USE OF THESES

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IV. The Background to Wheat-belt Politics.

Many problems from older areas reappeared magnified in the north. The area was not entirely undeveloped before the seventies; its eastern end was served by the railway joining the prosperous Bendigo goldfields with the busy river port of Echuca, and numerous smaller mining centres, each with its agricultural fringe, were scattered over the rest of the area. The dispersal and different nature of the new settlement, however, allowed it to draw little direct benefit from earlier public investment. Its needs were also greater than those of the early agricultural settlement, because it occurred in areas of lower, less reliable rainfall, with greater distances to market. Nor had southern settlement taken place so rapidly as the northern land rush of the middle 'seventies.¹ The old need for public works, therefore, was especially pressing.

¹ The working population engaged in agricultural and pastoral pursuits increased from 54,268 in 1861 to 65,056 in 1871, then nearly doubled to 123,096 ten years later. (Census of Victoria, 1881, General Report; p. 262, Table LXVII).
At the same time, the seriousness of the new problems was to promote demands for a greater variety of Government assistance. Although demands for non-resident selection and larger holdings continued,\(^2\) agitations for land law amendments lacked the former fire. The problem of gaining cheap access to land without giving it to the squatters had been more or less solved, the problems of the export market lay ahead.\(^3\) Meanwhile, the Government, having already undertaken development responsibilities elsewhere left to private enterprise, which in Victoria saw no profit in them, would be asked to supply other needs for which market forces did not yet cater adequately, particularly credit and labour, and to counter difficult times by helping reduce costs and in some areas by keeping out competition. With the shift to the new areas had come a shift from a mixture of general demands, made with a good deal of support from townsmen and miners, and generalised

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2. *Argus*, 20 June 1873, 24 July 1873; *Age*, 9 July 1874, 16 June 1875.

3. Dr. Bruce Graham's provisional figures, shortly to appear in his book on Country Party movements, show that between 1880 and 1900 production was relatively stable, and about 25% of it was exported. In the quinquennium 1901-5, as a rapid expansion in production began, the export figure leapt to 50%, where it stayed at least until the quinquennium 1911-5.
demands for the older forms of public investment, to a combination of sectional and regional demands, which now began a profound change in the structure of politics.

At the same time, the new areas were modifying social attitudes. Western District settlement had occurred generally in high-quality pastoral areas, where freehold was fairly common before 1862, and extensive thereafter. It had come during heavy unemployment when selection laws were blocked by squatter legislators. After 1865, the constitutional conflicts and the persistence of dummying maintained public prejudice against graziers. In the north, however, large-scale settlement came in a time of prosperity, political quiet and labour shortage. Lower carrying capacity and the smaller unit area of selection made dummying less profitable than in the south, where it had not been cheap; effective legislation and efficient administration made it more difficult and the consequences less acceptable. To

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4. Southern areas were also affected, and there was a mild agitation for assisted immigration there in 1874. *Argus*, 9 July 1874, 17 and 29 August 1874; 1 and 19 September 1874; *Age*, 29 September 1874.
move to Queensland or New South Wales was much more tempting.\textsuperscript{5}

The High Tory squatter, therefore, was as rare in the new Wimmera as he was common in the Western District.\textsuperscript{6} Such squatters as remained in the late seventies were often spoken of as good neighbours, especially during droughts, when many allowed selectors to use their dams as long as possible.\textsuperscript{7}

When Longmore, as Minister of Lands, victimised the son of a St. Arnaud squatter,\textsuperscript{8} who had selected on his father's run and demonstrated his bona fides by building and inhabiting a substantial house and by heavy agricultural investment, local liberals were indignant. Hostility to squatters in the abstract,\textsuperscript{9} as customary symbols of hostile wealth, survived and could usefully be appealed to, as the radical land tax agitation, which did not touch the selectors' interests, demonstrated in 1875-7. Such appeals,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{5} M. Kiddle, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 276-7.
\item \textsuperscript{6} M. Kiddle, \textit{op.cit.}, c. 14, 15 and 19.
\item \textsuperscript{7} \textit{St. Arnaud Mercury}, 12 September 1877, 26 April 1879; \textit{Argus}, 24 April 1878. And cf. M. Kiddle, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 403 and 423.
\item \textsuperscript{8} \textit{St. Arnaud Mercury}, 21 November 1877, 1 December 1877.
\item \textsuperscript{9} \textit{St. Arnaud Mercury}, 3 November 1877, 4 and 7 February 1880.
\end{itemize}
however, or action based on the assumption that agricultural difficulties could be alleviated by attacking squatters and bankers, bore no relation to the special problems of the dry, needy, isolated north.

During the late 'seventies, a new symbol of oppression and exploitation peculiar to that region was displacing the squatter, that universal symbol, from the minds of its farmers. Most selectors lacked initial capital, and in the three mediocre years after the rush began, their earnings were limited. Until they obtained their leases after three years under probationary licence, they could offer little security to the Banks, and must borrow from money-lenders, agents, millers and storekeepers. The honest, moderate lender, faced with poor security, charged high rates; others were usurious monsters. In bad times hard-pressed lenders had to collect debts which either could not be met or were paid with a curse. The tensions this caused neatly fitted


old attitudes. The same problem had doubtless existed\textsuperscript{12} in the south, although not on such a scale. Monied townsmen, moreover, had generally sided with merchants and squatters in the older settled areas, and in the north formed an established 'local aristocracy',\textsuperscript{13} glad of settlement but perhaps scorning the new settlers. The move during the 1878-80 depression towards collective bargaining and cutting out middlemen was more than an attempt to reduce production costs; it was a movement of revenge.

It was also a stage in the development of a sense of separate identity, long hampered by the alliance with miners and urban workers. The grassroots organisational expression of this feeling, from which the later co-operative and political movements developed, and to which they returned as their initial impulse weakened, was

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ararat Advertiser}, 12 November 1869.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{St. Arnaud Mercury}, 22 August 1877, 3 September 1879. And cf. Dow's remarks at the opening of the railway (St. Arnaud Mercury, 25 December 1878). "What men did they find objecting to (Berry's Embassy to Britain)? Why those opponents of the Government who are municipal representatives - men who have the money. (Mr. Harvey-And sense.) They were the gentlemen who had power in this district at any rate."
the Farmers' Association. Such bodies had long existed in the south, and some had at least considered co-operative and political action, but here, in areas bustling with the life which ebbed from Ararat and Hamilton, they flourished as never before. Although some would, if asked, help the local Agricultural and Pastoral Association, their memberships seem rarely to have overlapped, although some of their functions did. Intended to encourage better farming, A. & P.A.s heard papers, arranged shows and ploughing matches, and occasionally represented some general agricultural need to the Government. Being Government-subsidised, however, they could exert little pressure. Nor were they supported by the mass, or the leaders of the selectors. Being open to all classes, and having preceded large-scale settlement, they were the preserve of the 'local aristocracy'.

15. Hamilton Spectator, 9 October 1879; Ararat Advertiser, 22 June 1869 - "--- a society who (sic) pay a yearly subscription, send their cattle and produce to the yearly show, and their men to the yearly ploughing match, while they themselves meet at the yearly drink and drink each other down in the most approved of country fashions."
against them; their being based on a town and covering a large area also made it difficult for farmers to attend meetings.

F.A.s were set up by farmers, for farmers, based on small areas. To be President of a Farmers' Association probably enhanced a man's standing among his fellows, but unlike the A. & P.A., it was not something socially ambitious wives would press husbands to join. The F.A.s were also more useful. Singly or together they represented local needs to Shire Councils and Government Departments, seeking the removal of dead beasts from the river, help to exterminate rabbits, the proclamation of a reserve; they denounced individual injustices; for major improvements, they co-operated with other local bodies like Shire Councils and Railway Leagues. Often they took direct action, forming rabbit committees, trying to induce doctors and millers to settle among them, negotiating to buy draught-stallions or agricultural machinery. 16 The total numbers attending these associations were small, but like the Collingwood radical associations they included the local opinion

16. See, for example, St. Arnaud Mercury, 7 July 1877, 1 and 26 August 1877, 12 September 1877.
leaders.

During the 1877 election, there were also signs of political action. Since the 1874 elections, the number of farmers had increased enormously in the north, as the northern mining population continued to decline; the 1876 redistribution had recognised this. In the new Wimmera electorate, the Corack F.A. consulted similar societies about running a farmers' candidate. 17 Some thirty miles east, at Wychitella, a farmers' meeting arranged a comprehensive canvass to choose a farming representative for the second Avoca seat. 18 In Mandurang, the next electorate eastwards, a meeting of 150 "interested in the agricultural industry", representing all divisions, brought forward its own candidate. 19 In Kara Kara, Dow was first asked to stand by the farmers of Avon Plains, 20 which, from the names of his supporters, meant the members of the A.P.F.A.. In the same electorate, a similar movement was taking place in local government elections, 21 the initiative coming from the F.A.s and a series of ad hoc committees.

17. *St. Arnaud Mercury*, 10 February 1877.
This attitude was encouraged by R.W.E. McIvor\(^\text{22}\) whose itinerant lecturing gave him excellent opportunities for propaganda. In August 1877,\(^\text{23}\) having accepted an invitation to address the A.P.F.C. on farming methods, he came accompanied by Dow. The meeting warmly applauded Dow's suggestion that McIvor should stand as a second farmers' representative when Kara Kara received a second seat. At the subsequent dinner, McIvor urged farmers to unite, exert their political power, and demand as rights what they begged as favours. His expression of similar views at Belfast\(^\text{24}\) suggests that this was not an isolated incident. Early in 1879 he persuaded the Victoria Agricultural Society to contact all similar bodies and establish a union for economic and political ends, but the move failed just then for lack of support.\(^\text{25}\)

\(^{22}\) R.W.E. McIvor, agricultural chemist, was brought to Victoria and sent on lecture tours, at the expense of Sir William Clarke, grazier.

\(^{23}\) *St. Arnaud Mercury*, 22 August 1877.

\(^{24}\) *Hamilton Spectator*, 26 October 1878.

\(^{25}\) *Age*, 14 January 1879.
Advocates of such movements sometimes pointed to the success of North American farmers' organisations, the main channels of information about which seem to have been The Age and The Leader, from which it spread to the provincial press. By the late 'seventies references to the Granges were commonly made by farmers on both sides of politics. Not that they proposed simply to copy the American model. The mystical ruralism and the concern with social improvement which influenced at least the founders of the Grange was ignored in Victoria; only the resentful sense of unrewarded superiority remained. Secondly, although the principles of co-operative banking and trading and of collective bargaining, received some support and scattered groups tried vainly to put it into practice, the position of the Government as landlord and development authority gave their movement a much more exclusively political tendency than in the U.S.A., where the enemy had been the railroad company and the middleman.

26. Age, 21 January 1874; Hamilton Spectator, 8 March 1877; St. Arnaud Mercury, 28 January 1880; Ararat Advertiser, 9 April 1880, 12 July 1881.

27. Argus, 6 August 1880, 24 February 1881; Age, 19 April 1881; Ararat Advertiser, 23 November 1880; Mount Alexander Mail, 3 December 1880.
In the then state of Victorian politics this was a great misfortune for the movement. The sense of a separate regional and sectional identity had not yet developed so far as to make farmers break with the opposed British models of the independent representative and the two-party system. So far as any clear political intention can be deduced from the statements of those who championed direct representation, and from the behaviour of subsequent country factions in Victoria, this was that farming representatives should co-operate for purely industrial ends, as mining representatives sometimes did, irrespective of party, for party was still seen as a matter of abstract principle, or, more often, as a war-game which should not interfere with serious business. Beginning as a protest against the Government's attitude towards

28. "Politics are so interwoven with our everyday life that there are few associations among us, either of a social or a religious character, into which the political element is not largely introduced." Ararat Advertiser, 26 September 1879.

29. E.g. Ararat Advertiser, 11 June 1869. When the radicals of the Avon Plains Farmers' Club wanted to organise support for Berry in 1878, they set up a separate organisation, a branch of the N.R.P.L. (St. Arnaud Mercury, 20 February 1878.)
the plight of the farmers, at a time of bitter party warfare in Parliament and the country, however, the Farmers' Union Movement was immediately suspected of being an attempt to exploit the farmers for party purposes, and, therefore, failed to achieve anything in the short run.
V. The Farmers and the Berry Administration.

The 1877 election gave Berry the benefit of the increased northern representation. Of McCullochite M.L.A.s, Kerferd held his personal stronghold in the Ovens, but lost his colleague of thirteen years. MacBain retained his seat by one vote.¹ Only in Rodney, where the local influence of Simon Fraser² was added to the executive influence of Gillies, the Minister of Lands, did the Government narrowly retain both seats.

Many of the reasons for the northern landslide were the same as for the southern. Catholics, and probably young men, tended to support Berry in both areas. The superior vigour of the radical campaign was no less apparent than in the south. The N.R.P.L. had few northern branches yet, and those not among farmers, but to judge by the St. Arnaud Branch,³ where a nucleus remained of

1. Allegedly obtained by dancing Tullochgorum by moonlight, in full regalia, among whiskied Scots on the plains of the Wimmera. Argus, 23 May 1877.


3. St. Arnaud Mercury, 4, 7, 14, 21, 28 April 1877, 9 May 1877.
miners and townsmen who had made the old Crowlands electorate a radical stronghold in the 'sixties, these were not lacking in vigour. Moreover Dow's northern tour with his lecture on land monopoly, delivered to large audiences before a huge, vivid map, seems to have aroused a good deal of interest. Most important of all, however, were the effects of the agitations of the previous two years on miners and farmers, convincing them as much as the Melbourne workers that McCulloch was the leader of the rich, Berry the champion of the people. Berry also had one important advantage in the country which he lacked in Melbourne. As during the Duffy Ministry, radicals presented themselves as the party of the honest, downtrodden provinces against Melbourne. At the same time, however, they depended heavily on the Melbourne suburbs. The two were reconciled by taking as the symbol of Melbourne, not the worker, but the wealthy; Mr. Deeds and Lazurus could easily agree on Mr. Dives. This gained plausibility because Berry's first Ministry

4. Age, 8 November 1876.

had represented mostly provincial constituencies, because it contained Grant, still a name to inspire affection among farmers, and because of Wood's heavy reductions in railway freights.

Although the Ministry might proclaim itself the champion of the provinces, however, it and its party necessarily became associated with the metropolis. Some of its members already lived there, and even the numerous locals who entered Parliament as Berryites in 1877 had to spend much of their time in Melbourne. Others, like James Patterson and Major Smith, although staunch provincials and local heroes, were provincial townsmen; this led them, thinking in terms of urban and mining radical stereotypes instead of the realities of northern farming, seriously to misjudge the effects of their actions on country opinion, and to give too low a priority to alleviating northern distress. As this mounted, moreover, it turned against the mining centres which they represented. There

6. Geelong West, Ballarat West, Castlemaine, Crowlands, Ripon and Hampden, Avoca; only Munro, of North Melbourne, came from a metropolitan constituency.

7. Woods' name was constantly praised in the north during the election. E.g. St. Arnaud Mercury, 21 February 1877, 30 March 1877.
had always been some jealousy of these, the nearest concentrations of non-farmers who, it was alleged, could obtain their slightest whims while farmers went a-begging; many of the harvest workers who exploited the desperate and righteous farmer were miners; it was northern mining centres which prevented the election of farming representatives. Moreover as the villain was now becoming a Government which stood for the Melbourne workers, anti-metropolitan feeling was increasingly directed against the class which still thought of itself as the farmers' friend. Out of the old farming sense of belonging to communities of status and of provinciality a new sectional and regional consciousness was developing.

Longmore made the first mistake. Many radicals, including Berry, tended to regard anyone who disagreed with them as the rich man's lackey, and every difficulty as the outcome of the machinations of the rich. In Longmore, an Ulster Protestant

8. Hamilton Spectator, 6 March 1867. And note the signs of tension between miners and farmers near goldfields, over mining on private property, sludge from tailings, etc.: Bendigo Advertiser, 14 August 1868; Ararat Advertiser, 15 August 1871.

9. Argus, 9 October 1879.
and wowsers, "--- bitter, tenacious ---- inspired with all a selector's distrust and an Irishman's hate of great landlords," these tendencies were perfected. Berry's party had proclaimed that the land was falling to the squatter and speculator. In areas Longmore knew, this was no more than a slight distortion, as farmers sold part-worn land to select elsewhere. In the north where many of them were resettling and which Longmore knew not, it was a ludicrous travesty.

The 320 acre selection was generally too small for Wimmera farming; the residence requirement, if enforced, created difficulties for poorer farmers needing to replenish their limited capital from other employment, and for local businessmen with the capital successful farming needed. As legislation was prevented by the Assembly's lack of

10. A. Deakin, *The Crisis in Victorian Politics*, p. 15. Francis Longmore - B. 1826, arr. Sydney 1839, Victoria 1852. Farmed in Western District in '60s, but by 1877 a Melbourne speculator and professional politician. According to Niel Black (Black Papers. Black to Gladstone, 22 August 1865), formerly a land shark: one who, controlling a gang of dummies, helped the squatters to evade the selection Acts, but forced their expensive help on them by threatening to bid against them. If regarded as a protection racket, this is perfectly consistent with Longmore's hatred of squatters.

11. Ararat Advertiser, 29 September and 10 October 1876; Hamilton Spectator, 9 June 1877; Argus, 13 November 1874.
interest and the Council's obstruction, successful settlement required evasion of the law, by discriminating enforcement, dummying or the unsuccessful farmers' selling their land to the actually or potentially successful. Adjacent selection by members of the same family served the same purpose. 12

The land therefore was going not to a brummagem squirearchy, but to those whose resources of money, experience or family labour could, with luck, make settlement effective. Those who sold, or acted as dummies, improved their prospects for selection elsewhere or for a town occupation with a little capital. 13 What they sold was the hard, pinched, often squalid life of the small cookie fighting a harsh climate and economic system whose unpredictable fluctuations could destroy him overnight. Yet many of the poor and unfortunate did cling to their selections. They, like the large number whose chances were worth the gamble, needed credit. As 1878 approached, those who had arrived

12. Age, 19 and 21 July 1875, 10 September 1875, For a corrective to these jeremiads, however, see Vic. Parliamentary Papers (L.A.), Session 1879-80, Vol. 3, No. 72. Evidence before Lands Commission of 1878.

13. Age, 11 August 1875.
at the start of the land rush looked forward to obtaining their leases, and therefore easier credit. 14

But Longmore knew the rich were after the land. Attempts to increase the size of holdings, by legislation or the expedients of the north, were part of their scheming; loans by bankers or country businessmen were golden knives to flense the farmer of his land. 15 To believe otherwise would have been to break up the foundations of his world. One of his first executive acts, therefore, was to limit the amount which could be borrowed on leases to £1 per acre, and that subject to departmental approval, and to order an inquiry into existing loans.

The regulations did no good, and some harm. 16 Banks charged selectors who had their leases no more than normal rates and rarely lent above the new maximum; the debts accumulated at very high


rates during the previous three years were unaffected. Moreover, the need to obtain approval from a dilatory department\textsuperscript{17} now made banks reluctant to lend the small amounts which most cautiously requested. The farmers' alternatives were therefore to borrow more than they thought necessary (which might have been to their advantage) or pay higher rates to other lenders. Soon, the general restriction of advances which the financial situation forced on the banks removed the first alternative. Many blamed this on Longmore's regulations, his investigations and his declamations against capital.\textsuperscript{18} Longmore strengthened this impression by accusing the banks of limiting advances for political purposes.\textsuperscript{19}

The Berryite Avon Plains Farmers' Club condemned the regulations; Natimuk selectors burned Longmore in effigy.\textsuperscript{20} Attempts to persuade him to amend the regulations,\textsuperscript{21} however, met angry refusals and

17. St. Arnaud Mercury, 9 October 1878. And cf. 15 June 1878.


19. St. Arnaud Mercury, 5 October 1878.

20. St. Arnaud Mercury, 7 July 1877; Hamilton Spectator, 1 September 1877.

accusations. Not until October 1878, after a visit to the Wimmera had convinced even Longmore that the demand came from genuine selectors, did he permit loans below £1 per acre without departmental approval, but that did not make the banks more able to lend, nor retrieve his reputation.

Meanwhile, the problems of the north had increased. The 1878 harvest was poor, the next, in many places, disastrous. Rabbits moved from the mallee into the wheatfields. Government help was badly needed, and some was given. The railway reached St. Arnaud in December 1878, Horsham the following February, and Shepparton a year later. Woods again cut freights despite the revenue problem, but failed to regain the popularity he had obtained in 1875, since the reductions were small, late, and forced on him. The Government made trial bores

22. *St. Arnaud Mercury*, 5 October 1878.
24. *St. Arnaud Mercury*, 25 December 1878. The local Council, being anti-Government, did not lay on a celebration, although the line was given priority, so that it should be completed for that harvest and ahead of Horsham's line.
25. *St. Arnaud Mercury*, 16 October 1878.
26. *St. Arnaud Mercury*, 2 and 16 April 1879.
for water, but did little to supply it in quantity. It granted rent concessions to individuals and small sums to help local associations exterminate rabbits, but in vain. It allowed selectors to accumulate arrears of rents, but that was no more than previous Governments had done. The 1878 Land Act allowed selectors to pay half the previous rent for double the previous period, and permitted some non-resident selection at double the old price and rate of improvements, but this evoked little gratitude. For the rare new selector, rents were a relatively small part of expenses, and as the period under licence was doubled, the Act postponed the day when he could borrow at bank rates. For the old selector it did not wipe out debts. What in normal times might have told in the Government's favour was easily forgotten in times of disaster.

While disaster could come very quickly, Government assistance came more slowly. Partly this was inevitable. Works take time; revenue was falling.

27. St. Arnaud Mercury, 23 October 1878; 25 January 1879, 15 March 1879.
28. St. Arnaud Mercury, 1 March 1879; Argus, 4 December 1871; Age, 17 June 1872.
29. 42 Vic., No. 634.
Reform absorbed time and energy. Other delays were less justifiable. Longmore was quicker to abuse or promise than to act. After nearly three years, he had not prepared legislation against the expiry of the squatting tenure in 1880. He often talked about Government loans, but did nothing.\footnote{V.P.D., Vol. 39, p. 907.} Nor did his colleagues show any sense of urgency. Despite good intentions and the assistance they did give, their attitudes and priorities were those of urban radicals. After the constitutional crisis, they concentrated on Reform to a degree unnecessary and impolitic.\footnote{St. Arnaud Mercury, 22 June 1878; 21 December 1878.}

However much they supported Reform, it was no use to farmers desperate for money and water. Worse still, money was being wasted elsewhere. Having been taught to regard themselves as the basis of permanent prosperity, the favoured of the State, they now saw a heavy public works programme to embellish the detested metropolis and to provide work for unemployed loafers whose labour was needed.
inland, and who, during harvest, exploited the farmer. The money needed for the deserving was being lavished on the undeserving.33 'All the trades struck,' declared a Picola farmer, 'and the country was not ruined, but if the farmers struck in the northern district the country would be ruined.'34

The alliance of farmers and urban workers, then, was strained. The effects of the country labour shortage and ministerial ignorance made the first serious breach. There were three ways of overcoming the shortage. Where available, Chinese labour had been used for some time, especially, it seems, by poor farmers, some of whom were uneasy at the Melbourne anti-Chinese movements during 1879 and 1880.35 The second possibility, assisted immigration, abhorred by artisan and miner, and regarded as a shibboleth of conservatism, was commonly urged by rural radicals.36 The third possibility was mechanisation

33. Ararat Advertiser, 26 September 1879; Hamilton Spectator, 4 October 1879.
34. Argus, 15 July 1879.
35. Bendigo Advertiser, 29 December 1869; Argus, 13 June 1880.
36. St. Arnaud Mercury, 21 February 1877.
which both cheapened and accelerated harvesting, and was now extending rapidly. Many farmers had their own machinery; the small farmer could hire from them, or employ itinerant machine owners; at Donald in 1878, even the poorest used machinery. Farmers might combine to reduce prices in hard times, but extortion by machine owners never attained the same proportions in rural mythology as extortion by harvest workers.

In 1878, therefore, an Agricultural Association deputation asked Berry to abolish the duties on agricultural machinery. He promised to consider this, when he learned that the best machines were patented and could not be manufactured in Victoria. On being told that a Geelong manufacturer hoped soon to produce a better reaper-binder than McCormack's, he decided to maintain the duties. The following year he allowed Major Smith, who had been Acting Treasurer during his absence in England, to introduce a Budget which, seeking to combine increases in both the revenue and levels


of protection, proposed increased duties on agricultural implements and machinery and on bags. 39

Dow performed verbal marvels of protesting his support for the Government while bitterly assailing its attitude towards the country areas; "--- the agricultural interest of the colony is being ignored as much as it was in the past", he said. First had come Longmore's regulations, then the change wrought in Woods by office, making him refuse curtly to consider further reductions in freight-rates for agricultural produce, and now "this slapdash Tariff, which I can only call 'protection run mad'." Mirams, the Collingwood doctrinaire in him bristling, sharply reminded Dow that the farmers had been carefully fostered by the state, and that protection reduced prices. 40 Berry, ground between the upper and the nether millstones, had announced that he proposed to suspend the duties on machinery for a time, 41 but the damage had been done. With other

41. V.P.D., Vol. 30, p. 301.
representatives of farming areas, Dow voted against the tariff; the Government just survived the division, and was obliged to withdraw and recast the budget.\[42\]
VI. Movements in Rochester: the Beginning of the Victoria Farmers' Union.

The Avon Plains Farmers' Club had condemned the proposed increases. When Dow next visited St. Arnaud, he informed his constituents that little now bound him to the Government but the desire to reform the Council. Despite these protests, however, Kara Kara continued to support the Government. In that area, although some parishes had suffered, the harvest was reported fair. Further eastwards, disaster had reigned. Moreover, as an Opposition constituency, Rodney had not been so favoured as Kara Kara. Although willing to hasten the St. Arnaud line to completion by harvest, Woods did nothing to speed the Goulburn Valley line. He had even tried to run it along the eastern side of the valley, ignoring his Engineer-in-Chief and the location of population. The

1. *St. Arnaud Mercury*, 13 August 1879.
2. *St. Arnaud Mercury*, 3 September 1879.
east was in government-held Moira, the west in Rodney. West side farmers had to thank the Legislative Council's intervention for the compromise eventually achieved. The stimulus to organised protest was therefore especially great in Rodney. The final straw was the attempt to revive the Rochester N.R.P.L.

At the meeting to refound this society the emphasis was not on Council reform, although this was warmly supported, but on direct representation of farmers. Although this meant in Rodney expelling two Opposition M.L.A.s, the previous movement of farming opinion and the subsequent behaviour of the protagonists suggest that it was not a mere party gambit. As W.T. Webb said, its basis was different from the Melbourne organisation's; like Dow, he seems to have regarded Reform as the main remaining tie between farmers and the radical party. Andrew Mellen went a stage farther. "He thought they had had enough of the Reform League, and he would suggest the establishment of a farmers' union."


6. Rochester Express, 30 May 1879.
Mr Berry might have some good ideas, but he was the head of a very bad family." Dargan's amendment in this sense was declared defeated, but there was some doubt about this.

Almost immediately a meeting was held at Rochester by those who had supported Dargan's amendment. John Moore Chanter, born and bred to Australian farming, now began his long career in rural politics. "Those millers," he said, "had formed themselves into a ring to crush the farmers." The farmers must therefore set up their own stores, grain markets and export organisation. Secondly, farmers were the most unjustly taxed class of all, paying duties which increased the cost not only of necessities of life, but also of instruments of production, to help a few Melbourne industries which needed no assistance. The N.R.P.L.'s self-seekers, lackeys of Melbourne interests, who had frightened away the capital so

7. Rochester Express, 20 June 1879.

desperately needed by the farmer, must therefore be replaced by farmers.

On both counts, his conclusions and the bitterness of his speech were distasteful to the two N.R.P.L. leaders, Webb and Spencer, millers both. Not that the Berryites were conciliatory. One had interrupted the Chairman's opening remarks to inquire whether the meeting had not been got up by a clique to elect a "Conservative". For them, the test of Chanter's claim that the movement was non-partisan came when the names of the suggested committee were read out. Two of them proposed Webb. Chanter objected that Webb was the leader of an organisation opposed to the objects of the new union. Webb accused him of jeopardising for party purposes a cause in which all believed, Chanter retorted the accusation upon Webb.

Similar dialogues occurred whenever a Farmers Union on the Rochester model was proposed. 9 Men suffering the same hardships, with identical views on the needs of farmers, were divided over Service and Berry, and whether the effects of the

9. E.g. Argus, 21 June 1879; St. Arnaud Mercury, 3 December 1879.
Berry regime on farmers justified the abandonment of the radical party. The attempt of partisans to annex the movement embarrassed the large number who did not care who governed, provided their grievances were removed. Others cried out on both sides.

"They had been neglected," said one, "by Liberals and Conservatives alike: the sole policy of Parliament being apparently the conciliating and placating of the masses of mechanics and others congregated in large towns --- to the neglect of the country."\(^{10}\)

Even in Rochester, however, the area of agreement was wide enough to make both sides consider amalgamation. Unfortunately Chanter, now Secretary, was as firmly entrapped in his stereotypes as any Collingwood partisan. If the local N.R.P.L. was willing to amalgamate, he said,\(^{11}\) it must feel very differently from its Council, whose new programme ignored agriculture. At the conference,\(^{12}\) the League delegates pointed to the common ground of direct representation and


12. Ibid.
assisted immigration, and offered to sink all differences. The Union's chairman replied that the League's other planks made co-operation impossible. The question was therefore shelved until the Union's objects were settled, but the general feeling was that while individual leaguers might join, the organisations could not amalgamate.

A committee meeting to define the Union's objects was invaded by suspicious radicals, insisting it should be turned into a public meeting. The meeting became increasingly disorderly, fights broke out. A week later, the aims were eventually presented to a public meeting. All was well until Chanter reached assisted immigration. Despite the local N.R.P.L.'s policy, and Chanter's assurances that there was no intention to swamp the labour market, the proposal was received with groans and accusations. This suggests that the N.R.P.L. had brought along some urban supporters; if so, it had not mustered enough, for despite the racket and threats of violence, the rules were endorsed by three to one.

13. Rochester Express, 4 July 1879.
A week later, the Union met to elect officers. Radicals demanded the enrolment of many who had come to vote. Objections that this was an attempt to swamp the Union were followed by uproar until the meeting adjourned to allow the enrolments. When the balloting was finished, at 6 a.m. the following morning, the bottom of the list was full of Berryites. The Union was therefore established as an independent body, but in circumstances which made it appear a party political organisation.

Radical suspicions, especially in distant Melbourne, derived partly from ignorance and the arrogant tendency to regard all opponents as lackeys of the rich, but had some justification. The leaders of the Opposition and the Corner took up the movement eagerly, attended its meetings, and talked much about agricultural grievances. Many local protagonists were strong and open opponents of the Government. At the same time, the leaders certainly were neither squatters nor the local aristocracy of the country towns, who were forming their own political associations. The Unions' 

15. Rochester Express, 18 July 1879.
16. Age, 29 April 1880; Argus, 22 November 1879.
17. Argus, 23 August 1879, 21 and 28 October 1879, 27 January 1880.
rare financial statements confirm the rueful laughter which followed one member's remark that he only wished they were subsidised by the merchants, as their opponents suggested. So far as their occupations can be discovered, they seem to have been genuine farmers, although some also had town occupations.

The Age could reasonably point out that whatever their views about the Government, the farmers of Avon Plains and Bacchus Marsh still supported it. There seem to have been three reasons why the success of the Union varied so much. The tendency to support Melbourne radicals was still strong, although weakening. Where N.R.P.L. branches, or other organisations of radical sympathies, like the Avon Plains Farmers' Club, provided a closer commitment, tradition was reinforced among the opinion leaders. Moreover, the circumstances of the Rochester Union's foundation had given the movement a bad reputation which the attacks of The Age and Government supporters helped spread.

20. From the local papers and the 1880-1 Post Office Directory of Victoria. (Melbourne University Archives)
rapidly. Consequently, later Unions were avoided by radical farmers as conservative societies, or by independents as political, while conservative farmers were the more attracted to them. The image was making reality in its own image. A third factor was probably the political allegiance of the local M.L.A. Men like Dow, who remained faithful while condemning Government policies which damaged the farmer, could obtain Government favours while demonstrating their zeal for the farmers' interests, and so confirm the waverers.

