

‘A hotbed of Socialism and Radicalism’: the Social Democratic Federation in Erith 1905–1911

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I. Introduction: the SDF and the labour movement

In 1900 the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress [TUC] called a conference of unions and socialist societies which led to the formation of the Labour Representation Committee [LRC]. The socialist societies were the Fabian Society, the Independent Labour Party [ILP] and the Social Democratic Federation [SDF].¹ The SDF lasted less than eighteen months within the national LRC and left citing Labour's lack of commitment to a socialist objective as the reason. However, the SDF – founded in 1881 as an alliance of London Radical clubs – remained an important influence on the Labour Party through the affiliation of trades councils and through local LRCs. Subsequently an impression of the SDF has been given in the historiography of it being ‘alien’, ‘dogmatic’, and ‘intransigent’. As a result, histories of the Labour Party and the labour movement in Britain have been written without a mention of the SDF or, when it is included it is ‘as a warning to other socialists of what not to do’.²

In recent years the work of Karen Hunt, Martin Crick, Graham Johnson and others has done much to dispel the myths about SDF intransigence.³ However, the image lingers long, and publications by eminent political historians can still transmit the negative view of the SDF through misrepresentation or omission.⁴ It is the aim of this essay to place a branch of the SDF in its social and political context, to integrate it within the historiography of the labour movement, and hence in turn, to provide a more variegated narrative of the early Labour Party in the region.

Like many unsuccessful organisations the SDF has not left a substantial archive of sources for historians to trawl through in order to make a more balanced assessment of their position in history. There is no central office

correspondence or national executive minutes which can compare with those of the Labour Party, the Fabians or the ILP. Even local branch documentation is thinly spread. The Erith branch is quite well served by the John Wells Wilkinson (1870–1961) collection in the Bexley Borough archive. Wilkinson was a SDF member and a founder member of the local Labour party, a teacher and later the borough historian, and it is with the instincts of a historian that he collected and preserved his materials, including the SDF minute books for 1905–6 and 1910–13, the branch literature secretary's cash book – as well as a small collection of leaflets and ephemera. In SDF terms this is a gold mine. In addition, the archive also contains a twelve-month run of the local labour paper, the *Erith Socialist and Labour Advocate*. This title is not available in the British Library's newspaper section, nor is it listed in the authoritative 'Warwick Guide'.⁵ Given these sources, together with a number of autobiographical accounts, it is possible to build up a picture of SDF activity and influence in Erith in the first few years of the century.

II. The membership of the SDF in Erith

For much of the nineteenth century Erith remained a riverside village dependent on the Thames for its existence. However, with the opening of a branch of the North Kent railway in 1849, a connection was made with London followed at intervals by the South Eastern Railway's Dartford loop-line in 1866, and the Bexleyheath Railway of 1895. With these routes Erith developed as an extra-metropolitan industrial and residential suburb. The population doubled between 1841 and 1861 and once again between 1891 and 1901 when a total of 25,296 was recorded.⁶

Industrially, the area was known in the first half of the century for its loam quarry and brickfields, but in 1864 the 'Erith Ironworks' of Messrs Easton, Amos and Anderson established Erith as a centre for engineering and metalwork. In 1880 the cable manufacturers Callender, Bitumen and Telegraph and Waterproof Company set up in the town, followed in 1887 by the Norderfelt Gun Company (later taken over by Vickers-Maxim), while Fraser and Chalmers, suppliers of mining equipment to the mines of South Africa, opened their factory in Erith in 1891.⁷ Understandably, by the beginning of the new century the engineers dominated the local labour movement. In 1908 the engineers' three branches amounted to 600 members while the trades council had a membership of 1000.⁸ According to Henry Pelling in his compendium of political sociology of Britain before the First World War, the Erith area was in 'a genuinely marginal constituency . . . Erith was dubbed in a Conservative newspaper as having been a "hotbed of Socialism and Radicalism."'⁹

The first records of the Erith branch of the Social Democratic Federation commence on 12 October 1905, and they were described as a 'new branch' at the Annual Conference of the following year. However, from a reading of the extant minutes it is probable that the branch had been in existence for some time beforehand.¹⁰ In the first years the Sunday evening business meeting was held at the house of a 'comrade', and the number attending varied between four and nine; but it is clear from the names recorded in the minutes that a larger number were involved in the activities of the branch. By the end of the decade the branch met at their own Socialist Hall in Bexley Road, Erith, where 'outside hangs the Branch Lamp bearing the much feared initials SDF'; it boasted 91 members, an Executive Committee and sub-committees on which more than 21 activists served.¹¹ The above figures suggest that although Erith, like other SDF branches, was relative healthy in terms of numbers, only a small proportion of members – around 20–25 percent – could be regarded as active members.

These sorts of figures represent a period of steady growth for the branch but they are not exceptional. Paul Thompson puts the average membership for SDF branches in London at around forty.¹² P A Watmough's more 'conservative' estimate of dues-paying members is of branches between thirteen and 26 members.¹³ However, it is difficult to be precise about what is typical. Branches were born and died in epidemic proportions. The changes in the size of branches reflected their political successes and failures. The points I make below should make it easier to describe the range within which SDF branches fell, although given the size of this range I do not think it is possible to make calculations about the total membership of the SDF from an average branch size. Some provincial branches numbered well over a hundred members. For example, in 1910 Accrington had 160 members while Padiham had 162.¹⁴ In an article in *SDP News* in January 1911 H W Lee made some comments on the success, or otherwise, that some branches were having in distributing *Justice*. He referred to 'small' branches as having fifteen or sixteen members while large branches contained seventy to ninety, and he compared the success of eight 'small' but active branches with a combined membership of 204 (or an average of 25.5), with the difficulties endured by eight 'large' branches with a combined membership of 1,579 (an average of 197.37).¹⁵ These sorts of figures make Accrington and Padiham look quite modest. In this sort of context Erith can be seen to have grown from a small but active branch but could not be described as one of the SDF's 'large' branches.

It is difficult to assess from the records the occupational background of the members of Erith SDF. Certainly some members such as Fred Button, Tom Rees and A Scarlett can be identified as engineers. Will Hampton

was a handyman while John Wells Wilkinson was a teacher for the local school board, while others might be categorised according to their trade union, including Alex Scott (painters and decorators) and Alfred J Scarlett (carpenters and joiners). However, in the metropolis the membership can be categorised in the following way. Approximately eleven per cent were unskilled workers, 49 per cent skilled workers or artisans, twenty per cent white collar or office workers, 16.5 per cent professionals, two per cent of independent means and a final 1.5 per cent which I have found to be unclassifiable.¹⁶ Given the social composition of the Erith area it is likely that many members were skilled trade unionists from the local metal and engineering firms.

