THE SPLIT IN THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY

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C O N T E N T S

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P R E F A C E

The split in the British Labour Party and the consequent formation of the Social Democratic Party in January 1981 marked a major development in the British political scene which may well have far reaching implications for British politics in future. Historically, the Labour Party had all the characteristic of a coalition of different well demarcated groups like the trade unions, co-operative societies, the tribune group, the fabian society, the moderates, the leftists, etc. As these inner party groups had maintained different perspectives, there was a constant division among them over party priorities and approaches to different issues which came up, from time to time, in Britain. Besides the ideological controversy, there was much tension amongst the constituents over the constitution of the Party, especially on the election of the Leader and on the drawing up of the election manifesto. However, till 1981 such differences had not reached the point of a formal break-up of the Labour Party.

Rift in the Labour Party was brewing up from 1959 on-wards, following the third successive defeat of the Party in General Elections which led to a debate between the moderates and leftists over the Party's ideology -

mainly the interpretation of Clause IV of the Party Constitution. In 1969, the rift between Party and the trade unions became widened when the former attacked the corporate position of the trade unions. The Labour-Left became more critical of the official line of the Party after the defeat of the Party in 1979 General Elections. At the 1979 Annual Party Conference the 'Left' made an advance by seeking greater accountability of the Parliamentary Labour Party and more power to the Party Conference.

Constitutional issues were exacerbated by the formation of a group called 'Campaign for Labour Party Democracy' by some extreme elements in the Party. This group, with the support of some trade unions, brought in changes on the election of the Party Leader, writing the Election Platform, and on the selection of Parliamentary candidates by constituency parties, much to the discomfort of the moderates. Added to these factors were issues like the Party's attitude to the British membership in the European community, to unilateral nuclear disarmament etc. Following the victory of the 'Left' on these matters the moderates constituting a significant segment of the Party had resigned from the Labour Party and formed a rival Social Democratic Party.

The objective of this study is to analyse the factors which lead to the split in the British Labour Party and its implications for British politics and examine the extent of differences between the Labour Party and the Social Democratic Party on various issues.

During the course of this study, I received generous assistance from several people and institutions. First of all I would like to express my deep sense of gratitude to Dr. B. Vivekanandan, who guided and supervised my work at all stages. Similarly, I am grateful to Mr. Pradip Bose for giving his valuable suggestions and for providing me with substantial documents.

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION
FORMATION OF THE LABOUR PARTY

On Thursday, 27 February 1900 in Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street, London, the Labour Party was born.[1] It contributed decisively in less than a quarter of century to the almost total eclipse of a great national party of Britain, the Liberal Party. Recently the same Labpur Party got splitted into two and once again ushered in remarkable changes in the political spectrum of Great Britain.

The roots of the split in the Labour Party lay deep in the economic and social environment that had developed during the course of the late 19th and early 20th century British history.[2] But it is generally agreed by the historians of the Labour movement that it was the decade beginning in 1880 which saw the initiation of the process, culminating in 20 years later, the establishment of the Labour Party. Infact, from 1880 onwards a good deal was

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1. Francis Williams, The rise of the Labour Party (London, 1950), p. 6.

2. Frank Belay and Henry Pelling, Labour and Politics 1900-1906 (London, 1958), p. 3.

happening to make a large and influential section of the working class feel increasingly discontent, with the things as they were. There was emergence of real class - consciousness in Britain in the 1880s. Economic and social changes were also taking place, though they were not in themselves, enough to give rise to the Labour Party. There were many other factors, which could be broadly categorised into four separate movements, which converged to make the moder Labour Party. All of them were affected by international movements and by the impact of socialist and revolutionary thoughts in other countries. Despite their divergent outlooks in terms of their philosophy they had merged together to form the Labour Party out of sheer necessity and circumstantial reasons.

First among them was the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), the only one among the forebearers of the British Labour Party with a specifically Marxist orientation. It was an incoherent body, composed of a group of radicals, positivists and anarchists. It was initially controlled largely by H.M. Hyndman, a man of non-conformist Conscience wanting a radical change.[3]

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3. H.M. Hyndman, Record of Adventurous Life (London, 1911), p. 7.

Hyndman and his Social Democratic Federation genuinely believed that "the Great Social Revolution of 19th century was at hand",[4] and, so, chose to ignore the mind of the workers being too inclined, as Shaw commented, to mistake hungry stomach for the intellectual conviction of the class war.[5] This was the line of thinking of the Social Democratic Federation. As an observer of the SDF wrote, "Our militant Socialism of the eighties, although captained by poets, artists, anglican clergymen and ex-army officers was profoundly proletarian in speech and motto. Its scarlet barrier blazed with the war cry, workers of all nations unite."[6]

SDF was critical of the other constituents of the Labour Party and was at loggerheads with other socialist groups. Although SDF aspired to win mass support, it alienated a large segment of the working class especially in the trade unions. In 1884 it issued a manifesto denying that the unions had any right to speak for labour. John Burns, one of their stalwarts in the SDF organ, Justice,

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4. Justice, 18 July 1885, Cited in Philip E. Piorier, The Advent of the Labour Party (London, 1958), p.25.

5. George Bernard Shaw, Clarion, 4 November, 1904, Quoted Ibid.

6. S.D. Shallard, in ILP News, August 1901, Cited in Philip E. Piorier, op. cit., p. 24.

in 1887 heaped heavy scorns on theunions asserting that "they were middle class and upper class rate reducing societies".[7] However, in the course of a few years the SDF came to embody an attitude of exclusiveness and hostility to all. It contained a theory of doctrinaire radicalism, bereft of any revolutionary technique.

Hyndman viewed the Independent Labour Party (ILP), anothermajor constituent of the labour party, with a critical eye, posing himself as the sole guardian of the Socialist fire; he thought that there was no need for the existence of Independent Labour Party and said, "it existed simply because its leaders had to indulge their idiosyncracies and in their eagerness for office and were unwilling to submit to whole-some SDF discipline".[8] Thus restricted by the narrowness of its definition and its self-righteous feeling SDF contributed to its own isolation and impotence. However, SDF had helped to create a new and militant mood among the working classes and provided a rostrum and training centre for some of the Unionists and even for some of the Fabians. George Bernard Shaw, a Fabian member, for a time considered joining it and spoke

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7. Justice, 3 September 1887. Cited in Philip E. Poirier, n. 4, p.4.

8. SDF Annual Report, 1894, pp. 25-27. See Philip E. Poirier, n. 4, p. 25.

from its platform.[9]

The second constituent of the Labour Party was the Fabian Society which gave to the British Socialism much of its intellectual content, contributed to the Labour movement a philosophy as truely revolutionary and much more rooted in the realities of the British situation. On matters of forming theLabour Party as a new distinct political party, its contribution remained peripheral and advisory and at no time decisive,[10] although Edward Pease, later the Society's secretary, wrote in 1887 that the chief aim of Fabian plan was "the formation of distinct Labour Party in Parliament".[11] Fabians showed little comprehension of the place and importance of trade unionism. Sidney Webb, the Fabian Leader, said; "Fabian Society did not sufficiently appreciate the trade unionism as a political force or even as an essential part of the social structure".[12] Fabians thought that the socialism could be brought about by the intellectual "permeation" of the traditional parties, rather

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9. G.B. Shaw, "The Fabian Society, Its Early History", Fabian Tract (London), no. 41, 1892, p. 4.

10. Philip E. Poirier, n. 4, pp. 28-29.

11. Edward Pease in Today. Quoted in Samuel Beer, Modern British Politics (London, 1965), 2nd edn. p. 298.

12. Webb's introduction to 1920 edition of the Fabian Essays, p. xxi. See Philip E. Poirier, n. 4, p. 30.

than by the formation of a specifically socialist party into a Labour Party. In 1887, Webbs himself had little doubt that the Liberal Party would choose to become the Labour Party rather then be superceded.[13] But after the decisive defeat of the Liberals in General Election of 1895, Fabians shared the wide feeling that Liberalism has reached the point of demise and that henceforth the dividing political line would be between conservatism on one hand and an advancing socialism on the other.[14]

It is a fact that the modern Labour Party would not have existed without the Fabian Society. But, at the same time the Fabian Society could not have created the Labour Party alone. It required the industrial and political organization of the workers in the new trade unionism and it required no less the warmth, the humility and the moral fervour of the Independent Labour Party (ILP). The Independent Labour Party drawing upon the moral and idealistic resources, mobilised the awakened social conscience of men and women of all classes and brought into political life a crusading and evangelical spirit that had long been absent

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13. Sidney Webb, Socialism in England (London, 1889), p. 130.

14. Edward Pease, History of the Fabian Society (London, 1925), p. 117.

from it. Throughout the movement, the ILP was remarkably flexible, demonstrating a readiness to compromise and a sense of the possible inspite of its disagreement with Fabian's methods and difference with the SDF ideology. The ILP held a middle ground between the SDF extremism and the Fabian's isolationism.

Trade Unionism was the most important movement which formed the backbone of the Labour Party. It grew strength in Britain in response to the industrial needs and it was an inevitable outcome of the 19th century capitalism. Before 1880, the trade unions were not politically active. They believed that their best course of action was to quietly build up their financial strength and to secure improvement for their members through negotiations with their employers and by arbitration rather than by political action.

But from 1880 onwards, things for the unions began to change. Certain authoritarian measures in the nineties compelled the trade unions to turn to politics. Besides, a concept of 'New Unionism' grew in the early nineties mobilising the working class to organise. In addition to the three movements (SDF, Fabians, ILP), co-operative movement had profcund influence in shaping the political mind of many workers and giving them self-confidence.

The idea of an alliance, between these divergent groups and trends emerged at the Glasgow trade union Congress of 1892, where, James Keir Hardie, who was to be the dominant figure in the ILP convened a private meeting of the trade union delegates and representatives of various independent Labour associations. It arranged for calling a conference to form a new party.[15] The conference which founded the Independent Labour Party, the harbinger of modern Labour Party, met in the Labour Institute in Bradford on 13 and 14 January 1893.[16] The 120 delegates who attended the conference represented eighty local ILPs nine branches of Scottish Labour Party, four small trade unions, six SDF branches, and two socialist societies.[17]

At this conference, various organisations could not arrive at an unanimous decision on the nature of the new party. So, an amalgamation of these groups, instead of a party with a clear-cut socialist inclination, was decided upon. Still neither the SDF nor the Fabians society would agree to federate. Afterwards, through out the nineties Hardie and his ILP became absorbed in inconclusive dis-

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15. G.D.H. Cole, British Working Class Politics (London, 1925), p. 137.

16. Philip, E. Poirier, n. 4, p. 47.

17. Ibid, p. 48.

cussions on matters like fusion of socialist bodies with the trade unions. But, the nineties were in many ways, unfavourable to the formation of a new party, with political life being relatively calm, the electorate apathetic and towards the end of the decade a mounting imperialistic tide had swept socialism to the background.[18]

However, the process towards the formation of the Labour Party was accelerated when Keir Hardie was elected to the Parliament as an Independent Labour member in the General Elections held in 1892. There were two other Independent Labour men, John Burns for Battersea and J. Havelock Wilson for Middlesborough. There was still no Labour Party, however, although it was often styled as such. It was simply a group weak in leadership, in cohesion and in programme.[19] Occassionally the Labour members met in formal meetings and at other times they exchanged views in the lobby of the Parliament.

Havelock Wilson, once elected, gradually turned towards Liberal. Burns and Hardie were soon at cross-purposes. Burns had little respect or liking for the ILP

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18. G.D.H. Cole, History of the British Working Class, 1789-1947 (London, 1948), p. 35.

19. Philip E. Poirier, n. 4, p. 63.

and labelled it "badly led, worse organised and wroughly inspired".[20] Hardie, in his counter attacks, in the Labour Leader, harshly lampooned Burns and thus helped kill any hope of understanding.

1895 General Election had caused a setback to the Labour movement when all the Independent Labour candidates were defeated. The blame was apportioned to the lashing tongue of Burns, who, even in the late 1893 had denounced "the arrant frauds that in the name of Independent Labour and Socialism, were going about the country doing everything to disintegrate Labour and the trade unions".[21] When some one commented to Burns that a party which could expend over £ 5,000 on an election could not be considered dead, he retorted that it was the most costly funeral he had known since Napoleon was burried.[22]

The dismal performance during the 1895 elections had not deterred Hardie and his associates from having an alliance with the trade unionists. Their objective was to harness funds and votes of the trade unions through a Socialist-Labour combination, the 'Great Alliance' as

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20. Labour Leader, 20 October 1894, see Frank Belayand H. Pelling (ed.), Labour and Politics 1900-1906 (London, 1958), p. 15.

21. Trad Union Congress, Annual Report, 1893, p. 48.

22. David Lowe, From Pit to Parliament; Life of Keir Hardie, (London, 1923), p. 86.

Hardie called it. Unlike Blatchford and some of the followers of Hyndman, they did not assume that the trade unionists must become socialist before there could be a close and effective collaboration. The bridge of agreement was to be political independence, not some socialist abstraction.

Subsequently Hardie, in collaboration with James Ramsay MacDonald drafted a resolution to be introduced in the Trade Union Congress at Plymouth in 1899, and it was put forward by James Holmes, the Railway Servant's delegate.[23] The resolution called for the co-operation of all the co-operatives, socialistic Trade Unions, and other working organizations with a view to securing a better representation of the interests of Labour in the House of Commons. According to the resolution circulars were sent to different organisations.

Seven weeks before the Memorial Hall Conference, which gave birth to Labour Representation Committee, there was a significant development. The Scottish Workers Parliamentary Election Committee was formed, on a basis quite similar to that of Labour Representation Committee. A resolution of the Scottish Trade Union Congress of April

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23. Godfrey Elton, The Life of James Ramsay, MacDonald, 1866-1919 (London, 1939), p. 99.

1899, had led to the gathering at Edinburgh on 6 January 1900.[24] This Conference was attended by 116 trade unionists, 29 trade councillors and 29 co-operators, 34 delegates from the ILP, and 19 from theSDF. A resolution in favour of independent representation was carried by a big majority against an amendment by the SDF to remove the word independent and to require the candidates to support the nationalisation of means of production. Hardie criticised the rigidity of SDF which had threatened to withdraw if the amendment was not accepted. The SDF weekly, Justice, heaped ridicule on this not-here-and-now-but-some-time socialism of the ILP and accused it of having become a reform party, pure and simple.[25] The trade unionists had supported the ILP.

The trade unionists, socialists and co-operators finally met on 27 February 1900 in London Memorial Hall to form the Labour Party.[26] As at the previous conference, the SDF criticised its socialist counter part and asked for a party based upon the recognition of class war with the nationalisation of means of production, distribution and exchange as its objectives. Trade Unions were generally averse to such kind of extreme declaration. Hardie's

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24. Frank Belay and H. Pelling (ed.), A History of Labour Representation Committee (London, 1958), p. 66.

25. Justice, 13 January, 1900, Philip E. Poirier, n.4. p. 80.

26. G.D.H. Cole, n. 15, pp. 154-55,=

supporters considered the SDF resolution very heroic and confronted with the problem of steering a middle course between the stiff socialist dogma and the loose and informal which did not indicate the formation of a new party. Hardie, very skillfully proposed an amendment which stipulated that no trade unionists could oppose a socialist candidate or vice-versa in the elections - the maximum possible area of effective socialist-trade union collaboration. As a result of this meeting new Labour Party was formed and for the time being it was named as the Labour Representation Committee (LRC). Thus, the Memorial Hall Conference was the culmination of prolonged struggle of the working class towards political independence. Although the formation of LRC was regarded as the turning point in the Labour movement, it created a mixture of diverse feelings among its constituents. Many old school trade unionists felt certain that the Committee would soon get dissolved in the face of irreconcilable differences. Edward Pease, speaking for the Fabians observed: "The socialist lions have lain-down with the trade union lambs, and if either party be inside it is not certainly the lambs".[27] The SDF even

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27. The Economic Review (London), 17 April, 1900, p. 236.

after the Conference could not patch up with the ILP and its weekly journal, Justice, chose to describe the ILP opposition to the class war as the display of treachery.[28] James MacDonald the ideologue of the ILP replied to this cirticism by defining the philosophy of the ILP as "socialism marks the growth of Society, not the uprising of class.[29] To him it was not so much as a revealed doctrine as a general tendency. As for the socialist party, this was to be the last, not the first, form of the socialist movement.[30] He was critical of Fabians whom he considered too willing to ignore the vast untapped source of socialist energy that would come from the creation of a new political force.

In the late 1890 the labour movement had appeared to be at a standing stilll In the opinion of G.B. Shaw, this period showed an utter slump in socialism and everything else intellectual.[31] But this period showed the lull before the storm, the movement was on the threshold of a new resurgence. The Boer War stimulated the political activi-

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28. The Economic Review, n. 27, p. 237.
29. J. Ramsay MacDonald, Socialism and the Society (London, 1905), p. 127.
30. J.R. MacDonald, The Socialist Movement (London, 1911), p. 195.
31. G.B. Shaw's Comment on Ed. R. Pease, The History of Fabian Society (London, 1925), See P.E. Poirier, n. 4, p. 100.

ties, party conflicts and invigorated the public discussions. Ties of the new Party were put to a severe test. While most socialists excluding those in theILP and SDF attacked Chamberlain's war as wicked aggression, prominent Fabians had focussed the backwardness and inefficiency of the Boer farm communities and justified the war. This attitude of the Fabians towards the war helped to undermine both their interests and their influence in the larger Labour movement. But fortunately the Fabians did not make any official pronouncement and averted a virtual split.

