

The Farm Workers, The Dockers and Oxford University

By P. L. R. HORN

THE years 1889 and 1890 were of great significance and hope to those unskilled or semi-skilled workers who had previously been considered unsuitable for organization in trade unions, either because of the casual nature of their employment or because their wages were so low that no reserve remained to pay union dues. Their optimism arose not so much from the brief upturn in the trade cycle which was apparent at this period, as from the victory of the London dockers in the great strike of 1889, and the establishment of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers' Union. Indeed, the great importance of the dockers' victory in the annals of the labour movement is that it inspired other poorly-paid workers to emulate them—in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, the declining National Agricultural Labourers' Union, which had had such great influence in the 1870s, was fanned into some measure of life, for example, while in Oxfordshire, too, attempts were made to revive N.A.L.U. branches. The English Labourers' Chronicle, the Union's journal, recorded meetings held in the county, and declared that steady recruitment was taking place, but, in the event, this optimism proved premature.¹

The dockers, for their part, recognized the vulnerability of their employment position, despite the success of 1889; even in that year blacklegs had been brought in from various parts of the country to attempt to break the strike, while the steady, undirected flow of agricultural workers to London seriously prejudiced the position of the dock workers. Those who left the agricultural districts to work in the metropolis were said to be found sooner or later 'at the dockyard gates ready to do any work at any price which may be offered to them.'² For this reason the leaders of the Dockers' Union decided to take matters into their own hands and so to improve the position of the agricultural workers that they would be content to remain where they were.

¹ The English Labourers' Chronicle of 31 May 1890 recorded a meeting held at Fritwell under the auspices of the N.A.L.U. at which 37 joined the Union, while the same paper noted that at a meeting held at Tackley on 9 June, 13 joined the union branch established there. At the beginning of July, Joseph Arch, president of the N.A.L.U., visited Oxfordshire and addressed a number of meetings.

² *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 24 January 1891.

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Two counties in particular were selected for the campaign—Lincolnshire and Oxfordshire.³ This article is concerned with the latter county.

It was on Saturday, 17 January 1891, that the first formal delegation from the Dockers' Union left London for Oxfordshire. Stocks of rule books, papers, etc. were taken, and it was announced that the aims of the delegation were first and foremost to secure the establishment of union branches, and then to improve wages and acquire allotments (from one to ten acres in extent) which were to be devoted by the labourers holding them to the production of 'dairy, fruit and vegetable produce.'⁴ Other conditions which were to be introduced included a special entrance fee of 1s. for agricultural labourers, instead of the usual membership minimum of 5s. 6d.—although weekly contributions were set at 3d., as for all members. In return, it was stated that 10s. a week would be paid to members in case of dispute with employers, that monetary compensation would be given where a worker had been boycotted for obeying union instructions, and that 'excessive working hours' would, if possible, be reduced.⁵ A further aim was the abolition of annual hirings, which gave the unscrupulous farmer an unfairly strong hold over his employees.

The main representative of the Dockers' Union in Oxfordshire was E. H. Nicholls, who claimed to have worked on ships belonging to the P. & O. Company and to have been a member of the Seamen's Union before he started organization work with the dockers at the time of the 1889 strike.⁶ He was helped very considerably in his work by William Hines, a chimney-sweep at one of the Oxford colleges, who was a convinced Radical. Hines had been active in the agricultural labourers' trade union movement of the 1870s, and had continued to recruit for the National Agricultural Labourers' Union even in 1890.⁷ It would seem, however, that the more Radical approach of the Dockers' leaders appealed to him, and he threw himself very energetically into promoting the success of the new organization. His connexion with the University gave him the opportunity to persuade certain of the more Radical undergraduates to speak at meetings for the agricultural labourers—sometimes under the auspices of the Liberal Party, sometimes in favour of the N.A.L.U., but more particularly in connexion with the Dockers' Union. The link between the University and the agricultural workers was not a new one ;

³ See *The Revolt of the Field in Lincolnshire* by Rex Russell, Boston, 1956 (pp. 152-4) for some mention of the dockers' activities in that county.

⁴ *Jackson's Oxford Journal*—24 January 1891.

⁵ Extract from a special handbill prepared by the Dockers' Union for distribution among agricultural workers—Webb Collection, Coll. E. Sec. B.—CV.

