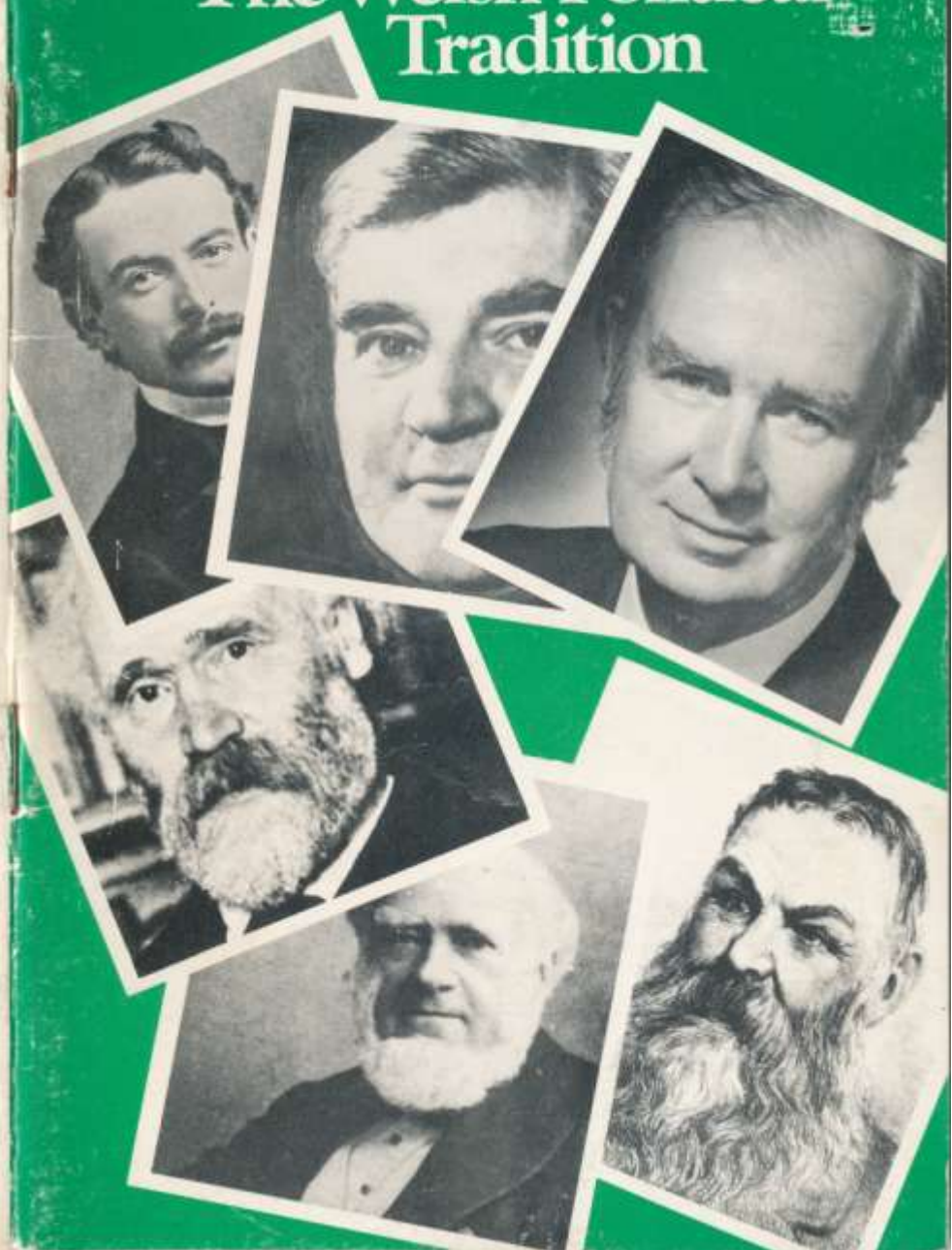


The Welsh Political Tradition



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THE WELSH POLITICAL TRADITION

BY

IOAN BOWEN REES

'Only slowly did I learn how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name.'

—WILLIAM MORRIS.

(NOTE: Some of the material in this essay has already appeared, in Welsh, in *Triban*, Vol. II, No. 2.)

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(Ioan Rhys') study of local government, entitled "Government by Community", ranks as a classic. This pamphlet on The Welsh Political Tradition, now republished after being out of print for years, has the same quality of thought and style. It will give those who read it for the first time fresh insights into the Welsh tradition.

Now that the Welsh nation is on the move towards full national status, a clear vision of the kind of society we want is a necessity. It must not be another little England in the West, wasted by materialism and cowed by technology. Wales is an ancient nation: that is an immense advantage, but she must be revitalised by a sense of purpose and direction, and the latent energies of her people must be released as she begins to realise her great potential. But in what direction should Wales move? I think a course can be discerned in the long Welsh past which points out the way for the generations to come. A pattern of values emerges which is as Welsh as any other aspect of our culture. This is not strange, for the main function of a nation is to transmit values from generation to generation. The values which have been transmitted to us over fifteen centuries and more will, one hopes, infuse the life of the free Wales.

Our generation has as much reason as any to know that wisdom was not born with us. Some legitimate pride can perhaps be taken in a growth in compassion, but in the political order and in the physical environment there is little enough of our handiwork that we can be proud of. Certainly, we cannot dismiss the wisdom of the past, including the Welsh past.

During the thousand years between the 5th and the 15th centuries in Wales one can see the lineaments of an order whose character clearly distinguished it in the early centuries from its eastern neighbours. Centuries later the Norman Conquest increased rather than diminished the differences.

It is the decentralisation of the Welsh order which impresses one most. Wales was a pluralist community which, despite its national character, never had a centralised church or state. Church order, which in the early Middle Ages was as important as the state for social cohesion and stability, was radically decentralist in Wales. Our Celtic Church had no Archbishop. As for the state, for most of the time the nation had a cluster of states to serve it. The political order was at

least as decentralist as the Church order. I hope the day is not too far distant when a federal Wales will once again have a cluster of states to serve it. When that day comes there will also be one state to serve the whole of Wales for certain purposes, but Welsh society will gain in justice and democracy if that state is weakened by the decentralisation and distribution of power and responsibility among the people in their neighbourhoods and provinces.

The tendency to decentralisation in medieval Wales was furthered both socially and politically by the Welsh law of property which knew nothing of primogeniture. Under its system of gavelkind property was divided among the sons. This principle of division applied to kingdoms and principalities as well as to small private estates. That it made for more justice is clear. There is another major difference between Wales and England in relation to property. In England it was possession of property which decided social status. In Wales property did not have this importance. Status was decided by descent.

It was an expression of the penchant for social justice which is impressively demonstrated by the extent of the rights enjoyed by women. Welsh law allowed them to hold property and to dispose of it as they wished, even to bequeath it by will — a right which they did not enjoy under English law until the Married Women's Property Act 1874. If a woman was divorced after five years of marriage she had the right to half the husband's property. Women's status in medieval Welsh literature such as — the *Mabinogion*; and no less a scholar than Renan maintained that it was Wales which gave the initial impetus to the movement of chivalry. This tradition lay behind the policy of the tiny "Free Wales" established through the inspiration of Michael D. Jones in Patagonia in 1860, when it gave the vote to women as well as men at eighteen years of age.

The nature of the Welsh tradition is exemplified in Giraldus Cambrensis' observations on the poise shown by the people. Speaking of the Welsh in the 12th century, he said: "Nature has bestowed on all of them throughout the population, to the most insignificant among the ordinary people as to the men of high estate, a boldness of speech, and a confidence in conversation in the presence of princes and nobles, in all kinds of situations." This high degree of self-respect would not be found unless the society was one in which people of every social status were given respect. How far this was bound up with the Christian emphasis on the value of each human person is a question which would repay study.

After the Act of Incorporation, 1536, there was a period of lifeless decay in which the descendants of those who had led Welsh society

betrayed and abandoned their tradition. For the most part they had become, within little more than a century, anglicised self-seeking renegades devoid of all sense of responsibility for Wales or loyalty to her. Later their descendants would find their political home in the Conservative Party which has so staunchly opposed the creation of the conditions in which the national tradition, the culture and the language of Wales can be conserved and developed.

But when in the early 18th century the energies of the people — *y "werin"* — revived, they were first channelled through a magnificent effort which restored a sense of worth and dignity to the majority by educating them, through the medium of Welsh of course. The change which this great educational movement, led by Griffith Jones of Llanddowror, wrought amongst the body of the people was greatly furthered by the religious revolution which started a little later and ran parallel with it. By the end of the century a great part of the people were what can be termed autonomous persons, with a strong sense of dignity and self-respect. Their industrial descendants built tens of chapels in Merthyr Tydfil and supported their ministers there in the 1840's at a cost of 08000 a year. The religious and cultural activities of these wholly Welsh language self-governing institutions would attract the people to them in numbers, throughout industrial as well as rural Wales, on each week night, as well as on Sundays. Nowadays, there is a habit of referring to the majority of the people as 'the mass'. Such a term would be quite inappropriate in speaking of the rooted and cultured "*gwerin*" of industrial and rural Wales.

Not unnaturally, the radical thought of the century which was to be stimulated by the French Revolution, found acceptance among a significant number of Welsh people. Two thinkers of considerable stature, Richard Price and David Williams, who did their work in English, were influential in America. It is notable that eighteen of the fifty-six signatories of the American Declaration of Independence were of Welsh descent and that the main author of the Declaration, Thomas Jefferson, was proud of his Welsh antecedents. Homespun radicalism found expression in a number of colourful figures of whom the best known was the amazing Iolo Morganwg. Professor Gwyn A. Williams has shown that the continuing intellectual ferment lay behind the Merthyr Tydfil insurrection of 1831, the year before the Reform Act. It also permeated the Chartist movement and affected even the Rebecca Riots of the thirties and forties of the last century.

