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Wallace
Smylie, P.**

This is a pre-publication version of a book chapter published in Devine, Francis and Byers, Séan (eds.) William Walker, 1870-1918, Belfast Labour Unionist, Centenary Essays, Umiskin Press, Dublin, pp. 15-26. The final definitive version is available from the publisher:

<https://umiskinpress.wordpress.com/>

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A Cautionary Antecedent: the Belfast Career of John Bruce Wallace

Patrick Smylie

The 'socialist revival' of the 1880s only slightly predated the first Home Rule crisis and then developed concurrently with it. The pioneering career of the Reverend John Bruce Wallace demonstrates that Belfast shared in the revival, but that the polarising issue of Irish self-government affected socialist efforts, laying the foundation for enduring resentments. Perhaps for Walker, Wallace represented a cautionary antecedent, a man whose experiences could be learnt from, if not always emulated.

Bruce Wallace, as he was commonly known, did not have a typical Irish childhood. Although of Ulster-Scots stock, he was born in 1853 at Gujarat, in India, the son of Presbyterian missionaries, and he was schooled in Switzerland. In 1870 he entered Queen's College, Belfast, before completing his education for the Presbyterian ministry at Dublin University, where he graduated with an MA in 1874. He proceeded to the University of Bonn where he studied philosophy and theology.¹ His actions in 1875, when he returned to Belfast, suggests he had inherited his parents' missionary zeal. He established a children's home 'to rescue orphan, homeless and destitute street arabs' and 'teach them useful trades'.² At this time, he disappointed his family by leaving the Presbyterian denomination as he could not conform to the Westminster Confession of Faith.³ Instead, 'he found the freedom he wanted among the Congregationalists'.⁴ Wallace remained a preacher throughout his life, 'but never an orthodox one.' His name conjured up 'the picture of a tall spare form and an eager face alight with friendliness and insight'.⁵ It was while he held a Congregational ministry at Clifton Park, Belfast, during the years 1880-1885 that Wallace became interested in labour politics and, influenced firstly by Henry George, became a socialist.⁶

George's book, *Progress and Poverty*, published in 1879, sold up to seven million copies. Famous for its advocacy of a 'Single Tax' on the economic rent of land, it appealed to people of a socialistic mindset, despite George's own predilection for laissez-faire economics, and his promotion of the nationalisation of rent as opposed to land.⁷ However, George did champion trade unions and many contemporaries, Wallace included, assumed he stood for land nationalisation, and a mild form of socialism, at least until the late 1880s. George's use of radical language along with his religiosity of expression and moral indictment of society and landlordism in particular, struck a chord and he is credited with being the catalyst of the socialist revival in Britain.⁸

Wallace's first foray into public life occurred in March 1884, when he delivered a series of lectures in the Hermon Hall. He cited Herbert Spencer, John Ruskin, Alfred Russel Wallace, and Henry George 'not [as] revolutionaries but men of argument and moral earnestness'.⁹ In one lecture, Wallace demonstrated his idealism, and detachment from the realities of working-class life, by observing that nature, including God-given material resources, and labour represented the sole requisites of wealth creation rather than capital, which constituted a mere product of nature and labour. Belfast's working men could, therefore, create their own capital:

'Let for instance a thousand intelligent and sober young men belonging to the ship building trades, receiving now perhaps 30s a week, delay marrying for a couple of years and lay by 10s a week. They could then build a co-operative ship building company with a capital of £50,000.'¹⁰

For Wallace, co-operatives represented 'the next stage in the evolution of the higher form of society'.¹¹ This harked back to the early Victorian Christian Socialists who sought to

'supplant the individualist and competitive system of property by co-operative socialist production'.¹² In the final lecture on 'Land Nationalisation', Wallace connected Christian Socialist values with George's contemporary ideas: 'whatever increase of wages people coming from the country to the town might receive, found its way in the long run into the ground rents'.¹³ Nevertheless, whilst he would continue to defend George's 'Single Tax', Wallace recognised its limitations early on, suggesting the American economist expected 'far too much from the one radical reform he advocated'.¹⁴ Overall, the lectures drew large attendances 'chiefly composed of the working classes',¹⁵ and they laid the foundations for the 'Irish Land Restoration Society' (ILRS).

