Making Rebels

The New Zealand Socialist Party, 1901-1913

By

Mark Edward Dunick

**A thesis submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History**

Victoria University of Wellington

2016

Abstract

The New Zealand Socialist Party (NZSP) was the first radical socialist party in this country. The decade in which it existed was a time of rapid social change. The NZSP began in 1901 as a reaction against the Liberal Party which dominated New Zealand politics at the time. In its first five years the party had two main branches in Wellington and Christchurch, but it grew rapidly after 1907 with the expansion of industrial unionism. The NZSP was overshadowed by the Federation of Labour and never developed a coherent national organisation. As the working class began to organise nationally to challenge the Massey Government, the NZSP failed to adapt to the new political situation and dissolved in 1913.

The party began as a group of marginal outsiders, but as society changed and class became an important political factor, the NZSP played an important role in spreading new ideas and educating a generation of socialists. When the NZSP ended in 1913 the ideas it had promoted were widely accepted among New Zealand's organised working class.

Cover photo

Delegates at the New Zealand Socialist Party, fourth annual conference, 1911 in Dunedin.

Photograph taken by Muir and Moodie. Roth, Herbert Otto, 1917-1994 : Photographs. Ref: 1/1-002591-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22304421>

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Jim McAloon, for always being helpful and encouraging while supervising this project, for always pointing me in the right direction when I got lost, for lending me books, and for showing me how to be a historian.

Thanks to the Polish Educational and Charitable Trust for providing a scholarship and financial assistance. The wonderful librarians at the Alexander Turnbull Library and the Hocken Library in Dunedin were always helpful, as were David Verran at Auckland Public Library and Erin Kimber at the MacMillan Brown Library in Christchurch. Thanks also to Malcolm and Violet for hosting us in Dunedin, and my family for the same and lots more in Christchurch.

Thank you to Charlotte Drene and Toby Boraman for photographing faraway documents for me. Thanks to my fellow History postgraduate students at Victoria for making the year so enjoyable.

And finally, thank you to Catherine, for encouragement, proof reading, and love. I could not have managed without you.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter One	13
Chapter Two	51
Chapter Three	89
Conclusion	134
Bibliography	138

Making Rebels: The New Zealand Socialist Party, 1901-1913

In February 1908, Edward Tregear, head of the Department of Labour, wrote a memo to his Minister, J.A. Millar, describing the rise of the radical socialist movement.

I was lately in the Town Hall of Wellington when three thousand people were there to greet Keir Hardie ... The immense majority were with him in his utterances, one and all. I went from the Town Hall to a small Socialist Hall – there were present about 150 people, men and women. They were not 150 voters merely – each was a preacher, a worker for the cause, an earnest furious adherent. By pamphlets, by street preaching, by coaxing argument, night and day these men were gaining adherents; their ranks grow and grow as all deadly earnest causes grow. It is the only religion of “Hope for the World” they know ... I went to Christchurch. At another socialist meeting the same fervour, the same propaganda, the same determination to make others believe what they believe were manifest. No easy “go-as-your-please” of trade-unionism can fight this spirit. They will win the trades unions as surely as day follows night.¹

Tregear was reporting the activities of the New Zealand Socialist Party (NZSP). He warned the Minister that the growth of militant socialism was the greatest of many threats to social stability and the Liberal government. Tregear urged Millar not to underestimate the strength of the new left wing movement, describing it as “a new religion. It is worked and will be worked by fanatics”.² Both Tregear and Millar saw themselves as moderate socialists who

¹ Edward Tregear, to J.A. Millar, Memo, Re: Labour in New Zealand, 10 February 1908, Hall Jones, William, 1851-1936, MS-Papers-5755-04, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), p.6.

² Ibid., p.5.

supported the Liberal government and its long and stable alliance with the labour movement. The 'earnest' and 'furious' men and women of the NZSP, the first nationally organised radical socialist group in the country, were determined to break that alliance. Formed in 1901, the party was a loose network of idealists, organisers and thinkers who spread socialist ideas during a decade of social transformation. In 1913, when the NZSP dissolved, the Liberals had collapsed and the organised working class was a major force in New Zealand society. Tregear, as President of a new Social Democratic Party, found himself aligned with the radical socialists he once feared, and Millar had sided with Massey's right wing Reform Party.

The decade in which the NZSP existed was characterised by rapid social changes. The nature of work changed as industrialisation spread and employment practices evolved. Piece rates were replaced by hourly wages and skilled workers in small workshops were replaced by less skilled workers in larger factories. These developments were associated with increased workplace conflict and the rapid rise of the trade union movement. Between 1895 and 1900 union membership in New Zealand increased from 8000 to nearly 18000, and by 1913 it was over 71,000. By the end of 1911 an organised working class existed in the cities and some smaller industrial towns. Although different areas developed in different ways and at different speeds, between 1911 and 1913 the threat of an independent working class political movement alarmed both employers and the state.³

As working class politics developed, the NZSP spread socialist ideas and provided a base for militants to network, educate themselves and discuss politics. The NZSP grew into a network of radical socialists who discussed and spread a range of different views.

³ Erik Olssen, 'The Origins of the Labour Party', *New Zealand Journal of History* (NZJH), Vol. 21, no.2, April 1987, pp.79-96.

British ethical socialism emerged in the 1890s, and its adherents saw socialism as primarily a moral issue rather than an economic one. They were radicals opposed to capitalism, but they believed socialism was an ethical philosophy that promised a new way of life. They promoted self-improvement and community building, and were active in local trade unions, utopian communities and a range of clubs and cultural groups, including the Independent Labour Party. Although many were not Christian, ethical socialists often adopted evangelical Christian methods, with a focus on conversions, fellowship and even secular socialist churches.⁴ Many of the Clarion settlers who founded the NZSP had a background in ethical socialism.

The scientific socialism of Karl Marx was the most influential theory among revolutionary socialists in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. Marxists believed class struggle and class conflict played a central role in history and understanding how economic forces influenced society and politics was vital to the workers movement.⁵ The core concepts of Marxist political thought were that economics and society could be understood by using scientific socialist methods, the working class were the agents of change, and they needed to organise themselves independently of other classes in order to achieve a free and truly democratic society.⁶

Anarchism, like Marxism, emerged from the nineteenth century European socialist movement. Anarchists were opposed to both capitalism and the state and advocated a stateless self-managed economy directly controlled by organisations of workers and peasants which would enable genuine individual freedom within a socialist society.⁷ They did not form

⁴ Mark Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp.217-218.

⁵ Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.38-39.

⁶ Ibid., p.44.

⁷ Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), pp.44-47.

political parties or contest elections, instead they adopted a wide range of often contradictory methods ranging from opposition to organisations of any kind, through to building mass organisations and syndicalist unions.⁸

Supporters of revolutionary syndicalism also believed in the primacy of class struggle, but they believed the most effective strategy in the short and long term, was to organise workers at the point of production and take direct action against the employers in order to bring down the capitalist system. They focused on organising workers and had little use for political parties. Syndicalism emerged in the 1890s as a response to the economic changes brought about by the spread of electrical power and the internal combustion engine. Many skilled occupations were replaced with technology which required easily replaceable unskilled workers. Syndicalism appealed to both transient casual workers and also to workers in industries like coalmining and railway working, which had been transformed by the new technology.⁹ Syndicalism came to New Zealand via the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The IWW was formed in the United States in 1905, and several key figures in the NZSP gained experience in the IWW and associated unions before they came to New Zealand.¹⁰

The NZSP did more than any other organisation to introduce these new ideas to the New Zealand working class. Throughout its existence, the Party membership included immigrants with backgrounds in these movements and maintained international contacts with

⁸ Alexandre Skirda, *Facing the Enemy: A History of Anarchist Organization from Proudhon to May 1968*, trans. Paul Sharkey (Oakland: AK Press, 2002), pp.60-66.

⁹ Marcel van der Linden, *Transnational Labour History: Explorations* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), pp.51-57.

¹⁰ Fran Shor, 'Bringing the Storm: Syndicalist Counterpublics and the Industrial Workers, 1908-1914, in Pat Moloney and Kerry Taylor, *On the Left: Essays on Socialism in New Zealand*, (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2002), pp.60-61.

propagandists and organisers from all these ideologies, which attracted varying degrees of support among NZSP members during the twelve years the party existed.

Although many NZSP members went on to play important roles in the founding of the Labour Party and later, the first Labour Government, the NZSP should not be seen as merely a forerunner to the Labour Party. The party educated a generation of revolutionaries and labour activists, including many who took leading roles in the dramatic events of 1912 and 1913. A new kind of democracy emerged and by 1913, class became central to New Zealand politics. Although most NZSP members decided a new type of socialist political party was needed, and joined the Social Democratic Party, many current and former members continued to advocate for Marxism, syndicalism, anti-militarism and anarchism for decades after the party dissolved in 1913. The NZSP had done more than any other group to introduce these ideas to the New Zealand working class.

Historiography

The NZSP was the first socialist party in New Zealand, and was a forerunner to the New Zealand Labour Party and Communist Party. However, there has not been a detailed study of the party since 1957. The NZSP has generally been seen one of a series of early groups which led to the first Labour Government, or as part of the background to other more dramatic Labour history stories.

The most well-known overview of the NZSP is a 1957 article by Herbert Roth.¹¹ He described the NZSP as an important but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to form an independent

¹¹ H. Roth, 'The New Zealand Socialist Party', *Political Science*, Vol.9, no.1, March 1957, pp.51-60.

worker's party. He felt the party's main legacy was its core of experienced activists, many of whom led left wing parties in the following decades. Roth argued that "the rock on which the party foundered was its attitude to reforms".¹² He contended that most of its members turned away from revolutionary ideas. This was partly true, but Roth incorrectly assumes the NZSP was merely a stepping stone towards the goal of a parliamentary Labour Party. Many of the people who passed through the NZSP remained committed to various forms of revolutionary socialism. Roth ignored ethical socialism, the approach followed by many of the party's founders, including Fred Cooke, and many other Clarion settlers. He also portrays Robert Hogg, the Scottish journalist who led the Wellington branch, as a liability. Hogg may well have been difficult but the various setbacks the party faced were almost always caused by more than the actions of one dogmatic leader.¹³ Despite these problems, Roth's study of the NZSP remains the most useful introduction to the party.

Valerie Smith's 1976 thesis on early socialism in New Zealand focuses on the lead up to the Blackball strike in 1908. Smith describes the transition from the moderate state socialism of William Pember Reeves and Edward Tregear to the revolutionary socialism that appears from 1908. She profiles Hogg, his friend Robert Rives la Monte, and a few other early NZSP figures. She also describes the NZSP branches on the West Coast.¹⁴ As James Taylor has pointed out, her analysis of socialist ideology has serious defects, as she argues that working class militancy

¹² Ibid. p.59.

¹³ Ibid. p.55, p.57.

¹⁴ V.J. Smith, "'Gospel of Hope' or 'Gospel of Plunder': Socialism from the mid 1890s up to and including the Blackball Strike of 1908", MA Thesis, Massey University, 1976.

was connected with poor education and an inability to understand complex ideas. She minimises the self-educated workers who were active in the NZSP.¹⁵

Barry Gustafson's book on the early Labour Party covers the NZSP briefly and includes a useful appendix with short biographies of many labour movement leaders before 1919. He argues that the NZSP was influenced by 'foreign' theories, especially syndicalism and Marxism, and neglects the influence of ethical socialism, anti-militarism and local ideas.¹⁶

Kerry Taylor's thesis on the New Zealand Communist Party includes a history of the NZSP which is focused on the Wellington branch and describes the factional disputes from 1908 to 1913.¹⁷ He correctly identifies these disputes as being political rather than personal, but like Roth, he overlooks the impact of ethical socialism. Instead, he describes it as "milder reformist socialism", suggesting that "Many of the early members of the NZSP had never been especially committed to a socialist perspective and could be better described as liberal left or labourists".¹⁸ Taylor emphasises the strong radical subculture that evolved in Wellington and explains why the Wellington branch of the party opposed the Unity proposals of 1913. He has published an article and book chapter drawing on his thesis.¹⁹ Jim McAloon's work on working class Christchurch and the city's labour movement supplies much useful context for the activities of the Christchurch branch of the NZSP.²⁰ Lastly, my own research on the 'Clarion

¹⁵ James Taylor, 'To me, Socialism is not a set of dogmas but a living principle': Harry Atkinson and the Christchurch Socialist Church, 1890-1905', MA Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2010, p.5; V.J. Smith, pp.3-4.

¹⁶ Barry Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence: The Origins and Establishment of the New Zealand Labour Party 1900-1919* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1980).

¹⁷ Kerry Taylor, 'Worker's Vanguard or People's Voice?: the Communist Party of New Zealand from origins to 1946', PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1994.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp.28, 29-30.

¹⁹ Kerry Taylor, 'Our Motto, No Compromise': *The Ideological Origins and Foundation of the Communist Party of New Zealand*, NZJH, Vol. 28, no.2, 1994, pp.160-177; Kerry Taylor, 'Cases of the Revolutionary Left and the Waterside Workers Union', in Melanie Nolan (ed.), *Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand* (Christchurch Canterbury University Press 2005), pp. 203-216.

²⁰ Jim McAloon, 'Working Class Politics in Christchurch, 1905-1914, MA Thesis, Canterbury University, 1986.

Settlers', a group of British socialists who migrated to New Zealand in 1900, explores the origins of many of the founding members of the NZSP.²¹

Biographical studies have highlighted the range of ideas that were present in the NZSP. P.J. O'Farrell's 1964 biography of Harry Holland includes a chapter on Holland's time in the Auckland branch of the NZSP, and Barry Gustafson's biography of Michael Joseph Savage also describes the Auckland branch in detail. Holland, Savage, and other lesser known figures brought their Australian union movement experience to the Auckland branch of the party.²² Michael Bassett and Michael King have written about Peter Fraser, the Scottish socialist who succeeded Savage as Labour Prime Minister in 1940.²³

More recently, James Taylor's thesis on Harry Atkinson and the Socialist Church describes the ideas of a central figure in the Christchurch socialist movement from the 1890s to 1905, and emphasises the importance of British ethical socialist ideas to Atkinson and his circle. It discusses Atkinson's involvement with the Christchurch branch of the NZSP in its early years.²⁴ Jared Davidson's book *Sewing Freedom* focuses on the life of Phillip Josephs, a Latvian anarchist who was part of the radical socialist subculture in Wellington, and often spoke at NZSP events. While anarchism remained a minority view in the NZSP, anarchist ideas and publications were discussed at socialist events.²⁵

²¹ Mark Dunick, 'The Clarion Settlers: A Socialist Migration to New Zealand', History Honours research essay, Victoria University of Wellington, 2014.

²² P.J. O'Farrell, *Harry Holland, Militant Socialist* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1964); Barry Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave, A Biography of Michael Joseph Savage* (Auckland: Reed Methuen, 1986).

²³ Michael Bassett and Michael King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song: A Life of Peter Fraser* (Auckland: Penguin, 2000).

²⁴ James Taylor, 2010.

²⁵ Jared Davidson, *Sewing Freedom: Philip Josephs, Transnationalism & Early New Zealand Anarchism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2013).

Several historians have described the rise of industrial unionism between 1908 and 1913. Although none of these accounts focus on the NZSP, they are essential for understanding the context of the decade in which the NZSP existed. The most important is Erik Olssen's account of the Red Feds, or Federation of Labour, the organisation which dominated the last five years of the life of the NZSP. Although the party is in the background, many of the leading Federation figures were NZSP members.²⁶ Melanie Nolan's 2005 collection of essays on the 1913 strike also contains useful discussion of socialists.²⁷ Stewart Moriarty-Patten has written about the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in New Zealand and his thesis explored the connections between the IWW and the NZSP.²⁸

The NZSP features in the background of much of this literature. A study focused on the party itself is overdue, as previous studies have looked at the party as a precursor to the more important later events, or as part of the background to the growth of working class militancy before the First World War. This study will place the NZSP in the context of the growth of the New Zealand working class as a political force, and focus on the people and ideas that passed through the party. This will show how the party evolved in a period of rapid economic and political change.

²⁶ Erik Olssen, *The Red Feds: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour 1908-1913* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1988).

²⁷ Melanie Nolan (ed.), *Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005).

²⁸ Stuart Moriarty-Patten, 'A World to Win, a Hell to Lose; The Industrial Workers of the World in Early Twentieth Century New Zealand', MA Thesis, Massey University, 2012.

Sources

This study draws on a range of sometimes fragmentary sources. Surviving NZSP records include conference reports, some minute books, and the party's pamphlets and newspapers. The University of Canterbury holds minutes from NZSP conference and executive meeting minutes from 1903 to 1913, as well as financial records and assorted other material from the Christchurch Branch. A Christchurch branch minute book is also held by the Canterbury Museum.²⁹

The Alexander Turnbull Library, the Hocken Library, and the Auckland University Library all hold partial collections of *Commonweal*, the Wellington branch's monthly newspaper. Together these collections cover most issues of the paper in both series, 1903-1904 and 1906-1911. Most political comment in the paper reflects the opinions of the Wellington branch, which may not necessarily have been shared by other branches, however the branch reports in the 'Our Activities' column are very useful. After *Commonweal* merged with the *Maoriland Worker* in 1911, less detailed branch reports were included in combined reports on all industrial union and socialist activity from a particular locality. Some sources were unavailable. The Alexander Turnbull Library has misplaced the minute book of the Wellington branch from June 1911 to January 1914, which was an important source for Kerry Taylor's 1994 thesis, so I could not consult this.

The party's activities were advertised and reported on in daily newspapers so the Papers Past website has been invaluable. For some periods, these newspaper reports are the only sources available.

²⁹ New Zealand Socialist Party Canterbury Branch Minute Book 1909-1912, Efford, Lincoln Winstone Arthur; 1907-1962, C327, Canterbury Museum.

Herbert Roth's papers in the Alexander Turnbull Library have been useful.³⁰ These include several folders of notes for Roth's 1957 article containing some primary sources, including letters and newspaper clippings, as well as some of his biographical notes and his research on related organisations.

Chapter Outlines

The first chapter discusses the NZSP from its beginnings in 1901 to the end of 1906. Very little has been written about the party in this period, when British ethical socialism was a major influence. The main branches in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch were fairly independent and quite different in nature. National coordination was limited, and a range of political opinions were present.

The second chapter examines the conditions which led to a huge increase in membership in 1907 and 1908. Many new members came from an industrial background, quite different from that of the party founders. For the first time the party organised itself as a national body at its 1908 conference and claimed 3000 members.

The third chapter discusses the period from 1909 to 1913. Here the party was overshadowed by the growth of industrial unionism and failed to develop an effective strategy. As class conflict increased, a variety of political approaches developed in the radical socialist movement and the NZSP lost members to other organisations. Finally in 1913 the Federation of Labour promoted a Unity scheme which most of the party agreed to support. All branches except Wellington merged with a new political party and the NZSP ceased to exist as a

³⁰ Roth, Herbert Otto, 1917-1994, Papers, MS-Group-0314, ATL.

national organisation. The chapter will attempt to explain why most of the party chose to amalgamate with a parliamentary party only months after declaring their commitment to revolutionary politics. Although the NZSP no longer existed, the ideas it had promoted had become widely accepted among working class organisations.

Chapter One

This chapter will discuss the formation of the New Zealand Socialist Party and its activities and ideology in the period from 1901 to 1906. In 1900, New Zealand politics was dominated by the Liberal Party and its leader Richard Seddon. The Liberals had introduced a range of progressive legislation including the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act which regulated workplace relations. Most trade unions supported the Liberals and the independent socialist movement consisted of only a few small scattered groups.

The unexpected arrival of nearly 200 British 'Clarion Settlers' gave the tiny socialist movement a huge boost in the second half of 1900. The group was led by William Ranstead, who believed that New Zealand was the 'Socialist Canaan' and had promoted his migration scheme in the *Clarion* newspaper. The new arrivals found work around New Zealand, and in early 1901, Ranstead toured the country meeting the new settlers and existing socialists in a failed attempt to establish a co-operative village. Discussions at the Wellington meeting led to the founding of the New Zealand Socialist Party in July 1901. The new party was boosted by the arrival of British socialist Tom Mann, who toured the country for the party in 1902. Mann was a celebrity and drew crowds wherever he went. This resulted in some increase in membership for the main branches but the party was unable to grow elsewhere.

The dominant philosophy of the new party was British ethical socialism, which emphasised fellowship, community and self-improvement, and the Clarion Settlers included several experienced trade union activists. The party provided a political home for radicals who opposed the arbitration system and the trade union movements' alliance with the Liberal government, and attracted a small number of overseas born individuals from a range of radical traditions including Marxism and anarchism. The only permanent branches were in

Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. Each of these operated separately and in quite different environments. In its first five years the NZSP served mainly as an educational and propaganda group, and had little influence outside the small socialist subcultures it helped to form.

Socialists in a Land of Liberals

The Liberal Party had been in power since January 1891, and from 1893, it had been led by Richard Seddon. It was New Zealand's first modern political party, and claimed to represent the interests of all New Zealanders, rather than one class or section of society. However the party lacked a strong grassroots structure, and was in practice dominated by Seddon. The parliamentary opposition was based on objection to the idea of party politics and party government rather than any specific policies.¹ The Liberals argued that previous governments had served the interests of large landowners at the expense of the rest of the community.² The Liberal government promoted a wide range of progressive legislation which improved the living conditions of many.³ Most notably, the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act regulated relations between employers and unions, and an Arbitration Court heard disputes and set wage rates across industries.⁴ William Pember Reeves, Minister of Labour 1892-95, was responsible for much of this legislation.⁵ Reeves was a Fabian socialist. He believed in a strong state and moderate, practical reforms which improved the lives of working people. He

¹ David Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power, 1891-1912* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988), pp.10-12.

² *Ibid.*, pp.39-42.

³ Bert Roth and Janny Hammond, *Toil and Trouble: The Struggle for a Better Life in New Zealand* (Auckland: Methuen, 1981), p.50.

⁴ H. Roth, *Trade Unions in New Zealand: Past and Present* (Wellington: Reed, 1973), pp.20-21.

⁵ Roth and Hammond, *Toil and Trouble*, p.50.

saw the gradual expansion of state control into every part of society as natural and beneficial. He saw class conflict as futile and believed it could be mediated peacefully by a state that favoured neither workers nor employers.⁶ Reeves' department head was Edward Tregear, also a self-described socialist. As well as administering the IC&A Act, Tregear promoted it internationally by writing for labour journals in the United States and England.⁷

Radical left wing ideas existed only in a few tiny socialist groups in the main centres. The longest lasting was Harry Atkinson's Socialist Church, formed in Christchurch in 1896. There was also a Fabian Society in Dunedin and a Socialist League in Wellington.⁸ In 1900, these groups were mostly inactive. They received an unexpected boost when nearly 200 British socialists migrated to New Zealand. The new arrivals were inspired by William Ranstead, an English businessman and Fabian socialist, who had been promoting New Zealand as a 'Socialist Canaan' in the pages of the popular English socialist weekly the *Clarion*. Ranstead was the funder and part owner of the paper, which by 1900, was the most influential socialist newspaper in Britain.

Established by English journalist Robert Blatchford in 1891, the *Clarion* appeared at a time of rapid expansion for the socialist movement, reporting on the arts, literature and sports, as well as news and opinion.⁹ Blatchford became a leading voice in the British socialist movement and helped popularise ethical socialism. He explained his philosophy of socialism in a series of letters to an imaginary 'John Smith of Oldham', and these were published as the

⁶ Pat Moloney, 'State Socialism and William Pember Reeves: A Reassessment', in Kerry Taylor and Pat Moloney (eds.), *On the Left: Essays in Socialism in New Zealand* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2002), pp.43-49.

⁷ K. R. Howe. 'Tregear, Edward Robert', *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*; <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2t48/tregear-edward-robert>

⁸ James Taylor, p.5.

⁹ Martin Wright, 'Robert Blatchford, the *Clarion* Movement, and the Crucial Years of British Socialism, 1891-1900', *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism*, Vol.13, no.1, 1990, pp.74-76.

pamphlet *Merrie England* in 1894. This sold 750,000 copies in its first year and became the *Clarion* movement's introductory piece of propaganda.¹⁰ *Merrie England* incorporated facts and figures extracted from Fabian publications with an inspirational vision of a future England inspired by the writing of socialist poet and novelist William Morris.¹¹

The new ethical socialism was informed by the ideas in the *Clarion* and *Merrie England*, and attracted the young socialist activists who lectured and campaigned in the industrial centres of Northern England. Although the movement incorporated an eclectic mixture of often contradictory ideas, it promised a new way of life and a New Britain.¹² These socialists were interested not just in political reform but in personal transformation. Their socialism was,

an ethical doctrine about individual fulfilment in and through organic social relations. Community was a necessary setting for individual growth: individuals could realize their potential only through suitable relations to others ... Socialism would rise out of the transformation of individual lives in accordance with the new ethic.¹³

Clarion readers were urged to value the arts, culture and the outdoors, and they set up social groups and projects such as holiday camps, cycling clubs and charity events.¹⁴

Most socialists were drawn to the idea of socialism, rather than to a particular party or tendency. They joined local branches of any convenient group, and were often simultaneously members of an Independent Labour Party branch, a local socialist club, and a socialist cultural

¹⁰ Denis Pye, *Fellowship is Life: The Story of the Clarion Cycling Club* (Scarborough: National Clarion Publishing, 2004), p.27.

¹¹ Stanley Pierson, *British Socialism: The Journey from Fantasy to Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), p.35.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp.35-36.

¹³ Bevir, p.217.

¹⁴ Martin Wright, p.78.

group.¹⁵ These groups built a small but strong socialist subculture in Britain, especially in the industrial towns of Northern England. The *Clarion* was selling about 80,000 copies every week in the late 1890s.¹⁶ Robert Blatchford's brother, Montague, also a *Clarion* writer, described the typical *Clarion* supporters as "young men who have a little above the average intelligence; ... young clerks, school teachers, and even young professional men who have education but little money. These young men have usually been active members of Sunday Schools, debating societies, or political clubs, or at least have held some intellectual position among their mates in mills or workshops".¹⁷

The Clarion Settlers

William Ranstead was the funder and part owner of the *Clarion* when he visited New Zealand in 1899. He stayed with Harry Atkinson in Christchurch and also met Edward Tregear, and Prime Minister Seddon. He became convinced that New Zealand was a socialist society and described his travels in a series of *Clarion* articles. Ranstead decided to settle in New Zealand and bring his family here. When he returned to England in early 1900 to arrange the move, he found that dozens of *Clarion* readers had written to the paper inquiring about moving to New Zealand. At first he offered advice and support to these migrants but soon his enthusiasm got the better of him and he published a long article proposing a cooperative village in New Zealand.¹⁸ This triggered more enquiries, and between August and November four ships carrying groups of Clarion Settlers arrived in New Zealand.¹⁹ These were mostly

¹⁵ June Hannam and Karen Hunt, *Socialist Women: Britain, 1880s to 1920s* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.4.

¹⁶ Keith Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism in Britain* (Gloucestershire, Sutton Publishing, 1997), p.34.

¹⁷ Montague Blatchford, *Clarion*, 30 April 1898, quoted in Pierson, p.46.

¹⁸ *Clarion*, 24 March 1901, p.96; 14 April 1901, p.117.

¹⁹ Kathryn Peacocke, 'Ranstead, William', *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*; <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/3r3/ranstead-william>

single men, but some were married and intended to bring their wives to New Zealand later. The group included twenty five married couples, some with children.²⁰ As *Clarion* readers, all of the settlers had some interest in or connection with socialism. A minority were experienced political activists, some of whom would go on to play significant roles in the NZSP. The new arrivals found work around the country, and established the Clarion Fellowship to serve as a social and mutual aid group for the new settlers and for *Clarion* readers who continued to arrive from Britain in small groups.²¹ The Fellowship was run from Wellington by recent arrivals Fred Cooke and Robert Denew.²² Cooke was a tailor from Bradford who had been involved with the Independent Labour Party before signing on with Ranstead's migration, and Denew had managed a London Co-operative store and was a keen supporter of Ranstead's plan for a cooperative village.²³

A socialist reunion was held in Wellington on May Day 1901, to coincide with a visit by William Ranstead. The attendees included recently arrived settlers, local socialists and sympathisers, and a few local and national politicians. The meeting was chaired by Robert Hogg, a Scottish socialist poet and recent immigrant who had been active in the Independent Labour Party in Glasgow.²⁴ Ranstead informed the group that the other Clarion Settlers around the country were doing well and announced he was seeking a block of land to buy for his communal settlement.²⁵ However, many settlers were losing interest in his proposals. Some had never

²⁰ From my analysis of the names in Ranstead's notebook, Ranstead William, 1859-1944, MS-Papers-0071-02, ATL.

