

REPUBLICANISM IN NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND

To one familiar with the attitude of “near devotion” accorded the monarchy by the majority of Englishmen today, it may come as a shock to discover a lack of this devotion in mid-Victorian England. A sampling of comments from the radical press is a striking example. The regular arrival of Victoria’s progeny evoked this impious suggestion in the *Northern Star*: That, rather than reciting national prayers of thanksgiving, congregations should sing “hymns of despair for their misfortune in being saddled with another addition to the brood of royal Cormorants.”¹ *The National Reformer* referred to “our good kind, and dear Queen, who... could easily dispense with the allowance which her loyal subjects make her... unless she desires to be the last of England’s monarchs...”²

Yet criticism of Victoria was mild in comparison with the criticism directed toward her immediate predecessors. Upon the death of George IV in June 1830, the *Times* had the following comment: “The truth is... that there never was an individual less regretted by his fellow-creatures than this deceased King... If George IV ever had a friend, a devoted friend – in any rank of life – we protest that the name of him or her has not yet reached us.”³

This attitude toward the monarchy can be explained partly by the personalities of some of the Hanoverians – George IV, for example,⁴ partly by objections to the growing expense of monarchy, but it might also be explained by the feeling in some radical circles that the institution of monarchy was incompatible with the growth of democracy. Jeremy Bentham, writing in the 1820’s, criticized most of the electoral reform projects of the day “because the Radical as well as the

¹ *Northern Star*, 9 November 1844.

² *The National Reformer*, 31 October 1869.

³ *The Times* (London), 27 June 1830.

⁴ Had George IV lived as long as Victoria, it is conceivable that England would be a republic today. William IV was, by contrast, moderately popular but never admired; his eccentricities and inept public utterances won him the nick-name “Silly Billy”.

Liberal respected the existence of the Monarchy and the House of Lords.”¹ Republicanism, the most heretical phase of modern English radicalism, had some hope of success at the outset of the Victorian Age. Its failure and the reasons for a renewed popularity of the monarchy is the theme of this paper.

The republicanism current in nineteenth century England is somewhat difficult to define. It meant something different to each of the leading republicans. The sense in which I shall employ the term is more specific than Rousseau’s: “I... give the name ‘Republic’ to every State that is governed by laws: no matter what the form of its administration may be.”² The establishing of a society in which position was based on merit rather than birth was basic; republicanism then would involve the abolition of the monarchy and a reform of the House of Lords. The republican experiments in France, the seventeenth century English republican Commonwealth (and literature – Harrington, Milton and Sidney) and the example of American republicanism all served as ideological sources for the movement.³

The French republican experiments, especially the First French Republic of 1792, with its emphasis on liberty, equality and the secular national state, left a deep impression on nineteenth century English radicalism. In the Victorian period, the egalitarian republicanism of the French Revolution found its best expression in the writings of the Chartist, George Julian Harney and the secularist Charles Bradlaugh.⁴ Through their efforts English republicanism – in the forties and again in the seventies – took on the shape of an organization with some limited support.

Julian Harney was one of Chartism’s youngest and one of its most revolutionary spokesmen. At the age of twenty in 1837, he helped form the East London Democratic Association, whose object was the achievement of a democratic and republican England – based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity.⁵ The Association, the first active republican organization since the corresponding societies

¹ Jeremy Bentham, Works, Bowring ed. (Edinburgh, 1843), IX, pp. 1-2.

² Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (New York, Everyman’s Library, 1913), pp. 30-31.

³ The influence of the classics might be added here. See Zera S. Fink, *The Classical Republicans* (Northwestern University Studies, 1945), which deals with seventeenth century England; for a parallel development in France, see Harold Parker, *The Cult of Antiquity and the French Revolutionaries* (Cambridge University Press, 1937).

⁴ Richard Carlile (1790-1843), a champion of many radical causes – a secularist, republican, and crusader for the freedom of the press also might be included here.