By this time there was a considerable literature of radicalism; but it did not produce a movement until late in the 19th century, when the

French syndicalist movement arose. Though there was a deep chasm between some aspects of syndicalist thought and practice, and the main tradition of Welsh radicalism, it is worth noting some of the features they had in common. Both stood for the people against the dominant class; for syndicalists, these were capitalists, but the radicals of rural Wales of necessity concentrated attention on the landlords. Both were antimilitarist, but neither succeeded in developing enough moral fibre to stand the test in 1914 when syndicalists obeyed the state's call to kill the fellows of other lands with the same docility as the Welsh radicals displayed.

Both were critical of the state, but whereas prominent Welsh radicals like David Rees, Llanelli, and Samuel Roberts of Llanbrynmair wanted the state merely to hold the ring while business and industry slogged it out in free competition, the syndicalists fiercely rejected the state completely. For them self-governing industrial unit was basic to a decentralised society and their instrument was the trade union. Both believed in democracy, syndicalists confined themselves to industrial democracy, a phrase coined by Proudhon. There is clearly a basic element in common between their thought and the co-operation of Robert Owen of Newtown, who, in addition to his work for the co-operative movement, and for the concept of the small self-sufficient and self-governing entity, as in New Harmony, was a major pioneer of trade unionism. Belief in decentralisation was common to both syndicalists and Welsh radicalism.

It has been said of radicalism that it is "directed against the classes on behalf of the masses". Syndicalism was consciously a class movement; it was because it had no philosophy of the community as a whole that it was so hostile to the state and to political action. There was no one in syndicalist scheme of things to represent the consumer. While Welsh radicals of the 19th century were on the whole too individualistic to have a lively sense of the needs of the whole community, in the mature radicalism of Michael D. Jones community was fundamental. Concern for social justice was not concentrated on one class but was diffused among the whole "gwerin".

The Welsh form of radicalism, like others, has a democratic and humanitarian intent. Property is distributed; responsibility is dispersed; the small unit is favoured; the power of the state is limited; personal freedom is exalted; human dignity is respected.

The centrality of the state in political life allows one to deduce the character of a political philosophy from its attitude to this central

institution. For all forms of fascism the state is dominant. "Everything within the state; nothing without the state", said Mussolini. The state in that kind of ideology dominates and swallows the nation. For some forms of communism and of socialism, a powerful state is basic. These are centralist philosophies. Imperialism is the extension of the power of a state over the people, territory and resources of another country. This is what happened to Wales when it was incorporated in England in 1536. This was an imperialist measure which reduced Wales to the status of an internal colony. The English state, which subsequently became known as British, dominated, swallowed and sought intermittently to destroy the Welsh nation. Wales has never known a state to serve, succour and strengthen her national life.

Welsh radicals of the mid-nineteenth century tended to oppose all state intervention. They were unwilling to see its power used even to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and the exploited. In this harsh attitude they were motivated by their concern for freedom and their fear of oppression. There is a constant tension in the history of radicalism between freedom and social justice in relation to the state.

The man who came nearest to resolving this tension was the major prophet of Welsh radicalism, Michael D. Jones. Both the passion for freedom and for social justice, which had found expression in so many ways during the course of Welsh history, coalesced in him. Proudly and uncompromisingly Welsh, the pivot of his social thought was the national community of Wales. Unlike the syndicalists and the Marxists his concern was for the whole community; and not only for its economic life but also for its tradition, culture, language, identity. Michael D. Jones, who influenced Tom Ellis and Lloyd George so profoundly, was the epitome of mature Welsh radicalism. Although he was a decentralist he saw the necessity for the state to exercise its power in the interests of the national community — by which he meant Wales — and of every section in it, especially the weak and the poor. But he had a fierce hatred of its militarism and imperialism and its oppressive and arrogant Englishness.

Michael D. Jones stood for the creation of a Welsh state which would be subordinate to Welsh needs and which would serve Wales. This is the most radical policy of all, the one which most offends the conservatism of the English political parties.

Welsh Liberal radicalism reached its zenith before the end of the century and then collapsed and died; but its most famous product,

Lloyd George, shone brightly in England for another fruitful decade or so.

Paradoxically, a splendid leader of Welsh radicalism for a decade at the beginning of this century was a Scotsman, Keir Hardie, whose Independent Labour Party incorporated so strikingly many of the emphases of Welsh radicalism. This explains why so many of its activists joined Plaid Cymru when the national party was founded in 1925. As nationalists they helped to create a party which has consciously sought to fuse the movement for social justice with the national freedom movement.

Keir Hardie not only stood for self-Government, and not only believed that the Welsh would act with effect in Westminster only if they formed themselves into an independent party like the Irish; he was also an anti-imperialist and a pacifist. A concern for peace had ran throughout Welsh radicalism in the previous century. Henry Richard of Trearon, known in Parliament as "The Member for Wales", was for 40 years the secretary of the Peace Society, the biggest peace movement in the world. For nearly 100 years its secretaries were Welshmen. They included Tregelles Price, the Neath ironmaster, who fought to save the life of Dic Penderyn.

The modern Labour Party itself incorporated many radical features, and these made resplendent the political life of Aneurin Bevan, who also reflected the intellectual nature of the Welsh tradition. But the party was never solidly anti-militarist and anti-imperialist as the ILP had been. In later years its radicalism was overlaid by its belief in the need for a powerful state, in centralism and in the large unit; by its massive inert support for the status quo; by its opposition to self-government and to justice for a fragile and vulnerable national traditions; and by its suffocating Britishness. The Labour Party's radicalism disappeared under thick layers of unlovely conservatism.

Although it was never as sickingly disloyal to Wales as the Welsh Conservatives and Unionists, Welsh Labour never fought for the vulnerable life of the nation, or for its language, culture, identity, freedom. Indeed, for more than a generation it did its utmost to prevent Wales from living a national life. It was a party of no change. We discovered through bitter experience the truth of Bernard Shaw's quip, "Scratch a socialist and you find an imperialist". Welsh nationhood was ground between the socialists and the Tories. The Marxists taught the worker that he had no country; the Tory taught him that Wales was not a country.

If Wales had been self-governing early this century a Welsh Labour Party would not have followed the centralist course laid out by the Webbs. Wales had seen its own version of syndicalism winning some influence. Far more important was that the kind of order widely favoured in industrial Wales was guild socialist. Its decentralism contrasted starkly with the form of state capitalism which won the day. A Welsh government would surely have initiated, and with great benefit to the industrial workers and to the whole community, guild socialist methods of co-operative control in industry, of workers' control. As H.N. Brailsford said at Neath in 1920, "I do not think that this policy is practicable in England, but I think it would work in Wales because your people still have some culture."

It was left to Plaid Cymru to bring together the strands of Welsh radicalism which have such long antecedents. Although, in the sense that it endeavours to conserve the life and tradition, the values and culture of the Welsh nation, it is a fundamentally conservative party, Plaid Cymru is the most radical party in Wales: the only radical party in Wales now that the Labour and Liberal parties have both lost their radicalism. Plaid Cymru's radicalism is Welsh through and through.

Its social thought begins from the premise that the supreme value on earth is that of the human person, whose humanity derives from his social nature. A humane social order will allow each person the the fullest opportunity of achieving his or her potential. This requires close regard for material needs: but equally important are man's non-material needs, for the human person is mind and soul as well as body. It is our social nature which places such a weight of importance on the character of the society into which we are born and with which we identify: on which our personal identity and our dignity as persons so largely depend. Care for community, for continuity, for roots, for the whole spectrum of cultural life becomes an essential part of the quest for a civilised order; on a parity with assurance of work of the right kind, with an adequate reward for labour, with good housing and all the material necessities of a healthy and happy human life.

If we are to achieve a community of autonomous self-respecting, self-fulfilling persons, their autonomy must be respected by the conditions of the political and industrial order. People must be able to participate in the fashioning of their environment. This requires democratic self-government in national, provincial and local government, and at work in industry. Power and property must be diffused. The less power which society can afford to invest in the central government the better. Responsibility must be shouldered by

the many rather than centralised in the hands of the few. The kind of order in which most people will live their own lives most fully is a decentralist one in which the small unit predominates.

Such a community will not set its eyes on power and prestige but rather on social justice and quality of life. It will not deepen the world's divisions but will try to help create harmony internationally as well as nationally by co-operating with others in seeking a stable, just and peaceful world order. It follows that it will take most seriously its duties in the international field, always aware of its exceptionally privileged situation. Membership of international organisations will not be just an honour but a rigorous challenge to which it must respond with all the sincerity and energy it can command.

Wales can, if her people will it, be a power for justice and peace in the world. In her domestic life she has the moral and material advantages, not least of which is her radical tradition, which could help her become a great social laboratory whose experiments could profit many who live far from her shores.

GWYNFOR EVANS

AUGUST 1975

PREFACE

To write about the political tradition of Wales will seem to many to be an act of presumption on the part of anyone who is not a professional historian. If I have ventured to do so, it is because one can feel tradition in one's own bones, as well as observe it in others and study it in the records.

This essay deals with the Welsh political tradition as it has come to me from my forebears and through my friends and their forebears in Caernarvonshire and Carmarthenshire, Merioneth and Glamorgan. It is this tradition above all which made me a Welsh Nationalist. What I lack in objectivity as a student, I hope to gain in authenticity as a reporter of the present and an interpreter of one (and only one) of the myths which give force to contemporary Welsh Nationalism.

