INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM IN 1848: THE PHILOSOPHIES OF PIERRE-JOSEPH PROUDHON AND FEARGUS EDWARD O'CONNOR

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PHILOSOPHIES OF PIERRE-JOSEPH PROUDHON
AND FEARGUS EDWARD O'CONNOR

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PREFACE

The power of the common man and his influence upon history has always intrigued me. Although he is most often satisfied to remain inconspicuous and concentrate his efforts toward the satisfaction of elemental economic necessities, the common man is occasionally provoked into taking forceful action to alleviate his despair or improve his lot in life. Such was the case when revolution erupted in France in February, 1848, and the Chartist National Petition was presented to the British Parliament two months later.

In order to comprehend the social problems that motivated the radical actions in England and France in 1848, it is necessary to study the writings of the men who most appealed to the masses. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Feargus Edward O'Connor each had an enormous following in their respective countries, and each tried to guide the common man toward a better life. Though the efforts of these men failed in 1848, the power of their followers in a popular movement was recognized. Seeing the large number of laborers who supported socialism in France and Chartism in England and realizing their immense power if collectively guided, I became interested in the reasons for the failure of an international union of the common man in 1848. Was it philosophical or personal disagreement that made the popular movements under Proudhon and O'Connor turn from internationalism at the height of their power? This question led to research and eventually to this thesis.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Douglas D. Hale for his guidance throughout my graduate work and his endless assistance and patience in the preparation of this thesis. I also wish to thank Dr. Homer Knight and Dr. Neil Hackett for their efforts as members of my committee. I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Homer Knight and Dr. Odie Faulk for their faith in my ability as a graduate assistant, without which graduate work would have been impossible. I also wish to express my gratitude to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Banks, for their encouragement, and to my brother, Mr. J. C. Banks, for his help and support. Above all, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to my wife, Pam Banks, for her endless efforts as wife, mother, provider, and typist throughout my undergraduate and graduate years.

Despite the contributions of all the above, I accept responsibility for any errors which may be found in this work.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Widespread discontent created many problems throughout Europe in 1848 and caused many dissatisfied segments of the society to unite in a common cause to improve their situation in life. An emerging popular force was the philosophy of socialism, which appealed to the socially, economically, and politically oppressed alike. The governments of England and France were forced to recognize and deal with this socialist movement because of the sheer power in numbers of the laborers who upheld it. In France socialism was endorsed by class-conscious intellectuals and despairing workingmen who jointly supported the revolution in February, 1848. English socialism was incorporated in the Chartist movement that rose to demand equality through political reform in April of the same year.

There were many socialist leaders and schools of thought in England and France, but those leaders who controlled an accessible and popular means of communication with the laboring class most affected the direction of the movement. Such was the case of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in the French socialist movement and Feargus Edward O'Connor in the English Chartist organization. Both men expounded their philosophies through inexpensive newspapers and established their preeminence in their respective countries. The doctrines expressed in Proudhon's Le Peuple and O'Connor's Northern Star appealed to the

poorer classes and persuaded many of them to unite to create a force with which their government had to contend.[1]

Since homologous segments of the French and English society were attracted to the ideologies of O'Connor and Proudhon, were their doctrines similar also? If similarities did exist in their philosophies, what were the possibilities of a union of their movements? The purpose of this study is to analyze the philosophies expounded in the 1848 and 1849 publications of Le Peuple and the Northern Star, to make a comparison of their similarities and differences, and to assess the status of international socialism in 1848.

To understand fully the writings of Proudhon and O'Connor, their teachings must be seen in the light of conditions as they existed in 1848. Socialism was not a completely new phenomenon in mid-nineteenth-century England and France, for it had already experienced the effects of many leaders and varying interpretations. Each new leader added new ideas and approaches to the solutions of the problems of European society and thus built a more encompassing philosophy which greatly influenced the thoughts of his followers. How had socialism developed before O'Connor and Proudhon incorporated it into their unique philosophies?

The origin of socialism cannot be approached by the study of one man, a group of men, or a school of thought. Although the term socialism first appeared in 1830, it was a product of centuries of social, economic, and political conditions, many great philosophers and

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[1] Le Peuple (September, 1848 to June, 1849), hereafter referred to as L. P.; Northern Star (January to December, 1848), hereafter referred to as N. S.

thinkers, and numerous movements and organizations.[2] From the establishment of the nation state and the development of mercantilism, the ideal of a large-scale economy which could be directed and somewhat controlled was made a reality. To dominate the national economy became the goal of every strong government, and it had little concern for the common man in its struggle toward achieving this objective. As wealth became more widely distributed, successful men competed for their share of the economy.[3] These capitalists also used the poorer class for personal gain, and hostility mounted against the inordinate power of the rich. The favorable position of the wealthy class was only enhanced by the industrialization of production and the resulting social upheaval.

England was the first to experience the Industrial Revolution. The poor farmer was removed from his rented land by the enclosure movement and forced to seek employment as a laborer in the industrialized areas.[4] In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the factory system was still rudimentary, however, and there was a limited demand for workers. With the existence of a large supply of laborers, the manufacturer was given the opportunity to exploit his workers by offering extremely low wages. The prospective employee had

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[2] George Lichtheim, The Origins of Socialism (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1969), p. 3. Hereafter referred to as Origins of Socialism.

[3] S. G. Checkland, The Rise of Industrial Society in England 1815-1885 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), p. 3.

[4] Carl Landauer, European Socialism: A History of Ideas and Movements (2 vols., Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959-1960), Vol. I, p. 12. Hereafter referred to as European Socialism. Other factors such as rural overpopulation, new farming methods, and new agricultural produce should also be considered as reasons for the urban migration in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

no choice but to accept the situation and adjust his life style accordingly. He sought cheap living quarters close to his work and wrestled a livelihood from his insufficient pay. From his dreary existence the worker viewed the rich and mumbled his resentment at the inequalities that were around him. His discontent would later unite him with many of his kind under the banner of Chartism, the most powerful of Mid-Nineteenth-Century English socialist organizations.[5]

The Industrial Revolution did not affect France as early as it had England.[6] By 1848 only Paris and a very few provincial cities could boast of large-scale industrialization. France, however, added an extremely important characteristic to socialism. Intellectuals became concerned about the economic condition of the French peasant in the early years of the eighteenth century and began to develop programs to relieve the poor. The French Revolution of 1789 interrupted their efforts and opened a new era of socialism. The spirit of equality expressed in the Revolution was expanded beyond politics to economics and society.[7] If poorer classes could obtain as much political power as the rich, they might thereby restrict those who attempted to exploit

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[5]Although denied by many historians of social movements, an analysis of O'Connor's teachings between 1842 and 1848 indicates that he actually supported a socialist platform. These teachings were the major force of Chartism in 1848. For a contrasting interpretation, see Albert Fried and Ronald Sanders, eds., Socialist Thought: A Documentary History (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1964), p. 186. Hereafter referred to as Socialist Thought.

[6]George Fasel, Europe In Upheaval: The Revolutions of 1848 (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1970), pp. 2-3. For a contrasting assessment of Paris in 1848 see Peter H. Amann, "The Changing Outlines of 1848," in The American Historical Review, Vol. LXVIII, No. 4 (July, 1963), pp. 944-945.

[7]Landauer, European Socialism, Vol. I, p. 8.

them. As the ideologies wained and a conservative government again took control of France after 1815, the lower classes realized that they were not going to achieve the goal of equality.[8] They searched for a means to improve the condition of their lives and to force the powerful elite to give them the promises of 1789. The French socialist movement developed upon these desires and hopes.

Although there were many leaders of the socialist movement in its formative years, all except Robert Owen were from France.[9] The first leaders of the socialist movement who would affect the events of 1848 emerged out of England and France at approximately the same time. Robert Owen and Claude Henri Saint-Simon saw the deplorable conditions of the lower class and desired to improve the lot of humanity. Owen was a contemporary of Feargus O'Connor and doubtless had a great influence upon O'Connor's socialist philosophy. Although Saint-Simon died in 1825, his utopian doctrines were extremely popular in the days of Proudhon's growing popularity. Proudhon did not accept many of Saint-Simon's teachings, but by necessity he had to deal with them in order to develop his own philosophy.

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, Owen formulated and put into action his philosophy of man as a product of his environment.[10] He improved the conditions of the workers in his New Lanark

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[8]Harry W. Laidler, History of Socialism (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968), p. 45.

[9]G. D. H. Cole, A History of Socialist Thought (5 vols., London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1953-1960), Vol. I, p. 219. Hereafter referred to as History of Thought.

[10]Owen thought that man was a product of his environment; thus if one improved the living conditions of the worker, one would also improve the worker.

mills and also increased his own profits, to the great astonishment of his associates. He viewed the laissez-faire philosophy of Adam Smith as harmful to society and refuted the arguments of David Ricardo and Robert Malthus that the poorer classes were doomed by natural laws to a subsistence standard of living. Owen was turning completely toward worker cooperativism and trade unionism by the 1820's. In both of the movements he sought to increase the bargaining power of the working class in order to improve their existence. Owen, the founder of British socialism, gave the worker the example of an organized movement that made the idea of Chartism acceptable to the laboring class.[11]

While Owen was involved in his early efforts at New Lanark, Saint-Simon was developing a utopian philsophy which was to affect a half century of French socialists. He believed that a harmonious society could be established if every individual was guaranteed labor.[12] By this guarantee every person could produce enough to provide for his needs, if he only worked. The satisfaction of self-sufficiency would produce universal peace which was the overriding goal in Saint-Simon's philosophical teachings.[13] His theories, however, did not stress equality but rather just reward for productive effort. He favored the industrious people of France and wanted to organize them against the idle. Saint-Simon did not consider the middle class a

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[11]Fried and Sanders, Socialist Thought, p. 153.

[12]Richard T. Ely, French and German Socialism in Modern Times (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1898), p. 64. Hereafter referred to as French and German Socialism.

[13]Cole, History of Thought, Vol. I, p. 41.

threat against the poor, for they too worked for their livelihood. He instructed his followers in the areas of education, religion, and morality, and predicted a future society of learned, moral, and peaceful men. Although democracy was not included in his philosophy, and he hated the concept of mob rule, Saint-Simon believed that proper education would insure justice and order.

Since Saint-Simon never suggested that equality should exist in society, his philosophy of a just and ordered world was his main contribution to socialism. To achieve this perfect world became the goal of Saint-Simon's disciples, and in working toward it they altered the teachings of their deceased leader. They gradually radicalized Saint-Simon's philosophy until it resembled the socialism of 1848. First of all, the Saint-Simonians, primarily Barthélemy-Prosper Enfantin and Saint-Amand Bazard, succeeded in distinguishing between the laboring class and the bourgeois and criticized the institution of private ownership.[14] No longer did both classes remain under the title of the "industrials," and socialism emerged from Saint-Simon's liberalism. Enfantin and Bazard uttered accusations of exploitation on behalf of the laborers against those who controlled production. Despite their natural appeal to the worker, the Saint-Simonians destroyed their influence by the adoption of mystical and religious doctrines into their movement. By 1848 their school was dead, but their teachings lived on in others; Proudhon was among them.[15]

Charles Fourier, a contemporary of Saint-Simon as well as Proudhon,

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[14]Lichtheim, Origins of Socialism, pp. 50-51.

[15]Ibid., p. 56.

provided support for the utopian philosophy. He also believed that the right to work would produce a perfect society in which all injustice and crime would be eliminated. "Harmonism," the ultimate stage in Fourier's perfect society, was idealized by French socialists and became one of the major goals of their efforts in 1848.[16] However, Fourier lost his position of influence in the socialist movement owing to his eccentric religious and moral theories. The workers in Europe were growing tired of the liberal philosophical leadership which still contained qualities of conservatism and restraint.

Socially progressive conservatism had little attraction for the working class because its supporters were too reluctant to acknowledge the laborers' right of self-determination. Concerned and reform-minded conservatives were part of the middle or upper class and, although they wanted to help the worker, they were not willing to endanger their own social position. Saint-Simon was the first socialist who was willing to remove all conservative restraints upon the laborer, and his followers only emphasized this trend. Because socialist philosophy strongly supported the cause of the worker, a union of the two groups was only a natural conclusion.[17]

Socialism as an organized movement became the main hope for the laborer to improve himself. The dislocation caused by the Industrial Revolution, which many leaders had predicted would be only temporary, lingered into the 1820's and 30's. The working class was not only concerned over its economic and social distress but its powerless

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[16]Landauer, European Socialism, Vol. I, p. 36.

[17]Ibid., p. 28.

political position as well. In France and England the old aristocracy had been forced to relinquish some of its power to the middle class, who in turn seemed to be more intent upon keeping their new power from the lower classes. Socialism promised a better society and usually worked toward this goal by attempting to reduce the power and control of the governing classes. Hand in hand the laborer and the socialist began to agitate for equality and justice for all mankind.

The economic, social, and political conditions in France throughout the first half of the nineteenth century only intensified the need for reform. In the official French census of 1826 the number of peasants was still approximately five times as large as the number of industrial workers.[18] This predominantly rural society was not particularly interested in politics, but through economic pressure and the agitation of intellectuals many of them joined the ranks of the revolutionaries in 1848. The Bourbons under Charles X attempted to restore all the values of the old regime, but the men who fought for the republic in 1789 were not willing to stand by and see all their advancements destroyed. In 1830 the French rebelled against these reactionary tendencies and established a new government under Louis-Philippe. Although the monarchist influence lessened, the new administration was still controlled by the wealthy class and remained

[18]Frederick B. Artz, France Under the Bourbon Restoration, 1814-1830 (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), p. 281. The number of peasants was 22,251,545 out of a total population of 31, 851, 545, while the workers numbered only 4, 300,000.

the enemy of the laborer.[19] The worker was still completely vulnerable to the whims of the owner or employer. The overpopulation in the rural areas forced the laborer to seek employment in the urban areas. As long as he worked he was content not to agitate for more concessions from his employer and his government. But the economic depression that engulfed France after 1845 forced the worker out of his job and into a position in which revolution appeared to be his only salvation.[20] The depression resulted in a famine in 1846 and 1847 and intensified in the early months of 1848.[21] The French government under Francois Guizot, the President of the Council, adopted a program of staunch immobility and opposition to reform in the face of agitation.[22] Into this atmosphere of worker despair, governmental impotence, and revolution, Proudhon entered to attempt to provide a philosophy that would produce good for all.

