

Detlev Mares

**'Industry, perseverance, self-reliance,
and integrity'**

Alfred A. Walton and mid-Victorian
working-class radicalism

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Preface

This publication dated '2018' reproduces a master dissertation submitted in 1993 for the degree of Master of Arts in Comparative British and American Labour History at the University of Warwick. Why publish a student work of research after a quarter of a century? Our knowledge of British popular radicalism has increased considerably since then, new perspectives have reshaped academic discourse on the topic, the tools available for research have multiplied. When this study was written, Victorian newspapers were not yet digitized – information which requires just a few search requests on the internet today, took up days. For example, the date of Walton's death had been obscure and it took two days in the 'Principal Registry of the Family Division' at Somerset House to unearth it; today, it just takes a couple of minutes in digitized newspapers, such as 'The Times Digital Archive', to find out. The same tools allow better insights into several aspects dealt with in this thesis, such as Walton's involvement in the fraud case of the Artizans', Labourers' and General Dwellings Company, whose treatment remains necessarily sketchy in the following account.

Still, there seem to be some arguments to be made for making the study available even now.

First, Alfred Armstrong Walton was one of the lesser popular radicals in mid-Victorian Britain and thus belongs to a group of political activists still widely lacking in biographical treatment. Despite its shortcomings, the following pages allow insights into a lifetime of political activism that hardly comes into view in most references to Walton. His name crops up in different political contexts, but mostly without any attempts to put his activities into a wider biographical frame of reference. Thus, he may serve as a case study for many a Victorian popular radical whose activities are bypassed by historical research. Moreover, although research has moved on, this biographical study draws together source material of different origin and thus may be helpful for researchers looking for original material on any of the topics which are here dealt with in connection with Walton's activities. So it is hoped that despite its flaws, some readers may benefit from the publication of this brief study.

Title and page numbers differ from the thesis of 1993, otherwise the text has been left unaltered.

Further publications on Alfred Walton emanating from the research on this thesis (as well as further publications by the author on popular radicalism and liberalism in Victorian Britain) can be found below in section 5 of the bibliography (pp. 73/74).

For the assistance in writing the original dissertation I thank my supervisors at the Centre for the Study of Social History at the University of Warwick, Dr. Jim Obelkevitch, Dr. Nick Tiratsoo, and Dr. Tony Mason in particular, for his valuable ideas on the location of sources. To him and Neda Sadoughi Nejad, I am also obliged for reading the whole draft of the dissertation and suggesting ways of making it sound English rather than German.

List of Abbreviations

ALGDC	Artizans', Labourers' and General Dwellings Company
BDMBR	Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals
DLB	Dictionary of Labour Biography
IWMA	International Working Men's Association
LRL	Labour Representation League
LTRA	Land Tenure Reform Association
NAOT	National Association of Organised Trades
NAUT	National Association of United Trades
NRL	O'Brienite National Reform League
TUC	Trade Union Congress
ULPCBC	United London and Provincial Co-operative Building Company

Introduction

After a period of relative silence, research in mid-Victorian labour politics has considerably increased over the last decade. Not only have the 1850s-1880s been recognized as an important period in the transition from Chartist to Socialist movements; these years also have a particular significance for the current re-definition of some paradigms in the history of the political labour movement. After the theory of an 'aristocracy of labour' has dominated research into the mid-Victorian labour movement for a long time¹, the focus is now shifting from socio-economic interpretations back to political and cultural approaches.

When Gareth Stedman Jones started a process of 'Rethinking Chartism' in 1982, this became of particular importance for encouraging the new approach. By analysing the language of the Chartist movement, Stedman Jones claimed to be able 'to establish a far closer and more precise relationship between ideology and activity than is conveyed in the standard picture of the movement'².

This approach has been taken up by a number of researchers and applied to the mid-Victorian years. The absence of a strong socialist streak in the labour movement of these years has given rise to an analysis of the Liberal traditions within the British labour movement in the years following the failure of Chartism. A. D. Taylor in a comparative study has pointed out the differences in the developments in London and Manchester³, whereas Eugenio Biagini has argued for the existence of a coherent 'Popular Liberalism', which characterised wide sections of the labour movement and led to a close co-operation between leading working class activists and the Gladstonian Liberal Party⁴.

Despite the recent increase in research into this period, biographies devoted to individual working class activists are still rare⁵. However, the individual experience is of crucial importance for the attempt to understand the course of labour politics during those years. This

¹ R. Gray, The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth Century Britain c. 1850-1914 (1981); E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The Aristocracy of Labour Reconsidered', in Worlds of Labour (1984). Unless stated otherwise, all works cited in the notes are published in London.

² G. Stedman Jones, 'Rethinking Chartism', in Languages of Class. Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982 (Cambridge et al., 1983), p. 95.

³ A. D. Taylor, 'Modes of Political Expression and Working-Class Radicalism 1848-1874: The London and Manchester Examples' (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 1992).

⁴ E. F. Biagini, Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform. Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880 (Cambridge, 1992).

⁵ Notable exceptions are F. M. Leventhal, Respectable Radical. George Howell and Victorian Working Class Politics (1971), and G. M. Wilson, Alexander McDonald. Leader of the Miners (Aberdeen, 1982).

thesis deals with a working class radical whose political activities and social ideas have not yet been thoroughly analysed, but whose undertakings have resulted in diverging classifications of his position - Alfred Armstrong Walton (1816-1883).

When the *Bee-Hive* presented a portrait of Walton on the occasion of his candidature as a parliamentary candidate for Stoke-on-Trent in 1875, he was introduced as 'a co-worker with the late lamented Richard Cobden in the Free Trade movement, and, in fact, every progressive movement up to the present time'⁶. He was praised for his book on land reform, his activities in the co-operative building movement and for his 'industry, perseverance, self-reliance, and integrity' in general. However, among this faultless array of liberal credentials, no mention is made of his association with the First International, nor of his membership in the National Reform League, which had been established by Bronterre O'Brien in 1849. The different perspective arising from these allegiances prompted the editors of the documents of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association to concisely label Walton as an 'English Socialist'⁷.

By analysing Walton's activities, this dissertation wants to contribute to the understanding of mid-Victorian working class radicalism. It is not intended to present a full-scale biography of Walton; the focus will be on the years between 1860 and 1880, when Walton was active in the reform movement and made several attempts to stand for parliament. These were the years when the relationship between the labour movement and Liberalism had to enter a phase of re-definition after the passing of the Second Reform Act of 1867, which enfranchised a large section of the urban workers.

In assessing the too convenient classifications of Walton's political position as either 'Socialist' or 'Liberal', this thesis wants to show that Walton was part of the Liberal Radicalism which shared a common criticism of the aristocracy, but was very disparate in its various tendencies and the proposed remedies to the evils of the social system. After 1867 the Liberal party managed to secure the support of wide sections of this radical Liberalism. However, using the example of Walton it will be argued that support for the Liberal party could be a conscious, strategic decision, which did not prevent 'Socialist' ideas from being preserved within the 'Liberal' framework.

⁶ *Bee-Hive* 30.1.1875, p. 2. Next quotation *ibid*.

⁷ General Council of the First International - Minutes (1864-1872), ed. by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the C.C., C.P.S.U., (5 vols., Moscow / London s. d. [1963-1968]), vol. II, p. 436 (Name Index). This publication will be quoted as IWMA Minutes.

The main source providing information about Walton is the contemporary newspaper press. Being a prolific writer, Walton constantly sought to propagate his political views by writing letters to several newspapers. The main channel to voice his concerns was the *Bee-Hive*, which accordingly will be the central source for this dissertation. Walton also wrote for other papers and trade union journals, but his publications are highly repetitious and he used to place the same article into various papers. In 1869 he admitted that he had "been "pegging away" for more than a quarter of a century in any paper or periodical I could get into, sometimes under the anonymous, but latterly more as a "free lance"⁸.

Apart from this continual flow of newspaper contributions, Walton produced several books and pamphlets explaining his position towards a range of questions from land reform and the social improvement of the working classes to labour representation and co-operation. The most important of these is his 'History of the Landed Tenures in Great Britain and Wales' (1865), laying the historical foundation for the land reform scheme he advocated.

Walton's significance as an activist is indicated by the fact that his name appears in connection with a large number of working class organisations, which were either covered by the radical press or have left their own reports (e. g. the General Councils of the Reform League, the International Working Men's Association or the Labour Representation League). Therefore it is possible to outline Walton's theoretical positions in the 1860s and 1870s, and at the same time to demonstrate how he attempted to transform his ideas into practical politics.

Although Walton has been rather neglected by labour historians, some aspects of his political career have become the object of historical research. Walton's involvement in the late Chartist movement has been referred to by John Belchem⁹, his activities in the Welsh reform movement are considered by R. Wallace¹⁰ and his attempts to stand as a candidate for the constituency of Stoke-on-Trent have been thoroughly analysed by Paul Anderton in his MA thesis on Liberal-labour relations in this borough¹¹. Usually, however, Walton makes just a

⁸ *Bee-Hive* 30.10.1869, p. 7.

⁹ J. C. Belchem, 'Chartism and the Trades, 1848-1850', *English Historical Review*, 98 (1983), pp. 558-587.

¹⁰ R. Wallace, Organise! Organise! Organise! A Study of Reform Agitations in Wales, 1840-1886 (Cardiff, 1991).

¹¹ P. Anderton, 'The Liberal Party of Stoke-on-Trent and Parliamentary Elections 1862-1880. A Case Study in Liberal-Labour Relations' (MA thesis, University of Keele, 1974).

passing appearance¹², covering only a tiny part of his interests and not accounting for the whole range of his political opinions and activities.

Dealing only briefly with Walton's early years, the thesis will concentrate on the main aspects of Walton's activities in the mid-Victorian years. An analysis of the questions of land reform, co-operation and labour representation will lead up to a general evaluation of Walton's career within the framework of contemporary labour politics.

I. Walton's Formative Years

1. The Self-Improvement of a Stonemason

As the youngest of ten children, Alfred Armstrong Walton was born near Hexham (Northumberland) in 1816¹³. At an early age he acquired some skills in the building trade (partly guided by his eldest brother, who managed his father's business), but farming with a relative also gave Walton some practical knowledge about the tillage of the soil. These insights might have motivated his permanent interest in the land question. In any case, in later years he claimed that this experience served as a solid foundation for assessing the living conditions of the agricultural labourers. When a landowner criticised Walton's land reform scheme, implying that he lacked a sufficient knowledge of agriculture, Walton replied:

I was born and reared in the midst of an agricultural district, and stood at the tail of the plough, and have taken my part in the harvest field before I was eighteen years of age, and although I have subsequently been engaged in other pursuits, I am in the habit of passing through many of the principal counties of England and Wales ten or a dozen times a year ...¹⁴

His father died before Walton was eighteen years old, and the son was subsequently employed in the firm of a builder in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. There he did not only join the

¹² E. g. G. D. H. Cole, British Working Class Politics 1832-1914 (1941), pp. 67, 69, 71, 262-263; H. Collins / C. Abramsky, Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement. Years of the First International (1965).

¹³ Unless indicated otherwise, the following biographical account of Walton is based on the portrait in the *Bee-Hive* 30.1.1875, pp. 1-2.

¹⁴ *Bee-Hive* 27.4.1872, p. 1.

stonemasons' union¹⁵, but he also became 'a co-worker with Thomas Doubleday, Augustus Hardin Beaumont, T. Devyr, James Ayre, and other local leaders in that town'¹⁶. Doubleday, the most important of these men, was a founding member of the National Political Union and after the Reform Act of 1832 went on to call for universal suffrage¹⁷. At leaving Newcastle in 1837, Walton therefore had made his first contacts with central issues of Victorian working class radicalism that would lead to Chartism.

After a brief stay in Leeds, he moved on to London, where he worked with several leading building firms and became involved in the erection of important public buildings, like the British Museum and the Houses of Parliament¹⁸. While being engaged at the former place, Walton supposedly collected material for his later works on the land question. In 1844 he was articled to an architect's office for twelve months, using his savings to pay for this opportunity of self-improvement¹⁹.

Although Walton was in London during the heydays of Chartism and is usually numbered among the ranks of this movement²⁰, he only rose to a semi-prominent position during the final stages of Chartism.

¹⁵ Cp. A. Plummer, Bronterre. A Political Biography of Bronterre O'Brien 1804-1864 (London, 1971), p. 272.

¹⁶ *Bee-Hive* 30.1.1875, p. 2.

¹⁷ See W. H. Maehl Jr., 'Thomas Doubleday (1790-1870)' in *Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals (BDMBR)*, vol. 2, pp. 184-188. For Beaumont (1798-1838), who only was in Newcastle for a few months, see *ibid.*, pp. 46-48.

¹⁸ See Wallace, Organise!, p. 229 n. 72.

¹⁹ Unfortunately, evidence about his later work as an architect is scarce. As Walton was not a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects, his name does not appear in any of the reference books or the directories of this institution (for this information I thank M. Nixon of the RIBA).

²⁰ Cp. e. g. D. Goodway, London Chartism 1838-1848 (Cambridge, 1982), p. 70.

2. Walton and Late Chartism

Like many contemporary Chartists and like many modern historians, Walton saw the major weakness of Chartism in the 'lethargy'²¹ and lack of support from the unions in the metropolis. In 1845 the National Association of United Trades for the Protection and Employment of Labour (NAUT) had been established to bring about a nation-wide combination of trades. However, although it claimed to operate upon public opinion and upon Parliament to redress the grievances of working men, it had by 1848 become concentrated on industrial questions, leaving more pronounced political objects aside²².

In March 1848 a series of meetings of metropolitan trades delegates commenced which in October resulted in the formation of the National Association of Organised Trades for the Industrial, Social and Political Emancipation of Labour (NAOT)²³. James O'Leary was elected chairman and A. E. Delaforce secretary.

The eight points proposed as the programme of the NAOT constituted a resolved attempt to combine social and industrial with political agitation. They called for free and secular education, currency reform, manhood suffrage, the establishment of local boards of trade, a graduated property tax and the protection of industry from foreign competition. Of particular importance was the resolution that 'the land being the gift of the Almighty to the people universally, [it] ought to be held in sacred trust by the State for their benefit, and not be exclusively possessed by a fractional part of the community'. As a practical step into this direction, point 5 demanded that 'the Government should introduce a bill establishing self-supporting home colonies, to give immediate employment to the numerous but compulsory unemployed of our population'²⁴. This point was chosen by Walton to become the main point of agitation.

From the formation of the NAOT, Walton had been deeply involved in the affairs of the new organisation. In 1848 he issued a pamphlet calling upon all trades to support the NAOT²⁵.

²¹ Walton, 'To the Trades of Great Britain and Ireland', *Northern Star* 24.3.1849, p. 3.

²² Cp. the programmes of the NAUT of 1845 (*Northern Star* 29.3.1845) and 1848 (*The Labour League* 5.8.1848, pp. 1-2), partly reprinted in G. D. H. Cole / A. W. Filson (eds.), British Working Class Movements. Select Documents 1789-1875 (1951), pp. 469/470 and 472-474 respectively. Also see S. and B. Webb, The History of Trade Unionism (1894), pp. 168, 173, 177.

²³ For the founding process see Belchem, 'Chartism and the Trades', pp. 559, 564-567.

²⁴ 'Address of the London Trades' Delegates to the Trades of Great Britain and Ireland', *The Labour League* 25.11.1848, pp. 130/131.

²⁵ Walton, An Appeal to All Trade Societies on the Necessity for a National Organisation of Trades for the Industrial, Social, and Political Emancipation of Labour (1848). This appeal

In this pamphlet he declares that universal suffrage, the most important point in the Charter, is not sufficient to alleviate the condition of the working people. It can only be understood as 'the necessary machinery of legislation - as the means to an end', because

until our present system of landed tenures be totally abolished - our laws on currency, credit, and exchange entirely altered - no matter under what form of government you may live, you who live by labour will continue to be the victims of a legally organised system of gigantic confiscation. Yes, our present land-laws and money-laws are the two malefactors between whom the fruits of the industry of the nation are devoured piecemeal!

These structural changes are of paramount importance to Walton, as the 'oppression of unjust social arrangements' is worse than 'the tyranny of kings or the oppression of statesmen'. Whereas the vassals in feudal times were at least housed, clothed or fed by their barons, the present social arrangements give all the revenue to the landlords without obliging them to care for the workers.

However, as 'the present system contains within itself the seeds of dissolution'²⁶, it is in the hands of the working men to bring about a change of their situation. But 'it is only by union, and a clear and comprehensive knowledge of the causes which led to the depressed condition of those who live by labour' that this change can be achieved²⁷.

Be not mistaken as to whence your liberty must come. It is by men belonging to the ranks of labour that your wrongs must be proclaimed, and your rights established²⁸.

Taking up the motto of the NAOT, Walton concludes:

And it is to you, Oh Men of the Trades, that British Industry must look for its deliverance. Therefore, "Arise, awake, or be for ever fallen".

Walton clearly recognized the significance of 'that talismanic word - UNION'²⁹ for any successful action on the part of the trades. Universal suffrage and home colonisation were the 'two great principles' advocated by Walton in the NAOT to achieve an improvement in the condition of labour and a more democratic society³⁰.

closely mirrors parts of the programme in the address of the London Trades' Delegates quoted above. The next quotations *ibid.* pp. 2, 3, 9.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁸ This and the next quotation *ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁹ Walton, 'To the Trades of Great Britain and Ireland', *The Northern Star* 24.3.1849, p. 3.

³⁰ See Walton at a meeting of journeymen tailors, who were considering the NAOT; report in *The Northern Star* 10.3.1849, p. 5.

But although Walton urged the trades to be 'the instruments of your own regeneration', he at the same time advised them to 'receive with courtesy all assistance that may be offered you'³¹. For him the antagonism between labour and capital was created by the present system and did not entail any hatred between the classes. When a meeting was held in London for 21 masons who had been indicted for conspiracy by Trego's, a government contractor, Walton seconded a resolution 'that union is the only hope of the toiling millions, as a means of protecting themselves from the despotism of employers and the tyranny of capital'³²; however, heartily endorsing the call for union, he took pains 'to explain the intimate dependence of labour and capital upon each other'. He agreed that 'they never could place labour in its natural and proper position in relation to capital, so long as the present system of classes of employer and classes of employed existed', but to change this system Walton did not attack the possession of the means of production by the industrial capitalists, but advocated a land reform.

To understand this policy, it is important to note that in speaking about the workers' grievances, Walton almost exclusively referred to the problem of unemployment, whereas industrial relations seem to have been only of minor importance to him. The concentration of the means of production in the hands of a few was criticised by him only as far as landowners were concerned, whereas his complaints about capitalists were confined to their substituting machinery for manual labour:

The usurpation of the soil by the few, to the exclusion of the many, on the one hand, and superseding manual labour by machinery for the sole benefit of the capitalist on the other, ... has [sic!] left the workmen of all nations only one of two alternatives to choose - either to accept the terms offered by an employer, or, otherwise, to turn round and look starvation in the face ...³³

The solution to the problem of unemployment, which was caused by this state of affairs, lay with a reform of the land system; accepting the teachings of political economy that the supply and demand in the labour market regulate the price of labour, Walton called for home colonies to absorb the compulsory surplus labour produced by the present system. Only this measure could prevent the working of the labour market from becoming 'the complete triumph of capital over labour'.

³¹ Walton, *Appeal*, p. 9.