Amidst mounting war situation in 1900, the general election, known as Khaki election,[32] was foisted on the nation. The conditions were very much against a reasonable Labour Representation Committee showing. In the first place, the election was an attempt on the part of the unionist government, prompted by its strongest personality, Chamberlain, to capitalise on the jingoism stirred by the South African war.

In the circumstances Socialism was relegated to the background. Secondly, the election came a bare eight months

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32. 1900 election was after the war, an appeal to Khaki, an attempt to exploit patriotic sentiments, see Roger Moore, The Emergence of Labour Party (London, 1978), pp. 68-69.

after the Party's foundation and in that short span of time it had neither the time to organise itself not to choose a body of worth while candidates. Finally, there was an acute shortage of funds. The LRC accounts show that a mere £ 33 was spent for the whole compaign by Ramsay MacDonald who only printed some pamphlets regarding the party policies.[33] Besides these unfavourable objective conditions the LRC showed the disunity of the groups in it and all its executive meetings were marked by a spirit of compromise and caution. The socialist and trade unions cleavage sometimes revealed itself in sharp exchanges, as was the case when the committee had to decide between Alex Wilkie and Peter Curran as rival claimants to labour candidature of Jarrow.[34] Subsequently, there was a move by some of the Liberals and Labour leaders to forge an alliance between the two parties. At the Memorial Hall Conference in 1900, while Will Thorne, the Liberal leader, had spoken of the LRC as a possible instrument for reaching some agreement with the Liberals in regard to seats, Hardie had given the assurance that nothing in his past recrod should prevent him supporting such a proposal. Two weeks after

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33. Roger Moore, The Emergence of Labour Party (London, 1978), p. 80.

34. Philip. E. Poirier, n. 4, p. 119.

Thorne and Hardie had made these remarks, SamWoods, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee was persuading MadDonald to approach the Liberal Chief whip for adjustment of the constituencies. Despite these attempts, the LRC remained divided and deferred discussions. While MacDonald was able informally to let know Herbert Gladstone, the Liberal Leader, the intention of the LRC, no top-level formal agreement was made.

However, LRC fielded a total of 15 candidates during Khaki election, held in September 1900 and polled 62,698 out of some 177,000 votes, i.e. about 35% of the total votes polled. One LRC-Socialist and one LRC-Trade Unionist had won.[35]

There was a lot of confusion emanating from the differences among the socialists in regard to the Labour electorate. While ILP suggested that its branches be strongly recommended to vote in favour of those candidates with good anti-imperialistic inclination and Labour recommendation, the other faction of the socialists decided that the branch should be left to itself to decide such actions as to best promote the interests of Labour and socialism at the poll. The poor performance in 1900 election made

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35. Philip E. Poirier, n. 4, p. 133.

clear the magnitude of LRC's most urgent task - its survival. The apprehension was that the new body would go the way of Labour Representation League of 1867 and the Labour Electoral Association of 1886, both of which had withered away and the remnants of which had been absorbed by the Liberal Party. For more than a year after the General Election in 1900, the LRC was beset by the grave doubt whether it could survive, let alone prosper. Therefore, at its first Annual Conference in February 1901, there prevailed an air of despondency. The Conference showed the lack of large trade union participation which was an essential requirement to strengthen the new organization.

Equally dismal was the state of affairs for Labour Party in the Hose of Commons. The creation of distinct Labour group appeared to be as remote as ever before. The Labour MPs were hardly distinguishable from the Liberals. Numerically the LRC had the support of a very few Trade Unions with a membership of 353,070 , whereas the total trade union membership in Great Britain, at the beginning of 1901, stood at 1,905,116.[36]

Practically all the trade unions founded after 1899, had joined the LRC. The older unions which had suff-

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36. Ibid, p. 139.

ered most from unemployment and trade depression had looked more favourably to political action and had joined the LRC. But, however, this showed obviously that despite legal uncertainties and several industrial set-backs, the unions were not sufficiently aroused in 1900 to turn en masse to the LRC and the concept of Great Alliance between the socialists and the trade unionists seemed to be fizzling out almost at its birth. A new impetus was needed to keep the LRC alive.

Fortunately for the LRC, in the following year, 1901, the political apathy of the trade unions was ended by a legal decision which threatened their whole effective existence as an industrial organisation. This was the Legal decision of the Law lords in 1901, in the Taff Vale case, arising out of a strike on the Taff Vale Railway in south Wales. This judgement not only surprised the trade union world, but almost the entire legal profession as well.[37] In effect, the decision held a trade union liable for damages or injury caused by any person affiliated to the trade union. Again in August 1901, in case of Quina Vs Leathem, a decision was taken which made the acts of any strike organiser more easily declared tortious.[38]

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37. Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, Trade Unionism (London, 1925), pp. 600-604.

38. Frederic Harrison, "The end of Trade Unionism", The Review of Reviews, Vol. XXIV, 14 Sept. 1901, p. 203.

Another severe blow to trade unions came from The Times in a series of articles on 'The crisis in British Industry' which lent its support to the employer's argument and urging for legislation to curb the trade union's scope and effectiveness.[39]

The LRC, an instrument of socialist and trade union alliance, lost no time to seize the opportunity thus provided and turn the anger of the trade-unions against the Lord's decision to more constructive channels. The issue which was to prove of such historic significance in the development of the Labour movement was ended to make a genuine and effective Labour Party possible within the next five years. It has often been said that the Taff Vale made the British Labour Party and without it the Labour Party would have foundered.

The reaction of the trade-unions to Taff Vale was two fold. Firs, they attempted to strengthen the trade union movement by forming a general foundation of trade unions, as today, to promote mutual support. Secondly there was an immediate awareness of the need for independent political action as the best long term means of secur-

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39. E.A. Pratt, Trade Unionism and British Industry (London, 1904), Contains series of articles on Legislation.

ing redress. This at first boded well for the LRC. On 1 August 1901 MacDonald issued a circular to the Unions in which he argued: "The recent decisions of House of Lords should convince the unions that a Labour Party in parliament is the immediate necessity".[40] Following this, a number of unions were affiliated to the LRC. Even thebig unions like United Textile Factory Worker's Association which were indifferent to the earlier appeals and had decided to steer clear of party politics, had joined the LRC. The affiliated trade union membership in the LRC in 1902 had increased from 375,931 to 469,311 the number of trade unions from 41 to 65, and the number of trade councils from 7 to 21.[41]

No doubt, the Taff Vale stimulated the Labour Party's growth. But it required the skill to marshall the discontent which Taff Vale left into a political victory. This leadership of skill and tact came from the ILP which, for political expediency, decided to forget the socialist exhortations and concentrate on appeals to narrower trade union interests, as long as the policy of independence was not floated openly.

40. Roger Moore, The Emergence of the Labour Party 1900-1924 (London, 1978), p. 87.

41. Francis Williams, n. 1, p. 143.

On the other hand, the SDF decided to withdraw from the LRC in August 1901 after proposing unsuccessfully for the second time that there be a socialist test for the LRC candidates. This decision caused less excitement in socialist circles than Hyndman's announcement at the same time that he was resigning from the SDF executive because he had failed to detect sufficient class antagonism among the English workers and that the members of SDF seemed to him to be wholly bereft of political aptitude. The ILP members still smarting under the SDF charge of betrayal exulted in this development. Ramsay MacDonald commented that the decision of Hyndman constituted a frank acknowledgement of the complete failure of the Marxian movement in England. Hardie's comment was equally terse. He said, "The propaganda of the class hatred is not one which can ever take root in this country. Mankind in the mass is not moved by hatred but love of what is right. If we could have socialism on the SDF lines, nothing would be changed save for the worse.[42] In this situation of hurling criticisms and counter-criticism at each other the question of reviviing the attempt at fusion seemed improbable. Moreover, in January 1902 by-election in Dewsbury, theSDF having been refused the support of the LRC felt no qualms in flouting the LRC authority. However, the success of SDF candidate made them more adament

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42. Philip E. Poirier, n. 4, p. 143.

and rigid. Meanwhile, Blatchford, the ILP Leader writing in Clarion, the ILP periodical, was adding fuel to the SDF fusion agitation by indulging in his periodic outbursts on Hardie. He used to comment that Hardie is neither wise nor successful and was a major obstacle in the socialist unity. Nonetheless, in the midst of all these controversies the LRC got considerable boost to its morale in the by-election victory at Clithero in Lancashire in July 1902. David Shackleton, Secretary of the Darwen Weavers, was chosen as LRC candidate and was returned unopposed. ILP had an opportunity of demonstrating and winning the sympathy of the trade unions by withdrawing their candidate, Philip Snowden, in favour of a textile trade unionist, David Shackleton. As 1902 drew close, the LRC with its membership expanding and three men in the Parliament, was confident that it would command increasing attention and respect.

The absence of a clear and definite programme which slackened the process of cohesion was revealed when MacDonald wanted the Committee to protest against the Education Bill and the Fabian Society objected to the proposal. Edward Pease, one of the Fabian member was authorised by the Fabian Society to point out that "the action of the LRC on the Education Bill is ultra vires" and that the Committee's practice of travelling beyond thepurpose for which it was

appointed by passing and publishing general political resolutions was likely to lead to the withdrawl of the constituent bodies and the disruption of the Committee.[43] However, despite the threat of the Fabians, the LRC conference of 1902 adopted a resolution favouring the continuance of the School Boards and providing free meals to the school children. The president of the Trades Union Congress endorsed this view point sponsored by the ILP when he stated, "under our present system an attempt is being made to feed the brain while the body is starved."[44] The second controversy which aroused and involved the Labour Party was the tarrif reforms. While the ILP argued for the free trade, the Fabians opposed it. However, there was no clarity of programme of the LRC. It was almost in agreement with the Liberals on the question of Boer War, education and tarrif reform. Hence, there was a demand for both an independent organisation and an independent programme, to which MacDonald and his colleagues replied that since outright socialist resolutions were voted down by the trade unionists in the LRC conference it was best to leave the party's objective vague. The important thing, they consi-

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43. Fabian Society Executive Minutes - 17 March 1901, See Philip E. Poierier, n. 4, p. 157.

44. J.A. Steward Reid, The Origins of the British Labour Party (London, 1955), p. 102.

dered, was to get a Labour Party in to the House of Commons and keep it there. Then there would be time enough for official programmes.[45]

When the LRC conference was convened at New Castel in February 1903, the Sharp differences over the terms of alliance with the Liberals surfaced. The Liberals sympathisers advanced a motion calling for the admission of any other organisation which is prepared to adhere to the objects of the Committee.[46] This move was engineered by the Fabians to contain the pressure of ILP for political independence. The second question to be discussed in this Conference was that of the central authority. The trade unions had begun to field their own candidates. There grew some suspicion of the concept of the Labour Party which would represent not simply sectional trade union interests but the interests of all those who were striving for a more just and economically sound social system. Trade-Unions could do so because of their financial and organisational strength. This tendency was resented by both Hardie and MacDonald who opined that the trade union officer alone being so involved in union matters and often imbued with purely

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45. Postman's Gazette, (London), 9 December 1905, p. 532.

46. Roger Moore, The Emergence of Labour Party 1889-1924 (London, 1978), p. 82.

sectional approach could not constitute a broad enough base for the Labour Party. In Britain, in 1903, there were about 2 million trade unionists, out of 14 million voters. So it was felt essential that if the idea of the Labour Party was to survive, the Committee should aquire new authority as the central organisation for sponsoring the Labour candidates and mobilising funds for them.

The third and most important factor in strengthening the movement in 1903 was the need for a firm declaration of independence. Although it was generally understood that Labour was to be quite independent of Conservative and Liberal organisations, the LRC constitution in its definition of independence was not hard and fast. Such was the state of confusion that in late 1902, W.E. Clery, the LRC candidate for Deptford, saw nothing incongruous in accepting an invitation to run under the banner with Richard Bell, the Labour MP and the Chairman of LRC, complicated the matter more by officially and unofficially associating himself with the Liberals. So the LRC Constitution waw sought to be amended by the adoption of a strongly worded resolution censuring Richard Bell on the agenda and emphasising the political independence of LRC. It required the LRC members to abstain strictly from idenitifying themselves or promoting the interests of any section of the Liberal or Conservative parties. But Richard Bell continued

to go his way seeking close co-operation between the Liberal and Labour MPs despite resentment of the LRC stalwarts. As a result, Philip Snowden was provoked to write that for Bell to continue his association with the LRC while conspiring to destroy it was both dishonourable to himself and was injurious to the prospects of the LRC candidates.[47] However, the 2nd great Constitutional steps had been taken in New castle in 1903 which could convert this loose political alliance of the socialist societies and trade unions into a genuine Labour Party in a couple of years time.

Thus, the year 1903 was the climatic year in the history of the LRC. The movement was consolidated, its membership disciplined through a stricter definition of independence, the financial position strengthened through the inauguration of the Parliamentary Fund, and it was expecting to make a fair showing in the next General Election. But the year 1904 began inauspiciously for the Committee when it suffered a set-back in a triangular by-election contest at Norwichand Norfolk. This was due to the fact that the LRC trade unionists in their drive to retrieve their former legal status, decided to confine their support to the LRC candidate alone. So the leaders of the movement

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47. ILP News, 1 December 1903, See Philip E. Piorier, n. 4, p. 167.

decided to seek agreement forunited action at polls because combining the LRC and the TUC provided no answer for, until the miners, the only left out major trade union, willingly joined the LRC, welding the two organisations together.

With this objective in view, representatives of the LRC and the TUC and theGeneral Federation met at Caxton Hall, London, on 16 February 1905. The Argument reached at Caxton Hall, popularly known as Caxton Concordat,[48] contained 4 main Clauses such as : (a) all LRC candidates should be supported by all sections of the labour movement; (BO the candidates approved by the TUC would receive support of the LRC and vice-versa; (c) in no case the candidates run either by LRC or TUC should oppose one another; and (d) in constituencies where no Labour candidate is running, the policy of abstention in no sense be recommended to the local organisations. This was the final and last feather in the cap of the Labour Party.

In January 1906, the General Election was declared in Britain. And MacDonald's careful work as Secretary of the LRC over the past six years was put to the test. The LRC put 50 candidates in the field. The Caxton House agreement with the Lib-Labs was generally held well. The LRC

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48. Frank Belay and H. Pelling (ed.), n. 20, pp. 99-101.

Election Manifesto declared that the election had to decide whether or not Labour was to be fairly represented in the Parliament. "Landlords, employers, lawyers, brewers and financers are there in force. Why not Labour ?"[49]

1906 turned out to be a turning point for the LRC. Of its 50 candidates, 29 were returned. The number rose to 30 when J.W. Taylor of the Durham Miners declared his adhesion to the cause immediately after the election.[50] Thus 30 Labour victors took their seat on the opposite side in the Parliament and assumed the new name, Labour Party, by dropping the old title of the Labour Representation Committee. Symbolically, it asserted their independence with their own representation in the House of Commons. Commenting on the triumph of the 1906 General Election, Arthur Henderson said in Memorial Hall in 1906, "A Labour Party now sits in the House of Commons and our success at the poll has been regarded as the most significant event of the election. We have won national recognition and for the time being the fate of our movement has to be decided not only in the platform, but also in the House of Commons".[51]

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49. LRC Election Manifesto of 1906, See Philip E. Poirier, n. 4, p. 245.

50. Roger Moore, The Emergence of Labour Party (London, 1978), p. 101.

51. Francis Williams, n. 1, p. 150.

CHAPTER - II

IDEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN THE LABOUR PARTY

The Labour Party since its formation has been riven between different factions of Socialist, Social Democratic and Marxist inclinations. Therefore from the very beginning the Party lacked a coherent and consistent ideology. G.D.H. Cole, the foremost historian of the Labour Party, characterised its ideological foundations as "Socialism without doctrines - so unindentified in its doctrinal basis as to make recruits readily among persons of quite different type."[1] However, to understand the specific ideological cleavages in the Labour Party which had contributed to the formal and final split of the Party on 24 March 1981, it is necessary to examine the ideological moorings of the various groups which had federated themselves to form the Labour Representation Committee which subsequently, in 1906, became the Labour Party. The main federating groups were Fabian Society, Independent Labour Party, Trade

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1. G.D.H. Cole, A Short History of the British Working Class Movement, 1789-1937 (London, 1973), Vol. VIII, p. 22.

Unions and the Co-operatives. Among those federating groups, the Socialist Democratic Federation, the oldest organisation of the British Socialist tradition, propounded the Marxist version of the class war and believed in the revolutionary doctrine. Consequently, this group was constantly at loggerheads with other members of the labour party. As a result, a year later, in August 1901,[2] the Federation disaffiliated from the Labour Party. The SDF represented a British revolutionary tradition which, though significant, had never been strong. The nationalist section of this tradition, under Hyndman, broke away during the First World War and rejoined the Labour Party, while the internationalist section opposed the War became, in 1920, one of the elements in British Communist Party.

Fabian Society, another federating group, rejected the Marxist prophecy of impending revolutionary doom. On the contrary, they envisaged a gradual and peaceful change by constitutional means from capitalism, through collectivism, to socialism. They enunciated their doctrine in 1887, proposing the use of existing institutions, Party and Parliamentary machinery for the realisation of politi-

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3. Frank Bealey (ed.), The Social and Political Thought of the Labour Party (London, 1970), p. 25.

cal reforms, which were designed to lead ultimately to the elimination of privately owned land and to the establishment of community ownership of the means of production. Democratic control, municipalisation, and nationalisation were the methods recommended for achieving these objectives.[3] The Fabians were, therefore, constitutionalists because, unlike Marxists, they regarded the state not as a expression of the domination by the capitalist class, but as a neutral apparatus. They were elitist in their strategy, if not in aspiration. The socialist society they anticipated was one of the nationalised monopolies run by technocrats, it was government for the people, not by them.