England's working class faced a similar situation between 1815 and 1848. The dislocation of the Industrial Revolution was intensified after 1815 when the end of twenty-three years of war flooded the labor market and introduced foreign competition.[23] Wages went down, the cost

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[19]For an interesting analysis of the interpretations of the French revolution of 1830 see David H. Pinkney, "The Myth of the French Revolution of 1830," in The Bobbs-Merrill Reprint Series in European History, E-168 (Indianapolis, Indiana: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964), pp. 52-71.

[20]Amann, "The Changing Outlines of 1848," p. 953.

[21]George Woodcock, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), p. 104. Hereafter referred to as Proudhon.

[22]Guizot's opposition to universal suffrage is documented by T.E.B. Howarth, Citizen King (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1961), p. 308.

[23]J.A.R. Marriott, "The Condition of England, 1838. 1928," in The Nineteenth Century and After, Vol. CV, p. 35.

of living went up, and employment of any kind became scarce. Every year was a time of depression and want for the working class, and the government's actions seemed only to intensify the despair. The Reform Bill of 1832 succeeded in merely replacing the old landed aristocracy with a jealous and self-centered middle class.[24] The lower classes were further alienated by the Poor Law of 1834, whose provisions appeared to punish poverty as a crime.

Just prior to the bitter legislation of the 1830's, the livelihood of the textile worker was threatened by the mass introduction of the power loom. Large textile centers such as Glasgow and Manchester were the first to adopt mechanization, and the workers in these areas were the first to realize the hopelessness of competing with machines. These laborers were strong supporters of any action to secure work and fair treatment. Out of the growing "bitter discontent" among the workers in England, Chartism was formed.[25] The organization soon became recognized as a class movement for economic and social ends by political means.[26]

Although the early 1830's were relatively prosperous, a severe depression engulfed England between 1837 and 1841. In the initial years of the depression many workers who had good jobs were forced to work short hours to keep the factories going. By 1840 and 1841 some

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[24] W. B. Faherty, "Nineteenth Century British Laborites: The Chartists," in The Catholic World, Vol. CLXVI (October, 1947), p. 40.

[25] Thomas Carlyle, Chartism (London: James Fraser, Regent Street, 1840), p. 2.

[26] Francis Elma Gillespie, Labor and Politics in England, 1850-1867 (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1966), p. 17. Hereafter referred to as Labor and Politics.

factories were forced to close, and many laborers lost their jobs.[27] In the winter of 1842, "sufferings, almost without parallel, were borne" by the working class.[28] The economic discontent resulting from this depression caused a great surge in the Chartist movement. The largest meetings were held during these years and two National Petitions were presented to the House of Commons.

After 1842 the economic situation improved and less Chartist agitation occurred. The era of prosperity was short-lived, however, and ended with the commercial crash of 1847 and the Irish famine.[29] The situation only intensified in the early months of 1848 and the workers began to return to Chartism. O'Connor believed that the Chartist movement would be successful in 1848, so he devoted his time and effort toward the achievement of equality for all men.

Thus Proudhon and O'Connor found themselves in positions of great influence when working-class discontent was high. Their writings in _Le Peuple_ and the _Northern Star_ were designed to solve the social, economic, and political problems that produced inequality and injustice and to create a better life for the laborer. What were the doctrines of the philosophies of Proudhon and O'Connor?

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[27] Donald Read and Eric Glasgow, _Feargus O'Connor, Irishman and Chartist_ (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd., 1961), p. 41. Hereafter referred to as _O'Connor_.

[28] Jonathan Peel, "State Prosecutions," in _Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine_, Vol. LV, No. 339 (January, 1844), p. 5.

[29] Frederick Engels, _The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844_ (trans. by Florence Kelley Wischnewetzky, reprint, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1952), p. xi.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE OF PIERRE-JOSEPH PROUDHON AND AN ANALYSIS OF HIS PHILOSOPHY AS EXPRESSED IN *LE PEUPLE*

Although socialism was well established in France by 1848, the revolution inspired a host of newspapers and journals which began to carry to the masses ideas which had previously been confined to a narrow circle of intellectuals. One of the most original and popular newspapers in Paris was Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's *Le Peuple*. Proudhon was not merely interested in the problems of the poor and the laborer--he was himself a product of those problems. He was more familiar with the situation that existed in France in 1848 than any other French leader. The unique philosophy espoused by Proudhon in his *Le Peuple* was a product of his life, environment, and experiences and not merely an intellectual facade of concern which was then in vogue. As Proudhon passed through his youth and early manhood, it was the events themselves which contributed to the formulation of his ideas and gradually produced a philosophy. Proudhon's socialism attempted to offer solutions for many of the problems in France in 1848 and best expressed the needs and ideas of the working class. Although there were many schools of socialist thought, Proudhon's identification with the people and their problems made *Le Peuple* a powerful voice of utopian socialism.

Proudhon was born in Battant, the working-class suburb of

Besancon, in January, 1809.[1] His parents both came from Franc-Comtois peasant stock; his mother had been a servant and his father began as a cooper and domestic brewer.[2] One of Proudhon's first chores was to act as his father's cellar boy. After a turn of bad luck, which resulted in the loss of the family tavern, the Proudhon family moved to the country. The peasant life of the Juras, a mountain range on the French-Swiss border, solidly implanted in Pierre-Joseph a love for the peasant existence. This affection, which was strengthened further by the pride of his mother, influenced greatly the philosophical course which Proudhon followed in his adult life.

Although it is often asserted that Proudhon was an autodidact, he did receive some formal education.[3] At eighteen his studies at the collège of Besancon were just at the point of being brilliantly completed when the loss of a lawsuit forced all the members of his family to work.[4] Proudhon never really forgave his father for such blatant financial ineptitude, and considered this interrupted education his ultimate loss of opportunity.

Proudhon was old enough to consider becoming an apprentice, and the printing business interested him because of his inordinate love of books. He worked at the printing house of Bellevaux until 1828 and then moved to the Besancon press operated by the Gauthier family,

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[1]Woodcock, Proudhon, p. 1. Although the date of birth which Woodcock assigns is disputable, his description of Proudhon's birthplace is excellent.

[2]Cole, Vol. I, p. 201.

[3]Georges Guy-Grand, La pensée de Proudhon (Paris: Bordas, 1947), p. 2. Hereafter referred to as La pensée.

[4]Woodcock, Proudhon, p. 8.

where he was eventually employed as a proofreader.[5] After finishing his apprenticeship and undertaking an unsuccessful attempt at study in Paris, Proudhon joined the ranks of the numerous traveling workers searching for jobs. It was from this period that he first developed the idea of a guaranteed right to work. Proudhon worked on short jobs in Switzerland and southern and eastern France, but he finally returned to Besancon late in 1831.[6]

Proudhon returned home to come to the financial aid of his family. His brother Jean-Étienne had been conscripted, and the loss of his earnings seriously depleted the family's income. The conscription of Jean-Étienne provoked Proudhon to criticize the authority of the government, and his brother's death during military training in 1833, Proudhon explained, ". . . finally made me an irreconcilable enemy of the existing order."[7]

At the same time as these personal experiences were shaping the basic foundation of Proudhon's philosophy, his ideological development was also progressing by other means. There were three major contributive factors to his increased interest in philosophy: friendship, education, and association. His first introduction to formal philosophy occurred through his work at the Gauthier printing house. He was placed in charge of printing Charles Fourier's <u>New Industrial and Social World</u> in 1829.[8] He worked closely with Fourier and admired

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[5]Ibid., p. 9.

[6]Guy-Grand, <u>La pensée</u>, p. 5.

[7]Woodcock, <u>Proudhon</u>, p. 24.

[8]Guy-Grand, <u>La pensée</u>, p. 5; Woodcock, <u>Proudhon</u>, p. 13.

his social reasoning, although he soon became disgusted with his impracticality, which irritated Proudhon's peasant common sense.

Probably the most important person in Proudhon's philosophical development was Gustave Fallot, a young Huguenot scholar.[9] Fallot had been well educated in philosophy and understood the many problems that hindered Proudhon's advancement in the discipline. Fallot and Proudhon discussed various philosophers and their teachings in long evening sessions in 1829. He forced Proudhon to discipline his thoughts and channel them toward one particular subject or problem at a time. This discipline of thought was necessary before Proudhon could analyze and form his own opinions. Fallot was extremely impressed with Proudhon's ability and intelligence—so much so that he invited Proudhon to live with him and to study philosophy in Paris. After a great deal of coaxing, Proudhon finally agreed to come. The Parisian experience, though it lasted only a few months owing to Fallot's contraction of cholera, marked the dividing line between a Proudhon who burned with the desire to write.

The young man returned to the printing business, but he never forgot the fascination of philosophy nor his urge to write. He made an attempt at ownership in 1836 by purchasing the Montarsolo Press, which he renamed the Lambert Press.[10] This enterprise failed within two years, and upon the suicide of his partner, Proudhon sold the press and returned to work for the Gauthiers.

As a result of his unsuccessful efforts to operate his own press,

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[9] Woodcock, Proudhon, p. 13.

[10] Ibid., p. 27.

Proudhon became more than ever determined to leave the printing business and to embark upon a scholarly career. The Suard Pension offered by the Academy of Besancon was opened for competition in 1838, and Proudhon submitted a composition. His essay, The Observance of Sunday, was selected, and Proudhon was given 1,500 francs a year to continue his education in Paris.[11]

Proudhon studied under the German philosopher, Franz Heinrich Ludolf Ahrens, while at the Collège de France in Paris.[12] Ahrens was responsible for acquainting Proudhon with both traditional and current German philosophy, in which the young man took immense interest. Ahrens was violently anti-Hegelian and was possibly the inspiration for Proudhon's denial of the Hegelian dialectic. During his instruction, Proudhon became familiar with the philosophy of Immanual Kant and incorporated his theory of "antinomy" (contradictions) into his growing philosophical knowledge.[13]

This intellectual career crystallized his early philosophy and introduced him to a wide public through his tract entitled What is Property published in 1840.[14] His most famous statement, "property is theft", was the summation of the purpose of the essay. Proudhon spent

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[11]Guy-Grand, La pensée, p. 6.

[12]Georges Gurvitch, Proudhon sa vie, son oeuvres avec un exposé de sa philosophie (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965), p. 17. Hereafter referred to as Proudhon sa vie.

[13]Stewart Edwards, ed., Selected Writings of P. J. Proudhon (trans. by Elizabeth Fraser, Garden City, New York: Anchor Books Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969), p. 19. Hereafter referred to as Selected Writings.

[14]A recent edition of this work with extensive commentary is available in Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, What is Property? An Enquiry into the Principle of Right and of Government (trans. Benj. R. Tucker, New York: Howard Fertig, 1966).

the rest of his life defending this statement and defining property. This remark also proved too radical for the Suard Pension Board in Besancon, and their financial assistance was withdrawn.[15] Proudhon, however, did not stop writing until two more essays were published.[16] Both of these works emphasized the necessity of abolishing all usury and social and political inequality.

By 1843, Proudhon again found it necessary to return to the printing business. Because of his popularity, he was able to secure a managerial position in the Gauthier house at Lyons. Under this new contract, Proudhon reserved the right to take a few months' vacation every year to visit his socialist friends in Paris. Lyons, though an undesirable location for Proudhon, proved a most fruitful site for the building of his socialist philosophy.

While in Lyons he became acquainted with a group of workers who called themselves "Mutualists".[17] Solely under the leadership of workingmen, they labored for economic and social change rather than political revolution. Proudhon viewed this organization as the realization of his dream that the people would achieve change in their own way. Some years later Proudhon was to call his own plan for social organization "mutualism".

Proudhon did manage to escape Lyons occasionally to call on

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[15] Jacques Bourgeat, P.-J. Proudhon: Pere du socialisme francais (Paris: Les Editeurs Donoel, 1943), p. 58. Hereafter referred to as P.-J. Proudhon.

[16] Proudhon, "Second Memoir: A Letter to M. Blanqui", in What is Property?, pp. 289-457; Proudhon, De la création de l'ordredans l'humanité, ou principes d'organisation politique (Paris: Prevot, 1843).

[17] Woodcock, Proudhon, p. 73.

Parisian friends he had made on previous trips. The winter of 1844-45 proved to be the most rewarding of all these visits. At this time Proudhon became acquainted with many German left-Hegelian revolutionary exiles. He also met the Russian revolutionary, Michael Bakunin, to whom Proudhon would owe a great deal for the subsequent dissemination of segments of his philosophy. Karl Marx was to become the most renowned of the group, but Karl Grün was to have the most direct effect upon Proudhon.[18] Proudhon was unconfortable around an authoritarian such as Marx, and he tended to associate with Grün for his discussions of the Hegelian dialectic in depth.[19] At first Proudhon was impressed with the systematized theory of Hegel; it was only later that he discovered that he could not incorporate the final stage in his own philosophy.

Proudhon attempted to apply the Hegelian dialectic in his next book, The System of Economic Contradictions, or the Philosophy of Poverty, published in 1846, but the alteration of the dialectic in the course of Proudhon's argument distorted the Hegelian influence to an almost unrecognizable degree.[20] Marx above all was outraged because of this seemingly inept treatment. He who had previously praised Proudhon for being "the only authentic proletarian that one found among socialist writers" now turned on him with a vengeance.[21]

Besides its philosophical aspects, the confrontations between Marx and Proudhon also involved clashing personalities. From their

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[18]Guy-Grand, La pensée, p. 37.

[19]Bourgeat, P.-J. Proudhon, p. 74.

[20]Edwards, Selected Writings, p. 19.

