

# Le Play House and the Regional Survey Movement in British Sociology 1920 - 1955

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The thesis examines the achievements of what I have chosen to call the 'Regional Survey Movement' in British sociology during the first half of the twentieth century, concentrating particularly on that period when it was synonymous with various bodies resident at Le Play House between 1920 and 1955. Of the movements associated with the Regional Survey, the most substantial was the Institute of Sociology, formed in 1930 and dissolved in 1955; its secretary for most of that time was Alexander Farquharson, and a consideration of his life and work forms a substantial part of the content.

The thesis begins by considering the history of British sociology, remarking on its absence from most standard accounts of the emergence of the discipline. Various ideas on the practice of historical explanation are examined, and an attempt is made to account for the 'presentist' nature of sociology, reflected in its inability to satisfactorily explain certain aspects of its own past. At the same time, the methodology involved in 'doing' the history of sociology is discussed, and certain problems concerning archive research and documentary evidence are considered.

The substance of the work contains a detailed account of the background to the movement and its emergence in the early twentieth century, centred around Patrick Geddes and Victor Branford. The rise and decline of each of the associations involved in regional survey work (the Sociological Society, the Regional Association and the Civic Education League) is considered in turn, culminating in their amalgamation into Le Play House in 1924 and the formation of the Institute of Sociology in 1930. The activities of the Institute of Sociology are discussed in detail; the survey work carried out in Britain and Europe, the publication of the Sociological Review, the organisation of conferences, meetings and schools, the relationships with other organisations and the reasons for its distance from the professional academic world. Finally, the decline of the Institute of Sociology in the post war period is explained in terms of a number of trends which the movement was unable to come to terms with; the professionalisation of sociology and social work, the growth of foreign travel and the expansion and formalisation of much of what was previously amateur and informal.

However, while the decline and disappearance of the movement may be explained rationally, its absence from almost every account of British sociology, education or social life in general is more difficult to understand, and it is tentatively suggested that it has more to do with the relatively rapid and recent expansion development of British sociology than any more general social change.

## 1 Introduction

"Sociology is the name given by some people at some times in some places to a very wide range of intellectual practices indeed, and its history is the history not so much or even mainly of intellectual intentions as of personal, political and institutional ones. A history of sociology therefore which restricted itself to those activities so described ... would be a very puzzlingly partial history, a history of flags of convenience that supposed a known history of navigation and trade" (Hawthorn 1979:478)

Most standard accounts of the history of sociology tend to overlook sociology in Britain, the history of social research and amateur sociology; so it is scarcely surprising that Le Play House, the Institute of Sociology and its organisers, Alexander and Dorothea Farquharson are unfamiliar to many sociologists today. Such is the strange combination of patricide and ancestor worship within the discipline that a whole tradition, initiated by Frederic Le Play in France in the mid 19th century, developed by Patrick Geddes and Victor Branford in Britain in the early 20th century, and regarded by Pietrim Sorokin (in what was for several years the most widely read account of the history and development of sociology) as "one of the best systems of social science" (Sorokin 1928:63), has been erased almost without trace. Indeed, Sorokin goes on to praise Le Play and his followers for displaying "a conspicuous scientific insight, a brilliant talent for scientific analysis and synthesis, and an originality of thought." (Sorokin 1928:63)

In an attempt to redress the balance, and to answer the call made recently by Stebbins (1978) for more attention to be given to amateur sociology, a study of the work of the Farquharsons and the Institute of Sociology in Britain between the wars seems timely. There are already several studies of the early years of British sociology. Abrams (1968) deals with the 19th rather than the 20th Century, and his work on the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science remains unsurpassed. His account of the formation of the Sociological Society in 1903 and the tentative account he offers of what happened after 1914 is however rather more sketchy. His treatment of the self-confessed amateurism of Branford and Geddes tends to substitute anecdote for analysis; his comment that, "the men who took the decisive part in institutionalising sociology in the Edwardian period were one of three things; wealthy amateurs with careers elsewhere, academic deviants or very old men" (Abrams 1968:102), while it may be true, does not explain why they did what they did. Abrams criticises Le Play House for not being specific on the survey method, - "From 1905 to 1947 (the reason for these dates is not clear - DE) first Geddes and Victor Branford, and then Le Play House issued a host of pamphlets, articles and studies advocating the sociological survey. But nowhere is there a rigorous specification of the principles of survey design." (Abrams 1968:115) He, like his father (Abrams 1951) does not choose to consider the possibility that the kind of survey Le Play House was engaged in was qualitatively and consciously different from that being developed in Britain by Bowley, Rowntree and the Webbs, and developed in the United States by Lazarsfeld and Stouffer during the Second World War. It is essentially a reluctance to treat the Regional Survey tradition seriously as an object of study in its own right, as a form of sociological activity with different aims, different methods, a different past and a different purpose that mars most of the other brief accounts of the work of Le Play House outlined later in this section. It is perhaps worth noting that in his later work on the relationship between history and sociology, Abrams comes close to recognising these limitations, when he writes, "there has been a marked appreciation of the need to establish the cogency of both narrative and theory at the level of subjectivity (both the consciousness and relationships) of

the people whose lives are to be explained; to give them what Weber would have called adequacy at the level of meaning ... Excursions into the study of 'mentalite' are not a withdrawal from the explanation of history as process; they are a necessary detour in order to arrive there safely." (Abrams 1980:12).

Halliday (1968) offers a shorter but more detailed explanation of the formation of the Sociological Society in 1903. (Halliday, unlike Abrams, makes specific reference to the Archives of the Sociological Society at Keele University. Whereas they were not complete at the time he would have used them, Branford and Geddes' papers and many of the records of the Sociological Society would have been accessible, albeit in the unsorted and largely disorganised state that they remain in today. Abrams appears to have relied on the archives of the University of Chicago, much better ordered, but with very little, if any, original source material on British Sociology). Halliday's account of the somewhat uneasy three-fold alliance which formed the Sociological Society (the social workers, the eugenicists and the town planners) remains a useful, if not wholly adequate starting point for any subsequent study of the early years of organised sociology in Britain, of which there have been very few.

Other accounts appear as parts of biographies of some of the more prominent figures in late 19th and early 20th Century British Sociology - Boardman (1977) on Geddes, Collini (1979) and Owen (1974) on Hobhouse, Simey and Simey (1960) on Booth, and Peel (1971) on Spencer, although Peel's book is a significant contribution to the theory and methodology of the history of sociology as well. However, when one proceeds beyond the First World War, the accounts become more hard to find. The period between 1920 and the early 1950s, and outside the London School of Economics (the only institution teaching a degree course in the subject: Fincham 1975) is almost entirely ignored. What went on, if anything, is the subject of gossip and guesswork, based on a few less than adequate accounts, which are in turn based on incomplete and unsubstantiated secondary sources.

Those who have written about sociology in Britain between the wars are few, but include contemporary American visitors (Harper 1933: Palmer 1927), British sociologists whose careers began before or shortly after the Second World war and therefore can, in some sense be said to have been part of what happened (MacRae 1961: Mitchell 1968: Halsey 1982); and younger British sociologists who are part of what might loosely be called the revival of interest in the history of sociology in the late 1970s (Hawthorn 1976: Bulmer 1980: Kent 1981: Bulmer 1985). In none of these however is there any systematic examination of exactly what was going on under the broad umbrella of 'sociology'. Accounts are almost all biased towards the universities, on the assumption that if sociology was not being taught at degree level, then it was not happening at all. The work of the Le Play School, and the organisations arising from it, principally Le Play House and the Institute of Sociology is hardly mentioned, probably because of the lack of any secondary source material. Yet, despite the fact that the primary source material, the archives and records of the Institute and its predecessor organisations has been available for academic scrutiny for the past thirty years, the number of sociologists who have consulted it has hardly reached double figures.

Nonetheless, the absence of detailed knowledge of the field has never prevented those sociologists who have mentioned it in passing from concurring that there was little that could be called sociology in Britain during the interwar period. A contemporary American visitor, Ernest Harper of Kalamazoo College found sociology to be in "a rather undeveloped and even moribund condition ..... the professional association seemed below par and its Journal (The Sociological Review) not up to the standard of the earlier 'Sociological Papers'. ... On the side of theory, research

and teaching, sociology in England appeared definitely weak. Perhaps it would be fairer and more exact to say that it appeared to be rare" (Harper 1933:335). However, Vivien Palmer of the Local Community Research Committee of Chicago University, who had sent a paper to be read to a Le Play House meeting in 1927 and written on Chicago Sociology for the Sociological Review, offered a more sympathetic account to American readers, recognising the links between the amateur and professional in sociology, and the connections between sociology and social welfare which was always an important part of the Le Play House approach, and concluding that, "when one comes into actual contact with the situation, one cannot help but feel that the British sociologists are clinging tenaciously to something that is distinctly their own. And when one speculates about it, one cannot help but feel that the time will come when the British interest in social evaluation, practical application and the synthesis of knowledge from the various fields of social science will yield something of value for those sociologists who have profitably swept these aspects aside in their efforts to create a pure science of human relationships." (Palmer 1927:761)

More recent accounts differ in their assessment of the period, although all tend to paint the same kind of picture. According to MacRae "(The Sociological Review) improved greatly after 1930 under the influence of Ginsberg and others, and an Institute of Sociology founded in that year did some useful work" (1961:22), although his attitude towards both the Review and the Institute has sometimes been more disparaging, describing the former as "not a serious Journal" and the latter as a "perfectly respectable" but "clapped out" body (Macrae 1981). Hawthorn claims that "under Farquharson's editorship, the Sociological Review "almost immediately changed its character, and by 1934 there was no sign in it at all of the romantic effusions of those who had begun it" (1976:167), but Mitchell claims that "the older interests which stemmed from Geddes' writing and lecturing, worthy in aim but undisciplined, idealistic but intellectually feeble, still persisted" and refers to Farquharson's editorship as "rather indiscriminate" leading to "a ragbag of all kinds of articles, only some of which could be said to be sociological" (1968:230). Bulmer decries "the awful variety of material published in the Sociological Review between the wars" (1981:159), although four years later suggests that it contained "from 1930 to 1952 ... much more real sociology than hitherto" (Bulmer 1985:11).

Various reasons are put forward for the 'absence' of sociology. Hawthorn, in one of the few attempts to offer a serious thesis on the question claims that "Sociology ... was absent because it was almost everywhere present" (1976:170); that "there is ... no need to be especially surprised by the lack of a flourishing self-styled sociology in England before 1939". The proper explanation, he suggests "starts rather from a redescription of what has to be explained", although his claim that the existence of 'sociology' in the liberal-socialist consensus which prevailed in the intellectual climate of the inter-war years precluded its development as a subject of serious academic study overlooks the work of those in the academic world who might have been said to be part of that 'consensus' (David Glass and Tom Marshall for example, who were both consciously socialists and sociologists during this period), and the work of the Institute which certainly does require such a 'redescription', although not the one that Hawthorn offers. Hawthorn's thesis is also strongly criticised by Ziff, on the grounds that a radical, socially conscious sociology had existed in Britain since the late 19th Century, although he only deals with academic sociology (1978; 1980). Shils, borrowing a phrase from E M Forster blames what he calls the "undeveloped heart" and the Oxbridge tutorial system which does not readily breed understanding of other peoples' predicament - "How could sociology come into existence in Britain" he writes, "when in Oxford and Cambridge sociologists were looked on as pariahs, as no better than Americans or Germans ... as awkward foreigners or restive lower class boys" (1960:447).

What is clear from all this is that Le Play House, the Institute of Sociology and the Farquharsons are not widely known, have not been reassessed seriously since their disappearance from the scene, and need rescuing from the misunderstanding, misrepresentation and trite dismissal which accompany their infrequent citations - for it is not going too far to say that, were it not for Alexander and Dorothea Farquharson, no organisation representing the interests of sociology as being something more than an abstract social philosophy would have existed in this country between the wars.

## **2 Theory and Methodology**

"We are so astonished that bards long dead should have modern ideas that we marvel if in what we believe to be an ancient Gaelic epic we come across one which we should have thought as most ingenious in a contemporary. A translator of talent has only to add to an ancient writer whom he is reconstructing more or less faithfully a few passages which, signed with a contemporary name and published separately, would seem to be merely agreeable; at once he imparts a moving grandeur to his poet, who is thus made to play upon the keyboards of several ages at once. The translator was capable only of a mediocre book, if that book had been published as his original work. Offered as a translation, it seems a masterpiece. The past is not fugitive, it stays put ....."  
(Marcel Proust "The Guermantes Way" 1920)

### **The Problem of Methods**

Any discipline which focuses excessive attention on itself can justifiably be regarded as somewhat self-indulgent. It is however a luxury readily available to only a few disciplines, notably in the areas of the arts and the social sciences, where the theories and methods used for dealing with the more obvious subjects of enquiry can equally well be turned upon the practitioners of the discipline itself and their activities and writings. Sociologists perhaps more than historians, geographers, economists or other social scientists tend to be more intensely interested in the nature and development of their own discipline, as an aspect of the sociology of knowledge. Sociologists are also interested in the nature and development of other disciplines, and the interest is reciprocated to a certain extent, for as Puttman observes, although routine workers in the physical sciences are on the whole not particularly interested in social and philosophical questions, those at the 'frontiers of knowledge' are more aware of the fragility and fallibility of their enterprise and are consequently more interested in epistemology. (Magee 1978).

However, despite the interest most sociologists show in the nature and development of their own discipline, and the fact that sociologists are often criticised for devoting too much attention to abstract theory rather than 'the real world', literature on 'how to do' the history or sociology of sociology remains sparse. A sociologist embarking on a 'conventional' piece of empirical work, using survey techniques, or participant observation is well provided for with technical manuals explaining what is to be done at every step of the way. This is not so for the kind of techniques necessary to investigate the history of sociology. Inevitably much of the work tends to be with documents rather than with people, and where it does involve contact with people, the standard techniques of social research such as the interview are not immediately appropriate (Platt 1981b). As Platt observes elsewhere, "Documentary research' is not a clear-cut and well-recognised category, like survey research or participant observation", and she goes on to note that well under half of a selection of texts on sociological method make any mention of documentary research at all. (Platt 1981a) Even those texts which do devote themselves extensively to documentary research

(Webb 1966; Plummer 1983) tend to be less than wholly relevant in that they still work within a model of the relationship between the researcher and the subjects of the research, which assumes that the former is in a higher social and institutional position to the latter, and is making use of materials which themselves were not constructed with sociology in mind. The situation is different for research into the lives and activities of those who were themselves part of the discipline. Documents relevant to the history of sociology are themselves part of sociology and have helped to construct the discipline which is in turn examining them.

Work on the institutional history of sociology is somewhat easier, especially in the USA where detailed course lists and other university records from the late 19th century onwards provide a ready made data set for subsequent research. The proliferation of institutions offering courses in sociology from an early stage, despite the conflicting notions of what the discipline was about provide much that can be used (Sica 1983; Bulmer 1981b; Martindale 1980). Such work is less fruitful in Britain, because of the much smaller number of institutions offering sociology in any shape or form and because of the less systematic way in which courses are described and recorded (The same problem exists for historical research in many other countries, such as Germany (Kasler 1980)). Very few people have attempted such research in Britain (Fincham (1975); Heath and Edmonson (1981)). The methodology most frequently used for institutional research in sociology, which relies on the identification of 'schools' and the personal and professional connections between individuals in different institutions which produce them (Mullins 1973; Tiryakian 1979) is also inappropriate for investigating sociology other than in university departments, or where a large enough number of such departments exists to form any kind of comparison.

Notwithstanding these limitations however, the problems faced by a historian of sociology are the same as those faced by a sociologist undertaking any research project; the identification of a perspective (and the corresponding evaluation and rejection of alternative perspectives), and the selection of a practical method (or methods) for carrying out the research. In practice the processes tend to be simultaneous, in that only the act of doing the research reveals the appropriateness or otherwise of a particular perspective or method. In any case, in dealing with the history of sociology, the choice is strictly limited.

### **Approaches to the History of Sociology**

It has already been remarked how dependent sociology has become upon the consideration of its own history, when compared with other disciplines (Peel 1978:347). However, sociologists differ in the ways they interpret their history, and some consideration of the different theoretical approaches which sociologists and others interested in the history of the social or human sciences take to the area is necessary. Here I will be considering the theoretical or epistemological problems of studying the history of sociology; the following section will cover the empirical or practical problems.

The identification of any clear 'pattern' to sociology, or the recognition that sociology was an international discipline with a history that could be examined in a cross-cultural context can be said to date from Parsons' creation of the idea of 'classical sociology' (Parsons 1937), through his attempt to integrate the work of Weber and Durkheim among others ("before 'The Structure of Social Action', the sprawling academic activities called sociology had no clear and generally recognised genealogy" (Therborn 1980), although Giddens among others has criticised the way in which such 'myths' are created in the history of sociology. (Giddens 1976). (It might be noted in the context of a history of British Sociology that Hobhouse was a

major influence on the young Parsons. His name appears in Parsons' early lectures as a primary influence, yet is entirely absent from "The Structure of Social Action" when it eventually appears in 1937).

However, books purporting to be histories of sociology had appeared earlier, the first probably being Bristol's "Social Adaption" (1915) (Hinkle 1978), Lichtenbergers' "The Development of Social Theory" (1923) and Sorokin's "Contemporary Sociological Theories" (1928). Timasheff (1955) identifies three different ways of dealing with the history of social theory in early works - through a consideration of different schools, through studying the development in historical (and by implication international) sequence, and in different geographical areas. There were a number of examples of the third type in existence by 1937, and many more to follow, although major compilations of different accounts in single volumes did not appear until after the Second World War (Gurvitch and Moore 1945; Barnes 1948). It is these which are often mistakenly reckoned to be the first accounts of the history of sociology.

Interest in the history of sociology as a theoretical problem rather than simply a matter of correctly charting an agreed sequence of events is comparatively recent, dating from Peel's seminal biography of Spencer (1971), influenced by the work of Quentin Skinner on the history of political theory (Skinner 1966; 1969). Several short, narrative histories of sociology also appeared during the 1960s (Maus 1962; Mitchell 1968), and Fletcher's much more substantial work (Fletcher 1971) shortly afterwards. The recognition of the history of sociology as a reputable academic specialism, rather than simply a hobby for retired sociologists can be marked by the establishment of the Journal of the History of the Behavioural Sciences (1965 - although this was more the province of psychologists initially), the International Sociological Association Research Committee on the History of Sociology (1971), the establishment of a History of Sociology Section at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting and the 'Journal of the History of Sociology' (now simply 'History of Sociology') (1978) and the British Sociological Associations' study group on the Sociology of Sociology and Social Research (1981). Within the last few years there have been many books, articles and papers on the theory and content of the history of sociology and the area can be said to be well established on an international level, although as recently as 1977 Jones could write that, "self-conscious reflection on historical method has not been typical of historians of sociological thought". (Jones 1977:282).

Peel (1978:347) suggests that there are at least five different forms of history of sociology.

In the first place, there are "triumphalist Whig histories celebrating the general scientific achievements of the subject". The term "Whig" or "Whiggish" to describe history originates from the work of Sir Herbert Butterfield (1931) who described 'the Whig interpretation of history' as being "to emphasise certain principles of progress in the past and to produce a story which is the ratification if not the glorification of the present". He goes on to argue that "the danger in any survey of the past is lest we argue in a circle and impute lessons to history which history has never taught and historical research has never discovered - lessons which are really inferences from the particular organisation that we have given to our knowledge....Our assumptions do not matter if we are conscious that they are assumptions, but the most fallacious thing in the world is to organise our historical knowledge upon an assumption without realising what we are doing, and then to make inferences from that organisation and claim that these are the voice of history." (Butterfield|1931:24-5). Butterfield argues that historians should focus their interests on issues and ideas that mattered at the time to the individuals concerned, rather than working backwards from contemporary

concerns. 'Whiggism', or 'presentism' as it is often called is the butt of much current criticism in the history of sociology (Peel 1971; Jones 1977; Collini 1979; Camic 1979; Kuklick 1980) although the critique itself has also come in for criticism (Seidman 1983), and there are serious limitations to Butterfield's own approach ("it is highly unlikely that there will be substantial agreement as to 'what matters' among the writers of any historical period; and ... even if there were, it would be a tedious and unsatisfactory 'history' which merely endorsed such judgements" (Jones 1977:1137). Peel suggests that the work of Barnes (1948) and Fletcher (1971) falls into the category of 'whig history'.

Secondly he refers to "histories written to give support to a very particular contemporary position", and cites Parsons (1937), Nisbet (1967) and Harris (1971) as examples, although Nisbet's account of the origins of sociology as being a 'conservative' reaction to the radicalism of the enlightenment, and an 'art form' as much as it is a science (Nisbet 1976) is perhaps the most typical. Hawthorn's account of the development of sociology as a series of different approaches to the nature and the lessons of history (Hawthorn 1976) is another example.

Thirdly, Peel writes of "exposito-critical histories, dealing with the founding fathers whom it is judged important for the present generation to know and get right". Any number of introductory texts could be included here, but specifically (although not necessarily critically) cited are Giddens (1971) and the whole University of Chicago 'Heritage of Sociology' series. The notion of 'founding fathers', apart from the inaccuracy inherent in its sexism (Morgan 1980) is a 'whiggish' term, and one which Giddens (and others) in later work (Giddens 1976: Jones 1977) have argued against, on the grounds that it tends to construe the history of the discipline in terms of arguments between a limited circle of individuals in the past who the present has deemed to be the significant figures of their epoch, when in fact they were frequently either not aware of each others' existence, or in debate with other long-forgotten individuals considered much more important at the time. The celebrated 'mutual non-awareness' of Durkheim and Weber (Tiryakian 1966: Lukes 1973), and Durkheim's intense debates with Robertson-Smith (Jones 1977) are examples.

Fourthly, Peel refers to "intellectual history ... merely dealing with a topic of intense interest" citing Hughes (1959) and Burrows (1966).

Finally there is "the sociology of sociology" (Reynolds and Reynolds 1970), described unhesitatingly as "a farrago", "belabouring establishment sociologists in America for unjustified pretensions to value-freedom" which "has little to do with the history of the subject" (Peel 1978:357). However Peel concedes that other works within this field, such as Oberschall (1972), Lazarsfeld (1962) and even Friedrichs (1970) are more worthwhile, although he remains critical of Gouldner (1971) describing it as the kind of "mythologised history" or "prophetic mode of sociology" which Giddens (1976) and (paradoxically) Friedrichs himself (1970) also condemn.

Since Peels article however, debate in the history of sociology has centred around the issue of "whiggism" and its counterpart, usually referred to as "historicism", and the two are conveniently dichotomised to 'presentism' and 'historicism' in some current papers (Seidman 1983). Jones (1977) on the interpretation of Durkheim's work on religion is the starting point for much of this debate, and this itself draws heavily on Skinner (Skinner 1966; 1969; 1972; 1974) and Dunn (1966) within philosophy, and of course Butterfield (1931) and to a certain extent Kuhn (1962). It has led to a wide ranging debate (Johnson 1978; Camic 1979; Kuklick 1980; Camic 1981; Seidman 1983) in the course of which the theoretical and methodological principles of both presentism and historicism have been subjected to scrutiny. Few



historians of sociology would describe themselves as 'presentists', but there are permutations and complications inherent in the idea of 'historicism' which mean that in practice it is more complex and possibly no more satisfactory a form of explanation.

Seidman (1983) provides the most cogent summary of the 'presentist' and 'historicist' positions. 'Presentism' sees "a continuity in subject matter and problems between past and present social scientists" (Seidman 1983:80), and "subordinates past to present. The past is not intrinsically valuable, for it is only worth studying as a record of (people) striving to realise the present. History is the story of the triumph of progressive forces over reactionary ones; and the present is superior to all." (Peel 1971:259). It is more vilified (Jones 1977; Skinner 1969) than practiced, although the work of Abraham (1973) and Fletcher (1971) could be said to be recent exceptions. It assumes that the problems and doctrines of the present serve as criteria for organising, interpreting and judging past ideas, that 'the past' involves a simple division between 'false ideas' (refuted) and 'true ideas' (incorporated), and that the history of social science must disentangle 'valid scientific knowledge' from 'ideological residues'.