In 1889, under the title "The New Fabian Research Bureau", Fabian Society brought two changes in its policies:[4] (a) in the concept of equality of opportunity - the aim of the society was the establishment of a society in which the equality of opportunity will be assured and the economic power and privileges of individuals and classes abolished through the collective ownership and democratic

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3. Josephine, Miliburn, "The Fabian Society and the British Labour Party", Western Political Quarterly (London), Vol. II, no. 2, 1958, pp. 319-339.

4. R.H.S. Crossman (ed.), New Fabian Essays, (London, 1952), p. 112.

control of the economic resources of the community; and (b) the Fabians restricted themselves to making interpretations to socialism. They regarded their part in the Labour Party as the advisors to the Party. Since then till 1918 the Fabians had only two alternatives for political action: (1) the policy of permeation - the strategy of spreading Fabian ideas to all receptive parties, leaders and government officials and working through them for reform; and (2) the policy of supporting a socialist political party to the exclusion of all ether political parties. In 1913, however, the change of action from permeation of all political parties to affiliation with the Labour Party became evident.[5] In 1919, the Society became a constituent of the Labour Party and of the International Socialist Congress and its ideas were incorporated into the basic programme of Labour Party, but it could take part freely in all constitutional movements, social, economic and political, which can be guided towards its own objects.[6] However, the Fabians were diametrically opposed to Marx, and were instinctively gradualist and permeators, believed on the contrary, that the reforms could come through the capitalist media.

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5. "A Plan of Campaign ofor Labour", Fabian Tract, (London, 1958), no. 49.

6. Edward Pease, History of the Fabian Society (London, 1925), p. 260.

The Socialist tradition of Independent Labour Party, the core-base of the Labour Party, has been extremely influential, but not easy to define. The Independent Labour Party was non-conformist in origin, and believed in the brotherhood of man, fellowship, service and altruism. It was formed in 1893 with two objectives: (a) to establish an independent working class Political Party; and (b) through that Party achieve the common ownership of the industrial system. The ILP called for Industrial Commonwealth founded upon the socialisation of land and capital. Keir Hardie, the leader of the Independent Labour Party, wished to achieve the 'Kingdom of God on earth'. He wrote: "Socialism means each for all not each for self; it was not classes but the system that was at war; both classes being the victim of the system".[7]

The trade union aspirations were by and large, materialistic. Their material motive was bound to bring into conflict with moral and theoretical basis of socialism. George Bernard Shaw of the Fabian Society said - of the trade unions: "they were out to exploit capitalism not to abolish it".[8] Trade union movement has basically two asp-

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7. Keir Hardie, "Kingdom of God on Earth", Labour Leader (London), 10 August 1901. See Frank Bealey (ed), Social and Political Thought of Labour Party (London, 1970), p. 25.

8. See A.M. McBriar, Fabian Socialism in English Politics 1884-1908 (London, 1962), pp. 304-7.

ects. In the first place, it is an organisation of wage earners, working within the framework of a capitalist society in order to defend its members from injustice and to gain for them advantages. Secondly, it is also in opposition to the existing system of society which it seeks to alter.[9]

The strains between the national values of the Labour Party and the sectional approach of the union was quite clear all along. When the Party assumed office and translated its ideas into practice, Roy Jenkins, one of the moderate social democrats, had to comment in the Annual Labour Party Conference at Blackpool in 1970: "there is no future for the movement in a complete free-for-all." He said that there was some contradiction between the aims of social democracy and the aims of trade unionism. He had appealed to the trade union leadership:" If you are a part of the Labour movement then you must accept that with the rights you have certain obligations as well to the community".[10]

Subsequently, there developed a group in the line of social democratic federation, known as the Left, inside the

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9. C.R. Attlee, Labour Party in Perspective (London, 1949), p. 55.

10. See Giles Radice, "Trade Unions and Labour Party", Socialist Commentary (London), November 1970, pp. 7-11.

Labour Party. This was a mixed and amorphous faction. The nature of this group was that it was composed, by and large, of two sets of people. The hard core was made up of many who could almost certainly belong to the Communist Party, if Communist Party had any chance of political success in Britain. Sorroudning this was a much larger soft periphery which was not a homogeneous group. This periphery did not have any conviction at all, but they played the role of the rebel and fire-brand. They used the word 'Democracy' constantly. But they did not accept its implications. Democracy means tolerance, respect for other's views; it means seeking to gain consent for change rather than imposing change by use of force. Once the editorial of Socialist Commentary admonished the left thus: "The role of the radicals has to be discharged in democratic fashion by reasoned argument and tolerance, not by the whips and scorpions of venomous denunciations."[11]

Since then the Labour Party's history is replete with the ideological wrangles between the 'Left' and the 'Right', between the trade unions and the other constituents of the Party. The sources of strain between the unions and the labour party on ideological planes can be traced to the fact that the trade unions are predominantly

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11. Socialist Commentary, "Out Side Left", Socialist Commentary, November 1961, pp. 18-19.

working class organisations which cannot deny that the divisions still exist in modern capitalist society, which their members experience at the place of work. Therefore, the trade unions continue to perform basicially a class function, whatever its leader's sympathises for the values promulgated in the name of the community. As a result, one comes across a number of incidents of conflicts between the Labour Party, Labour government and the trade unions. In 1911 while four members tabled a bill in Parliament, requiring 30 days advance notice before a strike could be called, it was roundly condemned by the Trades Union Congress. The Labour government of 1924 and 1929 unsuccessfully attempted to demonstrate a national consciousness by obviously disregarding their class allegiance, demanded sacrifices from the unions as a part of their national policies and attempted to use them as agencies in implementing them.[12] Despite the extensive post-war integration of the union leaders into the consultative bodies and other government agencies, conflicts have been common, particularly as the latter had continued the practice of relying upon the union loyalty to introduce policies the union would normally oppose. The controversies over the income

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12. Leo, V. Panich, "Ideology and Integration: The Case of British Labour Party", Political Studies (London), Vol. 19, no. 2, 1971, pp. 184-200.

policy, both during the 1948-50 wage restraint period and since 1964, are illustrative of this conflict in which the rhetoric of class has figured prominently. In 1967 and 1968 the Party organization suffered defeats, in the Party conferences, at the hands of the trade unions over the incomes policies. In 1969, 'In Place of Strife' proposal was rejected by the Unions. However, the government was able to pursue its policies due to the tradition of the Parliamentary Labour Party's independence from the Conferences.

Samuel Beer has traced the so-called "transformation" of the Labour Party to the reluctance of the trade unions to limit their traditional functions in the wages field, which he sees as the evidence of their rejection of a socialist planned economy. In the early - post-war period, he observed, a change of purpose occured in the trade union movement due to its new position of power in national decision-making and the increased influence of the working class. This stance presumably drove the Labour Party from its socialist goal of economic planning and led it to embracing a mixed market economy by 1950.[13] Secondly, the unions recognised, and probably appreciated by virtue of their close allegiance with the party, that it was an aggre-

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13. Samuel Beer, Modern British Politics (London, 1965), p. 188.

gative party that was driving, within a given programmatic framework, at a consensus of conflicting interests, a party which was not acting for one class, but one that admitted the legitimacy and responded to the demand of a broad ranges of classes and interests.[14]

The fatricidal strife between the 'Left' and the 'Right' within the party has also been endemic since the Party adopted a constitution in 1918. Although the constitution committed the Party to a common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange (clause IV of the party constitution), there had hardly been unanimity on how to achieve this objective. The Fabian tradition envisaged that this would be achieved through a gradual process in which social democracy would precede the inevitable - common ownership and equality - on the Keynesian pattern. According to Keynes: "Social Democracy is a state based upon the mixed economy and a high level of social welfarism, growth and employment, with as much individual liberty as possible within the edonomic and social circumstances, that exist in Britain".[15] Hence there was conflict over the means. The conflict was exacerbated by the

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14. See Paul Derrick, "Class and the Labour Party" Twentieth Century (Lincoln, N.E.) Vol. 173, Spring, 1965, p. 123.

15. Andrew Cox, "Political Instability of Liberal and Democratic State Reforms", Parliamentary Affairs (London), Autumn, 1982, pp. 318-396.

fact that the party grew out of the trade union movement and the union's interest of free collective-bargaining was often inimical to either Social Democracy or Socialism.

The flash point of this conflict was not fully tested in the 1930s mainly because the Labour Party did not win the office, although the decision of Ramsay MacDonald and some of his colleagues to enter the national government in 1931 bears testimony to the inherent tension between these two approaches. According to Samuel Beer, the struggle between the 'Left' and the 'Right' in the 1930s was about the means, rather than about ends, about the speed with which the Party should move towards the Socialist Commonwealth of the future, not about the goal because both the factions believed that the ultimate goal was the socialist society and the essence of socialism was common ownership.[16]

In forties, however, a major conflict took place in the Labour Party as socialists in the 'keep Left' group questioned the common ownership proposals. But, they were unable to force a commitment to a socialist state on the leadership, when Hugh Gaitskell replaced Element R. Attlee in the 1950s. Yet, they did ensure that the, Labour Party

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16. S.H. Beer, Modern British Politics, (London, 1975), pp. 126-62.

did not become unequivocally committed to a Social Democracy when it was in Opposition. Since then, after Attlee Government went out of office, there had been a powerful body of trade unionists within the Party to press for more radical programmes, notably for more nationalisation. The 'Right', in its attempt to defeat the pressure from the 'Left', had constantly used one argument', namely that the Labour Party could never win an election on a programme of nationalisation. Thus, by the fifties things had changed. Now the 'revisionists' on the 'Right' of the Party differed with the 'fundamentalists' on the 'Left' about the goal as well as the speed and style of journey towards it. The fundamentalists accepted the analysis that ills of capitalism were irremediable and drew the traditional socialist conclusion that exploitation could be ended and socialist justice be established only when the means of production were socially owned. The 'revisionist right' believed that capitalism had changed fundamentally since the war and saw the mixed economy in which strong and profitable private sector- co-exists with the public sector. However, the Labour governments of 1945-51 while pursuing policies acceptable to most socialists did nothing to demonstrate decisively that they had passed beyond Keynesian position of making capitalism work.[17]

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17. Leon, D. Epstein, "Socialism and the British Labour Party", Political Science Quarterly, (London), Vol. XVI, No. 4, December 1951, p. 559.

In the fifties and sixties, however, the 'revisionists' and 'fundamentalists' could bridge their differences in the short-term, though, irreconcilable were their long-term disagreements. But, gradually in the late sixties the situation in Britain changed again for the worse. The private sector became so weak that the continued existence of the mixed economy could no longer be taken for granted. The differences between the 'fundamentalists' or the 'Clause IV socialists' and the 'revisionists' or the defender of mixed economy were no longer long-term and theoretical but became sharped, short term and actual. The Labour Party, given the economic situation of the country, was left with only two choices. It could retain its existence as a Party pledged to introduce a new system of society based on the economic policies of socialism, or alternatively it could became a Party claiming to be able to manage capitalism better than capitalists. R.W. Wright, arguing in favour of the former choice, said: "Socialism is not a sedative that can be applied to a capitalist system but a system of economic ownership by the people".[18]

In the early fifties the development of a concept called 'Bevanism' also had serious effect on the ideological cleavages of the Labour Party - Aneurin Bevan, Harold Wilson and John Freeman resigned from the Attlee government in 1951. Bevan had differed from the rest of the cabinet

18. R.W. Wright, "Sedatives or Socialism", Labour Monthly (London), 42(10), 1960, p. 169.

on their diagnosis of Britain's economic situation and on their approach to rearmament. He criticised the Labour Party's strategy on launching the socialist revolution and its basic philosophy. He pointed out that the battle in the Labour Party was being fought back and forth between extremes, and suggested a middle ground between the adherents of 'left' and the 'right'.[19] In fact, Attlee Government had accomplished very little in the way of socialist legislation. The only striking radical proposal, the nationalisation of the Iron and steel industry, would never have been put into effect had it not been for the unyeilding personality of Aneurin Bevan. Bevanaites were also opposed to the ideas of limitations of state control. They argued that state control did not necessarily limit the personal freedom. It was often only a means of releasing the individual from the bonds which the capitalist society had forged on him. Bevan wrote: "Under capitalism the hope of individual emancipation was crushed by the weight of accomplished power".[20]

In the late sixties the conflict between social democracy and trade unionism became more pronounced. The

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19. N.I. Gelman, "Bevanism: A Philosophy for British Labour", Journal of Politics (London), 16(4), 1954, pp. 654-63.

20. Aneurin Bevan, "In Place of Fear (London, 1952), p. 2.

right wing lost to the trade union in Conferences over the income policy. In 1969, 'In Place of Strife' was rejected by the unions. In the seventies while the Parliamentary Labour Party stuck to the concept of mixed economy, the Conferences, dominated by the leftist constituency parties and the trade unions, wanted a more positive step in the direction of Socialism, than either Keynesianism or corporatism, through nationalisation of major sectors of industry and finance and planning agreements with private enterprise and the national enterprise board.

While surveying the history of conflict within the Labour Party, one finds four major areas of ideological controversies. Firstly, there has been continuous confusion about the Ends and Means, the goal of socialism and the means to achieve the goal. Secondly, there has been fierce debates about the publicownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. Thirdly, the fight for and against the famous clause IV of the party constitution. And finally, the issue of worker's control or Industrial democracy or joint management.

Ends and Means :

In formulating the socialist doctrine, the Labour Party had not been able to decide clearly what precise meaning was to be attached to the word socialism. This can easily be seen by studying the numerous and often inconsistant meanings attached to the word socialism by people who

swear by it. Karl Marx, by defining it as the "nationalisation of means of production, distribution and exchange" meant something quite different from Proudhan who defined it as consisting of every aspiration towards the amelioration of the society. While one section in the Labour Party, namely SDF, called for a distinct Party based the recognition of class war, Ramsay MacDonald, the leader of the Independent Labour Party, refuted this contention and said: "Socialism marks the growth of a society, not the uprising class. The consciousness which it seeks to quicken is not one of economic solidarity, but one of social unity and growth toward organic wholeness".[21] Like this, any history of socialist thought would provide several definitions to the word socialism - some in terms of ownership, some of co-operation, some of planning and some in terms of income distribution. However, the end seems to be common to all the bewildering variety of doctrines. And these ends consist of certain moral, human values and aspirations.

The confusion and controversy centred around the question of means. So far as the means to achieve socialism are concerned, Sam Aaronvitch puts forth four competing strategic conceptions.[22] The first, held primarily by

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21. Ramsay MacDonald, Socialism and the Society, (London, 1908), 6th edn., p. 144.

22. Sam Aaronvitch, "Recipe for Defeat", Marxism Today, (London), 26(4), April 1982, pp. 15-19.

the 'right' and some part of the 'centre', was to argue for the status quo. This was the 'broad church' in which the ministers and the hymn books were to remain in the tradition of Attlee Gaitskell, Wilson and Callaghan. The desire was to purge the 'Left' and cement the essentially 'Right' and 'centre-right' leadership. The second idea held by some section of the 'left(within and outside the Party was for the Labour Party to become, in the shortest possible time, a thorough going Socialist Party with a bold and uncompromising Socialist programme pursuing the socialist transformation of Britain. The third strategy was that the Labour Party must be transformed into a revolutionary party of vanguard type, completely purged of its right and centre and of the soft left. The fourth was that the Labour Party must move along the path of becoming a party committed to socialist transformation and it should be a prolonged process.

In the light of the above strategy, the rightist Labour leaders appeared to think that the nationalisation of industry and central planning were not the only means to the fuller and richer life, they seek for the British.[23] They believed that the individual rights and dignity could

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23. Arnold Rogow, The Labour Government and British Industry 1945-51 (Oxford, 1955), p. 112.

be secured from the business community, largely through taxation, subsidies and customary control, which otherwise meant that socialist society should be gradually preceded by mixed economy and social welfarism. But sadly, both these concepts came under the heavy attack of those belonging to the rival 'left' faction of the party. Reg Race, subscribing to this fundamentalist faction said: "The mixed economy solution to Britain's economy is on the last legs. It can no longer deliver the kind of reforms and the fundamental changes which many sections of the working class want to see".[24] According to Reg Race, who was a Labour MP in 1979, there were only two options open to the British economy - (a) to go back to a highly competitive force enterprise system, based either on the immediate changes which the Thatcher government was proposing, or (b) move forward to a highly planned economy which meant fundamental changes in the economic philosophy and accountablity in other directions. Moreover, R.H.S. Crossman precisely pin-pointed the short-comings of the welfare capitalism. According to him, under welfare capitalism, though the national income was rather more fairly distributed than before, the concentration of the capital, and so of the economic previleges, remained unchanged. Further, profits, salaries and wages were still determined not by national

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24. Reg Race, "Democracy in the Labour Party", Labour Monthly, July 1979, pp. 308-9.

interest but by traditional method of laissez-faire. And finally, though certain basic industry had been subjected to some control, effective power continued to remain in the hands of a small group of managerial and civil service elite. Therefore, Crossman cautioned the Party leadership that there could be no advance to socialism unless each of these problems was honestly faced.[25]

Thus, the 'Left' within the Labour Party, deriving their inspiration from Karl Marx, defined socialism as collective ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange on the assumption that the pattern of ownership determined the character of the whole society, and that the collective ownership was a sufficient condition to fulfil the basic aspirations. If this theory is accepted, it could lead to conclusions which would be quite irreconcilable to what the socialists had in mind when they used the word 'Socialism'; the conclusions like the one that the Soviet is a completely socialist country even though it denied all the values the western socialists have normally read into the word. Similarly, if socialism was defined as economic collectivism or state control of eco-

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25. R.H.S. Crossman (ed), Towards a Philosophy of Socialism (London, 1952), pp. 26-27.

nomic life, then Nazi Germany would correctly have been called a socialist country. But in neither case would the end-result be described as socialism by most socialists.[26]

However, in the 1950s the leftist clamour symbolised by the growth of Bevanism of more nationalisation, following the 1951 election debacle, had led the Party to a virtual split. But leaders like Hugh Gaitskell, having succeeded C.R. Attlee, fought hard and temporarily halted the encroachment of Marxists and the ultra-left, and outlined clearly the contrours of social democracy. The tenets Gaitskell thus put forth included : (a) the Labour Party must fight for the underdog and the oppressed; (b) it must advance social justice and an equitable distribution of wealth and income; (c) it must aim for a society without snobbery, privileges or restrictive social barriers; (d) it must adhere to belief in fundamental equality of all races and people; (e) it must seek to build a society based upon fellowship and co-operation, a good life having idealism and material satisfaction; and (f) it must accept the need for public planning as a basic principle of socialism and view that the public interest must come before the private interests; etc.