⁶ See his letter to the *Oxford Chronicle* of 15 October 1892.

⁷ He was concerned with the Tackley and Fritwell meetings already cited, for instance, along with L. T. Hobhouse and J. Burnet, of Merton College.

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Professor Thorold Rogers and T. H. Green had both chaired meetings of the Oxford district of the National Union in the 1870s, and although co-operation between farm workers and University had been largely lost in the 1880s, it was restored in the early 1890s.⁸

The first recorded meeting held by the dockers' organization in Oxfordshire was at Burford on Monday, 26 January. It was held in the club room of the Bear Inn at 7 p.m. and was addressed by Nicholls. The next meeting to be reported in the newspapers was one in the early part of February, at Milton-under-Wychwood.⁹ Once again Nicholls was one of the speakers, but Ben Tillett, the General Secretary of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers' Union, also came down from London to speak in favour of combination.

For the first time the potential value of holding meetings on Sunday, when the farm workers were normally at home, was appreciated, and on Sunday, 15 February, a meeting was arranged at Garsington. Hines was in the chair and although the chief speaker was Frederick Verinder, the Secretary of the Land Restoration League, addresses were also given by H. L. Samuel of Balliol College, and H. E. A. Cotton of Jesus, the president of the University Russell Club.¹⁰ From this time onwards scarcely any important meetings were held by the Dockers' Union which were not attended by one or more of the undergraduates.

On February 23, a large meeting took place at Great Milton; the chair was taken by Fairfax-Cholmeley of the university, and the meeting was addressed by Nicholls, Samuel, Cotton and Hines. However, by this time the movement had begun to arouse opposition among the farmers, and consequently a Mr. Gale, of Chilworth Farm, mounted the wagonette on which the delegates were assembled and spoke to the labourers present. In his speech he put his finger on a point which had plagued agricultural trade unionism for so many years—namely the alleged financial inefficiency, or even dishonesty, of the leaders of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union, including its president, Joseph Arch. It was claimed that Arch and his fellow leaders

⁸ In addition to Hobhouse and Burnet, W. R. W. Peel of Balliol, and A. S. Griffith of Wadham were members of the university who recruited for the N.A.L.U. in 1890 (*English Labourers' Chronicle*, 28 June 1890).

⁹ In 1872 this village had developed its own union, which had later been incorporated in the Oxford district of the N.A.L.U. See Milton Minute Book, Cole Collection, Nuffield College.

¹⁰ *Oxford Chronicle*, 21 February 1891. Samuel (later Viscount Samuel) has written of his experiences in his *Memoirs*. His first meeting was at Sutton Courtenay, Berks. in 1890, when he spoke with Hines under the auspices of the Liberal party, although combination among the labourers was advocated.

It should be noted that the Land Restoration League was an organization which advocated a single tax on land, which would make all other taxes unnecessary and which would eventually lead to the whole value of the land being taken from the landlord class and given to the nation at large. (E. Eldon Barry, *Nationalization in British Politics*, London, 1965, 61.) The organization owed much of its inspiration to Henry George, whose book *Progress and Poverty* had advocated the single tax.

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had refused to produce a balance sheet—indeed the matter had been raised in Parliament in 1888 and 1889.¹¹ Gale's criticisms of the financial arrangements of the N.A.L.U. were countered by both Hines and Nicholls, the former declaring that Arch's refusal had related to the showing of the Union balance sheet to non-members, not to the mere production of a balance sheet. Gale's intervention did not deter the labourers from forming a union branch, and at a meeting on 6 March it was stated that there were thirty names on the branch books.

Similar gatherings were held in the following weeks at other villages in the area, including Cuddesdon, Little Milton, Horspath and Great Haseley.¹² In the latter village, at a meeting held at the beginning of March, Gale again spoke against the Union, but was answered by L. T. Hobhouse of Merton, who was present, along with Samuel, Cotton, C. T. Benham of New College, and the ubiquitous Hines.

