

The Second International and its Bureau, 1900-1905

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On the threshold of the twentieth century international socialism was one of the diversity of movements, including feminism, ethnic nationalism and Zionism¹, seeking building space in a fresh European intellectual, social and political climate. To further their goals, at their 1900 Paris conference, adherents of the Second International formed their Bureau, operating at first from La Maison du Peuple, Brussels, midway between the strongest German and French adherents. The executive committee was formed entirely of Belgians and, until February 1905, Victor Serwy was its first secretary. This essay will address three major, related problems faced by the Second International and its Bureau. These were: I), how to profess international socialism in the context of the mix of European nation states, Empires and their imperial ambitions; II) how to organise labour movements with different philosophies and capacities, in differing stages of development, when enjoyment of democratic rights varied in differing countries and, III), when gender equality was far from assured.

I

As G.D.H. Cole, one of the International's first historians wrote, noting the weakness of the Balkan and American socialist parties, 'Other non-European countries made only intermittent appearances and exerted very little influence in the International's affairs'.² Its Eurocentrism was thus a prime factor of the International, presenting fundamental ideological and practical problems in finding an international expression of socialism where some workers' movements had an affinity with their nation state and others with an ethnic or language group. Such territorial or cultural entities were seen as a form of defence against both the vagaries of the European Empires' governments and the pursuit of capitalists' interests, which overrode national boundaries. The practical difficulty was that, while the International organised national parties these did not necessarily correspond to nation states.

Recognising such difficulties, E. J. Hobsbawm, whose work has perhaps most comprehensively addressed these issues, referred to: 'the complex and passionately debated problem of how the international working class, or its movement, or the movements claiming to speak on its behalf, relate to the nation, i.e. in practice the nation-states within which these classes and movements have their being'.³ Contemporaries approached the problem in vari

¹ Herzl's *A Jewish State* was published in 1896 and his *Altneueland* in 1902.

² G.D.H. Cole, *The Second International 1889-1914: A History of Socialist Thought Vol III Part I* (London: Macmillan, 1936) p. xiv. Calls were made in 1900 for overseas delegates and an Australian correspondent found plus delegates from Argentina, Japan and Canada. The list of delegates fluctuated during the first years. 33 countries were represented by 1910, including North and South America, Japan, South Africa and Australia, but Cole's point remained valid.

³ E.J. Hobsbawm, 'Working Class Internationalism' in Frits van Holthoorn and Marcel van der Linden (eds.), *Internationalism and the Labour Movement, 1830-1940 vol. I* (Leiden: IISG, 1988) p.4. Hobsbawm has recently written of: '... the failure, primarily for institutional and linguistic reasons, of history to emancipate itself from the framework of the nation-state. Looking back, this has been probably the major weakness of the subject in my lifetime', *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 July 2002. See also G.D.H. Cole (1936) op. cit. p.x. Carolyn Steedman has also pointed to a relevant historiographical problem, that the inauguration of modern archives is bound up with nation state formation, *Dust* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) p. 12, fn. 13, a point also made by Stefan Berger, 'every national party has its historiography', Stefan Berger and David Broughton (eds.), *The Force of Labour: the Western European Labour Movement and the Working Classes in the 20C* (Oxford: Berg, 1995), p. 6.

ous ways. According to his biographer, Belgian Emile Vandervelde, a leading figure of the International, 'defined nationality broadly as an agglomeration of residents struggling against the same government'.⁴ Thus, as in Britain, where workers' movements had developed by seeking citizenship, industrial and welfare rights within nation states, class and national consciousness had been twin acquisitions. Moreover, as was evident at the 1889 Paris foundation of the International⁵, the French left reflected the revolutionary nationalism of 1792 and 1848, a vision of achievement which coexisted uneasily with socialists' more utopian sense of proletarian internationalism.⁶ Jean Jaurès, also a key figure in the International, wrote: 'We know that, in the present state of the world and Europe, distinct and autonomous nations are a precondition for human freedom and human progress. As long as the international proletariat is not sufficiently organised to bring Europe into a state of unity, it could only be unified by a kind of monstrous Caesarism, a holy capitalist empire which would crush all national pride and all proletarian demands'.⁷