⁵ A. R. Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge* (New York, 1958), p. 15. The title of association was changed to London Democratic Association in 1838.

of the 1790's, recommended "force" rather than "moral persuasion" as the means of achieving Chartist and republican goals. Harney preached the gospel of insurrection; he printed scenes and sketches from the French Revolution in his *London Democrat* "in order that the present generation may derive a lesson from the deeds of the past", and, in the revolution "which will speedily take place" in England, "imitate the heroic, god-like deeds of the sons of republican France."¹ The London Democratic Association, which claimed to be the mass-party of the metropolis with its 3000 members in 1838² came to an end with the failure of the Chartist uprisings of 1840.

Harney's criticism of monarchy, however, continued with his editorial comment in the *Northern Star* and later, the *Democratic Review*. His interest in republicanism was socio-economic as well as political; the abolition of the profit system and the destruction of social inequality were as important as the abolition of the monarchy and the Lords. Harney's inclination towards socialism and his close association with the continental exiles in London led him to found a second republican organization, the Fraternal Democrats, in 1845. Polish, German, and French *émigrés* were included in the organization which believed in "Governments elected by, and responsible to, the entire people" and "the earth with all its natural productions to be the property of all."³

The 1848 revolutions and the formation of a new republic in France gave added stimulus to activities of the English radicals. The Chartists prepared a new national petition in March, and a new national convention met in April. Republicanism now had some currency within the ranks of the Chartists, not only in London, but as far afield as Scotland,⁴ as evidenced in a speech by a Dundee Chartist in the frenetic days of March, 1848: "Should they happen... to capsize the present government at the point of the bayonet and pike, the next Government would be a republican one."⁵ Some Chartist periodicals openly advocated a British Republic as the only "thorough remedy" for the evils of the day⁶ and G. M. Harding launched his shortlived *Republican*.

¹ The *London Democrat*, 20 April 1839, quoted by F. Rosenblatt, *The Chartist Movement in Its Social and Economic Aspects* (Columbia University Press, 1916), p. 134.

² Schoyen, p. 32.

³ Schoyen, p. 135.

⁴ The American industrialist, Andrew Carnegie, was raised in a republican atmosphere in Dumfermline, Scotland, and later returned from America to preach the virtues of republicanism to the British.

⁵ Anon, *Memoranda of the Chartist Agitation in Dundee*, (Dundee, 1889), p. 75.

⁶ *The Reformers Almanac*, 15 April 1848, quoted by P. S. Slosson, *The Decline of the Chartist Movement* (Columbia University Press, 1916), p. 96.

But 1848, which began as a year of hope for English radicalism ended in disillusionment. Neither republicanism nor Chartism succeeded. Feargus O'Connor, the "Lion of the North", busy with his Land Plan, was opposed to the republican and socialist inclinations of Harney and the left wing. By the end of 1848, Chartist unity was destroyed. Events in France added to this disillusionment; the French working-class movement seemed virtually ruined after the "June Days" followed by the election of Louis Napoleon in December.

Harney's last attempt to support republicanism with an organization was the Republican Brotherhood, launched in Newcastle in 1855 in cooperation with manufacturer Joseph Cowen.¹ The Republican Brotherhood was not as revolutionary as Harney's earlier republican organizations. Interest in republicanism in the fifties was still stimulated to a great extent from abroad. The Crimean War had the support of most of the English Radicals and old Chartists who looked to the defeat of a "reactionary" Russia and an uprising of the Poles and other national groups in Eastern Europe. Harney shared this view and criticized the government for not doing more to insure an allied victory. Writing in *The Republican Record*, the organ of the Republican Brotherhood, he condemned "the monarchical system", which "wastes the nation's resources, condemns our country to the shameful rule of imbecile aristocrats, by sheer incompetence adds tenfold to the horrors of war, and squanders... the blood of England's heroic defenders."²

The nature of Harney's republicanism rested on his belief that monarchy was a shield for the rule of a privileged aristocracy and the support for a privileged Church. Democracy and social equality can be achieved only in a republic. This was also the position of Harney's younger contemporary, Charles Bradlaugh³ but Bradlaugh did not accept Harney's means to the end – violence and the socialist state.