³² Meeting of Masons and Trades of London on 3.11.1848 at the Temperance Hall, reported in *The Labour League* 11.11.1848, pp. 115/116. This and the next quotation p. 116.

³³ Walton, 'To the Trades of Great Britain and Ireland', *The Northern Star* 24.3.1849, p. 3. Next quotation *ibid.*

Like many advocates of home colonies³⁴, Walton did not go into details about their establishment. He simply seems to have assumed that a great number of poor people would eagerly grasp the opportunity to get settled on the land. No consideration was given to the possibility that the poor would not like to work in the agricultural sector of the economy.

Nevertheless, Walton claimed to be a practical man, who was not satisfied with drawing up grand schemes for changing the structure of society, but also took into account the requirements arising from translating his ideas into politics within the context of the day. In particular, this meant that he recognized the limited base of many political undertakings in the late Chartist period. In 1851 he observed that the same audience attended several meetings he witnessed in the City, Westminster, Lambeth and Marylebone, and he concluded

that the great work to be accomplished is, to teach those who are not yet converts to the creed of Democracy the necessity of becoming so; but it is impossible to do this while the teaching is confined to particular districts, and chiefly to those who are already professed democrats³⁵.

The lack of mass support also made him mock the attempts of small extremist groups to bring about a change of the political institutions by force, and he advised

that any man who would threaten the overthrow of the government by force, when he and his party are scarcely strong enough to stand upon their legs, ought to be taken care of by his friends, as otherwise the government will be sure to take care of him for them.

Walton's conviction of the necessity for united mass agitation made him call for an extension of the movement into the 'slumbering districts of agriculture'³⁶ and to try to secure the support of the NAUT for the NAOT. In a letter to the editor of the *Labour League*, the journal of the NAUT, he suggested that both organisations were 'well calculated to confer inestimable benefits upon all classes of the community who live by labour'³⁷. On the one hand, he conceded that a body like the NAUT, 'which seeks to create employment in different industrial pursuits, and teaches the people that they possess within themselves the power of

³⁴ For the discussion on home colonies since the 1830s see E. E. Barry, Nationalisation in British Politics. The Historical Background (1965), pp. 29-34.

³⁵ Walton, 'To the British Democracy', in *The Friend of the People* 29.3.1851, p. 122. Next two quotations *ibid*.

³⁶ Cp. also Walton, 'To the Trades of Great Britain and Ireland', *The Northern Star* 24.3.49, p. 3. This call for organising the agricultural labourers became a constant theme throughout his life.

³⁷ Walton, 'New Organisation of Trades', *The Labour League* 16.12.1848, pp. 159/160; the next four quotations *ibid*.

considerably improving their own condition - such an Association ought, and I trust will continue to receive the support of the trades'. The NAOT, on the other hand, was based on the fact, 'that there is much which ought to be done, that never can be accomplished under our present social and legislative arrangements' and 'should direct its energies to the removal of these barriers of human happiness and progression'.

According to Walton's suggestion, both organisations should complement each other. They might have shared many objects, but the need for the new organisation was given by the different ways advocated to achieve these ends. Both associations sought the employment of labour; but whereas the NAUT purposed 'to employ labour by means of contributions from the Trades themselves upon the principle of "self-reliance"', the NAOT declared 'that it is the duty of the Government to afford every facility to the people to provide for themselves useful employment'. This for Walton meant to bring about a change in the land laws, as 'the great bulk of the most valuable land in the empire, is effectually locked up against the industry of the nation by our laws of entail and primogeniture'.

Despite Walton's offer of co-operation, the NAUT soon began to oppose the NAOT, and by the end of 1849 both organisations had become entirely opposed to each other³⁸.

The hostility of the NAUT prevented the desired unity of trades, but initially the NAOT could still be optimistic about its future. Chartists like Fergus O'Connor, who were eager to reconstruct the mass platform which had got lost after the presentation of the petition in April 1848, welcomed the formation of the new association³⁹.

In 1849 Walton attempted to single out point 5 of the programme (home colonies) as the main object of agitation. However, despite a first success in getting support for this object at a meeting of more than two thousand London trades representatives⁴⁰, the organisation almost at once started to develop into various directions. Not all trades delegates showed the same enthusiasm for home colonies as Walton; some rather gave priority to local boards of trade, others in a move against free trade insisted on highlighting the protectionist possibilities of the programme, even if this resulted in moving the association closer to Tory interests. By the beginning of 1850 it had become obvious that it was impossible to unite the diverging sections

³⁸ Cp. Belchem, 'Chartism and the Trades', pp. 568-570, 575-576, 583.

³⁹ Cp. *ibid.*, pp. 571-572.

⁴⁰ Report of the meeting in *Northern Star* 10.3.1849, p. 5. Walton wrote later that he had been 'chiefly instrumental' in holding this meeting 'to advocate home colonisation', but that it 'was not taken up with sufficient earnestness to be carried to a successful issue' (Walton, 'The Land and Money Monopolies', *Bee-Hive* 2.1.1869, p. 7).

of late Chartism⁴¹. Walton's policy of pushing home colonies as the central object of the NAOT might have been reasonable for obtaining a concise platform for the reformers, but given the diversity of opinions in the late Chartist phase it was bound to fail. The movement had run into a dilemma: A successful agitation required concentration on a limited range of objectives, but a limitation in the number of objects impeded any success in unifying the disparate interests in the movement. It would take more than a decade until the demand for manhood suffrage would provide a common platform for British reformers in the 1860s.

For Walton himself, the demand for home colonies only had been a first step in the direction of a comprehensive land reform, which had to result in a nationalisation of the land. For him, the nationalisation of the land was 'a question which will probably occupy public attention to a considerable extent in future'⁴². The land question had been widely discussed among working class and middle class radicals for half a century⁴³, but - as Walton regretted - the 'diversity of opinion'⁴⁴ on how to achieve a reform and how to organise agricultural production in the future impeded the solution of the question in 'a practical, sensible manner'.

Walton's proposal was to pass an Act of Parliament enabling the State to purchase the land at market price, thereby providing compensation to the owners. The land then should be let out for cultivation, but the Government was to have no influence in determining 'whether it shall be done under associational arrangements or by individual exertion'. The two principles of co-operation and competition 'would then be brought practically to the test, in which the advantages of association would be made clear and indisputable to the meanest capacity'. The whole scheme was to be financed by issuing Treasury notes, whose 'representative value ... would always be found in the land which they would be applied to purchase'⁴⁵. This scheme also required a reform of the system of credit for the cultivation of the land.

As Walton's proposals were only intended to be applicable to 'a transition state of society', he did not claim to describe a perfect social system. However, it was indisputable to him, that 'there can be no just settlement of this question of the land other than a total abolition of private property therein'.

⁴¹ Cp. Belchem, 'Chartism and the Trades', pp. 576-583.

⁴² Walton, 'The Land National Property', *The Friend of the People* 17.5.1851, p. 198.

⁴³ See D. Martin, 'Land Reform' in Patricia Hollis (ed.), Pressure from Without in Early Victorian England (1974), pp. 131-158, esp. 134-142.

⁴⁴ Walton, 'The Land National Property', *The Friend of the People* 17.5.1851, pp. 198/199; the following quotations *ibid.*

⁴⁵ Walton, 'The Land National Property', *The Friend of the People* 31.5.1851, pp. 214/215; next quotations *ibid.*

The programme of social and economic reform, which was advocated by Walton in 1848-1850, was not developed all by himself. It has been pointed out that his scheme for home colonisation was 'an interesting adaptation of the Owenite ideal'⁴⁶. However, the combination of the land, currency and money questions in Walton's programme suggests a much stronger influence by the ideas of Bronterre O'Brien.

Walton's views agree with O'Brien's in 'that the repeal of unjust laws and the enactment of a few just and salutary ones, upon Land, Credit and Equitable Exchange (the latter including Currency), is all that is needed to terminate poverty and slavery for ever'⁴⁷. Neither would Walton have objected to the condemnation of Fergus O'Connor's Land Plan, which in O'Brien's opinion would 'extend the hellish principle of Landlordism', and by benefiting only a small section of the working class would 'destroy the principle of United Action'⁴⁸.

Walton also shared O'Brien's wariness towards Free Trade. Not objecting to the principles of Free Trade as such, O'Brien had called for precautionary measures, lest Free Trade might merely result in the 'monied class' (persons living of fixed incomes) commanding an even greater share of the national wealth than the labouring classes⁴⁹. Similarly Walton - who in later years prided himself of having been a co-worker of Richard Cobden⁵⁰ - stated in 1848 that the repeal of the corn laws and the alteration of the tariff had failed to bring about the promised increase in employment and cheap food. Instead, according to Walton Britain was taxed seven times higher than France, and yet with this 'disadvantage, our mechanics and artizans are called upon to compete with foreigners'⁵¹. Walton was particularly concerned with the rising fortunes of the landlords, who in his analysis indirectly profited from Free Trade: British industry struggled 'in fetters with its competitors, and all this too for the purpose of exempting the land from taxation' and paying for 'worthless pensioners, placemen and sinecurists'. As a result, 'poverty, like a midnight hag, was everywhere stalking abroad'.

⁴⁶ Barry, Nationalisation, p. 33.

⁴⁷ Bronterre O'Brien, *Rise, Progress and Phases of Human Slavery* (1849), quoted in Plummer, Bronterre, p. 197. See also O'Brien's land scheme in *The National Reformer* 16.1.1847, reprinted in Cole / Filson, British Working Class Movements, pp. 407-409.

⁴⁸ O'Brien in *The National Reformer* 9.1.1847, quoted in J. MacAskill, 'The Chartist Land Plan' in Asa Briggs (ed.), Chartist Studies (1959), pp. 304-341, p. 339. For O'Connor's Land Plan see also A. M. Hadfield, The Chartist Land Company (Newton Abbot, 1970), and D. Thompson, The Chartists (1984), pp. 299-306.

⁴⁹ See R. G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement 1837-1854 (Newcastle, 1855, reprinted 1894 and 1969), pp. 103/104.

⁵⁰ Cp. Walton, 'To the Electors of the Borough of Stoke-upon-Trent', *The Potteries Examiner* 31.1.1874, p. 4.

⁵¹ Walton, Appeal, p. 6; next quotations *ibid.*, pp. 6 and 7.

In general, however, Walton was not opposed to Cobdenite policies. They simply did not go far enough for him. He told a meeting:

There were many schemes before the people for bettering their condition, and amongst others the Cobden one, for curtailing our expenditure, and reducing our armaments; to this he had no objection, as he thought a man was much more useful with a spade in his hand than a musket, but at the same time let it not be forgotten, that every man discharged from the army, was an addition to the supply in the unemployed labour market. It was fallacious on the part of any government to expect a people to be loyal, whilst that government stood between the people and the means of existence ... - if employment and the means of existence were not found, we must expect to hear of convulsions⁵².

For Walton, there was no entirely satisfactory measure of improving the lot of the unemployed as long as it stopped short of the nationalisation of the land. But middle-class reformers like Cobden were heading in the right direction, and their proposed measures promised some relief for the poor, until the gradual nationalisation of the land would commence⁵³.

The gradualist approach to the nationalisation of the land was also embedded in the programme of the National Reform League (NRL)⁵⁴. When O'Brien set up this organisation in 1849, Walton seems to have become a member⁵⁵. However, he never played a prominent part in the Eclectic Club, which was associated with the NRL. The club established an institute on its own premises in Denmark Street, Soho, and survived well into the 1870s, after O'Brien's death (1864) being dominated by the brothers Charles and James Murray and by John Rogers⁵⁶. On the other hand, Walton always kept a high standing with the National Reform League, and in 1867 he was elected its president for the ensuing year⁵⁷.

⁵² Walton at the meeting for Employment of the Poor, reported in *The Northern Star* 10.3.1849, p. 5.

⁵³ On the strained relations between Free Traders and Chartists see Martin, Land Reform, pp. 147/148.

⁵⁴ Reprinted in Cole / Filson, British Working Class Movements, pp. 409-411.

⁵⁵ Cole, British Working Class Politics, p. 67.

⁵⁶ On the history of the Eclectic Club see S. Shipley, Club Life and Socialism in Mid-Victorian London (Oxford, 1971), and Plummer, Bronterre, pp. 204-206, 274-276.

⁵⁷ *National Reformer* 10.3.1867, p. 158 (his name is incorrectly given as Walter Walton). Vice-President became R. G. Gammage, who had been one of the earliest members of the NRL and the first historian of the Chartist movement.

The late Chartist phase had seen Walton outlining the principal features of his political programme and establishing personal contacts, which could become important for his later career. His activities in the NAOT got the attention of journalists like Patrick Lloyd Jones⁵⁸, who in the 1870s was closely associated with the *Bee-Hive*, the paper in which Walton was to publish the paramount number of his articles. Lloyd Jones also addressed the inauguration meeting of the National Reform League, which was chaired by G. W. M. Reynolds, another leading figure in the field of the mid-Victorian radical press⁵⁹.

Walton's eclipse from the London political arena after 1850 was not only a result of the decline of the Chartist movement, but it was at least partly due to his work. After having completed his articles at an architect's office, he had become connected with the architect Sir George Gilbert Scott. In this position 'he erected many public and private buildings in various parts of the country'⁶⁰, which occupation kept him away from London for lengthy periods. In consequence, 'for a time he did not come so prominently to the front as he did in his earlier years', but soon he became involved in local politics in the little town Brecon in South Wales. From there he also tried to influence the national labour movement by a huge number of articles in newspapers and journals. Moreover, during his years in Brecon he elaborated on his views about land reform and the improvement of the people.

⁵⁸ Belchem, 'Chartism and the Trades', p. 575. For Lloyd Jones (1811-1886) see BDMBR 2, pp. 268-273.

⁵⁹ See Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement*, p. 351.

⁶⁰ *Bee-Hive* 30.1.1875, p. 2; next quotation *ibid.*

II. Walton's Years in Wales

1. Town Councillor in Brecon

Walton came to Brecon in 1861 as clerk to the works in the partial restoration of the Priory Church, which was carried out by G. G. Scott. He decided to stay in the Welsh town, married, set up his own business as a builder and did not leave until the middle of the 1870s⁶¹.

Walton's involvement in local politics became obvious when he was elected a Town Councillor on 1. November 1866⁶². In 1865, he had already been invited by 'several of the burgesses of Brecon' to stand for a seat in the Council, but had declined the offer - 'at least for the present'⁶³.

After his election to the Town Council, Walton took part in its proceedings quite regularly and, as the reports in the local press seem to indicate, in quite a self-confident manner. When the discussions tended to lose their clear line, he would advise his fellow councillors rather harshly: 'Go on with one matter at a time.'⁶⁴ He also could be insistent if he suspected inefficiency in the way public works were carried out or in cases where the Town Council failed to exert a close control. When there was a difference of opinion whether the contractor of the new water system was bound to repair the streets, Walton used his professional knowledge to lecture the Town Council on how an architect had to make sure that a contractor performed his obligations⁶⁵.

In general, he wanted to secure that the money of the rate-payers was used in a prudent way and that the accounts were open to the public. When a committee on the state of the public works had proved mismanagement, Walton urged the report to be made known to the public⁶⁶, and when several rate-payers complained that the Burial Board had never furnished a balance-sheet, he brought their request before the Town Council⁶⁷. Informed by the Town Clerk that the Burial Board maintained that there was no legal requirement for the publication of the

⁶¹ A 19th century scrap-book in the Brecon Cathedral Muniments Room mentions Walton as 'late from Brecon' in October 1872 (for this information I thank Siân Spink of Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion yng Nghymru, Aberystwyth). However, he might have kept a residence there, because he is also found in later sources as being from Brecon. A period of residence from 1861 to 1875 is suggested by Wallace, *Organise!*, p. 108.

⁶² See 'The Municipal Election', *Brecon Journal and County Advertiser* 3.11.1866, p. 1.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 28.10.1865, p. 1 (Letter to the editor by A. A. Walton).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.3.1867, p. 1.

⁶⁵ See *ibid.*, 6.7.67, p. 1; *Brecon County Times* 3.4.1869, p. 4.

⁶⁶ *Brecon Journal and County Advertiser* 30.11.1867, p. 1.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.1.1867, p. 1.

balance-sheet, but only for the right of inspection, Walton showed both his practical sense and a kind of contempt for the handling of affairs in Brecon: In condemning the response of the Burial Board as an insult to the rate-payers and the Town Council, he remarked that in a place like Brecon the balance-sheet was most likely to be kept in a private house, and of course hardly anybody would make the effort of visiting somebody else's house with the object of demanding a look into a balance-sheet⁶⁸.

Occasionally Walton served on special committees or missions of the Town Council. When the opportunity arose to establish a daily mail to London, he - most certainly also motivated by his interest in fast links of communication with the metropolis - was one of three councillors to wait upon the manager of the Hereford, Hay and Brecon Railway to arrange for the early train from Brecon 'to meet the London daily mail from Hereford'⁶⁹.

At appropriate occasions, Walton was also able to put the local affairs of Brecon into the wider context of national politics. In 1867 the Town Council was invited to attend the laying of the foundation stone for the Congregational Memorial College at Brecon by the wealthy Nottingham hosiery manufacturer and future M.P. for Bristol, Samuel Morley, whose liberality had been directed to Wales by his connection with Henry Richard, the future M.P. for Merthyr Tydfil⁷⁰. Walton considered this project to be 'a step in the right direction in the establishment of the necessary educational institutions for the proper education and training of the youth of the country', and he remarked that 'the whole subject of national education would shortly have to be taken up and settled both by the country and the legislature. And no man had done more than Mr. Morley ... towards assisting benevolent and educational institutions'⁷¹.

Like the Nonconformist Morley and many leading working class activists, Walton demanded a free, compulsory and unsectarian education for the people. In the very year 1867 he wrote that even if education 'might not entirely suffice to eradicate the many social evils which afflict society, it would doubtless materially assist to do so'⁷². Walton was convinced that

⁶⁸ Ibid., 30.3.1867, p. 1.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 6.7.1867, p. 1.

⁷⁰ For Morley (1809-1886) see BDMBR, vol. 2, pp. 360-366, for Richard (1812-1888) *ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 693-698.

⁷¹ *Brecon Journal and County Advertiser* 8.6.1867, p. 1. Cp. also *ibid.*, 15.6.67. Morley contributed £1000 to the building and returned two years later to the opening of the College. Cp. E. Hodder, *Life of Samuel Morley* (1888), p. 227; 'Opening of the Memorial College, Brecon', *Brecon County Times* 18.9.1869, pp. 4/5.

⁷² Walton, Our Future Progress: Being a Brief Digest of the Necessary Measures to be adopted to secure the Political, Social, Industrial, Educational, Individual, and Domestic Improvement of all Classes of the Community (Brecon, 1867), p. 53. Next quotation *ibid.*, p. 59.

no 'system of education can approach anything like perfection unless it be made national and uniformly public for both sexes, ... and based upon the most enlightened and comprehensive basis'. Consequently, he became opposed to the provisions of Forster's Education Act of 1870⁷³, which left the solution to the intricate religious question with the local School Boards⁷⁴.

2. National and International Movements

The biggest national issue during Walton's years in Brecon was the agitation for parliamentary reform. In Manchester, the National Reform Union had been founded, and in London the National Reform League was established in 1865 mainly as a working men's organisation, with Edmond Beales as President and George Howell as Secretary⁷⁵. The League's main object of manhood suffrage secured the support of many reformers who had been active in the democratic movements from the days of Chartism and saw the vote either as the ultimate reform measure or as a first instalment in further reform. The second position was shared by Walton⁷⁶. In 1865, he established a branch of the Reform League in Brecon and became its chairman⁷⁷.