In general, in the SDF, and the ILP for that matter, women made up less than ten per cent of the membership, and only a few found it easy to maintain the level of activism required for an elected post such as branch secretary, conference delegate or even as a member of the national executive.¹⁷ However, there are a total of ninety-four members who are mentioned by name in the branch minutes which cover the period from 1910-1; of these 94, eighteen or 19.14 per cent are identifiably women. This is nearly double what most commentators would expect. However, the expectation is an average. In the SDF branch minute books for the industrial district Stratford between 1904 and 1907 not one woman member is mentioned. Similarly in the East End, exemplified by the Canning Town branch, between 1890 and 1893 not one woman is listed. However, Erith's proportion is very similar to that of the Hammersmith branch from 1884-5 and the Peckham and Dulwich branch between 1893 and 1898. In this case the Erith branch seems to be displaying the characteristics of these more mixed suburban areas rather than the industrial ones.

Erith was an exceptional branch in another sense in that for the period after 1910 they had a woman – Mrs McGregor – as branch secretary. Little is known of her – not even her occupation – and no Mr McGregor either senior or junior appears in the documentation. It is possible that she was a widow, of independent means or even that she was acting independently of her husband, but this is pure speculation.

However, one widow of independent means, Dora B Montefiore, commented on an activity that would have been quite familiar to Mrs McGregor and the other women members of Erith SDF. In the early 1890s a female member had complained about

many Social Democrats who . . . look on women Socialists as a nuisance, or at best as mild enthusiasts, who must be tolerated, but who would be better engaged in gossip, tea drinking and other feminine frivolities. When one sees the half contemptuous remarks when women are

mentioned as workers or speakers, one cannot help feeling that Socialists are not as advanced or as true to their principles as they ought to be.¹⁸

This description seems to typify the reaction of many woman socialist activists to their inclusion in the political labour movement and the SDF in particular. The degree to which women were treated as external to the process of 'making socialists' is exemplified by a correspondent to *Justice* who suggested that outdoor meetings should have 'half a dozen good looking girls [who] would treble and quadruple the collection.'¹⁹

Dora Montefiore wrote that socialists ought to oppose fund-raising social events such as bazaars because they reflected female domestic labour. Although bazaar work involved many women in the work of the SDF, that neither challenged nor changed traditional gender roles, but merely reflected and reinforced them. On the other hand, 'Violet', the author of the *Erith Advocate's* column 'For Women Workers' believed that those behind the Erith SDF's bazaar were those who 'pledged to do all in their power . . . to bring about a system which will give back to all women their homes and their womanhood.'²⁰ The amount of bazaar work taken on by SDF women was the reason behind Montefiore's decision to resign from the Women's Committee of the SDF in 1905.²¹ She objected to the marginalisation of women in what amounted to the 'domestic work' of the socialist movement. For example, in Erith SDF between 1910 and 1912, when women were relatively active in the life of the branch, they dominated the Premises and Bazaar Committees, the organisation of the children's Christmas party, and so on. However, they were sufficiently trusted for Mrs McGregor to be an EC member and branch secretary for a while. Hence, to a degree, Erith could be seen as an advanced branch of the SDF with regard to the role of women in the party.

Another notable member was Fred S Button who was elected to the District Council for Belvedere ward in 1907. An engineer, he told the 1910 SDF Annual Conference that he was 'a member of the A[amalgated] S[ociety of] E[ngineers] of 16 years standing', and spoke in support of a 'class trade unionist' motion, and was known elsewhere in London and the South-east as one of the most vocal supporters of syndicalism or industrial unionism. Syndicalists proposed that rather than a revolutionary party leading the working class in taking command of the state, industrial unions would act as a working class government over the productive forces of society.²² As a means to this end Button advocated industrial unionism through the further amalgamation of the engineers' unions of the London area.²³

One of the founder members of the branch and another councillor was William Hampton. He was described by Ralph Fox, who knew him at this time, as the leading light of the branch's Socialist Sunday School

conducting the children in song and during the week cycling around the barber's shops of the town with copies of the SDF newspaper *Justice*. Fox recalls him as 'a wiry, bearded, middle-aged, blue-eyed Socialist enthusiast . . . his eyes lit with the joy of combat'.²⁴

The people who made up the Erith branch would often bring members of their family to the work of the organisation. Women had a presence in Erith SDF. They attended business meetings and sometimes held office in the branch. This is more than can be said of other SDF branches in the same period. For example, during 1906 of the 67 members attending branch meetings in Stratford, not one was female.²⁵ However, women more usually tended to be relegated to more supportive roles as for example in playing the piano for branch socials or organising fund-raising teas. Understandably, given the economic structure of the district, the members seem to be skilled workers, notably engineers. The political role of trade unions is an important issue with many of them.

III. Culture

The branch life or 'culture' of the SDF went beyond the purely 'political' ends of the organisation. The word 'culture' can be interpreted in at least two different ways. On the one hand it can be seen as an interest in artistic expression – music, theatre, literature or painting. For some socialists the arts were spaces in which the class struggle with bourgeois society could be fought and hence a look at how SDF branches viewed these activities can give us some insight into how they viewed their contemporary civilisation. Equally these attempts by SDF branches to develop their own 'cultural' activities, in forms such as drama and music, go some way to supplying us with their critique of what was available elsewhere.

An alternative political understanding of the concept is of culture as a set of values, ideas and conventions that provide an explanation of, and framework for, actions. Using this sense the culture of the SDF, how they conducted their meetings and organisation, can give us some insight into what they regarded as the appropriate way to run a society.

The SDF had its origins in a loose collection of Radical working men's clubs formed at the beginning of the 1880s. These clubs had a dual social and political function and it is clear from biographical accounts that SDF branches adopted the same sorts of routines, structures and practices, which constituted a culture. However, by the end of the century the working men's clubs ceased to have a political function and became much more reliant on their commercial entertainments. SDF branches on the other hand retained the traditions of amateur entertainment, self-education and, most importantly, a political purpose.²⁶

The smaller SDF branches always met in private houses and were unable to provide anything more than the most basic club-like activities. However, it was the associational activity that provided succour for members. As Paul Thompson points out 'there is little doubt that a major reason for the tenacity of the Social Democrats was the extent to which the movement provided a satisfying way of life'.²⁷ In the words of Herbert Morrison – an activist from 1907 to 1910 – 'political groups such as [the Westminster SDF] were . . . a pleasant form of social club apart from providing fuel for our political forces'.²⁸ The minimum number to constitute a branch was six and if a pioneer lacked socialist friends then an advertisement in *Justice* might produce some replies.²⁹ At other times a larger branch might divide into smaller branches, as was the case in Canning Town during the mid-1890s.³⁰ Much like the Erith branch in its early days, Herbert Morrison's Westminster branch consisted of between six and twelve members who met in the front room of Joe Butler, the founder and secretary of the branch.³¹

Each branch had a secretary who was responsible for keeping records and planning meetings, a literature secretary who maintained the stock of books and pamphlets, and a treasurer. George Lansbury, the future Labour leader, was active in the SDF from 1892 to 1900 and in his opinion the treasurer should be 'a comrade in whom all members have complete confidence and if possible also one who is known outside the movement, so that when special appeals are made outsiders may be more likely to subscribe'.³² In other cases someone was responsible for corresponding with the local press. For example, John Maclean was on the Press Committee which served the Glasgow branches of the SDF, scrutinising the local press and responding to topical issues with letters from a Party (or Federation) point of view. The scrupulous Stratford branch set up a visiting committee to encourage reluctant members to attend the weekly meetings.³³ The Bow branch had a novel way of reminding lapsed members of their commitments. On Christmas Eve 1910 a group of about 25 comrades 'obtained musical instruments and went round to the houses of various members singing songs from the SDP Songbook'.³⁴ Hence, even this visiting could be turned into a propaganda/solidarity activity.