Its attitude is evaluative and ideological. History becomes "a pack of tricks we play upon the dead" (Skinner 1969:178) - "the history of sociology is merely quarried to provide spurious pedigrees for current claimants to sociological legitimacy" (Peel 1971:ix), leading to historically absurd interpretations - 'the present' seems always to be foreshadowed in 'the past', "a history of thoughts which no one ever actually succeeded in thinking, at a level of coherence which no one ever actually attained". (Skinner 1969:18)

In contrast, 'historicism' seeks "to understand the science of a given period in its own terms" (Stocking 1968:8). "Past, present and future are bound into an organic pattern which can only be discovered from an analysis of the past. Historicism ... leads to improved techniques for recovering the past" (Peel 1971:259). It assumes 'discontinuity' between past and present - "the conditions, and therefore the questions and answers of science vary historically" (Seidman 1983:81). It avoids the notion of 'influence' - "a story which reads like the first chapter of Chronicles, though without the genetic justification" (Skinner 1969:25), and claims that to specify the meaning of a text or set of ideas, one needs to recover the authors 'intentions'. (Jones 1981b; Skinner 1972; 1976)

In this, it assumes that author's statements of intention are adequate, whereas "in the light of psychoanalysis ... we cannot assume that an author has privileged access to his or her own intentions" (Seidman 1983:83). It tends to deny what Ricoeur and others call 'the autonomy of the text' - "What the text says matters more than what the author meant to say" (Ricoeur 1971:534). "The real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter does not depend on the contingency of the author and whom (s/he) originally wrote for". (Gadamer 1975:263). Ultimately, it leads to an illusion of 'objectivism', that a 'real' description of the past is possible.

This is not the place to indulge in a detailed epistemological examination of the nature of historical explanation. Much has been written in recent years that is critical of traditional historical methods and which is particularly relevant to the forgotten parts of the history of sociology. Suffice it to say that the present study will attempt to provide an account of the Institute of Sociology, Le Play House and the Regional Survey movement in British social research which is informed by historicism, although mindful both of the limitations of the approach and of the tendency to slip into presentism without always being aware of doing so.

## **The Practice of Historical Research in Sociology**

The research was originally intended to take three forms

A detailed investigation of the records of Le Play House and its related organisations, together with such other artefacts (letters, manuscripts and survey materials) as are deposited with the formal records in the Library of Keele University.

An examination of other related records elsewhere. These would have included papers of individuals who were in any way involved with the work of Le Play House, records of organisations sharing common interests and a common membership with Le Play House, and the records of institutions (such as the London School of Economics) which were active in the development of the discipline of sociology in this country during the period in question.

Interviews with people who were active in any way in the work of Le Play House, or who knew of its work in any other capacity.

In practice, only the first and the third aims were realisable. Some of the organisations whose records would have been worth the effort of consulting appeared to have no records which could be traced, and it is unlikely that a search of the papers of any of the individuals whose collections are open to public scrutiny would have revealed any information which would have added significantly to that available at Keele. In any case, as the research proceeded, the scope tended to become narrower as the amount of material available and the amount of work it required became apparent. In dealing with an area where no cataloguing of the available documents has been undertaken, where no secondary research of any kind has made use of the material, and where the detailed pattern of the history of the organisations in question has not been charted in any surviving form, a large part of the thesis has become of necessity an attempt to do these three things.

Research on the records of Le Play House was undertaken at Keele University Library during three visits of two weeks each in 1981, 1982 and 1983, and a number of shorter visits. Details of how and why the records ended up at Keele University itself forms part of the research (Section 8.1) and has been explained elsewhere (Farquharson D 1955; Mountford 1972). The records consist of, among other things

Minute Books and other formal records of the Sociological Society, the Institute of Sociology and various other smaller organisations and committees which were associated with them between 1903 and the early 1950s. These are not complete - for example, no minutes of Institute of Sociology Council or Executive meetings exist for the period between 1936 and the early 1940s.

Correspondence and other papers, both private and professional of, among others, Victor Branford, Patrick Geddes (although the majority of his extensive collection of papers are elsewhere), and Alexander and Dorothea Farquharson.

Various manuscripts of books and articles by Victor Branford and others

Survey materials (notebooks, scrapbooks, maps, lantern slides, charts and other artefacts) from surveys undertaken in Britain and Europe between 1903 and 1952.

(Those undertaken under the auspices of Le Play House are listed in Appendix ?)

Most of these materials were deposited in the Archives at Keele University at two separate times. The first was after the dissolution of the Institute of Sociology (1955) when many of the formal papers were received through the efforts of W A Campbell-Stewart, then Professor of Education, and Stanley Stewart, the Librarian. The second was after the death of Dorothea Farquharson (1976), when the recipient was the University Archivist Ian Fraser; although it is likely that some things were received in the intervening period. The library of the Institute (some 10,000 volumes) was given to Keele in 1953, but Victor Branford's papers, and other related items were retained by Dorothea Farquharson after the dissolution of the Institute with a view to their

being edited and published. This had been a condition of the Victor Branford Trust, set out in Branford's will, and was nominally an obligation imposed upon the Guild of St George to which the Trust was passed after dissolution of the Institute. Lewis Mumford was chosen to act as editor of the Branford manuscripts, and visited Britain in 1956 with this in view (among other things), but due to the death of Alexander Farquharson, the recent dissolution of the Institute, the sale of most of Le Play House in Ledbury and the inevitable lack of funds, the papers were not easily accessible, and most of Branford's manuscripts were eventually passed on to Keele unedited and unsorted. Some preliminary listing and sorting of his papers had been undertaken in the early 1940s (VB1), and it is likely that the papers are currently stored at Keele in approximately the same order. In any case, all those items received prior to 1976 were listed in the order in which they were unpacked, and are referred to henceforth as the 'VB Series'. It must be understood that the prefix VB does not mean that the papers concerned are exclusively those of Victor Branford, although the majority of his most important materials are included in this series. (See notes by Dorothea Farquharson in VB1)

Those items received after 1976 had not been catalogued or listed in any way at all by Keele University Library, and I therefore prepared my own listing, which again did not involve any but the most minimal sorting and reorganisation. This is referred to henceforth as the 'AF series', although like the VB series it contains a very varied mixture of papers and other artefacts.

In addition, there is a large amount of material, mainly survey records and printed papers, which is stored in the basement of Keele Hall elsewhere at the University under the charge of Stanley Stewart, the former University Librarian who arranged the transfer of the Institute's records to Keele in the early 1950s. I prepared a listing of all that seemed to be directly relevant to the history of Le Play House, concentrating especially on the survey materials. It is likely that these were sorted in the late 1940s (Hill 1983). A great many pamphlets, journals and other printed papers from organisations which Le Play House was in contact from all over the world remain uncatalogued.

There are a limited number of texts on the methodology appropriate for this kind of sociological research. Platt (1981a) suggests that there are five major problems with documentary research, based largely on her work on the history of the antique trade (Platt 1978). These are

- authenticity
- availability
- quantity (whether there is enough to permit sampling)
- reliability
- other inferences

The extent to which scrupulous attention need be paid to any one of these problems depends on the nature of the documents being studied and their origin. The authenticity and 'truth' of a document and its contents can normally be covered by the practice of assuming both unless other evidence suggests the contrary. (Platt quotes 'Craig's Rules of Historical Evidence' of 1600 that 'all (people) have an equal right to be believed unless the contrary has been established from elsewhere').

Sampling is only relevant for very large datasets, which require some selectivity on the part of the researcher. This is not necessary with the Archives at Keele, although the technique could have been used for a more detailed examination of the survey records, of which there are a large number within an identifiable category.

Webb et al (1966) suggest two major sources of bias in running records; selective deposit and selective survival. Both of these are more likely to affect the records of voluntary or informal organisations rather than those of governmental or official bodies. In the case of records which can be defined as 'political', any evidence of selective deposit or survival should be viewed critically, since selective editing of records may be a deliberate administrative practice - 'particularly in the political area, the holes that exist in data series are suspect'. On the other hand, records, even the most important are often destroyed or mislaid casually, particularly in the course of office moves, and in that the 'holes' in the data series of the Institute of Sociology are proximate to two office moves (1940 and 1946) the former of which was made necessary by wartime conditions, there is unlikely to be any ulterior motive behind the loss. In any case, problems created by the selective or erratic survival of documentary evidence are 'solvable', the authors suggest, by 'consensus test', which involves searching for agreement (or discrepancy) from different contemporary sources - the absence of any noticeable evidence which suggests otherwise enables the rational assumption that things continued 'as before'. Although there were periods of fairly intense disagreement and even personal animosity during the thirty five year history of Le Play House (particularly during the split which led to the creation of the Le Play Society in the early 1930s (See Section 6.3) and during the discussions about the dissolution of the Institute in the early 1950s (See Section 8.3), there is ample supporting evidence, largely in the form of correspondence, to the effect that the formal records of the Institute of Sociology during these periods are an accurate, if not entirely complete record of what happened.

A second type of record in documentary research is what Webb et al (1966) call the 'episodic or private record', and which for the most part consists of letters. Plummer (1983), basing his evidence on Thomas and Znaniecki's monumental study of the correspondence between Poland and the USA in the early twentieth Century (1920) suggests that there are five types of letter - ceremonial, informing, sentimental, literary and business, and examples of each type occur in the Le Play House archives.

The significant difference between the way in which the current research has made use of letters, and the relevance of letters to research such as that of Thomas and Znaniecki is the same as that referred to above - namely, that the content of the letters is useful as factual evidence relating to the substance of the research, rather than simply as 'data' for subsequent analysis. In all correspondence however, what Webb et al (1966) refer to as the 'dross rate' is very high !

Documentary research in sociology may take several forms, and even though there is relatively little discussion of the technicalities of such research, there are many similarities with other research methods. As Platt observes, "only the most limited technical problems of documentary research are wholly specific to it." (Platt 1981a) However, she goes on to note that "the combination of characteristics which it can possess is sufficiently different from those more typically written about by sociological methodologists for differences of emphasis to amount almost to qualitative distinctiveness." The specific problems of documentary research which she draws attention to are

Documents are studied in contexts drawn entirely from other documents. This would not be so in all research using documents, but is almost inevitable in historical research - although the definition of 'document' can obviously be a broad one. One does not have all the documents that are relevant. One can never know either, particularly in dealing with 'informal' organisations exactly (or even approximately)

how many documents are missing, in that letters, reports, and committee minutes are not always produced regularly and sometimes never appear at all.

Not all those involved have produced documents. Many people who 'should' have written letters do not appear to have done so.

One wants to make inferences about things to which documents do not refer.

One result of this is that documentary research will inevitably involve a great deal more speculation and inference than other contemporary forms of research, and be less amenable to the possibility of testing hypotheses, because of the general lack of reliable, consistent, independent data to do it with. This is a problem that historians have long been familiar with, and have accepted as an inevitable condition of their work - it is only sociologists delving into what is for many of them a new area who have felt the need to 'problematise' it.

The present work is therefore an attempt both to offer a crude map of a largely uncharted land, and to suggest some reasons why previous travellers have seen fit to bypass it altogether. One conclusion might well be that they did well to avoid it - although there is a sense in which anything that has been almost studiously ignored must at the very least, in Michelin's words, 'merite un detour'. At the risk of producing a somewhat mixed metaphor, one could quote Bernard Crick who suggested that Collini's seminal biography of Hobhouse used a "vast net with a fine mesh to catch a middling plump fish which he wishes neither to eat nor to preserve." (1979) Sometimes the mere existence of something is justification enough for simple curiosity.

### **3 Origins of the Regional Survey Movement**

The Regional Survey Movement, in so far as it related to British Sociology came into existence in the last few years of the nineteenth Century. (A similar movement, although owing its origins to different sources and not having much connection with the British movement was developing in the United States at around the same time.) In both countries however, the pace of early activity and interest was frenetic, generating amateur organisations, and a considerable amount of professional interest which lasted until the 1930s. From then on, professional interest in the Regional Survey tradition dissipated in the social sciences (with the possible exception of human geography), and the 'movement' such as it was had all but disappeared by 1950. The last vestiges survived until 1960. In the course of the first half of the twentieth century in this country, at least five organisations dedicated in one way or another to the practice of the Regional Survey came into existence and merged or declined, involving the active participation of several thousand people.

Fagg, writing in 1928 suggests that the Regional Survey movement can be traced back to the Renaissance, and the beginnings of 'the scientific phase' (p.72). He describes the origins and development of geological and plant ecology surveys in the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as the work of the population census from 1801. However, the Regional Survey does not become more than an exercise in natural science until the late 19th Century and the development on the continent of Europe of sets of ideas nowadays claimed by sociologists as their history. As has already been indicated in Chapter 1, the history of sociology (and by implication the history of social research, where it parts company) is heavily permeated by 'Whiggism' or 'presentism' and a standardised pattern is widely used, which selects a particular path of influence between a few nineteenth century writers, some of whom used the word sociology and some of whom did not, which it then claims as the 'history' of the discipline. So, for example, a chain of connection is drawn up starting with Auguste Comte, and leading through Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and possibly one or two others. Frederic Le Play, whose name is vital in tracing the history of the

Regional Survey is often omitted or dealt with in cursory detail, as are many of the British sociologists such as John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer and Leonard Hobhouse, whose relationship to the Regional Survey Movement is marginal, but whose importance to the development of thinking in the social sciences is greatly underestimated. Notwithstanding the limitations of the use of the idea of 'influence' (Skinner), it can be said that the development of the Regional Survey Movement in Britain in the early 20th Century can be traced to the work of Frederic Le Play, John Ruskin, Charles Booth and to the generalised development of the disciplines of geography and sociology.

### **Le Play**

Frederic Le Play was by training a mining engineer and a metallurgist. In the course of his studies, and subsequent work in mining (rising to be professor at the Ecole Des Mines by 1840) he travelled around Europe extensively, and became interested in the differences between the lives and families of miners in different countries and different regions. He subsequently resigned his post to concentrate on social research, turning to politics later in life and the social reform aspects of his work took over from the social research. There can be said to be two trends emerging from Le Play's work - that deriving from his research, reflected in the Regional Survey tradition, and that deriving from his politics (the Unions for Social Peace) which found favour with Salazar, Defuses and Mussolini - decried by Proudhon as 'the scientific organisation of servitude' (M Leroy 1954, cited in Goldfrank 1972)

Le Plays social theory was based essentially on first hand observation, which he saw as a surer guide to thinking about society than deductive reasoning. As a scientist he was proficient in statistics, but later dismissed them as useless for the social sciences 'because of their shallowness and their collection by untrained amateurs' (Gold frank). However, his influence was the greatest on just those amateurs whose efforts in statistics he decried.

Le Plays method centred on the study of the family, and in particular of family budgets. He saw them as indicators of societal conditions rather than interesting for their own sake, although there are suggestions that much of his first hand data collection was suspect (Gold frank). Le Plays method, unashamedly unscientific involved interviews with ordinary people, and his method was "to praise with discretion the wisdom of the men, the grace of the women, the gentleness of the children, and to distribute judiciously small gifts to all". From this approach, he arrived at a number of three-fold classifications - of societies as 'simple and happy', 'complicated and happy' or 'complicated and suffering'; which in turn related to the three family types, 'patriarchal', 'stem' and 'unstable'.

In the wider world of work, he suggests a three fold classification of the relationship between employer and employee - compulsory (e.g. European Feudalism), permanent voluntary (??) or short term (class antagonism, instability, the result of revolution, industrial or political.) Suffering and familial or societal instability had three causes; 'vice, error and the abuses of novelty', or 'overpopulation, exaggerated traditionalism and attempts at marriage regulation'. All the evidence for Le Plays mammoth works (*Les Ouvrieres Europeeanes*) suggests that he was well received by those families he visited, although the idea of meticulous examination of the family budgets of complete strangers is somewhat dubious today. Goldfrank suggests that Le Play actually visited families chosen for him by mining managers whose hospitality he enjoyed on his trips, and even that some were entirely fabricated (e.g. in Norway). He concludes, 'we are left with the sense that Le Play's claim to scrupulous observation is dubious. Or did he simply not see what he was steered away from?'. (Goldfrank p. 142).

All in all, Le Play's method is heavily influenced by Comtean positivism, and a strong analogy between the mineral world and the social world. "The mineral kingdom (sic), with only a few hundred species and the human race with millions of distinct exemplars merely represent extremes of the simple and the complex". Goldfrank suggests that for the analogy for Le Play's social science is "not the lawful natural science of physics, but rather the classificatory and eminently practical one of metallurgy ... an application of his metallurgical training to the study of society'. (It is interesting to note that C H Desch, for many years an active member of the councils of the Sociological Society, Le Play House and later the Institute of Sociology was also a metallurgist, rising to professor of the subject at Sheffield University.

Le Play's influence on the Regional Survey tradition in Britain was at third hand initially, through his followers in French social science and geography to Patrick Geddes. Philip Boardman, in much the most useful biography of Geddes describes the moment when Geddes discovered Le Play and when the British Regional Survey movement could be said to have been born

"During 1878-9, Patrick (Geddes) wrote and published four scientific papers in French as well as lecturing in that language on certain occasions. Apart from such biological investigations, he steadily broadened his spheres of interest both intentionally and by chance. Walking one afternoon along the Rue Jacob, he happened to see a poster in a doorway announcing some lectures by a M. Edmond Demolins on the new 'Science Sociale'. Intrigued by the subject, he went in and heard the lecturer expound the work and social theories of Frederic Le Play. Though he had never heard of either person before, Geddes got then and there a new intellectual revelation. Le Play, he learned was a French mining engineer who had spend a lifetime in travel and first-hand study of social phenomena in worker-groups in all parts of Europe. His approach was concrete and comparative, on wages, family budgets, housing, stability of employment, and so on. Sceptical of the abstract reasoning of classical philosophers and new 'sociologists', including Comte, Le Play had worked out an objective method for studying actual cross-sections of society. Expressed by his famous triad: Lieu-Travail-Famille, he saw in 'Place' the force of environment which everywhere determined what sort of work men might do, 'Work' the main conditioning factor of family life and organisation, and 'Family' as the basic social unit.

Suddenly Geddes realised that in Le Play's travels and observations there lay a method of study which could satisfy him as a scientist and inspire him as one who now puzzled more and more over mankind's ways and institutions, to follow this literally down-to-earth lead. After the lecture he presented himself to M. Demolins with eager questions about Le Play and the work of the 'Science Sociale' group. When he left the Rue Jacob that evening, it was with a new idol to set up beside Thomas Huxley and Auguste Comte: Frederic Le Play, both as a scientific observer and as a man of action." CI LS2 LL70

The directions taken by Geddes as a result of his contact with Le Play will be dealt with in a later chapter (4.2).

### **John Ruskin**

Writing in 1930, Alexander Farquharson spoke of the Regional Survey as being an "intensive and imaginative study of a concrete locality ... inspired by Ruskin, and using the methods derived from Le Play, from Patrick Geddes and from Charles Booth"(1930). The choice of adjectives is significant - 'intensive', 'imaginative' and 'concrete' all go a long way towards defining the kind of activity involved. The

Regional Survey in its sociological form was never simply a dry catalogue of a district, but an attempt to combine the perspectives of the natural and human sciences with an artistic and spiritual appreciation. For this reason, John Ruskin is cited as a guiding inspiration, and certainly both Victor Branford and Alexander Farquharson were much influenced by him. Both were members of the Guild of St George, the organisation founded by Ruskin in 1871 to promote his particular form of social reconstruction - described by Frederick Harrison as "not so much an advance upon the present as a revival of the Past. It was in spirit Medieval, but purged from the cruelty of Feudalism and the superstition of Catholicism. It was to be neither Communist nor Monastic ... it was to show the world chivalry without war, devoutness without a church, nobility without luxury or sloth and monarchy without profligacy or pride ... It was to be a glorified medieval lordship fully equipped with the order, comforts and appliances of modern existence, but purged of its vices, its frauds, its base machinery and its sordid habits". Though the connections between this and the Regional Survey may not be immediately obvious, they are in fact vital. Ruskinism was a philosophy which influenced many social reformers and artists in the late 19th Century, and Ruskin's esoteric combination of art, socialism and self-help lay behind many of the ventures undertaken by members of the Regional Survey movement, and was one connective explanation between the diverse aspects of a Regional Survey. It was from Ruskin that the links between art, architecture and the environment were learned, as much as from Le Play's more famous 'Place - Work - Family'.

The Guild of St George as conceived by Ruskin was an organisation to bring about his vision of a practical, self-help road to social reform. Somewhat secretive and select in its operations, it lapsed into decline after the First World War, and never really recovered. Never achieving anything like its original aims it remained a "ghostlike" organisation (Mumford 1954), but the ideals on which it was founded, and the ideals which dominated Ruskin's life and work were very much the same as those which motivated Branford and Farquharson. From a peripheral involvement in the 1920s, Farquharson came to dominate the Guild, such as it was. The Guild's offices moved formally to Le Play House in 1933, although effectively it had been based there since the late 1920s, and Farquharson became Grand Master of the Guild in 1951 (Wardle 1954).

### **Charles Booth**

Charles Booth, although important was not the prime source of influence to British social research that he is sometimes claimed to be. As Branford said of him, "While the Booth type of survey is admirable in giving a picture of the economic and material condition of the family, it is deficient in the more difficult task of describing and estimating ... its cultural status"; by which he meant more or less the same as Booth himself meant when he wrote, "I have at times doubted ... whether the prolongation of this work has had any other basis than an inability on my part to come to a conclusion" (Abrams 1968). Frederic Le Play was in many ways the more important influence, certainly on the Regional Survey movement (and he was an important source of influence on Booth too, although opinions differ about the extent of the influence. Both Wells and Abrams recognise it - "Booth was to some extent influenced by Le Play" (Wells 1935); "the influence of Le Play in determining Booth's main strategy .... was direct, powerful and acknowledged" (Abrams 1968); but Moge suggests that Booth was not familiar with Le Play - "I can find no evidence to show that Charles Booth was aware of his predecessor in France" (Mogey 1956)). Most of the evidence however suggests that there was a direct influence, and that was certainly the view of most of the founders of the Regional Survey movement (Branford & Geddes 1917).



### **Geography, Sociology and other Disciplines**

Although there were many books written in Britain in the late 19th Century which covered in one way or another the subject matter of what is today called sociology, there was no coherent discipline, and no recognised salaried practitioners of it. The most influential writers (John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Benjamin Kidd, J A Hobson, W Stanley Jevons and Henry Sidgwick among others) were men of property or worked in other fields, such as journalism. There have been several recent studies of the development of social and political thought during the period (Collini 1979; Inglis 1982; Clarke 1980), and none of them make more than passing reference to Geddes, Branford and what was to become the Le Play House school, because although they shared a common extra-academic approach to the study of society, their philosophies were in most other ways diverse. Many of their kind were members of the Sociological Society in its early days, and some survived as Vice-Presidents of the Institute of Sociology. But as a major source of influence on the development of the regional survey school, their importance can be overstated, and I do not propose to examine it in any detail. That is not to say that there are not connections to be made and lines of influence to be drawn; rather it is to say that the aim of the current thesis is to pursue relationships other than those which lead directly to and from the writings of those who can be conveniently categorised as 'sociologists'. In many ways, for example, the development of academic geography was more significant for the Regional Survey movement.

Geography as a discipline has an institutional history as long as that of sociology, and even longer if one includes volumes of 'travellers tales', going back for several centuries. In Britain however, the formation of the Royal Geographical Society in 1851 probably marked the beginnings of the regular use of the term, although for most of the nineteenth century geography consisted more of the "veneration of the explorer" (Freeman 1980) than a serious academic discipline. Like anthropology as described by Malinowski, geography was very much a discipline of the Officers' Club Balcony, tied to British Imperialism, the scramble for Africa and the development of means of transport - "wherever the railway went, the geographer followed" (Freeman 1980). Freeman notes that Halford Mackinder, often regarded as the first great British Geographer, and later Director of the London School of Economics climbed Mount Kenya in 1899, "because he thought no one would take him seriously as a geographer unless he had some exploit to his credit".)

