their very character as gentlemanly leaders embodied an integrity above the factionalism and apostasy of party politicians and the specious independence of other parliamentary Radicals. Middle-class politicians who attempted to win some measure of working-class support for "respectable" *para-parliamentary* agitation failed precisely to the extent that they refused to accept popular radicalism's cultural style, its modes of open access mobilization and democratic organization. While Chartists displayed considerable ambivalence towards free trade they were united in rejection of the operational style and procedures of the Anti-Corn Law League. For those engaged in public meetings, demonstrations and associations, the very ways and means of agitation – the behavioural codes of the repertoire of contention – were themselves the crucial subject of much contestation. Popular contention has meanings beyond those revealed by Tilly's impressive database.

One final gripe. A book of this high quality, based upon a wealth of primary research in numerous archives, deserves a system of proper referencing. The Harvard system deployed here fails to do justice to Tilly's labours and hinders others who wish to pursue the sources.

John Belchem

BARROW, LOGIE [and] IAN BULLOCK. Democratic ideas and the British Labour movement, 1880–1914. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996. ix, 326 pp. £40.00; $69.95.

After World War I, socialist proponents of a strong democratic programme "found themselves squeezed between the benevolent elitism and 'realism' of one sort of Fabianism and what in some ways was the re-importation of the same thing in the revolutionary guise of Leninism" (p. 303). On the one hand, the Labour Party adopted a view of politics and the British constitution that owed much to the Fabian's defence of representative government rather than popular government. And on the other hand, the Bolshevik experience embodied the triumph of the Lenin of *What is to be Done?* over both his own more democratic guises and the popular democrats in the Russian movement. Logie Barrow and Ian Bullock's impressive work attempts to recover a stronger democratic tradition within the British left and to explain why it was squeezed out between these two alternatives.

One thing Barrow and Bullock rightly emphasize is the extent to which the socialism of the 1880s drew on a popular radicalism associated with Chartism. The first socialist organization of the 1880s was the Social Democratic Federation (SDF). Many of its members had been active in ultra-democratic movements, and the views of Hyndman, its idiosyncratic leader, overlapped with theirs here in important ways. The members of the SDF consciously saw themselves as the inheritors of the Chartist mantle: even as they came to place more emphasis on social reform, democratization typically remained essential not only to their vision of a socialist society but also as a strategic necessity to bring socialism about. Indeed, the commitment of the SDF to political action and political reform was one of the key issues that led people to leave it to form the Socialist League. Whilst some members of the League were anarchists who rejected the state as such, others, including William Morris, argued democracy had to come after the

transition to socialism. Although they regarded themselves as democrats, their focus on social measures all too often led to an unqualified rejection of politics. Thus, instead of addressing difficult political issues, they relied on a naive assumption that a socialist society necessarily would be harmonious and also a purist opposition to participation in existing political institutions. Barrow and Bullock see all this, but perhaps they could have made more than they do of the way an emphasis on the social pushed aside one on the political.

Whilst the Socialist League came to oppose a strong democratic programme from a purist position, the Fabian Society promoted a form of socialism that instanced only a weak concern with democracy. The Fabian view of democracy arose after Sidney Webb joined the Society, and it owed much more to his particular beliefs than Barrow and Bullock allow, for he had to fight to win for it the commanding position it held. Webb, influenced by liberal radicalism and positivism, argued for a system of representative government in which the people elected MPs who provided legislative control over reforms devised by experts. As Barrow and Bullock make clear, the differences between Webb and the strong democrats of the SDF were in fact quite slight. Nonetheless, there were significant differences in the theories from which they derived their views of democracy and so in the tone of their commitments. After the Independent Labour Party (ILP) was formed in 1893, it adopted a weak commitment to democracy, owing much to the Fabians, which lent passive support to democratic change without any commitment to campaign actively for it. Keir Hardie even said "nothing gave me greater satisfaction than the absence of any attempt to incorporate any political reforms in the programme". Despite some opposition in the ILP, and concerted opposition from the *Clarion* movement, the leaders of the ILP, like the Fabians, more or less accepted the existing political system – they demanded limited reforms rather than the popular democracy favoured by the SDF.