The Irish Land Restoration Society

The ILRS was established on 18 July 1884 in Robinson's Temperance Hotel, Donegall Street.¹⁶ Its 'Object' was 'the restitution of the land to the people' following a campaign of 'Public meetings, dissemination of suitable literature, and such other constitutional and moral means as may be deemed advisable'.¹⁷ Alongside Wallace, the President, two clergymen, Thomas Adair and Harold Rylett, played important roles.¹⁸ Adair had been a journalist at the *Northern Whig*, and he continued to agitate on the land question in Wallace's journal *Brotherhood* from 1887 onwards.¹⁹ Rylett, a leading Land Leaguer, had contested a Tyrone by-election on a League platform in 1881, and he supported Michael Davitt's unsuccessful endeavours to have the League adopt land nationalisation. Involved with radicalism in Britain from the early 1870s, he had attended the founding conference of the Democratic Federation in June 1881.²⁰ The ILRS's Secretary, Alexander Bowman, was also secretary of the Belfast Trades Council, which he had helped inaugurate in 1881. Bowman's combined membership of the ILRS and the Liberal Club was not unique.²¹ Moreover, Thomas Shillington (junior) and Thomas McClelland, would, like Bowman, be influential figures in the Irish Protestant Home Rule Association (IPHRA) founded in 1886. However, Wallace stated publicly that the ILRS 'had nothing to do with any political party'.²² John Duddy, President of the National League in Belfast, regularly took the chair when Wallace lectured.²³ John Ferguson, a member of the Scottish Land Restoration League and later a labour advocate and supporter of Irish nationalism in Glasgow, also regularly attended. In the main, the ILRS attracted radical and working-class elements usually associated with the Liberal party in the city.

The Belfast press generally poured scorn on the ILRS. The liberal *Northern Whig* printed the society's manifesto and constitution, before dismissing them as 'pure and absolute Communism'.²⁴ Despite not carrying the manifesto, the conservative/Unionist dailies were more vitriolic. However, the nationalist *Belfast Morning News* suggested the constitution 'was a practical one' that would 'we think be read with interest by our readers'.²⁵ Regardless, Wallace spearheaded a relatively successful ILRS campaign throughout 1884, stating at one meeting, attended by 300 people, that 'the cause was making rapid progress'.²⁶ Hostile newspapers suggested that the society had a 'few score members in Belfast'.²⁷ Another sign that the ILRS made some headway was that the Presbyterian minister and prominent Orangeman, the Reverend Hugh Hanna, felt compelled to lecture on 'the Fallacies of Henry George', which, if implemented, would bring 'ruin to their empire and to their race'.²⁸

In January 1885, the *Belfast Morning News* enthusiastically marked Henry George's arrival in Belfast with a biography and portrait.²⁹ Speaking at a packed Ulster Hall, George lectured before a 'mixed crowd,' Catholics and Protestants, and a platform consisting of the 'most ardent sympathisers with radical doctrines'.³⁰ Wallace chaired proceedings as George lectured on 'the Great Social Problem of the Day', or private land ownership. He also criticised the leaders of Irish Parliamentary Party and the Land League for championing peasant proprietorship and 'repressing land nationalisation'. Nevertheless, he broadly sympathised with the 'national movement'.³¹ When George finished speaking 'Roaring' Hugh Hanna attempted to address the proceedings, but Wallace 'sternly' censored him, at which point a fracas ensued before the meeting broke up.³²

The contradictory newspaper coverage is interesting. The conservative/Unionist *Belfast Newsletter* pondered how those responsible could fancy that George would be 'allowed without question to rehabilitate the ancient theories that shallow philosophers of the Tom Paine order loved to foist upon their weaker brethren, and present them to a Belfast audience as new truths discovered'. It also claimed that when George mentioned figures such as Parnell and Chamberlain the response was 'hisses' and 'groans'. In contrast, the *Belfast Morning News* suggested that 'sneer as they might' its 'contemporaries could not conceal the fact that an Ulster Hall audience composed largely of Orangemen gave an enthusiastic reception to Mr George'. This was the 'fact that supplied the gall to the pens that have feebly attempted to show Belfast at least is a place that wants no reformers'.³³