McCulloch would have won the movement over or neutralised it by concessions. The qualities which had enabled Berry to defeat McCulloch, however, prevented his retaining power by McCulloch's methods. This was especially unfortunate as he had no need to oppose most of the movement's aims.21 His proposed duties would have been slow to affect employment, and benefited very few, while adding immediately to the farmer's difficulties and alienating a large number of voters and representatives. Even if the radical dogma were

21. Argus, 9 and 10 October 1879.
correct, that protection lowered prices in the long run, this was cold comfort to the farmer faced with ruin in the short and ready to shy at shadows.

The demand for more farming M.L.A.s, and electoral redistribution to liberate farmers from the concentrated mining vote, could easily have been promised, especially since Berry believed genuine farmers to be with him. To concede assisted immigration was politically impossible, but that alone would not have supported an agitation. Nor would shortage of water have sufficed, if Berry had made a firm commitment and tried to rush through legislation, putting the onus of rejection on his opponents. Suspicion, myopia and inflexibility prevented him from taking his chances; worry and fatigue sapped his political skill. He even went out of his way to damage his reputation, opposing Casey's motion to abolish the duties on agricultural machinery, even while he was considering suspending them for a year or more.  

22. *Argus*, 10 October 1879, 1 November 1879.

Nor did he lack warning. Dow even suggested that his tariff was turning protectionist farmers into free traders. It is doubtful how far farmers ever had been protectionists. There had been small movements for protection against South Australian wheat in the earlier years of settlement, which had achieved some success in the 1867 Budget.

Despite the frequency with which urban Berryites reminded farmers that they too were protected, however, these duties had become unnecessary after the agricultural expansion of the 'seventies. Thereafter, simple economic interest might have been expected to have made most of them free traders. They showed little sign of beliefs either way, but their democratic sentiments had allied them with urban protectionists. Now, however, protection was singling them out when they were struggling for survival, and when the Government in which they had trusted had reviled them. At the same time they were not repudiating protection as a general theory or as a political shibboleth, any more than protectionist miners who sought

reductions in the duty on mining machinery, or protectionist manufacturers who sought protection for their products and free trade in their raw materials, imported components and instruments of production. On immigration, similarly, they were not calling for the general importation of hands and mouths so much as for the recruitment of rural skills to relieve a particular shortage. 27

Protectionist doctrinaires naturally either failed to appreciate the distinction, or else reacted simply as representatives of Melbourne interests. Even had they had no other reasons to regard the Farmers' Unions as conservative plots, this would have engendered suspicion, for slogans can be affirmed or denied, but not qualified. Anyone suggesting modifications, especially when the Reform campaign was nearing its climax, must be a squatter-lover. The Government knew what was in the minds of the people, for they alone sought the people's good, and the Melbourne crowds which demonstrated before their idols proved them right. The Berry who, facing

27. Rochester Express, 11 July 1879.
the unemployed, or the Longmore who, facing opponents of his regulations, regarded them as agents or dupes of the rich, necessarily so regarded men criticising their tariff and proposing assisted immigration.

28. See below, p. 543.

VII. Zenith and Collapse of the V.F.U.

The organisation begun so inauspiciously at Rochester was spread rapidly, by newspapers, circulars and missionary visits to ploughing matches and other rural gatherings. Most Unions accepted the Rochester Rules, a few decided for their own organisation and their own programme. The next stage was the development of a central organisation. Early in October 1879, a conference was held in Melbourne, attended by representatives of 34 Unions out of a total 100; by contemporary standards, a good attendance. The primacy of Rochester was recognised by the election of Hightett as President and Chanter as Secretary, and by the adoption of the Rochester programme, except for the demand for lower freights, narrowly defeated on the grounds that too much should not be asked at once. The conference did its best to disarm suspicion. Although some impatience was expressed with the Government, the meeting was not pro-Opposition. The general attitude was that "the farmers --- did not know Mr. Berry or Mr. Service," but only their own interests. The farmers' vote was to go to men, not parties.

1. Argus, 21 June; 11 and 28 July 1879.
2. Rochester Express, 1 August 1879; Ararat Advertiser, 2 December 1879.
3. Argus, 9-10 October 1879.
Once policy was settled, a deputation\(^4\) tried to see the Government; it was received by O'Loughlen. He said that the Government refused to alter its policy of protection, although, to please the farmers, it was dropping the increase in the bag duties, and suspending the machinery duties for a twelvemonth, to see if bounties would encourage local manufacture. If they did, prices would undoubtedly fall, since a ring of importers had conspired to keep them up. Meanwhile, the Government was extending railways and water supply as fast as it could. It was the reply of a doctrinaire urban protectionist and of a politician claiming merit for concessions made to avert defeat. The deputation was not satisfied.

The conference also created a well-devised organisation. The Unions became branches of the Victoria Farmers' Union, grouped on a constituency basis, and represented on the Central Committee by one delegate for each local M.L.A.. The Committee was to receive one shilling from each membership fee. Each group was to meet regularly to discuss questions concerning the agricultural interest,

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proposed by its branches or by the Central Executive. If any branch wanted a question discussed by the entire movement, it could require the Executive to circulate it. At election times, groups were to select or endorse candidates.

The V.F.U. therefore started with an organisation designed to meet the problems of scattered units. Unlike the N.R.P.L., it was not hampered by the model of the old metropolitan radical organisations. It was also blessed with an active, zealous and tactful Secretary. Its branches, unlike those of the old Ararat Land League, were numerous, well-established and apparently united on policy. Their number was soon increased by the efforts of Agricultural Associations. McIvor had at last succeeded in calling enough of these together to set up the agricultural organisation he had been urging since 1877. The meeting sought to join the V.F.U., but the conference decided that their reception of Government subsidies made the Associations ineligible. All agreed, therefore, that they should set up Union branches in their districts, which they speedily did.  

5. J.N.S. Clark, a Melbourne corn dealer.  
6. Argus, 24-6 September 1879, 9 and 23 October 1879, 1 and 3 November 1879.
All this was not enough. The Union was inferior to the N.R.P.L. in financial resources, since affiliation fees were rarely paid. The Government influence, used to support the N.R.P.L., was directed against the Union. The local machinery did not function efficiently, partly, it seems, from lack of experience, partly from the suspicion with which local bodies regarded the central association. Clark was soon complaining that nobody knew how to run branch and group meetings, and that local secretaries did nothing. Even he nodded, however.

He wrote to the Hamilton Union in the belief that it was affiliated, requesting copies of its rules, lists of members and officers, and one shilling from each subscription. "A long discussion took place on this matter," it was reported, "the members wanting to know who the Victoria Farmers' Union were, and why they wanted to levy money from the country districts." Some harsh remarks were passed about Melbourne centralism. When Clark replied, the Union decided that central organisation was unnecessary.

7. Argus, 17 June 1880; Hamilton Spectator, 6 April 1880.
Nor did the movement rid itself of the political stigma. Ararat adopted the Sale rules, because those of Rochester were tainted by association with a political society, and although its objects were almost the same as the V.F.U.'s, it would not join. Even in Rochester tension remained, despite the eventual victory of the moderates in ensuring that there should be no political test for membership. When the Rochester Union discussed the results of the conference, Webb protested at its free trade tone and its decision not to press for freight reductions, which, he said, should be included to demonstrate that it was not a mere free trade league. He also objected to the account of the interview with O'Loughlen circulated by Chanter. Hightett, who chaired the meeting, was, like Chanter, a native born to farming. His sense of the damage done to farmers by the Government was offset, however, by an impatience with all Melbourne politicians and perhaps a feeling that they were old foreign-born

12. John Moore Hightett, b. near Geelong. Farmed at Mitiamo (Mandurang) and Highton (near Geelong), M.I.A., 1885.
men fighting about nothing very much. He accused Webb of obstruction and Chanter of undoing his own work. Chanter resigned.

Shortly before the election, however, an incident occurred which suggested how successful the movement might have been in quieter times. Chanter and Webb were sufficiently reconciled to co-operate at a public meeting,¹³ in favour of a moratorium on rents to the Government. Blackham, a Berryite townsman imported from Bendigo to contest Rodney, ignorant of farming and the local situation, praised the Government's legislation and Longmore's regulations, and suggested that the meeting was got up by the farmers' enemies. Thomas Spencer, of the local N.R.P.L., who had contested the district as its nominee in 1877, turned on him. Other radicals carried on the meeting as if Blackham did not exist.

Fraser and Gillies held their seats, and formed part of Service's brief, unstable triumph. How far this was due to the Union is uncertain. There was, indeed, a fair amount of V.F.U. activity.

¹³ Rochester Express, 6 February 1880.
In several constituencies group meetings or individual Unions selected candidates\textsuperscript{14} or endorsed Opposition or Corner men. The Central Executive sent out one circular to branches, suggesting test questions for candidates, another to individual members, listing the M.L.A.s who had voted against Casey's motion to abolish the agricultural machinery duties.\textsuperscript{15}

There was a swing against the Government in farming areas,\textsuperscript{16} but it is impossible to separate out the V.F.U.'s influence from those of other factors. The candidates it endorsed were usually standing already for the Opposition or the Corner, or were subsequently endorsed by them; even if local, personal and religious influences could be ignored, therefore, it would be impossible to distinguish V.F.U. from Opposition votes. It is doubtful if more than two of the new M.L.A.s can be regarded

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Argus}, 19 and 20 January 1880; 2 and 25 February 1880; \textit{Mount Alexander Mail}, 3 February 1880; \textit{Rochester Express}, 6 February 1880.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Argus}, 10 January 1880.

\textsuperscript{16} Even Dow's majority fell from nearly 500 to 60.
as primarily V.F.U. men,\textsuperscript{17} and they were elected with Opposition support; in Parliament, they were indistinguishable from Service's other supporters. The organisation was raw, its energies divided in mid-campaign by harvest, which occupied not only individuals but also Unions, busily considering threshing prices, railway charges, co-operative grain export schemes and co-operative bag-buying.\textsuperscript{18} Then, just before polling day, heavy rain at last set in, preventing many from polling.\textsuperscript{19}

Of those who voted, probably most felt ill-used by the Government. Large numbers, however, still supported it. They could not hesitate between the party of the rich, which would very likely, as the radicals alleged,\textsuperscript{20} force them off the land by demanding the immediate payment of arrears of rent, and the party of the working man, which might neglect the farmers, but meant well by them. They might feel increasingly divided from their traditional allies, but this feeling was too recent to affect their voting.\textsuperscript{21} Even had the Union not been

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Thomas Langdon (Avoca) and Walter Madden (Wimmera)
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Ararat Advertiser, 30 December 1879; Argus, 10, 14, 19 and 20 January 1880.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Argus, 6 March 1880.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Argus, 1 November 1879.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Cf. Longmore's attempts to exploit this feeling, ibid.; "Let them trust to men of their own class, not to men of a class above them."
\end{itemize}
identified for many with the Opposition, they could not risk letting in the oligarchs on a split vote. Nor could those who trusted a party led by Service, Francis and John Gavan Duffy risk the return of Longmore to the Lands Office; hence the tendency to endorse Opposition or Corner candidates rather than run their own.

Had farmers formed an established and homogeneous class, of course, they would have tended towards similar opinions, prejudices and stereotypes. They had little in common, however, but farming and local jealousies. Many had been diggers, but while some had left the goldfields recently, others had done so long before and in entirely different circumstances, and had probably had other jobs in between. Many were Catholics, some Orangemen. Others voted as English, Scots, Irish, Germans or perhaps as native-born.

Nor had the Union much chance of electing many M.L.A.s even had farmers been more united. Miners might be ageing men in a contracting industry, but they were still numerous and concentrated enough
to remain an electoral power. Farmers might have found reinforcements, strategically placed and well-to-do, among squatters, country businessmen and professionals, but relations with these were still not easy, and they tended to support the Melbourne upper classes. The Central Union and some branches even excluded them. It is also likely that their varied backgrounds divided them on the same lines as the farmers, and prevented them from regarding themselves as primarily country people.

Nor were farmers united even on questions affecting their interests. The rejection of the freight-reduction plank at the first V.F.U. conference may have been justified, but the dominance of southern Unions in the attendance suggests rather that these were unwilling further to increase the advantages of men farming virgin soil acquired under easier terms than had applied during the older settlement. In the second conference a much more dangerous regional division appeared; as it concerned the tariff once

22. In Mandurang and West Bourke, for example, the farming areas' majority against the Government was outweighed by the mining areas' majority for them.


24. Such was the attitude of many in the branch at Whittlesea, 22 miles N.N.E. from Melbourne. Argus, 28 January 1880.
more, it made it impossible to forget party politics. As its support was regional, it split the movement.

Soon after the first conference, some West Bourke farmers asked Berry\(^{25}\) for increased duties on oats, maize and beasts, to preserve them from the competition of other colonies more favoured by Nature. Berry promised to help as soon as time allowed, and urged them to be up and doing, lest the V.F.U. should be taken as representative of farming opinion. Taking their cue, the members of the deputation denounced the Unions, alleging that they were composed mostly of tradespeople. Shortly afterwards another deputation, headed by Government M.L.A.s, presented a similar petition from the Government-held areas in and to the east of the Goulburn.\(^{26}\)

After the election, other areas joined the movement. The independent Ararat Union circulated a petition in favour of feedstuffs duties to all Unions. Hamilton decided to support it.\(^{27}\)

To The Age, this signified that the real farmers were taking over the movement from the squatters and dummymongers.\(^{28}\) In fact, although the

\(^{25}\) Argus, 8 November 1879.

\(^{26}\) Argus, 14 November 1879.

\(^{27}\) Ararat Advertiser, 16 March 1880; Hamilton Spectator, 6 April 1880.

\(^{28}\) Age, 8 April 1880.
association of protection and radicalism may have influenced some, as apparently happened in Kara Kara, the difference seems to have been mostly regional. Few requests for protection came from the main wheat-growing areas in the Wimmera, whose main crop did not suffer from external competition; already, in fact, some farmers were beginning to think in terms of exports. Nor was devotion to protection always wholehearted even where it obtained support. Some, despairing of reductions in duties which oppressed the farmer, sought compensation, even if its effects were only psychological; others took the same view as Harman, who told the Hamilton Union that, although in general he supported free trade, "--- they were in duty bound to protect themselves as farmers, as all business people would if they saw their interests were suffering for want of protection."  

Of the sixty Unions approached by Ararat, twelve replied. Of these, seven wanted time to

29. Ararat Advertiser, 25 May 1880; Rochester Express, 25 May 1880; Argus, 30 August 1880.
30. Argus, 30 August 1880; Hamilton Spectator, 6 April 1880.
consider the matter; only three promised support. An attempt to obtain the help of the V.F.U. Executive failed. Moreover, whereas the V.F.U. had sought reductions from a protectionist, Ararat had to seek increases from a free trader. Service naturally refused the request of a movement so feeble and so opposed to his policies. 31 Not that the change of Government benefited the V.F.U.. When its central Committee, having held its annual meeting in mid-June, sent a deputation to the Government, 32 it received sympathy but little else, as the Reform Bill blocked the way. When this had been defeated, Service obtained a dissolution and was replaced by the protectionist Berry. Although one or two groups met for the elections, and some individual Unions were active, 33 the political exhaustion which enveloped the rest of the country was affecting the farming areas, all the more, perhaps, because the rain which had hampered the farming vote in February was the harbinger of a series of good seasons.

31. Argus, 6 May 1880; Age, 5 May 1880; Ararat Advertiser, 25 May 1880.
32. Argus, 17-21 June 1880.
33. Argus, 29 June 1880, 10 July 1880; Rochester Express, 8 July 1880.
The central committee meeting had not only failed to obtain anything from the Government, moreover; it had actually damaged the movement by its decision against supporting the Ararat petition. Just after the elections, the Wimmera Branch decided to disaffiliate, because the Committee "did not represent the farmer". Chanter, moreover, who after the February election had begun to concentrate increasingly on purely economic action, abandoned his creation. Just before the July election, he had advised the foundation meeting of the Goulburn Valley F.U. not to join the V.F.U., because it had ceased to represent the farmers and had become a mere free trade league.

After seven Unions had been formed in the area, they met in conference, under his chairmanship, to form an association based, not on a constituency, but on a region of settlement, the Goulburn Valley.

34. Argus, 5 August 1880.
35. For his economic proposals, see Rochester Express, 9 April 1880.
36. Shepparton News, 8 July 1880.
37. Shepparton News, 9 September 1880.
Soon it was taking action on several of his proposals for collective bargaining and marketing.\textsuperscript{38} The Ararat Union followed with what had the makings of another regional association, covering the Western District: it arranged to meet periodically with the nearby Buangor and Shirley Union, and to hold regular discussions with Hamilton.\textsuperscript{39} Both groups ignored the second V.F.U. conference, held in mid-October,\textsuperscript{40} and attended mostly by south-central Unions; only Rochester represented the north, and only the Ararat District F.U., a separate body from the Ararat union, represented the west. It was, in fact, little more than a third regional conference, and recognised its changed status, in effect, by dismissing the secretary it could no longer pay. Within a fortnight the protectionist movement, such as it was, received the coup de grace when the Berry Government announced its intention\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{38} Shepparton News, 7 October 1880.
\textsuperscript{39} Ararat Advertiser, 8 October 1880.
\textsuperscript{40} Argus, 15 October 1880.
\textsuperscript{41} Argus, 27 October 1880.
to include duties on feedstuffs in the Budget.
Despite occasional local co-operation and activity, the movement was dead. Its dreams of forty thousand voters compelling justice from the Government, and of great co-operative ventures to humble the rapacious middleman and harvest worker, had been disappointed in less than a year.

No more than any other group were farmers to achieve unity and strength in one attempt. Their next movement, the Victoria Farmers' Protection Association of 1887-91, had perhaps more success. It was set up in more favourable conditions, when Parliament was divided between a powerful coalition and a disorganised Opposition, so that it was possible to work in the electorate and the legislature on a cross-party basis. It faced the V.F.U.'s problem of regional differences over tariff policy, and disappeared as, with the onset of the depression, the coalition disintegrated.

42. For information about the Victoria Farmers' Protection Association I am grateful to Dr. Bruce Graham. A copy of its programme, which closely resembled that of the V.F.U., is in the Seimens Collection. Melbourne University Archives. For further information on its electoral activities, see M. G. Finlayson, Victorian Politics. 1889-92 (Melbourne M.A. thesis).
and Parliament worked towards party divisions again, but for all the brevity of its existence, it built on the experience of the V.F.U. and the growing sense of a separate farming identity of which this had been the first organised expression.
CHAPTER 5:

WORKING CLASS POLITICS
I. The Working Classes.

Working class organisations were frequent among skilled workers, but rarely spread outside their tight circle. Mobility and relative lack of bargaining-power naturally made the unskilled slow to organise of their own motion; artisan exclusiveness prevented their benefiting from the experience of the skilled. These generally lived in different areas and were better educated. Their work was less unpleasant, less insecure and better paid and their conditions of employment were generally more favourable. These things they had achieved by their own efforts, and by the possession of that very personal thing, the slowly-acquired mastery of a varied craft. Their personal achievement, and the sober way of life which had made it possible, set them far above that drunken, shiftless, ignorant and frequently Irish thing, the labourer. They had risen through their personal qualities; let him rise through his.

Much of this would have been true of British artisans; in Victoria, where skills were scarcer, and they had early achieved what was, by comparison with the expectations and experience of their youth, affluence, they had especial reasons for having a
good conceit of themselves. 1 Conservatives tended to exaggerate and disapprove of their position, and the offhand way with employers which they alleged it generated, but although artisans would have gloried in what the squatter MacBain condemned, they would not have disputed his general picture. 2

"It was well-known," he said, "that the skilled labourers of the large towns exercised a large influence over the politics of the country. From their education and from their practical knowledge and experience of life, they were more powerful in political agitation than perhaps any other class of the community. --- They were the very aristocrats of labour. They had hitherto been able to dictate their own terms to their employers - they could work nine, eight, or even seven hours per day as they pleased ---."

He did not realise how fortunate this was for him. When their affluence and status were endangered by depression or seriously affronted by the Council, they tended to help middle class radicals, who, like them, were powerless alone, to organise and agitate other sections of the working classes. Then the talk in the Melbourne Club turned from the state of trade and the degeneracy of the times to the prevalence of

1. R. Gollan, Radical and Working Class Politics, pp. 72-3.

2. V.P.D., Vol. 11, p. 723.
mob violence and the likelihood of revolution.\textsuperscript{3}

As the basis of affluence was the possession of scarce skills, gained by long and costly apprenticeship, they were reluctant to let many share them. The unskilled who might pick up the rudiments of a craft endangered their livelihood and status; consequently, and from a genuine pride in skilled workmanship, they organised to maintain high standards and prevent the employment of half-trained men or boys.\textsuperscript{4} Another threat was the workers of Britain. Careful comparison would probably have shown that these had advanced more slowly than Victorians, but the comparison made in Collingwood was between their present affluence and the distress of the Britain they had left. Attributing their good fortune to merit, they flattered their vanity and justified their fears by claims to innate superiority.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{3.} Black Papers, Black to Gladstone, 19 March 1866. Black had just attended a meeting of conservative M.P.s during the tariff crisis. "At this meeting the probability of violence and bloodshed was openly discussed as well as the best means to prevent such an occurrence."

\textsuperscript{4.} Australasian Typographical Journal, September 1880. During the late '70s the use of boy-labour was one of the printers' most constant complaints, and seems to have lain at the root of their attempts to strengthen labour organisation and obtain a Factories Act. I am grateful to Mr. James Hagan, of the A.N.U., for drawing my attention to this question and to the A.T.J.

\textsuperscript{5.} "The poor décile working classes of England had been content to labour on and permit the upper classes to think and act for them." Argus, 25 May 1859 - The Chairman of the Melbourne Trades Hall Committee. Cited in Gollan, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 69.
The English were too far off to take offence; how the unskilled felt is unknown. The bushworker is credited with a tribal feeling which, setting his hand against all but his like, doubtless made him despise the artisans, if he ever thought of them; they practically ignored his existence, but doubtless deplored his drinking and general lack of respectability. There is no sign of a bush myth in Victoria, or indeed of any dominant myth at all: each section seems to have thought too well of itself. Settlement before 1850 had been much smaller than in New South Wales, and had been more completely swamped by the diggers, who were not only far more numerous but also covered far more of the smaller colony.

When the population had settled down, mining and

6. Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*, pp. 27-9, 78, 109-11, 157-8. Dr. Ward himself recognises in places that there were differences between New South Wales and Victorian working class attitudes at this time (e.g. c. 5, passim); his discussions couched in general terms should be read with this in mind. The similarities between the ferociously sober Methodist miners who led goldfields radicalism, and the 'old hands' through whom, Dr. Ward reasonably suggests, the influence of the bushlife was mediated to them, are hard to find. And for the tenacity of imported attitudes, see G. Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, c.11.

7. Population

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<tr>
<td>N.S.W.</td>
<td>187,243</td>
<td>350,866</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>77,345</td>
<td>513,896</td>
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Figures from censuses of Victoria and New South Wales, 1881, (General Reports.) For the distribution of mining towns in N.S.W. and Victoria, see the maps on pp. 15 and 31 in Blainey, *op.cit.*
agriculture, although the balance between them altered, were much more important inland, and pastoralism much less, than in New South Wales or Queensland. Victoria had no western plains. 8

As agriculture extended in northern Victoria, although sheep remained numerous, many came from small flocks run by selectors, who, if they did not shear their own, were not popular among shearsers because their own poverty made them harder taskmasters and more tightfisted than the squatters. 9 The selectors' need for extra money also turned them into the bushworker's competitors as the diggers had been before them. By 1870, reports appeared of a change for the more respectable in the type of bushworker. 10 This respectability, and perhaps docility, probably gave them an advantage in seeking employment. First the exceptionally large numbers and wide distribution of diggers, then the rapid

8. The mallee might have been an exception, but it was practically uninhabited.


10. Ararat Advertiser, 9 September 1870; Hamilton Spectator, 8 October 1870. The change may have come earlier in places. M. Kiddle, op.cit., p. 403, quotes the Hamilton Spectator of 7 August 1863 that "nine-tenths (of shearsers) are either small farmers or bushmen."
development of agriculture in the Wimmera and the Riverina, probably formed a high-pressure ridge which kept the western plains pastoral worker out of the Victorian pastoral regions in the south. Even there, despite the general defeat of selection, there were enough farmers to provide a good deal of the squatter's seasonal labour force. Moreover, as pastoralism expanded to the north of Victoria, there was a low-pressure area which may have attracted the permanent bushworkers' circuits nearer the Tropic; it would not be surprising, therefore, if they tended increasingly to omit Victoria from their travels — if, indeed, it had not always been a separate circuit.

If little is known about Victorian bushworkers, less is known of the Melbourne unskilled and semi-skilled; of their peers elsewhere, still less. They did not begin to form unions until the 1880s. They rarely appeared in politics. Their electoral power was weakened by apathy and the registration system. So far as they left any traces of their political existence, it was as parts of the Catholic vote, figures on polling day, or the recruiting ground
for politicians needing powerful lungs and strong arms. The traces of their sub-culture have either vanished or not been discovered.

Not even the Melbourne artisans, however, could ignore or despise the largest group of semi-skilled, the miners. They ranked among the aristocracy of labour as surely as masons or carpenters did and lumpers, shearsers and labourers did not. The romance of their past and the glamour of gold ensured that. During the 'sixties, with the expansion of goldfields Methodism, the relative stabilisation of their industry, and the development of their towns, they became increasingly sober and respectable. They were also vital to the radical power in Parliament. Although Melbourne was seriously under-represented, most country centres outside the Western District were mining towns or villages, and country constituencies were grouped around them.

11. E.g. Age, 1 August 1865. A protectionist meeting at Emerald Hill had to be abandoned because the opposition brought up several cab-loads of Sandridge lumpers. (Wharfies.)

12. Roughly half the radical constituencies were dominated by the mining vote; of the thirty goldfields seats (1859 distribution) only three could be relied on by the constitutionalists during the crises of the 'sixties.
Even by 1881, when those occupied in agriculture had risen from their slight numerical inferiority of 1871 to a two to one majority over miners,¹³ the latter were still numerous and concentrated enough to contain the movement of farming votes away from the radicals.

Like the artisans, many had been active in politics in Britain; others acquired experience in Councils, Mining Boards, School Boards, Friendly Societies, Orange Lodges, Chapels and, after 1872, Trade Unions. Over the three questions which particularly interested the men of Collingwood, miners generally agreed with them. Most supported protection, practically all opposed state immigration and wanted the eight hour day. After 1866, however, protection was considered settled; some might organise for particular increases, or to defeat free trade organisations, but not even in Melbourne did these obtain widespread support. The same was true of the 1869-71 Short Hours League. Nor did Governments dare reintroduce assisted immigration on any scale; McCulloch foolishly put a small vote on the

¹³. Census of Victoria, 1881; General Report, Table LXVIII.
Estimates during 1870, but much of the land revenue, elsewhere the main source of immigration finance, was earmarked for railway development by his own 1869 Land Act. The threat was not serious enough to provoke more than minor agitations in Melbourne and Ballarat.\textsuperscript{14}

Miners also had their own sectional demands, notably legislation against mining accidents or for mining on private property, and administrative action to enforce labour covenants or reduce duties on mining machinery. They also collaborated with mine owners and managers to further the mining interest, particularly on Ballarat, where, citizens of no mean city, they shared the usual provincial jealousy of Melbourne.\textsuperscript{15} Metropolitan radicals recognised the existence of separate goldfields demands, but showed no enthusiasm for them.\textsuperscript{16} Nor did Melbourne share the extreme zeal for secular education which characterised the leading goldfields.

\textsuperscript{14} These various organisations will be considered in the two later sections of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{15} Major Smith’s speech in Ballarat Courier, 16 January 1871, conveniently brings together all these points — and sheds some interesting light on Smith himself.

\textsuperscript{16} Mining on private property commonly appeared in their programmes and speeches during the ‘seventies, but that was all.
The reason for this was probably the much higher percentage of Methodists on the goldfields. This difference had existed before, but between 1861 and 1871 it became much more marked. The Cornish influence, particularly as deep sinking got under way in that decade, may partly account for it, but a good deal was due to revivals. In the turbulent, disorienting and physically dangerous life of the diggings, revivalist religion had strong appeal, especially when the hope of sudden riches had been deceived, and the chances of less spectacular advantages had not yet been appreciated. The revivals began in 1859, making great headway after 1863, when 'California' Taylor and Matthew Burnett landed in Victoria. Census figures for other denominations suggest that converts tended to come from the Church of England, a denomination slow to extend operations to the goldfields, whose organisation

17. Census of Victoria, 1861, 1871, 1881 - Religions of the People. In 1871 and 1881, after the great Methodist expansion, goldfield Methodist percentages ranged between about 18 and 22; the Melbourne working-class areas rarely exceeded 10%. Geelong, probably because of its connections with Ballarat, was nearer the goldfields figure.

was unsuited to their way of life, and many of whose ministers were too well-bred. In Collingwood, however, the number professing Anglicanism, from conviction or indifference, was unusually large. Methodism increased between 1861 and 1871, but like other suburbs, Collingwood was on the very edge of the revival.

The political significance lies in the connection between Methodism and anti-Catholicism, accentuated, perhaps, by the coincidence of a marked increase in the Catholic percentage of the population with the Methodist revival. Goldfields and artisan suburbs resembled each other in their low percentages of Catholics, but differed markedly in the attitude towards them of the Protestants. While the Catholic population was so markedly increasing, much of it was becoming separated from radicalism.

19. For the contrast between the Church of England and the Methodists, see G. Serle, *op. cit.*, pp. 339 and 342-3.

20. *Census of Victoria, 1881: General Report*, p. 230. Between 1861 and 1871, all denominations increased in numbers, but especially the Catholics, who rose from 109,829 (20.33%) to 170,620 (23.32%), and the Methodists who rose from 45,660 (8.46%) to 90,026 (12.30%). The Church of England increased its numbers only from 212,068 to 257,835, their percentage falling from 39.25 to 35.25.

21. The last O'Shanassy Ministry fell in 1863 only three days after the arrival of 'California' Taylor, and 2 months before that of Matthew Burnett. (Benson, *op.cit.*, pp. 129 and 131)
zealous Methodists who led mining radicalism, therefore especially, perhaps, to recent converts - Catholics were repugnant on grounds both religious and political. That conflict should have come over education made it the more bitter; the need for education was much greater among miners than artisans, and a denomination which so stressed the lay ministry and Bible-reading naturally felt particularly strongly about such questions. Religion, therefore, not only divided Catholic workers from their fellows, but divided Protestant workers according to the extent of their preoccupation with religious differences.

Economic rivalry and localism, however, made it difficult to establish unity among miners. Even after the creation of the Amalgamated Miners' Association in 1874, it was many years before it could be regarded as firmly established. For all their importance to radicalism, therefore, the goldfields played little part in the agitation of

22. Above, p.77.

23. Particularly, perhaps, between Ballarat and Bendigo, the former declining through the 'seventies, the latter prospering on its deep quartz. (Parnaby, O.cit., c.9) And note the suggestion in Major Smith's speech (n. 15, above) that all Ministers of Mines came from Bendigo, where they knew nothing about the grievances and problems of miners! (And cf. Ballarat Courier, 9 June 1870.)
specifically working class demands. These arose from Melbourne and especially from Collingwood, a crowded community of building workers, bootmakers, and small shopkeepers. It was the home of men like Benjamin Douglass, Thomas Vine and James Stephens, who had cut their teeth in British radical agitations, and who since their arrival in Victoria had been prominent in the eight hours movement, Trades Hall, and radical agitation. Among them, or in adjacent Fitzroy, 24 electorally part of Collingwood until 1876 but containing areas of higher status, lived many of the middle class radical politicians.

The attitude of working class agitators to these was ambivalent. Collingwood was equally famous for the passionate devotion with which it worked for its chosen representatives, and for the suddenness with which it destroyed them. This was partly the common tension between representatives obliged to manoeuvre and compromise, and militants expecting Jericho to fall at the first toot of the horn.