I shall have little to say about Wales before the Nineteenth Century — before the main Industrial Revolution and the beginnings of political democracy. This is obviously not the only period of Welsh History which has significance for us to-day, but it has been the only 'usable past' as far as party politicians are concerned. It would, nevertheless, be quite wrong to assume that the attitudes and ideals of the Nineteenth Century were all new and strange and alien to Wales. What was new was the formulation of these ideals and attitudes in terms of democratic politics. The myth of the Welshman's love of liberty clearly owes as much to our long struggle against tremendous odds in the Middle Ages as to the tenets of religious dissent. Our passion for social justice is reflected in Welsh Medieval Law and in the chivalry of Arthurian Romance. Decentralisation — a suspicion of the over-mighty state — is one of the abiding themes of Welsh history. Even the Welsh moral conscience — outwardly so sectarian — owes much to a Christian tradition unbroken since the Celtic Church.

Much of this essay will seem more relevant to the Western regions of Wales than to the more anglicised districts of the East. Over large areas of the country, all sense of history has disappeared, and the politicians themselves are unconscious of any traditions they may have inherited. Here again, however, in spite of the dilution of Welsh blood, I feel it is still a case of the tradition being unformulated and un-self-conscious rather than not existing at all. Up to a point, a tradition must be deliberately acquired as well as casually inherited. One of Plaid Cymru's most important tasks is to put the people of Wales in touch with their own past, make them more sure of their identity and help them to face the future with greater unity and confidence in themselves.

Brief particulars of some of the important but generally forgotten men mentioned in the text are printed as footnotes.

1. THE TRADITION DISTINGUISHED

'MODERN British politics has suffered from an endemic disease which now seems about to become acute. This is the inability of the British Left to offer a stable and coherent alternative to Conservatism. Since 1885 (when, it could be argued, Britain became a political democracy) a Left Party has held a working majority in Parliament for only nine years (1906-10, 1945-50).'

So says Robert Mackenzie, the established authority on modern British political parties.

How different it would have been had he been writing of a self-governing Wales! Since 1885 and before, the parties of the Left have at all times held, not merely a working majority, but an overwhelming majority in Wales. It is not just that the Tories have never held more than nine of the thirty odd Welsh seats since 1885 — and have only once held nine (in 1924). The majorities of individual Liberal and Labour members have often been immense. In 1886, ten of the Liberals were returned unopposed. In 1935, nine Labour M.P.s were returned unopposed — for practically the same constituencies — while two more were opposed only by a Communist and an Independent Labour candidate respectively. In 1906, no Tories were returned; in 1929, one only; in 1945, three.

Another striking fact is that such Tories as Wales has returned have always been returned for certain definite areas: Cardiff, Swansea and Newport, constituencies with large seaside resorts, and border constituencies, like the Monmouth Division of Gwent — in other words, for the most anglicised areas of Wales, for areas with the biggest proportion of people who have brought their politics with them from England and have had the least opportunity to become steeped in the Welsh tradition.

ANOTHER NORWAY

A self-governing Wales, then, would certainly have led a stable government of the Left since 1885, or before — another Norway, perhaps, another Sweden. And if we are to look for the dominant Welsh political tradition in the days of democracy, it is to the Left we must look. Statistics tell us little about the real quality of a political tradition, however, particularly on the Left. There is also as much to be learnt from observing the life that is lived in Wales as from the ideas propagated by her political parties.

Is the socialism of the Labour Party in Wales revolutionary or Fabian in origin, anarchist or authoritarian, Christian or cynical? To

what extent is the Welsh Labour Party — or, rather, the English Labour Party in Wales — socialist at all? Are its leaders the revolutionary Robespierres, the Bevan bogies, sometimes depicted by opponents of self-government in the more tranquil and pastoral constituencies of mid-Wales? Or are they the dessicated and corrupt municipal oligarchs, from whom valley intellectuals fly to the sophistication of Slough and Barry?

A comprehensive survey would probably reveal traces of as many brands of socialism in Wales as of religious dissent, and a large body of Labour supporters who owe their allegiance, not to socialism in any guise, but to the material interest of the working class. Yet the consensus of opinion seems to be that the dominant mood of the Labour Party in Wales during its climb to power was, as it were, evangelical.

CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM

'We were not bound by a narrow economic doctrine,' says Thomas Jones, C.H.,¹ one of the first Welsh members of the I.L.P., 'our approach was ethical or rather we were striving to bring the economic and religious factors into a right relation . . . we wanted a classless society but not a class war.' 'It was plain,' says the same writer of Keir Hardie, 'that he drew his inspiration from the Bible and Burns, from Ruskin and William Morris, rather than from Marx and Engels.' And again, 'Mabon, Tom Richards, William Brace, Vernon Hartshorn, A.J. Cook and Frank Hodges . . . they had all worked as boys in the mine, were products of Sunday schools, local preachers, more deeply steeped in the Christian doctrine of the value of human personality than in any economic theory. They had been taught that man was not mere means but an end in himself and greater than miners or coalowners or nations or Sovereign State.'

Who can forget that Wales' leading Communist, Arthur Horner, was himself a Baptist preacher who tried to wed Christianity to Socialism for many years before succumbing to materialism. I once heard Horner address undergraduates at Oxford. I went to condescend. I left full of nostalgia for Wales: Horner's peroration was

¹Thomas Jones (1870-1955): a native of Rhymni, Monmouthshire, who, after an academic career teaching economics, became a civil servant, ending up as Deputy Secretary of the Cabinet, a grey eminence in England and a despot in Wales. He retained his sympathy for Labour, in a diluted form, despite the close friendship of Baldwin and other Conservative leaders. He retained his interest in Wales, too, but became the very scourge of Welsh nationalism, which he seems to have taken as a slight upon his own decision to pursue a career in London. His books of reminiscences are well-written and suffused with that aura of having lived in a golden age so characteristic of his generation.

purest Welsh Radicalism, with the woes of the present yielding place at last to the paradise to come. He could have been Liberal, Labour or Welsh Nationalist, but he could only have come from Wales.

WELSH RADICALISM

The Welsh Radical Tradition: invoked on many an eve-of-poll platform but seldom defined. If our view of the dominant tradition within the Labour Party is right, it is in this radicalism that we must seek its roots, in a tradition which runs back to the early puritan and Quaker gentry, which began to speak colloquially in the ballad writers of the Eighteenth Century and which then became articulate, popular and consciously Welsh as the family factions of that century gave way to political parties as we know them to-day.

* * *

It has often been said that the early Welsh radicals derived their ideas from great contemporaries in England, and there is some truth in this. At the same time, as Iorwerth Peate has pointed out, while John Stuart Mill was an agnostic, to Samuel Roberts,² his Welsh counterpart, politics was a branch of religion. Is it not a mistake, too, to assume that it is mainly ideas and beliefs which make a radical? Nine times out of ten, it is the radical who makes up the ideas. Misgovernment, economic distress, social derision on the one hand; comradeship, traditional liberty on the other — these are the forces which make radicals.

Of the elements which made the early Welsh radicals what they were, two — the religion within them and the life about them — were distinctively Welsh. Indeed, when one considers that up to 1868 the largest Welsh religious denomination was politically quietist, and that it only woke up in order to support disestablishment, the Welsh people seem to have been remarkably quick to take up radicalism. It must have been in their bones.

²Samuel Roberts ('S.R.') (1800-1885): social reformer, editor, farmer, preacher and poet of Llanbrynmair, Montgomeryshire. Emigrated to Tennessee on account of oppression by his landlord in 1857, and farmed there till '67, when he returned to Wales, to Conwy. A pioneer of scientific farming, public health, railway development and the penny post (for which he received a civil list pension). A tough and persistent advocate of peace (delegate to Frankfurt Conference of 1850) and opponent of capital and corporal punishment and slavery. Supported the extension of the franchise, to women as well as men, but opposed the secret ballot, and also trade unionism and government aid to education, in the name of individual dignity and freedom.

NONCONFORMITY

Nonconformity was the backbone of the radical electorate in England as well as Wales up to 1914, but with this difference: in England, nonconformity was never in the majority, rarely even part of the establishment. In Wales, not only was it in the majority: it was the nation. So much so that few friends of Wales, and fewer still of her foes, can shake off this assumption even in these wicked and adulterous times. And recent though Welsh nonconformity is in a sense, let us remember that, as a dominant educative force, it is a good deal older than the equivalent English tradition, that of the Arnoldian public school.

Up to the end of the last century, Welsh nonconformity had its own system of popular education and entertainment, and its own popular press, some thirty journals strong. With no formal representative institutions, and with only reluctant support from English Liberalism, it was able to close the pubs on Sunday (not, apparently, as a measure to curb drinking, but out of sheer *joie de vivre*), to secure a secondary education act well in advance of England, to build a National University, Library and Museum and to disestablish the Church of England. Many of its most typical and most popular leaders wanted to disestablish the British Army and dismember the British Empire as well.

Neither was Welsh nonconformity the prosperous middleclass nonconformity of Manchester and Birmingham. It was the religion of the ordinary people. The early Welsh radicals belonged essentially to the *gwerin*,³ to a people oppressed in many ways by squires, industrialists and stewards of different religion, alien tongue and dubious origin. When they heard of foreign oppression in Hungary, Italy and Ireland, the people of Wales could picture themselves in much the same situation.

In the early nineties, according to Thomas Jones, Irish Home Rule 'dominated all topics of conversation' in Rhymmi, for 'the Welshman's love of liberty and toleration was stronger than his hatred of Roman Catholicism'. By Easter 1916, the proclamation of Irish independence could give Arthur Horner 'the same inspiration, the same sense of a just struggle and a righteous cause as *The Miners' Next Step*'. These are not empty words: inspire him it did actually to join the Rising.