[21]Georges Gurvitch, Les Fondateurs Francais de la sociologie contemporaine (Paris: Centre de Documentation Universitaire, 1955), p. 4. Hereafter referred to as Les fondateurs.

first meeting in 1844, Marx and Proudhon had not gotten along well. Proudhon detected an arrogant authoritarian streak in Marx's personality and did not associate with him on a personal basis. Marx, however, appeared to admire Proudhon from the beginning. To Marx, Proudhon seemed an important man in the realm of socialism, and he always thought it advantageous to obtain Proudhon's support for any socialist action. It was as a result of his request for Proudhon's assistance that an incident occurred which provoked Marx's attack against Proudhon's book.

On May 5, 1846, Marx wrote to Proudhon asking him to serve as the French link in a system of correspondence among German, French, and English socialists.[22] In this letter, Marx hinted at the dominance of the German sector of the system and also implied that the German socialist philosophy would be expounded by the union. Proudhon's reserved answer permanently severed any personal communication between the two men. Proudhon rather loftily accepted the position offered by Marx but then added, "I would also take the liberty to make some reservations that were prompted by different passages in your letter."[23] He continued by questioning the German dominance of the organization and the Marxian definition of revolution. Marx never wrote again.

Marx contained his anger until Proudhon's The System of Economic Contradictions or The Philosophy of Poverty was published and then

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[22]Woodcock, Proudhon, p. 91.

[23]Proudhon to Marx, Lyons, May 17, 1846, Correspondence de P.-J. Proudhon, (14 vols., Paris: A. Lacroix et Ce, Editeurs, 1874-1875), Vol. II, p. 198.

attacked him with a 220-page critique entitled The Poverty of Philosophy. In his criticism Marx asserted that Proudhon had never understood the Hegelian dialectic and that he was a petty bourgeois "from head to foot."[24] Proudhon never publicly refuted these intemperate accusations, but he privately referred to Marx as "the tapeworm of socialism!"[25] This incident is most important to refute assertions that Proudhon was merely another Marxist. Their inability to understand or even to tolerate each other's dialectical theories suggestes that most of their entire philosophical systems would not have agreed.

By 1848, Proudhon had developed his philosophy into a systematic whole and was more anxious than ever to apply his ideas to society. He had at last anchored the foundation of his entire system on economics. He believed that if wealth were equally distributed throughout society, man would establish his own perfect community as a result of the lack of need. He also believed that it was his duty to search for the correct avenues to this economic perfection and then direct society to them. Proudhon would guide his fellow man by criticizing that which was adverse to his plan and direction.[26]

Not only had Proudhon's philosophy developed during this period, but his personal life was also more prosperous and promising as well. At thirty-eight, Proudhon presented a robust yet eccentric appearance.

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[24]"Never understood dialectic", from Gurvitch, Proudhon sa vie, p. 25; "from head to foot", from Mary Allen, "P.-J. Proudhon in the Revolution of 1848," The Journal of Modern History, Vol. XXIV, No. 1 (March, 1952), p. 2.

[25]Woodcock, Proudhon, p. 102.

[26]Guy-Grand, La pensée, p. 12.

His chest and forehead were extremely broad and were accentuated by his unkempt blond hair and a beard that circled the edge of his jaw.[27] His eccentricity was even more evident in his dress, with his long green coat, large broad-brimmed hat, and pants that were always too short, resulting in the exposure of coarse, heavy, gray socks.[28] It was this peculiar individual who, on February 6, 1847, stopped a young girl on a street in Paris and, before offering an introduction, proposed.[29] Euphrasie Piegard, a seventeen-year-old working girl, surprisingly took the shock in stride. Although their courtship was rather cool, owing to Proudhon's practical approach to marriage which dispensed with love as an ingredient, the two were soon engaged.

Many other personal events occurred in the period just prior to 1848. Proudhon's mother died in late 1847, and the son suffered extreme melancholy for many days. He also moved from Lyons to settle permanently in Paris during this time. As he emerged from his deep depression, he soon began to notice and record the mounting signs of revolutionary danger. Because of his fame as a leading radical and socialist thinker, he moved freely among the extremist groups, and in January, 1848, Proudhon felt the tensions of the economically suppressed mounting toward a violent breaking point.[30]

When it came, the February Revolution was caused by many factors of social, political, and economic unrest. There was a widespread

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[27]Bourgeat, P.-J. Proudhon, p. 52.

[28]Woodcock, Proudhon, p. 105.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Edwards, Selected Writings, p. 15.

national discontent with the policies of the President of the Council, Francois Guizot. Opposition groups demanded parliamentary reform, but the government obstinately refused to act. The growth of Paris and the revolutionary tradition of 1789 and 1830 were also important factors in the outbreak of the Revolution. Particular grievances of the urban workers were intensified as the economic crisis of 1847 weighed heavy upon the lower classes and produced utter despair.[31]

The February Revolution and the following events enabled Proudhon to move into the mainstream of leadership. Although he had not originally supported revolutionary action, he found himself in the last days of February attempting to direct a course of action toward the achievement of more specific and lasting objectives.[32] He saw utter confusion among the revolutionary factions and disagreement on the purpose and organization of the government. Moderates on both sides were willing to establish a weak monarchy under a democratically con-controlled ministry, but extreme legitimatists and republicans were not willing to compromise. Even the radical republicans did not agree upon the action the new government should take to solve the social, political, and economic problems. Proudhon saw these frantic, confused leaders as "comic individuals."[33] Though he agreed with the attempts of Louis Blanc to assure every man the right to labor, he questioned the artificial creation of "national workshops" by governmental decree.

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[31]Georges Duveau, <u>1848 The Making of a Revolution</u> (trans. Anne Carter, New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), p. xi. Hereafter referred to as <u>1848</u>.

[32]Bourgeat, <u>P.-J. Proudhon</u>, p. 100.

[33]Proudhon to M. Maurice, Paris, February 25, 1848, <u>Correspondence de P.-J. Proudhon</u>, Vol. II, p. 284.

Gradually, as the radicals increased their demands on the provisional government, the threat of further violence forced the government to take precautionary measures to protect itself from the mob. Proudhon saw in these conservative steps the end of the Revolution. On March 1, he wrote despairingly, "That which was true yesterday is true today: the National Republic has changed nothing . . . ."[34]

Proudhon, even in the earliest stages of the February Revolution, realized that the radical element leading the movement had no established goals. "They have made a revolution without ideas," he said.[35] This disquieting omission Proudhon felt particularly qualified to correct. He began immediately to organize a newspaper which would elucidate socialist principles to guide the revolutionaries in their attempts to create a better society. The paper, Le Representant du Peuple, was organized on February 25, and began publication on April 1, 1848. The front page bore the motto: "What is the Producer? Nothing. What should he be? Everything!"[36]

By the time the first few issues were published, Proudhon was facing a full reactionary swing under the moderate republicans elected to the constituent National Assembly in April, 1848.[37] While Proudhon continued to espouse the economic and social equality that he saw as the goal of the February Revolution, the moderate government, alarmed by further labor uprisings in May, permitted complimentary elections

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[34]Ibid., p. 290.

[35]Woodcock, Proudhon, p. 118.

[36]Ibid., p. 123.

[37]Allen, "P.-J. Proudhon in the Revolution of 1848," p. 12.

to be held on June 8. Proudhon's popular philosophy in Le Representant du Peuple won him a seat in the National Assembly as a representative of the Seine.[38]

Taking his new role seriously, Proudhon endeavored legally to introduce his socialist ideas into the government. He called for the establishment of a People's Bank based on the principle of free credit and the cessation of collecting debts in full.[39] But these radical proposals were lost in the confusion attendant to the abolition of the "national workshops" and the subsequent worker riots of the "June Days".

After the workers were subdued by killing four or five hundred at the barricades and the massacre of more than three thousand suspects after the fighting was over, order was restored under the virtual dictatorship of General Cavaignac.[40] Because of its close association with and support of the workers' cause, Le Représentant du Peuple was kept under surveillance and finally suppressed on July 15. Following this action, the paper went into one month voluntary suspension. During this period of reaction Proudhon's political career suffered a setback as well, since he was publicly censured by the Assembly on July 31, 1848. When Le Representant du Peuple resumed publication in August, Proudhon was determined to adopt an even more critical tone. As a result, three consecutive issues were seized and the paper was

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[38]Ely, French and German Socialism, pp. 130-31.

[39]Proudhon proposed that debts due in June be remitted by the creditor partially to the debtor and partially to the government, thus relieving the financial stress upon the poor as well as the government.

[40]Duveau, 1848, pp. 155-56. A favorable assessment of the administration of Cavaignac is given in Frederick A. de Luna, The French Republic Under Cavaignac, 1848 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969).

officially suspended on August 21, 1848.[41]

Throughout Proudhon's life new experiences gave birth to new philosophies. Not until the February Revolution had Proudhon fully formalized his philosophy of government, society, or revolution. With this violent experience behind him, Proudhon considered his philosophy more mature than ever. He still desired a means by which he could expound his ideas and affect society the most. Shortly after the suspension of Le Représentant du Peuple, Proudhon and his associates therefore began planning the organization of a new organ, Le Peuple. There was initial difficulty in posting the bond necessary to start publication, but after selling 40,000 copies of the first issue in September, 1848, the paper was considered a safe investment.[42] There were two monthly publications in September and October, and in November it progressed to a weekly paper. Daily publication began on November 26, 1848. Le Peuple became a popular newspaper among the Parisian workers, most usually selling from forty to fifty thousand copies a day.

From the outset, Proudhon was primarily interested in commenting on the major events of the day. With each report on a current incident, Proudhon introduced some of his philosophy. He used his philosophy to explain, defend, or condemn that about which he was reporting. Thus Le Peuple provides an unrivaled compendium not only of the principles of Proudhonian socialism but of their application to practical problems of government, economy, and society as well.

The most pervasive element in Proudhon's philosophy was his con-

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[41]Woodcock, Proudhon, pp. 133-36. The vote to censure Proudhon was 691 to 2.

[42]Ibid., p. 137.

cept of progress. He considered it "the first law of humanity."[43] He posited two classifications of progress: positive and negative. To progress positively it was necessary in each moment of existence to produce a new idea that incorporated, generalized, or summed up a group of former assumptions. In this form of progress the individual did not destroy any part of his old ideas; he merely made them more acceptable and useful. The major theme of positive progress was "perpetual movement and metamorphosis."

Negative progress was to Proudhon the process of eliminating old ideas and replacing them with more comprehensive thoughts. The new ideas produced by this process simplified man's thoughts and thus created progress. Proudhon used historical examples to explain his negative progress: Christianity had introduced the concept of one God rather than many; modern society called for one brotherhood, not a multitude of social classes. Both represented progress through simplification.[44] Proudhon thus defined both types of progress as "the incessant struggle of man with nature, eternal opposition, producing an eternal conciliation."[45]

Proudhon's theory of "equilibrium" was closely related to his philosophy of progress. He never saw the world in a static state; on the contrary, it was constantly moving. This belief explains his refusal to adopt any philosophy of synthesis. Synthesis meant to Proudhon a defeat or destruction of one of the opposing forces, and

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[43] L. P., No. 99 (February 25-26, 1849), p. 1.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., No. 169 (May 7, 1849), p. 1.

that possibility he refused to consider.[46]

Closely associated with Proudhon's theory of progress was his philosophy of man and society. It was through progress and man's ability that society was directed toward a better way of life. Proudhon rejected Rousseau's theory of natural goodness and assumed men to be basically evil.[47] He felt it was the responsibility of intelligent men to create a society which would control and diminish man's evil nature. All of his social theories were designed to expose the good in man and to accentuate this characteristic. In Le Peuple, Proudhon always encouraged the masses to have patience with the government and especially with their socialist leaders. Patience was "the all in man."[48] It enabled him to conquer or solve the problems that he faced in his personal life as well as in the political arena. Patience assured man the best opportunities for success in all of his endeavors.

No matter how much Proudhon might have desired otherwise, he still asserted that man was created unequal by nature.[49] Not all men, Proudhon believed, were equal in their ability and intelligence, and Proudhon stressed the necessity of taking precautions to assure that the more intelligent and talented part of society did not exploit their inferiors. On the other hand, Proudhon also violently opposed commu-

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[46]For further study of Proudhon's philosophy of progress, see William H. Harbold, "Progressive Humanity: In the Philosophy of P.-J. Proudhon," Review of Politics, Vol. XXXI, No. 1 (January, 1969), pp. 28-47. For an excellent study of "equilibrium" see Guy-Grand, La pensée, pp. 117-29.

[47]Edwards, Selected Writings, p. 27.

[48]L. P., No. 2 (October 31, 1848), p. 1.

[49]Ibid., No. 106 (March 5, 1849), p. 1.

nism, because in such a system the inferior could exploit the superior and receive reward far beyond their contributions. Proudhon believed man was at his best when he profited from his own labor and hindered no one from doing the same.

When men in their imperfect state were combined to form the whole of society, Proudhon was bewildered by the vicious beast created, thereby. He began one of his statements in Le Peuple by saying, "Society, a monstrous thing!"[50] He continued this assessment of society by proposing that the most important characteristics that should dominate mankind were direction and purpose. Proudhon believed these qualities were unfortunately negated by their opposites of confusion and stagnation.

Society was composed of many smaller units, but the most important to its well-being were the institutions of the family and education. From his early writings Proudhon had gained the reputation of being opposed to the family, but in Le Peuple he asserted over and over again his firm support of the institution.[51] The family, to Proudhon, was the most perfect unit in society, both on the basis of economics and social "mutualism". Mutualism in the family was expressed through the common desire to work for the good of all. Proudhon called this "collective reasoning" as opposed to the evil "collective organization."[52] The love that bound the family was the epitome of unselfish-

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[50]Ibid., No. 1 (September, 1848), p. 3.

[51]Ibid., No. 41 (December 29, 1848), p. 1.