²¹ *Evening Post* (EP), 29 January 1901, p.4.

²² W.R. Edge, *Clarion Settlers per "Kumara" "Wakanui" "Tokomaru" "Paparoa" and "Rakaia" in 1900*, (Auckland: William Reed Edge, 1974), p.30.

²³ Jim McAloon, 'Cooke, Frederick Riley', *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*; <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/3c29/cooke-frederick-riley>; R.C. Denew to William Ranstead, 15 May 1900, MS-Papers-0071-03, ATL.

²⁴ EP, 2 May 1901, p.2.

²⁵ Edge, pp.30-31.

been interested in the scheme, some disagreed with how Ranstead proposed to run the settlement, while others rejected the idea of a utopian settlement and were becoming interested in the idea of a political party.²⁶

The legislation that had attracted Ranstead and some of the Clarion settlers to New Zealand must have seemed very strange to those settlers who thought socialism meant independent working class politics. Sources are scarce but it seems this issue dominated the discussions among the newly enthusiastic New Zealand socialist scene in the first months of 1901.

Some of the settlers, including Ranstead, opposed a Socialist Party. One wrote to Ranstead, "As to the proposed Socialist Party in Wellington, as you say, to work along the lines of the present government and push on state ownership & state control is far better in this colony than talking about the fundamental and economic basis of socialism".²⁷ Robert Denew was worried by the Marxism of a newly arrived American journalist, Robert Rives La Monte, telling Ranstead "I'm afraid his ideas re Class Struggle & Class Consciousness will not work here".²⁸ La Monte had criticised the Liberal government in the American socialist press. The *International Socialist Review* asked "Have we not been told all along that New Zealand is... the "most socialistic" country in the world? Comrade Robert Rives La Monte's impressions of this proletarian eldorado knock the bottom out of this iridescent air castle." La Monte told his American readers that there was no class consciousness in New Zealand, but that the arbitration system was coming under pressure and he hoped that trade unionists would soon learn to rely on their own strength and "thus develop a militant class-conscious spirit".²⁹

²⁶ H. Roth, 'William Ranstead and the Clarion Settlers', pp.2-3, MS-Papers-0027-27, ATL.

²⁷ William Worsley to Ranstead, received 13 September 1901, MS-Papers-0071-16, ATL.

²⁸ R.C. Denew to Ranstead, 21 September 1901, MS-Papers-0071-16, ATL.

²⁹ *International Socialist Review*, Vol.2, no.4, October 1901, p.305.

Robert Hogg, Fred Cooke and many other Clarion settlers agreed, and plans for a new party were soon being made.

By June a meeting had chosen the party motto 'Workers of the World Unite', and decided the party constitution would be modelled on those of the Independent Labour Party in Britain, and the Social Democratic Party of Germany. The party would oppose the politics of Richard Seddon. Robert Hogg was reported to be the leading figure in the party, and it appears he had already contacted British Independent Labour Party leader Keir Hardie to discuss the possibility of him visiting New Zealand to build support for the new party.³⁰ Roderick Ross, a Clarion settler from Edinburgh, later recalled that many of the founding members were quite hostile to Seddon and the Liberal Party from the beginning. He wrote that many of the recent British immigrants recognised that "all powerful as the Liberal Party then was, it had to be destroyed before any real progress towards Socialism could be achieved".³¹ This view does not appear to have been unanimous. Robert Denew, the temporary secretary for the new group, wrote to the *Evening Post* to correct a report on the meeting, claiming "We have not gone so far as to either adopt a constitution or frame a policy, so it is entirely erroneous to describe the movement as either pro or anti-Seddonite".³²

At the next meeting a resolution was passed unanimously, "That this meeting, after due deliberation, is of opinion that the time is ripe for the formation of an Independent Socialist Party to further educational and aggressive political work in the colony."³³ The meeting elected a committee to draft a constitution.

³⁰ EP, 24 June 1901, p.4.

³¹ *Maoriland Worker* (MW), 14 Dec 1921, p.3.

³² EP, 25 June 1901, p.6.

³³ EP, 12 July 1901, p.4.

The founding meeting of the New Zealand Socialist Party was held on 28 July 1901. Despite Denew's claims, the majority were opposed to Seddon and the Liberals and sought to distance the new party from the establishment. One founding member later wrote that the meeting was not advertised publicly in order to avoid it being "swamped by the followers of Dick Seddon and the effort being rendered futile". Instead trustworthy socialists were personally invited. About 100 attended the meeting, which carried a motion calling for the establishment of a New Zealand Socialist Party.³⁴ The *Evening Post* reported that there was much discussion on the name of the party but "The majority present were in favour of a name which described exactly what they planned the party to be, and the name "New Zealand Socialist Party" was unanimously adopted".

The objects of the party shall be to work for the organisation of New Zealand as a Co-operative Commonwealth in which the land and all the instruments of production, distribution and exchange shall be owned and managed by the people collectively.

Methods – (a) The propagation of Socialism by meetings, lectures, debates, and classes; (b) The circulation of books, papers, pamphlets, and leaflets of a Socialistic nature; (c) the utilisation of the press in speaking of the principles of the party; (d) the organisation of Socialists for united actions at elections.³⁵

These objects were fairly broad and uncontroversial to those with a background in the ILP or other British socialist groups, clearly defining the party as socialist, without containing overtly

³⁴ MW, 14 Dec 1921, p.3.

³⁵ EP, 29 July 1901. p.6.

militant language. The methods too seemed moderate, pragmatic, and unlikely to provoke controversy.

The Auckland Socialists

A week after the NZSP was established in Wellington, another group of socialists met in Auckland, and established an independent socialist group which soon became the Auckland branch of the NZSP. Two of the founders were from Queensland. Robert Way and Frank Foster had introduced themselves to Auckland trade union activists as soon as they arrived in 1901. Many of the people they met were involved in the Liberal Party, and Way and Foster soon became dissatisfied. They organised a series of lectures on socialism, which attracted a group of Clarion Settlers who were living in Auckland.³⁶ This informal group took part in debates with other radical groups, for example, intervening at a meeting of the National Single Tax League in June 1901. "A very lively discussion followed between the socialists and the single taxers, several speaking on each side".³⁷

The study group decided to formalise itself, and called a preliminary meeting to form an Auckland Socialist Society on the evening of 8 August 1901.³⁸ Thirty one men attended the meeting in Wakefield Street, and paid an initial fee of one shilling. Several others joined soon after, including James Aggers, the only New Zealand born founding member, and English socialist Percy Andrews, both future leaders of what soon became the Auckland Branch of the

³⁶ *Standard*, 10 June 1936, p.5.

³⁷ NZH, 29 June 1901, p.3.

³⁸ *Auckland Star*, 5 August 1901, p.8.

NZSP.³⁹ Harry Atkinson from the Socialist Church was also present, and at least fifteen of the founders were Clarion Settlers.⁴⁰

The new group constructed a portable speaking platform and commenced public speaking on Sunday afternoons and on weeknights.⁴¹ Soon it was clear that larger meeting rooms were needed.⁴² The Socialist Society wrote to the Wellington socialists in September.⁴³ They explained that they had decided to “tone down their title somewhat, and have formed the Social Democratic Society”.⁴⁴ They agreed to appoint two members to coordinate with Wellington and any other socialist or reform groups in the country. The group called itself by various names, including the Auckland Socialist Society, the Social Democratic Society or simply the Socialist Society, but by early 1902 the group was increasingly referred to as the Auckland Branch of the NZSP.⁴⁵

Christchurch

Christchurch was an industrialised city with a large trade union movement and a range of radical groups which included women’s rights organisations, the Wainoni commune founded by former chemistry professor Alexander Bickerton, and Harry Atkinson’s Socialist Church.⁴⁶ Atkinson had founded the Socialist Church in 1890s after living in Manchester, where he was involved with the Labour Church and the ethical socialism of northern England. While he lived

³⁹ *Standard*, 10 June 1936, p.5.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, compared with names in Ranstead’s Notebook, MS-Papers-0071-02, ATL.

⁴¹ *The Standard*, 10 June 1936, p.6.

⁴² NZH, 17 August 1901, p.4.

⁴³ EP, 10 September 1901, p.4.

⁴⁴ R.C. Denew to H.A. Atkinson, 20 October 1901, 94-106-14/15, MS-Group-0314, ATL.

⁴⁵ NZH, 20 March 1902, p.5.

⁴⁶ Jim McAloon, ‘Radical Christchurch’, in John Cookson and Graeme Dunstall (eds.), *Southern Capital, Christchurch: Towards a City Biography* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press), pp.171-174.

in England he met many socialist leaders, and had hosted William Ranstead during his 1899 visit to New Zealand. The Socialist Church promoted self-education, fellowship and discussion of socialist ideas, rather than orthodox Christianity.⁴⁷

After the Wellington branch had been founded, Secretary Robert Denew wrote to Atkinson, informing him that the party had decided to propose a federation or alliance of all the progressive and reform groups in the country. He asked “Can you see your way to put this before the various bodies in your city? This may be a first step towards a united conference”.⁴⁸ Denew enclosed a copy of the Socialist Party’s first leaflet and a draft motion for Atkinson to read at the next Trades Council meeting. The motion proposed a “Socialist League for NZ”, made up of “all associations – of whatever denomination – accepting a common socialist plank such as that stated as the object of the NZ Socialist Party – Wellington branch & that adopted by the S C [Socialist Church] in 1897”.

The Canterbury Trades and Labour Council finally replied to the Wellington branch in December, saying that they had decided to form a Christchurch branch. A committee was formed to circulate a proposed platform to the various Labour and reform organisations in Christchurch.⁴⁹ The founding meeting of the Christchurch branch was held on 21 January 1902, and chaired by Henry Rusbridge, the chairman of the Trades Council. He told the meeting the Wellington NZSP had asked the Trades Council to help form a branch in Christchurch, and while there would be no official connection between the party and the Trades Council, he hoped that the two organisations would be of assistance to each other. He then read out the objects of the party. A motion to form the party was moved and seconded.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ James Taylor, 2010, pp.1-3.

⁴⁸ R.C. Denew to Atkinson 20 October 1901, 94-104-14/15, MS-Group-0314, ATL.

⁴⁹ NZH, 12 December 1901, p.4.

⁵⁰ *Star*, 22 January 1902, p.1.

Two Liberal politicians spoke at the Christchurch meeting. George Laurensen, the member for Lyttleton, said he hoped the party would have a great future, but warned that the New Zealand parliament was not a radical one. He believed socialists should fight for the land to be controlled by the people, and for public control of transport, lighting and water. Harry Ell argued that ‘the socialist constitution was really what true Liberals had been fighting for’. He said the Liberals were unable to achieve change as the Cabinet and Legislative Council could overrule Parliament. He wanted the party to adopt a policy to change this.⁵¹

The circumstances of the founding of these branches would influence how each of them developed. All three centres had an influx of Clarion Settlers who were interested in socialism, but each would develop differently. The Wellington branch was the largest and was able to establish a strong radical subculture in the city. The Auckland branch was established by a group of trade union activists who would continue to be involved in the city’s union movement for many years, and the Christchurch branch was, from its beginning, only one of many groups within the city’s broad radical scene.

Tom Mann arrives in New Zealand

The morning after the Christchurch meeting, the *Press* carried a dockside interview with a newly arrived visitor who was about to become the NZSP’s greatest asset. The English socialist and trade union activist Tom Mann had arrived in Wellington with his family. Mann had had a long and varied career in the English socialist and trade union movement. He had worked in a coal mine as a teen before becoming an apprentice tool maker. He had been interested in

⁵¹ *Star*, 22 January 1902, p.1.

Bible studies and Sunday School teaching as a young man, and became a vegetarian and temperance advocate. Later he moved to London where he became a socialist and trade union activist. He joined the Social Democratic federation in 1885 and quickly became a full time organiser. In August 1889 he became nationally known as one of the leaders of the Great London Dock Strike. He was secretary of the Independent Labour Party from 1894 to 1897, but left the ILP after a political dispute and the messy breakdown of his marriage. His wife would not agree to a divorce and from 1898 he lived with ILP activist Elsie Harker and had four children with her. A new start with a new family led him to move to New Zealand, where Elsie became known simply as Mrs Mann.⁵²

Mann had been curious about New Zealand since reading Ranstead's articles in the *Clarion*.⁵³ On the Wellington wharf he told the *Press* he had been interested in New Zealand for some time, and planned to travel in New Zealand and Australia before settling down. "My main object... will be to gain an intimate knowledge of the colonies, especially in regard to their social and political legislation". He predicted severe industrial depression in Britain when the South African War came to an end, with no hope of practical or constructive legislation being introduced either. Therefore, he had decided to "gain a knowledge and experience of the colonies that should be of some use to me".⁵⁴ He was very interested in studying the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, which had attracted considerable attention in England.⁵⁵

Mann began a series of speeches the weekend he arrived. On Friday night he was asked to speak at the regular meeting of the Wellington Trades Council, where he described the

⁵² Chris Wrigley, 'Mann, Thomas (1856-1941)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, online edition, Jan 2011, (www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34854).

⁵³ Tom Mann, *Tom Mann's Memoirs* (London: Labour Publishing Company, 1923), pp.161-162.

⁵⁴ *Press*, 22 January 1902, p.7.

⁵⁵ *NZH*, 22 January 1902, p.5.

progress made by British trade unions.⁵⁶ On Sunday night he spoke at the Wellington Opera House, on 'Socialism. Is it coming? Is it desirable?' While Mann admitted he had not been in New Zealand long enough to analyse the economy and social life in detail, he gave a detailed account of wealth inequalities and poverty in North America and Britain, and argued that monopoly capitalism must be replaced with a democratic socialist system which, he said, would "produce most efficiently and distribute most righteously".⁵⁷

Within two weeks Mann had officially joined the NZSP at their Wellington meeting. He told the twenty socialists present that he saw the position of the Liberal Party as "not very bright", and that the Wellington Trades Council was in a "very flabby state" and had made little progress.⁵⁸

Two weeks later Mann arrived in Christchurch for a massive public meeting organised by the Christchurch socialists. The advertisements described Mann as 'Britain's greatest Orator'.⁵⁹ About 1500 people heard him describe the situation for workers in countries he had studied. He argued that the improvements in conditions he had seen in Britain, France and Germany had only come from trade union organising, not from governments or politicians. "Neither Liberal nor Conservative party in Britain had ever initiated any movement for the benefit of the Democracy". Mann congratulated the New Zealand government on its Conciliation and Arbitration Act and other progressive legislation but said there was much that remained to be done. "There was no safety for the colony short of the complete nationalisation of the raw material, the national ownership of land, mines, and minerals, and the running of industry on

⁵⁶ EP, 25 January 1902, p.4.

⁵⁷ EP, 27 January 1902, p.5.

⁵⁸ EP, 11 Feb 1902, p.4.

⁵⁹ *Press*, 28 Feb 1902, p.1.

a co-operative basis.”⁶⁰ Mann was also busy meeting trade unions and finding their opinions of the Arbitration Act ranged from hostility through to acceptance, and he decided that better trade union organisation was the key to overcoming the weaknesses in the Act.⁶¹ In April, the Auckland branch of the party hosted Mann, who spent the week meeting trade unions and lecturing.⁶² He spoke briefly at the conference of the Trades and Labour Council, and at a joint Trades Council and NZSP public meeting. He told the meeting trade unionism was growing rapidly in Britain and discussed the union movement in Denmark, Germany, France and Sweden.⁶³

Mann returned to Wellington to start a series of regular public lectures for the NZSP.⁶⁴ In early June, he was appointed national organiser for the party.⁶⁵ According to Wellington socialist and recent Clarion settler Will Kraig, the branch had been “rather somnolent” at the beginning of the year but membership had doubled in the two months to June 1902.⁶⁶ Mann’s first task as national organiser was a three week tour of the West Coast of the South Island. On arrival in Greymouth he was greeted by local trade union officials and given a tour of the town. That evening he spoke to a crowd of 200 at the Greymouth Opera House. Mann was introduced by the Mayor and gave a broad overview of British economic and labour history as he saw it, followed by a detailed account of the work conditions in the Waihi mines he had just visited. He discussed his experiences as a labour organiser in Europe and argued that workers federated in unions would bring peace. “The Trusts and combines, industrial and otherwise, had now assumed such vast proportions that it was the duty of the state ... to take them over

⁶⁰ *Press*, 1 March 1902, p.7.

⁶¹ Mann, pp.166-169.

⁶² *Auckland Star*, 3 April 1902, p.3.

⁶³ *Auckland Star*, 5 April 1902, p.7; *NZH*, 8 April 1902, p.6.

⁶⁴ *EP*, 28 April 1902, p.5.

⁶⁵ *Press*, 2 June 1902, p.4.

⁶⁶ *The Pilot: The Reform Journal of New Zealand*, July 1902, p.19.

and work them for the benefit of humanity”.⁶⁷ A week later he spoke at a public meeting for the wharf labourers union. The *Grey River Argus* described his speech as “a masterpiece of oratory, stamping the lecturer as a lover of humanity and an earnest worker in the noble cause of lifting up human nature from the sordid poverty of mental indifference to the higher plane of the brotherhood of man and the sharing of all wealth produced by mankind at large. To one and all of his audience the address was a revelation”.⁶⁸ Mann wrote later that visitors were so infrequent in some of the mining towns that almost everyone there, regardless of political persuasion, came to his talks just to relieve the monotony of life in such an isolated place.⁶⁹

Mann returned to Wellington at the end of June and resumed his regular lectures for the Socialist Party, giving an account of his trip and his impression of the coal industry.⁷⁰ Two weeks later he was back in the South Island. Addressing a large Saturday evening crowd in Cathedral Square, he described the state of industry in the world and the working classes in Britain, and said it was “most necessary for people here to watch closely the changes in the English market, which were manipulated by capitalists”.⁷¹ He spoke in small towns around the South Island, encouraging his audience to form Socialist Party branches. In Lyttleton, for instance, thirty people heard Mann speak and decided to form a branch afterwards.⁷² In Dunedin he was greeted by the local Trades and Labour Council and the Workers Political Committee.⁷³ He gave a series of lectures in the city and a few smaller centres, including

⁶⁷ *Grey River Argus*, 11 June 1902, p.2.; 12 June 1902, p.2.

⁶⁸ *Grey River Argus*, 20 June 1902, p.3.

⁶⁹ Mann, pp.172-173.

⁷⁰ EP, 30 June 1902, p.2.

⁷¹ *Press*, 14 July 1902, p.2.

⁷² *Press*, 17 July 1902, p.4.

⁷³ *Otago Daily Times* (ODT), 22 July 1902, p.3.

Mataura, Gore and Invercargill.⁷⁴ He returned to Dunedin for another public lecture on 'The Democracies of Europe'.⁷⁵

Mann returned to Wellington and reported that five new NZSP branches had formed as a result of his South Island tour. However the South Island branches of the party were weaker than they should be, as the leading activists were spending a great deal of their time on other organisations. He hoped this could be rectified and more of their time devoted to the party's propaganda work.⁷⁶ Later in August he returned to the South Island, visiting small towns again, starting with a lecture in Timaru. After this meeting a dozen locals stayed behind and formed a branch of the NZSP.⁷⁷

Mann returned to Wellington briefly before leaving for Australia. He had learnt that the Victorian State elections were about to be held so he decided to visit Melbourne and ended up staying on to work for the Victorian Labor party.⁷⁸ Mann gave his last public lecture in Wellington on Sunday 14 September.⁷⁹ Mann was a genuine celebrity whose presence enhanced the party profile. He drew crowds where ever he went and was often greeted by local mayors and other officials who would not normally associate themselves with the Socialist Party.

⁷⁴ *Otago Witness*, 30 July 1902, p.54.

⁷⁵ ODT, 5 August 1902, p.2.

⁷⁶ EP, 14 August 1902, p.4.

⁷⁷ *Timaru Herald*, 23 August 1902, p.4.

⁷⁸ Mann, pp.178-179.

⁷⁹ EP, 11 Sept 1902, p.6.

After Tom Mann, a temporary boost

The Wellington branch continued to be active after Mann left, and held its first annual social in September. The entertainment included readings of Robert Burns' poetry, and a range of musical pieces from men and women including Mrs Mann, who had stayed in Wellington with the children after her husband had left for Australia.⁸⁰ The branch was strong and active with a programme of open air meetings, indoor lectures and social activities, often holding several public meetings each week.⁸¹

Most of the other branches formed during Mann's tour left little trace. The Wellington group wrote to the new branches suggesting the formation of a colonial executive, and the appointment of a new fulltime organiser to replace Tom Mann. The objects of the party were included in the letter, which recommended members contribute a shilling per month.⁸² The Christchurch branch called a special meeting to discuss the letter but no details survive.⁸³ There is no record of an executive committee being formed and the only newspaper report on a small branch is from Timaru, and is probably fairly typical of the state of these new branches. A Mr Wallace had helped establish the Timaru branch after Tom Mann's lecture in August.⁸⁴ By September, Wallace was secretary of the Timaru Progressive Association, which appeared at the same time, and had an overlapping membership with the Timaru Socialist Party. Wallace read the Wellington letter at an open meeting of the Progressive Association, which caused one member to point out that the letter "seemed to indicate that this society had been formed as a branch of the New Zealand Socialist Party, but it was not so". The

⁸⁰ EP, 24 Sept, 1902, p.6.

⁸¹ For example, an advertisement lists four meetings in one week. EP, 20 Sept 1902, p.6.

⁸² *Timaru Herald*, 3 October 1902, p.4.

⁸³ *Star*, 25 September, 1902, p.3.

⁸⁴ *Timaru Herald*, 23 August 1902, p.4.

members “were not going to tie themselves to any party” but would try to advance the interests of their own town. The group, of about twenty people, seemed to be mainly interested in local issues and it seems likely that the Timaru group which formed after Mann’s visit was a subset of this group and did not have an independent existence.⁸⁵ Tom Mann encouraged his audiences to form branches of the party, and in many cases these groups did meet and Mann passed contact addresses back to Wellington, but these groups were never formally attached to the NZSP and merged with other progressive groups if they survived at all.

Socialist Publishing

Publishing and propaganda became a focus for the party. After a few experiments, *Commonweal*, produced by the Wellington branch, became the party’s main regular publication. The Auckland branch of the party were the first to take up publishing a newspaper, but neither their paper nor their branch lasted very long. The leaders of the Auckland branch were active in the local trade union movement and one of them, J Foster, had proposed a monthly reform journal at the Trades Council conference in April.⁸⁶ The conference was in favour of the idea and the Seaman’s Union pledged direct support. Foster, Way and PG Andrews made up the editorial team, and the first issue of *The Pilot* appeared in July.⁸⁷ It described itself as ‘The Reform Journal of New Zealand’ and promised that “Reformers of all grades who have something to offer for the betterment of humanity, will ever find the columns of the PILOT open to them”. The editors promised the journal would

⁸⁵ *Timaru Herald*, 3 October 1902, p.4.

⁸⁶ NZH, 3 April 1902, p.6.

⁸⁷ *Pilot*, July 1902.

be of interest to trade unionists, members of the Cooperative movement, socialists, and the general reader. The first issue contained updates and opinions on the work of the Socialist Party and the trade union movement. It included an article on the co-operative movement, a report from the Auckland Peace Association, and one on women's reform work by Margaret Sievwright, president of the National Council of Women. Percy Andrews contributed a long critique of a talk by George Fowlds, the Liberal MP for Auckland and single tax advocate. Tom Mann contributed an article on the trade union movement in New Zealand in which he said it had an "absence of international spirit".⁸⁸ 8000 copies of the first issue were printed but not fully paid for. The printer took Foster, Way and Andrew to court, demanding money owed. Foster told the court the three of them had started the *Pilot*, but Foster had paid for issue two himself as the other two "had deserted the sinking ship".⁸⁹ Foster asked for funds to set up a co-operative newspaper company in the second issue, which appeared a month later than advertised.⁹⁰ The third and final issue appeared on 25 October and was only four pages long.⁹¹

In November 1902, a new nationally distributed weekly labour journal was announced in Wellington, to be published by the Trades Council and edited by Robert Hogg.⁹² *The Democrat* advertised itself as an independent labour journal.⁹³ The eight page weekly was described as "hurriedly compiled, but the brightness of some of the comment gives promise of the paper becoming an interesting organ of the trade unionists of the colony".⁹⁴ After only a month, the *Democrat* announced it was temporarily suspending publication, "owing to the lack of interest taken in the publication by the Trade Unionists of this country. An effort is being

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁸⁹ NZH, 26 September 1902, p.7.

⁹⁰ *Pilot*, September 1902, p.2.

⁹¹ *Pilot*, October 1902.

⁹² *Star*, 6 November 1902, p.3.

⁹³ *Free Lance*, 22 November 1902, p.3; Kerry Taylor, p.28.

⁹⁴ EP, 18 November 1902, p4.

made to create fresh interest in the paper".⁹⁵ Nothing further was heard from the *Democrat*, and within a few weeks, a new and more radical, Socialist newspaper appeared in Wellington.

In February 1903, the Wellington branch decided on a "vigorous campaign" for the April municipal elections and selected Dave McLaren and William Hampton as their candidates. Both men had been active in local trade union politics, and McLaren had been an independent city councillor since 1901.⁹⁶ McLaren was also the secretary of the Wellington Waterside Worker's Union.⁹⁷ Hampton and Robert Hogg committed to preparing a report on the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act to be sent to the International Socialist Congress planned for August in Amsterdam. The American socialist Robert Rives La Monte was elected to the position of organising secretary, and agreed to edit a new monthly newspaper to be called *Commonweal*. Hogg would soon become editor, although precisely when is not clear.⁹⁸

The first issue of *Commonweal* appeared on Saturday February 21, 1903, and was distributed free. The front page featured a modified version of Walter Crane's 'A Garland for May Day', first published in the *Clarion* of May 1895. Crane's illustration features Persephone, the Greek goddess of spring and rebirth, personified as 'Socialism' and surrounded by a wreath of flowers threaded with ribbons bearing socialist slogans.⁹⁹ In the *Commonweal* version, the English slogans in the ribbons at the goddess's feet have been replaced with clumsily drawn local slogans. The first issue argued for revolution not reform;

The Commonweal has come and come to stay. It has no apology to offer in connection with its appearance, unless it is to apologise for not appearing

⁹⁵ *Press*, 16 January 1903, p.6.

⁹⁶ *EP*, 20 February 1903, p.5.

⁹⁷ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, p.161

⁹⁸ *EP*, 20 February 1903, p.5.

⁹⁹ Morna O'Neill, *Walter Crane: The Arts and Crafts, Painting, and Politics, 1875-1890* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp.50-51.

before. It is the organ and advocate of an aggressive political party which takes the field for the first time in the April municipal elections in this Empire city, but which will remain in the field till it has captured the government of New Zealand, abolished poverty and wage slavery, and turned Maoriland into a Co-Operative Commonwealth, where each shall be for all and all for each, where, in the words of grand old William Morris, - All *mine* and all *thine* shall be *ours*, and no more shall any man crave For riches that serve nothing but to fetter a friend for a slave.¹⁰⁰

The paper contained advertisements for several Wellington businesses, a list of socialist pamphlets for sale, and a few news items critical of the Arbitration Court or the Single Tax League, as well as several longer articles on socialist principles.