24. Free trade and constitutionalist candidates for the Collingwood electoral district obtained most of their votes from the Fitzroy divisions; by the time Fitzroy was made a separate electorate in 1876, however, working-class encroachments made it difficult for them to obtain even one of its two seats.
There was also something in the working man's way of life to induce such attitudes. The life of even skilled workers was relatively insecure. Middle-class security should not be exaggerated - failures were frequent when so much depended on such variable quantities as inland rainfall and the yield of gold - but bankruptcy struck less frequently than unemployment, and the effects of common ailments were less serious, the chances of incapacitating accidents smaller, for the businessman or professional. Seeking security, workers tended to identify themselves with their tribe and look for a wise, just and powerful father. On the goldfields this promoted revivalist religion and revivalist politics, both using mass meetings, impassioned oratory and torch-light processions.\(^{25}\) In Melbourne, although the religious aspects were not wanting, politics predominated, possibly because life there was more secure physically and economically than on the goldfields, possibly because the less outlandish surroundings diminished the sense of insecurity.

\(^{25}\) Benson, *op.cit.*, p. 130.
It is therefore not surprising to find Higinbotham and Berry arousing passionate devotion among workers. For those who dominated middle class culture, such enthusiasm was alien to their training and irrelevant to their needs. The reply of St. Kilda to the raptures of Collingwood was an appeal to reason, moderation, law and political economy, too remote, repugnant and obviously, if mistakenly, self-interested to compete with the burning passion with which demagogues fused appeals to self-interest and self-righteousness. When the only way of reaching the people was, for the conservatives, the public meeting, they were powerless; simply to obtain a hearing was for them a triumph during times of excitement. Not until the development of modern communications and propaganda could they use their wealth to advantage; not until they could exploit nationalism could they tap the resources of tribal feeling monopolised by their opponents. Even nationalism was a radical prerogative. Conservatives suggested that their opponents sought to leave the Empire; but the England with which they identified themselves was the England of the rich, who had

harrassed in Britain the men now inhabiting the
Melbourne suburbs, and who recalled Governors
exhibiting popular sympathies. The conservatives
perceived that British sentiment was strong, but
mistook its nature; it was even turned against them
in 1868 through the adroit use of the Fenian smear.
Failing in competition with the demagogues, therefore,
and used to calculation and prudence in their daily
lives, they made a virtue of their inadequacy, and
called it moderation.

One condition for the sense of security to be
obtained from identification with the tribe or
adoration of the wise father was to obtain their
approval, to feel righteous. External enemies,
therefore, were not merely mistaken, nor simply
fellow citizens pursuing their interests, but strange
and crafty monsters. Suspicion of the stranger,
exacerbated by the dramatic clash of supposed
interests during periods of economic uncertainty,
became paranoiac. The situation demanded closer
ranks, greater loyalty; the it also increased the

27. The McCullochites came to be known as the 'old hat'
party, because one of them, Duffy's opponent at Dalhousie
in 1867, 'declared that he came on behalf of the Govern-
ment, and that if Mr. McCulloch sent an old hat on a
stick the people of Victoria ought to elect him without
question on such an introduction.' (Duffy, op.cit.,
p. 296.) And cf. Argus, 8 January 1868 - "He (Dickson)
warned the electors (of Collingwood) not to be misled
by the mock cry of 'independence', but to secure men
who would be pledged and bound by the most solemn ties
to support the Ministry."
dread of the traitor, the one enemy more dangerous than the fanged merchant howling in his counting house. To a movement seeking not just material benefits but also certainty and justification, the possibility of honest disagreement about means was practically inconceivable; otherwise, there could be no justification, no certainty. Moreover, to a class containing few experienced in affairs of any magnitude, all things seemed possible, and difficulties not arising from the devices of the heathen were the work of false friends.\textsuperscript{28} Anyone doubting the wisdom of the leadership, therefore, probably did so from corrupt personal motives, and must be shunned by the faithful, who would thereby gain further merit with their tribe and its god.

When the minds of ordinary, decent men were so possessed—as, of course, they were not always—they kept a suspicious watch on their representatives. Radical constituencies emphasised that loyalty, not judgment, was required. Zealots entered Parliament in those days, and moderate men had to profess zealotry.

\textsuperscript{28} Cf. R. Hoggart, \textit{The Uses of Literacy}, pp. 79-82, on the tendency of British working people to interpret all events in terms of personalities.
Once in the House, however, whose solemn surroundings and complicated procedures chilled the ardent soul, and where the need to compromise for limited ends soon became as obvious as the impossibility of obtaining everything, the zealot found his genius rebuked. Few could strike the balance which Berry eventually achieved between amateur passion and professional skill. Some denied themselves completely, others maintained their political virginity at the risk of sterility.

During the crises, when all favoured the enthusiasts, their position depended on the behaviour of the leadership. If it refused to compromise, as Higinbotham wanted,\textsuperscript{29} it might retain their allegiance, at the risk of alienating more moderate supporters, and achieving nothing against the Council. Had Darling not re-entered the colonial service, it is difficult to imagine what alternative there would have been in 1868 to revolution but compromise; McCulloch might have achieved this, but if Higinbotham had continued to campaign vigorously against the Council, he would have found difficulty in maintaining his position. Compromise, as Berry found later,\textsuperscript{29. Argus, 18 August 1868.}
disillusioned the zealots. They were, moreover, in a privileged position to detect early the signs that the prophet in whom they had trusted would prove a false prophet. As it took electors longer to discover this, they tended to suspect that the zealot was the real traitor. Only when excitement had subsided, or if the leader was widely suspected of serious backsliding, could the revolt succeed.

These effects were magnified in working-class areas because they were not represented by workers. Their local leaders often showed a sense of belonging to a different order from their representatives, even when serving the same cause; it was a feeling, not of hostility, but of separateness. Had the representatives not been, very often, of working class origins or status, the problem might have been worse. It did not affect the middle classes, of course, because they were represented by their own order. The apparently obvious solution, for workers to elect workers, could not be satisfactory either, because the representative's trade had all the marks of being middle class. It was a high

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status, white collar job, which, after 1870, was quite well paid, and even before that opened the way to other sources of income, not always reputable, as well as leaving time for other employment. Moreover, it was difficult to regard merchants as monsters when they were met daily as patently human, and sometimes very pleasant — and it was difficult not to assimilate to some of their ways. Resentment for the worker suspected of trying to get above himself, to enter the world of 'them'; where he does not belong, has never been difficult to arouse. These were no doubt the main reasons why so few workers stood for Parliament, and why still fewer were elected, despite payment of members. So long as acceptable middle class candidates could be

31. £300 a year, with free postage and free travel on the railways and mail coaches. When a miner earned £125 for a full year's work, this must have seemed affluence. For less reputable sources of income, see M. Kiddle, op.cit., pp. 247-262.

32. The desire of those who were, or recently had been, working men, to demonstrate the respectability of their class, doubtless helped. Cf. Don's reply when The Argus noted his combination of stump oratory with attending garden parties dressed in his best suit and kid gloves — "Would you have wished to see me among the gentlemen who represent the people with my face begrimed with toil?" (Argus, 18 and 22 November 1859.) It would be naive to regard this as a form of climbing and class-betrayal, but it is easily represented as such. Cf. Hoggart, op.cit., pp. 58-60.

33. The cost of the election campaign must also have deterred others; provided enough supporters could be found, however, costs could be kept low, even if the expenses were not met by the election committee and sympathisers.
found, there was no call to help other working men to get too big for their boots. Certainly the half-dozen who stood at the 1871 elections were especially sensitive to the suggestion that they were just in it for the money. 34

Perhaps the same suspicion was directed at working men who became small employers. In most industries, units of production were small. Large numbers, therefore, were self-employed or worked in small firms under masters whose status resembled theirs, who might work beside them, belong to the same union, live in the same street, and whom a slight recession or business miscalculation could throw back into working for another, perhaps even for one of their own employes. Such bosses were easily regarded as no more than equals. Because of the rapid gains artisans had made in the 'fifties their self-respect, their belief in their own efforts and in the machinery for regulating their relations with their employers, were enhanced. They therefore continued to rely on a large number of small craft unions without effective central organisation. 35

34. Cf. Benjamin Douglass' concern to point out that if elected he could still maintain himself at his trade. Argus, 2 February 1871 (Advts.).

35. Gollan, op.cit., pp. 74, 78, 80-81.
to think of their position in terms of 'a manly independence', and to make few demands on the legislature.

They agreed with The Argus that the interests of master and man were identical, and that militancy was something to be discouraged. They doubtless would have agreed that some on either side of industry might not recognise their true interests in the short term, but in the long there was a balance of forces. As The Argus put it,

"In Australia capital and labour meet rather as co-equal potentates than as the representatives of two disparate grades in the social scale. --- Our statute-book does not contain any enactments which have the appearance of favouring combinations of masters, as contrasted with those of workmen. Again, the demand for and supply of labour, of all descriptions, are generally in such a state of equilibrium, and the evils of a strike are so manifest to both employers and employed, that a resort to so extreme a proceeding is rarely resorted to (sic), and its continuance is usually prevented by mutual concession."

Victoria, however, was no exception to the rule that when men set out their beliefs about economics and society, or practically anything else, they rarely set out their whole range of beliefs, which - if only for this reason - contain inconsistencies and qualifications. Events may make them aware of these

36. One of the standard justifications for unionism, in fact, was its tendency to discourage strikes. Age, 3 February 1874. (Speech by J. Jones.)

37. Argus, 5 November 1873.
conflicts, and make them seek resolutions, while retaining the old ideas and formulations as far as possible. How far they amend their ideas depends on how well defined these are, how important compared with other beliefs, how far they conflict with them, and how dramatic the conflict is. In Victoria the social and economic ideas of the working classes were extremely vague; so far as they might be described as individualist, they were hung about with reservations and exceptions. Nor were the ideas of politicians much more systematic. Further adaptation, therefore, was not difficult, until eventually new conventional wisdoms gained acceptance.

One example is in the attitudes towards the state's responsibilities for employment. The basic assumption was that no self-respecting man should want the Government to find him a job, least of all in Victoria. Unemployment after the goldrushes soon modified these ideas. Relief works were started and railway construction was regarded partly as a means for generating employment, and it soon became a commonplace that Governments should so legislate as to make it possible for all to find useful
occupations, and to attract migrants. As Yeomans put it, he did not want the Government to give him a job, but to make it possible for him to find one. Such ideas were more apparent among working men and protectionists, but free traders believed in Government encouragement to, and participation in national development by providing communications, grants and bonuses to industry, and by assisting immigration. At the same time as the needs of national development and the effects of unemployment accumulated exceptions, however, these were usually justified in terms of the rule. Working men pointed out, for example, that what they sought was not handouts, but useful work, either by direct employment on Government projects, or through protection and local procurement of Government requirements. In this way they could retain their self-respect.

Similarly, there was a feeling that legislation to cover hours and conditions of work was an admission that men who should be able to look after themselves

38. Argus, 10 January 1871.
39. See the colloquies of Berry with the unemployed on all these points. Argus, 21 May 1878, 4 June 1878, 24 June 1879. And note Don's tortuous attempts to reconcile the conventional wisdom with the need to generate employment in his letter, Argus, 22 November 1859.
were too tame-spirited to do so. Consequently the several attempts at eight hours legislation as prosperity revived early in the 'seventies were approached in a curious manner. Those concerned in the eight hours agitation of 1869-72 could not bring themselves to propose that eight hour day should be made compulsory, with specified reservations and exceptions. As a major employer, the Government could reasonably be asked to institute it among its workers. To ask it to make local authorities follow suit was more dubious, although it might have been justified in terms of the importance of the Government subsidy to local government. To legislate for private employment, however, was to interfere improperly with the workings of the balance of forces; at the same time, some guarantee for the gains previously made was desirable. It was therefore proposed to make eight hours "a legal day's work". There was little agreement what this meant. Casey explained it in 1869 to mean that nobody should be obliged to work longer unless there was an express agreement.

to the contrary; introducing his 1873 Bill, however, he suggested that it meant that anyone paid by the day should receive the daily rate for each eight hours' work, so that a harvester who worked two twelve-hour days should be entitled to three days' pay. Some understood him to mean, or suggested that he should mean, that none should work longer than eight hours a day. Others derided him, saying that it was already lawful to work an eight hour day. Yet others objected to any attempt to tell anyone how long he might work.

As well as adaptations to individualist attitudes caused by pressure of events and the colonial situation, however, there were also various provisos defining the area within which the balance could be allowed to operate. The most important was that the balance of forces could work only among equals. Clearly master and man must have equality before the law. Their economic and social relationships being what they were, the legal status of unions was not in question. There was some demand for a Workman's Lien Bill, but even before the

Contractors' Debts Act of 1870\textsuperscript{43} partly satisfied this, there was little force behind the demand. More important were the implications for fiscal and immigration policy. To justify opposition to assisted immigration was easy enough in free trade terms,\textsuperscript{44} since it constituted state intervention between master and man, tipping the balance in favour of the former with money derived from the latter. For the Chinese to be allowed into Victoria at all, of course, was to smash up the balance completely: they were inferior and, since they lacked spirit and could live on a handful of rice in conditions impossible for an Englishman, constituted unfair competition as well as a moral danger.\textsuperscript{45}

The idea of the balance entered the standard protectionist arguments in several forms. Increased duties were needed to offset the special disadvantages

\textsuperscript{43} 34 Vic., No. 385. Debated in V.P.D., Vol. 11, p. 100 ff. Note the general willingness to support such a measure, most of the objections being that this Bill was inadequate. MacBain (p. 102-3) brought out once again the argument that the workers of Victoria were well able to look after themselves, but obtained little support.

\textsuperscript{44} Ballarat Courier, 17 May 1870.

\textsuperscript{45} Argus, 11 December 1873, 12 May 1880.
of Victorian industries: sometimes the infant industries argument was employed, sometimes it was alleged that overseas workers were oppressed and underpaid, sometimes that British industry was dumping its shoddy products to prevent the natural and proper growth of Victorian industry.  

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Intervention in the interests of non-intervention was capable, of course, of great extension, like the other main justification for Government intervention, the state's responsibility for health and morality, a mixture of ancient and modern ideas. Reformers claimed, for example, that the climate made the eight hour day essential to health, and that without it the working man lacked the time and energy to improve himself or to be a good father, citizen or Christian. Even the protection agitation of the 'sixties was conducted to the chant of, "What shall we do with our boys?" Anti-Chinese diatribes were couched largely in such terms. Their defences menaced

46. Argus, 21 and 28 February 1871; Age, 14 December 1870.
47. Argus, 28 July 1873, 11 November 1873; V.P.D., Vol. 11, p. 727.
public health; their morals affronted decent men and endangered innocent children.\textsuperscript{49}

In some cases health and safety were the main motives for legislation, particularly in the case of the 1873 Regulation of Mines Act. Generally, however, demands for better conditions, expressed in industrial or political action, were rare. In the small-unit industry of Melbourne, working conditions for employed and self-employed were probably very similar; when the boss suffered the same conditions, or the workman wanted eventually to open his own workshop, which would necessarily not be luxurious, it was harder to feel dissatisfied. In the building industry, of course, there were no workshops to speak of. Health hazards were not the subject of agitation in the larger firms probably because conditions were generally better than in small establishments.\textsuperscript{50}

On the goldfields, however, death or disability came not just through the gradual development of ill-comprehended diseases, but suddenly, through the fall of rock, failure of a machine, flooding or

\textsuperscript{49.} Argus, 12 May 1880.

\textsuperscript{50.} Gollan, op.cit., p. 92.
explosion. The structure of the industry also removed some of the influences which helped make Melbourne workers accept their lot. During the 'sixties deep sinking became the rule, and company mines absorbed an increasing percentage of the contracting labour force. Nor did miners generally possess a rare skill. Even after the rapid contraction of 1859-66, although fortunes fluctuated and some fields enjoyed prolonged prosperity, many were more or less permanently depressed. The illusion of a balance of power was difficult to maintain on the goldfields.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Mines Act should have passed both Houses with little comment or opposition. Nor, considering the miners' traditions and, once the industry had been stabilised, their concentration, is it surprising that the first great union of the semi-skilled was the Miners' Association of 1872, founded to obtain the eight-hour day from the mining boom of 1871.

52. Major Smith even complained that a bare quorum was present. V.P.D., Vol. 17, p. 2108.
Fear and prejudice spread it rapidly to other fields after the attempt to break a Clunes strike by the use of Chinese labour had been defeated by a riot; in 1874 it became the Amalgamated Miners' Association. What is more surprising, in view of the reputation of the later New Unionism, is the quietness which marked its activities for almost two decades after the Clunes riots. There were, in fact, certain mitigations. Not only localism and the dependence of their community on one industry, but also participation in shareholding gave miners relatively easy relationships with a management, itself probably recruited from their ranks, similar to that enjoyed by Melbourne artisans. Moreover, while wage-working gave a steady income, theft, inside information about new seams, and mining on tribute, still offered a hope of sudden riches which helped maintain something of their former independence.

Finally, the balance could not exist between employers and women or children employed. Revelations about sweated labour in the Ballarat clothing

54. Argus, 11 and 16 December 1873.

industry aroused Major Smith to introduce the first Victorian Factories Act in 1873. Some doubted if conditions really demanded it, but few denied that on grounds of justice, chivalry, health and morality women and children should be protected. The idea of independence even changed sides in this case, since these young women were understood to prefer industrial to domestic employment largely because of the independence it conferred.

This Act was the result of a movement of philanthropy among parliamentarians; working men took very little part in it. Towards the end of the decade, however, a demand was growing for the protection of men, and was attracting trade union support. An extension of the argument that those needed to be helped who could not help themselves had been attempted as early as 1870. Macpherson, replying as Chief Secretary to a deputation from the Short Hours League, had suggested that, although he was willing to write an eight hour day into all Government contracts, it would be better for the

56. 37 Vic., No. 466.
58. Argus, 9 February 1870.
men to obtain it by putting pressure on the employers. The Secretary of the League replied that "--- the labouring classes were not in a position to organise themselves, and could not, therefore, bring much influence to bear upon the contractors." Such arguments were rarely heard, however; the movement for factories legislation towards 1880 was still largely presented in terms of the need to protect women and children. The movement\(^{59}\) was stimulated by the development of industry, particularly of sweatshops, repugnant to humanitarian sentiment and to the better employers; its emotional appeal was added to by the fear of Chinese labour which had caused a mild stir in 1879, and a greater in 1880;\(^{60}\) it was popularised by *The Age*, justified by British legislation, encouraged by the feeling that Victoria should not reproduce the evils of England, and finally dramatised by the tailoresses' strike of 1882.

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60. *Below, pp. 570-2*. The minute-books of the Anti-Chinese Leagues of 1879 and 1880 are in the Melbourne Trades Hall Collection (*Mitchell Library.*
During the Berry ascendency, little could be done, although "the Government of the working man" was in power, because the way was blocked by other matters which preoccupied even the Ministry's working-class supporters. In September 1880, however, the operations of the Typographical Society, after a very successful public meeting addressed by supporters of both parties and by the Bishop of Melbourne, issued in a deputation to Berry. Although, like Macpherson ten years before, he suggested that the same end could be accomplished more effectively by industrial action, he promised to introduce a Bill if they would draft it, or to allow Government time to a private member's Bill. His Ministry was defeated too soon.

Now the major questions which had preoccupied politicians had been settled for a time, however, social and industrial legislation, begun in a small way during the quiet years of 1870-73, could be resumed. Such legislation had always had low priority, but now with the rapid development of industrial employment during the 'eighties, and the

61. Angus, 14 September 1880, 1 October 1880.
expansion and increasingly powerful organisation of unionism, the pressure was beginning to increase. Perhaps the change of generation was also having its effect. It was the Geelong-born Gardiner who introduced the Employees in Shops Bill which, referred to a select committee, eventually led to the Factories Act of 1884. This, the first of a series, was introduced by another native, Alfred Deakin. The conventional wisdom of the fathers was ready to undergo further modification at the hands of the sons.

62. V.P.D., Vol. 37, pp. 426 ff.
63. Gollan, op.cit., p. 92.
II. Collingwood in Politics - 1864 to 1871.

"What Paris was to France," said Councillor Prytherich,¹ "Collingwood was to the colony. It gave the keynote of politics ---". When he spoke, at the 1874 elections, it was no longer true, but for the past it was a pardonable exaggeration. Its political methods, derived from those of British urban radicalism, helped pave the way for more imposing organisations like the Loyal Liberal Reform Association, the National Reform and Protection League, and eventually the Labour Party. In the case of men like Benjamin Douglass, there was practically a continuous development of personal political experience from the hungry 'forties in Britain to the creation of the Victorian Labour Party; and that sense of a separate working class identity upon which the Labour Party depended was clearly discernible in the small Collingwood organisations of the 'sixties.

Collingwood's skill and experience were apparent during the 1866 election, when its political managers, dissatisfied with the three M.L.A.s they had helped

1. Age, 26 March 1874.
elect in 1864, organised the constituency to elect three sound radicals. Equally thorough organisation for canvassing, propaganda and getting out the vote existed in other electorates, but usually it was carried out by the supporters of particular candidates. Something like this had been attempted in 1864, when a meeting of "protectionists", attended by some sixty mechanics and shopkeepers, settled a programme much like that of 1861, and formed an election committee. A public selection meeting was held, but as only some 200 attended, several of whom objected to so small a meeting dictating to five thousand electors, the idea seems to have been dropped.² By 1866, however, the colony had been wrenched from political torpor by the tariff and constitutional crises.

The Collingwood radicals were especially well-prepared, and had especial local reasons for determined political action. At the end of March 1865 the opposition to McCulloch's tariff set up the Free Trade League.³ Middle class protectionists made

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2. *Age*, 13 September 1864, 29 October 1864.
3. *Argus*, 1 April 1865.
no move to set up counter-organisations. The Protectionist Australasian Reform League had not survived the elections. A Manufacturers' Association, founded at this time,\(^4\) refused to be diverted from boiler explosions and moral dissertations. When, during the flurry of public meetings after the rejection of the Budget late in July, one member bullied it into considering action in support of the Government, it decided simply to pass a resolution of thanks for the tariff.\(^5\) As the membership was never large nor enthusiastic, and included several free traders,\(^6\) this was as well.

Ten days after the public inauguration of the Free Trade League, however, a public meeting to demonstrate that the working classes did support the tariff was held,\(^7\) addressed entirely by leading working-class radicals. In early May,\(^8\) they established the Central Protection League, under

\(^4\) *Argus*, 3 April 1865.

\(^5\) *Age*, 3 and 10 August 1865.

\(^6\) *Argus*, 10 September 1874.

\(^7\) *Age*, 11 April 1865.

\(^8\) The first advertisement appeared in *The Age*, 2 May 1865.
the presidency of Benjamin Douglass. A month later, they had set up enough suburban leagues to form a central committee. Country sympathisers were urged to form branches and send delegates, but ignored the invitation. A Protection League set up at about the same time in Ballarat wrote a fraternal letter to the Melbourne organisation, and had some contact with another league set up later in Geelong, but otherwise protectionists in the colony were agitating in virtual isolation.

The Melbourne League held a number of public meetings to induce the Council to pass the tariff, then to condemn its rejection; these were augmented by smaller meetings held by the suburban branches, but speedily merged in the general ministerialist agitation. The League had, as one Weedon said, done a good deal with slender means; he nevertheless moved that "gentlemen of influence" who had appeared on its platforms but had not joined, should be co-opted onto the committee. His seconder urged that

9. **Age**, 1 June 1865.
10. **Age**, 8 July 1865, 12 December 1865.
12. **Age**, 19 August 1865.
"--- all great movements in Great Britain were scarcely ever attained by the working classes alone, but with the assistance and co-operation, (pecuniarily and otherwise) of gentlemen of well-known standing and ability."

At the next meeting, however, the suggestion was shelved as premature; to meet the financial difficulty, a collector was appointed to supplement the sums voted by the suburban branches by canvassing for funds.

An attempt to set up another League followed.

"The promoters of the said League", announced the advertisement, "acknowledge readily the exertions made by various associations which have been formed in many districts of the colony; but it is felt that a more comprehensive and complete organisation is absolutely necessary at the present juncture."

Despite the inclusion of Douglass (very likely without his permission) the Committee was composed of middle class politicians and former A.R.L. leaders. At its first meeting, Readford, emissary of the existing League, remarked that "he could not object, if it was necessary for the moneyed interest, to keep aloof from the working classes, but they could do so without establishing what might be deemed an antagonistic body, and by such means split up the cause". It was therefore decided to amalgamate

13. Age, 26 August 1865, 2 September 1865.
14. Age, 4 September 1865.
15. Age, 9 September 1865.
with the existing body. This soon agreed, but to its annoyance, no reply to its terms was received for a month, when the secretary of the new venture wrote that it had collapsed, because of the actions of some of its founders. This can have referred only to Graham Berry, who had long been criticising McCulloch. As he and his associates were so prominent in the new League, much of its first meeting had been spent in expressing and attempting to allay suspicions that it was intended to strengthen the radical Opposition.

A little later, Berry's 1864 election committee had called him to account before the electors of Collingwood. Complying with this request, he had found it practically impossible to obtain a hearing, and clearly lost his temper. Berry may have been lucky to escape with nothing worse.

Wemyss Jobson, a Collingwood eccentric, "--- seriously, perhaps permanently, injured, when thrown from the platform at a late meeting on the tariff, at which he appeared as an opponent of the Ministerial scheme." "

16. *Age*, 14 September 1865, 16 and 23 October 1865.
17. *Argus*, 17 October 1865.
18. *Argus*, 1 April 1865.
Late in November, McCulloch announced the dissolution. The Committee took little part in the campaign, alleging the sufficiency of the Government's Liberal Reform Association;\textsuperscript{19} doubtless this decision was taken with relief by men embarrassed for money and busy in their own constituencies. So far as the League participated at all, it attacked the radical rather than the free trade Opposition. It was clearly against such as Berry that a resolution was passed which took pride consciously in the Committee's social composition, and unconsciously in the brute, but useful, loyalty of its class.\textsuperscript{20}

"The delegates," it said,\textsuperscript{20} "representing as they do the more intelligent portion of the working classes, affirm that this support is due to the Ministry as the first Government who have initiated a protective policy".

Their election manifesto,\textsuperscript{21} while not ignoring merchants and lawyers, put first on the list of enemies the ultra-protectionists. "Such, then, are not true protectionists. Sinister motives doubtless actuate them ---".

\textsuperscript{19} Age, 8 December 1865.
\textsuperscript{20} Age, 4 December 1865.
\textsuperscript{21} Age, 6 December 1865.
The Collingwood branch was sufficiently exercised about the sinister motives of Berry, Edwards and Embling to constitute itself the Collingwood Protection Moveable Election Committee, rapidly expanded by co-option. It sought three reliable men who would pledge themselves to protection, Reform and McCulloch; its immediate problems were to find them and ensure that in running them against the old members, they did not let in the free trade candidates, backed by a Free Trade League branch rich in funds and experience. Its main advantages were the increase in the population of Collingwood proper, whose electors now outnumbered those of Fitzroy by 500, and the excitement produced by the crisis and Berry's loss of temper.

A sub-committee was appointed to propose candidates, while the Chairman of the general committee issued an address to the electors, supported by canvassing, urging them not to pledge their votes before the committee, having sounded their opinions, could suggest which candidates to support.

24. *Age*, 2 December 1865, 5 January 1866.
Meanwhile, the old members set up their committees. Eventually, only one new radical candidate could be found, in Isaac Reeves. As a local, President of the Protection League and the Manufacturers' Association, he was accepted unanimously. Embling and Edwards, of whose loyalty to McCulloch, despite promises, the meeting was doubtful, were accepted faute de mieux. The selection was endorsed by a public meeting; the candidates' and the Moveable committees were merged, then divided into sub-committees for Collingwood and Fitzroy, under a common executive and over a host of local committees. 25

The results showed how thoroughly the radical vote had been organised. Only twenty three votes separated the first and third radicals. The importance of such discipline was shown by the narrow margin between the last radical and Harker, the single free trader, of only 33 votes. A few more plumpers, or votes for Berry, would have allowed Harker to retain his seat. Berry, having

25. *Age*, 18 and 20 January 1866.
headed the poll in 1864, now obtained only 428 votes. 26

Soon after the election the Protection League disappeared; the crisis over, political quiet descended until the Darling Grant crisis began in July 1867. During the following months of political turmoil, the same men were as active as before; during the 1868 election, dissatisfied with the loyalty of Edwards and Embling, they organised the constituency on the same lines, with similar success. Reeves was re-elected with Everard and Bates, the runningmates they selected for him, close behind. 27 Collingwood's reputation was being enhanced for unity and a short way with rats; or, as others put it, for accepting the dictation of a handful of wire-pullers, and either turning their representatives into voting machines or turning them out. However, one may detect the beginning of hubris in Thomas Vine's report to the selection committee on his attempts to persuade Higinbotham to abandon his doubtful seat at Brighton.


27. Argus, 4 September 1867, 8 January 1868, and 21 February 1868.
"It was quite plain," he said, that they could do as they did before, and return any three that they chose; so that—- if he sat for Brighton they could readily fill his place."

Nemesis claimed her own in September 1869.

The radical revolt which replaced McCulloch by Macpherson occasioned a by-election in Collingwood, Reeves having accepted office. Berry's instinct had shown him that McCulloch, for all his battles with the Upper House, was no radical, and had therefore sought cause of quarrel with him; unfortunately, Berry had not yet learned not to run too far ahead of his supporters, and fought at the wrong time on the wrong issue. Now his supplanter had made the same discovery about McCulloch; so, this time, had the leaders of Collingwood, who continued to support Reeves. To the electorate, however, McCulloch was still their hero, overthrown by the rich, the Irish and a handful of traitors doubtless actuated by sinister motives. Reeves' committees, full of the representatives of the more intelligent portion of the working classes, were faced by committees of unknowns, headed by a few of the old leaders.

28. Argus, 30 October 1867.
29. Cf. the lists of Reevesites in Argus, 8 January 1868 and 24 September 1869.
Both sides organised thoroughly. Every hotel in Collingwood was occupied by the committees of one side or the other. The local constitutionalist leadership decided to support Reeves, and joined his committees. The McCullochites ran William Vale, whose unimpeachable radicalism, self-righteousness, anti-Catholicism and gift of vituperation made him the perfect choice to exploit the suspicions aroused by the revolt. Reeves polled well, but lost. The old leaders, constitutionalist as well as radical, (for Fitzroy polled poorly for Reeves) had deposed themselves.

The bitterness and suspicion these events aroused crippled the attempts of the old leadership to organise for the extension of the eight-hour day to shop assistants and the unskilled. Like the Protection League, and unlike the local branch of the Loyal Liberal Reform Association, in which these men had been active during the Darling Grant crisis, this organisation, for all it received some middle-class radical support, was created and run

30. *Age*, 4 October 1869.
31. *Argus*, 1 October 1869.
33. *Argus*, 6 October 1869.
by working men. The National Short Hours League was set up early in June 1869, after a dispute over hours of work in the Melbourne bakeries. Various trades and the Early Closing Association promised moral and financial support; some of McCulloch's more loyal radical supporters, and later McCulloch himself, spoke at public meetings in their favour. Then came the fall of the Ministry. The leaders of the new League were separated from their kind. Everard, the President, was called on by a Collingwood public meeting to resign his seat for political perfidy. Matters became worse after Berry, who had re-entered Parliament for Geelong West as a client of McCulloch, became Macpherson's Treasurer.