The branch seems only to have taken off at the end of 1866 after a lecture delivered by George Mantle, a member of the General Council of the Reform League in London being on lecture tour in Wales⁷⁸. Despite the occasional mention of new members joining the branch and regular meetings each month, it seems to have been mainly carried on by only a handful of people. Apart from Walton, whose personal commitment was crucial in keeping the branch alive, these were Rev. H. Griffiths, Rev. W. Morris and Rev. H. Williams. Their participation indicates the central role played by Nonconformist ministers in the Welsh reform movement⁷⁹.

However, it proved difficult to organise a strong section of the Reform League for Wales. Although Walton was among a number of local speakers to assist the Welsh reform movement

⁷³ See Walton, 'The Education Act of 1870, and how it worked', *Bee-Hive* 23.12.1871, pp. 2/3.

⁷⁴ On the complexities of the education question and the workers' diverging opinions towards religious teaching see J. P. Parry, *Democracy and Religion. Gladstone and the Liberal Party, 1867-1875* (Cambridge, 1986), passim, but esp. pp. 236-237.

⁷⁵ See A. D. Bell, 'The Reform League, from its Origins to the Passing into Law of the Reform Act of 1867' (DPhil thesis, Oxford, 1960); Leventhal, *Respectable Radical*, pp. 55-58.

⁷⁶ See Walton, 'The Reform Movement in South Wales', *Brecon Journal and County Advertiser* 1.12.1866, p. 1 (Letter to the editor).

⁷⁷ See Wallace, *Organise!*, p. 108.

⁷⁸ See 'Lecture on Reform', *Brecon Journal and County Advertiser* 24.11.1866.

⁷⁹ For the administration and activities of the Reform League in Wales see Wallace, *Organise!*, pp. 104-121, here esp. p. 115.

in different towns⁸⁰, his intention 'to organise a district for South Wales'⁸¹ seems to have produced no results.

For the most important reform demonstrations, Walton went to London and reported the proceedings back to the Brecon Branch. After the demonstration of 11.2.1867, he severely criticised the 'vacillating conduct of the ministry'⁸². The Government Reform Bill of 1867⁸³ was met with protest by the Brecon Branch. Walton condemned it as 'a cheat, a sham, and a delusion'⁸⁴. When the Reform Act was passed, he consequently stated that despite considerable progress many demands remained to be fulfilled. As for most of the working class reformers, this for him meant in particular the redistribution of seats, the introduction of the ballot and shorter parliaments⁸⁵.

Only a few months earlier than the Reform League the International Working Men's Association (IWMA, the First International) had been set up by British and French workers in order to coordinate strike actions and prevent employers from importing cheap foreign labour during industrial disputes⁸⁶. Moreover, for the British trade union leaders, who took part in the formation of the IWMA (George Odger, Robert Applegarth, William Randal Cremer, George Howell), the organisation was one of several attempts to stir up mass support in the run-up to the parliamentary reform agitation⁸⁷. After the founding of the Reform League, the interest of the important British trade unionists in the affairs of the IWMA declined rapidly, and the organisation soon became dominated by Karl Marx and his followers.

⁸⁰ See the speech of Dr. James of Merthyr, 'Brecon Borough Election. Mr. Walton's Resignation', *Brecon County Times* 12.9.1868, p. 5. Cp. also Wallace, *Organise!*, pp. 112-113.

⁸¹ Walton at a meeting of the Brecon Branch of the Reform League, *Brecon Journal and County Advertiser* 12.1.67, p. 1. See also Walton, 'The Reform Movement in South Wales', *ibid.* 1.12.1866, p. 1; 'Brecon Branch of the Reform League', *ibid.*, p. 1.

⁸² Meeting of the Brecon Branch of the Reform League, *ibid.*, 9.3.1867, p. 1.

⁸³ For the different stages and drafts in passing the Reform Act see F. B. Smith, *The Making of the Second Reform Bill* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 50-110, 148-208.

⁸⁴ Meeting of the Brecon Branch of the Reform League, *Brecon Journal and County Advertiser* 6.4.1867, p. 1.

⁸⁵ Cp. Walton's statement at a public meeting of the Brecon Branch of the Reform League of 3.6.1867, *Bee-Hive* 8.6.67, p. 1.

⁸⁶ For the formation of the IWMA see D. Rjasanov, 'Zur Geschichte der Ersten Internationale. I. Die Entstehung der Internationalen Arbeiterassoziation', *Marx-Engels Archiv*, 1 (1926), pp. 119-202.

⁸⁷ See D. Mares, 'Englische Gewerkschaftsführer in der Ersten Internationale' (State Exam thesis, University of Trier, 1991), pp. 74-82.

Walton is usually considered to be one of the English adherents of the IWMA⁸⁸, and indeed he was chosen as one of the members of its General Council during its Lausanne (1867) and Brussels (1868) Congresses⁸⁹. However, the IWMA, like many radical associations, used to appoint members to its Council who might bring some benefit to the organisation, but would in fact never take up their seats. This was the case with Walton, who had not even been present at the Brussels Congress⁹⁰.

In 1865 Walton's name appears for the first time in connection with the IWMA. During the course of this year he sent copies of his book on the 'History of the Landed Tenures' to several reform bodies in London. On 28.7.1865, Roger Gray on Walton's behalf presented 15 copies to the Reform League⁹¹, and on the 1.8.1867 he did the same with 20 copies at a meeting of the Central Council of the IWMA⁹².

The relationship between Gray and Walton is not quite clear. Gray, a mason and the President of the Board of Directors of the *Bee-Hive* Industrial Newspaper Company, was a member of the Central Council of the IWMA for 1864-1865⁹³, but the presentation of Walton's book was the only occasion at which he turned up at a meeting. His absence from the Council might have been due to the strained relations between the IWMA and the *Bee-Hive*. The *Bee-Hive* had been appointed the press organ of the IWMA on 22.11.1864⁹⁴, but the hostilities between George Potter, the editor of the paper, and the prominent leaders of the London Trades Council, who also sat on the General Council of the IWMA (Odger, Cremer, Applegarth, Howell⁹⁵), soon caused a severe strain on the co-operation between both sides. The IWMA even launched an unsuccessful take-over bid at the paper's shareholders' meeting in May 1865⁹⁶.

⁸⁸ See Collins / Abramsky, *Karl Marx*, p. 303; Wallace, *Organise!*, p. 219 n. 29.

⁸⁹ See the list of the members of the General Council in *IWMA Minutes* II, p. 163 (meeting of 24.9.1867), and in *Bee-Hive* 3.10.1868, p. 1.

⁹⁰ See J. Freymond (ed.), *La Première Internationale. Recueil de documents* (vols. 1-2, Geneva, 1962), vol. 1, p. 287.

⁹¹ Meeting of Executive Committee of the Reform League of 28.7.1865, in Minute Book of the Reform League, April 1865 to November 1866, p. 47, Howell Collection, Bishopsgate Institute.

⁹² *IWMA Minutes* I, p. 119. Walton had announced his present in a letter which was read on the 28.3.1865, see *ibid.*, p. 85.

⁹³ On Gray see *ibid.*, pp. 452/453 (Name Index).

⁹⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 48.

⁹⁵ These men formed the core of what S. and B. Webb called the 'Junta', see their *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 215-283.

⁹⁶ See S. Coltham, 'George Potter, the Junta, and the Bee-Hive', *International Review of Social History*, 9 (1964), pp. 391-432; 10 (1965), pp. 23-65, esp. p. 409, and Mares, 'Englische Gewerkschaftsführer', pp. 100-108.

Walton - a regular reader and contributor to the paper - might have known about the hostilities between IWMA and *Bee-Hive*. Therefore he might also have known that he provided additional ammunition for Potter's enemies when he approached the Central Council in August 1865 in order to complain 'that he had the previous week sent a letter to the *Bee-Hive* ..., but the editor of that paper had inserted the letter as a leading article and palmed it off on the readers by using the editorial "We" as an editorial production'⁹⁷. However, this message to the Central Council does not seem to have been a deliberate manoeuvre to join the side of the IWMA against the *Bee-Hive*, because Walton continued his frequent contributions to the paper. Perhaps his move was just prompted by a temporary fit of anger at Potter's procedure in editing his letter.

By the time he wrote his letter to the Central Council, Walton had already become a member of the IWMA⁹⁸, but it was only in 1867 that he took some direct part in its affairs. In May, two months after his election as president of the National Reform League, Walton was among a number of reformers who received the report of the 1866 Geneva Congress of the IWMA, apparently connected with an invitation to attend the next Congress at Lausanne⁹⁹. At first he declined to become a delegate because he was occupied with the publication of his book 'Our Future Progress'¹⁰⁰. However, on 20.8.1867, the General Secretary Eccarius could report that Walton 'had announced his intention of representing the National Reform League'¹⁰¹. This meant at the same time that the NRL became the first political organisation to affiliate to the IWMA, after discussions on this subject had been carried on for several months¹⁰². On 29.8.1867 Walton was present at the meeting of the General Council and paid the entrance fee and the annual contribution of the NRL¹⁰³. On this occasion he also spoke on some aspects of the credit question¹⁰⁴.

This was one of the very few occasions that Walton appeared at a Council meeting. However, he indeed visited the Lausanne Congress (2.-8.9.1867). He became a member of the commission on co-operation and mutual credit and took a leading part in drawing up its report.

⁹⁷ Letter by Walton, read at the Central Council meeting of 28.8.1865, in *IWMA Minutes I*, p. 125. Cp. also *ibid.*, Central Council meeting of 5.9.1865, p. 126.

⁹⁸ At least he was called 'a member of the Association living in Wales' at the Central Council meeting of 28.8.1865, see *ibid.*, p. 125.

⁹⁹ See *IWMA Minutes II*, meetings of 14.5.1867 and 28.5.1867, pp. 122 and 124 respectively.

¹⁰⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 145, meeting of 30.7.1867.

¹⁰¹ See *ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁰² See *ibid.*, pp. 52 (23.10.1866), 56 (30.10.1866), 58 (6.11.1868), 95 (5.2.1867).

¹⁰³ See *ibid.*, p. 158. See also Collins / Abramsky, *Karl Marx*, p. 73.

¹⁰⁴ See *IWMA Minutes II*, p. 158. At the meeting of 24.3.1868, Eccarius also read a letter from Walton on this subject, cp. *ibid.*, p. 200.

As a compromise of the Proudhonist and O'Brienite positions represented in the commission it recommended a State bank to give free credit to co-operations or individuals¹⁰⁵.

Walton was quite satisfied with the result of the Congress. After his return he was happy to inform the Finsbury Association of the National Reform League¹⁰⁶

that the committee on which he acted reported entirely in favour of many of our prominent principles, that the Congress entirely endorsed the doctrine of a safe and secure system of State credit, and also the gradual redemption of the national domains on behalf of the people, on the principle of full equitable compensation to existing holders¹⁰⁷.

During 1868, Walton's active involvement in the affairs of the IWMA dwindled rapidly. He still contributed some letters to the *Bee-Hive*, commenting on the programme for the Brussels Congress and stressing his own views on the relevant points¹⁰⁸, but during the following years he only attended three meetings of the General Council¹⁰⁹.

The history of Walton's connection with the IWMA shows that this association never played a major role among his political activities. His involvement in 1867 had been mainly due to his position as President of the National Reform League, which he represented at the Lausanne Congress. He supported the IWMA programme where it agreed with his own principles, but the association had no formative influence on him at all¹¹⁰.

During the Lausanne Congress, Walton - together with some other English delegates¹¹¹ - had taken the opportunity to attend a further conference, which had been held at the same

¹⁰⁵ See Freymond, *La Première Internationale I*, pp. 135-136, 190-193. Walton also took part in the discussions on an orthographic reform (pp. 141, 142, 231) and on primary education (p. 151).

¹⁰⁶ This society had only been established a few weeks before, see *National Reformer* 11.8.1867, p. 94.

¹⁰⁷ Meeting of the Finsbury Association of the NRL on 15.9.1867, reported in *Bee-Hive* 21.9.1867, p. 1. See also Walton's letter on the congress *ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁸ See *Bee-Hive* 22.8.1868, p. 7; 5.9.1868, p. 7; 19.9.1868, p. 7.

¹⁰⁹ See *IWMA Minutes III*, p. 108 (1.6.1869), p. 152 (31.8.1869), p. 214 (1.3.1870).

¹¹⁰ This is suggested by Collins / Abramsky, *Karl Marx*, p. 303, and J. S. Shepherd, 'The Lib-Labs and English Working Class Politics, 1874-1906' (PhD thesis, University of London, 1980), p. 15.

¹¹¹ Odger and Cremer (who was to become a major peace activist and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1903) went as delegates from the Reform League, see Collins / Abramsky, *Karl Marx*, pp. 126/127.

time at Geneva: the Congress of the International League of Peace and Liberty¹¹². But although he constantly advocated a reduction of the expenditure in armament, and arbitration as the solution to international disputes¹¹³, Walton did not become involved in the formation either of the English Branch of the League for Peace and Liberty¹¹⁴ nor in the establishment of the Workmen's Peace Committee at the time of the Franco-German War¹¹⁵.

Walton's concern with the education question, the reform agitation, the IWMA and the peace question shows the wide range of his interests, covering important aspects of mid-Victorian working class radicalism. However, the main thrust of his energies was devoted to other fields of activity: an elaboration of his views on land reform, the establishment of co-operative building agencies and the direct representation of labour in Parliament.

¹¹² He also answered questions on this Congress at his report to the Finsbury Association of the NRL, see *Bee-Hive* 21.9.1867, p. 1.

¹¹³ See his articles on this subject in the *Bee-Hive* 19.11.1870, pp. 634/635; 7.1.1871, p. 11; 2.3.1872, pp. 2/3.

¹¹⁴ See report of the foundation meeting of 20.12.1867 in *Bee-Hive* 21.12.1867, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ See *Bee-Hive* 6.8.1870, p. 397.

III. Walton and the Land Question

1. The 'History of the Landed Tenures' and Land Nationalisation

The land question played a crucial role in the development of Radical political thought in Britain throughout the 19th century. Both the Chartist movement and the Anti-Corn Law League had shared a dislike of the landed aristocracy, but the proposed schemes for land reform embraced a wide range of measures, from the free trade in land and the creation of a peasant proprietorship to the nationalisation of landed property¹. Walton himself had been one of the advocates of land nationalisation, but with the decline of Chartism the public discussion of land reform measures also faded away. The National Reform League was a rare exception in keeping the question alive over the 1850s well into mid-Victorian times.

However, in the 1860s the land question again rose to prominence among radical reformers. This re-emergence was fuelled by a number of different sources. In the late 1860s the IWMA provided a new forum for the O'Brienites to advocate their views, although they had to compete for the first time with the positions propagated by Karl Marx.

Much more important for the public awareness of the question than the comparatively small group of 'Internationalists' was the influence of Richard Cobden and John Stuart Mill. Cobden, in one of the last speeches before his death, had urged the formation of 'a League for free trade in land just as we had a League for free trade in corn'². This call was taken up by John Bright and John Stuart Mill, who became one of the most influential advocates of land reform³.

Into the renewed discussion on the land question Walton interfered with a detailed scheme for land nationalisation, based on the O'Brienite foundation of his early years, but at the same time designed to achieve a united front of land reformers.

¹ See F. M. L. Thompson, 'Land and Politics in England in the Nineteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, ser. 5, 15 (1965), pp. 23-44, esp. pp. 23/24, 33/34; G. Claeys, Machinery, Money and the Millennium. From Moral Economy to Socialism, 1815-1860 (Cambridge / Oxford, 1987), pp. 156-165; M. Chase, 'Out of Radicalism: the Mid-Victorian Freehold Land Movement', *The English Historical Review*, 106 (1991), pp. 319-345, esp. pp. 337-338, 342-343.

² J. Morley, The Life of Richard Cobden (1903 edn.), p. 920 (speech in Rochdale on 23.11.1864).

³ On Mill's importance and the changes in his position towards the land question see W. Wolfe, From Radicalism to Socialism. Men and Ideas in the Formation of Fabian Socialist Doctrines, 1881-1889 (New Haven / London, 1975), pp. 23-65, esp. 52-65.

As early as 1848 Walton had announced that he was preparing 'an historical epitome'⁴ of English land usurpation, but it took 17 years until his 'History of the Landed Tenures' was published in 1865. In this book he set out to show

the process by which the original tenure of life leases to the great barons, established after the Norman conquest as tenants of the crown, was altered by numerous and successive innovations, for a period of nearly five hundred years - and was then changed into an absolute proprietary by the Statute 32nd Henry VIII - and its final usurpation by the great territorial proprietors ...⁵

This historical account provides the background and justification for his scheme of land nationalisation, which he presents in the second part of the book.

As with many British reform movements in the 18th and 19th centuries, Walton's position originates in a myth about the situation in Saxon times and the subsequent Norman Yoke⁶. In Saxon times, Walton argues, there was no 'hereditary and unconditional right of primogeniture'⁷. Furthermore, he contends that 'the entire revenue [was] raised from the land'. The object of social reform has to be to restore this happy state of affairs.

British history after the Norman conquest is the history of how 'the ancient custom of raising the public revenue from the land was ... gradually abolished by the great barons'.

With the king supreme lord of the landed property, the law of primogeniture at first 'was of a strictly permissive character', depending on the goodwill of the king and extending only to the next heir of the estate. The revenue continued to be raised from the land, the poor being maintained by the interest of the barons in their labour power. However, during the various struggles for the royal succession in the 12th and 13th centuries, the barons 'obtained a greater hold and firmer possession of the soil' and 'also commenced those fiscal innovations which ended in the total removal of taxation from the land to the trade, commerce, and industry of the country'. Temporary levies and duties raised from the cities and counties to pay for the civil wars were the first steps into the direction 'of that labyrinth of taxation' which have become permanent charges on commerce and industry, but have been completely removed from the land. In this process, the Magna Carta was 'simply the charter of the great barons and knights,

⁴ Walton, Appeal, p. 3.

⁵ Walton, History of the Landed Tenures of Great Britain & Ireland from the Norman Conquest to the Present Time (1865), p. iii.

⁶ Another example is G. Odger, 'The Land Question', *The Contemporary Review*, 18 (1871), pp. 23-42, esp. p. 29. For the background tradition see C. Hill, 'The Norman Yoke' in Puritanism and Revolution. Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century (1958), pp. 50-122, esp. pp. 67-74 and 94-116.

⁷ Walton, Landed Tenures, p. 3. The following quotations *ibid.*, pp. 4, 5, 12, 15, 16, 25.

upon whom it was intended to confer special privileges, particularly in reference to the tenure and occupancy of the land, as well as the mode of levying taxes and tallages, aids and scuttages'⁸.

When further civil wars forced the king to hold parliaments to collect higher revenues, 'the people became accustomed and habituated ... to a more extended system of taxation, and a further exemption of the land from the ancient revenues due to the public exchequer'⁹. Moreover, the landlords managed to evade their payments to the king by the trick of nominally transferring their land to the church and becoming tenants of the church at the same time. Although the 'instinct of liberty ... moved the peasants to insurrection against serfdom', their revolt in 1381 only taught the lords of the soil 'to levy taxes in a more insidious and indirect manner upon the goods and merchandise of the community'.