Hardie, Ramsay MacDonald and others followed the strategy of seeking labour representation in parliament in some sort of positive relationship with the Liberal Party. It was this strategy that animated the Labour Party which sought, not unreasonably, to use the existing political system to win concessions. The Party's hostility to the strong democrats was clear from the way it rejected attempts to commit MPs to either a fixed programme or the control of the annual conference – members were not to be allowed popular control over their representatives. Not surprisingly there was criticism of the authoritarian structure of the Labour Party from the SDF, dissident groups in the ILP, and the *Clarion*. These critics wanted Labour MPs to challenge the existing political system as undemocratic, and also to use their position less to win concessions than as a platform from which to deliver the socialist message. The dominant figures in the Party, however, remained unmoved.

One of the strengths of Barrow and Bullock's work is the way it traces parallel debates over democracy in the trade union movement. Whilst there were numerous attempts to increase the control that members had over particular unions, Barrow and Bullock focus on the attempt to do so through the scheme of federation proposed by P.J. King and championed by the *Clarion*. Schemes for federation flourished after the engineering lockout, when various activists blamed the defeat of the engineers on the fact that the workers were federated when the unions were not. King's scheme rested on the ideals of equality of contributions, benefits and representation. It dispensed almost entirely with full-time union

officials, and required decisions made by delegates attending the annual conference to be submitted to the general body for confirmation. Yet just as the strong democrats lost out to Hardie and MacDonald in the political movement, so King's scheme lost out to the official one of the Trades Union Congress in the industrial movement. One of many novel aspects of Barrow and Bullock's work is the details they have recovered of King's scheme and its fate. Another is the stress they place on the importance of its fate in the background to the rise of syndicalism in Britain.

Although the strong democrats seemed to have lost out in both the political and the industrial movements, Barrow and Bullock argue a new consensus was beginning to emerge on the eve of 1914. MacDonald, of course, still wanted Labour MPs to be representatives pursuing the parliamentary game in some kind of alliance with liberals. But two important things changed. First, the Social Democrats voted to affiliate to the Labour Party. Second, Philip Snowden and other powerful figures lost patience with MacDonald's arguments and leadership and began to side with the ILP dissidents on a number of issues. No doubt MacDonald could have rallied support among trade unionists, but, Barrow and Bullock conclude, "the prospects for an advance towards some form of 'real democracy' on the basis of a broad consensus looked better in that early summer of 1914 than at any previous time in the history of British socialism" (p. 285). Perhaps that is true, but I for one still do not think these prospects looked particularly good.

Barrow and Bullock are quite right to emphasize the centrality of debates on democracy within the labour movement at this time: earlier historians of the movement have neglected these debates, particularly within the trade unions, and it is useful to have that neglect corrected. But to highlight the vigour of the strong democrats is also to increase our interest in the question: why did they fail? Barrow and Bullock suggest various reasons for this failure without ever trying to weigh their relative importance. One set of reasons is the tactical errors made by the strong democrats: Barrow and Bullock point to a number of these at various key moments in their history. Another is the impact of external factors, for by 1914 the strong democrats had overcome some of their mistakes and the main forces for marginalization were the war and Bolshevism. A final one is the apparent lack of success of the strong democrats in comparison with the weak democratic programme embodied in the Labour Party: the weak democrats could claim some credibility for their strategy simply by virtue of having won seats in the House of Commons. Lurking behind all these reasons is one Barrow and Bullock never quite bring into the open – a suspicion of the adequacy of the strong democratic programme as such. All too often a commitment to socialism pushed aside a concern with political issues in a way that left the strong democrats prey to anarchism, purism and vagueness. Perhaps it is not enough for socialists to see democracy as part of their ideal and as a strategic necessity for bringing that ideal about. Perhaps they also have to be sufficiently modest about the epistemic validity of their ideal to believe it needs to pass the test of democracy.

Mark Bevir