

THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION
AND THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT IN MANCHESTER

1865 - 1885

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS.

THE RIOTS IN THE COUNTRY.



THE RIOTS AT NEW CROSS.

THE SCENE AT NEW CROSS, MANCHESTER, FACING N.E.

(From *The Illustrated London News* of 20 August, 1842; the building on the left, at the corner of Swan Street and the Oldham Road, is on the site of the present semi-circular building of the Midland Bank).

EDMOND AND RUTH FROW
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CLASS MOVEMENT IN MANCHESTER, 1865 - 1885

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THE INTERNATIONALE UNITES THE HUMAN RACE

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To many people, the concept of mid-Victorian Manchester would present ideas of the Halle, the Guardian, Gothic buildings and an acceptance by masters and men that prosperity demanded a serious attitude to work and leisure. The 1851 London Exhibition, followed in 1857 by the Manchester Art Exhibition, aimed to raise taste and stimulate the educational direction of the people. Although Manchester had been a centre of Owenism and the City where the National Charter Association had been formed in 1842, working class activity in the 1860s and 1870s is usually considered to be "in the dark ages". It can, however, be shown that the gloom was not so overcast as has been supposed. In fact, Manchester continued to be a centre of working class activity and organisation and a slender thread can be traced through the latter half of the nineteenth century into the 1920s and the formation of the Communist Party.

There were a number of strands crossing and recrossing the picture of working class activity during the twenty years from 1865. The City's growing Irish population provided one of the highlights when they rescued their Fenian leaders from the prison van in 1867 and acquired the three martyrs, Alan, Larkin and O'Brien, whose deed is still remembered in Moston Cemetery each year on the anniversary of their execution. Reform Movements flickered into life and grew into a flame and the trade union movement co-ordinated round the birth of the T.U.C. in 1868. Rapacious employers supported by the mailed fist of law and order led to militant trade unionists taking retaliatory action.

A further ingredient was injected into the social milieu in Manchester following the year of revolutions in 1848. Some of the continental exiles found their way to the City. One of these was "Polish Joe" who had "experienced some of the tyrannies of his native land"¹ and ended up in Manchester running a coffee house and library. He exercised considerable influence on young Joseph Lancashire who later played a part in the I.W.M.A. Frederick Engels also returned to Manchester after taking part in the abortive German revolution. He worked at the

cotton firm of Ermen and Engels until he went to live near Marx in London in 1870.

The International Working Men's Association was founded in London in 1864. As soon as membership cards were printed in 1865, Marx wrote to Ernest Jones and sent him twelve cards. He urged him to form a Branch Committee irrespective of the numbers interested. Jones did not take up the proposal, but Marx also sent cards to Engels. He must have enrolled his friends and formed a loose association in Manchester because although there is no mention of a formal Branch being set up, Frank Hall describes Engels as having, "played some part in the International Movement in Manchester founded by Karl Marx on the principles of his 'Das Kapital'".² When the first volume of Capital was published in September, 1867, Marx was in Manchester visiting Engels and Lydia Burns.

Although there is slight evidence of a formal Manchester Branch it is possible that Marx spoke to the group of friends that gathered at Engels' house for discussion.

When proposals were put to the General Council of the International Working Men's Association in 1866 and again in 1869 for the formation of a Federal Council based on Branches, Manchester may have been one of the places considered to have a Branch. One can assume that the local internationalists grouped around Engels exchanged opinions on the events of the six years up to 1870 and probably exercised some influence on the Fenians and the trade union movement.

The Reform Agitation

In 1865, the English members of the International Working Men's Association played a prominent part in forming the Reform League, the objective of which was full manhood suffrage. Marx wrote to Engels on 13th May, 1865, "Without us this Reform League would never have been created or would have fallen into the hands of the middle class."³

The Manchester Manhood Suffrage Association became the Northern Department of the League. In August, 1866, the President was Edward Hoosen and prominent supporters included Ernest Jones, J.C. Edwards and Elijah Dixon.

During August, 1866, meetings were held in Manchester and the surrounding towns to create interest in a demonstration that was to be held at Campfields, the Knott Mill Fairground. Support became so great that the middle class National Reform Union felt impelled to join in. On 24 September, it rained solidly on the twenty thousand people who gathered round the six platforms from which speakers put the case for reform. The League had called for a stoppage of work and the closure of all factories for that afternoon which possibly accounted



This is to Certify that *Frederick Engels* was admitted
 a Member of the above Association 18
 and paid as his Annual Subscription

R. Shaw

Corresponding Secretary for America.

