# DICTIONARY *of* LABOUR BIOGRAPHY

VOLUME XIV

*Edited by*

*Keith Gildart & David Howell*

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# Acknowledgements

The *Dictionary of Labour Biography* depends on the scholarship of our contributors. They enable an appreciation of the infinite variety that has been characteristic of the British labour movement. We thank them for their entries and for their tolerant and good-humoured responses to our queries and comments.

The research for this volume, as with its predecessors, rests on the library and archival resources of many institutions. As always we have depended on the rich collections and supportive staff of the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick, the Labour History Study and Archive Centre at the People's History Museum, Manchester and the Working Class Movement Library, Salford. Previous volumes have acknowledged the invaluable contribution of the British Newspaper Library, Colindale. Its closure and the consequential transfer of its holdings mean that we can now consult them in the less spartan and less urban new home at Boston Spa in Yorkshire.

The construction of individual entries has depended on the resources of local depositories. We are grateful to Burnley Public Library, Cambridgeshire Record Office, Durham Record Office, Flintshire Record Office Hawarden, Hampshire Record Office, Portsmouth Archives, Hull History Centre, Kent Record Office, Maidstone Archives, Sheffield City Archives, Tyne and Wear Archives Service, Newcastle Archives, and Walsall History Centre. Our thanks are all the greater because these vital resources for the historical memory of communities are suffering from the severity of government-imposed austerity.

We remain committed to the exploration of labour movements in the context of diverse and contested national identities, a priority underlined by recent political upheavals. Our debts to the National Archives Kew, the British Library, the Trades Union Congress Library, the National Library of Scotland, the Scottish Record Office, and the National Library of Wales are underpinned by this commitment. Our entries also depend heavily on material held in British academic institutions: Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics and Political Science, London Metropolitan University Archives, Sydney Jones Library University of Liverpool, Swansea University Library, University of Durham Library, University of Huddersfield Library, University of Newcastle Library, University of Stirling Library, University of Sussex Library.

Diverse collections illuminate the richness of our material: Arthur Findlay College Stansted, British Postal Museum London, College of Psychic Studies London, National Co-operative Archives Manchester, National Portrait Gallery London, National Tramway Museum Archives Derbyshire, Union of Democratic Mineworkers Mansfield, Women's Library London. More widely we must emphasise our continuing thanks to the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam complemented for this volume by the Archive Office of Tasmania, Hobart and the Kenya National Archive, Nairobi.

Once again we have experienced the excitement and frustrations of tracing family details on Ancestry.com, the genealogist.com.uk and scotlandspeople@scotlandonline.co.uk. We are glad to note our informal link with the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and the practical help and enthusiasm of Mark Curthoys.

This volume has been prepared in a period of exceptional political turmoil. Much has been unexpected and emphasises the complexity and contingency of what we study as historians. More substantively the crude populism that increasingly degrades our politics makes even more urgent the need to recover our past in all its diversity.

# Notes to Readers

1. Place names are usually quoted according to contemporary usage in the period covered in each entry.
2. Where the amount of a will, estate or effects is quoted it is normally that given in *The Times*, in the records at Somerset House in London, the Probate Office in Manchester or at the Scottish Record Office in Edinburgh. For dates before 1860 the source is usually the Public Record Office. Additional information has been provided by www.ancestry.co.uk and www.gov.uk.
3. Under the heading **Sources**, personal information relates to details obtained from relatives, friends or colleagues of the individual in question; biographical information refers to other sources.
4. The place of publication in the bibliographical sources is London unless otherwise stated.
5. The *See also* sections that follow some biographical entries include names marked with a dagger—these refer to biographies published in Volumes I–XIII of the *Dictionary of Labour Biography*; those with no marking are included in the present volume.
6. A consolidated list of entries in Volumes I–XIV can be found at the end of this volume, before the general index.

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**ANCRUM, James** (1898–1946)
COMMUNIST AND NATIONAL UNEMPLOYED WORKES' MOVEMENT LEADER

James 'Jim' Ancrum was born on 15 August 1898 in Felling-on-Tyne, now part of the metropolitan borough of Gateshead. His parents were James, a road labourer, and Martha née Mills. The family included many staunch Methodists. He started work underground at a local colliery as a boy and at the age of sixteen, in 1915, he volunteered for the Royal Navy and served for the rest of the war. During the miners' lockout of 1926, Ancrum joined the Communist Party, a decision that caused a permanent rift with some of his respectable, Methodist relatives. The 1926 lockout featured a rapid expansion in Communist Party membership in the Durham coalfield, more than in any other, but then an equally rapid decline. He was part of a small cadre who remained in the party and played a significant role in the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM) in the region during the inter-war years.

Ancrum gained both a national and an international reputation for his organising role with Workers' International Relief during the lock-out at Dawdon Colliery, County Durham, in 1929. This was a particularly significant dispute for the Communist Party because it was an opportunity to implement the 'class against class' strategy which had recently been adopted by the Communist International. At Dawdon the Durham Miners' Association (DMA) Executive was amenable to accepting the inferior wages and conditions offered by the management whilst the local lodge was not; for the Communist Party this was an opportunity to promote its revolutionary leadership in opposition to the official union structure.

Workers' International Relief (WIR) was a Comintern initiative that was intended to prevent workers who were on strike from being starved back to work. Ancrum described how the national committee of the WIR had made a £30 donation to start a feeding centre for the miners and their families. A local committee, initially opposed by lodge and DMA officials as a communist front, organised the centre with the help of the local Co-operative Society. Funds were then raised by collections and concerts that involved the local community as well as appeals to trade union branches around the country. Over fifteen weeks, until the Dawdon miners returned after a partial victory, 14,880 meals were served and 1200 food parcels were distributed to workers and their families. According to Ancrum this showed that 'the workers cannot rely on the trade union machine to prevent them from starving during a strike. They must have their own commissariat, the W.I.R…' [Ancrum (1929)]. This of course was entirely in line with the 'class against class' position, but at the same time the feeding centre has been recognised as being instrumental in allowing the dispute to continue.

Ancrum was appointed by the 11th Congress of the Communist Party to its Central Committee in December 1929. He served until 1932, whilst also spending time from some point in 1931 until 1932 at the International Lenin School in Moscow. The 11th Congress was the second held by the party in 1929, the Comintern believing that the members of the Central Committee agreed at the 10th, at the beginning of the year, were insufficiently committed to the 'class against class' policy. Ancrum proved loyal to this policy for as long as it was required of him. He repeated his WIR role in organising soup kitchens and feeding centres during the textile disputes in Lancashire in 1930. In that year he was a leader of the Tyneside contingent of a Hunger March to London. This march, held only a year after an earlier National Hunger March and organised despite the reservations of the NUWM leadership, attracted less than half of the target number of marchers and Tyneside was no exception.

In the early 1930s Ancrum was also secretary of the Durham Miners' Minority Movement, speaking at pit-head meetings and trying with little success to build a membership in the coalfield. The Executive of the DMA had been in a bitter feud with the Communist Party since the 1926 lock-out, and the Minority Movement pushing the 'class against class' critique of the union leadership exacerbated the situation. In 1931, Ancrum was temporarily expelled from the union for Minority Movement activity, although the specific offence was 'dealing with Lodge

business in Felling Square' [DMA Executive Committee Minutes, 14 July 1931]. Although the available evidence points to his loyalty to the Communist Party leadership, the Minutes of the Central Committee of 15 March 1931 record a contribution which also outlined his approach to locality working:

> Before I joined the Party I used to back gee-gees, fill in the football coupon and go to the pub. But when I joined the Party I thought I had to stop doing this and only associate with Communists. But we must associate with people who back gee-gees, fill in the football coupon and go to the pub. Find out what's troubling them and raise it as an election issue… we must not only deal with national issues but get definitely on to the big issues affecting the workers in the localities [Communist Party, Minutes of Central Committee Meeting, 15 March 1931].

There are echoes here of Methodism in this account of his life-style conversion on joining the Communist Party. There is also a clear sign of what was to make him a force in the Felling area: the focus on what local people defined as major issues and the need to engage with them.

Ancrum was elected as a Communist councillor to Felling Urban District Council at a by-election in 1935. This local authority was solidly Labour and it was his third attempt at a seat in his own West Ward; he consolidated his position two years later. Ancrum's electoral progress in Felling over a six-year period indicates his increasing presence in the area, as can be seen from the election reports in his local newspaper *Heslop's Local Advertiser*, and the *Newcastle Journal*. In 1931, in a field of six candidates for three seats, he secured 12% of the votes cast. Three years later, with five candidates for the seats, he secured 16%. At the by-election in 1935 he was elected with 66% of the vote against one Labour rival. In 1937, in a field of five candidates, he was re-elected with 23% of the vote, again defeating a Labour rival. Although he was never successful in the Durham County Council elections, he nevertheless achieved a noticeable increase in his share of the vote over the same period. In 1934 in a field of three candidates for one seat he won 18% of the vote and 29% three years later.

West Ward was one of the poorest in the authority and had the highest rate of over-crowded housing. Ancrum's increasing success was the result not just of persistent electoral campaigning in the same ward but of meticulous local advice and advocacy work. He was a leading figure in the Felling branch of the NUWM and a speaker at regular outdoor meetings, where he described his extensive casework on benefits advice and appeals over rents, repairs, and preventing evictions. Ancrum organised the funding and equipment for the Felling contingent on a Means Test protest march to Durham in 1932 and led the Felling and Gateshead campaigns against the new benefit scales introduced by the 1934 Unemployment Assistance Act. This campaign involved 1000-strong indoor rallies in a local cinema, and a march estimated at 15,000 strong to the Unemployment Assistance Board Area Office. Ancrum secured a commitment from the manager not to reduce benefit scales where children were receiving free school meals, a review of cases where 'unfair advantage' was being taken of the Act, and agreement that central government would be notified about the protest. This was part of the national movement that forced the government to temporarily withdraw benefits cuts. However, his local paper noted after his first election success that 'This contest appears to have been fought on an individual and not a political basis … Councillor Ancrum is well-known throughout the district and this no doubt accounts for his remarkable victory' [*Heslop's Local Advertiser*, 18 October 1935]. In other words it was not his communist politics that attracted the voters, but his local efforts on their behalf over benefits, housing issues, and council policies.

Ancrum's council work was largely an extension of his NUWM work. As well as taking opportunities to campaign against the Means Test and benefits levels, he took up local dissatisfaction about council housing and job schemes, and campaigned for more transparency in council business and for a points system in council house allocation. At one point the district Communist Party officials had to warn him against making accusations of corruption and

favouritism in council affairs unless he had firm evidence. At the same time he had a national presence in the NUWM, speaking and helping to create branches around the country, and with his name and position as 'National Organiser' on the organisation's headquarters letterhead. Nevertheless the NUWM in the North East of England, as in many other areas of the country, was isolated from the mainstream labour movement for much of the 1930s. Ancrum was involved in organising the Tyneside contingent for the 1934 Hunger March, but the effort was later criticised by NUWM leaders for having to make up the numbers with 'unreliable, bad types' rather than the trade unionists who were the target participants. Although trade union participation had improved considerably two years later, and Ancrum had been instrumental in raising funds for the marchers in the Felling area, he failed to persuade Felling Urban District Council to support the 1936 Hunger March. His Labour colleagues fell into line with their party's official opposition to such communist initiatives.

Local elections were suspended for the duration of the war and Ancrum served on Felling UDC from 1935 until his death in 1946. His was one of only five local authority seats to be taken by Communist candidates in the north-east of England during the inter-war period; like Ancrum, the other councillors were all well-known local activists in the NUWM. This appears to have been the case in other parts of Britain too. The fact that the small numbers of communists elected to local authorities in Britain were almost invariably local NUWM figures is a testament to the effectiveness of their advice and advocacy work. The Communist Party recognised at the time that such local electoral success was the result of campaigning work by individuals, but that this was not being translated into wider support for the party: 'the workers see too much done by councillors as individuals and not enough by them as Party members' [Communist Party, Report of the Fifteenth Party Congress 1938]. Ancrum's local paper had already made a similar observation. During the Second World War Ancrum served as an Air Raid Precautions warden in Felling, a role which communists developed as a means to monitor and take up local issues and grievances. He formally withdrew from the NUWM in 1940, with a suddenness that is known to have confused such leadership of the organisation as still remained; it is not clear what the reasons were, although by that stage the political circumstances that had produced the NUWM had changed completely.

Ancrum had acquired a command of Russian during his year at the Lenin School and that was the first of several visits to the Soviet Union. It is possible (although this must be conjecture) that his knowledge of the language gave him a greater opportunity to appreciate what was really taking place there during the 1930s. If so there is no public evidence that he expressed any disquiet about it. It is known that the NUWM leaders Wal Hannington and Harry MacShane had several major disagreements with the Comintern loyalists in the Communist Party leadership over the direction of the unemployed movement. What role, if any, Ancrum played is not known and neither is his position during the policy disputes. His career as an activist lasted twenty years and witnessed the major Comintern-imposed policy shifts of the CPGB, all of which he seems to have accommodated.