However, by the late nineteenth century a different form of geography was beginning to emerge, largely through the gradual institutionalisation of the subject in the universities. Mackinder was appointed to Oxford in 1887 and F H H Guillemand to Cambridge in 1888 (succeeded by J Y Buchanan the following year). From 1887 until well into the twentieth century the RGS gave grants to universities for the teaching of geography, mainly to Oxford and Cambridge, but smaller amounts to other universities as they began to become involved in teaching the subject - Liverpool, Manchester, Edinburgh and Wales. The first department was established at Oxford in 1899, and the first full honours course begun at Liverpool in 1917. The Geographical Association was formed in 1893, specifically for the purpose of encouraging the teaching of geography, and geographical societies, with aims which straddled the veneration of explorers, education and practical survey work were formed in various places - Tyneside in 1887, Liverpool in 1891 and Southampton in 1897 (Freeman 1980). It is perhaps significant that some of these places were later involved in pioneering social surveys in the early twentieth century (see Section 6.6 below).

The connections between the emerging discipline of geography and the Regional Survey were very heavily dependent on the personality of Patrick Geddes and his influence on a range of disciplines in Scotland at this time, described by the

geographer H R Mill, whom he "persuaded out of chemistry into geography" (letter to C C Fagg, quoted in Fagg 1928) as "the most inspiring influence in Edinburgh in the early 1880s when inspiration blew in from many quarters." (Mill 1895). Geddes work on the survey in Scotland led to the formation of Outlook Tower in 1903, and the Edinburgh Summer Schools on biology, geography and the Regional Survey, which led to the formation of the Regional Association (Chapter 4.2).

By the early twentieth century, it was possible to see the emergence of a number of different forms of geography, some of which were closer to the social survey than others. The old style of geography as exploration was dying out (although paradoxically, it was still the acts of explorers such as Scott in the Antarctic before the first world war that led to the greatest interest in geography), and being replaced by a number of distinct schools - a school of what can be called Regional Geography at Oxford ("at once physical and political and deeply concerned with human life in relation to the environment" - (Freeman 1980:43), and a more Physical Geography at Cambridge, with close associations with climatology, meteorology and oceanography. H R Mill, writing in 1895 proposed a hierarchy of geographies, beginning with mathematical geography at the base of the pyramid ("great blocks hewn from the quarries of the only absolute science, absolutely squared and fitted"), and followed by physical, biological, anthropological and finally commercial geography. (Mill 1895). The term human geography, nowadays often seen as the branch of the discipline closest to sociology did not appear until the 1920s (Roxby 1930).

The overlap between the interests of the disciplines of sociology and geography, while never much in evidence in the professional sphere was extremely significant in the development of the regional survey movement, which was, as has already been indicated an essentially amateur enterprise. While it is possible to attempt to draw dividing lines between those organisations (the Regional Association and the Le Play Society) which mainly attracted geographers and geography teachers and those others (the Sociological Society, the Institute of Sociology) which attracted sociologists, the extent of overlap is quite considerable, and the degree of cooperation across disciplinary boundaries, without any indication that the boundaries posed any serious problems at all, quite remarkable.

In dealing with the influence of geography on the development of the Regional Survey it is perhaps worth considering also, if briefly, the role of amateur survey work in other related disciplines. Amateur geological survey work began in the early nineteenth century, with the work of William Smith, which led eventually to the establishment of the official Government Geological Survey in 1832. The first amateur organisation of geologists was the Geologists Association, formed in 1859 (Fagg 1928), and which later developed into a full professional organisation. Similar movements existed in botany and plant ecology in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Robert Smith and Marcel Hardy both produced botanical surveys of Scotland, and were closely involved with Geddes in more general surveys of Edinburgh and Midlothian. In 1904, A G Tansley and Robert Smith among others formed the Central Committee for the Survey and Study of British Vegetation, which became the British Ecological Society in 1913. A final development worth noting is the photographic surveys, inspired by Benjamin Stone, who formed the Photographic Record Association in 1897. Fagg (1928) refers to the Photographic Record and Survey of Surrey of 1902, consisting of several thousand lantern slides and a few films, which were later held by the South Eastern Union of Scientific Societies among its records.

## 4 The Early 20th Century

"(We must) help people to understand us and not think of the regional survey as simply technical or one of those innumerable special subjects clamouring for recognition; but rather an attitude of mind towards our whole surroundings. They will at least leave us with a smile instead of a frown." (Geddes 1922)

### **The Sociological Society**

The establishment of the Sociological Society of London in 1903 has been described in some detail by, among others Halliday (1968), Fletcher (1972), Collini (1979) and Kent (1981), and papers from its early years (the three volumes of Sociological Papers 1905-7) are fairly widely quoted. It was never a professional association, in the sense in which its American equivalent was and always has been, most of its members being amateurs or academics from other disciplines - indeed, the number of professional sociologists in Britain probably did not reach double figures until after the Second World War (Mess 1942).

James Bryce, in his address as first president of the Sociological Society (quoted in Rumney 1945) suggested three reasons for its foundation

'the ever expanding ramifications of social investigation' needed a society to 'survey with the eye of science the whole field of human activity and to father the many incipient branches of social study beginning to emerge;'  
there was a need for a single society to connect various branches of 'scientific social investigation' into 'systematic cooperation', to bring together specialists in different group;  
there was, according to Bryce a 'backwardness in Britain' on the theoretical side, except in the field of political economy. It should, Bryce concluded, 'be of enormous benefit to practical philanthropists to have the aid of men of theory.'  
Halliday refers to the Sociological Society as a 'movement', albeit a disparate one, loosely committed to various versions of positivism, or a hierarchy of the sciences, resting uneasily with an evolutionism reflected in an almost universal interest in the historical development of human society. There was also a widespread interest in social problems, and the role of sociology in providing a formula for social policy or social action, leading to the familiar denigration of the discipline as being solely concerned with 'drink, drainage and divorce' (Abrams 1967). Halliday however suggests that the fundamental division in the movement was over the relationship between biological and sociological method, although he identifies three strands in the Sociological Society in its early years

'a school of ethical or social work sociologists', concerned primarily with sociology as the study of and solution to social problems, and whose interests were in establishing institutions for the professional training of social workers. This approach owed a lot to Oxford ethical philosophy, and served to unite in one slightly heterogeneous group Hobhouse, Charles Booth and Charles Loch (Secretary of the Charity Organisation Society).

'a school of racial sociologists', whose approach owed much to Francis Galton, the founder of the intelligence testing movement, and to the science of eugenics as espoused by Karl Pearson, Caleb Saleeby and Edward Brabrook. Although active in the early years of the Society, the eugenicists drifted away after 1907 with the foundation of the Eugenics Education Society, and became more involved with the medical aspects of heredity.

'a school of civic sociologists or town planners', most prominent among whom was of course Patrick Geddes, but the ideas Geddes promulgated came from Le Play and an earlier generation of French sociologists and geographers; and Geddes numbered among his disciples in the Society Victor Branford, J A Thompson and J G Bartholemew. Because Branford provided much of the money and Geddes much of the enthusiasm for the establishment of sociology on a firm footing in Britain it was almost inevitable that their interests should have been uppermost in the image of the Sociological Society from the start.

There were of course other strands to the social sciences, and even others who saw themselves (or who were seen by others) as sociologists. Paramount among these were the statisticians and the anthropologists, and Halliday suggests that 'the Sociological Society ... was an institution to emancipate sociological science from the oversight of academic economists and British anthropologists.' Branford and Geddes saw the economists as sterile, and the claims of statisticians to be interested in social problems as 'fallacious' - their economics came from Ruskin. Similarly, the eugenicists were scathing in their criticisms of anthropology, still in its pre-Malinowski and pre-participative stage, and still identified very much as a form of unscientific and rather disreputable voyeurism.

However, the consensus achieved in 1903 began to break up almost as soon as it had been formed. The eugenicists left in 1907, their particular brand of 'social Darwinism' proving unacceptable to the stronger forces in the Society led by Branford and Geddes. Indeed, Geddes and the planners argued that Le Play's doctrine of 'Lieu - Travail - Famille' rendered irrelevant many of the concerns of the eugenicists with heredity. Halliday suggests that biology, far from providing a link between the eugenicists and the town planners actually split them apart.

At the same time, the accession of Hobhouse rather than Geddes to the newly founded Chair of Sociology at the London School of Economics further deepened a rift between the town planners and what Halliday calls the ethical or social work sociologists. For Hobhouse, Geddes' and Branford's writings ignored the development of human rationality, and overemphasised the environmental factor in the growth of social institutions. Hobhouse's school of Oxford based ethical philosophy owed more to T H Green than Frederic Le Play, and indeed Hobhouse had little time for any geographical or biological concerns. The sole meeting point between Geddes and the Hobhouse school was in the field of voluntary social work, but even here there were clear differences of emphasis, with Hobhouse and his followers emphasising education for citizenship, and the value of social work of the kind promulgated by the Charity Organisation Society, while Geddes saw improvement of the social and especially urban environment as of paramount importance. Indeed, for Geddes the city was paramount, and the building of cities the most effective form of social development. (Even here however, the contrast is not as clear as Hobhouse suggests, for Alexander Farquharson came from a Charity Organisation Society/ethical social work background, and yet was firmly committed to the Branford and Geddes school of sociology.)

The end result of these discrepancies was that the town planners, essentially the followers of Branford and Geddes remained the only active force within the society after 1910. During the next 20 years of its existence, the Sociological Society did little more than hold meetings in London, perhaps half a dozen a year, the most successful of which had audiences of up to a hundred. It was not however an 'active' body in any real sense of the word - and did not itself engage in any survey work, although a Cities Committee, founded in 1908 engaged in small scale activity and educational work in this area. After the war, the Society effectively collapsed, remaining in existence in name alone until 1930.

### **The Regional Association**

The Regional Association, formed in 1918 out of the Provisional Committee for the Development of the Regional Survey represented a different strand in the movement which was later to lead to the formation of the Institute of Sociology; one which owed a lot to the influence of Geddes, through Edinburgh, and in biology, geography and geology rather than sociology. The Regional Association brought together people whose interests were primarily in these other disciplines, some of which have been discussed in Section 3.5 above, but who found in the survey idea a means of pursuing active, practical investigations. In fact, the formation of the Association in some ways marked the peak of its achievement, and there is no evidence that it ever amounted to anything very spectacular, but it is a convenient heading under which to discuss a number of related developments.

The early work of Patrick Geddes, and his role in the development of the idea of the Regional Survey has been discussed briefly in Chapter 3.2 above. From 1887 to 1899, Geddes organised a series of Summer Schools in Edinburgh, based on similar schools held in the United States (Boardman 1978). Starting with a few dozen students and a couple of subjects (botany and zoology), the schools expanded year by year to encompass a wider range of physical and human sciences, architecture and town planning, and involve the services of several dozen teachers, among them people such as Edmond Demolins, the Reclus brothers, Charles Zueblin and Victor Branford. Partly to accommodate the summer schools, and partly through his general philanthropic interests in education and Edinburgh, Geddes established University Hall in 1887, and in 1892 purchased an old observatory on Castlehill, which he renamed Outlook Tower, described by Zueblin as 'the world's first sociological laboratory.' (Zueblin 1899). Outlook Tower contained a camera obscura as well as affording a view over the city better than that to be had from the Castle - Geddes added exhibitions, displays and materials of all kinds from a variety of disciplines, and used it as a practical, physical demonstration of the relationship between the large and the small, the city and the Region, and his adoption of Comte's 'lieu-travail-famille' into 'place - work - folk'.

Through Outlook Tower and the Edinburgh Summer meetings, as well as in his other varied academic and extra-academic activities (he had been appointed to the chair of biology at Dundee University in 1888 with a flexible contract which allowed him freedom to travel and write elsewhere for half the year), Geddes developed the idea and practice of the Regional Survey method. In particular, he was concerned to integrate his interests in plant ecology and human society, and he used the Edinburgh summer schools to experiment in cross-disciplinary dialogue, involving particularly debate between biologists, social scientists and town planners (Fagg 1928). Fagg goes on to suggest that 'the modern Regional survey movement was born of the long intellectual alliance between Scotland and France', the French input coming from Le Play, Demolins and Reclus among others, and the Scottish from the growing band of disciples from a variety of disciplines that Geddes was beginning to form around him.

Geddes' interests and activities tended to move in waves. During the 1890s, most of his energy was devoted to Outlook Tower and the Edinburgh schools. From 1900 onwards, he became increasingly involved, with Victor Branford and others in the formation and early work of the Sociological Society, an interest which dissipated somewhat in 1907 when he failed to secure the first Professorship of Sociology at the newly established London School of Economics, despite being instrumental, along with Branford, in persuading J Martin White to put up the money for the Chair.

From 1908 onwards, Geddes became increasingly involved in town planning, following the success of his survey work in Dunfermline and Edinburgh. He helped organise a town planning conference and exhibition in London in 1910, the first of its kind in the country, which brought together a large number of both academics and practitioners in the wake of the 1901 Town and Country planning act, which in its turn was due in no small part to Geddes' influence (Boardman 1978). He was a tireless traveller, arranging and hosting exhibitions all over Britain, Europe and occasionally the United States, and it was at one such exhibition in Ghent in 1913 that the idea of the Regional Association was born. Previously Geddes had persuaded the Sociological Society to establish a Cities Committee to pursue survey work, a body which in its turn became a virtually autonomous organisation. The Regional Association was the idea of George Morris and Mabel Barker, both school teachers involved in a survey of Saffron Walden, and disciples of Geddes, who suggested the need for an organisation for those interested in the survey method and particularly its application in education (Fagg 1928). A conference was arranged at Outlook Tower at Easter 1914, and letters sent to all schools listed in Whitaker's Almanac, along with Outlook Tower members. About fifty people attended, of whom the vast majority were teachers (Fagg 1928) - the meeting lasted a fortnight, and involved practical social and ecological survey work in Edinburgh and its surrounds together with accounts of surveys currently underway or completed in Saffron Walden (G Morris), North Lambeth (V Bell), Teesdale (C B Fawcett) and Croydon (C C Fagg). An organisation, originally titled The British Association for Regional Survey, later changed to the Provisional Committee for the Development of Regional Survey at the instigation of Geddes was formed, with Geddes as Chair and Morris as Secretary. The committee and active members of the Association were largely school teachers (Bell, Morris) or professional geographers (Fleure, Fawcett), joined by Victor Branford, Alexander Farquharson, Christopher Fagg and a number of other people who were also on various committees of other related organisations, primarily the Sociological Society.

The first four years of its existence coincided with the war and a reduction in survey activity. Committee meetings were held only every six months or so (VB 208), and it was not until January 1918 that the Provisional Committee reconstituted itself as the Regional Association. Almost immediately, the Association became involved in discussions, initiated by Victor Branford and dealt with in greater detail in Section 5 below which led to greater cooperation and eventually formal amalgamation of the several organisations involved with the amateur social and regional survey into partnership at Le Play House. The Regional Association Committee minutes first refer to cooperation in March 1919, when Branford suggests joint secretarial support, although an Inter-Association Committee, involving the Geographical and Historical Associations, the School Nature Study Union, the Selbourne Society, the Civic and Moral Education League and the Schools Personal Service Association had been established two years earlier. Talk of co-operation between the Geographical Association and the Regional Association continued intermittently over the next few years, (the Geographical Teacher published a number of Regional Association survey reports), reaching a climax in 1921 when the Association decided effectively to commit itself to sociology (represented by Le Play House). However, the Association performed a useful role in maintaining a dialogue between sociology and geography at an amateur level, which kept a number of the most prominent British geographers closely involved with Le Play House until the early 1930s.

### **The Civic Education League**

The Civic Education League, although not initially an organisation which had anything particular in common with regional survey work became, largely through the work of Alexander Farquharson and Margaret Tatton the organisation most enthusiastically committed to the idea of the regional survey in education. It was the

Civic Education League which instigated the foreign field trip, of which Le Play House and the Institute of Sociology organised over seventy between the 1920s and the 1950s (see Sections 5.5 and 6.7 below).

The Civic Education League began life as the Moral Instruction League in 1897 (Hilliard 1961), later becoming the Moral Education League in 1909, the Civic and Moral Education League in 1916 and finally the Civic Education League in 1919. The changes of name reflected a move away from its initial aim, "to substitute systematic non-theological moral instruction for the present religious teaching in all State schools, and to make character the chief aim of school life", to a broader policy of persuading Training Colleges to make better provision for courses in moral instruction for teachers. In any case, the initial aim was partially achieved in the Board of Education's revised Education Code, published in 1906, which, according to *The Times* UE "implied, if not expressed" most of the League's intentions (Hilliard 1961). A longer list of suggestions for "What the Schools could do" in a pamphlet entitled "The need for civic education", covers history, geography, social and industrial studies and the importance of the local survey, together with more moral aspects of citizenship (truthfulness, unselfish service, interest in the Empire and the League of Nations.)

It was through work with the Civic and Moral Education League that Alexander Farquharson first came into contact with the Regional Survey movement, and it was later through Farquharson's influence that the League became part of Le Play House, initiating many of the activities that were to become the mainstays of that organisation's existence for over a quarter of a century.

Alexander Farquharson was born Alexander Farquharson Jack on 22 January 1882 in the village of Towie, some thirty miles west of Aberdeen. He went to Edinburgh University at 15, graduating with a 1st Class MA, after which he moved to England in 1902 to teach in schools in London, Littlehampton and Worcestershire. Religion was, and remained an important part of Alexander Farquharson's life; although not a religious person in the sense of being a practicing member of a particular faith, he was a great student of religious ideas. Marie Jahoda, who knew Farquharson intimately during the 1930s said of him, "I never observed any act of religious observation; I don't think it could have played a role (in his life) ... just like he found virtually everything interesting, so he also found this very interesting" (1982). He wrote to Kate Bradley (later his first wife) in 1906 - "Religion is, and always has been one of the deepest and most real interests of my life. I mean by that I have always thought a great deal about religion ... often in past years and now too I have spent days together with little else in my thoughts ... it is not unlikely that I shall spend my life over it" (AF59 4.12.06).

In the summer of 1909, Farquharson left teaching in Littlehampton to move to London, where in January 1910 he became a District Secretary to the Charity Organisation Society in Holloway, North London. The early twentieth century saw an expansion of voluntary social work in a number of areas, and a corresponding growth of organisations to co-ordinate and expand such work. The Charity Organisation Society, established in the mid 19th Century dominated the field, and had under the secretaryship of Charles Loch from 1875 onwards fiercely resisted any state intervention in social work of any kind; "Authoritative Charity Organisation Society doctrine continued to dismiss as superficial and self-defeating any approach to social reform other than through the rehabilitation of individuals". (Owen 1965). All social reform, and in particular the Liberal reforms from 1906 onwards were opposed on the grounds that they removed responsibility from the individual for his/her own predicament; the Charity Organisation Society never used the word unemployment

other than in heavy inverted commas. Not until the late 1930s under the secretaryship of B E Astbury, a member of the Institute of Sociology did the official attitude of the Charity Organisation Society become more enlightened - however, the attitude of field workers prior to this was often more in tune with the realities of the 20th Century.

It was at about this time that Farquharson first became active in what was then the Moral Education League, first mentioning it in a letter to Kate in May 1910. However, in an obituary to Farquharson published in 1954, Alfred Waldegrave, a Post Office manager who was also a member of the League before the Institute of Sociology indicates that he first met him in 1908, while he was still an elementary school teacher. In any event, it seems clear that both Waldegrave and Farquharson were on the Council of the League in 1910, and that it was beginning to take up a considerable amount of his time and interest. Nevertheless, he also mentions joining the Fabian Society (his only recorded political involvement) in 1908 and the Theosophical Society at about the same time. In his letters to Kate during 1910 and 1911, Farquharson also mentions his friendship with Margaret Tatton, whom he met through the Moral Education League. She was later to become secretary of the Civic Education League, and there is some evidence in Farquharson's correspondence to suggest that their involvement was more than professional - both S H Beaver and T W Freeman suggested that the later dispute between the Institute of Sociology and the Le Play Society was to a certain extent a personal matter between Farquharson and Margaret Tatton, and correspondence between Alexander Farquharson and Dorothea Price during the late 1920s and early 1930s lends credence to this argument.

Hilliard (1961) suggests that the League's influence declined markedly after 1909, although the period was one of considerable success for the League's leading protagonist, F J Gould. From 1901 to 1915 his post was described as 'Lecturer and Demonstrator', and involved a great deal of travel and propagation of the League's now much broader policy on civic and moral education both in Britain and abroad. Gould was also the author of a number of books and pamphlets on the League's work. However, the war interrupted many of the League's activities, and Gould's involvement ceased in 1915, at about the time that Farquharson became its unpaid Secretary; he is described by Hilliard as 'a lecturer at the London School of Economics'. In fact he had lectured part-time for a couple of years before the war, but was employed by the Ministry of Food from 1914 - 1919, being awarded an MBE for his work). It was probably under Farquharson's influence that the League moved further away from the promotion of moral instruction in schools and more towards courses for teachers and others on 'Training for Citizenship', which formed the greater part of its considerable activity after the war. Hilliard implies that the League ceased to exist in 1919. In fact it continued and grew in strength for the next four years, running training schools and foreign field trips under the auspices of Le Play House, where it was based, along with the Sociological Society and the Regional Association from May 1920. (Farquharson himself moved from the Ministry of Food to a very well paid managerial post at Jurgens, a Danish food manufacturing firm, only to give it up a year later to work at a much lower salary for Le Play House.)



## **5 Le Play House**

"The rich grime of Waterloo Station and a high, sensible old taxi taking me deviously through Westminster to Pimlico, with glimpses of the green Embankment, the playing fields of Westminster School, the helmeted policemen with chin-straps, the black uniformed bemedaled messengers, the towers of the Abbey and the Houses of Parliament, till, after turning through Churton Street with its dreary little shops, we finally halted at the headquarters of the Sociological Society, Le Play House.

In effect, Le Play House was a New York brownstone with an English basement, newly done over with a coat of muddy stucco. The reek of coal fires, still omnipresent then, hung in the air: an odour I used to find as pleasantly haunting as the dim aroma of a skunk - when inhaled from a sufficient distance. There were two rooms to a floor, except at the top, where my narrow room allowed three; but however austere the furnishings of my cell were, it was bright and cheerful, for it faced west, and there was a glass of flowers - five narcissus and a tulip ! - with a note on the mantelshelf. The young woman who had left them, Branford's part-time secretary, Dorothy Celia Loch, began with that gesture our lifelong friendship." (Mumford 1982:255)

### **Foundation**

At the end of the War therefore, there existed a number of nominally separate bodies, albeit with overlapping personnel, which shared a common interest in the Regional Survey, and its application to education, town planning, social work and general 'civic betterment'. In the light of this, Victor Branford, who was himself only directly involved with the Sociological Society (and peripherally with the Regional Association) decided in 1920 to obtain premises which could serve as a base for the Sociological Society and provide rooms for other like-minded organisations. Consequently, in April 1920 Le Play House was officially opened at 65 Belgrave Road, Westminster, the first of four houses to bear the name. Initially it served the Sociological Society alone, which had been at the London School of Economics during the war; but during 1920 the Civic Education League, the Regional Association and one or two minor organisations moved in. Two new bodies were established at once - Sociological Publications (later Le Play House Press) to handle books, pamphlets and the Sociological Review, and the Sociological Trust to administer the finances of the House.

The establishment of Le Play House marks the beginning of the organised Regional Survey Movement in this country - for as long as Le Play House existed, funded initially by Victor Branford in person and later (and more tenuously) by his legacies, a base and a centre existed to further both the idea and practice of the survey, and also (and this was a condition of Victor Branford's will) the particular approach to sociology and 'social betterment' with which Branford was associated.