Th. Van der Veken for six for Belgium

Julio Gotsch Italy.

Eugene Dupont France

Anthony Gorka Poland

Karl Marx Germany

H. Lutz Switzerland.

W. K. K. K. Treasurer

J. George Sec. Gen. Council

for the trade union banners that were carried on the march to Campfield. Among them were the Hulme and Chorlton Carpenters and Joiners, the Ancoats Glass Blowers, the Bakers' Society and the Operative Stonemasons. The outcome of this activity was the formation of a Trade Union Committee which was set up to campaign alongside the Reform League.

The agitation was intensified and pressure on the Tory Government increased. A year later, on 1st June, 1867, a combined Reform League and Reform Union demonstration was planned. It took place in a large field near Hullard Hall off Stretford Road where six platforms were erected. The trade union contingent marched with the League from Stevenson Square and there were flags and banners "beyond precedent".⁴ The Reform Union set off from Albert Square led by fifty eight carriages and with twenty five bands playing.

Although the London workers played the decisive part in forcing the Government to concede Parliamentary Reform and enfranchise the lower middle class and higher paid workers, Manchester certainly made a contribution to the campaign. For the first time, the organised trade unions played a significant part in the agitation. Engels hoped for considerably more from the new electoral roll than it produced. He wrote in a disgusted tone to Marx after the 1868 election, "What do you say to the elections in the factory districts? Manchester and Salford return three Tories to two Liberals.....Here the electors have increased from 24,000 to not quite 43,000 while the Tories have increased their votes from 6,000 to 14/15,000". He put his finger on one of the problems that beset the English working class movement for many years, "Not a single working class candidate had a ghost of a chance, but my Lord Tomnoddy or any parvenu snob could have the workers' votes with pleasure."⁵

The Fenians

It was not only the electors that increased their numbers in Manchester during the middle years of the century. The Irish population, starved out of their own country, emigrated to England to find work in England's rapidly expanding industry. Large numbers of them found their way to Manchester

Frederick Engels was naturally interested in the Irish question as a burning issue on the political scene, but he also took a particular interest in the revolutionary Fenian movement because his wife, Lydia Burns, was an ardent worker and supporter. He wrote to Marx, "I need not tell you that black and green predominate in my home too",⁶ while his own description of his wife was "a revolutionary Irishwoman".⁷ Engels sought to influence the Fenian movement and guide it along the path of mass struggle and joint action with the British working class.

Events on 18th September, 1867 in Manchester focussed

attention on the question of Irish freedom. Two Fenian leaders, Thomas Kelly and Timothy Deasy were rescued by an armed ambush while they were being taken from Bridge Street Court to Belle Vue prison. The railway bridge which was the scene of the rescue was within five minutes walk of the Engels house, 86, Mornington Street. On 21st, Engels took Paul Lafargue, who, with Marx, was on a visit to Manchester, to view the scene. Lafargue wrote that Lydia was in continual touch with the many Irishmen in Manchester and "was always well informed of their conspiracies". He said that more than one Sinn Feiner found hospitality in Engels's house and "it was thanks to his wife that the leader in the attempt to free the condemned Sinn Feiners on their way to the scaffold was able to evade the police".⁸ Eleanor Marx also staying with Lydia Burns was deeply impressed by the events. She was taken by her "Aunt" Lizzie to the market where Kelly had sold pots and she saw the house where he had lived. Aunt Lizzie described her visits to Deasy's home and recalled many episodes connected with them. When twelve year old Eleanor left Manchester, she was an ardent Fenian supporter.

The trial of the five men who were accused of organising the rescue and firing the shot which killed Sergeant Brett, the Police Officer inside the van, directed public attention to the vexed question of the independence of Ireland. The public execution, which Engels attended, aroused widespread feeling. Catholic priests in every Church in Manchester on the Sunday after the execution denounced the "murder" of the hanged men from their pulpits. A young boy, John Williams, who later became a leader of the Social Democratic Federation, was so moved by the events that he paid his 'school pence' into a local Fenian Centre collecting box and then walked from London to Manchester to witness the execution. He described the scene as the three condemned men, Allen, Larkin and O'Brien watched the public hangman, Calcraft, bungle his work. He said, "many were bareheaded, some were on their knees praying and many were crying".⁹ Engels noted the courageous demeanour of the three men.