More practically, the paper promoted the two Socialist candidates in the upcoming Wellington municipal elections. Hampton and McLaren called for the council to build and rent out decent housing, and for the establishment of Municipal coal depots, City run vegetable and fish markets, and Municipal refreshment rooms. These would be a “first step towards municipalising the food and drink supplies of the citizens”. They also demanded the abolition of contract employment on public works, which they said should be replaced by permanent employment on union wages and conditions.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ *Commonweal*, Feb 1903, p.4.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

Opposing the Arbitration Act

In February 1903, the Wellington branch organised a series of public meetings to discuss the Arbitration Act. The discussions were to be included in the report on the Arbitration Act to be sent to an International Socialist Congress. Robert la Monte chaired the meeting, which heard from half a dozen trade unionists, including the President of the Wellington Trades and Labour Council, Mr Westbrook. Westbrook told the meeting the Act “had done good” but required amendments. Most speakers agreed with Mr Cooper, the Trades Council secretary, who said the Act had “killed the fighting spirit in the working class”. Only one, a Mr Townsend, gave the act “unqualified praise”.¹⁰² The meeting provoked a hostile newspaper editorial which described La Monte as “the latter day prophet of Socialism in Wellington” and quoted him as saying “There is but one way – the class struggle - to socialism”.¹⁰³

In Auckland, the local socialists became involved in a dispute in the furniture manufacturing trade.¹⁰⁴ The dispute turned into a lock out and the party called an open air meeting attended by two to three hundred people. A speaker said the Arbitration Act was a failure as “It prevented the worker from striking but it did not prevent the employer from striking”.¹⁰⁵

In March, the Wellington branch held another meeting to hear the results of Hampton and Hogg’s investigation into the IC&A Act.¹⁰⁶ At the meeting, the NZSP condemned “the outrageous attempt of the employers of the cabinet making trade in Auckland to nullify the beneficial effects of the award of the arbitration court”. The resolution expressed its hearty sympathy to the locked out workers and urged them to join the Socialist Party “in its efforts

¹⁰² EP, 26 Feb 1903, p.5.

¹⁰³ *West Coast Times*, 3 March 1903, p.2.

¹⁰⁴ *Auckland Star*, 10 February 1903, p.2.

¹⁰⁵ *Auckland Star*, 11 March 1903, p.2.

¹⁰⁶ EP, 11 March 1903, p.6.

to overthrow the wage system and secure to the workers the full product of their toil” and described the employers as ‘anarchistic’, and whose actions were “an open defiance of the law of the land”.¹⁰⁷

The Wellington branch had little success in the April municipal elections. McLaren was returned to his council seat but Hampton was not elected.¹⁰⁸ A month later they had their annual general meeting. W.H. Hampton was elected chairman, Will Kraig Vice chair, H. Ellicock financial and literature secretary and J Griffiths general secretary.¹⁰⁹ The branch held its annual social on 10 June, which was open to the public and featured music, food and dancing, as well as “an exhibition of muscular development and feats of strength” from a Mr Harris Trigger.¹¹⁰

The Auckland socialists reported a rapid increase in membership after Tom Mann’s visit, and briefly recruited local Councillor and prominent trade unionist Arthur Rosser.¹¹¹ This did not last, and in 1903 the leading members of the Auckland branch got into a messy conflict over control of the Trades Council. In July the party convinced the Trades Council to set up a joint committee with them and draft a platform for the municipal election campaign.¹¹² By September relations between the party and the Trades Council broke down. Thirty or forty people attended what the *Auckland Star* described as ‘a stormy conference’. The meeting was supposed to discuss the municipal election campaign but several delegates objected as individual unions had not authorised participation in the elections. Some objected to the nomination of Arthur Rosser as he had already announced he would run as an independent

¹⁰⁷ EP, 12 March 1903, p.5.

¹⁰⁸ EP, 30 April 1903, p.6.

¹⁰⁹ EP, 29 May 1903, p.4.

¹¹⁰ EP, 8 June 1903, p.6.

¹¹¹ *Pilot*, July 1902, p.18.

¹¹² NZH, 30 July 1903, p.6.

candidate. Socialist Party members Robert Way and William Pierpont Black nominated J. Kneen, the secretary of the Seamen's Union as a council candidate. Mr Phillips, the President of the Trades Council tried to stop this nomination but the Socialist Party members managed to outvote him.¹¹³ The Trades Council eventually changed its rules to exclude anyone not affiliated with a union from its meetings. When the president declared the motion carried, "a perfect uproar broke forth, the proceedings being of a most disorderly character". Socialists were prominent in the chaos and union delegates threatened to remove one unnamed socialist physically. The socialists tried to question the president's ruling but could not win a vote, and eventually all withdrew from the meeting.¹¹⁴

By the end of the year the Auckland branch was "having an off season during the summer months" according to the *Commonweal* editor, who was not impressed, and urged Auckland members to take more initiative.¹¹⁵

The party had a low profile in Christchurch too. In April 1903, they had helped to set up a coalition of progressive groups, including the Socialist Church, the Canterbury Women's Institute, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the Progressive Liberal Association, to hold quarterly public meetings on topics of general interest.¹¹⁶ There are no reports of NZSP branch meetings in Christchurch for the rest of the year and the branch seems to have gone into recess. The December *Commonweal* reported it had not heard from Christchurch members. It did report the creation of a short lived new branch in Mine Creek on the West

¹¹³ *Auckland Star*, 1 September 1903, p.3.

¹¹⁴ *Auckland Star*, 24 September 1903, p.5.

¹¹⁵ *Commonweal*, December 1903, p.39.

¹¹⁶ *Press*, 28 April 1903, p.4.

Coast of the South Island. The branch was led by J. Aitken and had sixteen members, but nothing further was heard from them.¹¹⁷

The Socialist Educational League and the Political Labour League

From April 1904 the party faced competition for the first time. Some members were unhappy with the party's direction and formed a new group called the Socialist Education League. The party acquired the services of a Californian lecturer, Mr J.M. Wilson, who arrived from San Francisco in March, where he was a member of the Pacific Coast Lecture Bureau. Not much else is known about Wilson but he gave eight lectures in Auckland before coming to Wellington and connecting with the NZSP. Wilson said he was collecting information on New Zealand labour laws in order to refute articles published in Californian papers which argued New Zealand's labour system was a failure.¹¹⁸ Wilson lectured on Sunday nights in Wellington for the NZSP until May.¹¹⁹ In early June, a notice appeared in the *Evening Post*, stating that "Another Series of Lectures on Socialism by J.M. Wilson" had been arranged and invited interested readers to attend a meeting "to consider arrangements and discuss certain proposals to further Socialism in Wellington".¹²⁰ The Socialist Party was not mentioned. The following Sunday night Wilson spoke at His Majesty's Theatre in Courtney Place. This event was quite separate from the Wellington branch of the Socialist Party, who were holding

¹¹⁷ *Commonweal*, December 1903, p.39.

¹¹⁸ EP, 21 April 1904, p.5.

¹¹⁹ *Commonweal*, May 1904, pp.19, 20.

¹²⁰ EP, 4 June 1904, p.6; EP, 6 June 1904, p.6.

another event later that evening.¹²¹ The new group started hosting regular weekly meetings, chaired by R.C. Denew, and eventually called itself the Socialist Educational League.¹²²

A few days later the July issue of *Commonweal* appeared and it included a short reply to a reader's query, saying "No. There is no "split" in the Wellington Branch, some of the members of the Branch are also members of the Educational League. In our opinion there is plenty room for both organizations".¹²³ Wilson continued lecturing for the Socialist Educational League until November when he left the country. He told the *Press* that a group of Wellington businessmen had formed the League and had arranged for him to deliver twenty lectures in Wellington, and had plans for more. This work was "not political but educational". The group had raised money for a weekly newspaper and the first issue was due to appear in September 1904 but it never eventuated.¹²⁴

Wilson also visited Christchurch, where he was greeted by a group of socialists led by J. O'Bryen Hoare, a former Anglican minister who had been involved in a range of radical causes in Christchurch since the 1880s and was a committed Christian socialist.¹²⁵ O'Bryen Hoare said the arrival of Wilson in Wellington had "aroused the dormant socialism in Wellington" and thought Wilson deserved a medal if he could arouse the dormant socialism in Christchurch as well.¹²⁶ Wilson seems to have succeeded as a subsequent meeting attracted seventy people. All the prominent socialists in Christchurch attended but they were divided over what sort of organisation they wanted, and decided to revive the Christchurch branch of the NZSP as well as a new branch of the SEL. Only twelve people turned up to the new NZSP branch a week

¹²¹ EP, 11 June 1904, p.6.

¹²² EP, 2 July 1904, p.6.

¹²³ *Commonweal*, July 1904, p.36.

¹²⁴ *Press*, 5 August 1904, p.5.

¹²⁵ James Taylor, pp.77-80.

¹²⁶ *Press*, 5 August 1904, p.5.

later.¹²⁷ The SEL was more active with regular lectures in Christchurch through the winter of 1905. Speakers included local Liberal parliamentarians George Laurensen and William Tanner, as well as socialists Harry Atkinson, O'Bryen Hoare, and James Thorn.¹²⁸ Thorn was a young moulder at the Addington railway workshops whose service in the South African War had turned him into a committed pacifist. He joined the Socialist Church in 1901.¹²⁹ The SEL appears to have been an ethical socialist educational group that appealed to those who were less interested in the political direction of the NZSP. The SEL continued in Christchurch until at least May 1905 before fading away.¹³⁰

The bigger challenge to the NZSP was the formation of another left wing party, the Political Labour League (PLL). At the 1904 conference of the Trades and Labour Councils a majority of delegates voted to establish an independent Labour Party to contest parliamentary and municipal elections. The PLL got off to a slow start, holding its first conference in April 1905, and adding 'Independent' to its name. It promoted a program of reforms including nationalisation of land, increased state ownership of industry and a state bank, equal pay for women and preference for trade unionists. The PLL did not have unanimous support from trade unions. Some Union leaders in Auckland and Dunedin objected to the party's open criticism of the Seddon government, and did not stand independent candidates in the 1905 elections.¹³¹

¹²⁷ 'Christchurch', 94-106-14/20, MS-Group-0314, ATL.

¹²⁸ *Star*, 22 April 1905, p.5.

¹²⁹ Jim McAloon, 'Thorn, James', *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*; <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4t15/thorn-james>

¹³⁰ *Mataura Ensign*, 20 May 1905, p.5.

¹³¹ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, pp.17-18.

The Auckland Trades Council refused to even discuss the League's platform.¹³² This hostility may have convinced the Auckland Socialists that the League was worth supporting. At the end of March, Robert Way and Henry Horning helped to found an Auckland branch of the PLL.¹³³ Within weeks, the PLL announced its Auckland municipal election candidates as James Aggers, Percy Andrews and Robert Way. All had been founding members of the Auckland Socialist Party three years earlier.¹³⁴ Aggers and Way were the PLL's two Auckland candidates in the parliamentary elections in November 1905 too.¹³⁵

The PLL had more union support in Christchurch and Wellington. The three Wellington candidates in 1905 included former NZSP supporter Dave McLaren along with former Seaman's Union president Alfred Hindmarsh. In Christchurch the PLL leadership included Jack McCullough and James Thorn, both former members of the Socialist Church, and trade unionist Ted Howard.¹³⁶ Despite its slow beginning the PLL was far larger than the NZSP, claiming to have over a thousand members in 1905. Unlike the NZSP, the PLL was based in the union movement and led by trade union activists. It advocated practical independent working class politics, in contrast to the NZSP, which began to differentiate itself from the PLL by becoming even more uncompromising.

Wellington and Christchurch from 1905

For the next two years, the NZSP had only two branches, Christchurch and Wellington. The Wellington branch remained stronger and more active, although *Commonweal* ceased to be

¹³² NZH, 9 March 1905, p.6.

¹³³ NZH, 29 March 1905, Supplement, p.1.

¹³⁴ NZH, 20 April 1905, p.6.

¹³⁵ NZH, 10 November 1905, p.10.

¹³⁶ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, p.18.

published in the winter of 1904. The Wellington branch opened a Socialist Hall at 35 Cuba Street.¹³⁷ The hall was used for weekly business meetings, and held a library of books and pamphlets, and the latest copies of socialist newspapers from Europe, the United States, Australia and Britain. In 1904 the party literature department was selling exclusively English socialist literature, with over a dozen titles by Robert Blatchford, and other Clarion writers, as well as titles by British trade unionists Ben Tillett and Tom Mann, and Marxists Ernest Belford Bax, and Harry Quelch.¹³⁸ The branch held open air street meetings on current issues and weekly lectures on Sunday nights, often accompanied by music from socialist musicians. These formed the basis for a busy social calendar of radical events in Wellington.

James Brooke Hulbert and his wife Isobel were central to the musical life of the branch. James Hulbert was born in 1851 in London and had been active in the rationalist movement in England, often playing music for gatherings of rationalists and secularists around London in the 1870s.¹³⁹ He moved to Hobart and then to New Zealand where he was active in the labour movement in the 1890s.¹⁴⁰ He settled in Wellington in 1892 and married Isobel a few years later. She was also a talented musician and committed socialist. She often sang or played music at Wellington socialist party events.¹⁴¹ James Hulbert compiled socialist songbooks which were sold around the country.¹⁴²

In March 1905, Robert Hogg made a short promotional trip to Dunedin. There the party had a friend in John Gilchrist, a Scottish socialist who had arrived in New Zealand with the Clarion

¹³⁷ EP, 7 May 1904, pp.5, 6.

¹³⁸ *Commonweal*, July 1904, p.35.

¹³⁹ Robert Hogg, 'Introduction' in J.B. Hulbert, *My Garden and Other Verses* (Wellington: Maoriland Worker, 1922).

¹⁴⁰ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand, Wellington Provincial District 1897*, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-corpus-cyclopedia.html>, p.699., and Robert Hogg, 'Introduction' in J.B. Hulbert, *My Garden and Other Verses* (Wellington: Maoriland Worker, 1922).

¹⁴¹ MW, 23 Jan 1923, p.4.

¹⁴² *Socialist Songs* (Wellington: J.B. Hulbert, 1906).

Settlers, and was secretary of the Dunedin Fabian Society.¹⁴³ Hogg spoke at the Dunedin Trades Hall on “Labours Place in Politics, (with special reference to PLL)”.¹⁴⁴ Gilchrist chaired the meeting, and when only a dozen people showed up, he suggested they move out into the street. This attracted more attention but not for the right reasons. Hogg was not always audible thanks to a passing pipe band. He was also interrupted by a dog fight, and a small boy threw a stone, hitting a member of the audience. Gilchrist gave chase, and was joined by most of Hogg’s audience. The *Otago Daily Times* correspondent admitted the interruptions made it difficult to follow Hogg’s speech, but it included an attack on the supposed independence of the PLL, which Hogg predicted would not achieve anything for workers.¹⁴⁵

Wellington becomes more militant

Although the Wellington branch was strong and had developed a healthy social life, it failed to effectively challenge the Liberal government and few, if any, Wellington trade union leaders supported the NZSP. The membership of the Wellington NZSP appears to have been mostly city based skilled workers, and the trade unions they belonged to would generally have supported the arbitration system. Wellington trade union leaders were becoming interested in an independent labour party though, and in April 1905, led by newly elected president and former NZSP member W.H. Hampton,¹⁴⁶ they hosted the first PLL conference.¹⁴⁷

The rhetoric of the Wellington branch gradually became increasingly militant, arguing for revolution and against any sort of “palliative reforms”. In 1905 news of revolution and

¹⁴³ Gilchrist to Ranstead, MS-Papers-0071-03, ATL; ODT, 23 July 1904, p.8.

¹⁴⁴ ODT, 28 March 1905, p.1.

¹⁴⁵ ODT, 29 March 1905, p.2.

¹⁴⁶ EP, 10 March 1905, p.6.

¹⁴⁷ Gustafson, *Labour’s Path*, p.17.

repression in Russia reached New Zealand. The Socialist Party participated in meetings and protests in support of the Russian revolutionaries. At least one party member was himself a Russian exile. Phillip Josephs, a Latvian born anarchist, had arrived in Wellington in March 1904.¹⁴⁸ He was soon organising protests in Wellington against the repression of the Russian government.¹⁴⁹ It is unclear when he joined the NZSP but he became actively involved in the Wellington Socialist subculture through his solidarity work and spoke alongside Robert Hogg and others in early 1905.¹⁵⁰

Josephs spoke at New Zealand's first May Day celebrations, a mass meeting organised by the Wellington branch at His Majesty's Theatre. He described the history and meaning of May Day and moved a motion of solidarity, sending "fraternal greetings to workers of every land". Robert Hogg spoke on a range of topics afterwards and the meeting finished with music from the Socialist Party orchestra, conducted by J.B. Hulbert.¹⁵¹ In Christchurch, a smaller May Day celebration was held at Wainoni, the co-operative home run by eccentric anarchist and former chemistry professor Alexander Bickerton. A number of Christchurch socialists spoke, from the PLL, Socialist Church and the NZSP, including Jack McCullough, Harry Atkinson, J. O'Bryen Hoare, and former Wellington branch member Fred Cooke, who had now moved south.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Davidson, p.51.

¹⁴⁹ EP, 26 January 1905, p.5.

¹⁵⁰ EP, 20 February 1905, p.5.

¹⁵¹ EP, 8 May 1905, p.2.

¹⁵² *Press*, 8 May 1905, p.3.

The 1905 Elections

The party discussed running candidates in the November 1905 elections, but only one candidate actually stood. In Christchurch, Bradford born tailor Fred Cooke had been chosen as branch secretary at a meeting in February and the same meeting had decided to stand candidates in the national elections due to be held later that year. They eventually chose Cooke as their candidate.¹⁵³ The Wellington branch initially decided to stand Robert Hogg in Wellington South.¹⁵⁴ As the election date drew closer, the branch decided to withdraw their candidate and instead passed a resolution calling for no vote in the election. This 'rather remarkable' resolution was widely reported in newspapers. The branch declared that "no palliative legislation will ever solve or tend to solve the great economic and social problems of the day; and until such time as the workers become class conscious they can never hope to work out their own salvation".¹⁵⁵ In Christchurch, Cooke also had no interest in reformism, but he used his candidacy to promote socialist ideas. At one meeting he was reported as saying that "current political questions were unimportant, so far as workers are concerned. He did not propose to give a political address: he would simply talk up Socialism".¹⁵⁶ Four candidates stood in Christchurch East, and Cooke came last with 95 votes.¹⁵⁷

Although the PLL had only partial support in the Trade Unions, it was already much bigger than the NZSP. The PLL claimed over a thousand members and had stood eleven candidates in the 1905 general elections. Although all were defeated, the PLL was making progress.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ *Star*, 11 January 1905, p.3.

¹⁵⁴ *EP*, 8 June 1905, p.4.

¹⁵⁵ *EP*, 14 November 1905, p.5.

¹⁵⁶ *Press*, 15 November 1905, p.8.

¹⁵⁷ *Star*, 7 December 1905, p.4.

¹⁵⁸ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, p.18.

The NZSP's response to the growth of the PLL was to move further towards revolutionary politics and condemn the League as hopeless reformists. Hogg denounced the Political Labour League at a public meeting in February 1906, describing it as "the good dog of the Liberal Party".¹⁵⁹ Later, the Wellington branch wrote to the PLL and invited them to debate the question "That there is no ground upon which joint political action can be taken between the Independent Political Labour League and the Socialist Party". The PLL declined the offer, saying they had "no time to spare for academic discussion" as their efforts were "being devoted to practical work for the benefit of Labour".¹⁶⁰

The 1906 May Day celebrations in Wellington were described by as "one of the most successful demonstrations the Socialist Party has held". The speeches give a good indication of the politics of the Wellington branch at the time. Mr McManus chaired the meeting, and after the opening music, Phillip Josephs moved, "That this meeting sends its fraternal greetings to our comrades engaged in the eternal class war, and pledges itself to work for the abolition of the capitalistic system and the substitution in New Zealand of co-operative commonwealth, founded on the collective ownership of the land and the means of production and distribution". Josephs told the crowd that trade unionists in New Zealand "took very little interest in their own affairs, and consequently this May day demonstration was taken up by the more advanced Socialist party". He attributed this apathy to the Arbitration Act and predicted that "if the Act was not abolished there would be an outburst of public feeling that would have serious consequences". His motion was seconded by Hulbert, who said he was pleased to see the germ of class consciousness emerging in the form of the PLL but declared that "all palliative legislation had failed to alter the position of the

¹⁵⁹ EP, 26 Feb 1906, p.6.

¹⁶⁰ EP, 7 April 1906, p.4.

worker". Instead he advocated socialist education. Robert Hogg also praised the rise of class consciousness both in the UK and New Zealand.¹⁶¹

For the rest of 1906, the Wellington branch continued its regular social and educational events, and Hulbert became a regular public speaker. He put together a series of lectures with limelight photographs featuring prominent socialists, diagrams explaining socialist principles, and photographs of slums in Wellington.¹⁶² The pictures of the Wellington slums were described as "an unpleasant disclosure" by the *Evening Post*, and were reported around the country.¹⁶³ However the party did not take advantage of this, probably because of its refusal to campaign for reforms.

In Christchurch, regular weekly meetings continued with a range of speakers.¹⁶⁴ The Christchurch branch remained small. No exact figures for most of this period are available, but forty two members attended a meeting in May 1906.¹⁶⁵ The Christchurch party was one part of the city's socialist subculture, along with the Socialist Church and other groups. The memberships of these groups often overlapped, and they all took part in protests and public meetings, as well as internal meetings where newspapers and pamphlets were exchanged and ideas were discussed.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ EP, 7 May 1906, p.2.

¹⁶² EP, 20 July 1906, p.2.

¹⁶³ EP, 23 July 1906, p.4.

¹⁶⁴ Examples, *Press*, 1 May 1906, p.4; *Star*, 19 July 1906, p.3.

¹⁶⁵ *Star*, 28 May 1906, p.2.

¹⁶⁶ James Taylor, pp.132-133.

Conclusion

The first years of the NZSP saw fairly stable socialist groups established in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. All three groups were founded as part of a surge of interest and energy caused by the sudden arrival of the Clarion Settlers in 1900. British ethical socialist ideas, writers and activists were the main political influence on the party in these years. Ethical socialism was focused on recruiting and converting people to socialism and encouraging self-education and a socialist subculture. The NZSP distributed the *Clarion* newspaper in New Zealand, many of the more active Clarion Settlers had experience in the British Independent Labour Party or the Social Democratic Federation. Robert Hogg, John Gilchrist, Fred Cooke and others all came from an ethical socialism background. Alongside these ideas, the party read and discussed overseas trade union activity, as well as some Marxism and anarchism too. Contact between the three branches was informal and the party did not have a clear strategy. Some members drifted into the Social Education League, which focused on educational activities, and other members saw the PLL as a more viable group due to its connections with the trade union movement.

The Wellington group was the largest and strongest of the three groups and a strong radical socialist subculture developed in the city. The group published newspapers and distributed literature at its many social events, but it had very little influence on the city trade union movement. The Auckland branch had more involvement with the small trade union movement in the city. Many of its members were union activists, and despite a sometimes stormy relationship with those unions, the leading members remained within the Auckland union movement and eventually moved to the politics of the PLL. The Christchurch branch was formed with the support and help of the city's progressive organisations and was never

the sole socialist group in the city. The party profile had increased dramatically when Tom Mann arrived in New Zealand but any benefits gained were short lived. Most of the people who flocked to see Mann did not have a lasting interest in radical socialist ideas. After 1905 the Wellington branch became increasingly radical and opposed to any kind of reformist ideas. This limited its appeal and in Wellington, the party remained isolated from the local trade union movement. The Christchurch socialists were more integrated with the rest of the left in the city, but they were smaller than the Wellington group, and in both cities, the NZSP remained a propaganda and educational organisation without much influence.

Chapter Two

This chapter will trace the NZSP from September 1906 to the end of 1908. This period saw a huge growth of interest in socialism as many workers lost faith in the arbitration system and began to organise and take industrial action. Premier Richard Seddon was dead and his replacement, Sir Joseph Ward, lacked his political ability and popular appeal. Interest in the NZSP grew rapidly due to the changing political context but the party leaders were unsure how to take advantage of it. While the change in the political climate led to an increase in members, the party failed to develop a clearer focus. The new branches which sprang up in the West Coast mining towns were inspired by radical trade union activists who often had a background in North American or Australian industrial unionism. Meanwhile, the Wellington branch discovered industrial unionism through the arrival of H.M. Fitzgerald, a Canadian militant who became the paid organiser for the party and promoted the ideas of the Industrial Workers of the World. The first national conference of the NZSP was held in April 1908, and the party was surprised to discover it had more than 3000 members, a majority of them supporters of the new industrial unionism. At the conference, delegates agreed to adopt the preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World and voted to abstain from parliamentary politics. While the party membership rejected the abstention policy, the 1908 election campaign was focused on raising awareness and promoting the party rather than making a serious attempt to defeat the other candidates. The industrial unionists in the party focused their efforts on building a strong union movement rather than building the party itself. The party had very little national coordination and most branches operated fairly independently as small propaganda and education groups. The branches all agreed that coordinating

speaking tours by prominent lecturers was important, but the party did not develop any national strategy beyond this.

The Socialist Party and Arbitration

Trade union discontent with the arbitration system had been growing in 1906. Employers' organisations were becoming better resourced and argued their position more effectively. The court was reluctant to increase wages further.¹ As the only political organisation in the country that was staunchly opposed to arbitration on principle, the NZSP stood to benefit from the discontent. However, the party was slow to take advantage of the changing mood in the labour movement.

The first evidence of an increase in support for socialism was that the Wellington branch felt confident to restart its monthly newspaper in September 1906 after a two year break. *Commonweal* was now the official organ of the entire party, although it was published by the Wellington branch, and Wellington businesses contributed the advertisements. The cover price was now one penny.² Edited by Robert Hogg, the first issue of the new series declared:

We conceive it to be our immediate duty to teach the New Zealand Worker the true economic basis of Socialism, the reality of the class struggle, and the ineffectiveness of all palliative legislation to emancipate our people from the grinding heel of capitalism. We have but one aim in view: the complete

¹ James Holt, *Compulsory Arbitration in New Zealand: The First Forty Years* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1986), pp.65-67.

² *Commonweal*, September 1906, pp.6, 8.

overthrow of present competitive industrialism and the inauguration of a cooperative commonwealth.³

The new series of *Commonweal* had more varied content and provides much detail about the activities of the Wellington branch, and later, many of the other branches too. The cover page usually featured a short poem, and the regular column 'Stings and other things' by Busy Bee, a pseudonym of Robert Hogg. This column was a compilation of comments, news snippets, and local politics, and was often critical of labour leaders. Inside, the paper had an editorial page and reprinted a few articles and cartoons from overseas socialist newspapers. There was a short 'Our Activities' column, with Wellington branch news, and a full page of advertisements from local businesses. Often these were owned by party members, like J.B. Hulbert's boot shop. A list of socialist literature and pamphlets was published in each issue and Philip Josephs also had a regular advertisement in which he listed anarchist publications available at his tailor shop in Taranaki Street.⁴

The new issue drew so much support it allowed the paper to expand to larger tabloid size pages for the October issue, which now had room for a cartoon on the cover and two full pages of advertisements inside. It included a new column 'The World of Work', in which Hogg, using the pseudonym 'Blochairn', updated readers on news and gossip from the trades' union movement. The editorial restated clause five of the party membership pledge, "to work for the establishment in New Zealand of a co-operative commonwealth founded on the collective ownership of land and all the means of production, distribution and exchange". This was explained in more detail, using the language of class conflict and the words of William Morris.

³ Ibid., p.4.

⁴ Ibid.

All mine and thine shall be ours,
 And no more shall any man crave
 For riches that serve for nothing
 But to fetter his friend for a slave.