A further ILRS highpoint occurred in February 1885, when Wallace and Hanna debated 'Land Nationalisation' at the Ulster Hall. On this occasion, the *Belfast Newsletter*, conceded that Wallace had acquitted himself well. The debate was of 'great consequence' and the audience a mixture of 'elements that might in a moment have been forced into an explosion' alongside 'much of the intellect of Belfast ... important men of all shades of opinion being present'.³⁴ The occasion left its mark on popular memory. Robert McClung recalled 'being told by our people about the great debate between two clergy men in the Ulster Hall'.³⁵

Furthermore, Alexander Bowman's activities in the ILRS, Belfast Trades Council, and the Belfast Liberal Association, apparently left him a strong 'labour candidate to fight for North Belfast' in the 1885 General Election.³⁶ He did not stand as 'a declared socialist' but 'was a class-conscious trades unionist and a widely read man'. His conservative/Unionist mill owning opponent ran a negative campaign, which alluded to Bowman's support for Henry George. Furthermore, 'the pope and Home Rule played a big part in the fight'.³⁷ Henceforth, loyalists consistently disrupted ILRS meetings, a situation partially explained by Bowman's new position as secretary of the IPHRA. In 1887, Wallace suggested the 'vast meetings' at the Ulster Hall and the resulting press coverage 'roused multitudes to consider social questions and to consider them in a new light'. He also noted, however, that Home Rule had led the ILRS into a state of 'animated suspension'.³⁸ In 1889, he conceded that 'Mr. Gladstone's First Home Rule Bill split and then killed the Society'.³⁹

Brotherhood

In April 1887 Wallace began publishing *Brotherhood*, 'a weekly paper designed to help the evolution of a juster and happier social order'. Whilst, intended to continue the propagandistic ideal of the ILRS, its scope extended beyond land nationalisation, encompassing all the components of Wallace's 'social gospel'. Many ideas enshrined in *Brotherhood* were indebted to Laurence Gronlund's *The Co-operative Commonwealth* (1884), which expounded upon contemporary theories of 'scientific' or German socialism. Indeed, this trend had prompted Wallace's return to the University of Bonn during 1885-1886. Although he accepted Marx's argument that capitalism required the exploitation of the working classes and contained the seeds of its own destruction, Gronlund, nevertheless, rejected any notion of class struggle. He believed a future 'Co-operative Commonwealth' would represent the state, to his mind a living organism, at an advanced stage when 'social co-operation' or 'organised humanity', extended to the whole human race. This evolution was already apparent with 'the growth of state-activity, the true rationale of Socialism' and in 'the growth of monopolies'. Gronlund's book also represented a recruiting call; his voluntary socialist revolution envisaged an evangelical minority of all classes propagating the Co-operative Commonwealth. For some contemporaries, including Wallace, Gronlund had apparently discovered a middle way between the theories of Marx and George. His argument appealed to those who doubted whether George's 'Single tax' constituted *the* social panacea, whilst assuaging Christian Socialists' suspicions of Marx's class antagonism.

Indeed, as the first product of the Circle Co-operative Company, *Brotherhood* represented a working example of 'a possible voluntary Co-operative Commonwealth'. It consisted of 'the regular staff of the printing office', each of whom received a share of the net profits in proportion to their wages, which would be invested 'towards provision against accident, old age and bad times'. Based at Limavady, County Derry, Wallace suggested that this represented a 'reasonable' protest at workers' migration to already overcrowded cities and posited that the company's work would be no less effective in these 'wholesome surroundings'. A more prosaic reason may have been that by locating to his family's ancestral farm costs could be cut. Circulation figures are unknown, but 'though it barely paid its way' Wallace would edit *Brotherhood* from various locations until 1935.⁴⁰ It was sold in Ireland and Scotland in the period discussed here.