Bradlaugh's republicanism, like Harney's developed out of the

¹ Joseph Cowen, later (since 1876) M. P. from Newcastle, was a classical republican who was quite active in support of continental revolutionaries. The Poles, Italians and Hungarians all were given his support. "He was the chief banker and general agent in this country of the European revolutionaries." J. M. Davidson, "Joseph Cowen", in: *Eminent Liberals*, (Boston, 1880), p. 55.

² *The Republican Record* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne), January 1855, No. 1, p. 1. The criticism of the monarchy in connection with the Crimean War was not restricted to the radical press alone. *The Morning Advertiser* and *The Times* were especially critical of Albert, so much so that Victoria threatened to resign. See Kingsley Martin, *The Triumph of Lord Palmerston* (New York, 1924), pp. 210-212.

³ Harney left for America in 1863, hence the two – Harney and Bradlaugh – were never associated in the republican cause in England.

French revolutionary tradition. He was deeply impressed by Paine at an early age – Paine’s views on religion as well as politics – and he was an admirer of Richard Carlile.¹ From this intellectual atmosphere, Bradlaugh, who adopted the pseudonym “Iconoclast”, developed into a crusader for atheism and republicanism which views he espoused from the lectern and in the columns of his paper, *The National Reformer*.

Bradlaugh’s criticisms of the monarchy were those of his republican predecessors but he tended to place more emphasis on the expenses of monarchy. To a republican in the sixties and seventies this was political expediency. The long uninterrupted seclusion of the Queen following the death of Albert in 1861 had stirred considerable comment. The ceremonial functions of the Crown having lapsed, radicals began to raise the question about the need of a monarchy in view of the great expense. What benefits, it was asked, did the nation reap to counterbalance the enormous sums which were expended upon the sovereign? As Bradlaugh put it in *The National Reformer* in 1870: “the experience of the last nine or ten years proved that the country can do quite well without a monarch, and may therefore save the extra expense of monarchy.”²

Although there were occasional demands for the³ abdication of the Queen herself, Bradlaugh’s approach was to block the path of a successor. “Whereas it is treasonable to talk of dethroning a monarch, there can be no disloyalty in preventing a person not yet a monarch from becoming one.”⁴ The Prince of Wales, whose scandalous behavior was a topic of discussion, thus became the chief target: “the heir apparent to the throne has neither the intelligence nor the virtue, nor the sobriety, nor the high sense of honesty or truth which might entitle him to take a front rank in this great nation.”⁵

The seclusion of Queen Victoria plus a new stimulus from France in the promulgation of the Third Republic brought English republicanism to its climax in the early seventies. For the first time, the republicans had a voice in parliament – members Sir Charles Dilke, Henry Fawcett, A. Herbert, and P. A. Taylor. And in this climate, the Civil List became an issue. The debate was occasioned by the Queen’s request for a dowry for her daughter, Princess Louise

¹ Bradlaugh ranked Carlile with Paine as a co-founder of the modern English republican movement, *The National Reformer*, 16 February 1873.

² *The National Reformer*, 11 September 1870. In addition to his comments here, Bradlaugh spelled out in great detail the total cost of the monarchy in his *Impeachment of the House of Brunswick*.

³ *The National Reformer*, 1 October 1871.

⁴ *The National Reformer*, 1 September 1870.

⁵ *The National Reformer*, 12 May 1871.

(£ 30,000), and an allowance for her son, Prince Arthur (£ 15,000). Peter Taylor, Radical M.P. from Leicester, was the leading republican who opposed both the dowry and the allowance. He warned the Crown that such grants would strengthen the tendency towards republican views among the artisan class.¹ Dilke, member from Chelsea, took up the issue shortly thereafter and gave a famous speech on the topic at Newcastle in November 1871, closing with the following remarks: "Well if you can show me a fair chance that a republic here will be free from the political corruption that hangs about the monarchy, I say for my part – and I believe the middle class in general will say – let it come."² On the popular level republicanism found expression in the mass meetings at Birmingham and Nottingham which passed resolutions condemning the grants voted to Victoria's daughter Louise.