It continued “We ask you, are you willing to pay the price? That price is Revolution. We are soul sick of the pestilential bogs and fogs of palliative Liberal-Labourism. We are out to abolish the foundation of all existing capitalistic institutions. This is our aim – not reform, but REVOLUTION”.⁵

While the party was adamant that it opposed all reforms, and wanted to overthrow capitalism, it was less clear about how it was going to achieve this, and accommodated views ranging from British ethical socialism, through to Marxism and anarchism. A growing interest in socialism across the country can be seen in the increasingly diverse origins of the letters received by the paper. The November issue of *Commonweal* contained replies to letters from Dunedin, Wanganui, Invercargill, New Plymouth and the Manawatu.⁶ In December, *Commonweal* published a letter received from Hokianga, where a Socialist League had been operating there all year but had only just heard about the NZSP. The group had grown to fifty members and had a reading room and regular meetings.⁷

The political climate was becoming more polarised and the first signs of rebellion against the Arbitration Act appeared. On 14 November 1906, an ongoing dispute erupted between Auckland tramway workers and the private British company owner over a series of unfair

⁵ *Commonweal*, October 1906, p.4.

⁶ *Commonweal*, November 1906, p.4.

⁷ *Commonweal*, December 1906, p.7.

dismissals. Sixty six tram drivers refused to work until the sacked men were reinstated. The strike lasted only a few hours but it was the first in New Zealand for more than twelve years, and the first open defiance of the Arbitration Court by a registered trade union.⁸ The party did not immediately see the significance of this small but successful challenge to the arbitration system the party had opposed for so long, and *Commonweal* had little to say about the dispute. In the regular trade union column, Hogg used the dispute to make a point about the privatisation of the Tram Company. He warned Auckland voters that "a bitter and protracted strike of the old type might have eventuated had not wiser heads prevailed", and hoped that the dispute would "drive home to the electors of Auckland the immensity of the blunder they made in allowing such public service to become a monopoly used for private gain".⁹ In February a bigger strike began. Around 140 slaughterhouse workers in Wellington and Petone stopped work for a week. Another 500 men from other slaughterhouses around the country joined them, successfully demanding higher wages.¹⁰ The strike was illegal, but as it had been agreed on outside of the official union meeting, the union could not be prosecuted. Instead the men were prosecuted as individuals and fined £5 each.¹¹ The strike was over wages and did not have any further political aims. The NZSP did not have any influence among the slaughterhouse workers, so its response was fairly muted. A meeting of the Christchurch socialists passed a motion expressing "sympathy with the slaughtermen in their attempts to gain a large share of the results of their labour, of which they have been systematically robbed by a ring of capitalists" and condemned the use of police to protect employers and scab labour.¹² The strikers refused to pay the fines and the Attorney General

⁸ H. Roth, *Trade Unions*, pp.25-26.

⁹ *Commonweal*, December 1906, p.6.

¹⁰ Roth, *Trade Unions*, pp.26-27.

¹¹ Roth and Hammond, *Toil and Trouble*, p.71.

¹² *Press*, 2 March 1907, p.10.

argued that they could be imprisoned for non-payment of the penalty. The Wellington socialists held an open air meeting, condemning the Attorney General's comments.¹³

Apart from these expressions of solidarity, the party continued as before, supportive of the strikes but unable to directly influence events. Its main activities were organising meetings and spreading propaganda. In March the Literature Secretary apologised to *Commonweal* readers for the delay in filling numerous orders for literature, as the stock of the most popular pamphlets had run out. A larger order was on its way from Britain and he informed readers he was making up as many orders as he could from the private collections of local socialists.¹⁴ A report from the following month showed the Wellington branch had sold nearly £90 worth of literature in six months, including many pamphlets on socialist economics.¹⁵ *Commonweal* advertised a range of pamphlets for sale. All were one or two pence each, and authored by British ethical socialists like Blatchford, A.M. Thompson, and increasingly, British Marxists such as Harry Quelch, Ernest Belfort Bax, and Edward Aveling.¹⁶

In April, *Commonweal* attacked the hypocrisy of employers and the newspapers who "never weary of declaring that the Arbitration Act was all for the benefit of the worker", but who were now demanding the act be strengthened to punish those who took direct action outside the system. The author pointed out that although most trade union leaders had supported the Arbitration Act in the past, the Socialist Party had always seen arbitration as counter to the interests of workers, who were foolish to put their faith in trade union leaders who supported the system. It ended, "Know that the exploitation of Labour will continue just so

¹³ EP, 11 March 1907, p.8.

¹⁴ *Commonweal*, March 1907, p.4.

¹⁵ *Commonweal*, April 1907, p.5.

¹⁶ *Commonweal*, September 1907, p.7.

long as you permit capitalism to continue. To put an end to the former you must first abolish the latter. WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO BEGIN?"¹⁷

The editors of *Commonweal* were unaware that miners on the West Coast of the South Island had come to the same conclusions, and were actually in a position to take action outside the Arbitration Act. The NZSP had had no organisation or contact with West Coast miners after Tom Mann's speaking tour in 1902, apart from a short lived branch which appeared in Mines Creek in November 1903.¹⁸ Since then, coal mining had expanded rapidly on the West Coast. The Union Steamship company needed coal to fuel its ships and had developed mining in the difficult terrain of the Denniston Plateau above Westport and the Buller River. By 1908 the Buller mines were producing nearly a third of New Zealand's coal, and the Grey Valley mines were also expanding. The increased production required 2000 workers, mostly young single migrant men, and they all needed accommodation. Mining company owners provided boarding houses and huts to attract men to the more remote locations, and provided loans for men working in established townships. Many workers were reluctant to borrow money from their employers and there was no incentive to invest in a home in a remote area, so mine workers often lived in one room huts with no other facilities. Denniston and Burnett's Face were the most overcrowded with sometimes entire families forced to live in these shacks. In the Grey Valley, the mining townships were closer to Greymouth and the establishment of state mines created hopes that conditions might be better. Instead tents and huts sprang up next to the mines and conditions were no better than those of the Buller valley.¹⁹ However the rapid expansion of the mines and the crowded living conditions in the

¹⁷ *Commonweal*, April 1907, p.4.

¹⁸ *Commonweal*, December 1903, p.39.

¹⁹ Len Richardson, *Coal, Class and Community: The United Mineworkers of New Zealand 1880-1960* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995), pp.91-98.

mining camps created a strong sense of community among the residents. The miner's unions campaigned successfully for wage rises, organised a cooperative society, and by 1908 they had opened a Miners Hall in Runanga.²⁰ Many of the migrant workers who congregated at the mining camps were experienced trade union activists. Some were practical socialists from England, who may not have been revolutionaries but who knew how to organise effectively and were prepared to use the strength of the union to push for reforms. Others had a background in the militant revolutionary syndicalist unions of North America.²¹

One of the recent arrivals at Denniston was Pat Hickey. He was born near Nelson and had spent three years working in the Denniston Mine before travelling. While he was working as a miner in Utah, he had become involved in the miners' union there and had joined the American Socialist Party.²² He returned to New Zealand and in early 1907, he was back at the Denniston mine. There, he met other radical unionists among the many transient single men at the mine. He also started reading *Commonweal*.²³

He may have obtained his copies of *Commonweal* from Richard James Ecroyd, a Christchurch Socialist Party member who had also recently arrived on the West Coast. Ecroyd was much older than the other miners and had arrived in New Zealand from Lancashire in 1904 with his wife and five children.²⁴ By 1906 Ecroyd was speaking on behalf of the Socialist Party at open air meetings in Cathedral Square.²⁵ It is unclear why he moved to the West Coast or if his family came with him, but in March 1907 Ecroyd was living at Burnett's Face, near the

²⁰ Ibid., pp.104-105.

²¹ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.108-109.

²² Ibid., pp.2-3; P.H. Hickey, *"Red" Fed Memoirs: Being a brief survey of the Birth and Growth of the Federation of Labour from 1908 to 1915 and of the days that immediately preceded it*, reprinted edition (Wellington: Wellington Media Collective, 1980), p.6.

²³ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.2-3.

²⁴ New Zealand, Archives New Zealand, Passenger Lists, 1839-1973, database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QJDJ-SY7G> : accessed 9 November 2015), R J Ecroyd, 1904.

²⁵ *Star*, 17 March 1906, p.5.

Denniston mine, and had established a branch of the Socialist Party there.²⁶ The new branch ordered two hundred copies of the next *Commonweal*,²⁷ and soon they had between thirty to forty members, and had helped launch another branch at Denniston, with Pat Hickey as its secretary.²⁸ Hickey recalled that he established the branch with Paddy Webb, who had been an active socialist and trade union organiser in Australia, and that the branch “was responsible for broadcasting among the mine workers pamphlets and booklets dealing with the various phases of the Labour Movement”.²⁹ The most popular pamphlets were those on industrial unionism and socialism in the United States, including texts of speeches by Eugene Debs, Daniel De Leon and other prominent American socialists.³⁰ These American authors were not listed in the literature catalogue of *Commonweal*, and may have come into the country via the Christchurch branch of the party.³¹ The Denniston group initially attracted the transients, outsiders and radicals and was regarded with suspicion by more conservative union leaders.³²

While Hickey and Webb were organising the Denniston miners, Ecroyd was writing about social conditions in the township. His report, ‘The Tragedy of Toil’, was published in the May 1907 *Commonweal*. He condemned the poor housing conditions of the miners and the lack of sanitation.

And the Stench! Ah!! It can be FELT. There is no escape: it’s here, there and everywhere. Sweet Denniston I smell thee now. Did you suggest sanitary arrangements? It’s the only place that I know where the devout pray for rain

²⁶ *Commonweal*, May 1907, p.5.

²⁷ *Commonweal*, April 1907, p.4.

²⁸ *Commonweal*, May 1907, p.5.

²⁹ Hickey, pp.8-9.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Herbert Roth, ‘American Influences on the New Zealand Labour Movement’, *Historical Studies*, Vol.9, no.36 (1961), pp.414-415, 416-417.

³² Olssen, *The Red Feds*, p.3.

at least once a week. THAT'S our sanitary system, and if the rain is a day late, the microbes can be TASTED! Ugh! Phew! – Let the reader's imagination fill in the rest.³³

Ecroyd described the “wretched” one room huts which three or four miners shared and asked “Surely here is a field for the Labours of the Socialist Party?” He wrote in graphic detail about some of the recent fatal accidents on the cliffs surrounding the mines, including one involving a mother and baby who fell off a bridge into the river and were both killed. “God knows the terrible agony of that poor mother when she was faced with death in that last awful moment. Yet the West Coast Coal Company merrily grinds out dividends of 6d per share, entirely callous and indifferent to what takes place on their preserves”.³⁴ Finally, Ecroyd announced that the workers of Denniston had organised a socialist group numbering seventy members, and would not rest until they had signed up all the miners and elected a socialist Member of Parliament for Westport.

While the Socialist Party was growing in the Buller mining towns, another advocate of industrial unionism with overseas experience arrived in Wellington. Little is known of the background of H.M. Fitzgerald, but ‘Fiery Fitz’ had been prominent in the Canadian socialist movement before he came to New Zealand.³⁵ The first public appearance he made in this country was at the Wellington May Day meeting, where he read out a resolution of solidarity. His first full public speech was at a Sunday night meeting a few weeks later, and his subject was “Evolution of the Wage Slave”.³⁶ He became a frequent speaker at Sunday night meetings

³³ *Commonweal*, May 1907, p.3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Roy Dovore, ‘Politicians out of the Past’, Radio Broadcast, 27 August 1959, reprinted in *The Western Socialist*, Vol 26, no.211, 1959, pp. 9-11;

<http://www.worldsocialism.org/canada/politicians.out.of.the.past.1959.v26n211.htm>

³⁶ *Commonweal*, June 1907, p.3.

in Wellington, and in July, the party announced plans to employ a paid organiser. Sometime after August, Fitzgerald was appointed to the position.³⁷ Fitzgerald believed workers should adopt a strategy of both voting socialist candidates into parliament, and organising as one big union, along the lines of the recently formed North American Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).³⁸

In the winter of 1907, criticism of the Arbitration Act was often in the news, with the Act being attacked by both employers and growing numbers of trade unionists. The NZSP had established itself as the only political party that was hostile to the Arbitration Act, and it began to attract growing numbers of Wellington workers. The branch meetings grew to the point where the fortnightly business meeting could not cope with the increased work. A management committee of eight men was set up in August to take over some of the workload. Twenty seven new members were confirmed in August and seven more had applied for membership by the end of the month. Many of these had been recruited through the Sunday morning economics classes run by the anarchist tailor Phillip Josephs. These attracted trade unionists and other sympathisers, as well as many party members.³⁹ One of the tasks of the management committee was to find a suitable base for the branch. Soon, they were able to lease a hall and office in the Mercantile Exchange in Manners Street. Former Clarion settler Ernest Whittaker of Petone painted and decorated the hall, and members supplied one hundred and fifty chairs.⁴⁰

³⁷ EP, 22 July 1907, p.8; EP, 8 August 1907, p.8.

³⁸ Peter Clayworth, 'Prophets from across the Pacific: The influence of Canadian agitators on New Zealand labour militancy in the early twentieth century', *Red Ruffians* website; <http://redruffians.tumblr.com/post/2682342488/prophets-from-across-the-pacific-the-influence-of>

³⁹ *Commonweal*, September, 1907, p.4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.3.

In response to growing criticism of the Arbitration Act from both unions and employers, the government introduced a number of amendments to the Act. One of the most contentious was a proposal to prohibit unions from appointing officials who had not worked in that trade. Many smaller unions needed to employ officials who were experts in the arbitration system, and if passed, this amendment would hinder their work greatly. Most union leaders opposed the amendments and the government withdrew the bill.⁴¹ As part of the campaign against the amendments the Socialist Party invited Waterside Workers Union secretary Dave McLaren to address their Sunday night meeting in Wellington.⁴² The Arbitration Act was not the sole focus of the party, and many other topics continued to be discussed at the Sunday night lectures. The following Sunday lecture was on “Wealth, War, and Wisdom”.⁴³

The Christchurch socialists were also active, organising a variety of activities throughout 1907. More than two hundred people attended the May Day social and dance, where the chairman urged the women present to join the Socialist Party.⁴⁴ The Christchurch socialists often emphasised the appeal of socialism to women, and several women were prominent in the group. In July the Christchurch Socialists elected A.H. Shrubshall as branch President. Fred Cooke was secretary, Len R. Wilson was financial secretary and three of the eight committee members were women, including Mrs Wilson, and Ida, Fred Cooke’s wife.⁴⁵ In July the Christchurch branch report linked “the evils with the drink traffic, and the treatment of women working in that industry” and urged socialist women “to redouble their efforts to bring about socialism”. The report detailed a recent liquor license application which heard evidence of the exploitation and abuse of female bar staff, and commented that “The present

⁴¹ Holt, pp.77, 80-81.

⁴² EP, 9 September 1907, p.2.

⁴³ EP, 14 September 1907, p.6.

⁴⁴ *Press*, 3 May 1907, p.6.

⁴⁵ *Commonweal*, August 1907, p.3.

system of private ownership of industries... forces women into the revolting drink industry to earn a living." Women "would not take situations as bar maids if they had the opportunity of the full life that Socialism could give them." The report argued that the liquor trade was immoral and women should be protected from it. "There is not much opportunity for a barmaid to gain the love of an honest man... what in the name of heaven have barmaids to live for?"⁴⁶ Many in the Christchurch branch linked alcohol consumption with social problems, but the party never adopted an official position on the subject. Some members advocated for nationalisation of the liquor industry, arguing that socialist regulation was the best way to control vice and others were prohibitionists. Other party branches, particularly those with connections to industrial unions, had a strong drinking culture and dismissed prohibitionists as 'wowsers'.⁴⁷

As the NZSP grew in Wellington, the *Evening Post* reported one of the regular Sunday night meetings. The article, while mocking in part, gives some detail about the atmosphere at a Socialist Party event. The speaker was the recently arrived H.M. Fitzgerald, and his topic, "Commodities: Their Relation and Expression".⁴⁸ About 250 people attended, and were described as "chiefly young men of the shop and artisan class, with a sprinkling of the middle aged and elderly, a few ladies, and here and there a boy or girl". They were "a decent, honest, earnest audience, very well behaved. It was an audience that deserved better food than the Socialists provided; but at all events they did their best, and the evening was interesting and stimulating". The evening began with the Socialist Orchestra playing some tunes to warm up the crowd. The orchestra "played strictly on the individualistic principle, and harmony seemed

⁴⁶ *Commonweal*, July 1907, p.3.

⁴⁷ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.109-111.

⁴⁸ EP, 21 September 1907, p.8.

as hard to obtain as it is under the intolerable regime of brutal capital. Still the noise was not unpleasant, and the orchestra meant it anyway. That was a good feature of the evening; all the comrades were in earnest". Next, John Gilchrist stood up and sang well known Scots and Irish songs for the crowd. As he was singing, Socialist Party members moved among the crowd selling *Commonweal* and socialist pamphlets. After the music, Fitzgerald came forward to speak. The *Evening Post* described him as "a thickset and ruddy young man" who was "socialistically attired in open coat, tweed trousers and a "sweater"". Fitzgerald spoke "distinctly, deliberately and well", but he soon admitted he found his subject difficult and had not prepared adequately. "He essayed to make a chapter of Karl Marx's denunciation of capital intelligible to an average audience and failed miserably". As Fitzgerald explained "Though I feel I understand the subject myself, it's all in a mess when I try to explain it, and I'm sure you're all in a fog". The *Evening Post* noted "the audience did not attempt denial". Fitzgerald struggled on, but his chosen topic proved too complicated. He apologised again and then changed to an easier subject, denouncing those labour leaders who accepted invitations to the Premier's private social occasions. Fitzgerald warned "whenever a capitalist comes into contact with a dangerous man he invites him to dinner". He named several members of the Wellington Trades Council, who had recently been entertained by Theresa Ward, wife of the Premier, eliciting groans of disgust from the crowd. Fitzgerald had finally connected with his audience. "If a Labour leader went to Lady Ward's reception, he should take with him all the men who paid to put the bread into his mouth" he declared. After his speech Fitzgerald took questions and at the end "the conscientious orchestra, still holding aloof from any pretence of socialistic tenets, played the audience out".⁴⁹ Maybe the *Evening Post* was being

⁴⁹ EP, 23 September 1907, p.7.

unnecessarily harsh, or maybe Fitzgerald was having a rare off night. He was generally regarded as one of the best socialist speakers available to the party. Before he arrived in New Zealand he was known as “an orator par excellence, a platform general with possibly no equal in all Canada”.⁵⁰

Another socialist celebrity arrived in Wellington in October 1907. Ben Tillett had been a household name in Britain since his involvement in the 1889 London dock strike with Tom Mann, and still had a high profile as a trade union leader and public speaker.⁵¹ Tillett was in Melbourne in 1907, and his visit to New Zealand was arranged with the help of the NZSP and the Wellington Trades Council.⁵² He seemed unaware of the recent controversies over the Arbitration Act when he arrived in Auckland. Tillett was welcomed by Auckland union officials, including Robert Way of the Waterside Workers Union, and H.L. Horning, President of the Political Labour League. They invited him to speak to dock workers as soon as he arrived and at noon three hundred gathered in a large shed on the wharf to hear him. When someone asked Tillett for his view on compulsory arbitration he said he was still very impressed with the idea and has been calling for it within the British trade union movement.⁵³

He may have been modifying his message according to the audience, or he may have adjusted his views after learning of the situation in New Zealand, but a week later, Tillett was sharing the stage with H.M. Fitzgerald in Wellington, and preaching the creed of the Industrial Workers of the World.⁵⁴ The following week over 2000 people came to hear Tillett speak on

⁵⁰ Dovore.

⁵¹ Duncan Bythell, ‘Tillet, Benjamin (1860-1943)’, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004 online edition Jan 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36522>

⁵² *Evening Star*, 6 August 1907, p.6; EP, 13 September 1907, p.8.

⁵³ *Auckland Star*, 27 September 1907, p.5.

⁵⁴ EP, 4 October 1907, p.6.

'Revolutionary Socialism and Government'.⁵⁵ Tillet returned to Auckland for a few days of lectures, then he visited Whangarei and Palmerston North and then went south to Dunedin and Christchurch.⁵⁶

Tillet's talk on 'Revolutionary Socialism' was part of a "record month for Wellington Socialists" which also included the regular Sunday night lectures and a visit to Petone to support a local socialist who was debating the Single Tax League. Thirty socialists had formed a choir, and every Sunday afternoon the branch organised leafleting and street speaking at Post Office Square.⁵⁷ The Sunday evening lectures normally shut down for summer, but as they were continuing to draw large crowds they were continued for the rest of the year. Members in Petone made plans for a new branch.⁵⁸

In Christchurch Tillet's visit was used to promote revolutionary socialism among the city's trade unionists. After the visit, discussions continued with members of the PLL and the branch reported that some had moved towards the position of the Socialist Party. Despite being critical of reformism, the Christchurch socialists maintained respectful relations with the wider trade union movement. They praised PLL leader Jim Thorn for his efforts on behalf of farm labourers before the Arbitration Court, but argued he and Jack McCullough were wasting their time and talent fighting for minor concessions when they could be more useful in the NZSP.⁵⁹ At its half yearly meeting in December, the Christchurch branch heard that its finances were in good health with more than twenty pounds collected in Cathedral Square for election purposes. Literature to the value of £52 had been distributed in six months.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ *Commonweal*, November 1907, p1.

⁵⁶ NZH, 10 October 1907, p.5.

⁵⁷ *Commonweal*, November 1907, p.3.

⁵⁸ *Commonweal*, December 1907, p.3.

⁵⁹ *Commonweal*, December 1907, p.3.

⁶⁰ *Press*, 7 December 1907, p.8.

At the end of the year, an attempt was made to restart an Auckland branch. A *Commonweal* correspondent reported that “many that embraced the faith of Political Labourism in the hope of thereby speedily setting the town on fire, have found it but a damp squib, and are sighing for the resurrection of a militant party. They have found that deviating from the straight path brings with it much sorrow and vexation of spirit”.⁶¹ The correspondent was referring to Robert Way and others who had left the NZSP for the PLL in 1904. They were urged to make contact with the party again and begin planning for the return of the Auckland Socialist group in the New Year. Prominent Australian socialist speaker Harriet Powell lectured for the party on 5 December,⁶² but the Auckland socialists were unable to form a successful group until March the following year.⁶³ Further north, the Hokianga socialist group had become a branch of the NZSP by the end of 1907 and reported a growing membership, and successful social events.⁶⁴

On the West Coast, the socialists were pursuing industrial unionism and organising community events and fundraisers in the mining towns. The two branches in Denniston held meetings every Sunday and organised several social events to raise money for a ladies tennis court. Other activities included a letter writing campaign to the local newspaper.⁶⁵ The visit by Ben Tillett had caused much discussion and increased membership of the Denniston Branch, including many women. In Westport, socialists advertised Tillett’s talk by walking up and down the street ringing a bell while selling copies of Robert Blatchford’s *Britain for the British* pamphlet. The Denniston socialists were pleased to report that the merits of

⁶¹ *Commonweal*, December 1907, p.3.

⁶² NZH, 5 December 1907, p.6.

⁶³ *Commonweal*, April 1908, p.3.

⁶⁴ *Commonweal*, December 1907, p.3.

⁶⁵ *Commonweal*, September 1907, p.3.

withdrawing from the Arbitration Act were being discussed daily, and class consciousness was on the rise in the town.⁶⁶

Further south, the Greymouth branch had also benefited from Tillett's visit. The branch had been formed at the end of October, with the help of Pat Hickey and others from the Dunollie branch.⁶⁷ Seventy were present and another hundred turned out to a meeting in Dunollie the following week.⁶⁸ The Greymouth branch complained to Wellington of a shortage of socialist literature, and requested 200 copies of the December *Commonweal*, and back issues if no pamphlets were available. They also reported a new branch at the State Collieries in Runanga.⁶⁹

At the end of 1907 the party was in a positive mood and was aware of the growing support for socialism. The Wellington branch proposed a national conference in 1908.⁷⁰ The editorial in the December *Commonweal* began "Class War is a fact".⁷¹ It argued that the landlords and employers recognise the 'Class War' as a reality, though they never call it by its name. The editorial made it clear that class was the central issue and other concerns were distractions. "While many of our comrades are discussing religion, a white New Zealand, anti-militarism, and one hundred and one abstract questions, the Anti-Socialist is recognising the Class War in a practical way – he is making ready to take his side in it". The NZSP offered the workers of New Zealand "Class Conscious Revolutionary Socialism" but, the workers hesitated, "as if unsure of the effectiveness of such a weapon". The editorial argued that the stomach of the worker had been weakened by a diet of Liberal labourism and real socialism may be too strong

⁶⁶ *Commonweal*, December 1907, p.3.

⁶⁷ *Grey River Argus*, 28 October 1907, p.2.

⁶⁸ *Grey River Argus*, 4 November 1907, p.2.

⁶⁹ *Commonweal*, December 1907, p.3.

⁷⁰ *Press*, 7 December 1907, p.8.

⁷¹ *Commonweal*, December 1907, p.4.

for him. It ended by calling on readers to push forward “armed with the double edged sword of Industrial Unionism and Scientific Socialism”, and send men to parliament “pledged to plead the cause of Labour, to obstruct business and generally play the devil till they get what they want; men who will hew to the line heedless where the chips may fall”.⁷²

In the same issue, a young Wellington socialist and former branch secretary named Neville Gandy wrote about the changing environment for socialists. In ‘The Growth of Socialism’, he argued that the main cause of the recent growth in interest in socialist ideas was the deteriorating economic conditions. “The rising prices of commodities, the soaring of house-rents, industrial unrest strikes, financial panic – what do all these signify but the awakening from slumber of giant Labour – the vague but growing recognition that all is not as it should be?” Gandy was confident that the worsening economic conditions would cause people to turn to socialism for salvation. He wrote in semi-religious language, that “the spirit and leaven of Socialist thought moves, like the Spirit of Life, in a mysterious way”. Gandy was convinced that capitalism was doomed and that “The night may be dark but dawn comes with startling suddenness”. He continued, “when at last the hour arrives that the great, the final choice must be made, depend upon it that the great mass of humanity will be with us on the side of Right and Justice”.⁷³

Gandy’s writing shows that the philosophical side of ethical socialism was still alive in the Wellington branch despite the predominance of industrial unionism and Marxist ideas. Unlike the others, the industrial unionists had a clear strategy, to build militant unions that were willing to take strike action and ignore the Arbitration Court. Fitzgerald took the lead in

⁷² *Commonweal*, December 1907, p.4.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.5.

Wellington by chairing a meeting at the Socialist Hall to form a branch of the IWW. Fitzgerald emphasised that the new group was a separate organisation from the NZSP. A constitution was drafted, based on the American IWW constitution but with modifications for local conditions.⁷⁴

In January 1908 the long planned tour by Scottish socialist Keir Hardie began. Hardie was part way through a world tour, and had travelled to Australia to meet Tom Mann.⁷⁵ Wellington socialists began planning to bring him to New Zealand, and had called a meeting in September to arrange the reception party. Ex members of the SDF, ILP and the Clarion movement had all been invited to take part.⁷⁶ Hardie arrived in Auckland on 23 December and met with Auckland socialists and trade unionists that evening.⁷⁷ Hardie travelled to Wellington after Christmas and was welcomed by the Wellington mayor T.W. Hislop at a public dinner attended by 150 people. The meeting was attended by city councillors, politicians, Secretary for Labour Edward Tregear, and others. Robert Hogg, an old friend of Hardie, was also present.⁷⁸ After a short delay due to a car accident, Hardie spoke to a large audience at the Wellington Town Hall, organised by the NZSP.⁷⁹ While in New Zealand Hardie was asked by journalists about the Socialist Party's denunciation of the arbitration legislation, which was causing so much division in the labour movement. Hardie replied, "Upon that I will express no opinion".⁸⁰ Although Hardie had a personal connection with Hogg, and the Socialist Party

⁷⁴ *Dominion*, 1 January 1908, p.8.

⁷⁵ Bob Holman, *Keir Hardie: Labour's Greatest Hero?* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2010), pp.148-149.

⁷⁶ EP, 14 September 1907, p.6.

⁷⁷ *Auckland Star*, 23 December 1907, p.5; NZH, 23 December 1907, p.12.

⁷⁸ *Dominion*, 28 December 1907, p.6.

⁷⁹ *Commonweal*, February 1908, p.3.