The aims were therefore on the one hand fairly obvious and practical - the carrying out of Regional and Civic surveys, both with a view to the expansion of scientific knowledge and the education of those involved. But at another level they are somewhat more nebulous - the notion of 'social betterment' stems from Branford and Geddes' political philosophy, which was in many ways the underlying rationale behind the whole movement. The Regional Survey, or 'Regionalism', which "lays stress upon family life, contacts with nature, the significance of labour, the interests

of locality" was one of three interrelated schools of thought prevalent in the world at the time which they commend. The second was 'Humanism', which "sees the progress of mankind as an unfolding of ideas and ideals ... a view of life and the world inimical to the Prussian cult of force"; and the third 'Civism' or "constructive betterment ... child welfare ... repair and renewal of historic cities ... tidying up of confused industrial towns ... guidance and gardening of their suburban growth". Regionalism and Humanism are, according to Branford and Geddes "two poles of man's world ... and the art of civics is his mariner's compass". (Branford and Geddes|1917)

The general parameters of Branford and Geddes' political programme is most clearly enunciated in the series of books and pamphlets published in the aftermath of the War under the general title of 'The Making of the Future', and especially in "The Coming Polity" quoted above which was published in 1917. It involves the search for a 'third way' as an alternative to 'the Party of Order' or 'the Party of Revolution' (neither term being used to refer to any specific existing political party) - and at a more general level, an alternative to the twin evils of "Prussianism - the cult of force in statecraft" and "Profiteering - the striving for monopoly by the ruthless elimination of rivals". (Branford consistently cites the polarisation between what he calls 'Prussian' and 'Gallic' values; the one representing all that is worst in the modern world, and the other all that is best; although of course the allusion is somewhat romanticised). Branford and Geddes wanted a movement for social reconstruction along the kind of lines suggested by John Ruskin, William Morris and others who would probably be defined as 'romantic socialists', but among whom they numbered, somewhat incongruously Frederic Le Play. They felt that the Great War marked the possibility of a turning point in civilisation, "a grand conversion which would alter all the dominant values of Imperialist Society, even as Christianity had transformed those of Rome" (Mumford 1948:378) - indeed it could be argued that the whole of Branford's, if not Geddes', sociology hinged upon the extent to which his ideas were taken up in the post-war period. They were not taken up - although they and he were not without influence in fairly high places (A J Balfour, who had been Prime Minister in the early years of the century was President of the Sociological Society for a time, and other peers and establishment figures were sympathetic). But overall, the impact of Branford's political programme was not as great as he would have liked. (The economic side of things was more the province of Branford than Geddes, with his background in finance; both his wife Sybella and an accountant colleague, John Ross also wrote and lectured extensively on Social Credit. The reasons for this lay partly in the style and tone of writing, which was conscious and deliberate, but which had unintended consequences. The attempt to synthesise facts and values, science and arts, the practical and the poetic, "Science and Sanctity" and "Interpretations and Forecasts" did not lend itself to being taken seriously, but it was very much a part of their world view - "(Branford and Geddes) saw thought as an organic process. Instead of ejecting feeling and sentiment, they sought to integrate them in rational thinking" (Mumford 1948:378). This was a resolute attempt to bring together seemingly incompatible strands of thought and action, and both men were nothing if not practical. Branford's politics were grounded, as he says in "The Drift to Revolution"(1917-20) "not on abstract shibboleths, but upon definite, concrete, realisable aims" - aims which in retrospect have sometimes been realised, but never with any mention of where they, at least in part originated. Branford was in some ways an aspiring philanthropist who never had quite enough resources or the organisational ability to see his schemes through to fruition, seeming instead to display only "a wild devotion to losing causes and remote ideals" (Mumford 1948:376).

### **Lewis Mumford**

Although Alexander Farquharson very quickly became effectively the organiser and moving force behind Le Play House, Branford's original intention was that the post of Editor of 'Sociological Review' should go to the young American, Lewis Mumford. Mumford had read Geddes' work on biology and architecture while a student in New York, and found it "singled itself out from the many stirring contemporary voices then clamouring for attention ... (it) roused something in my soul that no one else had yet touched." (1982:144) From Geddes, Mumford realised the importance of 'the city' as a unit of study in its own right - in the United States at that time, he notes, "only a handful of books about the nature of the city ... existed", and even those contained "little insight into the nature of the city itself as the organic shell of a living community." (1982:150) (Mumford notes later in the same chapter that Geddes' influence in this respect on the work of the Chicago School in the United States, through Charles Zueblin, is almost unremarked.) From 1917 onwards, Mumford engaged in correspondence with Geddes, then in India, and plans were conceived for him to work with Geddes at Outlook Tower. After the war, Mumford worked for the New York literary review *US The Dial* (until being dismissed in November 1919 when the journal changed ownership), and reviewed Branford and Geddes' 'The Coming Polity'. Branford was impressed by the review, and on learning of Mumford's dismissal, offered him the job of Editor of the *Sociological Review* (at the same time as Geddes was offering him a job as research assistant at the new University of Jerusalem which he had built.) Mumford notes, "since Geddes' offer was somewhat vague as to both duties and pay, while Branford's was more definite, I decided to go through with the latter" (Mumford 1982:253), in pursuance of which he arrived in London in April 1920. He spent five months in London, eventually deciding against taking up the post on a permanent basis (it went instead to Farquharson); but his account of the time spent in London and at Le Play House form the most detailed contemporary record of that institution in both its formal and informal work. Farquharson, who was to become a lifelong friend recognised his importance early on; in a letter to his future wife in July 1920, Mumford writes, "the future of the Sociological Society, Farquharson said yesterday ... depends upon whether we have enough money to buy Mr Mumford. I am glad I put my price up reasonably high". (1979:63) Despite not being 'bought', in the sense of becoming a permanent full-time worker, Mumford worked with Branford and Farquharson for several months, attending the Civic Education League's Summer School in High Wycombe and many London meetings of the Sociological Society. He remained very close to Le Play House throughout its existence; (one of Farquharson's last acts at Le Play House in 1953 was to name a room after Mumford, although the house was sold within a couple of years).

Mumford's relationship with Geddes (both the man and his philosophy) was more tempestuous, going through phases of idolatry, interspersed with periods of despair and frustration. Their face to face meetings were often hurried and unsatisfactory; "Nobody, once within Geddes's orbit, somehow ever found it possible to break into his endless soliloquy and get down to work. His time and other people's time rarely coincided." (Gladys Mayer, quoted in Mumford 1982:153). Mumford compared the way in which Branford, as his host on his first visit to England had taken time to get acquainted socially before engaging in planning for the future - Geddes had launched straight into grand schemes for which the young Mumford was emotionally unprepared. Geddes was inclined to treat Mumford as the image of his son Alistair, killed in France in 1917, presenting a psychological situation "too violent, too urgent" for Mumford to handle. Their personal relationship never reached the level of their mutual admiration of each other's qualities - and gradually, Mumford's attachment to Geddesian philosophy waned (Mumford 1966). He remained a powerful influence however, summed up by Mumford in Nietzsche's words on Schopenhauer, 'what he

taught is put aside; what he lived, that will abide." (Mumford 1982:158). 'In many cases', Mumford concludes, '(Geddes) paid the penalty of the pioneer: by being thirty years too early he was forgotten - or rather, never even discovered.' (Mumford 1982:147).

### **Amalgamation**

For the first three years of Le Play House's existence, the Civic Education League, the Regional Association and the Cities Committee of the Sociological Society, all having much the same rationale and much the same active membership remained in existence as separate organisations. Only the Civic Education League maintained any kind of regular activity, organising schools, conferences and fieldwork both in Britain and abroad (see Section 5.5 below), and belying Hilliard's contention that it folded in 1919 (Hilliard 1961). The Sociological Society's Cities Committee and the Society itself were relatively inactive, organising occasional meetings. The Regional Association, consisting of a number of geographers, discussed amalgamation with the Geographical Association in 1921, but decided against it (14.10.21 : VB208). The following year, Farquharson suggested to the Regional Association that if it was to continue at all, "it might be well to mark out a narrow line of effort and get ahead actively on it", (7.4.22 : VB208), referring to the organisation of a regular survey exhibition at Le Play House. From late 1922 onwards, moves towards some form of amalgamation between at least the Regional Association, the Civic Education League and the Cities Committee of the Sociological Society were being actively canvassed, although Branford was resolutely opposed to the Sociological Society itself losing its separate identity (7.12.22 : VB208). Paradoxically, the most active organisation, the Civic Education League does not appear to have held any meetings as such - although the Annual Report of the Directors (of Le Play House) for 1923 records that Alexander Farquharson acted as Chairman and that an Annual General Meeting was held in December 1923. No minutes exist in the Keele archives however.

Le Play House was officially controlled by its Directors, elected from each of the constituent bodies - these were Victor and Sybilla Branford and Alexander Farquharson from the Sociological Trust (which owned the House, Victor Branford having formally handed it over in 1921 (VB206)), H V Lanchester from the Cities Committee of the Sociological Society, Amy Holman from the Civic Education League and Valentine Bell from the Regional Association. Le Play House Educational Tours, which had taken over the foreign field trips initiated by the Civic Education League did not have a seat.

Amalgamation was formally agreed by the Cities Committee of the Sociological Society in April 1923, and by the Civic Education League and the Regional Association at separate meetings in December 1923. From January 1924, all activity was carried on under the Le Play House banner. The only exception was the Sociological Society, which held infrequent meetings and really existed in name alone, largely on Branford's insistence on keeping space for what he chose to call 'pure sociology'.

### **The Regional Survey**

From the start, there was a need for some guidelines as to what exactly a 'Regional Survey' was, how it was to be carried out, who was to finance it, and what its purposes were. In some ways, the absence of any clear statement of intent at the start was responsible for the problems which Le Play House and the Institute of Sociology were to face later - as Mumford wrote to Patrick Geddes in May 1931, "surely it was contrary to your own teachings to build the building first and then seek

to attract the pupils. That is our own weak American method; the method that produces palatial buildings and fills them with vacant minds" (Mumford 1979:114).

During the 1920s therefore, several papers and pamphlets were produced, mainly by Farquharson, although Geddes and Branford had more than a passing interest, attempting to explain the organisation and uses of the survey both for the student and for the putative 'consumer'. The first emanating from Le Play House was "An Introduction to Regional Surveys" by Farquharson and Sybella Branford, issued in 1924, and prepared at the invitation of the Sociological Society's Cities Committee, although it was based loosely on an earlier pamphlet by Fagg prepared for the South Eastern Union of Scientific Societies (Fagg 1928). The pamphlet expounds a fairly orthodox Le Play/Geddes model of Place-Work-Folk, interpreted somewhat mechanistically, although with a more practical emphasis than Geddes' writings at that level. It is written, according to the introduction, "to meet the needs of Civic Societies and similar groups", groups which were becoming interested in surveys in fairly substantial numbers at this time - and there is explicit recognition that such surveys will most likely be undertaken by volunteers, "people without much specialised knowledge and skill". The pamphlet was reissued in 1947, more as a tribute to Sybella Branford than as a guide which would still have been of use at that time - indeed, as an official statement of Le Play House policy on the conduct of surveys, it was replaced by "Social Surveys and Community Organisation", first issued in 1931. Nonetheless, in describing the 'folk and work' aspects of town surveys, the authors suggest methods that are considered novel by many social researchers even today - 'competent observers' they write, 'might photograph typical street corner gatherings, typical bands of youths ... typical factory door crowds. Each institution might be asked to record its own activities in a series of photographs'. The preparation of exhibitions, which would then be displayed in (among other sites) the place where the survey was done is not far removed from some innovatory forms of contemporary ethnography. Although the emphasis tends towards epidemiological and quantitative mapping without any very specific purpose, there is evidence throughout of sociological sensitivity combined with an immense practicality, two qualities which are not always found together.

It was at about the same time (the mid 1920s) that the Sociological Review first began carrying reports of regional surveys; and the period from 1924 to 1929 was one in which both the form that surveys should take, and the means by which they should be carried out attracted considerable attention. It was during this period too that Farquharson was first engaged in full scale surveys for outside bodies rather than for students on Le Play House courses; and an internal paper produced for the Le Play House Council in 1927 shows a marked difference in approach from that of the Branford and Farquharson pamphlet referred to above. In this, Farquharson talks specifically of the 'civic' survey rather than the 'regional' survey; and gives a greater emphasis to the social life of the area, its development from the point of view of the adequacy of its social services and its likely future needs in this direction, with a correspondingly reduced section on environmental factors. ("It should be noted that these need not occupy a great length of time"(Farquharson 1927)). Considerable space is however devoted to describing the importance of studying the work of existing voluntary organisations, and the scope of their activities; evidence of the growing relationship of Le Play House survey work to social service and away from geography.

Throughout the 1920s, Le Play House became more involved in carrying out surveys in particular localities at the specific invitation of outside bodies, or in conjunction with such outside bodies - examples include Chester (Council of Social Welfare), Southampton (Council of Social Welfare - this was prior to and separate from Percy

Ford's published survey of the town (Ford 1934), Middlesborough (Guild of Health), Margate (Council of Social Service), Hastings (Twenty One Club), Tynemouth (Rotary Club/Council of Social Service - the survey was directed and the results published by Henry Mess (1928)), Melton Mowbray (Rotary Club) and Brynmawr (Society of Friends). (Farquharson and Marie Jahoda were later involved with another Quaker research project in Wales in the late 1930s directed by Peter Scott (AF42) (Jahoda 1982)). Not all of these surveys were published, and the involvement of Le Play House varied from advice in the early stages to total control of the project.

In most of these cases however, there is evidence of Farquharson's connections with voluntary social service work both before and immediately after the war. The work and philosophy of the Charity Organisation Society has been discussed above (Section 4.3). More directly related to social survey interests were the British Institute of Social Service, established in 1907 "to promote civic, social and industrial betterment" (Brasnett 1969), and the National Council of Social Service founded in 1919. At about the same time, a number of local social welfare organisations were formed, one of the earliest of which was the London Social Welfare Association (1910 - later the London Council of Social Service). There was reciprocal exchange of ideas between these councils and Le Play House, and several members of the Council of Le Play House and later the Institute of Sociology were workers in such organisations. From about 1924 onwards, the National Council of Social Service, aware that the distinction between urban and rural problems was no longer particularly valid turned its attention towards the idea of regions, and with the aid of a grant from the Carnegie UK Trust began in 1924 a survey of social services in two areas, Cheshire and Fifeshire where there was no clear distinction between town and country and Farquharson, together with the town planner Patrick Abercrombie was involved in both surveys.

This kind of activity became a regular feature of Le Play House work in the late 1920s, and created a measure of influence for the organisation - it also led to a certain measure of disagreement between Farquharson and both Branford and Geddes. Farquharson wrote to Branford in 1927, "we have already secured some recognition as authorities on surveys in connection with the early stages of the (Sheffield) scheme. If we retain our hold, and negotiate a sound scheme of co-operation which will leave me free for other work here, and also in connection with other surveys, we shall I think have taken a decisive step in securing our position with regard to the further development of the survey movement" (20.2.27:|AF160). He was explicit about the reasons for Le Play House not being able to capitalise on what he saw as its true potential - an overemphasis on formulae at the expense of practical involvement - writing to Branford in 1926 that, "if it is desired to reorganise the Sociological Society in the near future, I do not think it would be advisable for Geddes to include it in his field of work. As you know, the chief reason for the present weakness of the Sociological Society is that no reputable student, outside the ranks of the Geddesians, will take any active part in its work, and this state of things cannot be remedied by further Geddesian propaganda". (5.12.26 : AF160) In the light of this, he was also more sceptical of over-emphasis of the Le Play formula in survey work and sociology more generally, writing to Geddes in 1929, in connection with a project for the Hutchinson University Library volume on sociology that, "it is essential to sweep aside all this hackneyed treatment of the Place, Work Folk theory. Its radical defect is that it tries to demonstrate unity by analytical methods ... it tries to suggest the unity of Place, Work and Folk by separating these three elements. Many of our members tell us that they are thoroughly tired of the vain repetition of those terms and get no meaning out of them". (2.5.29 : VB243). He pursued the same theme too in his negotiations on behalf of Le Play House with the London School of Economics, trying to persuade Ginsberg to take a more active part in the Sociological Society;

"We put to Ginsberg clearly and specifically the question as to whether and on what terms he and any of his colleagues are prepared to take any part in the work of the Sociological Society. He answered with equal clarity and definition that they are not ready to do so unless a radical reorganisation, involving the retirement of Geddes and yourself to purely honorary positions should take place". In the same letter however Farquharson notes that, "(Ginsberg) further thought it would be good to extend and make known our survey activities, which he thinks useful and on lines which the LSE is unlikely, indeed unable to touch" (9.12.27 : AF160)

The issue was not resolved - indeed, it continued to surface throughout the early 1930s, both with regard to the general practical value of carrying out surveys, and in the context of the relationship between the professional and educational side of survey work. It was also a factor in the growing distance between the various disciplines (sociology and geography, and later psychology and market research) which were already, or were shortly to become, involved in developing the social survey. Indeed, had it been resolved at all satisfactorily at any stage, there is every chance that the influence of Le Play House on the mainstream of British social research would have been considerably greater.

### **Foreign Field Work**

In some ways, the most representative work of Le Play House was its foreign field work, undertaken during the 85 or so trips between 1921 and 1952 (See Appendix D) to places as diverse as Scandinavia, North Africa and the Soviet Union, with a considerable number to rural parts of what is now Eastern Europe, in the 1920s and 1930s. The first trip was to Belgium in April 1921; the last to the Pyrenees in 1952. The trips were organised initially by the Civic Education League, whose secretary in 1921, Margaret Tatton had been a close friend and colleague of Farquharson's since well before the war. Although Farquharson led the trip and many others thereafter, it was probably Margaret Tatton's aptitude for the more routine aspects of organisation (Beaver 1982; Freeman 1983) which enabled the tours to achieve the importance that they did. Prior to his arrival at Le Play House, Farquharson's approach appears to have somewhat less active. Mumford recalls a conversation with Branford in 1920 in which Branford had suggested a winter vacation in Egypt to investigate theories on the origins of civilization - Farquharson's response was, "That is the difference between you and me, Branford. I was just thinking that it would be nice to spend a winter in the British Museum reading about Egypt". (Mumford 1954:17). However, within the space of a few years both Farquharson and Le Play House became converted to the importance of practical experience, and foreign tours became a valuable source both of that experience and also of income. Following a highly successful tour to Norway in 1923 (Le Play House 1923), Le Play House Educational Tours became an independent organisation within Le Play House, in some ways a travel company with educational overtones. Tours varied in size and duration, although most lasted about two weeks with between 20 and 30 students, recruited by leaflets, and advertisements in the Sociological Review and geographical journals. The aim was primarily educational, but there was also the suggestion that work of real scientific value could be done. Groups were usually led by academics in geography, history, biology or other natural sciences, with the interests of the leader playing a large part in determining the direction that the work took. Tours led by Farquharson tended to produce more sociological accounts, if only in the sense of speaking more of history, culture and lifestyle than environment - but there were many tours whose bias was almost wholly biological or geological. Most trips produced reports, often including maps, charts and lanternslides, many of which remain in the archives at Keele. They comprise a valuable and underused source of evidence on life in Europe between the wars.

From 1927 onwards, disagreement began to arise at Le Play House over the organisation of foreign fieldwork. The problems were partly personal, in the relationship between Margaret Tatton and others involved in the organisation of tours (Farquharson, Dorothea Price, Eileen Thomas and Eleanor Spear, the Secretary to Le Play House); but they were also academic, in that Tatton, Le Play House Educational Tours (renamed the Foreign Fieldwork Committee of Le Play House in 1928) and the Le Play House Students Committee (which also organised its own tours in the late 1920s under K C Edwards, later Professor of Geography at Nottingham) were becoming more strongly slanted towards geography, which had by then a stronger institutional base in schools and universities than sociology. Academic geographers, especially C C Fawcett, H J Fleure, Arthur Geddes, J L Myres and L Dudley Stamp were involved both with the organisation of tours and as tour leaders (Freeman 1983); and the Geographical Association was becoming more generally interested in survey work, forming a Regional Survey Committee in 1926 (Fagg 1928). The period around 1930 was incidentally an important one in the development of Human Geography (Roxby 1930: Freeman 1980), and one in which the Regional idea achieved probably its greatest prominence within the discipline.

Relationships between the Tours Association and the rest of Le Play House deteriorated markedly from the summer of 1927 onwards, due apparently to personal disagreements between Margaret Tatton, Dorothea Price (later Farquharson) and Alexander Farquharson, which arose at a field trip to the Pyrenees. Tatton's letters to Dorothea earlier in the year are friendly and give no indication of any friction (in February 1927, inviting Dorothea to lead the trip Margaret Tatton writes, "personally, I know of no-one who would do it better than you" (8.2.27 : AF99)). By July however, it was apparent that personal animosity between Margaret Tatton and Dorothea Price, probably over the latter's deepening friendship with Alexander Farquharson, was souring their work. By September, the disagreements had been brought to the attention of Trustees by Margaret Tatton, in a manner which to Farquharson suggested that they did not perhaps 'quite reflect the views of the Committee as a whole' (AF99). In October Margaret Tatton wrote to Dorothea "Neither of us can fail to realise that the position between us is so critical that on the surface it looks as if our friendship must end." From then on, relationships between Margaret Tatton, Farquharson and the majority in Le Play House deteriorated, and with them, the relationships between the Tours Committee, the Students Committee and the mainstream activities of the House. In late 1928, the Tours Association was designated the Foreign Work Committee of Le Play House, and an agreement drawn up for the duration of 1929, effectively defining separate spheres of activity. (VB215) It was a trial separation which was never reversed, and culminated in the split between the Institute of Sociology and the Le Play Society in 1931 (see Section 6.2)

### **Background to the Formation of the Institute of Sociology**

More important however than the personal disputes in the area of foreign fieldwork were the moves, instigated at about the same time, to bring about the full amalgamation of Le Play House, the Sociological Society and all their disparate activities into one body. In March 1927, Farquharson reported to the Le Play House Council in detail on the background to the problem (VB206). In 1925, full powers had been given to the Trustees to annul or reconstruct the original constitution of Le Play House, as they might think fit, in the light of incipient financial difficulties. However, the long illness and eventual death of Sybella Branford, who was one of the trustees delayed this work, and in any event, the financial position of the House appears to have improved during 1926. It was with renewed optimism that an Advisory Council was established in October 1926 to investigate the possibilities for the future, and the activities of Le Play House were summarised as being general propaganda work in connection with regional surveys and sociology; meetings in London for propaganda



purposes and discussions of topics of interest; survey meetings in different parts of the country for training workers and for the study of particular districts; surveys in town or country areas by skilled workers in response to local needs; publications, especially the *Sociological Review*; and foreign tours, then in the hands of the Le Play House Educational Tours Association. Farquharson noted particularly that 'Le Play House (i.e. the Trustees) has no (financial) responsibility for Le Play House Press or Le Play House Educational Tours'; and that 'the Sociological Society, which was established many years before the foundations of the House has its offices here, and is maintained as a separate organisation, while cooperating formally and informally with the House in many ways.'

In October 1927, a Committee was established containing representatives from the Sociological Society (Victor Branford and Reginald Wellby), the Sociological Trust (Alexander Farquharson and Harold Gurney) and Le Play House (G L Pepler and H V Lanchester) (VB181) to look at co-operation and ultimately amalgamation. Proposals put forward in 1927 by Branford suggested a number of guidelines

"Pure sociology - as distinct from applied, should retain the central position in the work of the Institute;"  
surveys, which are "definitely within the sociological field" should be continued and developed;  
the name of the new body should be the Institute of Sociology;  
the name Le Play House should however be retained, either as part of the title of the Institute or the address;  
"a strong Council meeting regularly is essential to its success"

Despite general agreement on the benefits of such a scheme, there is evidence of serious concern on the part of Branford and others of the 'old guard' of the Sociological Society that their particular interests might be lost in the clamour for more practical applied work, in other words, more surveys. Writing to the Trustees in September 1928, Branford remarks, "Looking back, I am inclined to think that it was a mistake not to have enlarged the scope of the (Sociological) Society, so that it could carry on all the things that Le Play House as a separate organisation now does. (VB216)" However, he went on to concede that "some merging of Le Play House ... and members in the Sociological Society would help to develop all those survey activities in a sociological direction, and to go towards preventing what tends at present to happen, namely the arrest of such surveys at what might be called a pre-sociological state." As a result, concessions were made to Branford - it was agreed that the new Institute should have a special 'sociology committee' to ensure that 'pure sociology' be strengthened and maintained; a 'Sociology Group' led by Geoffrey Davies and Reginald Wellby existed for a while, but does not appear to have done a great deal. It was also agreed to add a paragraph defining Civic and Regional Surveys as "sociological studies of human communities, or any aspect or activity of such communities" to the draft constitution of the Institute of Sociology. For much of the time when amalgamation was being most actively discussed, during 1928 and 1929 Branford was out of the country, and he wrote in alarm to Eleanor Spear (Secretary to Le Play House) that he was 'unaware that the amalgamated scheme between Le Play House and the Sociological Society had gone as far' (2.12.29 AF166). Branford was especially concerned about the future of the *Sociological Review*, in that it had 'been allowed to drift away from the other activities', and was only continuing to be published because of his personal interest in its survival. Branford's letter provoked energetic correspondence from other members of the Sociological Society Committee and Le Play House Executive to Spear through December 1929, anxious to ensure that procedures had been correctly followed, and culminating in an offer to delay proceeding until he was well enough to return.