For the AustroMarxists nationality was a matter not so much of territory but of ethnicity and culture, understandably as, despite Victor Adler's claim at the 1900 International conference that 'We in Austria have a little International ourselves ...'⁸ membership of the Austro-Hungarian Social Democratic Party (SDP) was largely drawn from ethnic Germans. James Joll's history of the International drew attention to the problem of representing people from subject nationalities that were disinclined to associate with those from the majority group.⁹ Jewish people were, however, well represented in workers' movements, as a function of the discrimination they faced.¹⁰ The SDP's programme called for a federation of nationalities in a democratic state. Otto Bauer envisaged a register of nationalities, with each individual participating in their own chosen national body. In Germany, where 'socialist nationalism traced its roots back to the cosmopolitan traditions of the German enlightenment and the radical democrats of the 1848–1849 revolutions',¹¹ Karl Kautsky called for nationhood based on language. Italian socialism was influenced by the struggle for Italian nationhood, although Cahm and Fisera, in their still invaluable study of socialism and nationalism, wrote that both Italian and Spanish socialist parties lacked 'an adequate theory of the nation state and its political and cultural dynamics'.¹² In Russia, the Jewish workers' *Bund* failed to win separate status within the SDP, although the Russian SDP's programme, from 1903, recognised the right of every citizen to use their own language. Bolsheviks, included in the International, were anti-Imperialist. Anarchists had been excluded in 1896, but were also anti-Imperialist, opposing the centralisation of the Tsarist regime but also nationalism, which led to the imposition of strong government. Hélène Carrère d'Encausse has written that: 'In the Austrian, Russian and Ottoman Empires, the socialists could no longer ignore the national groups

⁴ Janet Polasky, *The Democratic Socialism of Emile Vandervelde* (Oxford: Berg, 1990) p. 95.

⁵ Kevin Callahan, "'Performing Inter-nationalism" in Stuttgart in 1907: French and German Socialist Nationalism

and the Political Culture of the International Socialist Congress', *International Review of Social History* 45 (1) 2000, p. 5 describes the Congress hall and revolutionary shields.

⁶ Eric Cahm and Vladimir Claude Fisera (eds.), *Socialism and Nationalism, vol.ii*, (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1979), Eric Cahm, 'Socialism and the Nationalist Movement in France at the Time of the Dreyfus affair' p.48: (revolutionary nationalism) ... not integrated with their socialist thinking, but remained as a substratum in their world view'.

⁷ Ibid, citing Jaurès, 'La Manifestation du Tivoli ... Discourses de Jaurès', *La Petite République* 9 June 1898.

⁸ James Joll, *The Second International, 1889-1914* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p.120.

⁹ *ibid* p.42.

¹⁰ Carl Levy (ed.), *Socialism and the Intelligentsia, 1880-1914* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987) p. 12. Christine Collette and Stephen Bird (eds.), *Jews, Labour and the Left* (Andover: Ashgate, 2001), *passim*.

¹¹ Callahan (2000) *op. cit.* p.53.

¹² Eric Cahm and Vladimir Claude Fisera, *Socialism and Nationalism, vol iii* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1980) p. 3.

fighting against Imperial rule'.¹³ Rosa Luxemburg, however, opposed Polish nationalism because of Poland's economic dependency on Russia.

There were thus competing philosophies of nationalism and the ways these impacted on international socialism represented within the Second International.¹⁴ The general principle had been laid down at the 1891 Congress, which condemned anti-Semitism, that the class struggle took priority and that workers should not be divided by racism or the nationality question. At the 1896 Congress, the right of all nations to self-determination was asserted. The practical difficulties were illustrated when Poale Zion was refused affiliation to the Second International because it was not a national party. Dr. S. Levenburg, of the Second International Bureau, wrote that: 'there was an indifference to the national problem and an unfriendly attitude towards Zionism'.¹⁵