The barons did not only try to get their land exempted from taxation, but were also eager to increase their possession of the soil. In this context, Walton's idiosyncratic account of the Reformation contends that the lords, in the name of the king, wanted to 'take possession of the whole of the ecclesiastical property. Accordingly, Henry VIII ... became an apostate'.

Parallel to the moves for extending their possession of land and for transferring the taxes from the land to the community, the barons constantly pressed for the right of inheritance in the soil. Good progress in this cause had been made during the Hundred Years War and the Wars of the Roses, when the kings had attempted to consolidate their power by conferring estates and titles upon adherents. But it was during the reign of Henry VIII that the great barons 'succeeded in firmly establishing their dominion over the soil, and effecting a sweeping revolution in our landed tenures'. By the statute 32nd Henry VIII, the 'various lordships and manors ... [were] converted into an absolute proprietary, giving full power and authority to the great landlords to devise the lands and hereditaments they formerly occupied as tenants of the crown, to their heirs by will, which, before the passing of this Act had never before been lawful'. Walton considers this to be 'the most important act of parliament relating to the whole history of our landed tenures from the Norman conquest' and cites the full text of the document.

The success of the landlords was completed in the aftermath of the failed Commonwealth, when by statute 12 Charles II taxation was 'removed from the land and placed upon excisable articles, which ... laid the foundation to a perpetual excise'. In this way, 'taxation, territorial aggression, and fiscal innovation' had been made 'to march, as it were, in parallel lines, to the

⁸ Ibid., p. 33. It is noteworthy that Walton's focus on the land question led to this negative evaluation of the Magna Carta, whereas working class radicalism often emphasised the myth of the freedom and independence of the Englishman connected with the Magna Carta, see Biagini, *Liberty*, p. 394.

⁹ Walton, *Landed Tenures*, p. 47. The following quotations *ibid.*, pp. 57, 68, 77, 74, 85, 102,

final triumph of the usurpation of the soil, and the removal of taxes from the land to the community'.

Apart from the simple injustice arising from the fact that the land belonging to the people became accumulated in the hands of a small caste of landlords, Walton singles out two main 'oppressive and injurious effects of landlordism upon the community':

First, the agricultural labourer is kept in a condition of permanent distress, and this in turn prevents real improvements in agriculture. In the present system of 'rack-rentism'¹⁰ the landlord collects the wealth produced by the soil, but does not invest it in the agricultural district where it originated. He rather invests the rent he receives from the tenant farmer in other places, leaving the agricultural district stagnating or getting poorer. As a result, the rising level of population in agricultural districts cannot be maintained, so that the 'surplus population' is driven into the large towns. According to Walton, however, it is 'evident from past experience that we cannot rely with certainty upon our manufacturing districts in future to employ the "surplus population" from the rural districts'. A crisis seems imminent, but as long as the land remains 'locked up in the hands of the few, ... we may look in vain for any very considerable increase of our agricultural produce'. The farmers are quite aware of the improvement measures which would be necessary to increase the output of agricultural production, but any improvement is discouraged by the fact that it is only the landlord who will reap the benefits in the long run. Regardless of how much 'the former tenant may have improved the farm, his successor will find that the landlord will always increase the rent in proportion to the increased value of the land from former improvements'. The lack of incentives for tenant farmers to improve the soil results in stagnating wages for the agricultural labourers and in widespread rural distress.

The second oppressive effect of landlordism reaches beyond the agricultural sector and affects the whole structure of society and the political system: 'A monopoly of the land gives a monopoly of almost everything else!', or as Mill had simply put it in 1834: 'Land is power'¹¹. The monopoly of the land results in a monopoly of legislation, mineral wealth, dockyards, produce of the soil, the game, the fish in lakes and rivers, 'and last, though not least, a monopoly of both political power and social influence which permeates through all the ramifications of society'¹². Moreover, after having obtained the complete possession of the land, the landlords

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 94. The following quotations *ibid.*, pp. 95, 96, 97, 100.

¹¹ Quoted in Martin, 'Land Reform', p. 131.

¹² Walton, Landed Tenures, p. 100.

also have moved into the market of house property, causing a horrendous rise in the prices of accommodation in the towns¹³.

Of the remedies proposed by some contemporaries to react to the poverty resulting from the land system, Walton accepted neither state employment nor emigration as long term solutions. In the first case, he asserted that 'the less the State Government has to do with employing the people, the better; because it is not so much a question of Government aid in employing the working classes as it is to afford facilities for them to employ themselves'¹⁴. This position resulted from his general conviction that it was not the duty of the government to interfere directly into public affairs, but only 'to frame its laws and conduct its legislation so as to diminish as far as possible the antagonism of class interests, and to assimilate and make them as near as possible practically identical'¹⁵.

Emigration, in his view, simply helped to stabilize the whole system by providing a valve for relieving the pressure for change¹⁶. It was, however, acceptable to Walton as a temporary measure to remedy immediate distress¹⁷. This position was sufficient to enable him to support the Mutual Land Emigration and Co-operative Colonization Company, an offspring of the National Reform League, which was establishing a co-operative colony in Kansas, USA. Walton acquired two shares of £1 each in the company¹⁸ and spoke favourably on the prospects of the society, stressing the evils of the English land system and the co-operative principles in its programme¹⁹.

It is clear from Walton's analysis of the prospects of the 'surplus population' which had moved to the towns that he would not look for remedies of the agricultural distress in the manufacturing sector either. However, he also had no interest in curtailing the working of this sector:

¹³ Ibid., p. 92-93.

¹⁴ Walton, Co-operative Production and Industrial Partnerships; also The Necessity for, and the Best Means of Obtaining, a Direct Representation of Labour in Parliament (Birmingham, [1869]), p. 7.

¹⁵ Walton, Our Future Progress, p. 5.

¹⁶ C. Erickson, 'The Encouragement of Emigration by British Trade Unions, 1850-1900', *Population Studies*, 3 (1949), pp. 248-273, esp. pp. 261-263.

¹⁷ See several articles by Walton in the *Bee-Hive*: 'Emigration and the Land Question' (18.7.1868, p. 7); 'Compulsory Idleness vs. Profitable Employment' (2.1.1869, p. 7); 'Emigration, Want of Employment and Poverty' (9.4.1870, p. 124).

¹⁸ PRO BT 31 1457/4367, 'Summary of Capital and Shares' of 6.5.1869, and of 21.4.1876, in the registration files of the company.

¹⁹ See report of a meeting on 3.3.1872 of the Mutual Land Emigration and Co-operative Colonization Company, in *National Reformer* 10.3.1872, p. 156.

Let us endeavour to increase and extend our trade and manufactures by all means; but let us at the same time endeavour, as far as possible, to make our agricultural and manufacturing progress co-extensive²⁰.

For a real solution to the land problem, Walton advocated the restoration to the whole community of 'the natural and inalienable right of inheritance in the soil'. This could 'only be done by purchasing and making the land national property, with, of course, full compensation to the landlords'.

Walton's proposed procedure behind the call for land reform is simple and emerges from the historical account of land tenure in England. As the act of Henry VIII sanctioning private property in land was passed by parliament, 'all that remains to be done is to alter the law, and undo, by Acts of Parliament what Acts of Parliament have already done, and then purchase the land on behalf of the state'²¹. This might either be done by passing an act declaring that at the decease of the present proprietors the land shall revert to the state, or by gradually purchasing the land and making it national property. Walton himself favours the second option, suggesting the appointment of a parliamentary Board of Commissioners 'to survey, value, and purchase on behalf of the STATE, such portions of land as they might from time to time select'²². The money required for buying the land should be issued in Treasury Notes to the amount of £50,000,000, which would be as safe as the notes given out by the Bank of England, but 'represented by a real property value in land'²³.

After the nationalisation of the land, 'the rent charge to tenant farmers, or others, occupying the land under the state, would not be more than a mere rent tax for revenue purposes'²⁴. Without the landlords to exempt the land from taxation and reaping the benefits, the rent would be low, improvements would be encouraged, and 'the taxes would ultimately be paid entirely from the land revenues, as they were in ancient times, when custom and excise duties were all but unknown'²⁵. This would not only favour the agricultural population, but by the

²⁰ Walton, Landed Tenures, p. 95. The following quotations *ibid.*, pp. 102.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

²² This and the next quotation *ibid.*, p. 105.

²³ This scheme returns to Walton's own suggestions from the 1850s, even in such details as the value of the Treasury Notes; cp. Walton, 'The Land National Property', *The Friend of the People* 31.5.1851, pp. 214/215. For a slightly different version on the issuing of paper money, not entirely consistent with the one given above in ascribing the foundation of wealth to the value of labour rather than the one of land, see Walton, 'Compulsory Idleness and Poverty versus Profitable Employment and Plenty', *Bee-Hive* 23.1.1869, p. 7.

²⁴ Walton, 'The Land Question', *Bee-Hive* 20.6.1868, p. 7.

²⁵ Walton, Landed Tenures, p. 104.

abolition of custom and excise duties 'the trading, manufacturing, and commercial classes would profit largely by having a genuine free trade, which we certainly cannot say we have at present'²⁶.

The cultivation of the soil after its nationalisation should be carried out by co-operative associations of tenants, and the 'general management of all matters relating to the land should be entrusted to properly constituted local or district authorities'.

Despite his call for compensating the landowners in the process of nationalisation, Walton does not see any legitimacy in the holding of the land by the few. By his position in society, the landlord is no better than 'the fabled vampire of old, which is said to have stalked the length and breadth of the land in stealthy quietude, sucking the life-blood of its victims'²⁷. However, for the sake of social peace Walton conceded 'that the nefarious traffic which was carried on in land through the fierce and bloody contests of ages was the natural results of the inevitable and irresistible course of events'²⁸. As early as 1851 he had addressed the opponents of compensation by begging 'them to consider well what would be the *end* of an attempted agitation according with their views'²⁹.

Moreover, there was a further argument for compensation. Notwithstanding the fact 'that private property in land was originally founded in force and fraud, and afterwards made lawful by acts of Parliament, there are a great number of the smaller owners of land, or their forefathers, who made honourable purchase of their possessions, and the whole of the landlords, great and small, are at least in lawful possession of their estates'³⁰. It would therefore have been legally difficult to force them off the land without compensating them.

When Walton advocated his scheme in numerous articles in the *Bee-Hive*, he often pointed to a first instalment in the process of land nationalisation, which resembles his programme in 1849: the reclamation of waste lands for home colonisation. He applied this suggestion to the Irish Church lands in particular, as they were likely to be at the disposal of Parliament soon after Gladstone had launched his campaign for the disestablishment of the Irish Church on 16.3.1868³¹. Walton called for an act of Parliament 'to be passed authorising the reclamation

²⁶ Walton, 'The Land Question', *Bee-Hive* 20.6.1868, p. 7. The next quotation *ibid*.

²⁷ Walton, 'The Land and Money Monopolies', *Bee-Hive* 2.1.1869, p. 7.

²⁸ Walton, 'Land Tenure Reform', *Bee-Hive* 25.6.1870, p. 300.

²⁹ Walton, 'The Land National Property', *The Friend of the People* 17.5.1851, p. 198 (Walton's italics).

³⁰ Walton, *Landed Tenures*, p. 104.

³¹ See J. Morley: *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone* (2 vols., 1908), vol. I., pp. 657-659.

of waste lands ... on behalf of the State, and the peasantry at once located thereon in co-operative companies³².

Walton's 'History of the Landed Tenures' contained many passages which secured the support of the broad spectrum of radicals who wanted to reform the existing land and money laws. Martin J. Boon, like Walton a member of the National Reform League, quotes the paragraph insisting on compensation to the present owners in his own pamphlet on land nationalisation³³. Karl Marx used the passages on the rise in property prices and on the lack of incentives for agricultural improvement in his analysis of the ground rent³⁴, although Walton's proposals on monetary reform for him must have formed part of the O'Brienite 'currency quackery', which he only saw with amused contempt.

Despite widespread approval, some of the praise for Walton's book is notable for a critical undertone. The *Banner and Times of Wales* gave a summary 'to show the direction in which the thoughts of some able men run', but stated at the same time that they could 'by no means approve of all the views of Walton'³⁵. George Howell, in thanking Walton for the copies presented to the Reform League, only wrote a very short letter, calling the work an 'able book on the land question'³⁶, but not offering any further endorsement of the principles it contained.

This reserved attitude was mainly due to the second part of Walton's book. The whole range of radical reformers could agree on the historical account of how the land became accumulated in the hands of a small number of landlords and on the criticism of landlordism, but the proposed measure of land nationalisation marked a significant step beyond the consensus of radical reformers.

Walton claimed that he had been 'mainly inspired by the teaching of Mr. Cobden in writing my book upon the "Landed Tenures of Great Britain and Ireland," the main features of which had his approval'³⁷. This might have been true for the attack on landlordism and the advocacy of 'real' free trade, but the scheme for land nationalisation maintained Walton's O'Brienite ideas of the late 1840s. Cobden's 'approval' of Walton's book in fact started with reserve: 'Without entirely agreeing with the whole of the contents of your book, it shows considerable care and

³² Walton, 'Improvement of the Condition of the Agricultural Labourers', *Bee-Hive* 11.4.1868, p. 7. Also see Walton, 'The Land and Money Monopolies', *Bee-Hive* 2.1.1869, p. 7, where he supports M. J. Boon's propositions on home colonisation.

³³ M. J. Boon, *How to Nationalize the Commons & Waste Lands ...* [1873], pp. 24/25.

³⁴ K. Marx, *Capital* (1984), vol. III, pp. 620-621.

³⁵ Quoted on the backpage of Walton, 'Our Future Progress' (2nd edn., 1868).

³⁶ Letter of 2.8.1865, quoted *ibid.*

³⁷ Walton, 'Mr. Bright and the Land Question', *Bee-Hive* 1.11.1873, p. 3.

research, and if extensively read will do much to prepare the public mind for a beneficial change in the law relating to land'³⁸.

The proposals for land reform by liberal radicals like John Bright centred around the abolition of primogeniture and entail. This measure, intended to effect a free trade in land in the Cobdenite tradition and to create a peasant proprietorship, was also supported by influential working class reformers, like Thomas Dunning, the old General Secretary of the Bookbinders' Association. Walton, however, contended that the 'mere abolition of the laws of primogeniture and entail, and making the land a marketable article, would neither do away with large private possessions nor abolish rack-rentism, which is the chief and most grievous evil attached to landlordism'³⁹.

Dunning opposed Walton in several articles in the *Bee-Hive*, calling the nationalisation of land 'a dream in the first place'⁴⁰. Moreover, Dunning maintained that the amount of rent was not determined by whether the land was nationalised or not, but depended 'in its amount on the demand there is for the land'. With the same demand for the land, there would be the same level of rent. Dunning conceded Walton's point that the abolition of primogeniture and entail might lead to many uneconomical subdivisions of the land, but preferred this as the lesser evil to the existing monopoly. He entirely rejected Walton's suggestion that the land should pay for all state expenses; even if this might have been true for Saxon times, the land at that period simply had to account for all the state revenue because there was no other source of wealth⁴¹.

For two reasons, these theoretical debates on the land question acquired a new momentum in the early 1870s: First, new organisations advocating land reform were established, and secondly, the agricultural labourers started to become organised.

Given Walton's description of the distress in rural districts it is not surprising that he endorsed the attempts of the agricultural labourers in Warwickshire in 1872 to get an increase in their wages⁴². Asked for advice by the local leaders how to form a union, Walton urged them to unite with the tenant farmers to break the monopoly of the landlords. As the object of an

³⁸ Letter from Cobden to Walton, quoted on the backpage of Walton, 'Our Future Progress' (2nd edn., 1868).

³⁹ Walton, *Landed Tenures*, p. 102.

⁴⁰ T. J. Dunning, 'The Land Question', *Bee-Hive* 9.11.1867, p. 5. Next quotation *ibid*.

⁴¹ T. J. Dunning, 'The Land Question', *Bee-Hive* 30.11.1867, p. 5.

⁴² The Warwickshire strike led to the formation of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union at Leamington Spa; see J. Dunbabin, 'The "Revolt of the Field": The Agricultural Labourers' Movement in the 1870s', *Past and Present* 26, 1963, S. 68-97.

agricultural labourers' union he recommended the programme of the Land Tenure Reform Association (LTRA)⁴³.

2. Walton, Mill and the Land Tenure Reform Association

For several years Walton had been calling for a 'broad, well-defined line of action, which shall secure the adhesion and support of all shades of reformers'⁴⁴. And although he maintained that the only 'final settlement of the land question, will be the nationalisation of the lands of all nations'⁴⁵, he recognized that a tactical alliance with other reformers was necessary to achieve any improvements at all, even if he had to compromise on the nationalisation principle.

Anything short of this can never be a final settlement of the question. Nevertheless any plan or proposition that can be shown to be an improvement upon the present system ought to be supported as far as it goes, although it may fall short of a full acknowledgement of the great principle of public property in land. To use a Disraelian phrase it will take a long time to "educate" the people to the mark upon the land question. We have to face the traditions and prejudices of centuries⁴⁶.

Therefore, he was prepared to co-operate with 'any body of men who may wish to abolish the laws of primogeniture and entail, and make the purchase and conveyance of land as easy and inexpensive as any other kind of property'⁴⁷. This compromise would enable all shades of reformers to 'join in breaking up the present land monopoly without in any way abandoning the nationalisation principle'.

The Land Tenure Reform Association seemed to offer the kind of broad alliance Walton always had been calling for. It was established after June 1869 on the initiative of John Stuart Mill. He had already urged Irish land reform during his time as a member of Parliament⁴⁸ and

⁴³ See Walton, 'Strike among the Agricultural Labourers in Warwickshire', *Bee-Hive* 6.4.1872, pp. 3-4. Many members of the LTRA, esp. Auberon Herbert, supported the striking labourers, see P. Horn, *Joseph Arch (1826-1919). The Farm Workers' Leader* (Kington, 1971), p. 53.

⁴⁴ Walton, 'The Land Question', *Bee-Hive* 2.11.1867, p. 7.

⁴⁵ Walton, 'The Land Question', *Bee-Hive* 21.12.1867, p. 7.

⁴⁶ Walton, 'The Land Question', *Bee-Hive* 20.6.1868, p. 7.

⁴⁷ Walton, 'The Land Question', *Bee-Hive* 21.12.1867, p. 7. Next quotation *ibid.*

⁴⁸ See J. S. Mill, 'Autobiography' in *Collected Works* 1, pp. 1-290, here pp. 279/280.

was constantly fighting against the vulgar kind of *Laissez-faire*-Liberalism shunning any form of social responsibility.

Like Walton, Mill wanted to establish an association which would unite working class and middle class reformers. From the very beginning some important working class representatives, such as Applegarth, Howell, Cremer or Potter, were involved in shaping the programme of the LTRA⁴⁹. The ensuing bargaining process between working class and middle class radicals resulted in 'an elaborate web of compromise and accommodation, from which it becomes difficult to extract Mill's personal opinions'⁵⁰ and the input of the working class members. The main interest of the latter was to draft a programme, 'on which the land reformers of the working classes can co-operate with those who do not go to the length of the nationalisation of all the land of the country'⁵¹.

The first three points in the programme, which was adopted in July 1870, demanded the abolition of primogeniture and entail and the free transfer of land⁵². However, it was with the important fourth point that the programme went beyond the traditional Cobdenite demand for free trade in land. It claimed 'for the benefit of the State, the Interception by Taxation of the Future Unearned Increase of the Rent of Land'⁵³. This proposal would have deprived the landowners of the profit from the tenants' improvement measures. Point Eight, calling for the national use of the waste lands, also was meant to attract working class members to the LTRA.