The organization of a branch such as Erith in the 1900s was based on routine. In particular, it was customary after the minutes and correspondence to fix the arrangements for the Sunday propaganda meetings and for any weekday meetings there might be. Lansbury describes the meetings of the Bow and Bromley SDF in the 1890s as 'usually well attended and orderly. Our branch meetings were like revivalist gatherings. We opened with a song and closed with one and often read together some extracts from economic and historical writings'.³⁵ The life and activity of the

branch centred around these propaganda meetings. If the branch possessed a hall or meeting room, as Erith did after 1909, one meeting would take place there as a matter of course, usually on the Sunday evening. A morning meeting or meetings – perhaps also an afternoon one – might be held at some customary speaking spot – for example the Belvedere Recreation Ground or the waste ground opposite the Socialist Hall in Bexley Road, Erith – to advertise the indoor meeting, to hold a collection and to sell literature. If the branch had elected representatives such as Councillors or Poor Law Guardians, it would hear regular reports from them. It was necessary to keep a close watch on their representatives – or rather delegates – as branches frequently instructed them on how to vote on particular issues.³⁶ Occasionally there was time for a discussion on political topics such as *Capital and Labour* or *Socialism and Industrial Efficiency* but this sort of staged discussion was usually left either to the education classes, or to the debates and classes open to non-members.³⁷ Therefore, the SDF can be seen as building on a well-established working-class tradition of self-organisation.

Beyond the Sunday lecture and the routine of branch life, it was the way in which the SDF provided a satisfying way of life that perhaps explains some of the attraction of what Harry Pollitt in his memoirs called the ‘whole round of local labour life and work.’ Like many of his southern comrades at this time, he was out chalking the pavements to advertise meetings, collecting subscriptions, cleaning the branch premises, selling literature, carrying the speaker’s platform to the street corner, and then taking the collection at the end. ‘Every night of the week, something or other was going on: classes in industrial history and economics, socials to raise money, choir practice, lecture’.³⁸ This blur of activity could have had the dual purpose of giving even the lowliest a responsibility within the organisation and hence keeping them involved and tied to the party.

The self-sustaining life of the SDF branch might include activities such as the cycling corps of revolutionary propagandists – perhaps inspired by the Clarion cycling clubs of the period – set up by the Southwark and Lambeth branch, or the Socialist Sunday Schools set up first in Battersea in the 1890s and in Erith by 1909: alternatives included Hammersmith Socialist Society’s choir, conducted by Gustav Holst, while Erith’s ambition focused on the ‘formation of an orchestra’.³⁹ Yet the majority of branches did not need to rely on a celebrity artist for the choirs, bands, concerts, amateur dramatics, lectures, educational classes, parties or other entertainments. In the run up to the Christmas 1911, Erith SDF held a bazaar, whist drive and children’s party in a period when the national SDF was working towards building the British Socialist Party [BSP].⁴⁰ Harry Young recalled similar scenes from the Islington BSP before the First

World War when the hall was in use on a Saturday night for a regular social, where a 'member's wife' would play the piano or there would be dancing to a gramophone.⁴¹ The branch therefore not only acted as a surrogate family for young male members but the entertainment could have a useful function – especially given the SDF's loose federal structure – of bringing neighbouring branches closer together. This is brought out in the example of the concert and dance at the Grafton Hall, Fitzroy Square, advertised by the Marylebone and Paddington branch in December 1893, where 'a dramatic sketch will be given by comrades from Battersea. The proceeds will be handed over to the Fund for the Unemployed agitation'.⁴²

The Erith branch had a flourishing Socialist Sunday School [SSS] under the leadership of Will Hampton. These were initially set up by Mary Gray, an SDF member from Battersea, in 1892. Yet the movement went very much beyond just SDF members. For example, Canning Town SSS provided for the Poor Law children as well.⁴³ By 1910, when the National Union had been formed, about 100 schools were in existence attended by nearly 5000 children and over 1000 adults.⁴⁴ The schools were often the focus of women within the SDF as is illustrated by the SSS's column in the *Essex Socialist* newspaper entitled 'For the Children – By Mother'.⁴⁵

According to Brian Simon the SDF's SSS tended towards 'concrete socialist teaching and a materialist outlook'.⁴⁶ The men, women and children gathered together on a Sunday morning under the leadership of a 'Superintendent'. Since one of SSS's objects was to train boys, and to a lesser extent girls, to take their places as leaders in the working-class movement, the children were encouraged to undertake minor offices – such as minute secretary. In the classes the youngest children might be introduced to juvenile fiction and nature study as a route to producing a factual understanding of the world. For the older children there were tales of past reformers and historical novels to introduce the notion of human progress. From the age of thirteen, when the child would normally be out at work, they would be expected to deal with aspects of capitalism.⁴⁷

Harry Young, who from 1909 attended the Islington SDF's SSS, remembers singing 'England Arise', the 'Internationale' and the 'Red Flag', but claims he understood only the latter. It was run by women in the main, with an attendance of between twenty and thirty children. They would usually learn their socialist catechism, sing some songs, listen to a story 'of an ethical nature' taken from the *Freethinker*, or play games in the yard at the back. Some of the children were doubtless from non-socialist families left there to give their parents some peace.⁴⁸