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26. C.A.R. Crossland, The Future of Socialism (London, 1956), pp. 66-67.

Gaitskell broke clear of public ownership as one of Labour's socialist tenets. He argued that the Labour should abandon the idea that public ownership was the ultimate first principle and aim of socialism.[27] As opposed to Aneurin Bevan, who was a doctrinaire not ready to sacrifice basic principles in pursuit of Parliamentary majority, Gaitskell was a pragmatist, ready to bargain with capitalism because he felt that, that would be the way by which the Labour could ever gain power.[28]

Thus, the Party had achieved a remarkable degree of agreement under the pragmatic leadership of Hugh Gaitskell The disagreement was confined only to between the socialist philosophy of the 'heretics' of the 'left' and the 'right's' concern for the Party image which was sullied in the 1951 election due to extreme philosophy. The difference lay in the 'revisionist's' persistent determination to regain electoral popularity and the fundamentalist's obstinate adherence to doctrines. The revisionists were convinced that the only way of revitalising the Labour Party was to break with the tradition. The 'leftists' were sure that nothing worth-

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27. See Geoffrey Goodman, "British Labour's Crisis", New Leader (London), Vol. 43, no. 2, 11 January, 1960.

28. "Bevanism and British Labour", New Leader, Vol. 16. 1954, p. 645.

while would be achieved by forsaking the principles. Both the factions were divided by mistrust. The'right' doubted the capacity of the 'left' and the 'left' doubted the sincerity of the 'right'. This mutual suspicion and misturst continued till the split.

Public Ownership :

The concept of public ownership had been a bone of contention in the Labour Party since the Party's constitution was drawn up in 1918. Although the Party constitution did not precicely define the concept, both the groups, the extremists and the liberals had tried to interprete it in different ways. The leftists argued that the root of the capitalist evil was the payment of rent, interests and profits to a propertyowning class who thereby deprived the workers of the full product of their labour. It was, therefore, necessary to take over the means of production and arrange for what had hitherto gone into rent, interest and profits, to accrue instead either to the workers as the producer or to the community as a whole. Income structure, according to the propounders of this concept, should resemble a sphere, rather than a pyramid with the majority of the people nearer the middle than the bottom. Moreover in the 1950 post-election reapprisal this group attacked the welfare reformists of Attlee government to nationalise

the major private sectors. According to R.H.S. Crossman: "What we got were not nationalised industries but centralised bureaucratic state monopolies. The nationalised Board, for example, is neither public enterprise, responsible to parliament, not yet an efficient profit making monopoly, is a hybrid, neither fish nor fowl".[29] In his Planning for Freedom, Crossman wrote: "It would be strange indeed for the Labour Party to abandon its belief in the central importance of public ownership when the superiority of the socialised economy is being triumphantly vindicated in the world affairs.[30]

On the other hand, the 'right wingers' attributed the failure of the Labour Party in the October 1950 election to the Party's continued adherence to such unpopular concept as nationalisation and working militancy and believed that Gaitskell would have won if the confidence of the electorate had not been unnecessarily alienated by the image of the labour party as dogmatically wedded to wholesale nationalisation.

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29. 'Commerce', "Crisis of British Labour Party, Socialist Concept under fire, Commerce (Bombay), 25 June 1960, pp. 142-50.

30. R.H.S. Crossman, Planning for Freedom, (London, 1965), p. 121.

The most theoretical objection to the concept of public ownership had been made by Anthony Crossland in his popular masterpiece, The Future of Socialism. He had weighed this concept against each of the basic characteristic of a socialist society. Firstly, against political freedom and democracy. Recent history demonstrates that they may exist in a largely privately owned economy and not in a collectivist one, presumably no one would deny that they were present in Britain and absent in Soviet Russia.[31] Secondly, against the degree of exploitation - that is the extent to which the workers, instead of being paid and consuming the whole value they produce, surrender some part in the form of surplus value. A collectivist economy can extract as much surplus value as it chooses by means of heavy taxation and ploughing back of profits by state enterprises. Thirdly - the distribution of personal income is not uniquely determined by the pattern of ownership. It depends on the share of wages in the national income the taxation policy of the government, the level of unemployment, degree of competition, the strength of trade unions and political complexion of the government. Fourthly, the degree of government planning does not depend exclusively on ownership. Post-war experience in Britain has

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31. Anthony Crossland, The Future of Socialism (London, 1956), p. 38.

shown that private industry can be subjected to a close degree of government control while nationalised industries may behave in a rather independent fashion. Generally, there is no theoretical reason why a privately owned economy cannot be subjected to, as Nazi economy was, state control of all major decisions. Lastly, the status of workers may be better or worse in a collectivist than in a privately owned economy. Soviet worker is more proletarianised than the British workers. He has no free trade unions to protect him, no right to strike, no freedom to change his job, no elaborate system of judicial remedy, no political party to represent his interest in a democratic Parliament. He is deprived of individual right and subject to autocratic management. Thus the ownership of means of production decides much less than the character of political system.

The critics of the public ownership adduce the argument that according to Clause V of the Declaration adopted by the socialist international at Frankfurt in 1951, "The socialist planning does not pre-suppose public ownership of all means of production. It is compatible with the the existence of private ownership in the important field."[32] While continental Socialist Parties have aband-

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32. See Saul Rose, "Socialist Doctrine and the Labour Party", Listener (London), 10 January 1963, pp. 54-55.

oned the public ownership ideal, the British Labour Party remained stubboraly fixed to its earlier course, in line with Clause IV of the Party constitution.[33]

The Clause IV controversy :

The 'revisionists' in the Labour Party came out with a scathing attack on Clause IV of the Party Constitution and demanded its re-drafting. The revisionists, led by Anthony Crossland, stressed that if the Labour leaders had stopped harping on public ownership a moderate Labour government would have been elected.[34] They attributed the dismal performance of the Attlee government to the rigid adherence of the fundamentalists to all-out nationalisation of 'pub and garage'. Crossland believed that the Party militants blindly adhered to the concept of public ownership, largely owing to the influence of the 'left wing' leaders who intellectually accepted a mixed economy but still clinged to the dogma of whole-sale public ownership. The adherents of this concept derived the legitimacy to their approach from the extremist phraseology of the Party constitution. Crossland wrote: "The Labour Party should have one over-riding aim over the next three years to adapt itself,

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33. Saul Rose, n. 32, p. 55

34. See Paul Foot, "The Socialist Draught" New Statesman (London), August 1971, Vol. 82, p. 255.

without surrendering any basic principles, to the realities of social change and present itself to the electorate in a mid-20th century guise."[35] Robin Blackburn, another 'revisionist' participating in public ownership debate, said that the ownership of the means of production no longer determined the nature of the society and that capitalism, as modified, no longer stood in the way of equality. Socialism was not about equality. Rather equality was no longer about socialism.[36]

Gaitskell, who gave a sharper ideological substance to the 'rightist drift' of the Party, opened the battle of the common ownership (Clause IV) in the Party constitution after three successive defeats in 1959. In the Annual Conference of Labour Party of 1959 in Blackpool Gaitskell urged the British socialists to distinguish between the means and the ends. He made two clear qualifications, viz., that he had no plan to take every sphere of production, distribution and exchange into publicownership; and secondly, nationalisation and public ownership was only a means not an end in itself towards the socialist goal.[37]

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35. Anthony Crossland in Encounter, March 1960. See R.H. S. Crossman, Planning for Freedom (London, 1965), p. 113.

36. Robin Blackburn, "Labour and the Marxist Left", New Statesman (London), 14 Sept. 1973, pp. 339-46.

37. Hugh Gaitskell, Public Ownership and Equality", Socialist Commentary (London), Vol. XIX, June 1955, pp. 65-70.

The most stout defense of Clause IV came from R.H.S. Crossman, who denied that the constitution contained any extremist phraseology. On analysing the actual wordings of the Clause which read "To secure for workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of common ownership of means of production, distribution and exchange and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry and service".[38] Crossman said that Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution contained none of the extremist phraseology because it did not commit the Labour Party to the whole-sale nationalisation or further nationalisation of all industries. In the opinion of Crossman, the proper way to counter hostility to nationalisation was not to re-write Clause IV but to admit frankly the mistakes of Attlee government and workout precise proposals for decentralising their oligarchies and subjecting them to full public control.[39] Moreover, the so-called 'fundamentalists' had mantained that the nationalisation of predominant part of economy remained the essential condition for the creation of a socialist order of the society and further argued

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38. See. R.H.S. Crossman, Planning for Freedom (London, 1965), p. 114.

39. Ibid, p. 115.

that the deletion of the Clause would help to confirm the Labour Party's regression to liberal infantilism.[40]

However, Hugh Gaitskell, after taking over the Labour Party leadership from Clement Attlee tried to save the Party from tearing apart. Under his leadership, both Gaitskellites and Bevanities showed remarkable resilience on principles in order to achieve a workable agreement. Thus the Party steered through one of its gravest cirsis and moved along despite the defeat at the Polls.

Industrial Democracy :

The demand for industrial democracy or worker's control has a long history in the British Labour movement, going back to Robert Owen's ambitious Co-operative Builders Union of 1832, at New Linark, and reaching the climax in the stormy decade before the Ist World War.[41] The tide receded in the 1930s when the Labour movement, after a protracted debate, voted for the public co-operation with no direct workers representation on it. In the 1950s the 'fundamentalists' desired that the first task of socialism

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40. Ralph Miliband, "The Battle for the Labour Party", Monthly Review (New York), December 1960, pp. 436-41.

41. Anthony Crossland, The Future of Socialism (London, 1964), p. 257.

should be to challenge the centralisation of power. The growth of vast centralised bureaucracy they opined, constituted a grave potential threat to social democracy.[42] Aneurin Bevan formally endorsed the concept of industrial democracy while strongly adhering to nationalisa tion.[43] In the 1960s the debate again gained momentum. In 1965 Annual Party Conference the national Executive of the Labour Party set up a working committee to study the pros and cons of industrial democracy following a commitment by Mrs. Eirene White MP on behalf of the Labour Party National Executive Committee (NEC). The views deliberated in a series of meetings constitute the comprehensive working document on industrial democracy. The essence of the document was that the constituents of the Party had unanimity on two principles, viz., (a) the workers had the right to determine their economic environment by participating in a widening range of decisions within management; and (b) workers participation must be identified with trade union organisation and representation of workers. Industrial Democracy was desired to be secured under the following five heads: (i) the development of the individual wor-

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42. R.H. S. Crossman, "Socialism and the New Despotism" Fabian Tract (London), February 1956, p. 56.

43. Aneurin Bevan, In Place of Fear (New York, 1962), p. 109.

ker; (ii) protection of the worker; (iii) the extension of government by consent in industry; (iv) industrial efficiency; (v) strengthening the principle of social accountability.

Initially the Fabians opposed direct control of socialised industries by workers and favoured exclusive parliamentary control while the trade unions opposed exclusive parliamentary control and favoured some form of direct participation by the workers in the control of industry. The Webbs, epitomizing the Fabian view point, argued that the trade uhions would have to remain independent and uncompromised by identification with managerial decision in order to fight for the workers point of view against bureaucratic stupidity or official oppression.[44]

The Fabian's concept of state and government led them to the rejection of the idea of workers control. First, the Fabians argued that the acceptance of Parliamentary supremacy is the expression of majority will. Not only workers control, but all other attempts to infringe upon the supremacy of the Parliament or to weaken the Parliament was consistently opposed by the Fabians. Secondly, they viewed that, socialism rested on democracy, democracy

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44. Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, Industrial Democracy (London, 1902), pp. 818-9.

on majority rule, and majority rule on parliamentary supremacy. To have any official ultimately responsible to some agency other than Parliament was the denial of the whole meaning of British Constitution.[45]

In 1932, a trade union leader Lamented, "The workers are workers and are doomed to remain hewers of wood, and drawers of water under the perpetual control of their bosses, substitution of bureaucratic management for capitalist management would fail to provide the economic self-government, that is the promise of socialism".[46] In response to this, G.D.H. Cole wrote, "Ability and not the representation should be the criterion of appointment. We cannot afford to risk failure and confusion by trying to be too democratic at the start."[47] He further pointed out that unions had no real desire in management but had job problems and secondly, the representation of labour on the government boards would only open the doors to demands of other interests for representation and thus an industry would be run by half-hazard collection of interest groups.[48]

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45. Sidney Webb, "Socialism : True and False", Fabian Tract, no. 51, 1894, p. 16.

46. See Robert A. Dahl, "Workers Control of Industry and the British Labour Party", American Political Science Review (New York), Vol. 51, 1947, pp. 875-900.

47. Ibid, p. 878.

48. Ibid.

The arguments, to mention a few for and against industrial democracy in the Industrial Democracy Working Party meetings, organised by the Labour Party National Executive Committee in 1966-67 were as follows: The critics argued that the workers and trade union representatives did not have the technical administrative and commercial experience to participate constructively and effectively in the running of large-scale commercial enterprise. Secondly, it was an impossible objective that workers should directly and equally share in management. It was unrealistic in view of the scale and technological content of many managerial decisions. Thirdly, the workers interest would conflict with those of management so the attempts at participation in decision making and at sharing in control would undermine the independence of workers organisation, the most important of all determinants of industrial democracy.[49]

The defence given by the workers to the above mentioned points were that, firstly, the real problem was the question of learning: how to combine specialist management with democratic influence, not whether to abolish specialist

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49. Labour Party, Report of the Labour Party Working Party on Industrial Democracy (London, 1967).

management. The extention of participation of workers would lead to major and rapid development of adult education and training which would equip the participants better for the role they were called upon to play. Secondly, even the political democracy was subject to some problems and limits. It was in this sense that Rousseau argued that there had not been and could not be complete democracy. Thirdly, there were many areas of co-operation within which joint decision taking could predominate, while the participants could retain their independence and right to disagree when the need to do so appreared to outweigh the advantage of continued co-operation. As Robert A. Dahl rightly said: "The debate over workers control is the inherent conflict between those to whom socialism is a means of economic planning and those to whom it is a means of reconstructing the position and the function of the working man in industrial society."[50]

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50. Robert A. Dahl, n. 46, p. 887.

CHAPTER - III

FACTORS LEADING TO THE SPLIT

Social Democrats led by Dr. David Owen view that the seeds of split in the Labour Party was sown at least 20 years ago, following the revisionist thinking and political practice of Anthony Crossland and Hugh Gaitskell.[1] It has been said that Crossland, through his writings, and Gaitskell through his leadership attempted to transform the labour party into a modern, classless and non-ideological equivalent of the Post-Bad Godesberg West German SPD. While Gaitskell was defeated in his attempt in 1959, it did not lead to any split in the labour party. The general hegemony of the right and the centre was not in dispute. Harold Wilson's succession as Party leader after Gaitskell's death in 1963 and his successful evasion of the left-right conflicts through the rhetroric of technological 'modernisation' burried these disputes for quite sometime. In fact, Wilson's leadership was proved successful in making the

1. Ross McKibbin, The Evolution of the Labour Party (Oxford, 1974), p. 245.

the Labour into a credible "Party of government", in 1964, 1966 and 1974. But, the disastrous defeat of 1979 began to bring the cracks inside the party to the surface.

The conflicts of 1950s and 1960s had involved some substantial exchanges on ideological questions among important leaders like Anthony Crossland, Richard Crossman, Barbara Castle, etc. But, these intellectual politicians at the same time showed resilience in the interest of the unity of the Party. However, in the later years of Wilson and Callaghan, stewardship of the Party and the relative fertility of the ideas got diminished, and there emerged a set of Parliamentary politicans like David Marquand, Brian Walden, Roy Jenkins, etc., who had initiated a debate on the privileges and rights of the constitutents of the Labour Party.

But, prior to analysing the constitutional factors which had precipitated the split, it is necessary to examine the alliance between the Party and the trade unions, whose controversial relationship was no less a factor which was responsible for the break-up of the Labour Party.

As Rose McKibbin has shown, the growth of the Labour Party into a national party stemmed largely from the rank-and-file involvement of the trade unionists. At the same

time, the relationship between the Party and the Unions waw an unequal one. While the Party always needed the Unions, the Unions always did not need the Labour Party. However, the birth of the Labour Party as the "child of the trade union movement" had two basic assumptions. The first was that organised industrial wing, the trade unions and its political wing, the labour party, were mutually inter-dependent and related parts of a larger totality which would seek economic, social, and political justice, for the working classes. The second supposition was that since the Labour Party was founded largely by the trade unions, parliamentary Socialism would seek the same goals as trade unionism.