³The untranslatable word *gwerin* means 'the people', not in the sense of 'the lower orders' (though sometimes used in this way) but in the sense of 'the community as a whole'. The *gwerin* can be contrasted with the mob as well as with the privileged and the stand-offish.

Not that this feeling for other nations, this challenge of the Establishment, this passion for education, this militant pacifism was peculiar to Wales or that the Welsh themselves were unanimous — what nation ever was? As cold-blooded an English analyst as Bentham believed in national self-government, as hot-blooded an English patriot as Palmerston could delight in a small country's cause.

The writer would be the last to belittle the great pacifists of England, like John Bright, or to forget that in the back streets of several Welsh boroughs there once lurked a mercenary, Jingoistic mob. But it must have been easier to pillory the Empire and idealise peace, just as it was more difficult to understand the glory of annexation and war, in Llanbrynmair than in the Mall.

ENGLISH RADICALS

English Radicals as different as John Bright and Harriet Martineau could oppose Home Rule for Ireland. Joe Chamberlain was the radical, Gladstone the moderate, before Ireland made Chamberlain a Unionist. Charles Dilke was more radical than either, and a favourite of the early Labour Party. He would probably have succeeded Gladstone but for his part in a notorious divorce case. But Dilke had no interest in Ireland or in opposing the Boer War. He believed in increased armaments, in Imperial Defence, in an Anglo-Saxon mission to colonise the earth. He could write with pride, 'the Anglo-Saxon is the only extirpating race on earth.'

While radicalism in England remained essentially a minority creed, often associated with imperialism and seldom pacifist, the authentic voice of Welsh radicalism has been anti-imperialist, pro-national freedom, pacifist in international affairs and consciously Welsh if not always Welsh Nationalist.

One suspects, too, that, by and large, the Welsh people were more radical than their leaders. According to R. T. Jenkins, Thomas Gee,⁴ as Editor of the *Faner*, was 'rushed off his feet

⁴Thomas Gee (1815-98): editor and owner of the *Faner* of Denbigh at the height of its influence and power — the period when rural Wales began to take advantage of the 1867 and 1884 Reform Acts, and when politics brought mass-entertainment as well as actual relief to the Welsh people. On the publishing side, his great achievement was the ten-volume *Gwyddoniadur* (Encyclopaedia) of 1878 and 1896.

R. T. Jenkins is the doyen of Welsh modern historians: almost all his work is in Welsh, but the English-speaking reader might well turn up his essay *The Development of Nationalism in Wales*, *Sociological Review*, XXVII (1935).

by the force of public opinion' into supporting Irish Home Rule, which he personally opposed. It is the more extreme preachers and editors who are chiefly remembered to-day and who used to have to rouse the country to vote for mild men like Rathbone and Rendel. A majority culture in a minority nation makes for a militant public. And Wales, like France, had had a Revolution — all the more devastating for being a religious one — in the Eighteenth Century.

THE MORAL CONSCIENCE

The early radicals were, of course, intensely individualistic: the range of their interests was as wide as their artistic taste was bad. The big point that they have in common is a belief that public as well as private life should be subject to the moral conscience.

Samuel Roberts, a champion of anti-slavery, writing, in Tennessee, of the American Civil War: *'Slavery in a country is a very grievous evil, conspiracy to break up its unity is a very grievous evil; but worse than either is to fill the land with war, with the idea of establishing freedom and unity by its fury and savagery.'*

Michael D. Jones,⁵ declaring of the evictions which followed the election of 1859: *'the real tragedy is not the number of tenants evicted for voting Liberal; the real tragedy is the much greater number who voted against their consciences.'*

⁵Michael D. Jones (1822-98): probably the first modern Welsh political nationalist. Born in Llanuwchllyn, Merioneth, he returned there in 1853 as Principal of the Congregational College and became engrossed in radical politics: after the 1859 Election, his mother was evicted from the family home for voting Liberal. Michael D. Jones hammered the industrial capitalist as well as the rural landlord, supported Trade Unionism, sympathised with Henry George on the land question and advocated co-operation in industry and the development of Welsh resources. He worked through the Liberal Party but wanted its Welsh members to form an independent Party in the Commons, believing that Tom Ellis and Lloyd George would lead Wales to Home Rule. As a young man, he spent several years in Ohio, the Governor of which state had married his sister, and he later inspired, organised and spent his last penny on attempts to establish a self-governing, Welsh-speaking community overseas, notably in Patagonia.

Samuel T. Evans⁶ attack in the House of Commons upon Chamberlain's whitewashing of Cecil Rhodes, the official Liberals having let the Committee of Inquiry into the Jameson Raid peter out as 'an act of national solidarity':

'If these be the ideas of the Colonial Secretary with regard to public morality, it would be an evil day for this country if he were allowed to become the arbiter of our political ethics, or the compiler of our code of honour.'

Here is the authentic voice of Welsh radicalism. Here, perhaps, is the source of its Utopian perorations, a plea, not for the perfect blueprint of the political theorist, but for a state of grace where men rise to the occasion and recognise something greater than their own convenience.

MIGHT VERSUS RIGHT

Right up to-day, the appeal to the conscience has tended to unite Wales: one saw it recently over Suez, less recently in the majority vote of the Welsh Members of Parliament (20 to 12) against peacetime military conscription: if we disestablished the Church by ourselves, they might have said, why shouldn't we disestablish the Army?

In England, however, the appeal to the conscience has been splitting the Left since Gladstone's day — the Liberal split over Ireland was not so much a split between landed Whigs and ardent Radicals, as a split amongst the Radicals themselves. The same split exists in the Labour Party to-day over unilateral nuclear disarmament. The English people, with their traditional ruling class, are too nationalistic to accept the politics of conscience for more than brief periods: one should blame them, not Gaitskell, for the Labour Party's present plight.

⁶Samuel T. Evans (1859-1918): a Skewen solicitor who was later called to the bar, became M.P. for mid-Glamorgan for twenty years, Solicitor-General in 1908, President of the Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Division of the High Court, 'the greatest since Lord Mansfield', and an outstanding authority on international law. How he has come to be forgotten so soon is a mystery: he must have stood out even amongst the vintage Welsh Liberals of 1906, most of whom seem, however, to have faded out after the 1914 War — or was it after the Hussars had been sent to Tonypandy?

Shaw's remark, 'Scratch an English Socialist and you find a Tory', is well known. It was anticipated, in effect if not in wit, by the most nationalistic of the Welsh radical thinkers, Emrys ap Iwan,⁷ when he wrote after the 1895 Tory election victory, 'In national affairs, the main body of the English nation is Tory to the backbone.' 'See here, mister,' the leader of a delegation of English socialists is alleged to have said, in reply to a fraternal speech of welcome by a Swiss socialist, 'When we're on the Continent, we're Englishmen, not comrades!'

As anyone who lived in England during the Suez Crisis can testify, it is the perpetual tug-o'-war between public morality and the might of England that underlies the persistent failure of the Left in that country.

* * *

The historian Kenneth Morgan has described Welsh Radicalism as 'a phenomenon that resembles more than radical movements of the United States, of Andrew Jackson and William Jennings Bryan, rather than any parallel development in English history.'

SENTIMENTALITY

William Jennings Bryan was an unsuccessful Democratic candidate for the Presidency of the United States, a brilliant orator with a Mid-Western revivalist background. If one phrase can sum him up, he was a man of progressive political views speaking the language of the past. There is certainly a strain of Bryan in Welsh Radicalism, a savour of the small farmer of the eighteensixties still, a tendency to blatant sentimentality. Jim Griffiths is about the last good example of this strain: at his best, he can be very moving; at their worst, his speeches are the oratorical equivalent of *Hen Ffonfy Nain and Mae Darlun fy Mam ar y Mur*.⁸

Let us not be too blasé, however. At times, this strain of Welsh Radicalism was, and is, capable of a sincerity and a sense of values

⁷Emrys ap Iwan (1851-1906): another forerunner of Plaid Cymru — literary critic, philosopher, and, inevitably, minister of religion, this time Presbyterian. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Emrys ap Iwan spent his period abroad, not in America, but on the Continent — his great-grandmother was French. As a result 'both in political and cultural matters his stock of ideas was clearly non-English'. Born in Abergele, he lived most of his life in the Vale of Clwyd, ministering gently to his own community but stinging both the Welsh public and the English government with caustic wit.

⁸'My grandmother's old walking stick' and 'Mother's portrait is on the wall', two popular Victorian ballads still being sung on the B.B.C. Welsh Home Service.

that is sadly lacking in politics to-day. Welshmen are no less hard and grasping than their neighbours. But in turning their backs upon the things of the mind and the spirit, as people everywhere usually do, they often do so knowingly and uneasily. Welsh people, generally, have too much imagination to remain wholly impervious to an appeal which cuts across self-interest or class-interest. On occasion, mind has beaten matter in Wales, and always there is a strong minority who think it worthwhile to plug away at the mind.

* * *

If Morgan's reference to William Jennings Bryan is a better basis for caricature than appreciation, this is less true of his invocation of Andrew Jackson. President Jackson of the United States was a gentleman in bearing and a general by profession. What is chiefly remembered about him is, nevertheless, his supreme lack of class-consciousness, his recognition that ability alone mattered in the frontier conditions of Arkansas and Kentucky. At Jackson's first reception at the White House, the refined society of Washington appears to have been elbowed out of the way by ordinary people 'with mud on their boots'.

All this suggests another characteristic of Welsh Radicalism, not so much a belief in equality in the abstract as the ability to behave as if everyone was, in fact, equal.