The most important extra-parliamentary development was the founding of republican clubs – beginning in February, 1871, with the organization of a club at Birmingham by Christopher Charles Cattell.³ In his inaugural address, Cattell declared: "My opinion is that in ten years or before the centenary of the great French revolution, Great Britain will be a Republic. My aim is to prepare the people for that day."⁴ The Birmingham example was then followed by some fifty other towns and cities, including London⁵. Fawcett and Taylor both joined republican clubs and Fawcett founded one at Cambridge University.⁶ Most of the clubs began with memberships of twenty to fifty.

Bradlaugh was the founder and president of the London Republican Club and a popular lecturer at the other republican clubs. His lectures indicting the monarchy were later published as *The Impeachment of the House of Brunswick*. The Royal Family he declared,

¹ Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CCIV (February 16, 1871), p. 359. On the allowance for Arthur, eleven were opposed to any and fifty-three were for a reduction (CCVIII, p. 590).

² The Times (London), 9 November 1871. When Queen Victoria read Dilke's Newcastle speech, she recalled that she had stroked his hair on meeting him as a boy with his father in the Exhibition Grounds in 1851. "I suppose", she added, "I stroked it the wrong way." Stephen Gwynn and Gertrude M. Tuckwell, *The Life of the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles W. Dilke* 2 vols. (London, 1917), 1, p. 10.

³ Christopher Charles Cattell, who also wrote under the name Charles "Cockbill" Cattell, was active in behalf of many radical causes – universal manhood suffrage, disestablishment and municipal government reforms.

⁴ The National Reformer, 12 March 1871.

⁵ The National Reformer, beginning with the February 26, 1871, issue, carried the announcements of the founding and activities of each of the republican clubs.

⁶ Sir Charles Dilke did not join any of the republican clubs. Gwynn and Tuckwell, I, p. 144.

should be denied the right to the throne and parliament had this power of denial: "The Parliament . . . has the undoubted right to withhold the Crown from Albert Edward, Prince of Wales."¹ Parliamentary control of the throne is based, as Bradlaugh pointed out, on the Act of Settlement of 1701: "except from this statute they (House of Brunswick) have no claim to the throne."² The repeal of this Act then is the way to the English Republic. It should all be accomplished legally; there should be no violence.

Criticism of Bradlaugh and Dilke in the "respectable" press was savage. The *Morning Advertiser* called Bradlaugh a communist as well as a republican after his Paris visit in April 1871, and demanded government action against the English republicans.³ Charges of treason were made against Dilke, and the rest of his speaking tour in 1871 was marked by noisy disturbances.⁴ But it was an "act of God" rather than an act of government that stymied the republican movement in 1871. In December the Prince of Wales became desperately ill and was near death for weeks. The long illness, given detailed and sympathetic press coverage, did much to restore the popularity of the monarchy and to put a decided damper on republican hopes.

Dilke's move to inquire into the Civil List met overwhelming opposition in the Commons in March 1872. Only one member, Auberon Herbert, a republican, rose to speak by way of supporting Dilke. In the division with Dilke and Herbert as tellers, only Sir Wilfrid Lawson and George Anderson, a Glasgow member, voted in favor of Dilke's motion. The division was 276-2,⁵ after one of the wildest scenes in House of Commons' history. Despite the parliamentary defeat, this incident probably did more to create interest in republicanism among the working classes than it did to curtail it. Furthermore, this division in 1872 cannot be viewed as a real test of republican sentiment. Others known to be inclined towards republicanism did not support Dilke because they thought his motion inopportune. Fawcett refused support because he protested "against the question of republicanism being raised upon a miserable haggles over a few pounds."⁶

Outside of parliament the republican clubs moved toward federation. A program for all republicans was suggested by Cattell writing

¹ Charles Bradlaugh, *The Impeachment of the House of Brunswick* (Boston, 1875), p. 6.

² Bradlaugh, p. 6.

³ *Morning Advertiser* quoted in *The National Reformer*, 25 June 1871.

⁴ Gwynn and Tuckwell, I, pp. 140-45.

⁵ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, CCX (March 19, 1872), p. 253.

⁶ Leslie Stephen, *Life of Henry Fawcett*, 3rd., (New York, 1886), p. 288. G. M. Young's comment on this incident is also interesting. See G. M. Young, *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age* (New York, 1954), p. 209.

in *The National Reformer*: "First to increase the number of voters from one million upwards. Secondly to effect an immediate redistribution of seats. Thirdly to get more republicans elected to the next House of Commons."¹ Then steps could be taken to repeal the Act of Settlement.