During the course of Labour movement these assumptions proved to be incorrect, particularly the uneasy alliance between the unions and the party got exposed over the question of a White Paper "In place of Strife", published in 1969. This White Paper, issued by the Labour government, sought to modernise the union by means of legislation. But, the Party had to give it up in the face of stiff opposition from the Trade Union Congress. In the process there have been different comments on the links between the trade unions and the Labour Party. Many on the far left, headed by David Coates, thought that the ties between the trade unions and the Party had paralysed the will for radi-

cal action. Coats urged: "Break the stifling cords that bind the partners together in the flably dogmas of Labourism, and the unions could go on to generate a fiery working class consciousness".[2] On the other hand, there were those who thought that the Labour Party should disentangle itself from the group of the trade unions. They thought that if the Labour Party became free from the constraints imposed by one of the most conservative trade union movements in the world, it could then become a truely social democratic party, dedicated to the defense of mixed economy and Western way of life.[3] It is undoubtedly true that a section of public opinion disliked Labour Party's links with the trade unions and thought that the Labour's association with the trade unions had adverse effects on its popularity. Further, they thought that in taking a firm stand against union activities in the national interest would give the Party plenty of political mileage.[4]

Critics of the"social contract" between the Party and the Unions argued that the alliance was built on flimsy,

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2. David Coates, The Labour Party and the Struggle for Socialism (London, 1975), p. 54.

3. Robert Taylor, "The Uneasy Alliance: Labour and the Unions", Political Quarterly (London), October 1976, p. 399.

4. Butler and Strokes, Political Change in Britain (London, 1974), 2nd edn., p. 199.

contradictory foundations. David Farnham, for example, said that it had become "a relationship of convenience, not of conviction. As they are currently organised, professionalised business unionism and reformist Parliamentary politics, are institutionally incompatible. The Labour Alliance is formally a reality, but its unity is a myth."[5]

According to John E. Turner, two qualities make the Labour Party an attractive subject to study from an organisational perspective: (a) it is an ideological party which is able to win power; and (b) it harbours two centres of decision making - the Party inside the parliament, the Parliamentary Labour Party, and the mass organisation outside the Parliament.[6] The combination of these two factors, according to him tended to breed conclitt. Ideological differences were difficult to contain in organisational structure as it was not clear where the authority lay. Dissidents who lost the battle in one power centre were in a position to carry the struggle to other political centre. This was the situation that had long existed in the Labour Party. Tensions had often emerged between the leaders of

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5. David Farnham, "The Labour Alliance: Reality of Myth", Parliamentary Affairs (London), Winter 1976, pp. 37-46.

6. John E. Turner, "The Labour Party, Riding two Horses", International Studies Quarterly (California), September 1981, p. 385.

the Parliamentary group, who were inclined towards a pragmatic approach, and a more ideological minority which forged linkages with the 'Left' oriented elements in the Party's outside units. As a result there were tensions from the earliest days of the Labour Party, between the constituency Labour Parties, represented at the Party Conference, and the Parliamentary leadership. Indeed, there is a long history of conflict between those who believed that the Conference and the National Executive Committee (NEC) should have the power to order MPs how to vote in Parliament, and the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) which believed that MPs had sufficient mandate to exercise their own judgement by the process of Parliamentary elections. Pertinently, it may be noted that in 1900 the Labour Representation Committee, at its foundation conference, adopted, in its policy statement, "A distinct Labour group in Parliament, who shall have their own whips and agree upon their policy.[7]

The issue came up for debate in 1907 when Keir Hardie, then Leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party, declined to take advice, let alone instructions, from the Conference on

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7. Chris Cook and Ian Taylor, eds., The Labour Party (London, 1980), pp. 32-50.

such matters as women's suffrage. In 1935, George Lansbury offered to resign if the Party Conference did not support his pacifist policies. Hugh Gaitskell, as the Leader of the Opposition, also had conflicts with the Conference. As he had failed, in 1959, to persuade the Conference to get rid of Clause IV, which committed the Party to the nationalisation of means of production, distribution and exchange, he had to fight hard to secure, in 1961, the reversal of the 1960 Conference decision in favour of unilateral disarmament. Gaitskell's successor, Harold Wilson, was able for a time to depend on the deference of the Party Conference. But, he also had to clash in between, for his foreign policy which included acceptance of American involvement in Vietnam. The attempts to reconcile the Labour government's incomes policy with the trade union power, as expressed in the White Paper, "In Place of Strife", had further alienated the Left and had badly split the party. However, the events culminating in Wilson's rejection of "Labour's Programme, 1973", were the stimulus to the foundation of the Campaign for the Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) in June 1973. Vladimir Derer, the leader of the CLPD, described this incident : "in 1973 there was a programme and this included a demand for 25 companies to be taken into public ownership.... Harold Wilson remarked that if the proposal of nationalising 25 largest companies

was included in the manifesto his government would ignore it".[8] In saying this Wilson was reminding the movement of the lack of any control which the Labour Party had over the Parliamentary representatives, and it was this statement of truth which caused the launching of the CLPD. According to a Communist newspaper, Morning Star, "The essential issue facing the Labour movement is its inability to control the Parliamentary Labour Party".[9] With the creation of the CLPD, inner group politics began to assert itself with in the Labour Party. Significantly, the group emphasised the advancement of 'radical left' politics. It concentrated on ways of forcing the Parliamentary Labour Party to accept the decision of the Conference and the National Executive Committee.

In 1918, the Labour Party's structure was carefully balanced by the founding fathers to reconcile the federal and monolithic trade unions with the realities of Parliamentary democracy.[10] The buffer in the constitution had three components: (a) Clause V of the Party Constitution

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8. Peter Willsman, "The Struggle over the Labour Party's Constitution", Labour Monthly, (London), 22 October 1979, p. 459.

9. Morning Star (London), 6 July, 1979.

10. Ian Mikardo, "The Fatal College", The Times (London), 24 January, 1981.

provided that the policies passed by the Conference did not become manifestoes, unless jointly agreed by Parliamentary Labour Representatives and the National Executive Committee; (b) individual MPs were protected by the understanding that they should not and could not be under instructions of Constituency parties or under the threat of loosing their nominations simply because their views did not concide; and (c) collectively, Parliamentary Labour Party's independence was accepted. Its right to elect the Leader was unchallenged. One man one vote was necessary to make it democratic and legitimate, in case any change in this procedure was intended.[11] The CLPD waged its war against these procedures to demonstrate its strength in the mass organisation in the House of Commons. To begin with, CLPD was not very eager about the mandatory re-selection of the MPs nor the election of the Leader, by a wider franchise. It was concerned entirely with the Annual Conference decisions and their treatment by the Parliamentary Labour Party. In July 1973, they released a statement which read: "We believe that the policy decisions reached by the Annual Conference should be binding on the Parliamentary Labour Party and it undertakes to secure the implementation of this principle. We call upon the National Executive to carry out fully its

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11. Ian Mikardo, n. 10.

responsibility as the custodians of Conference decisions. Finally we urge upon the NEC to make sure that the Labour's election manifesto reflects party policies as expressed by Annual Conference decisions."[12] The other issues became only compaign targets when circumstances brought them to CLPD's attention. The controversy over the superiority or authority of Parliamentary Labour Party and Conference decisions was an organisational issue, whereas the clash on different issues like Britain's withdrawl from the Common Market unilateral disarmament, immediate abolition of the House of Lords etc. also were factors responsible for the final split.

The Party Constitution was ambiguous as to which group, either the Parliamentary Labour Party or the Conference, spoke with an authentic voice when the policies clashed; and there was no effective mechanism for the reconciliation of their differences. The advocates of the predominance of the Conference had pointed out that the Party Constitution gave it the power to lay down the authoritative Party policy and the Parliamentary Labour Party merely applies its doctrines. Those on the other side

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12. See David Kogan and Maurice Kogan, The Battle for the Labour Party (London, 1982), p. 26.

claimed that the parliamentary labour party by virtue of its discretion in the conduct of its parliamentary business was in reality an independent power with only a pereferal influence exercised by the Conference directives.[13] It was raised earlier by Norman Atkinson at the Party conference: "The rank and file of our movement have laid down the policy which will be pursued at election.?.. Therefore, the parliamentarians must come to some understanding of what is being demanded by the wider movement outside."[14] He further said: "The Parliamentary Labour Party is not a sovereign body in that sense. It is subservient to the decisions taken elsewhere by the membership of the British Labour Party."[15] However, this tension had been a permanent feature in the Labour Party. As Turner put it: "straddling the two horses has become a difficult feat for the Party Leader because in recent years one of the horses - the extra-parliamentary organisation - had been trotting out of control".[16]

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13. R.T. McKenzie, British Political Parties: TheDistribution of Power Within the Conservative and Labour Parties (New York, 1966), 2nd edn., pp. 485-516.

14. Uwe Kitzinger, Diplomacy and persuation: How Britain joined the common market (London, 1973), p. 325.

15. See Harry Lazer, "British Populism: The Labour Party and the Common Market Parliamenary Debate", Political Science Quarterly (London), Vol. 91, 1976-77, p.270.

16. John E. Turner, n. 6, p. 387.

However, when the CLPD was unable to force the Parliamentary Labour Party into complete obedience, it southt to persuade the Conference to introduce the mandatory re-selection of MPs, to introduce an electoral college, and to waive some important procedural rules which obstructed the constitutional change.

Mandatory Reselection :

The CLPD's most profoundly radical proposal was that MPs should submit themselves for re-selection atleast once during the life-time of each parliament. It was an issue which posed fundamental questions concerning the nature of democracy. Was it right that the constituency activists should be able to unseat a MP whom the majority of his constituents might re-elect ? Was it democratic for these same people to attempt to control the voting behaviour of their MPs in Parliament by threatening to deselect those who did not reflect the views of constituency activists ? The traditional rules were designed to make it difficult for the local parties to deny sitting MPs a chance to retain their seats.[17]

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17. "Model Rules for Constituency Parties", See UK, Labour Party, Annual Conference Report, 1974, (London, 1974), Appendix 3, Clause XIV, pp. 378-349.

The Constituency Parties felt that some Labour MPs had risen above the movement and were acting contrary to the wishes of the working class. They demanded the procedure for making the MPs and the Party leaders more accountable. As one conference delegate expressed in 1974: "If the Parliamentarians are not going to take note of the Conference, then let us make them take note of Constituencies."[18] The argument they put forth, however, in favour of mandatory re-selection was that the MPs would be stronger if they renewed their mandate. The MPs could then be confident that they were speaking on behalf of their Labour Constituency Parties and this would legitimise the base to make their decisions. At the same time, the process of mandatory re-selection would animate the constituencies' political life and educate, through the exercise of power on important decisions, individual party members who, for too long, had every excuse for apathy and deference. When this was their logic, their complaint against the Parliamentary representatives was the views they held on certain political issues. Some MPs were attacked for supporting the Labour government on policies the local activists con-

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18. UK, Labour Party Annual Conference Report 1974 (London, 1974), p. 173.

sidered to be unsocialistic. A frequent cause of tension, in this context, was the MPs support for Britain's entry into Common Market. In an attempt to make the MPs more accountable to the Party organisation some local parties began to extract accountability pledges. A demand for accountability was made by the Yorkshire Council for the Mine Worker's Union, whose guidelines for Parliamentary behaviour required that its sponsored MPs promised not to vote against union policy on any major issue.[19]

Further, the complaint of the Party activists was that the feelings of self-esteem was stronger thatn feelings of accountability of those who put MPs in Parliament. However, the issue became prominent only in 1970s. The first impetus to the CLPD came from the experiences of the Lincoln Constituency Labour Party, which disagreed with the Pro-EEC policy of its sitting member Dick Taverne. The Constituency Party was not able to get rid of the MP with whom it violently disagreed over the question of Britain's entry into the EEC. The Taverne case seemed to those present in the Annual Party Conference, in 1973, to be a self-evident example of the need to assert the supremacy of the Constituency Parties over their sitting members.[20] The

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19. The Times, 26 June, 1975.

20. The Times, 5 July, 1973.

issue was formally raised by Ken Coates of the Rushcliffe Constituency Labour Party, and the Institute of Worker's Control moved a resolution calling for it.[21] The motion fell but won two million votes,[22] and gave to the CLPD a clear indication that mandatory re-selection was a worthy target for its campaign. Under the three-year rule, mandatory re-selection could not be taken up by the Conference until 1977. But the CLPD was tenacious in advising the constituencies to ignore this restriction and continue to submit resolutions based on its model. In 1976, 46 Constituency Labour Parties submitted a CLPD model resolution on mandatory re-selection to the Annual Conference, but they were ruled out.[23] But, pressures were reaching at its peak in the 1977 Annual Conference.

In the meanwhile, there took place a development in the Party which the CLPD could exploit to its advantage. Reg Prentice, a cabinet minister in the Wilson government, fell out with both Harold Wilson and with the 'Left' in the New Ham North-east Constituency Party. He had been the target of attack in his own constituency because of his support to the Conservative government's decision to pro-

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21. UK, Labour Party, Annual Conference Report, 1974, (London, 1974), p. 122.

22. Ibid.

23. UK, Labour Party, Annual Conference Report, 1976, (London, 1976).

secute the Shrewsbury pickets and was de-selected. Having the Prentice affair as a gift, the CLPD built pressure, throughout 1975 and 1976, and raised the issue at the 1977 Annual Conference of the Labour Party. 67 local Parties moved the resolution which was marginally defeated.[24] But, at the 1979 Party Conference, the plan for mandatory re-selection was passed by 57% of the votes.[25] Under the mandatory re-selection system, however, an MP had to justify his re-selection against the groups that were pressing for his removal. The mass organisation thus held a briddle of keeping the Parliamentary contigent in tighter rein. The CLPD supporter, Reg Race MP, commented: "Mandatory re-selection would prevent Labour MPs from having a meal ticket for life and would make them genuinely accountable for their actions to their Constituency Labour Party.... More democracy in the Labour Party is an absolute pre-requisite for the advance towards socialism."[26]

The moderates were very much shocked at this attempt at making the Labour MPs prisoners of the local Parties and reducing them to mere delegates. The MPs were supposed

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24. UK, Labour Party, Annual Conference Agenda, 1977 (London, 1977).

25. UK, Labour Party, Annual Conference Report, 1979, (London, 1979).

26. Reg. Race, "Democracy in the Labour Party", Labour Monthly (London), July, 1979, p. 308.

to represent the entire electorate, not to bow to the dictates of a few extremists in the local Constituency Parties. William Rodgers protested that the mandatory re-selection would make the Labour MPs prisoners of the local party activists, rather than independent minded representatives of all their constituents.[27] On the eve of the 1979 Conference, in an editorial, The Guardian urged the moderates and Social Democrats to act at once to prevent the constitutional changes. It said, "If these were accepted, there would be a government and a set of MPs who would be responsive, above all, to the decisions and instructions to the grass-root Party. The machinery of the new Constitution would be designed to see that there is no escape from the doctrine of obedience".[28] Daily Mail also cautioned: "We must hope that sensible people both in the Labour Party and outside it will heed this latest ominious Benn initiative, recognise the danger he represents and take counteraction in time."[29]

Controversy over the Manifesto :

The implementation of Labour Party's policies should necessarily precede their inclusion in the Party's election

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27. See Peter Willsman, n. 8, p. 460.

28. The Guardian (London), 15 August 1979.

29. Daily Mail (London), 6 July 1979.

manifesto. Clause V of the Party's Constitution states that the National Executive Committee and the Parliamentary Labour Party should together draw up the manifesto. The CLPD proposed that NEC alone should have the previlege of drawing the electoral platform. To support their proposal the CLPD members alleged that the Parliamentary leadership of the Party had been ignoring the Party desires. Harold Wilson, they alleged, had cold-shouldered the 'Labour Programme of 1973', so laboriously prepared by the NEC members. James Callaghan also, by-passing the NEC, drafted his own manifesto and had launched a blistering attack on the NEC by saddling them with the blame for the Euro-election debacle. Thus, tension between the NEC representatives on the Platform Committee and the Parliamentary leaders had emerged during the drafting of the statements on previous elections. But, the strains were particularly severe as they sat down to prepare the 1979 Platform.[30] Although Callaghan and his colleagues made a few concessions to the left, their pressure resulted in the dilution, and in certain cases, exclusion of other NEC proposals from the document and thus rendering the elaborate work done by the NEC futile.

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30. Daily Telegraph (London), 11 December 1978; Also see, The Times, 3 July 1978.

Subsequently, Labour's defeat at polls in 1979, on what some activists regarded as a Cabinet-butchered Platform did little to arrest the discontent at the 1979, Annual Party Conference six months later. Callaghan tried to postpone the debate on the issue when theConstituency Parties submitted 26 resolutions to the Assembly urging that the framing of the Platform be placed entirely in the hands of the National Executive Committee. The editorial in the New Statesman which called Callaghan to resign, referred to these so-called manouvres to postpone the debate as dishonest and stupid even from the Righ's view point.[31]

Callaghan regarded the question of Platform authorship as even more serious than the re-selection of MPs and the method of choosing the Party Leader and had hoped that the trade unions might come to his rescue. But they failed to respond by enough votes, and by a narrow tally of 50.3%, the Conference committed the party to the principle of having the National Executive Committee take over the writing of the Platform.[32] This decision, however, was reversed, a year later, by another close vote of 50.8%[33]. Under the

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31. New Statesman (London),24 August 1979.