CLASSLESSNESS

To-day, the Labour Party in England is bedevilled by class-consciousness. Intellectuals and Trade Unionists cannot mix: Gaitskill's accent upsets more people than his policies even. According to Anthony Crosland, this state of affairs is peculiar to England: no Continental socialist party is similarly afflicted. Certainly it is not true of Wales — yet. Here, a trade union leader can still publish a book of verse⁹ — so can a County Council roadman, for that matter.¹⁰ Here, an 'intellectual' can, in Welsh at any rate, talk the broadest dialect. If there is one reason for the strangely slow growth of Labour politics in Wales before 1910, it is that here, the Liberal Party belonged to the miners and the steelworkers as much as anyone.

⁹Huw T. Edwards (T.G.W.U.), *Tros F'Ysgwydd*, Denbigh, Gwasg Gee, 1959.

¹⁰Monallt (Merioneth C.C.).

English Tories are fond of depicting the Left Wing Intellectual as a crank, and one must admit that they are all too often right about this. English Left Wing Intellectuals often are bleak or bizarre individuals, seeking compensation in politics for some personal failing. Only in Wales does the man in the street, the good fellow, the genial club secretary turn out, as often as not, to be deeply socialist in his prejudices. A comparison of English and Welsh supporters of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament would have proved most instructive. So would a comparison of English and Welsh student conversation: English students tend to split up into sets, athletes and aesthetes and so on. Welsh students will talk of rugby, theology, sex and poetry in the same breath.

In an Army Transit Camp in Egypt, I once met a regular Company Sergeant Major from Llanelli, whose constant boast was that the principal of a Welsh University College — a studious and aloof-looking classical scholar — was a bosom pal of his. I have no means of knowing whether this was indeed so: the interesting point is that a Sergeant-Major should boast thus.

Many observers have picked out its comparative lack of class-consciousness* and type-consciousness as the outstanding characteristic of Welsh society — Cliff Morgan said that this was the great feature of Welsh rugby. Throughout history there has been an emphasis upon co-operative endeavour, informal as much as formal, on the farm as much as in the industrial village. Throughout history each valley or district or village in Wales has had as much right to set the standard as any other. Even in the Middle Ages, Wales was, except for a few years, an alliance, not a unified state. Up to 1956, we had no Capital: and one can imagine how very much less snobbish the English would be without London!

Not so long ago, one of Labour's favourite gibes against Plaid Cymru was to call her 'medieval'. This was a surprising taunt. For one thing, Plaid Cymru's favourite models, the Scandinavian countries, probably have the most 'modern' living standards in Europe. For another, a number of influential socialist thinkers found much to admire in the Middle Ages. At any rate, one makes no excuses for suggesting that the Welsh people retain to this day some of the traits which characterised them in the Middle Ages, and which made Welsh Law so enlightened for its time, and so well worth fighting for.

*I am told that, in the Vale of Glamorgan, the villages of the Welshry can still be distinguished from those of the Englishry on this score.

ARISTOCRATIC DEMOCRACY

Ah, says the Labourite, princes and lords! Precisely, for in Wales the, there were more princes, more people of gentle birth, than there were serfs. It was to preserve a social system under which the many were equal and free, that the Welsh fought so long and so stubbornly against English and Norman feudalism, and tended to resist strong government from within, too.

Later on, in Elizabethan times, the Welsh were still being mocked by the English as a nation of whom even the poor regarded themselves as gentlemen, gentility being for the Welsh, of course, a matter of descent, not of wealth. In the Middle Ages, in the Tudor period and in modern times, higher education has been, to a fault, a popular ambition in Wales. Even to-day, the Welsh delight in pedigree and learning is a democratic, rather than an aristocratic, trait. These things are the right of everyone in Wales: when the anglicisation of the wealthier squires threatened to make our democratic aristocracy class-conscious, Welsh society was already regrouping around the lay leaders of a new religious awakening. The emphasis, during the awakening, on literacy and the dignity of the individual went well with the co-operative ways of small farmers and the comradeship of quarry and mine. It produced an aristocratic democracy which, here and there, survives.

The erudition of the Welsh worker has often been exaggerated, and his temperament romanticised. It is nevertheless, astonishing what was once achieved and what remains. Let me give one of several possible examples.

Llyfrau'r Dryw, publishers, of Llandybie, Dyfed, brought out in the early '60s a series of well-produced pocket books of contemporary verse, one to every county. These are anthologies, not so much of the work of established poets as in each case, of some sixty ordinary men and women who write poetry as a hobby.

A COMMON CULTURE

When one considers the inroads already made upon the Welsh language, even in the Western counties, the result is scarcely credible by cosmopolitan standards. Schoolmasters and ministers are well represented, and the cynic will be grateful for that. In the volumes so far issued, they are, however, outnumbered by working farmers. Other occupations represented include — and this is not an exhaustive list — electrical engineer, collier, police sergeant, cobbler, sales representative, quarryman, seamstress, ship's captain, ship's

wireless operator, mason, director of education, postman, steel worker, dentist, farm labourer, writer on furniture design, shopkeeper, forester, motor mechanic and bank manager.

Most of the poetry is sound and enjoyable, rather than original and inspired. The accent is on good craftsmanship, rather than imagination. The wonder is that our contemporaries should write poetry at all. And for every 'ordinary' poet in Wales, there are several singers and musicians, a score of amateur adult students, and hundreds who bring to sport the dedication of an artist or a scholar. Neither should the chapel hypocrites of fiction be allowed to obscure the many admirable plate-layer deacons, quarryman commentators and farm-hand choir-masters of fact.

How long all this will last is a matter for conjecture, even in the Welsh-speaking areas. Two generations have gone by since every sheet in the blacksmith's workshop of the Sirhowy Iron-works was chalked 'white with couplets of *cywydd*'.¹¹ one doubts if Aneurin Bevan, named after a local poet, knew what a *cywydd* was. But if the steelworker-poet or the miner-poet is almost a thing of the past, there is some hope that the attitude of mind which made him possible will remain.

A railwayman's son from a village near Abergavenny, to whom we shall be referring again, wrote that in his home they 'met and made music, listened to it, recited and listened to poems, valued fine language' — this in the twenties of this century and in an area where the language died long ago. The myth, if not always the fact, still distinguishes Wales from what has become of England.

* * *

SOCIAL JUSTICE

For better or for worse, democracy is the Welsh way of life and the basis of our passion for social justice. This is so quite as much in the rural as in the industrial areas: the aim of the Farmer's Union of Wales is, for example, a full life for many farmers rather than wealth for a few — an ideal which holds good generally and reminds one of that recent description of Denmark as 'a country where the rich are few and the poor are non-existent'.

¹¹The *cywydd* is a Welsh verse-form, dating from the Fourteenth Century and necessarily written in the strict meters called *cyghanedd*. The quotation is from Myfyr Wyn's *Atgofion am Sirhywi a'r Cylch*, edited by D. Myrddin Lloyd for the University of Wales Press in 1951.

When they think of the typically Welsh in political attitudes, most people remember that the statesmen responsible for bringing in both Old Age Pensions and the Health Service were Welshmen and that Aneurin Bevan resigned from the Cabinet over a Labour Government's decision to charge for doctors' prescriptions; that three out of the four candidates at the most recent Welsh by-election favoured unilateral nuclear disarmament; that a Peace Message from the Children of Wales is relayed around the world annually, and that the small town of Llangollen started the renowned International Eisteddfod entirely of its own accord; they think, perhaps, of the principles and the dignity of the Bethesda strikers of 1896, of the sportsmanship of the Tonypany strikers of 1911, of University Colleges built with the pennies of the poor, of the Welsh settlers in Patagonia winning such a name for humanity amongst the Indians that the Indians — not without experience — refused to believe they were Christians.

If these attitudes can be summed up in one word, humanity is that word: humanity emanating from a traditional sense of community; humanity enlightened by a traditional Christian belief in the worth of each individual, and by the application of the individual conscience to the affairs of the community.

The Welsh phrase 'chwarae teg' ('fair play') was coined long before the English learned to play cricket!

II. THE TRADITION AND PARTY POLITICS

So far we have concentrated upon the distinguishing features of Welsh Radicalism, and have neglected features which are common to radicalism everywhere. One can, nevertheless, see how well the characteristic Welsh way of life fitted in, both with the early radical emphasis on individual liberty and with the later radical emphasis upon social justice, with the Liberal Party to begin with, and then with Labour.

POSITIVE RADICALISM

In Wales, the transition from negative radicalism to positive radicalism was relatively smooth. In 1906 the Liberals held every Welsh seat in the Commons, except for Keir Hardie's corner of the double seat at Merthyr Tydfil. Yet by 1922 there were nineteen Welsh Labour M.P.s, by 1929, twenty-five. After the first World War in fact, the Labour Party inherited the Liberal vote with considerable ease. For one thing it was the evangelistic voice of the I.L.P. which had paved the way for Labour in Wales, rather than the more doctrinaire S.D.F. — it was time, said Hardie, 'to rescue Christ from the hands of those who did not understand him.' For another, the Radical Liberals were already close to the I.L.P. on topics like peace and in attitudes like respect for the workman: and academic study of the Welsh Liberal M.P.s of 1906 reveals that only seven belonged to the 'elderly and commercial' section of that Party.

To-day, in retrospect, Labour leaders tend to emphasise the differences between themselves and the Liberals. Then, in the heat of elections, they strove to minimise them. To-day, historians, wise after the event, show us how, as the turn of the century approached, the nationalistic young radical leaders of the 'Rural North' failed to appreciate the temper of the 'Industrial South' and thus lost their opportunity to win self-government for Wales.