As a result of the feeling aroused by these events, the Irish question became an English question and the International Working Men's Association paid due attention to it. As Engels remarked, "All the Fenians lacked was martyrs. These they have been presented with.... through the execution of these men, the liberation of Kelly and Deasy has been made an act of heroism which will now be sung over the cradle of every Irish child....The Irish women will see to that."¹⁰ These proved to be prophetic words. The anniversary of the Martyrs' death is still celebrated annually by a procession to Moston Cemetery and a ceremony at the graveside.

Formation of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council

While the Irish question was exploding and lighting political fires, the Manchester trade unionists set out on their historic

journey to found the T.U.C. Efforts had been made to form a Manchester and Salford Trades Council as early as 1837. J.R. Richardson addressed the United Trades Council in the Corn Exchange on the subject of "Whig Tyranny in Glasgow and the Glasgow Cotton Spinners".¹¹ Over a thousand people were present at that meeting which expressed support for the arrested leaders of the Glasgow spinners.

Developments in 1866 followed a strike of fustian dyers. When their strike was defeated, a Trades Defence Association was set up. This was a committee of representatives from different trades which pledged mutual support in future disputes. This laid the basis for the formation of the Trades Council and at a meeting on October 9th, 1866 at "The Three Crowns" at the corner of Garden Lane, the Manchester and Salford Trades Council was formed. The landlord of the Three Crowns was John Pike, a file-cutter by trade. He became the Treasurer and kept the funds paid in by the forty five affiliated trades.

The decision to convene the first Trades Union Congress was taken at one of these meetings. The Congress was held at the Mechanic's Institute at the corner of Princes Street and David Street during Whit week, 1868. One of the delegates to the Congress was Peter Shorrocks. He was the General Secretary of the Amalgamated Tailors and was sent to the Congress from the Trades Council. He read a paper on "The law relating to Conspiracy and Picketing" and¹² was elected to the position of Conference Secretary. He was also elected to the Parliamentary Committee in 1868 and again in 1873. As early as 1868, he had been in touch with the General Council of the International Working Men's Association and in 1869 agreed to dispose of a hundred copies of the Report of the International Congress.

The International Working Men's Association

New Cross played an important part in the events leading to the formation of the I.W.M.A. in Manchester. At the time, it was an open space of moderate dimensions. It was "ground which was sacred to the people having been consecrated in times past by their blood shed in bread, weavers and reform riots".¹³ All shades of opinion were expressed there. Groups discussed religion, politics, literature and ethics. It was, in fact, a people's forum.

Joseph Lancashire met a group of young men at New Cross. Five of them whose ages ranged from eighteen to twenty one, were young men "of some considerable ability. They were all sons of working men, clear thinkers and ready speakers".¹⁴ This loyal band of six friends met nearly every night for many years. They either joined the throng at New Cross or had a quiet read or talk together. Between them they accumulated a library of over five hundred volumes which they

kept at a coffee house near New Cross. There they were read on wet nights "with the greatest avidity and appreciation".¹⁵ Three of these young men played a prominent part in the I.W.M.A.

Edward Jones was the son of a collier. He had such an "impressive personality" and "a marked gift of speech"¹⁶ that Frederick Engels almost adopted him and sent him to the Mechanics Institute for further training to qualify him for public life. James Booth "was a philosophic youth, full of wise sayings, sturdy, phlegmatic, reliable, level headed, rather slow in his thoughts and not as good a speaker as his companions. He was capable of expressing his thoughts in writing - with the addition of some flashes of dry wit".¹⁷ The third was Joseph Lancashire.

The General Council of the I.W.M.A. was in touch with Manchester and when Karl Marx wrote the first address on the Paris Commune in 1870, copies were sent to the Trades Council, the Reform Union and the Amalgamated Tailors Society. William Appleton, the Secretary of the Operative Lace Makers, may have seen the Trades Council copy. He was so "pleased with the address"¹⁸ that he intended to have it reprinted for circulation. Appleton became the General Secretary of the Lacemakers Society in 1896 and in 1907, the General Secretary of the General Federation of Trade Unions.

Joseph R. Lancashire was born in 1848, the "first son of a boy and girl marriage".¹⁹ As a boy he refused to go to fetch beer even though he was beaten for it. When he was seven he started work, turning an engine for winding silk hanks. At eight and a half he worked in a dye house for three shillings a week. By the time he was twelve he was earning between eighteen and twenty two shillings. His chance of educating himself arose through his friendship with a boy whose father had collected an unusual library. He read Thomas Paine and other radical thinkers and began to consider the world around him in critical terms. When the defeat of the Paris Commune in May, 1871, led to "an influx into Manchester of men and women of both nations",²⁰ it was to Lancashire's home that they went; "Friendly hospitality was given to strangers from across the sea, and many attachments formed thereby."²¹ He and his wife became known in France and Germany as one of the "places of refuge for continental visitors".²² Lancashire ended up in the house furnishing business.