Branford's prime concern was that the legal position of the Trustees, which required that they be elected by the Council of the Sociological Society would be jeopardised by any premature dissolution of that body, especially while a vacancy existed for a trustee to replace Sybella Branford.

However, legal opinion sought by Le Play House was to the effect that the Council of the Sociological Society, not itself having been formally elected since 1925, was not a competent body to appoint trustees (VB 160). In the event, matters were resolved without further dispute, and concurrent Annual General Meetings of Le Play House and the Sociological Society were held on 24 January 1930, which resulted in the establishment of an Institute of Sociology by the formal amalgamation of the two bodies.

## **6 The Institute of Sociology**

"If I ever were asked to establish a test for disciples in the survey movement, I should make each one repeat to me the sentence: 'O Nature take me.' I should know by intonation, glance, gesture as these words were said whether the disciple was for life only a 'torch bearer' or was to be one of the few mystics" (Farquharson 1930a)

### **Establishment**

The Institute of Sociology came into being on January 24 1930, as a result of the merger of the Le Play House organisation and the Sociological Society, with the objects "To promote the study of Sociology and the sociological study of human communities; to encourage the use of such studies in education; and to advance the application of such studies to urban and rural development." (Constitution of the Institute of Sociology, AF). As the first Annual Report (VB211) said, "a single organisation appeals to the public with more force, simplifies contacts with members and enquirers, and makes infinitely easier the co-operation with other bodies". Its constitution provided for a President, who should hold office for not more than three years in succession, an unspecified number of Vice Presidents and a Council of up to twenty five elected members, with the powers to co-opt the same number. Day to day organisation was to be in the hands of an Executive of eight, three of whom were to be appointed by the Trustees, whose role remained largely unaltered from the Constitution of the Sociological Society. No formal membership figures are given, but a rough calculation from the subscription income produces a figure of about #435 for the first year ( a figure which is, incidentally, never exceeded during the ensuing 25 years (VB211). A note in the 1930 Annual Report reports 50 new members during the first year, and that, "the whole standard of enquiries seems to have risen steadily, and indicates that the Institute has now an assured status as a centre of information."

Activity during the first year or so was fairly extensive, covering meetings, foreign field trips, survey work in Britain and the organisation of schools and conferences, as well as publishing a revitalised Sociological Review and a large number of pamphlets. The early 1930s were also the period when Alexander Farquharson wrote most extensively, on the nature of the social survey and its role in community organisation. Although never a prolific writer, Farquharson's articles on survey work, published in pamphlets, a variety of social service journals and the Sociological Review form the basis for a discussion of the nature of Le Play House survey which is free from Geddes's flowery metaphor and Branford's obscure mysticism. The papers are discussed in Section 6.4 below.

### **Structure and Organisation**

The Institute of Sociology took its structure from the structure that Farquharson had built up during the 10 years of running Le Play House. It was formally run by a Council, which appears to have met about four times a year during the years when the Institute was functioning most effectively (the first half of the 1930s). Thereafter, consistent minutes do not exist, and those that do indicate that meetings were less regular, less well attended and did not follow any set pattern. The most consistent members during the first few years were Farquharson, Eleanor Spear, Amy Holman, Christopher Fagg, and Maud Jeffrey - after 1933, Dorothea Farquharson (who was married to Alexander in December 1933) played an increasingly prominent role, and Alfred Waldegrave, Eileen Thomas, Rosemary Pennethorne, John Dugdale and for a while, T H Marshall appeared regularly.

There is clear evidence that the organisation was severely hit by the recession in the early 1930s, quite apart from the problems surrounding Branford's will. Between 1924 and 1933, Eleanor Spear served as Secretary to the Sociological Society, Le Play House and the Institute of Sociology. In December 1932, as a consequence of the economic situation, discussion of staff reductions at the Executive (VB209 2.12.32) led to suggestions of a need for a cut in salary expenditure. Spear offered to take a 25% cut in salary, or resignation, the latter of which was accepted amicably, although she remained a full time employee of the Institute until March 1933, and worked for two months during the summer as well. Her association with Le Play House remained close, and she continued to work for the Institute on occasions, in research and in the library during 1935 to 1936, while working full time in social work for much of this period. She also served as Secretary to the South East Union of Scientific Societies until 1942. However, there is evidence in correspondence between Farquharson and Dorothea Price, particularly during the late 1920s that Spear was a difficult person to work with, and that her relationships with Le Play House were tied up in the same incestuous circles which led to the Le Play Society split, and antagonism between Margaret Tatton, Farquharson and several other women involved with the organisation.

One consequence of Spear's resignation was that, for the first time, Alexander Farquharson became a salaried official of the Institute, being paid #250 in 1932, notionally for editing the Sociological Review and working on the Branford Papers, rather than for his actual role as full time organiser for the Institute. Although there were several occasions when Farquharson indicated that he intended to give up this position, initially in 1935, just prior to the last existing Minutes of the Executive, and more urgently in the late 1940s, on the grounds of ill health, he remained effectively the Secretary of the Institute until the early 1950s when a succession of less than satisfactory substitutes briefly held the position in the Institute's declining years (See Section 8.1).

One of Farquharson's paramount concerns was that sociology in general, and the Institute in particular should be respectable and responsible, and it is partly for this reason that he was concerned to secure prestigious figureheads as presidents of the organisation. Following the deaths of Victor Branford and Patrick Geddes, who were the first Presidents of the Institute, (probably more as a courtesy in the case of Geddes), the title went from 1931 to 1934 to Robert Randolph Marrett, professor of Anthropology at Oxford and described as 'one of the last armchair anthropologists' and 'an office bound don', part of the 'real establishment of British Anthropology' (Kuper 1975:20-35). Marrett became actively involved in the work of the Institute during the years of his Presidency, leading a field trip to his native Jersey in 1932. Marrett's interest in sociology was sporadic, but genuine - he wrote of admiring the 'missionary ardour' of Branford, but added 'I always wondered whether they were

right in pinning their faith so exclusively on the method of Le Play' (Marrett 1941:262). Nonetheless, he admired the concrete practicality of the Institute's foreign field trip programme, as well as attempting (unsuccessfully) to persuade the Institute to take more seriously his interests in population, anthropometry and race. However, Farquharson complimented him as 'the ideal president for a difficult transitional period' (VB300), and his relationship with the Institute remained cordial until his death in 1943.

Marrett was succeeded by Sir Ernest Barker, the Cambridge historian, appointed to a Chair in Political Science in 1927 with Laura Spelman Rockefeller Foundation money, which would also have provided a Chair in Sociology had the University Regents been prepared to accept the discipline, which they were not (Howarth 1978; Bulmer 1981a). There is no evidence that Barker, despite his connections with the Institute did anything to attempt to alter this state of affairs. Nonetheless, Barker had been a member of the Sociological Society, and a founder member of the Institute - Farquharson's letter to him in January 1935, offering him the Presidency promised that 'your acceptance ... would help extraordinarily the plan upon which I have set my heart; namely, the establishment of this Institute in a thoroughly stable and influential position during the next few years.' Despite modestly defining himself as 'a bleating lamb among the lions of sociology', Barker accepted the post, and remained a friend and confidant of the Farquharson's until Alexander's death in 1954 (Barker 1960) - one of the last surviving photographs of Farquharson, from March 1953 shows him and Dorothea with Sir Edward and Lady Barker at Ledbury.

Following Barker, the historian George Gooch was elected President, and remained in post for ten years, from 1938 to 1948 on account of the War. But by this time, the Institute was already in decline, and the task of a President was to keep it afloat by lending a spurious academic legitimacy, rather than seeking to secure its influence in new and higher places. Gooch appears to have been loyal but colourless, and his relationship with Farquharson was not significant to the extent of any substantial surviving correspondence.

The role of Dorothea Price, who married Alexander Farquharson in December 1933 became increasingly prominent during the 1930s. After the war, from her position as Honorary Organiser of Field Studies she became effectively joint Secretary of the Institute, taking over the role of protector of its traditions (such as the Branford heritage) following Alexander's death in February 1954. Dorothea first came into contact with Le Play House while a lecturer at Leeds City Teacher Training College in the early 1920s. She was born the same year as Alexander, 1882 in or near Ross on Wye, where her father was a Congregational Church minister. Her family, interesting in its own right consisted of five brothers and Dorothea - her brothers Egbert (Bret) and Hereward were both travellers, the former working in India, Africa and South America at various times, and the latter becoming a Professor of English at Ann Arbor University in Detroit. The American descendants of the Price family maintain a detailed family history, which I have unfortunately been unable to trace (Copner 1982). Nonetheless, it is perhaps too trite to suggest that Dorothea's involvement with Le Play House, which came increasingly to be through participation in and later organisation of foreign field trips should be simply in line with the proclivities of the rest of her family. The first record of her presence at a Le Play House function was at the High Wycombe School of Civics in 1921; and from 1925 she and Alexander engaged in increasingly intimate correspondence. Dorothea both went on and then led a number of field trips for Le Play House Educational Tours, the Foreign Work Committee and later of course the Institute of Sociology, and in the process became more intimately involved with sociology, Le Play House and Alexander Farquharson. Their correspondence through the late 1920s and early 1930s, preserved in the

archives at Keele provides a valuable commentary on affairs at Le Play House during its most active and energetic years.

### **Le Play Society split**

During the first year of the existence of the Institute, relationships between the Foreign Fieldwork Committee and the rest of Le Play House continued to deteriorate. The Foreign Fieldwork Committee remained resolutely detached from the mainstream of Le Play House, as did the Students Committee, although this was partly due to the fact that most students associated with Le Play House were at residential teacher training colleges some distance from London (Council Minutes 17.7.30 VB211); It was reported to Council twice in 1930 that despite a generally healthy level of recruitment, "no new members had come through foreign work." The Foreign Fieldwork Committee's report to Council was minuted as not being "sufficiently informative financially", and it was noted that non-IOs members were not being charged extra for going on foreign tours. As a result, Council decided in December 1930 that "the attempt to treat it (the Foreign Fieldwork Committee) as a semi-independent body in the past has been a source of friction and misunderstanding", and that while there was "no proposal or discussion of secession", Farquharson suggested that their occupancy of a substantial part of Le Play House should perhaps be reviewed. In October 1931 the two organisations parted company by mutual agreement, the secession being agreed unanimously by Council. A letter to 'members and friends', signed by the Chairman of the Institute's Council, A J Waldegrave stated that, "The termination of this agreement had been under discussion for about a year, when the national crisis introduced a fresh element into the situation by making foreign travel impossible." It was agreed to lend the Institute's collection of survey materials to the former members of the Committee, and that it might at some stage become a gift to any new body competent to make use of it.

Members of the Foreign Fieldwork Committee however, at the instigation of C B Fawcett, Professor of Geography at University College London and with a certain measure of support from Geddes immediately formed a separate organisation which they chose to call the Le Play Society (Beaver 1962; Russell 1960). Geddes had presented a paper to the Institute's Council in October 1931, at which the disagreement between his and Farquharson's notion of the nature of sociology and the survey (see Section 5.4 above) seems to have resurfaced (2.10.31 : VB211). In any case, it seems that Geddes was sufficiently disenchanted with the state of things at Le Play House to explore the possibility that another body, more firmly rooted in geography and biology might be a better vehicle for the propagation of his ideas. Both Beaver and Russell suggest that the split occurred in 1930, and that it was primarily a difference of opinion over the nature of fieldwork; although there were disagreements as outlined above, there is little evidence that methodological or theoretical disputes within Le Play House prior to the secession were the prime cause. Rather, the circumstantial evidence that exists suggests that the major causes of the dispute lay in personal and professional jealousy between Farquharson, Margaret Tatton, Dorothea Price and Eleanor Spear. However, the Foreign Fieldwork Committee was continuing to draw into its orbit (although not into membership of the Institute of Sociology) an increasing number of young geographers; (for example, one of the last field trips organised by Margaret Tatton for Le Play House (to Finland in August 1930) was led by Dudley Stamp), and their interests were in precisely the kind of biological, ecological and ultimately Le Playian aspects which Farquharson was anxious to relegate to a more minor role.

The actual threat that the formation of the Le Play Society posed to the continued existence of Le Play House and the Institute of Sociology, or even its involvement in foreign fieldwork was considerably less serious than was suggested by

Farquharson's response, coloured as it undoubtedly was by personal antagonism and also by the belief that the Le Play Society was in some way intent on challenging the interpretation of Branford's will. However, the immediate problem was sorted out reasonably cleanly without the need to resort to law. The Institute's most serious loss was nonetheless Patrick Geddes, who, although he had remained relatively apart from the affairs of Le Play House for most of the time, remained a powerful and enormously influential figure. He saw himself as a mediator between the two factions, writing to his son, "At first Farquharson etc. furious threatening even the law - but I adjusted and reconciled them - at solicitors yesterday - and hope for doubling sociological action accordingly, since each is now free to spread surveys and tours at home and abroad" (Boardman 1978:423). In fact, the Institute secured a written statement from all former members of the Foreign Fieldwork Committee in January 1932, confirming that there was "no corporate continuity or connection" between the Committee and the Le Play Society, and that they had no claim to any of the property of the Institute. Personal bitterness remained, and the two organisations had virtually no contact with each other thereafter, even though both were engaged in very similar activity for the next twenty years. Dorothea Price wrote in 1933, "It is enough to make Le Play turn in his grave to have these unsociological joyriders dubbed Le Play" - and somewhat more elliptically referred to the British Union of Fascists as "the Le Play Society of Fascism". (AF 102). The Le Play Society attracted most, although not all of the geographers away from the Institute, and continued in existence until 1960 (Russell 1960; Beaver 1962). It produced reports and material very similar to that produced by the Institute, although it is now somewhat scattered; some is at Keele, some at Nottingham but a considerable amount is probably lost.

### **Branford's Will**

The death of Victor Branford on June 24 1930, while not critical for the continuation of the Institute or Le Play House was important in that it removed the figurehead, whose contacts in the financial and political world were important in securing for sociology recognition in areas where it would otherwise have been unknown. However, partly as a consequence of Branford's death the first half of the 1930s were for the Institute a fairly optimistic time, despite the world economic crisis. Branford had apparently left a large bequest to the Institute on his death, for the furtherance of his particular brand of sociology, and this included the continuation of the *Sociological Review*, and the publication of a number of his writings. The total value of his estate was never clearly established, but was estimated by Farquharson in 1937 to be #20,000 (VB242), the greater part of which, after provision for relatives was to be left the Institute. The authenticity of his handwritten will was not in doubt, but as Farquharson wrote, "it was couched in obscure terms, and was interlocked with the will of his wife who had died in 1926, also leaving an obscurely worded will." (AF - Edyr, Roche and De La Vega, Buenos Aires 13.1.37, VB242) Both wills were referred the Chancery Division; Victor Branford's was accepted late in 1932, and Sybella's two years later. The problem however was that much of Branford's fortune was tied up in investments abroad, particularly in South America, where he had had numerous financial interests - and many of his investments in Britain were in projects which were more sound socially and morally than financially. There was great confidence that money would be forthcoming - Dorothea wrote to Alexander Farquharson in June 1930 (on hearing the news of Branford's will)

"Glad - so very glad - all was well; but I hadn't the glimmering of an idea that it was so wonderfully good. It means possibilities now of carrying out the cherished hopes for Le Play House - hopes that had to lie up and wait ... without much sign of fulfilment. It really is a great thing to have done - this last decision of VB's ... giving finally his blessing to all the efforts made. I really think it the most blessed piece of news I've ever had. That after so many checks, disappointments, rivalries that spoil

things, opposition that baffled, dark days when funds had almost gone - and you knew the very darkest days when there seemed nobody to keep things going but yourself - after all this, a blessed sign that you might be given the chance of making Le Play House what it should be".(30.6.30:AF 98) LS2 CI LL70

In fact, the legal complications surrounding Branford's finances proved to be much more intractable than either Farquharson or the Branford family could have imagined. In June 1932, Farquharson reported to the Council that in order to obtain the substantial inheritance which Branford had bequeathed to the continuance of Le Play House and its particular brand of sociology, it was necessary for the Institute to change from a registered charity to an incorporated body. He added that the actual value of Branford's funds in Britain was about £6000, which would produce an income of about £650 a year, of which £400 would go to the Institute. An additional consequence of incorporation would be that the need for Trustees would be obviated, and this concurred with advice from Counsel early in 1931 to the effect that the present Trust was legally invalid. The position of the Trustees had been in question since the death of Sybella Branford in 1926 and the demise of the Sociological Society - however, while their role in relation to the status of decisions made by any of the constituent bodies of Le Play House was relatively unimportant, their role in the administration of Branford's complex estates was more significant. Despite assurances from all surviving Trustees named in Sybella Branford's will that they had no desire to interfere in the administration of the Victor Branford Trust, and despite the incorporation of the Institute into a company limited by guarantee in December 1932, any real income from Branford's estate continued to prove elusive.

Farquharson and Harold Gurney, the two executors of Branford's will began on a long and ultimately fruitless correspondence with South American banks and lawyers early in 1933. Branford had many investments in South America, including holdings in Government Stock, gold mining companies, timber companies and his main interest, the Paraguayan Railways. The Bank of London and South America, which was handling much of Branford's estate insisted on a number of complicated requirements, among them the marriage certificate of Branford's parents, which Farquharson was unable to provide, his mother having died in 1871. The Bank of London and South America's Argentinean lawyer died in July 1934, shortly after Branford's London lawyer had also died, which, coupled with the self-confessed sloth of South American Courts and the financial and political vagaries of affairs in Argentina during that period led an ever decreasing likelihood of money being forthcoming. Eventually, a cable to Farquharson from the Bank in September 1936 read simply, "Death duties claimed absorb total funds". Despite further correspondence, no significant amounts of money were recovered, and a file of over 500 letters (VB45 / VB242) is testimony to the frustration felt by the Institute.

Despite a certain amount of financial juggling, the problems involved in realising any Branford assets took so long that by the time some money did start to appear in the late 1930s, the Institute was already fairly heavily in debt. In only one year (1939) did the Branford income reach the amounts hoped for - and by then wartime problems were taking over. With the exception of a few years in the mid 1930s, the Institute was in severe financial difficulties for the whole of its existence, showing a deficit for every year of its published accounts (1930 - 1950).

However, the problems involved in realising anything from Branford's will were short-lived compared with the problems of fulfilling another requirement of that will, namely that his unpublished works should be published, and that all his works should be edited and kept in print. In July 1934, the psychologist Pryn's Hopkins, who had been investigating the Branford Papers wrote to Waldegrave (Chairman of the Council)

suggesting that publication take the form of an extended biography, probably edited by Farquharson which would cover the main points of Branford's philosophy and would include contributions by Lewis Mumford and academic colleagues from the Sociological Society and the Institute. Assurance was obtained from relatives of Patrick Geddes that they would have no objection to the inclusion of extracts from the extensive Geddes-Branford correspondence in such a volume, and Farquharson wrote to Mumford asking him to participate in the project. Mumford agreed to do part of the work during a visit to London in 1935, but in the event proved to have too little time available to achieve anything substantial. However, by 1936, Hopkins had planned a detailed word budget for the volume, which would include about 60,000 words of Branford's unpublished papers.

Yet despite his endeavours, and the earnest wishes of almost all those involved with the Institute that Branford's papers be edited and published, nothing happened. A detailed list of Branford's papers was produced prior to the move to Malvern in 1940, but it is likely that some papers were lost during the war, and the project to publish them all never materialised seriously again. Dorothea Farquharson, writing in 1955 (VB1) suggested that the cause lay mainly in the threat of war and the uncertainty over the future of Le Play House in London. However, Geoffrey Salter-Davies, wrote to Farquharson in 1942, "only yourself would have the knowledge and the sympathy, and, so far as I know, only myself the sympathy without the knowledge to undertake the work." The choice was between publishing everything unedited, which would have been prohibitively expensive (and probably counterproductive), or producing an abbreviated collection, which would not have fulfilled the obligations in Branford's will. Davies concluded by placing the blame on Branford himself, accusing him of "brilliance marred by incoherence, an inability to write precise English and a certain intellectual laziness which ... has been the main defect of all the sociologists in our particular group" (GSD-AF 9.2.42 VB1).

### **The Social Survey in Britain**

It was in the late 1920s that the Government first began to show an interest in social research, although the interest was sporadic and lukewarm until the Second World War compared with the USA, where a Social Science Research Council had been established in 1923, albeit a private concern financed by Rockefeller Foundation money (Fisher 1980; Bulmer 1980). There is evidence that Le Play House attempted to get some money from this source, (a handwritten document by Farquharson from 1927, "Appeal to the Laura Spelman Trust" exists in the Archives (VB114), but there is no record of a formal application having been made. It is perhaps significant that this coincides with the paper to a Le Play House meeting on the Local community Research Committee of Chicago by Vivien Palmer, and the latter's article in the Sociological Review. Nonetheless, earlier in the decade formal applications for funding had been sent to the Carnegie Trust, noting that "Under the Town Planning Act 1919, it is obligatory on every urban Authority for an area having more than 20,000 inhabitants to prepare before 1923 ... a town development scheme for all vacant land within their area.", and adding "It is now recognised that any plans for systematic urban development should be based upon as complete as possible a civic survey of the area in question." A note from Mrs Fraser Davies to members of the Sociological Society (28.7.21 VB98) notes that the application had been received too late for consideration - but Le Play House did nonetheless participate in a large number of urban and civic surveys during the late 1920s and early 1930s in connection with the widespread interest in town planning and community development that existed during the inter-war years.

However, formal government interest in social research of this kind did not emerge until some time later. The prime mover was Sir George Catlin, who was pressing for



the establishment of a British Social Science Research Council as early as 1931 (Catlin 1931) because, "it was clear in about 1929 that there was going to be more social legislation deeply affecting the way of living in the community", and especially due to his experience of the problems surrounding the 18th Amendment (Prohibition) in the USA (Catlin 1942). Largely at Catlin's instigation, and with the assistance of Sir Josiah Stamp, the Sir Halley Stewart Trust was persuaded to sponsor an investigation into the nature and extent of existing social research in Britain, with a view to making recommendations about the future direction it should take. The investigation was administered by the British Institute of Social Service under Sir Percy Alden, and Farquharson was appointed as secretary to the Committee on secondment from Le Play House for (initially) a fee of #100 (Le Play House Executive Minutes 12.6.29 VB216). Other members of the Committee included Ginsberg, Carr-Saunders and Mess. A preliminary report was produced by Farquharson in 1931, recommending the establishment of a Clearing House for Social Science research, with the addendum by Catlin calling for a full Social Science Research Council; a longer final report was presented in 1934, written by A F Wells, which contained a detailed and categorised analysis of all surveys carried out in Britain since Booth. Wells later produced a book based on the work (Wells 1935).

The report was not however acted upon. Catlin wrote, "for (various) reasons, the ... scheme proved abortive. Largely owing to Lord Stamp's activity, the Institute of Economic and Social Research was established to do valuable work (but) the other scheme (for a full SSRC - DE) died. The humanists were not very sympathetic, and there was some confusion between the fields of social research and social service, and also doubt about whether only economics was mature enough to be regarded as a science" (1942:89). Government interest in sponsoring social research did not revive until the outbreak of war, and even then only in conditions of ludicrous secrecy (Moss 1983).