Lose their opportunity they did, but there was much more room for synthesis than is always appreciated to-day. Ruskin and William Morris strongly influenced the radicals as well as the socialists. Tom Ellis,¹² indeed, had revealed some sympathy for socialism as early as 1892 when, in a speech at Bangor, he asked, 'In the . . . great movement for placing upon a stabler and more satisfactory and permanent basis the social relations and duties of man to man, in this movement towards socialism, what has been the contribution of

Wales?' — and went on to answer, 'Though Wales in modern times is largely individualist, we cannot but feel that it has been the land of *cyfraith, cyfar, cyfnawdd, cymorthau and cymanfaoedd*.¹³ the land of social co-operation, of associative effort. It is significant that the initiator in Britain of the movement for collective and municipal activity in the common effort for the common good was Robert Owen, who embodied in these latter days the spirit of the old Welsh social economy.'

NATIONALISM

Neither had nationalism acquired in the nineties the some-what sinister air which Germany was soon to give it. Thomas Jones revered Mazzini as devotedly as Tom Ellis, while Keir Hardie's election addresses include sentences like, 'Socialism means that the land of Wales will again belong to its people.'

Many elderly people in rural Wales still think of the Liberal Party essentially as a Welsh Nationalist Party — when Plaid Cymru first fought Merioneth, the main Liberal gibe was, 'You've stolen our policy!'. Let it not be forgotten that, up to 1945, 'self-government for Wales' was a perennial on the Labour manifesto too.

Recent historians have suggested — again perhaps being wise after the event — that all the Welsh people wanted in the days of Tom Ellis was recognition, as opposed to responsibility. It is clear, however, that to the later leaders of Welsh Radical thought, the nation was of the essence. In Michael D. Jones, rural Wales produced, as early as the sixties, a prophet who fused the liberalism, nationalism and incipient socialism of his day into a comprehensive whole which Wales is only now beginning to appreciate.

In that critical and exciting period of Welsh development at the turn of the century, before events had shaken the confidence and flouted the optimism of one of the most gifted generations Wales has known, there were three distinct and honourable strains in Welsh Radicalism. Each one of them is represented by a separate political party to-day. In a sense, the Liberal, Labour and Welsh Nationalist Parties are all heirs of the Radical tradition. As might be expected, it is my contention that only one of them still has enough concern for that tradition to give it contemporary significance and project it into the future.

¹²Tom Ellis (1859-99): the golden boy of Welsh radical liberalism, still being mourned after his early death. The son of a small Merioneth farmer, he won his way to New College, Oxford, and to the House of Commons, taking it all in his stride and winning the hearts of all who knew him. Many Welshmen feel bitter about his acceptance of office under Gladstone in 1892 — he became Chief Liberal Whip in 1894 — but one suspects that his subsequent career would not have been quite as disillusioning as Lloyd George's. Less dynamic than L.L.G., he was, nevertheless, deeper in learning, wider in culture and more responsible in nationalism: an old disciple of Michale D. Jones in fact.

¹³The Welsh prefix *cyf* or *cym* means 'together'.

Take the Liberals. Although the Liberals still hold Cardiganshire and Montgomeryshire and until recently polled well in Denbigh, Merioneth and Carmarthen, it is, perhaps, in these very areas that Liberalism as a belief is most dead. If there is to be a revival of the Liberal Party at all in Wales, it will come, not in the Welsh-speaking counties, but in cosmopolitan centres like Cardiff: and it will have no interest in Wales or Welsh Radicalism.

After the great split in the Liberal Party in 1918 and its landslide losses to Labour, the most representative figures of Welsh Liberalism were safe men like Sir Henry Haydn Jones, M.P. for Merioneth, 1910-45, about whom it was openly said that the only time he had ever risen in the Commons was to shut the window. In spite of one or two radical-sounding candidates and their immediate following, most Welsh Liberals to-day are respectable, safe, almost non-political. As long as some reverence is paid to their ancestral heroes, few of the local leaders mind whether you are for Suez-like expeditions or against them, for self-government for Wales or against it.

It is difficult to conceive of anything more alien to the spirit of Tom Ellis than the way the Merioneth Liberals, at the 1959 General Election, tried to make capital of the fact that the Cwmlllynfell miners' leader, Isaac Stephens, had joined Plaid Cymru. They spoke no longer of One Wales but of the 'industrial South' overwhelming the 'Rural North'. They invoked instead the socialist bogey. And no wonder: they had the tacit support of the Merioneth Conservative and Unionist Association! This is the Liberalism which sent the Hussars to Tonypandy and which can never again win the confidence of Wales.

While one deplores the retreat of Welsh Liberalism from its Welsh commitments, one must admit that by 1959 there were ample grounds for suspecting the quality of the Welsh Labour Party's socialism. Although the Labour Party went on inheriting both the ideals and the personnel of Welsh radicalism right up to Lady Megan's defection in 1955, it is far from certain that the ideals are being handed on to the second and third generation of Labour voters. During the lifetime of Keir Hardie even, leaders were growing-up in the coalfield who owed their ideas much less to local tradition than to a formal Marxist education.

Now Marxist economic theory — materialism and the class war — was well suited to the period when huge impersonal combines ousted the old family concerns of Wales. But in discovering an economic aspect of the truth which had hitherto been overlooked the new

'independent working-class education', as Noah Ablett¹⁴ called it, rejected another equally valid aspect. Just as the Liberals forgot that, since the martyrdom of Dic Penderyn,¹⁵ most Welshmen in the coalfield had become militantly working class, so these new Labour leaders forgot that the working class of Wales was inimitably and unavoidably Welsh.

ANEURIN BEVAN

One sees this clearly in Aneurin Bevan's striking apologia, *In Place of Fear*. Bevan was big enough to reject the orthodox line when he saw fit. In spite of everything, one finds the old radical tradition coming out in sentences like, 'If the policies of statesmen . . . do not have for their object the enlargement and cultivation of the individual life, they do not deserve to be called civilised.'

Yet Aneurin Bevan had no idea at all whence that tradition came. He advises the new working-class M.P. not to stand in awe at the tradition of the House of Commons, to bear in mind that the great statesmen of the past are 'not his ancestors', that it is 'not the past of his people' which the pageantry of Parliament depicts. Only a Welshman could have felt and written like this: such talk must have been anathema to Ernest Bevin or Herbert Morrison, and to Michael Foot.

The tragedy is — it is the tragedy of a whole generation of Welshmen — that Aneurin Bevan himself had no idea who *his* ancestors were or what they did, no one to tell him that the past of Wales 'is not the history of kings but the history of the counsellors and leaders of the people'. Even to-day there is little place for history of that kind in most Welsh schools. There was no place at all for it in the Central Labour College and its satellite Marxian classes in the valleys. 'Independent working-class education' turned out, more

¹⁴Noah Ablett (1883-1935): born in Porth, Rhondda; one of the miners' leaders responsible, in 1910-11, for overthrowing Mabon's policy of conciliation in favour of strikes and the class war. A Marxist-syndicalist, and one of the authors of *The Miners Next Step*, with its typically Welsh accent on decentralisation and workers' control as opposed to nationalisation.

¹⁵Dic Penderyn (1808-31): collier. Took part in the Merthyr Riots of 1831, when the 93rd (Highland) Regt., besieged in the Castle Inn, shot at the crowd and killed and wounded several. Arrested for allegedly wounding a soldier, which he denied, sentenced to death at Cardiff Assizes, hanged, despite much petitioning, on 13th August, 1831, at the age of 23, and buried at Aberafan (Aberavon) with full nonconformist honours and an immense guard of honour of ordinary people. In 1874, another man confessed to the wounding.

often than not, to mean 'English working-class education'. To Aneurin Bevan, and thousands like him, Wales remained only a sentiment, her only institution a rugby team — and thank goodness for the exception.

THE LABOUR PARTY IN DECLINE

Few Welshmen like to criticise the stricken generation of the Depression but the fact must be faced that orthodox Labourites of that generation have done untold harm to the image of socialism. Marxism as such may be out but the Fabian state socialism in vogue sadly lacks the humanity of Robert Owen or William Morris or Pierre-Joseph Proudhon or Keir Hardie. Labourites who lack the originality of a Bevan tend to adhere to a centralist and materialist dogma and to think that strength-in-unity entails party discipline of ludicrous rigidity.

All over Wales, the Labour Party is becoming dominated by the Unions, the Unions themselves are passing under the control of the orthodox type of official, and the more orthodox type of Union is gaining ground as industry is diversified.

By 1955, an 'objective but sympathetic' *Guardian* correspondent could name as the chief characteristics of the Labour Party in Wales, 'its overwhelming strength, the loyalty of its active members and its lack of any ideas for bringing about socialism.' My generation found it hard indeed to recognise in W. H. Mainwaring, M.P. for the Rhondda Fach up to 1959, one of the authors of *The Miners' Next Step* — and of that short-lived syndicalism which the historian Gwyn A. Williams has described as yet another example of Welsh 'separateness' ('*arwahanrwydd*').

This is, of course, far from being the whole story as far as Labour is concerned. If the evangelical tradition does not seem to be perpetuating itself, it remains strong, both in and out of the chapels. A team of sociologists from University College, Swansea, has estimated that a quarter of the Labour leaders in their area are 'chapel socialists', as opposed to 'orthodox Labourites'.

WELSH SOCIALISM

It is, perhaps, the Labour movement in England, as much as orthodoxy within Wales herself, that is making the Labour Party uncongenial to the many Welsh socialists who cannot regard materialism, centralisation and British Nationalism as part of their heritage. Men moved to action 'by sorrow at the world's tears' seldom find it easy to work with those moved, like the Fabians, 'by irritation

at the world's mess'. Wise and unwise do not always coincide with good and bad. Just as Marx and Lenin were in a sense bound by German and Russian national tradition to see socialism in autocratic terms, so the English Webbs tended to see it in paternal and metropolitan terms. It should surprise no one that the Welsh, who have never known the feudal system and have always known Christianity, should see it in democratic terms; nor that, just as the fathers left a lukewarm and divided Liberal Party for a dynamic Labour Party, a number of the sons have already left a lukewarm and divided Labour Party for the Party of the Welsh.