Generally, the Imperialist ambitions of the European Empires and of Britain were condemned and Indian resistance to British colonialism was supported. In 1900 Congress resolved against colonial expansion and in 1904, when a member of the Indian National Congress was present, recommended subject peoples' rights to better conditions, their complete emancipation being the ultimate goal. A Colonial Bureau was formed in the same year. The difficulties of finding a consensus on these issues were shown by British reactions to the 'Colonial Question'. Hyndman, of the quasi-Marxist Social Democratic Federation (SDF), wrote to Serwy: 'It is safe to say that English socialists are opposed to such "colonisation" as that involved in your appropriation of the Congo or our own appropriation of the Nile'. However, in Hyndman's opinion there were several types of colonisation which merited different responses, free, self-governing provinces, Crown colonies with poor representation for the indigenous population, exceptions such as Singapore, recent conquests where a mixed system applied and the case of 'enlightened despotism' in India. Although they did not benefit from colonisation – 'we see no advantages whatsoever in any shape or way to be derived by the working classes in the long run' –, Hyndman felt that workers had a sense of pride in national exploration and appropriation: 'We English are essentially practical and adventurous as we have been for centuries' ... 'We dominate at this moment one-fifth of the whole habitable sphere of the earth and control nearly one-fifth of its population'.¹⁶

Hyndman took exception towards the wording of the proposed Second International manifesto on the South African war. In the opinion of some of the British and German left, imperialist expansion was a precondition for evolution into a socialist society; for others, expansion kept capitalism strong. The SDF, including Hyndman, despite his occasionally obscurantist rhetoric, had campaigned against the war, which Preben Kaarsholm has perceived as '... a main focus for debate which helped the international socialist community to clarify its understanding of imperialism ... a test case for the establishment and practical implementation of internationalist solidarity'.¹⁷ Implementation, however, was far from easy. The 1900 Congress had condemned the war in line with a resolution keenly supported by Hyndman and the other British delegates. However, the International was unwilling to join forces with W.T. Stead, the campaigning journalist and founder of the International Union for Peace, who favoured the creation of South African Republics and wanted the International to participate in

¹³ Helène Carrère d'Encausse, 'The Bolsheviks and the National Question' in Cahm and Fisera vol. iii (1980) op. cit. p. 115.

¹⁴ Callahan (2000) op. cit. pp. 53-4 concludes: 'it may be best to jettison the socialist / nationalist and nationalist / internationalist binary oppositions for their simplicity'.

¹⁵ Collette and Bird (2001), op. cit. p. 74; S. Levenberg, *Seventy Five Years* (Tel Aviv: World Labour Zionist Movement, n./d.)

¹⁶ *Camille Huysman Archive*, Archief en Museum voor Het Vlaamse Cultuurleven, Antwerp, Hyndman to Serwy, 23 May 1901, I 100/13a.

¹⁷ Preben Kaarsholm, 'The South African War' in van Holthoon and van der Linden (1988) op. cit. p.47 and passim.

his Peace Crusade.¹⁸ Anti-war movements were generally viewed with suspicion as unattractive to the electorate. Hence the need for a manifesto, *versus* war but steering clear of the peace campaign. Hyndman warned that while the war was 'unfortunate and disgraceful', English workers would not strike or demonstrate against British policy in South Africa and that a boycott of British goods would be counter-productive. In his opinion the Boers' behaviour was worse than that of the British, while all European nations, Japan and America had committed atrocities, Belgium in the Congo, the French in Madagascar, America in Cuba and the Philippines, Russia in Manchuria, Austria in Bosnia / Herzegovina.¹⁹ Bruce Glasier, of the more ethical-socialist ILP, was willing to take a stronger line: 'Our Party, being a socialist, and therefore a democratic party, maintains the principle that no nation can govern another'.²⁰ The ILP had campaigned against the war and for training the indigenous population in citizenship and self-government. The International Secretariat visited England to meet Hyndman and other SDF and ILP members, gaining a consensus that all were willing to join in protest against British concentration camps but only if the atrocities of other nations were also mentioned. The final manifesto thus included mention of Armenia and the Philippines and the signatories included Hyndman.²¹ Hyndman, who underlined his position by strongly supporting the 1904 resolution for colonial independence.