In April, Tillett visited Oxfordshire once more and spoke in a number of villages. In particular, at Great Milton, he stressed the progress which the union was also making in Lincolnshire, Hampshire and Somerset, and demanded that Crown land, which was 'at present let at rents far below that which agricultural labourers would pay for it' should be let to this class for allotment purposes. There is little doubt that Tillett's own ignorance of rural matters weakened his arguments; they certainly enabled the hostile journal *Rural World* to make fun of him, and of Tom Mann, who was president of the Dockers' Union and also carried out some recruitment in rural areas. As the edition of the *Rural World* of 30 October 1891, expressed it: 'Before Mr. Mann and his friends seriously take up the battle of the agricultural labourer, they should learn something of agricultural life... Work is to cease at 4 p.m. between 1 May and 31 October, and labourers are to refuse to engage unless farmers agree to this. What about hay time and harvest?...'.

As in the 1870's, the farm workers, once organized, were anxious to achieve something through their combination fairly rapidly. One of their aims was the establishment of co-operative stores, and in his *Memoirs* Viscount Samuel described how Hines and he took supplies of tea, sugar and tobacco with them in a dogcart when they went to address meetings in some of the villages. When a branch of the Union was established at Islip, it was declared that the members were 'very anxious to open a co-operative supply stores at once'.¹³ In some cases, as Viscount Samuel has mentioned, labourers' cottages were used as centres for co-operative stores.

¹¹ *Hansard* (Third Series) cccxxix, 328, and cccxxxviii, 1432-33 and 1571.

¹² It is perhaps of interest to note that at an open air meeting at Horspath on Sunday, 8 March, A. G. L. Rogers of Balliol (son of the late Professor Thorold Rogers) was one of the speakers, so that a family tradition might be considered to have been continued.

¹³ *Oxford Chronicle*, 11 July 1891.

During the hay and corn harvests of 1891 Union activities were very largely suspended, but some meetings did take place—for example on 29 August, George Bernard Shaw, the playwright and member of the Fabian Society, spoke at Bicester. This was the first meeting held in the town under the auspices of the Union, and Hines also spoke, drawing attention to the fact that at the village of Worminghall, when the men had joined the Union, a strike had been held which had lasted for thirteen weeks; the men's demand had been for 2s. a day and their protest had been successful. Hines stated that the unionists had been 'paid £91 in money through the strike' by the dockers' society.¹⁴ At the close of the meeting it was announced that another one would be held; this in fact took place on Saturday, 12 September. On the second occasion E. R. Pearse, also a member of the Fabian Society, was the guest speaker, and he expressed himself in favour of radical political action on the part of the labourers: . . . 'They had to consider politics, and whether they could not vote for the right man, instead of voting for a farmer or landlord. They had got 670 members in the House of Commons, and only ten of those members professed to represent the working classes . . .'

It is difficult to know what effect Pearse's speech had on the labourers; certainly no branch of the Union was formed, and it was declared that another meeting would be held for that purpose. It is likely that Hines's speech was more effective. Although not a great orator,¹⁵ he took the opportunity of sketching a brief history of the Union, which was more likely to have a practical interest for his listeners than Pearse's wider appeals for political action. He pointed out that at Great Milton, where the movement had effectively commenced, they had enrolled 130 members (the population in the village according to the 1901 Census Report was 455). At Cuddesdon, when a branch was formed the farmers 'rose (*sic*) the wages of the agricultural labourers 2s. per week without a man asking for the money. It was just the same at Tetsworth, where the wages went up to the same extent . . .'¹⁶

During September a large branch of the Union was formed at Wootton, to incorporate the nearby villages of Bladon, Barton, Tackley, Duns Tew, Ledwell, Kirtlington, Steeple Aston and Heyford, and a co-operative store was opened in the village in connexion with the union branch. At a committee meeting held towards the end of the month Orbell and Jarvis of the Dockers' Union came from London to address the meeting, while a Woodstock Liberal, J. N. Godden, who had been a supporter of the National Agricultural Labour-

¹⁴ This figure was almost certainly exaggerated; according to the balance sheet of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers' Union for the year 1891, the total dispute pay disbursed in connexion with the agricultural districts was £56 11s. 8d.—Webb Collection—Coll. E. D. 109.

¹⁵ See Viscount Samuel, *op. cit.*, 14.

¹⁶ *Oxford Chronicle*, 19 September 1891.

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ers' Union in the 1870s and 1880s, also attended. The opportunity was taken at this meeting to draw attention to the fact that membership in the district had risen to 'between five and six hundred'—the total number of agricultural labourers in the county at this date, excluding shepherds, horse-men and carters, who might well have joined the Union anyway, was 14,151.¹⁷ It can be seen, therefore, that in spite of much-vaunted progress, a very great deal remained to be done if the majority of agricultural workers were to be organized in the county.