The first conference held by the republicans was called by trade union leader, George Odger and convened at Sheffield in December 1872, with some seventy delegates represented. They agreed to form a National Republican Brotherhood, and adopted a tricolor flag (green, white and blue). John Bright was nominated as first President of the Republic but he declined the offer. A second republican conference was called by Bradlaugh, who was somewhat at odds with the Sheffield group. Birmingham was chosen as the site and Joseph Cowen or William J. Linton² was endorsed by *The National Reformer* for the presidency of the proposed republican organization.³ The conference convened in May 1873, with fifty-four clubs sending delegates and forty-five hundred people in attendance.⁴ Odger was present, but the National Republican Brotherhood, disliking Bradlaugh's atheism, refused to attend. Thus, at the height of the movement, the republicans were handicapped by disunity.

The delegates agreed to the title, National Republican League, for the organization and adopted several resolutions, including the following: 1.) "That this conference declares the Republican form of government to be the only form of government worthy of the support of a civilized people, meaning by a republic... a State... Which guarantees the fullest individual liberty... in which the sovereign power resides in deputies elected by the people."⁵ 2.) "That this meeting cordially sympathises with the Spanish people in their endeavors to establish a Republic."⁶ Bradlaugh was delegated to take the latter resolution to Spain in person.

These conferences of 1872-3 marked the high point of an organized republican movement in nineteenth century England. But the enthusiasm waned quickly. By 1875 republican club notices were dropped from the pages of *The National Reformer* and Bradlaugh turned to

¹ *The National Reformer*, 7 April 1872.

² Chartist republican then living in America.

³ *The National Reformer*, 9 March 1873.

⁴ Several estimates have been made on the number of clubs represented. H. A. L. Fisher, *The Republican Tradition in Europe* (London, 1911), p. 256, lists 54; *The Times* (London) mentions 50; and *The National Reformer*, 48 official republican delegates plus several representatives of other interested groups.

⁵ *The Times* (London), 13 May 1873.

⁶ *The National Reformer*, 18 May 1873.

other crusades. Dilke, the “name” republican of the period,¹ refused association with the clubs; his republicanism was theoretical rather than practical. He thought monarchy to be “a somewhat cumbersome fiction” but he was not “ready to fight against it on a barricade.”² Dilke was less tainted with Jacobinism and the French revolutionary tradition than Harney, Bradlaugh or Odger; his republicanism was more in the spirit of Bentham and the utilitarians. He directed his appeal to the middle classes whereas Harney, Bentham, and Odger were champions of the artisan classes. Dilke then had little in common with his fellow republicans despite the active support some of them gave him. But he did share enthusiasm for the Third French Republic and counted Leon Gambetta a close personal friend.

The most idealized republic of the period, however, was not France but the United States. *Reynolds Weekly Newspaper*, one of the most successful ultra-radical papers of the day, was consistent in presenting the United States as the *summum bonum* of republican virtues. Harney’s and Cowen’s Republican Brotherhood was not as wildly enthusiastic but still considered America the “hope of the nations”. “With all its faults and imperfections – and they are neither few nor trivial – how superior is the government of Republican America to that of monarchical England! The latter, incapable, weak and wavering; the former able, vigorous, and stedfast in asserting the rights and upholding the honour of the great Republic.”³

The novelist Thackeray, who had declared himself “a republican but not a chartist” in 1840⁴ visited the United States in the 1850’s and delivered his famous lectures on “The Four Georges” – as devastating an indictment of the Hanoverian Monarchy as could be found in Victorian England. Thackeray was particularly harsh in his treatment of George IV, closing with a comparison of two Georges – King George IV and President George Washington – decidedly favorable to the latter: “Which is the noble character for after ages to admire; – yon fribble dancing in lace and spangles, or yonder hero who sheathed his sword after a life of spotless honour...”⁵

For most of the English Radicals, the one blight on American republicanism was the institution of slavery. Consequently, the coming of the American Civil War attracted great interest. The major-

¹ Joseph Chamberlain and John Morley displayed some interest in republicanism but shyed away from any definite endorsement.