A further aspect of branch life were the many retail stores established around the country. Stock was purchased in the co-operative manner in

hopes that sales would alleviate the financial difficulties of many branches by providing their members with necessities such as tea, sugar or tobacco.⁴⁹ SDF enterprises included a draper's store run by E C Fairchild in Hackney, another was the *Red Flag Toffee and Chocolate Company* set up by the Leeds branch, whilst the Sheffield branch manufactured cutlery in order to help the movement and offered razors made of 'the finest Sheffield steel.' Comrades could take their pick from the 'Revolutionist' at 3/6, the 'Clarion' at 2/6 or the mere 'Proletarian' at a modest 1/6d; a 'Red Flag' pocket knife could be had for the same price. The money brought in by these branch stores helped to subsidise the propaganda efforts. The Peckham and Dulwich branch could even celebrate – perhaps ironically – that their 'Steward is developing into a capitalist of the most virulent type'.⁵⁰ At the same time as the continuing debate over the formation of the BSP, Erith SDF minutes imply that the branch devoted as much time to the problem of their *Red Flag Toffee* account and 'Hampton's chocolate club'.⁵¹ On a national scale some of these socialist co-operatives such as the Pioneer Co-operative Boot Works of Northampton contributed useful funds to central finances. In 1910 the Unique Clothing Company, run by Fairchild and J R Burnett, could announce that they had contributed £200 to the funds of the SDF's London Committee.⁵²

Access to a perceived musical heritage was important to socialist thinking. This musical heritage was English in the main and reflected the *Merrie England*-ism, Morris dancing and maypole rites of many May Day celebrations. The poetry of earlier radicals was also significant, as not only was it a 'national asset' but it was also seen to be 'rooted in the people'. This to a large extent reflects the broader revival in interest in folk music in this period typified by people such as Cecil Sharpe and Vaughan Williams. It was perhaps easier to make a connection between folk music as an idealised indigenous popular/working class culture.⁵³ Socialists also considered music to be important for more political reasons. *Justice* noted that 'the one reproach to our movement is that we neglect music. Apart from the pleasure and the refining influence of music it is . . . or would be if practised, a great aid to us in propaganda work'.⁵⁴ The correspondent was not alone in this view as there is evidence of choirs and musical events being developed by SDF branches, such as the Blaendydach Marxian Choir that performed at the close of the 1910 SDF Annual Conference, or the various musical evenings arranged by the London members.

The importance of music to the SDF is illustrated by the national appeal made in *Justice* in 1893 when a writer – probably Tom Quelch – had asked 'Why doesn't the SDF in London get up a band or two among the members? . . . The Burnley branch has its own string band and surely London ought not to be behindhand'.⁵⁵ The singing itself became a part

of the SDF's propaganda effort. Recalling SDF activities in Erith William Hampton wrote that the

children, with our piano mounted upon a pony trolley attended our outdoor meetings. Their singing drew crowds and our Socialist songs became popular, so much so that there was scarcely a meeting of working people of whatever political colour but opened with singing the "Red Flag" and closed with the real "International".⁵⁶

Rather than describing the SDF as elitist in the Mathew Arnold tradition, I would locate them within the Hoggart school of placing value in working class culture generally – working men's clubs, sports, music – whilst adopting a conservative attitude to its future corruption from 'outside commercialism'.⁵⁷ SDF culture was profoundly political. The main aim of the activities was political, yet the *forms* they took reflect to some degree the political intent of the organisation. I would contend that they were seriously committed to their aims which is shown in their conduct of branch meetings and the crucial role of outdoor propaganda and weekly lectures in their activities.

IV. Propaganda

The Fabians believed that the best tactic to advance socialism was the permeation of the existing political parties, especially the Liberal party. The ILP believed in the Labour Alliance between socialists and the trade union movement to win elections at municipal and parliamentary level. The SDF, on the other hand, was a propagandist party which aimed to convert individuals to the cause by preaching socialism through literature, on the street corner and at election time.

The demand for speakers was felt throughout the history of the party. The SDF, unlike the ILP, were reluctant to pay for outside speakers and so each branch was largely dependent on their own resources for propagandists.⁵⁸ *Justice*, the Annual Conference Report and later *SDP News*, all carried requests for more and better speakers.⁵⁹ Many branches ran speakers' classes as well as elocution and drama groups as a part of their education programme. This helped develop members' speaking ability. Herbert Morrison even asked a friend to heckle him to help him sharpen his responses.⁶⁰ In Erith the SDF were active in the local political arena as speakers and agitators. One leading activist remembers how they 'took some trouble to understand Marxian Socialism, held classes and insisted upon their members knowing what they were talking about before they were allowed to mount the "soap box"'.⁶¹

The SDF's newspaper *Justice* was established in January 1883 and was still running in the 1920s. It varied in size and content but by the 1890s it was made up of eight pages with the front page taken up with one major article related to current news. The following pages would contain further short articles on the news, Quelch's editorial (under the name of *Tattler*), a serialised pamphlet or book such as Bax's *History of the Paris Commune*, branch notes from the regions such as Scotland and Lancashire, with the occasional song like the 'Carol for Capitalists' thrown in for good measure.⁶² On the back page there was the directory of who was speaking at the SDF meetings that week, where and when. There were also advertisements for branch bazaars and the like and by the early 1900s a list of SDF members offering their services as traders and craftsmen. Newsagents were reluctant to stock this socialist sheet and so members were obliged to sell it wherever they could. The sale itself was a form of propaganda and an opportunity for the face-to-face discussion with a reader and potential member. Hence, sales of *Justice* were an important part of the political work of a branch. In July 1911 the Erith branch proudly recorded their best sale of 413.⁶³ At times selling the paper in an energetic way could be disruptive to the meetings of others as is clear from the ban imposed on the SDF by the Fabian Society.⁶⁴

From 1897 the Twentieth Century Press (TCP) also produced the monthly *Social Democrat* for the SDF. The *Social Democrat* was a lengthier journal with more theoretical items such as 'Woman and Her Place in Society' by K Fitzgerald or 'Socialist Unity' by Quelch. There were also translations from German Social Democrats and hagiographic sketches of socialist and radical luminaries from home and abroad. *Justice* and the *Social Democrat* were not the only items of literature pushed by the SDF. The Twentieth Century Press published pamphlets in editions of five, ten or fifteen thousand and branches might take up to two quires [fifty] to sell.⁶⁵ From August 1910 they also produced a monthly internal bulletin – the *SDP News* – which carried correspondence from the centre to the branches as well as letters and advice on subjects such as the effective use of propaganda. Local branches might also collaborate in local labour publication such as the *Erith Labour and Socialist Advocate* or the *Bow and Bromley Worker*, while the *Young Socialist* would be taken by members of the Socialist Sunday Schools. The Erith paper was a monthly and consisted of four pages with an item of local news on the front, the editorial and perhaps a topical verse on the second page, a lengthy article related to the news for example on education or unemployment, with the last page taken up with columns such as 'For Women Workers', 'LRA [Labour Representation Association] Notes', 'SDP Notes' and other notices.

In addition to these publications there was also propaganda material such as photographs, cartoons, badges, song sheets and Christmas cards that could deliver a message.⁶⁶ In an article in *SDP News*, Tom Quelch emphasised that leaflet propaganda should be 'clear and simple, not clogged with heavy phrases, nor made dull and uninteresting by academic words. They should be printed in fairly large type if possible and the subject matter broken up into small paragraphs'.⁶⁷ However, the fact that he needed to remind members of this suggests that this type of leaflet was not always the norm.