From 1934 onwards there was a marked decline in both Le Play House and Alexander Farquharson's active participation in survey work in Britain, although both remained in constant demand for advice and assistance with surveys instigated and carried out by social service organisations. The 1938 Annual Report refers to the "constant demand for help by suggestion and advice on survey methods from organisations such as Rotary Clubs, Townswomen's' Guilds, Training Colleges, Schools and also from individual workers" (VB173); evidence that the emphasis in Le Play House activity was moving more towards the field of education, a trend which was to continue even during the last few years of its existence.

### **Farquharson's concept of the Survey**

Alexander Farquharson's writings on sociology are not extensive, and indeed his collected published works would barely fill a single volume. He was essentially an 'activist', although not of course in the contemporary political sense of the word, but one who believed fervently that sociology had to be an active discipline - in this respect, the comparisons between the Regional Survey Movement a personified by its two greatest protagonists Alexander Farquharson and Patrick Geddes bears many similarities to that other great active school of sociology in Chicago. Farquharson was also a great teacher, and the testimony of many who knew him (Mumford, Jahoda, Hill, Copner) bears this out. However, he did write a number of pamphlets and short articles, mainly between the late 1920s and the early 1930s, at the time when the Institute was in the process of being established, and at a time when the Government, in the shape of George Catlin's commission was actively pursuing the idea of some kind of Social Science Research Council, about the nature and purpose of the survey, and about the different types of survey.

Farquharson's first published work in this field was 'An Introduction to Regional Surveys', written jointly with Sybella Branford and discussed in Section 5.4 above. In the years following its publication, Farquharson became increasingly involved in practical survey work for voluntary social service organisations, and with his realisation of the potential for the use of Le Playian and Geddesian techniques in this growing area came disenchantment with the manner in which Branford and Geddes had presented their ideas. In 1929, in an address to a conference at Le Play House he said, "our movement has suffered in the past from the widespread idea that we were exclusively or almost exclusively concerned with Regional Surveys of a rural type; surveys that were unintelligible to urbanised people." (Farquharson 1930a:70) and in a series of articles and pamphlets published in 1930 (Farquharson 1930b:1930c:1930d), he set out more clearly the relationship between the survey, now more often referred to as the Community Survey rather than the Regional Survey, and social work. Several clear points emerge

the conduct of a survey should be a participatory exercise, involving the subjects of the research as well as the researcher. "A local community survey can be - should be - a survey of the community, by the community, for the community ... the value of a local social survey depends largely upon the share taken in it by the citizens of the locality" (Farquharson 1930d:3). Farquharson was a firm believer in the value of sociology as self-help, and as an activity which would always be essentially amateur. the survey should lead to greater community cooperation, and to better citizenship - "each organisation finds its part to play when a view of the whole field has been obtained showing in detail the extent and character of the problems to be tackled and the work already being done." (Farquharson 1930d:6)

the outcome of a survey should be practical - "we want to know in order to do" (Farquharson 1930a:6) and "it should not be forgotten that the best written survey report will be largely ineffective unless it includes some simple, clear and definite suggestions for future action." (Farquharson 1930d:13).

On method, Farquharson suggested that there could be three types of survey - the general social survey, covering "all the main aspects of the social life of a town or city", special surveys of some particular feature, institution or problem, and finally the sample survey, for larger towns and cities, which will involve studies of selected areas. He went on in the same article (Farquharson 1930d) to make his only published reference to quantitative techniques, remarking that "The use of questionnaires is now widespread and may be of great assistance in a social survey", but with the proviso, which goes against the kind of survey work that Le Play House was committed to that "amateur questionnaires will certainly be in part at least, ineffective". (Farquharson 1930d:12). Indeed, there is evidence in these writings and in contemporary observations (Jahoda, Lindgren, Hill) that Farquharson and Le Play House were by no means unaware of quantitative techniques - the work of Paul Lazarsfeld was very familiar to Farquharson, through his contact from 1937 to 1940 with Marie Jahoda, and the Institute of Sociology maintained a relationship of sorts for a number of years with Lazarsfeld's Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia. The reason why Farquharson rejected quantitative techniques was that they could not be carried out effectively by amateurs, and his commitment to amateurism was greater than his commitment to objective social research.

However, Farquharson recognised that there must be a dividing line between the practical and the educational in survey work, in a fine distinction which predated Eileen Thomas's criticisms of the foreign work of Le Play House (See section 6.7). He wrote (1930d:70-1) of two doctrines in survey work - the exoteric and the esoteric. The exoteric was concerned with the betterment of social life, along the Branford and Geddes political model - but it failed, according to Farquharson by being "dull ... with an art perhaps at the level of Co-operative Society window dressing", and it needed

the addition of the esoteric to enliven it. "This doctrine asserts that the rural survey is equal in importance with the urban survey ... because the deepest urges in man are more akin to the life of nature than to the artificial unreal conditions of our modern towns and cities." It is this which served as the rationale for surveys abroad, "so largely devoted to natural and rural conditions... We need our naturalist surveys for our own education as survey workers." Here is reflected the whole survey traditions, from Ruskin, through Le Play, Geddes and Branford to Farquharson - the relationship between town and country, between the constructed environment and the natural environment and the interaction between the two. "A kind of faith is necessary", Farquharson wrote, "followed by works that will in time build up a new attitude that justifies the faith" (1930a:71).

### **Foreign Fieldwork**

The debacle with the Le Play Society left the Institute temporarily embarrassed with regard to its foreign fieldwork, coming as it did in 1932 which was the Institute's worst financial year (VB176). However, it provided the opportunity for a fundamental reappraisal of the nature and purpose of such fieldwork; although this does not seem to have led to any radical changes. Discussion centred on the way tours should be organised, the relationship between the different disciplines involved, and the nature and degree of commitment of the participants.

In its foreign fieldwork, the Institute perhaps more than in any other aspect of its work was trying explicitly to put into practice the Le Play / Geddes / Branford model of what the Regional Survey should be about. In a paper on the subject prepared probably in about 1931 (the typescript is undated), Farquharson and Irene Herbert wrote,

"(we) cannot at present see that the problem lies so much in trying to understand the people (who are generally independent enough to resent attempts at being understood) as in trying to understand the land, which is the home of the people, and which, in its relation with the people, forms the unity. People are transitory; the land is permanent ... If one accepts this however, it is the attitude towards the studies and the method of conducting them that will be different. There will be more care for the region itself and less for the article one might write about it, and a readier understanding that a living region will not respond fully to a process of being chopped up and fitted into an academic scheme of work. ... (There) should be an attempt to understand the personality of a region. Such an understanding, even if only partial, would serve as a restraint and an inspiration to the student, and as a bond of sympathy between the students and the people of the regions concerned".

The purpose of foreign field work was undoubtedly primarily educational (IOS Executive Minutes 17.2.31 : VB211). Even though there was always a formal claim that the surveys did work of real scientific value, the manner of their organisation and the lack of any claim to expertise on the part of most of the participants belies the claim. In a report on the Shetland Survey of 1932 (IOS Executive Minutes 4.11.32 - VB209), Eileen Thomas wrote,

"we do not seem to have made up our minds whether we are aiming at results of real scientific value, or at training students, either in general openness of mind or in definite survey method: nor have we yet solved the problem of the right relation between the study side of the visit and the social side: nor have we yet found the way to fit in the necessary organisation harmoniously with the other work of the House. ...

If our chief aim in arranging such visits is serious sociological study, (by that I mean neither a complete "research" in the ordinary sense of the word, nor merely earnest

and conscientious work on the part of the students, but active independent effort, in a spirit of readiness to explore, understand and test the characteristic outlook and methods of Le Play House, and to search for light on the pressing social problems of the present time) - then it seems to be quite clear (a) that the party must be small in number, not more than about 12, (b) that it must be recruited privately, from among those who are able and willing to follow these lines. In such a party there should be no need nor desire to arrange times for work and play, and no need for anyone to divert attention from the main object to the individual's needs or to the social and recreative side of the party's common life"

She went on to suggest that in future, foreign tours should be of two types - for 'serious scientific work' described above, or for educational purposes. There is no clear evidence that this was taken up, although some tours were more productive in terms of reports than others; however this is more likely to have been the consequence of a particular leader, and the random composition of the group than with any conscious attempt to do otherwise.

The relationship between the different disciplines involved in a Le Play House survey was also important. One of the defining characteristics of the Institutes' survey work, which they saw as distinguishing it from the work of the Le Play Society was that it was explicitly multi-disciplinary. Farquharson and Herbert wrote

"Unless the essential personality of a region, and its living quality are appreciated, the studies of its various parts are bound to lack cohesion ... (we) take it as axiomatic that the aim of the Institute of Sociology in organising the groups is not the multiplication of ... individual academic studies". (Farquharson and Herbert 1931)

Though the outcome of a Le Play House survey might appear disparate, a ragbag of fragments from different disciplines, this was in fact the intention. What was missing, and what goes part of the way towards explaining why the work is not more well known, is anything which would be understood as sociological research methodology today.

A report by Dorothea Price on the Jersey tour in 1932 draws attention to the different degrees to which the participants were committed to the Le Play House conception of the purposes of the exercise. It is apparent from this, and from other accounts of actual tours that those taking part varied from those with an academic background (teachers, training college lecturers and university students) to others who were more interested in a cheap foreign holiday. Marie Jahoda, who led a tour to Denmark in August 1939 describes it as, "more like a school trip of reasonably bright and motivated children than anything to do with any serious sociological approach" (Jahoda 1982); although Walter Freeman, who led similar trips for the Le Play Society observed that, "sometimes a middle-aged lady tactfully poking around and getting into the farm kitchen and talking to the people ... could find out an amazing amount" (Freeman 1983). Both organisations were essentially based upon, and welcomed the interested amateur - neither could of course exert any discipline over the extent to which members of tour parties chose to participate in the survey work for which the exercise was designed.

It is perhaps worth adding two final points on the foreign field trips, particularly those organised during the 1930s. One is that both Le Play House and the Le Play Society built up an enormous number of foreign contacts during this period, which had direct and in some cases immediate political consequences. Both the Farquharsons and Margaret Tatton were involved in assisting refugees from Europe before, during and after the war. It was Farquharson who arranged for Marie Jahoda's release from

prison in Austria in 1937 (Jahoda 1982), and the contacts established with Hungary continued through to 1956. Farquharson also assisted Karl Mannheim in providing work permits for German refugees (AF 90), and Margaret Tatton assisted Dr Julie Moscheles in fleeing from Czechoslovakia in 1938 (Freeman 1983).

The second point is that the survey work done in Europe during the 1930s was used by the Allied Forces during the war in providing detail of areas where no maps existed. Stanley Beaver's surveys in Albania and Bulgaria (Beaver 1962), and the Institute's work in Northern France (Hill 1983) were both of considerable value, in that no other sources of the same kind of detail existed at the time. The records of these trips still remain a unique record of rural life in Europe during this period - and the experience gained by those who took part was also more extensive than that achieved by almost anyone else at the time. As Mumford wrote in his obituary of Farquharson, "Few people in Europe had the first hand acquaintance with country after country, region after region, culture after culture that Farquharson had acquired between the first and second World War". (Mumford 1954:9)

#### The Sociological Review

Of these other activities, the one of most enduring value was probably the continued publication of the Sociological Review, which was until 1951 the only journal of its kind in the country. Established in 1908, it remained largely under Branford's editorial control until his death in 1930. (Although no formal position of 'Editor' existed for most of the time, Branford was effectively responsible for content. He was assisted by both Mumford for a short while in 1920, and Farquharson for the rest of the decade, but maintained a much more direct interest in the journal than in many other aspects of Le Play House's work. On his death, Farquharson took over that responsibility).

The future of the Sociological Review was one of the many aspects of Le Play House work which was examined following the establishment of the Institute and the death of Branford. Farquharson reported to Council in December 1930 that,

"... it had been possible to discuss the future of the Review with leaders in social science, not closely concerned in the work of the Institute. These discussions made it possible now to formulate alternative lines of policy to be adopted in the future. Broadly speaking the alternatives were

to continue and develop the Review upon the lines followed by Mr Branford, i.e. to aim at making the Review a Le Play House publication from cover to cover, presenting a point of view characteristic of the House  
to make the Review an open platform for contributions from all schools of thought in social science. If remodelled on such lines, the Review would have no central or typical viewpoint or message ... If however any attempt is to be made to include the leading recognised exponents of social science in this country outside the Institute no other line seems to be open." (VB209)

The latter of the two alternatives was accepted and consequently, an editorial board of three was established in 1933 - Farquharson, Carr Saunders (then at Liverpool) and Ginsberg at the London School of Economics, neither of whom was at that time yet actively involved with the Institute. Financial liability was covered by a "special guarantee fund" (IOS Annual Report 1933 VB176). During the next four years, the journal improved its position both financially and in terms of its impact, Farquharson being able to write in 1934 that "the improvement in the quality of the contributions was widely recognised" (IOS Annual Report 1934:VB176) and the following year that "it has been pleasant to note during the year the attention given in many widely read newspapers to some of the statistical articles published in the Review. Correspondence and contact with sociologists in other countries also suggests that

the Review is being more widely read and is gaining a position of authority among sociological periodicals" (IOS Annual Report 1935 VB176). The articles referred to included ones by Glass on divorce and Marshall on class, both of which indicated a much greater involvement by the London School of Economics in the Sociological Review, and also in the affairs of the Institute more generally. Ginsberg joined the Council of the Institute in 1934 and the Executive in 1936; Marshall joined both in 1935, and was during the years up to the war a very active member. (Farquharson wrote in October 1935 to Ernest Barker, President of the Institute that he had "come to have a deep respect for (Marshall's) ability" (VB302)). Carr-Saunders was a member of Council both before and after being appointed to the London School of Economics (1937), but was only directly involved with the Review. (IOS Council and Executive Minutes VB209, 211, 225).

From 1936 onwards however the Review began to suffer the effects of the worsening international situation more directly than other aspects of the Institute's work. The foreign subscriptions, especially from Japan and China, where there was a not insignificant school of rural sociology in the 1920s and 1930s (Mauss 1962) began to dry up, and from 1938 onwards the journal began to show a deficit again after two or three years of financial stability (IOS Annual Reports VB176). During the war, its appearance was restricted by paper shortages as much as anything, and it was kept afloat by the Oxford University Press. In 1948, the Institute Council rejected an offer from the London School of Economics to take over publication of the Review (See Section 8.1 below), as a result of which both Carr-Saunders and Ginsberg withdrew from the Editorial Board and effectively from the Institute. Arrangements were made for the Review to continue to appear, but in unbound monthly instalments - generally reckoned to be a very unsatisfactory arrangement, as many members were apparently unaware what the slim blue leaflets were. As late as June 1950 however, Dorothea Farquharson was able to write,

"I do think we should get it back to volume form - a thicker volume to come out quarterly instead of these slips of pamphlets which some people fail to realise are copies of the actual Review. US Libraries write to say they haven't received copies ... and we have to send them again" (DF-EJL 29.6.50 : EJL)

From 1952 onwards when the Institute was in the process on winding down, the future of the Review was one of the things uppermost in Farquharson's mind, as a consequence of the moral obligation to maintain it imposed on the Institute by Branford's will. It was Ethel John Lindgren's suggestion that Keele be required to take over the publication of the Sociological Review as a condition of receiving the Institute's library (Lindgren 1982), and the New Series published at Keele began appearing from 1953 onwards. Initially an attempt was made to keep the interdisciplinary flavour which Branford and the Institute had insisted upon, and which the new university also favoured, with an Editorial board consisting of Keele academics from a wide range of social sciences - but with the establishment of a full sociology department at Keele in the mid-1960s, this gradually faded (Beaver 1982).

### **Other Meetings and Publications**

As well as publishing the Sociological Review, Le Play House also published various other pamphlets and books through Le Play House Press, and the earlier Sociological Publications (which was finally wound up in 1934 after several years of inactivity). Le Play House Press publications included in the 1920s a number of reports of foreign field trips (Norway and Czechoslovakia), although this tradition was continued more by the Le Play Society than the House in the 1930s. However, Le Play House Press did publish the collected papers of all Institute of Sociology

Conferences (Dugdale 1936; Dugdale 1937; Marshall 1938; Dymes 1944;1946;1949) most of which are still available from Keele University Library.

The organisation of conferences and London meetings, which took place regularly throughout the 1930s kept the Institute and the House in a position of some prominence within the academic world - speakers included not only sociologists, of whom there were of course few, but also historians (Beales, Gooch, and Toynbee), anthropologists (Marrett, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown), political scientists (Barker, the President from 1935 to 1938) and representatives from various other disciplines. Some of these meetings were of more than simply passing interest - the meeting in 1938 at which Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown spoke on functionalism for example; and it was one of the Institute's major achievements that it could bring together academics in the social sciences who would not in the normal course of events have anything to do with each other (Jahoda 1982).

Other Le Play House activities worth noting were the maintenance of a library of over 10,000 volumes and numerous periodicals from all over the world (now at Keele) which included works not readily available elsewhere - and the existence of a number of study groups, of which the most productive was the Race Relations group. (Between the late 1930s and the late 1940s when it ceased to exist, it issued a monthly newsletter).

### **Relationships with Other Organisations**

Although the Institute of Sociology was the only organisation claiming to represent the discipline for the first half of the twentieth century, there were nonetheless a number of other organisations and institutions with which it should be compared, or with whom its relationships should be examined, both within the field of the academic social sciences and in the sphere of its amateur social research activities. One of these, the Le Play Society, has already been examined in detail because of the peculiar nature of its relationship with the Institute. Primarily a movement of both amateur and professional geographers, the Le Play Society had no recorded contact with the Institute after 1933 - and the existence of the Le Play Society, together with the growth of bodies such as the Institute of British Geographers founded in 1933 to cater for the younger generation of geography teachers effectively removed that discipline from the sphere of influence of the Institute of Sociology.

The Institute's relationships with other associations representing the social sciences do not appear to have been particularly close or significant. There are occasional references to the Royal Anthropological Institute (IOS Annual Report 1934 and 1935, during which time a joint RAI/IOS Committee on Race and Culture was sitting), to the American Institute of Social Research, which used Le Play House as a UK mailing address during the mid-1930s, and to the International Institute of Sociology, to which the Institute was affiliated. There are a large number of references to the International Conference on Social Work, of which Alexander Farquharson was from 1932 the Secretary, and which held its Conference in London in 1936, hosted by Le Play House. A number of other organisations in the field of social work enjoyed close relations with Le Play House, especially the Charity Organisation Society (See Section 4.3) whose secretary during the 1930s, B E Astbury was a member of the Council of the Institute of Sociology. The Institute and the Charity Organisation Society organised a joint committee on social reconstruction which met between 1940 and 1942, submitting evidence to Beveridge broadly in favour of a Welfare State with substantial provision for voluntary social work to continue. (VB212)

Apart from the Charity Organisation Society, the Institute was also in close co-operation with the British Institute for Social Service and the National Council for

Social Service, the British Committee of the International Institute for Intellectual Co-operation, the Rural Reconstruction Association, the British Federation of Social Workers, the National Book Council and the Association of Libraries (ASLIB). There is no evidence however of any regular contact with academic organisations of economists, political scientists or psychologists, all of which were of course in existence during this period, and all of who had members who were also members of the Institute. One of the most significant social science texts of the 1930s, "The Study of Society" (Bartlett et al 1939) contained papers by Lindgren, Wells and Ginsberg, alongside contributions by anthropologists and psychologists. The production of the book was very much an interdisciplinary exercise, involving seminars held in Yorkshire, the Lake District and elsewhere at which all aspects of the social sciences, their relevance and their future were discussed (Lindgren 1982). The main difference between the sociologists and the other social scientists was perhaps that organisations in those disciplines were, like those in geography, organisations of professionals, based in and largely oriented towards the universities; whereas the Institute of Sociology was from its inception latently if not actively hostile to the universities, a legacy from Patrick Geddes' failure to secure the Chair of Sociology at the London School of Economics and one which it was never able or willing to shake off.

The relationship between the Institute and the London School of Economics is worth pursuing. Although not the only British academic institution offering courses in sociology (by 1930 Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, Bristol and Manchester Universities and Bedford College, London taught some sociology or social studies (Fincham 1975)), the London School of Economics was the only one with a Chair of Sociology, and indeed the only one to employ sociologists as such. From 1907 until 1929 under Hobhouse, and from then onwards under Morris Ginsberg, the small Department of Sociology at the London School of Economics regarded Le Play House as an interesting, but academically irrelevant institution. Ginsberg, Edward Westermaarck and later Thomas Marshall were all members of the Institute of Sociology, and all participated peripherally in its affairs, although only Marshall, as a member of the Council and Executive between 1935 and 1949 was actively involved. Nonetheless, Ginsberg spoke at Le Play House on Bergson and Freud in 1933, spoke for the Institute at joint meetings with the British Psychological Society a year later, and worked with Farquharson on the Modern Sociologists book series during the mid-1930s. Marshall spoke at a great many more Le Play House meetings, and both Ginsberg and Marshall, together with a number of other academics in the social sciences from London University and beyond were involved in the series of Conferences organised by the Institute of Sociology in 1935 (The Social Sciences: their relations in Theory and Teaching), 1936 (Further Papers on the Social Sciences) and 1937 (Class Conflict and Social Stratification) (Dugdale 1936:1937, Marshall 1938). Both wrote extensively for the Sociological Review, as the only journal of the discipline in the country at that time.

While it was not entirely true that "for a long period after he succeeded Hobhouse, Ginsberg was sociology ... in Britain" (Fletcher 1974), it is of course the case that, as the only full time Professor of Sociology in Britain, Ginsberg was the professional face of the discipline, whereas Farquharson, as Secretary of the Institute represented what was at that time, a considerable amateur force. Relationships between the two men were not close, but neither were they antagonistic. MacRae said of Ginsberg, "I never heard him say a single hostile word about the Institute, but I think he felt he had other things to do ... I think it would be fair to say that he lost interest - it may have been interpreted as hostility." (MacRae 1982) He went on to confirm that there was no evidence of antagonism in Ginsberg's unpublished correspondence, and the same can be said of Farquharson's letters which make any reference to Ginsberg.



That is not however the case with Marshall, (See Section 8.1 below), although during the 1930s his relationship with Le Play House was cordial. Unfortunately his death in 1981 prevented any opportunity to pursue these matters.

There is no evidence of any close relationship between Le Play House and any of the other Universities offering courses in Sociology during the 1930s, although Philip Sargent Florence (Birmingham) and Tom Simey (Liverpool) were inactive members of the Institute of Sociology's Council from the late 1930s until 1953 (in the case of Florence) and 1949 in the case of Simey (when it was discovered that he was not actually a member of the Institute (EJL - IOS Council 3.11.50). Henry Mess, of Bedford College was more closely involved until his death in 1944.

The one amateur organisation with which the Institute of Sociology is most often compared, and with which its relationships were less than cordial was Mass Observation (Stanley 1981: Calder and Sheridan 1984: Madge 1976). Formed in 1937 as the result of the mutual interest of a poet and a journalist in the public's reaction to the Abdication Crisis, this "wild gypsy crusade" (Shils 1960) seized the imagination of large numbers of people for a short while during the late 1930s, became almost wholly absorbed part of the Ministry of Information during the war, and declined into a (what was by then becoming) conventional market research organisation thereafter. The founder and chief public protagonist of Mass Observation, Tom Harrisson was scathing about the Institute of Sociology, describing it as an "antiquated organisation ... overdue for overhaul" undertaking "small local surveys, often of slight significance" (Harrisson 1947:13). Stanley, in an authoritative work on the early years of Mass Observation writes of the Institute at that time as being "intellectually timorous, ... helplessly ineffective and increasingly irrelevant." (Stanley 1981:216). However, elsewhere he recognises Branford, Farquharson and Wells' writings on the Regional Survey (Branford and Farquharson 1924: Wells 1935) as being "really not far from the rhetoric of Mass Observation's 'anthropology of ourselves'. There is the same belief in the power of the searchlight of social investigation to illustrate conditions and thereby self-evidently to set in train ameliorative legislation and voluntary action from above." (Stanley 1982:196). The Institute hit back too in its own right, with an attack by Marshall on the academic validity of Mass Observation's work, and highly critical reviews by Marie Jahoda in the *Sociological Review* of its first publications. (Marshall 1937; Jahoda 1938; Jahoda 1940). All that said however, Harrisson spoke at Le Play House in 1937 on fieldwork in sociology, (recalled by Marie Jahoda as a "quite tough meeting") but overall relationships between him and Farquharson were by no means hostile (Jahoda 1982). In conclusion it can be said that the attitude of the Institute of Sociology towards Mass Observation was similar to that of academic sociology to the Institute - polite interest but somewhat complacent disdain for something which was felt to be an altogether less worthwhile form of activity. Had the Institute and Mass Observation been able or prepared to work together, amateur sociology may have established itself as a more serious force for the future.