* * *

One of Labour's main slogans when faced with opposition by Plaid Cymru at the 1959 General Election was, 'Don't split the progressive vote!' This was indeed ironic, not only because some Labour candidates had only just stopped calling Plaid Cymru Tory, but also because many of Labour's own attitudes were anti-progressive, as that vague adjective has normally been understood.

PROGRESSIVE POLICIES

It was the Labour Party which collaborated with the Tories to ban political broadcasts on the Welsh Home Service. It was the Labour Party which opposed the wish of the Cwmlllynfell miners to run their own pit as the authors of *The Miners' Next Step* would have wished. It was the Labour-controlled Liverpool Corporation which refused to make the slightest concession to Welsh, including Welsh Labour, opinion over destroying the community in Cwn Tryweryn. It was a Labour President of the Board of Trade, Harold Wilson, who refused to schedule the depressed slate-quarrying districts of Gwynedd as a Development Area, on the ground that 'the number of persons unemployed or liable to unemployment' was 'not significant in the national total'. (The rate of unemployment then being, according to his own White Paper, 'higher than the national average or even that for the development areas'.) It was Labour which was sending its big guns around Wales to laugh off any demand for self-government. It was Aneurin Bevan himself who had decided that to enter the counsels of the world without the Hydrogen Bomb would be to enter them naked — Bevan, who had once faced the whole might of capitalism with only his faith.

On these topics and on many others, it is Plaid Cymru which is on the side of the angels of radicalism. Of course, it is easy enough for a minority party to specialise in unsullied ideals. The sincerity of Plaid Cymru's appeal to the radical tradition cannot be assessed without examining her philosophical basis as well as her election slogans.

FREEDOM AND CO-OPERATION

One of Plaid Cymru's oldest tags is 'Freedom and Co-operation', a coupling which holds good in domestic as well as international affairs. From the beginning, the party has looked upon the early radical emphasis upon individual (and national) liberty, and the later radical emphasis upon social justice (and world order) as complementary rather than conflicting virtues.

On the question of external relationships, the Party's founders drew a distinction between freedom and responsibility, on the one hand, and independence or isolation, on the other. Independence they repudiated, nor was the idea of national sovereignty at all sacred to them. It should always be remembered that the founding of the Party preceded the decision that self-government within the Commonwealth was the status appropriate to Wales. To Plaid Cymru, national freedom is a means, not an end.

In internal affairs, too, the new Party was quick to distinguish the nation from the state. The nation was a society of the societies within which men lived their lives, the state's business to serve the nation, not absorb it. State socialism, with its mammoth centralised industries, was potentially as inhuman as capitalism. The system of economic organisation best suited to the national tradition was co-operation, with occupiers becoming owners, singly on the farms, jointly in the factories. The supreme test of a political system was the status of the individual person, and it was the human person who was degraded when his own society or his own nation was ignored or destroyed.¹⁶ The state had to be kept in its place.

One thing which the Left used to throw at Plaid Cymru was the assertion that the outstanding figure of the Party's formative years, John Saunders Lewis, was a 'conservative' with affiliations with the French Right. This was sometimes countered by the assertion that Plaid Cymru has changed out of all recognition since the Roman Catholic ex-officer, Saunders Lewis, retired from politics in favour of (eventually) Gwynfor Evans, a pacifist and a practising Congregationalist.

SAUNDERS LEWIS

While it is true that Saunders Lewis is essentially an explorer in politics, Gwynfor Evans essentially a consolidator, both assertion and counter-assertion are a little superficial.

¹⁶Wales Can Win, Christopher Davies 1973, and R. Tudur Jones, 'The Desire of Nations', Christopher Davies, 1974.

Saunders Lewis has certainly developed into something of an aristocrat in taste and temperament. He even has a partiality for Welsh rescue-work amongst the anglicised country gentry, a partiality as different as it could be from Ramsay Macdonald's snobbish weakness for the same class.

In the sense that he seeks to strengthen Welsh democracy where it is weakest, Saunders Lewis might well be called a reactionary — as were Ruskin and William Morris. It is well known that he has learnt much from France or, as he himself would put it, from Europe: his appreciation of the danger of declining standards under mass-democracy probably derives from De Tocqueville, his appreciation of the need for roots from Barres.

But De Tocqueville, aristocrat though he was, accepted democracy: his aim was to 'ennoble equality', not to restore the nobility. Barres, too, was one of the few pillars of the French Right to accept the Revolution and to acknowledge the essential Frenchness of socialists like Jaures — just as Saunders Lewis acknowledged the element of nationalism in Welsh Liberalism, in his memorial essay on Edward Prosser Rhys.

Nothing could be more absurd than to identify Saunders Lewis with the characteristic French Right, with Maurras, say, and the Action Francaise. To Maurras, the safety and convenience of the state were more important than justice — in principle he it noted as well as in practice. To Saunders Lewis, Welsh Nationalism is 'Christian, moderate and conditional'. To Maurras, the benefit of France was the only criterion of worth. To Saunders Lewis, Wales is a society of societies, itself part of the greater society of Europe. It is as silly to identify Saunders Lewis with the French Right as it is to associate Michael D. Jones with the English Utilitarians. Both are essentially of Wales and *sui generis*.

It has been necessary to digress this far in order to explain, firstly how some radicals came to think of Plaid Cymru as tainted with the sinister philosophy of the French Right, and, secondly, how it was that a Roman Catholic with an obvious taste for the Welsh way of life as lived before the Welsh Revolution, could lead a party which included the cream of Welsh nonconformity.

THE FIRE AT PENYBERTH

In assessing as original a figure as Saunders Lewis there is, of course, a tendency to emphasise the originality at the expense of any underlying orthodoxy. It was indeed original to defend Wales by

arson on a scale sufficient to ensure trial by jury at Caernarfon Assizes. It was orthodox Welsh radicalism to defend this action on the ground that the moral law takes precedence over the law of the state.

The fire kindled at the bombing school at Pen-y-bertth in 1936 is one of the great beacons of the Welsh radical conscience. 'If you find us not guilty,' said Saunders Lewis in that incomparable address¹⁷ to the Caernarfon jury, 'you declare your conviction as judges in this matter that the moral law is supreme; you declare that the moral law is binding on governments just as it is on private citizens. You declare that "necessity of state" gives no right to set morality aside, and you declare that justice, not material force, must rule in the affairs of nations.'

It was not for nothing that the Roman Catholic had at his shoulder an ex-miner in D.J. Williams and a representative, in the Baptist Lewis Valentine, of the oldest radical tradition in Wales.

* * *

It is clear that modern Welsh nationalists are very much in the line of succession of the Welsh Radicals and the early Welsh socialists. They nevertheless remain absolutely detached from the parties which those radicals and socialists supported. For if most Welsh radicals wanted to preserve the cultural identity of Wales, many of them rejected the idea of Wales as a political entity. What Plaid Cymru has done is to insist that politics, economics and culture cannot be separated, that Wales cannot hope to keep her identity alongside as powerful a nation as England without political power, and that no Welsh faction can keep its identity sufficiently long within an English political party to gain such power for Wales.

This view has proved too realistic for the many romantics amongst Welsh Liberal and Labour leaders. Many of these realise by now that Wales is significantly different from England politically as well as culturally but still hold back from nationalism. Such leaders always lay great stress, as do many English politicians of the Left, for obvious reasons, upon the vital Welsh contribution to English politics.

¹⁷Included in the second volume of British Pamphleteers, edited A.J.P. Taylor and Reginald Reynolds, London, Allan Wingate, 1951. The jury disagreed and there was a fresh trial, this time, most inequitably, at the Old Bailey in London.

THE SALT LOSES HIS SAVOUR

But did not England conquer David Lloyd George and Aneurin Bevan as surely as she conquered Henry Tudor? The pity of it is that as Wales, without a parliament, without a press, without a full-time television service, gradually forgets her history and becomes part of England the Conservative and Unionist Party is becoming really established in Wales for the first time.

It is still true that the areas of Tory progress are the anglicised areas, but is not the whole of Wales becoming anglicised to-day? 'The Anglicization of the population,' say the Swansea sociologists, 'might produce a self-conscious middle-class which is opposed both to the orthodox Labour view and to the Welsh way of life. Such a movement is in evidence and could presumably be associated with the Conservative Party.'

The question which Welshmen in the Labour Party must face, and face at once, is, 'if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?' If the people of Wales lose their Welshness, how long will their natural socialism remain?

III. THE TRADITION TOMORROW

There is a sense in which only the success of Plaid Cymru and the self-respect which follows self-government can possibly save Welsh Radicalism in any guise. This is not, however, the most important way in which the Party can contribute to our political tradition. The maintenance of a tradition only makes sense if it is selective, rejecting the bad and the out-moded, accepting only the good and the relevant. Plaid Cymru has striven to remedy the defects of radicalism as well as consolidate its good.

When one speaks of social conscience and of classlessness as Welsh virtues, it is with no sense of moral superiority. The Welsh people have been endowed in full measure with the vices which so often correspond to these virtues. The main trouble at the moment is that we have to endure our vices without being able to exercise our virtues.

WELSH SOCIAL VICES

By English standards, the Welsh are free of class-consciousness, but they are uncommonly quick to denigrate individual excellence, slow to insist upon the highest standards and distrustful of strong leadership. Was it not Lloyd George's peculiar strength that, in Wales, he never attempted to lead?