II

The Second International was not dealing with populist party institutions but with a disparate collection of political groups, feeling their way to becoming institutions but imbued with the ethical socialist ideas of the nineteenth century. The diversity of the parties affiliated to the International was geopolitical, a function both of the differences, outlined above, in national, ethnic and language identification and also of the differing speeds with which socialist groups developed. Geary has insisted on our recognising that: 'Specifically political factors (the franchise, the behaviour of political élites and ruling classes) were arguably the decisive factor in determining the politics of European labour'.²² Moreover, as Vandervelde wrote, the formation of national parties began in the intermission between the First and Second International, so that there was no coordinating body. He saw the Second International's prime function as dealing with this phenomenon by forming inter-national links.²³

However, the process of institutionalisation and, where possible, nationalisation was far from complete. The German SDP was the sole mass membership party, its strength reflected in electoral success. It offered its membership a whole way of life, as did the less sizeable, but still substantial, French SFIO when formed in 1905. Scandinavian parties also followed the German model. The Russian SDP went into reverse, splitting into Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in 1903. The British Labour Representation Committee was formed in 1900 on a different model than the German SDP, as an electoral agency, became the Labour Party in 1906, but waited until 1918 to organise an individual membership; the large ILP meanwhile remained both extant and affiliated until 1932. The smaller, urban, more revolutionary SDF competed for members. Geopolitical differences applied equally within each country; Britain had its 'Celtic fringe' of Labour supporters while support for the Labour Movement was less strong in Catholic than in Protestant areas of the Netherlands and Germany²⁴. In rural areas

¹⁸ *Camille Huysman Archive*, Circulars and Manifestos, 22 December 1900, I 316/1.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, Hyndman to Serwy, 15 August 1901, 28 August 1901, 7 November 1901, I 100/20, I 100/23a, I 100/30.

²⁰ *Ibid*, Bruce Glasier to Serwy, 28 October 1901, I 100/27.

²¹ Georges Haupt, *Bureau Socialiste Internationale, vol. I, 1900-1907, Comptes rendus des réunions, Manifestes et circulaires* (Paris: Mouton & co., 1969) document 8, pp. 8-9, ISB report 25 & 30 October 1901, document 9, pp. 40-41, Manifesto.

²² Dick Geary, *European Labour Politics from 1900 to the Depression* (London: Macmillan, 1991) p. 6.

²³ Emile Vandervelde, 'The Second International', *Labour Magazine* vol. iii no. 5 September 1924.

²⁴ Berger and Broughton (1995) *op. cit.* p. 257.

generally, support for socialism was generally weaker. White-collar workers and women were everywhere grossly underrepresented. Indeed, membership of the German SDP was expressly forbidden to public servants.

Even where party institutions had been formed, there were ideological differences and factions, corresponding largely to more reformist and more revolutionary elements, for example in Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, and Britain and Russia as outlined above.²⁵ James Joll wrote of the way the International acted as referee when parties were divided or when an individual was expelled and demanded a hearing.²⁶ The ideological base of such differences, however, can be over-emphasised: Geary, for instance, doubts if individuals can properly be divided into 'reformist' or 'radical'; people took different stances in different circumstances.²⁷ Carl Levy has usefully commented that: 'Perhaps we should imagine party structures as contested terrains where various knowledges validate the power and the status of members, but where no single discourse ... is capable of direct translation into power'.²⁸

It should also be noted that this period was one of great labour unrest and direct action on the one hand, while on the other, Trades Union Federations were becoming established – the French CGT, German General Commission of Free Trades Unions, British Trades Union Congress and its Parliamentary Committee. In some countries, for instance Britain and Germany, there were close contacts between party and trades unions, whereas in others, such as France and Spain where the trades unions were anarcho-syndicalist, there were differences between parties and unions. In some countries, notably Belgium, as Serwy's position indicated, the Cooperative Movement was strong.