⁸⁰ *Truth*, 4 January 1908, p.5.

benefited from their association with Hardie, he was well known and admired by the entire labour movement, and was reluctant to take a position on such a controversial issue.

On the West Coast, Paddy Webb had been sacked from the Denniston Mine after organising Ben Tillett's visit to the town, so he had moved to Greymouth. Soon, he, Pat Hickey, and half a dozen other socialists began working at the Blackball mine.⁸¹ The Denniston socialists, having lost all their most able public speakers, resorted to playing gramophone recordings of American socialist speakers at their meetings. The branch had been using the discontent associated with recent disputes between the Westport Coal Company and the miners as an opportunity to promote and sell socialist literature, and requested that the Wellington branch produce and distribute pamphlets dealing with local issues if possible. They did not have long to wait for a capable speaker. Fitzgerald departed Wellington in mid-January, for a tour of the South Island. A social was held in his honour before he departed Wellington, and the next day he left for Nelson.⁸² J.B. Hulbert had moved to Nelson and helped organise a series of meetings there, before Fitzgerald headed to a Thursday night reception in Greymouth, organised by the NZSP State Collieries branch.⁸³ That weekend, Fitzgerald spoke to a large audience at the Greymouth Town Hall. His talk, 'The Evolution of the Wage Slave' covered world history from the Neolithic age to the development of industrial capitalism. He did not blame the capitalists for the condition of society, but rather the workers, who he believed had refused to use their power and instead had trusted in politicians who did not have their interests at heart. The *Grey River Argus* described him as a "fluent and forcible" lecturer who would continue to attract large audiences.⁸⁴ Fitzgerald spent the next six weeks touring the

⁸¹ Hickey, p.11.

⁸² *Commonweal*, Feb 1908, p.3.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.4.

⁸⁴ *Grey River Argus*, 27 January 1908, p.3.

West Coast, addressing meetings almost every night, and travelling each day. He spoke at a range of venues, ranging from halls with hundreds of people to tiny farming communities. By March there were half a dozen branches of the party in the Greymouth area, and these groups set up a district council of two delegates from each branch to coordinate meetings, speakers, and distribution of literature. Groups also emerged in Reefton, and the branch at Blackball reported renewed interest and debate about socialism among locals following visits by Fitzgerald.⁸⁵

The Blackball Strike

In 1908, the Party found itself at the centre of the most important industrial dispute New Zealand had seen in years. Pat Hickey, Paddy Webb and several other young socialists had been working at the Blackball mine since January 1908, and had discovered that the mine owners allowed only fifteen minutes for lunch or 'crib time'. At a union meeting the men decided they wanted thirty minutes break, which was in line with conditions in other mines on the coast. They decided not to go to the Arbitration Court, and simply informed the mine manager that from Monday 27 January the men would take a thirty minute lunch break.⁸⁶ The day came and as Hickey ate his lunch, the mine manager stood over him with a watch and when the fifteen minutes was up, ordered Hickey back to work. He refused, and was charged with "refusing to obey the lawful commands of the mine manager".⁸⁷ Hickey and the other union activists continued agitating for improved working conditions and after a month, the mine manager informed Hickey and six other men that they were fired. Hickey asked for an

⁸⁵ *Commonweal*, March 1908, p.4.

⁸⁶ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, p.6.

⁸⁷ Hickey, p.12.

explanation but received no answer. All the sacked men were active in the local branch of the NZSP. The miners met that evening and unanimously decided not to return to work until the seven were reinstated.⁸⁸ The *Grey River Argus* wrote “The first note of trouble brought the stormy petrel Fitzgerald upon the scene”.⁸⁹ Fitzgerald was at Millerton when he heard of the dispute, and he immediately walked 20 miles to Westport, caught a coach to Reefton, and continued on to the Grey valley, arriving at Blackball in time to give a two hour speech to the miners that night.⁹⁰

The next morning, Mr T. Milligan, NZSP party secretary at Blackball, and one of the men who had been dismissed, sent a telegram to Fred Cooke informing the Christchurch branch that seven socialists had been dismissed from the mine. The Socialist Party met that night and passed a resolution “expressing sympathy with the men who have temporarily lost their means of livelihood” and requested further information from the Blackball miners.⁹¹

Milligan’s telegram was reproduced in the March *Commonweal*, which reported that all seven of the dismissed men had been assisting Fitzgerald with his speaking tour, and this was the probable reason for the dismissals. No mention was made of crib time.⁹² The next day, negotiations between the union and management failed so the Blackball miners voted to strike.⁹³ Fitzgerald was already overworked but he threw himself into organising and speaking on behalf of the striking miners. He addressed a meeting at Brunner on Friday night, then walked 12 km to Greymouth afterwards, arriving at midnight. The following afternoon he walked north to Dunollie for a meeting, then returned for an open air meeting in Greymouth

⁸⁸ *Star*, 28 February 1908, p.1.

⁸⁹ *Grey River Argus*, 2 March 1908, p.2.

⁹⁰ *Grey River Argus*, 29 February 1908, p.3.

⁹¹ *Star*, 28 February 1908, p.1.

⁹² *Commonweal*, March 1908, p.4.

⁹³ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.1-2.

that evening. After the meeting he caught the last train to Brunner and walked from there to Blackball, arriving on Sunday morning. On Sunday evening at Blackball, after speaking for more than an hour, he fainted, and had to be carried to his hotel room.⁹⁴ The NZSP committee advised him to reduce his workload to only Sundays and three nights a week.⁹⁵

In Wellington, the regular programme of Sunday night meetings continued, but on 15 March Robert Hogg's lecture was replaced by a protest meeting in relation to the recent £70 fine imposed on the Blackball miners. Auckland socialist Robert Way spoke, as did Hogg and McLaren, who unexpectedly impressed the socialists, being "once or twice ... on the verge of plunging into revolutionary action". Robert Way was still in Wellington the following week so he took the Sunday night stage again and informed the audience that the Political Labour League was a failure, and that workers in Auckland were now joining the NZSP instead.⁹⁶

An attempt to negotiate an end to the strike in mid-March failed when the Blackball mine manager refused to give a written guarantee that he would not victimise any of the miners when they returned to work. The miners' union decided to send representatives on tour to raise money and promote support for the strikers. Dave Pritchard, a Scottish socialist who had come to New Zealand with the Clarion Settlers, was sent to tour the South Island and Pat Hickey was sent to the Buller region and then to the North Island.⁹⁷ Hickey began by speaking at Westport and the Denniston mine, where the workers donated £50 to the strike fund.⁹⁸ When he spoke to the Wellington Trades and Labour Council, it passed several resolutions in support of the miners, and organised a public meeting attended by 200 people at the

⁹⁴ *Grey River Argus*, 3 March 1908, p.3.

⁹⁵ *Commonweal*, March 1908, p.4.

⁹⁶ *Commonweal*, April 1908, p.3.

⁹⁷ *Press*, 16 March 1908, p.7; Hickey, p.14.

⁹⁸ *EP*, 16 March 1908, p.8.

Wellington Town Hall a few days later.⁹⁹ Pritchard arrived in Christchurch on the evening of 18 March.¹⁰⁰ A meeting was organised to coordinate the campaign in support of the strikers. Seventy people from the NZSP, Trades and Labour Council and the PLL crowded into the Socialist Party rooms where Pritchard told them he had been employed at the Blackball mine for seven months. He informed the audience that the seven dismissed men were the entire committee of the Blackball Socialist Party.¹⁰¹ A few days later, the NZSP hosted a public meeting at Christchurch Opera House, which was completely full. Fred Cooke chaired the meeting and scoffed at the Arbitration Act, saying “with a labour party in Parliament, the workers would not be at the mercy of the present Liberal Government, and would not care a rap for the Arbitration Act”. Pritchard outlined working conditions in the mines and gave a history of the dispute.¹⁰² In April, Hickey spoke to a meeting of the Auckland Socialist Party, which agreed to send “a letter of sympathy to the Blackball miners, expressing hearty approval of their action” and to collect donations for the strikers at their Sunday evening open air meeting.¹⁰³

In Wellington, the April *Commonweal* devoted a full page to the dispute. The story traced the origins of the strike to the founding by Hickey and others of the Blackball branch of the Socialist Party, and how the Blackball socialists had raised the issue of crib time through the union.¹⁰⁴ The Wellington branch promoted industrial unionism in the Sunday night public lectures in April. Fitzgerald returned to Wellington in early April, and spoke at His Majesty’s

⁹⁹ *Dominion*, 24 March 1908, p.7; *Press*, 27 March 1908, p.8.

¹⁰⁰ *Press*, 19 March 1908, p.7.

¹⁰¹ *Star*, 19 March 1908, p.1; *Star*, 20 March 1908, p.4.

¹⁰² *Star*, 23 March 1908, p.1.

¹⁰³ *NZH*, 4 April 1908, p.8.

¹⁰⁴ *Commonweal*, April 1908, p.4.

Theatre. The following week Pat Hickey spoke at the same venue, arguing that ordinary trade unionism was not enough, and urging workers to adopt the strategy of the IWW.¹⁰⁵

The 1908 Conference

The NZSP held its first national conference in Wellington on Easter Monday. Tom Mann arrived from Australia, and the party told the *Evening Post* they expected to draft a platform for the next election.¹⁰⁶ By the end of the week the party was surprised to discover it had more than 3000 members and the delegates had voted to abstain from political action.

A preliminary meeting was held on Saturday evening 18 April to draw up the agenda and elect officers to run the conference.¹⁰⁷ Thirty three delegates, representing over three thousand members, elected Robert Hogg as chairman and Harry Larner as conference secretary.¹⁰⁸ The formal conference began on Sunday afternoon.¹⁰⁹ Nearly thirty delegates attended, all but one were men. The delegates came from at least seventeen branches around the country.¹¹⁰ Hogg welcomed the delegates to Wellington and reminded them that conference decisions were not binding until they had been confirmed by the party branches. A national executive was elected, made up of seven delegates along with the paid party secretary in Wellington. The members of the executive were; Robert Hogg and Ernest Clay (Wellington), James Hulbert (Nelson), Jamieson and R.J. Ecroyd (Christchurch), Jackson (Inglewood) and Glynn (Blackball).¹¹¹ The conference adjourned early to hear Tom Mann speak at the Wellington

¹⁰⁵ *Commonweal*, May 1908, p.3.

¹⁰⁶ EP, 11 April 1908, p.6.

¹⁰⁷ *Commonweal*, May 1908, p.8.

¹⁰⁸ *Dominion*, 20 April 1908, p.9.

¹⁰⁹ *Commonweal*, May 1908, p.7.

¹¹⁰ *Dominion*, 21 April 1908, p.9.

¹¹¹ *Commonweal*, May 1908, p.8.

Opera House that evening.¹¹² Two thousand people crammed into the building to hear Mann's first public speech in New Zealand for more than six years.¹¹³ The *Evening Post* reported "Fully half of Mr Mann's audience were ladies". Robert Hogg introduced Mann, whose speech on revolutionary socialism covered everything from the history and evolution of capitalism to unemployment in London.¹¹⁴

The next day the conference confirmed the national platform of the New Zealand Socialist Party. The object of the Party was "The establishment in New Zealand of a Co-operative Commonwealth founded on the Socialisation of Land and Capital". The party principles defined capitalism and class struggle, and argued;

To win economic freedom the non-owning working class must organise on the lines of the Industrial Workers of the World, and they must force the struggle into the political field and use their political power, the ballot, to abolish the capitalist class ownership, set up the Socialist Republic, and thus revolutionise in the interest of the working class the entire structure of industrial society ... Political power is useful to the workers only for the purpose of overthrowing Capitalism: Parliaments being essentially capitalist machines designed to enable that class to perpetuate class domination.¹¹⁵

The conference decided on the party structure and membership requirements. Prospective members had to sign a statement confirming they had studied the party constitution and agreed with the party principles before being nominated to branch membership. A majority

¹¹² *Dominion*, 20 April 1908, p.9.

¹¹³ *Commonweal*, May 1908, p.3.

¹¹⁴ EP, 20 April 1908, p.9.

¹¹⁵ *Commonweal*, May 1908, p.8.

vote of branch members admitted new members. Dues were one shilling a month. A new branch with twenty financial members would receive a charter from the National executive. Members who did not belong to a local branch could join the nearest provincial branch in Auckland, Wellington or Christchurch.¹¹⁶

The conference adjourned on Monday for dinner and Tom Mann joined the evening session.¹¹⁷ The National Executive were instructed to draw up a manifesto stating the party position on current political questions, for use in the forthcoming general election.¹¹⁸ Later there was a debate over the value of taking political action at all. Mr A. McMahon moved that the party should abstain, arguing that "It was a fallacy to think they could obtain Socialism through Parliament. It was only through the industrial field that their object would be obtained". On the opposing side Mr Williams argued that it would be a mistake to withdraw from parliamentary action. He thought there was a chance that Robert Hogg could be elected to Parliament. McMahon responded by comparing the record of British socialist politician John Burns to that of Tom Mann, and argued Mann had done far more for socialism outside of Parliament than Burns had inside.¹¹⁹ The delegates agreed and voted two to one in favour of the motion "That the New Zealand Socialist Party take no political action at the present juncture".¹²⁰

Next, the party discussed and agreed to endorse the 1905 'Preamble' of the IWW which began "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common" and urged working class industrial and political unity independent of any political party. Tom Mann spoke about the

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Dominion*, 21 April 1908, p.9.

¹¹⁸ *Commonweal*, May 1908, p.8.

¹¹⁹ EP, 21 April 1908, p.3.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*; *Commonweal*, May 1908, p.8.

founding of the IWW in 1905 and told the conference it was “the greatest organisation of the kind in existence”.¹²¹ The delegates voted to endorse the ‘Preamble’. Mann was asked to address the conference on the socialist movement in Australia, and the party agreed to affiliate to the Socialist Federation of Australasia (SFA).¹²² The SFA had been formed at a June 1907 conference in Melbourne attended by a range of Australian socialist groups. One of the few things they agreed on was to endorse the militant industrial unionism of the IWW.¹²³

The conference confirmed its opposition to the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, and warned the workers of other countries that acceptance of industrial arbitration “will prove detrimental to their industrial welfare and class emancipation”. The delegates agreed to support the *Commonweal* as the national organ of the NZSP and began raising funds to obtain a printing press. They also decided to recommend to their members that the *Commonweal* should become a weekly paper.¹²⁴

There was a “lengthy and interesting discussion” on the subject of militarism. It was finally agreed that “this Conference of Socialists in New Zealand recognises that the workers of the world have no quarrel among themselves, and affirms the principle of universal peace as in the best interests of humanity”. The conference ended with the singing of the *Red Flag* and *Auld Lang Syne*.¹²⁵

The Wellington socialists were pleased with the success of the conference. They were aware the party had been growing but as they wrote in *Commonweal*, “few of us were prepared for the announcement at the conference that the members of the New Zealand Socialist Party

¹²¹ EP, 21 April 1908, p.3.

¹²² *Commonweal*, May 1908, p.8

¹²³ Verity Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.13-14.

¹²⁴ *Commonweal*, May 1908, pp.8-9.

¹²⁵ *Commonweal*, May 1908, p.9.

number over three thousand persons”.¹²⁶ They were confident that with half a dozen paid organisers and the turning of *Commonweal* into a weekly, they could multiply the membership tenfold. Doubters were assured that better and more centralised national organisation would make the entire party stronger.

The party was aware that the most significant decision to come out of the conference was the decision to renounce parliamentary campaigns. The new policy was explained in *Commonweal*.

It has long been a weakness of the Socialist movement that its development has been one-sided. Too much energy has been dissipated in the attempt to capture political power which, when seized, is like a maxim gun without ammunition in the hands of untutored savages – they can’t make use of it.¹²⁷

The writer explained that tactical errors were inevitable in a young movement. Although socialists must try to seize the reins of government, they must recognise that “we must capture not only the shadow of power – Parliament – but also the real source of power – possession of the means of production, distribution and exchange. And this is to be done by industrial organisation, by education of the worker along class lines, and by ceaseless perfection of our Socialist Organisations”.¹²⁸

The time was not right for taking political action, they wrote, as “Much has yet to be done before we can achieve any lasting benefits to our cause by Parliamentary action”. The Wellington branch noted that the statement of principles adopted by the conference “places

¹²⁶ *Commonweal*, May 1908, p.6.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

our movement in line with the policy of Revolutionary Socialist parties throughout the world” and declared themselves “well satisfied” with the conference.

The decision to reject parliamentary action was won by a two thirds majority of delegates and it is likely this is roughly the proportion of members who signed up in the year before the conference. While the party still contained a range of ideas, militant industrial unionism was quickly becoming dominant. This new militancy had attracted the majority of the recent members, and was being energetically promoted by young militant unionists. At the time of the conference these men were involved in a strike that was the biggest challenge to the arbitration system since it had begun in the 1890s. They had little interest in parliamentary politics and were entirely focused on building industrial unionism. As we shall see, most of the membership disagreed with the decision to reject electoral politics, but the conference delegates were convinced by the industrial strategy of Hickey, Fitzgerald and the other unionists. The party’s previous electoral campaigns were always intended merely as propaganda tools to promote the idea of socialism rather than as serious attempts to get into positions of power, so abandoning this tactic was easy for some of the older members. The NZSP had long pushed for resistance to the Arbitration Act and now this was widespread they were happy to go along with the new wave of industrial unionism. Their failure to develop a political strategy to go alongside the work of the union militants would become a problem in the future but in 1908 the party leadership were confident they were on the right path. H.M. Fitzgerald did not attend the conference, instead he was in Dunedin addressing a meeting of 150 people about the Blackball strike.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ EP, 21 April 1908, p.2.

The NZSP celebrated May Day with rallies in Wellington and Christchurch. The Wellington meeting passed a motion sending “fraternal greetings to the class-conscious workers of all civilised nations on every continent. “ The motion ended “Socialism is the only hope. All else is delusion”. In Christchurch the party held a social with music and songs. The new Auckland branch was still struggling to get organised but had received a big boost from the visit of Tom Mann, who delivered six public lectures during April and May, and fifty new members had enrolled in the local branch.¹³⁰

On 12 May it was announced that the Blackball strike had been settled. The Blackball socialists immediately began preparing for a visit by Tom Mann. Mann had spoken in a range of small towns around the North Island and reported that new branches of the party had been formed in Wanganui, New Plymouth and Stratford. He was confident that the new branches would prove more enduring than those established after his previous tour in 1902. His tour continued in June with stops at Blackball and Dunollie, then to Christchurch, Dunedin and Invercargill, Oamaru and Timaru. Mann’s tour ended with an appearance at the Wellington branch annual social in July.¹³¹

The 1908 Election

The decision to abstain from political action put the Christchurch branch in an awkward position, as they had been running a fundraising campaign for several months in preparation for the election campaign, and they were unaware that abstention from electoral campaigning would even be on the agenda of the conference.

¹³⁰ *Commonweal*, June 1908, pp.3, 4.

¹³¹ *Commonweal*, June 1908, p.4.

The national executive discussed the problem after the conference, and recommended that branches think carefully before voting to confirm the abstention policy as part of the constitution.¹³² The majority of the membership voted to reject the abstention policy and take part in the 1908 elections. An article in *Commonweal*, announcing Robert Hogg's election campaign, gave some of the background to the decision. Although the motion against political action "was strongly supported by all the Wellington delegates", the article explained, "when the recommendations of the conference were submitted to the referendum of the party members, this was the solitary motion rejected, and rejected by the overwhelming majority of the rank and file of the branches".¹³³ The article hinted that recent events had taken place among the various Wellington political organisations which convinced the Wellington branch that standing a candidate was necessary. "What those events are is well known to all who are acquainted with the inner working and machinations of certain local organisations". Whatever these events were, the Wellington branch was now unanimous in deciding to contest the Wellington South seat and had nominated Robert Hogg as their candidate. The party ran three other candidates; Robert Way stood in Ohinemuri, which included the mining town of Waihi, and in Christchurch, R.J. Ecroyd and Fred Cooke stood in the Christchurch North and Christchurch East electorates.¹³⁴

Once the decision had been made to support political campaigning, the decision to run a candidate seems to have been left to individual branches, with no central party involvement. In Ohinemuri, Robert Way was standing against another labour candidate, Tim Armstrong, who was president of the Waihi Miners Union.¹³⁵ In Christchurch the party came to an

¹³² *Commonweal*, June 1908, p.9.

¹³³ *Commonweal*, October 1908, p.5.

¹³⁴ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, pp.25-26.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

informal agreement with the PLL, and the two parties stood in two electorates each.¹³⁶ The PLL had set up Labour Representation Committees for the 1908 election so they could coordinate election campaigns with other trade unionists who did not necessarily support the PLL. In Auckland and Wellington they made alliances with moderate trade union candidates.¹³⁷ While the Christchurch Socialists were not part of the LRC, it appears their close relationship with the socialists in the Christchurch PLL made the informal arrangement possible.

The Wellington South electorate was chosen because, "Newtown is undoubtedly the most promising field for the labours of a workers champion. It is the home in Wellington of the very poorest of the toiling population".¹³⁸ Hogg emphasised that he stood for revolution not reform. He told a Newtown meeting that he came before them "as a missionary more than anything else. His main object was to preach the doctrine of Socialism and get converts; the glamour of parliamentary life had no charm for him". He told the meeting he would not be appealing for their votes or for their support in any other form.¹³⁹ Instead he described his political evolution from conservative to revolutionary socialist and quoted government statistics in order to show the administration's policies had failed. In an appeal to voters, Hogg outlined common objections to socialism and his answers to them, and argued that under capitalism, all palliative measures would necessarily fail. The letter ended "Remember, Socialism is the ONLY hope. All else is delusion".¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ EP, 3 October 1908, p.12.

¹³⁷ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, p.19.

¹³⁸ *Commonweal*, October 1908, p.5.

¹³⁹ EP, 21 October 1908, p.4.

¹⁴⁰ *Commonweal*, November 1908, p.5.

In Christchurch, Fred Cooke confidently told his audience that socialists would soon be represented in Parliament. His socialism was about brotherhood and moral improvement. He pointed out that the local Anglican Bishop had recently declared “there was a universal cry for justice and a fairer distribution of wealth. Surely, Cooke asked, if a man of such high standing made statements like that, there must be something in socialism? Cooke told the crowd that a socialist was “his brother’s keeper” and “a new era was dawning for humanity”. Like Hogg, Cooke also criticised government policy in detail, but he also gave his opinion on various local issues. The Christchurch socialists supported the election campaign by turning up to meetings of the non-socialist candidates to heckle and ask difficult questions. The branch reported increased attendance at their own meetings and increased donations as a result of the election campaign.¹⁴¹

In Ohinemuri, Robert Way used his eight years of experience advocating in the Arbitration Court to argue that the system was incapable of bringing reform. He argued that although the Liberals had done some good in the past, workers needed more, and “it would remain the duty of the Socialist Labour Party to push on to higher standards of civilisation and humanity”.¹⁴² Australian socialist Harriet Powell made another visit to assist with Way’s campaign, delivering a lecture on ‘Socialism and Religion’, where she argued that the aim of Socialism was to develop “true religion” and that a modern Jesus would not be satisfied with denouncing sin but would tackle economic issues and raise all of society upwards.¹⁴³

The Dunedin branch of the party was unclear about its attitude to the election. Some of the branch threw their support behind the PLL candidate, trade unionist J.W. Munro, while others

¹⁴¹ *Commonweal*, November 1908, p.2.

¹⁴² *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 28 October 1908, p.2.

¹⁴³ *Commonweal*, December 1908, p.3.

decided not to take part at all. The branch reported that many local PLL members were convinced the PLL positions were not strong enough and they were optimistic about recruiting them to the Socialist Party. John McManus had spoken at recent socialist meetings in Dunedin and quoted from Blatchford and other prominent English socialists who argued against alliances between Liberals and Labour advocates and instead for class struggle.¹⁴⁴

Regular educational activities continued alongside the election campaigning. The Wellington branch hosted its usual Sunday night lectures, which included local woman Elizabeth Glover speaking on the moral aspect of socialism, and Pat Hickey, visiting from Blackball to give a talk on the history of civilisation. The branch also ran weekly social events, including a fundraiser for a proposed Socialist Sunday School, a dance, and a concert. In Christchurch the branch ran public dancing classes which attracted young people and made a small profit.¹⁴⁵

The NZSP candidates uniformly received very few votes, but they were happy with the increased exposure they obtained. *Commonweal* justified Hogg's poor showing by pointing out there had not been any propaganda work done in Newtown before the campaign, and that there was an opposing labour candidate. "All those things considered" the editorial wrote, "to have secured 237 votes at the first time of asking for clear-cut Revolutionary Socialism is something of a feat".¹⁴⁶ The editorial ended with criticism of unnamed comrades who had failed to exhibit sufficient enthusiasm during the campaign. Twenty two prospective members were recruited during the campaign, which had "proved its value".¹⁴⁷ The Christchurch branch recruited fifteen new members on election night alone and reported that

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.2.

¹⁴⁵ *Commonweal*, November 1908, p.2.

¹⁴⁶ *Commonweal*, December 1908, p.4.

¹⁴⁷ *Commonweal*, January 1909, p.2.

the final meeting of the campaign brought in donations worth more than double their previous branch record.¹⁴⁸

The NZSP was apparently not concerned that the PLL had also made progress and had increased its electoral support from 7.3% of the vote in the seats it contested in 1905 to 20.1% in 1908.¹⁴⁹ The union movement was growing rapidly as the working class was becoming aware of its strength. Thousands of people were now prepared to vote for a Labour Party, and thousands more were joining trade unions and the new industrial unions.

Conclusion

At the end of 1908, the NZSP must have been very pleased with the progress it had made over the previous two years. Support for revolutionary socialism had grown rapidly and the party had benefited from its involvement in the Blackball strike. The NZSP provided a social space for militants to meet, read literature and take part in political debate and education. Women, including residents of mining towns, who were unable to take part in the unions there, became politically active in the local branches of the party. The party still contained a range of socialist ideas, but the majority of the new members joined as part of the surge of interest in industrial unionism. The new members and the increase in interest in industrial unionism did not change the purpose of the party, as many of the industrial unionists were focused on building the union movement rather than the Socialist Party. Participation in the 1908 elections was seen as part of the process of recruiting people into the socialist network rather than as a serious attempt to enter Parliament. As in earlier years the NZSP remained an

¹⁴⁸ *Commonweal*, December 1908, p.2.

¹⁴⁹ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, p.19.

organisation whose main purpose was to build and support a radical socialist counterculture in New Zealand. However, by 1908 it was operating in an environment which had allowed the party to grow rapidly. Young union militants like HM Fitzgerald and Pat Hickey disdained parliamentary politics and their confidence encouraged NZSP leaders who were committed to revolutionary action. The growth in unrest saw an increase in party membership but not all who joined were prepared to reject political action entirely, and the membership reversed the 1908 conference decision to abstain from parliamentary elections. Unlike the industrial unionists, the bulk of the new members did not have a clear strategy or prominent leaders, and many of them would not remain in the party long term.

Chapter Three

This chapter describes the NZSP in a period which saw working class militancy increase in many parts of the country and the rise of an organised independent political labour movement. The militant miners of the West Coast formed the Federation of Labour, which grew rapidly, and the Trades Councils moved away from their previous alliance with the Liberals and continued building their own independent working class political parties. As the two union groups competed for influence over the organised working class, the NZSP naturally supported the industrial unionists of the Federation of Labour, and saw itself as the political wing of the Federation. The party did not have any direct influence over the Federation and although many Federation leaders were party members, they had little interest in the party or politics, and remained focused on building the Federation. The party and the Federation had a shared belief in militant socialism and a rejection of the 'reformism' of the Trades Councils and the PLL. The NZSP remained a loose network of local groups with no coherent national structure or strategy. Education and propaganda work continued, and the branches in the main centres were very active. A wide range of policy was debated at the annual conferences, but these debates did not evolve into a party strategy. The branches in Auckland and the mining towns often had overlapping membership with the industrial unions, and became the base for a group of men who became nationally significant labour leaders. The Christchurch and Wellington branches were very involved in anti-militarism campaigns, and also built links with local Federation unions. Despite the activities of individuals and branches, the party was unable to influence events on a national level. After the defeat at Waihi in 1912, the Federation of Labour decided to pursue a unity strategy, and proposed a

national labour organisation and political party. Most NZSP branches decided to support the Unity proposals, and by the second Unity conference in July 1913, they had been convinced to join the new Social Democratic Party. Only the Wellington branch still contained a majority who opposed the merger with the new party. By the end of 1913, the NZSP no longer existed but the ideas they had promoted had become influential in all parts of the labour movement in New Zealand.