Ancrum had married Frances J. Gibbon in June 1920, a Felling Communist Party activist, and they had no children. He died in 1946 of complications following an operation and after a communist funeral was buried at St Mary's Church, Heworth. After his death the Labour Party re-captured his West Ward seat and the Communists were never represented again on Felling Urban District Council. In many respects Ancrum represents a good example of the 'local tribunes' produced by the Communist Party between the wars. He would have been to a large extent an ideal role model of the time: rooted in his own community and sharing its privations, selflessly active, an effective negotiator and open-air speaker, a natural leader whose abilities were honed through party training and education. His achievements as an NUWM leader—and in winning local elections—were substantial in a region where the CP membership was consistently the smallest of any district in Britain. Nevertheless 'local tribunes' operated within the context of the top–down organisation that was the Communist International. Jim Ancrum was

one of those who had to balance the needs of the people among whom he worked with the demands of a political leadership whose priorities were determined elsewhere.

**Writings:** 'The W.I.R. in the Dawdon Lock-Out', *Labour Monthly*, vol. 11, no. 9 (September 1929); 'Felling's Part in the Great Protest', *Heslop's Local Advertiser*, 15 February 1935.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Durham County Record Office (Minutes of the Durham Miners' Association Executive 1931–1939); Tyne and Wear Archives Service (Minutes of Felling on Tyne Urban District Council 1934–1946); Labour History Archives and Study Centre, Manchester (Minutes of the Central Committee of the CPGB 1930–1939; Wal Hannington Papers); Marx Memorial Library (Hannington and Brown Papers; NUWM Bulletins and Circulars). (**2**) **Newspapers**: *Daily Worker* March–April 1930; *Heslop's Local Advertiser* 1931–1946; *Newcastle Journal* 1934–1937. (**3**) **Books and Articles**: George Hardy, *Those Stormy Years* (1956); Richard Croucher, *We Refuse to Starve in Silence: A History of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement 1920–1946* (1987); Stuart Howard, 'Dawdon in the "Third Period": The Dawdon dispute of 1929 and the Communist Party', *North East Labour History Society Bulletin*, 21 (1987), 3–17; Andrew Thorpe, 'The Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1920–1945', *Historical Journal*, vol. 3, no. 43 (2000), 777–800; Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen, and Andrew Flinn, *Communists and British Society 1920–1991* (2007); Alan Campbell and John McIlroy: 'The National Unemployed Workers' Movement and the Communist Party of Great Britain Revisited', *Labour History Review*, vol. 73, no. 1 (April 2008), 61–89; Don Watson, *No Justice Without A Struggle: The National Unemployed Workers' Movement in the North East of England 1920–1940* (2014). (**4**) **Oral Testimony**: Mrs. Joan Douglas (nee Ancrum).

DON WATSON

*See also*: Henry BOLTON; †Sir William LAWTHER

**BANNER, Robert** (1855–1910)
TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST

Robert Banner was born on 27 November 1855 in a tenement building in East Arthur Place, on the eastern south side of central Edinburgh. His father, James Banner (1816–1887), an Edinburgh shoemaker had married Margaret née Dickinson (1825–1882) in 1843 and together they were active in the Chartist movement. Robert (he was 'Bob' from an early age), the eighth of seventeen children, later recounted that his father had known Ernest Jones and his mother had set up a secret hand-grenade factory during a critical period in the Chartist movement. Banner's reading material at home included works by Robert Owen and files of the Chartist newspapers *Northern Star*, *Red Republican*—including the first English translation of *The Communist Manifesto*—and *Friend of the People* [*Workman's Times*, 5 December 1891]. Throughout his life Banner remained a student of Chartism, once promising the Socialist League Council a pamphlet on the subject for the Socialist Platform series. Sadly, Banner failed to deliver the manuscript and he published nothing other than letters to the press in his lifetime.

Already a recent participant in the Edinburgh demonstration for household suffrage in 1866 and other radical gatherings, Banner became involved in the affairs of the Edinburgh Republican Club when it was established in 1871, where he met the radical journalist John Morrison Davidson. Although only nineteen years old and still an apprentice in the bookbinding trade, Banner took over the secretary's role in 1874 and according to one account it was here that he first met the Austrian Marxist Andreas Scheu, who arrived in the city in the following year [Lee and Archbold (1935) 80]. Scheu's autobiographical portrait written nearly fifty years

later, locates their first encounter in the Unitarian church of Pastor Robert Drummond after the Austrian had spoken to the congregation [Scheu (1923) 109]. Whatever the exact truth, at some point in or around 1875, the experienced Austrian revolutionary took Banner under his wing and introduced him to social democratic ideas which the young bookbinder later acknowledged formed the core of his political thinking.

On completion of his apprenticeship in March 1877, Banner was admitted to the Edinburgh branch of the Bookbinders' and Machine Rulers' Consolidated Union where his enthusiasm was at first encouraged by the respectable and largely Liberal artisans forming the local committee. Sent as delegate to the influential Edinburgh Trades Council in April 1879, Banner made an immediate impact when he challenged the right of the secretary to absent himself from a conference to discuss a Federation of Trades because he did not agree with the purpose of the gathering. Acting for the first time with David Reid, a young compositor representing the Scottish Typographical Association, Banner argued for the Trades Council to implement the decision of the 1878 Trades Union Congress (TUC) to work for federation of unions principally to defend the nine hour day. Indignant at the challenge, the Trades Council secretary threatened to resign and then put his case at the following Congress, coincidentally held at Edinburgh, opposing what he believed were over-ambitious moves towards federation. In the period of consultation that followed, Banner brought the matter to the attention of the Bookbinders branch where, following a contested vote, it was agreed to instruct the Trades Council to organise a federation conference. However, with all local impetus lost in delay the matter dropped from the agenda.

Undeterred, Banner and Reid continued to make waves at the Trades Council. In August 1879 they unsuccessfully opposed any financial contribution to the Royal Infirmary Hospital because 'it should be the capitalists …to keep up such an institution' [Minutes of Edinburgh Trades Council, 19 August 1880]. Their proposal in January 1880 to encourage the Trades Council to discuss 'all questions of national importance, political and social', was checked by a majority who believed it unconstitutional and divisive [Minutes of Edinburgh Trades Council, 6 January 1880]. The pair were in a minority of two when attempting to reject endorsement of two Liberal parliamentary candidates on the basis of Banner's words that, 'so far as the working classes are concerned, none of them had any more interest in the working classes than the man in the moon' [*Edinburgh Evening News*, 31 March 1880]. They were again going against the grain in June 1880 when, in secular mode, they objected to the depiction of Sunday labour as 'demoralising', providing another rest day was provided. This landed Banner in trouble with the Bookbinders branch who warned him to be more careful in the future. For Banner, matters came to a head in the following August when the Trades Council was agonising over the allocation of seats for the royal review of volunteers and he castigated delegates for their deference saying: 'he did not understand why the Trades Council should be anxious to procure tickets for the grand stand. Besides it was a most depraving thing to see men throwing away their time, which could be devoted to useful production. They would be throwing their time away before an old lady of whom Benjamin Disraeli said she was mentally incapable of performing her duties. They will have 100,000 fools looking at another 40,000 fools, each handling a musket for the defence of a country that did not possess an inch of …' [*Edinburgh Evening News*, 17 August 1881]. At this point the Trades Council president ruled Banner out of order and he was forced to stop. These remarks proved too much for the Bookbinders union branch who replaced Banner as delegate.

Away from what was for Banner the stultifying environment of the Trades Council, his activity was more expansive and explicitly political. Again with Reid at the Edinburgh Workman's Industrial Institute set up in 1880 by leading trade unionists to stage 'discussions, essays and

lectures', Banner promoted a political aspect to the work, inviting Scheu to speak and running a Social Science Congress [Minutes of Edinburgh Trades Council, 27 April 1880; *Edinburgh Evening News*, 8 October 1880]. Despite its strong links with the Trades Council, the arms-length nature of the relationship gave Banner space to criticise the established craft unions, as he did in November 1880 when reviewing the recent TUC he described them as 'a collection of old women and windbags who just wished themselves reported' [*Edinburgh Evening* News, 1 December 1880].

In a similar vein, Banner's correspondence with Friedrich Engels in the winter of 1880 focussed on the limitations of British trade unionism—'what a sickly thing the TUC is'—and expressed hope that as more of Marx and Engels's work were translated into English 'you will hear the low murmurings that lay stifled in the breasts of the people burst into a raging storm that will bring down priest, king and bourgeoisie. Once let the toilers taste the good we have to give them, and the odious individualism will perish as feudalism perished' [Marx/Engels Papers L-129]. Banner studied assiduously Engels's articles published in the *Labour Standard* between May and August 1881, remembering nearly twenty years later receiving a copy of the first in the series, 'A fair day's wages for a fair day's work', from Engels himself [*Woolwich and District Labour Notes*, July 1899].

Banner was also in correspondence with Karl Marx by the autumn of 1880, declaring himself to be a 'humble admirer', expressing the wish to read *Capital* that extended into a proposal for translation into English. Marx asked Banner to keep him informed of developments in the Scottish working-class movement and reports were sent, including one announcing a 'Conference of Social Democrats' meeting in Hamilton on 11 June 1881 [Marx/Engels Papers D 131–133]. Banner was clearly the driving force behind this initiative and it is possible that by this time he had established relations with James Keir Hardie, who had since 1879 led struggles among Hamilton miners, making it a suitable venue for a conference that intended to establish a 'Scottish Labour Party' that would affiliate to the Socialist International and send a delegate to the upcoming conference in Zurich. Although nominally one of three joint secretaries, it was Banner who took the leading part and drafted the programme for discussion. This included the traditional radical causes of adult suffrage, equal electoral districts, payment of members, triennial parliaments and independence for Ireland; less common was the demand for Scottish independence which was also there. Land nationalisation also featured and had a particular resonance at this time because of ongoing tenants' struggles in Scotland against landlordism. But what was most significant about the Hamilton conference, and which marked out its distinctively socialist character, was the call for 'nationalisation of the means of industrial production; national co-operation for the rational production and distribution of wealth' [*Labour Standard*, 18 June 1881]. On this issue the meeting was in advance of the founding Democratic Federation conference held three days earlier in London—welcomed by the Hamilton delegates—where nationalisation was not discussed because its leading force, H.M. Hyndman, 'was still in large part satisfied with the Radical programme adopted' [Wilkins (1959) 205]. The influence of Scheu can be detected in an additional resolution at Hamilton condemning the 'persecution of Herr Most' (Johann Most) the editor of *Freiheit*, the German language anarchist newspaper produced in London to which Scheu regularly contributed. In March *Freiheit* had supported the assassination of Tsar Alexander II and suggested other monarchs should be treated to the same justice, leading to Most's arrest, and at the time of the Hamilton meeting, detention. Most was subsequently found guilty and sentenced to sixteen months hard labour.

Banner needed no encouragement to condemn the British state for its use of repression. He reacted vociferously against the Liberal Government's Coercion Bill of 1881 claiming it 'is got up by a conspiracy of Whigs and Tories in the interest of the landowning class, in the interest of

that class who have at all times resisted the ever growing demands of the people for freedom, so that they may be better able to collect their blackmail in the form of rack rents' [*The Radical*, 26 February 1881]. For Banner, the removal of constitutional means of protest justified direct action, and he was in contact with Edinburgh-based members of the Irish Land League. He made sure that the suppression of the newspaper *Irish World* from circulation was condemned by the Hamilton delegates and in early 1881 he was attempting to attract well known speakers on the Irish question to Edinburgh [*The Radical*, 5 March 1881]. In an interview given to his friend George Samuel in 1891, Banner claimed he had been one of the few who had defended the Phoenix Park assassinations in May 1882, which he said led to government interfering with his correspondence. Banner must also have alluded to his involvement in events 'connected with Ireland, Russia and elsewhere', because Samuel wrote that these he 'must not mention in print' [*Workman's Times*, 5 December 1891]. It is possible, of course, that these were fanciful and boastful notions expressed by Banner, but it is also conceivable that they were true and perhaps connected to the 'rumour current throughout the nineties—always angrily denied—that a member of the H.M. Hyndman's Democratic Federation had some hand' in the Phoenix Park events [Thompson (1971) 33].

By the spring of 1882 Banner had certainly linked up with the Democratic Federation—the proposed Scottish Labour Party having come to nothing—his attention turned to setting-up a branch of the Federation in Edinburgh [*The Radical*, 13 May 1882]. At the end of April 1882 Hyndman wrote asking for a report on progress and in May Banner made the trip to London to attend the Federation's first annual conference where he was elected to the executive and contributed to the debate on republicanism, telling delegates that, 'the whole question turned upon what sort of republic they wished to create … In his opinion it should be a social democratic one', which presupposed common ownership of all means of production and not just land [BLPES Coll Misc 492C; *Daily News*, 1 June 1882]. Therefore, while Banner was in June 1882 prepared to join other social democrats in endorsing the programme of the Land Nationalisation League, he would add that common ownership also needed to extend to 'Mines, Factories and Machinery for the equal distribution of wealth'. In that way Banner believed, quoting from the *Communist Manifesto*, 'our goal that was sketched by Marx and Engels, where the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, will be replaced by an association, wherein the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all' [*The Radical*, 1 July 1882; 29 April 1882].