32. UK, Labour Party, Annual Conference Report, 1979 (London, 1979).

33. UK, Labour Party, Annual Conference Report, 1980 (London, 1980).

Party rules the Conference could not discuss the matter for 3 more years unless the NEC decided to waive the rules as it did on the question of re-selecting the MPs. With such close votes on the issue of drafting the election statement, it was thought that, probably, the Conference would decide to give this responsibility to the NEC which would then be in a position to write a militant platform for the next election.

Control over the Selection of the Party Leader :

The Party Leader has traditionally been elected by the members of the Parliamentary Labour Party, and, through custom, has come to be regarded as the Leader of the entire Labour Party. In recent years, however, the activists who have sought to make the MPs more acountable have also attempted to curtail the power of the Parliamentary Labour Party, having the Party Leader chosen by a broader constituency. In the period from 1971 to 1980, the Constituency Parties submitted a total of 48 resolutions to the various Labour Party Annual Conferences calling for a change in the selection of the Leader and 34 of these appeared in 1979 and 1980. Some of the resolutionswere authored by sitting Labour MPs and this issue waw hotly debated in press and public.

The issue came to the fore at the 1979 Annual Conference of the Labour Party when the delegates voted on a proposal to have a Leader chosen by an electoral college. However, some of the trade unions, that had voted for the mandatory re-selection of MPs, did not support this plan, and therefore, the proposal was defeated by a 57% vote majority.[34] But, this decision was reversed at the 1980 Annual Conference by a narrow majority of 50.7% when the delegates decided to have the Leader chosen by an electoral college composed of Labour MPs, representatives from the trade unions and activists from the Constituency Parties although after several attempts they could not agree on voting formulae.

As a reaction to CLPD the moderates started the Campaign for Labour Victory (CLV) in 1977. The CLV was organisationally not very strong and so could not put up a strong resistance to the CLPD. Nevertheless, the leaders of the moderate group vociferously reacted to the proposed formation of 'electoral college' and the subsequent proceedings thereby. Lord Kennet, one of the moderate social democrat wrote in The Times: "The only true and permissive

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34. The Guardian, 3 October 1979; and UK, Labour Party Annual Conference Report, 1979 (London, 1979), p. 256.

source of power in a Parliamentary democracy is the upward voting pyramid, elector, MP and PM. Any distortion of this is to be taken seriously as the first sign of cancer.[35] He further regretted that the national Party was committed to supporting the privileges of the trade union and the Constituency Labour Parties, at the expense of the people, to unilateral disarmament, to dropping out of the EEC, to abolition of the House of Lords without replacement, to cumbersome and artificial process of re-selection which would turn an MP into a delegate, to removing the choice of Leader from the Labour MPs and to give a preponderant say to those same local cadres and to the meaningless block votes by trade union barons. The Parliamentary Party would be boxed into a corner of the electoral college.[36] Mrs. Shirley Williams, a leading moderate in the Party said: "Our objection is based not on how the electoral college votes are shared out, but the method of voting".[37] The mandated delegates voting at the conference and the union block votes cast without a ballot of members, according to her, could hardly be described as democratic. If a wider franchise was needed,

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35. Lord Kennet, in an interview, See The Times, 14 December 1980.

36. Ibid.

37. Shirley Williams, in an interview. See The Times, 24 January, 1981.

then ways of extending it democratically by the secret ballot and the registration of labour supporters in the unions could have been worked out, given enough time. But democracy was never intended, she said. What was intended was the activists' control of the Party and the Parliamentary Party.[38]

Inspite of the bitter opposition of the Labour leaders like Shirley Williams and David Owen, the CLPD went on manoeuvring to get the major share of votes to the trade unions in the electoral college. It was supported by massive lobbying by the Rank and File mobilising committee (RFMC), a rendezvous of left-wing groups like labour coordinating committee, the Institute of Workers control, Independent Labour Publications, the National Organisation of Labour students, Labour Party Young Socialists, and, the most important, the Militant Tendency. Hectic preparations were made on the eve of special Wembley Conference on 24 January 1981. The RFMC and its allies formed a tactical flying squad reacting to each situation as it arose, guiding the actions of its supporters and aiming to strengthen the resolve of the waivers in the highly charged atmosphere of the Conference.

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38. Shirley Williams, n. 37.

Once again a constitutional impediment stood in the way of immediate action. Eric Heffer, Therefore, moved, on behalf of the NEC, a resolution that the procedure for the election of the Leader and the Deputy Leader should be changed to allow a widening the franchise for election, and that the constitutional amendments should be considered forthwith at the conference. The motion was carried by the narrow margin of 98,000 votes and the obstacle of three-year rule was removed.[39]

Earlier, the 1980 Blackpool Conference had decided, with virtually no debate, against two possible modes of electoral college. The first would have given the trade unions 50 per cent of votes and the Constituency Parties and the PLP 25 per cent each. The second would have given the each group one third of the votes. The Conference had adjourned to resume the discussion on next day. In the intermittent period, the Left, CLPD and RFMC showed their ability of manouvrebility to create a climate in their favour by emphatic persuation of individuals.

The NEC put forward a resolution proposing the 40-30-30 representation for trade unions, PLP and Constituency Parties respectively, but unexpected opposition came

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39. See David Kogan and Maurice Kogan, n. 12, p. 91.

from some of the trade union leaders. David Basnett from AUEW and Tom Jackson from GMWU successfully opposed the resolution on the pleas for extension of time to consult their members.[40] Opposing this move, Mike Thomas wrote in The Times, "Why should the British people think that the Labour Prime Minister, constantly looking over his shoulder at the unions vote, will be able to run the country in the interest weighing all classes equally, giving special privileges to none."[41] He further comented that the electoral college was the recipe for the demise of the Labour Party. But, the victory was in store for the 'Left' in this Special Conference in January 1981.

The right wing moderates had returned from Black Pool in 1980 in disarray. It had failed to stem the left-wing militancy on all but control over the manifesto. The trade union leaders were not steadfast in their opposition to the concept of the electoral college. Before the voting in the Special Wembley Conference in 1981, the speeches reflected the predictable preferences of leading Party figures like David Owen and Shirley Williams. According to

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40. UK, Labour Party, Annual Conference Report, 1980 (London, 1980).

41. Mike Thomas, "The Fatal College", The Times, 24 January 1981.

David Owen: "The day this system is used to elect a Prime Minister, the whole country would see it to be a totally undemocratic and illegitimate methods. It is an outrage and disgrace".[42] However, the Conference moved from acceptance of the electoral college to discussion of its composition. After some sort of deliberations of different proposals there was voting. The delegates voted in favour of 40% voting strength to the trade unions, 30% to the Labour MPs and 30% to the Constituency Parties.[43] Some of the larger unions wanted the MPs to have the strongest voice in the electoral college but a mix-up in their tactical voting played into the hands of those who wanted to reduce the influence of the PLP.

The victory of the 'Left' was too much for some moderate MPs. And, the day after the Conference ended, David Owen, Shirley Williams and Bill Rodgers - otherwise known as the "Gang of Three" in the British press, augmented, later on to four, by Roy Jenkins, made its Lime House Declaration. Two months later, on 14 March 1981, they launched the Social Democratic Party.

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42. Times of India (New Delhi), 25 January 1981.

43. The Times, 26 January 1981.

Besides the Constitutional issues, there were serious disagreements between the 'Left' and the 'Right' of the Party over major questions like Britain's entry into the EEC, withdrawl from the NATO, abolition of the House of Lords, and unilateral Disarmament, etc. The 'Left' in the Labour Party complained that the House of Lords was still over-populated with the lineage of 'rubber barons', 'royal concubines' and 'imperial warlords'. The composition of the House of Lords was highly unjustifiable.[44] On NATO, they argued that the socialist opposition to bureaucratic collectivism of Eastern Block need not express itself in formal alliance with the American Imperialism, hence Britain should withdraw from NATO alliance. The left of the Labour Party cynically spelled out the value of NATO,as it "keeps the Russians out, the Americans in and the Germans down". Secondly, the 'Left' of the Party thought that NATO had very clear limitations. It was a military alliance, and the various efforts to extend allied co-ordination into the important areas of economic policy, or into the more vaguely defined issues known as "Challenges to Modern Society",had remained fairly in substantial. Again, the alliance had always had difficulty in co-ordinating the

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44. The Times, 14 December 1980.

policies of its members. Towards issues arising out the geographical area of alliance, for example, France was not able to get NATO support for the war in Algeria or Britain and France for their attack on Egypt in 1956, anymore than the United States, had been able to get the backing of the Alliance for American policy in Vietnam or Elgalvador.[45]

Social Democrats viewed that withdrawl from NATO would lead Britain to disaster. In response to the above criticism of NATO, Social Democrats asserted that NATO did provide a framework for countering the Soviet pressure on Western Europe, for committing the military power of the United States to European defence, and for enabling the economic and military power of the Federal Republic of Germany to be harnessed to the western defence effort without threatening Germany's neighbours either to the East or the West. Besides, NATO had proved in many ways to be a flexible enough instrument to meet the changing needs of changing time. The incorporation of detente as one of the objectives of the alliance, on par with determence, had been one of its notable success. Social Democrats regarded

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45. Roger Mogan, "Breaking the Mould Without Rocking the Boat," in Wayland Kennet, (ed.), The Rebirth of Britain (London, 1983), pp. 213-235.

NATO as one of those international organisations whose function was to prevent disaster, hence withdrawl from NATO was uncalled for.

Britain joined the European Economic Community because of three specific reasons, such as her economic decline could be reversed by access to an enlarged 'home' market, by the stimulus of continental competition, and probably also by a framework of Community industrial structure policy as well as substantial Community aid for regional policy. The 'Left' of the Party pointed out that these specific expectations were not justified in the long run. The 'Left' considered the Common Market as a 'Capitalist Club' which hindered the growth of Socialism. According to them, withdrawl from the EEC seemed like a gesture of national independence which would set Britain free from constraining shackles, and release the creativity and dynamism of her people. Furthermore, EEC was not effective in controlling the multi-nationals and had not been able to obtain detailed information about their activities. Until this was done, they contented, it would not be possible to tackle the problems like transfer pricing etc. Any effort in this direction would be futile because of the EEC's ideological commitment to market system. This was said to be to undermine the importance of the Labour's call for

the "restoration of our national economic sovereignty".[46] In 1979, the Labour Party issued a manifesto declaring that if fundamental reforms were not carried out by the government with respect to EEC operations, it would consider very seriously whether continued EEC membership was in the best of interest of British people.[47]

Social Democrats defending Britain's membership of EEC said that Britain had been able, as a member of the community, in pressing her community partners for more common action, in order to add weight to the collective expression of Europe's views. This general principle had come true in case of East-West relations, Atlantic (or West-West) relations the North-South dialogue or such issues as Europe's relations with the Middle East, or the Problems of international trade, money or energy. Roger Morgan, the Social Democrat MP in 1979, stated that taking these geographical dimension of world politics, and Britain's place in them, together with the world wide issues of trade, energy and money and the over all management of economic interdependence, it was hard to avoid the conclusion that Britain's interest lay in fostering the cohesion and effect-

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46. Donal Sasson, "Euro-Communism, the Labour Party and the EEC", Political Quarterly (London), January-March 1979, pp. 86-99.

47. The Economist (London), 17 November 1979, p. 24.

iveness of the Community as an essential part of International machinery for the safeguarding and promotion of the things Britain stood for in the world.[48] In addition to these advantages, membership of the Community had directly improved Britain's economic situation by increasing the British share of American investment coming into the Community from 29.7% in 1973 to 58.8% in 1980 and by more than trebling investment in Britain by the countries of the Community.[49] Moreover, the EEC has done much to promote human rights, although this issue was of special concern of Council of Europe. In many specific areas of human rights policy, for instance, in securing more equal employment opportunities and rates of pay for the women, the community has significantly improved the standards prevailing in the member states. The attempts to create a common European Energy Policy, among other advantages, had brought the installation of Europe's first major nuclear fusion laboratory - the Joint European Torus in a British site at Culham. This was a community project. Looking at all these benefits the Community has brought to Britain, withdrawl, according to the SDP, is an unwise policy.

The third area of controversy, was in the field of disarmament - in the process to achieve the goal of disarma-

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48. Roger Mogan, n. 45, p. 225.

49. Ibid.

ment. The unilateralists argue: "Why to have what you cannot use. There is obviously no reason, therefore, let us throw the abomination away. We had it and could not use it, now we have not got it and still cannot use; so where is the difference."[50] Unilateralist objected that multi-lateralist disarmament negotiations had been going on for years and had got nowhere. Therefore, some one had to give a lead. Further argument for the unilateral nuclear disarmament was that it would make the disarmed country a safer place, less likely to be attacked.

The 'Right' wing of the Labour Party believed that a framework for multi-lateral disarmament was a sine quo non of world peace, and the European Community had an opportunity to begin erecting such a framework.[51] Multilateralists knew that Britain was not alone to have nuclear weapons in the world. Throwing away of the nuclear arms would make sense if Britain was alone to have them in the world. If they threw their saway, their adversary can be cure their compliance with his will by threatening to use his. The first effect of unilateral nuclear disarmament

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50. Wayland Kennet, "East-West Relations for a Medium Power", n. 45, p. 204.

51. Shirley Williams, Politics is for the People (London, 1981), p. 202.

would be to restore the usability of the adversary's nuclear weapons. Attempts to reach multilateral disarmament had always been attempts to ensure the non-usability of the nuclear weapons, not by mutual deterrence as now, but by common non-possession. Whatever the claims made for unilateral disarmament, it would appear highly unlikely that either the Soviet Union or the United States would follow the examples of Japan and Austria, both of whom have abided by the repudiation of nuclear weapons written into their peace treaties, or the would be example of a Holland or a Britain that had surrendered all nuclear weapons.[51] It is naive to think that a disarmed country would be safe from nuclear warfare, because any strategic nuclear exchange between the super powers would cause great damage and destruction through out the world, including those countries that had abandoned the nuclear weapons. That was why securing detente in Europe while pursuing arms limitation assumed more importance, according to the Social Democrats, for world peace than unilateral nuclear disarmament of one or a few countries can ever be.

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51. Ibid.

CHAPTER - IV

FORMATION OF THE SDP

The British General Elections of 1979 constituted the watershed in the formation of the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The election results precipitated a major relignment in British Politics. In the aftermath of the General Elections, it was presumed that with a right wing Conservative government in power, the Labour Party, in oppostion, was bound to move left. The centreground social Democracy had occupied in both the major Parties since the Second World War, suddenly seemed deserted.

Roy Jenkins, one of the founder leaders of the SDP, had been toying with the idea of forming a new party after returning from his assignment in the Commission of the European Community. He had hinted about his plans to form a new centre party in his famous Dimbly Lecture, in November 1979, which had inspired his followers to form organisations in different parts of the country with a view to forming a new party in future. Indeed, Jenkins wanted to form the new Party when the dissatisfied group

in the Labour Party would break away from it. However, Labour leaders like William Rodgers, Mrs. Shirley Williams and David Owen, had not thought in terms of forming a new party until James Callaghan, in the Labour Party Annual Conference in October 1979, proved that he did not have the capacity to fight the aggressive line of the Left. Infact, in 1979, Shirley Williams had commented on Roy Jenkins' plans for launching a new Centre Party: "A new party shall have no roots, no principles, no philosophy and no values."[1] But, gradually, following certain developments in the Labour Party, leaders like William Rodgers, Shirley Williams and David Owen began to think that the Labour Party, as a vehicle for democratic socialism, was beyond redemption.

William Rodgers was the first to announce a time-frame about his continued membership of theParty. In a speech at Abertillery, in South Wales, on 30 November 1979, he gave Labour Party a year to save itself and hinted that if the 'Left' in the Party won their battle to change the Party Constitution, he and others would quit the Party. In the Birmingham,Conference of the Labour

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1. See Ian Bradley, "Birth Pangs of the Party That was Nearly not There", The Times (London), 3 August 1981.

Party, in May 1980, while both William Rodgers and Shirley Williams vociferously spoke for the Campaign for Labour Victory (CLV), David Owen told the Conference that Social Democrats should stay on in the Labour Party even if it took 20 years to win their battle. Owen said that he had nothing to do with the CLV if it was used for launching a new Party.

But, David Owen too changed his mind in the Wembly Conference of the Labour Party on 31 May 1980, when he was hooted down by the militant Labour activists, while he was speaking against unilateral disarmament. The prevailing extremist atmosphere in the Conference had disappointed him.

John Silkin, a Labour MP, in the beginning of June 1980, gave notice to a motion in the Parliamentary Labour Party to Commit the Labour Party, in the next Conference, in favour of Britain's withdrawl from the European Economic Community (EEC). Silkin's move, made without consulting his Shadow Cabinet colleagues, prompted David Owen to advise Rodgers and Mrs. Shirley Williams to issue a joint statement, on 7 June 1980, to the effect that they would leave the Labour Party if Silkin's proposal was accepted. Notably, this was the first public declaration, jointly made, by the 'Gang of Three'. The Labour Party

Annual Conference in Blackpool, in September 1980, proved to be the turning point. There, David Owen began to convass for the breakaway movement. The outcome of the Blackpool Conference had pushed Rodgers, Mrs. Williams and Owen further down the road of separation. On 14 January 1981, on the eve of Wembley Conference, all the four - Roy Jenkins, David Owen, William Rodgers and Shirley Williams - met together to discuss the formation of the new Party. At the Wembley Conference, on 24 January 1981, the 'Left' won the battle over the selection of the Party Leader. On the outcome of theConference David Marquand, a Labour MP, commented that the Social Democrats who wished to remain in the Labour Party could do so at the cost of endless compromises, endless erosion of self respect and endless equivocation.[2] The 'Left' of the Labour Party, led by Antony Wedgewood Benn, had won battle after battle over. Party policies pushing the Party to the extreme. As a result, it seemed that for Social Democrats there was no other alternative but to break away from the Labour Party and express their defiance of the duo-poly of the two major Parties and go in search of what

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2. David Marquand, "Is There any hope for the Social Democrats ?: Difficulties in Breaking the New Mould in Britain", Encounter (London), 35(4), April 1983, p. 12.