The Rise of the Federation of Labour

After the Blackball strike, the West Coast miners' unions began organising themselves into a federation. The Blackball miners appointed Pat Hickey to work on the project and the Runanga miners appointed Robert Semple, an Australian trade unionist who had been working there since 1906. By the end of 1908 North Island miners had joined and the Federation had thousands of members. The Federation adopted some political policies but most of the executive committee were socialists and industrial unionists like Hickey, Semple and Paddy Webb, who had little interest in electoral politics.¹ In 1909 the Federation opened its membership to all unskilled workers and renamed itself the Federation of Labour. This was a direct challenge to the Trades Councils, who had been trying, unsuccessfully, to form a nationwide federation for years.²

In Wellington the NZSP remained focused on organising educational activities and lecture tours. Robert Hogg had lost his job at the *New Zealand Times* after the election, and the Wellington branch employed him, initially for a three month period until the 1909

¹ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.16-23.

² Ibid., pp.27-28.

conference.³ He continued to edit *Commonweal* and added a regular column which encouraged children to write to 'Uncle Robert' about their pets, home life and holidays. The first 'Children's Hour' column announced that socialist Sunday schools were being planned in Dunedin, Auckland and Wellington, and reprinted a version of the Socialist Ten Commandments to be learnt by heart.⁴ The Wellington Socialist Sunday School opened on 14 February 1909.⁵ The Dunedin Sunday School sent a syllabus and the Wellington classes grew steadily in 1909 from an initial enrolment of "over two dozen" children.⁶

Wellington socialists were encouraged to learn Esperanto, a constructed language designed to promote international understanding. An Esperanto society began teaching the language at the Socialist Hall on Tuesday nights, with free admission for NZSP members.⁷ *Commonweal* printed exercises and grammar lessons, and the courses proved popular with the initial supply of textbooks selling out.⁸

In March 1909 the party announced a tour of the West Coast by Wellington socialist Elizabeth Glover.⁹ Glover was the first female speaker for the Wellington branch and had been lecturing since September 1908.¹⁰ The party also approached Harry Scott Bennett, a former labour politician who had resigned from the New South Wales parliament and became a revolutionary socialist, and proposed he tour New Zealand for six months later that year.¹¹ As in previous years, the Party gave little thought to the political ideas of its featured speakers, instead choosing them on the basis of popularity and availability. However Scott Bennett

³ *Commonweal*, January 1909, p.5.

⁴ *Commonweal*, January 1909, p.3.

⁵ *Commonweal*, February 1909, p.5.

⁶ *Commonweal*, March 1909, p.3.

⁷ *Commonweal*, April 1909, p.5.

⁸ *Commonweal*, June 1909, p.6.

⁹ NZH, 24 March 1909, p.8.

¹⁰ *Commonweal*, October 1908, p.2.

¹¹ NZH, 24 March 1909, p.8.

would turn out to be one of the most influential of the overseas speakers the NZSP brought to New Zealand.

The Second Easter Conference

The second annual conference of the NZSP was held in Wellington on Easter weekend 1909 and began with a series of social events for visiting delegates. A reception was held at the Socialist Hall on Saturday night, with music and speeches. On Sunday afternoon visiting delegates spoke at open air meetings around the city, and advertised a public lecture that evening.¹²

The formal conference opened the next day with twenty four delegates representing 758 members from thirteen of the party's twenty seven branches.¹³ The 1908 conference had decided that the aim of the party was to establish a "Co-operative Commonwealth founded on the Socialisation of land and capital". Delegates voted unanimously to change 'land and capital' to "the means of production, distribution and exchange". Next there was a "spirited debate" on the statement of party principles. Some delegates described the statement as "unnecessary, redundant and amateurish". One of the Nelson delegates wanted all reference to the IWW removed. In the end, the 1908 principles were endorsed with minimal changes.¹⁴

Several branches argued that the membership requirements be loosened and that branches should have the power to draft their own conditions of membership. Many delegates were opposed to increasing the power of the executive and wanted local autonomy for branches.

¹² EP, 12 April 1909, p.8.

¹³ *Commonweal*, May 1909, p.5; *Dominion*, 13 April 1909, p.6.

¹⁴ *Commonweal*, May 1909, p.5.

Various minor changes to the membership and branch rules were made. The conference decided that in future, branches would be represented by delegates according to the size of their membership.¹⁵

The delegates were aware the Miners' Federation had adopted some limited political aims, and the NZSP membership pledge was rewritten to accommodate members who were part of the Federation. Previously, it had been agreed that members were forbidden from being "connected with, directly or indirectly" with any other political party or organisation.¹⁶ The pledge was now modified to allow support for any "kindred organisation, having for its objective the Socialisation of the means of production, distribution or exchange". The Wellington branch modified its internal rules in line with the decision and an editorial in the next *Commonweal* was devoted to explaining this. The editorial admitted that the removal of a similar clause in the British ILP had allowed "mere reformers and political adventurers" to join the British party. It was admitted this was a risk in New Zealand too, but readers were assured "the rank and file are too militant for that". No mention was made of the PLL. The editorial explained that the party was forced to amend the clause "or dissolve as a party, as the Miners' Federation had decided to stand candidates in the next general election. "Supposing we had not amended our Sixth Clause, how were our comrades who are members of the Miners' Federation or other "political action" unions to remain members of our Party? They could not". The article explained, "Either way the New Zealand Socialist Party stood to be crippled if not wrecked". The editorial concluded that the amendment was a wise one and would not affect the party.¹⁷ *Commonweal* did not discuss why the Miners' Federation had

¹⁵ *Commonweal*, May 1909, pp.5-6.

¹⁶ *Commonweal*, May 1908, p.8.

¹⁷ *Commonweal*, May 1909, p.5.

apparently decided to stand candidates in the election themselves. Already the NZSP was following the lead of the industrial unionists, rather than devising a strategy for its members in the Miners' Federation.

The Struggle against Militarism.

Militarism in New Zealand and elsewhere became a topic of debate for the entire labour movement in 1909. While some in the Party were initially influenced by socialist arguments in favour of militarism, they were the minority and the party became part of the growing anti-militarism movement. In March, Prime Minister Joseph Ward announced that his government had offered to pay for a dreadnought for the British Navy.¹⁸ Weeks later he announced plans for a Compulsory Military Training (CMT) programme for boys and young men.¹⁹ The NZSP executive debated its policy on militarism at a May 1909 meeting in Palmerston North.²⁰ Two leading British socialists, Robert Blatchford and Harry Hyndman, had publicly broken with the rest of the British socialist movement and called for a strong military to defend Britain against alleged German aggression.²¹ Some of the executive had been convinced by these arguments. The details were not recorded but they eventually agreed on a statement condemning Compulsory Military Training and in favour of international solidarity.²²

As the executive were meeting in Palmerston North, Wellington socialists had already made up their mind, and were disrupting a public meeting on Compulsory Military Training in the

¹⁸ EP, 22 March 1909, p.8.

¹⁹ *Dominion*, 6 April 1909, p.7.

²⁰ *Commonweal*, June 1909, p.5.

²¹ *Star*, 22 September 1908, p.1.

²² *Commonweal*, June, 1909, p.5.

Town Hall.²³ The meeting was hosted by the Mayor of Wellington, Alfred Newman, and ex government minister Robert McNab.²⁴ After the opening speech, Robert Hogg stood to ask the Mayor why there were uniformed police officers among the audience. An “organised gang of hoodlums” heckled Hogg, but he wrote later, “our fellows determined not to let the militarists have it all their own way”.²⁵ The meeting degenerated as arguments broke out in the hall and McNab began verbally attacking the socialists from the stage. He quoted from a recent pro-militarism article by Robert Blatchford to loud cheers from the pro-military section of the audience. Hogg eventually made it onto the stage to move a resolution in favour of international solidarity but no one could hear him. Socialists attempted to sing *The Red Flag*, while their opponents sang *Rule Britannia*.²⁶ Eventually the meeting closed and as organisers began to sing the National Anthem, the socialists called for “cheers for the revolution” and “one of the most noisy meetings ever held in Wellington” came to an end.²⁷ The next issue of *Commonweal*, condemned “the latest eruption of Jingoism by Robert Blatchford and H.M. Hyndman in the “Clarion””. The editorial argued, “There must be no compromise with foolish and affronting panic-mongering of this sort” and “the Socialist movement must clearly and earnestly disassociate itself from their war-provoking avowals or be itself condemned as unworthy to bear the Socialist name”.²⁸

The Australian socialist Harry Scott Bennett was welcomed to Wellington in November 1909 with an NZSP reception.²⁹ The following night he addressed a public meeting on the ‘War of

²³ Ibid., p.2.

²⁴ *Dominion*, 14 May 1909, p.5.

²⁵ *Commonweal*, June 1909, p.2.

²⁶ *Dominion*, 14 May 1909, p.5.

²⁷ Ibid.; *Press*, 14 May 1909, p.8.

²⁸ *Commonweal*, June 1909, p.4.

²⁹ EP, 20 November 1909, p.6.

the Classes'.³⁰ In December, he spent three weeks touring the West Coast, which helped revive the mining town branches.³¹ Scott Bennett stayed in Auckland for most of January, drawing large crowds to his lectures.³² The Auckland branch was led by Australian born Michael Joseph Savage. Joe Savage, as he was known, had become branch secretary at the end of 1908. He was 36 years old, single and had been active in Australian labour politics before moving to New Zealand. He worked at a brewery and led the Auckland Brewers Union. By 1909 he was leader of the socialist faction in the Auckland Trades Council.³³ The Auckland branch included many union activists and they were so impressed by Scott Bennett's work that the executive asked him to return later in 1910 as their paid organiser.³⁴

The 1910 conference in Christchurch

The 1910 Easter Conference in Christchurch highlighted the lack of administrative structure in the party. The National Executive report to the conference revealed there were no centralised financial records. The 1908 conference had been financed by the Wellington branch, and in 1909 Hogg had used his own money to pay for part of the conference costs. The 1910 committee recommended "the absolute necessity of providing the General Secretary with sufficient funds to meet the expenses of his department, if the national organisation is to continue to exist". The Committee had previously asked the branches to send in regular dues to head office, but "Not until within a few days of the meeting of

³⁰ Ibid., p.2.

³¹ *Commonweal*, January 1910, p.2.

³² *Commonweal*, March 1910, p.2.

³³ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.111-112

³⁴ *Commonweal*, March 1910, p.2.

Conference did anything in the shape of national dues come to hand, and even then the amounts sent forward were not up to expectation".³⁵

Commonweal was also in trouble. Although the executive had agreed in May that it would be recognised as the national newspaper of the NZSP, and suggested ways that local branches could support the paper, there was little evidence of effort by most branches. The Wellington branch were keen to increase frequency to a weekly, and they, along with the executive, thought the party should take responsibility for the paper at a national level. Wellington had suggested that Auckland, Christchurch or Dunedin should take over the paper for the following year.³⁶

On Monday morning twenty delegates gathered in the Christchurch Socialist Hall. They represented sixteen branches, but eleven more branches failed to send delegates.³⁷ The conference heard the total expenditure for all branches was £2000, mostly on literature.³⁸ Yet again the conference debated the party principles and membership requirements. Delegates from Blackball and Greymouth proposed the membership requirements should be loosened to allow support for other socialist groups. The Blackball delegates eventually accepted a proposal that members would agree "not to be connected with, directly or indirectly, any party but the party of the New Zealand Socialists, and that you would render no support to any other political party". It was decided that the National Executive would be based in Auckland for the following year and Robert Hogg in Wellington was appointed National Secretary.³⁹

³⁵ *Commonweal*, May 1910, p.3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Press*, 28 March 1910, p.6.

³⁸ *Commonweal*, April 1910, p.3.

³⁹ *Commonweal*, May 1910, p.3.

The *Commonweal* subsequently reported, "Every delegate to the Conference had the same hopeful optimistic tale to tell, every delegate did his best to impress upon the conference the great need for more missionary Socialist work". The writer noted the absence of conflict and "a genuine feeling of comradeship prevailed". The Christchurch branch had benefited "immeasurably" from hosting the conference. *Commonweal* also published a series of short impressions of the conference by attendees. All commented that it was the most professional and pleasant conference they had attended. Paddy Webb contrasted it with the trade union conferences, praising "the entire absence of wire pulling, intriguing and canvassing fellow delegates for one or other proposition". Robert Hogg described it as "Easily the best of all Conferences I have attended here and at home".⁴⁰ A more critical article appeared the following month. The unnamed author attended the conference but was not a delegate, and appeared to be speaking for many in the Wellington branch, arguing that the conference was too efficient and did not allow for full debate and discussion.⁴¹

After the 1910 conference the NZSP remained a fairly loose network of groups. The party had strong branches in the four main centres, and a larger number of small and fairly informal branches. National organisation was still shaky. Although all the branches ordered literature and copies of *Commonweal*, they had little interest in, or ability to, financially support the newspaper or the distribution of literature.

The Wellington branch had 350 members. Nationally the party had four paid organisers. These were Hogg, Auckland activist Robert Way, and two overseas lecturers, John Fox, and Harry Scott Bennett.⁴² John Fox was an English socialist who had arrived in Auckland in March.

⁴⁰ *Commonweal*, April 1910, p.2.

⁴¹ *Commonweal*, May 1910, p.2.

⁴² EP, 7 May 1910, p.3.

He was known to *Clarion* readers as the organiser of the Oxford University Clarion Fellowship.⁴³ Popular lecturer Harry Scott Bennett had returned to New Zealand on May Day 1910 as Auckland branch organiser.⁴⁴ In June 1910, the Auckland branch reported it had 304 members.⁴⁵

In Christchurch the Socialist Party was benefiting from an upsurge in labour activity in the city. Jack McCullough led a group of unionists who supported an independent Labour Party, and the NZSP worked alongside them to take control of the Trades Council. By 1910, the radicals dominated the Council, and the NZSP's Ted Howard was the president. English born Howard had been involved in the Political Labour League since he arrived in Christchurch in 1903. In 1908 he had been elected secretary of the General Labourers' Union, and had joined the NZSP after hearing Tom Mann speak. He became a leader of the branch, along with Fred Cooke and Fred Bartram, an English born insurance agent.⁴⁶ Many of the other trade unionists in Christchurch, including McCullough, supported the New Zealand Labour Party, which had been formed at the July 1910 Trades and Labour Councils conference in Auckland.⁴⁷

Others in the Christchurch branch of the NZSP rejected political action entirely. Christchurch socialist Syd Kingsford set up an IWW club in September 1910 and began importing propaganda from the Chicago IWW.⁴⁸ In contrast to the earlier IWW propaganda that influenced many of the NZSP union militants, the Chicago group advocated industrial unionism only, and hostility to all political action. Many North American IWW members had

⁴³ *Commonweal*, April 1910, p.4.

⁴⁴ *Commonweal*, June 1910, p.3.

⁴⁵ Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave: A biography of Michael Joseph Savage* (Auckland: Reed Methuen, 1986), p.77.

⁴⁶ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.62-65; Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, p.154.

⁴⁷ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, pp.21-23.

⁴⁸ MW, 23 June 1911, p.13.

resented the domination of Daniel De Leon's Socialist Labor Party, and at the 1908 convention they had passed a motion removing any mention of political action from the IWW Preamble, replacing it with a declaration that class struggle will end "when the workers of the world organise as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system". The minority who still supported the SLP set up a separate headquarters in Detroit, while the majority of the IWW, who were opposed to political action remained based in Chicago.⁴⁹ The new IWW ideas first reached New Zealand through the efforts of Kingsford and his little propaganda club in 1910. Kingsford had been literature secretary for the Christchurch Socialist Party a few months earlier,⁵⁰ and appears to have remained on good terms with the Party, as he was chairing public meetings for them in October.⁵¹ While the anti-political ideas of the Chicago IWW would not be a major influence until 1912, they were first introduced to New Zealand by Kingsford and others in 1910.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Labour was growing fast and becoming more powerful and confident. The Federation had sent its President, Robert Semple, on an organising tour of the mining towns in the North and South Islands, drawing large crowds. Many of the Federation's leaders were socialists but had little time for politics. At their 1910 conference they had elected Paddy Webb as president, and Semple remained full time organiser. Both opposed parliamentary action, but the Federation could not agree on its attitude to politics. Some delegates proposed developing a political platform and policies, but the majority disagreed. Some of these were opposed to all political participation, and others argued politics was only necessary after industrial organisation was complete. The conference decided to postpone

⁴⁹ Burgmann, pp.11-12.

⁵⁰ *Commonweal*, August 1910, p.3.

⁵¹ *Star*, 1 October 1910, p.9.

any decisions and its revised constitution emphasised the primacy of class consciousness and class struggle.⁵²

Opponents of political action received another boost in the form of a visit from high profile Australian union leader Peter Bowling. Bowling had led the Newcastle miners in a strike in 1909. An Australian court sentenced him to two and a half years in prison under the 1908 Industrial Disputes Act. He was released in November 1910 by the newly elected Labor government of New South Wales, and the Federation of Labour invited him to tour New Zealand.⁵³ His case had been followed closely in New Zealand and Bowling was pictured on the front page of *Commonweal*.⁵⁴ He spoke at venues up and down the country, condemning arbitration and reformist labour parties (including the party who had just released him from prison) and calling for industrial unionism.⁵⁵ While in New Zealand Bowling learnt that he had been defeated in an Australian union leadership ballot and was now unemployed. A coalition of Christchurch trade unionists, including members of both the Labour and Socialist Parties, proposed employing him in New Zealand. After much debate the meeting decided to ask the Federation of Labour to extend their contract with Bowling and promised to financially support his work. The Wellington Trades Council opposed any talk of Bowling being appointed as a Labour Party organiser and said a “minority section” of the Christchurch movement had no right to suggest such a thing.⁵⁶ Joe Savage, speaking as president of the Auckland Trades Council, said he was in favour of Bowling being appointed but did not think the Labour Party would agree to have an industrial unionist working for them.⁵⁷ Not all the Red Feds were

⁵² Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.30-35.

⁵³ Ibid., pp.38-39.

⁵⁴ *Commonweal*, December 1910, p.1.

⁵⁵ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.39-40.

⁵⁶ *Press*, 5 January 1911, pp.6, 8.

⁵⁷ *Star*, 9 January 1911, p.1.

impressed with Bowling. Bob Semple accompanied Bowling and did not get on with him at all. Pat Hickey described Bowling as an indifferent speaker with an insufferable ego, whose tour “fell flat”.⁵⁸

As the Federation of Labour and the NZSP turned away from political action, a rival party finally emerged at the 1910 Trades and Labour Council conference in Auckland. Most of the Trades Council delegates supported the creation of an independent party, but were not prepared to support militant socialism. The Socialist Party members among the delegates, led by Auckland Trades Council president Joseph Savage, tried to stop the formation of a rival party. They were outvoted and the first New Zealand Labour Party was established, replacing the now mostly inactive Political Labour Leagues. By the time of its first conference in 1911, the new party had eleven branches and over 3000 members.⁵⁹

A Growing Movement

Support for industrial unionism and radical socialism grew in 1911, with thirty five unions leaving the arbitration system, and branches of the Socialist Party forming in all the mining towns and many other small centres around the country. Despite the growth in support, the NZSP failed to take advantage of the new atmosphere. The leaders of the Federation of Labour were confident they had all the power they needed to force employers and the government to negotiate with them. While the socialists among the leadership saw no need for politics, they began to worry that many members would be tempted by the Labour Party being organised by the Trades Councils.⁶⁰ The Federation started a new weekly newspaper in

⁵⁸ Hickey, pp.25-26.

⁵⁹ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, pp.21-23.

⁶⁰ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.53-58.

1911 which became the voice of the movement and absorbed the NZSP's *Commonweal*. The Federation had invited Australian socialist journalist Robert Ross to edit a planned weekly newspaper in 1910. Before he arrived, the Federation had taken control of the NZ Shearers Federation newspaper, the *Maoriland Worker*. Robert Hogg became acting editor until Ross arrived and the *Maoriland Worker* became the newspaper of the Federation.⁶¹

By 1911, Auckland was the fastest growing city in New Zealand and the only city in the country which had more men than women. Over 80% of those men were under 45 years of age. Nearly half were new immigrants, mostly from Britain but 20% were Australian. Auckland men were also more likely to be single than in other cities. Like the mining towns, inner city Auckland was full of pubs, brothels and gambling dens which catered to the growing population of transient, single and unskilled young men. Auckland had a much higher rate of suicides and violence than other cities. Until 1907, most Auckland trade unions were made up of skilled workers, but union membership more than doubled between 1907 and 1910, and most of the new members were unskilled workers.⁶² The Auckland branch thrived in these conditions and had a much higher proportion of industrial union activists in its ranks than any other branch. Scott Bennett helped train the large numbers of young single men who joined the Auckland branch and its busy social life. The branch imported Marxist literature and held education classes, reading groups and social events. The Auckland socialists were involved in a range of other causes, including the Anti-Militarist Council, a Rationalist Association, and meetings of the Federation of Labour.⁶³ South of Auckland, NZSP branches and industrial unions formed in the mining towns of Huntly and Waihi.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ibid., pp.40-43.

⁶² Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.108-109.

⁶³ Ibid., pp.113-114.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.117.

Harry Scott Bennett started a new weekly socialist newspaper in Auckland. The first issue of *The Social Democrat* appeared on 24 February 1911. The new paper was “Out to fight for Socialism and Industrial Unionism. We believe that craft unionism should be supplanted by industrial unionism, and that capitalism must be fought with bare knuckles in New Zealand as in other parts of the world”.⁶⁵ The revolutionary socialist movement was now much broader than the NZSP and contained a range of opinions. The various factions began competing for influence in the wider movement as well as within the party itself.⁶⁶ Some workers became more militant than the Federation of Labour was willing to accept, and many of them turned to organisations like the Industrial Workers of the World.

Finally, the new Compulsory Military Training (CMT) programme began in April 1911, requiring males between fourteen and twenty years of age to register for training. By July 13,000 of those eligible had failed to comply. Most were simply apathetic but a minority refused for political reasons and it was these young men that suffered the brunt of government repression. Two of the first three prosecutions were sons of prominent socialists in Wellington and Christchurch.⁶⁷

The 1911 conference in Dunedin

With all this conflict brewing, the party held its fourth annual conference in Dunedin, possibly the furthest place from the action.⁶⁸ The local branch hosted a social evening for visiting

⁶⁵ *Social Democrat*, 24 February 1911, p.1.

⁶⁶ Kerry Taylor, p.30.

⁶⁷ Ryan Bodman, ““The Military Strike is now on!” A History of the Passive Resisters Union, 1912-14, *Labour History*, no.107 (November 2014), p.4.

⁶⁸ *Fourth Annual Conference of the New Zealand Socialist Party. Held at the Trades Hall, Moray Place, Dunedin, on the 17th April 1911* (Wellington, Maoriland Worker, 1911).

delegates on Saturday night, and on Sunday night a public meeting was held so that local audiences could hear the visiting speakers.⁶⁹ Dunedin branch president and former PLL official J.W. Munro, told the meeting that socialism “would remove all social problems, and would place mankind in the highest state, physically and mentally, it had ever known”. Speakers included Frank Freeman of Christchurch, Michael Savage from Auckland, Wellington waterside George Farland, and Fred Cooke. All spoke of the growth of socialism around the world and the advantages it would bring.

The first conference decision was to agree that all future conferences be held in Wellington.⁷⁰ The Wellington branch proposed “that *Commonweal* be urged [sic] in the *Maoriland Worker* on terms to be arranged by the [National Executive]”.⁷¹ This was passed, and *Commonweal* ceased publication.⁷² From July, the *Maoriland Worker* carried a one page *Commonweal* section with NZSP news and comment.⁷³ The party now relied on the *Maoriland Worker* to publicise its activities, and had much less space to do so.

The conference agreed to a statement condemning war and declared that international disputes should be solved “not by brute force but by reason and arbitration” and urged “workers of this and every other country to take organised action with their fellows in other lands” to counter militarism and promote peace and social justice. More practically, they agreed all branches should hold at least one meeting every three months devoted to the topic of militarism and the principles of working class solidarity and peace.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ ODT, 17 April 1911, p.8.

⁷⁰ *Fourth Annual Conference, 1911*, p.2.

⁷¹ ODT, 15 April 1911, p.8. The word “urged” appears in both the NZSP conference report and in the ODT report.

⁷² *Fourth Annual Conference, 1911*, p.2.

⁷³ MW, 21 July 1911, p.9.

⁷⁴ *Fourth Annual Conference, 1911*, pp.4-5.

A majority voted to draft a national platform of proposals for parliamentary and municipal elections.⁷⁵ This platform, addressed to New Zealand's workers, began "Comrades, - What is it you hope for from either of the old parties represented in your Houses of Assembly? Do you not know that they differ in no essential point one from another. Both believe in production for profit. Both are in favour of upholding and perpetuating the present capitalistic system". The platform condemned all capitalist parties and demanded equal pay, easier access to old age pensions, a tax on land values, state control of all hospitals, and that economic and industrial history be taught in schools. The platform made no mention of the Labour Party, which was due to have its first annual conference a few days later in Christchurch. It continued, "We do not claim that by securing of any or of all of the foregoing demands we can have the collective ownership of production and distribution – Socialism. A number of them are necessary in order to secure to the workers political democracy, while the remainder in some measure narrow down the issues, and the struggle to obtain their endorsement by the legislature will be without a doubt a potent factor in the evolution of a class-conscious workers party". The report concluded "With Karl Marx we believe in fighting ... For the immediate attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the monetary interests of the working class, and in that bitter struggle of the present, take care of the future".⁷⁶

Auckland was now the most active branch in the country, with Harry Scott Bennett drawing up to 1600 people to his Sunday night lectures. The branch distributed literature including the *Maoriland Worker* at lectures, open air street meetings and regular social events. Pat Hickey

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.2.

⁷⁶ *Fourth Annual Conference, 1911*, pp.8-12.

wrote “the N.Z.F.L. finds its greatest ally and supporter in the New Zealand Socialist Party”.⁷⁷

In fact the leadership of the Auckland branch of the Federation and the Auckland Socialist Party were almost interchangeable, with Peter Fraser, Michael Savage, Tom Bloodworth and Tom Barker all serving on the executive of the Federation as well as playing leading roles in the Auckland NZSP branch.⁷⁸

Professor Mills and his Unity Scheme

As the movement grew, the rivalry between the Federation of Labour and the Trades Councils became intense and public. The Federation mistrusted the new Labour Party and condemned it as reformist. The NZSP agreed, but offered only a protest vote as an alternative.

The Labour Party grew rapidly in 1911 after it broke with its radical liberal members and adopted socialist goals. The new policies increased support from the trade unions, including unskilled workers unions’ in the cities. In the April municipal elections, the Labour Party stood fifty candidates and eleven were elected.⁷⁹ The Party hired a charismatic American, Professor Walter Thomas Mills, as its national organiser. Mills had been active in the socialist movement since 1903, but no one in New Zealand was aware he had acquired a reputation for dishonesty and fraud where ever he went.⁸⁰ He had been touring Australia when Jack McCullough had invited him to visit New Zealand on behalf of the Labour Party. McCullough thought Mills would have some influence over the radicals in the Socialist Party and calm the hostilities that

⁷⁷ MW, 26 May 1911, p.11.

⁷⁸ Michael Bassett and Michael King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song: A Life of Peter Fraser* (Auckland: Penguin, 2000), p.41.

⁷⁹ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, p.57.