By this time Banner was a married man with four children. He married Helen née Maclucas, a fellow native of Edinburgh and a lithographer's assistant, in January 1875. The service was conducted by Pastor Drummond whom Scheu remembered as preaching 'quite radical ideas, and with whom I had various interesting discussions' [Scheu (1923) 109]. The Banners settled in Arthur Street near to where Robert had been born and with the young bookbinder in regular work earning a weekly wage of 30 shillings the family would have been better off than most. Robert, although prone to spend money on books, had built up savings only for them to be lost when the Scottish Savings and Investment Building Society wound up after 1880. Scheu later recounted his conversation with Banner at this time:

> I well remember the day when he came to me in Edinburgh and told me, with a troubled expression, that the workers' building society that he belonged to had failed. 'But you weren't heavily involved,' I said. 'Well, with my life savings about fifty pounds.' 'I thought you had invested it all in books.' 'Some of it, not all. I wish I had been true to my first love and stuck with the books. But now – perhaps it is a just punishment for wanting to have my own home that I could leave to my children, from which nobody could ever evict them. Why would a

> fighting socialist need such a thing?' He had no words of anger or bitterness against his comrades whose lack of knowledge of business (let us assume!) had led to the collapse of the building society. But it finished Edinburgh for him [Scheu (1923) 111].

Banner and his family did indeed leave the city in the late summer of 1882 with the original intention of following other Edinburgh bookbinders to America, but en route he met up with Scheu in London (Scheu had moved there in 1881) and was persuaded to set up home in the capital. Banner found work as a bookbinder in Woolwich, took rooms for the family in Milward Street in a residential district near Woolwich Common, and was quickly involved in the Invicta Working Men's Club where he found many fellow Scots, working mostly as engineering craftsmen at the Royal Arsenal. Activity at the Invicta Club gave Banner entrée to cohorts of secularists, republicans, home-rulers, anti-imperialists and radicals, amongst whom he argued for a socialism based unequivocally on the struggle between classes, an approach to politics that almost certainly had never been aired in the previously Tory Woolwich.

Banner worked with James Macdonald and Scheu to persuade the Federation to hold Sunday open-air meetings in Regents Park in February 1883, an activity he then took to Woolwich [*Justice*, 11 July 1896]. The site outside the Arsenal gates in Beresford Square became his regular haunt with, on occasions, himself the only speaker, a fact belying the suggestion that it was only following later contact with Will Crooks that the socialist tradition of open-air meetings took hold in Woolwich [Tyler (2013) 106]. Banner was soon able to persuade leading members of the Federation to speak at Woolwich, including the chairman, Hyndman, who had previously been opposed to Sunday gatherings believing them to be, according to Scheu's account, 'a continental idea, which the English people would never allow to be established in London' [Scheu (1923) 48]. Always an engaging and amusing speaker, who could perform impromptu, Banner became a familiar figure on the soap box where his Edinburgh tones accorded with some of his audience who had also left the Scottish capital to work in Woolwich. When mistaken for an Irishman Banner, tongue in cheek, wrote, 'Don't slander me. I am a Scot, and, as a Scot, a Communist' [*Workman's Times*, 14 November 1891].

In June 1884, following such a meeting at the Arsenal gates with Scheu as the main speaker, Banner announced that a Woolwich branch of the Federation was being established. Although not at this point a member of the executive, having come off in June 1883, Banner was playing a role in the simmering discord that emerged between Hyndman and Scheu over the chairman's autocratic style of leadership and 'submerged jingosim' [Thompson (1955) 396]. William Morris, who had joined the Federation in January 1883 and was at this point playing a conciliatory role, reported to Scheu who had returned to Edinburgh, that Banner was 'much down cast at the turn things are taking,' but would caution him from 'running a-muck' [Kelvin (1987) 294–295]. While Morris appears to have respected Banner's political integrity, he sometimes seems to have doubted his temperament which could be fiery and confrontational, once describing how 'Banner was ready to jump down anyone's throat' at an executive meeting [Kelvin (1987) 314]. No doubt experienced and successful in making extemporised contributions, Banner's lack of preparation could sometimes be exposed, as Morris observed at a decisive meeting where he 'spoke badly and not much to the point' [Kelvin (1987) 360].

Banner had been re-elected to the executive at the annual conference of the Federation in August when delegates adopted the title of Social Democratic Federation (SDF) along with a full socialist programme. At this conference the composition of the executive changed weakening Hyndman's position and increasingly he resorted to intrigue against Scheu and his other critics, further polarising views and forcing Morris to lead the opposition camp. In a series of confrontations during December the battle lines were drawn, culminating at the 27 December

executive meeting where Morris and his supporters, despite being in a majority, resigned from the SDF and went away to form a new organisation, the Socialist League (SL).

Banner was announced as a member of the SL provisional council and signatory of the League's *Manifesto* when it was published on 30 December 1884. Moving quickly to transfer the small Woolwich branch from the Federation to the SL, Banner invited Morris to speak in the final week of January 1885 aware that members of the SDF were due to visit in an effort to avoid secession. Morris's visit to Woolwich on 25 January was not, therefore, as Kelvin suggests, an example of his 'dislike of conflict among socialists … (illustrated) …. by his readiness to keep an SDF lecture engagement so soon after the weeks of acrimony', but more a pre-emptive strike against the Federation [Kelvin (1987) 379]. Three days later, Jack Williams and James Murray were sent down by the SDF executive and in speeches lasting two hours attacked 'various members of the majority' for their actions. Banner reported to the League secretary that after much debate members voted by five to three to become a branch of the League. Banner's addendum to his note that a number of members who would have voted to join the League were not present because of overtime work at the Arsenal, could not disguise the fact that little more than a handful were involved, and not surprisingly, despite his best efforts a League branch was never established at Woolwich [SL Archive 742/4]. The regular and well-attended Sunday evening meetings continued, still featuring League heavyweights, copies of *Commonweal* and other SL literature were sold, but no branch was registered at the Farringdon Road office nor delegate sent to the annual conference.

Not discouraged, Banner's early enthusiasm for the League meant he was a regular outdoor speaker at many of London's principal venues and occasionally he was asked to deliver a conventional lecture on one of his chosen topics including 'The Social Revolution' and 'The History of Chartism'. Banner's third offering, 'The Fraud of Politics', allowed expression of his view held since at least the early 1880s that 'Parliamentary government is a mockery, and the cry for the franchise is a sham. What is wanted is not mere voting power, but the people to understand how they are being cheated and robbed' [*The Radical*, 29 April 1882]. During the free speech fight at Dod Street in September 1885, he expected the League to send a 'force of true men who can be relied upon to resist the police should they again commit outrages', offering himself to 'come armed' [SL Archive 747/1]. He propounded League policy on the Soudan War at a protest meeting of the Woolwich (formerly Invicta) Radical Club in April 1885, successfully moving a resolution that the war was undertaken 'in the interests of the market-hunters and bond holders against a people struggling for the freedom of her native land' [*Cambridge Independent Press*, 5 April 1885]. As delegate of the Woolwich Radical Club at a Fabian Society conference in June 1886, Banner acted as a surrogate League representative, stating that 'socialists did not believe that socialism would be carried out in one country only. Socialists believe that in order to establish socialism it must be universal … and international' [Coll Misc. 0098, 1886, 175]. Described by Hyndman as a 'workman economist' because of his knowledge of Marx, Banner advised George Bernard Shaw to read *Capital* and established classes in economics for workers in Woolwich because he believed the study would unlock understanding of exploitation [Lee and Archbold (1935) 80; Shaw (1971) 84; BLPES Wallas/1/6; Commonweal, 15 October 1887]. When a Woolwich newspaper attempted to ridicule Morris for being a manufacturer and a socialist, Banner explained that socialists were concerned with the capitalist system as a whole and not the actions of individuals [*Woolwich Gazette*, 17 April 1885].

Banner's working hours and the necessity to take on overtime when it was available in busy periods often meant he was unable to attend SL council meetings and his record of attendance in the first six months of 1885 was far from exemplary. Absence meant Banner could be surprised by reported discussions of meetings, such as the occasion in May 1885 when his name had

been put forward as a possible successor to Mahon for the League's post of secretary without prior consultation. Such events reinforced doubts Banner harboured about the League's governance, organisation and administration. He complained bitterly to the secretary in April 1886 about being sent to meetings in Stratford and Battersea, at a personal cost of 4s, only to find nothing organised. Banner wrote: 'Now, as I am neither a millionaire nor a spendthrift, I don't intend going to any meeting put up by the League until those who are responsible for this organisation have been taught a little common sense. It is not by anarky (sic) but organisation progress will be made. If we can't organise a meeting in the open-air, how are we going to organise to destroy capitalism' [SL Archive 748/4].

Re-elected to the Council in April 1886, Banner, along with others, detected a growing anarchist influence in the League which he believed to be organisationally introspective at a time when energy needed to be directed towards education and agitation. With Scheu, Eleanor Marx Aveling, Edward Aveling, Alexander K. Donald and others associated with the Bloomsbury branch of the SL, Banner signed a statement criticising a circular issued by Joseph Lane and Henry Charles of the League's anarchist wing proposing major organisational change at the 1886 conference. Their scheme to establish 'communes' as a counterweight to centralisation and domination by London members, was criticised by Banner and the others as disruptive, divisive and likely to compound existing problems [BLPES Coll Misc. 0706/9]. Although the Lane and Charles proposals were rejected by the conference, the anarchist tendency grew proportionately stronger on the League council as it reduced in size, which undoubtedly contributed to Banner's decision to resign his membership in 1886.

In spite of this, he remained in regular contact with the League, took copies of *Commonweal* for sale, and attended the 1887 annual conference as a visitor. Present with League comrades at the demonstration on 13 November 1887 seeking access to Trafalgar Square following its closure by the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Banner reported to the SL secretary that 'it was nearly a header for me. I got my hat knocked into a shape which made me think for some time I had either lost or found a hat' [SL 740/3]. The Woolwich contingent was attacked by the police just after crossing Westminster Bridge and Banner described how, 'The police rode in amongst the people hitting right and left indiscriminately' [*The Link*, November 24, 1888]. Following the demonstration he acted as one of the two Woolwich contacts for the Law and Liberty League as it attempted to defend those prosecuted and maintain pressure for the banning proclamation on Trafalgar Square to be lifted. Banner's association with the League was also influenced by his admiration for Morris and he continued to respond positively to requests to speak at Hammersmith into the nineties when he would combine a Sunday midday open-air meeting with an evening lecture at Kelmscott House.

Banner's links with leading members of the Bloomsbury branch of the SL was also of significance in that it revealed a further stage in the evolution of his own political thinking, bringing him closer to those who believed it was necessary for socialists to engage in the class struggle on all fronts, including parliamentary and municipal politics, where standing candidates was a necessity. He explained his view of the tensions in the relationship between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activity in a letter to the local Woolwich press in 1890.

> Parliament never moves faster than the people who make and unmake parliaments …And is parliament their sphere of action? At present, certainly not. It is in rousing the great inert mass of working men who are at present outside of labour organisations and instructing them on the great economic questions. The **best** men among the workers don't desire to go to Parliament, but to the street corners, the factory gates, and just as our work is done effectively, then so Parliament will act in our interests. If those workmen who have an eye on Parliament

> would just keep their attention fixed on educational work …and just remember …that it is not Parliament, but the people outside it who are first to be captured, the work of us all would be more lasting and sounder …Let those who are for education and organisation stick to our guns; Parliament will move as our shots are effective. But at the same time let us see that we vote for no candidate who is against our labour programme, and that we rouse the workers to a knowledge of their own interest [*Woolwich* Gazette, 5 September 1890].

This was to be the issue the Bloomsbury branch would contest with Morris in the SL until their expulsion in 1888, by which time Banner was in regular contact with leading protagonists A.K. Donald and John L. Mahon as they hatched plans for a new organisation. By June 1888, Banner was advertising meetings in Woolwich under the title of the Labour Union and two months later a new body of that name was canvassing support, with Mahon as joint secretary and Banner a member of the organising committee, for an 'independent working class party'. Recognising that such a party could not be established immediately, the Labour Union accepted it must 'throw what weight it has on the side of the party that brings forward the most progressive measures' [Barker Archive BAR 3/1; George Bernard Shaw Papers 465].