During his ministerial election he addressed the Geelong Branch of the Short Hours League, with Douglass and William Rice. His sympathies are undoubted, but he hardly attempted to conceal

34. Argus, 8 June 1869.
35. Age, 22 March 1869, 17 May 1869; Argus, 9 August 1869.
36. Argus, 19 October 1869.
37. Argus, 28 January 1870.
his intention to exploit the Government's proposal to introduce the eight hour day for labourers on Government work. Next day,38 Everard, Rice, Douglass and Vine held a meeting in Collingwood to counter allegations that Berry had no friends there. Several now publicly regretted having helped defeat him before. It is hardly surprising that they were soon accused of using the League for party purposes. Nearly three months later it was necessary to hold a meeting simply to deny that the League supported any party. At the annual meeting a month later, Everard included a similar denial in his opening remarks.39

He also felt obliged to deny that the League was a class organisation; it was open to all, to help extend to others the benefits enjoyed by artisans. From the start, however, class attitudes hampered the work. As usual, most of those who had obtained benefits were unconcerned about extending them to others. Douglass, the Eight Hours pioneer, mildly complained40 that "--- the

38. Argus, 29 January 1870. Only 50-60 attended.
39. Argus, 5 February 1870, 29 April 1870; Age, 7 June 1870.
40. Age, 9 September 1869.
trades had not come forward to assist the national movement as they should have done, but had been extremely selfish." A year later, he had to complain of the Early Closing Association, a body which had been trying for many years to obtain by common consent shorter hours for shopmen. After long delay, its Secretary had replied to an invitation to the Eight Hours Conference at the Trades Hall, that it was inexpedient for it to be represented. Douglass, who had supported the Association's exhortations to working men to see that their shopping was over by six o'clock, now commented bitterly\(^{41}\) on the Association's refusal to join a body which, although begun by artisans, was intended to benefit all wage-earners. He refrained from suggesting that their selfishness was rooted in snobbery.

Even Douglass and his friends, however, suffered from class myopia. Seeing the needs of those before their eyes, they forgot those whom they could not see. When J.J. Casey, a member of the previous Government, introduced a brief Bill

\(^{41}\) *Argus*, 18 August 1870.
during the first phase of the Macpherson Government to make eight hours a legal day's work, the Government radicals saw this as a mere political move. Even Everard, waiting to introduce his resolutions, regarded it as useless, almost, it seems, a personal insult. Casey's subsequent co-operation with the Short Hours League suggests that their suspicions were unjustified. The workers he had in mind included, and may have been predominantly, his Mandurang miners. Even when the League had accepted him, and added his proposal to their platform, he had reason to complain that the Eight Hours Conference represented nobody outside Melbourne and Geelong, and to point out when Everard's Resolutions, based on the decisions of the Conference, were before the Assembly, that the third, calling for a Factories Bill, ignored the miners. These, meanwhile, were too exercised about

43. Age, 21 July 1870.

44. V.P.D., Vol. 11, pp. 722 ff. Everard's first resolution, declaring that the eight hour day should be legalised, was passed in a thin House; the second, that it should be applied in all factories and workshops, was defeated. As it was clear the others had no chance, Everard withdrew them all. They had, in any case, been introduced too late in the session for any action to be taken in that Parliament.
reforms to relieve their industry to bother with Collingwood. During 1871 there was some effort to pledge candidates,\textsuperscript{45} and some of its leaders stood for election, but without success. Later that year, it resolved\textsuperscript{46} to support Casey's next Eight Hours Bill, although this was regarded as inadequate. Its support was lukewarm; the Bill\textsuperscript{47} passed the Assembly, but was lost in the Council. Nor had the League much success in its attempts to excite public support for the Bill.\textsuperscript{48} It had failed to obtain the legislation it sought in face of its early mistakes and the apathy of Parliament and public. The extension of the eight hour day by the Macpherson Ministry to nearly all those employed directly or indirectly by the Government, and the miners' achievement of the eight hour day in 1872 left it still less to fight for. Although it continued to exist until at least April 1872,\textsuperscript{49} it was practically finished.

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Argus}, 15 February, 1871.

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Age}, 22 June 1871.

\textsuperscript{47} V.P.D., Vol. 16, pp. 160ff.

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Argus}, 14 September 1871. Only some 3-400 attended this meeting.

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Argus}, 10 April 1872.
by the 1871 election.

So was the pre-eminence of Collingwood. Despite general disillusionment with McCulloch, the old leaders, faced with a host of candidates, completely failed to control them. Bates, now McCulloch's Commissioner for Works, headed the poll, followed by the freetrader George Harker; Vale defeated a popular local for third place by only 54 votes.50 Collingwood never lost its reputation as a radical stronghold, but never again did Prytherich's boast have any substance. Later in the 'seventies Ballarat and North Melbourne might be picked out as the two leading radical constituencies, but none ever attained the pre-eminence once held by Collingwood. Which is only to say, perhaps, that it had completed its task as the education of Hellas.

50. Argus, 17 March 1871.
III. Representation of the Working Classes.

The 1871 election was also remarkable for the first real stirrings since the election of Charles Don of the idea that the working classes should be represented by their own kind. Although nothing of the sort was achieved, the combinations of forces between 1870 and 1872, and the changes of personnel in radical organisation - even something of the pattern of events - looked forward to Berry's triumph of 1877 with a party which, although middle-class, was regarded as the party of the working man.

W.E. Murphy, who in 1885 urged the Trades Hall Council to run Labour candidates, seems to have regarded this as a means to reviving the party of 1877. To find a precedent, however, and one which would appeal to the Council, he had to return to the start of the post-goldrushes depression, in 1857. Then the eight hour day and the balance between workers and employers were not traditions, but novelties, and to certain employers anathema. The gains could not be preserved in all trades; only the lack of large firms, the willingness

1. Argus, 3 December 1885, 1 March 1886.
of unionists to accept wage cuts rather than increased hours, and the persistence of labour-shortages in some trades and areas, preserved it at all. ²

The day before the defeat of the first O'Shanassy Ministry, the first of the monster meetings ³ for which Melbourne was later to become notorious was attended by some five thousand people. It was addressed by, among others, Charles Don, in whom the respectable Glaswegian stonemason, proud of his skill, status and independence, conscious of the gulf between him and the disreputable labourer, struggled with the ex-Chartist, determined to improve the lot of his fellows and persuaded of the necessity of antagonism between capital and labour. The latter dominated his bluestone eloquence as he spoke to the people, the former as he spoke for them.

During the ministerial elections several unionists formed an ephemeral Operatives' Reform

Association, which persuaded him to stand against Michie and Moore for the City. He did so avowedly as a working man's candidate, claiming that

"It is impossible for men living in a different class, and never having felt what poverty and hardship was, fully to sympathise with those who have felt them, or even to bring forward measures that will to the greatest possible extent alleviate them so well as those who have themselves suffered these wrongs, can do so." 5

However, his programme, 6 which had been agreed at the meeting of the Association, demanded practically nothing specifically working class except the cessation of assisted immigration. Very few of the leaders of the eight hours agitations of 1856 were involved in the venture, and none of their unions; the Chairman of the Operative Masons, to which Don belonged, wrote to The Argus denying that his union was taking part in politics. 7 Nor, finally, can Don's 1,162 votes - less than half the poll for Michie and Moore - be taken as a sign of

6. Argus, 8 May 1857.
enthusiasm for working-class representation. Don also appealed to two important minorities. The first was the Irish, numerous in that electorate and furious at the defeat of their heroes. The selection of Edward Cohen, a merchant, as Don's runningmate, and the number of Hebrew names on the committee, frequently without the consent of their owners, shows that Don's committee also had an eye on the Melbourne Jews.

Don was eventually elected for Collingwood after another two years of unemployment, deflation and bitter industrial conflict. Men who had rushed to the end of the world seeking Eldorado had found despair, and their distress and anger was the greater in proportion to their former hopes and attainments. Their hopes had also been raised, then dashed, by the railway works opened in June 1858. The contractors resumed on a large scale their former assault on hours and wages, even trying to import amenable workers by the hundred. The masons managed to retain the eight hours, but others could not. An Eight Hours League was formed in 1858, and

8. Argus, 12 and 13 May 1857.
an Operatives' Board of Trade, the former to mobilise public opinion, the latter to organise the Unions. 9

Economic events alone, then, would suffice to explain why a few leading unionists, including Rice and Douglass now as well as Don, began the Political Labour League in March 1859, demanding, as well as the usual land and constitutional reforms, the abolition of sub-contracting and the Masters and Servants Act (which had been invoked successfully during a printers' strike at The Argus), a Workmen's Lien Bill and eight hours legislation. 10 The political situation played its part, however, as in later movements for direct representation, for while there was a group in Parliament to which organised workers could look, the natural course was to work through it. Whereas in 1857 Don's friends could see in the first O'Shanassy Government their parliamentary champions, the second, which had time to show its mettle, disillusioned them. 11

10. Argus, 23 March 1859. The Masters and Servants Act had lately been invoked during a printers' strike at The Argus. (G. Serle, op.cit., p. 244.)
Worst of all, perhaps, was the financial connection of at least three of its members with Cornish and Bruce. Nor could the goldfields members, their solid democratic front broken in 1858, be regarded as an alternative.

At the same time, however, the League was not the only, nor the most successful, radical organisation offering the worker adequate representation and secure prosperity. The greatest was the Convention. It had played a major part in defeating the 1857 Land Bill, but its power had since been diminished by the surmounting of the original obstacle, and by the decline of the Irish impulse, first through the accession of O'Shanassy and Duffy to office, so that revenge had been taken upon Haines, secondly by the breach between the leaders. Despite the breadth and radicalism of the Convention's programme, however, this did not contain the Labour League's specifically working-class demands. As the League included

several Convention artisans, Don not least among them, and the two programmes overlapped on other questions, it looks like a breakaway movement, either to replace the Convention, now apparently moribund and inadequate, or to make it accept the additional demands as the price of amalgamation. An encouraging first meeting, and a serious rift in the Convention leadership during the following month, made the former look likely.\textsuperscript{13}

Success did not last, however, partly because of competition from yet another organisation, the Tariff League of Victoria. Founded in January, its meetings during May attracted the largest crowds of all.\textsuperscript{14} Like the Convention, it offered a panacea to capture the imagination. Both the Convention and the Labour League programmes included land settlement and various other proposals, but settlement predominated in the former, which had the advantage of being known. The mass of voters

\textsuperscript{13} The story of the Labour League has a rough parallel in another working-class breakaway movement from a radical organisation run by members of the middle class, the Victoria Protection League of 1876-7, which was set up out of discontent with the National Reform League's leadership over the question of protection. (Below, pp.500-2.)

\textsuperscript{14} For the activities of the Convention, the Political Labour League and the Tariff League at the period of the 1859 election, see G. Serle, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 288-90.
might choose, therefore, between protection and land legislation, but if they chose the latter the natural tendency was to follow the Convention; the Labour League's purely working-class demands, its distinctive feature, were too prosaic and fragmentary to capture the imagination, and could have had little appeal on the goldfields. Eventually, the League rejoined the Convention, although a conference in June failed to bring about the amalgamation of the three societies.

The League apparently ran only one candidate for certain, Don himself - perhaps it should now, in fact, be regarded as nothing more than his election committee. How far he obtained votes specifically as representing the working classes, it is difficult to say. He so regarded himself, and his attempts to put into law the distinctive policies of the Labour League,¹⁵ which had not survived the elections, gave him some reason. He was not alone, however, in these attempts, being supported by Convention M.L.A.'s and other sympathisers, with whom he generally acted. As his election was also

supported by the Convention, \textsuperscript{16} it would probably be more accurate to regard him as a Convention Member with special sectional concerns, much like some goldfields representatives. \textsuperscript{17}

The elections showed that the working classes were divided between Melbourne and the goldfields, where the Convention was regarded as a Melbourne affair, \textsuperscript{18} and saw no particular advantage in electing men of their own class while others were available, nor regarded policies which affected them alone as being so important to their welfare as policies shared with other groups. Even for the Labour League men, the substantial radical party which had now appeared must have reduced the incentive for separate representation. Throughout the rest of the depression, a radical party, despite divisions and the conservative alliances which it was forced to contract, could be looked to as the working man's

\textsuperscript{16} G. Serle, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 291-2.

\textsuperscript{17} E.g. Woods and McLellan, who should probably be regarded at this time as working class, but who were less prominent than Don, and, having much longer political careers later, had time to show themselves in other lights. Nor, as they were not associated with any movement which could be regarded as foreshadowing of the Labour Party, did they attract the same retrospective attention as Don. The same fate befell the handful of other working men elected later. (E.g. John James, M.L.A. 1870, a blacksmith, and G.V. Smith, M.L.A. 1864, a digger.)

\textsuperscript{18} G. Serle, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 288.
party. With the emergence of Higinbotham, whom the spectacle of the times had changed from the moderate liberal editor of The Argus to the passionately radical Attorney-General, it obtained an idol whose tongue and heart, at least, were golden, and who had power. Possibly it was also to his advantage that, unlike Don who had aspired to speak for them, he was not a member of the working classes. While Higinbotham ruled the land and fought the powers of darkness in the name of the people, few paid much attention to the early death of Charles Don. 19

There had been, of course, another barrier to direct representation, lack of payment of members, which always occupied a high place in the radical constitutional demands. 20 In 1870 it was introduced as a three-year experiment, and, with the disappearance of the former rigid party lines, promoted a rush of candidates. Some half-a-dozen of these were working men, 21 standing on programmes which, in their addition of a few Melbourne artisan

19. Don died in 1867.
21. Douglass, Johnston, R. Miller, Manuel, Yeomans. There may have been others, of course.
points to a list of common radical demands, recalled the Political Labour League, and in their arrogant emphasis on the impossibility of any but working class representatives understanding the feelings and demands of the people, recalled Don and his colleagues. The causes of this movement also resembled those of 1859. The recovery of 1868 had been followed by a recession which few could have seen as anything but a return to normal. In Parliament, the radical party had disintegrated. Higinbotham was now alone, capable of resuming power, but unwilling to do so except on impossible conditions. McCulloch was discredited. The revolt of 1869 had come too soon to attract popular support, and in circumstances which aroused popular suspicion and resentment, and divided radical electors. Macpherson had succeeded in his chief intention, to break up the "old hat" party. The old radical party of Heales, and later of Higinbotham, was broken; the party of Graham Berry was not yet created. Its creators were coming together, however. Longmore, Macpherson's Minister of Railways, now
became one of the busiest of organisers. After the Government's defeat, he set up the Protection and Anti-Immigration League just after the Ministerial elections. Increased protection, to counter the recession and raise the revenue, was the radicals' immediate objective. Immigration was included because McCulloch proposed to resume a limited scheme. Longmore's aims did not stop there, however. The new association was to co-operate with others for eight hours legislation and the "general amelioration of the industrial classes". The unions were invited to send delegates. Headed by another radical M.L.A., and led by the leaders of the late Protection League, the Short Hours League could be expected to amalgamate or co-operate, the working-class radicals with their parliamentary brethren. The aim of the older organisation was too limited to form an election machine, and for Longmore to have joined it and tried to expand its functions would not have answered. Its organisers

22. Argus, 29 April 1870.
were trying to live down the suspicions aroused by their support for Berry. The fear that politicians were trying to use them for personal, if not sinister ends, was shared by Douglass, Rice and their fellows; their sensitivity to possible slights by middle-class radicals would have made them positively resent a takeover.

The other bodies to which Longmore looked for support were equally unenthusiastic. Although the Geelong iron workers agreed to help, that brought rejection by the rival ironworkers of Ballarat. The response of the Melbourne unions was so discouraging that one of the deputation which had visited them suggested the League might as well disband.\textsuperscript{23} Public meetings attracted no more than moderate audiences.\textsuperscript{24} The organisers, however, plunged into more overtly political activities. Petitions were organised during June, against the provision for immigration in the Estimates, and for a dissolution to allow the electorate to pronounce on "--- all the questions agitating the public mind,

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Argus}, 10 May 1870.

\textsuperscript{24} E.g. \textit{Argus}, 24 May 1870 (250), 31 May 1870(200); a meeting for "the unemployed" attracted the most, 7-800. (\textit{Argus}, 14 June 1870)
such as immigration, the eight hours system, protection etc.---". The latter the Assembly refused to entertain; it was therefore decided to present it to His Excellency.  When this was done, however, two months later, a new argument had been introduced, that the correct interpretation of the law on the duration of Parliaments was that they should be dissolved after, not three calendar years, but the passing of three sets of annual Estimates.

The style of thought is not Longmore's, nor that of his unimaginative colleagues. It suggests the influence of someone who, long absent from agitation, was to return to its very centre for a decade. J.J. Walsh, the Irish bookseller who had been Secretary of the Convention, had resumed his political career, having improved his mind by studying for the bar. The petition to the Governor was the political firstfruits of his education. He first reappeared, speaking after Longmore to a moderate-sized meeting in July 1870. He was followed by a young man, just beginning that career as radical

25. Age, 18 June 1870.
27. Argus, 5 July 1870.
agitator and political machine-operator, which was
to bring him to fame, power, scandal and bankruptcy.
In Longmore, Walsh and William Yeomans,28 three
of the Gothic pinnacles of the National Reform and
Protection League were now in position.

For seven years, however, the lean kine were
to browse on their ambition. Their attempts to
rouse the working classes against the Government
all failed. They tried blaming lack of protection
for the renewed depression, the Government for its
delay in starting public works and for obtaining
English rolling stock and pumps for the new graving
dock while Victorian ironworkers were unemployed.
They proposed to start a protectionist journal.
They called on working men to combine against the
monstrous regiment of money, and to elect rep-
resentatives "pledged to all the reforms demanded
by the people".29 All was in vain. Even the
ironworkers preferred to approach the Government on
their own, which they did with some success.30

educated and apprenticed to a hatter in London.
Arr. Victoria 1852; after digging for gold, took
up land near Melbourne. Later set up as hatter in
Melbourne, until bankrupt, 1879. Treasurer,
By August, the movement was abandoned.

Meanwhile, Douglass and his fellows were ploughing a roughly parallel furrow. Longmore, with Berry, attended in July the Conference which agreed the basis of Everard's Resolutions. Longmore had already urged the Short Hours League's Annual General Meeting to intervene in the elections, not only to secure pledged candidates, but to support a particular party. "They would become political," he prophesied, "in spite of themselves." Berry assured them that "He considered it was much safer to see the supreme political power in the hands of the working men than in any other class ---". 31

Although these overtures failed to open artisan hearts to the parliamentary radicals, Longmore's plea for increased protection to ensure that employers would not be able to put down the workers evidently spoke to ideas current in their brains. Having taken the eight hours question as far as they could until the elections, they turned to the plight of the ironworkers. The Vigilance Committee these had appointed earlier called a meeting in November 32 to

31. Age, 7 June 1870.

32. Age, 12 November 1870.
discuss further measures; several urged those present to vote only for candidates who supported increased protection. As a result, the Victorian Industrial Protection League was founded in mid-December, after the failure of Everard's Resolutions, at a Trades Hall meeting of "trade societies, trades, callings and industrial occupations" chaired by Douglass. Unwilling to be further compromised or taken over by the parliamentarians, the artisans were willing to agitate for the same ends on their own; Longmore and his friends could join if they wished. Like him, Douglass had sought the support of organised labour, and could already claim that a meeting of manufacturers had promised co-operation.

The need for association arose, said Rice, from a British plot.

"The master manufacturers of England were bound together as one man to maintain their superiority over all others, and they were prepared to sacrifice any people for their objects." Victoria must therefore raise her tariffs against the "harassing and destructive foreign competition selfishly and recklessly directed to cripple and destroy opening and struggling manufacturers."

A touch of xenophobia was already being added to memories of class conflicts half a world away.

33. Age, 14 December 1870.
To these feelings were added the nascent class conflicts of Australia. Later in the month, Douglass proclaimed,

"Capital was arrayed against labour, for the purpose of reducing it to a degraded and hopeless position. Men at the head of affairs in the colony had said that the working classes here were too independent, and must be subdued."

Nor should the working classes be too ready to put their trust in politicians, especially rich ones, and least of all McCulloch.

"They should not be the followers of creatures, but should use discretion, and select practical, respectable and common-sense men. Such would be preferable to merchants, bankers, lawyers and doctors."

They were reluctant, however, to urge outright the election of working men, fearing, perhaps, allegations of personal ambition. Only Yeomans, the leading working-class agitator of Longmore's defunct League, and significantly the only one of its leaders active in the Industrial Protection League, stressed the point. "Labour had never been represented in the Assembly, and until it was they would never do any good for themselves." Declamations about labour and capital, however, referred to the past in Britain and the iniquities of merchants and squatters. Yeomans' remark

34. *Age*, 22 December 1870.

35. *Age*, 6 January 1871.
had been preceded by the cliché that "the interests of the manufacturer and the working man were identical". Indeed, the organisers seemed surprised that some manufacturers suspected that these declamations were aimed at them. When one manufacturer, proposed for the Vice-Presidency of the League, first wanted to know if it was true that it existed solely for workers, or for employers as well, a note of puzzled embarrassment appeared in the disclaimers of Douglass and others.

At the same time, the organisation's usefulness was limited by the limited horizons of its leaders. The original programme, support to Victorian manufactures by protection, local procurement of Government needs, and industrial training, had been such as to appeal only to Melbourne artisans and manufacturers. Soon, however, the idea at the back of the founders' heads, of benefits for the working classes as they conceived them, expanded the programme semi-officially in their speeches to include opposition to assisted immigration,

36. Age, 28 December 1870.

37. Age, 14 December 1870.
"such other reforms as may have an influence on
the social well-being of the people", which must
have meant to them primarily the Eight Hours Bill
which they were seeking in their other manifestation.
Just as hardly any of them would let the idea of
direct representation emerge from the back of their
minds, so they allowed the idea of using their
electoral half-organisation to press a comprehensive
programme of working-class demands on Parliament go
no further than hints and implications. Agitation
for one limited aim at a time, leaving representation
in Parliament to others, was still their custom.
So strong was the hold of traditional attitudes
over their instincts.

There was an element of deliberate choice
in their attitude to assisted immigration, omitted
lest it should have lost any chance of farming support.
This was done at the suggestion of Douglass, whose
sympathies, as he had shown in the eight hours
agitation, extended further than those of most of
his colleagues. Yet even his mind was still in
blinkers. He laid some stress on approaching all

38. Argus, 22 December 1870.
39. Age, 10 January 1871.
classes and all country areas, but did not attempt to make the programme really appealing to miners and farmers. Nor does he seem to have expected M'Williams' complaint that protection meant little to the unskilled compared with the immigration question, and that so far from uniting the working classes the new league would divide them. Possibly in reaction to this sort of criticism, Douglass was soon telling an Emerald Hill meeting, "The League was a body identical with the people." No doubt he meant it to be; probably he thought it was. Like other radicals, he could not comprehend that not all groups outside the wealthy had the same attitudes, interests and preoccupations. The breadth of his sympathy exceeded that of his understanding.

Despite this activity, none of those who stood as working class candidates in 1871 was elected. Douglass was easily defeated at Collingwood; Rice had at first proposed to stand, and had been selected with his friend by a Collingwood Liberal Election Committee, composed

40. *Age*, 6 January 1871.
41. *Age*, 24 January 1871.
of the old local leaders, but soon gave up; the third working-class candidate, Johnston, received only 33 votes.\(^{42}\) By the fall of the McCulloch Ministry in mid-1871, neither the Protection nor the Short Hours League did more than barely exist. The change of Government produced little working-class response, probably because it was headed by a Catholic ex-constitutionalist and freetrader, and composed of several Catholics and ex-Macphersonite radicals. Duffy's triumphal tour did not come until later, when his tariff and his unpopularity with the constitutionalists and the Council had established his bona-fides. Probably organised support would have appeared earlier if the Council had rejected the tariff. Some 8-900 people attended a protest meeting\(^{43}\) called by the former leaders of the Industrial Protection League when it was first rejected because of the inept and insulting way it was introduced in the Council, and although numbers were small by comparison with the meetings of the constitutional crises, they were considerably larger than the League had managed to muster in

\(^{42}\) *Argus*, 1 and 4 February 1871, 17 March 1871; *Age*, 10 February 1871.

\(^{43}\) *Age*, 26 October 1871.
May\textsuperscript{44} to consider its and McCulloch's tariff proposals.

During the Christmas recess of 1871-2, however, signs of popular support for Duffy began to increase. There was now, at last, a radical Government to which working men could attach themselves. In Collingwood, something approaching the old unity reappeared. When Vale was made Commissioner of Trade and Customs in November, he had been supported at his ministerial election\textsuperscript{45} against Reeves, also standing as a Duffyite, by most of the men who had supported Reeves during September 1869. When Duffy's Ministry was threatened with defeat, it was men like these who began the agitation in favour of Duffy and a dissolution, and founded the Australian Democratic Association, with Douglass as Secretary, to support the late Government, win the ministerial or general election, and protect the new protective tariff\textsuperscript{46}.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Age}, 30 May 1871.

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Argus}, 21 November 1871-11 December 1871.

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Age}, 29 May 1872 (Advts.), 1 and 4 June 1872.
The attempt failed, the organisation collapsed. In Parliament, Duffy's party rapidly disintegrated; the Francis Government showed itself as determined to carry out reforms as its predecessor had been, more powerful and efficient, and as determinedly opposed by the Council. The return of prosperity and the achievement of a really protective tariff by the previous Government removed the economic and political purpose which had helped foster the organisations of 1869-71.

The Australian Democratic Association had demonstrated, however, that when a distinct radical party appeared in the Assembly Douglass and his kind would rally to it with other radical militants, and could develop a close alliance with the parliamentary leaders. Most of the leaders of Berry's party and of the National Reform and Protection League were already prominent in 1872; Berry and Longmore were in the Cabinet, Yeomans and Mirams were busy in the Democratic Association, alongside most the old Collingwood leaders. For the moment, however, the radicals were crushed and divided. As in 1870, they had lost their new leader without having found an
effective substitute. Benjamin Douglass forsook Collingwood to go up-country.\textsuperscript{47} The glory of Collingwood had departed, and the man who had taken perhaps the most prominent part of any in establishing and maintaining that glory had left with it. He returned to politics three years later, at the start of the agitation which established Berry's following as the party of the working classes.
CHAPTER 6:

PARTY ORGANISATIONS
I. The Loyal Liberal Reform Association.

When the Council's continuous obstruction broke the rules within which the moderates' system worked, they turned to political organisation to maintain and extend their control of the Assembly, to make the Council realise the futility of hoping for concession or changes in public opinion, and to break its nerve by the roaring of the Melbourne mob. In this, however, they were hampered by their attitudes towards political organisation: the kind of association permitted to gentlemen was not suited to these proceedings. As the radicals, temporarily their allies, felt no such scruples, the moderates could have the benefits of organisation without the discomfort of modifying their ideas. Their opponents, hampered by similar scruples, lacked similar allies except on the periphery; nor do they seem to have had adequate funds for hiring many agents. Their incentives were weaker than the McCullochites', since their position in the electorate was hopeless, and in the Council, impregnable. Although eventually provoked into organisation, therefore, this was frequently different from, and generally inferior to that of the democrats.
Although, in the L.L.R.A., McCulloch's organisers eventually anticipated the achievements of Berry's, this was the culmination of several years' development. McCulloch won the 1864 election without organisation, relying on the traditional election committees and speeches, supplemented by the use of such personal and patronage influence as Ministers and their supporters could muster, and assisted by the Orange movement. The only prominent organisation - and that in the Melbourne area - was the Australasian Reform League, set up by radicals suspicious of the Government. Nevertheless, so great and unanimous was public disgust with squatters and Council that McCulloch won an overwhelming majority. He therefore lacked incentive to organise. As his parliamentary support declined, however, during 1865, and he became dependent on the radicals, he gained both the incentive and the personnel.

Although the Protection League already existed and had helped in the late agitations, it was pointless to try and take it over. It had failed to extend

1. Above, pp. 11-12; Argus, 21 May 64, 1 December 64.
beyond Melbourne, and was in the doldrums; its obscure leaders had already shown their working-class suspicion of takeover bids. If the Government was to control the elections, it must control candidatures, and therefore create a body headed by men of standing before whom aspiring candidates would feel it no disgrace to bow. Consequently the President and one of the Vice-Presidents of the Liberal Reform Association were M.L.C.s, the other Vice-President being a former Member. The Treasurer, Horatio Beauchamp, was a St. Kilda auctioneer. At the same time, experience was needed. Beauchamp had been active in the A.R.L., but the crucial post of Secretary was reserved for C.E. Jones, Government whip, representative of the Orangemen, and more remarkable for skill and experience than nice scruples.

On December 5th the Association was advertised, "--- to organise the popular party during the FORTHCOMING GENERAL ELECTIONS." Volunteers flocking to its offices jostled up-country deputations seeking candidates; visitors and correspondence offering or requesting help, advice or information poured in;

4. Age, 5 Dec 1865 (Advts.)
it was announced that £700 had been promised for propaganda. 5 Meetings were soon being held in the Melbourne area; 6 Jones was busy with candidatures. When the South Bourke ministerialists, for example, invited McCulloch's Treasurer to leave Williamstown, Jones dissuaded them, because without Verdon's personal and official prestige Williamstown might be lost. 7 Instead, he persuaded George Paton Smith, lately editor of The Age, to abandon North Melbourne for South Bourke; as North Melbourne had guaranteed his election expenses the Association gave him £100. 8 When all arrangements were complete, lists of approved candidates were advertised 9 shortly before the polling days.

The sweeping Government victory having justified its efforts, the organisation was disbanded. Passed

5. Age, 6 December 1865
6. E.g. - Age, 8 and 20 December 1865; Argus, 18 December 1865, 27 January 1866.
7. Age, 15 December 1865.
9. Age, 21 December 1865, 10 January 1866.
over in the ministerial reconstruction which followed the end of the crisis, Jones went into opposition, and began intriguing with the Constitutionalists. The Liberal Reform Association's offices were therefore re-opened for the 1868 election by his successor as Government whip, John Goulson Burtt, an ex-Chartist tea-merchant who had previously been active in the Australasian Reform League. So far as they are known, his methods resembled those of Jones. It is therefore likely that the only detailed piece of information about either Liberal Reform Association illustrates equally the methods of 1866 and 1868.

Henry Field, a Grenville miner, brought a complaint against Mr. Speaker Murphy for not having paid him for electioneering work. He told the court that he had visited Melbourne in January to see the Minister of Lands. As there was some doubt in the L.R.A. who should be supported with Murphy for Grenville, he was introduced to Samuel Bindon, the Attorney-General, 

10. Argus, 9 November 1866, 5-8 March 1869.


and to McCulloch himself. Bindon suggested "Bogus" Clarke but Field said he was too unpopular, and suggested Thomas Russell, a local pastoralist. Unwilling to accept him as a bona fide ministerialist on his word alone, Bindon finally agreed provided he signed a pledge to support the Government. This Bindon evidently obtained, as Russell and Murphy ran together, and Bindon engaged Field as their election agent. He was put in touch with the Bogus, who paid him £7 on account; he campaigned, worked twelve hours a day, and saw his candidates successful. Then he asked for his pay. Murphy referred him to the Bogus, who declined to pay a man he had not engaged. Field then brought his action, telling his story with such a wealth of unnecessary detail that it has an air of truth. Certainly Murphy had made a name for his reluctance to pay his election bills. As Bindon, called as a witness, refused to appear, Field lost his case, but the reason reinforces his bona-fides.13

This sort of organisation, although simple, renewed McCulloch's majority. A fortnight after

the elections, however, on 12th March, he resigned in face of Buckingham's instructions. By the end of the month it was clear that the Governor would not give way, although the Sladen Government was not formed until early May. Rumours of another dissolution were rife. The prospect was faced with some anxiety by the McCullochite party, as it was not generally wealthy, had just emerged from its third general election in three years, and now would lack the advantage of the Government influence. In these circumstances the Loyal Liberal Reform Association was set up.

Throughout its history the traditional and the practical views of organisation conflicted. George Rolfe, the founder, was a leading importer and Congregationalist, and a former M.L.C. Like the sponsors of the Free Trade League, he harked back to the Reform Association of 1830-2 and the Anti-Corn Law League; perhaps concerned to demonstrate the respectability as well as the value of his organisation, he did not mention the Chartist or Irish agitations. Not even in the organisations he


15. Age, 21 April 1868.
mentioned, however, had he participated; his political career had begun in Victoria, centred in the unorganised world of the Council. Most of the Committee were men of outlook and standing similar to his, with a few lesser individuals and a handful of radicals which included only one Collingwood worker, Thomas Vine.

Something of the nature of this body appeared in the Association's first manifesto. The first three clauses set out its aims.

"1. To strengthen and protect public opinion as expressed through the ballot-box from the aggression of faction and monopoly; to vindicate and defend the right of the people to govern the country in such a manner as the majority determines for the interests of all; to consider and respect the opinions of minorities, but resist their avowed attempts at supremacy.