Mill himself would even have been prepared to concede that nationalisation of the land was justified in principle, but he thought it highly inexpedient to raise this point, as it would have deterred many possible middle class supporters from joining the LTRA⁵⁴. In his explanatory statement on the programme of the LTRA of 1871 he therefore underlined that the association aimed at promoting 'not the abolition of landed property, but its reform, and the vindication of those rights of the entire community which need not be, and never ought to have been, waived in favour of the landlords'⁵⁵.

⁴⁹ R. Harrison, Before the Socialists. Studies in Labour and Politics 1861-1881 (London / Toronto, 1965), pp. 223-226.

⁵⁰ Wolfe, From Radicalism, p. 59.

⁵¹ R. Harrison, 'The Land and Labour League (Some new light on Working Class Politics in the Eighteen Seventies)', *Bulletin of the International Institute of Social History Amsterdam*, 8 (1953), pp. 169-195, p. 188, quoting a not further identified paper from the Howell Collection.

⁵² J. S. Mill, 'Land Tenure Reform' in Collected Works 5, pp. 687-695, here p. 689. This text is Mill's explanatory statement of 1871 on the programme of July 1870, which is contained in the notes to the edition in the Collected Works.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 690.

⁵⁴ See W. Wolfe, From Radicalism, p. 59.

⁵⁵ J. S. Mill, 'Land Tenure Reform', p. 690.

The suggestion of taxing the value, which was added to the land 'by natural causes' rather than by improvement measures already be found in Mill's 'Principles of Political Economy'⁵⁶. However, it is important to note that Mill was rather the exception than the rule among political economists in the stress he laid on communitarian and social ideas. This constitutes his unique position as a mediator between middle class and working class radicalism.

Mill and Walton are examples of how the framework of mid-Victorian radicalism could unite advanced reformers despite their different approaches to the land question. If Mill embarked on his way towards the unity of land reformers from the perspective of middle class Liberalism⁵⁷, Walton was an advocate of land nationalisation allowing for the necessity of moderating his claims. Both men could agree on a number of issues, like the dire effects of landlordism, the desirability of bringing about a class of independent peasants or the call for entrusting 'all matters relating to the land ... to properly constituted local or district authorities'⁵⁸. It has also been suggested that Walton's scheme for raising the entire tax revenue from the land constituted a furtherance of Mill's proposals to tax the 'unearned increment'⁵⁹. However, Walton's scheme is concerned with the period *after* a nationalisation of the land, whereas Mill's proposals did not imply the public ownership of the land.

In fact, Walton himself used to emphasise his ambivalent position towards reformers like Mill and Bright:

I have carefully considered the plans proposed by Mr. Mill and Mr. Bright, and although both propositions are greatly in advance of anything that has been put forth before by either of these gentlemen, neither of their schemes can by any means be considered a final settlement of the land question⁶⁰.

Significantly, Walton does not seem to have been involved in the formation of the LTRA. Only in November 1869 does his name appear on the third 'revised list' of the members on the Provisional Committee⁶¹. The preceding week he had justified his support for the LTRA, reminding the readers of the *Bee-Hive* that he was 'an advocate for collective or national property in land', but that 'at the same time I am perfectly convinced that we can only reach

⁵⁶ J. S. Mill, 'Principles of Political Economy' (1840), *Collected Works* 3, p. 820.

⁵⁷ See W. Wolfe, *From Radicalism*, pp. 62-65.

⁵⁸ Walton, 'The Land Question', *Bee-Hive* 20.6.1868, p. 7. See Wolfe, *From Radicalism*, p. 61; Biagini, *Liberty*, p. 87.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 188/189.

⁶⁰ Walton, 'The Land Question', *Bee-Hive* 20.6.1868, p. 7.

⁶¹ See *Bee-Hive* 6.11.1869, p. 7.

this as the final goal by stages'⁶². As the first stage he accepted the abolition of primogeniture and entail, 'and the adoption of what is understood to be a "free trade in land"'. This 'transition state in relation to the management of the land' should be used to teach the people the advantages of a nationalisation of the soil, and Walton was confident that before long 'public opinion will doubtless have advanced sufficiently far to declare that the land shall revert to the State, to be held in trust for the entire people'. He left no doubt that this decision was entirely based on practicality and tactics, but not at all on any dithering on the principle of land nationalisation:

In the meantime we who remain steadfast to the principle of collective property in land, should at the same time show ourselves practical men by uniting with and in every way aiding those who may not yet have advanced so far as us in this direction. The Land Tenure Reform Association ... is well worthy of the support of the country. And I have consented to have my name placed upon the committee, not because I believe the objects sought to be accomplished by the association a final settlement of the land question, but because I am convinced it is a step in the right direction.

Being convinced that only gradual progress would result in the pursued aim of land nationalisation, Walton did not join the Land and Labour League, which was established in October 1869 on the initiative of the Holborn Branch of the National Reform League⁶³ and whose programme went straightforward for land nationalisation⁶⁴. Instead, Walton advocated the programme of the LTRA, sometimes sounding like an original supporter of free trade in land⁶⁵, but still aware of the 'differences of opinion'⁶⁶ among the reformers.

⁶² Walton, 'The Land Question', *Bee-Hive* 30.10.1869, p. 7. The next four quotes *ibid*.

⁶³ Erroneously, this branch is often associated with the O'Brienite National Reform League, whose president Walton had been in 1867 (Harrison, *Before the Socialists*, p. 215; Barry, *Nationalisation in British Politics*, p. 49). In fact it was the old Holborn branch of the Reform League, which during the realignments after the break-up of the Reform League had established a short-lived organisation called 'The Working Men's National Reform League', which in turn transformed itself into the Land and Labour League.

⁶⁴ See Harrison, *Before the Socialists*, pp. 216/217, 246-250.

⁶⁵ See several of his articles in the *Bee-Hive*: 'Land Tenure Reform', 24.6.1871, p. 13; 'Enclosure of Commons and Waste Lands', 27.7.1872, p. 3; 'Admiralty Sales of Estates', 26.7.1873, p. 2.

⁶⁶ Walton, 'Land Tenure Reform Association', *Bee-Hive* 3.6.1871, p. 12 (Walton's account of the first public meeting of the LTRA on 15.5.1871).

The LTRA presents the unique example of an association covering the range of radical thought from adherents of land nationalisation to 'free traders' in land. It became possible, because men like Walton were prepared to compromise on the principle of land nationalisation, whereas John Stuart Mill accepted measures going beyond mere free trade in land. However, the LTRA soon faded away, when Mill, who was the central figure in holding the association together, suddenly died in 1873. Moreover, despite the broad support of leading working class and middle class radicals, the LTRA never managed to get widespread popular support, but rather remained an intellectual enterprise. As far as Walton was concerned, his support for the LTRA indicates that he was able to consider tactical aspects, if he could hope to see a broad platform of reformers united for the cause of land reform. He did not give up his views in the long run, but he preferred the chance of practical success to a close adherence to the letter of his scheme.

IV. Walton and Co-operation

1. Walton's Interest in Co-operation

When Walton advocated co-operative cultivation of the soil, this was not only a proposal for the organisation of production in an era still to come, but as for many of his contemporaries, co-operation for Walton also constituted a workable means for improving the situation within the existing economic system⁶⁷. He was particularly interested in 'co-operative production, because co-operative stores or companies for distribution have been carried to a greater extent than production'⁶⁸. For Walton, the failure of most experiments in co-operative production, which had been carried out in the 1850s by Christian Socialists like J. M. Ludlow, F. D. Maurice or C. Kingsley⁶⁹, had 'arisen from the want of a correct knowledge of the true basis upon which the principle of co-operative production ought to rest, and not from any inherent defect in the co-operative principle'⁷⁰.

At the Birmingham Trades Union Congress of 1869, Walton supported trade unionism as a means of improving the lot of the people, but he declared 'frankly ... that I look to co-operation - and particularly co-operative production, as the only means of settling the conflicting interests of labour and capital, and securing the complete emancipation of labour'⁷¹.

Walton scolded the big trade unions for their failure to recognize the importance and possibilities of co-operation. Although in many trades co-operation and unions might 'give mutual aid and assistance to each other', powerful organisations like the Amalgamated Society of Engineers or the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners rather paid huge sums in unemployment benefit than using this money for putting their members into work in co-operative associations.

Walton further criticised the unions for not investing their funds into existing co-operative societies. However, he was optimistic that they would reverse this policy as soon as they would

⁶⁷ S. Pollard, 'Nineteenth-Century Co-operation: From Community Building to Shopkeeping' in Asa Briggs and John Saville (eds.), Essays in Labour History. In Memory of G. D. H. Cole (21967), pp. 74-112.

⁶⁸ Walton, 'Co-operation in the Building Trades', *Bricklayers' Trade Circular* 1.2.1868, pp. 751/752, quote p. 751.

⁶⁹ See G. D. H. Cole, A Century of Co-operation (Manchester, 1945), pp. 97-113; for the revival of co-operative production in the 1860s *ibid.*, pp. 158-162.

⁷⁰ Walton, 'Co-operation in the Building Trades', *Bricklayers' Trade Circular* 1.2.1868, p. 751.

⁷¹ Walton, Co-operative Production and Industrial Partnerships; also the Necessity for and the Best Means of Obtaining a Direct Representation of Labour in Parliament (Birmingham, [1869]), p. 3. Next quotation *ibid.*

be assured of the safety of their money: 'Do that, and the difficulties would be at once removed'⁷². To this end, Walton supported the resolution at the 1869 Co-operative Congress to establish a co-operative bank and was nominated a member of a committee on this subject⁷³.

The provision of loans out of the surplus funds of the various trade and benefit societies was designed to make a considerable contribution to the solution of the capital problems of co-operative enterprises. As a source of loanable capital for the 'whole industrial community', however, Walton called for 'a safe and secure system of credit guaranteed by the State, based upon a wealth or property security'⁷⁴. This system of credit was to be based on labour notes, which should be issued 'in all the large centres of industry where numbers of workmen are out of employ' and which should be based upon the labour of the workmen⁷⁵. This measure seems to be clearly modelled on Robert Owen's idea of labour notes⁷⁶ and would have made any interference with the business of the Bank of England unnecessary, as the labour notes would not have been convertible into gold⁷⁷.

As in the question of land reform, Walton was not satisfied with leaving his proposals for co-operation at the stage of theory, but became active in transforming them into practice. From Brecon, he sent a letter to the London Trades Council in November 1867, announcing that he wanted to come to London to submit resolutions in favour of co-operative associations in the building trades. The London Trades Council decided to bring the subject to the attention of the trades⁷⁸. When Walton attended the first public meeting of the newly established Breconshire Benefit Building Society in January 1868, he already 'came there more as a listener than as a speaker'⁷⁹, because his energy was directed to the formation of the United London and Provincial Co-operative Building Company (ULPCBC).

⁷² Walton in a discussion during the first Co-operative Congress 1869: J. M. Ludlow (ed.), Proceedings of the Co-operative Congress ... [1869], p. 33.

⁷³ However, Walton 'unfortunately could not attend' the proceedings of the committee; see Walton, Co-operative Production and Industrial Partnerships, p. 7.

⁷⁴ Walton, 'Credit and Co-operation', *The Social Economist* 1.6.1868, p. 55.

⁷⁵ Walton, Co-operative Production and Industrial Partnerships, p. 7.

⁷⁶ See Claeys, Money, Machinery and the Millennium, pp. 45, 139/140.

⁷⁷ Walton, Co-operative Production and Industrial Partnerships, p. 7. See also Walton, 'Compulsory Idleness and Poverty versus Profitable Employment and Plenty', *Bee-Hive* 23.1.1869, p. 7.

⁷⁸ See report of meeting of the London Trades Council, *Bee-Hive* 30.11.1867, p. 5.

⁷⁹ Report of meeting of Breconshire Benefit Building Society, *Brecon Journal and County Advertiser* 25.1.1868.

2. Co-operation in the Building Trades

As he had announced in his letter to the London Trades Council, Walton at the beginning of 1868 spent a fortnight in London to establish a co-operative society in the building trades⁸⁰. Building was not only the sector of industry Walton had been trained in; he also believed that the builders 'would possess greater facilities and advantages for Co-operative self-employment than any other branch of industry'⁸¹, as the combined skill of the various building trades was necessary to 'produce the desired result, namely, the completion of any building'.

On new year's day, 'Walton called at 11³⁰ about Co-operative Building Co.'⁸² at George Howell's place. In the ensuing weeks, he tried to arrange meetings with the carpenters, bricklayers, masons, plasterers and painters in order to persuade them to form a building society.

The meetings of the painters, carpenters and masons were well attended, and all of them resolved to form committees on the matter. The plasterers lacked a strong organisation. As a consequence Walton was unable to hold a general meeting, but several representatives of the trade assured him that they would form a committee to act with the other three committees in establishing the building society⁸³. At the Operative Bricklayers' Society, Walton attended a meeting of the Executive Council, which informed him that they had no power to deal with this object as a Council, but they allowed him to insert a statement explaining his proposals into their monthly circular⁸⁴.

The advantages of the building company were to be the self-employment of the working men and the independence from the capitalist employer. Walton suggested to base the association on share capital, each share for £1. The preparatory steps would involve the appointment of working committees, composed of the men of each trade interested in acquiring shares in the building company. These committees should meet weekly as a Central Directory to work out all the necessary steps for the formation of the company, until a prospectus could be issued, the capital secured and the building operations taken up⁸⁵. Walton

⁸⁰ Walton also used the occasion to participate in a meeting of the Bloomsbury Branch of the Reform League, see *Bee-Hive* 11.1.1868, p. 1.

⁸¹ Walton, 'Co-operation in the Building Trades', *Carpenters and Joiners Monthly Report* January 1868, pp. 56-58, quote p. 56. Next quotation *ibid*.

⁸² Howell Diary, entry for 1.1.1868, Howell Collection.

⁸³ Walton, 'Co-operation in the Building Trades', *Bricklayers' Trade Circular* 1.2.1868, pp. 751-752.

⁸⁴ See 'Abstract Report of the Business of the Executive Council' (January 1868), *Bricklayers' Trade Circular* 1.2.1868, pp. 747.

⁸⁵ Walton, 'Co-operation in the Building Trades', *ibid.*, 1.2.1868, pp. 751-752.

suggested that each shareholder should get one vote rather than a plurality of votes in proportion to the amount of share capital, and he urged that great care should be taken to ensure that the Board of Directors would consist of 'none but practical working building operatives', whereas 'capitalists or employers of labour' ought on no account to be admitted to the board⁸⁶.

In the first quarter of 1868, the members of the building trades were called upon to attend weekly meetings at the Brown Bear Inn in Bloomsbury to take part in the establishment of the society⁸⁷. A London and Provincial Provisional Directory and a West London Directory were formed, and on 22.4.1868 a resolution was passed that both directories would 'form one company, to be carried on in future as the United London and Provincial Co-operative Company'⁸⁸. Its object was 'to undertake by contract (or otherwise) the erection, alteration, and repairing of any class of masonry, brickwork, carpentering, plastering, plumbing, decorating, painting, agencies, furnishing, or anything appertaining to the building trades'⁸⁹.

Walton successfully assisted the establishment of the United London and Provincial Co-operative Building Company with a series of five lectures during May 1868: 'Numbers have joined, through hearing Mr. Walton's very instructive lectures'⁹⁰. In enthusiastically welcoming the new company, George Jacob Holyoake's *Social Economist* observed that 'there are some masons with the tiles all tight on their upper story, who have set on foot what everybody has been looking for - a Co-operative Building Society'⁹¹. With an ironic touch, the paper expressed its hope that 'the co-operative builders will put up monuments to their name and fame in every street, and gladden Mr. Ruskin's eyes with good workmanship and good design'.

The articles of the association having been approved by Walton, Thomas Hughes and other supporters of co-operation and the society having been registered on 21.7.1868⁹², the first general meeting of shareholders of the ULPCBC was held on 11.8.1868, and a board of

⁸⁶ Walton, 'Co-operation in the Building Trades', *Carpenters and Joiners Monthly Report* January 1868, pp. 56-58, quotes p. 58.

⁸⁷ See the abstract reports of the Executive Council of the Operative Bricklayers' Society for February and March 1868, in *Bricklayers' Trade Circular* 1.3.1868, p. 755, and 1.4.1868, pp. 763/764.

⁸⁸ Report of the meeting in *Bee-Hive* 25.4.1868, p. 6.

⁸⁹ PRO BT 13 1413/4075, 'Memorandum of Association'.

⁹⁰ Report of a meeting of the company (3.6.1868), *Bee-Hive* 6.6.1868, p. 1.

⁹¹ 'Co-operative Builders Looking About Them', in *The Social Economist* 1.3.1868, p. 3. Next quotation *ibid.*

⁹² PRO BT 31 1413/4075, registration certificate.

directors consisting of representatives of various branches of the building trades was elected⁹³. The company was now ready to take contracts and start work.

Walton, still living in Brecon, did not participate regularly in the affairs of the association, but he acquired five shares⁹⁴ and continued to give his support. In the summer of 1868 he had visited Bristol, Liverpool, Birmingham and Manchester, intending to form similar companies in these towns. He was received favourably in Bristol and Liverpool, whereas to his surprise the building trades in Manchester and Birmingham, 'where I had expected the least difficulty'⁹⁵, hesitated to take the matter up.

By the beginning of the year 1869, the company numbered 600 shareholders with a capital of £500⁹⁶, a far cry from the £50,000 nominal share capital. Soon financial problems became apparent. The ULPCBC was supplied with repairing work on the various premises of the Aerated Bread Company (which had also provided the company's premises in 141 and 143 Euston Road⁹⁷), but it had to call on the working men to increase the amount of share capital to enable it to carry out more expensive building operations⁹⁸. The trade societies, however, hesitated. In October 1868, for example, the Paviers' Arms Lodge of the Operative Stonemasons' Friendly Society had suggested to take up shares to the amount of £50, but when the proposition was put to the vote, a large majority of the membership supported an amendment by the Bolton Lodge against the participation in the company⁹⁹.

The ULPCBC finally managed to obtain a contract for building a mission-hall and schools in St. John's Wood; but 'paradoxical as it may sound, this success proved a disaster'¹⁰⁰. The shareholders were not prepared to provide more capital, which would have been absolutely necessary for carrying out the building operations. Moreover, the directors of the company were workers who had to work all day themselves, so that a proper supervision of the progress

⁹³ See Walton, 'Co-operation in the Building Trades', *The Social Economist* 1.10.1868, p. 118.

⁹⁴ PRO BT 31 1413/4075, 'Summary of Capital and Shares' of 15.8.1869.

⁹⁵ See Walton, 'Co-operation in the Building Trades', *The Social Economist* 1.10.1868, p. 118.

⁹⁶ See Walton, 'The Land and Money Monopolies', *Bee-Hive* 2.1.1869, p. 7.

⁹⁷ See Henry Broadhurst, M.P. The Story of his Life from a Stonemason's Bench to the Treasury Bench told by Himself (1901), p. 48; Report of second annual meeting of the ULPCBC, *Bee-Hive* 13.8.1870, p. 402.

⁹⁸ Walton, 'The London and Provincial Co-operative Building Company', *Bee-Hive* 9.1.1869, p. 7; Walton, 'London and Provincial Co-operative Building Company', *ibid.*, 6.2.1869, p. 7.