Banner attempted to apply this strategy in the selection of a parliamentary candidate to ensure that the Conservative incumbent Colonel Edwin Hughes was challenged at the next election. Pushing forward William Martin Edmunds, a radical Liberal and supporter of home rule, Banner claimed he had received assurances from Edmunds of his support for key labour policies and other progressive demands and told a local Liberal and Radical club that 'they would force this man on the Liberal Party, and tell them that unless they supported him they would hold aloof from the election contest, or run a man of their own and split the vote' [*Woolwich Gazette*, 24 May 1889]. The choice of Edmunds created controversy in Woolwich with some local Liberals resentful of the emerging labour interest and Banner's assertive intervention. Others, including Fred Hammill who had recently arrived in the town from Yorkshire to work at the Arsenal, believed him to be a poor choice, citing the authority of the recently established Woolwich branch of the National Labour Electoral Association with its two hundred members who 'under no circumstances would… support any candidate, save one who stood on the Labour Platform, independent of any party, and was prepared to champion the claims of labour apart from the pressures of party' [*Woolwich Gazette*, 8 November 1889]. Hammill and Banner did not see eye to eye on this and there appeared to be some animosity between the two men which surfaced again in July 1891 when Banner attempted to block Hammill's candidacy for the forthcoming London County Council (LCC) election. Preparation for the LCC election gave rise to a new labour umbrella body the Woolwich Labour Representative League, which drew support from trade unions, radical clubs and tenants' organisations and it quickly became the authoritative forum for the selection of labour and trade union candidates. Tom Chambers, a retired engineer, was selected to fight the LCC election and after a good deal of jockeying for position following Edmunds' withdrawal, Ben Jones, a London co-operator with the backing of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, was selected ahead of Pete Curran, Banner's preferred candidate, to contest the Parliamentary seat.

When it became clear during the autumn of 1889 that the Labour Union would not take hold, Banner turned his attention to setting up an independent labour party with the support of Hammill and Pete Curran, who was also a recent arrival in Woolwich. Meetings continued at the Arsenal gates but were now described as organised by the 'Labour party' and were soon linked to the call for a legal eight-hour working day, the central demand of the International Socialist Labour Congress held in Paris in July 1889 about which Eleanor Marx Aveling had consulted Banner and other leading socialists in an effort to win British support [Meier (1984) 216]. The congress decision gave rise to the successful labour demonstration on 4 May 1890 where Banner

spoke on the platform with friends Curran and George Bernard Shaw, a Woolwich regular at the bookbinder's request. Following the demonstration the organisers established the Legal Eight Hours and International Labour League, where as a member of the executive representing the Woolwich Radical Club (he was now Club secretary) Banner again worked alongside Marx and Aveling and became a stalwart of subsequent May Day demonstrations. In tune with Banner's aspirations the League sought to achieve its objectives, 'educating, agitating, and organising for an eight-hours Bill…and the foundation of an independent Labour Party' [Kapp (1976) 390–391].

Banner was able to engage in discussions about the eight hour working day with some experience having been a member of the joint union committee that had achieved this for London letterpress bookbinders. Representing the London branch committee of the Bookbinders' and Machine Rulers' Consolidated Union, Banner played a prominent role in negotiations with employers that commenced in October 1890 and concluded twelve months later with an agreement to implement the eight-hour day from January 1892. Despite the agreement not being universally adopted by employers in the capital, and a vellum binders' strike seeking enforcement ending in defeat, the deal was acknowledged as a breakthrough and received wide publicity. Awareness in Woolwich of Banner's role in the negotiations led to him being drafted in by trade unions at the Royal Arsenal to advise on their campaign and accompany delegations to meet government ministers as they made their case for an eight-hour day. Similarly, Banner was also on hand to assist the Woolwich branch of the National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers as they mounted their campaign for improvements in the summer of 1889.

During the Arsenal workers' campaign Banner was in contact with Keir Hardie, supplying detailed information on pay and conditions to help the MP put their case at Westminster. It is highly likely that the two men had been on good terms and in regular contact since the early 1880s and so when Hardie's campaign in South West Ham during the 1892 general election needed a push he called for Banner to act as his agent. Hardie reported to 'Proletarian' of the *Workman's Times* (almost certainly Robert Blatchford), that during the final two weeks of the contest Banner worked tirelessly 'never away from his post from 6 in the morning till 11 at night, save to catch a meal next door. Bob, on polling day, had his head shaved to keep himself cool' [*Workman's Times*, 16 July 1892]. When the result was declared late into the night, some 50,000 people had gathered outside the Town Hall in Stratford to greet Hardie whose arrival on the balcony was cheered when Banner struck a light so the crowd could see his face.

Banner knew east London well having been a regular SL speaker at Canning Town and since his admission to the Fabian Society in November 1890 he frequently made the trip across the river—aided by the opening of the Woolwich free ferry in 1889—to meet the group of east London Fabians based in Hackney. Including Samuel and Harry Lowerison, the group was involved in efforts to tighten up the Fabians' Eight Hours Bill (published as Fabian Tract 9) and replace the Society's policy of permeation with thoroughgoing commitment to an independent labour party. As part of this movement Banner was elected to the Fabian executive in 1892 where he was pleased to sign the Society's election manifesto of that year because it represented a move towards support for a party of independent labour. However, work commitments and the refusal of the executive to adjust their early evening start time forced his resignation after only six meetings. Banner kept up his support for the Woolwich Fabian group established in 1891 and, particularly valuing the intellectual stimulation it offered, he remained a member of the society all his life.

Meanwhile, Banner and the group associated with the Woolwich Labour Party seized the opportunity to connect with others working nationally to found an Independent Labour Party (ILP) in the Spring of 1892 and were early 'adherents' to the appeal by Joseph Burgess in the pages of *Workman's Times*. Although very much in contact with the principal figures of the new movement in the capital, Banner did not join the leadership of the London ILP, as might have

been expected, preferring instead to confine his activity to Woolwich. Similarly, when the Woolwich branch of the ILP was finally constituted as part of the national body in October 1894, Banner, although elected to the executive committee, did not become one of the leading officers or attend national conference, presumably because he no longer had to, there having been many new recruits to the cause in the years following the new unionist upsurge that made the Woolwich branch among the strongest in London. He reflected on this change in his speech to a large meeting in the Woolwich Drill Hall in October 1894 where, supporting Hardie, he contrasted the new optimism with the time 'not so very long ago to advance collectivism at one of the clubs in the town, called forth hisses' [*Woolwich Gazette*, 12 October 1894].

Further evidence of this was provided only two months later when Banner and four other Labour men were elected to the local authority, the Woolwich Local Board of Health. Previously dominated by Conservatives and penny-pinching small businessmen, the Board had recently been given a shock by the public exposure of its failure to deal with poor and insanitary housing and the highest death rate in London, by Rev. J.W. Horsley, the social reforming vicar of the Holy Trinity Church. These revelations severely embarrassed Board members, prompting some improvements in public health measures which the Labour members wanted strengthened and extended. Banner, in particular, argued for the adoption of the most recent public health legislation to force recalcitrant landlords to accept their responsibilities to provide sanitary habitations. The long-running campaign, led by the labour movement, for the Board to open public libraries, in which Banner had played a prominent part since the late eighties, eventually succeeded at the end of 1895: after much delay and opposition, the Free Libraries Acts were adopted and plans made for a new library in the town. Re-election for Banner in 1896 and improved labour representation encouraged further progressive changes, including acceptance of trade union-approved conditions for contract labour, expanded public work to absorb local unemployment, and stricter enforcement of laws obliging landlords not to neglect their premises. Banner was especially vocal in these years, rebutting the argument often made by government ministers that improvements in pay of Arsenal workers could not be justified as they were immediately swallowed up by landlords increasing rents. For Banner, this view made the argument for public housing watertight and he urged the Board to explore the scope for action provided by the Housing of the Working Classes legislation pointing out how the government could release unused ground on the Arsenal site for housing. However, nothing was done in this area and Banner lost his seat in 1899. In the late nineties the Board was winding down as it anticipated the reorganisation of London local government which would in 1900 create a new Metropolitan Borough of Woolwich, absorbing the previously independent Plumstead and Eltham.

Banner's membership of the Woolwich Local Board had from January 1895 given him a seat on the governing body of Woolwich Polytechnic, which he had supported since its foundation in 1891. A regular contributor at its public events he was quick to join the campaign to save the Polytechnic when it ran into financial trouble and was forced to close in June 1894. Pivotal to the effort to mobilise the Woolwich labour movement behind plans to reopen, Banner advised a public meeting on tactics and then led a Trades and Labour Council delegation to the local Board in July 1894, a few months before his election to that body, in support of a proposal to accept funding from the LCC Technical Education Board, then under the chairmanship of Sidney Webb. When this was agreed the Polytechnic reopened, and by the turn of the century it was back on its feet offering technical programmes connected to the town's industrial workforce and a range of liberal education courses. When Banner lost his seat on the local board, Webb lost no time in efforts to retain his commitment to the Polytechnic at governing body level by proposing his nomination as a representative of the Technical Education Board, a position Banner occupied until his death.

At Parliamentary constituency level the Woolwich ILP maintained its support for Ben Jones, who had been unsuccessful at the 1892 general election and lost again in 1895. When the result

was declared Jones gave special thanks to Banner, but some in the London ILP were unhappy with the support offered by the Woolwich branch to the candidate whom they believed to be tainted by Liberal associations. The Deptford ILP was particularly strong on the matter and in October 1895 won support at the party's General Council for a resolution declaring 'the Woolwich branch be advised to take such steps as shall in the end bring about the expulsion of Bob Banner from the ILP, he being the ringleader in the matter' [ILP/9/58]. This was subsequently rescinded, allowing Banner to continue his activity in the Woolwich party as executive member, public speaker and contributor to its *Woolwich and District Labour Notes*, issued from November 1898. This splendidly unsectarian publication urged its readers to also support *Justice* (and the *Clarion*) reflecting the good relations existing locally between the ILP and the SDF where there were often joint gatherings and a summer fete, including one in 1896 at which Herbert Burrows of the SDF 'declared that a united socialist party was bound to come' [*Labour Leader*, 8 February 1896].

Although never expressing an interest himself in rejoining the SDF, some of Banner's comrades did, including Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx Aveling, whose tragic suicide at her Sydenham home at the end of March 1898 deeply affected him. He spoke at Eleanor's funeral on 5 April, but sadly his contribution was not reported. Two letters to the correspondence column of *Labour Leader* then followed. The first on April 23 written 'in haste', objected to remarks in the previous issue by 'Lily Bell', believed to be the pseudonym of Isabella Bream Price, about destructive aspects of Eleanor's materialism, which Banner correctly pointed out were 'very stupid' because they confused her philosophical and theoretical materialist outlook with her general view of life which he believed was one of idealism: 'Her theoretical materialism I know, and believe in; her ideal materialism was her failure. She placed love and hope where there was none, and died a martyr's death' [*Labour Leader*, 16 April 1898; Crawford (1999) 715; *Labour Leader*, 23 April 1898]. Readers familiar with Eleanor's story would have understood Banner's remarks about 'love and hope' to be a clear reference to Aveling's duplicitous behaviour and failure to commit to their relationship. Banner went further in his second letter a week later prefaced with the words 'as one who knew her, perhaps longer that any living British socialist', a claim which if true, would date their first encounter to a time before Eleanor's acknowledged membership of the Democratic Federation in 1883 [*Labour Leader*, 30 April 1898]. With access to 'facts and letters put at my disposal', Banner quoted a letter written by Eleanor dated 20 February 1898 including her words 'I can get on anyway', in respect of her care for Aveling who had been released from hospital following an operation and would go to Margate for convalescence. Banner linked Eleanor's remark to her financial situation which, following Engels not inconsiderable bequest in 1895 had since worsened because 'by far the greater part of it had been spent'. Here Banner, without mentioning his name was clearly impugning the 'waste of her property' to Aveling, and again his words would have been unmistakable for those who knew the couple. Banner then went on to detail—'I assert positively'—a host of apparent inconsistencies and omissions in the evidence presented at the inquest into Eleanor's death, all questioning Aveling's role in the events, which he clearly wanted investigated by the public prosecutor, a call made seven days later by Keir Hardie in his *Labour Leader* column [*Labour Leader*, 7 May 1898]. When this did not happen, Banner was most likely involved in the request to Alexander K. Donald, a former SL comrade and recently qualified barrister, that he give an opinion on the case for a prosecution against Aveling; Donald cautioned against.

The inclusion in Banner's second letter written little more than three weeks after Eleanor's death of her words 'I can get on anyway,' can only mean that he read the original correspondence from Eleanor to Freddy Demuth, son of Helen Demuth, housekeeper and lifelong friend (and possibly more) to Marx and his family. This letter and eight others, which it can be assumed Banner also read as he cites 'facts and letters', written by Eleanor between August 1897 and March 1898, reveal her state of mind as the extent of Aveling's betrayal became clear. Banner

sent the letters (or copies) to the German Social Democratic Party from which Karl Kautsky added a footnote to an article of reminiscence by Eduard Bernstein published in the April issue of *Die Neue Zeit* hinting at suspicious circumstances of Eleanor's death [*Labour Leader*, 21 May 1898; *Die Neue Zeit* XVI Jg. II Band, Nr. 30]. Bernstein, who was known to Banner, published the letters translated into German in his second article in *Die Neue Zeit* in mid-July and then in *Justice* on 30 July [*Die Neue Zeit* XVI Jg. II Band, Nr. 42, 481–491; *Justice*, 30 July 1898]. Banner must also have given Keir Hardie access to the letters because he, too, published on the subject, also including Eleanor's letters in full [*Labour Leader*, 30 July 1898].