2. To reform the Upper House, that it may become what it was intended to be, a moderating power in the state working for and with the people and not, as it has hitherto been, antagonistic to public opinion and a hindrance to the material progress of the country.


17. Argus, 21 April 1868. The Melbourne Directory 1868, shows them to be mostly prosperous commercial men, with a handful of professionals, publicans, and Vine, a carpenter.

18. Argus, 30 March 1868.
3. To conserve all political rights and that feeling of loyalty and affection for the British throne and institutions so abundantly characteristic of Australian people."

This dignified but empty statement was characteristic of Rolfe and his peers. In tone and content it is remarkably similar to the aims of the Constitutional Association19 which the conservatives set up in opposition.

"1. The government of the colony according to law and in conformity with the recognised principles of the Constitution.

2. The effecting of all changes which experience may prove to be desirable in the Constitution or the laws of the colony by the regular and legitimate means provided by the Constitution itself.

3. The administration of public affairs for the benefit of the community as a whole; and not with a view to the advantage of any particular class, sect or party.

4. The maintenance of the British connexion, and the due recognition of the fact that the Queen is one of the three branches of the Legislature of Victoria."

The main difference, in fact, is the conservatives' insistence on law, the liberals' on rights. The statements of methods which followed reveal rather more divergence. Basically these were the

19. Argus, 2 May 1868.
registration and political education of electors, and working for the return of M.P.s of the right sort, helped by branches in each electoral district. The L.L.R.A. put all but one of these means into one clause, devoting a separate clause to their intention "To promulgate in every way the true principles of political liberty by lectures, publications and meetings and thus raise the social and political status of the people." The C.A.'s equivalent, however, was only one of four clauses and proposed "Affording information to electors with a view of inducing them to take a more active interest in public affairs; and to discharge their duty by recording their votes at every election."

The difference lies partly in the problems facing a victorious party and one which, crushingly defeated in seats, was much closer in votes. More than that, however, the first proposes a social reform, the second is concerned with the mechanical operation of getting out the vote. The mob could be beaten if decent folk made a determined effort to elect "--- men of character and ability to both Houses of Parliament, as the best guarantee of good government." The proposal of Rolfe's organisation "to suggest the
names of honest and intelligent men as representatives of the people —"²⁰ must be read subject to the first object stated. Both sides stressed the personal qualities needed in a representative, but to the liberal these were to be controlled by the will of the people; to the conservative, by the law, seen as something given, and not readily to be altered.

Rolfe was concerned to elevate the electorate into harmony with the rationalist democratic ideal. As the McCullochites had just demonstrated that they retained their ample majority, he probably was interested not so much in winning votes as in saving the people from being led to extremes; if so, political education, in his scheme, was to serve the same function as the Council, the modifications to manhood suffrage, and the British connection, did in the conservatives'. It was indeed a far cry from Rolfe's aspirations to the sectarian

²⁰. _Argus_, 30 March 1868, 2 May 1868.
muckraking of C. E. Jones and William Clarke, or the anonymous pamphlet issued to the German electors of South Bourke.21 This described the Constitutionists as

"a motley collection of keen lawyers, accustomed to scoff at right, of agents for the importation of foreign wares, promoters of ignorance and priestcraft, those actuated by greed for land, speculators, sheepbarons, Jew traders ---."

Fortunately for the L.L.R.A. it contained not only men like Jones and Rolfe, at the extremes, but also an important body of men like Burtt and Everard who combined something of Rolfe's high purpose with something of Jones' skill. To these, public meetings and pamphlets, although occasions for presenting arguments to rational people, were also methods of psychological warfare to maintain morale on their own side and break it on the other. They were perhaps behind the additions made to the L.L.R.A.'s aims by the time these were advertised in The Age, late in April,22 for they had been reported dissatisfied lately.23 Retrenchment was added, and the determination "to facilitate the settlement of

21. Argus, 4 August 1868.
22. Age, 21 April 1868.
23. Bendigo Advertiser, 13 May 1868.
the people on the lands, and to promote and encourage our colonial industries." The additions were not very precise - any free trader could have accepted them - but precision had begun to encroach on grand sentiments. The address put out during the ministerial elections for McCulloch's second Ministry, although adding very little, was far more succinct and workmanlike; it was no longer a statement of political principles, but a political programme.

"Constitutional government having been restored," it ran, "and the question of the grant to Lady Darling settled, the Loyal Liberal Reform Association have in view the carrying out of their published policy, namely :-

1. Immediate reform of the Upper House;

2. Liberal Land Laws, based on the principle of free selection before survey;

3. Increased immigration, of a character suited to the development of the colony, and commensurate with the requirements of the labour market;

4. Reform of the Electoral Act;

5. Enforced retrenchment in the public service.

And believing that the Government are determined as far as practicable, to carry out this policy, desires that all friends of liberal reform will give their hearty support to Ministers seeking re-election." 24

After that Ministry's defeat in September 1869, and the ensuing ministerial elections, this was developed a stage further, with the addition of new, more radical points like payment of M. P. s and a National Bank. The list was now headed, moreover, by proposals to abolish state aid to religion, and establish a national education system. With Rolfe in Parliament, radicals still supporting McCulloch had a freer hand; the new Government being dependent on Duffy, it was convenient to stress the secularism in which they genuinely believed. The statement of principles having become a political programme, the programme had become a political weapon.

A similar change occurred, and more rapidly, in the character of public meetings. Following Rolfe's intentions, the first few ended with self-conscious homilies on matters constitutional; flotsam on the tide of demagoguery. In the Sladen Government's ministerial elections the Association, having played the part of the L. R. A.'s at short notice and with a scratch team, won the

25. *Age*, 26 October 1869.

valuable propaganda victory of defeating two ministers, including Gillies, the Lands Minister on whose liberal policies the Government based much of its appeal. With the rapid extension of its branches the Association could soon concentrate on agitation. At first, the founding of new branches was the main source of publicity. Soon, however, something more spectacular was tried.

On 10 June the Committee sent the following letter to all branches:

"The Council of the central association request that you will call a public meeting in (Warrnambool) on Saturday, the 13th instant, to adopt the following resolution which will be adopted and passed at a monster meeting to be held in Melbourne on Thursday, 11th. It is desirable that the resolutions should reach His Excellency the Governor from all parts of the colony at the same time, and to secure this each district throughout the colony had been communicated with in the same manner. Annexed is the resolution. ---

Resolution. - 'That in face of the decision of the constituencies given at the recent general election, this meeting protests against a further dissolution of the representative branch of the legislature, which can only be regarded as a means of coercing the great majority of the people of this country, and that the above resolution be transmitted by the chairman to His Excellency the Governor.'"


And so it was done. It was soon plain, however, that the Governor would not grant another dissolution, and Sladen retained office despite constant defeat. The Association's next campaign, therefore, tried to force his resignation. Having demonstrated how widespread was its support, it resolved to display it in Melbourne where M.L.C.s and the Government would see and tremble. A monster meeting was therefore called for 6th July. The committee called for delegates from country areas, and although many sent apologies, an impressive number sent representatives. Two thousand torchlit suburban workers marched to Richmond Paddock, preceded by bands and attended by small boys and dogs. Passing on the way Thomas Fellows, leader of the Constitutionalists in the Assembly, they booed and shouted; constitutionalist shop-keepers rushed out to cheer him; the boys screeched, the dogs barked. Despite the season, three to five thousand awaited them. Speakers and delegates were crowded onto a large cart, lit by kerosene and the smoky flicker of the torches. Few could hear what was said, still fewer could find seats. Larrikins
catcalled from the trees, or chased each other with lighted torches. The fringes soon showed more interest in kiss-me-quick and doodlem buck than in the principles of self government.\textsuperscript{29} Yet such were at stake; and rarely had so many thousands felt any political occasion so important as to call them from their firesides of a winter's night. If few could hear the resolutions, most had assented to them in advance by their presence.

The resolutions show, moreover, what the leaders had in mind. A meeting had been held that morning at the Association's offices to draw up resolutions and decide speakers. After affirmations that the McCullochites deserved the people's support, that the Darling Grant must be passed in the Appropriation Act, and that the suffering caused by the crisis was the Council's fault, it was resolved,

"That this meeting authorises and requests the Loyal Liberal Reform Association to take steps for the formation of a National Convention in the event of the Assembly being dissolved on the present issue - delegates to be convened from all parts of the colony - for the purpose of watching the proceedings of His Excellency's irresponsible advisers, and acting as such Convention may deem necessary for the protection of the rights and privileges of the people of Victoria."

\textsuperscript{29} Argus, 7 July 1868.
The respectable, moderate precedent of the Anti-Corn Law League was giving way to the half-revolutionary precedents of Chartism and the Catholic Association. Suggestions of violence haunted the speeches of the wilder demagogues. Next day, however, brought anti-climax. News arrived that Darling had re-entered the colonial service, so that Lady Darling could no longer accept the Grant. Sladen promptly resigned. Nobody had won. The radicals had been cheated of their triumph; the gentlemen could resume control. The Association would not develop into a permanent force.

It had done better, however, than the Constitutional Association. To radicals, indeed, this was to be taken seriously. One Geelong worker informed the inaugural meeting of the local L.I.R.A. branch that "associations had been formed for evil. He alluded to the Victorian Association, which raised money in thousands to corrupt the members sent by the people to the Parliament. He referred to the Constitutional Association, as it was called, whose object it was to deprive them of their rights.

Let them all continue to protect those rights against the workings of the Constitutional Association, which was composed of the scum of the Victorian Association."

Some branches did show a skill and energy matching those of their opponents. These existed mostly on the goldfields, where the leaders were not merchants or squatters, for whom political organisation was faintly distasteful, but men like the Castlemaine ex-butcher, James Patterson, or Joseph Jones, Gillies' organiser on Ballarat, bred among Cobdenites, and later a Chartist.31 The gentlemen of Geelong, however, were practising the techniques which they later employed to bungle their railway agitation. Seeking to attract working men, they originally proposed to fix the subscription, which the Melbourne committee had suggested should be 1/-, at 10/6. Asked why no working men appeared on the proposed executive, the Chairmen replied that they had wanted to include some, but could think of nobody; another of the committee added that they were all working men.32

31. For the Castlemaine body, see Mount Alexander Mail, 11, 29 and 30 June 1868, 1-3 July 1868. For Ballarat and North Grenville, see Ballarat Star, 17 and 24 June 1868.

32. Geelong Advertiser, 20 and 23 June 1868.
Three weeks later the *Geelong Advertiser* was complaining of the Association's lethargy.\(^{33}\)

The central Association followed the Geelong, not the goldfields pattern. It was, indeed, hampered by lack of funds, for despite the opponents' references to the Victorian Association and talk of the rich, its backers seem to have been reluctant to part with their money to yet another unpromising speculation. But so was the L.L.R.A.\(^{34}\) Nor did the two societies differ in structure, for in this they were identical.\(^{35}\)

Both consisted of a central committee of notables, supported by practically autonomous branches which - for even the C.A. was anxious to enrol working men - anyone could join for 1/- a year. The difference was much more one of attitudes and experience.

Constitutionalists persistently denied that theirs was a party organisation; Joseph Jones even claimed, "The design of this association

35. *Argus*, 30 March 1868, 21 April 1868, 2 May 1868.
was to put down party."³⁶ Both sides tended to regard themselves as the national party (to use the word in a modern sense) but whereas the radicals regarded the nation as being the numerical majority, their opponents saw it rather as a collection of interests, each equally deserving of consideration, and, because interdependent, each obliged to seek its own good in the good of all.

"Their object in founding the society", said Robert Murray Smith at West Melbourne, "was to do away with all lesser principles, and to erect some general principle which might embrace all classes of the community --- and to make their interests as a mercantile and propertied class subservient to their general interests as citizens of Victoria."³⁷

To men like Murray Smith, the radicals represented one class only; a class organised politically to prey on others constituted a party.³⁸ Although crude and interested, these views were not held the less strongly, and did influence attitudes. Whereas Burtt and Everard wanted to maintain the L.L.R.A.,³⁹ C. A. speakers emphasised that once they had beaten the revolutionaries they would disband.⁴⁰ Least of all, they protested, did

³⁷. Argus, 18 July 1868.
³⁹. Age, 2 and 5 May 1868.
⁴⁰. Geelong Advertiser, 23 June 1868.
the C.A. exist just to maintain one Government in office.41

Another limiting belief was the greater conservative insistence on local independence, which made it more difficult for it to use its branches for spectacular simultaneous action after the manner of the L.L.R.A.; at most it seems to have attempted a disorganised effort to obtain signatures to petitions,42 the least of the L.L.R.A.'s activities, but which, unlike radical demonstrations, were devices known to the constitution whose aims were to express the considered views of respectable men, not to whip up the passions of the ignorant and use them for intimidation. These motives were probably strengthened by a suspicion that country constitutionalists were willing to leave too much to Melbourne.43


42. *Bendigo Advertiser*, 17 June 1868; *Mount Alexander Mail*, 11 June 1868; *Hamilton Spectator* 27 June 1868.

It was particularly difficult, then, for the constitutionalists to break the hold of prejudices against organisation; lacking experience, their efforts were still less effective than they could have been.

"The men who control the Association," complained the Melbourne correspondent of the Ballarat Star, "appear to have no notion of the necessity of rousing or exciting public opinion, and very dim notions of the uses of an organisation for political purposes. They meet in the Chamber of Commerce, where no working man's constitutional representative is likely to find them, and where, to a great extent, they are fenced in from any public recognition or information." 44

The Geelong Advertiser's correspondent pointed out 45 that the Association's having denied hiring rowdies to break up an L.L.R.A. meeting, or even having discussed that meeting, was a sad admission, in so far as the meeting should have either been attended by C.A. speakers primed with arguments and amendments, or met with a simultaneous counter-demonstration.

Despite several public meetings, petitioning and registration activity, and a number of branches which, at 65 only about half the number achieved

44. Ballarat Star, 5 May 1868.
45. Geelong Advertiser, 15 June 1868.
by the L.L.R.A., still looked impressive, the C.A. achieved nothing. Some even suggested that it did no more than keep the McCullochites united and active. Too slow to support the Sladen Government at its ministerial elections, it discussed the ministerial election of Sladen's successors, but showed little further sign of activity. Thereafter, although branches met occasionally, the central body disappeared. Its paid secretary was dismissed at the end of 1868 for lack of funds. Despite some exertions to pay his account, he eventually sued the Committee as individuals for the remaining £50, about two months wages, or a quarter of what he had earned. The Association possessed only 8/7; he was non-suited.

The L.L.R.A. showed a little more vitality. During the ministerial elections it issued its second programme, and its leading men helped run

46. Argus, 18 July 1868; Age, 26 January 1869.
47. Ballarat Star, 3 August 1868
48. Argus, 13 July 1868.
49. Argus, 14 May 1870. (Morris v Lorimer and Others.)
election campaigns in the Melbourne area; as election claims for South Bourke, where G.P. Smith was standing for re-election, were to be sent to its headquarters, it probably helped with finance. In the Council by-elections of August and September in the Melbourne area, the Association decided which candidates to support, and seems, once again, to have helped with expenses. Soon, however, financial difficulties made it necessary to dismiss the paid secretary, who was replaced in an honorary capacity by Burtt. The committee was stood down, with the warning to conservatives that it could be brought forward at a moment's notice to mobilise its branches.

Whether this would have been possible is doubtful. As usual without the stimulus of events or an active central organisation, the branches decayed, although more slowly than those of the C.A. At least three radical strongholds, Prahran,

50. E.g. Age, 20 July 1868. (Crews and Burtt on G.P. Smith's platform)

51. Age, 3 August 1868 (Advts.)

52. Age, 21 and 22 August 1868, 19 and 22 September 1868, 10 October 1868.

53. Age, 10 and 16 October 1868.
Collingwood and Ballarat, attempted to run debates, but these soon ceased. The main local stimulus came from by-elections. At Ballarat in particular, a remarkable series in 1868-9, associated with the C.E. Jones scandals, together with the personal interest in, and skill at political organisation of Jones and Clarke, successfully maintained it there until the 1871 election. The Association then split into two, however, over Jones' alleged betrayal of the temperance cause; he left the district, and Clarke entered Parliament for the neighbouring constituency of Grenville. Without their zeal, or any special stimulus, the new organisation formed after the dissolution of the two previous ones soon disappeared. Had the Association endured, however, another difficulty would have remained, in the relationships of branches and

54. *Age*, 7, 12 and 25 August 1868, 8 February 1869.
56. *Ballarat Courier*, 31 August 1870, 8 and 10 September 1870.
57. *Ballarat Courier*, 14 June 1871.
central committee. With the removal of the pressure towards unity, this problem appeared in East Bourke during the August by-election of 1868, where the central Association had to convince a suspicious branch that it had no wish to force any candidate upon it. 58

For almost a year after the disappearance of the central committee, the Association practically disappeared outside Ballarat. Then came the radical revolt of 1869. George Rolfe was appointed Commissioner of Trade and Customs, although not in Parliament, at least partly because he was the man "who for years had been the recognised leader outside the House of the Liberal party", according to G.P. Smith. 59 Although nothing like the political hurricane of 1868 occurred, public interest was fluttered by the parliamentary drama and the convulsions it occasioned among militants. The support these gave in Collingwood 60 to the new Ministry was not reflected on the goldfields. A

58. Argus, 25 August 1868, 1 September 1868.
59. Argus, 14 January 1871. Smith had been Attorney-General at the time of the revolt.
60. Above, pp. 410-1.
crowded meeting of the Bendigo Liberal Association applauded the remark that "--- no other public man had done so much for the people as Mr. McCulloch, and they should not forget him." As for the rebels and their constitutionalist and Irish allies, "Never had there been such a bastard Ministry as this one," another asserted, somewhat rashly. Yet another smelled priest. Jones and Clarke raised the sectarian issue on Ballarat, while Vale, Jones' former colleague, cried "No popery" in Collingwood. Jones asked later if his hearers "were prepared to take their orders from the Oecumenical Council, and let one fifth of the population set up a state Church." Meanwhile, Burtt revived the central organisation. A meeting of former members set up a committee "to carry out the objects of the old Loyal Liberal Association, to oppose Ministerial candidates for re-election and assist Liberal opponents, etc."

62. Ballarat Courier, 30 October 1869; Argus, 25 September 1869.
63. Ballarat Courier, 22 February 1870.
64. Argus, 23 September 1869.
The Ministerial elections were fought as well as time allowed.\textsuperscript{65} Vale won in Collingwood; Rolfe himself defeated Byrne, the leader of the mutiny, at Crowlands. Otherwise, the new ministers were unopposed, or easily defeated the nonentities sent against them.

After the elections, Burtt tried to reorganise. The Council, expanded to include more Parliamentarians, drew up the new programme, soon accepted by the Branches.\textsuperscript{66} A few new branches appeared, a few meetings were held; the Bendigo Liberal Association gave a very successful banquet for the late Ministry.\textsuperscript{67} It was still only with difficulty, however, that a candidate could be found to oppose the ministerial re-election of Berry at Geelong in the new year, while the other two new ministers were unopposed.\textsuperscript{68} As these elections had been

\textsuperscript{65.} \textit{Age} and \textit{Argus}, 24-28 September 1869; elections completed, 11 October 1869.

\textsuperscript{66.} \textit{Age}, 21 and 26 October, 1869, 23 November 1869.

\textsuperscript{67.} \textit{Age}, 26 February 1870.

\textsuperscript{68.} M'Lelllan at Ararat, Aspinall at St. Kilda; for the Geelong selection, see \textit{Age} 25-28 January 1870.
long foreseen, this suggests that the revival was not so strong as it seemed on the leading goldfields. The suspicion may have been growing that so far from being a Catholic and Constitutionalist plot, it had indeed been a radical revolt, as no assault was made on manhood suffrage, the eight-hour day was introduced in Government works, no attempt was made to give special advantages to papists, and the 1869 Land Bill, taken over from Grant, was enacted.

If so McCulloch fell into the pit being digged for him, and then himself helped dig it deeper. Having defeated the Ministry with Constitutionalist help on a protectionist's budget, he made the head traitor Minister of Lands instead of the popular James Grant. Speaking during the 1871 election, G.P. Smith stigmatised the arrangement with Macpherson as a corrupt bargain, and said of his former chief, "He had been the

69. Age, 23 November 1869.
70. Argus, 14 January 1871. And note the reaction at Bendigo, Age, 28 April 1870.
means of splitting up the liberal party, and leaving them without any ruling principle to guide them, or any means of forming associations for controlling these elections."

After the ministerial elections at which all ministers were returned unopposed, the Association was wound up; the 48/- which remained of its funds were donated to the Benevolent Asylum.\textsuperscript{71} During the 1871 elections, there were rumours of an attempt to set up a successor. According to Smith, a meeting had been held, and had agreed on a new programme, but as McCulloch had refused to abandon Macpherson, whose administration of the Lands Office had further increased his and the Government's unpopularity, the attempt was abandoned. According to the Geelong Advertiser's correspondent,\textsuperscript{72} the Macpherson question had just failed to be fatal; it had then been decided that if McCulloch wanted such an organisation - and the correspondent alleged that the attempt was made on his instructions - he must inform the meeting what his programme was. The next day's meeting ended with the decision to await his election

\textsuperscript{71} Age, 25 June 1868, 8 July 1870.

\textsuperscript{72} Geelong Advertiser, 13 and 14 January 1871.
speech, which evidently was unsatisfactory. Burtt was alleged to have become so excited that he screamed with rage over the question of the programme. As he had, a little before, quarrelled with McCulloch and offered his resignation over the Licensing Bill, it looks as if the last thrust of the knife into the L.L.R.A. in Melbourne, as into that of its most powerful auxiliary, on Ballarat, was the temperance question. So perished the organisation founded to secure to Victorians the right to rule themselves, and to help make them worthy of that right.

73. Ballarat Courier, 9 December 1870.
II. Origins of the National Reform and Protection League.

During the early 'seventies, as the Land Acts began to achieve their greatest success, urban radicals began to fear that they were failing yet again, and that land monopoly was triumphing in the north. Two remedies, neither original, began to gain currency. The first was a revival of interest in the leasing system. Even Grant, father of the selection system and Duffy's successor to the radical leadership, favoured it by 1873¹ and a few urban organisations were set up to advocate it. Grant, however, was replaced by Berry, who believed the English had an inherent desire for freehold,² and the organisations were uniformly unsuccessful. The most promising, the Ballarat Leasing Land League, died of apathy in six months, having resolved in any case to concentrate as a first step on a progressive land tax, the second and, because more consistent with popular attitudes, the stronger radical proposal.³

2. V.P.D., Vol. 17, p. 2062.
Like all taxes, it was intended as more than a means of raising revenue. For the radicals, it was the second phase of their battle to make the pastoralists pay their fair share of taxation, their attempts to increase pastoral rents having been foiled during the 'sixties.\(^4\) As freeholds replaced squattages, one might have expected them to have favoured a land tax before 1870, but being by then more concerned to establish a really protective tariff, they actually opposed the 1871 property tax, insisting that not just part, but all of the extra revenue needed should come from increased duties. Once Berry's 1871 tariff had been passed, however, they could take up taxation of the pastoralists again. By themselves they could have done nothing - Woods' resolutions of 1873\(^5\) failed for lack of a quorum and excited no public attention - but other groups brought the question to the fore. Free traders, although having generally accepted protection as settled policy, still hoped to cut duties which hampered

\(^4\) Partly because the Council would not agree to it, partly because there was a feeling that it amounted to repudiation of the bargain struck in 1862. *Vic. Hansard*, Vol. 11, pp. 103-119.

\(^5\) *V.P.D.*, Vol. 17, pp. 2200-7, 2227.
trade without effectively protecting anything. This protectionists were willing to concede, and as the 1872 coalition divided ultra and moderate protectionists, and free traders, between Government and Opposition, there was a positive political pressure towards such an accommodation on all sides. As to cut expenditure was politically impracticable, this entailed direct taxation. Consequently, Service's proposals in 1875 to rationalise the tariff and make all interests contribute to make up the deficit were opposed by men with the same intention but different proposals.

In particular, Berry, suspicious of any attempt by an avowed free trader to alter the tariff which so far was his sole major political achievement, suggested that direct taxation should be accompanied by reductions in tea and sugar duties, since they bore more heavily on the working man. This gained some favour with land reformers, notably J.J. Walsh, and was part of the policy of their organisations and of the Berry Ministries.

8. V.P.D., Vol. 21, pp. 701 ff.
The radical proposals for adjusting the incidence of taxation, however, possessed another social aim which they occasionally represented as a great social revolution. They proposed to use the land tax to destroy the great freehold estates. This policy made headway among them between the Land Bills of 1872 and 1873, apparently because in May 1873 Higinbotham re-entered Parliament, calling for the leasing system and a land tax to arrest the continuing progress of land monopoly, the local form of a universal tendency for rich and poor to become respectively richer and poorer.¹⁰ Some radicals, like Berry, spoke of it only as a tax fair in itself which would make subdivision the more profitable course; others, like Woods, saw it as a means to "burst up" the great estates.¹¹

The tax also offered purely political advantages. After 1872 radical M.L.A.s were a disorganised minority of uncertain leadership; the return of Higinbotham, captivating as ever, and if anything more radical, offered powerful reinforcement and possible leadership. Although he was unwilling

¹⁰ V.P.D., Vol. 17, pp. 2049-55.
¹¹ V.P.D., Vol. 17, p. 2204; Argus, 17 August 1875, 13 February 1877.
to lead or even join any party, or to help overthrow any Government until a better was available, his sympathy and approval were invaluable, and his ideas therefore worth accepting. Moreover, the radicals, although divided from the Government by old disputes, and sensing a difference in political and social attitudes, could point to no major disagreements. Higinbotham's land tax offered one. Woods, moving his resolutions just before the 1874 election, declared them to be the basis of a new party. Service's land tax nearly stole this distinction too, but as it was not hostile to the great estates, being part of a series of proposals for taxing all forms of wealth, it publicised the question without entirely destroying the possibility of using it to polarise parties and project distinctive images of them.

The tax also appealed to Berry, emerging as leader of most of the Opposition, as the most promising instrument for ending the political quiet and legislative frustration of the previous three years. One constant difference between

Francis' reforming Government and Berry's reforming Opposition had been the methods they were willing to use to overcome the Council's obstruction. A heavy land tax had some chance of uniting all other interests against the pastoralists who dominated the Council, and if handled by men who did not shrink from another deadlock might make it possible to mobilise public opinion against the Upper House and so achieve the constitutional reform which had eluded Francis' more orthodox methods. This suggestion also was Higinbotham's. Seeing little hope in Reform Bills on which agreement in the Assembly was unlikely and whose rejection in the Council was certain, he suggested a land tax which the Council would be bound to reject, whereupon the Assembly should refuse Supply, using its inherent powers to control the public monies without statutory authority, until the Council accepted its proper position.

15. V.P.D., Vol. 17, pp. 1438-43. The suggestion contains, of course, a curious piece of conventional wisdom; the power of the purse doubtless enabled Parliament to prevail over Kings dependent upon its gifts, but the Council was not in such a position.
Berry decided to follow this course is uncertain, but by his campaign opening speech of 1877\textsuperscript{16} he had clearly adopted Higinbotham's idea.

His speeches by then, however, dwelt less on the land tax, the tariff or the Council, than upon the iniquities of McCulloch. This man had frustrated Berry's career for twelve years. McCulloch's manoeuvres had broken up the small, tight Australasian Reform League group, and it was for opposition to McCulloch that Berry had been put out of Parliament between 1866 and 1869. As Treasurer of the Macpherson Ministry, he had seen it defeated on his budget by McCulloch. The Duffy Ministry, in which he had occupied the same position, had been defeated by Francis, the lieutenant of McCulloch. McCulloch, returning to politics, had helped him defeat Kerferd. Berry's Government, having returned unopposed from the polls, was promptly defeated by McCulloch.

Outmanoeuvred by a parliamentary master, he returned to the element to which he was native, and began the most successful agitation of the period.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Argus}, 13 February, 1877.
In this he was helped by a number of small radical associations. The indefatigable J.J. Walsh, having failed to revive the glories of the Convention in the Protection and Anti-State Immigration League of 1870 and the Constitution Reform League of 1873-4, had set up a Land Tax League in March 1875, advocating the replacement of the tea and sugar duties by a revenue tax on freeholds. "Cheaper sugar!" however, was not a cry with strong popular appeal, and Woods seems to have been right that townsmen were not interested in land reform. By the end of August it had disappeared.

17. This body seems to have done nothing but discuss Reform in Walsh's rooms. (E.g. Age, 9 and 30 June 1874). After the Francis Reform Bill was withdrawn it soon disappeared.


19. Argus, 27 July 1875. At a meeting of another abortive leasing organisation. The personnel of these bodies, inclining towards free trade radicals and liberals, who were few, rarely overlapped with the personnel of the Walsh-Longmore-Mirams series. These, although generally petty, were in the main stream of radicalism in Victoria, and it was they which eventually developed into the N.R.P.L.

20. Its last appearance was to decide not to amalgamate with the V.P.L., because the land tax, after Berry's speech at his ministerial re-election in 1875, was clearly about to become the dominant issue. Argus, 24 August 1875. This suggests, of course, that although the leadership of the two leagues was similar, the L.T.L. contained free traders.
Walsh, with his friends Longmore and Mirams, had meanwhile founded the Victoria Protection League in mid-July, "for friends of Protection and a Land Tax." As Service's budget had aroused protectionist suspicions at least in the Assembly and, after some hesitation, in The Age, the inclusion of protection seemed likely to add to its appeal. Its campaign was more vigorous than that of the Land Tax League, partly because it could appeal to definite interest groups and established prejudices, partly because it attracted more vehement supporters, particularly Yeomans. William Stutt, an ex-M.L.A. and a hotel-keeper, incited the Licensed Victuallers' Association against the tariff. The new Manufacturers' Association, set up partly to watch the previous budget, happened to meet at the same place and time as the V.P.L. The two meetings joined to hear

22. Age, 16, 27 and 28 July 1875.
23. Argus, 23 July 1875.
25. Argus, 20 July 1875. As both meetings occurred at Stutt's hotel, one suspects that this was more than coincidence.
fiery speeches from the protectionists, after which the manufacturers held their own quiet meeting on details of the budget to which they objected. Next day, Yeomans, one of the main speakers at the joint meeting, bitterly attacked the manufacturers' alleged contempt for working-class protectionists; and in fact, although a few manufacturers joined both associations, the M.A., whose secondary purpose was defence against a small wave of strikes, and which was no more eager than any other sectional organisation to become embroiled in party politics, limited its action to separate representations to the Government. At the same time, the League's links with other radical groups were being strengthened: a few land-lessees sat on the Council, and the first public meeting was addressed by several prominent Opposition M.L.A.s

Then came the parliamentary crisis. The Kerferd Ministry resigned after the near-defeat of the tariff.


27. *Argus*, 10 September 1874.

28. *Argus*, 24 July 1875. Longmore, A.L. Tucker, Munro, Curtain, Crews; Berry was to have spoken, but was prevented by illness.
Walsh had hardly announced that the V.P.L. generally approved of Berry's policy,\textsuperscript{29} despite some recent doubts about the soundness of his radicalism,\textsuperscript{30} when McCulloch moved want of confidence in the new Ministry's financial proposals. The V.P.L. Council, having consulted Berry, telegraphed to provincial contacts to demonstrate in favour of the Government, and send delegates to a large Melbourne meeting.\textsuperscript{31} Demonstrations duly appeared in Melbourne, Geelong and mining areas. Although the attendances were not remarkable, nor was the Ministry saved, a start had been made in arousing public feeling. Moreover, the agitators were now on better ground. "Protection in danger!" had been outdated when Kerferd resigned, and the land tax had aroused little interest, but Berry's defeat had been dramatic enough to arrest public attention, and had come in circumstances which allowed it to be represented as an attempt by squatters

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Argus}, 18 August 1875.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Argus}, 21 July 1875. It was suggested that Berry should preside at the meeting referred to in N. 28, with the hope that"... perhaps the League might now tie him down to their party". It was decided, however, that he would be more valuable as a speaker.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Argus}, 20 September 1875.
and merchants to evade taxation. The class suspicions which it had aroused made it possible to inflate the allusions in McCulloch's motion, to reducing duties into a free trade plot, and to hint at probable attempts to revive state immigration. Moreover, it was now possible to concentrate denunciation upon an individual, McCulloch, leader of the rich, renegade from the radical cause.