Wallace, following Gronlund, was a state socialist. This was a top-down variety of socialism, which, at its core, discountenanced working-class self-emancipation. In the second edition of *Brotherhood*, Wallace called for 'thousands of Young Men of the 'Upper and Middle Classes' with brains and hearts to forgo their opportunities of making fortunes and to organise the toiling masses into a Co-operative Commonwealth'. At this juncture, Wallace had yet to involve himself directly with the labour movement and the struggles of the industrial working class were a sphere of activity well-removed from rural Limavady. However, Wallace's dismissal as a genuine socialist due to his emphasis on land nationalisation and support for the Liberals is possibly overdrawn.⁴¹ Wallace's disdain for the moral emptiness and economic inadequacies of capitalism reflected the fluidity between radicalism and socialism. Indeed, Gronlund's book partially explains Wallace's support for the Liberals. The 1886 British edition argued that the Radical program for the forthcoming general elections, although not socialist, tended in that direction, and that a 'Co-operative Commonwealth' could emerge via a socialist majority in the House of Commons, evolving out of the Radical wing of Liberalism, as soon as 'four or five parliaments hence'.⁴²

More importantly perhaps, Gladstone had committed himself to Home Rule in 1885, on the basis it could undermine demands for complete independence, whilst allowing the British Government to control the most important vestiges of power. Wallace supported this policy even if this form of decentralisation ostensibly ran against the vein of his brand of socialism, which aimed ultimately at the greater centralisation of the state. However, because of Ireland's particular social problems, notably the land question, Wallace believed the decentralisation of power across Britain, 'Home Rule All Round', would create opportunities for social reform: 'In our cumbrous overburdened Imperial Parliament, neither English, nor Scotch, nor Irish affairs can be dealt with satisfactorily'. In Wallace's opinion, the idle landlord class, who without any moral right or sanction from God for possession of the land, and who lived in grandeur on the rent and the toil of farmers and laborers, were to blame for the crime and poverty in rural Ireland. *Brotherhood* repeatedly offered the simple remedy, land nationalisation. Hence, support for Home Rule and land nationalisation fused casually in Wallace's mind, the former could bring closer the realisation of the latter.

The belief land nationalisation would follow Home Rule required a leap of faith, especially as Parnell had already rejected it. Wallace's customary optimism overcame this dilemma:

'There is no reason why the personnel of an Irish parliament should be identical with that of the Irish Parliamentary Party. There are many gentlemen of constructive rather than destructive facilities and tastes who have not yet been called to the front because as yet there has been little or no opportunity for the exercise of their gifts.'⁴³

Furthermore, following the defeat of Home Rule at Westminster, Wallace's promulgation of land nationalisation went against the grain of both the land agitation and the new Conservative Government's attempts to alleviate it. Despite their affinity with the landed

interest and inclination for coercion, the Tories moved slowly and reluctantly towards transferring ownership of the land to tenants.

Wallace's views were, of course, controversial in Belfast, but this did not deter him as is apparent from an episode which occurred when he preached at Clifton Park. Wallace delivered a sermon on the text 'Walk in Love' on the Sunday before 12 July, with the result that 'seven of the most important families' left the congregation. This annoyed the 'vestry members' who stated he should be more tactful as they would now struggle 'to make up his stipend'. Wallace replied he did not care about the money, 'he was bound to preach what he felt was right'.⁴⁴ In March 1888, Wallace publicly disparaged the anti-Home Rule sentiment of Ulster's capitalists, the propertied classes, and 'firebrand' evangelical ministers.⁴⁵ This enticed a two nation response from the *Northern Whig*: 'There is no disguising the fact that there are two nations, two peoples, in Ireland and that they approach the [Home Rule] question from irreconcilable standpoints'.⁴⁶ The insinuation is clear; Wallace stood accused as traitor in his own 'nation'. Previously the *Whig* had placed a ban on discussion of the ILRS within its pages, and Wallace increasingly became *persona non grata*. In 1889, *Brotherhood* was banned from the Belfast reading rooms of the YMCA and the Working Men's Institute. Regardless, believing his Limavady base caused 'insuperable challenges' to his 'propaganda work' he moved to Belfast in October 1889 to be a 'centre of agitation'.⁴⁷

Warfare of Reformism

Wallace became a leading light in the Belfast Radical Association (BRA), which existed from September 1889 until February 1891, when the Belfast Branch of the Fabian Society eclipsed it. The BRA's formation reflected developments in Britain, and particularly the capital where, after 1889, the London County Council had given radicalism renewed dynamism. There radical Liberals, or 'Progressives', campaigned for municipal reform. The BRA opposed 'intolerant Conservatism' and perceived itself as 'resisting the tyrant of sectarianism, the ogre of greed, and the curse of class supremacy'.⁴⁸ The BRA established a base on Royal Avenue, where a reading room was established. Membership figures are unknown, but Wallace championed the BRA in a paper he seemingly set up for the job, the *Belfast Evening Star*.⁴⁹ It carried news of the group's meetings, which centred upon the issues of land nationalisation, housing, sanitation, unemployment, municipal reform, and the eight-hour day.