The refugees who settled in Manchester made New Cross their centre and there contacted each other and the young Englishmen who were interested in international affairs. Hall said, "Although London was the chief centre for the spread of international opinion, its adherents in Manchester were not less earnest and energetic and much attention was paid to this area. A number of refugees were sent down and a meeting was arranged at the Free Trade Hall at which internationalists from various parts of the continent were present. Its success

was an encouragement to its promoters and a local committee was arranged. This included a number of New Cross leaders."²³

Among these leaders was Eugene Dupont (c1831-1881), a French musical instrument maker who had taken part in the June uprising in Paris in 1848. From 1862, he had lived in London and was a member of the General Council of the I.W.M.A. from 1864 to 1872. He was the corresponding member for France and in 1868, the Chairman of the Brussels Congress. He lived in Manchester for a short while at 40, Carnarvon Street, Cheetham. Dupont was described as "a kind lovable man who had made great sacrifices for his country".²⁴

The formation of a Federal Council of the International Working Men's Association was agreed by the General Council on 21st October, 1871. John Hales, the Secretary wrote to the Manchester section warning them to take no action until a policy was ratified nationally. This was done at the General Council meeting on 14th November when it was reported that letters had been received from a number of places, including Manchester, indicating that members were being enrolled daily and that the Sections were gaining strength. Equally favourable reports were given of activity abroad.

The Manchester Branch

Early in January, 1872, the Manchester Branch was addressed by Harriet Law on behalf of the Communard refugees. She was a well known figure in Manchester, a democrat and an atheist. She had been a member of the General Council of the I.W.M.A. since 1867. Harriet Law was described as, "a bluff, stout, loud-voiced woman, a female Boanerges, whose violent declamations used to make themselves heard and almost felt, far beyond the limits of the hall in which she spoke".²⁵ It may have been at this meeting that the decision was taken to commemorate the first anniversary of the Paris Commune.

The I.W.M.A. Branch had obtained a meeting room at the Union Chambers, 15, Dickenson Street, near the Town Hall. "This room which would hold 150 to 200 people had historic associations for it was the central rendezvous of the Old Chartists 25 to 30 years before. Meetings were held on Sunday afternoons at which local talent was supplemented by speakers from London and the Continent. The gatherings were opened by the singing of an international hymn or the Marseillaise and at the end a collection was taken to defray expenses."²⁶ These first activities of the Branch were organised by Eugene Dupont, the Secretary whom Engels called "very useful to us".²⁷ When he returned to London in 1872, Edward Jones took his place.

The first large meeting organised by Jones when he became Secretary was on 18th March, 1872. It was held in the Temperance Hall in Grosvenor Street with an audience of

one hundred and fifty people of whom a large number were women. N.J. Ridgeway was in the Chair and above the platform hung a banner on which was written, "To the memory of the Martyrs of the working men's revolution of the 18th March, 1871"²⁸ on red material. The Chairman commented that they were meeting to commemorate an event which would become historic. He could also have forecast that such a meeting would be held annually for many years to come. W. Torr proposed "the memory of the Martyrs of the Commune"²⁹ and M.J. Johannard replied in French. He was a French worker who had been a member of the General Council of the I.W.M.A. since 1868. After the suppression of the Commune he emigrated to London. A translation of his speech was read by the Secretary, Edward Jones. The Marseillaise was then sung and dancing commenced.

The following month, on 9th April, another successful meeting was held in the Grosvenor Street Temperance Hall. Dr. George Sexton who had been a friend of both Robert Owen and Ernest Jones was in the Chair. He was a member of many learned Societies and a prolific writer of rationalist tracts. He called himself a Communist and sat on the General Council of the I.W.M.A. from May to August, 1872. He also became a spiritualist. Edward Jones and N.J. Ridgeway were the speakers on that occasion.

The Manchester Branch paid considerable attention to the trade unions. Speakers attended union branches and clubs to expound the principles of the International. A branch of four hundred members of The Manchester Operative Bricklayers affiliated. Edward Jones addressed a meeting at the Union Chambers on 28th June, 1872 on "Trade Unions, Past, Present and Future".³⁰ During the business part of this meeting, delegates were elected to attend the Nottingham Congress of the I.W.M.A. These were Edward Jones, Charles Heys, R.A. Rouzan and Bilcliffe. This may have been the Bill Bilcliffe who on 17th May, 1892 was elected joint Secretary (with Alf Settle) of the Manchester and Salford Independent Labour Party at its inaugural meeting.