However, the agitators must have recalled how quickly, after Duffy had been refused a dissolution, public enthusiasm for his party had evaporated. The League telegraphed to the chairman of the late demonstrations to join a mass deputation to the Acting-Governor, Chief Justice Sir William Stawell, to support Berry's request for a dissolution. More meetings followed. The Manufacturers' Association and the Trades were invited to help. Stawell

32. V.P.D., Vol. 22, p. 998.
33. Age, 20 September 1875.
34. Argus, 8 October 1875.
received the deputation, but politely refused to alter his decision against a dissolution. As he had been a conservative politician in the 'fifties and drafted the constitution, the idea of a conservative plot was strengthened, memories of digger-hunting were evoked, and as the apparent intervention of a Governor in favour of a party recalled the crisis of 1868, indignant orators bawled to increasing crowds of the rights of self-government.

During the ensuing ministerial elections, the Protection League worked for the Berryites in the Melbourne area. Several branches helped defeat the Minister of Justice at West Bourke; in East Bourke, although the Ministry held the seat, the League provided the candidate, canvassed and apparently paid some of the expenses. Another minister having been defeated in Ballarat West, Berry claimed that

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35. *Age, Argus*, 13 October 1875. Petitions purporting to come from the Trades and the Manufacturers' Association were also presented, but as the former came from a meeting (*Argus*, 12 October) fifty-strong in the Trades Hall, which anyone could hire, and lacked official union backing, and as the former had been so careful to keep out of politics even on a matter affecting trade, these claims cannot be taken seriously.

36. *Argus*, 15 October 1875. The *Age* puts the attendance at 8,000.

37. *Age*, 22, 23 and 27 October 1875; *Argus*, 20 and 29 October 1875; 28 December 1875.
the country, having allowed the Berry Ministry through its re-election without opposition, had now shown by its votes as well as by public meetings and petitions that it rejected his successor. Encouraged by public excitement, but fearing, as he later admitted, that it would evaporate, he declared that the Parliament, which two Chief Secretaries had wanted dissolved, was unrepresentative, that the people demanded a dissolution, and that it was the duty of their true representatives to prevent the transaction of public business until one was granted. The expected return of Governor Bowen from leave in January gave added point to the agitation. As the long, acrimonious debates ground on, the agitators kept the country in uproar.

Although support for Berry was gathering strength, the divisions among radicals of which both Higinbotham and The Age complained did not disappear at once. Several radical M.L.A.s supported the

38. Argus, 7 February 1876. "The questions of the present hour might be lulled to rest, the seductive influences of liberal subsidies for local wants might be brought to bear..."
39. Argus, 5 November 1875. Berry's Warrnambool speech was the first announcement of his determination.
40. Argus, 4 November 1875; Age, 5 November 1875.
coalition under McCulloch as they had done under Francis and Kerferd; for all the narrowness of his defeat by McCulloch, Berry could rely on only a score of M.L.A.s for his "Stonewalling". Prominent and popular radicals like Casey, Higinbotham and Duffy, although opposed to McCulloch, condemned Berry's methods. Even during the 1877 election, The Age, for all its bitter opposition to the Chief Secretary, suggested that Berry had shown himself incompetent as a parliamentary leader, and should announce that he had no intention of becoming Premier. In the country, the Bendigo Liberal Association condemned the Stonewall; Gauzon, roughly handled by his Ararat constituents, even suspected that if McCulloch had obtained a dissolution at that time he might have won on a cry of "majority decision". Had McCulloch not actually discouraged pro-Government demonstrations, whether from distaste for agitation or the belief that his best chance lay in ostentatious moderation, he might have widened and deepened the radical divisions.

41. *Age*, 12 and 14 February 1877. The title seems to have been used first by Kerferd, when the Chief Secretaryship was left vacant in the hope that Francis' health would allow him to resume it.
42. *Argus*, 29 January 1876.
44. *Argus*, 27 January 1876.
However, the choice before the public was ceasing to lie between the great coalition and the rest, or between numerous individuals or groups offering various degrees of support or opposition to it; the choice was becoming essentially one for or against McCulloch. Those who objected to him could choose to support the largest, most organised and best advertised Opposition group, the stonewallers, or could support some other individual opponent. The Corner, where sat Service and Casey, was small, unorganised, and refused to present itself as a political party. Berry himself was not yet the great national leader; probably The Age spoke for others when it suggested that he was a great agitator, a man much wronged, but too wrong-headed to be Premier. At first, the most obvious man to lead the radicals was Higinbotham. When Higinbotham resigned his seat in January 1876, Berry said that he had looked forward to serving under Higinbotham; Munro, that he had lost "--- a father in politics, to whom he could go for counsel and

45. Age, 12 February 1877.
advice when in doubt." Benjamin Douglass was not the only working-class politician who believed that "the time had arrived when they wanted a modern Cromwell. --- Such a man they would find in Mr. Higinbotham."46

Had he agreed, radical unity would perhaps have been achieved. He refused, however, on the grounds that there were no parties in Victoria, in the proper Burkean sense of groups united in pursuit of a public principle, only factions, alliances and local pressure-groups. Moreover, representatives were now obliged to choose between McCullochites and Stonewallers; as, although opposing McCulloch, he was shocked by Berry's reduction of Parliament to chaos, he resigned. As had always been the case, except in the extraordinary circumstances of the late 'sixties, his strange principles, his mixture of antique and rationalistic theory about the nature and functioning of representative government, which he so venerated, wasted a remarkable talent and a powerful influence. In the last act of his political career, his farewell speech to the electors of East Bourke.

46. Argus, 4 February 1876; Age, 13, 15 and 16 October 1875. Higinbotham's prestige, and the influence of his ideas upon Berry, suggest that Berry's and Munro's remarks were genuinely felt.
Boroughs, he perhaps helped Berry on his way by his expressions of disgust at the way he had been treated, but certainly left no practical alternative between Berry and McCulloch.

Then, on the day the by-election was won by the Berryite candidate, actively supported by the Protection League and the Stonewall party, McCulloch achieved a brilliant propaganda disaster. On that day the resolution introducing the Iron Hand into Victorian parliamentary procedure for the rest of the session was passed. He had himself added the finishing touch to the image which the Berryites had been trying to construct of the reactionary tyrant trying to stifle the voice of the people. Berry's group was defeated and exhausted, its reputation even among radicals was still uncertain, and the League was destroyed by political quiet and the cost of the agitation, but few electors now would vote for McCulloch or those identified with him.

47. Argus, 1 February 1876.
48. Argus, 4 and 5 February 1876.
49. Argus, 19 May 1876.
The radical organisers on Ballarat, after having defeated McCulloch's new Minister of Railways, were as conscious of radical divisions as *The Age*. Like Walsh and Longmore, they too had been casting about for programmes and organisations which would have a wide appeal.⁵⁰ Between the ministerial elections and the Stonewall, therefore, they had established a new organisation, the National Reform League. In its search for unity, the committee had kept the programme as brief and general as possible, including the leasing system, the land tax and reform of the Legislative Council. The addition by the membership⁵¹ of mining on private property was innocuous, but to add maintenance of the Education Act pointed ominously to future divisions; the proposal to add another divider, protection, was defeated, but the same lack of unanimity appeared in the new branches. Sandhurst, for example, included protection, annual Parliaments and payment of M.L.A.s for actual attendance only.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Argus*, 26 and 30 May 1874.
⁵¹ *Ballarat Courier*, 19 and 27 November 1875.
⁵² *Argus*, 24 December 1875.
Expansion around Ballarat was rapid, however. Apart from the stimulus of meetings to support the Opposition, there was by then a network of longstanding association between Ballarat West and the County of Grenville. The two had cooperated closely during the days of C.E. Jones and William Clarke and before, so that in this area, more than in any other except the Melbourne radical suburbs, political organisation was never far below the surface. This network was maintained by personal, social and business contacts, the Orange movement, and, perhaps most important of all, by the circuits of Methodist lay preachers like Bell, James, Hain and other Ballarat radical leaders.

The area also had a tradition, somewhat weaker, of contacts and co-operation with radical Melbourne, now reinforced by the presence of Major Smith in the first Berry Cabinet. As the rest of that Government, except Munro of North Melbourne, represented other provincial constituencies, each provided more contacts for the central managers.

Now that the Irish were no longer attached to the constitutionalists, and there was a clear alternative
to the coalition, another network of contacts was opened up. Finally, J.J. Walsh, the most prominent Catholic in the Protection League, seems to have found his old correspondence-book from Convention days, for he wrote to one former member in Kyneton asking him to organise a meeting in favour of a dissolution, only to find him now on the other side.\footnote{53}

Despite this lapse, no political agitation for many years had been able to draw on the same range and variety of contacts;\footnote{54} the agitation then confirmed and augmented them. During 1876 another important strand was added in the one area where contacts were still thin, the northern wheatbelt, when J.L. Dow, fresh from his lecture tour for the Land Tax, was enlisted. The fortunes of the central organisation might fluctuate, but all was now ready to unite the radical community. The parliamentary drama gave it the common cause it had lacked for

\footnote{53. \textit{Argus}, 26 November 1875; \textit{Age}, 4 December 1875.}

\footnote{54. Duffy's Ministry also was provincial, and had Catholic support, but its members had not come from such a wide area of the provinces, nor did it manage to combine Catholic and anti-Catholic radicals as the 1875 agitation did.}
so long; previously unable to unite behind a policy or programme, it came together in hostility to a man and to the classes for which he seemed to stand. It then became easier to whip up enthusiasm for a policy which expressed this hostility, and promised to be the club with which the enemies of the people would be beaten to the ground.

The local differences over policy never completely disappeared, however. The new organisation appeared in Melbourne in January 1876, after the Ballarat Secretary had sent copies of the rules and programme to leading Melbourne radicals. Hopefully, he wrote to Higinbotham, who sent £5 but otherwise refused to take any part in the organisation.\textsuperscript{55} Those needing an instrument of agitation during the stonewall, as the Protection League seemed too narrow, welcomed an organisation with established branches in areas they had not previously reached. A Protection League continued awhile in Geelong; it had the special stimulus of by-elections to both Houses, and was establishing branches in its vicinity between March and July. This seems, however, to have been a separate organisation, having little contact with Ballarat or Melbourne.\textsuperscript{56}

\begin{flushright}
55. \textit{Age}, 19 January 1876.
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56. \textit{Age}, 24 April 1876, 1, 3 and 23 May 1876, 22 June, 1876, 8 July 1876.
\end{flushright}
The Manifesto which appeared over Longmore's name differed considerably from the Ballarat programme. 57 A detailed scheme of Council reform was followed by representation in the Assembly in proportion to population, and a detailed land tax proposal; protection and the abolition of non-protective duties on necessities were added, the Education Act was omitted. Nor was there any acknowledgement to Ballarat, for Melbourne radicals were unwilling to be led by an inland town. The tariff plans were a natural, perhaps a necessary addition in Melbourne, and the omission of education was expedient: the Melbourne leaders included several Catholics, several M.I.A. s depended on Catholic votes, and the party's general electoral prospects were uncertain.

After the introduction of the Iron Hand, the by-election victories at East Bourke Boroughs and Collingwood 58 helped maintain morale, but gave no guides to future action. Walsh suggested 59 that the Opposition should leave the unrepresentative

57. Argus, 13 January 1876.
58. Age, 8, 15-17 and 23 February 1876. Mirams, the elected, was Secretary of the N.R.L.
59. Argus, 17 February 1876.
Parliament to put themselves at the head of a representative Convention, reviving the glories of the Land Convention of 1857, and, for him, the earlier triumph which he had never been able to repeat. Despite some support, wild talk a little before of a march on Melbourne, and references to another memory of the 'fifties, the Eureka Stockade, the suggestion was not received enthusiastically, and was remitted to the branches. Their views are unknown; for three months the League vanished. When it reappeared in May, it too was showing signs of imminent collapse. The parliamentarians now rarely attended, and the wild men made it grotesque with a series of discussions on the impeachment of the Acting-Governor; some wanted to meddle with the programme yet again. Pessimism increased, funds diminished. The Council refused to organise a demonstration for the start of the session unless half the expenses were guaranteed, which took three weeks; one speaker doubted if the League were popular enough for the demonstration to be worthwhile. 61

60. Argus, 8 February 1876.

61. Argus, 19 and 20 May 1876, 2 June 1876. The Age's account of these events is heavily censored; but its editorial of 8 June 1876 suggests the essential truth of The Argus' highly detailed accounts; indeed, had they been false, The Age would have been swift to point this out.
League, meanwhile, took five weeks to meet the catering bill for a tea-meeting at Buninyong, although it was addressed by Berry himself and the locally popular John James, M.L.A.\textsuperscript{62} In Collingwood, meetings of the branch were poorly attended, and it was soon split by faction.\textsuperscript{63} Few new branches were founded, and apart from the unsuccessful co-operation of Geelong and Ballarat in the Southwest Province election, none was active.

Nor were relations with the parliamentary party close. Probably because of complaints that the League was useless without parliamentarians, half of whom, according to the hypersensitive Yeomans, thought themselves too respectable "to come down from their high stools",\textsuperscript{64} Berry and Major Smith attended a meeting\textsuperscript{65} early in June. Berry's speech showed the distance between League and party. Courteous, complimentary, he spoke as to a public

\textsuperscript{62.} Argus, 9 May 1876, 15 June 1876.

\textsuperscript{63.} Argus, 27 May 1876, 3 June 1876.

\textsuperscript{64.} Argus, 19 May 1876.

\textsuperscript{65.} Argus, 2 June 1876.
meeting. He urged extending the organisation, as elections might come at any time; Walsh and Mirams explained, with heat and exaggeration, that this had been done already. The meeting adopted his suggestion to concentrate on the land tax, as the best cry for winning the majority they needed to achieve that and all other reforms, but a week later the League was discussing the impeachment of McCulloch. Yeomans and others improvised on the theme that 'respectable' radicals and parliamentarians were not to be trusted. Stimulated by a customs-evasion prosecution against a leading importing firm, discussion centred, not on the land tax, but on the tariff.

The crisis came in September. The paid secretary became honorary, for lack of funds, which payment of a small part of the accumulated room-rent had exhausted; a new Free Trade League, inaugurated in August, looked formidable; the protectionist wing, composed largely of working men, suspicious that land-taxers and Berryite

66. Argus, 9 June 1876.

67. Argus, 23 and 30 June 1876.

68. Argus, 1 and 8 September 1876.
M.L.A.s, who included some free traders, were willing to compromise on the tariff to obtain office, responded to the decision to ask the parliamentarians to reorganise the League by setting up the second Victoria Protection League.\textsuperscript{69} This was a complete failure. Between September 1876 and January 1877, its activities amounted to one unsuccessful public meeting, two circulars, and a little canvassing and registration.\textsuperscript{70}

In January, it discussed amalgamation with the N.R.L., but pitched its demands too high.\textsuperscript{71} It therefore made a new effort to establish branches, only to meet suspicion and resentment from the dormant branches of its defunct namesake. The old Emerald Hill and Prahran Branches agreed to join only after heated argument; the old Richmond Branch decided to remain independent; in East and North Melbourne, the problem did not arise, but the inauguration of the former was ill-attended and pessimistic, and only the latter branch settled

\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Argus}, 4 October 1876; \textit{Age}, 19 January 1877 (Letter by Dove.)

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Argus}, 7 and 20 November 1876.

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Argus}, 11 and 13 January 1877.
down well. The branch at Emerald Hill, established by a narrow majority only, split over suspicions that its election committee was packed by the partisans of one candidate. However, the new League was surviving, and could endanger seats; in February 1877, the N.R.L. therefore accepted amalgamation terms similar to those previously rejected. The two Councils were to form the Executive of the National Reform and Protection League, to advocate the N.R.L. programme, in which, however, protection was to take precedence of the land tax. The alliance with the parliamentary party was sealed when Berry was elected President, Munro one of the Vice-Presidents, and Mirams Honorary Secretary. "... they were now enabled," Berry said, "to face the country with a united party, and not only with a clear programme, but with something more than a political programme, a programme which involved a social revolution." So far as the election hinged round an issue, rather than around the iniquities of McCulloch, that issue was now clearly the land tax.

72. Argus, 26 and 31 January 1877; 1, 7 and 14 February 1877; Age, 1 February 1877.
73. Argus, 17 February 1877.
74. Argus, 23 February 1877.
75. Argus, 20 February 1877.
The N.R.I. thus strengthened was already more formidable than in September. The committee of parliamentarians had reported on October 12th.⁷⁶ Berry's healing speech dismissed the past as trivial compared with the "vital ideas" the League represented. William Gaunson, the temporary Secretary, followed with a bloodcurdling account of the horrors awaiting Victoria if radical disunity permitted a conservative victory. An Executive was proposed, including some non-members and omitting some early supporters. When one member protested, Berry courteously urged unity, and Major Smith talked of throwing out anyone sowing dissension by the scruff of his neck. None supported the objector; the old Adam had been scourged out.

Meetings became businesslike and decisive. Finance and organisation committees were appointed, the secretary contacted local sympathisers and distributed propaganda.⁷⁷ Branches were founded

⁷⁶. Argus, 13 October, 1877.
⁷⁷. Age, 17 October 1876, 24 November 1876, 8 December 1876.
pace, amounting by the amalgamation to between sixty and seventy. Meetings were arranged, leading radicals engaged to address them. Dow was enlisted to give his famous lecture on land monopoly in several more places, including the Melbourne suburbs, and the League arranged for its publication. Branches selected candidates, some by ballot, some by acclamation, some by leaving it to a sub-committee whose choice was then ratified by a public meeting. The Council sounded the opinions of candidates already standing, helped find candidates for seats and seats for candidates, tried to ensure the optimum number of candidates for each constituency, and finally published its list shortly before the election. For the first

78. The names of 63 have been discovered, but the list is probably incomplete. As the Secretary claimed (Argus, 9 July 1878) that the number had doubled to 150 during the previous year, however, the omissions are probably not numerous.

79. Age, 14 December 1876, 2 and 9 February 1877.

80. For different methods of balloting, see Argus, 19 and 20 March 1877, (Ballarat) and 27 February 1877 (Sandridge). For other methods, Argus 20 April 1877, 24 March 1877.

81. Age, 26 January 1877, 2 February 1877, 9 and 23 March 1877, 20 April 1877. The usual anxiety to avoid seeming to interfere unnecessarily is very apparent.
time, an electoral and promotional organisation was to fight a general election as an arm of a disciplined parliamentary party.

Against this combination were arrayed the disordered remnants of the great coalition which had attempted so much and achieved so little, deprived of its most popular leaders and its most powerful talent. It had no electoral organisation. The radical Opposition formed against it in front, while its free trade wing prepared to fight its own battle. For some time, The Argus had proclaimed the existence of a free trade reaction; at about the time of the Iron Hand debate a committee had been set up to exploit it. By the end of March 1876, free tracts were issuing in some numbers, while Langton lectured up-country. In August the Free Trade League was publicly inaugurated.\footnote{Argus, 12 August 1876.} It looked at once more formidable than its 1865 namesake; it was equally well-endowed,\footnote{Argus, 14 January 1877 - Receipts to end of 1876, £670; expenditure, £640. Argus, 27 February 1877, Receipts in 1877, £480; expenditure, £103.} its leaders showed a
greater determination to convert the masses, its rules were well thought-out, and its meetings, which, unlike its predecessors', were public, exuded confidence and determination. Free trade was on the offensive against a tried system with which all were more or less dissatisfied. The success of the Anti-Corn Law League, on which it was consciously modelled, even to the resolutions moved at the inaugural public meeting, was frequently alluded to.

Even in Melbourne, however, by no means all commercial men supported it. Some big importers, it was alleged, had profited from the price-rises caused by protection. According to Murray Smith, avowed free traders had asked him what was the point of trying to reduce the burden of taxation on the working classes when the only result would be to make them combine once more against the merchants.

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84. Argus, 19 September 1876. Cp. the much vaguer rules of the first F.T.L.

85. Argus, 12 August 1876, 31 October 1876.

86. Argus, 30 October 1876.

87. Argus, 21 November 1876.
Although the League's support was strong enough amongst the trading community to provide it with ample funds, it is noticeable that the active leadership consisted of intellectuals rather than of businessmen, although some combined both occupations. 88

In the provinces, there was a more marked lack of zeal. Encouraging reports were continually received in Melbourne of the progress of free trade ideas, and a fair number of branches and committees was founded, but few were active. Some correspondents wrote that free trade was too strong locally to need organisation, others that it was too weak to do more than provoke the protectionists. 89 Several Melbourne branches busied themselves with registration and canvassing for members and funds, but that was all.

Even in Melbourne, the League never solved its worst problem, its public image. Its backers seem to have been mostly squatters, commercial men

88. Murray Smith's and Langton's speeches show them to be clearly intellectuals who had strayed into commerce. *(Argus, 25 April 1877, 10 June 1865.)* Colin Campbell, the Secretary, later abandoned his small pastoral holdings to take holy orders. Professor Hearn and William Shiels were intellectuals by profession.

89. *Argus,* 14 January 1877, 19 March 1877.
and lawyers. They gave it financial strength, which the League Council tried to convert into political strength by purchasing propaganda. With modern techniques it would have been extremely difficult to overcome prejudices against free trade and its backers; with the resources then available, it was impossible. Moreover, the time was inauspicious. The atmosphere created by the recent agitations made it especially easy for any conservative organisation to be regarded as another bribery association, another stage of the plot begun with the defeat of the Berry Ministry and continued with Stawell's refusal of a dissolution. This impression The Age exploited just before the elections with its publication of the manifesto Reform of a Parliamentary/Association, put about over the name of William Coulter, which proposed to work undercover during the elections for the return of anti-stonewall candidates who would preserve the landed interest. Murray Smith had received one of these during January, and sent it back; Andrew Iyell, another member of the F.T.L. Council, had

90. So far as the occupations of its central and local supporters can be traced in the directory of Melbourne for 1877.

91. Age, 4 May 1877.
not seen it before, and suggested that it was a trick by opponents out to suggest an alliance between free traders and those who sought to avoid a land tax. Although *The Age* was unable to sustain its accusations, it is doubtful whether Smith's and Lyell's denials had much effect.

The League often emphasised that, as Professor Hearn put it, "They did not aim at proposing a policy, because they did not aim at undertaking the government of the country. They were not seeking office - they were seeking free trade." Just when the radicals had graduated from the promotional to the party organisation, in fact, their opponents had taken up the promotional organisation. In dissociating themselves from the Government, however, the free traders cut themselves off from the support which it might have given them without persuading working class electors that their organisation was anything more than a disguised agent of the most unpopular man and the most unpopular group in Victoria.

92. *Age*, 5 May 1877.

93. *Argus*, 31 October 1876.
Berry, trying to concentrate on the land tax, did not want to be diverted onto a question which had a narrower appeal and which he regarded as settled. As early as October he suggested that the League was a diversionary tactic by the squatters. After the accusation had been repeated by a respectable intellectual, Professor Pearson, now just entering politics, for all his belief in free trade, as a land taxer, Colin Campbell, a small pastoralist, resigned from the secretaryship so as not to harm the League "--- by exposing it to the imputation of being engaged, under the guise of free trade, in opposing the excessive taxation of landowners' property." Langton, remarking that "--- the number of gentlemen who were disposed to exert themselves in the cause of free trade was so limited that they could not afford to part with one of them", pointed out that Campbell's resignation would not stop misrepresentation. Andrew Lyell, remarking that although his firm was the largest squatter in Victoria, he, like Campbell, was willing to pay a land tax provided other wealth did not escape, moved that the League should publicly recognise the

94. Age, 28 October 1876.
95. Argus, 17 January 1877.
necessity of direct taxation if duties were to be cut. His original intention had been to move that the League would support direct taxation; although again toned down, it was eventually withdrawn for fear of splitting the League.

Even had the resolution been passed in its original form, however, it is doubtful if it would have had any effect. The League was faced with too high a wall of suspicion for it to scale, had its means been five times what they were. Its main vehicles of propaganda were The Argus and its free tracts, which few can have read, and those very likely free traders already. Its meetings faced two difficulties. The subject was academic, and audiences were usually suspicious of mercantile men and intellectuals, who, as a St. Arnaud miner put it, "were always very courteous to the working classes about election times." Realising the importance of winning popular confidence first, they sought arguments which would appeal to working men; without knowing enough about working men to do so successfully. Perhaps realising this, when

96. St. Arnaud Mercury, 14 April 1877.
Henry Taylor, an associate of Joseph Arch, visited Australia, they persuaded him to speak in favour of free trade. At the first meeting, his reception was polite, but the votes were adverse; Munro and Dixon, M.L.A.s, complimented him on his work for the English agricultural labourer, but suggested he was ignorant of Victoria, and had been duped by the enemies of the working man. The next two meetings broke up in disorder, and although the last meeting was quiet, Taylor was by then spending most of his time denying that he had betrayed his kind. 97

As for the League's proposed electoral methods, they were sound enough in conception, and indeed were practically identical with those of the N.R.P.L. As The Argus justly remarked, 98 however, "Probably so far as mere rules go, nothing better can be done. But success in such matters depends not upon rules, but upon the spirit in which the rules are worked." It might have been fairer

97. Argus, 20, 25, and 30 November 1876; 1 December 1876.
98. Argus, 4 October 1876.
to the League, however, to point out that Melbourne could do nothing without the provinces, and in the provinces nothing was done except to distribute tracts. Like the N.R.P.L., the Free Trade League tried to maintain a supply of speakers to the provinces, but as it complained on one occasion, it was short of experienced platform speakers\textsuperscript{99} compared with the Berryites, who could draw upon the resources of a political party, and that radical community which delighted in nothing so much as holding public meetings. In Melbourne itself, however, the League made a poor showing. Of its leaders, Langton and Murray Smith lost safe seats, because free trade voters were ill-disciplined.\textsuperscript{100} Professor Hearn, shunted from one constituency to another, was defeated in Fitzroy, where one seat, on past voting, had reasonably been expected. Colin Campbell, his former seat dismembered by the re-distribution, was sent to Brighton, a moderately well-to-do seat where Bent, no radical although opposed to McCulloch, was secure. The only

\textsuperscript{99} \textit{Argus}, 19 March 1877.

\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Argus}, 26 May 1877 and 7 June 1877 gives a detailed analysis of the voting.
compensation was Lyell's obtaining the second seat lately added to Emerald Hill. Suspected by those to whom it had sought to appeal, ill-supported by those to whom it had looked for help, it had failed as completely as the N.R.P.L. had succeeded.

Superior organisation was far from the only superiority which Berry had, however. Perhaps his greatest advantage was McCulloch himself. "Politically," said the Pleasant Creek News, "he was hated and feared, and personally he was unpopular even among his immediate supporters." Partly this was the result of two years of propaganda, but it was also in part the effect of his own actions and forbidding personality; nor did he, despite past benefits from organisation by his lieutenants, regard agitation and organisation as normal, major political weapons. A master of Parliament, he was no match for Berry outside it. He also gave Berry the advantage of a long start in the election campaign, making his speech some six weeks after Berry's, and only a fortnight before polling. 101

101. Argus, 2 June 1877.
102. Berry spoke on February 12th, McCulloch on April 25th; polling day was May 11th.
The redistribution also helped Berry. The 1876 Act\textsuperscript{103} had increased the number of seats from 78 to 86, and altered their distribution in favour of the larger urban and the farming areas, the districts and groups of the population on which McCulloch had relied in the late 'sixties. Since McCulloch's manoeuvres and Berry's agitations had established the idea that Berry's supporters were true radicals, and McCulloch's crypto-conservatives, Berry appropriated the radical traditions of these areas, and won the seats of McCullochite radicals like Clarke and Curtain.

As the League's branches were most concentrated in areas which must have been among the 28 seats regarded by Major Smith as certain victories,\textsuperscript{104} it is quite likely that its work at the elections was mainly to make assurance double sure. This, and its headquarters functions, perhaps turned a sound into an overwhelming majority, but on the principle that where there are pretty firm party divisions, most elections are won before the election

\textsuperscript{103} 40 Vic., No. 548.

\textsuperscript{104} Argus, 13 October 1876. Mostly within the Melbourne-Geelong-Ballarat triangle.
campaign begins, its main contribution was the assurance it had given, under various names, to the parliamentary party and its itinerant orators in uniting the radical community and persuading it, not only that McCulloch was the enemy, but also that Graham Berry and his score of supporters were the party of the working classes. George Higinbotham, who had provided Berry with many of his ideas and much of his inspiration, had at last found a successor.
III. **Problems of Power.**

The number of branches on which the League Council could call was impressive. Having remained steady during 1877, it rapidly increased after Black Wednesday to about 150. Until late in 1880 the total remained between 120 and 160.\(^1\) The significance of these figures is harder to discover. Clearly one should allow for dead branches. The Secretary, publicly presenting his annual report, is unlikely to have pruned his lists with undue severity. Nor is there any hint of the number of members, although most branch meetings were poorly attended. Berry himself, at the annual meetings of 1878 and 1879,\(^2\) felt obliged to claim that the League's public spirit and command of the allegiance of the electorate more than offset its small numbers.

As for quality, even in Melbourne this left much to be desired. Weak branches existed in the

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1. After the constitutional crisis, 139 branches were claimed. *(Argus, 9 July 1878.)* At the annual meeting, the total was 150, half founded since October 1877. *(Argus, 29 October 1878.)* Just before the February 1880 elections, after a thorough reorganisation, 162 were claimed. *(Argus, 9 January 1880.)* Falling to 150 by the end of the year. *(Argus, 5 November 1880.)* As 44 of these had been founded since November 1879, the number at that time was probably about 120.

four 'aristocratic' constituencies, 3 quarrelsome branches in lower class areas like Collingwood, Sandridge and Emerald Hill, and at Fitzroy a branch which never achieved that local leadership which Berry took for granted. North Melbourne, on the other hand, could spend £100, a third of the Council's budget, during 1877, and claimed 1,300 members at the start of 1879. 4 Moreover, where branches were numerous, they augmented their strength by uniting their efforts under a central authority which might be temporary or permanent. At first, co-operation arose naturally from proximity and socio-economic ties, and the need for united efforts within each constituency. The numerous Grenville branches, for example, met to settle the affairs of the electorate, and co-operated with the Ballarat radicals. 5 In Ballarat and Geelong, the local branch was reinforced by the creation of sub-branches in different wards during 1879. 6 Melbourne worked

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3. East and West Melbourne, St. Kilda and Boroondara.
5. Ballarat Courier, 26 and 27 February 1877, 26 March 1877, 14–25 April 1877.
6. Ballarat Courier, 14 March 1879, 17 April 1879; Argus, 31 July 1880.
as a team under the leadership of the Council. 7

Whatever the significance of the figures, however, they clearly represent an achievement beyond any previous or contemporary organisation, and gave a nucleus capable of rapid action and expansion, given the right conditions, in nearly every centre of the colony. After the 1878 crisis, apart from local stimuli like by-elections and individual zeal, the maintenance of numbers depended on the continued efforts of a central organisation. Where the L.L.R.A. had failed, the N.R.P.L. succeeded. Founded before the struggle between the Houses, it could draw determination from the sense of unfinished business, and example from the maintenance of a disciplined parliamentary party; moreover, the parliamentary leaders had long accepted the need for permanent organisation and especially a strong central council if the branches were not to decay during political calms, and were able, as never before, to manufacture political drama and maintain their League with Government influence and funds.

When local needs were so great, and the allocation of Government favour on political grounds was customary, a party organisation supporting any Government was in a strong position; under Berry's Ministry, exceptionally willing to convert the powers of Government to party uses, the advantage was still greater. Branches and Council sought to strengthen their position by influencing patronage; rumour magnified their power, and those seeking justice or advantage from the Executive commonly did so through the League. When a branch was inaugurated, or celebrated an anniversary, Ministers were invited and usually attended; local deputations sought and often obtained promises of local services, so that the Branch was thenceforth known as the body which could command Graham Berry from Olympus to win generous hearts by oratory and prudent ones by public works. Established branches proposed reliable men as electoral registrars, returning officers, J.P.'s and public servants.