[52]Edwards, Selected Writings, p. 121.

ness.[53] An expansion of this perfect situation in the family to the whole of society would have achieved Proudhon's ultimate social goal. Education was the institution by which society could best be prepared for progressive ideas. Proudhon viewed the ignorance of the proletariat as one of the main obstacles to the adoption of his ideas. He considered education "incompatible with the security of parasites," and regarded it as the only solution to the authoritative and exploitative characteristics in government.[54]

On the other hand, Proudhon considered institutionalized and orthodox religion to be the major threat to society's advancement. During the lifetime of Proudhon, the Catholic Church played an important role in politics, society, and most important, in the thoughts of the common man. To be sure, Proudhon considered "pure" religion, i.e., religious teachings, the most important characteristic needed in man to develop a society based on the common good. He also thought religion was important to give hope to the depressed or deprived. But that part of religion which he abhorred was its organization and dependence upon authority. This, to Proudhon, epitomized the Catholic Church. He believed that the church had numbed the people's natural resistance to authority and had thus created a society unable to defend its rights against the rise of authoritarian government. The church, moreover, "encouraged no change and symbolized the continuance of tradition."[55] By its existence for centuries the church was the

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[53]L. P., No. 204 (June 11, 1849), p. 5.

[54]Ibid., No. 70 (January 27, 1849), p. 1.

[55]Ibid., No. 169 (May 7, 1849), p. 2.

essence of tradition and stagnation and represented to Proudhon one of the greatest hindrances to the progress of mankind.[56]

Proudhon's hatred of authority not only affected his views on religion but also his philosophy of government. Le Peuple had been organized by Proudhon to criticize the reactionary policies of the Republic's administration. To Proudhon, there existed a wide gap between his philosophy of government and the one that he observed in operation. His theory of anarchism, though never fully developed in the pages of Le Peuple, was adumbrated through his statements on "no administration," universal suffrage, and representation.

The best government was one which only carried out national affairs and maintained order. To Proudhon, government was not to dictate nor regulate personal affairs. The people were to govern themselves. This perfect situation never approached realization in 1848 and 1849, so Proudhon directed his efforts to improve the existing government. The first target for his criticisms was General Cavaignac, the virtual dictator of France in the summer of 1848. Proudhon attacked Cavaignac particularly because he was said to represent the "capitalists."[57] This class was the most dangerous threat to the realization of Proudhon's political philosophy because it supported a government which condoned social stratification and exploitation. Next, Proudhon decided to support a candidate for President who would represent his socialist views. He selected F.-V. Raspail and campaigned for him under the philosophy of "no administration." Proudhon encouraged the people to

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[56]For a closer look at the formation of Proudhon's opinion on religion see Woodcock, Proudhon, pp. 7-12.

[57]L. P., No. 17 (December 4, 1848), pp. 1, 2.

vote for Raspail as a protest against government; for if elected, Raspail promised only inactivity.

Although Proudhon was definitely opposed to the office of the Presidency, he praised some aspects of the Republic. The republican form of government itself he considered "coordinated equality."[58] In this system Proudhon saw an approach to the perfection of equilibrium and the encouragement of unity, legality, and order.[59] Another feature of the Republic which encouraged Proudhon's hopes for progress was universal suffrage. He believed the extended franchise was the manifestation of the national will.[60] Because of the popular franchise of the early Republic, Proudhon believed there was hope for the development of legitimacy in government. Naturally this meant a government which actually represented all of the people. Proudhon asserted that unity, equality, and order in government were the direct results of universal suffrage.[61]

The Constitution that officially established the Republic was adopted in October, 1848. Though a member of the Constituent Assembly, Proudhon voted against the document, explaining that "I voted against the Constitution because it is a Constitution."[62] Proudhon's socialist desires forced him to condemn the Constitution because it went only

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[58] Ibid., No. 2 (October 31, 1848), p. 1.

[59] Ibid., No. 152 (April 20, 1849), p. 1.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid. For further insight into Proudhon's philosophy of government see Alan Ritter, The Political Thought of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969).

[62] L. P., No. 3 (November 8, 1848), p. 6.

halfway. It merely paid lip service to socialism and offered many opportunities for conservatives to return the country to authoritarian rule.

As the political scene changed from October, 1848, to the spring of 1849, the position and importance of the Constitution, as well as Proudhon's feelings toward it, also changed. The reactionaries under the leadership of the President, Louis Bonaparte, constantly attacked the Constitution because its most liberal provisions were blocking the conservatives' return to monarchy or dictatorship. Proudhon then praised the document for maintaining "the force and progress of the socialist-democratic party."[63]

Although Proudhon did experiment with political action to solve social problems in 1848, he still directed his main emphasis toward economic reform. As early as 1840, Proudhon had become convinced that the major problems of France could be solved by the application of economic solutions. This emphasis upon the economic approach to problems was extremely complex because it involved the frequent adoption of utopian institutions to establish goals such as equality, order, and stability. Proudhon's efforts to discover economic solutions for France's problems introduced him to questions of property, credit, and labor.

Proudhon had previously developed a mature philosophy of property, but <u>Le Peuple</u> gave him an opportunity to expound it to a larger audience. Proudhon maintained that there were two types of property: one good, the other bad. He encouraged private personal ownership, which

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[63]Ibid., No. 190 (May 28, 1849), p. 1.

he called "possession", and even inheritance.[64] As long as a person worked his own land and lived by his own labor, Proudhon condoned his activity. The type of property which Proudhon considered an extreme evil was that which gained profits for its owner without any personal labor. This property is what Proudhon called "theft."[65] Any property which gave its owner privilege or authority was condemned. Rent, taxes, or interest were usury and thus evil products of property. Proudhon believed that once all property was established on an individual basis and credit was free, then all men could exist in a happy society without exploitation.

Naturally, with the discussion of property being projected beyond the question of land ownership, the problem of credit became very crucial to Proudhon's philosophy. While expounding his theory of free credit through his paper, Proudhon busied himself in the organization of an institution offering gratuitous loans, the People's Bank.[66] The People's Bank was to achieve in finance what equilibrium was to achieve in society: equality and justice. Free credit was also designed to make money available to all and thus to increase monetary circulation. With increased circulation the economic problems of France would be solved. The theory of the People's Bank was certainly promising, but the institution barely received enough support to pay the salaries of its staff. Proudhon personally liquidated the Bank in the spring of 1849.

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[64] Ibid., No. 2 (October 31, 1848), p. 1.

[65] Ibid., No. 41 (December 29, 1848), p. 1.

[66] There is a factual report on the welfare of the People's Bank in almost every issue of Le Peuple.

The primary goal of all of Proudhon's economic efforts was to ease the strained financial condition of the poorer classes. One of his chief objectives was to take government profits from taxation and return the money to the poor.[67] Proudhon also wanted to end unemployment and assure the "right to work."[68] He did not agree with the establishment of work by decree; without a genuine demand for labor the situation was only artificial and likely to fail. Although popular support for the right to work was extremely strong, this philosophy was never realized after the failure of Louis Blanc's "national workshops" in June, 1848.

One segment of Proudhon's philosophy greatly affected all of his theories and tended to be the means which he most often cited by which perfection in all areas could be realized.[69] This was his theory of revolution. To Proudhon, revolution was a constant process, perpetually moving and striving to achieve improvement in society, government, and economics. Revolution was not usually violent; it was responsible for the gradual change which represented progress.[70] Therefore, new inventions, new beliefs, or new institutions that improved the well-being of mankind were all products of this type of revolution. If revolution became violent it must be instigated by the people and must be founded on an economic base to achieve any kind of success.[71]

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[67] L. P., No. 20 (December 7, 1848), p. 1.

[68] Ibid., No. 2 (October 31, 1848), p. 1.

[69] Ibid., No. 190 (May 28, 1849), p. 2.

[70] Ibid., No. 99 (February 25-26, 1849), p. 1.

[71] Ibid., No. 93 (February 19, 1849), p. 2.

Revolution produced in society, government, and economics similar results. It always provided a means to achieve equality and the suppression of privilege and abuse. It fought against capitalists and usury of any nature.[72] Revolution, above all, created progress faster than man could work toward it alone.[73]

Doubtlessly the philosophy Proudhon expressed in Le Peuple had a more mature foundation than his theories of a year before. The most crucial event in the development of his thoughts had occurred in February, 1848. The Revolution had forced Proudhon to question critically his philosophy in all areas. After this, Proudhon's anarchist tendencies diminished somewhat, and more consideration was given to the role of government in society. While Proudhon was criticizing the government of the Republic, he never so much as hinted that government should be abolished. He began to develop the idea that a government was acceptable if it possessed a solid foundation in the people. Prior to the February Revolution Proudhon had been much more willing to deny the need for government at all.

Another change in the basic philosophy of Proudhon as a result of the bloodshed of 1848 was his rejection of the necessity for violent revolution. In Le Peuple, Proudhon described revolution as a gradual, evolutionary phenomenon and actually discouraged violence as a source of progress. He still praised revolution but not the kind of peoples' revolt that he had envisioned prior to 1848.

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[72]Ibid., No. 5 (November 15-21, 1848), p. 2.

[73]Ibid., No. 99 (February 25-26, 1849), p. 1. For Proudhon's personal study of revolutions see P.-J. Proudhon, General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century (trans. John Beverly Robinson, London: Freedom Press, 1923).

The maturing effect of the February Revolution also completed the originality of Proudhon's philosophy. As has been shown, Proudhon's whole life was his school for the development of a unique philosophy. First, Proudhon's humble origin was the basis for his identification with the poorer classes. This background set him apart from the French socialist intellectuals of his day and caused him to reject the absurdities of Charles Fourier's solutions. He did, however, accept a part of Fourier's analysis of society and its needs. He also established his position in opposition to Saint-Simon early in his career by proclaiming an intense hatred for any philosophy which organized society toward an ideal situation. Proudhon always denied that he was a systematizer and was content to let the people find their own way to social improvement.[74] He considered himself to be no more than an occasional guide.

The Marx-Proudhon feud made it evident that Proudhon had rejected the Hegelian dialectic and had developed his unique theory of equilibrium. This theory depicted a society which was full of antagonisms; progress was not achieved through the destruction of one of the opposing forces but by agreement and conciliation.[75] The development of the theory of equilibrium was one of the most unique characteristics of Proudhon's philosophy.

The major effect of the February Revolution on Proudhon's labor philosophy was to reject the theories of Louis Blanc. Proudhon praised any attempt to establish a "right to work", but he disagreed with Blanc

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[74] Woodcock, _Proudhon_, p. 46.

[75] Guy-Grand, _La pensée_, p. 29.

on how to implement effectively the theory in society. His opposition to Blanc again showed that Proudhon was no systematic thinker. It also emphasized his conviction that reforms must come from an economic base and not from a law.[76]

Proudhon's open opposition to the major philosophical schools of his day and their mutual rejection of his ideas reflect the intensity and uniqueness of his thought. This philosophy in its most mature form was written, taught, and expounded in Le Peuple. But was Proudhon's philosophy so unique that similarities cannot be found in other socialist movements in 1848? Proudhon was an expert in the abstract and built his philosophy on basic premises which he believed should be the ultimate goals of society. On the other hand, English socialism was founded upon agitation for practical goals that would improve the lives of the working class. How does the philosophy of Le Peuple compare to the ideals of the Chartist movement in England? This comparison was made possible by the writings of Feargus Edward O'Connor in the Northern Star.

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[76] Landauer, European Socialism, Vol. I, p. 67.

CHAPTER III

THE LIFE OF FEARGUS O'CONNOR AND AN ANALYSIS OF HIS PHILOSOPHY AS EXPRESSED IN THE NORTHERN STAR

In 1847, Feargus Edward O'Connor boasted that "neither the living denouncer nor the unborn historian can ever write of Chartism, leaving out the name of Feargus O'Connor."[1] Although typically egocentric, no truer statement could have been made by a man assessing the value of his leadership and actions. The devotion of O'Connor to the Chartist cause kept the movement alive long after other English leaders had moved on to newer ideas. Of his position O'Connor once said, "I don't lead; I am driven by the people," and throughout his nineteen years of public service he championed the causes of the working class.[2] His devotion to the Chartist cause won him the title of "Lion of Freedom" from his supporters and epithets such as "despot" and "the most capricious of all demogogues" from his critics.[3] O'Connor's dynamic person-

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[1]Feargus Edward O'Connor and Ernest Jones, eds., The Labourer (2 vols., London: Northern Star Office, 1847-1848), Vol. I, p. 176.

[2]Asa Briggs, "The Local Background of Chartism", in Chartist Studies, ed. by Asa Briggs (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1959), p. 10.

[3]"Lion of Freedom" and "a despot", from Frank F. Rosenblatt, The Chartist Movement in its Social and Economic Aspects (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), pp. 107, 108, (hereafter referred to as The Chartist Movement); "the most capricious of all demagogues", from F. C. Mather, Chartism (London: The Historical Association, 1965), p. 30.

ality and eccentric characteristics won him friends and enemies, and also enabled him to gather many working people into a united movement to improve their political, social, and economic status.

O'Connor, as the leader of a radical movement, had a family heritage which only reinforced his penchant to leadership. He claimed descent from Roderick O'Connor, the king of Connaught and last king of all Ireland, and was the nephew of Arthur O'Connor, famous Irish patriot of the late eighteenth century.[4] O'Connor's father, Roger, was a United Irishman and was responsible for the changing of the family name back to O'Connor from its anglicized form, Conner, adopted in the seventeenth century. Roger O'Connor burned with a desire to create an Irish nation under an O'Connor dynasty. This radical scheme ultimately resulted in a short imprisonment and exile from Ireland, to which he returned only to undertake litigation in a vain effort to reduce his financial distress. His constant worry with finances and the end of his political hopes contributed to his subsequent insanity and ultimately caused his death. Although their father had fallen into bad times, all the children had been indoctrinated with royal traditions and hopes of Irish nationalism. Feargus Edward, one of nine children, was destined to carry his father's aspirations closer to their goals than any of his three offspring.