Then, of course, there is the parochialism, geographical and otherwise, which has so often stabbed Welsh nationalism in the back and which may yet destroy that very sense of local identity in which its own exponents revel. That Wales is largely 'internationalist' in her attitude to world affairs makes not a whit of difference. Was there ever a more parochial type than the international socialist miners' leader, to whom Wales is a series of mining valleys, no more?

Neither has the celebrated Welsh conscience added stature to our political life at all often. As has already been acknowledged, it is not difficult to let the conscience reign supreme in a nation which, for centuries, has experienced neither the responsibilities nor the temptations of power. Devoid of responsibility, the Welsh conscience has been allowed to wallow endlessly in sentimentality.

In spite of an obvious capacity for administration and business, in the really big things, the Welsh are all talk — calling conferences, appointing sub-committees, proposing amendments, walking out: all the futility summed-up by the man who was surprised it wasn't a Welshman who split the atom.

As the novelist Kate Roberts has discerned, the Welsh are far braver in suffering than in removing the causes of their suffering. Is the famous Welsh militancy perhaps an English myth? Certainly it is a militancy of opinion rather than action. Our Left has failed to produce anyone with the dash of a Lasalle or a Bakunin, let alone the dedication of a Marx or a Lenin: only John Frost¹⁸ and the elusive Rebecca of Carmarthenshire come anywhere near the Continental standard of sacrifice and heroism.

The trouble is perhaps that though we have less respect than most people for the state, we have more for humanity.

THE STIMULUS OF SELF-GOVERNMENT

The struggle for self-government, no less than self-government itself, should help to reconcile the romantic enthusiasm of the Welsh Revolution with the discipline and rigour of an earlier tradition. It

will bring to the various localities, sects and occupations of Wales, and to her two languages, a unity that they have rarely known. It will also reconcile our radical tradition and our pastoral culture with the temper and the techniques of the scientific revolution of our own time, and give the immense immigrant population of Wales an identity and roots of their own.

* * *

If Wales lives, the political scene will go on altering from time to time. That is why it is so silly, as well as cowardly, for Conservatives and Liberals to oppose self-government in fear of Labour rule in perpetuity.¹⁹ The Welsh moral conscience and the Welsh sense of community may, nevertheless, have an abiding role to play in affairs of state.

As a political party, Plaid Cymru is in many ways unique, disconcertingly so to those who are used to the traditional right-left line-up in British politics. As political thinkers, however, her leaders are by no means alone in the world.

All over the world to-day, some of the best minds are emphasising much the same themes as Plaid Cymru: the importance of roots to the individual, the importance of decentralisation to the community, the superiority of piecemeal progress over complete upheaval, the renewal of moral vigour in public life and policy.

THE WAR WITH BUREAUCRACY

If the problem of national self-determination as such is, in Europe, somewhat dated, the problem of making people feel that they govern themselves is occupying many. The constitutions of Britain, the United States and the U.S.S.R. no longer excite the admiring study that they used to: it is Switzerland, the Scandinavian countries and Yugoslavia that interest students to-day.

¹⁸John Frost (1784-1877): one of the leading citizens of Newport and Mayor after the Municipal Corporations Act, 1835. He became an active Chartist in 1838 and soon lost his seat on the bench of magistrates. Always prepared to stick his neck out in a good cause, he, nevertheless, opposed physical violence, and it is ironic that, after leading the Chartist demonstration march on Newport in 1839, which provoked shooting by the army, he should have been condemned to death for treason. The sentence was commuted to transportation for life, and in 1854 Frost was pardoned. On his return home, he continued to speak his mind regardless of the possible consequences. Another Congregationalist. There is an excellent biography by Professor David Williams, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1939.

¹⁹True Conservatives should reflect that under self-government—
(1) Welsh socialism might well reject many of the features which have brought discredit upon the Labour Party;

(2) Welsh conservatism might well shake-off its association with the Englishry and its responsibility for the Depression in the public mind;

(3) The old English party divisions will lose force as the Welsh people face their own problems in their own way. The Welsh Conservatives might, for example, accept the sense of community of the tradition outlined here, but reject its pacifism. For what is Welsh conservatism? Up to a point, it was to conserve the democratic Welsh way of life that Wales voted radical, and to conserve its radicalism that it voted socialist.

One of the outstanding social scientists of the age, the Swede Gunnar Myrdal — a scholar with experience as a Cabinet Minister and as a high U.N.O. officer — has been arguing to great effect that the 'stale and confused' controversy between free and planned economies belongs to the past. Everywhere, planning, in some form or other, has won the day. The next phase in the development of the Welfare State is to minimise central intervention and develop local responsibility, for 'we should not make peace with bureaucracy.'

Bureaucracy has its own will to survive, however, and men in many lands are becoming little better than domestic animals. If Myrdal's policies are to be practiced, a naturally decentralised country like Wales will have distinct advantages. Far better let Wales live on than have to resort to Lewis Mumford's prescription for large states — the 'cultural re-willing' of regions.

No bureaucrat will willingly devolve power upon a community which is unready for it. Decentralisation by central direction is, as T.S. Eliot observes, a contradiction. Decentralisation is thus a cultural as much as a constitutional problem. In England now, the most striking distinguishing mark of the New Left is its concern about the moral apathy, status-seeking and salesman mentality of our day, its search for 'a common culture' of real worth. Is not this common culture the very thing which Wales still possesses — on the thinnest of threads?

CULTURE IS ORDINARY

It cannot be a coincidence that the leading exponent of the view that 'culture is ordinary' in England to-day is a Welshman from the country behind Abergavenny, Raymond Williams, whom we have already mentioned. Judging by Williams' novel, *Border Country*, his district is consciously Welsh. It has, however, long lost the language, and Williams himself never seems to have had the opportunity to acquire a Welsh intellectual background. Raymond Williams nevertheless seems to be groping for something which another Monmouthshire man, Aneurin Bevan, missed altogether. His reaction to the University of Cambridge, to which he won a scholarship, is utterly different from Bevan's reaction to the House of Commons: 'always from these scattered white houses it has made sense to go out and become a scholar or a poet or a teacher.'

It may not be polite to say so, but one doubts whether Williams could write quite as confidently of the ordinariness of culture and education had he been brought up anywhere in England. Richard Hoggart, a Yorkshireman, shares the New Left's concern for culture. Hoggart's family, however, lumped the 'educated' in with the 'rich'

and the 'powerful' Them — and the proper attitude to Them was hostility. More significant still is the attitude of the Londoner Wollheim who, in a recent Fabian pamphlet, insists that culture is for the intelligentsia, is not 'ordinary'.

Raymond Williams' emphasis on culture as a way of life, his hostility towards education merely as a ladder for individual betterment, his feeling that there are no 'masses', only your own cousin, brother-in-law and neighbour, his longing for a community which governs itself and is not governed by Them: these are great ideals for any country, but there is something very Welsh about them.²⁰ In Wales, they could become practical politics. If Wales would only remain true to her own personality, she might yet bring the ideal of equality to life.

* * *

Many of the thinkers with whom Plaid Cymru can claim kinship in home affairs are noted denigrators of 'nationalism'. Myrdal's main concern, apart from decentralisation, is to curb the 'economic nationalism' which results in gross and provocative inequalities between the West and the underdeveloped nations.

INTERNATIONALISM

I find no difficulty here. International idealism is characteristic of the Welsh radical tradition and springs from the humanity and lack of racial prejudice of the ordinary Welsh man and woman. It is characteristic of Welsh Nationalism too: though Plaid Cymru is the only *Welsh* nationalist party in Britain, it is the least nationalist of all the parties in the chauvinistic sense.

Internationalism and nationalism are, indeed, complementary aspects of the Welsh political tradition. It is no accident that Henry Richard,²¹ the first radical Member of Parliament for Merthyr, was known both as 'the Member for Wales' for his work for Wales, and 'the apostle of peace' for his work in pressing arbitration upon the powers of Europe.

²⁰Williams' views are summarised in his article in the symposium, *Conviction*, edited by Norman Mackenzie, London, 1958.

²¹Henry Richard (1812-88) of Tregaron, Congregational minister and then, from 1848, secretary of the Peace Society, a post which involved him with many European governments. Elected to Parliament in 1868, he carried a measure in favour of the principle of international arbitration in 1873. His successor as secretary of the Peace Society was another Welshman, William Jones of Ruthin. Joseph Tregelles Price of Neath, who worked hard to save Dic Penderyn from execution, founded the first Peace Society in 1816.

Now that the influence and the votes of small nations are counting for something in U.N.O., now that the Irish (of all people, according to the usual Welsh assessment of Irish Nationalism) are playing a glamorous international role, now that Albania, a country immeasurably poorer than Wales, is playing a significant role even in the Communist world, is it in the least Utopian to seek for Wales and her conscience a voice in world affairs?

PUBLIC MORALITY

Gunnar Myrdal himself says that there is only one remedy to the inequality between West and East — 'a more enlightened citizenry'. He might have written, 'a more humane citizenry', for our generation is confronted by a problem more fundamental even than the inequality between West and East. Hydrogen Bomb threats are poisoning men's minds as surely as Hydrogen Bomb threats are polluting the atmosphere. If statesmen persist in taking it for granted that the annihilation of millions of ordinary people is an honourable means of defence, the decline in public morality can only continue.

The old radical newspaper of Wales, *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, recently declared, 'Wales can no longer remain part of England without violating her radical conscience.' If that conscience is worth a damn, Wales must join the so-called 'uncommitted' nations, which may yet win the battle of ideas and stave off catastrophe.