Jenkins called "a fundamental re-alignment" of British politics.[3]

Soon after the Wembley Conference, on 27 January 1981, the "Gang of Four" made the famous Lime-House declaration. Two months later, in March 1981 the Social Democratic Party was launched. 12 Mps in the commons and 9 Peers resigned from the Labour Party. On 12 March, a Parliamentary Committee, Consisting of 12 MPs, with David Owen as the Chairman, was formed. Later on, the number of MPs increased to 29, making the SDP the second largest opposition party in the Commons, relegating the Liberal Party to a 3rd position.

The initial recruitment the SDP was very rapid. By the end of 1981 the SDP had 60,000 adherents more evenly spread, by age, class and region. The idea was to have a minimum of 100 members in each Parliamentary Constituency.

POLICIES OF THE SDP

The leaders of the Social Democratic Party had deliberately avoided committing themselves to detailed pplicies. They wanted to get away from what Roy Jenkins

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3. The Economist (London), 24 January 1981.

called, the "disease of the manifestoists". Therefore, in the absence of a manifesto in order to have a systematic idea of SDP's policies, one has to rely upon the writings and public utterances of its spokesmen from time to time. Besides, the Party has published its tentative programme - "12 tasks for Social Democrats" at the time of the its launching.[4] This programme included Constitutional reforms, Proportional Representation, an open government, with a Freedom of information Bill, greater control over the civil service, and state financing of political parties.

On the Central area of economic and Social Policy, the SDP leaders' pronouncements revealed a mixture of a fairly traditional Crosslandite commitment to an expanding Welfare state, financed through growth, a mixed economy, and newer and more radical notions of market Socialism, community care and decentralisation.[5] According to Ronald Butt: "Most of the Social Democrats' initial policies offering was derived from Gaitskellism and the policies of the 1st Wilson government & a planned mixed economy, social egalitarianism, pro-Common Market, decentralisation and industrial Democracy".[6]

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4. The Times, 15 March 1981.
5. Ian Bradley, "Unravelling What SDP Stands For", The Times, 27 March 1981.
6. Ronald Butt, "An Alice Lost in the Centre Land", The Times, 29 March 1981.

Hoever, SDP's founding fathers were fairly clearly committed to the principle of constitutional reforms. In fact, they knew that much of SDP's success depended on the constitutional changes. Mrs. Shirley Williams, while emphasising the priority of constitutional reforms, said; "Without Constitutional reform, the SDP would be merely a ragbag of failed politicians, linked with optimistic liberals".[7]

The first and foremost task of the Social Democrats was to fight for Parliamentary democracy against the extreme 'Left'. The Social Democrats viewed that although over the centuries, in response to the various social and industrial revolutions, the pattern of recruitment to Parliament had changed, Parliament itself still retained many of the features of an older, privileged oligarchic, and semi-democratic order.[8] For example, the composition of the House of Lords, according to SDP, was undemocratic and needed to be reformed until it was substituted by an elected chamber. Similarly, SDP wanted to democratise the electoral system for the House of Commons through the introduction of proportional representation. For them,

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7. See Allan Massie, "A party for the Nation", Spectator (London), 10 October 1981, p. 5.

8. Stephen Hassler, "Can the Social Democrats Devise Policies for Political Power", Encounter, January 1982, p. 14.

election 'Primaries' were also important. Primaries, together with the judicious base of referenda, they believe, would add a popular element to the Constitution. As Ronald Butt had argued, "Parliamentary democracy was going wrong not because it was democratic, but because it was not democratic enough, because it is too often used as a facade behind devoted campaigners of minority interests can bring the sort of society they approve of into existence without any real reference to the people".[9]

SDP believes that more decisions should be taken at local levels and the Parliament must be free from the control of the Party machine. This required another constitutional change, decentralisation, which if properly implemented, would have modernising and democratic effects. Similarly, the Party favoured democratisation of trade unions (primarily by introducing secret ballot to elect its officials) and an offensive against the trade union legislative privileges. Being a classless national party, the SDP proposed an even handed approach to social interests and to deal with obvious excesses of corporate power.

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9. Ronald Butt, "On Britain's Decline: Democratic Contradictions," Encounter (London), March 1979, p. 47.

So far as the Socio-economic policy of SDP was concerned, while formal commitments were few, one could gauge its nature and likely direction from the speeches and writings of the party ideologues like David Owen, David Marquand and Shirley Williams. In this context, David Owen's Face the Future, and Shirley William's, 'Politics is for people, are notable contributions. They support equal opportunity in the sphere of welfare, education and health, express real concern over bureaucratisation and centralisation, support small business co-operatives and voluntary effort, and seek reconciliation and consensus between contenting classes.[10] According to Mrs. Shirley Williams: "A traditional socialism steeped in old industrial attitudes and based on the class war has become obsolete."[11] Therefore, she favoured the promotion of small-scale enterprises. She believed that industrial democracy was needed to bring about greater co-operation in improving the productivity of all factors of production and better understanding of the need for voluntary incomes and price policies to combat inflation. She further, argued that political pluralism and private ownership were inseparable.[12]

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10. See David Owen, Face the Future (London, 1981) and Shirley Williams, Politics is For People (London, 1981).

11. Shirley Williams, Ibid, p. 16.

12. See Michael Rustin, "British Labour Party and Social Democrats", Dissent(London), Summer 1981, pp. 300-07.

David Owen argued for a mixed economy and rejected the doctrinaire Laissez-faire monetarism, total state socialism and whole-sale nationalisation. He wrote: "The Socialists must cease to believe that the only way of ensuring economic advance is to reproduce the old patterns of state nationalisation."[13] He was disillusioned about the working of Nationalised Industries. Commenting on the development of the British Computer and Pharmaceutical Industries, as an example of how government could mix control and ownership, he wrote: "What government must learn is to judge when to intervence and when not to intervene on the basis of disciplined, thoughtful and scientific approach, not on the basis of dogma, doctrine and prejudice."[14] He pointed out that present income policy was an essential element in increasing Britain's economic malaise; and, a decentralised policy, that relies on a combination of market forces, controls and comparability, should be able to be maintained by successive governments of any Party.[15] David Owen firmly supports the EEC and NATO and supports the course of negotiations for multi-lateral nuclear disarmament from a position of strength rather than succumbing to temptations of

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13. David Owen, n. 10, p. 115.

14. See The Times, 29 January 1981.

15. David Owen, n. 10, p. 165.

unilateralism.[16]

Roy Jenkins, though had not spoken much on the ideology of the Social Democratic Party, was vehementhy against nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange.[17] Stephen Hasler, a member of the policy Committee of the SDP and one of the original supporters of Lime House declaration, wrote that SDP would attempt social change, and modernisation and would tackle the class problem in Britain. The first priority of SDP he said would be to identify the central British problem - the lack of change in social institutions and too much emphasis on the economic changes. In his opinion, Britains' economic policy-making of all varieties had essentially been constrained by powerful underlying non-economic factors - by the country's social culture and structure, and their institutional expressions and rigidities.[18]

In his opinion, British crisis of economic competition cannot possibly be solved by application of particular strategy unaccompanied by social change. Any attempt at economic change must be accompanied by an allied

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16. n. 14.

17. The Sunday Times (London), 15 February 1981.

18. Stephen Hassler, n. 8, p. 9.

strategy of social modernisation. That is one of the reason, Hassler says, why the SDP has the world 'social' in its name.[19]

The SDP has proclaimed its commitment to creating in Britain a modern and open society, encompassing political, social, economic and intellectual planes. The SDP does not consider that Britain is a modern and open sodiety, at least not in comparison with other industrial nations. Ideas like liberty, tolerance and civility they think, are still restricted to the upper reaches of the British society. In other words, the British, even in the 1980, are liberal (albeit a secretive) society at the top but not a particularly democratic or modern one.

The search for "Classlessness" - an objective at the heart of the SDP's original Lime House Declaration - has become the central idea and the purpose which has distinguished the SDP from the Conservative and the Labour Parties. The 'New Left' which is interested in class structure imposes upon it a simple analysis of class struggle, with class determined exclusively on the basis of old Marxian concept of relationship to the "Productive forces". But SDP's approach to the British

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19. See Stephen Hassler, ibid, p. 11.

class question differed from the left. Rejecting the Marxist analysis, SDP has pleaded for social harmony and cultural absorption. The key to unlocking the British class-system, according to the SDP, is not with the abolition of capitalis, but with, what Anthony Crossland described, the "deep marks of the heriditary aristocratic society from which the British descends", or with, what R.H. Tawney described, the "lingering aroma of the aristocratic legend".[20]

According to Robert Marris, economic policies of the SDP are spread over five distinct themes. They are: (1) the road to Britain's economic recovery required, inter-alia, a sophisticated, multi-pronged approach towards the management of inflation, in contrast to the ostrichlike attitude of the labour party and the one-dimensional attitude of the Conservative Party; (2) Britain's economic decline is partly due to its educational system, which is too academic, in the field of industrial training to almost nullity; (3) Britain's economic decline is also partly due to the lack of consistent and positive industrial policy, especially in respect of small business; (4) Britain needs more industrial democracy, i.e., more direct formal consultation and informal participation

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20. Ibid.

of workers in the process of management, especially where the individuals in question are directly affected; and (5) Trade unions are a necessary and desirable feature of modern industrial society; at the same time they need to be internally democratisied.[21]

In foreign policy, social democrats are, by temperament, "Atlanticists" and would resist being tempted into the anti-American Lobby. "A socialist", says David Owen, "who works constructively within a framework of mixed economy is fervent in its support for NATO and Western shield."[22] Moreover, given a tense world, where America faces a militarily strong, albeit politically and economically weak Russia, SDP sees plenty of scope for pragmatic lobbying within the Western Alliance. There are also considerable strategic considerations for Britain to remain in the Western Alliance. Besides, the trade ties of Britain with the EEC are such that leaving EEC would be a natural calamity for Britain.[23]

Opposing the concept of unilateral disarmament, SDP considers that the one sided movement of unilateralists for disarmament would only lead to war, and that

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21. Robert Marris, "The Politics of Rationalism: Reflections on the Economics of the SDP", Parliamentary Affairs (London), Spring 1982, pp. 16-31.

22. David Owen, "Powerto the People", Sunday Times, 25 June 1981.

23. Michael Rustin, n. 12, p. 307.

it would encourage the would-be aggressors. According to SDP, to take a Euro-Centric view, and cause a split in NATO, will lead to a disarmed Western Europe at the mercy of increasing Soviet pressure.[24]

ORGANIZATION

The situation that developed in the remainder of the Labour Party after the split helped the SDP to recruit members, where it needed to do so, among the Labour councillors and trade unionists. The traditionalists in the Labour Party were sufficiently alarmed after the split and had opened a fight to reverse those decisions they had not worked to prevent. The balance in the Labour Party was precarious when the 'Solidarity Campaign', launched by 150 MPs, took up the fight against the Left to change the Wembley formulae by restoring half of its votes in Leadership selection to the MPs. The Annual Conference of the Labour Party at Brighton, in October 1981, provided the "Solidarity Campaign" last chance to reverse the trend. But, it turned out to be a draw. However, 7 MPs had defected to theSDP, although 20 were expected to join if Anthony Wedgwood Benn had won the contest for deputy Leadership.[25]

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25. Philip M. Williams, "The Rise and Possibilities of Britain's Social Democrats", Dissent (London), Winter 1982, p. 73.

Thus SDP started recruiting from the Labour dissidents and Progressive Conservatives. Gradually, members were attracted from all sections. Paul Rose, the Secretary of SDP in the Borough of Brent, said that class, colour, race and religion were no barrier to the membership in the SDP. He further described the Panel of municiapl candidates in Borough of Brent numbering 37, including six Asians, six Irish and three West Indian, had covered the spectrum of Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Free thinkers.[26] However, the rise of the SDP in its 1st year of existence had been phenomenal. At the beginning of 1982 it had 80,000 paying members with 29 MPs in the House of Commons and 14 Peers in the House of Lords.[27]

The SDP issued its draft constitution on 22 September 1981.[28] Under the draft constitution, membership was open to every British citizen who supported the principles of the SDP. There is no provision for corporate or group membership in theParty and there is nb provision for block votes also. But the constitution does not provide for a simple application of the principle of

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26. Paul Rose, "Whither the SDP", Contemporary Review (London), March 1982, p. 133.

27. The Statesman (New Delhi), 3 April 1982.

28. The Times, 23 September 1981.

one-man - one-vote. It is an attempt to harmonise that principle to give extra weight to those with particular responsibility.

The Basic unit of the Party organisation, to which the members will automatically belong, is the Area Party. Area will be Shire Counties, Metropolitican Districts, and London Boroughs. This has reflected the practical concern to enable members to promote the purpose of the Party, not only in the existing Parliamentary constituencies but in local government area as well. The area Party will be directly represented in the regional organisation of the Party and each will be entitled to elect a representative to Party's highest decision making body, the Council for Social Democracy.

Social Democratic Party has favoured decentralisation of government. In the decision making, the Social Democrats wanted to ensure, through the regional organisations of the SDP, that the policies prepared by the Party are responsive to the views and wishes of the people throughout the country. Regional Conferences and the right of regions to promote policies of particular importance to themselves would aid the process. The regional organisation would help to co-ordinate local party activity and would have the responsibility for

endorsing the list of would-be candidates for election to Parliament. The regions would also be directly represented by members elected to serve in theCouncil for Social Democracy which would be the Parliament of the Party. With about four hundred members, the Council would be the representative of the Party throughout the country. It would also decide what would be the policies of the Party. The underlying principle that runs through the draft constitution is that the membership of the party at large should decide crucial issues. Members should be involved in decisions at all levels of the Party structures, from Area and Regional Committees to the Council for Social Democracy.[29]

In the opinion ofSDP, the task of leading a political party is onerous and ought to be shared. There are functional differences between the responsibilities of the Leader in Parliament and those of the Leader of a Party in the country. In view of this, the SDP has decided in favour of dual leadership. The President, who will lead the Party in the country, will be elected by ballot of all members. The Leader of the Parliament will be initially elected by MPs, but will then have to be confirmed by ballot of all members of the Council, unless one

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29. The Times, 23 September 1981.

person is nominated by the Parliamentary group, in which case person is automatically elected without the need for any confirmatory ballot.[30] Apart from this, like other political parties, the draft constitution has provisions for the National Committee, Policy sub-committee, Consultative Assembly, Appeal Tribunal, etc., which are generally the necessary bodies in a democratic party.

ELECTORAL STRATEGY

Social Democrats were convinced that, in view of the present nature of British electoral system, they could not form a government of their own without close electoral co-operation with the Liberals. Indeed, these two centre parties could not afford electoral rivalry between them because they would only be undercutting each other. However, certain complementarity and mutual benefits, evident from the start, helped to promote SDP/Liberal relationship. The SDP, being top-heavy, could offer several prestigious popular figures like Roy Jenkins, David Owen, Shirley Williams, etc., with governmental experience, which the Liberals had previously lacked; while the Liberals had a larger grass-root following (a

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30. THe Times, 5 October 1981.

claimed 180,000 members compared with SDP's total of 78,000 by early 1982), with a solid background of campaigning especially in Local politics.[31] Thirdly, the opinion polls consistently showed that an SDP-Liberal Alliance would obtain more votes than the two Parties campaigning separately. Added to this was the impressive near victory result for the Alliance at Warrington (July 1981), and by-election victories at Croydon (October 1981) and Crossby (November 1981) which welded the Alliance more firmly. Moreover, the electoral co-operation between the two Parties was tested in those by-elections when the activists of both the Parties had campaigned enthusiastically for each other's candidates. Parliamentary level co-operation at Westminster was established through a Joint Consultative Committee (involving the two Chairmen and the two chief whips). The personal-political harmony between Roy Jenkins' and David Steel was also viewed as having contributed significantly to the early smooth working of the Alliance. As a result, one commentator chose to call Jenkins as a "true Liberal" and Steel a "true Social Democrat".[32]

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31. Geoffrey Pridham, "European Perspective on the Britsh SDP/Liberal Alliance", Parliamentary Affairs, Autumn 1982, pp. 183-201.

32. Ibid, p. 189.

Moreover, David Steel, Leader of the Liberal Party, himself had long been an advocate of an alliance or a coalition involving the Liberals, who had tried unsuccessfully for a realignment of party forces in Opposition for twenty years and should now pursue realignment by aiming for governmental control.[33]

However, in matters of an electoral strategy, such as having an alliance with the Liberals, the SDP leaders had divergent views. Jenkins favoured a particularly close alliance of SDP with the Liberals, while Owen stressed the importance of maintaining and strenghening SDP's own identy which, according to him,would maximize electoral appeal. Besides, there has been uneasiness between both the partners within the Alliance, as has been confirmed by the first joint statement, 'A Fresh Start for Britain', which read: "Our parties stem from different traditions and have their own identities".[34] This uneasiness was notable in five areas of policy: (a) economic growth (the SDP was more emphatic here, the Liberals sceptical); (b) defence the SDP is decidedly

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33. David Steel, A House Divided: The Liberal Pact and the future of British Politics (London, 1980), p. 36.