² Gwynn and Tuckwell, I, p. 145.

³ The Republican Record (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne), January 1855, No. 1, p. 2.

⁴ The Letters and Private Papers of William M. Thackeray, ed. G. N. Ray, 4 vols. (Harvard University Press, 1945), I, p. 458.

⁵ William M. Thackeray, “The Four Georges”, Works, Kensington ed., (New York, 1904) XXVI, p. 144.

ity in the Radicals supported the North, especially after 1863 and the Emancipation Proclamation; the Conservatives, on the other hand, viewed the Civil War as proof of the failure of republican democracy.

The association of republicanism with violence in America in the sixties and in France in '48 and again in '71 was a factor which detracted from its appeal. And it brought some of the Victorian Radicals to look to the past rather than to the present for republican models. Many, like Joseph Cowen, found their ideal in the Athens of Pericles or the Rome of Cicero, but others looked to England's past and to the seventeenth century Commonwealth of Cromwell. True, the Commonwealth was not devoid of violence, but its violence was paled by time and by degree when compared with the French Revolutions and the American Civil War. Furthermore, the historic Commonwealth, unlike the Paris Commune, was not associated with the "red spectre" of communism or socialism. This point of view was most clearly stated by Harney's fellow Chartist and republican, William J. Linton.

Linton, who acknowledged an intellectual debt to Paine, was, like Harney, closely connected with the continental exiles in London, but with Mazzini and the "young Italy" group rather than the French and Polish. This difference in association was an important one. Almost all the *émigrés* were revolutionary and republican, but the Italians opposed any socialist aims. Mazzini's influence on Linton was considerable and helped shape his "moderate" republicanism as compared to the socialist republicanism of Harney.

Linton outlined his position in a number of journals published in the fifties and sixties before leaving England for America in 1866. These included his own journal, *The English Republic* and Joseph Cowen's *Northern Tribune*, in which he was also associated with Harney. Linton's definition of a republic was close to that of Bradlaugh's, "the abolition of class government which is monarchy under whatever name."¹ Direct democracy and a written constitution must be the basis of the Republic and as to a program, Linton called for three revolutionary measures: "Abolition of Monarchy, the House of Lords, the Peerage and all laws of primogeniture and entail. Severance of the connection between the Church and State. Abolition of all restrictions upon the Press, direct or indirect."² Social reforms are not emphasized. Socialism was not part of Linton's republicanism. "Socialism would make the State the director or dictator... (a)

¹ William J. Linton, *The English Republic*, ed. by K. Parkes (London, 1891), p. xii. Linton also wrote and published a number of poems including *The Plaint of Freedom* dedicated to "the memory of Milton".

² Linton, p. 40.

stronger tyranny of a corporate majority; such socialism would not be republican for it would violate individual liberty.”¹

Linton's influence was certainly not great. The journals he helped edit or publish were shortlived and the mild republican associations he helped found in the fifties “to teach republican principles” were few in number and in memberships.² But his tendency to separate socialism from republicanism introduced a note of disunity in the republican camp which not only separated him from Harney, but also Bradlaugh from Odger at the later conferences of the eighteen seventies.

The weakness of republicanism as a program in Victorian England was first of all a lack of agreement on basic principles. All agreed, to be sure, that republicanism involved the elimination of privileged institutions – the monarchy, Lords and Established Church. To some this was all it involved; the founding of a republic with an elected executive, a unicameral legislature and a disestablished and disendowed Church would be the *panacea*. Nothing more need be done. But others, like Harney, saw the creation of the republic as only the beginning; the new republican state must then become the instrument of social democracy. “Irresponsible capitalism” and the profit system should give way to nationalization of industry. But to this neither Linton nor Bradlaugh could agree. All the republican leaders offered solutions to the “condition of England” question and all might be considered state interventionist or collectivist³ rather than advocates of laissez-faire, but most of them opposed the tenets of international socialism and rejected the idea of the class struggle.