Victor Serwy has been somewhat unfairly criticised for inefficiency²⁹ when the Bureau itself had no statutes in this period. Jolyon Howorth has referred to its 'intimate, clubbable atmosphere'³⁰ and Vandervelde's biographer refers to his use of cafés and social settings for conducting business.³¹ The secretariat was beginning to settle fees and delegations and to build its library of socialist newspapers and brochures.³² Serwy's duties were to obtain information, produce an annotated list of previous Congress resolutions, distribute reports from each country before each Congress and distribute Congress decisions thereafter, publish occasional manifestos and further the organisation of proletarian parties in each country. Haupt has referred to the difficulties of small resources, lack of information sent by parties, difficulties of language '... *de tempéraments, parfois de conception*'. Serwy himself com

²⁵ Maxime Szejnberg wrote that this was not true of Belgium, 'L'Interpretation Belge des Decisions de L'Internationale sur le Ministerialisme', *International Review of Social History*, 10.

²⁶ Joll (1974), op. cit. p. 67.

²⁷ Geary (1991) op. cit. p. 14.

²⁸ Levy (1987) op. cit. pp. 4/5.

²⁹ Polasky (1995) op. cit. p.98. Failure to appreciate Serwy's difficulties is no doubt partly caused by the relative difficulty of accessing the records for the early years of the ISB, held at Antwerp. The longevity, and continued participation in the Labour and Socialist International formed in 1923, of Serwy's successor Huysmans, also has perhaps contributed. Jolyon Howorth was also of the opinion that: 'the premature death of Georges Haupt (and the subsequent disappearance of the papers of the ISB)' has contributed to the paucity of its historiography, Jolyon Howorth, 'French workers and German Workers: the Impossibility of Internationalism, 1900-1914', *European History Quarterly* vol. 15 (i) (1985) p.72. Haupt found the Antwerp archive very good, but affected by two world wars, and wrote: 'ce n'est pas la carence des sources, mais leur valeur qui contribue à rendre la recherche peu aisée ... Or, ces sources, quoiqu'en partie imprimés, sont difficilement accessibles et par conséquent peu utilisés par les chercheurs', Haupt (1969) op. cit. p. 15.

³⁰ Jolyon Howorth, 'the Left in France and Germany, Internationalism and War: a dialogue of the Deaf' in Cahm and Fisera vol II (1979) p. 83. See also Georges Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War: the Collapse of the Second International* (Oxford: Clarendon,1972) pp. 15/16.

³¹ Polasky op. cit. p. 83.

³² *Camille Huysman Archive*, customs declaration of books received from Britain, 17 August 1903, I 100/121, bookseller's bills I 100/123.

plained of non-payment of fees; substantial payments had been made only by the Germans and Belgians, Austria had paid half its fees.³³ In 1905, several French resolutions to improve the functioning of the Bureau resulted in the appointment of Camille Huysmans (formerly secretary to the Interparliamentary Commission) as Secretary. It was not until 1907 that statutes and rules of procedure were drawn up and authority given for the Bureau to act as the voice of the International between Congresses.