⁹⁹ See *Operative Stone Masons' Friendly Society Fortnightly Return Sheet* 1.-15.10.1868, p. 8, and 29.10.-12.11.1868, p. 8.

¹⁰⁰ Broadhurst, Life, p. 48. Next quotations *ibid.*, pp. 51 and 50.

of the company's operations turned out to be impossible. Henry Broadhurst, one of the directors, whose 'first and last personal experience of productive co-operation' the ULPCBC was, has given a vivid account of the character of the building works. When suspicions about the competence of the managing director arose, he, at the expense of his own working time,

determined to pay a surprise visit to the works. I left my home at 4.15 one morning, and arrived at the works before 6. ... Six o'clock was the time for commencing work; but when a neighbouring clock chimed the hour, out of thirty men engaged on the building operations less than half were ready to begin. Some arrived ten minutes late, others were twenty minutes behind time; while the managing director, who should have been there without fail to blow the whistle at six o'clock, turned up half an hour late.

Despite these conditions, the company managed to continue these works, but at their completion it was bankrupt and had to be wound up after only three years existence¹⁰¹.

Although 'a co-operative company for self-employment, composed entirely of working men'¹⁰², the ULPCBC in its early stages had received support from well-known middle-class co-operators. Walter Morrison, MP for Plymouth, presided over one of the public meetings held by Walton during the formation period¹⁰³, as did Sir Henry Hoare, the future MP for Chelsea. Further assistance was provided by Thomas Hughes, Baxter Langley, Auberon Herbert, Alderman Lusk and John Stuart Mill¹⁰⁴.

Hughes and Morrison (together with E. O. Greening, A. J. Mundella and W. Pare) were also among the leading spirits to bring about the first Co-operative Congress in 1869, and the ULPCBC appointed two delegates to attend the preliminary meeting¹⁰⁵. Walton himself became a member of the Arrangement Committee for the Congress and took part in its proceedings¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰¹ The company was only formally dissolved in 1883. The Companies' Registration Office had been sending letters to the former address of the ULPCBC asking it to forward its returns, but was informed by a silversmith and jeweller occupying the premises that there 'must be some mistake' because there was no building company existent in this place; see registration files of the company, PRO BT 31 1413/4075.

¹⁰² Walton, 'The London and Provincial Co-operative Building Company', *Bee-Hive* 9.1.1869, p. 7.

¹⁰³ Among his many activities, Morrison was a director of the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company, which by 1873 had already provided accommodation for 9,000 people. See J. S. Storr, 'The Anarchy of London', *The Fortnightly Review*, ns 13 (1873), pp. 754-768, here p. 759.

¹⁰⁴ Report of the meeting of the ULPCBC of 3.6.1868, *Bee-Hive* 6.6.1868, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Report of the meeting of the ULPCBC of 17.6.1868, *Bee-Hive* 20.6.1868, p. 6.

¹⁰⁶ See Ludlow (ed.), Proceedings of the Co-operative Congress, p. 118.

For the middle-class reformers, the participation in building schemes had long been one of their foremost activities in support of the working classes. This interest in housing arose from concern with the state of health in the big cities, and Parliament took up the matter several times, as with the passing of the first Public Health Act in 1848, or more specifically in 1866, when William McCullagh Torrens brought in a bill to provide better dwellings for artisans and labourers¹⁰⁷. Moreover, by 1869 more 'than half the Members of the House of Commons [were] locally connected with Building Societies as trustees or otherwise'¹⁰⁸.

Unlike the ULPCBC, however, most of the existing building societies did not actually build houses themselves, but usually provided the money for purchasing existing houses or financing the erection of new ones¹⁰⁹. One of the few societies carrying out building works was the Artizans', Labourers' and General Dwellings Company (ALGDC). With the failure of the ULPCBC, Walton became increasingly committed to this organisation, which had been set up in 1867 under the presidency of the Dean of Westminster to meet the demand for working class housing in London. The workmen employed by the ALGDC received a share of the profits of its activities.

The company was supported by a broad range of influential men. Some of them had also assisted the ULPCBC (Morrison, Baxter Langley, J. S. Mill), others (Earl of Lichfield, Earl of Shaftesbury, Lord Elcho) had always shown a deep interest in the social improvement of the working classes¹¹⁰.

Walton became a member of the board of directors of the company in 1870 and for the first time took part in the board meeting of 10.2.1870¹¹¹. One week later, he already acted as chairman to the board meeting, a position which he was to occupy frequently in the following years, since he became vice-chairman of the board, the chairman being J. Baxter Langley.

The organisation experienced a quick rise, from £502 share capital in 1867 to £52,078 in 1872¹¹². With this financial basis, the company could embark on ambitious building projects.

¹⁰⁷ See W. McCullagh Torrens, *Twenty Years in Parliament* (1893), pp. 46-54. McCullagh Torrens in 1869 became president of the Building Societies' Protection Association, see S. J. Price, *Building Societies. Their Origin and History* (21959), p. 179.

¹⁰⁸ J. Higham at a meeting on 26.2.1869 to establish the Building Societies' Protection Association, quoted *ibid.*, p. 172. For the history of Victorian building societies see *ibid.*, pp. 136-159.

¹⁰⁹ See E. J. Cleary, *The Building Society Movement* (1965), pp. 72-73.

¹¹⁰ See advertisement of the ALGDC in *The Social Economist* 1.4.1869, p. 27; Report of its fourth annual meeting, in *Bee-Hive* 11.3.1871, p. 3.

¹¹¹ See Artizans', Labourers' and General Dwellings Company, Minute Book I, 10.2.1870, Lambeth Archives.

¹¹² See report of the sixth annual soiree, *Bee-Hive* 26.4.1873, p. 10.

In 1872, during a meeting chaired by Walton, the Earl of Shaftesbury laid the foundation stone for a 'Workman's City' on premises which had been purchased by the company¹¹³. The 1,200 buildings, which were erected between Battersea Park and Clapham Common, included a lecture hall, a co-operative store, schoolrooms, baths and wash-houses, and Shaftesbury Park Estate became known for their careful drainage and a low average death rate¹¹⁴.

During 1870 and 1872, Walton paid frequent visits to Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool to arrange the purchase of land and building operations for the company¹¹⁵. The number of visits declined in the following years, but Walton still occasionally surveyed the building works in these cities¹¹⁶ and was a constant participant in the meetings of the Board of Directors.

However, Walton's commitment to the affairs of the company was to cause him trouble. In 1877, some shareholders charged the Board of Directors with fraud respecting the funds of the society. An extraordinary meeting of shareholders had to be called for the 2.6.1877, at which an Investigation Committee into the affairs of the directors was appointed¹¹⁷. Despite some quarrels about the proper constitution of the Investigation Committee and the beginning of its work, the whole Board of Directors had to resign on the 4.7.1877¹¹⁸. Civil proceedings were launched against Baxter Langley and the former manager of the company, named William Swindlehurst¹¹⁹. Walton was charged with having wrongfully received money during his term of office as a director. However, the solicitor of the company thought it doubtful whether Walton could be held legally responsible for the money he had received for his special services. The charges were therefore dropped¹²⁰.

Despite the failure of the ULPCBC and the sudden departure from the ALGDC, Walton's activities in the co-operative production movement show the importance he attributed to the self-employment of labour in co-operative schemes. However, he was once more prepared to

¹¹³ See 'The Artizans' Dwellings Company', *Bee-Hive* 10.8.1872, p. 12.

¹¹⁴ See Storr, 'The Anarchy of London', p. 759; 'The Shaftesbury Estate', *Bee-Hive* 25.7.1874, p. 8.

¹¹⁵ See Artizans', Labourers' and General Dwellings Company, Minute Book I, 17.2.1870, 12.4.1870; Minute Book II 17.5.1870, 1.6.1870, 29.6.1872, 24.8.1871, 25.10.1871, 5.3.1872, 21.3.1872, 22.4.1872, 9.5.1872, 3.10.1872, 8.11.1872.

¹¹⁶ See *ibid.*, III, 19.12.1876; IV, 13.3.1877, 10.4.1877.

¹¹⁷ See *ibid.*, IV, 8.5.1877, 15.5.1877, 29.5.1877.

¹¹⁸ See *ibid.*, IV, 5.6.1877, 12.6.1877, 19.6.1877, 26.6.1877, 2.7.1877, 4.7.1877.

¹¹⁹ See *ibid.*, IV, 6.7.1877, 12.11.1877. For Baxter Langley this also implied that he had to resign from contesting the parliamentary seat for Greenwich, see LRL, Minute Book, 2.11.1877, p. 276 (newspaper clipping), Broadhurst Collection.

¹²⁰ See Artizans', Labourers' and General Dwellings Company, Minute Book IV, 26.11.1877.

accept lesser objects as first steps in the direction of emancipating labour from the power of the employer. Industrial partnerships between masters and workmen, as established by E. O. Greening, did not form the 'highest phase of co-operation', but 'still, if the principle were more generally adopted and carried out it would materially assist in reconciling the conflicting interests of labour and capital'¹²¹.

For the same reason he advocated the peaceful settlement of industrial disputes by arbitration. During the Trades Union Congress of 1869 he moved a resolution for the establishment of Courts of Arbitration and Conciliation¹²², and when the miners in South Wales went on strike for higher wages in January 1873¹²³, Walton, together with A. J. Mundella¹²⁴ and the miners' agents T. Halliday and W. Pickard, was involved in finding a solution by arbitration¹²⁵.

However, although arbitration might be applied to settle disputes between employers and workmen, Walton urged the workers to avoid strikes in the first place and substitute these short-sighted actions by a long-term policy of founding co-operative associations. The striking bricklayers in Liverpool were told in 1868 that

under the present relations between labour and capital, you have been struggling and striking for the last thirty years, to my certain knowledge, against all kinds of grievances, and the working men in general are just about where they were; and so they must continue to be, until they alter the present relations between labour and capital, and become, as far as possible, their own employers, and receive the full value of their labour¹²⁶.

Walton's own example showed, that he would co-operate closely with middle class reformers to bring the alteration of the relations between capital and labour about. As in his views on land reform, the antagonism between labour and capital to him did not seem insurmountable, but originated in the present arrangements of society. All reformers willing to modify these arrangements were welcomed by Walton to combine and look for a common

¹²¹ Walton, Co-operative Production and Industrial Partnerships, p. 9.

¹²² See report of the TUC, *Leeds Mercury* 28.8.1869.

¹²³ For the history of the strike, which was carried out by Thomas Halliday's Amalgamated Association of Miners, see E. W. Evans, The Miners of South Wales (Cardiff, 1961), pp. 107-108.

¹²⁴ On Mundella, one of the most respected advocates of arbitration, see W. H. G. Armytage, A. J. Mundella, 1825-1897. The Liberal Background to the Labour Movement (1951).

¹²⁵ See Walton, 'The Federation of All Organized Trades', *Bee-Hive* 19.4.1873, p. 3.

¹²⁶ Walton, 'Co-operation in the Building Trades', in *Bricklayers' Trade Circular* 1.10.1868, pp. 813/814.

basis of collaboration. However, to secure the support of legislation for the particular interests of the workers, Walton would not rely on middle class MPs, but urged the direct representation of labour in parliament.

V. Labour Representation

1. Walton's Views on Labour Representation

As early as 1848 Walton declared it to be 'indisputable, that whatever may be the future destinies of this country, its onward course must be through the legislature; and ... that no real progress will be made until the people are fully represented there'¹. Although he always maintained that direct representation of labour was no aim in itself, but only a means to achieve the alteration of the social arrangements, representation, on the other hand, was the necessary precondition to effect such changes.

Only the extension of the franchise in the Second Reform Act of 1867 transformed these deliberations from being mere theory into a possibility for the future. Even before the passing of the Act, Walton stressed the 'necessity of united action, which could be more necessary than ever, in the event of another election, to counteract the machinations of Whig or Tory corruptionists'². A month earlier, he had called upon the audience at the commemoration ceremony for O'Brien's birthday to form themselves 'into a nucleus of advanced social and political reformers'³.

Unity among the working classes once more took the highest priority on his agenda to obtain the direct representation of labour. For Walton, it seemed 'absolutely necessary that both the Reform League, the Working Men's Association, and all other organised bodies should act in concert, both in instructing the people in their social and industrial rights, and the selections of the best men as candidates to be ready to bring forward at the proper time'⁴.

The attempt to get working class candidates nominated to stand for parliament turned out to be a battle on two sides:

First, a widespread apathy and indifference among the workers had to be overcome, as they were not as interested in the issue as their leaders. Walton went so far as to call this 'an act of the greatest ingratitude'⁵ towards the men who fought for the enfranchisement and now

¹ Walton, *Appeal*, p. 2.

² Meeting of the Brecon Branch of the Reform League, *Brecon Journal and County Advertiser* 9.3.1867, p. 1.

³ *National Reformer* 17.2.1867, p. 110 (meeting under the auspices of the NRL).

⁴ Walton, 'Our Future Progress', *Bee-Hive* 31.8.1867, p. 1.

⁵ Walton, 'The Approaching Elections and Duty of Electors', *Bee-Hive* 25.7.1868, p. 7. Also see his 'Industrial Representation', *ibid.* 7.9.1872, pp. 2/3; 'On Working Men's Representation', *ibid.* 31.10.1868, p. 5.

deserved to be voted into parliament. He was particularly impatient with the surprisingly large number of working class electors who in the 1868 General Election gave their votes to the Conservative party, and he grumbled that

whenever I hear anyone calling himself a Conservative working men, I always think that, if he has any friends, the sooner they look after him, the better, because it is quite certain that he is not capable of taking care for himself, at least in a political point of view. We must all deplore that there are working men who, after the franchise has been conferred upon them, have used it both against themselves and their fellow workmen, under the specious pretence of being Conservatives⁶.

Secondly, the middle classes did not appear to be prepared to transfer some of the seats in parliament to working men candidates. During the 1868 election, the close co-operation of the Reform League and the Liberal party had played an important part in securing the majority for Gladstone's first government⁷. However, none of the working men candidates, who had sometimes met with the hostility of the Liberal party establishment in putting forward their candidatures, had been elected. Walton, who had been calling for the establishment of electoral committees for the return of working men, saw his prediction come true that without such committees 'the middle classes will monopolise the whole of the representation'⁸.

During the by-elections of the ensuing years he always pointed to the middle class policies of preventing working men from being elected as MPs. In 1869 the 'middle-class Whigs of Stafford' were blamed that 'by refusing to admit Mr. Odger as one of the Liberal candidates at the test ballot [they] have clearly demonstrated that they are determined that no working man, whatever his claims or abilities may be, shall be returned to the House of Commons if they can help it'⁹. This was the worse as 'by far the greater part of the men sent there are mere political nonentities'¹⁰. When Odger contested Southwark in 1870, Walton warned against the machinations of his Whig opponent Waterlow, whose supporters 'appear to understand the mode of putting on the screw in the different workshops in the presence of employees in true Whig fashion'¹¹.

⁶ Walton, Co-operative Production and Industrial Partnerships; also The Necessity for, and the Best Means of Obtaining, a Direct Representation of Labour in Parliament, p. 13.

⁷ See Harrison, Before the Socialists, pp. 141-183.

⁸ Walton, 'The Approaching Elections and Duty of Electors', *Bee-Hive* 25.7.1868, p. 7.

⁹ Walton, 'The Stafford and Nottingham Elections', *Bee-Hive* 12.6.1869, p. 7.

¹⁰ Walton, Our Future Progress, p. 6.

¹¹ Walton in *Reynolds's Newspaper* 6.2.1870, p. 3.

Walton's permanent attacks on the 'Whigs and sham Liberals'¹² did not imply that he would call for a separation of the working class radicals from the Liberal party. He saw broad agreement with the middle classes in their common stance against the landed interest, which in particular dominated the representation of the counties. 'If the middle classes could only be brought to understand their own interest in this respect, ... [a] united action ... between the middle and the working classes would greatly improve the representation of the House of Commons for practical and useful legislation'. Moreover, he increasingly made a distinction 'between the advanced Liberal section of the House of Commons - composed of about sixty members - and the Government'¹³. The working class MPs, which were to be elected, in his opinion should strengthen the ranks of these 'advanced Reformers'.

However, although Walton rejected any class legislation, both in favour or against working class interests¹⁴, he still maintained that the interests of the workers could not be represented by middle class radicals, because 'however well a few gentlemen may wish towards the working classes, they are not real *bona fide* representative working men, and therefore cannot be expected to understand or explain their wants or requirements so well as working men can do themselves'.

Walton's general deliberations on working class representation were complemented by the actions of the government and the majority of Parliament. After the first session of the 1868 parliament, Walton concluded that its legislative action proved 'the want of sympathy in the House of Commons for the wants and requirements of the working classes', and after the second session he stated that every measure 'that has been passed has been mainly for the benefit of the upper and middle classes'¹⁵. The following years only confirmed his in views: The Truck Act and Payment of Wages Bill of 1872 proved 'simply that the working men will never get rid of old Truck ... until they send their own men to the House of Commons'¹⁶. The repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act could only be effected by working class representatives¹⁷. The withdrawal of Torrens' motion to help the unemployed by assisting emigration and the cultivation of waste lands gave 'the most unmistakable proof - if proof were

¹² Walton, *Necessity*, p. 12. Next quotation *ibid.*, p. 11.

¹³ Walton, 'Break Up of the Liberal Party', *Bee-Hive* 13.5.1871, p. 14. Next quotation *ibid.*

¹⁴ See Walton, 'The Trade Union Bill', *Bee-Hive* 14.3.1871, p. 14; Walton, *Necessity*, p. 13. Next two quotations *ibid.*, pp. 11 and 10/11.

¹⁵ Walton, 'The Second Session of the Reformed Parliament', *Bee-Hive* 20.8.1870, p. 428.

¹⁶ Walton, 'The Truck and Wages Bill', *Bee-Hive* 31.5.1872, p. 3.

¹⁷ Walton, 'Representation of Labour in Parliament', in *Bee-Hive* 14.6.1873, pp. 2/3.

wanting - that the so-called Reformed Parliament has no more sympathy with the wants and sufferings of the working-classes than any of its predecessors'¹⁸.

Thus, the failure of parliament to tackle the questions concerned with the well-being of the workers in Walton's opinion called for practical steps to secure a direct representation of labour. However, his demand, which was shared by many working class activists, resulted in a dilemma of political tactics. On the one hand, the wish to maintain co-operation with the advanced reformers, who shared so many of the workers' demands, prevented the establishment of a separate labour party against the Liberal party. Moreover, running working class candidates against the Liberal party might cause a split in the Liberal vote and return Tories to parliament. On the other hand, the refusal of many Liberals to admit working class candidates had prevented any working man from being elected. The most striking example had been Odger's contest for Southwark, where the Liberal candidate Waterlow had refused to withdraw from the poll in time to secure Odger's return¹⁹.

Walton became increasingly prepared to ignore the danger of splitting the Liberal vote. He told the delegates at the Trades Union Congress (TUC) of 1873 'that if the Liberal party refuse to coalesce with the working men, the responsibility of dividing the so-called Liberal interest will rest with them and not with you'²⁰. However, he still recommended 'to secure the co-operation of the best portion of the middle classes'; this could be effected if the workers asserted their strength by showing 'a bold face and united action among themselves'²¹.

Walton's idea was to come to an understanding with the Liberals that in boroughs represented by two seats, working men should select one candidate, and the middle classes the other, both to be started in the Liberal interest²².