Efforts, too, had been made to extend the Union's sphere of influence into the nearby villages of Gloucestershire. In March Nicholls and Fairfax-Cholmeley had attempted to recruit at Bourton-on-the-Water, for example, while in April of the following year Nicholls had addressed meetings at Shirburn and Eastleach. The movement does not appear to have enjoyed any dramatic success in the county, although a branch was formed at Eastleach.

Despite the fairly promising beginning made in 1891—approximately twenty-two branches were formed in Oxfordshire in that year—progress does not seem to have been maintained in 1892.¹⁸ In part this was possibly due to financial difficulties in the Dockers' Union itself—membership of the Union was declining fairly steeply—and in part to the fact that the London-based leaders of the Union, with their Radical or socialistic policies, were often out of sympathy with many of their rural audiences. The Assistant Commissioner who visited Oxfordshire in 1892 in connexion with the Royal Commission on Labour reported that the agricultural labourers he had interviewed had not been 'favourably inclined to the Dockers' Union'. One, a man named Parrot, of Tetworth, said: 'The feeling is not so good between employers and men since the Dockers' Union came and set men against masters, and masters against men.'¹⁹ Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that at the time he visited the county, in the middle of 1892, there were still sixteen branches of the Union in existence.

It is noticeable that the branches of the Dockers' Union do not appear to have taken part publicly to any important degree in the Liberal election

¹⁷ Census Report, 1891.

¹⁸ According to the Annual Report, 1891, of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers' Union, in Oxfordshire the Union had 'been successful in obtaining allotments and small holdings. The wages (had) been raised, proper sanitary inspection of cottages insisted upon, provision made to ensure proper contract prices at harvest and busy times, overtime hours fixed, and every assistance rendered to ensure protection to members whose labour is hired.' p. 15.

It is perhaps of interest to note that the Dockers' Union was not the only urban society to attempt to organize the farm workers of Oxfordshire. In North Oxfordshire, in the Banbury area, the National Labour Federation carried out some recruitment, and branches were formed at King's Sutton, Deddington, Bodicote, and Hanwell, for example. The effort does not seem to have had any long-term success, however. (See *Workman's Times*, 21 August and 23 October 1891.)

¹⁹ Royal Commission on Labour, 1892-94, *Report on the Poor Law Union of Thame*, 56.

campaign in 1892, in spite of the general enthusiasm of the Liberals within the county at this time. However, Nicholls did complain after the election of the unfair pressure exerted by an employer in North Oxfordshire. When the Liberal candidate for Mid-Oxfordshire was elected, the employer told his men that he would reduce their wages 2s. per week. One of the workers said that he would leave under those circumstances, but the rest meekly accepted the position.²⁰ This kind of treatment, although happily not common, indicates the forces which could be brought to bear on the labourers to discourage them both from supporting the Liberal party in politics and from joining a Union.

In the *Oxford Chronicle* of 17 September 1892, Nicholls wrote a letter calling on the labourers to organize 'until the co-operative and commonweal shall be established, and wagedom, capitalism and landlordism have ceased to exist'. At the same time he denied that he was going to leave the district and return to London, despite the fact that the Dockers' Union itself had declared that its recruitment among the agricultural labourers would have to stop.²¹ In the same newspaper on 22 October he made clear what alternative he had in mind—the formation of a separate Oxfordshire Labourers' Union.²²

The objects of this new organization were said to be regulation of hours of work and conditions of labour; the taking of legal action, when necessary, to recover compensation for union members; the provision of dispute pay and funeral benefits; the promotion of co-operative societies; the acquisition of land for allotments or small holdings; and the lending of 'small sums of money' on satisfactory security to occupiers of allotments or small holdings. Weekly subscriptions were fixed at 2d., with an entrance fee of 6d., while in case of an authorized dispute, full members were to receive 10s. per week. Every full member who at the time of his death was of six months standing and 'clear on the books' was to be entitled to a funeral benefit of £4. In order to enable members to reap small day-to-day benefits, it was further proposed (under Rule 29) that, if any member suffered accidental loss of livestock or other property, the General Secretary might, on the recommendation of the branch, 'suggest a voluntary contribution from the branches as compensation'. In addition, the executive council, could, under Rule 31, advance a sum, not exceeding £20, to any branch 'for the purchase and transfer of coal and other goods for the use of the members, on the branch guaranteeing repayment of the sum on delivery of the goods, the goods to be sold to the members at cost

²⁰ *Oxford Chronicle*, 30 July 1892.