⁸⁰ Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement: 1897-1912* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1972), p.180.

divided the Labour movement.⁸¹ Mills made a good impression at first. He attended one of Scott Bennett's lectures as soon as he arrived in Auckland, and the two speakers shook hands on stage. He was initially greeted warmly by the *Maoriland Worker* and other socialists, as he spoke in favour of industrial unionism. Auckland socialist Tom Bloodworth recommended socialists go and see Mills speak and also urged Labour Party members to hear him too, "and you will wonder why you are outside the Socialist Party".⁸²

The radicals soon became wary of Mills when the Trades Councils and the Labour Party asked him to stay for a year and promote a plan for labour unity.⁸³ Mills was convinced that a class conscious socialist revolutionary movement would fail in a mainly rural society like New Zealand. Instead, he advocated a broad organisation that included trade unionists, Christians, small farmers and monetary reformers. Membership would be open to all the 'useful' people in New Zealand, and would combine both industrial and political activities in a single mass democratic organisation, structured like the IWW but without its revolutionary aims. Mills was an energetic and charismatic speaker, and spoke at hundreds of meetings and sent a weekly report to newspapers around the country.⁸⁴

In August, Harry Scott Bennett came out strongly against the Unity proposals. He told an Auckland audience that socialism could only come through class struggle and that reformist political parties could only ever disappoint the workers.⁸⁵ Tom Bloodworth wrote in *Maoriland Worker* that Mills had forgotten that the labour movement was divided over important principles, and there was no point in pretending those differences did not exist. He

⁸¹ Melanie Nolan, *War & Class*, pp.166, 168; Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, p.47.

⁸² MW, 23 June 1911, p.6.

⁸³ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, p.56.

⁸⁴ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, pp.47-48.

⁸⁵ MW 11 August 1911, p.14.

wrote, "A party of only one hundred strong, knowing what they want and going straight for it, will do far more good than a party of ten thousand who are continually warring amongst themselves because they do not know what they want".⁸⁶ He was confident that the proposals would not attract many supporters. He wrote that "unity is almost already established in Auckland - but it is in the Socialist Party, and not in any conglomeration of parties".⁸⁷ He made no comment on the unity of the movement outside of Auckland.

As the 1911 elections approached, Scott Bennett and Mills toured the country debating the Unity proposals in front of large crowds. Scott Bennett argued that the chief obstacle to industrial unity was Mills and his "bogus Unity schemes". He saw Mills' scheme as far too broad. "It is a class fight that is waging to-day and upon class lines must we organise". He told his audience "You can only have a sound industrial organisation by confining the membership to those whose brains and brawn are daily exploited by the capitalist class". Flirting with capitalists or their hangers on would, he said, invite disaster.⁸⁸ In reply, Mills described the Socialist Party in the United States. "It is a party I helped to create out of seven distinct and separate Socialist organisations, each struggling to be the representative of the working class of America".⁸⁹ He acknowledged that a united organisation would include a range of opinions but said "Mr. Bennett's argument rests on the presumption that we are in fundamental disagreement in regard to the things that we are undertaking to do, and therefore we cannot do them" but if his proposals were adopted, and everyone united around some common aims, "we will get them done".⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.8.

⁸⁷ MW, 11 August 1911, p.14.

⁸⁸ *The Bennett-Mills Debate on the Unity Scheme, Amended Report* (Wellington: Maoriland Worker, 1912), p.7.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.9.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.17.

In Wellington, the party focused on the growing controversy over Compulsory Military training. Protests against CMT had increased in July after the first boys were imprisoned for resisting. Sixty people attended a meeting at the Wellington Socialist Hall to hear the Defence Act being denounced. The father of William Cornish, one of the imprisoned boys, read a letter in Esperanto from a supporter, and a statement he had sent to the *Evening Post*. Two Continental comrades spoke about conscription in Europe. One described patriotism “as all humbug”, and they both urged the meeting to support Cornish and his son.⁹¹ The Wellington branch continued the campaign with outdoor meetings which sometimes attracted violent opposition. At one meeting, patriotic crowds pushed a socialist off his speaking platform which was then smashed into pieces. The socialists were unprepared for the angry crowd and retreated to the safety of their Hall.⁹²

A much larger pro conscription crowd turned up for the next open air meeting a week later. The *Dominion* described the crowd as a “rather too exuberant opposition”. Hogg began speaking at seven, but minutes later, “he was being rescued from the clutches of a wild mob by a strong force of police”.⁹³ Part of the crowd had surged forward and overturned his platform. Hogg was knocked over and trampled, and a socialist allegedly flashed a revolver but did not use it. The police managed to rescue Hogg and escort him back to the Socialist Hall. The crowd, now numbering a more than a thousand, followed them, and the socialists barricaded themselves inside.

⁹¹ EP, 10 July 1911, p.2.

⁹² EP, 7 August 1911, p.2.

⁹³ *Marlborough Express*, 16 August 1911, p.7; *Auckland Star*, 15 August 1911, p.2; *Dominion*, 14 August 1911, p.6.

Patriotic crowds also attacked anti militarist meetings in Christchurch.⁹⁴ The local NZSP branch was part of a much wider coalition that included trade unionists and peace activists.⁹⁵ A large indoor meeting was organised in August and chaired by prominent labour leader Jack McCullough. Security was tight, with police guarding the hall and locking the doors before the meeting was due to start. A large crowd of loyalists had marched to the venue and the noise was so great it was difficult to hear the speakers inside as police held the doors to prevent them breaking in. Fred Cooke spoke and said the fight against militarism should be an intellectual one, and described the crowd outside as “an ignorant rabble”. The formal meeting lasted only twelve minutes before rocks started coming through the windows and the crowd attempted to break the doors down. A member of the audience defended the hall by pushing a firehose through the broken window and spraying the crowd. This provoked more stones and more broken windows. Afterwards the loyalists went to the Socialist Hall and smashed its windows. Several men were arrested for throwing stones. One police officer was hit in the face with a bottle and another was injured when a stone bounced off a police station window and hit him in the face. Nonetheless, the police described the crowd as “quite good humoured” and claimed the trouble had been started by the people defending the hall.⁹⁶

In his August 1911 report to the party, Cooke reported that they had received a formal proposal for Labour Unity from Professor Mills, but the executive was not impressed. Cooke wrote “The scheme may please certain bodies, but does not appear to possess any charms for the members of the NZSP, judging from communications received”. He asked all branches to discuss the scheme and report back, so the results could be published. He added “The

⁹⁴ *Press*, 22 August 1911, p.8.

⁹⁵ Elsie Locke, *Peace People: A History of Peace Activities in New Zealand* (Christchurch: Hazard Press, 1992), pp.34-35, 37-42.

⁹⁶ *Press*, 22 August 1911, p.8.

scheme has been condemned by both your executive and many members of the Federation of Labor". His report contained a short update on the progress of the CMT campaign which included a personal note stating "my son was arrested this morning (Aug.11) and has been sent to Timaru Gaol, leaving by the midday express". Finally, he reminded branches that the rules require them to pay a fee to head office of 3d per member. The Conference report has been sent to all branches but he noted, "only Huntly has paid up as yet".⁹⁷

Women were always a minority of the party membership, but they were active in almost all the branches around the country. As we have seen, married couples played leading roles in the Christchurch branch, which had close connections with women's groups in the city. The Wellington branch was more male dominated, with committed socialists like Isobel Hulbert organising social events but not taking committee roles. Elizabeth Glover was the only women in the Wellington branch to become a prominent public speaker. Auckland branch reports also indicated female members playing background roles at meetings, with an unnamed "lady friend" played the piano at one of Tom Mann's lectures, and a Miss I. Walker of Edinburgh selling Commonweal "like hot cakes" at the same meeting.⁹⁸ The Dunedin branch established a Socialist Sunday School in 1908, managed by a Miss Annie Lowe, who had previously worked alongside many prominent socialist leaders in England.⁹⁹ Women could not play a direct role in union politics, but many women in the mining towns took part in the political life of their community through the local socialist party branch. In Blackball, husband and wife Bill and Ann Bromilow were a key part of the socialist group for years.¹⁰⁰ In 1911, a Women's Socialist Branch was formed in Runanga. A large missed crowd attended and about thirty women

⁹⁷ MW, 25 August 1911, p.7.

⁹⁸ CW June 1908, p.3. Hocken Library.

⁹⁹ Socialist Sunday School, *Evening Star*, 7 September 1908, p.6; *Otago Daily Times*, 7 September 1908, p.5.

¹⁰⁰ Richardson, p.131-132.

joined at the inaugural meeting, which featured drinking, music and song.¹⁰¹ The branch organised regular social evenings and debates until at least 1913.¹⁰² In Waihi, Zena Norton, the sixteen year old miner's daughter, entered a school essay competition on the meaning of the Union Jack. Her entry, which advocated the "Red Flag of Socialism", did not win, but was published in the *Maoriland Worker*. She also chaired the local Socialist Party election campaign meetings.¹⁰³ The Waihi Socialist Party was a key part of the local community and Waihi women would go on to be very active during the 1912 strike. After many of the men were imprisoned, local women led the resistance to the employers and strike breakers.¹⁰⁴

The NZSP was generally in favour of equality for women but never adopted detailed positions on gender issues. The party advocated for equal pay for equal work and women's rights occasionally featured as a lecture topic at branch meetings, but these were driven by women members and some men, according to personal preference rather than as party policy.

The 1911 elections

The NZSP ran six candidates in the 1911 elections but found itself overshadowed by the growing Labour Party, with seventeen candidates, in addition to half a dozen independent Labour or socialist candidates.¹⁰⁵ The Labour Party had adopted a socialist goal of "gradual Public Ownership of all the Means of Production, Distribution and Exchange" and was far more radical than other equivalent Labour Parties in the English speaking world at the time.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Runanga Socialist Women, MW, 25 August 1911, p.13.

¹⁰² Debate at Runanga, MW, 15 November 1912, p.7, Runanga Notes, MW, 15 October 1913, p.5.

¹⁰³ MW, 28 July, 1911, p.11,12,13.

¹⁰⁴ Cybele Locke, 'Rebel Girls and Pram pushing Scab-hunters: Waihi "Scarlet Runners," 1912, *Labour History*, no.107, (November 2014), pp.35-51.

¹⁰⁵ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, p.36.

¹⁰⁶ Olssen, 'The Origins of the Labour Party', p.89.

Its candidates campaigned on a platform advocating nationalisation of monopolies, a land tax, formation of a state bank, a minimum wage, an eight hour day, and a range of other amendments to the labour laws.¹⁰⁷ In contrast the NZSP candidates promoted revolutionary socialist ideas but did not propose any reforms or detailed policy. Fred Cooke stood in Christchurch East. According to his advertisement in the *Maoriland Worker*, he stood for “people not for a party” and was “a strenuous fighter in the class war”. “He has suffered for preaching Truth and Justice. His honesty, ability and fearlessness are above question”.¹⁰⁸ At public meetings he argued simply that as workers produced the best for “the loafers and idlers” of the ruling class, it was time they took the best for themselves. The workers, he said, must collectively own the means of production.¹⁰⁹

Cooke’s advertisements presented him as a principled socialist, a founder of the NZSP, who had been to prison for his principles, and the only candidate in Christchurch East who was a prohibitionist. Howard also proclaimed his support for prohibitionism and anti-militarism.¹¹⁰

In Auckland, Joe Savage spoke against arbitration and militarism and argued that capitalism would be overthrown by the combined efforts of workers in industrial unions and a class conscious political party. Unlike the other NZSP candidates he had the support of the local Trades Council and was unopposed by other Labour candidates. He was the only NZSP candidate to do well in a city district, receiving 1800 votes.¹¹¹

In the other three seats contested by the NZSP, they were outperformed by the Labour Party, whose candidates collectively received nearly 30% of the vote. The NZSP candidates, Frank

¹⁰⁷ Gustafson, *Labour’s Path*, p.37.

¹⁰⁸ MW, 1 December 1911, p.7.

¹⁰⁹ *Press*, 30 November 1911, p.11; *Press*, 1 December 1911, p.8.

¹¹⁰ *Star*, 2 December 1911, p.9.

¹¹¹ Gustafson, *Labour’s Path*, pp.37-40.

Freeman, Fred Cooke and Ted Howard, together received only 5%.¹¹² Commenting on Frank Freeman's poor performance, the *Maoriland Worker* wrote "For the capital city, where Socialism has been propagated vigorously for the least eleven years, this is a surprising testimony to the staying powers of ignorance".¹¹³

The NZSP did better in the mining towns. The Labour candidate in Grey withdrew and Paddy Webb received 2539 of 6287 votes, and Pat Hickey, who had no Labour rival, received 1674 votes.¹¹⁴ Hickey had promised voters that if he won he would represent only the working class voters, as "the master class were quite capable of looking after their own interests".¹¹⁵ He opposed CMT and urged his audiences to study industrial unionism and socialism.

The only candidate endorsed by the NZSP to win a ballot was the independent socialist candidate in Otaki, John Robertson. He was an experienced union official who had been active in the Scottish ILP before coming to New Zealand and had been selected by the Manawatu Flaxmillers Union.¹¹⁶ He campaigned for a state bank and free education, and denounced the arbitration system and compulsory military training. On the second ballot, he managed to beat the Liberal candidate and win the seat.¹¹⁷ Although he was a member of the NZSP, after his election it was made clear that Robertson was nominated by the Flaxmillers Union, and therefore only responsible to them, not to the party.¹¹⁸

The results of the 1911 election showed the labour movement that there was a demand for an independent working class party, and the Labour Party managed to establish a voting base

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ MW, 15 December 1911, p.18.

¹¹⁴ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, p.39.

¹¹⁵ *Social Democrat*, 11 August 1911, p.3.

¹¹⁶ MW, 11 August 1911, p.7.

¹¹⁷ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, p.93.

¹¹⁸ *Horowhenua Chronicle*, 12 December 1911, p.3.

in Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. The Auckland movement was dominated by the Federation of Labour who were generally less interested in electoral politics and included a number of anarcho-syndicalist influenced workers who were opposed to electoral politics on principle.¹¹⁹ However, it was clear that many more workers were prepared to support a Labour Party with practical policies than would support a Socialist Party which was asking only for protest votes.

The Auckland General Labourers Dispute

The Auckland branch of the NZSP suffered a series of setbacks in early 1912. Scott Bennett had left for Australia a few days after the elections, but a recently arrived Scottish socialist named Peter Fraser had led the Auckland General Labourers Union in a successful wildcat strike which had won improved conditions for members working for the city Drainage Board.¹²⁰ Conflict was growing within the Auckland branch, with popular speaker Tom Barker moving towards the militant syndicalism of the IWW, and journalist W.P. Black moving towards the right. Tom Bloodworth had disapproved of Joe Savage standing in the election, and decided to get married and leave for Britain. In February, Joe Savage resigned as secretary of the branch to move back to Australia, giving no reasons other than what he called “a complication of circumstances”. The internal conflicts in the branch may have contributed to his decision or it may simply have been missing his family in Australia. Before he could board the ship he heard the labourers dispute had flared up again, and decided to stay. Scott Bennett also returned from Australia when he heard the news.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Olssen, ‘The Origins of the Labour Party’, pp.86-87.

¹²⁰ Bassett and King, p.42.

¹²¹ Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, pp.82-83.

Auckland Mayor James Parr had decided to resist further union pressure, and when the AGLU left the arbitration system, the City Council refused to negotiate further, but offered a small wage rise to workers if they formed a new union. A new union was soon registered under the Arbitration Act and the Council began negotiating with them instead, ignoring the AGLU. The AGLU were prepared to strike if they had the support of the Federation of Labour, but Federation leaders were reluctant to provoke a city wide strike. Instead they organised a coalition of unions to unseat Parr in the coming election.¹²² A meeting asked Joe Savage to stand against Parr but he would only agree if the NZSP endorsed him. The branch refused, deciding Savage would be in an awkward position if he was elected to head a council who were overwhelmingly hostile to him. Instead the Federation decided to back a local lawyer who had already committed to running against the mayor.¹²³ The campaign failed and Parr was re-elected. The AGLU was fined by the courts and began to lose members. Eventually the remaining members forced Peter Fraser to resign as their President.¹²⁴ The Federation had been outmanoeuvred and humiliated for the first time, and the Auckland NZSP had been weakened.

The 1912 conference

The NZSP held its 1912 conference in Wellington and this time several Red Fed leaders attended. The party reaffirmed its commitment to class struggle and its belief that the Labour Party were not true socialists at all. Although the Federation was worried by the growing support for the Unity scheme, most of the leaders still did not see the need for an alternative

¹²² Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.124-127.

¹²³ MW, 4 April 1912, p.10.

¹²⁴ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, p.127.

political strategy. Fifteen delegates attended, including Joe Savage, Edwin Dye from the Waihi branch, *Maoriland Worker* editor R.S. Ross, and Pat Hickey. They represented 747 members in 11 branches. Christchurch and Wellington were represented by three delegates each, indicating a membership of over 100, with the other branches having less than fifty members each.¹²⁵ Five branches did not send delegates and were not represented.¹²⁶ Across town, the Trades Councils and the Labour Party were meeting to discuss Professor Mills' Unity scheme. This conference was attended by most of the moderate union leaders in the country, the NZLP, some independent socialists, and a range of other organisations.¹²⁷ The NZSP ignored the Unity conference and over a dozen socialist leaders from around the country spent the afternoon of Easter Saturday delivering speeches from intersections along Cuba Street. According to the *Evening Post* these consisted of "patches of quick interjection alternated with dull dialogue". A reception was held on Saturday night, and a mass public meeting on Sunday afternoon in Post Office Square. That evening the socialists gathered at the Opera House to hear visiting English socialist Edward Hartley speak. Ted Howard spoke too, telling the crowd that socialists wanted "the complete overthrow of the present system" and therefore could never compromise with the Unity advocates.¹²⁸

The next morning, the conference opened, and Cooke informed the party that Hartley had been hired as a lecturer on a one year contract. The committee reported that the Auckland branch was doing "great work for Socialism and Industrial Unionism", and that Harry Scott Bennett had decided to return to New Zealand to oppose Professor Mills after hearing that the "reactionary labour party had concentrated their forces in the Queen city". The Waihi,

¹²⁵ New Zealand Socialist Party Minute Book 1911-1913, Reference 79157, Canterbury University McMillan Brown Library, pp.41, 56.

¹²⁶ NZSP branch chart, 94-106-14/20, MS-Group-0314, ATL.

¹²⁷ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, p.48.

¹²⁸ EP, 8 April 1912, p.2.

Karangahape and Huntly branches were also doing well, as were the West Coast branches and the Manawatu groups. Wellington was recovering from some over expenditure and the loss of some members who had been forced to move for economic reasons. Christchurch branch was doing “steady plodding work” but the number of anti-militarists in prison showed that “rebels were being made”. The Dunedin branch was doing well and several branches were reforming in other South Island towns.¹²⁹ After the report was read, a delegation from the National Peace Council spoke to the conference, which passed a resolution of sympathy with the teenagers who had suffered fines or imprisonment for refusing compulsory military training. The national political platform from the previous conference was deleted entirely.¹³⁰ It was agreed that the incoming executive should meet the Federation of Labour “for the purpose of arranging that the political field be left to the Socialist Party”, with the result of the meeting to be submitted to the entire membership of both the party and the Federation to vote on in a referendum.¹³¹

The conference debated how to respond in the event that the Mills’ Unity conference across town adopted a socialist perspective. R.S. Ross successfully moved that “such unity can only be effective if based upon the revolutionary Marxist conception of the class struggle, with the Socialist objective clearly avowed and the name procedure and principles of the International Socialist Movement adopted”.¹³² The executive was instructed to write to the Socialist Party of America about the activities of Mills, who had “allowed himself to be engaged for organising and lecturing purposes by the New Zealand Labor Party, this being a strongly anti-

¹²⁹ ‘The New Zealand Socialist Party, April 1912’, executive report, inserted in New Zealand Socialist Party Minute Book 1911-1913, Reference 79157, McMillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury.

¹³⁰ The New Zealand Socialist Party, *Report of the Fifth Annual Conference, held at the Socialist Hall, Manners Street, Wellington, April 7, 8, and 9, 1912* (Wellington, The Maoriland Worker, 1912), p.3.

¹³¹ Ibid., p.5.

¹³² Ibid., p.7.

Socialist body, whose existence is a serious obstacle to the linking up of workers along Socialist lines".¹³³

Hogg and others in the Wellington branch were now unhappy with the party's reliance on the *Maoriland Worker*. The Wellington branch proposed "that the incoming executive immediately take steps to issue a monthly paper. The same to be devoted to Socialist thought and action in general and the N.Z.S.P. in particular". The remit was lost.¹³⁴ They also asked the executive to explain the terms on which the *Commonweal* was merged with the *Maoriland Worker*. This remit was accepted but no record of the explanation survives. The unhappiness of the Wellington branch may have been influenced by the opposition to the Federation and the *Maoriland Worker* that came with the increase of IWW ideas spreading in Wellington.¹³⁵ The conference elected Ted Howard as president and Fred Cooke as secretary. The executive committee were Frank Freeman, Edwin Dye, Joe Savage, James Munro, and R.S. Ross.¹³⁶

After the conference was over, the rival Labour Unity conference announced the formation of the United Labour Party of New Zealand (ULP). The ULP presented itself as a moderate party with some socialist policies, but which supported strike action only as a last resort. Mills and others argued that the ULP must extend its social base beyond the union movement and approached a wide range of progressive organisations, including women's groups and Christian organisations.¹³⁷ Jack McCullough was still convinced the ULP was a socialist party,

¹³³ Ibid., p.6.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, p.132.

¹³⁶ *Report of Fifth Annual Conference, 1912*, p.7.

¹³⁷ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, pp.48-51.

despite efforts by the NZSP to convince him otherwise.¹³⁸ The Federation of Labour disagreed. They met the following month and rejected the ULP as too broad and insufficiently militant.¹³⁹

Waihi

The Waihi gold miners' strike began in May 1912, and was followed by another strike at the Reefton goldmine. The Waihi dispute began when thirty engine drivers left the Waihi Workers Union and registered as a new arbitration union. The engine drivers felt they were being neglected in a union that was dominated by miners, and they also resented the radical politics of the union leaders. The recently arrived American IWW militant J.B. King urged the union members to strike in order to preserve the principle of 'one big union'. The union leaders, including President Bill Parry, were reluctant, but agreed with the principle of one industrial union and told their members the Federation of Labour would back them if they decided to strike. The Federation executive did not support the strike and were taken by surprise. King and the other IWW militants at Waihi now had the initiative.¹⁴⁰

Peter Fraser had taken an interest in Waihi early in 1912 and had been elected President of the local Socialist Party in February, despite living in Auckland. The same tactics used to attack the AGLU were now being used at Waihi and Fraser urged the Federation to offer full support to the Waihi strikers.¹⁴¹ The Waihi Socialists had invited leading Australian socialist Harry Holland to visit before the strike began and he stayed at Waihi for the first months of the strike.¹⁴² The Federation chose not to extend the conflict and confined itself to raising money

¹³⁸ Nolan, *War & Class*, p.226.

¹³⁹ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, pp.53-54.

¹⁴⁰ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.133-134.

¹⁴¹ Bassett and King, pp.47-48.

¹⁴² O'Farrell, p.51.

for the strikers. A new Reform Party government sent police reinforcements to Waihi and dozens of unionists were prosecuted and imprisoned. The mine owners set up a new arbitrationist union and by October the mine was working again. Police guarded the mine and protected the arbitrationists from the striking men and their wives. By December the striking miners were outnumbered, their hall was attacked by strikebreaking men, and Fred Evans was killed by the police. The miners were defeated and hundreds of families were forced to leave town.¹⁴³

The ULP were deeply divided over the Waihi strike and at first chose to remain neutral. As the strike continued and miners were imprisoned, Mills and others in the ULP who were angered by actions of the police and government refused to be silent and spoke out.¹⁴⁴ The defeat at Waihi was a serious blow to the Red Federation. In Auckland and at Waihi, the Arbitration Act had allowed employers to register a small union and undermine the majority union, and in both instances it had worked.

The Federation of Labour attempted to claim that the Waihi strike was a great moral victory, but no one was convinced, and many blamed the Federation for the defeat. The Auckland General Labourers Union, which now contained many Waihi veterans, voted to leave the Federation. The IWW militants were gaining strength and many of the Federation's northern officials were worried, and began looking for ways to isolate them. In November, at a week-long meeting in Wellington, the Federation decided to seek an alliance with the Trades Councils they had long criticised. They called a conference of all unions in New Zealand to discuss a strategy to force the government to repeal parts of the Arbitration Act. There was

¹⁴³ Roth and Hammond, pp.83-85.

¹⁴⁴ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, pp.63-65.

no mention of politics in the invitation but it was clear that most Red Feds were aiming to end the rule of the Massey government. The Trades Councils had the same aim and many ULP affiliates accepted the invitation to the January conference. The 1912 NZSP leadership were all close to the leadership of the Red Federation and supportive of the Unity proposals. Most of the NZSP members on the Federation Executive, including Ted Howard and Pat Hickey, agreed a political strategy was needed. They also agreed that the NZSP in its current form was not suitable for the task.¹⁴⁵

The First Unity Conference

The NZSP was not expecting to be invited to the first Unity conference in January 1913, which attracted over a hundred delegates from eighty-eight organisations to Wellington.¹⁴⁶ Most delegates were not committed to either the Federation or the ULP and were willing to make compromises to achieve a united union movement.¹⁴⁷ After some debate, the conference decide to invite representatives from political parties.¹⁴⁸ The NZSP initially appointed Harry Holland and Wellington member T.A. Eagle as the party delegates.¹⁴⁹ Fred Cooke was touring the North Island when he heard the party had been admitted. He quickly returned to Wellington in time to replace Eagle for the second half of the conference.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.163-166.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., pp.165-168.

¹⁴⁷ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, p.71.

¹⁴⁸ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.165-168.

¹⁴⁹ *Conference of Trade Unions (convened by the N.Z. Federation of Labor) held in the offices of "The Maoriland Worker", Wellington, N.Z., January 21 to January 27, 1913, adopting basis of unity for the United Federation of Labor and Social Democratic Party, and convening further congress on July 1, 1913 at Wellington* (Wellington: Worker Printery, 1913), p.25.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p.37.

The conference managed to reach a consensus that the Arbitration Act should be amended. A committee led by Edward Tregear came up with a list of reforms to the Act and the conference agreed to oppose any political candidate that would not agree to these reforms. The delegates debated the establishment of a political party but did not want to declare support for either the ULP or the NZSP. Instead they set up a committee to discuss the details. This committee was made up of five members of the ULP and seven Red Fed leaders. All of the latter were De Leonites who believed in the need for a revolutionary political party alongside industrial unionism.¹⁵¹ The ULP members included Walter Mills who was now enthusiastically supporting the militants. His sudden turnaround was linked to the fact that the ULP had run out of money and was unable to pay him. The larger, wealthier Federation looked far more attractive to the unprincipled Professor than it had previously.¹⁵²

Before the conference adjourned the committee outlined their proposal for a United Federation of Labour and a proposed Social Democratic Party that was committed to collective ownership of production, exchange and distribution.¹⁵³ Harry Holland spoke and said the unity achieved “represents the greatest advance that has ever been recorded in any country of the world”, and that the new political strategy represented “a great revolutionary movement”. He told the conference that “personally I am against any platform of palliatives – the party I represent is against it. I have spoken to my co-delegates and I feel that while we can commit our party to nothing, we would not create a division . . . we have unity on the

¹⁵¹ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.165-168.

¹⁵² Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, pp.67, 72.

¹⁵³ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.165-168.

revolutionary objective”.¹⁵⁴ Some in the ULP were beginning to have doubts but most of the unaffiliated delegates supported the plans.¹⁵⁵

Holland spoke at a rally after the conference and admitted that he had initially been worried about the Unity Conference because “while it brought possibilities of magnificent advance, it also involved dangers of dire reaction”. While neither he nor the NZSP were opposed to political action the party felt that “unless the political organisation rested on a solid foundation of working-class knowledge and interest, it would be of little use to the workers”. He was impressed with the Unity Conference and said it had “certainly sounded the death-knell of the Massey Government; but if that was all it would not be worth while”. Holland predicted the movement would soon be powerful enough to force immediate concessions from the government, including amending or abolishing the Arbitration Act.¹⁵⁶ The January conference was a success for the Federation of Labour but also marked the beginning of the end for the NZSP. The leading socialists in the Federation had committed to the Unity process and the NZSP had to either follow them or isolate themselves.