The British Federal Council

Up to 1871, the General Council of the I.W.M.A. had acted both as an international coordinator and as the British Section, however, in September, 1871, the London Conference decided to set up a British Federal Council to organise national affairs. From the beginning, the Federal Council included a group of reformers who opposed the General Council on a number of issues, particularly the formation of Irish Sections. The first Congress held by the newly formed Federal Council was held at Nottingham on 21st and 22nd July, 1872. Edward Jones was elected Conference Secretary and both he and Dupont played a prominent part in the proceedings. Manchester was reported as having one hundred and fifty individual members and six

hundred affiliated through trades unions. A programme of demands was adopted but a resolution to transfer the Federal Council to Manchester was defeated by fourteen votes to seven.

The Manchester District Council

A meeting of the Manchester District Council took place on 21st August at the Cobden Temperance Hotel³¹ in Port Street. Mr Robinson was elected to the Chair and James Stafford Murchie to the Secretaryship. The Cobden Coffee House was a traditional meeting place for working men interested in political and social topics. It was so well known as a meeting place of informed opinion that officials and statesmen had been known to go there to listen to the opinions expressed. It was an old decayed looking house and must have been demolished shortly after the Federation Meetings took place.

James Murchie who accepted the responsibility of being Secretary of the new organisation was a carpenter who had been admitted to the Manchester 2nd Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners in 1871 when he completed his apprenticeship. He was described as a "brilliant young man whom 'death cut short'".³² He held all the important offices both in his own Branch and later in Manchester 6th. In 1875 he became a member of his union Executive and in 1878 the Chairman of the Executive Council. The Manchester and Salford United Trades committee made him Chairman in 1876 and Secretary in 1877. In 1883, he became a member of the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C. and in 1885 its Chairman. He was also an active cooperator and a confirmed advocate of independent Labour representation.

Under the leadership of this brilliant young man, the Manchester Federation took shape. It was decided that new sections be formed to cover the foreign members, the Ancoats district, Hulme, Chorlton on Medlock and Salford. The next few months saw an increase in activity and membership. The representatives to the District Council were Rawson, Cooper and Murchie from Hulme, Shorrocks and Sutton from Salford, Vaughemen and Kupper, the foreign section, J.R. Lancashire, New Cross and Blake and Robinson, New Cross Number three, Edward Jones and possibly Charles Heys from the Central Branch together with James Booth of the Operative Bricklayers' Society.

In November, 1872, J. Inmans wrote a letter on behalf of himself and twelve "shopmates" asking for a section to be formed in Gorton. R. Rawson of 6, Newton Crescent, Gorton Lane was appointed to form the section. As Gorton was a centre of the engineering industry it is more than probable that the workshop was an engineering works.

Developing Dissension

It is one of the unfortunate contradictions of history that twelve months after the Federal Council was formed and started to grow, it split in two and Manchester became inevitably caught up in the arguments. John Hales, the General Secretary of the British Federal Council became more and more influenced by politics. The Manchester foreign section was strongly opposed to Hales and the spokesman for their point of view was Eugene Dupont. The Federal Council met in November and a proposal was made to remove Hales from office at the next meeting. A week later, there was a split and two bodies calling themselves the Federal Council claimed to represent the International in England.

John Hales who claimed to be the leader of the majority on the Federal Council, was the Secretary of a small union, the Elastic Webb Weavers' Society of London. This had affiliated to the International in 1866. Hales was a member of the General Council between 1866 and 1872 and its Secretary from May 1871 to July 1872 when it moved to New York. He then became Corresponding Secretary to the British Federation and in November, 1872, its General Secretary. Hales had angered members of the Manchester District Council by opposing each section in Manchester having a representative on the Federal Council. When his letter was read to a meeting of the Manchester District Council on 2nd October, 1872, Edward Jones and J.R. Lancashire sponsored a resolution asking if it correctly represented the views of the Federal Council. They also pressed their case for full Manchester representation on the Federal Council and for the full report of the Nottingham Congress to be published.

The split rapidly developed within the organisation. The Federal Council invested Hales with the dual responsibility as Secretary and Corresponding Secretary. At a meeting in Manchester on 13th November, Vaugheman and Kupper proposed a lengthy protest against the decision. They strongly objected to "creating a General Secretary with so many functions".³³ There was a proposal from Hulme and Chorlton on Medlock asking the District Council to invite Thomas Mottershead, a supporter of Hales, to speak while he was on a visit to Manchester. This was agreed, but his subject was changed from "The History of The Association" to "The Direct Representation of Labour in Parliament".

