

## Appendix II Relationship with Keir Hardie

Cunninghame Graham and Keir Hardie were friends and worked in partnership. This would have probably gained more recognition had it not been that Keir Hardie took the stage in national politics just as Cunninghame Graham was withdrawing from it. The former was the fomenter from below (with his paper "The Miner") the latter from above (as the Miners' MP) of working-class aspiration. The former was the secretary or member of committees of several political working-class associations which were chaired by the latter.

Clearly, in the 1880's, Hardie is the junior partner. He is not comparable in effectiveness on the platform. In a Scrap-Book I find a newspaper report of a meeting connected with the Mid-Lanark election of 1888. It states that after Cunninghame Graham's "...denunciation of most things that are, from the two Houses of Parliament down to the 'pot-bellied manufacturers', the brief moralisings of H H Champion and Mr Keir Hardie which followed, were tame and moderate by comparison".

The Mid-Lanark campaign in other ways illuminates the nature of their relationship at this time. Scrap-Book insertions tell the tale. In a "Manifesto" regarding the coming contest, dated March 14<sup>th</sup> 1888, Cunninghame Graham urges Liberals to choose a Labour man, and proceeds:

"....I venture to recommend to the electors of Mid-Lanark, and especially to the miner classes, Mr Keir Hardie as a fitting candidate. I do so because I am convinced of his honesty, and because I know, did your choice fall on him, that the House of Commons would be forced to listen to a working man, dealing with the labour question".

He writes to Dundee Radical Association thanking them for supporting Keir Hardie's nomination. This kind of choice, he avers, is necessary if, in future, the claims of labour are to be taken seriously. It was the defeat of this nomination which produced the conference at Hamilton, over which Cunninghame Graham presided, which resulted in the formation of electoral associations for Lanarkshire, under Cunninghame Graham's chairmanship.

On October 25<sup>th</sup> 1890 Cunninghame Graham writes in "The People's Press" commending to working men those who know the British working man: and alongside John Burns, Tom Mann, Ben Tillett and McHugh of Glasgow he mentions Keir Hardie. At this time he is Keir Hardie's advocate, exercising that "high perception of the remarkable" in men, of which Richard Curle speaks in his edited Letters of W H Hudson (which elsewhere enable him to recognise the genius of Conrad, Hudson himself, Tschiffely and others, when it still flowered in obscurity). Opportunely he commends Hardie, and brings him forward, finding kinship in his enthusiasm, his bluntness, his empiricism, his human sympathy; sharing with him convictions about the structure of society and the remedies which need to be applied; desecrating from afar his capacity to forward a genuinely working-class movement.

ON September 20<sup>th</sup> of the same year, Cunninghame Graham speaks in "The People's Press" of the victory of the new unions over the old unions at the TUC. He speaks of Keir Hardie as one who has "...dwelt so long in the cold shades of opposition, and has

fought so stoutly in the shades the battle which Burns and Marn have fought in public". Hardie is just beginning to make his presence felt on a larger platform.

A letter to the same periodical from John Ferguson, dated May 31<sup>st</sup> 1890, refers to Keir Hardie's S W Ham candidature. He states:

"Keir Hardie is loyal to the Liberal Party so far as that 'bourgeois party' will tolerate loyalty to the Labour Party.....(yet) he would fight tyranny under the name of Liberalism, as the Irish Home Rulers did for ten years in Ireland till it became real Liberalism.

Ask Cunninghame Graham.....".

The letter suggests that Hardie was still a Lib-Lab when Cunninghame Graham was urging workmen to form a new party; and it indicates that his place in the labour movement was naturally referred to Cunninghame Graham for support.

To bring forward working men of capacity and integrity such as Keir Hardie was Cunninghame Graham's aim. When he had done so, he continued to encourage, support and speak for them. He did not wish or attempt to contend with them for leadership.

Both men made a contribution to the formation of the Labour Party, which in its main impetus was brief in time, but most significant in quality. Keir Hardie was able to bring together the forces which joined in the Labour Representation Committee as Cunninghame Graham never could. But Cunninghame Graham laid foundations to be built on; in Parliament and by outside organisation and agitation, by practical, new-minted programme and personal championship, in some cases with Keir Hardie, in others before him. When Hardie stung the House to fury by his forthright antagonism of the claim of the relatives of the 260 lost in the Cilfynydd pit disaster, he was simply taking over where Cunninghame Graham left off.

Cunninghame Graham and Keir Hardie between them pioneered Socialism in Britain and were founders of the British Labour Party.