## **7 The Second World War**

"Sociology stands for a view-point and method that has universal application in human life: in every complex situation we can at least attempt to define, understand and estimate the importance of the various factors and trends. War is the negation of this viewpoint and method. In wartime force and its grim associates, fraud and inhumanity, operate between combatants for an indefinite period. How many sociologists adjust themselves to this situation ?" (Farquharson 1940)

### **Evacuation to Malvern**

In August 1940, following the outbreak of war, the Institute moved to Malvern; the reasons were partly to escape the Blitz, although there were other factors as well, and some members of the Institute's Council were very unhappy about the isolation that they saw as being likely to result. Normal activity had been continued for the first half of 1939, with a series of meetings in London, and active preparation was taking place for the fourth Annual Conference on the Social Sciences to be held in October on the growth and decay of towns in contemporary England, for the International Congress on Sociology to be held in Bucharest in September and the International Conference on Social Work to be held in July 1940. All were of course cancelled. The Annual Report for 1939 records that "It happened that Mr and Mrs Farquharson had arranged during the summer to give up their residence at the Institute headquarters and had taken a house in Malvern, Worcestershire. At the end of August they were able to provide immediate accommodation for indispensable papers and records of the Institute and allied organisations." Other papers, records and office staff remained in London, and Farquharson visited London regularly to maintain both centres until early 1940. The 1940 Annual Report records that the Gordon Square premises were badly damaged by bombs during the year, and that all papers that could be recovered were put into storage in Worcester, before being moved to the new Le Play House, in Albert Road South, Malvern.

The retreat to rural seclusion appeared to many active members of the Institute to be somewhat premature, and likely to cut Le Play House off still further from the mainstream of academic life and any public influence. Stanley writes of Mass Observations scathing attitude towards the Institute, "retired in the comfortable calm of Malvern throughout the war" (Stanley 1981:217), where it continued to "conduct genteel schools in civics which study cathedrals, respectable ruins rather than doing the fieldwork relevant to the war." (Madge and Harrison 1940). Ernest Barker wrote to Waldegrave, Chairman of the Institute's Council in June 1939, "I am adverse to a country centre ... to develop a permanent country centre for the contingency of a period of war would appear to me not to be logical or prudent. The permanent home of the Institute is necessarily in London", and later to Farquharson, "Honestly, I think Malvern is impossible." (VB302). In a letter to Barker, Farquharson explained the choice of Malvern - Dorothea had a close friend in Switzerland, "for whom she might at any time to undertake heavy responsibility", and for whom Malvern was one of the few health resorts in England which would be suitable. Farquharson sought to justify the choice of Malvern and its relevance to the war effort further, writing in the 1939 Annual Report (published in November 1940) that, "nothing should be done that draws attention away from the national effort", and suggesting that "for the tired worker there is no doubt that Malvern offers opportunities for recuperation." In 1940, in Le Play House's Emergency Wartime Bulletin, he wrote,

"The war time task of sociology may be envisaged as threefold :

the study of the social aspects of the war situation in this (and other) countries  
the study of the social aspects of reconstruction  
the study of the bearing of sociology on the future organisation of human life."

He went on to suggest that the war offered the opportunity both to study "the essence of English life" during periods of adversity, and recognising that significant changes would be likely to occur afterwards; and also the opportunity of planning, through education, for a closer relationship with France and other European countries in peacetime. (Farquharson 1940)

In any event, the Institute remained at Malvern, and activity in London declined, although discussion meetings, the Race Group led by E J Turner and conferences (See 7.2 below) continued. Farquharson and others were keen to maintain some kind of London centre, and there was a suggestion in 1942 that rooms might be taken at Chatham House for £100 a year. Barker wrote to Farquharson, baulking at the cost and at Farquharson's suggestion that his protégé, Marie Jahoda be invited to run a London Centre - "You must forgive an old Englishman (of the working class stock that is perhaps the most obstinately English) if he feels that the charge of a centre for the activities of a British Institute of Sociology should be vested in somebody who belongs to the country by birth and tradition." Farquharson was also in correspondence with Ethel J Lindgren, at the time a researcher at Cambridge, on the same subject and on the possibility of Jahoda being offered a job at Cambridge (EJL).

### **Surveys and Education**

A major area in which Le Play House developed the use of the survey during and immediately after the war was in the field of education, at all levels from the initial promotion of civic education in schools (a theme which was fairly widely supported in the 1920s (Hadow 1926)) through to work in universities, teacher training colleges and in adult education. Le Play House and the Institute regarded themselves too as educational bodies, and saw education both in sociology generally and in survey techniques in particular as being one of their major responsibilities (IOS Executive 17.2.31 - VB211) - as the practical participation by the Farquharsons and other Institute members in survey research declined in the late 1930s, so their interest in education increased. Both Farquharsons had backgrounds in education - Alexander taught in schools in London and Worcestershire between 1904 and 1910 before moving on to social work organisation, and Dorothea taught in schools and training colleges, latterly at Nevilles' Cross College, Durham from 1927 to 1933 before she married. It was Dorothea's continuing interest in and commitment to teacher education that gave it such a high profile in the Institute's affairs (Copner 1982; Hill 1983), and during the 1930s, Le Play House began organising fieldwork, meetings and exhibitions for training college lecturers and students, an activity which continued until the early 1950s.

During the war, the Institute was invited to submit evidence to the McNair Committee on Teacher Training (1942), as the question of whether sociology should be included in the curriculum of teacher training colleges was a live issue at the time, and the fact that it was subsequently included is due in no small measure to the activities of the Institute and the Farquharsons. (One could speculate further to the effect that the expansion of sociological activity in teacher training colleges in the 1950s was one of the main factors behind the development and widespread institutionalisation of sociology in this country a few years later, and draw the conclusion that some small measure of acknowledgement should be due to the Farquharsons for this.). The

Institute organised three Conferences on education during the war, the first of which was on the place of sociology in the training of teachers at St Hilda's College Oxford in January 1943. A report of the proceedings was subsequently published in a pamphlet, which contains papers by Mannheim, Ginsberg and Mess among others, (Dymes 1943). Discussion centred on the problems inherent in a two year course; the relationship between the kind of theoretical social philosophy expounded by Ginsberg and the practical survey work put forward by the Farquharsons and the several colleges already practicing it; and the shortage of trained staff to teach sociology at that level. It was partly because of this, and also because the conference proved so popular that conferences on education were held in the two following years (Dymes 1946: Dymes 1949); on education in the universities in 1944, and on the sociology of schools in 1945. A paper produced by the Farquharsons at the invitation of a number of training college principals, while recommending the incorporation of sociology into the training college curriculum, felt that the training college "should cease to model itself on the university with its highly specialised courses, but should revise its curriculum ... by partial or total removal of barriers between subjects." "Unless there has been planned and deliberate co-ordination of the various subjects in the curriculum" they write, "the student is left with a knowledge of an infinite series of disconnected subjects in an overcrowded timetable, and a sense of competition or even conflict between the claims of one subject and another" (AF15). However, the idea of integrated social studies in the teacher education curriculum did not attract widespread favour for another thirty years.

There is evidence to suggest that the relevance of the Institute's survey work was becoming apparent to many teachers. Writing in the 1939 Annual Report, Farquharson states that "there is a constant demand for the new series of Discovery Broadsheets designed to meet the needs of teachers dispersed with their schools, and faced with the problems of initiating local studies in their new areas." In 1944, as a consequence of the Oxford Conference (above), a joint committee involving the Institute, the British Psychological Society and the Association of Teachers in Colleges and Departments of Education (ATCDE) was formed to look at the place of sociology in the training of teachers - this continued after the war, when the role of the Institute, and particularly Dorothea Farquharson in providing assistance to the Emergency Teacher Training Colleges established after the 1944 Education Act was considerable (See Section 8.1 below).

### **Army Education**

Dorothea Farquharson also contributed a great deal to Army education during and immediately after the war. Speaking at the Institute's 1945 Conference on the sociology of education, Ms M Hardman, formerly an ATS Senior Commander described how, "it had occurred to some people interested in Army Education that many of the troops had no idea at all what they were fighting for." (Hardman 1949:71) A series of talks by the Army Bureau of Current Affairs, and pamphlets on "The British Way and Purpose" were largely useless, especially for the Women's Services because "the members of the discussion groups had neither the knowledge nor the interest necessary for effective discussion." For this reason, talks and formal discussion was abandoned in favour of a more active approach, and from 1942 onwards, experiments began in local survey work. Early in 1943, the Institute was approached by the Army Education Corps, on the recommendation of a number of ATS Officers who had attended an Institute course at Haywards Heath previously. Officers of the Royal Army Education Corps visited Le Play House (then at Malvern) and the institute was invited to conduct a course in survey techniques for a group of Army Officers at Louth in September 1943 (Farquharson D 1948). The survey that was conducted covered housing, agriculture and local government, with the ostensible purpose of preparing the students for occupying and administering foreign

territory during the forthcoming Normandy invasion (Hill 1983). The course was followed by a larger one at Brighton in 1944; and by courses in Bradford, Hull, Luton, Perth, Pontefract, St Andrews, Wakefield and elsewhere. The longest was held at Durham over two weeks in April 1945 for the training of future leaders of the RAEC, and the techniques learned were later applied in Europe, North Africa and India. Twelve officers from the British Army of the Rhine attended the Institute's Field trip to Ghent in 1947, and the Army also produced its own version of the Institute's 'Discovery' broadsheets; guides for the conduct of surveys which were intended for schools and voluntary organisations.

However, despite these close contacts over a number of years, Army historians do not appear to have regarded the Institute's work as any more worthy of note than their counterparts in sociology. Writing a few years later, Dorothea Farquharson observes ruefully that a book on Army Education makes no mention of herself, the Institute or the use of the Regional Survey technique, (Farquharson D 1951)

### **The Wartime Social Survey**

The full history of the Wartime Social Survey remains to be written, (Moss 1986: Platt 1986) and its significance in the development of social research in this country is not clear, although three of those most involved with it (Jahoda 1982: Lindgren 1982: Moss 1983) have implied recently that a great deal of evidence concerning its work is as yet unstudied. Neither was the Institute of Sociology directly connected with the Wartime Social Survey, although inevitably in such a small community of interested scholars there was considerable overlap of membership and reciprocal contact. Marie Jahoda and Ethel Lindgren, both of whom were actively involved with the Farquharsons and Le Play House (the former before the war and the latter afterwards) worked for the Survey during what Lindgren called 'Phase II' between July 1940 and August 1941 (Lindgren 1982).

The survey had its origins in the burgeoning of empirical social research in the late 1930s, both within the academic sphere (Glass, Bowley and others at the London School of Economics) and outside, through such initiatives as the British Gallup Poll, run by Henry Durant and described by MacRae as "in many ways much more sophisticated than the American Gallup polls" (MacRae 1982), and the early BBC surveys of listening habits from 1939 onwards (Moss 1983). The Government had been actively planning a Ministry of Information in the eventuality of war, and somewhat surreptitious moves to establish one were made as soon as war broke out in September 1939. The Wartime Social Survey was initially organised as a semi-autonomous unit, working from the London School of Economics notionally under the control of the National Institute for Economic and Social Research, but fairly transparently funded by the MOI. The whole exercise, of social research, intended to ascertain the state of national morale was widely criticised by the press (in particular by Ritchie Calder (Whitehead 1985) and *The Daily Herald* (Moss 1983)). In fact, the social survey in its various guises throughout the war produced valuable and reliable evidence of the state of morale, findings which were often too dismal to be made public (Jahoda 1982). In 1941, the Ministry of Information took over the Survey more directly, and Louis Moss was recruited from the British Institute of Public Opinion, where he had been working on the British Gallup Survey and BBC audience research. His arrival, which seemed to mark the total subjugation of the Survey to the needs of the Ministry, coming as it did at the same time as the Ministry acted for the first time to suppress research findings on morale resulted in "all of us, including the cleaning ladies resigning as scientific protest" (Jahoda 1982); they were replaced by others, both from the Ministry and from Market Research, described by Lindgren as "shady people" (Lindgren 1982). However, although both Lindgren and Jahoda were involved with the Institute, there is no evidence of any direct contact between the

Wartime Social Survey and Le Play House at any point. From 1941 onwards, under Moss the Survey continued to develop social research techniques, to the extent that it became, as the Government Social Survey, a permanent fixture, now part of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (Whitehead 1985).

## **8 Postwar**

"The affairs of the Institute are very much in the melting pot, and your own situation appears to be very uncertain. The Institute appears to be the victim of an Oedipus situation; aggravated by the overall economic condition of the country and the world. The Sociological Society and the Institute have performed a gigantic feat of pioneering in the sociological sphere and you have played a major part in this. But the Institute has given birth to many lusty offspring, chairs of sociology in the universities; and the occupants of these appear to me now to be playing the role of Oedipus. They want to be independent of the old man. Sociology itself will, I think, lose something by this by becoming more rigidly academic. But that is the way of the world, and our consolation is the contemplation of a life of work well done and bearing fruit" (C C Fagg to A Farquharson 33.3.52:AF8)

### **The Final Decade**

The history of the Institute of Sociology during the last decade of its life is one of gradual and seemingly inevitable decline. As Farquharson wrote in the 1945 Annual Report, "In the work of the Institute, ... little benefit was evident" (VB212). Two things were apparent however. One was that the Institute needed a base in London if it was to have any hope of building on the various initiatives in the social sciences and social research which were soon to materialise. The second was that a case could be made for retaining a country centre, if for no other reason than that both the Farquharsons were old, neither had any desire to return to London, and the Institute could not survive without them.

Proposals for a London centre were complicated somewhat by the need to vacate the Malvern house fairly soon after the end of the war, as the owner required it for his own residence. There were considerable difficulties in finding a house of suitable size in the vicinity, until fortuitously, a large country house became available at Ledbury. It was purchased fairly rapidly, and all the Institute's possessions were moved there, just prior to the worst winter for many years, which aggravated problems in what was already a house in need of repair. (Disputes with local builders over repair work continued well into the 1950s).

In October 1946, just after the move to Ledbury and the publication of the Clapham Committee's report, advocating an expansion in teaching and research in the social sciences (Clapham 1946), the Council of the Institute heard a paper by T H Marshall calling for the establishment of a London centre as an urgent priority. In the paper, Marshall outlined the history of Le Play House and its relationship to the terms of Branford's will. He noted that the pre-war income of the Institute was about #1800 which was always matched and often exceeded by expenditure (there had been a deficit for every year since 1930.) A London centre would require a salaried director, in addition to premises, and would cost in the region of #3000 per annum at post-war prices. Marshall's paper gave no indication of where this money was to be found, other than from existing sources (membership, sale of publications and services), but the implication was that a centralised Institute, making a more direct appeal to the expanding academic community in the social sciences, and able and willing to work

with and build on the expansion in social research in all forms currently underway would be more likely to generate the momentum necessary to survive and prosper than an organisation appealing to amateurs and based in the countryside.

Council approved the paper, but without the powers or the resources to do anything about it. By 1947, according to the Annual Report, membership was increasing (60 new applications were received, many of them from lecturers at the Emergency Teacher Training Colleges established in the wake of the 1944 Education Act), and the Farquharsons were kept busy with demands on their time as experts in field studies - as Dorothea wrote to Ethel Lindgren early in 1947, "We are terribly active here in Ledbury, in fact I hardly know how to answer the many demands made of our time." (DF - E.J.L. 2.5.47). Foreign field work revived as well, with trips to Belgium and Denmark. There is every indication that the Farquharsons took a revival of the kind of work they had undertaken before the war to indicate a revival in the fortunes of the Institute. As with many other organisations, institutions and practices, the long-term effects of the war were more serious.

In January 1948, following the lack of progress in the search for a London centre, Council received a serious offer from the London School of Economics to take over the ailing *Sociological Review* (which was appearing in erratic supplements rather than regular journal sized issues. This was partly due to paper rationing, but it was also due to lack of material.) After long discussion, Council, on the advice of the Farquharsons and in line with the underlying suspicion of the LSE that always coloured its attitude rejected the offer, at which both Ginsberg and Carr-Saunders indicated that they would be unable to promise continued interest in the Institute, as the LSE would be taking steps to establish a new sociological journal of its own.

Aside from the *Sociological Review*, Institute of Sociology activities continued in both London and Ledbury. Courses were organised for the Emergency Teacher Training College, particularly in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, but with some contact from as far away as Harrogate, Lancaster and Liverpool. Courses for the Army also continued occasionally, and the Institute became involved with University Extra-Mural work for Birmingham, and arranging courses in survey methods for visiting Commonwealth students from the then University College, Southampton (AF61). In London, the Institute, still without any premises, was assisted by J L Peterson, from University House, Bethnal Green, a University Settlement, who provided rooms or secured them elsewhere, and organised a Committee to arrange London meetings (Institute of Sociology Annual Report 1948 : VB173). The Royal Institute of British Architects and the London University Institute of Education also provided much help and goodwill - Sir Fred Clark from the Institute of Education had become President of the Institute in 1947, C W Dixon of the Institute was Chair of Council during 1952 and 1953 for its final meetings, and Professor Basil Ward from RIBA was also on its Council during its final years.

By 1949 however, the temporary post-war boost to the Institute's fortunes appeared to have peaked. The 1949 Annual Report reported only 21 new members and 2 resignations for the year, and activities were somewhat hampered by the illness of Alexander Farquharson. It was during 1949 that the newly formed UNESCO began formulating plans for the sponsorship of national and international associations of social scientists - a conference of sociologists from 21 countries was held in Oslo in September 1949 and the International Sociological Association formed. (ISA 1950; Bottomore 1954) The Institute of Sociology was represented at the meeting by T H Marshall, at that time working as Educational Adviser to the British High Commissioner in Germany on secondment from the London School of Economics (Marshall 1974; Halsey 1984). The 1949 Annual Report records that Marshall "kept

the Council informed on the discussions, and the Council expressed its willingness to do anything possible to forward the movement in this country." Nevertheless, the Institute was not among the national sociological organisations recorded as being in existence in 1949, nor among those "expected to be admitted to full membership (of the ISA) during 1950" (ISA 1950). It was not until some months later that it became clear to the Farquharsons that Marshall had apparently told the ISA that the Institute was closing down, and that a new organisation would shortly be formed. Dorothea wrote to Ethel Lindgren in June 1950, "The UNESCO HQ were told over six months ago by 'someone from the Institute of Sociology' that we were about to fold up our tents. This we heard from an American sociologist ... Marshall was then the Institute of Sociology representative on UNESCO." In the same letter, she records that Marshall "definitely declined to lift a finger to help us and said he would have nothing to do with our efforts to carry on in London or Ledbury. (DF-EJL 29.6.50: EJL)" He had refused to serve on the Council of the Institute, and yet was keen to participate in any decision to wind up the Institute.

The reason for Marshall's declining interest in the fortunes of the Institute, and even his desire for its closure was the imminent establishment of a new body, the British Sociological Association to be composed of professional sociologists and based at the London School of Economics. An inaugural meeting was held in October 1950, and the establishment of the BSA was announced in a letter to *USThe Times* in May 1951 (Banks 1967). The Farquharsons attended the meeting to report back to the Institute's Council in November. In June, Alexander wrote to John Ross, a former colleague of Branford, "those responsible for the new Association have agreed that nothing they are doing need prevent us from carrying on along the lines that Branford laid down, and that is what my wife and I are now putting our best efforts into." (4.6.81 : AF171). It was agreed that a Committee should be formed to negotiate with the BSA if necessary, and that the membership should be consulted on their attitude to the new organisation. At that meeting, it was also agreed to hold no further meetings in London. It was felt by the Farquharsons that the London meetings had been used by Peterson and Marshall for their own purposes, having more to do with the establishment of new organisations than the furtherance of the interests of *Le Play House*. Writing to Ethel Lindgren, Dorothea described Peterson, whose assistance had been welcomed only a few years previously : "none of us trust him - he is a slick East ender, and apt to twist anything round to suit his purpose." It was apparently because of Peterson's handling of the negotiations that the Institute lost the chance of a grant from the Nuffield Foundation, which had stipulated conditions unacceptable to the Ledbury contingent - a move to London within three months, transfer of the library to London, and the handing over of the *Sociological Review* to some other body. Dorothea went on, "Marshall is desperately keen to get hold of the *Review* - AF is determined not to let Peterson or Marshall get it. It is our best asset ... it was the beginning of the foundation of the Sociological Society and was Branford's dearest child". (DF-EJL 29.6.50: EJL)

The Committee to negotiate with the BSA was formed in December 1950 (The Farquharsons, Ms Murdo Mackenzie, Basil Ward, Geoffrey Salter-Davies and Canon Vigo Demant - Ethel Lindgren was elected, but declined the nomination.) There is no evidence of it ever having met - correspondence with the BSA continued throughout 1951, but the matter disappears from the Council Minutes thereafter, overtaken by the more serious problems concerning the Institute's survival. Carr-Saunders and Ginsberg formally resigned from the Council in January 1952 - Marshall had ceased to be a member some years earlier. Thereafter, contact between the Institute and the LSE appears to have ceased.



Attendance at Council meetings during the early 1950's was rarely more than half a dozen, and often as few as three. However, in December 1951 there were twelve present to receive the resignation of Alexander Farquharson as Secretary and Dorothea Farquharson as Organiser of Field Studies, on the grounds of age and illness. The resignations (which had been threatened on and off since the move to Ledbury) were accepted with regret; although Alexander was elected Treasurer, following the resignation of Salter-Davies, and also appointed to a new position of Honorary Director. It was unanimously agreed that, as specified in the terms of Branford's will, both should continue to receive lodgement free of charge at Le Play House. (Farquharson had turned down an annual stipend of #200 for the Branford estate in return for accommodation rights. (DF-EJL 9.3.52: EJL). Dr George Gibson, a Church of England clergyman, Rector of Nuthurst in Sussex and Secretary of the Central Christian Social Council was appointed to undertake the Secretaryship on a voluntary basis initially. It was hoped that a salaried appointment would be possible after about six months.

The resignation of the Farquharsons as officials of the Institute in effect meant the end of what little activity had been maintained over the previous few years. Dorothea wrote to Ethel Lindgren in March 1952, "all field study organisation ... has been stopped dead since I resigned in December, and nobody else is able to take it on." (DF-EJL 9.3.52 : EJL). She noted that Gibson, together with Demant and one or two other London-based members of the Council seemed determined to sell Le Play House to attempt to place the Institute on a secure financial footing, prior to absorption by one or other of the several bodies beginning to show an interest in it. More pressing however was the Institute's overdraft of over #1000. In April, Alexander Farquharson put to Council a scheme, suggested by Sheffield Corporation, which at that time housed the Ruskin collection, but was unable to exhibit them. Sheffield was willing to pay the Guild of St George (of which Farquharson was still Master, and which had Le Play House as its Headquarters) #1500 a year to arrange exhibition of the materials, money which would in turn be transferred to the Institute. The final condition was the transfer of substantial parts of the Branford Trust interests from the Institute to the Guild of St George. The arrangements and their implications were complicated and cumbersome, and it is probable that Farquharson did not fully understand them, any more than did the Council. Nevertheless, the offer was accepted on 24 April, and Farquharson given permission to continue the negotiations, much to the chagrin of Gibson, who had proposed that the Institute's library be transferred at once to Moor Park, a Church of England Adult College of which he had hopes of becoming Principal. (Alfred Waldegrave, long-time Chair of the Institute's Council wrote to Farquharson in connection with Moor Park and its staff, "(none) of them has the beginning of an understanding of an approach to social problems and to social organisation by modern scientific method. To commit the care of the Institute's library to their hands would be ludicrous. No doubt they would keep the books dusted, but they are incapable of using them or guiding enquirers in the use of them."(EJL))

During May of that year, Gibson and Demant (who had proposed the motion that the Guild's offer be accepted and that Le Play House remain at Ledbury - referred to thereafter as the 'Demant Resolution') attempted to call an emergency meeting of Council to reconsider the issue, on the grounds that the Guild's offer had been misleadingly presented. (Dorothea wrote scathingly to Ethel Lindgren of 'the dog-collar faction'). A bitter series of public letters followed - Farquharson questioning Demant's position (a co-opted member of the Council since 1946, and not actually an individual member of the Institute; furthermore, holding the position of 'Vice-Chair' which was not provided for in the Memorandum and Articles of Association), and Gibson and Demant eventually resigned. Demant wrote to Council members on 13

June, "I cannot resign positions (Vice-Chairman and member of Council) which I do not hold. But I now desire ... to sever my connection, such as it is, with the Institute altogether." (EJL). Gibson wrote more bitterly to Farquharson, "I propose tendering my resignation as Honorary Secretary of the Institute as soon as I can discover a body competent to receive it."