There was also some difference of opinion on religion and the Church. To many of the republicans – Carlile and Bradlaugh, especially – secularism⁴ and republicanism were closely associated. The Church was as much the enemy as the crown; the conspiracy of throne and altar must be destroyed and disestablishment could only be viewed as a first step. Nonconformity conflicted as much with

¹ Linton, pp. 141-144.

² W. E. Adams, the Cheltenham Chartist and former Fraternal Democrat, was the chief organizer. The largest and most active of these associations was in London where they claimed a membership of twenty and had an audience which included many of the continental republicans in exile. W. E. Adams, *Memoirs of a Social Atom*, 2 vols. (London, 1903), I, pp. 261-269.

³ Bradlaugh might be an exception here. See Crane Brinton, „Bradlaugh”, *English Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (Harvard University Press, 1949).

⁴ Bradlaugh actually insisted on the term atheism rather than secularism, but the terms are sometimes used interchangeable in references to Bradlaugh's position. Linton might be included here, but he was a deist rather than an atheist. Harney was an agnostic. Dilke and many of the academic republicans were non-conformists.

Bradlaugh's rational denunciation of religion as did the Established Church. A national educational system completely free of religious groups would be the solution and hence was an integral part of Bradlaugh's republicanism.

Republican views were never widely held in Victorian England. And of those who entertained republican ideas, many were academic republicans only; ¹ they foresaw the eventual abolition of the monarchy but did nothing to work toward such a goal. The problem faced by the active republican leaders – Harney, Linton, Bradlaugh, Odger and Cattell – was to win mass support for their program – this meant working-class support for the most part. Here again, there was a disagreement on approach; Harney was an advocate of violence or “physical force”, Linton and Bradlaugh, of peaceful, legal means to the end. Harney had some success in the thirties and forties with his London Democratic Association of 3000 members, but few of these were willing to support him in any revolutionary move toward the creation of a republic. The real centers of working-class radicalism and militancy in the Chartist period were not in the London area but in the North. And here republican propaganda was blunted by the “magic” of O'Connor. Republican organizations were not established in the northern Cities – Birmingham, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Leeds – until the seventies, and by then much of the economic misery which gave rise to extremist programs had dissipated.

The peaceful, legal approach of Linton and Bradlaugh was more sound than Harney's. This was especially so after the failures of 1848 and in view of the violence associated with the Irish Republicans (Fenians) in the sixties. What was needed, from the English republican point of view, was a revolution in the tradition of 1688 rather than 1789. But Victoria was not James II, and issues to arouse the masses were difficult to develop. The cost of the crown was a valid issue but not a dynamic one. Dilke's inquiry was certainly justified despite Gladstone's denials, but without the enthusiasm engendered by the founding of the Third French Republic the republican movement of the sixties and seventies might not have materialized. As a result of this enthusiasm some fifty-short-lived republican clubs and two republican leagues or brotherhoods came into being. The total

¹ Other academic republicans, in addition to those previously mentioned, were Frederic Harrison, the English Positivist, and Leslie Stephen. Swinburne wrote some revolutionary poetry – “A Song of Italy, A Song in Time of Order” – for the republican cause and penned an ode celebrating the proclamation of the Third French Republic but would still be classified as an academic republican; he was not active in working toward an English Republic.

“official” support here in terms of delegates and memberships probably amounted to five or six thousand or approximately double the supports for Harney’s organizations of the thirties and forties.

In view of the relatively good times,¹ the republican movement of the early seventies was at the outset all that the most enthusiastic supporter could have hoped for. But the movement disintegrated as rapidly as it had taken shape. The reasons for this are not entirely clear but a few suggestions might be made. The small working class support was a temporary flirtation at best; increased support or alliance was blocked by the republican connection with secularism and by the lack of interest in trade unionism on the part of some of the republican leaders. On these grounds Dilke was a more acceptable leader than Bradlaugh but his practical interest in republicanism was slight, and his political career was ruined by a divorce suit in the eighties. More important than the failure of republican leadership was the realization on the part of the working classes and trade union leaders that a republic was only a distant possibility and that the democratic reforms they desired were possible of attainment under a limited monarchy.² Finally, Queen Victoria’s gradual emergence from a decade of seclusion undercut many of the republican arguments based on expense without performance of duty.