Wallace had high hopes for his new evening paper, intending it to be 'the most interesting, the most trust-worthy and the most instructive newspaper in the North of Ireland'. He hoped 'some of its social teaching' would be read by 'members of all classes' but it was pitched as 'a newspaper in the interests of the working classes.'⁵⁰ Wallace stressed the paper's neutrality in the sectarian 'war of creeds', which represented the 'chief scourge' among the Irish people. On the 'burning issue of the day', he felt 'compelled' to delineate support for 'Home Rule All Round and Imperial Federation' but with workers in mind:

'If the working class are to get fair play, if any intricate social problems that are now pressing for settlement are to meet with due consideration and with some satisfactory practical answer in the lifetime of the present generation, there must be some division of labour in legislation.'⁵¹

This delineation would have been primarily for the benefit of Protestant workers who were the largest single social group in the city, and thus the largest potential audience for the new paper, and because Catholics, by crude definition, needed no persuasion in favour of Home Rule. Ultimately the paper's support for a Dublin Parliament was premised on the identifiably nationalist view that it was in 'accordance with the demands of the majority of the Irish People'.⁵² Therefore, it seems Wallace, editor of the *Belfast Evening Star*, in conjunction with the BRA, hoped that through radical reformist politicking the Protestant working classes could be won over to supporting an Irish Parliament as part of a broader radical agenda.

Belfast acquired city status in 1888, and the BRA strongly opposed the building of a new City Hall on the grounds of the building costs, a belief that the existing Town Hall was sufficient, and because in their opinion the proposed site, at the White Linen Hall, which Belfast Corporation was prepared to pay for, had already been bequeathed to the city.⁵³ Wallace used alarming statistics on Belfast's unsanitary conditions and its high death rate to attack the project:

'At a time when our city fathers are so anxious, for their own glory, to tax the rate payers of this borough to the extent of from £200,000 to 300,000 in order to erect a City Hall... the terrible fact stands revealed, that our city is now the most unhealthy in Ireland and, indeed, we might say, in the British islands...'⁵⁴

In October 1889, Wallace noted with satisfaction that members of the Orange and Protestant Workingmen's Association, had inscribed 'economy and no more increases for well paid officials' on their banners. He surmised this signified that men who had been 'too easily hoodwinked in to conserving things as they are' were going to turn 'old fashioned Tories' out of office.

In reality, however, Wallace struggled to make headway. On one occasion he defended the *Belfast Evening Star* against allegations that its views were 'Fenian'.⁵⁵ Indeed, the sectarianism of Belfast politics increasingly frustrated Wallace. In an editorial addressed 'to the working men of Belfast' he suggested that they should 'stop being fools' and that 'people that will not think cannot be raised to a higher life'.⁵⁶ A month later, he suggested that 'for public opinion we must confess, we have quite as little respect as it has for us and our views'.⁵⁷ This was written just as the *Belfast Evening Star* 'set behind the horizon' having lasted only four months.⁵⁸ It had not been a financial success. Wallace, a teetotaler, suggested it failed because it would not carry sporting news and advertisements for liquor and public houses: 'Neither of these two concessions the Editor felt disposed to make. Success would have been too dearly bought at such a sacrifice of principle'.⁵⁹ But his frustrated utterances on public opinion suggest that Wallace's principles did not match the proclivities of his desired readership. Feasibly, his condescension did not help either. Regardless, Wallace struck a defiant note, he did not 'propose to sink into complete silence'. The *Belfast Weekly Star* would continue, and within its pages 'a considerable amount of space will be given to the news of the various trades'.⁶⁰