Freddy Demuth, an engineer by trade and a member of the ILP, lived in Hackney, where Banner had established acquaintances including George Samuel and Harry Lowerison [Kapp (1976) 437]. Although we cannot be certain, it is credible to assert that Banner had come to know Demuth and, if so, would have recounted stories of his long friendship and comradeship with Eleanor. For Demuth, keen to secure posthumous justice for the wronged Eleanor, making the letters available to Banner for certain publication in Hardie's *Labour Leader* was conceivably the best way to bring the matter to the attention of the authorities.

Away from Woolwich politics, Banner maintained his trade union activity in the Bookbinders' Consolidated Union where he was a long-serving member of the London branch committee; when annual national general council meetings were instituted in 1900 he became a regular delegate. A frequent contributor to debates, he found his stance broadly in tune with the union's leadership when the base of the organisation moved to Manchester in 1900 and James Kelly, a supporter of independent labour representation, was elected as chief secretary. Vocal in support of members taking action against what he believed were increasing employer incursions into established craft practices, Banner advocated solidarity action with strikers in Liverpool (1902) and then Glasgow (1903) where he accompanied Kelly to assist in negotiations. A prominent role was also accorded to Banner in the union's attempt in 1908 to reach agreement with the National Association of Master Printers and Allied Trades over demarcation issues. Fearing the continued introduction of new machinery into binderies which allowed employers to take on workers without a craft apprenticeship, the union sought an accord with the Master Printers Association which had expressed anxiety over competitor firms undercutting their businesses by dilution of skilled labour. However, despite much common ground between the two sides, the talks failed because the Master Printers' Association felt unable to enforce any agreement on the trade, causing Banner to remark, 'I am afraid that moral suasion with firms who are already cutting your throats will not amount to very much' [*Bookbinders' Trade Circular*, March 1908].

Banner's national profile encouraged him to stand for election to the new full-time union post of assistant secretary in 1908; he came top of the poll after the first round of member voting. However, as the lowest-placed candidates were eliminated in successive rounds and members voted tactically he lost ground, eventually finishing runner-up. At the general council he opposed attempts to extend the union pension scheme for members, telling delegates at the 1905 Manchester conference that, 'There is not an economist who has written against trade unions who had not pointed out the work done for the employing class by the trade unions in providing superannuation allowances which were often the object for which the selfish men joined the societies' [*Bookbinders' Trade Circular*, August 1905]. Banner also feared the superannuation payments would be a millstone around the neck of the union, and so it proved, as the number claiming the benefit increased by 50% between 1905 and 1909. In contrast, he was an enthusiastic supporter of educational initiatives such as the launching of a new journal for the trade in 1904, the *Bookbinding Trades Journal*, edited by fellow bookbinding craftsman, ILP member and Morris admirer, William Mellor from Manchester. Believing the new publication would become an important forum for views and discussion, Banner stressed the capacity of union members themselves to fill the journal rather than paying professional writers.

The first issue of the *Bookbinding Trades Journal* proudly announced to its readers the names of two union members who had recently achieved election to municipal authorities, one being Banner, who was elected to Woolwich Borough Council in November 1903 as Labour took control for the first time with a large majority. Elected top of the poll in the St George's ward, regarded as the most difficult for Labour to win, Banner joined twenty-four other Labour councillors swept in on a wave of enthusiasm carried forward from the election in March of Will Crooks for the Woolwich parliamentary seat. Despite there being unanimous support for Crooks' candidature during the nomination process, involving the Trades and Labour Council, the ILP, and other affiliates, the Woolwich ILP took exception to the omission of their party's name from the election address, and to Labour's willingness to be accommodating towards local Liberal organisation, ignoring repeated advice by Banner and others that it was almost non-existent. Banner was acutely aware of this, having since 1899 been secretary to the Progressive Association which brought together Labour and Liberal supporters at local election time, but which by 1903 had ceased to operate as such because Labour's influence had become overwhelming. He made this plain to Hardie before and after the poll, and Hardie in turn took up the ILP's case with the Labour election secretary, William Barefoot, who was fast emerging as the central figure in the development of the local electoral machine. These anxieties were symptomatic of a growing bias 'strongly towards the trade union side of the alliance' weakening the ILP's position, a tendency that would be exacerbated by the introduction of individual membership after the setting-up of the Woolwich Labour Representation Association in 1904 [ILP/4/1903/21; Howell (1983) 264].

Nevertheless, eleven of the twenty-five Labour councillors were from the ILP, including the Mayor, Lewis Jenkins Jones, and a number of the council committee chairmen. Appropriately, Banner, well known as a bibliophile, was given chairmanship of the Library Committee where he proposed an ambitious programme including the building of a new library at Plumstead. By the time the new library was opened in December 1904, the committee chairmanship had passed to Angus Tynemouth, an elementary school teacher, who gave a vote of thanks to Liberal MP John Morley, for his keynote address. Banner did speak but the content was not reported, save a comment that it was 'an amusing speech', and one wonders if he was able to resist reference to Morley's notorious opposition to the legal eight-hour day which the bookbinder had adhered to in the previous two decades [*Borough of Woolwich Gazette*, 23 December 1904]. Banner left his mark on the new library, instructing those purchasing the stock to ensure that there was an excellent range of books about socialism and a shelf of works by William Morris.

Naturally, Banner was a supporter of the Labour Council's minimum wage policy, its provision of temporary work for the growing number of unemployed discharged from the Arsenal, plans for extended municipal services such as milk supply and electricity, and vigorous enforcement of public health regulations to improve sanitation. Housing, for Banner, remained a critical area for municipal action telling a meeting in 1906 that, 'He professed to give the landlords no peace' until there was justice for working-class tenants and 'if he did not live to see the day, he would instil the idea into children, and so to his children's children' [*Pioneer and Labour Journal*, 26 October 1906]. Angry when council plans to build municipal homes at Bostall Hill were rejected by the Local Government Board in 1905, Banner demanded a challenge and commitment to extend housing provision.

Banner was initially against standing for re-election in 1906 but was persuaded to put his name forward again, with his son William, a schoolteacher, as election agent. This time, in common with a number of other Labour men, he lost the seat as control passed to the Conservatives who stood as Municipal Reform candidates. Shocked after their defeat in 1903, municipal reformers revamped their local organisation and conducted a press campaign against the Labour council for its 'municipal extravagance', which culminated in the 1906 election campaign described by the local Labour secretary as one of 'relentless bitterness… supported by

a mendacious press which appealed only to the basest instincts of the electorate' [*Pioneer and Labour Journal*, 28 June 1907].

Disappointment at the defeat did not sap Banner's commitment. He remained involved in the work of the Labour Representation Association, serving on its general and executive committees for some time and taking on his share of public engagements. He was still sometimes asked to speak about William Morris and he would probably have taken great pleasure in chairing a meeting from the Clarion Van known as 'William Morris', parked in Woolwich in the Spring of 1908. The once-strong link with Bernard Shaw was renewed momentarily in 1906 when the playwright lectured at Plumstead and acknowledged Banner's presence in the audience. One of Banner's last public speaking engagements was at the 1909 May Day demonstration, organised jointly by the Trades Council and the ILP, where he registered his view that in Woolwich as 'in every civilised country in the world the workers assembled and declared their solidarity with the workers in all lands. The object of the meeting that night was to impress upon the workers gathered together the need for their standing together in one solid army' [*Kentish Independent*, 7 May 1909].

While Banner would have wished the spirit of working-class unity to be the one driving force behind moves to merge the four trade unions in London bookbinding, he was realistic enough to know that the depressed state of trade and the rapid introduction of binding machinery were making amalgamation essential for survival. Relations between the London unions had been good since the eight-hour campaign in the early nineties, and it was from the capital that the impetus to merger came. An active participant in the London conference of May 1907, from where he was elected to serve on the joint union committee to plan the merger, Banner was then an important agent in the process to secure positive member ballots of the constituent unions achieved by the spring of 1909. Sadly, by vesting day of the new organisation, the National Union of Bookbinding and Machine Rulers, 1 January 1910, Banner was dead.

Admitted to Plumstead Infirmary the first week of September 1910 with what was reported as a 'mental breakdown', Banner was visited by Scheu after he had learned of his old friend's condition from Linton Hartland, the former deputy clerk at Woolwich council, who was in touch with the Banner family. Scheu recorded the visit in his diary:

> He recognised me, and we were both deeply moved. He shouted 'Hey, I knew you would come.' Then he turned to a warder. 'This is my oldest friend. An artist – a poet – he and William Morris – what would Morris say, hey?' Then he lay back exhausted on his pillow, holding my hand tightly in his…Poor Robert! I comforted him as best I could, and promised to go to his wife. He embraced me strongly once more with tears in his eyes. Good-bye, Bob – Good-bye. Outside, the doctor said that Bob would be transferred the following day. To an asylum for the mentally ill – where he died. Perhaps the best of the British comrades [Scheu Archive].

Banner was transferred to the LCC Horton Asylum, Epsom on 7 September, where he died on 7 November 1910; his death certificate recording 'General Paralysis' as the principal cause of death. At this time 'general paralysis' was often used as a euphemism for syphilis, and indeed the Asylum's medical register lists that condition for Banner, although a question mark was added, suggesting a degree of uncertainty, implying perhaps a tumour on the brain [Horton Hospital H22/HT/B/03/009]. The funeral took place at Woolwich Cemetery on 11 November in what appears to have been a low-key event with few of Woolwich's labour notables present, other than Charles Grinling and William Calderwood, who were both there on behalf of the Woolwich Polytechnic governors.

Fittingly, the Bookbinders' union publications carried sympathetic notices of Banner's death. One by Sam Stubbings, secretary of the Society of Day Working Bookbinders of London and Westminster, was particularly poignant in that it came from one who had worked closely with

Banner on the merger, who shared his political perspective and was also an admirer of Morris, himself being a member of the socialist Kelmscott Club. In contrast, no substantial obituary notices appeared in the Woolwich local press and the only national newspaper to mark Banner's death was *Labour Leader*, where his pioneering socialist work was highlighted [*Labour Leader*, 25 November 1910]. Scheu was very upset that *Justice* had failed to mention Banner's death and he made his feelings clear to editor Harry Quelch when he wrote that the omission in respect of a 'good and brave comrade is most deplorable' [Scheu Archive]. As if to set the record straight, Harry Lee the lifelong SDF stalwart and historian of the federation later wrote kind words about Banner including an acknowledgement that of those who split in 1884, Morris, Belfort Bax, Scheu and Banner were 'decidedly losses to the SDF' [Lee and Archbold (1935) 72]. From Lee we also have the insight that late in life Banner was reported to have commented that 'although we had carried out two of the Chartist principles, "agitate and organise", we had not succeeded with the third, "educate"' [Lee and Archbold (1935) 80].