V. Politics

Like most branches, the Erith SDF put local issues and education in particular at the top of their list of priorities. After the turn of the century the national SDF campaigned for a more vocational curriculum and for full state maintenance for children of school age.⁶⁸ These two aspects of their campaign are reflected in the actions of the branch at Erith.

There was a belief among more radical educationalists that the working class should take control of their own education in the same way as the trade unions represent working class producers and the co-operative movement represented the working class consumer. While there were many supporters of this idea in the SDF, other members aimed to pressurise the state into improving the provision for children within the existing system. Some even envisaged the school system as providing the basis of an educational but also productive, industrial commune where the students would acquire practical skills in agriculture and engineering to become self-sufficient or yield a surplus and so pay for an expansion in education provision. Hence the calls in Erith in September 1909 for a manual training centre 'to provide the girls with a knowledge of laundry work and kindred subjects and the boys woodworking and carving'.⁶⁹ In comparison with the pre-1870 period, this generation of socialists seem to have accepted the role of the state in the provision of education and to have looked to a more 'practical' curriculum as a means of equipping working class students for the realities of employment.

In 1910 Will Hampson was sitting as an LRA/SDP representative on the Education Committee of the District Council. Although the Council could have raised a levy to pay for the feeding of the children in their care the Education Committee was against it and claimed that it should be the role of charities. Hampson's response was to involve the members of the Socialist Sunday School. They drew up appeals and delivered them to the local farmers and thus built up a fund for the feeding of the children. Farmers promised loads of potatoes and with the money collected they

bought more food and hired a cauldron for making cocoa. On a Wednesday afternoon in a field outside Erith the feeding took place. Hampson's

women helpers made enormous meat and potato pies, and each child got a wedge of pie and a mug of cocoa. It was wintry weather but they ran races and enjoyed the day. He advertised it as a picnic with sports to follow. Hundreds of children joined in and the schools were emptied.

Hampson's colleagues on the Committee raged. "What about the Education grant?" the Chairman demanded. "We'll lose that when the inspector sees the attendance rolls."

"I suppose we will" agreed Hampson resignedly. "But you said the children would have to be fed by private charity, and I'm feeding them," he went on deliberately. "I'm going to choose the time and place. We're having another grand feed next Wednesday. You should all come along and see it!"

"Outrageous!" Snapped a member. "We'll summons you. You can't do this!"

"I am doing it" said Hampson, "and if you like to summons me for feeding hungry children when you don't want to do it yourselves, go ahead and see what the people think of you!" They were beaten, and they had the sense to know it. The Act for the feeding of Necessitous School Children was put into operation.⁷⁰

Given the proportion of engineers among the district's trades unionists, syndicalism and industrial unionism was an important issue for the branch.⁷¹ At the end of 1909 Tom Mann, one of the leaders of the Great Dock Strike of 1889, returned from Australia, where he had developed strong views on industrial unionism; working class trades unionists should use their strength as the producers in society to build the co-operative commonwealth with (or without) the support of a parliamentary labour party.⁷² Writing in *Justice* in September 1910 Mann announced that: 'At the present hour . . . I favour using all effective agencies or weapons at our disposal, and I include in these industrial organisation, parliamentary action and voluntary co-operation'.⁷³ However, Mann left the SDF in May 1911 and together with Guy Bowman, the manager of the SDF's press, he set up the Industrial Syndicalist Education League and issued a series of pamphlets under the title of the *Industrial Syndicalist*.

Syndicalism proved an attractive alternative to SDF orthodoxy in two senses. Firstly, its emphasis on revolutionary activism and the aggressive élan of direct action was far more acceptable to many militants than the economic determinism which assumed that capitalist collapse was inevitable. Thus instead of the effective separation of the maximum programme of revolution from the minimum programme of reform, syndicalism

offered a strategy which invested day-to-day struggles in the workplace with revolutionary significance. A second reason for the appeal of syndicalism was its emphasis on the potential of industrial conflict for revolutionary change. This potential had been consistently neglected by the SDF leadership, which saw wage militancy and strikes as both ineffective and irrelevant to the creation of a socialist society.⁷⁴

From early on in the life of the SDF branch in Erith the members had flagged up their concern for the position of the trade unions in Britain after the Taff Vale judgement. Soon after the Liberal landslide of 1906 they expressed the hope that the new government would put 'the Trade Unions back upon the old basis'.⁷⁵ As far as SDF activist Will Peake was concerned, the action of the striking engineers in Erith in 1909 was correct in the sense that they were trying to 'uphold that dignity [of labour] by the strike'. However, Peake, as other Syndicalist-socialists would do, encouraged the strikers to take a more political line and to 'consign this obsolete weapon [the strike] to the industrial scrap heap'.⁷⁶ The political goal of syndicalist trade unionism is illustrated in a resolution by the branch later in the same year. While they recognised that the SDF and socialists should 'continue our propaganda', they believed that they 'must give as much of our energy as possible to the organisation of the present Trades Unions into a class union, so that we may be able to retain in this industrial field whatever we may gain in the Political field'.⁷⁷

This commitment to a combination of both syndicalism and political socialism, while not unique within the SDF, ran counter to its leadership. It is perhaps significant that it is in the area of industrial trade unionism, rather than on the issues of education or militarism and foreign policy, that the views of the Erith branch diverge from Hyndman and 'the Old Guard'.

In the years before the outbreak of the war in 1914 the socialist movement in Britain and throughout the world aimed to overcome the petty jealousies of nationalism and to adopt the higher values of internationalism. One of the policies promoted by the SDF was the idea of a 'Citizen Army' in the hope that military training for the population and a democratic structure for the army would act as a safety catch for any trigger to war.⁷⁸ The SDF was echoing Second International orthodoxy in supporting a Citizen Army and had advocated such a policy from early during the first decade of the twentieth century. However, the debate gathered in intensity with Haldane's army reforms and the establishment of the Territorial Army in 1908. In Erith the stalwart Will Peake warned the *Advocate's* readers that with the formation of the Territorials the working class would 'become the contented allies of the spoilers willing to

be drilled and officered by them, and ready to protect their master's interests to the utter destruction of their own'. The point he raised with those who had already joined the new force was that they 'could be called upon to don [their uniforms], take up arms, and by order of [their] officer employers, shoot down [their] brothers with whom [they] are out on strike'.⁷⁹ However, not all SDF members were as critical of the national preparations for an impending European war. H M Hyndman, the effective leader of the SDF, clearly identified German militarism as the principal obstacle to maintaining peace in Europe. This attitude caused divisions in the party and the International. When, in an article in the *Conservative Morning Post* in July 1910, Hyndman demanded a £100 million increase in the Navy estimates, a 'flood of protest' came from the SDF membership in response. The Central Hackney branch demanded that he 'desist from these utterances' and in what looked 'like a concerted move' branches at Enfield, Whitechapel, Bethnal Green, St. George's, Finsbury and Camberwell passed similar resolutions.⁸⁰ The furore caused the Erith branch to hold a special meeting on the issue on the 28 August. After some discussion a resolution was adopted which stated that the branch 'defend comrade Hyndman in his right to express his own individual opinion upon any subject' and going on to 'protest against our paper [*Justice*] being used to draw members attention away from general propaganda for Socialism'. Hence, the branch went against the leadership on issues surrounding trade unionism and syndicalism but were loyalists in the field of foreign and military policy.