Hales sent out a circular to the Branches on December 17th claiming to speak for the majority of the Federal Council. In it he fully accepted the Nottingham Congress decisions but rejected those of the Hague Congress. One of the replies to this circular was drafted by Frederick Engels and sent in the name of the Manchester Foreign Section. It was dated December 21st and was signed by P. Zurcher, F. Kupper and O. Wyss.³⁴ The left wing established itself as the British

Federal Council and was recognised by a majority of Branches. In January, 1873 when John Hales called a Congress, only twelve delegates attended.

Salford Republican Club

However, the damage was done and a decline set in. Edward Jones wrote to Engels, "The unfortunate quarrel you have had in London has a very detrimental effect on our work in Manchester."³⁵ By 22nd February, 1873, Salford Branch was no longer listed in the advertisement in the International Herald. Later it appeared again as the Salford Republican Club. The Secretary was W. Adams who continued in the office when the name and affiliation were changed. Peter Shorrocks who had been a delegate to the Manchester District Council was the speaker at a meeting of the Republican Club held at Ford Street Temperance Hall on 23rd July, 1873. His subject was, "Republicanism and Royalty". In Hulme, Murchie, who also supported Hales, attempted to form a Branch of the breakaway Federal Council. He did not have much success.

On 16th April, 1873, The Manchester Central Section adopted a resolution on re-organisation and J.A. McDermott was elected Secretary in place of Edward Jones. Jones had played a consistently active part in the affairs of the International and had helped to build up the Central Section. McDermott sent in the affiliation fees for twelve members only. He announced that Edward Jones had relinquished his position as he was "leaving Town".³⁶ The only reference to Jones is by J.R. Lancashire who said "he might have gone far".³⁷ It would be interesting to know where he went and what became of him in later life.

The Manchester Congress, 1873

The second Congress of the British Section of the International was held in Manchester on 1st and 2nd June, 1873. S. Vickery was in the Chair and the Foreign Section played a prominent part in arranging the conference which was held in the Mechanics Institute in David Street. The "Manchester Weekly Times" reported that there were seventeen delegates apart from the Chairman and that about half of them were "very young men".³⁸ There were also two women present. Frederick Engels reported "twenty six delegates who represented the main centres of English industry". He characterised it as "An epoch-making event in the English labour movement."³⁹ Among the decisions taken were the demand for the return of the means of production to the workers, the adoption of the Red Flag and the assertion of the right of the working class to use force to realise its demands. It also called for the release of the imprisoned Fenians and congratulated the Spanish workers who had elected ten of their representatives to the Cortes.

A less favourable appraisal was made by Stekloff who pointed out that the "Federation had no serious foundation and was out of touch with the working class".⁴⁰ Although the Congress was in favour of an independent workers party, it did not define its position in relation to the imminent General Election. He also pointed out the lack of trade union support and commented that they were increasingly going over to the camp of Liberalism. It is significant that Joseph Lancashire became a Liberal and saw "the folly of extreme views by his association with the International Movement".⁴¹

It was true that the extension of the franchise in 1867 and again in 1872 had satisfied the immediate political aims of the skilled workers. The improved legal status of the trade unions blunted their militancy. Hall reported that J.R. Lancashire's assessment was, "For nearly three years the movement flourished on the strength of its propaganda, but the difficulty of its application to this country, coupled with the fact that the workers here were not slow to discover that it's objects were political rather than industrial, brought about its failure."⁴²

The working class was at the tail of the Liberal Party. The International became temporarily defeated by the policy of retrenchment and reform. A thread however was carried through to be taken up in the Socialist revival in the 1880s.

Significantly, the name of J. Darbyshire, appeared in the International Herald on 12th July, 1873. He gave his address, 28, Sidmouth Street, Salford, for those wishing to obtain information about the I.W.M.A. Although he was also a member of the Salford Republican Club, his interest in and activity on behalf of the International did not cease. There is no record of organised activity by the I.W.M.A. for ten years, but Darbyshire told Engels in 1884, that he had tried for years to revive the International and it is not beyond imagination to picture individual members meeting for a chat or running into each other in the course of their activity, but being too few to contemplate re-organising the group. Certainly, we can trace individual activists who continued to play a leading part in the labour movement of the time. When the massive trades demonstration in support of the agricultural labourers' claim for sixteen shillings a week entered Pomona Gardens, on Saturday, 20th June, 1874, they and a crowd of fifty thousand who awaited their arrival listened to speakers from six platforms. One of the Chairmen was Peter Shorrocks.⁴³

The Manchester Branch of The International Working Men's Association, The Social Democratic Federation.