Following Banner's death, his wife Helen (sometimes 'Ellen') sold her husband's library to John Burns, who had known Banner since the SDF days, but was now President of the Local Government Board and a member of the Liberal Cabinet. Scheu, who probably had a hand in this, noted sarcastically, 'John could use it! And he has the money' [Scheu Archive]. Helen Banner remained at 16 Milward Street, to where the family had upgraded in 1890, close to a number of her six children who stayed in Woolwich, until she died at St Matthews Hospital, Shoreditch on 21 May 1939.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Socialist League Archive, Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels Papers, Andreas Scheu Papers, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam; Fabian Society Archive, Independent Labour Party Archive, Wallas Archive; Coll Misc., British Library of Political and Economic Science; H.A. Barker Archive; Labour History Archive, People's History Museum, Manchester; George Bernard Shaw Papers; Hammersmith Socialist Society Papers, British Library; Edinburgh Trades Council, Bookbinders' and Machine Rulers' Consolidated Union, Edinburgh Branch, National Library of Scotland; Bookbinders' and Machine Rulers' Consolidated Union Archive, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick; Woolwich Labour Party Archives, Minutes of the Woolwich Board of Health, Minutes of Woolwich Borough Council, Greenwich Heritage Centre, Horton Hospital; London Metropolitan Archives. (**2**) **Newspapers and Periodicals**: *Bookbinder* 1888–1889; *Bookbinders' Trade Circular* 1877–1910; *Bookbinding Trades Journal* 1904–1910; *Borough of Woolwich Gazette* 1903–1910; *Borough of Woolwich Labour Journal* 1901–1904; *Borough of Woolwich Pioneer* 1904; *Borough of Woolwich Pioneer and Labour Journal* 1904–1906; *British Bookmaker* 1890–1894; *Commonweal* 1885–1888; *Die Neue Zeit* 1898; *Edinburgh Evening News* 1873–1882; *Fabian News* 1891–1910; *ILP News* 1897–1903; *Justice* 1884–1910; *Kentish Mercury* 1882–1910; *Labour Elector* 1888–1890; *Labour Leader* 1894–1910; *Labour Standard* 1881–1885; *The Link* 1888; *People's Press* 1890–1891; *Pioneer and Labour Journal* 1904–1910; *The Radical* 1880–1882; *The Republican* 1879–1886; *The Republican Chronicle* 1875–1878; *Woolwich Gazette* 1882–1902; *Woolwich and District Labour Notes* 1898–1899; *Woolwich District Labour Journal* 1899; *Workman's Times* 1890–1894. (**3**) **Books and Articles**: *John E. Williams and the Early History of the Social Democratic Federation* (1886); *Preliminary*, *Interim and Final Reports of the Amalgamated Committee of the Bookbinding Trades of the Metropolis on the Eight Hours Movement* (1890–1892); *A Short Biography of Fred Hammill* (1891); *Benjamin Jones*, *The Next Parliamentary Election: A Labour Representative for Woolwich* (1892); J.M. Davidson, *Politics for the People* (1892); J.W. Horsley, *I Remember: Memoirs of a 'Sky Pilot' in the Prison and the Slum* (1911); H.M. Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life* (1911), *Further Reminiscences* (1912); E. Belfort Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions of a Mid and Late Victorian* (1918); C.H. Grinling, *Fifty Years of Pioneer Work in Woolwich* (1920); A. Scheu, *Umsturzkeime: Erlebnisse Eines Kampfers* (1923); W. Stephen Sanders, *Early Socialist Days* (1927); W. Barefoot, *Twenty Five Years of the Woolwich*

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STEPHEN WILLIAMS

*See also*: †Peter Francis CURRAN; †Henry Mayers HYNDMAN; †James MACDONALD

**BARTLETT, William Walter** (1861–1950)
SOCIALIST

William Walter Bartlett was born on 7 June 1861 at 45 Euston Road, London, the home and business address of his parents, George and Harriett (née Freeman). George Bartlett, born in

Holborn in 1809, had followed his father Abel (1780–1855), into the trade of architectural modelling, as would William himself in the mid-1870s. Specialising in the manufacture of mouldings and decorative motifs in plaster and artificial stone, George Bartlett's trade had grown with the expansion of house-building in the capital, and by 1871 he was employing eleven men at his workshop in Dukes Road, next to St Pancras Parish Church.

Political discussion in the Bartlett household was of a decidedly radical character and took place beneath an oil painting of Thomas Paine that adorned the wall of the family's living room. Harriett's father had been a follower of Garibaldi, and George was a Chartist who frequented Edward Truelove's radical bookshop in High Holborn and continued to uphold republican and secular views. The young William's early public encounters with this radical, largely artisan, milieu occurred at events organised by the National Sunday League, which campaigned for Sunday opening of monuments, art galleries and libraries. Alongside worthy lectures held regularly at among other places Moncure Daniel Conway's South Place Chapel in Finsbury, its annual soiree provided entertainment, and we know that an eighteen-year-old William attended this event in February 1880. Doubtless the slim, short, handsome young Bartlett was more interested in filling-up his dance card than witnessing the 'displays of microscopes and telescopes by Professor Evans' [*Free Sunday Advocate*, January 1880]. Nevertheless, William Bartlett did quickly become a regular at the many halls in the neighbourhood offering lectures, including the National Secular Society's own Hall of Science in Finsbury where he heard and became a 'supporter' of Charles Bradlaugh, particularly because of his stand against the Parliamentary oath which compromised atheist belief [*Labour Annual* (1896) 196]. Bradlaugh's struggles earned him the respect of London's thriving radical clubs, including those based in Marylebone to which William gravitated. From here he 'assisted' in the organisation of the demonstration in July 1884 to protest against the House of Lords rejection of the Third Reform Bill, joined the agitation against landlordism in Ireland and was swept along in the enthusiasm for land reform generated by Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* and his tours of England.

The merger of clubs in Marylebone into one representing the new Parliamentary borough in early 1885 part-signalled its intention to capture the local Liberal Association and to win adoption of a Radical programme. The Borough Club had an early success when its backing of Sir Julian Goldsmid's candidature, as a Liberal and Radical, in South St Pancras proved crucial in securing his election in the general election of November 1885. This optimism was short-lived, however, as Goldsmid followed Joseph Chamberlain into the Liberal Unionist camp, forcing the Club to denounce the sitting member as a 'renegade', and transfer support in the 1886 general election to a 'sound Radical' and supporter of Home rule, Edward Beale [*Holborn Guardian*, 11 September 1886].

Goldsmid's desertion of the radical cause had been predicted by Edward Aveling of the Bloomsbury branch of the Socialist League (SL) at a meeting in July 1885; his intervention advised against 'returning a man to Parliament that was not a working man, but represented vested interests, as Sir Julian did' [*Holborn Guardian*, 25 July 1885]. The Bloomsbury branch had been formed in March 1885 following the national split in the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) which saw William Morris and his supporters leave to form the SL. Although small in numbers, the Bloomsbury branch counted among its members several who were of national and international significance in the socialist movement. Founder members included Aveling, his common law wife Eleanor Marx Aveling, Philip Webb, German émigrés Frederick Lessner, Carl Winard, and Henry Croesel, and French émigré and veteran of the International Working Men's Association, Jean Francois Lassassie. Over the next three years they were joined by Karl and Louise Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein, also in exile from Germany. The branch also had significance because it provided a direct line from Friedrich Engels to the small but impressionable socialist movement in Britain through Eleanor and Aveling, who were trusted and regular visitors to the Engels home in nearby Regents Park Road.

Impressed by these leading figures—he heard Aveling speak for the secular cause on many occasions from the late 1870s onwards—Bartlett, having, to use his own words, 'developed from Individualism to Collectivism,' joined the SL in the summer of 1886 and threw himself into the activity of the Bloomsbury branch [*Labour Annual* (1896) 196]. The weekly branch meetings at the Communist Club, 49 Tottenham Street, drew on the considerable intellectual resources within the branch, with Aveling, Marx Aveling, William H. Utley, Lessner, and the rising Alexander K. Donald as regular contributors. Not that it was all discussion. In the summer of 1886 Donald, along with fellow Bloomsbury Leaguers Thomas E. Wardle and Walter A. Chambers, had been involved in protests for free speech at Stratford and Paddington ending in court appearances and heavy fines. It was not long before Bartlett joined these twenty-something members of the branch in outdoor speaking at the regular Sunday morning St Pancras Arches pitch and the Polygon housing development in Somers Town; by the Spring of 1887 his open-air engagements had stretched to Clerkenwell, Marylebone, Soho, Hyde Park, and Regents Park. During the second half of 1887 barely an issue of the League's newspaper, *Commonweal*, failed to include his name in the listings of forthcoming meetings. In August he spoke in support of striking Midland Railway workers; in September in protest at the 'judicial murders' at Mitchelstown, Ireland; in October he appeared with William Morris, Henry H. Sparling and James Allman, all of the League's Council, to protest at the sentences imposed on the Chicago anarchists; and as the date of execution of the Chicago men approached, he represented the Labour Emancipation League, with Henry A. Barker (then secretary to the SL), and leading members from radical clubs in a deputation to the American Legation calling for the sentences to be commuted to penal servitude.

Bartlett's experience of working within one of London's largest radical clubs—his friend Walter Chambers was also a member there—was an advantage for the Bloomsbury branch because it was, by this time, working to convert club members from liberalism to socialism. Marx Aveling was on the club circuit, and Aveling had worked up a lecture on 'Socialism and Radicalism', later published as a pamphlet, that he gave to large audiences at clubs in 1887 and 1888, the essence of which was that club members included many 'advanced radicals' who could be convinced that 'socialism is really the logical outcome of the very ideas he holds' [Aveling (n.d.) 2].

Events unfolding in 1887 certainly suggested a polarisation of political positions that could favour the socialists. Mounting protest over coercion in Ireland coincided with anger over unemployment, giving rise to multiple demonstrations in Trafalgar Square which, in turn, led to the imposition of a ban on meetings there on 8 November by Metropolitan Commissioner, Charles Warren. The ban threatened a demonstration set for 13 November, called by the radical clubs and the Irish National League, demanding the 'release from prison of William O'Brien MP and other Irish patriots', but the organisers decided to go ahead as planned.

On Sunday 13 November the Bloomsbury SL contingent joined approximately 6000 demonstrators at Clerkenwell Green and listened to speeches by Morris, Aveling, Annie Besant and George Bernard Shaw before setting off for the Square. At St Martin's Lane the procession was halted by the police and told to disperse. When the demonstrators demanded their right to enter the Square the police attacked the procession as Bartlett described, when asked immediately after the incident to provide an account for the *Pall Mall Gazette:*

> I was one of the standard bearers, and was marching in company with a lady, Mrs Annie Taylor, and some others, like myself, were members of the Socialist League, in the front ranks of the procession, and was at the top of Great St Andrew-Street, when an attack of the most brutal character was made by the police upon some part of the procession a few yards to the rear of us. We halted to allow the disorganised body to reform, when some constables came up and made an unprovoked and dastardly assault upon us who were in front. The lady just mentioned, who was carrying a standard, was struck down first, by a ruffian constable whose

> number I have noted. I held out my banner in front of the policeman who had knocked her down and exclaimed "you cowardly ruffian!" whereupon another constable gave me a terrific blow upon the head with his truncheon which felled me to the ground and caused a terrific scalp wound upon my head, which bled most profusely. A stranger to me, who was in the procession, took me into a house where they procured what was necessary to dress the wounds, and acted with great kindness. I should add that when I was struck an inspector dragged the banner from my hands. I should be pleased to give a fuller account of what happened, but great weakness brought on by the loss of blood renders me unable to do so [*Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 November 1887].

Similar encounters occurred near other points of entry to the Square, on what became known as 'Bloody Sunday', and as a result many hundreds were injured—two later died—and there were nearly 300 arrests. Bartlett, and leading members of the Bloomsbury branch participated in the hastily convened defence organisation, the Law and Liberty League, raising funds, serving on its general council [Bartlett chaired the council on 11 August 1888—*The Link*, August, 1888], and in the Spring of 1888 joining 'conversational meetings' in the Square to keep the issue of access for meetings before the public. Arising from these meetings, Bartlett and Taylor appeared before Bow Street Magistrates Court in July to give evidence against policemen for wilful and wrongful assault. For a time the Law and Liberty League believed this to be a test case in asserting the legal right to assembly in the Square [National Archives TS 18/1374; *Daily News*, 8 December 1888].

For the majority of active members in the Bloomsbury branch the events of 'Bloody Sunday' and subsequent struggles around access to the Square confirmed the view that they needed to be engaged in all aspects of political struggle, including standing candidates in local and parliamentary elections. This view set the branch at odds with the majority of the SL Council who agreed with Morris's stance against what he called a 'stepping-stone' policy dependent on palliative reforms brought about by parliamentary agitation. The Council's position was backed by a clear majority at the League's third annual conference in May 1887, immediately after which, it was alleged by opponents, a group from the Bloomsbury branch including Aveling, Marx Aveling, Donald, John L. Mahon, Utley, Tom and William Binning, Lena Wardle and her son Thomas, met with leading figures from the Hoxton branch of the Labour Emancipation League, who had full voting right within the SL, to plan how to fight for their position. The group had agreed to encourage membership of the Emancipation League and 'use it as an organising centre for Parliamentary supporters … while in the provinces Mahon, Donald and others should develop similar organisations … connected only loosely with the present body' [Thompson (1955) 536–537].

In the months following the League's conference Mahon and Donald, much to Morris's annoyance, undertook political work outside London not directly connected to the League but funded through channels provided by the Bloomsbury branch's 'propaganda missionary fund' administered by Treasurer, Lena Wardle. Then, in April 1888, the branch defied the League's policy of abstention from elections by proposing Bartlett as candidate for the St Pancras Board of Guardians on a common platform with local SDF candidate, Henry Clothier. Together, Bartlett and Clothier claimed the support of the Irish National League, the Upholsterers' Club, the Decorators' Club, the Communist Club, the West London Trades Club and the Borough of Marylebone Radical Club, and their joint election address appealed for all those who toiled to vote for them: 'We are workmen, and appeal to our comrades to support us' [*The Link*, April 1888; Bartlett Archive, Local Government Election Material]. In practical terms they promised, if elected, to throw out 'jobbery' in the award of contracts, control salaries and pensions of officers, push for Guardians meetings to be held when working-class members were able to attend, and provide outdoor relief in order not to break up families. Bartlett's vote of

475 (Clothier polled 434) was the highest of the unsuccessful candidates and indicated that the branch's regular public work had generated a basis of support in the St Pancras area.