VI. The Erith SDF and the Labour Party

The SDF formally left the national LRC in August 1901. However, at a local level SDF members continued to work on local LRCs even after the formation of the Parliamentary Labour Party following the General Election of 1906. The example of Erith indicates that it was a difficult relationship but one that the local branch of the SDF worked hard to maintain. In 1904 the Erith Trades and Labour Council had run eight candidates for the District Council election, three of whom were known SDF members.⁸¹ Five of these candidates were elected. The SDF minute books show the branch sending delegates to the formation of the Erith Labour Representation Association, while the position of the SDF in relation to 'parliamentary Labourism' is a subject of debate on a number of occasions.⁸² The Erith LRA included in their aims the 'recognition of the clash of class interests' and hence the SDF branch saw this as a success. When in January 1906 the LRA deleted this from their aims, the SDF branch felt obliged to oppose LRA candidates in the local elections.

This, however, was a temporary attitude as two months later they announced negotiations with the local branch of the ILP for 'future propaganda and consolidation of the socialist party in Erith' and reaffiliation to the LRA. They agreed to 'co-operate with [the LRA] for a given object, always providing that no sacrifice of party principles are involved'.⁸³

The LRA was not as successful in the District Council election of 1907 as the Ratepayer's Association easily outpaced them with a more effective electoral organization as well as having more motor cars available to get their voters to the polling stations.⁸⁴ By 1909 the SDF/LRA were able to produce the short-lived *Erith Labour and Socialist Advocate*. The first issue tried to allay fears that the LRA had been 'captured' by the Social Democratic Party [SDP], although a reading of the paper suggests a heavy SDF involvement in the production of the paper at least. In March 1910, with the branch now numbering over ninety members, the LRA put forward seven named candidates, five of whom were SDF trade unionists. In October 1910, when MacDonald held a meeting in the district, the branch declared that they would boycott the meeting in protest against 'the recent action of the labour party and Ramsay MacDonald', although a motion to withdraw from the Erith LRA was defeated.⁸⁵ However, the following month the branch insisted that the phrase 'labour and socialist' should be included in the constitution of the local party and when, as in many other cases across the country, this proved to be the sticking point, the Erith membership voted by an overwhelming majority to leave the LRA.⁸⁶ Although the SDF adopted a policy of benevolent neutrality towards their former colleagues, they also ran candidates, including the successful Button, at the UDC elections in 1911.⁸⁷

The division within the national LRC over the 'adoption of a socialist objective' widened after 1901 as candidates such as Will Thorne in South West Ham were refused permission to describe themselves as 'Labour and Socialist'.⁸⁸ These difficulties compounded with the performance of the Labour Party in Parliament after 1906, led to calls from across the left for a united socialist party. In Erith, as in other places in the South East, there were opportunities for the SDF to work alongside the ILP.⁸⁹ However, it is doubtful whether the BSP would have come solely on the basis of an SDF campaign for socialist unity, given that the key events focused on disaffection with the Labour Party – the Colne Valley by-election of Victor Grayson (1907), the 'Green Manifesto' (1909), and Grayson's appeal for socialist unity through the *Clarion* (1911) – all came from outside the SDF.

Despite, as in Erith, individual branches and members taking part in the work of the LRC and trade unions, the SDF was formally uncommitted to joint action. Resolutions in favour of socialist unity were passed

in a ritualistic way at SDF annual conferences but more significantly in 1909 the annual motion for reaffiliation to the Labour Party was lost 125 to two.⁹⁰ As late as September 1910 *Justice* could declare that 'Unity can best be achieved by affiliation to a Socialist organisation – the SDF'.⁹¹ However, the industrial militancy of the period and the objective fact of unity in the Socialist Representation Committees [SRCs] and the amalgamation of SDF and ILP branches (in Oldham, Bury and Ashton) brought to the formation of the BSP a momentum which the 'Old Guard' could not – and did not want to – resist. The SDF made up less than half of the new Provincial Executive of the BSP and less than half of the organisations represented at the foundation conference of the BSP in September 1911. As with the formation of the ILP in the early 1890s, much of the momentum for the formation of the BSP came from the North-west, yet ILP branches in Romford, Balham and Stoke Newington seceded to join the BSP. Hence in the London region, at least, the SDF element remained dominant. However, the formation of the BSP illustrates that for individuals such as Quelch and Hyndman, Socialist Unity was not a prize worth the dissolution of the SDF.

The first mention of the new party in the Erith minutes was in October 1911 when the branch expressed its support of 'the splendid spirit of unity displayed at the Conference in Manchester'.⁹² Later in the same month the branch agreed that they 'should honourably stand by the SDP until the constitution [of the new party] was discussed'. Three weeks later the constitution was before them and duly accepted.⁹³ The next step was to get a 'prominent speaker' to boost the foundation of the new BSP locally and the contrasting names of Lady Warwick and Ben Tillett were put forward.⁹⁴ The new party required all members 'whether old or new' to complete application forms, although the old SDP branch officers were to remain in post until March 1912. With this the Erith branch of the SDF gently underwent the metamorphosis into the Erith BSP.⁹⁵

VII. Comparisons and conclusions

It is difficult to say that Erith was a model or typical of the SDF branches of the period as the available data is just too thinly spread. However, Erith is an interesting departure point for some comparisons to be made with socialist and labour organisations before the First World War. To begin with, rather than being dry, ascetic or academically detached, the Erith SDF had a rich cultural life involving men, women, adults and children. Some time was spent in academic study of the Marxist canon but probably a greater amount of time was spent on singing, bazaars and socials. This form of inclusive culture was useful to a movement because it provided

support to people who were often mobile, migrant workers new to the community. Secondly, the autonomy of the branch at Erith reinforces the point that the labour and socialist movement before 1918 was a loose structure and for all the restrictive dogmatic image of the SDF, the local branches had a good deal of scope for independent action. The branch could decide on the nature of the relationship with the local Labour party and their policy on local education provision. On the one hand they adopted an orthodox line in relation to foreign policy but confronted the leadership over their attitude towards the trade unions. A generation later Will Hampson pointed to the decline in socialist politics in Erith as dating from the creation of the national Labour Party 'when official control and direction passed from the local workers [to] the offices of London and Dartford being run by paid officialdom'.⁹⁶