By the July meeting of Council, it was becoming clear that a number of options were open to the Institute, described by Dorothea in a letter to Ethel Lindgren. Offers to take over all or part of the Institute's library, the Sociological Review and/or the Ruskin Collection were received from

Reading University, whose Professor of Philosophy, H A Hodges was a Ruskin scholar and friend of the Institute

University College Leicester, in particular the adult education division at Vaughan College through its Director, A J Allaway

Edinburgh University, who's Principal, Talbot Rice was interested primarily in the Ruskin collections

Keele Hall, shortly to become the University College of North Staffordshire and then Keele University, whose founder, A J Lindsay had been a long time member of the Council of the Institute.

At the same time, Farquharson was in detailed correspondence with Lewis Mumford over the possibility of some Ruskin material going to Yale (VB1).

From the start, the Farquharsons favoured Keele, which was the only body to make specific suggestions (Council Minutes 3.7.52: EJL), and Council urged that a firm offer be invited. Council also appointed A C McClintock-Currie, the office manager at Ledbury and a "keen Ruskinian" (DF-EJL 20.4.52 : EJL) as Secretary. The following month, Council agreed formally to offer the Sociological Review to the University College of North Staffordshire from the beginning of 1953, and to begin to transfer its library. This was accepted by the University's Council in September (Institute of Sociology Council Minutes 29.10.85 : EJL) It was decided to hold an open meeting of members in December to ascertain opinion on the transfer of the rest of the library and the Institute's extensive survey materials collection. This appears to have been agreed, although the minutes of the meeting do not record a specific decision.

Through the latter part of 1952 and into 1953, discussions at Council meetings also centred on the desirability of selling part or the whole of Le Play House, Ledbury and the timing of any sale to maximise revenue. Central to such considerations, and impressed upon Council most forcibly by Waldegrave and others was the need to ensure continuity of accommodation for the Farquharsons, particularly in view of Alexander's failing health. From early 1953, pressure to sell at least part of Le Play House became stronger, and in April the decision was taken to sell the South Wing and surrounding building land. Council also appointed a new Executive Committee to oversee business at Ledbury, consisting mainly of local members - J L Brewin, Ms C V Butler, W W Lee, Rev J Pearce-Higgins and W A Campbell-Stewart.

Campbell-Stewart, Professor of Education at Keele played a major part in the following two years in assisting the Farquharsons to untangle the complicated interwoven finances of the Institute and the Guild of St George, and in his own words, helping "these two elderly people to arrange the orchestration of running the Institute down" (Campbell-Stewart 1981), without going into bankruptcy. (It has to be

remembered that the Institute was still registered and operated as a limited company, not a voluntary organisation or charity.) During the first few months of 1953, a Fund was established to provide for the Farquharsons, amassing a total of over #400 (AF8). Barker and Gooch, who as Past Presidents were the prime movers wrote to them in March, "your work has been a labour of love and you have not toiled in vain. No one has striven more patiently or more successfully to establish the importance of sociology, not merely as an academic discipline but as an aid to good citizenship." (4.3.53 : AF8). Barker added, "Take it easy: shed any and every responsibility in respect of the Institute"

The latter part of 1953 was largely uneventful. Dorothea was preoccupied with the ailing Alexander, and no further Council meetings were held after April. On February 16 1954, Alexander Farquharson died, at the age of 72

A meeting of the Executive was held in March, but no meeting of Council during the whole year. Dorothea was in continued correspondence and contact with Keele University, and spent much of the year sorting papers, and agonising in particular about the fate of Branford's papers, still unedited. By the end of the year, it was clear that the time had come to wind up the affairs of the Institute. A General Meeting of members in January 1955 decided in principle on this course of action, and an Extraordinary General Meeting on 7 July 1955 took the final decision that the Institute be voluntarily wound up under the provisions of the 1948 Companies Act.

### **Reasons For Decline**

All this being so, the reasons for the fairly rapid demise of the Institute of Sociology in the 1950s, and of its subsequent exclusion from almost all accounts of the development of sociology are all the more puzzling. The two aspects are in some ways separate and yet in other ways linked, although there are no demonstrably obvious explanations for either. Rather it was probably the convergence of a number of factors in the immediate post war period, and the development of other factors in the early 1950s that both brought about the extinction of a number of institutions regarded as symptomatic of a bygone age; and at the same time effected their expulsion from a position in the immediate past in a search for more glamorous ancestors from longer ago or further away. In other words, the same trends which can be discerned in fashion, architecture, music and various other art forms also affected sociology - the Regional Survey tradition, which had existed in this country for close on half a century was discarded in exchange for a new, ready made version of the discipline imported wholesale from the United States which had comfortably (at that time) forgotten where it had come from, but which thought itself to be eminently right for the present.

Breaking this rather abstract explanation down into constituent parts, one can identify a number of specific, concrete factors which weakened the Institute after the war

1 The financial difficulties which had plagued the Institute for most of its life, with the exception of a few years in the mid 1930s now became acute. The war had wiped out the value of many of the Branford investments overseas, and a loss of membership subscriptions during the war led to deficits of well over #1000 in 1947 and 1948. (Paradoxically, membership figures appear to have recovered fairly well during this period with the expansion of sociological activity, especially in teacher training). Finance also played a significant part in the decline of the foreign field trips, which had usually been a source of income in the 1930s. Foreign travel was difficult until about 1950, although trips were organised in the late 1940s to Denmark, Belgium and France; but more important was the general increase in tourism, and the rise of the package tour, offering foreign holidays at prices with which the Institute could not

hope to compete. (The same difficulties also affected the Le Play Society (Freeman 1983), although because of its base in academic geography, where the idea of the regional survey itself was not also under attack it was able to continue for a few more years).

2 Both the Farquharsons and other prominent figures within the Institute were growing old, and although there were a number of active younger members, they tended on the whole to be either academics who were ultimately more drawn towards the professional (as opposed to the amateur) side of the discipline, or people from other spheres (the Church, University settlements, social work) who would have wished the Institute to move more directly towards their particular field of interest. To put it more simply, there was no one else who shared the ideals of Ruskin, the sociology of Branford and the Geddesian belief in the survey, and who was willing to take on the arduous administrative work involved. To the younger generation of social scientists, the Institute and the Farquharsons appeared already peculiarly dated, "a rather special kind of Edwardian couple" (Campbell-Stewart 1981). Along with steam trains and Victorian city centres, there was no place for them.

3 Part of the reason for the age profile of the Institute's active membership was the wholesale loss of the younger geographers in the split with the Le Play Society in 1932. Although the Le Play Society did not remain in existence much longer than the Institute, and suffered from many of the same weaknesses, it was able to continue foreign fieldwork until well into the 1950s, largely through the support of a loyal core of academic geographers and their students. No such body of academic or students existed in sociology during the 1930s, and when they did begin to appear during the 1950s, participation in the activities of the Institute of Sociology was not uppermost in their minds. Had Le Play House been able to retain more geographers, during a period when human and regional geography were at their strongest (1930 to 1960), it is possible that a new generation of Le Playians might have emerged.

4 By choosing to remain in rural Herefordshire rather than returning to London after the war, the Institute effectively cut itself off from any real position of influence at a time when a great deal was happening in the social science world in which it could have played a more significant part. The location of Le Play House was the subject of major debate at the Institute's Council in 1946 (most major meetings were still held in London); when it was agreed that a London centre should be established, in response to Marshall's paper (Marshall 1946). As Farquharson had written in the 1945 Annual Report, "there was practically universal agreement that the Institute should re-open a headquarters in London at the earliest possible moment" (VB176). However, the purchase of the Ledbury premises in 1946 imposed a considerable strain on the Institute's already weak finances, and a decision on a London centre was postponed until the financial situation should become clearer. The rejection of the London School of Economics's offer to take over the Sociological Review in 1948, which led to the withdrawal of London School of Economics participation in the Institute and active steps being taken to establish both a rival journal and a new organisation effectively condemned Le Play House to permanent rural isolation.

5 The distinction between 'amateur' and 'professional' sociology referred to earlier (Stebbins 1978), although not a distinction which was articulated at the time, can nonetheless in retrospect be seen to have been an underlying factor affecting the future of the Institute. Those in the 'sociological' wing of the Regional Survey movement had, ever since Geddes' rejection for the LSE Chair in 1908, treated the formal academic world with a certain measure of healthy scepticism. Notwithstanding Farquharson's somewhat more pragmatic approach to the LSE in the 1930s following the deaths of Geddes and Branford, Le Play House always avoided becoming too

closely involved with the Universities. This policy caused no particular problems in the pre-war period, when not only sociology but also most of the other fields with which the Institute had connections were dominated by amateurs - but after 1945, academic sociology, social work, town planning, market research and even the organisation of study tours abroad all became gradually, or in some cases rapidly 'professionalised', leaving no role for an organisation of dedicated impecunious amateurs. Quite why the amateur tradition in some disciplines (local history, archaeology, botany, ornithology and geology) remains relatively strong is not clear (Stebbins 1978). The rise of town planning, and the inability of the ailing Institute of Sociology to exert any real influence on its development, despite being the heritors of Patrick Geddes who all but invented the idea is perhaps an even more serious failing than its lack of influence in academic sociology.

However, there is a sense in which sociology has suffered by rejecting its amateur heritage. Voluntary investigative educational activities, of the kind initiated by Le Play House do still continue, under many different guises - through the Workers Educational Association, University Extra-Mural Departments, Women's Institutes, Local History associations and many other small, local bodies. The participants do not see themselves as sociologists, nor do they look to Le Play, Geddes or Farquharson for inspiration. But neither do they see themselves as having much in common with the discipline of sociology as it is currently taught and practiced, and they do not concern themselves unduly about the rather vulnerable and marginal position in which it now finds itself. If the new generation of post-war sociologists, whom Halsey categorises as both provincial and professional (Halsey 1982) had been less eager to bury their amateur past, the discipline in general might command more widespread support and understanding today.

The fate of the Institute of Sociology is not dissimilar to that which befell that other manifestation of what Shils calls "thirties naive empiricism", Mass Observation. In explaining not so much its decline, but rather its exclusion from contemporary texts on sociological methodology, Stanley writes

"... sociology continually moves on abandoning old sites for new, tearing down old edifices when age renders them either unsafe or unfashionable, and always replacing the methodological edifices with new structures. The old ruins become unintelligible as the memory of their use becomes obscured by time. At most they remain a mute record of an earlier and arrested development; they represent what might have been as well as an example of a failure to develop. Sociologists seldom visit such sites, and generally find them uninteresting when they do. Like most builders, they look on the ruins as a source of raw materials, blocks to be carried away and used in the new building. Such is the predatory nature of most archival and historical work in sociology" (Stanley 1981)

Writing in 1952, at the time when it first began to be clear that the Institute could not survive C C Fagg, who had himself been involved with the Regional Survey movement since the end of the 19th century wrote to the Farquharsons,

"The Institute appears to be the victim of an Oedipus situation; aggravated by the overall economic condition of the country and the world. The Soc Soc and the Institute have performed a gigantic feat of pioneering in the sociological sphere and you have played a major part in this. But the Institute has given birth to many lusty offspring, chairs of sociology in the universities; and the occupants of these appear to me now to be playing the role of Oedipus. They want to be independent of the old man. Sociology itself will, I think, lose something by this by becoming more rigidly

academic. But that is the way of the world, and our consolation is the contemplation of a life of work well done and bearing fruit" (AF8)

By general agreement, the Institute went down in a dignified manner - as Canon Demant wrote at the time of the final meeting, held in January 1957 two years after the dissolution, "It is in one sense a sad funeral: but in another it is a magnificent example of dying properly" (4.1.57 : AF35). Far more sanctimonious tears were shed by other academics and institutions, none of which had done anything to assist the Institute at times when it could possibly have been saved. As John Ross wrote to Farquharson in May 1951, on the news of the establishment of the BSA, "I am surprised that the founders of the British Sociological Association have not only markedly avoided making any mention of the Sociological Society or the Institute, but have conveyed the impression that no such organisation has previously existed. In view of the names appearing on the letter (to *The Times* (DE)), it suggests a not very creditable lack of candour." The real tragedy however is that the work of two generations and hundreds of individuals in keeping alive the idea of sociology in this country for a quarter of a century is now all but forgotten.

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# Appendix A

## Keele University Library Archives

Material in the Keele University Library Archives relevant to the history of sociology consists of

- 1 Papers of Victor Branford
- 2 Formal records of the Sociological Society, Le Play House, the Institute of Sociology and various other related bodies
- 3 Papers of Alexander and Dorothea Farquharson
- 4 Some papers of Patrick Geddes (the majority of his papers are elsewhere)
- 5 Some papers of Karl Mannheim (the majority of his papers are elsewhere)
- 6 Various other papers and documents

Categories 1 to 4 above are stored in two separate sequences, neither of which is more than a rough and ready listing of material in the state in which it arrived at the Library. Some sorting and preliminary cataloguing of Victor Branford's papers had been undertaken in 1940, and later by Lewis Mumford in 1953.

Papers deposited in 1955 on the dissolution of the Institute of Sociology are listed in the sequence 'VB'.

Papers deposited in 1976 on the death of Dorothea Farquharson are listed in the sequence 'AF'.

There is however a considerable amount of overlap and duplication between the two sets of papers, and both require further sorting. Various other papers relating to peripheral individuals and organisations are included in both sequences.

The small collection of Karl Mannheim papers are stored elsewhere in the Archives, and consist of two uncatalogued boxes.

References (VB#) and (AF#) in the text of this paper refer to material in the Keele Archives. A listing of all numbers quoted is given overleaf. Where relevant, further information is given in the text.

Only sequence numbers containing documents relevant to the thesis have been included.



## VB SERIES

- 1 Branford Papers, transfer to Keele
- 4 Various leaflets
- 45 Victor Branford's will
- 98 Various Sociological Society papers, 1920s
- 114 Various Sociological Society and Outlook Tower papers, 1900-1920s
- 121 British Institute of Social Service papers
- 123 Le Play House Student Committee 1925-31
- 173 Institute of Sociology Annual Reports 1930-48
- 174 Correspondence on transfer of Sociological Review to Keele
- 180 Sociological Society Members Book 1914-1920
- 181 Sociological Society Minutes 1926-29
- 183 Sociological Society attendance 1911-14
- 202 Le Play House Directors Meetings
- 205 Sociological Society Council 1913-26
- 206 Le Play House Council Minutes 1924-9
- 208 Regional Association papers
- 209 Institute of Sociology Executive Minutes 1930-32
- 210 Sociological Society Cities Committee papers
- 211 Institute of Sociology Council Minutes 1930-32
- 212 Institute of Sociology / Charities Organisation Society Social Reconstruction Committee papers
- 215 Le Play House Council Minutes 1929-30
- 216 Le Play House Executive and Trustees 1927-30
- 225 Institute of Sociology Council and Executive Minutes 1932-36
- 233 Civic Education League Summer School 1920
- 235 South Eastern Union of Scientific Societies papers
- 238 British Institute of Social Service / Sir Halley Stewart Committee on the Survey 1930s
- 242 Various mixed papers
- 243 Correspondence Alexander Farquharson / Patrick Geddes / Victor Branford on publications
- 244 Correspondence Victor Branford / Sybella Branford 1924-5
- 268 Charity Organisation Society 1935-43
- 295 T H Marshall "The Case for a London Centre" (1946)
- 300 Correspondence Alexander Farquharson / R R Marrett
- 302 Correspondence Alexander Farquharson / E Barker

## AF SERIES

- 3 Correspondence on transfer of papers to Keele 1955
- 6 Various papers, 1952-3
- 7 Institute of Sociology Executive Minutes etc 1954-5
- 8 Correspondence 1953
- 9 Correspondence 1952
- 11 Notes on Victor Branford
- 15 Various papers, 1946-7
- 33 Correspondence Alexander Farquharson / Dorothea Price 1927-8
- 35 Dissolution meeting 1957
- 40 Alexander Farquharson early correspondence 1903-5
- 42 Correspondence Alexander Farquharson / Peter Scott and others 1938-45
- 50 Correspondence Alexander Farquharson / Dorothea Price 1933
- 54 Correspondence Alexander Farquharson / Dorothea Price 1925
- 55 Correspondence Alexander Farquharson / Kate Bradley 1908-10
- 57 Alexander Farquharson early correspondence 1902-4
- 58 Correspondence Alexander Farquharson / Kate Bradley 1910-19
- 59 Correspondence Alexander Farquharson / Kate Bradley 1906-08
- 61 Details of Institute of Sociology for Keele
- 70 Alexander Farquharson obituaries
- 76 Civic Education League / Sociological Society papers 1921
- 90 Correspondence Alexander Farquharson / Karl Mannheim 1935-48
- 93 Correspondence Dorothea Price / Alexander Farquharson 1928
- 96 Correspondence Dorothea Farquharson/Alexander Farquharson 1933-38
- 98 Correspondence Dorothea Price / Alexander Farquharson 1930-32
- 99 Correspondence Alexander Farquharson / Dorothea Price 1927
- 100 Correspondence Alexander Farquharson/Dorothea Farquharson 1933-48
- 101 Correspondence Dorothea Price / Alexander Farquharson 1928-29
- 102 Correspondence Dorothea Price / Alexander Farquharson 1933
- 160 Correspondence Alexander Farquharson / Victor Branford / Eleanor Spear 1925-30
- 171 Formation of the British Sociological Association

## **Appendix B**

### **Uncatalogued Material At Keele**

A large amount of material from the Institute of Sociology stored at Keele University remains uncatalogued. Much of this consists of catalogues, pamphlets, journals and brochures from various organisations both in this country and abroad with which the Institute was in contact. It is stored in Keele Hall, along with the collection of survey materials (reports, maps, photographs, slides etc) dating from the early 1920s through to 1951, much of which was packed and sorted by Lorna Hill from 1948 to 1949. A list of the foreign field trips undertaken by Le Play House is given in Appendix D.

Access to this material was obtained by courtesy of Stanley Stewart, formerly Keele University Librarian.

A small amount of survey material, mainly from the Le Play Society trips of the 1930s is stored in the Geography Department, and access to this was obtained by courtesy of Stanley Beaver, formerly Professor of Geography at the University.

## **Appendix C**

### **Papers Of Dr E J Lindgren**

The initials (EJL) in the text refer to the small collection of papers relating to the Institute of Sociology between 1941 and 1955 kindly made available to the author by Dr Ethel John Lindgren, lately Fellow of Newnham College Cambridge and a member of the Council of the Institute for most of that time.

The papers consist of formal records (Minutes, Agendae etc) not all of which are available at Keele, and private correspondence with Dorothea Farquharson. Dates and other details are given in the text where necessary.

# APPENDIX D

## FOREIGN FIELD TRIPS ORGANISED BY LE PLAY HOUSE 1921 - 1951

Date	Destination	Numbers	Files	Notes
1921	March		LA	"The first foreign survey meeting undertaken by LPH" (AF76)
	Dec			France (Paris)
1922	April			Holland
	May			France (Brittany)
	August			Austria (Tyrol)
1923	Jan	23		Italy (Rome)
	April	23		Italy (Venice)
	May	14		France (Loire)
	Aug	57	KH	Norway
	Oct			Belgium (Brussels)
	Dec			Spain (Madrid)
1924	April			Hungary (Budapest)
	Aug		KH	Czechoslovakia
	Aug			Hungary
	Aug			France (Briancon)
1925	April			Germany
	Aug		KH	Norway
	Aug			Czechoslovakia
1926	Jan	LPH Educational Tours becomes a separate organisation		
	April		KH LA	France (Carnac)
	April			France (Provence)
	Aug			Ireland
	Aug			Belgium (Dinant)
	Dec			Italy (Rome)
1927	April		LA	France (Auvergne)
	April			Yugoslavia
	July		KH	Austria (Tyrol)
	July		KH LA	France (Pyrenees)
	Dec			Sicily

Date	Destination	Numbers	Files	Notes
1928	April	France (Normandy)		
	April	Majorca	KH	
	April	France (Montpellier)		
	May	Italy		
	July	Germany		
	Aug	Sweden		
	Dec	France (Montpellier)		
	Nov	LPH Educational Tours Association becomes Foreign Work Cttee of LPH		
1929	Jan	Portugal		VB242
	March	Corsica	28 LA	VB242
	July	France (Les Eyzies)	27	
	July	Czechoslovakia	25 KH LA	led by Arthur Geddes
	July	Germany (Harz Mnts)	21 KH	
	July	Austria (Tyrol)	17 KH	
	Dec	France (Montpellier)		LPH Exec 27.3.30
1930	Jan	Institute of Sociology formed		
	March	Holland	21	
	March	Algeria	31 LA	
	March	France (Carnac)	KH	
	Aug	Finland	LA	
	Aug	Yugoslavia (Dolomites)		
	Aug	France (Pyrenees)	KH LA	
	Aug	France (Cantal)		Students Cttee
1931	Jan	France (Mentone)		
	Jan	Spain	27	By motor (most trips were by train) Council 17.7.31
	March	Sicily	29	
	March	Germany (Heidelberg)	22 LA	
	Aug	Poland	30	
	Aug	Rocamadour	17	
	Aug	Yugoslavia		Student Cttee
1932	Jan	Le Play Society formed		
	Aug	Shetland	13 KH	
	Sept	Jersey	15 KH	
1933	March	Guernsey	17 KH	
	Aug	Orkneys	KH	
1934	May	Holy Island		
1935	March	Italy	KH	
		Czechoslovakia	23 KH	VB302 AF-EB 22.7.35
		France (Normandy)		
		Italy (Florence)		
		Finland	KH	

Date	Destination	Numbers	Files	Notes
1936	March	Spain		
			KH	
	Aug	Orkneys		Summer - International Conference on Social Work trips to USSR, Scandinavia and E Europe
	Dec	Germany (Cologne)		DF-H Mess (KH) 2.11.38
			KH	
1937	March	France (Auch)		
	March	Switzerland (Sierre)		
	Aug	Scandinavia		
	Aug	Skye		
	Sept	Hungary		
			KH	Bakony Wald, E of Budapest
1938	April	France (Provence)		
	Aug	Denmark/Sweden		
	Aug	France (Gascony)		
			KH	AF96
			KH	
1939	April	France (Tourraine)		
	Aug	Finland		
	Aug	Denmark	22	
			KH	M Jahoda interview
			KH	
1939-1945	All foreign tours suspended during the War			
1947	April	Belgium (Ghent)	26	
	Aug	Denmark	21	
			KH	
			KH	
1948	Aug	Denmark	19	
	Sept	Switzerland (Sierre)		
			KH	
			KH	
1949	March	Holland (Breda)		
	Aug	France (Brittany)		
	Aug	Denmark		
			KH	
			KH	
1950	Aug	France (Pyrenees)		
	Aug	Denmark		
			KH	
			KH	
1951	Aug	France (Pyrenees)		

#### NOTES

- 1 For all tours, the country and/or the exact destination are given
- 2 The number of participants is given where this is known
- 3 Where survey material exists at Keele, the location is given as either Library Archives (LA) or Keele Hall (KH)
- 4 Specific references to particular tours in correspondence or minutes are given in the Notes column

**APPENDIX E**