Membership of the Bloomsbury branch had increased from 50 to 100 in the first quarter of 1888, attributable, Bartlett implied in his written report after taking over as secretary in April, to the extensive propaganda and educational work undertaken. In addition to the weekly business meetings the branch had an impressive and catholic lecture list featuring most of the best-known socialist speakers of the time, among them Morris, Shaw, Besant, Sidney Webb, Rev. Stewart Headlam, Hubert Bland, Edward Carpenter, H.M. Hyndman and Robert Cunninghame Graham MP. Because the branch had more than one hundred members it was entitled to three delegates at the fourth annual SL conference on 20 May 1888 which was set for a showdown between the two factions. Donald, Chambers and Bartlett divided responsibility for moving and seconding the four controversial motions tabled by the branch: the first proposed a meeting with other socialist bodies with a view to federation, something Bartlett had been canvassing support for since April; the second sought to empower branches to run and support candidates in elections; and the remaining two, taken together and moved by Bartlett, proposed amendments to the composition of the Council and the method of mandating delegates, changes that, according to Bartlett, would make the ruling body more democratic and representative of members' views. After twelve hours of conference business the Bloomsbury delegates went away with each of the motions heavily defeated, while another, to which Morris added his support, called on the Council to take steps to 'reconciliate, or if necessary, exclude the Bloomsbury branch from the Socialist League' was carried with a large majority [Report of the Fourth Conference of the Socialist League, 1888, SL Archive 37a].

Following the conference the Council suspended the Bloomsbury branch until, using Morris's words they withdrew their 'stupid defiance', which would have involved overturning their electoral policy, but also, according to Thompson, showing contrition over some joint membership with the SDF, support for Mahon's campaigns in the north of England, and the production of a cartoon ridiculing the position of Morris and the Council [Thompson (1955) 549]. As secretary Bartlett undertook responsibility for stating the branch's case, the essence of which was that since its foundation in 1884 the League had accepted 'political action as legitimate means of realizing an altered condition of society', citing the League's adoption of the constitution of the International Working Men's Association as a model, and the presence of Lessner on the League's Provisional Council. This conveniently ignored the fact that a draft constitution 'which almost certainly brought forward by the Avelings and represented Engels' view, including support for electoral contests, had been defeated by the League's Provisional Council in the first weeks of 1885' [Thompson (1955) 448–449]. Notwithstanding this, in making the Bloomsbury branch's arguments, Bartlett was attempting to claim a version of the inheritance of the League at its origins, and not that which had developed since, where, according to him, the leadership decided who could attend the annual conference and, in turn, the Council, making for 'a permanent Executive that controls those sections that recognise their authority' [*The Socialist*, 14 July 1888]. Recognising that there was no way back into the League, the branch leadership set to work on a statement of purpose, continued to enter the names of its members on electoral registers and proposed to run a candidate in the St Pancras division come the next election. In the final week of August 1888 it announced itself as the independent Bloomsbury Socialist Society (BSS).

The ambition of the nascent BSS to run a candidate in a Parliamentary election was never realised, but it did put up Bartlett on a 'Labour' ticket in the first election to the London County Council (LCC) in January 1889. Standing in the two-member South St Pancras division, the BSS believed Bartlett could do well if enough Radical Liberal supporters gave him one of their votes. John Hutton, the well-known local Liberal and newspaper proprietor, was the first into the contest and expected Bartlett to add his name to the list of supporters, thereby strengthening his claim to have the socialist vote. However, when Bartlett declared his intention to stand and

asked Hutton to support him as a running-mate he got short shrift as Hutton opted to support Colonel Robert Edis, an architect with a conservative background. Bartlett's candidature was supported by *The Star* newspaper, an important influence in the election, where he was described him as 'a working man of good address. He is a socialist, but believes in advancing along ordinary political lines.' His programme, the newspaper observed, was on 'Star lines' and 'he can point to a scar received in the thick of the fray at Trafalgar Square as a guarantee of his good faith on the question of the control of the police' [*The Star*, 9 January 1889].

Bartlett's campaign, supported by SDF branches and a number of local trade union branches, did indeed raise the issue of public control of the Metropolitan Police alongside a raft of proposals for trade union rates of wages, an eight hour day, direct labour, public ownership of gas, water supply, and tramways, inclusion of the City of London into the LCC, artisans dwellings and a redistribution of the burden of rates towards 'The Great Landowners of London.' It was perhaps a surprise, and certainly a disappointment, that the astute combination of traditional radical demands alongside specifically 'New Unionist' and socialist proposals in Bartlett's campaign only yielded 277 votes that left him bottom of the poll.

By this time Bartlett had become acquainted with George Bernard Shaw, who lived in St Pancras and had been a regular and challenging speaker at meetings of the Bloomsbury branch. Unlike Sidney Webb, who ticked off Bartlett and the BSS for standing in the LCC election without Liberal Association support, Shaw, with an intimate knowledge of the situation in St Pancras as well as a more heartfelt commitment to socialism, backed Bartlett's candidacy unequivocally. Shaw and Webb were both leading lights in the Fabian Society, which Bartlett joined in October 1888. Sponsored by comrade and friend, Annie Taylor, also there from the BSS were Utley, Lena Wardle, and David and Sarah Gostling, all unmistakably more typical of the Fabians' middle-class membership than Bartlett, who joined the handful who 'were workers at a trade' [Hobsbawm (1968) 268]. Not that this environment intimidated Bartlett, who volunteered his services to the Society offering lectures on 'London's Heritage', 'Socialism and Ricardo', and 'Shaping the Liberal Programme' [Fabian Society Lecture List 1886–1914, Misc Coll]. Although never invited by the Fabian Executive to speak at the prestige meetings at Clifford's Inn and Willis's Tea Rooms, he contributed to the preparation of the Society's Eight Hour Bill, acted promptly when asked by Webb to put pressure on Liberal Associations, was a regular speaker for the Society at radical clubs and often filled in when more prominent speakers were forced to withdraw [Fabian Society Executive Minutes, 20 September 1889]. Tellingly, when the Society asked members to express a willingness to speak at outdoor meetings, Bartlett was one of the few to volunteer. Perhaps seen by fellow Fabians as more of a working class 'stump orator' than an intellectual, his two challenges for a seat on the Society's Executive in 1892 and 1893 were unsuccessful.

Seemingly unencumbered by any theoretical dogmatism, Bartlett was able to straddle activity in the BSS where there was a commitment to advance Marxism, with that in the Fabian Society where there was a mission to refute it. Although he would almost certainly have been present at the meeting of the Bloomsbury branch of the SL in June 1887 when Aveling took Shaw to task for his exposition of the concept of rent of ability, and then again when Aveling provided, as a corrective, a separate lecture on the Marxist theory of value, he remained typically unconcerned with theoretical differences, preferring instead to engage in organising and propaganda. When Bartlett was provided with the opportunity to sketch out a broad political perspective its eclecticism was apparent, drawing on traditions of political radicalism overlaid with an analysis of rent, profit and interest as 'stolen property' then common among socialists [Woolfe (1975) 97–98]. In the same vein, it is likely that his willingness to undertake lectures on 'Socialism and Ricardo' reflected Shaw's view that the Ricardian view of rent, when extended to other factors of production, was the 'keystone of socialism' [*The Star*, 7 June 1889]. Less Fabian, however, was Bartlett's appeal for 'revolutionary social change by every means within our power,' and the necessity of 'organization and solidarity in the ranks of workers', the first shoots of which had

encouragingly begun to emerge in 1888, providing an entree for the group of socialists to the working class with whom he was connected [Bartlett Archive, Speeches and Writings].

Coalescing around the Labour Union launched in August 1888 with the express purpose of forming a Labour Party, this group constituted the backbone of the organising committee with eight of ten of them coming from either the BSS or the Hoxton branch of the Labour Emancipation League, which had also seceded from the Socialist League following the fourth conference. Bartlett's direct involvement in the Labour Union consisted of backing its unsuccessful attempt to launch a new labour newspaper, *The Workers' Advocate*, and speaking at outdoor meetings. He played a more direct role in supporting the dockworkers in August 1889 when, on the first Sunday after the strike was declared, he and members of the BSS held a meeting in Regents Park to raise money for the strikers and were thus first into register a donation to *The Star's* relief fund. Later he held meetings at the dock gates at which H.H. Champion presided. This contribution was recognised years later from an unlikely quarter when William Collison, of the strike-breaking Free Labour Association, remarked in his autobiography: 'In January 1890, I joined the United Democratic Club in Chancery Lane … Here I met all the leaders of the advanced school of Labour, including W.W. Bartlett of the Bloomsbury Socialist Society, and H.H. Champion, editor of the *Labour Elector*. These two gentlemen, more than any others, started the Dock Strike Fund, and by their efforts caused the money to flow in from Australia which won the "Dockers' Tanner"' [Collison (1913) 79–80].

The dockers' victory fed into the current of New Unionism which, in turn, helped generate enthusiasm for the first May Day demonstration in 1890, in which Bartlett played a pivotal role. Plans for the event began when Aveling and Marx Aveling proposed that the BSS act to implement the decision of the International Socialist Labour Congress of July 1889 to demand a legal eight-hour working day, and that this be the focus of world-wide labour demonstrations. Contact was made with the Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers on this issue because they had recently declared in its favour, and there was already a conduit into the union through Marx Aveling who was heavily involved in the Silvertown branch and acted as mentor to its general secretary, Will Thorne. On 20 February Aveling sent a telegram to Bartlett advising him: 'Important news. Gas Workers. Bring all letters. Please turn up at Bloomsbury eight thirty.' On the following day he again contacted Bartlett with instructions to meet at Liverpool Street station where, with himself and Eleanor, he would travel to Barking to meet Thorne and assistant secretary, William Ward [Bartlett Archive, Correspondence 59, 61]. The purpose was to agree the formation of a joint committee to put in place arrangements for a labour demonstration in support of the legal eight-hour working day. The joint committee, including Bartlett, convened a meeting for 16 March of delegates from trade unions, radical clubs and other working-class organisations at which there was a majority vote for the demonstration to be held on Thursday 1 May, a working day, but also a recognition that many present had no firm mandate from their respective bodies for such a decision. Similarly, a meeting of the National Labour Electoral Association on 28 March also backed a demonstration on 1 May, but this was thought to be unrepresentative because of poor attendance [*The People's Press*, 12 April 1890].

Bartlett, his comrades from the BSS, and the majority of New Unionists proposed 1 May for the demonstration because that date had been agreed internationally, and would allow the British movement to show its collective commitment to the demand for a legal eight hour working day through a mass withdrawal of labour. In support of this position, the BSS convened meetings in Regents Park, Hyde Park and Clerkenwell Green to make the case and raise funds. Bartlett spoke at the Hyde Park meeting and, to cheers, asked his audience to cast their minds back to the franchise demonstration of 1884, 'the largest he could remember', which they would recollect took place on a working day [*The People's Press*, 12 April 1890].

These arguments failed to carry a majority at a reconvened and enlarged meeting of representative bodies on 6 April, because it was believed attendance would be maximised if the demonstration were held on Sunday 4 May. Nevertheless, the meeting endorsed the choice of

preliminary officers with Bartlett, on some occasions described as representing the BSS at others the Borough of Marylebone Radical Club, and Thomas Wardle, a cabinet-maker, also from the BSS, acting as joint secretaries. With Aveling elected chairman of the now formally constituted Legal Eight Hours Demonstration Committee, the BSS kept the principal officer roles in-house. Bartlett's address of 51 Euston Road was used by the Committee for correspondence purposes, and it was he who took on much of the organising and administrative work.

In the three weeks leading up to the demonstration a disproportionate amount of the Demonstration Committee's time was spent negotiating relations with the London Trades Council, which at first had ignored the invitation to co-operate but then, on Tom Mann's prompting and doubtless fearing they would be left out of a successful event, declared in favour [Tate (1950) 76]. They would not, however, support the demand for a legal limitation of hours, opting instead for a declaration in favour of the principle of reducing hours but leaving the precise method of achieving it to the future. The Trades Council had also infuriated the Demonstration Committee by insisting that any demonstration must be led by trade unionists, despite having agreed that two of its seven platforms in Hyde Park would be allocated to the SDF. This tactic was understood by Engels as allowing the Council to present itself as 'preserving a semblance of impartiality towards the socialists' [Marx–Engels (2001) 489].

At this point there was a serious danger that the Demonstration Committee could be marginalised and all credit for what would obviously be a monster demonstration pass to the Trades Council, particularly when it became clear that arrangements for use of the Park with the First Commissioner of Public Works, the government official responsible for the administration of Hyde Park, had been made only by the Trades Council. Moving quickly to prevent what would have obviously been a disaster, Aveling and Bartlett met at the office of the First Commissioner on 25 April and according to Engels: 'Aveling… told him that, unless the original committee were simultaneously awarded a sufficient number of platforms, there would be a set-to … Aveling was awarded seven platforms, and now it is the turn of the gentlemen on the Trades Council to eat humble pie, for a clash at this juncture would really have shown how weak they were' [Marx–Engels (2001) 490].