While Huysmans's long career gave exemplary testimony to his worth, contemporary criticisms of Serwy, rather than being reflections on his capability, can be read as part of the growing pains of national party formation in the various countries. In these circumstances, the Bureau's task of attempt to consolidate socialist representation within each country was extremely difficult. The 1904 Congress resolved that, as, in each country, there was one proletariat, so there should be one socialist party. Each national party was intended to delegate two representatives. Correspondence between British parties and the Bureau illustrates the difficulties Serwy faced. In Britain there was a nation state, but, as indicated above, more than one party. Hyndman insisted that he and Quelch, both of the SDF, had been elected at the 1900 Paris Congress as national representatives by all British parties. The ILP, however, claimed one of these two places, appointing Keir Hardie as delegate. This dispute, with increasingly angry correspondence from Hyndman, who had the tactical advantage of writing French, was not settled until after the 1904 Amsterdam Congress. Hyndman objected to Hardie's signature on Bureau manifestos, even when agreeing their content and made difficulties about dates for meetings. An example of Hyndman's style was his July 1902 accusation that the International's 'opportunities (were) utterly frittered away'. 'Surely the local self-style'd "Executive Committee" cannot be under the hallucination that it preserves all the knowledge of the Universe? Or is that what is really the matter with Vandervelde?' Meanwhile, apart from one payment of £4 by the ILP, neither party paid its fees. By 1904 the Socialist Labour Party of Great Britain, denounced by Hyndman as 'impossibilists', many of whom had been excluded from the SDF, was also asking to be invited to congresses, while the ILP was proffering the importance of the Fabian Society. The Labour Representation Committee nominated three delegates for the 1904 Congress. Serwy's letters remained polite; he accepted the ILP £4, included Hardie's name on delegates' lists and made great efforts to resolve all this, trying to get the SDF and ILP to meet – neither would take the first step – and journeying to Britain with other Bureau officers to arbitrate a meeting. Following the discussions on socialist unity at the 1904 Congress, the British waited until the end of 1905 to form their own British National Committee to deal with all business relating to the International and this appointed Hyndman and Hardie as delegates. The ILP, however, refused to pay back- fees. ILP leading figures Philip Snowden and Francis Johnson wrote to Serwy: 'No proposal for the complete fusion of all or any of the Socialist bodies which would involve submergence of their existing names, policies or formulae would at present be entertained by any of the sections'. They further insisted on comprehension of the working of the Labour Representation Committee: '... in our relations as socialists with the Trades Unionists in the new Labour Representation Movement ... formed to bring together the trades unions, Cooperators and socialists'. In their view, it was not necessary that this new agency profess socialism; its function was to ensure a viable electoral alternative to capitalist party candidates and the formation of a Labour Party would be the next step.³⁴

³³ Haupt (1969) pp. 24/5, document 1, circular on ISB constitution and cited, p.58, comment on difficulties. Serwy's comment, *Camille Huysman Archive* 1 November 1901, I 316/2.

³⁴ *Camille Huysman Archive*: on delegates, Hyndman to Serwy 5 December 1900 I 100/2, Penny (ILP) to Serwy 14 November 1900 I 100/14, Ramsay MacDonald (LRC) to Serwy 2 July 1904 I 100/17, Neil Maclean (SLPGB) to Serwy n.d. I 100/106; Hyndman's complaints to Serwy, 16 September 1901, 27 December 1901, I 100/40 I 100/38, cited, 22 July 1902, I 100/62 ; ILP/SDF refusals to meet, Penny to Serwy 13 June 1901 I 100/18, Quelch

Against this background, the Bureau tried its best to keep the peace. Indeed, perceived as mediatory, rather than initiatory, the secretariat tried not to step on national parties' toes by first, seeking opinions on an issue and then circulating draft manifestos. Even this careful way of proceeding was liable to rouse resentment, as was illustrated by the British reaction to the manifesto on colonialism described above. Neither did the secretariat initiate discussion at Congresses but chose from questions posed by national bodies, appointing committees and rapporteurs. The big dispute between parties at the time was on the issue of ministerialism. This was an important issue, which came to prominence in 1899 when, in France, the socialist Millerand accepted office under the Minister of War who had been held responsible for the downfall of the Paris Commune. For many, taking office under a capitalist government was an impossibility because it would mean support for the military budget, but in the Europe empires where soldiers were conscripted, it was important to get representation on conditions of military service.³⁵ The International, typically, decided to reject the principle of collaboration but to recognise that it might be justified in practice, each country to decide the matter for itself. Fundamentally, however, the issue arose not from an individual's actions but rather was inevitable, given the creation of national parties and their growing participation in the political life of the state, a natural development of social democratic philosophy and practice.