To carry out this idea, the working classes had to become united and organised. To this end, Walton always urged existing political working class bodies to combine and called upon the

¹⁸ Walton in *Bee-Hive* 3.9.1870, p. 461.

¹⁹ See *Bee-Hive* 19.2.1870, p. 6; J. Dunlop, 'Radical Politics in Bermondsey, 1869-1880', research paper.

²⁰ Walton, 'Representation of Labour in Parliament. The Best Means to secure it', *Bee-Hive* 1.3.1873, p. 11. At the TUC of 1869, he had already dismissed the warnings of a split in the Liberal vote as a 'deceptive and delusive cry' (Walton, *Necessity*, p. 12).

²¹ Walton, 'Representation of Labour in Parliament. The Best Means to secure it', *Bee-Hive* 1.3.1873, p. 11.

²² See Walton, 'The Stafford and Nottingham Elections', *Bee-Hive* 12.6.1869, p. 7; Walton, 'Break Up of the Liberal Party', *Bee-Hive* 13.5.1871, p. 14.

trade unions to support working class candidates in their districts²³. Walton was among the first to send a positive answer when the Greenwich Advanced Liberal Association issued a circular for support in an attempt to consolidate 'the Advanced Liberal party, so as to promote a united action in favour of popular and practical legislation'²⁴. Walton also urged the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC, which had been established in March 1871²⁵, to watch for opportunities to nominate labour candidates²⁶.

The most direct attempt to secure the return of working men MPs, however, was the Labour Representation League (LRL). It is well known that this body emerged from the negotiations during the summer of 1869 between three different groups in London agitating for labour representation after the break up of the Reform League²⁷. However, although he is not mentioned among the attendants of the inaugural meeting on 4.11.1869²⁸, Walton also seems to have played a certain part in the formation of this body. In a letter of 8.6.1869, he expressed his hope

that the committee appointed when the Reform League was dissolved to organise another association, as well as the founders of the London Working Men's Association, will all unite in forming one grand national union of the working classes and others favourable to a fair share of the representation of the country being participated in by the working men²⁹.

In a further letter to the Working Men's National Reform League he announced 'that he would be in London early in September, and that he wished to see a conference of representatives to form a National Labour League'³⁰. Finally, during the Birmingham TUC in August 1869, he moved a resolution that 'this Congress recommends a National Organisation of the working classes, to be called the Labour Representation League'³¹.

From these tenuous hints it does not become entirely clear how deeply Walton was involved in the formation of the LRL, but without doubt the new organisation satisfied his repeated

²³ Walton, *Necessity*, pp. 12/13.

²⁴ 'Greenwich Advanced Liberal Association', *Bee-Hive* 24.6.1871, p. 11.

²⁵ See Leventhal, *Respectable Radical*, pp. 150-152, 165-189.

²⁶ Walton, 'Representation of Labour in Parliament. The Best Means to secure it', *Bee-Hive* 1.3.1873, p. 11.

²⁷ See Cole, *British Working Class Politics*, pp. 49-51.

²⁸ See 'Labour Representation League', *Bee-Hive* 6.11.1869, p. 1.

²⁹ Walton, 'The Stafford and Nottingham Elections', *Bee-Hive* 12.6.1869, p. 7.

³⁰ Report of delegate meeting on 28.7.1869 at the Norton Folgate Branch of the Working Men's National Reform League, *National Reformer* 8.8.1869, p. 93. In the literature, this body is not mentioned among the organisations which have founded the LRL.

³¹ Walton, *Necessity*, p. 16.

calls for a united effort of the working classes to secure direct representation of labour. Some of the Council members of the LRL, like Lloyd Jones, Odger or Howell, he knew personally; therefore, given the hints mentioned above, his direct participation in the establishment of the LRL seems to be very likely. In the following years, he served as a member on its General Council³² and enjoyed its support for his own parliamentary candidatures.

2. Walton's Involvement in Parliamentary Elections

Although Walton was not as prominent in the national labour movement as George Potter, George Odger or George Howell, his name was occasionally mentioned in the radical press as a possible working class candidate for parliament. In August 1868 J. W. Carter³³ asked in a letter to the *Bee-Hive*, why Walton was not put up as a working men's candidate somewhere, counting him among the workers 'who, though not exactly in the ranks, have risen from them, and are still employing all their energies to promote their welfare'³⁴. Carter tried to explain that Walton, despite his professional self-improvement, was still 'a *bona fide* mason, but who through the application of those powers in his possession has risen to a position which commands the respect and admiration of all who by profession know him'.

In another letter in 1873, Walton was put in a line with Odger, Pickard, Burt and Lloyd Jones as one of 'several good and true men' who deserved to contest a seat in the next elections³⁵. Walton was in fact to stand twice for Stoke-on-Trent in 1874 and 1875, but his first attempts to launch a candidature were made in Brecon.

³² Despite some periods of prolonged absence, notably during 1874, Walton's name is found among the members present at meetings of the General Council up to the last meeting reported in the Minute Book on 28.6.1878.

³³ Carter was a leading member of the London building trades, being temporary secretary of the ULPCBC (see *Bee-Hive* 25.4.1868, p. 6), secretary of the London United Committee of House Painters (see *ibid.* 11.1.1868, p. 5), and a member of Potter's London Working Men's Association (see *ibid.* 11.4.1868, p. 1).

³⁴ *Bee-Hive* 15.8.1868, p. 7. Next quotation *ibid.*

³⁵ A Merthyr Elector: 'Mr. Halliday and the Representation of Merthyr Tydfil', *Bee-Hive* 10.5.1873, p. 3. As the author of the article introduces himself as 'a Pastor of a Christian congregation', he might have been the Christian Radical T. D. Matthias (1823-1904), who had moved to Merthyr Tydfil in 1868. In 1875, he supported Walton in the Stoke-on-Trent by-election. See his biographical entry in DLB VII, pp. 178-182, by A. Jones and J. Saville.

a) Brecon 1868 and 1869

Brecon, described by Walton as a 'little landlord ridden borough, which is merely a type of many others in different parts of the country'³⁶, was among the smallest parliamentary boroughs in Britain. A parliamentary investigation into each constituency in 1873, moved by Charles Dilke to prove the necessity of a redistribution of seats, showed that of the 6,308 inhabitants, 822 were registered as electors³⁷. This number of voters marked a considerable increase to the period before the Second Reform Act, when just about 300 people had been on the register³⁸.

Since 1854, the borough had been represented by a Liberal MP, who had been returned unopposed. Only in 1866, at the succession to the peerage of the then MP, the Earl of Brecknock, the Conservative candidate Howel Gwyn had been returned. He stood for re-election in 1868.

Walton had been present at a meeting of Liberal Electors after the unsuccessful 1866 campaign³⁹, but he only became significantly involved during the Brecon election of 1868. In August 1868, Howell asked Walton on behalf of the Reform League about the prospects of running an advanced radical candidate in the borough and suggested Passmore Edwards as possible choice⁴⁰. However, Walton offered himself as a candidate in the Liberal interest, after 'those gentlemen who assumed or arrogated - whichever they pleased - the right to dictate to the town as to who should be their representative'⁴¹, failed to select a Liberal candidate for the borough. By this move, he wanted to prevent Gwyn from being returned unopposed.

Walton started canvassing the borough for a week on a platform of Irish Church disestablishment, the university question, reduction of national expenditure, and the abolition of the ratepaying clauses of the Reform Act of 1867 - apart from the last point a programme which most of the Liberal candidates adhering to Gladstone shared with him.

Walton found, however, that 'agencies had been at work which he should never employ himself': The Liberals of Brecon, who were partly his colleagues on the Town Council and in the Brecon Branch of the Reform League, elected Hugh Powel Price as their candidate and

³⁶ Walton, 'Brecon Election', *Bee-Hive* 22.5.1869, p. 7.

³⁷ See 'Electoral Facts and Statistics', *Bee-Hive* 4.10.1873, p. 9.

³⁸ F. W. S. Craig (ed.): British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885 (1977), p. 498. All further figures on Brecon elections refer to this collection.

³⁹ See 'Banquet of the Liberal Electors of Brecon', *Brecon Journal and County Advertiser* 20.10.1866.

⁴⁰ Howell to Walton, 7.8.1868, Howell Collection.

⁴¹ See report of a speech by Walton, 'Brecon Borough Election. Mr. Walton's Resignation', *Brecon County Times* 12.9.1868, p. 4. The next quotation *ibid.*, p. 5.

prevailed upon Walton to withdraw his candidature. Walton maintained 'that if the electors of the town were left free he could have polled two to one against the sitting member'⁴², but complied with their request, as the majority of the Liberals declared themselves in favour of Price. Walton was concerned that a split in the Liberal vote might result in the return of the Conservative candidate, and he therefore presented himself 'as a peacemaker, to reconcile and to endeavour to get every man to unite in order to return to Parliament the best man they could in the absence of himself'. However, apparently he did not participate in the ensuing Liberal meetings for Price⁴³.

Despite Walton's withdrawal from the election contest, Gwyn was returned by a margin of 15 votes. Immediately after the election, the Liberals in the borough united for a petition against Gwyn's election and charged him with 'bribery, treating, corruption, and undue influence'⁴⁴.

The Liberal move was well prepared. When Gwyn was unseated on 9.4.1869, the Liberals swiftly presented their candidate in the evening of the same day, the candidate himself, Edward Hyde Villiers (Lord Hyde), arriving at Brecon early the next day. In the evening the first public meeting was held, with one of Walton's fellow Liberal town councillors, Dr. Lucas, in the chair⁴⁵.

Walton had been involved in the process of unseating Gwyn, and afterwards was urged by friends 'either to contest the borough myself or endeavour to bring forward an advanced Liberal candidate, while others begged of me to support Lord Hyde'⁴⁶. Yet his attempts to persuade the 'professional liberals' in Brecon to invite well known reformers like Milner Gibson, Passmore Edwards or Frederic Harrison failed. With the deferential Brecon middle classes, 'nothing would go down but a lord'. Walton complained that the selection of the candidate and the election were

simply a repetition of what I have witnessed in other parts of the country in small boroughs, in the midst of the agricultural districts where landlord

⁴² See report of a speech by George Overton, *ibid.*, p. 4. Next quotation *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴³ See reports of the Liberal meetings in *Brecon County Times* 3.10.1868, pp. 4/5; 7.11.1868, p. 4; 21.11.1868, pp. 4/5.

⁴⁴ See reports in *Brecon County Times* 28.11.1868, pp. 4/5; 5.12.1868, p. 5; 10.4.1869, p. 4 (quote taken from the last report). For the fight against corrupting practices see C. O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices in British Elections 1868-1911* (Oxford, 1962), esp. p. 61 n. 1.

⁴⁵ See *Brecon County Times* 17.4.1869, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Walton, 'Brecon Election', *Bee-Hive* 22.5.1869, p. 7. The next three quotes *ibid.*

influence and interest is supreme. The custom is that the moment it is known that an election is to take place the great landlord writes cautiously but significantly to his estate agent, and the candidate retains as many of the lawyers in the town as possible. These men, together with the squirearchy, parsons, and other local satraps, sally forth to operate upon the shopkeepers and tradesmen, who, in their turn, with becoming obsequiousness, operate upon the working men, and every means which money, trickery, and chicanery can devise is put in requisition on both sides to carry the election.

Nevertheless, the Walton camp examined Lord Hyde's political position in order to decide whether to give their approval to his candidature. After Hyde had given his first election address, stressing his support for Irish, but not English disestablishment, and after he had received the support of H. P. Price, the unsuccessful candidate of 1868, Walton, 'by desire of several of his friends'⁴⁷, asked Hyde whether he was prepared to support a motion before Parliament calling for the abolition of primogeniture and entail, and for an alteration of the game laws. This caused an abrupt ending of the meeting, the chairman observing that 'it was now getting late, and that Hyde would answer those questions on another occasion'⁴⁸. He further pointed out that these questions 'required a good deal of consideration, and even eminent statesmen had not made up their minds with regard to those matters'.

At the next public meeting on 13.4.1869, Hyde provided the promised answer, declaring himself to be against the abolition of primogeniture and entail, as the equal division of the land between all sons would lead to a fragmentation of the soil into countless small spots. Moreover, this measure would be the first step in the direction to the abolition of the House of Lords, 'and that was the last thing he should like to see come to pass. (Applause.)'⁴⁹.

From its political content, this statement was completely incompatible with Walton's position. He was, 'however, in hope that as Lord Hyde grows older he will grow wiser in this respect, and not be led away by the delusion that it is necessary for a man to be the owner of half a million acres of land ... to qualify him to take his seat in the Upper House'⁵⁰.

On two further questions, Hyde's views came closer to Walton's positions. Hyde promised to advocate an amelioration of the game laws, and although not entirely approving of the ballot,

⁴⁷ Walton during the next Liberal meeting, referring back to the first one, *Brecon County Times* 24.4.1869, p. 4.

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 17.4.1869, p. 4. Next quotation *ibid.*

⁵² Report of the Liberal meeting of 13.4.1869, *ibid.*, 17.4.1869, p. 5.

⁵⁰ Walton, 'Brecon Election', *Bee-Hive* 22.5.1869, p. 7.

he said he would 'never vote against it'⁵¹. Walton himself was rather reserved about the ballot, stating that to 'all men of independent mind and action secret voting seems not only distasteful but positively objectionable'⁵². However, as long as corrupt practices at elections were not abolished, Walton, unlike Hyde, found it 'necessary to adopt secret voting - for a time at least'⁵³.

Despite this partial agreement in their views, Walton's conciliatory tone towards Hyde did not so much result from ideological affinity, as from tactical considerations. Between two Liberal meetings of 13. and 17.4.1869, Walton 'had some conversation with his lordship, and he found that his lordship had a warm heart towards those men whose exertions, while they kept within the pale of the law, rendered them worthy of protection. (Cheers.) He mentioned this to show that his lordship was worthy of their support'⁵⁴.

Walton's praise for the personal qualities of the Liberal candidate only served as a supportive argument in justification of the political tactics he pursued. Walton stated at the same meeting that he

had been asked why he did not reply to some of the remarks of his lordship; and his answer was easy. He was desirous of saying nothing whatever which would in any way tend to sow division among the Liberal party, which he was happy to say was now entirely united.

Keeping this resolve, Walton gave his uncompromising support to the Liberal candidate, praising the 'principles of progress, which the Liberals defended' and hoping 'that they would stand shoulder to shoulder, and endeavour to return as the representative for the borough of Brecon one who would support the great principles embodied in the programme of the Liberal party of this country, and which alone could conduce to the happiness and welfare of the people, and the prosperity of the empire'⁵⁵.

Walton himself realized that this support for Hyde might seem strangely at odds with his usual calls for the direct representation of labour. However, he argued that under the

⁵² Report of the Liberal meeting of 13.4.1869, *Brecon County Times* 17.4.1869, p. 5.

⁵² Walton, *Our Future Progress*, p. 7. Reservation towards the ballot was rather an exception among working class and liberal radicals, but was shared by some prominent protagonists, like Mill (see P. Adelman, *Victorian Radicalism. The Middle-Class Experience 1830-1914* (1984), p. 49) and Ludlow (see his letter to Howell of 26.6.1865, Howell Collection).

⁵³ Walton, *Our Future Progress*, p. 7.

⁵⁴ Walton at the Liberal meeting of 17.4.1869, reported in *Brecon County Times* 24.4.1869, p. 4. Next quotation *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Walton at the Liberal meeting of 21.4.1869, reported *ibid.*, p. 5.

circumstances prevailing in Brecon no other course was possible. The middle class insistence on a lord as candidate had 'put the few real liberal men in the awkward position of either dividing the Liberal party, remaining neutral, or voting for Lord Hyde'⁵⁶. He and his friends chose to vote for Hyde.

Walton's tactics paid off for Lord Hyde. On 24.4.1869, he was returned with a majority of 391 against the Conservative candidate Lord Claud Hamilton, who only polled 328. Despite this victory, however, Walton hoped that 'the old hacknied phrase of not "dividing the liberal party"' would not prevail much longer:

If the country is to be fairly represented we must set aside the old Whig clique,
who are as great obstructionists to real progress as the Tories.

Five years later, after even greater disappointment with the conduct of the majority of Liberal party members, Walton got the chance to assist in an attempt to effect exactly this aim.

b) Stoke-on-Trent 1874 and 1875

If Brecon was one of the smallest parliamentary boroughs, Stoke-on-Trent was among the ten biggest in the country. From the 131,000 inhabitants, about 18,000 were registered as voters⁵⁷. In 1868, Robert Hartwell, an associate of George Potter in the London Working Men's Association, had tried to contest one of the two seats for Stoke as a labour candidate. However, his candidature was only supported by a small group of working class activists, whereas the local union leaders supported the Liberal candidates G. Melly and W. S. Roden. Hartwell did not even go to the poll, but resigned his candidature under obscure circumstances and allegations of having been bought out of the contest by the Liberal campaigners⁵⁸. As there was no Conservative candidate for Stoke either, the two Liberal candidates were returned unopposed, thus depriving the approximately 12,000 first voters in the borough of the opportunity to use their new right⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ Walton, 'Brecon Election', *Bee-Hive* 22.5.1869, p. 7. The next two quotations *ibid*.

⁵⁷ See 'Electoral Facts and Statistics', *Bee-Hive* 4.10.1873, p. 9.

⁵⁸ See *Bee-Hive* 28.11.1868, p. 4; 19.12.1868, p. 4; 19.6.1869, p. 7.

⁵⁹ See Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results, p. 291. All further figures on Stoke elections refer to this place.

Although this '*fiasco*'⁶⁰ did not bode well for another labour candidate, the political situation in the Potteries changed considerably over the following years. Trade union growth in the major local industries (pottery, mining, ironworking) provided an extending basis for political activities, especially because the union leaders, feeling snubbed by the local Liberal party in the years after the General Election, became more favourable towards a working class candidate⁶¹. In May 1870 a Potteries branch of the Labour Representation League was formed with the support of local trade union leaders, and William Owen, the editor of the *Potteries Examiner*, started to advocate the direct representation of labour in his paper⁶².

During the Trade Union Congress of 1869, Owen had heard Walton speaking on the question of working class candidates, and this encounter made him introduce Walton in his borough⁶³. Walton started visiting Stoke in 1870, giving lectures and generally investigating his possible acceptance as a labour candidate. In 1872, Walton's chances of success were 'deemed by some of the local working men to be very good'⁶⁴, but yet no formal move had been made to nominate him as a candidate.

When Gladstone's ministry was in a crisis due to the Irish Universities Bill in March 1873 and new elections were expected to be held in the near future⁶⁵, the LRL started moving to get working men candidates nominated. In Stoke-on-Trent, a meeting of representatives from the various trade societies was held on 11.2.1873, chaired by George Salt, the president of the local LRL, and attended by a deputation from the Birmingham LRL. Although the LRL was supporting Walton's candidature, it had to proceed carefully with his nomination, as some delegates had the impression 'that Mr. Walton was being thrust upon them'⁶⁶. After a long discussion it was decided that a list of three potential candidates should be presented to the trade societies for further consideration. Apart from Walton, Lloyd Jones of the *Bee-Hive* and G. W. M. Reynolds of *Reynolds's Newspaper* were suggested as candidates, but despite a short

⁶⁰ So the London Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, quoted in *Bee-Hive* 30.11.1872, p. 10.

⁶¹ See Anderton, 'Liberal Party', p. 112.