The popularity of the monarchy dates from the early seventies that saw the high tide of republican propaganda and organization. The illness of the Queen and the Prince of Wales in 1871 evoked a wave of sympathy, and the Queen’s resumption of national duties shortly thereafter restored her prestige. However, equally important was the new monarchy that was fashioned in the last quarter of the nineteenth century – a monarchy whose significance was dwindling in the face of a democratized parliament, but took on new importance as the connecting link in the Empire.

The rise of imperialism is closely related to the revival of monarchy and the decline of republicanism. The new interest in colonies and in closer ties between various parts of the old empire did not necessarily presuppose a renewed interest in the crown. Imperialism was as much a part of republican governments, including the Commonwealth of Cromwell, as it was of monarchies.³ But in the politics of the

¹ The republican agitation came to a climax in the early seventies before the onset of the Great Depression.

² Trade union leader, Robert Applegarth, opposed Bradlaugh throughout, charging that attacks on the Royal Family were an attempt to divert the minds of the people from more important issues. G. D. H. Cole, *British Working Class Politics* (London, 1941), p. 62.

³ And imperialism won the support of some republicans, including Charles Dilke and Joseph Cowen, See Dilke’s *Greater Britain* and E. R. Jones, *Life and Speeches of Joseph Cowen* (London, 1885), pp. 150-151.

seventies, Disraeli used the “republican scare” to needle the Gladstone Liberals¹ and in his Crystal Palace speech of 1872, he emphasized the crown as the symbol of the new imperialism. Whether this move on the part of Disraeli grew out of any real concern over republicanism is questionable² but it did grow out of political opportunism and a real concern over Gladstone and the successes of the Liberal Party. That republicanism was a factor in the Liberal defeat in 1874 also is questionable, but the cry of Empire did arouse loyalty to the crown. The jubilees of 1887 and 1897 were a great testament to the changing attitude toward the monarchy.

Republicanism in Victorian England was a failure. By the time of Victoria’s death in 1901, her popularity had assumed semi-religious proportions. No attempt was made to block her successor. But this popularity was not accompanied by a growth of constitutional powers; the crown indeed gave way on a number of occasions³ to the democratic House of Commons. Republicanism did not come on the heels of democracy as many radicals had thought it would. The monarchy and the Church⁴ proved compatible with democracy; the House of Lords was more obstinate and, as a result, reform of the upper house was still a live issue at the end of the century. Republicanism and disestablishment faded from the scene.⁵

¹ Lawrence J. McCaffrey, “Home Rule and the General Election of 1874 in Ireland,” in: *Irish Historical Studies*, IX, No. 34, (September 1954), p. 194. Had Gladstone actually been interested in republicanism, “what a turn our history might have taken.” G. M. Young, *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age*, p. 209.

² Herman Ausubel, *The Late Victorians* (New York, 1955), p. 83, states that Disraeli’s conversion to a vigorous imperialism was due partly to “his concern over the growth of republican and anti-monarchical agitation in the early seventies... Disraeli believed that the cry of Empire would arouse loyalty to the monarchy and defeat the republican agitators.”

³ Specifically, one might mention the Cardwell Army reforms of 1870-71 which wrested control of the army from the Crown by making the commander-in-chief subject to the Secretary of State for War, and the work of the Committee on the Civil List in 1889 establishing the right of the House of Commons to inquire into the Civil List even during the continuance of the reign.

⁴ See Olive J. Brose, *Church and Parliament: The Reshaping of the Church of England, 1828-1860* (Stanford University Press, 1959), for a discussion of the metamorphosis of the Established Church in the 19th century.

⁵ Some republican sentiment has been evident in the twentieth century. At the annual Labour Party Conference in 1923 the following resolution was submitted (Mr. J. Vipond): “That the Royal Family is no longer necessary as part of the British Constitution...”, but was not approved. Republicanism also garnered some attention during the abdication (Edward VIII) crisis of 1936. See the Labour Party Report of the 23rd Annual Conference, London, 1923, pp. 250-251 and Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, CCCXVIII (December 10, 1936), pp. 2192 and 2206.