It was a valid point that many, indeed most socialist party leaders were bourgeois and led bourgeois lifestyles so that reformism was an amenable philosophy. As Levy wrote, party membership was not big enough to generate working class leaders outside Germany, Britain, Belgium and Scandinavia. Also, as parties centralised, their proletarian members were left at the grass roots while the party structure grew above them.³⁶ Many of the leading figures of the Second International made their careers in politics, Vandervelde being a prime example, so that political orientation, practice and lifestyle were intertwined (a reason for the 'clubbable atmosphere' described above). For anarchists, syndicalists and bolsheviks this was the wrong road to take, but social democracy was a reformist philosophy which required political participation, in turn demanding a broad electoral appeal. Reformism was electoral logic. Discussing this point, David Beetham wrote: 'The establishment of nationwide labour organisations and political parties throughout the countries of Europe led to the reproduction of reformist tendencies, not as a temporary expedient, but as a persistent tendency'.³⁷ He gives three reasons, one, institutional, because institutions are naturally reformist, two, social, because of exposure to bourgeois ideology and three, economic, as some workers benefited from increased wages. For some social democrat theorists, reformism was part of a political process that would mature beyond civic participation to transform the whole of everyday life, bringing workers the benefits of art and intellectual activity.³⁸

It has thus been justly remarked that: 'In the years before 1914, the most striking feature ... of these left-wing movements in Western Europe was their growing integration into the capitalist economy and into the liberal-democratic structures and concerns of the bourgeois states'.³⁹ The 1904 establishment of the International's Parliamentary Commission to

to Serwy 31 May 1901 I 100/17; Snowden and Johnson to Secretary ISB, 6 January 1905, I 100/216; fees, Johnson to Huysmans 16 March 1905, I 100/232; British National committee, Green to Huysmans December 1905 I 100/257.

³⁵ This was also the opinion of socialist youth in the period after the war, see Christine Collette, *The International Faith: Labour's Attitudes to European Socialism, 1918-39* (Andover: Ashgate, 1998) p.169.

³⁶ Levy (1987) op; cit. Introduction, p. 19, 'Education and Self-Education: Staffing the Early ILP', p. 159.

³⁷ David Beetham, 'Reformism and the "Bourgeoisification" of the Labour Movement' in Carl Levy, (1987) op. cit. p. 107.

³⁸ Peter Beilharz, *Labour's Utopians: Bolshevism, Fabianism and Social Democracy* (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 97, p. 110, discussions of Kautsky and Bernstein.

³⁹ Carrère d'Encausse (1980) op. cit. p. 128.

coordinate national party parliamentary activity was a recognition of this phenomenon. The debate was also of course, illustrative of the International's Eurocentrism, as it hardly applied outside. Even within Europe, parties had widely varying impacts on their national governments, which has been seen as one of its 'fundamental weaknesses'.⁴⁰ As Howorth has remarked, Second International congresses were 'elaborate public relations exercises designed to impress governments and socialist militants alike with the seriousness of purpose of the delegates'.⁴¹

III

The women's movement was well established in Europe by 1900⁴² and had links to socialists. On the one hand, late nineteenth century socialist groups had dealt with issues such as social purity, sexuality and reproduction, sexual jealousy, the link between marriage and property, the double standard of sexual morality for men and women, and there were socialist and feminist links with sexologists and eugenicists.⁴³ On the other, women who had benefited from the education for which they had struggled had turned their attention to issues such as working conditions, where the miseries faced by women in factories and sweatshops reflected an ideology of disadvantage by class and gender.

As working people had claimed inclusion in the political process through the nineteenth century, so had the cause of women's suffrage grown into an important, international movement. Gaining the franchise was far from a straightforward process: in Britain, for example, women could vote for and be elected to Poor Law Boards of Guardians and, (until 1902) Boards of Education. They could vote for municipal corporations, London Boroughs and the new County Councils, and vote for and be elected to Parish and District Councils. Where elected, women achieved notable reforms, such as improved diet, medical and child care. Parliament, however, remained forbidden territory to women. The question facing socialists was whether to seek limited women's suffrage, based on electoral rules determined by property-holding, or to include women in the demand for full adult enfranchisement. Apart from Britain's ILP, all parties at the International (including the British SDF), determined on the course of full enfranchisement. This has led some commentators to emphasise the separation between the women's and socialist movements.⁴⁴ The appearance of distance was heightened by women's under-representation in trades unions, socialist parties and at the International. Although the 1896 Congress had called on trades unions to admit women and secure equal pay, the nature of the female labour market -low paid, agricultural, domestic and sweatshop work- militated against the chances of remedying this situation. Moreover, the club of the Second International was largely a male one. Women's participation rates as delegates, speakers and translators were low, for the usual reasons of cost and disruption to family life. Where these difficulties were removed, women participated in substantial numbers; for instance, British women participated fully in the 1896 Congress held in London.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Robert Murray, 'Italian Irredentism, Internationalism and Socialism, 1900–1915, in Cahm and Fisera vol.II (1980) op. cit. pp. 81/2.