⁶² See A. Jones, 'Local Labour Journalism in England and Wales 1843 to 1891, with particular reference to the newspapers of W. Owen and J. T. Morgan' (PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1981), pp. 233/234.

⁶³ This link is suggested by Anderton, 'Liberal Party', p. 131. For Walton's moves in the borough in the following years see *ibid.*, pp. 133-143.

⁶⁴ 'The General Election and the Direct Representation of Labour', *Bee-Hive* 30.11.1868, p. 10.

⁶⁵ See Morley, *Gladstone*, vol. II, pp. 32-48.

⁶⁶ 'Stoke-on-Trent Labour Representation League', *Potteries Examiner* 15.3.1873, p. 3.

appearance of Lloyd Jones in the borough, Walton was nominated as candidate in a meeting on 25.3.1873⁶⁷.

Walton's candidature was immediately endorsed by the Business Committee of the LRL during its meeting of 4.4.1873. In the following months, the LRL supported his campaign by sending its Secretary Henry Broadhurst or George Howell to the borough to attend meetings in favour of Walton⁶⁸.

Only very late did the Liberal leadership in the borough start to take Walton's candidature seriously. Nevertheless, only few attempts were made in the last months of 1873 to effect an alliance between the working men's candidate and the Liberals. They were doomed to fail from the outset, as neither Walton nor the two sitting Liberal members were prepared to resign from the contest⁶⁹. Moreover, the sudden 'plunge into the stormy waters of parliamentary dissolution'⁷⁰ on 26.1.1874 called for hasty preparations for the election.

Walton held meetings in Hanley, Tunstall, Burslem and Longton, frequently chaired by William Owen, and several miners' lodges decided to give financial support for Walton's election expenses⁷¹.

Walton managed to hold the 'largest attended meeting'⁷² during the campaign, but he failed to raise enough support to become elected. With 5,198 votes he finished fourth in the poll, being only 173 votes behind W. S. Roden, who lost his seat to the Conservative candidate R. Heath. Although Roden was not very popular in the borough, the powerful emergence of the working man candidate was seen as the main reason for his defeat.

As William Owen complained, Walton's chances had been damaged by accusations from his Liberal opponents that his candidature was supported by the Tory party to split the Liberal vote⁷³. These allegations were grossly untrue and had been a desperate attempt to discredit the labour candidate.

After the election, however, the failure to return both Liberal candidates gradually led to a new policy on the side of the Liberal party in Stoke. Instead of opposing a working class

⁶⁷ See 'Labour Representation in the Potteries', *Potteries Examiner* 29.3.1873, p. 4.

⁶⁸ See LRL, Minute Book, 4.4.1873, 20.6.1873, 7.8.1873, Broadhurst Collection; 'Labour Representation in Stoke-upon-Trent', *Potteries Examiner* 4.10.1873, p. 6.

⁶⁹ See Anderton, 'Liberal Party', pp. 162-166.

⁷⁰ So the headline of an article in the *Potteries Examiner* 31.1.1874, p. 4. On the dissolution see Morley, *Gladstone*, vol. II, pp. 64-72.

⁷¹ See reports of several meetings in *Potteries Examiner* 31.1.1874, pp. 5 and 7.

⁷² 'Mr. Walton's candidature: Great demonstration at the People's Music Hall, Hanley', *Potteries Examiner* 7.2.1874, p. 7.

⁷³ See 'The Late Election in Stoke. The Calumnies circulated concerning the Working Men's Candidate and the Election Expenses', *Potteries Examiner* 14.2.1874, p. 4.

candidate, some sections of the Liberal leadership started to accept the view that the second Liberal candidate should be nominated by trade union organisations and the LRL.

Immediately after the election, a Liberal Club was set up to draw the working men closer to the Liberal party⁷⁴. Despite the ambivalent position of the Club, which was perceived by some working men as an attempt by the leadership of the Liberal party to oust Walton as a candidate for future elections, it was to serve as a place to assert the working class demands within the Liberal party⁷⁵.

The slow re-arrangements between the old management of the Stoke Liberal party, still opposing the prospect of a labour candidate, and a rising new leadership, looking for a compromise with the working class interest, were badly shaken on 31.12.1874: giving business affairs as reasons, Melly unexpectedly resigned his seat.

With the General Election still in everybody's mind, Melly's decision gave a boost to the section of the party leadership who called for the acceptance of a Labour candidate. Although Roden still indicated his intention to stand for Parliament again, Walton and his friends had a stronger base in the borough and moved quickly to issue an election address. In the first week of January, the Liberal party bodies met to discuss Walton's adoption as a candidate⁷⁶. Moreover, Walton announced his candidature to the LRL in London, expressing his confidence in being elected if the League supported him⁷⁷. The Secretary, Henry Broadhurst, was dispatched to Stoke, where he met with bodies of Nonconformists and the mayor, all of them promising their support for Walton⁷⁸.

During a meeting of the LRL on 14.1.1875 to celebrate the election of its new president William Newton, Walton could announce 'that he had been accepted as the candidate of the Liberal party'⁷⁹. An alliance, however in the balance, had been worked out between the local Liberal party and the LRL, giving Walton the chance to stand in the by-election, but promising working class support for the second Liberal seat in future elections⁸⁰.

After this electoral alliance, Walton's prospects of being elected against the Conservative candidate Davenport seemed to be very good, and until two weeks before the election Broadhurst delivered optimistic reports to the General Council of the LRL⁸¹. However,

⁷⁴ 'The Formation of a Liberal Workmen's Club for Stoke', *Potteries Examiner* 14.2.1874, p. 4.

⁷⁵ See Anderton, 'Liberal Party', pp. 177-179.

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, pp. 181-185.

⁷⁷ See LRL, Minute Book, 4.1.1875.

⁷⁸ See Broadhurst's report *ibid.*, 29.1.1875.

⁷⁹ 'Labour Representation in Parliament', *Bee-Hive* 16.1.1875, p. 7.

⁸⁰ See Anderton, 'Liberal Party', pp. 186-189.

⁸¹ See the report of a meeting of the LRL in *Bee-Hive* 6.2.1875, p. 4.

another challenger appeared in Dr. E. V. Kenealy, the solicitor of the Tichborne claimant⁸², entering the contest as an independent candidate. Carried by the popular enthusiasm for the case he was advocating, he came first in the poll of 18.2.1875, leaving Walton in the second place by almost 2,000 votes.

The Liberal-Labour alliance and the LRL were shocked. The extent of support the Tichborne claimant received had always been eyed with suspicion by the 'respectable' working class leadership, and the election result in Stoke was considered to be a shame for the borough. The *Bee-Hive* lamented that it was difficult not to regard the 'honour' of Kenealy's election 'as ill-bestowed, and such a sudden enthusiasm as gave birth to it as the mere effervescence of over-enthusiastic ignorance, made blind and indiscriminating by the mere perversity of passion'⁸³.

Walton had polled 1,000 votes less than in his first attempt in Stoke. The low turnout in general raised suspicion that not only working men voting for Kenealy, but also the abstention of many Liberal voters were the reasons for Walton's defeat. When the *Daily Telegraph* published a letter by an elector who had abstained in opposition to Walton's candidature, the *Bee-Hive* eagerly grasped the opportunity to blame the middle classes for his failure:

They dislike the Tories, but they hate trades unionists, and if Mr. Walton possessed the integrity of Aristides, the legislative power of Solon, and the eloquence of Demosthenes, he could not obtain the support of such poor Calibans as the Stoke elector who wrote to the *Telegraph*⁸⁴.

This line of argument got additional nourishment from the fact that John Bright in a speech in Birmingham just before the election had objected to the alleged claim that a candidate should be elected to Parliament mainly because he was a working man⁸⁵. Although Bright conceded in a published letter to an elector in Burslem that he would have 'no difficulty in giving my vote for Mr. Walton'⁸⁶, the supporters of Walton were outraged. Broadhurst, who spent several weeks in Stoke to support Walton, argued that if Walton was not successful, 'he should attach much of the blame to the words uttered by Mr. Bright, as they might have the effect of

⁸² On Kenealy see R. McWilliam, 'Radicalism and Popular Culture: The Tichborne Case and the Politics of "fair play", 1867-1886' in Eugenio F. Biagini and Alastair J. Reid (eds.), Currents of Radicalism. Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914 (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 44-64, esp. pp. 47-48.

⁸³ 'Dr. Kenealy in the House', *Bee-Hive* 14.8.1875, p. 10.

⁸⁴ 'Middle Class Hatred of Working Men', *Bee-Hive* 27.2.1875, p. 9.

⁸⁵ See Bright's address in Birmingham (28.1.1875), in J. E. Thorold Rogers (ed.), Public Addresses by John Bright, M.P. (1879), pp. 256-260.

⁸⁶ Letter of John Bright to Joseph Hulme of Burslem (13.2.1875), in H. J. Leech (ed.), The Public Letters of the Right Hon. John Bright M.P. (1885), pp. 180-181.

disuniting the middle class party from the working men's party'⁸⁷. After Walton's defeat, the *Bee-Hive* maintained that Bright's speech 'did damage his chances beyond any power of repair'⁸⁸.

However, although the reaction to Bright's speech shows how uneasy the relations between Liberal party and working class representation were, it could hardly conceal that Walton's defeat was most likely caused by the defection of too many working class voters towards Kenealy⁸⁹.

The LRL continued to pursue its policy to nominate one middle class and one working class candidate for Stoke-on-Trent⁹⁰, but Walton himself would not stand for Parliament again. On 28.6.1878, he seconded a motion at the General Council of the LRL in favour of Broadhurst standing as a working men's candidate for Stoke⁹¹. At the next election in 1880, Broadhurst was convincingly returned against the Conservative candidate and the independent candidate, Dr. Kenealy.

The history of Walton's parliamentary candidatures shows how the working class leadership became increasingly willing to insist on the direct representation of labour in Parliament. Although Walton, like many working class leaders, felt he belonged to the section of the political spectrum which was broadly described as 'the Liberal interest', this did not result in a slavish adherence towards the Liberal party. During the elections of 1868 and 1869, Walton conceded that the representation of the 'Liberal interest' in Parliament could only be secured by giving his support to the candidates of the Liberal party. However, he never lost sight of the particular working class interest within the broader framework of the 'Liberal interest'. When this working class interest seemed to be neglected by the Liberal government, Walton was prepared to risk a split in the Liberal vote to secure the return of working class candidates like himself in the General Election of 1874. However, as Walton still preferred the unity of the Liberal interest to a complete split between the middle class and the working class vote, the alliance between both classes in the 1875 by-election in Stoke was the option most appropriate to his policies of sharing two-member constituencies between the two classes.

⁸⁷ Broadhurst at a meeting in Birmingham on 6.2.1875, reported in the *Birmingham Morning News* 8.2.1875 (newspaper clipping in the LRL Minute Book, 26.2.1875).

⁸⁸ 'Mr. Bright and Working Men Candidates', *Bee-Hive* 20.2.1875, p. 12.

⁸⁹ See McWilliam, 'Radicalism and Popular Culture', pp. 62-63.

⁹⁰ See LRL, Minute Book, 20.4.1877.

⁹¹ See *ibid.*, 28.6.1878.

Conclusion

When Walton left Brecon in the middle of the 1870s, he moved to 14 Oberstein Road, Wandsworth. There he lived with his niece, Anne Walton, who cared for him after the death of his wife. Walton himself died on 7th March 1883 at the age of 66⁹².

As many working class activists of the mid-Victorian era, Walton had gone through a career of self-improvement, leading from manual work to relative independence and self-employment. However, he never denied his working class roots, but devoted a considerable amount of his time to promote schemes for the political and social improvement of the working people.

Despite his rise in society, his working class background left him in a precarious social position, half-way between the working and the middle classes. This became apparent when he stood for Parliament. To make his candidature acceptable to the working class electors, Walton's supporters had to stress that he had been 'for twelve years a worker at the bench, and had paid for his own study'⁹³. On the other hand, they had to argue that Walton was a respectable gentleman⁹⁴, if they wanted him to be acceptable to the middle class voters.

When he made his will in 1880, Walton himself used the term "gentleman" to describe his social position, but so did other working class activists, such as William Allan (1813-1874) and William Newton (1822-1876), both engineers and presidents of the LRL⁹⁵. Compared to the respective £3,000 and £6,000 in effects which Allan and Newton bequeathed to their heirs, Walton's personal estate of £2,032 does not seem to have been excessively large. However, compared to the much smaller fortunes of artisans and manual workers, Walton's profession as an architect appears to have secured a comfortable living for him.

In his will, he bequeathed £19 19s. to each of the children of his sister and five brothers, whereas own children are not mentioned. His niece Anne, who was still unmarried at the time of his death, was appointed sole executrix and main beneficiary. Walton's ten shares of £10 each in the Artizans, Labourers and General Dwellings Company were given to the magistrates of his native district Hexham in Northumberland, 'to be held in trust by them and the interest

⁹² See the short death notice in *Reynolds's Newspaper* 18.3.1883, p. 5.

⁹³ Meeting during the 1874 campaign, *Potteries Examiner* 31.1.1874, p. 7.

⁹⁴ See the address of the Liberals in Stoke-on-Trent for the 1875 by-election, inserted in LRL, Minute Book, meeting of 29.1.1875.

⁹⁵ The wills of Walton, Allan and Newton are kept in the Principal Registry of the Family Division, Somerset House, London.

derivable therefrom to be applied at their discretion in providing Meat Soup Medical aid or other necessaries at the most inclement seasons of the year for the Poor of Hexham⁹⁶.

This dissertation could not offer a comprehensive account of Walton's personal life and of his wide-ranging commitments. Many aspects call for further research, such as Walton's early years, his position within Welsh radicalism, his comments on trade union legislation, or the local and personal contexts of his activities. Nevertheless, crucial points relating to his career and his interests have been highlighted: Walton's position on the land question, co-operation and labour representation, and his attempts of shaping politics on these issues.

Walton's political and social thought turned out to be of an eclectic, sometimes almost protean quality. It does not only elude a clear positioning within intellectual traditions, but it renders a too narrow definition of such traditions questionable in itself. According to the necessities of the day, Walton himself evoked a seemingly disparate collection of political thinkers as his ancestry. Notwithstanding how his claims of having been a follower - or in some cases even a co-worker - of Cobden, Doubleday, Mill, O'Brien or Owen might have been substantiated (and often the evidence is scarce), he without doubt integrated elements of their social and political ideas into his own programme.

If radicalism was defined by a moral outlook, insisting on the values of democracy and equity⁹⁷, Walton from his Chartist days onwards can be numbered among the popular Radicals. His commitment to the question of direct representation of labour and to progress through the legislative process neatly fit into this tradition. If Socialism was characterised by an overwhelming concern with the problem of unemployment and the lot of the poor, Walton could with the same justification be labelled a Socialist, especially when his constant call for land nationalisation as the only final solution to the 'compulsory idleness' of many workers is considered. If the acceptance of the law of demand and supply as regulating the labour market and the doctrine of free trade are considered to be core demands of economic Liberalism, Walton might also be located in this tradition of thought.

Apparently, such attempts at defining intellectual traditions merely cover segments of Walton's thought and do not help much in ascertaining his own perception of his political

⁹⁶ Last Will and Testament of A. A. Walton, drawn up on 15.10.1880, proved at the Principal Registry on 5.4.1883.

⁹⁷ For the following distinction between Radicalism and Socialism see A. Whitehead, 'Popular Politics and Social Structure in Clerkenwell, 1860-90' (chapters from an unfinished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1981), pp. D 3/4.

position. He saw himself as belonging to a broad front of 'advanced reformers', advocating disparate programmes and embracing not only working class, but also middle class reformers. A comparison of John Stuart Mill and Walton has demonstrated to what extent this broad reforming interest could fluctuate between 'Liberal' and 'Socialist' ideas.

This loosely connected group of advanced reformers constituted the 'true Liberal interest', as opposed to Whig policies and Tory landlordism. To postpone the discussion of ideological differences within this 'Liberal interest' and to unite this potentially strong force of reform was the golden thread woven through the whole of Walton's political activities.

Recently the case for continuity between Chartism and mid-Victorian Liberalism has again been underlined⁹⁸. Walton is a striking example for this continuity. His political ideas had been formed by 1850, and carrying on concerns of late Chartism⁹⁹, Walton was committed to social and democratic reforms, that would lead up to a new social and an improved political system. Although Walton was always conscious of a distinct working class interest within the broad Liberal interest¹⁰⁰, the necessity of uniting the 'advanced reformers' against Whigs and Tories made him advocate a course of gradual change in the direction of the desired reforms. This at the same time meant that 'Socialist' ideas, like the demand for the nationalisation of the soil, could be maintained within the 'Liberal' framework, although they only constituted the long-term perspective of a rather small number of reformers.

The course of gradual progress, however, ran into a dilemma as soon as practical politics was concerned. The unity of advanced Liberals called for a close co-operation between working class radicals and the Radicals within the Liberal party, but as John Bright's remarks on the direct representation of labour proved, the Liberal party was not necessarily prepared to concede the existence of special interests of working men.

As long as the workers did not possess the franchise, co-operation with the parliamentary Radicals upon specific questions was possible without compromising working class interests as a whole. With the passing of the Reform Act of 1867, however, a struggle between middle class and working class leaders became apparent. Either the working men would give up the claim to any specific working class interests, or they would often have to assert their position

⁹⁸ See E. F. Biagini / A. J. Reid, 'Currents of Radicalism, 1850-1914' in Currents of Radicalism, pp. 1-19.

⁹⁹ See Belchem, 'Chartism and the Trades', pp. 584-587.

¹⁰⁰ For the difficulties involved in determining class consciousness see J. Benson, The Working Class in Britain 1850-1939 (1989), pp. 151-166.

against the Liberal party, thereby endangering the desired unity of the reforming forces in the country.

Walton's election experiences from 1868 onwards exemplify the uneasy relationship resulting from this constellation. At first willing to support middle class Liberals in the interest of preventing an electoral success of the Conservatives, the growing disappointment with the Liberal government led to a phase of conflict. Official Liberal candidates and additional working class candidates ended up contesting the same constituencies, as in Stoke-on-Trent in 1874. However, the resulting loss of seats in favour of the Conservative party led to agreements inaugurating the period of Lib-Labism, with working class representatives running as official Liberal party candidates.

Although Walton defined his political position as being part of the Liberal interest, it has to be pointed out that for him the allegiance to the Liberal party or to organisations like the Land Tenure Reform Association were always based on tactical considerations. The necessity to find an organisational framework for the 'Liberal interest' did not make him accept the Liberal party as the only legitimate exponent of the wide set of ideas named 'Liberal'. However, close cooperation with the Liberal Radicals prevented the establishment of a working class party against the Liberal party. As long as working class leaders were convinced that a common interest of advanced reformers existed, the 'working class party' organised itself in associations like the Labour Representation League, which preferred to push the Liberal party to acknowledging working class interests rather than risking a break up of the 'Liberal interest' along the lines of class. Therefore even in defending its claims, the LRL leadership maintained a conciliatory tone:

We are by no means insensible to the great services rendered to the people of this country by the Liberal party, and where they have failed to meet our wants, we ascribe such failures to an imperfect knowledge of our requirements more than to a want of sympathy¹⁰¹.

In supporting and formulating this policy, Walton was a typical representative of mid-Victorian working class politics.

¹⁰¹ 'Labour Representation League. An Address to the People of Great Britain', November 1875, inserted into the LRL Minute Book, 5.11.1875.

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