Feargus O'Connor was born July 18, 1796, at Connerville, Kinneigh parish, County Cork. He attended grammar school in London during his father's exile and later returned to Ireland and entered Trinity College

[4]Royal descent from Rosenblatt, The Chartist Movement, p. 107; information on Arthur O'Connor from Reed and Glasgow, O'Connor, p. 11.

at Dublin with the intention of taking a law degree. At the age of thirty, O'Connor was admitted to Gray's Inn, the last stage in his education.[5]

Just prior to this, O'Connor had become a landlord by inheritance. In 1820 his uncle Robert died and unexpectedly left his estate and fortune to Feargus. The mansion, Fort Robert in County Cork, was immediately occupied by Feargus and two of his brothers. They maintained a style of living befitting only the wealthiest of lords and soon moved into the upper ranks of county society. Feargus enjoyed his new status and took his duties as a landlord quite seriously. He paid his workers well and often worked in the fields with them. It was at this time that he first became concerned about the political, social, and economic welfare of the working class. O'Connor was particularly appalled at the average landlord's lack of interest in his estate and its inhabitants and the tithe required from every Irishman. Although O'Connor was a Protestant he believed that no member of one faith should be required to support another, and by 1822 he was delivering speeches denouncing the tithe required of Irish Catholics by the established Irish Protestant Church.[6] The Protestant absentee landlords received the brunt of his orations, and their tenants quickly acclaimed O'Connor as their leader.

From his moderate beginning as a spokesman for the Irish tenants of County Cork, O'Connor began to expand his platform and his popularity. He wrote a sympathetic account of the Irish situation in his first

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[5]Read and Glasgow, O'Connor, pp. 15-16, 21.

[6]G. D. H. Cole, "Feargus O'Connor," in Chartist Portraits (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. 308.

book, A State of Ireland (1822).[7] O'Connor oscillated between threats of violence and programs of peace in this discussion of the necessity for the repeal of the Act of Union. He also participated in an Irish nationalist organization, the Whiteboys, and supposedly received a wound in one of their more violent skirmishes. While a member of the Whiteboys, O'Connor was most outspoken against the English Protestant landlords, but he also expanded his causes to include population control or distribution, the agrarian revolution, and, above all, Irish independence. O'Connor's career as a politician was founded in his pro-peasant and Irish nationalist activities of the 1820's.

The qualities of the natural politician in O'Connor's character surfaced fully in the debates attendent to the passage of the Great Reform Bill. At a county meeting called to discuss parliamentary reform on December 1, 1831, O'Connor spoke in favor of such principles as universal suffrage, the ballot, annual parliaments, and repeal of the union with England.[8] During the following year he made many public speeches and impressed numerous working-class crowds. He was a born leader and possessed the power of reading the minds of the people, in accordance with which he would adjust his actions. O'Connor was tall, red haired, vigorous, and strong. He was aristocratic in manner and possessed a speaking ability which was "beginning to fascinate angry audiences everywhere."[9] As an orator, O'Connor did not feel particularly bound by facts and indulged freely in "bombast, broken metaphor

[7]Read and Glasgow, O'Connor, p. 25.

[8]Ibid., p. 26.

[9]Briggs, Chartist Studies, p. 10.

and inflated language."[10] Whatever the philosophy behind them, his speeches were effective, and O'Connor became a popular leader throughout the county. He concentrated on the anti-tithe theme and was eventually arrested on September 8, 1832.[11] Although his prosecution was dismissed, the experience gave him an aura of martyrdom which he never failed to emphasize throughout his career.

In the general election of 1832, O'Connor presented himself as a candidate for the County Cork seat in the House of Commons and was accepted into the Irish nationalist party upon the approval of its leader, Daniel O'Connell. O'Connor campaigned at a feverish pace, often holding two speaking engagements a day. His efforts were rewarded on election day, December 29, 1832, when he received a total of 1,837 votes, fifty-nine more than the next candidate.[12]

A rather arrogant O'Connor entered Parliament in January, 1833, as a member of Daniel O'Connell's party. With his inflated self-confidence, O'Connor immediately began to propound his policies to his new audience. He soon discovered the difference between a mob of poorly educated workers and an audience of highly critical, learned men, however, as his speeches were denounced as shallow and illogical and had little effect on any of the opposition.

O'Connor was in no way satisfied with the achievements of his first months in London and immediately began to look for a more receptive group of people. He found them among the London radical workers. As

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[10]Read and Glasgow, O'Connor, p. 29.

[11]Ibid., p. 28.

[12]Ibid., p. 30-31.

early as 1833, he spoke to the National Union of the Working Classes which was the largest London skilled workers organization.[13] Although he disagreed with some of the philosophy of the leader of the Union, William Lovett, he believed his association with the radical labor movement was more productive and worthwhile than his parliamentary position.

During the summer of 1833, O'Connor faced new opposition from among his fellow Irishmen. O'Connor and his supporters desired the immediate introduction of a repeal of the Union bill, but O'Connell's faction wanted to travel a path of judicious delay. Although O'Connell won the argument, O'Connor constantly agitated for quicker action. In November, 1833, another O'Connell-O'Connor clash occurred. O'Connell wanted the Whigs to compete for votes among the Irish by offering their own reforms. By this method, O'Connell believed reforms would be gained more speedily and with less agitation. O'Connor violently denounced O'Connell's tactics as involving needless delay and as a betrayal of the Irish repeal cause.

O'Connor also disagreed with O'Connell on the need of radical working-class associations. O'Connor supported the trade unionist cause because it was completely composed of workingmen, and opposed any association that was even slightly connected to middle-class liberals. O'Connell's beliefs were the opposite. He desired middle-class assistance in the working-class cause.[14] The constant feuding between the two men weakened the unity and effectiveness of the Irish

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[13]Cole, Chartist Portraits, p. 310.

[14]Briggs, Chartist Studies, p. 12-15.

party, but no immediate split occurred. O'Connor realized the importance of his ties to O'Connell and the enormous influence the party leader had on the Irish people.

O'Connor maintained an acceptable alliance with O'Connell's party and was re-elected in the general elections of 1834. His margin of victory was only seventeen votes, however, owing to the anti-O'Connor pressure placed upon the tenants by their landlords and the effects of the O'Connell feud.[15] Shortly after his re-entry into the Commons in 1835, O'Connor again quarrelled with O'Connell over old issues and was unseated on grounds of not meeting the property qualifications.[16] The final breach between O'Connor and O'Connell came in 1836 when O'Connell, completely frustrated by years of argument, denounced O'Connor as a Tory radical. This action estranged O'Connor from the Irish nationalist movement, and made it necessary for him to look elsewhere for a constituency.

O'Connor immediately placed his political aspirations before the English working class. He entered an election to fill the vacant seat of the representative from Oldham, but succeeded merely in splitting the radical workers' vote between J. M. Cobbett and himself, helping thereby to usher in a Tory victory.[17] After this unsuccessful attempt in politics, O'Connor preoccupied himself in the radical working-class movement emerging in the manufacturing cities. Though basing his

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[15]Read and Glasgow, O'Connor, p. 37.

[16]The Illustrated London News, Vol. I, No. 22 (October 8, 1842), p. 344.

[17]Julius West, A History of the Chartist Movement (reprint, New York: Augustus M. Kelley, Publisher, 1968), p. 85. Hereafter referred to as History of Chartist.

activities in London, he travelled for two years in the industrial areas speaking to the labor organizations. At last he was again before a crowd which appreciated his thoughts and words, a crowd he could appeal to, influence, and sway.

O'Connor founded the Radical Association among Marylebone radicals in September, 1835, and made plans for several important meetings in the coming spring.[18] He concentrated his efforts on the unskilled workers in England, many of whom were Irish immigrants, and dreamed of a united movement consisting of "Irish peasants, Irish immigrants living in the towns of England and Scotland and British working men."[19] The Irish workers were somewhat hesitant to follow the man who had quarrelled with their great leader, O'Connell, but gradually more and more of them looked to O'Connor for leadership. From the beginning, O'Connor received most of his support from the manufacturing areas in the North and Midlands. There the workers were in the grip of depression and suffering from low wages and a scarcity of jobs.

To counterbalance O'Connor's power among the unskilled, uneducated workers, William Lovett and Francis Place founded the London Working Men's Association. This radical organization was composed exclusively of skilled laborers and deliberately anti-O'Connor in its program.[20] Lovett detested O'Connor's demagogic approach to leadership and once

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[18] Patricia Hollis, The Pauper Press, A Study of Working-Class Radicalism of the 1830's (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 267. Hereafter referred to as Pauper Press.

[19] Mather, Chartism, p. 24.

[20] James Walker, British Economic and Social History 1700-1967 (London: MacDonald & Evans, Ltd., 1968), p. 237. Hereafter referred to as Economic History.

referred to him as "the blight of Democracy."[21] O'Connor, disgusted at Lovett's attempt to exclude him from any organization, founded the East London Democratic Association in 1836 under the secretaryship of George Julian Harney.[22] The organization's objectives were universal suffrage, agitation for liberty of the press, repeal of the Poor Law, the eight-hour day, and the prohibition of child labor.[23] By 1837 O'Connor had succeeded in splitting Lovett's London Working Men's Association.

From the early years of 1835 and 1836 the radical organizations and leaders had fought for supremacy in the working-class movement. Leaders would travel long distances to address small crowds on the benefits of their philosophy and organization and would often incorporate other popular causes into their platform in order to gain more followers. O'Connor adopted the anti-middle-class cause and opposed the Anti-Corn Law League. He also joined the Anti-Poor Law agitation to gain the support of the northern handloom weavers. O'Connor spoke against the harsh action taken by the British government in the Dorset laborers' trial of 1834 and the Glasgow cotton spinners' case in 1837.[24] As though the adoption of all of these popular causes was not enough, O'Connor began to make references to violence and resistance.

It was discovered that during this proselytizing period the most

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[21] West, History of Chartist, p. 204.

[22] Cole, Chartist Portraits, p. 311.

[23] Rosenblatt, The Chartist Movement, p. 111.

[24] F. C. Mather, Public Order in the Age of the Chartists (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), p. 7. Hereafter referred to as Public Order.

useful tool a leader could possess was a cheap newspaper. From the paper's columns the leader could support his causes, hold his party together, and denounce his opposition. Throughout this period O'Connor had been denounced many times by the opposition, and he desired an opportunity to arm himself with a newspaper. It was in this atmosphere that the Rev. William Hill approached O'Connor with some funds designated for the establishment of such an organ.[25] Since the money collected by Hill was not sufficient to establish the paper fully, O'Connor agreed to sell interest-bearing shares in the newspaper; but only he would determine the editorial policy.[26] Hill was named editor, and a prominent radical, Joshua Hobson, became the printer and publisher.[27] On Saturday, November 18, 1837, the first issue of the Northern Star was circulated from its office in Leeds, England. It was destined to be "the newspaper of Chartism, the first great British popular newspaper."[28] In the first issue O'Connor made the purpose of the paper quite clear by his statement that "the power of the press is acknowledged upon all hands, and rather than oppose it, I have preferred to arm myself with it."[29]

From the outset, the Northern Star was a success. Within four

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[25]Read and Glasgow, O'Connor, p. 57.

[26]West, History of Chartist, p. 87.

[27]Read and Glasgow, O'Connor, p. 58.

[28]Ibid., p. 56. From November 18, 1837, to November 23, 1844, the official title of the newspaper was The Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser. Then the paper was moved to London and called The Northern Star and National Trades' Journal until March 13, 1852.

[29]N. S., No. I (November 18, 1837), p. 1.

months it was selling nearly ten thousand copies a week.[30] It devoted much of its space to local news which made the small laborer realize that he was part of a gigantic movement.[31] With the growing circulation of the Northern Star, so rose O'Connor's popularity. By June, 1838, small independent organizations in the North were pledging their allegiance to O'Connor.[32]

During the founding of the Northern Star and its first year of publication, O'Connor had taken up the cause of universal suffrage. This popular issue gained a great following for O'Connor from the Glasgow area. In the spring of 1838, the Anti-Poor Law movement merged with the political agitation for parliamentary reform, and made O'Connor one of the most powerful men leading the working class.

While O'Connor was busy enlisting supporters, his opponents were opening a new era in the English labor movement. Francis Place, a co-leader in the London Working Men's Association, drafted the "People's Charter" of six articles in 1838.[33] The six points of the Charter were as follows: universal suffrage, no property qualification, annual parliaments, equal electoral districts, vote by ballot, and payment of members of parliament. O'Connor took little notice of the People's

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[30] J. F. C. Harrison, "Chartism in Leeds," in Chartist Studies, p. 73.

[31] Hollis, Pauper Press, p. 121. The management of the Northern Star spent £500 a year on local coverage even in the declining years of Chartism.

[32] Harrison, Chartist Studies, p. 75.

[33] Walker, Economic History, p. 237. Excellent primary sources for the six points of Chartism are The Chartist Circular (2 vols., Glasgow: W. & W. Miller, 1839-1842) and The English Chartist Circular and Temperance Record for England and Wales (2 vols., London: J. Cleave, 1841-1844). Both of these publications are available in reprint under (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1968).

Charter for some months owing to the fact that Place was Lovett's associate in the London Working Men's Association, but he gradually allowed himself to be converted to Chartism. O'Connor actually had no choice but support Chartism if he wanted to maintain his control over his suffrage and political reform organizations.

The spread of Chartism took a natural course starting with the despondent worker organizations in Scotland and then to the troubled workingmen's groups of the larger industrial towns. Soon Scotland, London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Leincester, Suffolk, Somerset, Wiltshire, and Wales were filled with organizations supporting the People's Charter.[34] In this early period there was still confusion on what approach to take to Chartism and who would lead the movement.