⁴¹ Howorth (1985) op. cit. p. 72. Cf. Callahan (2000) op. cit. p. 54, 'An international socialist congress was a well-organised and orchestrated public spectacle designed to perform an internationalism that would sustain the socialist cause and intimidate bourgeois governments'. Callahan's opinion is that the importance of customs, rituals and political symbolism has been overlooked.

⁴² Fiona Montgomery and Christine Collette (eds.), *The European Women's History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), passim.

⁴³ Christine Collette, *For Labour and For Women* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), passim and 'Socialism and Scandal', *History Workshop Journal* 23, Spring 1987. Lucy Bland and Laura Doan, *Sexology in Culture and Sexology Uncensored* (London: Polity, 1998).

⁴⁴ June Hannam and Karen Hunt, *Socialist Women: Britain, 1880s to 1920s* (London: Routledge, 2000) p. 166.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 169–70. Mary Fenton Macpherson, later important in founding the women's Labour League, was one of the translators.

Women's rights, however, as illustrated above, were debated at the International from the outset. Vandervelde's biographer wrote that initially, his opinion was that women were apolitical and that it was natural for men and women to inhabit separate spheres. Challenged on these issues he later became a champion of women's empowerment.⁴⁶ Women's suffrage was amongst the resolutions at the 1904 Congress; the principle was to be defended and parties were to engage in propaganda for the cause.⁴⁷ It is possible to overestimate the separation of the women's and socialist movements. Many women were active in both. Moreover, concentration on suffrage obscures other aspects of the struggle for women's empowerment. Feminists now approach the question of women's citizenship rights critically, challenging the gender ideologies that are often implicit in the formation and maintenance of nation-states.⁴⁸ This reminds us that identification with nation involves issues not only of class and ethnicity but also of gender.

Conclusion

The experience of the Second International organising at the turn of the 19C /20C, striving to find a common front in a new social order, is of interest on the threshold of a new century when the fundamental problems faced by the International remain unresolved. European states remain contested areas. In Britain, where the Euro is still outlawed, Scotland has its parliament and Wales its Assembly. Northern Ireland communities remain divided. History remains a discipline confined by the problematic concept of the nation and historians, together with politicians, profess competing ideas of inter-nationalism. Bureaucracy bedevils expressions of internationalism. The relationship of minority ethnic groups and of women to the nation they inhabit remains problematic and is a factor in their continuing under-representation in trades unions and socialist movements.

However, although echoes of the social order addressed by the Second International may be discerned today, the distinct character of the threshold of the twentieth century, its utopianism and modernism, was reflected in its socialist parties. Despite its many failings, the International was, on the one hand, inspired by utopian imaginings of workers' transnational solidarity to which it could occasionally give voice. On the other, the International acted as a forum for the development of social democracy, and the tortuous formation of guidelines which kept alive the utopianism, the socialism, within the inevitable process of collaboration with capitalism. As James Joll reminded us, '...Social Democracy was a genuinely international force. It was believed that certain problems were common to the parties which were members of the Second International and that they could be met by common solutions'. The isolation of the 1870s was overcome and smaller parties 'felt they had the International Movement behind them'.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Polasky (1995) p. 87.

⁴⁷ *Camille Huysman Archive*, Congress Resolutions, I 174/52

⁴⁸ Ruth Lister, *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives* (London: Macmillan, 1997), passim.

⁴⁹ Joll (1974) op. cit. p. 1, p.55.