Wallace's relocation to Belfast, in late 1889, occurred in the aftermath of the Great London Dock strike 'when 'New Unionism' was sweeping through the industrialised parts of Britain'.⁶¹ This was not a coincidence as Wallace regarded the 'New Unions' as a development which could potentially facilitate the growth of his brand of politics. In March 1890, he was on hand in Belfast to record Richard McGhee, the President of the National Union of Dock Labourers (NUDL), stating: 'as Mr. George had shown, landlordism was really the chief cause of poverty. Probably the landlords of Belfast will receive more from ground rents than all the dock labourers of the city receive for working a year'.⁶² In March 1891, the United Trades Council of Derry held a reception in his honour at the Guild Hall 'as an expression of their appreciation of the services he had rendered since the commencement of the labour movement in Derry'.⁶³ Wallace could boast at a meeting of trade unionists that his newspaper, unlike its contemporaries and particularly the *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, did not merely 'pose as a friend to workingmen'.⁶⁴ Undoubtedly, Wallace achieved some success in a propagandist role for 'New Unionism', but his attempts to 'preach Christian socialism' directly to Protestant shipyard workers would meet with less success.

The NUDL received the most attention in Wallace's newspapers and the reporting exposed the morality underpinning Wallace's activities. In January 1890, Messrs Francis and Daniel Burns, stevedores and publicans, utilised 'scab' labour in an unsuccessful attempt to defeat

a dock strike. Wallace aired the NUDL's grievances and carried a congratulatory interview with the union's Branch Secretary after it had been resolved.⁶⁵ Prior to this, in October and November 1889, Wallace had written articles highlighting the working conditions of dock labourers and chiefly 'the iniquity' of these men being drawn into 'intemperate drinking with disastrous results' by their sweated conditions and because they were being paid in public houses. In what would later be deemed libellous comments, he suggested the Messrs Burns were guilty of this crime in their pub, the White Star in Garmoyle Street. In April 1890, Wallace was fined forty pounds with costs. The most interesting aspects of the case was the belief by some of Wallace's supporters – but which he played down – that 'party bias' had played a part in his being found guilty, and the insinuation made on behalf of the plaintiffs, which suggested Wallace was a 'socialist and a nihilist.' The judge, summing up, suggested:

'the Socialistic views of the defendant did not very closely connect themselves with the issues which the jury had to try, unless they arrived at the conclusion, which he thought it would be hard to do, that the defendant was *mala fide* putting forward a charge against these men for the purpose of carrying out his warfare of reformism.'⁶⁶

In July 1890, at the first Annual Meeting of the NUDL in Belfast, Wallace suggested that the Twelfth of July Orange parade could and should be replaced by 'a great annual united Labour Demonstration'.⁶⁷ Speaking only days after the bicentenary of 'the Boyne', Wallace's statement met with 'laughter and cheers' but the *Belfast Weekly Star* frequently adopted a poor view of Orangemen:

'A few years ago an eminent Orange leader declared, that in case a Home Rule Bill were passed for Ireland, the ditches from Belfast to the Boyne would be lined with Orangemen ready for battle. On the afternoon of the 12th, we saw a sight which reminded us of that gallant prophecy. The ditches on the Antrim Road were then pretty well lined with Orangemen and their sympathisers; but, we regret to report, many of these were in a more or less horizontal position, but not exactly calculated to inspire terror, but rather to provoke a smile of contemptuous pity.'⁶⁸

This was remarkable considering Wallace was unquestionably to the fore in attempting to develop a labour movement in the city which could include all creeds. Also remarkable is the fact that less than a month after his comments, Wallace went to the shipyard at Queen's Island to directly address the workers many of whom were Orange Men. He made a good impression at two meetings. However, at the third, a 'gang of lads' brought up his views on the Orange Order, and he had to be rescued from 'attacks' by senior workers.⁶⁹

Perhaps Wallace's successful dealings with the NUDL inflated his innate optimism to the point that he believed the section of workers with greatest notoriety for defending their 'party' interests would be receptive to his endeavors at radicalising them, regardless of his public utterances. The 'New Unions' were, after all, composed of semi-skilled workers and labourers, and were much more religiously mixed than their craft counterparts. Skilled workers were disproportionately Protestant, better paid, and the 'gangs of lads', or apprentices, were more prone to engaging in sectarian attacks 'than did the skilled men with aspirations to respectability'.⁷⁰ To be fair to Wallace, if his reports are accurate then the majority of the Island men were prepared to hear him out. Arguably, however, he held an exalted conception both of the potential of his radicalism and his own ability to propagate it.