In the early 1880s events again forced the question of the relations between Britain and Ireland to the forefront of

the political scene. In April, 1881, a "Democratic League of Great Britain and Ireland" was formed in Manchester. Shortly afterwards the inaugural Conference of the Democratic Federation was held in London on 8th June, 1881.

A second Conference of the Democratic League was held in May 1882 and a decision was taken to affiliate to the Democratic Federation. The Manchester Group was counted as one of the six provincial Branches. Firm links between the Radicals in Manchester and London were thereby established.

Early in 1883, John Darbyshire who had been an agent for the International Herald in Manchester succeeded in re-forming the Manchester Branch of the I.W.M.A. In his letter to Engels he said that he had formed a committee of "English, Irish, Welsh and Scots".⁴⁴ He asked Engels for the names of former members of the International and promised him a copy of the principles and aims of the new organisation. He sent his letter from the address of the County Forum, 2A Marsden Square, off Market Street.

The County Forum

The Forum, which claimed to have been established in 1812, was a "great dining place"⁴⁵ and debates took place each Tuesday and Friday at midday. Two prominent debaters were old Chartists. One of them was W.H. Chadwick who was known as "The last of the Chartists".⁴⁶ In one debate, the Chairman introduced him with a portrait in words of the days when he had been a fiery advocate of the People's Charter. The speech he had made early in his career was recorded in verse:

"Oh! Comrades, hear me! Aye, and having heard,
Rise in your myriads! Marshal in your might!
Proclaim the six-gemmed Charter - 'tis your right!
By peaceful methods win it if you can;
Should peaceful fail you, Revolution's plan:
Force versus force, whate'er the issue be!
Far better not to be, than not be free!"⁴⁷

When the re-formed Branch of the I.W.M.A. met, it was at the County Forum, the traditional meeting place of progressive thinkers. One of the new recruits was a young man, Henry Musgrave Reade. He was the son of a County Magistrate, Captain L.L. Reade, J.P. He was fascinated in his youth by the revolutionary traditions of France. His heroes were Marat, Mirabeau and Babeuf. He was eleven years old at the time of the Commune in 1871 and a few years later he read Louis Blanc, Robert Owen, Rousseau, Voltaire, Paine, Buchner and Darwin. As a result, he became a free thinker and secularist and in 1862 became the Secretary of the Salford Branch of the National Secular Society.

Finding secularism a negative and sterile creed, he

joined the International Working Men's Association. Here he found a different atmosphere, "lectures on political economy and especially the doctrines or theories of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, were propagated".⁴⁸ The members of the I.W.M.A., he found, were full of enthusiasm and expected to establish a Commune in Manchester in a very short time. Influenced by Henry George's "Progress and Poverty", Reade organised a Branch of the Land Restoration League in Manchester, but he retained his membership of the I.W.M.A.

When the Manifesto of the Democratic Federation was published in June, 1883, Reade was impressed by it. "Socialism Made Plain" revealed that "a great economic movement had commenced in Conservative England".⁴⁹ William Morris who was one of the signatories of the Manifesto, wrote to Reade asking him and the members of the I.W.M.A. to join with them and show a united front. This appeal was rejected on the grounds that they were not prepared to leave a "purely socialist organisation for one that outwardly seemed only democratic".⁵⁰ However, when Henry Mayers Hyndman met them when he was in Manchester and explained that the new organisation was formed on Marxist principles, and when in January, 1884, Justice and Today were published, their objections were overcome and Reade joined the Federation. He then proceeded to organise a Salford Branch of the Social Democratic Federation and became its Secretary, a position that he held for many years.

The activities of the Manchester Branch of the I.W.M.A. were recorded in Justice in March, 1884. On the eighteenth of the month, the 'Annual Dinner' in commemoration of the Commune, was held at the County Forum. There were speeches on 'The Commune' and 'Labour and Capital'. Thomas Shillingshaw, who was in the Chair, was a well known Forum figure. One of his Forum speeches recorded in verse said,

"There is an ever-present fight.
The old and well-entrenched resists the new;
The false, established, fights against the true;
The wicked, placed in power, resist the good;
The tyrant yearns for the reformer's blood.
And yet, one feels, nor can one but contend; -
The true and good shall triumph in the end."⁵¹

A year later, on March 28th at the Royal Anchor Hotel, Lower Broughton Road, Salford, the Branch again commemorated "the glorious 18th March, 1871". Tea was "on the table at 5p.m."⁵² and addresses were given by John Darbyshire, Joe Waddington, Kay and Greaves. Waddington was a joiner by trade and an ardent pamphlet seller. He was agent for Justice and later became well known as 'Clarion Joe'. He took Robert Blatchford and A.M. Thompson on a conducted tour of the Manchester slums in much the same way that Mary Burns had taken Frederick Engels nearly fifty years earlier.