There were three basic groups of Chartists in 1838. William Lovett of the London Working Men's Association led one faction, which was predominantly middle-class, peaceful, and centered in London. The Birmingham Political Union led by Thomas Attwood supported monetary reform and were loyal to the Queen and generally constitutional in their approach. The third group comprised the O'Connorites. Mostly from the North, these readers of the Northern Star supported factory legislation and Anti-Poor Law agitation. This faction was not bound to the letter of the Charter and believed in the use of physical

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[34]This information was gathered through the various articles in Briggs, Chartist Studies. For an in depth study of the formation and early growth of Chartism see E. C. K. Gonner, "The Early History of Chartism, 1836-1839," in The English Historical Review, Vol. IV, No. 16 (October, 1889), pp. 625-644.

force.[35] O'Connor's faction also supported their leader's desire to look backward to the former prosperous days of the English worker and, as a part of this desire, O'Connor later developed his land plan.[36]

The fight for supremacy in the Chartist movement was carried on by these groups. Throughout the late summer and fall of 1838, Chartist meetings were held by various leaders to promote their own philosophy. In August, 1838, the Charter was officially adopted in Birmingham.[37] O'Connor's militant and anti-bourgeois attitudes expressed in his speeches in 1838 and 1839 gained him popularity superior to that of his opposition. Militant and anti-middle-class factions left Lovett's and Attwood's organizations and joined O'Connor. This general gravitation toward O'Connor continued into the early 1840's and ultimately created a Chartist organization of national scope and following.

While O'Connor was gaining followers, the Chartists held their first National Convention on February 4, 1839, in London.[38] A petition was prepared with over two and one-quarter million signatures and presented to the House of Commons on July 12.[39] The Commons rejected

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[35] West, History of Chartist, p. 95. For an excellent example of O'Connor's view of violence in late 1838 see Max Morris, From Cobbett to the Chartists, 1815-1848 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1948), p. 146.

[36] This tendency to look backward to better days was considered to be the greatest weakness in O'Connor's program by Harold Underwood Faulkner, Chartism and the Churches: A Study in Democracy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), p. 74. The Chartists' reasons for supporting O'Connor's land plan are discussed in Preston William Slosson, The Decline of the Chartist Movement (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), p. 36. Hereafter referred to as Decline of Chartist.

[37] Harrison, Chartist Studies, p. 75.

[38] West, History of Chartist, p. 107.

[39] The number of signatures was taken from Walker, Economic History, p. 237; the date from Mather, Public Order, p. 9.

the petition and the convention moved to Birmingham. Only a few working-class riots occurred, and these were quickly quelled by troops led by General Sir Charles James Napier.

O'Connor managed to abstain from any violent actions in the 1839 riots although he was prosecuted for libel, found guilty, but never sentenced.[40] He was considered potentially dangerous by the central police and was under constant surveillance in early 1840. Belatedly, the police arrested him for writing seditious libels in the July, 1839, publication of the Northern Star. On May 11, 1840, O'Connor was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment.[41]

Although their leader was imprisoned, the O'Connorites conducted a nationwide reorganization of Chartism at Manchester in July, 1840.[42] The National Charter Association was established under the platform of moral suasion, a tactic which had been encouraged by O'Connor. O'Connorites were still numerous and maintained their strength during the imprisonment of their leader.

When O'Connor was released from prison in August, 1841, he immediately returned to his agitation for the working class.[43] He made a tour of the North, where his popularity had actually grown during his imprisonment. O'Connor began to protest the middle-class participation which had seeped into the Chartist movement during his absence and became determined to rid any non-labor elements from his

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[40] Read and Glasgow, O'Connor, p. 63.

[41] West, History of Chartist, p. 148.

[42] Mather, Public Order, p. 10.

[43] Donald Read, "Chartism in Manchester," in Chartist Studies, p. 50.

organization. He called for a general Chartist conference at Birmingham in late 1842.

The Birmingham Convention occurred in December, 1842, and ushered in the complete dictatorship of O'Connor.[44] His anti-bourgeois principles moved him far ahead of any of his opposition. O'Connor adopted an anti-suffrage platform also, because the franchise movement was the stronghold of the middle class. William Lovett and Bronterre O'Brien, both of whom supported middle-class participation in Chartism, were forced to side with the non-labor faction, and O'Connor won the workers.

O'Connor's victory at Birmingham enabled him to move forward on his own personal reorganization of the Chartist movement. He introduced two objectives which were to become the major goals of Chartism from 1843 to its last important days in 1848. O'Connor believed the National Charter Association should first of all improve the condition of men "by peaceful and legal means only" and secondly "provide for the unemployed, and . . . those who are desirous to locate upon the land."[45] He also officially tied the Chartist movement to Irish nationalism by including the repeal of the Union as one of its goals.

Despite O'Connor's appeal to the Irish and the laborers, Chartism still lost many supporters after 1842 to trade unionism and the Anti-Corn Law League.[46] The mid-1840's were more prosperous than the

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[44]Edouard Dolléans, Le Chartisme (Paris: Librairie Marcel Riviere et Cie, 1949), p. 257.

[45]West, History of Chartist, p. 203; Elie Halévy, "Chartism," in The Quarterly Review, Vol. CCXXXVI, No. 468 (July, 1921), p. 70.

[46]Walker, Economic History, p. 238.

previous decade, and the workingmen's interest in politics cooled rapidly. O'Connor received most of his support from Scotland during this period. He struggled to devise a new program which would again make him powerful among the English laborers. It was as a result of this struggle that O'Connor began his land schemes.

Although Chartism received most of its support from urban laborers, O'Connor still had a stronger love for the rural life. He believed that land was the only source of all wealth and that to relieve the distress of the urban unemployed, he must move them to the countryside.[47] As early as 1843 O'Connor developed the ideas behind the land plan, but not until May and June, 1845, were the first organizational meetings held.[48] The Land Company dominated O'Connor and the Chartist movement for the next three years.

The Land Company was to buy large estates and divide them into four, three, or two-acre plots to rent to prospective laborers. The renter would pay an initial investment but could never actually own the land. O'Connor and a small number of directors were to retain all administrative powers in the company. Between 1846 and 1848 O'Connor purchased three estates and attempted to buy two more. The first two estates, Herringsgate, later called O'Connorsville, and Lowbands, were bought in 1846, and the first occupants were settled in May, 1847. Snig's End, the third estate, was also purchased in 1846

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[47]Rosenblatt, The Chartist Movement, p. 110. The claim that O'Connor founded his land plan on Marxian principles was made in Slosson, Decline of Chartist, p. 198.

[48]Harrison, Chartist Studies, p. 93.

but not occupied until 1848.[49]

The Land Company demanded many hours in O'Connor's schedule, but he still held a keen interest for English politics. With the depression which struck England in 1847, more people began to look again toward Chartism as an answer to their problems. O'Connor used this opportunity to gain followers and make another attempt at a seat in Parliament. In the General Elections of July, 1847, Chartists challenged incumbent members of Parliament everywhere. O'Connor chose to run against Sir John Cam Hobhouse, President of the Board of Control and the representative of Nottingham, and won.[50] O'Connor's victory was "as surprising an occurrence as could possibly arise from the mere movements of human opinion and feeling."[51]

From the end of 1847 and throughout the first half of 1848 O'Connor was at the pinnacle of his career. He was the leader of the Chartist movement, the director of his Land Company, the controller of the most important radical newspaper, the Northern Star, as well as the representative of Nottingham. Throughout his career he had continuously contributed articles to the Northern Star. These articles had introduced his philosophy to thousands of laborers and had established him as the primary leader of the Chartist movement.[52] O'Connor had introduced his land scheme in his articles in the Northern Star and had made it a popular institution through propaganda published in the same organ.

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[49] Joy MacAskill, "The Chartist Land Plan," in Chartist Studies, pp. 324-325, 327.

[50] West, History of Charist, p. 220. O'Connor received 1,340 votes.

[51] The Times (London), July 31, 1847, p. 6.

[52] Although the weekly sales of the Northern Star reached only 21,000 in 1848, they were recorded as numerous as over 50,000 in 1839. Read and Glasgow, O'Connor, p. 60-61.

As a member of Parliament, what O'Connor wrote became extremely important, and the thoughts he expounded were to affect many of the laboring class. O'Connor realized the importance of his newspaper articles and used them to present doctrines designed to win converts to his cause.

O'Connor's philosophy of mankind expressed in the Northern Star exposed his deep faith in the people. He believed in the old maxim that "a people are seldom wrong and never very long wrong."[53] When the people moved as a whole in a just cause, O'Connor asserted, they would "inevitably and irresistably crush the power of the oppressor."[54] He hinted of an evil element in man's composition only when mob action occurred; then man would commit acts that he "would blush to acknowledge as an individual."[55] Although O'Connor sought to create a better world for all men, he believed that "a good man struggling against adversity" was an admirable sight.[56] Throughout his articles in 1848 O'Connor encouraged the development of the personal traits of prudence, caution, and bravery. These characteristics would enable mankind to face adversity and emerge from the fight victorious.

O'Connor rarely dealt in abstract philosophy and utopian goals, but he believed in the possibility of social perfection. He proposed that social perfection was "representative equality" which would lead to "political agitation" which in turn would secure all the basic

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[53]N. S., No. 534 (January 15, 1848), p. 1.

[54]Ibid., No. 540 (February 26, 1848), p. 1.

[55]Ibid., No. 548 (April 22, 1848), p. 1.

[56]Ibid., No. 534 (January 15, 1848), p. 1.

rights and privileges of every man.[57] O'Connor was convinced that "when one of the community is oppressed, society is injured" and that once representative equality was gained, all oppression would cease and a perfect society would emerge.[58]

O'Connor dealt more easily with the common aspects of society and placed great importance upon the family. He believed it was a great advantage for every man to be "surrounded by his own family."[59] The man's duty was to respect his wife, never to neglect his children, and to take his rightful place in "the free Labour field, working for himself." A woman's place was in "her own house" training, loving, and protecting "her little children." The child's place was "the school, the open air, and the comfort of a home."[60]

Most of the perfect home life and society O'Connor described was directed toward the laborer whom he considered "the source of all wealth."[61] Although the worker's life was bleak indeed in the late forties, O'Connor contended that he had many advantages. He always honored any man who lived by the sweat of his own brow and insisted that this personal production would "inevitably confer benefits upon all classes."[62] Due to the all-inclusive benefits of individual labor, O'Connor believed that if the laborer was the only person represented

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[57]Ibid.

[58]Ibid., No. 538 (February 12, 1848), p. 1.

[59]Ibid., No. 541 (March 4, 1848), p. 1.

[60]Ibid., No. 542 (March 11, 1848), p. 1.

[61]Ibid., No. 552 (May 20, 1848), p. 1.

[62]Ibid., No. 543 (March 18, 1848), p. 1.

in the government "every other class of society would be benefited."[63]

Despite the contributions made by the laborer, O'Connor realized that the English society operated on the opposite principle. He declared that the existing "Labour system of England is one huge system of Communism" where the idler was living off of the production of the worker.[64] In reaction to this situation O'Connor declared that the laboring class was "governed like slaves," for "no one but the Labourer can represent Labour."[65]

Although O'Connor considered the English working class well informed about the Charter, he still attributed their "manifold transgressions to the systematic ignorance" in which they had been kept on other social and political issues.[66] He believed the only hope for progress was to study and learn from the information placed before them and to refuse to be deceived any more about their rights.

O'Connor criticized the English economy as being the institution responsible for the poor condition of the working class. He asserted that the capitalists would rather realize a huge profit for "their own kindly use" than to see an annual distribution on a more equal basis.[67] O'Connor stressed the importance of the principles of "reciprocity" and "co-operation" in economy as the means by which the laborer could pro-

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[63]Ibid.

[64]Ibid., No. 578 (November 18, 1848), p. 1. An excellent example of O'Connor's view of the evils of the factory system can be seen in The English Chartist Circular Vol. II, No. 62 (March, 1842), p. 37.

[65]Ibid., No. 541 (March 4, 1848), p. 1.

[66]Ibid., No. 534 (January 15, 1848), p. 1.

[67]Ibid., No. 543 (March 18, 1848), p. 1.

ceed out from under the existing middle-class tyranny.[68]

As another solution to the plight of the laborer, O'Connor suggested a return to the land. He believed that any work outside the field was artificial and thus not really beneficial to the laborer and society. Furthermore, O'Connor asserted that a man and his family could be self-sufficient and comfortable on only three acres of land.[69] Self-sufficiency was one of O'Connor's highest goals, because the laborer could then more thoroughly control his situation and improve it.

While O'Connor encouraged the laborer to return to the land, he also supported the introduction of improved farming practices. In his book, <u>A Practical Work on the Management of Small Farms</u>, published in 1847, O'Connor explained his agricultural methods completely. He dealt with all aspects of agriculture from the farmer's attitude to a lengthy discussion of important crops.[70] O'Connor was an avid believer in the benefits of fertilizer and once said of manure, "that's money."[71]

Although the Land Company was of major importance to O'Connor in 1848, he was still fascinated by government and the political goals of Chartism. He considered the English governmental system evil because it denied the lower classes equal rights and power. Public servants, particularly Whigs, committed the supreme crime of hypocrisy because

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[68]Ibid., No. 575 (October 28, 1848), p. 1; No. 543 (March 18, 1848), p. 1; No. 537 (February 5, 1848), p. 3.

[69]Ibid., No. 533 (January 8, 1848), p. 1.

[70]Feargus O'Connor, <u>A Practical Work on the Management of Small Farms</u> (Manchester: Abel Heywood, 1847).

[71]<u>N. S.</u>, No. 554 (June 3, 1848), p. 1.

they appealed for votes on a pro-labor platform and then deserted the cause once they were elected.[72] O'Connor once characterized the legal system created by these unscrupulous politicians as "the narrow limits of the narrow law, as prescribed by the narrow intellect of hired officials."[73]

O'Connor supported all six of the points of the Charter, but he placed particular emphasis upon annual parliaments and universal suffrage. He insisted that annual parliaments with annual elections were the most needed reforms in England. "A nation will never be free," he wrote in 1848, "until the leaders are placed under that popular vigilant control which never will pardon the first act of political delinquency."[74] O'Connor placed the importance of annual parliaments even above universal suffrage and the secret ballot. Only annual parliaments would insure complete control by the people and thus guarantee improved legislation. In universal suffrage, O'Connor saw the equalizing of political power among all people so that politicians would find it necessary to pass legislation which would benefit all the people, not merely the wealthy. Above all, universal suffrage would insure "full, free, and fair representation of the whole people in the Commons House of Parliament."[75] Strangely, O'Connor's support of democratic principles in government was not applied to his own direction of the Chartist movement. He insisted upon full control of all administra-

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[72]Ibid., No. 534 (January 15, 1848), p. 1.