Shortly after the meetings at the Queen's Island, Wallace went on a four month investigative tour of Co-operative colonies in Canada, Mexico and the United States.⁷¹ Upon his return, in February 1891, the BRA was eclipsed by the Belfast Branch of the Fabian Society – with Wallace as its Chairman.⁷² A shift away from radical Liberalism is clear from the first line of the society's constitution: 'The Fabian Society consists of socialists'.⁷³ Nevertheless, the majority of the leading lights in the Fabian group had held that distinction in the BRA, and

their activities did not demonstrably change. The Fabian group would not last a year, and seemingly disheartened Wallace left Belfast for London in late 1891.

That July, the *Belfast Weekly Star* had followed its evening counterpart 'behind the horizon'. Efforts towards replacing it with a bigger and better '*Workers' Star*' were thwarted: 'To successfully work such a paper as we proposed from such a centre as Belfast, is very nearly if not quite impossible'. Wallace, it seems, had finally recognised the extent to which his views enraged Unionists. Perhaps the lesson was precipitated by a public meeting alluded to in an obituary of Wallace written by a friend: 'He told me once that while speaking to an audience of 1,000 men on the quay at Belfast, he found that he was gradually being hemmed in, nearer and nearer the water's edge. He stopped speaking and departed'⁷⁴

Wallace's thinking and actions during 1884-91 have received little attention from posterity. Perhaps this was because he does not sit neatly on either side of the Connolly/Walker controversy. If Connolly wrote that Wallace was 'long a hard and unselfish worker for the cause of socialism in Ireland',⁷⁵ it seems likely that his activities and reception, especially across the spectrum of Unionism, had a greater influence on Walker.

Notes

¹ *The Labour Prophet*, September 1897.

² *Belfast Street Directory*, 1880.

³ The Westminster Confession of Faith is a reformed confession of faith drawn up in 1646 Westminster Assembly to draw up standards for the Church of England, It remains the 'subordinate standard' of doctrine in the Church of Scotland and influenced Presbyterianism worldwide. In 1643, the English parliament called upon 'learned, godly and judicious Divines' to assemble at Westminster Abbey to determine matters of worship, doctrine, government and discipline of the Church of England. Over five years, a Larger Catechism and a Shorter Catechism were produced. In 1658, the Westminster Confession of Faith was modified by Congregationalists in England in the Savoy Declaration. In 1689, the Baptists in turn modified the Savoy Declaration to produce the Second London Baptist Confession. English Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists became known as Nonconformists as they did not conform to the 1662 Act of Uniformity which declared the Church of England as the only legally approved church.

⁴ *Public Record Office Northern Ireland (PRONI)*, D/4201/H/2/6, *Monica Wallace to Dennis Barritt*, 6 December 1981.

⁵ *The Citizen*, 12 May 1939. This information comes from an obituary written by W.R. Hughes.

⁶ George, 2 September 1839-29 October 1897, was born in Philadelphia, second of Richard and Catharine Vallance's ten children. Richard published religious texts and sent Henry to the Episcopal Academy, although he resisted this education. Henry went to sea in 1855 and eloped to marry eighteen-year old Annie Fox from a Catholic Irish background in Sydney. He became Managing Editor of the San Francisco Times in 1867 and held editorial positions in several other reputable newspapers. In 1879, after seeing working class conditions in New York, he wrote *Progress and Poverty* which sold by the million. Starting as a Lincoln republican, he became a Democrat, identified with Irish-Americans in New York and conducted speaking tours of Ireland Scotland. In 1886, he contested the Mayoralty of New York for the United Labor Party but, although defeating Republican Theodore Roosevelt could not beat Tammany Hall's Abram Stevens Hewitt. He died while again contesting the Mayoralty as an Independent democrat, his funeral being massively attended. He had campaigned for free trade, banking controls, the socialisation of land municipalisation of utilities.

⁷ Peter d'A. Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914: Religion, Class, and Social Conscience in Late Victorian England*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1968), p. 336.

⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 41- 48.