After the conference the Unity Committee hired former opponents W.T. Mills and Harry Scott Bennett to build public support for the proposals before a second conference which was planned for July.¹⁵⁷ Both the ULP and the executive of the NZSP agreed to delay their annual conference until July, and Fred Cooke continued with his speaking tour.

In February *Maoriland Worker* published the ‘Manifesto of the NZSP’, which declared the party was distinct from every other political party because “we realise there is existing a CLASS

¹⁵⁴ *Conference of Trade Unions, January 1913*, p.50.

¹⁵⁵ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, pp.67-68.

¹⁵⁶ *Conference of Trade Unions, January 1913*, pp.62-63.

¹⁵⁷ Olssen, *The Red Feds*, pp.165-168.

WAR". The manifesto declared "we will not enter into any endorsements, fusions, bargains, or mutual understandings whatsoever with any other party which shall in any way compromise our principles, for our determined purpose is to overthrow Capitalism and abolish the wage-system once and for ever".¹⁵⁸ The statement was signed by Howard and Cooke, and its publication at this time seemed to have been designed to remind any doubters that the NZSP remained true to its principles as its leaders were preparing to work alongside those who they had until recently, condemned as 'moderates'.

The main opposition to the unity proposals from inside the NZSP came from the Wellington branch. The Wellington socialists were the oldest and largest branch in the country and unlike Auckland and Christchurch, had never needed to develop working relationships with other groups in their city. Robert Hogg was now associate editor of the *Truth* newspaper, and he used his position to criticise the Unity scheme and denounce his former comrades as sell outs.¹⁵⁹ The Wellington branch contained a range of views, from those who were resolutely opposed to political action of any sort, through to supporters of the Unity proposals, like Robert Ross and Harry Holland. The debate within the branch was heated and personal, and in March, Holland and Ross attempted to have the anti-political faction expelled from the party. They were in a minority and were easily defeated.¹⁶⁰ Although both men were closely connected to the Federation they were recent arrivals in Wellington and had little local support. The majority of the Wellington branch were clear. They wrote "we do not support any other body . . . not out for revolution. Our Motto, No Compromise".¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ MW, 28 February 1912, p.3.

¹⁵⁹ Redmer Yska, *Truth: The Rise and Fall of the People's Paper* (Nelson: Craig Potton Publishing, 2010), pp.48-49.

¹⁶⁰ Kerry Taylor, p.39.

¹⁶¹ New Zealand Socialist Party - Minute book, 1911-1914, 12, 14 March 1913, Griffin, Gerald John, 1904-1976: Papers, 86-043-2/18, ATL, quoted in Kerry Taylor, p.165.

Winter 1913

The conflict between Wellington and the rest of the party inevitably dominated the sixth and final conference of the NZSP, which was held in Wellington the weekend before the second Unity Congress. On the morning of the conference, *Truth* published an attack on the Unity Congress and the Federation of Labour. Written by Robert Hogg, the article accused the Red Federation, or as he called them, the 'White Featherisation', of being weak and cowardly. He described its leaders as professional bureaucrats, obsessed with maintaining their own paid positions. The permanent paid official is "the curse of the labor movement" he wrote.¹⁶² According to the *Maoriland Worker*, the party was "seething with indignation" over Robert Hogg's attacks on Scott Bennett and other socialists as the NZSP conference began.¹⁶³ The delegates gathered at the Socialist Hall on Saturday 28 June. Eighteen delegates representing fourteen branches were present for what must have been a fairly bleak day. Most of the leaders who had been pushing for unity were absent. Of the executive committee elected in 1912, only Cooke and Howard attended the final conference. The Auckland branch was represented by the otherwise unknown J.E. Nicholson, and reported 66 members. Nicholson also represented the branch at the Unity conference the following week, but none of the high profile Auckland Socialists in Wellington for the Unity Congress felt the need to attend the NZSP conference.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² *Truth*, 28 June 1913, p.5.

¹⁶³ MW, 11 July 1913, p.8.

¹⁶⁴ NZSP Minute Book, 79157, Macmillan Brown Library, p.65.

Christchurch had 110 members represented by Howard, Cooke and C.S. Smith.¹⁶⁵ The branch had been in existence for eleven years and had always operated as one part of the wider Labour movement in the city. Cooke's friendship with Jack McCullough, who had been central to the development of the PLL, LP and now the ULP, was also important. The Christchurch branch wanted to retain their distinct identity but had no objections to a unified Labour movement. Of the smaller branches, those in the mining towns were closely aligned with the Federation and the others were Wanganui and three small Manawatu branches. Most of these had already registered for the Unity Conference.

The Wellington branch was represented by Robert Hogg, George Bailey, and Jim Roberts.¹⁶⁶ All three opposed the Unity proposals. Wellington was the largest and oldest branch, and unlike Christchurch, the branch dominated the city's radical socialist counter culture, and most members had very little connection to the Federation of Labour.

It was proposed that the delegates consider the Unity proposals before the other business was dealt with. A Wellington delegate immediately questioned the decision to delay the 1913 conference, which was followed by a discussion of the Wellington branch decision to announce a meeting on Sunday evening, directly clashing with the big public meeting of the Unity Congress. The delegates resolved to support the Unity Congress and declared "That this meeting does not think the holding of the Sunday evening meeting convened by the Wellington Branch of the Socialist Party advisable and asks that Branch to concur".¹⁶⁷ The conference adjourned for the night, but conflict and confusion continued as unnamed delegates apparently tried to rearrange the next meeting time without consulting the

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p.66.

committee.¹⁶⁸ The conference resumed on Sunday morning with a motion that the conference endorses “the spirit of the declaration” of the January Unity Conference. Hogg moved the motion be delayed until after the Unity Congress had declared itself, and the Wellington branch told the conference they had decided to go ahead with their anti-unity meeting that evening. The Party then passed a motion requesting that the chair of the Unity Congress explain that the NZSP conference did not agree with the decision of the Wellington branch to continue its meeting, and endorsing the party members who were speaking at the Unity Congress. The meeting then adjourned until the following Thursday.¹⁶⁹ The ULP were also in disarray, with their conference also unable to come to an agreement on how to approach the Unity Congress.¹⁷⁰

The Unity Congress opened on Tuesday morning with 400 delegates in attendance. Fred Cooke and Ted Howard represented the NZSP and many other prominent party members were present as part of the Unity Congress Committee, the Federation of Labour or as delegates for their unions. Eight smaller branches of the party sent their own delegates. These were Foxton, Fielding, Palmerston North, Millerton, Denniston, Runanga, Greymouth, and Westport.¹⁷¹ Howard told the *Evening Post* the NZSP is fully represented at the Congress and the NZSP delegates represented a majority of the party.¹⁷²

On Thursday, the Unity Congress had still not made any decisions on their political strategy and had several more days of business to discuss.¹⁷³ The NZSP annual meeting reconvened briefly that evening and found themselves in agreement for the first time that year. A letter

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., pp.67-68.

¹⁷⁰ Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, p.69.

¹⁷¹ MW, 11 July 1913, p.4.

¹⁷² EP, 2 July 1913, p.6.

¹⁷³ MW, 11 July 1913, p.5.

from the anti-militarist boys imprisoned on Ripapa Island was read out, which stated that they had begun a hunger strike. The NZSP was unanimous in sending congratulations to the boys “on their stand against the despotic tyrannical Government of New Zealand”. They voted to ask the Unity Congress and the Anti Militarist League to “cooperate in a monster protest meeting”. Hogg promised that the Wellington branch would assist in organising the meeting.¹⁷⁴ After this the conference adjourned again until the Unity Congress had decided its political platform. Secretary Cooke “promised the Wellington Delegates who were not attending the Unity Congress plenty of notice of next meeting”.¹⁷⁵ The next day Cooke read the Ripapa Island letter to the Unity Congress, which decided to march to Parliament in protest.¹⁷⁶ The Congress continued another week and established the Social Democratic Party.¹⁷⁷ The new party adopted as its objective “The socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange”.¹⁷⁸ Moderates were voted into the presidencies of both the new United Federation of Labor and the Social Democratic Party, but all the other key positions in the UFL went to militant socialist miners, and Peter Fraser became secretary of the SDP.¹⁷⁹

Cooke’s promise to notify the Wellington branch of the next meeting was the last thing recorded in the NZSP minute book. The membership had elected a new executive by ballot but they never met.¹⁸⁰ The Party no longer existed as a national organisation. Although most NZSP branches saw the end as a new opportunity, the Wellington branch disagreed. They

¹⁷⁴ NZSP Minute Book, 79157, MacMillan Brown Library, p.68.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. pp.68-69.

¹⁷⁶ MW, 11 July 1913, p.5.

¹⁷⁷ MW, 18 July 1913, pp.4-6.

¹⁷⁸ *Report of Proceedings of the Unity Congress held in Wellington: July 1st to 10th, 1913, Establishing the United Federation of Labor and The Social Democratic Party* (Wellington: The Worker Print, 1913), p.76.

¹⁷⁹ Gustafson, *Labour’s Path*, p.71.

¹⁸⁰ MW, 11 July 1913, p.3.

asked individuals who had joined the SDP to resign from the branch, and wrote to the NZSP executive accusing them of destroying the party.¹⁸¹

The rest of the party began the process of slowly merging into the new SDP. The executive asked NZSP branches to formally decide on joining the SDP and recommended that each branch take a ballot of all their members on the question of affiliation. A notice was published in the *Maoriland Worker* in October 1913 reproducing the ballot. "Shall we affiliate with the Social Democratic Party and retain our identity as a Socialist Party". Howard and Cooke had no hesitation in recommending that branches affiliate with the SDP which they described as "a revolutionary party that exists for the purpose of the total abolition of the present wage system". They ended their plea with "Remember Karl Marx's great call, ""Workers of the World, Unite," for the Revolution".¹⁸² The call to retain a separate identity within the SDP appealed to those members who saw a need for a strong socialist counter culture. The Christchurch branch, and maybe others, would have been worried that this might otherwise be lost in a large party whose aim, no matter how socialist, was to fight elections.

The ballot was in most cases a formality. In Auckland the new SDP branch was established at a meeting at the Socialist Hall on 21 August. Scott Bennett chaired and Peter Fraser, National Secretary of the SDP spoke. Forty people signed up on the night and the meeting heard that "practically the whole Auckland Branch of the New Zealand Socialist Party" would join as soon as a members' ballot was taken. The new SDP branch elected as officers Joe Savage, Robert Way and Mrs Muriel Glyde.¹⁸³ The members' ballot took place the following month and the Auckland Socialists formally merged with the local SDP branch, transferring all their assets to

¹⁸¹ Kerry Taylor, p.41.

¹⁸² MW, 3 October 1913, p.6.

¹⁸³ *Auckland Star*, 22 August 1913, p.2.

the new party.¹⁸⁴ In November, W.T. Mills reported that he expected the Christchurch branch to formally join the SDP as soon as the ballot was taken and that “The Socialist Party Branch is taking a ballot on the same matter which can but have one result”.¹⁸⁵

As most NZSP branches formalised their merger into the SDP, a series of minor industrial disputes were escalating into what would become the Great Strike of 1913. Employer’s organisations and business groups were backed by the state in a coordinated effort to break the power of the union movement. Waterside workers at all four main ports stopped work and shipping came to a standstill. Thousands of Special Constables were enlisted to control the wharfs and hired ‘free labour’ to move cargoes. Many prominent and not so prominent trade unionists were arrested and charged for everything from sedition to bad language. The last strikers returned to work defeated in January 1914. Melanie Nolan described the 1913 strike as not only an industrial struggle, but also “a struggle over the kind of democracy New Zealand would be in the twentieth century”.¹⁸⁶ After 1913 the working class could no longer be ignored.

The end of the NZSP

In the years between 1909 and 1913 the working class became an organised political force in New Zealand. The NZSP had always advocated for this and had helped connect many of the most militant labour leaders. However the union militants focused on building industrial unions and showed little interest in politics until 1912. The NZSP supported this strategy and had voluntarily excluded itself from electoral politics. The party remained a network of groups

¹⁸⁴ MW, 29 October 1913, p.2.

¹⁸⁵ MW, 5 November 1913, p.6.

¹⁸⁶ Nolan, ‘Introduction’, in *Revolution*, p.35.

which carried out education and propaganda advocating militant revolutionary socialism, and attracted support from socialists who rejected reformism and parliamentary politics. The NZSP played a vital role in the education of a generation of working class radicals, but it was never going to be a disciplined political party capable of winning mass electoral support. After the defeat at Waihi, the Federation decided a unified labour movement was needed to bring down the Massey Government. By this time the Federation's arch rivals in the Trades Councils had developed an effective electoral party. The January Unity conference decided to set up a new union Federation and a left wing socialist party. Most of the NZSP followed the Federation leadership and agreed to merge into the new Social Democratic Party. The Wellington Socialists saw the Unity process as a betrayal and refused to go along with it. The NZSP had ended, but twelve years after it had begun as a group of marginal outsiders, the ideas it had promoted were now widely accepted among New Zealand's organised working class.

Conclusion

This study has traced the NZSP from its beginnings in Wellington in 1901, to the end of the Party as a national organisation in 1913. The formation of the NZSP was triggered by the arrival of the Clarion Settlers in 1900, which boosted and energised the dormant socialist movement. Many of the new arrivals found the political consensus in New Zealand to be far removed from their idea of independent working class politics and the new party quickly became identified with opposition to the Liberal Labour alliance. The party began as local branches in each of the three main centres and each of these had a different character due to the different circumstances in these centres. These circumstances defined the main branches for the duration of the party's existence.

During the first five years of the party, Wellington and Christchurch were the two permanent branches. There is little hard evidence of the makeup of the membership, but these two branches seemed to be dominated by skilled working class men. The Wellington group was the first and largest of the socialist groups and developed its own subculture based around regular lectures, socials and publishing and distributing pamphlets and newspapers, including its own *Commonweal*. The Wellington branch was always the largest radical group in the capital and had no serious competition. Christchurch had a healthy and varied progressive movement before an NZSP branch was established there in 1902, and this branch was always only one of a range of progressive groups that operated in the city. These groups had overlapping memberships and it was possible for a socialist to be prominent and active in the city's political scene without being a member of the party. Christchurch progressive circles included women's organisations and the local Socialist Party was more open to women's involvement, both as speakers and in leadership positions, than any of the other main

branches. From the beginning in 1901, the Auckland Socialist Party was dominated by men with a strong trade union background. While they opposed the Liberal Labour alliance they were more connected to the small Auckland trade union movement and this may explain why the branch collapsed in 1905 as the leaders moved into the PLL. The leaders returned to the NZSP in 1908 and, as Auckland's population grew rapidly, the arrival of experienced militant socialists from Australia transformed the branch into the most active in the country after 1911. Socialist Party branches formed in mining towns on the West Coast of the South Island, and later in North Island towns like Waihi and Huntly, were part of the growth of industrial unionism in those towns. There, the Socialist Party fulfilled many different social and educational functions in the often isolated small towns. These branches were often comprised of the same men who were active in the new industrial unions, but unlike the unions, the party enabled women to take part in the political life of the towns too.

From 1907 to 1908 the party grew rapidly thanks to the growth of industrial unionism in the mining towns. Union militants like Fitzgerald and Hickey joined the party and used it to build support for direct action. Many new branches of the party were formed, often in small mining towns. The membership of these small industrial town branches included union members and supporters (including women) who were not eligible for union membership. Like the city branches, the small town branches discussed politics, distributed literature and organised lectures on a range of subjects, and often they may have been the only option for intellectual stimulation in some of these towns. The ethical socialism of the early years lost ground to De Leonite industrial unionist ideas and later, Marxism. However the spirit of the *Clarion* and the ethical socialism continued in the form of social clubs and educational work like the Esperanto clubs, Socialist Sunday Schools and more until at least 1911, and probably even later in Christchurch and Dunedin. The industrial union militants in the NZSP focused their efforts on

building the Federation of Labour, which soon overshadowed the party. Although the NZSP regarded itself as the political wing of the Federation, the Federation leaders saw the Federation as far more important than the party. Some branches had strong local leaders but the party members who became nationally significant were important because of their position as union leaders. The Federation's rivals in the Trades Councils began building their own Labour Party, but Federation had little interest in politics and the NZSP remained an educational and propaganda group. After the defeat at Waihi in 1912, the Federation leaders proposed a unified Labour movement, including a new left wing party. Most NZSP branches decided to join, only the Wellington branch refused, and the NZSP ceased to exist.

This study has shown that the party was always quite decentralised and each branch operated differently according to local conditions. Erik Olssen has described how the social conditions and the nature of work changed rapidly in New Zealand in the first decade of the twentieth century. The process was very complicated and varied around the country, but it caused working class people to become more unionised and more aware of their common interests as a class. Olssen describes how the political responses to these conditions varied around the country and in each main centre.¹ This analysis explains how the NZSP developed as a loose network of local groups which evolved differently according to local conditions. The NZSP was an oppositional group that carried out propaganda. It was not a mass working class party, or even the beginnings of one. It was a decentralised network of radicals dedicated to self-education, and building a socialist counter culture.

¹ Olssen, 'The Origins of the Labour Party', p.84.

This loose structure served it well until 1911 when the organised working class became a real political force. The NZSP failed to develop a strategy that reflected the new social and political context, and lost influence as new left wing political groups grew stronger.

The strength and legacy of the NZSP was its contribution to the thinking and culture of the working class, rather than its organisation or tactics. The NZSP helped spread the ideas of radical socialism, and was nearly always pushing newer and more radical ideas than anyone else in the labour movement. The party had an influence on the rest of the labour movement, which moved further to the left than might otherwise have been the case if the NZSP had not existed.

When writing about this period of labour history, there is a risk of constructing a linear narrative ending with the first Labour Government. This ignores the section of the labour movement that took other paths. Although almost all the NZSP branches became part of the SDP in 1913 and many members continued to play leading roles in that party and its successor the New Zealand Labour Party, a significant minority went in different directions. Many of those who passed through the ranks of the party and into the IWW continued to be involved in radical syndicalism and anti-militarist activities through the First World War and later. The Wellington branch of the party remained an independent centre for radicals in the capital until 1921 when its members helped to form the Communist Party of New Zealand. All these strands of socialism in New Zealand had inherited organisers and idealists who had discussed or read about socialist ideas at the meetings of the New Zealand Socialist Party.

Bibliography

Unpublished Primary Sources

Alexander Turnbull Library

Griffin, Gerald John, 1904-1976, MS-Papers-086-43.

Hogg, Robert, 1864-1941, MS-Papers-0020.

Ranstead, William, 1859-1944, MS-Papers-0071.

Roth, Herbert Otto, 1917-1994, MS-Group-0314.

Hall Jones, William 1851-1936, MS-Papers-5755-04.

Canterbury Museum

Efford, Lincoln Winstone Arthur, 1907-1962 Papers, C327.

Canterbury University, Macmillan Brown Library

New Zealand Socialist Party Records 1903-1913, 79157.

Canterbury Workers Educational Association Records, 76303.

University of Otago, Hocken Collections

Paul, John Thomas, 1874-1964, ARC-0191.

Victoria University of Wellington, J.C. Beaglehole Room

Herbert Roth Pamphlet Collection.

Newspaper and Magazine Primary Sources

Auckland Star

Clarion

Commonweal

Dominion

Evening Post

Free Lance

Grey River Argus

Horowhenua Chronicle

International Socialist Review

Maoriland Worker

Marlborough Express

New Zealand Herald

Ohinemuri Gazette

Otago Daily Times

Otago Witness

Press

Social Democrat

Star

The Pilot: The Reform Journal of New Zealand

The Standard

Truth

West Coast Times

Other Published Primary Sources

Conference of Trade Unions (convened by the N.Z. Federation of Labor) held in the offices of "The Maoriland Worker", Wellington, N.Z., January 21 to January 27, 1913, adopting basis of unity for the United Federation of Labor and Social Democratic Party, and convening further congress on July 1, 1913 at Wellington (Wellington: Worker Printery, 1913).

Cyclopedia of New Zealand, Wellington Provincial District 1897.

Fourth Annual Conference of the New Zealand Socialist Party. Held at the Trades Hall, Moray Place, Dunedin, on the 17th April 1911 (Wellington, Maoriland Worker, 1911).

Hickey, P.H., *"Red" Fed Memoirs: Being a brief survey of the Birth and Growth of the Federation of labour from 1908 to 195 and of the days that immediately preceded it*, reprinted edition (Wellington Media Collective, 1980).

Hulbert, J.B., *My Garden and Other Verses* (Wellington, Maoriland Worker, 1922).

Hulbert, J.B., *Socialist Songs* (Wellington: J.B. Hulbert, 1906).

Mann, Tom, *Tom Mann's Memoirs* (London: Labour Publishing Company, 1923).

Nolan, Melanie (ed.), *War & Class: The Diary of Jack McCullough* (Wellington, Dunmore Publishing, 2009).

Report of Proceedings of the Unity Congress held in Wellington: July 1st to 10th, 1913, Establishing the United Federation of Labor and The Social Democratic Party (Wellington: The Worker Print, 1913).

The Bennett-Mills Debate on the Unity Scheme, Amended Report (Wellington: Maoriland Worker, 1912).

Secondary Sources

Bassett, Michael and King, Michael, *Tomorrow Comes the Song: A Life of Peter Fraser* (Auckland: Penguin, 2000).

Bevir, Mark, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

Bodman, Ryan "The Military Strike is now on!" A History of the Passive Resisters Union, 1912-14, *Labour History*, no.107 (November 2014), pp.1-20.

Bowan, Kate, and Pickering, Paul A., 'Singing for Socialism', in Laurajane Smith, Paul A. Shackel and Gary Campbell (eds.), *Heritage, Labour and the Working Classes* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp.192-215.

Brooking, Tom, *Richard Seddon, King of God's Own: The Life and Times of New Zealand's Longest-serving Prime Minister* (Auckland: Penguin, 2014).

Burgmann, Verity, *In Our Time: Socialism and the Rise of Labor* (Sydney; George Allen & Unwin, 1985).

Burgmann, Verity, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Clayworth, Peter, 'Prophets from across the Pacific: The influence of Canadian agitators on New Zealand Labour militancy in the early twentieth century', *Red Ruffians* website <http://redruffians.tumblr.com/post/2682342488/prophets-from-across-the-pacific-the-influence-of>

Coleman, Peter J., *Progressivism and the World of Reform: New Zealand and the origins of the American Welfare State* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1987).

Davidson, Jared, *Sewing Freedom* (Oakland: AK Press, 2013).

Dovore, Roy, 'Politicians out of the Past', radio broadcast 27 August 1959, reprinted in *The Western Socialist*, Vol 26, no.211, 1959, pp. 9-11;

<http://www.worldsocialism.org/canada/politicians.out.of.the.past.1959.v26n211.htm>

Dunick, Mark 'The Clarion Settlers: A Socialist Migration to New Zealand', History Honours research essay, Victoria University of Wellington, 2014.

Edge, W.R., *Clarion Settlers per "Kumara" "Wakanui" "Tokomaru" "Paparoa" and "Rakaia" in 1900* (Auckland: William Edge, 1974).

Eley, Geoff, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Gustafson, Barry, *From the Cradle to the Grave: A Biography of Michael Joseph Savage* (Auckland: Reed Methuen, 1986).

Gustafson, Barry, *Labour's Path to Political Independence: Origins and Establishment of the New Zealand Labour Party, 1900-19* (Auckland, Auckland University Press, 1980).

Hamer, David, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power, 1891-1912* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988).

Hannam, June and Hunt, Karen, *Socialist Women: Britain, 1880s to 1920s* (London: Routledge, 2002).

Holman, Bob, *Keir Hardie: Labour's Greatest Hero?* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2010).

Holt, James, *Compulsory Arbitration in New Zealand: The First Forty Years* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1986).

Kelly, Pat, *Scotland's Radical Exports: The Scots abroad – how they shaped politics and trade unions* (Glasgow: Grimsay Press, 2011).

Kipnis, Ira, *The American Socialist Movement: 1897-1912* (paperback edition) (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972).

Cybele Locke, 'Rebel Girls and Pram pushing Scab-hunters: Waihi "Scarlet Runners," 1912, *Labour History*, no.107, (November 2014), pp.35-51.

Locke, Elsie, *Peace People: A History of Peace Activities in New Zealand* (Christchurch: Hazard Press, 1992).

McAloon, Jim 'Working Class Politics in Christchurch, 1905-1914, MA Thesis, Canterbury University, 1986.

McAloon, Jim, 'Radical Christchurch' in John Cookson and Graham Dunstall (eds.), *Southern Capital, Christchurch: Towards a City Biography 1850-2000* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2000), pp.162-192.

Moloney, Pat and Kerry Taylor (eds.), *On the Left: Essays on Socialism in New Zealand* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2002).

Moriarty-Patten, Stuart, 'A world to win, a hell to lose: the Industrial Workers of the World in early twentieth century New Zealand' MA Thesis, Massey University, 2012.

Nolan, Melanie (ed.), *Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand* (Christchurch, Canterbury University Press and the Trade Union History Project, 2006).

O'Farrell, P.J., *Harry Holland, Militant Socialist* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1964).

O'Neill, Morna, *Walter Crane: The Arts and Crafts, Painting, and Politics, 1875-1890* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2010).

Olssen, Erik and Len Richardson, 'The New Zealand Labour Movement, 1880-1920' in Eric Fry, (ed.) *Common Cause: Essays in Australian and New Zealand Labour History* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1986), pp.1-15.

Olssen, Erik, 'The Origins of the Labour Party', *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.21. no.2. April 1987, pp.79-96.

Olssen, Erik, *The Red Feds: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour 1908-13* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography; <http://www.oxforddnb.com>

Pierson, Stanley, *British Socialism: The Journey from Fantasy to Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979).

Pye, Denis, *Fellowship is Life: The Story of the Clarion Cycling Club* (Scarborough: National Clarion Publishing, 2004).

Richardson, Len, *Coal, Class & Community: The United Mineworkers of New Zealand 1880-1960* (Auckland: Auckland University Press 1995).

Roth H. 'American Influences on the New Zealand Labour Movement', *Historical Studies* (Melbourne, University of Melbourne), Vol.9, November 1959 to May 1961, pp.413-422.

Roth, Bert and Janny Hammond, *Toil and Trouble: The Struggle for a Better Life in New Zealand* (Auckland: Methuen, 1981).

Roth, H. 'The New Zealand Socialist Party', *Political Science*, Vol.9, no.1, 1957, pp.51-60.

Roth, H. *Trade Unions in New Zealand: Past and Present* (Wellington: A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1973).

Shore, Elliot, *Talkin' Socialism: J.A. Wayland and the Role of the Press in American Radicalism, 1890-1912* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1988).

Schmidt, Michael and Lucien van der Walt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009).

Skirda, Alexandre, *Facing the Enemy: A History of Anarchist Organization from Proudhon to May 1968*, trans. Paul Sharkey (Oakland: AK Press, 2002).

Smith, Valerie, 'Gospel of Hope or Gospel of Plunder: Socialists from the mid 1890s up to and including the Blackball Strike of 1908', BA(Hons), Massey University, 1976.

Taylor, James E. "To me, Socialism is not a set of dogmas but a living principle': Harry Atkinson and the Christchurch Socialist Church, 1890-1905', MA Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2010.

Taylor, Kerry, "Our Motto, No Compromise': The Ideological Origins and Foundation of the Communist Party of New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.28, no.2 (1994), pp.203-216.

Taylor, Kerry, 'Worker's Vanguard or People's Voice?: the Communist Party of New Zealand from origins to 1946', PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1994.

Te Ara, the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography; <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies>

van der Linden, Marcel, *Transnational Labour History: Explorations* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003).

Wright, Martin, 'Robert Blatchford, the Clarion Movement, and the Crucial Years of British Socialism, 1891-1900', *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism*, Vol.13, no.1, 1990, pp.74-79.

Yska, Redmer, *Truth: The Rise and Fall of the People's Paper* (Nelson: Craig Potton Publishing, 2010).