[73]Ibid., No. 579 (November 25, 1848), p. 1.

[74]Ibid., No. 532 (January 1, 1848), p. 1.

[75]Ibid., No. 534 (January 15, 1848), p. 1.

tion in order that he might maintain national unity.[76] He believed that unity in leadership would assure the demise of divisive sectional Chartism and the success of the national movement.

The most important characteristic of annual parliaments and universal suffrage was their practicality. O'Connor believed that "practical, and not theoretical, changes" were the only reforms that were really going to improve society.[77] When the French Revolution of 1848 guaranteed the right of the laborer to employment, O'Connor considered it the most "valuable result" of the violence.[78] He altered his opinion when events turned the revolution into a failure, and he subsequently dismissed the guaranteed right to work as "exciting theories."[79] O'Connor insisted that to have practical change it was necessary to begin with "social reform."[80] Without social reform all political change was worthless; thus O'Connor directed Chartism toward what he considered practical social reforms.

O'Connor believed that true social gains could not be made "unless accompanied by annual parliaments, universal suffrage, vote by ballot, equal representation, no property qualification [for members of Parliament], and the payment of members."[81] He proposed that Chartism organize to achieve these goals by agitation and trusted completely in the

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[76]Ibid., No. 538 (February 12, 1848), p. 1.

[77]Ibid., No. 534 (January 15, 1848), p. 1.

[78]Ibid., No. 541 (March 4, 1848), p. 1.

[79]Ibid., No. 534 (January 15, 1848), p. 1.

[80]Ibid., No. 549 (April 29, 1848), p. 1.

[81]Ibid., No. 532 (January 1, 1848), p. 1.

power of a popular movement. O'Connor warned that these goals must be won and society must be reorganized on a new standard, or revolution could not be averted.[82]

To O'Connor, revolution was a spontaneous, uncontrollable, and leaderless phenomenon that resulted from the failure of governments "to secure for man all those rights to which he is entitled."[83] He was in no way sure of any benefits of revolution but did assert that the laborer would suffer at least "three years" after any violence before gaining any permanent good from the ordeal.[84] O'Connor stressed the importance of direction and goals in a revolution and the necessity for being "prepared with a new system as a substitute."[85]

Although quite cautious in his approach to revolution, O'Connor was known as a supporter of physical force. Actually his opinions on violence were so vacillating that O'Connor's ideology seemed merely a radical blur. Famous statements such as ". . . I never seek the battle nor shun it when it comes . . ." made O'Connor into any type of agitator his readers or listeners wanted.[86] O'Connor realized, however, that violence would alienate his moderate supporters, so he turned toward the tactic of "moral force"—the "quality in each man's mind, which teaches him how to reason, how to endure, and when for-

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[82]Ibid., No. 575 (October 28, 1848), p. 1.

[83]Ibid., No. 572 (October 7, 1848), p. 5.

[84]Ibid., No. 575 (October 28, 1848), p. 1.

[85]Ibid., No. 551 (May 13, 1848), p. 1.

[86]Ibid., No. 553 (May 27, 1848), p. 1.

bearance becomes a crime."[87] With this emphasis upon moral force, O'Connor expected to achieve success in all his causes peacefully.

During O'Connor's agitation for the laboring class he constantly criticized the Church, particularly the privileges allowed it by the State. As early as 1822, O'Connor was an opponent of the tithe, and in 1848 he still devoted himself to "the destruction of that power which imposed a tax upon the professors of one faith, for the support of the preachers of another faith."[88] Although a Protestant, he championed the Irish Catholics' cause and protested the power of the Anglican Church. O'Connor was particularly opposed to the ownership of land by the Church and insisted that "Church property belongs to the flock and not to the shepherds."[89] He wanted to confiscate Church lands and divide them into four-acre plots for rent to needy laborers.

Throughout his career O'Connor championed the causes of the politically, socially, economically, and religiously oppressed. He believed that the Charter was "the basis of the English Constitution" and was assured that through it all his dreams would be realized.[90] O'Connor's philosophy was the Chartist movement, and what was to be the future of Chartism depended upon the actions and words of the same men, the "Lion of Freedom."

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[87] Ibid., No. 540 (February 26, 1848), p. 1.

[88] Ibid., No. 532 (January 1, 1848), p. 1.

[89] Ibid., No. 549 (April 29, 1848), p. 1.

[90] Ibid., No. 579 (November 25, 1848), p. 1.

CHAPTER IV

A COMPARISON OF THE PHILOSOPHIES OF PROUDHON AND O'CONNOR IN 1848

Both O'Connor and Proudhon reached the zenith of their careers in 1848. Proudhon's Le Peuple was being read by approximately fifty thousand workers a day; O'Connor was the leader of the Chartists, the administrator of his land plan, the editor of the Northern Star, and a member of the House of Commons as well. Both men occupied positions of great influence in 1848, and if international socialism had triumphed in that year, it would probably have developed along the lines of the teachings of Proudhon and O'Connor. However, the activities that were organized by the socialists failed to produce the desired goals, and along with these failures the opportunity for an international consolidation of socialism moved out of the realm of reality. An understanding of the similarities and differences in the philosophies of Proudhon and O'Connor helps one to analyze the fate of international socialism in 1848.

The family backgrounds of the two men were far from similar, but both men were dedicated to the working-class movement. Although O'Connor was particularly proud of his Irish ancestry, he identified himself with all workers throughout England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. Proudhon had the tendency to identify mainly with the Parisian worker and the French peasant in general. Both men desired to im-

prove the social, economic, and political status of the laborer and to increase his productivity and happiness.

In their views of mankind as a whole, the philosophers disagreed somewhat. Proudhon was convinced that man was basically evil and that intelligent and unselfish leaders were needed to guide the average man down the correct path.[1] Although Proudhon believed himself to be well qualified to lead, he never actively sought to establish himself at the head of any movement or organization. On the other hand, O'Connor expressed more faith in mankind and held that any movement of the people as a whole would progress toward a good end.[2] Only in a mob, O'Connor admitted, did evil action have a possibility of emerging from a popular movement. Oddly enough, O'Connor fought tirelessly to establish himself as a leader for a people who he believed already knew the best way. Of the traits of man, O'Connor desired the dominance of prudence, caution, and bravery, while Proudhon called for patience above all else.

O'Connor anticipated a perfect society only after a representative equality had been established in which all men, regardless of social class, could act politically to secure all their basic rights and privileges.[3] Proudhon's perfect society existed in a state of what he called equilibrium, which was the constant movement of mankind toward the goals of equality and justice for every individual.[4]

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[1] Edwards, Selected Writings, p. 27.

[2] N. S., No. 540 (February 26, 1848), p. 1.

[3] Ibid., No. 534 (January 15, 1848), p. 1.

[4] Guy-Grand, La pensée, pp. 117-129.

Although Proudhon saw equilibrium as the ultimate goal in society and economics, he emphasized its importance in politics as well. To achieve equilibrium, Proudhon realized that every citizen must have equal political power to be able to compete for his welfare. In this sense, O'Connor's representative equality closely resembled Proudhon's equilibrium.

Both philosophers saw in the family the closest approximation to their perfect society. To O'Connor, the family was the ultimate in useful productivity because each individual fulfilled a role which would produce self-satisfaction as well as benefit the unit as a whole.[5] Proudhon honored the family as the epitome of what he called mutualism.[6] In mutualism, every individual desired to work for the good of all, and to Proudhon this unselfishness existed most abundantly in the form of familial love.

Any institution or individual that encouraged domination of one segment of the society by another was opposed by Proudhon and O'Connor. Such was the case in their opposition to religion. Both men disliked the privileges that were given to the established churches of their countries. Although O'Connor was a Protestant, he constantly fought for the rights of the Irish Catholic majority. He despised the tithe and the ownership of church property.[7] Proudhon abhorred the authoritarian attitude of the church, which he thought had prepared the way

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[5] N. S., No. 542 (March 11, 1848), p. 1.

[6] L. P., No. 204 (June 11, 1849), p. 5.

[7] N. S., No. 549 (April 29, 1848), p. 1; N. S., No. 532 (January 1, 1848), p. 1.

for an authoritarian government.[8] Their opinions of the organized churches, however, were not carried through to their attitudes regarding religious teachings. O'Connor and Proudhon shared the view that the ethical principles of Christianity might instill in man good qualities, which if accepted by all, would improve society.

Proudhon and O'Connor agreed that the best way to prevent the dominance of any institution or social group over the working class was through education. Proudhon asserted that the education of the working class would threaten the existence of any parasitic individual and insure freedom to the poor.[9] O'Connor insisted that the many problems of the laborer were a result of systematic ignorance.[10] He believed that it was the duty of every man to know his rights and privileges and to insist upon having them. As a result, dominant segments of the society would lose their control of the laboring class.

Both Proudhon and O'Connor abhorred communism, in which they believed the productive individual was exploited by the idler. Although the ultimate goal of communism was closely related to the ideal of the family as expressed by both men, they argued that while work for the improvement of all was good, equal distribution of the product was evil. O'Connor and Proudhon were convinced that communism would only encourage certain members of the society to live off the work of others.[11]

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[8] _L. P._, No. 169 (May 7, 1849), p. 2.

[9] Ibid., No. 70 (January 27, 1849), p. 1.

[10] _N. S._, No. 534 (January 15, 1848), p. 1.

[11] _L. P._, No. 106 (March 5, 1849), p. 1; _N. S._, No. 578 (November 18, 1848), p. 1.

Their mutual hatred of communism was directly related to their theories of labor. Proudhon was an avid supporter of private ownership and private production and opposed any situation in which one man made money by profiting from another's work.[12] He was particularly outspoken against rents and interest, which he considered extreme examples of the evils of usury. O'Connor's theory on labor was very similar. He also honored the man who lived by the sweat of his own brow and promoted the concept of personal production.[13] The idea of personal ownership was a dominant theme in both men's programs. O'Connor wanted to place the unemployed worker on the land to give him a means of personal production and self-satisfaction, while Proudhon was convinced that individual ownership was the only way to end exploitation. Both were sure that once individual ownership and production were established, all of the society would benefit. O'Connor's land scheme closely resembled Proudhon's People's Bank. Both institutions were established to provide an easier method for the laborer to achieve his own success. The Land Company was to turn the unemployed into a self-sufficient farmer, while the People's Bank was to make gratuitous credit available to the working class so they could gain freedom from their creditors.

Both men believed that if their new institutions did not improve the condition of the worker then force would become necessary. They disagreed slightly, however, on the method of agitation to be used to achieve their goals. To cure the economic dislocation that existed in

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[12] L. P., No. 2 (October 31, 1848), p. 1.

[13] N. S., No. 541 (March 4, 1848), p. 1.

France in 1848, Proudhon continually called for the right to work.[14] He believed that if the laborer was assured a job, not only would that worker be benefited but also the financial distress of France would decrease and political agitation would diminish. O'Connor, on the other hand, worked primarily for political goals designed to make the laboring class the major segment of the society with which the politicians would have to contend. In this way the politicians would promote legislation to improve the condition of their constituents, the laborers.

Proudhon's primary emphasis upon economic solutions to the workers' problems and O'Connor's chief interest in political reforms were consequences of their varying opinions of government. Though both men agreed that government as it existed in France and England in 1848 was inefficient and evil, O'Connor worked to improve it, while Proudhon rejected it completely and moved to create a society that would govern itself. Proudhon's severest opposition was directed against government administration. He desired the abolition of any administrative position and would have restricted the actions of a powerless, small, but necessary governmental organization to national affairs and the maintenance of order. O'Connor believed that certain reforms would improve the government, its administrators, and its efficiency; thus he rarely agitated for more than political rights for the worker.

O'Connor's two great panaceas were annual parliaments and universal suffrage. He believed that annual elections would make the politicians more responsible for their actions in Parliament and

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[14]L. P., No. 2 (October 31, 1848), p. 1.

therefore create a government interested in the welfare of the people every year and not merely prior to elections.[15] In universal suffrage O'Connor saw the equalizing of political power and improved representation for people of all classes. Proudhon, when forced to conclude that government would always exist to restrain violence and maintain order, believed that the extension of the franchise was the only means of discovering the wishes of all the people and thus give legitimacy to government.[16] He asserted that universal suffrage was the only way to establish governmental unity, equality, and order. Therefore, as a result of their joint support of universal suffrage, Proudhon and O'Connor actually agreed on the qualities of the best type of government.

Not surprisingly, then, O'Connor's and Proudhon's theories of reform to establish a better world were quite similar. Both men stressed the importance of social and economic rather than political reforms, and in fact, agreed that political improvements without corresponding social and economic reforms were useless.[17] However, the methods advocated by Proudhon and O'Connor to win social reforms were strikingly different. O'Connor stressed the need for political agitation for certain privileges, which in turn could be used to force the government to legislate social reforms. This program he adumbrated

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[15] N. S., No. 532 (January 1, 1848), p. 1.

[16] L. P., No. 152 (April 20, 1849), p. 1.

[17] This similarity in philosophies is particularly noticeable in O'Connor's preoccupation with the Land Company and Proudhon's support of the People's Bank. Both institutions were promoting economic and social rather than political reforms.

in the six points of Chartism. Proudhon on the other hand saw the establishment of economic equality as the best way to insure social reform. Equal private ownership and production would enable each individual to control his own life independently of the whims of a wealthy class. Eventually this economic equality would produce a society that benefited every individual.

Both theorists were concerned about the apparent impossibility of the gradual introduction of reforms and the probability of revolution. Although both men often spoke approvingly of a people's revolt or a rebellion, when the time came for them to encourage violence, both refused to do so. O'Connor was more prone to speak of "force," and Proudhon most often spoke of the "inevitability of violence," but revolution meant the same thing to both men in 1848. O'Connor and Proudhon were convinced that a revolution was a spontaneous, leaderless reaction to a hopeless situation.[18] Both men discouraged the resort to revolution because they considered it unpredictable and uncontrollable. They agreed, however, that if a revolution occurred, and if it took the right directions, progress could be made more rapidly in the working-class cause. Proudhon believed that immediate progress would be evident, while O'Connor predicted a period of at least three years after a revolution in which the worker would undergo extreme hardships before prosperity would come.[19] Thus, both men displayed an ambivalent and cautious attitude toward revolution, refused to encourage planned

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[18] L. P., No. 93 (February 19, 1849), p. 2; L. P., No. 99 (February 25-26, 1849), p. 1; N. S., No. 572 (October 7, 1848), p. 5.