8. E.g. Age, 7 December 1877.
9. Cf. his visit to Hamilton (Argus, 27 April 1878), and Dow's remarks at the opening of the St. Arnaud line, when no ministers had been invited. (St. Arnaud Mercury, 25 December 1878.)
10. Argus, 13 June 1878, 4 October 1878, 1 March 1879.
helped mining M.P.s obtain grants for prospecting grants and drainage; it promised a good word for the lime-makers and umbrella-manufacturers of Geelong when the 1878 tariff was imminent; when Berry divined the machinations of his enemies in both the depression of trade and the deputations of unemployed calling for the People's Ministry to provide work, it successfully represented the need for the Department of Works to buy its materials locally, and the Department of Railways to resume the manufacture of rolling-stock. The League, in short, was the intercessor between the democracy and its gods.

Ministers and other relatively well-to-do supporters were also an important source of funds. Their donations effectively replaced the £1 subscription, which, to put the League in funds, had carried the right to a seat on the Council, and was therefore early abolished as undemocratic. Despite the general character of the party, enough of it was

11. *Argus*, 7 September 1877, 6 and 30 August 1878, 11 October 1878.
13. *Age*, 4 March 1876. On the motion of the bootmaker William Trenwith. "He objected to a class distinction. They would be reproached for establishing in their own society what they objected to in the constitution of the colony."
comfortably off for this to be the most important single source of League income; branches containing substantial ironmasters like Danks or Harratt, or prosperous farmers like the leaders in Bacchus Marsh, were similarly blessed. A less reliable, but valuable, source of relatively large sums was the occasional function, ranging from the Sandridge anniversary muffin-struggle in 1876\textsuperscript{14} to Berry's welcoming banquet in 1879; as the latter attracted a large crowd, obtained several columns in the newspapers and provided one sixth of the Council's income for the year, it was a very successful combination or propaganda and profit.\textsuperscript{15} These sources of income, although usually adequate, were irregular. The half-crown local subscription, however, probably did not produce much, in face of small numbers and the tendency not to pay in the absence of regular

\textsuperscript{14.} Argus, 24 October 1876. 'Vagabond's' article, for all his patronising style, gives a pleasant caricature of this kind of meeting. E.g. "While the tea was going on I questioned my immediate neighbours. 'What is all this about?' I asked, 'Oh! it's just a tea meeting and some songs. There'll be dancing afterwards.' 'It's an entertainment; what they call a Protection one.'"

\textsuperscript{15.} The banquet (Argus, 2 July 1879) made a profit of £50. (Argus, 20 September 1879.)
collections. Nor does much of it seem to have gone to the Council. The 1879 Rules provided for a half-yearly affiliation fee of 10/6, which would have provided some £160 a year early in 1880, but the financial statement after the February election suggests that even then very little had been paid.

Finally, although finance was always a problem as Beddowes told the 1878 Annual Meeting, "Applause was plentiful, but pecuniary contributions were scarce!" the League had two compensations. The first was the number of volunteers it could muster, reducing the need for paid assistance and expensive operations in the Revision Courts. The second was the free propaganda it received in the radical press. Apart from The Age and The Leader, also two of the most important provincial dailies, the Ballarat Courier and the Geelong Advertiser supported the radical cause, with a good number of smaller suburban and provincial newspapers.

16. Walsh Collection. loose printed sheet, dated 1 October 1879.
17. Daily Telegraph, 4 March 1880.
18. Argus, 29 October 1878.
The League's organisation initially resembled that of all its predecessors. The distinction between subscribers abolished, the Council consisted of representatives of all branches, who elected the Committee, which elected the officers. Although all branches could send delegates, however, only metropolitan delegates were able to attend regularly; Melbourne therefore controlled elections and had direct access to policy and operations. When organisations had been practically confined to the metropolitan area, this had not mattered, but the League soon covered a colony the size of Great Britain, full of competing local prides and jealousies, which agreed only on suspicion of Melbourne, and was reinforced by the localisation of interests and crochets. If conflicts on policy and routine were to be avoided, therefore, great tact was needed. Unfortunately, this was rare in the Council. Among Melbourne representatives, the tendency for narrow zealotry to increase in the ascent from elector to branch member to petty office-holder was as marked as it usually is. There was

also a group of central managers who belonged only to the Central League, the original body, a branch without local habitation, whose experience and interests differed from those of the branch representatives of Melbourne still more from those of the unrepresented provincial branches. At the centre of influence, they represented nothing. Walsh, Knaggs, Wilder and their like were eager, frustrated agitators, who, never having sat in Parliament and not belonging to any normal branch, lived their political lives detached from political reality at both ends. The Council was therefore not conspicuous for tact, smooth co-operation or realism. Rescued from the consequences of its folly in 1876, it had not become less foolish.

During 1877 this did not cause serious difficulty: politics were dormant, as all awaited the great battle. When this began, on Black Wednesday, the unity of expectation gave way to the unity of agitation, a political function in which branches were happy enough to be led. The great danger always was the by-election, where the Council, as electoral co-ordinator, had the greatest interest
in local affairs, where local feelings were touchiest, and where the distribution of duties was undefined. The early unity, however, reduced the willingness to quarrel over the batch of by-elections during 1877 which resulted from the record crop of successful election-petitions\(^{20}\) and the death of an Opposition M.L.A.; the old candidates, endorsed by branches and Council for the general election, were still available, and the Council, while the moderate Ivers was Secretary and the extremists were busy with their schemes for tariff revision, was circumspect.\(^{21}\)

Elections in Melbourne, where the Council was accepted as the area authority and local feeling was weaker than in the provinces, caused little trouble. The first West Melbourne by-election\(^{22}\) in fact, coming in the heart of the city and of the

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21. William Ivers, a North Melbourne house-owner, was Secretary during the second half of 1877; Yeomans was kept out of mischief as Secretary of the tariff sub-committee. He replaced Ivers in December 1877. (Age, 11 December 1877.)

22. Parnaby, op.cit., c.17, covers this election. She tends, in my opinion, to over-rate the importance of the manufacturers — in this as in other places. Although O'Loghlen's main strength was in the areas which had put Andrew in during the general election, that does not make the Irish vote there the less important, and where Victory depended on 45 electors, the successful roll-stuffing and the marked increase in the percentage voting could materially affect the result. During the next election the constitutionalists won by some 300 votes, and during the next, by some 600.
excitement following Black Wednesday, provided a remarkable example of close co-operation between branches, Council and Ministry. The premier mercantile constituency, it had always been regarded as safe for two free traders. However, it also contained a large number of small traders, small manufacturers and railwaymen and Irish; at the general election, although MacMahon's seat was safe, these votes, largely plumped for John Andrew, the single radical, and divisions among the free traders, many of whom disliked Langton, gave radicals an unexpected victory. After Black Wednesday MacMahon resigned to provide a safe seat for Francis, who, despite poor health, now agreed to lend his experience and popularity to avert the revolution he feared was gradually approaching. The Opposition already included a wealth of experience; Black Wednesday gave it the formidable gifts of James Service; the addition of Francis would not only add to its talent and experience but also provide one politician whose popularity might rival Berry's. Moreover, as by-elections had gone
ill for the radicals, a victory was badly needed; if won in West Melbourne, so soon after the start of the crisis, its propaganda-value would be incalculable. The local league selected Sir Bryan O'Loghlen, whose religion and nationality were doubly valuable since his opponent was closely associated with the Education Act.

The election took place in a whirl of political and sectarian feeling. The local branch, having thoroughly stuffed the electoral roll, triumphed in the revision court on a technicality. Dr. Knaggs, Treasurer of the League, was appointed returning officer, and selected leaguers as deputies. When Opposition scrutineers, to combat the stuffing of the roll, required these to put to suspect voters the questions prescribed for the detection of electoral frauds, they evaded their duty. Other branches hunted

23. Three elections were declared void on petition. At Sandhurst, the Opposition won back the seat; at South Gipps Land, the Government improved its majority; at Rodney, the Opposition did so. (Argus, 6 August 1877, 3 September 1877, 28 November 1877). The death of an Opposition M.L.A. caused a fourth by-election, at Boroondara, which resulted in another increased Opposition majority. (Argus, 27 December 1877.)

up electors living outside the constituency, and sent contingents of volunteers into West Melbourne. Council and party held fiery meetings. The Ministers of Works and Railways, on whom much of West Melbourne depended for its livelihood, made known their preference for O'Loghlen. On polling day, which the Government made a half-holiday, railway electors were given free passes to Melbourne. After a day of political ferment and sporadic violence, Knaggs exultantly announced O'Loghlen's victory by 90 votes out of 3,856. After the new member had spoken, Knaggs replied to the vote of thanks.

"Gentlemen, Sir Bryan O'Loghlen --- has said that this is the proudest day of his life. I now say it is the proudest political day in my life. (Cheers) We have rescued West Melbourne from the merchants. (Loud cheers)--- I thank you heartily for your vote of thanks to me as returning officer."

The crowd then moved off to groan The Argus and smash its windows.25

O'Loghlen's appointment as Attorney-General entailed a second election. Meanwhile, Berry

25. Argus, 5 February 1878.
refused to release papers necessary to the prosecutions of Derbin Wilder and Knaggs for electoral misdeeds, alleging that Francis was trying to intimidate Knaggs for the next election; O'Loghlen, as Attorney-General, had charges against Wilder, a League Councillor and one of Knaggs' deputies, removed to the Supreme Court, where they could not be tried until after the poll. 26 Knaggs appointed Yeomans, now League Secretary, a deputy. 27 The same methods were followed, with improvements: the tickets issued to railwaymen were accompanied by propaganda, and other absent voters in distant constituencies were grouted out by Government M.L.A.s, who telegraphed for railway passes or took a block with them. 28 O'Loghlen won again. Opposition hopes for revelations from the prosecution of a personator were dashed when Knaggs, a J.P., left the Bench for a word with the accused, persuaded him to plead guilty and keep silence, and helped fine him 20/-.

27. Argus, 12 April 1878.
29. Argus, 17 April 1878.
By-elections in outlying areas, although offering less opportunity for co-operative effort, usually caused no particular stresses within the organisation. The serious difficulties began in two constituencies verging on Melbourne's sphere in 1879. The background contrasted sharply with that of the West Melbourne elections. Berry was in England, politics were at a discount, and the divisions in the party over the Embassy were exacerbating the conflict between moderates and wild men in the Council. Death created vacancies in the adjacent seats of West Bourke and Footscray. In the former, local branches had difficulty in finding a candidate. The Ministry favouring the late M.L.A.'s son, the Council asked him to stand. The branches objected; unable to choose but unwilling to abandon choice, they approached David Syme, and accepted his suggestion of Alfred Deakin, then a promising unknown on his staff. The central managers were furious, not least

30. There was some trouble at Castlemaine, where some resented having one of their members resign just to let Professor Pearson have a safe seat (Argus, 29 May 1878), and in South Gippsland the local League, despite help from headquarters, could not control candidatures (Argus, 20 June 1878), but these involved relations between the League and outsiders.
because relations with The Age were strained. The men of North Melbourne, however, numerous on the Council and already at odds with their colleagues over the Yeomans scandals, sided with constituency rights. The local decision was endorsed; Deakin gained a narrow and disputed victory. 31 The Council then had to deny to the Bacchus Marsh Branch that they had resolved, as The Argus alleged, never again to endorse Deakin. 32

For Footscray, according to The Argus, the Council was seeking Ministerial support for John Fisher, lately prominent among the central managers. William Vale, always formidable, threatened to stand as an independent. The M.L.A. for adjacent Williamstown had the local committee hastily endorse his cousin and partner. 33 The Council awaited the result of the full branch selection meeting; this was postponed for lack of attendance. Worried by the approach of nomination day but uncertain about interfering, the Council compromised

31. Age, Argus, 4-8 February 1879; Deakin, op.cit., pp.8-10, and c.3.
32. Argus, 25 February 1879; Age, 7 March 1879.
33. Argus, 15 and 17 February 1879. The M.L.A. for Williamstown, A.T. Clark, a former public servant elected in 1871 and by this time owner of the Williamstown Advertiser, shared the ownership and operation of a Footscray subsidiary with his cousin, William Clark, who had recently been a workman in local Government workshops. Both were ultra radicals.
by rejecting a proposal to decide after discussions with leading electors and the local branch, but vetoing one candidate. The branch ballot overwhelmingly endorsed the local committee's decision, which the Council accepted; its predilection for Fisher had gained some local credence, however, since the deputation which announced the choice to the Council informed it that they would probably have selected him had not Clark been a local.

The absence from the Council of provincial branches, then, by allowing undue interference, was leading to difficulties in early 1879. Well before that, the lack of parliamentarians in the party machine had allowed conflicts much more serious.

The League had no organisational link with the party; although radicals did not believe that constitutional principle demanded the complete separation of parties and leagues, the usage affected

34. *Argus*, 18–25 February 1879. The candidate vetoed by the Council was Thomas Loader, who had helped Walsh found the Convention and had been one of Heales' ministers, but who, as a free trader, had supported the other side since then. That he should be seeking the endorsement of the League suggests how little free trade or protection was an issue at this time.

them; a modern radical setting up a party organisation would consider what relationship should exist between representatives and militants as automatically as Victorian radicals did not. Extravagant claims were occasionally made in heated moments. When the Government wanted to postpone revision of the tariff in 1878 to concentrate on Reform, there were high words in the League Council.

"The CHAIRMAN. - The Government are merely the representatives of the people. They are our servants, not our masters. (Hear, hear.) Mr. OWEN. - Are the members here present the representatives of the people? The CHAIRMAN replied that he considered they were the representatives of the people, as the League had 139 branches." 36

Such outbursts were rare, however, and despite attempts to put pressure on the Government, its authority was normally taken for granted.

Even the election-time overlap in the leadership of League and party was temporary. Berry, nominally President, was far too busy as Premier, party leader and popular orator. Longmore was preoccupied with departmental, parliamentary and agitational duties, and various private speculations.

36. Argus, 9 July 1878.
Even Mirams, a backbencher, felt that parliamentary duties demanded his resignation as Secretary. He was succeeded by a non-M.L.A., William Ievers, and attended hardly any Council meetings thereafter. In the Council election of January 1879, apart from the absentee Mirams, no M.L.A. polled well.

Some attempt was made to maintain contact at the social level in the Reform Club, intended as "a common centre of attraction and operation for the party such as was supplied at home by the political clubs". The party magnates attended a successful inaugural dinner, but soon no more was heard of it. Apart from the financial problem, the Club faced two difficulties. Few Victorians, and those mostly wealthy, were used to the idea.

37. Age, 6 July 1877.
38. Argus, 10 January 1879. Knaggs came first with 80, then Walsh with 63, then Mirams with 59. Longmore, the next M.L.A., was twelfth with 45; Nimmo and Laurens, M.L.A.s, came fourteenth (equal) with 41. Longmore, however, was elected President—perhaps a sign that it was felt there should be some tie with the party and the Government. In that case, it is significant that it should be not Berry but his most violent colleague who was chosen.
39. Argus, 1 June 1877. The words, and perhaps the idea, are Mirams'.
40. Argus, 1 March 1878.
of the club; even Mechanics Institutes, Farmers' Clubs or Manufacturers' Associations found them an unclubbable people. Secondly, despite political co-operation between middle and working class radicals, differences of dress, interests and experience, helped promote a feeling of "us" and "them". This could usually be contained in political contacts, where there was common ground; in social contacts there was none. And this assumes a goodwill which was not always present. As The Argus gloatingly put it, 42

"The social intercourse did not come off. The more the members of the party saw of each other, the less apparently, they liked each other."

The League's invasion of patronage has already been mentioned; it is enough here to quote the M.L.A. 43 who, approached by a deputation, remarked bitterly, "Why the devil don't you go to a member of the Reform League?" They can do more for you than I."

Another was the League's part in maintaining

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41. Even in this institution there seems to have been a feeling that clubs were for the middle classes; of the fourteen officers, committee men, etc. (Argus, 16 February 1878) only two at the outside were working men (Douglass and Yeomans), and the four officers were all M.L.A.s.

42. Argus, 25 November 1878.

43. Ararat Advertiser, 4 March 1879.
discipline. Backsliders might find themselves called upon to resign by their local branches or a public meeting organised by them. 44 A gentler hint was contained in the series of meetings in favour of the Embassy, 45 although there were no demands for resignations. Admittedly, these were the only cases of such electoral pressures actually being applied until late in 1879, when only the quick resolution of the tariff crisis prevented a spate of similar meetings. 46 Like the unsuccessful attempt to use this weapon against O'Loghlen's motion of no confidence in 1881, 47 however, these showed that the deterrent had ceased to deter. It would be remarkable if it did not make even loyal parliamentarians resent the League.

In these functions, it operated as the Government's ally to the detriment of its relations with the party. During 1878 it also alienated the Government, and so lost its authority over

44. Argus, 22 March and 22 April 1878.
45. Argus, 12 and 27 November 1878.
46. Argus, 21 and 29 August 1879.
47. Age, 27-29 June 1881.
patronage. The Council was generally extremist and often irresponsible; many of its members possessed that strain of working class suspicion of those who, although fighting the battle of the people, had many of the trappings of the people's enemies, and who, although in many cases they had begun as working men and still thought of themselves as such, were now plainly middle class in varying degree, and in outlook were subjected to the moderating influences of Parliament. They were also more exposed to the moderating influence of their electors, who seem to be generally less extreme than militants.48

There were extremists in the party, and in the Cabinet, but they were not particularly strong. Munro's right wing was at least as numerous as the left. Both combined, however, made up only a small percentage of the whole; the bulk of the party followed Berry with little hesitation. In fact, the ascendancy which Berry early established, rooted in the personal as well as the political allegiance of

48. Munro's victory at Carlton by some 200 votes (Argus, 3 December 1879) following his resignation at the demand of a public meeting, to gamble on a great propaganda coup while the Reform Bill was before the House, suggests that this was so even in Melbourne. Elsewhere, electors held views and had interests different from, or opposed to, those of the Melbourne doctrinaires.
his followers, was one of the most potent forces in holding the majority together, and in influencing its character. Despite occasional impetuosity, he was at this time always dignified and courteous in Parliament and on the platform, and as Deakin put it, "the most conservative man in his own Ministry". As party leader he had to devise policies and tactics which could obtain the support of the majority of the party, of The Age and, at first, of independents like Service and Casey; extreme measures were therefore to be avoided if possible. Apart from Black Wednesday, which came after the Legislative Council had rejected its chance of compromise, Berry as Premier was a good deal more moderate than Berry as erecter of the stonewall, or Berry as aggrieved agitator. Black Wednesday was in fact the end of the violent, although not of the radical Berry. When members of the Protection League had expressed doubts about him in 1875, they had sensed a difference in personality which Berry's sense of rejection had

then kept in check; by 1878 his position and responsibilities had once more brought out the difference. Of the limitations on his power as head of a Government faced by a depression and a hostile Upper House, none of the League Council had any experience, and many had no conception; compromises, changes of front, delays, were suspected as betrayals.

All was well at first, as the colony awaited the coming conflict, and the Government began carrying out its programme. In preparation for the tariff revision the League set up a committee\textsuperscript{50} to consult manufacturers and trades, and recommend changes to the Government. The details of the report it presented to the Government are unknown, but as it came seven hours before Berry's Budget Speech, it was probably not a determining influence.\textsuperscript{51} His tariff\textsuperscript{52} cut or abolished some 'vexatious' duties, and increased protection elsewhere, but increases were few and slight, and reductions, generally those proposed by a committee of softgoodsmen,\textsuperscript{53}

50. \textit{Argus}, 14 July 1877.
53. \textit{Argus}, 18 August 1877.
did not include the abolition of the duty on tea and sugar. Berry pleaded the financial dangers of carrying out all the Government's fiscal changes at once when a probable deficit required increased taxation, but to the ultra-protectionists this cannot have been entirely convincing; nor was his land tax, a reintro-
duction of his 1875 proposal, the heavily progressive measure they expected.

Then the Railway Bill included the purchase of the Melbourne and Hobson's Bay Railway, which partisanship had led Berry to oppose as a waste of money and a gross job when proposed by McCulloch. On the same day as the Council decided to organise agitations in support of the 'tack', the Government was persuaded by the Ministerial Corner to put it before the Upper House in a separate Bill. Even after the Legislative Council had made the battle inevitable, Berry's delay for the Governor to consult Downing Street, whose lack of authority

54. V.P.D., Vol. 26, p. 504. When Munro stated that the land tax was the same one which appeared in the League programme, Nimmo, Fergusson and Andrew leapt up to deny that it was progressive. (Argus, 6 September 1877.)

55. Argus, 5 July 1878.

56. Argus, 30 November 1877.
over internal affairs was an article of radical faith, provoked a League deputation, urging Ministers to hold a plebiscite, pointing out that correspondence showed great eagerness to help the Government and strong opposition to compromise.

Black Wednesday made up for all hesitations. Enthusiastic co-operation was the order of the day; the double radicals found their brief fulfilment. Then the Ministry began the long campaign for Reform. For the moment unity lingered, and to forestall suggestions that the proposal had not been endorsed by the country Berry adopted the reform scheme in the League's manifesto. As the Budget approached, however, the ultra protectionists again prepared to exact the fulfilment of past promises, strengthened by Yeomans' accession to the Secretaryship, and by the increasing unemployment which, to a protectionist, showed levels of protection to be inadequate.

The Government, however, was as conscious of falling revenue as of falling employment, and

57. Argus, 3 January 1878; Ararat Advertiser, 4 January 1878.
58. Argus, 3 June 1878.
anxious to avoid diversions from the Reform Bill, which might divide the party. The Council itself was not united. Some felt that "protection was not protection unless it prohibited importation"; others opposed this extreme, or supported the Government's wish to postpone the question.\(^{59}\) Another committee was therefore set up, but although it collected information it made no recommendations that year.\(^{60}\)

Meanwhile, Yeomans had been taking a hand in the deputations of the unemployed seeking relief work, or assurances that certain Government requirements would be obtained from Victorian sources.\(^{61}\) When he introduced another deputation\(^{62}\) to thank the Government for its decisions, he ended characteristically by urging that the best way to ensure full employment was to introduce that really progressive land tax of which the ultras had been cheated in 1877. About the same time,

\(^{59}\) *Argus*, 9 and 16 July 1878. The quotation is from the former reference, remarks by Henry Harratt, ironfounder.

\(^{60}\) At the Annual meeting (*Argus*, 29 October 1878) Yeomans said in his report that the sub-committee had gathered a good deal of information, on the basis of which submissions would be made to the Government. There is no sign that any recommendations were made, and it is quite likely that the project disappeared during the League's crisis early in 1879.

\(^{61}\) *Argus*, 8 August 1878.

\(^{62}\) *Argus*, 3 September 1878.
he was urging the Council to demand a say in
the allocation of development funds. 63 At the
Annual Meeting, he ended his report with hints
about protection and the land tax. 64 These
activities led many to wonder if they had created
a Frankenstein's monster. 65 At the Annual Meeting,
Berry, who had previously spoken of the League as
permanent, hinted that it should disband when the
Reform Bill was passed. The Age joined The Argus
in calling the Council a self-appointed clique
dictating to the representatives of the people. 66
But the fall of Yeomans was imminent. His enemy,
Munro, attended with some allies the Council
meeting of January 1879. He failed to influence
the election of the new Council or to discover more
about charges which rumour laid against Yeomans.
When one of Yeomans' supporters wrote to The Age
a letter of sneering triumph, Munro's reply set
before the public the charges which he had heard
from Elliott, the Assistant Secretary, of embezzling

63. Argus, 11 and 15 October 1878.
64. Argus, 29 October 1878.
65. Ararat Advertiser, 17 January 1879.
66. Argus, 24 September 1878, 15 October 1878.
League funds and selling his influence over patronage. The Council was obliged to set up a committee of inquiry. This divided equally; the official report, as presented by the Chairman, exonerated Yeomans; a dissidents' report brought in a verdict of not proven only. When the meeting narrowly decided against reading the evidence, Munro and others left. The victors turned on Elliott who had offered his resignation and presented his account; as he refused to withdraw the accusations, he and his account were dismissed.

He had given The Argus the true story, as his opponent Fisher admitted, instead of the smoothed-out version published in The Age; he now raised more accusations against Yeomans. The West Bourke and Footscray election muddles were just over. Anxious to rehabilitate itself, the Council capitulated. Fisher and Walsh, who, according to Elliott, had signed the report exonerating Yeomans with the promise to hand in

68. *Argus*, 7-11 March 1879.
69. *Argus*, 10 and 24 March 1879.
later the resignation which he had entrusted to them, as being the least damaging course, started a subscription to pay Elliott. Signatories of the other report protested that those who had voted for his expulsion should meet the whole bill; they were then accused of setting up a faction inside the League to destroy it.  

However, the account was settled; soon Yeomans, protesting innocence and disinterest, resigned, and Mirams was elected in his place. This marked the end, not only of Yeomans, but of the League as an independent power. Despite Yeomans' aspirations and the fears these aroused, however, the position of the parliamentarians was stronger than the ultras thought or the Opposition suspected. The League's power was limited by its small electoral basis and its internal divisions. Control of patronage, works and selectors' leases made the Ministry a powerful independent force, and it could appeal to country jealousy of Melbourne, the centre of League scheming. The parliamentary party commanded a large amount of local influence and included the greatest platform.

70. Argus, 25 March 1879.

71. Argus, 4 April, 1879.
draws. Above all, it contained Graham Berry. The Age, for all its virulent tone, was moderate in policy and therefore would not support the wild men of the League. The Council therefore lacked control of the largest numbers, the strongest propaganda weapons and the most powerful direct electoral influence; nor was it independent itself, since the Government provided a significant part of its funds.

The condition of the League was now perilous; the Council was isolated from the party, divided and short of money; the number of branches had fallen and the Council had irritated some of the strongest. On Berry's return the final Reform campaign was expected, with a general election within a few months. Farmers and Catholics were restive.

The Fitzroy by-election further damaged the League's image. Mirams, anxious to heal divisions in the Council, appeared with Yeomans to address the local branch, which, with some ministerial activity, provoked murmurs of 'interference'.

When a deputation from a large public meeting

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72. Argus, 13 June 1879; Age, 26 June 1879.
condemned the branch as unrepresentative and asked the Council to withhold endorsement, he showed that little had changed when he exclaimed, "If we are to be a power in the land, we must put the heel of authority on this innovation and crush it out". The dissidents, failing to persuade William Vale to stand, resolved to abstain or support the Opposition candidate. Two days later, in a low poll, he won by 82 votes.

Already, however, the League's last rally had begun. The return of Mirams and Longmore to Council meetings had improved relations with the party, although Munro cannot have rejoiced at the replacement of left-wing militants by left-wing M.L.A.s. Berry's return had been the occasion for another great demonstration. To channel this into reviving radical enthusiasm and refurbishing the League, a delegate conference was arranged to coincide with the annual meeting and the welcoming banquet.

73. *Argus*, 16, 17 and 24 June 1879.
74. *Argus*, 24 June 1879.
75. *Argus*, 18 June 1879.
76. *Argus*, 2 and 4 July 1879.
The conference, and the programme it approved, sought a new unity and determination; the endorsement of Fisher's proposals defining the organisation, and especially the relations between branches and Council, gave it organisational expression. Conference, rules and programme took it finally out of the company of the urban leagues from which it was descended; the acceptance of the programme by a powerful government made it greater than the Land Convention. With the alliance of an external organisation with a considerable section of the Assembly in 1875, the substance of the first modern political party in Victoria, foreshadowed in the Loyal Liberal Reform Association, had appeared; with the reorganisation of 1876-7 the alliance had been confirmed; with the development of the caucus system in Parliament and the reorganisation of the League, much of the form had gathered around the substance.

However, the branches at the conference had come from the Melbourne-Ballarat-Geelong triangle only. The items of the programme, discussed separately, were endorsed as they had been proposed, in the vaguest fashion, the variety of opinions and qualifications
boding ill for unity whenever the Government tried to frame legislation. Ballarat protested at metropolitan domination of the conference, and proposed its own additions. Its two lesser proposals were accepted, but not the two greater. Longmore, the Chairman, ruled the conference with a rod of iron.

The new rules' provision for quarterly reports to the Council on the strength, resources and activities of each branch, and annual returns of names and addresses of all members were probably not observed meticulously, nor can many branches have paid their affiliation fees. The by-election procedures, which tried to associate Council, branch and electors in the selection of the candidate, still left the Council's role uncertain. It was to be consulted immediately a vacancy occurred, and invited to advise a meeting of branch members which, after a public meeting had heard those candidates who promised to accept the League's decision, was to select by ballot. Whether it could veto the branch's choice, propose its own man, or take over if the branch could not find or

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77. Walsh Collection, loose printed sheet dated 1 October 1870.
agree on a candidate, was not mentioned. A great deal was left to the "marked esprit de corps" appealed to in the last rule. Clearly any organisation or procedure is likely to break down without this, nor can rules cover all contingencies, but the recent behaviour of Longmore and Mirams had just shown that the change of management had not changed the Council's nature.

Of the four by-elections before the end of the Parliament, three\textsuperscript{78} occurred in circumstances which prevented the rules being tested. In the fourth, however, they were tested and found wanting. Munro met a local vote of censure on his opposition to the Reform Bill\textsuperscript{79} by resigning and standing for re-election. The local branch agreed with him on the Reform Bill and supported his candidature; the Council passed Mirams' motion condemning both decisions, and the Government influence was used.

\textsuperscript{78} At West Bourke, where Deakin had resigned to recontest because of allegations that he would have lost if lack of ballot-papers at Newham had not prevented a complete poll, there was no question about candidates. (Deakin, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 35-8, 41-3.) At Villiers and Heytesbury, there was no local League, and, as a general election was imminent, no radical candidate could be found unless the Council sent one, which it did. (\textit{Argus}, 5, 6, 8 and 17 December 1879). The Government lost both elections.

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Age}, 19 November 1879.
for Munro's opponent. The rules had been ignored on both sides; the marked *esprit de corps* was markedly absent.

However, if reorganisation had come too late, the Council set about preparing for the election vigorously. The Council remained united, relations with the Government remained close, the coffers were refilled, the number of branches was raised to a record level. The League entered the election with a clear programme, a refurbished organisation and a united leadership. Its Government was defeated, its power was broken.

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80. *Argus*, 21 and 22 November 1879; 3 December 1879.

81. *Argus*, 11, 18, 22 and 25 November 1879; 6 December 1879; 9 January 1880.
IV. The League's Opponents.

The opposition to the League was far more formidable than in 1877. Radicals themselves were divided between a Berryite majority and a Munroite minority, the former supported by the N.R.P.L., the latter by the hastily-assembled Liberal Association. Although opposed to Berry, this organisation derived from the radical tradition, with its branch structure and its definite programme of reform. Two things distinguished the latter:¹ support for Munro's Reform proposals, as being practical politics, and maintenance of the Education Act, put second. The N.R.P.L. had avoided commitment over education,² but Munro, although not vocally anti-Catholic, was an Orangeman. So was the Association's secretary, Thomas Arkle; J.B. Crews, whose advocacy and influence helped found the Prahran Branch,³ was another, and seems from his emphasis on education to have supported Munro on that ground alone. The Association also attracted radicals like George Parsons, who, with other N.R.P.L. men, joined the

¹. Argus, 1 January 1880.
². Argus, 4 July 1879.
³. Argus, 28 January 1880. Prahran was one of the few branches outside areas already represented by Corner M.L.A.s.
Association's North Melbourne branch bitterly comparing the Government's achievements with its assailing 1877 promises, Berry's reception of the unemployed.  

Outside Melbourne and Sandhurst, where Corner M.L.A.'s were concentrated, no branches are discernible. Lack of time partly accounted for this, but more important was the Association's basic dilemma: how to fight the majority without assisting common enemies. The result was a decision to keep out of constituencies where the Ministry was fighting constitutionalists, which left few seats to contest. Except as a number of local committees, the Association hardly appeared at the elections; afterwards, it disappeared. A new organisation needed quick success; the unexpected defeat of Casey and Munro was therefore a severe blow, although both lost for reasons far removed from

4. Argus, 10 January 1880.
5. Argus, 29 January 1880.
the Reform Bill. Berry, moreover, had been hinting at dropping those clauses to which the Corner objected. The Liberal Association was in fact more important for the division in radical ranks of which it was the expression than because it was an organisation of great power.