²¹ This decision was formally taken at the Swansea conference of the Union held in September 1892. It was said that the work had been abandoned because of the 'heavy charges' of the organizing work—1892 Annual Report of the Union.

²² Vol. XI of *The Church Reformer* of 1892 appears to indicate that it had always been the intention of the Dockers' Union to establish separate, local, self-governing unions (p. 113).

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price'. Junior members and women were to be accepted, but they were only to be entitled to half benefit. In order to reduce the drain on the funds it was agreed that not more than £5 was to be withdrawn from the Society in any one week, unless a majority of the branches agreed to it, or except as provided for under Rule 31. The finances of the Union were to be administered by three trustees, and here, again, the University displayed its immediate sympathy: A. Sidgwick, who was also President of the Oxford Liberal Association, and L. T. Hobhouse were two of the trustees, while Councillor James, a Liberal member of the Town Council, formed a third.

In a letter to the *Oxford Chronicle* (which newspaper faithfully recorded the doings of the organization) Nicholls claimed that 'during the past fortnight' men had been coming into the new union 'in great numbers'.²³ However, evidence of this great rush of interest is somewhat scanty; on 5th December a meeting was held at Kirtlington, attended by Nicholls and Hobhouse, at which attendance was said to be 'fair' although 'enthusiastic'. Exhortations to join the Union were given and it was stated that 'several' new names were handed in to the secretary.

During the early months of 1893 Nicholls went to Lincolnshire in an effort to link up with those favourable to agricultural trade unionism in that county. The result of this was that at the first formal meeting of the new union on 1 April 1893, it was decided that the name should be changed to the Oxfordshire and Lincolnshire Agricultural Labourers' Union and that Mr. A. Whitworth of Binbrook, Lincolnshire, should preside.²⁴ On this occasion Nicholls was re-elected general secretary, while A. Sidgwick, L. T. Hobhouse and H. F. Cholmeley, all of the University, agreed to act as trustees, along with Councillor G. Hawkins and Vaughan Nash. There is no doubt at this stage of the essentially Radical nature of the leadership of the organization since these men were all active Liberals of the 'advanced' school.

According to the balance sheet, dated 25 March, there were approximately 500 members of the Union divided into seventeen branches, in Oxfordshire, and in Lincolnshire there were said to be eight branches. The largest amount received from any one branch during the six-month period was £6; at the other end of the scale a total of under 10s. was recorded. It is impossible to estimate the membership of the branches from these figures, since it is not known at what stage members joined the Union and therefore if a total contribution is divided over the six months' period this might well give a too pessimistic viewpoint.

In all, the income of the Union was said to be nearly £100—£40 of which

²³ *Oxford Chronicle*, 3 December 1892.

²⁴ *Oxford Chronicle*, 6 April 1893.

came from 'donations'. On the expenditure side, Nicholls, as secretary, received £60, and there was a balance in hand of £34; the only benefit 'appearing on the side of the members was a sum of £3 paid to a man named Coggins of Barton . . .'²⁵

Under these conditions it is not surprising that members were becoming restive, and according to the strongly Conservative *Oxford Times*, by July the Union was declining rapidly—'It is to all intents and purposes a political organization . . . The O.L.A.G. Labourers' Union . . . allows the secretary 30s. per week, a house rent free, and a pony and trap. A subscription of 2d. per member per week, it is evident, will not stand a permanent outlay of that kind, and leave a surplus for the benefit of members, unless the members increase very extensively. That the labourers do not want it, and are losing what little faith they may have had in it, is shown by the rapid falling off of the membership. It has reached so low an ebb, indeed, that recently it was announced that if only 150 members could be secured, certain members of Balliol College were prepared to find the money to keep the concern afloat. Peradventure, if 150 men cannot be persuaded or bribed, they will do it for less. We do not think the collapse of this latest political dodge of the Radicals is very remote, unless a general election is hurried up, for even Balliol men get tired of putting their hands in their pockets without some equivalent advantage.'²⁶