⁹ *Northern Whig*, 18 March 1884.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² Max Beer, *A History of British Socialism*, (Allen & Unwin, London, 1929), v ii, p. 180.

¹³ *Northern Whig*, 18 March 1884.

¹⁴ *Belfast Morning News*, 19 July 1884.

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- ¹⁵ *Northern Whig* 11 March 1884.
- ¹⁶ *Northern Whig*, 19 July 1884.
- ¹⁷ *ibid.*,
- ¹⁸ *ibid.*
- ¹⁹ See for example, *Brotherhood*, 22 April 1887
- ²⁰ Fintan Lane, *The Origins of Modern Irish Socialism, 1881-1896*, (Cork University Press, Cork, 1997), pp. 36-37, 40, 50-51, 71, 187-8.
- ²¹ *Northern Whig*, 13 February 1886.
- ²² *Belfast Morning News*, 23 February 1885.
- ²³ *Northern Whig*, 13 December 1884.
- ²⁴ *Northern Whig*, 19 July 1884.
- ²⁵ *Belfast Morning News*, 23 February 1885.
- ²⁶ *ibid.*, 20 Oct. 1884.
- ²⁷ *Belfast Newsletter*, 23 January 1885.
- ²⁸ *Northern Whig*, 6 December 1884.
- ²⁹ *Belfast Morning News*, 22 January 1885.
- ³⁰ *Belfast Newsletter*, 23 January 1885.
- ³¹ *ibid.*
- ³² *ibid.*
- ³³ *Belfast Morning News*, 24 January 1885.
- ³⁴ *Belfast Newsletter*, 27 February 1885.
- ³⁵ *Recollections of the Belfast Labour Movement*, (1929), McClung Papers, Terrence Bowman's Private Collection; Robert McClung was an Official of the Workers' Union and of the union that it absorbed it, the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union.
- ³⁶ *ibid.*, see also Terence Bowman, *People's Champion: The Life of Alexander Bowman, Pioneer of Labour Politics in Ireland*, (Ulster Historical Foundation, Belfast, 1997), pp. 36-47.
- ³⁷ McClung Papers.
- ³⁸ *Brotherhood*, 11 November 1887.
- ³⁹ *Belfast Weekly Star*, 30 November 1889.
- ⁴⁰ PRONI, D/4201/H/2/6.
- ⁴¹ Lane, *op.cit.*, p.160.
- ⁴² Laurence Gronlund, *Co-operative Commonwealth: An Exposition of Socialism*, (Sonnenschein, London, 1891), pp. xii-xiii.
- ⁴³ *Brotherhood*, 18 November 1887.
- ⁴⁴ PRONI, D/4201/H/2/6.
- ⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 23 March 1888.
- ⁴⁶ *Northern Whig*, 19 March 1888.
- ⁴⁷ *Brotherhood*, October 1889.
- ⁴⁸ *ibid.*, December 1889.
- ⁴⁹ *ibid.*, September 1889.
- ⁵⁰ *Belfast Evening Star*, 29 January 1890.
- ⁵¹ *ibid.*
- ⁵² *ibid.*
- ⁵³ *ibid.*, 5 February 1890.
- ⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 13 February 1890.
- ⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 17 February 1890.
- ⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 14 June 1890.
- ⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 5 July 1890.
- ⁵⁸ *Belfast Weekly Star*, 7 June 1890.
- ⁵⁹ *ibid.*
- ⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 7 June 1890.
- ⁶¹ Lane, *op. cit.*, p. 164.
- ⁶² *Belfast Weekly Star*, 7 March 1891.
- ⁶³ *ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ *Brotherhood*, October 1889.
- ⁶⁵ *Belfast Weekly Star*, 2, 15, March 1890.
- ⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 5 April 1890.
- ⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 19 July 1890.
- ⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ John Gray, *City in Revolt: James Larkin and the Belfast Dock Strike of 1907*, (Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1985; republished by SIPTU/Linen Hall Library, Dublin & Belfast, 2007), p. 19.

⁷¹ *Brotherhood*, September 1890.

⁷² *Belfast Weekly Star*, 28 February 1891.

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ *The Citizen*, 12 May 1939.

⁷⁵ James Connolly, *Labour in Ireland*, (Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, Dublin, 1944) p. 140.