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0521024145 - Democratic ideas and the British Labour movement, 1880-1914

Logie Barrow and Ian Bullock

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This is the first detailed survey of democratic ideas on the British Left in the period leading to 1914. Socialists of the late nineteenth century inherited assumptions about the priority of democracy from a long tradition of British Radicalism. However, the advent of the Fabians, who rejected this tradition as primitive, and of an ILP leadership more concerned to enter than reform parliament, meant that the movement was split between 'strong' and 'weak' views of democracy. 'Strong' democracy characterised an attempt to weld unions into a 'fighting federation' during the late 1890s. Its collapse sheds light on the reception of syndicalist ideas a decade later.

By the eve of the First World War a consensus was emerging that might have formed the basis for a more realistic *and* more radical approach to democracy than has actually been pursued by the Labour Party and the Left during the twentieth century. *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement* assesses an important debate in the history of socialist ideas and in the formation of the British Labour movement.

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