34. Geoffrey Pridham, n. 31, p. 193.

Atlanticist, the Liberals with their strong unilateralist attitude differ over siting Cruise missiles(; (c) devolution (the Liberals are Federalists, the SDP less committed, though favours decentalisation); (d) nuclear energy (the Liberals distinctly against, the SDP apparently for); and (e) the Middle East (with the SDP in Parliament taking a less anti-Israeli position than the Liberals). Having listed these areas of disagreement, Hugo Young, a political commentator of The Times, remarked that even when the Alliance partners were seeking for power together, they were struggling for power between themselves.[35]

There have been differences between the two parties, and within them too, over the extent of the Alliance itself. Differences over the degree of closeness with the Liberals were apparent among Social Democratic Party MPs - those SDP MPs whose original Labour Party roots were the weakest seemed more inclined towards a close relationship with the Liberals. On the Liberal side, there were some differences between traditional and radical liberals. The most vocal source of hostility in the Liberal party towards the Alliance came from the Association of Liberal Councillors, who were suspecious of the grass-roots of the SDP.[36]

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35. Hugo Young, "How Many Divisions Has The Centre", The Times, 8 March 1981.

36. Geoffrey Pridham, n. 30, p. 196.

BY-ELECTION PERFORMANCES

The Social Democratic Party entered Britain's political arena with a bang on 16 July 1981 with an unexpectely narrow defeat in the Warrington by-election, turning a traditional Labour stronghold into a seat quite shaky for the Labour Party.[37] In Warrington, Roy Jenkins was the Alliance candidate. Optimists hoped that he might poll 30 to 35 per cent of vote, but his 42 per cent vote amazed everyone, while the Labour candidate, Douglas Hoyle, just won the seat by obtaining 48 per cent, down from 61 per cent in 1979, and the Conservative candidate lost his deposit. A MORI poll, usually the least favourable to the SDP, found that Jenkins took 29 per cent of 1979 Labour voters and 50 per cent of the 1979 non-voters.[38] However, in Warrington, Jenkins won a moral victory in greatly reducing a formerly overwhelming Labour majority. Moreover, this first by-election test drove home the consistent message of the opinion polls, that the new party, even though it would be weaker, posed a major threat to the electoral hegemony of both the Labour and Conservative parties.

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37. The Times, 17 July 1981.

38. New Statesman, 11 September 1981.

Soon after Warrington, the SDP scored victories in several local Council by-elections in safe Labour seats - many of them in depressed North of England where it had been said to be weak. On 1st October 1981 in the Council elections SDP won in Sussex, Gloucestershire and lost to Labour in the Licestershire.[39] The second and third by-elections were held respectively in Croydon, in October 1981, and in Crossby in November 1981. The results of both the by-elections were just amazing. The SDP had supported a Liberal candidate in Croydon. While MORI opinion Poll gave 1½ per cent lead to William Pitt, the Alliance candidate, over his Conservative rival, the electorate gave him a winning margin of nearly 10 per cent over the Conservative, with Labour relegated to the third position. Similarly, an opinion Poll taken before the Crossby campaign gave the SDP candidate, Mrs. Shirley Williams, 40 per cent of the votes, Conservatives 34 per cent, and Labour 25 per cent. It may be recalled that in the 1979 election the Conservatives got a majority of 19,272 in Crossby.[40] But, the results surpassed all the expectations. Mrs. Shirley Williams won the Seat

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39. Andrew Stephen, "What Does the 'Gang of Four' do Now", The Times, 4 October 1981.

40. The Times, 8 October, 1981.

with 49 per cent of votes, Conservatives got 40 per cent and Labour a meagre 10 per cent.

The last by-election SDP fought in 1982 was in Hillhead which was Conservative stronghold. Roy Jenkins was discouraged from fighting that seat. But, Jenkins thought that withdrawl would be a demonstration of weakness. Besides, he was keen to get into the Commons also, to lead the SDP-Liberal Alliance. Therefore, he contested the by-election. Jenkins won the seat comfortably, with the Conservatives second and the Labour to a poor third. After the Victory, Jenkins said that the result could alter the whole map of British Politics. Through these victories the new resurgent SDP-Liberals Alliance had proved that it could beat any established parties anywhere.[41] Thus, in a year after its formation, the SDP got firmly established in the British political scene, demonstrating its potential to open up a new phase in British politics.

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41. The Times, 12 January 1982.

CHAPTER - V

C O N C L U S I O N

The foregoing analysis shows that the split in the Labour Patty in 1981 was not the result of a sudden development, but a logical culmination of a series of wranglings persistent within the Labour Party for a long time. Organizational matters, constitutional questions and major national and international issues had equally contributed to the split.

Historically speaking, the seeds of split in the Labour Party was very much embedded from the very foundation of the Party as a unified set up for its various constituents like the trade unions, the Fabian Society, etc., which had divergent ideological and functional approaches on various questions, which created tensions within the Party from time to time. Moreover, there was an ongoing tussle between the trade unions and the rest of the Party organization over the extent of their say in Party matters.

It may be recalled that the Labour Party was born out of the desire of the trade unions to have their representation inside Parliament to promote their interests there. But the party, over a period of time, grew beyond this mould and began to view issues from a much wider angle, than from an exclusively narrow angle of the trade union interests. The result was that there emerged differing perceptions between the Unions and the organizational wing of the Party on various important questions. Indeed, the trade unions and the Party, as organisations, operated in contrasting environments. While the unions presented themselves as conservative institutions, protecting sectional interests, the Party, on the other hand, was dominated by its parliamentary elite and sought social reforms. But professionalised trade unionism and reformist Parliamentary politics were institutionally were not on the same wave length. Of course, this was not withstanding the fact that while for the Unions the historic connection of the Party provided a political lobby to protect their class interests, for the Party the connection provided the necessary finance to maintain its political organisation. However, till late 1940s the relationship between the trade unions with the Party was smooth mainly because of three factors -

(a) the fundamental weakness of the Parliamentary Labour Party; (b) the wide spread economic depression and omnious spectre of dictatorship/ and (c) the Trade Union activism in politics and their initiatives on foreign policy.

But, in the early 1950s, the stress in the relationship became discernible. Aneurin Bevan, the leading trade unionist, and his supporters demonstrated fundamental disagreement with the Labour Party on the issues of nationalisation, defence and foreign policy. In the late 1950 the stress was further exacerbated by the development of "a revisionist school of socialism" within the Labour movement. Anthony Crosland's 'Future of Socialism' decried the class nature and industrial militancy of the Unions. The 'revisionists', unlike the old Labour 'Right', were initiators of change and were attacking the 'class consciousness' of the Unionists which aroused the sensibility of the trade unions.

Following the Labour's third successive electoral defeat in 1959, the revisionist school was increasingly anxious to dissociate the Party from the 'cloth cap' image which its links with the Unions gave it. In addition, they criticised control of the trade unions over the Party, and the decision making in the Unions. The

Unions were not only critical of 'socialist panacea' of the revisionists, they were also anxious to show their political independence and autonomy to negotiate on behalf of their members. The inevitable conflict between the Party 'revisionists', including Hugh Gaitskell and disaffected elements within the Unions, centred on issues like Clause IV of the Party Constitution, industrial democracy and unilateral disarmament debates. Gaitskell wished to qualify Clause IV with declarations of socialist values other than nationalisation, which implied acceptance of mixed economy. The trade union opposition to Clause IV represented the innate conservatism and sentimentality of the Union leadership. Harold Wilson, however secured the consent of trade unions to his voluntary incomes policy, by the rehetorics of the technological revolution which would lead to sustained and real growth. In 1971, the trade unions and the Labour Party came to some formal agreement, when persons like Jack Jones, of the TUC urged an end to the stress and strain between the trade union and the intellectual wings of the Party. David Basnett (GMWU) spoke of the need for agreement on the broad lines of an equitable economic and social development. In January 1972, TUC - Labour Party Liason Committee known as 'Social Contract' was formed. While

Social contract was a way of reconciling the trade unionism with the governmental objectives of the Party it also encapsulated the seeds of stress. While on the trade union side the expectation that the union was the vehicle of their aspirations lead to the growing disenchantment with the incomes policy, the constraint on the government side was the fear of destabilising an inherited mixed economy, and the desire to retain broad electoral support.

The phenomenal growth of the 'Left' in the Labour Party was another factor which precipitated the split in the Labour Party. Of course, the 'Left' had its ancestors in the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and Social Democratic Federation (SDF). Although SDF abandoned the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) in disgust in 1901, it continued to have influence, and had occassionally shaped Labour Left Policies. The Fabian - intellectual, aloof and riven with feud - took little interest in the Labour movement and even less in the Party which they had helped to found. Thus, from the earliest days, the ILP weilded the most vocal, powerful and ambitious socialist influence, and was the source of many of the traditions and attitudes, which was later regarded as the Left Wing.

The adoption of the Party constitution in 1918 was an important event so far as the battle between the Left and Right was concerned in the later years in the Party. The inclusion of Clause IV, which called for nationalisation, and control of each industry and service, was a triumph for the 'Left'. Indeed, Clause IV gave the Labour Party an official Socialist colouring which had been rejected in 1900. Although Clause IV was accepted without much controversy, it became a live issue after the General Election in 1959 when it was felt, by Gaitskell, that it caused harm to Labour's image.

In one sense, 1918 Party Constitution was a victory for the 'Right' also. Arthur Henderson, one of the Co-authors of the constitution, made the Trades Councils, and Labour Representation Committee, and not the myriad branches of the ILP, the main bases of the Party organisation and made it possible for anybody to be a direct member of the Labour Party without being a member of an affiliated society or union. This, in effect, destroyed the traditional role of the ILP as the main body responsible for political activity in the constituencies. Thus, ILP could no longer act as a catch-all body for Labour activists and became, instead, a faction placed uncomfortably in competition with the new individual members' section that grew fast in size and importance.

In the later years, a deep and lasting hostility developed between this group, the electorally oriented Parliamentary leadership, and the semi-revolutionary outer fringe consisting of the ILP and other extreme groups.

Aneurin Bevan's decision in 1951 to resign from office, followed by Harold Wilson, and John Freeman inaugurated a period of factional warfare of unprecendented beitterness which for a time seemed to split the party. Bevan had pointed to a basic conflict over the Party's purpose and argued that revisionism attacked Socialist doctrine at its heart. In mid 1950 Bevan and Anthony Crossland shared many opinions, but their conflicts were not over principles, but over the extent of action: how much support for American foreign policy, how many arms and how many industries to be run by the state. At that time, tradition and approach divided the Party into rival groups, but was held together by bonds of trust and friendship.

Labour's third consecutive defeat at the Polls in 1959 renewed the hostilities. Hugh Gaitskell's attempt to remove nationalisation from the Party constitution on the belief that nationalisation programme caused loss of votes for the Labour Party, brought a predictable out cry from the 'Left'. But, Gaitskell's attempt was

defeated by the Trade Unions, rather by the 'Left'. Another plan, set out by Barbara Castle, then Minister of Employment and Productivity, in 1969 designed to limit the number of strikes was rejected by the Trade Unions. The plan called "In place of Strife" was bitterly opposed by the Trade Union MPs.

The Retreat over "In Place of Strife" was certainly a victory for the Trade Unions, than for the Labour Left.[6] But, it was important for the Labour Left, nonetheless as it effected a shift in the alliances within the movement, which had profoundly affected Labour politics through out the following decade. The strength of the 'Left' within the two major Unions - the Transport and General Workers Union and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (which together controlled almost a third of the total vote at the Party Conference) determined the issue. After 1974, the Labour government faced more or less consistent 'Left-Wing' opposition from the NEC.

In the post 1970 election defeat, the Pro-Common Marketeers became identified with the Labour 'Right', while the Labour 'Left', led by Michael Foot, represented a rejection of both Parliamentary sovereignty and participation in a "capitalist club" - the EEC. However, the Labour Government's referendum on the EEC in 1975 showed

that the Labour Party was controlled by the 'Left', with a Trade Union-based National Executive and Conference, backed by the constituency activists, looking towards one direction and the Parliamentary leadership looking towards the other.

Meanwhile, the 'Left-Wing' influence encouraged the adoption of more radical 'Platforms' for the Party. The 'Labour's Programme for Britain 1973', the basis for the Election Manifesto of 1974, called for a massive and irreversible shift in the distribution of wealth and income in favour of the working people, a phrase which represents a different mood from that of Parliamentary Labour Party, and was ignored.

The Party's shift to the 'Left' adversely affected the strength of the PLP and strengthened the Constituency Parties. Two prominent Right Wingers - Dick Taverene at Lincoln and Reginald Prentice at Newham North-East - were rejected by their 'Left-Wing' Constituency parties (with the approval of the 'Left-Leaning' NEC). In 1978, the traditional relationship between the Constituency Labour Parties (CLP) and the MP was almost blown up by the Militant Campaign for Labour Party Democracy. The Election defeat in May 1979 set the process of Left onslaught on the Right-wing PLP Leadership. Overturning

the decision of the previous year, the Conference accepted the principle of mandatory re-selection of Labour MPs once in every Parliament and also gave the NEC the ultimate control over the Party's Election Manifesto.

Having deprived the PLP of its traditional privilege of writing the manifesto, the Labour Left planned to curtail the PLP's right to select the leader of the Party. Their manoeuvrability in the Party Conference and their calculated efforts in making inroads into the trade unions, the CLP stalwarts lead the Conference to decide for an Electoral College to choose the Leader of the Party. The voting share given to PLP was almost of no significance and the right of 'selection' belonged to the Trade Unions and the Constituency Labour Parties, consisting of militant elements, who now had an easier and institutionalised procedure for discarding their MPs if they did not find them obliging.

However, all these developments pushing the Labour Party into the hands of 'Left' extremists made the moderate Social Democrats like William Rodgers, Shirley Williams and David Owen feel very uncomfortable. Adding to their disappointment with the changes in the Party Constitution were the views held by the Party Conference on foreign policy questions. Party Conferences' decision

for Britain's unconditional withdrawal from the EEC, and NATO, its commitment to unilateral disarmament, etc., had convinced the moderates, like Owen, that the attitude of the Labour Party was going against the trend of Social Democratic Parties in Western Europe, as well as against the trend of Public Opinion. Further, there was little chance for the 'Right-Wing' to reverse the trend, since the counter attack to the increasing assault of the 'Left' was unorganised and weak. Therefore, the so-called 'Gang of Four', decided to break the political mould in Britain, sought a fundamental re-alignment in British Politics, and founded the Social Democratic Party.

The foundation of the Social Democratic Party provoked a genuine interest and excitement on an unexpected scale among the British electorate. The launching of the Party was accompanied by the declaration of the "Twelve Tasks for Britain", which constituted a broad outline of the Party policy. By studying the policies and the electoral strategy of the SDP, and, more important, the British Political System, one could judge whether SDP would stand upto the euphoria it had created in the begining. The 'Gang of Four' have constantly stressed the freshness of their policies and approach. Their

support for Britain's continued membership of theEEC, and their opposition to the unilateral disarmament and neutralism had clearly set the SDP apart from much of the rest of the Labour Party. Similarly, the SDP leaders are fairly committed to the cause of constitutional reforms - aimed at Proportional Representation, more open government, greater Parliamentary control over the civil service, and state financing of political Parties.

In the end, question that naturally arises is: what are the implications of the formation of the SDP in British Politics ? In the past, minority Parties like Liberal Unionists, Asquithian Liberals, Commonwealth party, etc., passed on to oblivion without making much impact on British politics. But, the birth of SDP has taken place in different circumstances. The traditional and class dominated pattern of political behaviour seems to be breaking down in Britain. A declining post-industrial society appears to be rejecting centralisation and concentration of power and wealth and demanding devolution. Moreover the British people are opposed to any kind of extreme, be it left or right, the mood of the country is more moderate and tolerant.

On the other hand, the electoral popularity of both the major parties is declining, as has been shown by the

1983 General Elections. Labour Party's electoral base has eroded since it still sings the old class tunes. Its total number of seats 209 it got after 1983 elections is the smallest since 1935. The decline in the electoral popularity of Conservatives is also unmistakable if one looks at the percentage of votes since 1951. It got 48 per cent in 1951, 46 per cent in 1970, 44 per cent in 1979 and 42 per cent in 1983. Similarly the Labour got just 28 per cent in 1983 compared to its 37 per cent in 1979. But it was the strongest showing by the Centre party, the SDP-Liberal alliance, since 1923.

The presence of the SDP-Liberal Alliance in British politics cannot be just wished away if one takes into account of the 1983 election results. The Alliance received as much popular votes as the Labour party, its total 7,776,065, compared to the Labour Party's 8,460,860 votes, just a little over 6 lakhs of votes the Alliance got, though the Alliance got only 23 seats in the House of Commons. These results may open up a debate in the country about the faulty nature of the electoral system which is heavily staked against the minority parties. There are already two important pressure groups, the Electoral Reform Society, which wants to introduce the single transferable vote (STV) and the Campaign for

Electoral Reform, which wants proportional representation (PR). SDP is likely to change the nature of British Politics if a change in the electoral system is effected. However,, one should not see the role of the new party in terms of replacing the Labour Party, and restoring fundamentally the two-party system as it occurred when the Labout replaced the Liberals in 1920s. Instead, if the SDP succeeds, it might transform British politics into a multi-party coalition system.

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