[19] L. P., No. 99 (February 25-26, 1849), p. 1; N. S., No. 575 (October 28, 1848), p. 1.

insurrection, and stressed the importance of having a better system prepared to replace the old one when it fell.

Although the philosophies of Proudhon and O'Connor were strikingly similar in 1848, the success of a united socialist movement depended upon them holding a primary aim of internationalism. Proudhon influenced a great number of radical French workers, while O'Connor was the leader of the Chartists. Had both men desired the development of international socialism, they could have easily joined with other European socialist leaders to guide their theories toward a physical union. Unfortunately, the time during which O'Connor and Proudhon controlled their separate movements was short-lived, and the hopes of international socialism dwindled as these men failed to achieve important goals throughtheir efforts in 1848 and 1849.

Proudhon maintained his preeminence in the French working class movement until June, 1849, although he had been tried, convicted, and sentenced to three years' imprisonment three months earlier for his opposition to Louis Bonaparte's reactionary government.[20] In March Proudhon escaped to Belgium for a few months, then returned to Paris and was apprehended and imprisoned in early June. At the same time, _Le Peuple_ was permanently suppressed, and Proudhon never again regained such a popular platform from which to expound his philosophy. Though he continued to write, he now directed his talents against the rule of Napoleon III. His outspoken hatred for the administration of the Empire resulted in another conviction in 1858 and exile to Belgium.[21] Proudhon returned to Paris in 1862 a sick man and never

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[20]Woodcock, _Proudhon_, p. 145-146.

[21]Edwards, _Selected Writings_, p. 16.

regained his health before his death in 1865.

Proudhon's powerful days in 1848 had passed quickly. He had suffered governmental suppression and imprisonment, but, most of all, he had witnessed the failure of his socialist goals. The conservative elements in the French middle and upper classes had stolen the revolution from the radicals and had established a government just as intent upon the exploitation of the worker as the one that had been destroyed. The laborer remained the powerless segment of the society and grew apathetic in the more prosperous years that followed the critical days of 1848.

O'Connor's influence in the Chartist movement was not so lengthy, but yet more complicated. The events of 1848 wore heavy upon the mind and body of O'Connor and ultimately removed him from his powerful position. In early 1848 the sales of the Northern Star experienced an upsurge of more than ten thousand copies per issue.[22] O'Connor interpreted the rise in popularity of his newspaper as an indication that Chartism was again gaining great power and that, as a result, 1848 was to be the year that the Charter would be accepted. He called for a Chartist Convention on April 10, 1848, and supported the drafting of another National Petition.

Just prior to the convention, which was to take place at Kennington Common, O'Connor appeared somewhat confused in his attitude toward violence. In his labor meetings he supported Chartism and the Petition with his usual inflated oratory, but in his speeches before

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[22] Read and Glasgow, O'Connor, p. 61.

Parliament O'Connor adopted a more reserved tone.[23] He feared the loss of the middle class to Chartism because of the rumors of possible violence during the April convention. His caution caused some of the more radical Chartists to doubt his ability to lead the movement in a crisis.

The Kennington Common meeting passed without a mishap, however. Approximately 170,000 special constables were hired for the day, among whom was Louis Napoleon, but no confrontation occurred.[24] O'Connor, overcome by his fear of violence, encouraged the workers to dispense with the scheduled procession to deliver the Petition to the House of Commons. The crowd of 15,000 (O'Connor had expected 300,000) dispersed after only a couple of hours and O'Connor and Ernest Jones accompanied the three cabs containing the Petition to the House of Commons.[25] O'Connor bore the jeers of his political opponents when he meekly presented the Petition to Parliament. His predictions of a popular Chartist force of immense magnitude became jokes, and his humiliation as the leader of a powerless movement was almost unbearable. Further complications resulting from the Petition placed O'Connor in a more ridiculous situation.

O'Connor estimated the number of signatures on the petition at 5,700,000, but after an inspection by a House committee only 1,975,496

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[23] Parliamentary Debates, third series, Vol. XCVII (1848), pp. 1354-1355; Vol. XCVIII (1848), pp. 11-13.

[24] Slosson, Decline of Chartist, p. 99.

[25] The Illustrated London News, Vol. 12, No. 312 (April 15, 1848), p. 237.

names were accepted as valid.[26] This attack upon the honor of Chartism and particularly its leadership forced O'Connor to occupy himself with defensive actions and statements in his remaining days as leader.

Another crisis also occurred during the summer months of 1848. The Land Company to which O'Connor had devoted his time and money came under the scrutiny of a House of Commons committee appointed early in that year. By August the committee submitted a report stating that the records and finances of the company were so irregular that they rendered the enterprise illegal.[27] With these accusations made against his character, O'Connor lost his composure and wrote blistering articles in his defense in the Northern Star issues of August 19 and 26. His defense showed definite characteristics of a mentally disturbed personality. O'Connor constantly made references to his enemies and their plans to destroy him, as well as the inefficient and prejudicial actions of the House of Commons investigating committees.

After the fiasco of the National Petition of April, O'Connor departed sharply from his earlier program by actively seeking the support of the middle class, a move which forced him to repudiate radical Chartism and thus divide his supporters.[28] Ernest Jones, one of O'Connor's main followers, broke from O'Connor's school in order to

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[26] Slosson, Decline of Chartist, p. 97, 101.

[27] West, History of Chartist, p. 221.

[28] Gillespie, Labor and Politics, p. 67; N. S., No. 548 (April 22, 1848), p. 1.

lead the radicals.[29]

O'Connor's desertion to the moderate middle-class Chartists actually placed him out of the mainstream of the movement. Although he still spoke in favor of the Charter in the remaining years of his political career, he polled only fifth among the Chartist leaders in the executive election of 1850.[30] The speeches of the erstwhile leader became more and more incoherent, and his actions became more objectionable and belligerent. In February, 1852, during the final sessions of the House committee assigned to the Land Company investigation, O'Connor's testimony was so illogical and disruptive that the meetings had to be adjourned.[31] O'Connor's actions so alarmed his family and associates that an attempt was made to place him in an asylum. He quickly sailed to the United States to escape such action, but returned in June only to engage again in disorderly conduct in the House of Commons.[32] He was arrested by the Sergeant-at-Arms and released to his sister, who removed him to a lunatic asylum in Chiswick.[33] O'Connor remained quite content in the asylum and was released only shortly before his death on August 30, 1855.[34]

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[29]Read and Glasgow, O'Connor, p. 137.

[30]W. B. Faherty, "Nineteenth Century British Laborites: The Chartists," in The Catholic World, Vol. 166 (October, 1947), p. 41; Read and Glasgow, O'Connor, p. 138.

[31]The Illustrated London News, Vol. 20, No. 544 (February 7, 1852), p. 122.

[32]Cole, Chartist Portraits, p. 335.

[33]The Illustrated London News, Vol. 20, No. 564 (June 19, 1852), p. 479.

[34]Read and Glasgow, O'Connor, p. 144.

Thus O'Connor, as Proudhon, maintained the leadership of his movement only a short time in 1848. The opportunity for them to direct their similar philosophies and separate movements toward international socialism did not linger. Both men had been aware of efforts to unite European workers since 1845 and 1846 and had been approached by Karl Marx to lead this effort in their respective countries.[35] But as 1848 passed, Proudhon and O'Connor failed to encourage internationalism. Both leaders spoke of a united workers' movement but evidently wanted this phenomenon to occur only in their own countries. What were the reasons behind O'Connor's and Proudhon's lack of interest in international socialism?

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[35]For references to Marx's appeal to Proudhon to aid in an international socialist effort see Woodcock, Proudhon, p. 91, and Proudhon to Marx, Lyons, May 17, 1846, Correspondence de P.-J. Proudhon, Vol. II, p. 198; O'Connor's contacts with Marx are documented by West, History of Chartist, pp. 233-234, and Read and Glasgow, O'Connor, p. 127.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

International socialism in 1848 actually existed only in the aspect of broad philosophical agreement. Proudhon and O'Connor did desire similar goals in their philosophies and prescribed like methods of achieving them. Although the formation of an organization would have easily resulted from a simple joint effort, complications surrounded the lives and activities of Proudhon and O'Connor that hindered such an action.

To say that Proudhon and O'Connor could have created an international organization alone is questionable. There were in 1848 other leaders in the socialist movement that would have had to lend their support to achieve such a union. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels were actually the main forces behind internationalism, and both actively sought to engage Proudhon and O'Connor in their movement. Certain incidences and different priorities prevented a successful joint effort of the four leaders.

As a result of the heated correspondence between Marx and Proudhon in 1846, Marx never again considered Proudhon as a possible international socialist leader.[1] Moreover, Proudhon's philosophy

[1] For the 1846 correspondence, the last documented communication between Marx and Proudhon, see Proudhon to Marx, Lyons, May 17, 1846, Correspondance de P.-J. Proudhon, Vol. II, p. 198.

contained many hints of anti-internationalism. Proudhon disliked any type of organization, be it religious, political, or socialist, because he believed organization only encouraged authority. The hierarchy established in the organization would naturally attempt to control and direct the union; organization meant the development of an administration, and Proudhon disliked the idea of a few governing the many. Proudhon also recognized early in his relationship with Marx that his domineering personality would only encourage the establishment of a central core of leaders who would completely control all aspects of a socialist organization.[2]

Another aspect of Proudhon's anti-internationalism was his preoccupation with the troubled situation in France. Proudhon was, above all, interested in the welfare of the Parisian worker and French peasant.[3] Even though the economic conditions of the laborer improved after 1848, Proudhon was still concerned with the French worker's political rights and power. When the major surge was being made toward international socialism, Proudhon had turned his full attention toward criticizing the evils of the French government.[4]

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[2]Henri de Lubac, The Un-Marxian Socialist: A Study of Proudhon (trans. R. E. Scantlebury, New York: Sheed & Ward, 1948), p. 131.

[3]Throughout his articles in Le Peuple, Proudhon spoke only of the relief of the French worker and prescribed solutions that would have been peculiar to the problems in France.

[4]Proudhon wrote many works after 1848 on taxation, the church, war and peace, revolution, the coup d'etat of 1852, and federalism, but no matter what the subject was his efforts exhibited his overpowering disappointment in the revolution of 1848 and his dislike for the government that epitomized its failure. Just prior to his death in 1865, Proudhon attempted a work on the political power of the working class, but he died before it was completed. See De la capacité politique des classes ouvrieres (Paris: 1865).

Although Proudhon was preoccupied with other problems in 1848 and after, his followers did gradually turn toward international socialism and dominated the initial meetings of the First International in 1864.[5] However, Proudhon never personally encouraged this activity.

Doubtless, O'Connor held the most enviable position in the socialist movement in 1848. Marx and Engels admired his theories and particularly the number of his followers. After meeting O'Connor in 1845, Marx managed to send him letters of encouragement and advice in the direction of his Chartist organization.[6] O'Connor appeared not even to recognize the possibility of support from the Brussels revolutionaries; moreover, he shunned any aspects of an international organization.[7]

Throughout 1848, O'Connor only reluctantly recognized the revolutionary movements erupting over Europe. He wished the Northern Star to be an organ of the English laborer alone and wrote, "I tell you as long as I live the Charter and the Land shall never be lost sight of, nor placed in abeyance by any foreign excitement or movement . . ."[8] In April, 1848, O'Connor turned from a radical laborite to a moderate Chartist and publicly supported middle-class participation in the Chartist movement. This action directly contradicted Marx's theory

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[5] Jacques Freymont, ed., La Premiere Internationale (2 vols., Geneve: Librairie E. Droz, 1962), p. viii.

[6] West, History of Chartist, p. 234.

[7] O'Connor never supported the Fraternal Democrats, the leading international oriented organization in England. He allowed contributors to the Northern Star to publicize the organization's meetings and its program, but never personally spoke in support of its goals.

[8] N.S., No. 540 (February 26, 1848), p. 1.

of class struggle, but Marx never overtly recognized the disagreement.[9]

O'Connor's mental derangement after his National Petition and Land Company failures in 1848 made him even more hostile to an international organization. He became jealous of his leadership position and feared the influence and ideas of men who could possibly replace him. He began to view potential collaborators in the international socialist movement as conspirators against him, and O'Connor declared that " . . . no man living shall control me, dictate to me, or in any way interfere with me . . . ."[10]

As a result of O'Connor's influence, Chartism remained aloof of any international movement. However, two of O'Connor's chief followers, Julian Harney and Ernest Jones, were instrumental in founding the Fraternal Democrats in 1845 and eventually turned from O'Connor's emphasis upon an isolated English Chartist movement to international socialism in 1848.[11] Harney and Jones remained supporters of O'Connor's Chartist ideals but desired to establish them beyond the boundaries of England.

Although the philosophies of O'Connor and Proudhon provided socialism with an ideological unity in 1848, the international consolidation of socialism was impeded by the personality clashes, jealousies,

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[9]This difference in class theory is noted in Read and Glasgow, O'Connor, p. 128, but by the middle of 1848 O'Connor had lost his leadership of the radical workers and a pro-internationalist, Ernest Jones, had taken his place. Thus, Marx did not have to worry about the disagreement.

[10]N.S., No. 550 (May 6, 1848), p. 1.

[11]Peter Brock, "Polish Democrats and English Radicals 1832-1862: A Chapter in the History of Anglo-Polish Relations," in The Journal of Modern History, Vol. XXV, No. 2 (June, 1953), p. 149.

and nationalistic preoccupations of its most dynamic leaders. Thus, these unpredictable and uncontrollable characteristics of any social movement delayed the rise of the workingman and the creation of an international organization to represent him until 1864.

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