This bitter attack was firmly repudiated by the *Oxford Chronicle* acting as the mouthpiece of the Union. 'The fact is that from first to last the Union has known nothing of party politics.' The actions of Sidgwick and Hobhouse were strongly defended, and it was claimed that what decline in membership there had been was due to the bad agricultural season. It was said that, 'if the Union has not succeeded as well as its friends would wish, the great bulk of the general public will admit that it has at any rate attempted to do good'.²⁷

By 14 October the organization had obviously disappeared, for the *Chronicle* of that date declared: ' . . . That the present moment is not propitious for forming a stable trades union among our local labourers has been proved by the unfortunate end of the Oxfordshire Agricultural Labourers' Union.' In this way the attempted co-operation of agricultural labourers, dockers and the University came to a conclusion, and trade unionism among the farm workers disappeared from Oxfordshire for over a decade. There is little doubt that strong advocacy of the Liberal party line must inevitably have crept into the meetings, and this may have alienated some members, while

²⁵ *Oxford Times*, 22 July 1893.

²⁶ *Oxford Times*, 22 July 1893.

²⁷ *Oxford Chronicle*, 29 July 1893.

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Farmer Gale, speaking at Great Milton in 1891, may have pinpointed another feature when he said that he knew more about his audience than 'those gentlemen who came from Oxford University.'²⁸

Although formal Union organization had disappeared, therefore, by the autumn of 1893, it is perhaps of interest to note that some of those who had been active members of the Dockers' Union or its successor, the Oxfordshire Union, did put themselves forward for election to the parish councils in the December of 1894. Their desire to improve the position of their class had not been daunted. Thus, for example, J. Search, a farm labourer who was secretary of the Burford branch of the Dockers' Union, was elected to the parish council there. Other similar examples include T. Sheppard, labourer, who was secretary of the Tetsworth branch, W. Smith, secretary of the Horspath branch, H. Dawson, manager of the union co-operative stores at Wootton and also branch secretary, and E. East, a labourer of Weston-on-the-Green, who was branch secretary there. Some, like A. C. Price, the postman secretary of the Dockers' union branch at Islip, put up for election, but were not successful.

In conclusion, it can be said that while the Dockers' Union almost certainly first came to Oxfordshire in 1891 with the aim of safeguarding the position of its own members, particularly in the London docks, the labourers' economic position was very much in need of improvement. For example, early in 1891, at Great Milton, Viscount Samuel discovered from his personal observation that the ordinary weekly wage of the labourer was 10s. in summer and 9s. in winter, and that cattlemen, who worked on Sundays, got 11s., or in some cases, 12s. per week. At harvest time the labourers earned 16s. a week and occasionally even £1 working from dawn to dusk. A few of the women worked in the fields also, and they earned 9d. for a day stretching from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. An investigation carried out by the *Oxford Chronicle* bore out these statistics very largely. Although there were some villages, like Charlbury, Tackley and Kirtlington, where certain of the labourers earned 12s. a week, there were others, like Middle Barton and Duns Tew where the maximum was 10s.²⁹ Although these basic wage rates might be supplemented by opportunities to work at piece rates, or, perhaps, by perquisites, by no means all of the labourers were able to benefit in this way, and for many, despite an overall tendency for food prices to fall, there was real hardship.

There was, therefore, a real scope for the Dockers' Union to improve conditions, and in the more favourable economic climate of 1891 they were able to achieve a little; however, as the economic position worsened in the

²⁸ *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 6 June 1891.

²⁹ *Oxford Chronicle*, 26 September 1891.

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course of 1892 and as the Union's activities became increasingly overshadowed by political considerations, so its influence waned among the farm workers. Those members of the University who held 'advanced' Liberal views sought to arrest the process of decline, but they were unable to provide a convincing rallying cry for the workers, and so their efforts proved in vain. Perhaps they derived a little comfort, however, from the fact that some at least of the former members of the Union did offer themselves for election to the parish councils. On the other hand, the number of labourers so elected was quite small, while villages where a branch of the Union was established did not, on the whole, appear to have fared better than those where there had been no such branch. Indeed, the villages of Cuddington, where all five members of the council were agricultural labourers, and Sydenham, where four out of five were, had never had a union branch ; conversely, at Burford, where a strong union branch had existed, only three of the eleven councillors were farm labourers.