The more dangerous adversary was the complex of constitutionalist organisations which had developed since 1877. For the Free Trade League that year had been as disastrous as for McCulloch. Of its leaders, Langton and Murray Smith had lost safe seats; Professor Hearn, shunted from constituency to constituency, had been defeated in Fitzroy, where one seat had been reasonably expected; Colin Campbell, whose former seat had been dismembered by redistribution, was eventually sent to Brighton, a moderately well-to-do constituency, but securely held by Thomas Bent, who

6. Casey was defeated at least partly because of the Catholic vote. (Above, p.242) Munro's Carlton, a rapidly-expanding suburb in the late 'seventies, had an unusually high percentage of young Australians among its adult population; about 40%. (Census of Victoria, 1881 - Ages of the Population.) whereas Munro had defeated in the November by-election the McCullochite radical he had beaten in 1877, he was opposed in February by the popular, native-born captain of the Carlton football team. There might also have been a shift in Catholic voting; in November, to vote for Munro was to oppose the Government, but by February Munro was more openly opposed to the Catholic claims.

7. Argus, 10 February, 1880.
was, moreover, although opposed to McCulloch, no radical. The only compensation was Lyell's capture of the second seat lately added to Emerald Hill.

The Committee noted that time had been short, that the land tax had overshadowed the tariff, and that Cobden's victory had taken ten years. It complained of lack of support from the rich, but failed to examine itself. At the A.G.M. the Chamber of Commerce was accused of faintheartedness, and probably with some reason. While the League, having helped stir up the protectionists, was issuing a circular calling for monetary and other assistance and denouncing the Government's tariff, a softgoods committee had proposed fiscal changes to Berry and obtained virtually all it asked.

The Land Tax Bill dealt another blow. Landowning M.L.C.s opposed it bitterly, but it passed the Council on the votes of businessmen.

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8. Argus, 2 June 1877. (Citing a perceptive article on the reasons for Berry's victory, from the Pleasant Creek Times.)
10. Argus, 31 August 1877.
11. Argus, 22 September 1877.
13. Parnaby, op.cit., c.5. Pastoralist feelings may be judged from Niel Black's reactions - Black Papers, Black to Gladstone, 15 February 1878.
Mercantile M.L.C.s did help defeat the Appropriations Bill, but merchants outside did not all hail their coup with enthusiasm; many put pressure on Councillors to accept the Iyell-Funro compromise, and when it was rejected, cursed both Houses for destroying business.\(^{14}\)

Despite defeat, and division in the groups which supported it, the League lasted until the end of 1877, but was virtually inactive, presumably existing on the £230-odd remaining in August\(^{15}\) of the money accumulated before May. Its branches in the Western District and Ararat had disappeared before the election; in Melbourne, the annual meeting of the St. Kilda Branch, which should have been the strongest and richest, simply demonstrated that its small income had been overspent.\(^{16}\)

The final blow was Black Wednesday; who could think of Free Trade, a barrier to unity with loyal protectionists,\(^{17}\) when bloodshed and revolution were to be feared? However, Black Wednesday

15. Argus, 31 August 1877.
16. Argus, 30 November 1877. The situation in the Western District is summed up by the Hamilton Spectator, 20 January 1877, 8 March 1877.
17. Cf. Argus, 4 March 1878; Hamilton Spectator, 10 January 1880.
provoked a burst of conservative organisation. In Hamilton, news of Black Wednesday was headed, "Commencement of the Revolution"; the "anti-revolutionists" of Casterton formed a Law and Order Defence League, resolving to set up branches in the area and meet, with representatives of Shire and Borough Councils, in a Law and Order Convention; the paper later seriously discussed Western District separation from a revolutionary Victoria.\textsuperscript{18} By the end of the month, however, talk of revolution disappeared; the branches of the league, now the Constitutional Association, were soon consulting about a candidate for Normanby. The Hamilton Spectator's expectation that with the end of the crisis, and of prospects of an election, the local leagues would disappear, was soon verified.\textsuperscript{19}

Contemporary organisations in Geelong and Ballarat\textsuperscript{20} were normal political bodies from the start, although the note of mutual protection against dangers undefined was occasionally sounded. The Ballarat Association atrophied like its Normanby

\textsuperscript{18} Hamilton Spectator, 10 January 1878, 2 and 14 February 1878.
\textsuperscript{19} Hamilton Spectator, 5 March 1878, 9 April 1878.
\textsuperscript{20} Argus, 28 February 1878, 4 March 1878.
fellows, but the Geelong Political Reform Association survived until 1882. It met frequently, busying itself with registration, founding branches, and holding public meetings. Its fainéant branches were slow to appear and quick to vanish, but the central body survived. During the first election of 1880, it helped its President, Charles Andrews, to run second only to Berry. In July he was narrowly defeated, but during the August ministerial elections he came within 50 votes of defeating the Chief Secretary.

No other local constitutionalist organisation lasted so long as this, which was still alive enough to participate in the two Geelong by-elections of 1881-2, but during the latter half of 1879, as the return of Berry to take up the Reform question again promised renewed agitation, perhaps another Black Wednesday and certainly a general election, local constitutionalist associations began to appear all over Victoria, under various names, each with its sub-branches in the rest of the electorate.

24. *Argus*, 22 May 1879; 11 and 14 July 1879; 5 and 16 September 1879; 15 and 27 November 1879.
In a curiously conservative version of the stump tour, the Opposition caucus arranged that all its M.I.A.s should address their constituents; the more prominent members of the party accepted invitations to speak at the inaugurations of the local associations. Once established, these set about selecting candidates. Their methods of selection were as various as their names. In South Bourke, each divisional committee decided whom to support, some by ballot, some by acclamation, and delegates were instructed accordingly for the central committee meeting. In Grenville, where one delegate was allowed for every two hundred electors, they went unfettered to the central meeting. At Emerald Hill, the committee, having considered seven names, and found three willing to run with the sitting candidate or to withdraw if not selected, chose sixty constitutionalists at random from the electoral rolls and asked them to select by ballot. The Ballarat constitutionalists

25. Argus, 8 May 1879.
27. Argus, 30 January 1880, 4 February 1880.
successfully tried the risky method of holding a public meeting which set up an executive committee, heard the three candidates, and selected by show of hands, although the defeated had the right, which he declined to exercise, to call for a ballot.\textsuperscript{29}

In yet other places, such as Mornington,\textsuperscript{30} no organisations appeared, and older methods prevailed.

Once again, the conservative suspicion of political organisation was shaping the political forms they adopted when they had no choice but to organise. Local independence and variety was much in evidence; there was no formal central machinery such as the N.R.P.L. was evolving at that time, nor even the simpler forms which had been adopted by the Constitutional Association. The new organisations resembled this body, however, in their lack of interest in producing a political programme, such as the N.R.P.L. was then devising.

The Geelong P.R.A. may be taken as typical in this respect. It set out its aims,\textsuperscript{31} not as a list of proposed legislation, but as a set of 'principles': it professed a concern for unspecified

\textsuperscript{29} Ballarat Courier, 23 December 1879.

\textsuperscript{30} Argus, 20 January 1880.

\textsuperscript{31} Argus, 4 March 1878.
liberal legislation, Government by legal and constitutional means, and the restoration of that social harmony which had been disturbed by the demagogues. Its meetings discussed the Government's latest iniquity, or such curiously Pétainist topics as National Christianity, National Loyalty, National Morality and National Unity, \(^{32}\) not what precise tasks lay ahead of a Constitutionalist Government. It aimed, in short, simply at rallying the gentlemen of Victoria to thrust the jacquerie out from the national boardroom. Unlike the Constitutional Association and the Free Trade League, however, the movement was not a Melbourne society amateurishly trying to wake up the provinces; it arose from within the provinces and the suburbs themselves. It did not provide machinery suited for agitation like the N.R.P.L., but this was not a function to which conservatives were suited, and to undertake it would have been to deny themselves. During 1879, moreover, when at last they experienced the unfamiliar sensation of feeling public opinion moving in their favour, it was not agitation that was needed, so much as machinery to avoid the waste of candidates and votes which had cost them so dear in 1877.

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32. Argus, 8 February 1879.
In doing so they gradually evolved a
distinctively conservative selection technique.
In most cases, this presented no difficulty.
Sitting constitutionalists were left alone, and
in most other seats the selection was accepted
either for the sake of the cause or because it had
diminished the chances of the rejected. Where
the selection was not accepted by all candidates,
or no selection machinery existed, a variety of
arbitration methods - a commercial rather than a
political method of settling disputes - were
employed. It started at St. Kilda, where one of
the safest constitutionalist and free trade seats
in Victoria had been lost in 1877 because of poor
voting discipline, and where, despite the new
organisation set up for the February election,
there was general disagreement over the second
candidate. Eventually, the two contestants sub-
mitted to arbitration by their friends, and the
second seat was regained.\(^{33}\) As practised during
the by-elections of 1880-2, it involved basically
a selection committee of friends of each candidate,
with umpires, discussing until general agreement was

\(^{33}\) Argus, 9 February 1880.
reached, generally without a vote. It could, however, become quite complicated. Three candidates sought endorsement for Boroondara, another well-to-do Melbourne constituency, in February 1882. Each selected three friends, the nine selected two more; the eleven agreed to accept the result of a vote. As the first ballot gave nobody an absolute majority, the lowest was eliminated and the issue decided by a second ballot.34

This election also demonstrated a danger of this method. It worked because a sense of party had prevailed over the old localist and individualist assumptions about representation, but it had not destroyed them, so that candidates who stood down at one election could, and did, claim preference for the next vacancy. In this case, all went well, W.F. Walker, whom Service had intended for his successor at Maldon, had retired there as a result of arbitration, and having claimed preference at Boroondara,35 was selected and victorious.

34. *Argus*, 18, 20 and 21 February 1880.
The conservatives were not entirely without central organisation however. They had two, one permanent, one temporary, and both suited to conservative attitudes towards politics. The permanent body was the National Registration Society, created in February 1878 as a result of Black Wednesday. Its original functions were those the name suggests although extended later. Why this sort of organisation was chosen instead of one in the Constitutional Association or Free Trade League tradition is not clear. The failure of the latter was probably one factor, and very likely fear of some sort of reprisals was another.

The structure was rather like that originally proposed for the National Reform League, without the branches. A shilling subscription gave a vote for the committee, while £5 entitled to a seat on the general council. This advised the committee, the

36. The N.R.S. maintained a discreet, commercial silence over its operations except in the two cases on which this account is based: the 1880 report (Daily Telegraph, 2 April 1880) and the accounts of the foundation of the Dundas Branch. (Hamilton Spectator, 10 and 29 January 1880)

37. Just what sort of reprisals the conservatives feared is not clear; public employers, selectors or Government contractors might be affected, but hardly the 'local Aristocracy' which ran the Geelong association. It was probably an irrational fear that the men of Black Wednesday would stop at nothing, a conservative counterpart of the radicals' tendency to see conspiracies everywhere.
committee elected the officers and, presumably, appointed the paid secretary, the experienced and efficient Joseph Jones. The West Melbourne by-elections came before it was functioning properly, but although formed too late to influence the result, it struck at some of the bases of the Perryite victory by prosecuting the returning officer and one of his deputies, and successfully removing three hundred names which had no business to be on the roll, at the next Revision Court. Conversely, the 1880 report claimed the enrolment of many thousands of constitutionalists, and very likely it was this organisation which arranged the unusually efficient use of plural voting and transport at the February election.

Its registration activities apparently covered the whole colony, if the report's claims be true, that its detailed information on all constituencies was invaluable to the Constitutional Election Committee of 1880, and probably the code of instructions for registration which it had drawn up was distributed widely, but the rare references to it appear mostly in Melbourne. The report confirms this, but claims
the creation of similar societies in some country electorates, and the organisation of secret help in others where Government reprisals were feared. The only National Registration Society branch seems to have been at Dundas, in the Western District, which Jones was asked to set up, but as he said that he had been active in creating similar bodies, it is quite likely that he was connected with the emergence of constitutionalist organisations elsewhere.

Without the Registration Society constitution- alists would have been at a disadvantage, for organisations set up near elections lacked time and experience to deal with registration unaided, while effective political intelligence for parliamentarians took time to establish. During and after 1880, the organisation added another service, helping local conservatives out of selection difficulties, in co-operation with a caucus committee first set up late in 1879 to oversee the central election campaign and help local associations ensure that only the optimum number of candidates was run. It left some of this work to the Registration Society, apparently where there were local reasons for doing so, but in
most cases it was considered more fitting for this function to belong to a committee of men of standing elected by the people, rather than by a private political society, after the fashion of the National Reform and Protection League. After nomination day, it considered who had the best chance where candidates were still too numerous, apparently on the basis of Registration Society intelligence, and asked the rest to retire. It failed only twice, and in both cases the electors supported its choice, with hardly a murmur about 'interference'.

The same central organisation appeared in July, whereafter the parliamentary caucus met as by-elections required. The 1883 election was worked in the same way, but as with the radicals, local organisations were in decay. Of the organisations of February 1880, practically all had vanished. So had the handful of local political and registration societies, some very businesslike, which had developed from election committees after

39. Age, 5 August 1880; Argus, 30 June 1880, 2 July 1880, 1 and 2 February 1881, 1 March 1881.
40. Argus, 2 February 1883.
July 1880. The only notable exception outside Geelong was at Fitzroy, stimulated by close by-elections and active leadership. But by then, the radical organisation was in much the same condition. As the parties moved towards the coalition of 1883, their forms of organisation moved together and atrophied. When there was, as it seemed, nothing to fight about, there was little need for electoral organisation, still less for agitational associations. The gentlemanly-commercial ideal of politics came as near realisation, perhaps, as it could.

41. Argus, 24 July 1880, 21 August 1880, 16 September 1880.

42. Age, 31 March 1882, 18 April 1882.
V. Decline and Fall of the National Reform and Protection League.

Defeat destroyed the prestige which the previous two years had tarnished. The League also lost access to Government favours, and although not heralding a general purge, Service's decision that electoral officers must sever connections with all political associations or lose their posts, did result in several changes;¹ the power of Berry and of the League had been shown to be impermanent. Finally, the League was short of money.²

While the Council's appeal for funds was being circulated, however, some things could be done cheaply. Some branches were soon busy with registration and a few new branches were set up.³

Meanwhile, when the Exhibition Commissioners appointed by Service voted to allow the display of furniture made by the few Chinese, the Berryites, already trying to smear Service as an enemy of the workers, attached themselves to the revived Anti-Chinese League, subsidised by Trade Unions and led by working

1. V.P.D., Vol. 34, pp. 73-93.
2. Mount Alexander Mail, 17 March 1880. (Circular from the Council)
3. Age, 16 and 24 April 1880, 8 May 1880.
class leaguers like Gration, Trenwith and Murphy.  

The League was working its way back, gradually restoring its finances, organising a few public meetings against the Service Reform Bill, when the July election was exploded beneath it. The radicals had to fight again, as Deakin put it (with some exaggeration) "with an irregular and motley crew of candidates, with empty purses, dispirited by reverses and needing nothing but a sharp blow to split into fragments. --- The electors were weary and so were we ---."  

The radicals\' election appeal was based primarily on the suggestion that they alone had the people's interests at heart, so that their opponents' measures must, if examined closely, prove devices to enslave the masses. Suggestions, during the February campaign, that Service would have dispossessed selectors wholesale and met the unemployed with police repression, had been demonstrated to be nonsense. Now the Exhibition episode was seized 

4. Argus, 12 May 1880.
5. Argus, 29 May 1880.
7. Argus, 10 February 1880.
upon by men who needed not, perhaps, just victory but also confirmation that the whole basis of five years' gruelling political warfare had not been an illusion. A minor official's acceptance of a small Chinese tender for locomotive fuel was set beside the affair of the Exhibition chairs, attributed directly to ministerial policy, and presented as a reactionary assault on wages. A remark of Service's was twisted to suggest that he thought five shillings a week adequate wages, and a tent adequate accommodation, for any workman. The Service Reform Bill was tortuously interpreted as a plot against manhood suffrage, and the dissolution as a deep-laid plot to weary the people of elections and bankrupt the radical party.8

The condition of public opinion, and the closing of the gap between the rival Reform Bills, made dramatic cries essential. The condition of the League and the lack of warning led the parliamentarians to create their own election committee.9 One or two branches were strong and active, a few more were able to promise candidates their election expenses, but in general, few appeared in the news, and some only to demonstrate weakness

8. Age, 16-22 June 1880; Argus, 6, 14 and 19 July 1880. and cf. Age, 12 July 1880 - "Throughout the texture of the Service policy one design runs like a thread, to crush out liberalism in this colony and transfer power from the working classes to the wealthy."

and disorganisation. 10

Nevertheless Berry managed slightly to
increase the narrow majority by which he had
defeated Service, partly with some return of Catholic
support, partly with the end of divisions in the
radical ranks. Soon, however, having placated the
moderates, he alienated his ultras. The parliamentary
situation and his own inclinations produced a Ministry
which, in personnel and policy, was much closer to
the Opposition than in 1879. The former Ministers,
Longmore and Woods, were soon giving trouble; others
objected to the appointment of H.R. Williams, a
returned renegade. Mirams, passed over for a portfolio
and having seen another renegade chosen Chairman of
Committees, offered his resignation as League
Secretary and moved to the Corner, now filled with
ultras. 11 Fortunately for the League, no open breach
yet occurred. The Annual Meeting re-elected Longmore
President and Mirams Secretary; Walsh and Levers,
re-elected as Vice-Presidents, were joined by A.T.
Clark, M.L.A., another ultra. Despite the presence

10. The extremes are represented by the Bacchus
Marsh and the Normanby branches. Age, 22 June 1880;
Hamilton Spectator, 3-10 July 1880.

11. Argus, 18 August 1880, 2 September 1880;
10 and 11 September 1880.

12. Argus, 4 December 1880.
in the new Corner of L.L. Smith and Gaunson, freelandes who bitterly opposed the League, 'Timotheus' had reason to call it 'the party of the League'.

In preparation for the final battle of the Reform campaign it called a second conference in November. Although there was no electoral programme to draw up, no enthusiasm for reorganisation, and discussions had a tired or defensive tone, Berry's address sounded optimistic as ever. July had shown, he said, how a few months of 'Toryism' disgusted the people, and in returning prosperity divined its perpetual eclipse. He may also have had in mind another direction in which conditions seemed to be turning in his favour. Since 1874, the number of new, native-born voters added each year had been increasing rapidly, and they now formed a considerable part of the electorate. To Berry these were natural radicals, who, he said, would replace those whom prosperity and respectability had turned conservative. The Ballarat League had reorganised

15. Census of Victoria, 1881; General Report, Diagram 3.
16. Argus, 26 August 1880, 1 August 1881.
itself onto a ward basis to canvass these new voters more thoroughly as early as 1879; after the July election, the movement became more general.

It is not mentioned in any reports of the League Council's meetings, unless The Argus was right in saying that the Echuca Branch's attempt to set up a nativist auxiliary was the result of instructions from Melbourne. If instructions were issued, they must have been in very general terms, to judge from the variety of approach. The new Campbell's Creek Branch simply put the age of eligibility at eighteen; in Geelong, although a separate organisation was set up, the original intention seems to have been a natives' branch. The purely local and independent association was the most common form. There was also an attempt in Melbourne to set up a colony-wide Australian Natives' Democratic Association, whose programme included protection, but like most of the local organisations, this achieved no success. There

18. Argus, 9 September 1880.
19. Age, 27 July 1880; Argus, 31 July 1880; Mount Alexander Mail, 11 August 1880.
was one exception, the organisation set up at
Bendigo by John Quick, M.L.A., which tried to set
up other branches, was busy in the Revision Courts
during 1882 and worked for Quick at the 1883 election. 21

This association also issued a manifesto 22
which suggests one reason why the movement achieved
so little. It praised the work of the immigrant
generation, but described itself as impatient of
old personalities and old party cries. The Ballarat
reorganisation had also been undertaken partly because
the old leaders found the new generation politically
apathetic. Young men voting for the first time in
1880 would have been only nine to twelve years old
when the bitter disputes over land and tariff policy,
the constitutional crises and heavy unemployment of
the 'sixties had ended; there was a great gulf fixed
between their experience and that of their fathers,
who could remember not only all this, but also
digger-hunting, Eureka and the Hungry Forties in
Britain. To the fathers, current politics were a
continuation of the old struggle between squatters

21. *Argus*, 27 and 30 July 1880; *Age*, 22 April 1882,
8 July 1882, 9 February 1883. John Quick, arrived
Victoria aged two in 1854; mining machinery operator,
entered journalism locally, then in The Age, and
qualified as barrister. Later active in federation
movement and federal politics, where he became Sir
John Quick.

and diggers; to their sons, perhaps, they were
the shadow-boxing of old men. Berry might have
been right that the young were natural radicals in
their unquestioning acceptance of what the old had
fought for; but what is universally accepted is
removed from politics, and what is inherited is
never regarded with the same complex of emotions
as what has been won.

Even the old, however, were returning to their
former political apathy. It was impossible to
arouse much public or parliamentary interest in the
latest Reform Bill. Then the divisions in the party
began to affect the League. Berry's endorsement of
the leaguers' old enemy, Munro, selected by the
local branch for the North Melbourne by-election,
widened the rift. Longmore and Mirams bitterly
attacked Berry in the House. 23

Then the Legislative Council suddenly restored
unity. The Opposition in the Assembly had let the
Bill pass easily, but the Council insisted on making
amendments. A conference between the Houses failed. 24

pp. 74-8, gives an inside but much later account
of all these manoeuvres.
During the Easter recess, Berry, although accepting certain amendments for the sake of party unity, uttered ominous warnings about the consequences of blocking Reform. The Council of the League held two stormy meetings about Berry's concessions; at the first, most were for rejecting them, but agreed to consult Berry. The second ended in a narrow majority for acceptance. The Treasurer resigned, and it appeared that Longmore and Mirams had resigned a month earlier. The Age announced that thirty branches had come to a decision, all but two expressing confidence in the Ministry, while urging it to seek further concessions, but those meetings which were reported showed much disagreement and weariness.

Then the Upper House refused the compromise. Berry forgot his hesitations, forecast another titanic struggle, refused all concessions, and urged branches to prepare for another election.

25. Age, 23 April 1881; Argus, 17 May 1881.
27. Age, 4 June 1881.
28. Age, 24 May 1881; Argus, 17 May 1881, 1 and 2 June 1881.
29. Age, 13 June 1881.
The Council of the League, at a crowded meeting, called unanimously on the Government to adjourn, introduce a stiffer Bill next session, and if that were rejected, call on the Imperial Parliament to pass it.  

Caucus supported Berry's proposal to lay the Bill aside. All seemed ready for another bout of 'Berryism', in which divisions should be healed in the hue and cry after the enemies of the people. But the caucus meeting had been small; the vote had gone 27-8, and three of the minority had refused to follow the majority, understanding from the Opposition that the Council was prepared to concede virtually all points in dispute. The Opposition caucus resolved for another conference, and obtained promises from a sufficient number of M.L.C.'s to ensure the passage of the Bill.

Berry faced a cruel dilemma. If he rejected the compromise he was sure of defeat; if he then obtained a dissolution, as was not likely, the result was doubtful. If he did not obtain a

dissolution, his opponents would form a Government and obtain the credit for reforming the Council. If he accepted the compromise, the ultras, who had some support in the Cabinet, would be finally alienated, and his eventual defeat was equally sure, but at least, as the Opposition would support him, he would first obtain the political advantage and personal satisfaction of being the man who passed the Reform Bill. He accepted the compromise; the Bill passed, and before he could obtain a recess, O'Loghlen brought down the Government.

A few branches sent resolutions of support, or warned their representatives to stand by their leader. The League's new Council called on Corner M.J.A's to oppose O'Loghlen. Several branch representatives came to lobby their members. From the gallery they heard the debate which marked the end of the Berry ascendancy.\textsuperscript{33} Faintly echoing 1876, a few branches demanded a dissolution, but the Governor refused Berry's advice,\textsuperscript{34} and there was no pretext for another stonewall. Berry was exhausted,

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Age, Argus}, 24–28 June 1881; \textit{Argus}, 5 July 1881.

\textsuperscript{34} C.O. 309/122, Despatch No. 90, Normanby to S. of S., 18 July 1881.
the ardent agitators were estranged, his diminished following was unwilling for another agitation or election. The League was not a new creation, but a ruin. The public had just emerged from a period, not of political torpor, but of political frenzy.

Berry returned to the League presidency; an unknown took the posts of both Secretary and Treasurer. Some attempt was made to fight the ministerial elections, but without success.35 Something was achieved, however. The main needs were money, a programme and unity. By late November 1881 the financial position was said to be satisfactory.36 The other problems, closely connected, were intractable. Berry's first policy suggestions,37 the abolition of plural voting, the creation of permanent electoral revision officers and winning the elections under the new Upper House franchise, simply emphasised how little now separated the parties. Only the first two were questions of

35. Argus, 15 and 16 July 1881. The only Minister defeated was Gaunson, because both radicals and constitutionalists, whom he had deserted in turn, united against him. (Argus, 15 July 1881.)
36. Argus, 22 November 1881.
37. Argus, 21 July 1881.
policy, and the second had long been advocated by the Registration Association.

Late that year, with the expiry of the Land Act imminent, Berry took up the leasing system. It might mollify Mirams, who was due to address the N.R.P.L. Council on it following the decision to invite him, Longmore and others to rejoin. It was also understood to have some support among liberal constitutionalists.\textsuperscript{38} It stirred the dead leaves along the Branches; the Ballarat area conference and a few local leagues resolved in its favour.\textsuperscript{39} Early in 1882 Berry produced a more comprehensive programme,\textsuperscript{40} extending his land policy to include repurchase of freehold, but otherwise adding only proposals with which most or all of his opponents would agree.

However, nobody felt strongly about leasing the mallee scrub, and the Government had long before announced its intention to do so.\textsuperscript{41} Berry's attempts to ally with the liberal constitutionalists

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{38.} Argus, 4 October 1881, 22 November 1881; \textit{Ace}, 29 November 1881.
\textsuperscript{39.} Argus, 12 September 1881; \textit{Ace}, 24 and 29 November 1881, 7 February 1882.
\textsuperscript{40.} Argus, 25 March 1882.
\textsuperscript{41.} Cf. O’Loghlen’s speech at the ministerial elections, \textit{Argus}, 14 July 1881.
\end{flushleft}
in defence of the Education Act or of protection had no immediate success. Nor did he attempt an agitation on either question. If the Government was to be defeated before, or perhaps even during the next election, Berry had to convince Francis and his followers, who knew they could control, if not trust the Government, that he had abandoned 'Berryism'.

Nor were the branches prepared for agitation. A few still met regularly, but most had disappeared. Fuller had probably been right when he had told the Fitzroy Branch before Berry's defeat that the League could not face another dissolution. Now even the Ballarat Branches ceased to meet after their area conference. The position in Geelong had been shown by two by-elections to be one of bare existence. When the elections for twelve Legislative Council seats were held late in 1882, the fruits for which the party of 1877 had fought four years, and for which it had been broken, were lost; the League Council made no movement, and only in North Yarra

43. *Argus*, 1 June 1881.
44. *Ballarat Courier*, 13 September 1881. The last Ballarat meeting was held on 7 October 1881, although there was some attempt to use the name of the N.R.F.D. at the 1883 election. (*Ballarat Courier*, 10 February, 1883.)
Province, where they returned one candidate, did local leaguers show any vitality. 45

Then O'Loghlen sprang the 1883 dissolution. The Opposition caucus met next day, resolving into an election committee under the name of the Central Liberal League, which, said the advertisement, "for all election purposes will take the place of the REFORM and PROTECTION League." 46 Four suburban branches called on Berry, supposing it to be opposed to the N.R.P.L. According to The Age, he told them that it was set up for that election only, because if the old league were called together, its brawling would damage the party. According to The Argus, they were informed that the old League was so disorganised that immediate action was impossible. 47 Both observations would have been justified. The branches were satisfied. The N.R.P.L. Council registered its own death by giving in its adherence to the new league. 48 Where the N.R.P.L. had failed in 1880, its organisation still

46. Argus, 1 and 3 February 1883.
47. Age, Argus, 3 February 1883.
48. Argus, 5 February 1883.
formidable, the Government influence on its side, the public intensely interested, the Central Liberal League was unlikely to succeed. Nor did it. A few local organisations still functioned, but not vigorously; confronted with country deputations seeking candidates, it usually declined to help, saying that there was no time for adequate canvassing by strangers in country areas. 49

The League's career had ended with neither a bang nor even a whimper, and this organisation which some had feared was becoming the real ruler of Victoria, was soon practically forgotten. Yet its achievements were considerable, not the least of these having been to have lasted so long. It had shown some skill in adapting itself from the role of promotional association to that of a national party organisation, introducing the annual party conference, attempting to define relations within the party, even experimenting with a youth movement. It had made widespread use of systematic election machinery, and materially assisted in maintaining an unusual level of party discipline and achieving the

49. The problems and defects of the new organisation are summarised in Mount Alexander Mail, 3, 14 and 20-22 February 1883.
first important measure of direct taxation and the first significant reduction in the power of the Council.

Its example had been contagious, forcing conservatives into their first effective organisation, along lines which did not simply follow their opponents, but suited their own attitudes. It may have helped encourage the first farmers' organisation which showed signs of becoming effective. Its fame and influence reached radicals in other colonies. The alliance in New South Wales between a Working Man's Defence Association, a Reform League and the Trades and Labour Council during the elections of 1877 may have derived some inspiration from the election a few months earlier in Victoria; at least the N.R.P.I. was sufficiently aware of the movement to send its fraternal greetings.50

Later, when the League was in decline, it had some direct influence in Sydney. Late in 1881, Sydney radicals formed a Protection and Political Reform Association; soon the N.R.P.I. and individual Melbourne radicals were sending letters of congratulation and advice on policy and organisation.

50. Gollan, op.cit., p. 83; Age, 7 September 1877.
and a cordial correspondence was begun, supported by personal visits and mutual hospitality. 51
Berry accepted an invitation to address the Association's first public meeting, where he was introduced as "a gentleman who in his public life had been spoken of time after time in such a way and manner that many persons had really come to the conclusion that he must be something more than human." 52

Three days later, a representative of a Queensland Reform League had discussions with the Sydney committee, and a week later Berry was invited to address protectionists in Brisbane, an invitation which parliamentary duties made him decline. 53

Although the contact between Melbourne and Brisbane does not seem to have persisted, Brisbane and Sydney radicals were still in contact six months later, and Berry made another visit to his New South Wales friends in September. 54 How far Victoria by these contacts influenced radicals in other colonies, who had their own traditions and problems, is beyond

51. S.M.H., 12 October 1881, 23 and 30 November 1881, 21 December 1881, 12 August 1882, 16 September 1882, 16 January 1883.
52. S.M.H., 18 April 1882.
53. S.M.H., 21 and 28 April 1882.
54. S.M.H., 23 September 1882, 9 October 1882.
the scope of this study; it is clear, however, that Victorian radicalism was highly regarded elsewhere, that its views were received with some respect, and that the radical community of Victoria was becoming part of the radical community of Australia.

At about the same time, labour, eventually to become the dominant partner in the next generation of radicalism, was following a similar path. Several of the Victorian working men who were active in the intercolonial conferences, and the movements to obtain industrial legislation and increase the power and cohesion of the unions, were active supporters of Berry and members of the N.R.P.I.. This had been the training ground for many of the men who, in the Labour Party, were eventually to apply successfully and develop further the political methods of the League and of the parliamentary party with which it had been associated. Even several of the policies later particularly associated with Labour, such as the land tax, the leasing system and the national bank, were N.R.P.I. policies.
But just as the roots of the Labour Party lay in Berry's parliamentary and external organisations, so they in turn had grown from many years of experience in petty organisations, many years of small disappointments and insignificant triumphs, the routine of politics and everyday life, the experience of the four nations of the British Isles applied to, and modified by, the rapid creation of a modern society in a remote wilderness.
Abbreviations

Vic. Parliamentary Papers - Papers Presented to Parliament by Command

V. and P. (L.A.) - Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly

V.P.D. - Victoria: Parliamentary Debates

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