Finally, Erith is an interesting example of the labour movement in the new working-class suburbs. Erith did suffer from an identity crisis as at some points they regarded themselves as a metropolitan branch and sometimes as a part of the South East Counties Federation.⁹⁷ However, Erith from the end of the nineteenth century was fast becoming integrated into the economic and political life of the capital. Between 1891 and 1901 the population of London's outer ring grew by 45 per cent. Indeed in the country as a whole the areas with the fastest rates of population growth were all London suburbs.⁹⁸ These areas of London such as Erith, Woolwich, North West Ham, Edmonton and Acton had concentrations of the engineering industry.⁹⁹ At the same time they were all areas with lively SDF and ILP branches. While not suggesting that London had its very own 'red belt' comparable to the Communist strongholds of Paris, it does suggest a comparison with other 'segregated' and 'coherent' working class communities in other parts of the country, especially in the inter-war period.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, it does call into question the picture of London working-class politics developed by Gareth Stedman Jones as essentially conservative and inward looking.¹⁰¹ Working-class suburbia was an expanding area which held developing industries and as the city grew, radical politics, like the working class, had migrated to the suburbs.

Notes

1. The Democratic Federation was formed in 1881, they adopted a socialist manifesto in 1883 and became the Social Democratic Federation in 1884. In 1907 they changed their name to the Social Democratic Party. At the end of 1911 the SDP was the principal component of the newly formed British Socialist Party [BSP] I will use the term SDF for the period 1881-1911.

2. P P Poirier, *The Advent of the Labour Party* (1958), p.26.
3. Karen Hunt, *Equivocal Feminists: the Social Democratic Federation and the Woman Question 1884-1911* (Cambridge, 1996). Martin Crick, *The History of the Social Democratic Federation* (Keele, 1994). Graham Johnson, *The Politics of Social Democracy in Britain 1881-1911* (Lampeter, 2002).
4. Martin Pugh, *The Pankhursts* (2001), pp. 56, 63. Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version: the Life of Sir Stafford Cripps 1889-1952* (2002), p.54.
5. R Harrison, et. al. (eds.), *The Warwick Guide to British labour Periodicals, 1790-1970* (Brighton 1977).
6. John A Pritchard, *A History of Erith, Part Three 1837-1894* (Bexley, 1978), pp.5, 9.
7. *Ibid.*, pp.10-3. Paul Thompson singles Erith out as one of the extra-metropolitan concentrations of the metal and engineering industry together with West Ham and the Lea Valley. These were both comparatively successful areas for the SDF after 1900. Paul Thompson, *Socialists, Liberals and Labour: The Struggle for London 1885-1914* (1967), p.16.
8. *Ibid.*, p.248.
9. *Daily Telegraph*, 27 January, and 15 December, 1910, cited in Henry Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections 1885-1910* (1967), p.71.
10. Erith SDF Minutes, 1905-6, B[exley] B[orough] L[ibrary], PE/JWW/3/2. SDF Annual Conference Report 1906, p.14.
11. *Erith Labour and Socialist Advocate*, November 1909. Erith SDF Minutes, 25 September 1910, BBA.
12. Thompson, *op.cit.* p.307.
13. P Watmough, 'The membership of the SDF 1885-1902', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, vol. 34 (Spring 1977), p.38.
14. *SDP News*, September 1910.
15. *Ibid.*, January 1911, p.6.
16. See David M Young 'The membership of the Social Democratic Federation in London', *Historical Research* (forthcoming).
17. *Ibid.* See also Jane Hannam and Karen Hunt, *Socialist Women: Britain 1880s-1920s* (2002), pp.8, 81.
18. *Justice*, 2 September 1893.
19. *Ibid.*, 29 July 1893.
20. *Erith Labour and Socialist Advocate*, January 1910.
21. *Justice*, 11 March 1905.
22. SDF Annual Conference Report, 1910, p.17. Bob Holton, *British Syndicalism 1900-1914: Myths and Realities* (1976), p.144.
23. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p.65. See also Section V, 'Politics'.
24. Ralph Fox, *Smokey Crusade* (1938), p.119.
25. Stratford SDF Minutes, Stratford Central Library, Newham.
26. For working men's clubs generally see John Taylor, *From Self Help to Glamour* (nd. 1972). John Davis, 'Radical clubs and London politics 1870-1900', in David Feldman and G Stedman Jones (eds.), *Metropolis London: Histories and Representations* (1989), pp.103-28.
27. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p.207.
28. Herbert Morrison, *An Autobiography* (1960), p.39.
29. An advertisement in *Justice*, 31 March 1894, preceded the foundation of the subsequently-flourishing Stratford SDF branch.
30. A committee was set up to consider the formation of a branch in Plaistow. Canning Town SDF Minutes, 10 September 1893.

31. B Donoughue and G W Jones, *Herbert Morrison: Portrait of a Politician* (1973), p.15. Morrison, *op.cit.*, pp.38–9. For the St Pancras branch and their meeting place above a baker's shop, see Fenner Brockway, *Inside the Left* (1942), p.19.
32. *Justice*, 12 October 1896.
33. George Lansbury, *My Life* (1928), p.171. Tom Bell, *John Maclean: Fighter for Freedom* (Glasgow, 1944), p.10. Stratford SDF Minutes, 16 November 1905. Canning Town SDF would visit members who had not been in attendance for more than three weeks. Canning Town SDF Minutes, 19 February 1893.
34. *SDP News*, February 1911, p.3.
35. Lansbury, *op.cit.*, p.78.
36. Erith SDF Minutes, 26 February, 14 May 1911, BBL.
37. Erith SDF Minutes, 30 November 1905 and 24 July 1910, BBL. See also Hammersmith SDF Minutes, 3 December 1884. Stratford SDF Minutes, 30 March 1905. T A. Jackson, *Solo Trumpet* (1953), p.54.
38. Harry Pollitt, *Serving My Time* (1940), p.33.
39. P Henderson, *William Morris: His Life, Work and Friends* (1967), p.311. Erith SDF Minutes, 11 December 1910, BBL.
40. *Ibid.*, September to December 1911.
41. Interview: D M Young/Harry Young, 12 May 1993. Erith held regular Saturday night socials until early in 1911. Erith SDF Minutes, 5 February 1911, BBL.
42. *Justice*, 30 December 1893, 20 January and 10 February 1894. Interview with H Young, 6 January 1993. *Justice*, 2 December 1893.
43. *West Ham Citizen*, 3 February 1900.
44. F Reid, 'Socialist Sunday Schools in Britain 1892–1939', *International Review of Social History*, XI (1966), p.21. B Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement 1870–1920* (1965), p.50.
45. *Essex Socialist*, 1 January 1909.
46. Simon, *op.cit.*, p.49.
47. Hackney Socialist Sunday School Minutes, 1907–8.
48. Interviews, 6 January 1993 and 12 May 1993, *loc.cit.* This structure and content is very similar to that described by Lansbury in his article in *Justice*, 14 March 1896.
49. SDF Annual Conference Report, 1894.
50. Peckham and Dulwich SDF, Accounts Book, September 1893.
51. These matters were important to the branch because they operated on such tight budgets. When Erith SDP was wound up to become Erith BSP, the closing balance was just 2/-. Erith SDF Minutes, 22 October, 5 and 12 November 1911, and 7 January 1912, BBL.
52. *SDP News*, November 1910, p.8. The South West Ham branch ran a bakery, BSP Annual Conference Report, 1912.
53. This is a significant contrast to those socialists such as Bax, Shaw and the Marx-Avelings, who were enthusiasts for *avant garde* culture such Wagner's music and Ibsen plays.
54. *Justice*, 25 June 1910.
55. *Ibid.*, 23 September 1893. See [Walthamstow] *Socialist Critic*, 21 April 1900, for the progress of the Walthamstow SDF Brass Band. For music, see also Canning Town SDF Minutes, 19 March 1893; Erith SDF Minutes, 11 December 1910, BBL.
56. W Hampton, 'Socialism in by-gone Erith', *Bexley Heath Observer*, 11 February 1944.