A COMMUNIST CLUB-ROOM NEAR LEICESTER-SQUARE.

Socialist Pioneers

The Branch of the Democratic Federation started by Reade and William Horrocks in 1884 became the South Salford Branch of the Social Democratic Federation. This could be considered as the first truly Socialist organisation set up in Manchester and Salford. It became one of the largest Branches in the S.D.F. It became a foundation Branch of the Communist Party in 1920. The Red Flag, adopted by the I.W.M.A. at their Manchester Congress in 1873, was carried through the streets of Manchester by the Social Democrats in the first May Day demonstration in the City on 1st May, 1892.

"There is no evidence that the Manchester Branch of the I.W.M.A. joined the S.D.F. or Socialist League as a body though a number of its members certainly did. The first issue of "Commonweal" in February, 1885, acknowledged communications from Joe Waddington and J.M. Reade. There was also a request addressed to T. Ewing to form a Manchester Branch and the suggestion was made that "Citizen Derbyshire, 116, Lower Broughton Road, will be of great use to you in any such undertaking."

The Socialists tried from the start to broaden their agitation and appeal to a wider public. An unemployed committee was formed by Joe Waddington and John Thompson of the Manchester S.D.F. An appeal was made to the unemployed and a demonstration organised to march to Pomona Gardens on 25th February, 1884. Five thousand unemployed assembled to listen to the speakers.

From the first issue of cards to supporters of the I.W.M.A. in 1865 to the final closure some twenty years later, a nucleus of supporters faithful to the ideals of Marxism and Internationalism kept the red flag flying in Manchester. William Liebknecht, could well say of the International "It did not die, but passed into the mighty working class movement in many lands, and it continues to live in these movements."⁵³

Appendix

Since writing the essay on the I.W.M.A. in Manchester, our attention has been drawn, by Bill Williams of the Manchester Studies Team at Manchester Polytechnic, to an article written by J.R. Lancashire J.P. called "New Cross Memories. Continental Internationalism" published in 'The Manchester City News, Saturday, October 16, 1920'.

Joseph Lancashire commented on the strong influence that Karl Marx's 'Das Kapital' had on the Germans who came as refugees to this country after 1868.

He described how such internationalists came to Manchester and found fruitful ground at New Cross. A large meeting at the Free Trade Hall was arranged and the success of this led to a local committee being formed. He enlisted Jones, Macdonald, Job Belcliffe and James Murchie as "the principal leaders from New Cross" who went "heart and soul into the matter".

He said that "many schemes were adopted to popularise the objects of the international". Among them were the ticket of membership costing one shilling a year. On the front was written the member's name and on the back, the main principles of the movement in English, German, French and Italian. He said that "To be in possession of one of these cards meant you had to be fraternal brother with the workers of the world."

Another method of contacting people was attending places where people gathered for any reason and at the end of proceedings to ask them to stay for a few minutes to listen to "a new doctrine" for their "redemption". They also sent deputations "to interview all kinds of clubs, local trade unions and friendly societies". He claimed that "so strong was the movement in Manchester that it became the real centre of activity in England.

The end of the Franco Prussian War and the break-up of the Paris Commune brought an influx of Communards to Manchester. There were also a number of German and Swiss refugees. Among them, Lancashire named Professor Wilmars, Leon Blanque, Colonel Clouseit and Eugene Dupont. There were also Max Burgemann who had escaped from the fortress at Konigsburg.

Eugene Dupont who was denounced in Parliament in the most violent language read the speech to his New Cross friends in their favourite coffee house and they all laughed heartily at the extravagant charges made against him. Lancashire characterises Dupont as, "a kindly and lovable man, a splendid patriot who had made great sacrifices for his country, and had given his all to further its cause."

After the slaughter of 3,000 Communards in March, 1871, there was grief and anger in Manchester. A memorial meeting was held in March, 1872, in the Grosvenor Street Schoolroom where Dr. Pankhurst took the Chair.

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