57. Some contemporary socialists such as Lenin felt that *avant garde* culture was non-proletarian and hence non-revolutionary. However, socialist advocates of modern literary works by those such as Ibsen and Zola, and in Britain Gissing and Harkness, could point to their rejection of bourgeois society in their choice of themes such as truth, divorce and iniquities of poverty.
58. National Administrative Council Minutes, 3 July 1897 and 1 July 1898, British Library of Political and Economic Science, M890/1/2 ILP.
59. For example, *Justice*, 7 April and 28 April 1894, and 1 June 1907. SDF Annual Conference Report 1898. *SDP News*, October and December 1910.
60. Morrison, *op.cit.*, p.41.
61. *Bexley Heath Observer*, *loc.cit.*
62. *Justice*, 30 December 1893.
63. Erith SDF Minutes, 27 August 1911, BBL.
64. Fabian Society Executive Minutes, 28 October and 4 November 1890.
65. Erith SDF Minutes, 1 February 1906, 3 July 1910, BBL. Stratford SDF Minutes, 28 June 1906.
66. For the variety of material, see Erith SDF Branch Literature Secretary's Cash Book, October 1909-December 1912, BBL.
67. *SDP News*, February 1911, p.4.
68. See for example, John M Richardson, *The Education Problem and its Solution* (1903). F Greville [Countess of Warwick], *A Nation's Youth: Physical Deterioration, Its Causes and Remedies* (1906). J Hunter Watts, *An Appeal for the Children* (1907). See also Hilda Kean, *Challenging the State: the Socialist and Feminist Educational Experience 1900-1930* (1990), and Jane Martin, '“An Awful Woman”?: the life and work of Mrs Bridges Adams, 1855-1939', *Women's History Review*, 8, 1 (1999).
69. Erith Socialist and Labour Advocate, September 1909.
70. Fox, *op.cit.*, pp.120-2. See also Erith SDF Minutes, 26 June, to organise the campaign for the 'feeding of necessitous school children', and the leaflet produced by the Erith SDP in November 1910, PE/JWW/3/14, BBL. 'Are the Hungry Children Fed', *Erith Socialist and Labour Advocate*, December 1909.
71. The branch held a discussion on 'Industrial Unionism'. Erith SDF Minutes, 24 July 1910, BBL.
72. For a contemporary view, see E J B Allen, *Revolutionary Unionism!* (Bradford 1913), Holton, *loc.cit.*
73. *Justice*, 10 September 1910.
74. Holton, *op.cit.*, pp.57-8.
75. Erith SDF Minutes, 24 July 1910, BBL.
76. *Erith Socialist and Labour Advocate*, October 1909.
77. Erith SDF Minutes, 14 August 1910, BBL. For the SDF leadership's view of Industrial Unionism, see the article by H W Lee in *SDP News*, September 1910, in which he describes the syndicalists in the party as 'a parasitical excrescence of which every serious organisation is bound to rid itself as quickly as possible'.
78. See H Quelch, *Social Democracy and the Armed Nation* (1900), and R Edmondson, *A Exposition and Exposure of Haldane's Territorial Forces Act 1907* (1908). See also D J Newton, *British Labour, European Socialism and the Struggle for Peace 1889-1914* (Oxford, 1985).
79. Erith Socialist and Labour Advocate, September 1909.
80. W Kendall, 'Russian emigration and British Marxist socialism', *International Review of Social History*, VIII (1963), p.363.

81. Labour Representation Committee, Correspondence Files 1900-1906, 13/157.
82. Erith SDF Minutes, 19 October, 9 and 24 November 1905, BBL.
83. *Ibid.*, 18 January, 6 April and 17 June 1906.
84. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p.248.
85. *Erith Labour and Socialist Advocate*, August 1909 and March 1910. Erith SDP Minutes, 16 and 31 July, and 23 October 1910, BBL.
86. *Ibid.*, 13 and 27 November 1910.
87. *Ibid.*, 5 and 26 March 1911.
88. The lengthy negotiations between Thorne and MacDonald as Secretary of the LRC were published by the SDF as a pamphlet, *Correspondence between J. R. MacDonald and Will Thorne* [nd. 1904]. For a similar issue from South Hackney from 1903, see LRC/10/159.
89. Erith SDF Minutes, 2 October 1910 and 7 May 1911, BBL.
90. SDF Annual Conference Report 1909, pp.21-2.
91. *Justice*, 24 September 1910, cited Crick, *op.cit.*, p.239.
92. Erith SDF Minutes, 8 October 1911, BBL.
93. *Ibid.*, 22 October, 12 November 1911.
94. *Ibid.*, 3 and 10 December 1911, and 14 January 1912.
95. *Ibid.*, 7 and 14 January 1912.
96. Bexley Heath Observer, *loc.cit.*
97. Erith SDF Minutes, 15 March 1906 and 7 August 1910, BBL.
98. David Thorns, *Suburbia* (1972), p.38.
99. All areas with more than ten per cent employed in engineering according to the 1911 census. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p.344.
100. D S Bell and Byron Criddle, *The French Communist Party in the Fifth Republic* (Oxford, 1994), p.58. Eric Hobsbawm, 'The Making of the Working Class, 1870-1914', in *idem.* (ed.). *Worlds of Labour* (1984), pp.194-213.
101. Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Working-class culture and working-class politics in London 1870-1900: notes on the remaking of the working class', *Journal of Social History*, 7 (1974), pp.460-508.