In the event, the procession and assembly organised by the Legal Eight Hours Demonstration Committee was a resounding success and it was widely acknowledged that in comparison with the Trades Council's efforts 'the Eight Hours people were better organised, were first into the Park, with a more colourful procession, engaged the interest of the crowd, had excellent and well-known speakers and finally, had a clear and definite proposition to make, calling for an international working day of eight hours by legislative enactment' [Duffy (1968) 218]. The BSS was represented on five of the seven platforms with Bartlett appearing alongside star turns Cunninghame Graham, Michael Davitt, and the young George Lansbury. In addition to moving the Demonstration Committee's resolution, Bartlett spoke of the movement as 'the first step towards the final emancipation of labour… that they could not trust the trade unions to alone deal with the matter' and that 'they should have nothing to do with candidates in elections who did not support the eight-hour day' [*The Morning Post*, 5 May 1890].

Bartlett's immediate role in the efforts to transform the Demonstration Committee into an organisation that would carry on 'practically as a new Labour Party' was more limited than his recent contribution [*The People's Press*, 24 May 1890]. He was elected to the executive of the successor body; the Legal Eight Hours and International Labour League formed in July 1890, but only after its membership had been broadened, his recent successful organising experience being of value as talks began with the London Trades Council about a joint demonstration in May 1891. Inevitably, Aveling, the driving force behind the new organisation, became the BSS representative on the joint committee with the Trades Council, but Bartlett did speak from the platform at the demonstration of 1891.

By this time Bartlett's circumstances had changed in two important ways. In November 1889 he had married Alice Maud Taylor, the daughter of 'well known Chartist', Samuel Taylor,

originally from Norwich but now living and working as an upholsterer in St Pancras, where Alice was born 1861 [*Labour Annual* (1896) 196]. Sharing William's political views, Alice joined the Fabian Society, almost certainly as one of the very few working-class women, in June 1890 and remained a socialist throughout her long life. There was also a change in Bartlett's working circumstances. When his father, George, died in 1882, William inherited the small architectural modelling business which he continued to run until the spring of 1892 when, about to embark on a lecturing tour, he gave it up. He and Alice had already moved out of St, Pancras to Islington, but he retained his connection with the BSS, acting as secretary until the end of 1891. His name appeared under the 'Manifesto of the Bloomsbury Socialist Society' published after the historic 4 May 1890 demonstration [reproduced in Kapp (1976) 384–385]; he kept up his speaking engagements in the area and was responsible for the organisation of the Paris Commune celebratory meeting in March 1891; and he put the case against one of Aveling's enemies, Ferdinand Giles, whom the BSS suspected of being behind an attempt to subvert a socialist co-operative set up in Bloomsbury when they were a branch of the SL [*Workman's Times*, 8 October 1891].

For a time Bartlett operated politically in both St Pancras and Islington, but gradually his focus shifted to north London where, in permeating mode, he gained a seat on the executive of the East Islington Liberal Association, became active in the Central Finsbury Radical Club and joined up with the Fabians in what was known as the 'Northern group'. Although not directly involved in attempts to establish an independent Labour party in Islington, he became friends with and worked closely alongside one of its pioneers, George Patterson, a New Unionist among warehouse and shop assistants, whom William and Alice sponsored for Fabian Society membership in 1892. They were often found together at meetings, as on the occasion of a debate on immigration at the Central Finsbury Club in March 1892 where they rebutted the arguments of a speaker from the Society for the Prevention of Immigration of Destitute Foreigners, and a senior official of the Club, with a joint exposition of how sweated labour would be stopped not by 'removing foreigners from the country, but the extension of the present Factory Acts, especially in shortening the duration of the working day' [*The Weekly News and Chronicle*, 19 March 1892].

Bartlett's emphasis on the importance of socialists contributing to legislative improvements to labour, pre-eminently at this stage the eight-hour day, was consistent with his broader view that through struggle and change, elements of socialism could be established within the existing system. He was sometimes exasperated when critics from a left perspective dismissed genuine improvements in the condition of labour, believing them not only to be wrong but also distancing themselves from potential allies who could be won for socialism [e.g. *The Weekly News and Chronicle*, 18 November 1893]. Bartlett's political practice in these years was a good example of McBriar's observation that in the late eighties and early nineties it was difficult to know where radicalism ended and collectivism began and that the Fabians 'were concerned to keep the borderline as blurred as possible' [McBriar (1966) 242]. Defining socialism to a highly literate and literary society in Highgate in 1892, he said it was 'the control by the community of the means of production for public advantage instead of private profit.' In economic terms this would involve 'the absorption of rent and interest by the community generally.' He told his audience that 'socialism was not a leap-in-the dark …for a large amount of socialism was present in our municipalities, our colonies and the continent', in the form of municipal ownership of tramways, gas, electric, public libraries and other publicly funded and provided services [*Hornsey and Finsbury Journal*, 6 February 1892].

Despite this increasingly explicit Fabian vocabulary, Bartlett did not separate himself from his recent Marxist associations in Bloomsbury, returning to provide lectures, and it was significant the BSS invited him back in March 1893 to speak alongside Engels, Lessner, Bernstein and the French socialist, F. Lassassie in its joint celebration of the Paris Commune with the Communist Working Men's Club at 49 Tottenham Street. The report of the meeting is scanty, but we have no reason to believe he felt ill at ease with the company, or when moving the resolution that paid

'homage to the proletarian heroes of the past' who 'sought the abolition of the capitalist class.' In contrast, the Fabian Society secretary, Edward Pease, sent a letter saying he would not be present for, among other reasons he always 'felt rather an objection in making a celebration of one of the most tremendous failures in history.' The newspaper report, written by Sparling, went on: 'The meeting had a laugh for Mr Pease, it evidently thought the "failure" of the Paris communists was of greater importance and had further reaching effects for good than the Fabian "victories" at the last County Council election' [*Workman's Times*, 25 March 1893].

If these remarks illuminate a tension in the socialist movement at the time, it was one that the pragmatic Bartlett thought could be negotiated, as was the relationship with the radical wing of the Liberal party, many of whom, he believed, would find their way to socialism. He was therefore encouraged by the Progressives' increased majority and the strengthened Labour 'bench' at the LCC election of 1892, including an impressive performance in Islington where nine Progressives were returned in ten contests. This was followed by the general election of that year in which Liberal and socialist success in the capital was based unmistakably on working-class votes, including victories in Islington for radical candidates Dadadhai Naoroji and Thomas Lough for whom Bartlett acted as agent working alongside James Ramsay MacDonald who had been Lough's secretary [Thomson (1967) 96; *Portsmouth Evening News*, 3 November 1939]. Not surprisingly, therefore, Bartlett became an enthusiastic and active member of the London Reform Union, a Fabian-influenced pressure group supporting Progressivism, when it was founded in December 1892 with Lough as Chairman and Mann as secretary, subscribing fully to its policies to unify London government and increase municipalisation of basic services. As well as undertaking lectures for the London Reform Union, he provided a link between its local officers and the Central Finsbury Radical Club at election times, when members were encouraged to vote for endorsed candidates, a responsibility that became more formal when he was elected Political Secretary for the Club in December 1893.

Bartlett's work in Islington was interrupted in the summer of 1892 when he accepted the invitation to travel to Somerset to join the Red Van of the English Land Restoration League (ELRL). Following a successful campaign in Suffolk in 1891, the ELRL, supported financially by a number of wealthy patrons, expanded its operations and sent out five vans in the following year. The van, a horse drawn covered wagon in which the lecturer and driver would sleep, carried the slogans 'Fair Rents – Fair Wages – The Land for All' and 'Justice to Labour – Abolition of Landlordism'. The lecturer was given a detailed and demanding itinerary of stops at villages and towns where he was expected on arrival to publicise a meeting that would be held in the evening. The meeting would consist of an exposition of the League's case for a single tax on the value of land, some community singing and, in the early years of the tours, recruitment to local agricultural workers' trade unions and the setting up of branches where they did not exist. From 1893, with agricultural trade unions in decline because of an economic downturn, the Red Van lecturers shifted emphasis and encouraged workers to use their votes in favour of county council and parish council election candidates sympathetic to their cause.

Bartlett was familiar with the ELRL in London because by the mid-1880s its cause was widely supported in the radical clubs. Growing directly out of Henry George's successful tours, the League espoused his single tax on the value of land as the means to abolish landlordism and restore the land to the people of England. The League's energetic general secretary, Frederick Verinder, was a regular speaker on the metropolitan club circuit and Bartlett would have almost certainly heard him there, and again at the Bloomsbury SL branch in July 1887 when his lecture to a secular audience on 'The Bible and the Land Question' provoked only 'a slight discussion' [*Commonweal*, 16 July 1887]. That Bartlett himself was imbued with an urban anti-landlordism was evident in his 1889 LCC election manifesto where he identified the Dukes of Bedford and Grafton as responsible for the 'wholesale plunder and flagrant abuse of public trust' by their failure to improve property leased to tenants despite annual rental values tripling in the 1880s [Bartlett Archive, Local Government Election Material]. The suggestion that in the late 1880s

the ELRL pursued a narrow 'single tax programme that made absolutely no concessions to dissentients' [Peacock (1962) 51), did not extend to the Red Vans where socialists—James Shaw Maxwell, George Edwards, Frank Smith, Ben Riley, George Patterson, as well as Bartlett—were to the fore as lecturers, and prepared to offer a critique of profits and interest as forms of unearned income as well as rent.

In Somerset, Bartlett quickly picked up the routine and had success, helping to establish 59 branches of the Somerset and West of England Agricultural Labourers' Union and signing-up 700 new members. He exposed poverty wages, dilapidated tied cottages and improper use of charity funds by local clergymen conferring gifts only on those who were regular church attenders. At the village of East Brent, the local newspaper reported that 'the farmers made the meeting a perfect pandemonium and the van was obliged to leave the village that night under escort. This, however, did not prevent showers of stones being thrown at the van, shattering the windows and entering the van to the danger of Mr Bartlett and his assistant inside' [*Somerset Express*, 27 July 1892].

Many of Bartlett's experiences first encountered in Somerset in 1892 were repeated over the next five summers as he became the most regular ELRL 'vanner' taking on tours of Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Wiltshire, Suffolk, Norfolk, Middlesex, Leicestershire and Essex. Displaying enormous moral and physical courage, he regularly confronted those protecting the vested interests of landowners, who were often in cahoots with county councillors, local magistrates and the constabulary in attempting to deny the ELRL rights of assembly on common land. Bartlett was moved on, fined for obstruction, sworn and shouted at and physically attacked—the most brutal case occurring at Aylesbury in 1896 when, accompanied by George Patterson, his friend from Islington, the van was attacked in the dead of night by a group of men with hammers and sticks and pushed down a slope. The police arrived too late to apprehend the assailants, but Bartlett was able to identify the men and took a civil action for assault in the High Court, where he was awarded damages which he donated to the Red Van Fund [*Reynolds Newspaper*, 10 May 1896].

Through the Red Van campaigns Bartlett developed an extensive knowledge of agriculture and agricultural labour, so that by 1893 it had become his main lecture subject in the Fabian Society and radical clubs. He became convinced, like Stewart Headlam whom he admired, that attempts by socialists to downgrade the importance of the 'land question' were mistaken as 'it embraced nearly all other questions of the complex political system, such as the problem of unemployment and the resettlement of immigratory agriculturalists on the soil, whence they flocked in urban cities of industry' [*Weekly News and Chronicle*, 24 February 1894]. He was able to put to good use his first-hand knowledge of rural conditions in an impressive critique of the report submitted by a senior government official to the Royal Commission on Labour regarding agricultural workers' conditions, showing in detail how on an average weekly wage of 11 shillings it was impossible for a rural labourer to enjoy the standard of living suggested by the official, whom he accused of 'gullibility' [*Daily Chronicle*, 19 September 1895].

Absence from home for six months during the summer, late payment of wages by Verinder and uncertainty about employment during the winter months encouraged Bartlett to seek a permanent job. He was unsuccessful in his bid to become general secretary of the Working Men's Club and Institute Union in 1893, despite having the backing of the *Weekly News and Chronicle* and local MP Thomas Lough. An approach to the austere Sidney Webb in 1895 asking for advice on becoming a factory inspector or working for the LCC drew no encouragement. Verinder provided him with extra lecturing work on a short tour of the north-east in early 1896, but, by this time, the ELRL itself was under financial strain following the death of three of its principal benefactors within a twelve-month period, and prospects for future van work were not good. Bartlett went out with a van for the last time in 1897 for an abbreviated tour of Essex, and it was fitting that he was sent on his way with best wishes at a meeting in Canning Town by Will Thorne [*Daily News*, 6 May 1897].

When Bartlett was away Alice spent most her time at her sister's home in Brighton, where William and Alice's only child, Olive Maud, was born in November 1896. By 1898 the Bartletts had settled permanently in Brighton where William got a job as commercial representative with a brewing company. For a short while he was self-employed as an antique and book dealer before securing reliable employment in 1909 with the Post Office as a contract officer.

Known initially in Brighton as a land reformer, Bartlett took some time settle politically into his new environment, particularly as there was no Fabian Society branch nor a political culture associated with working men's clubs similar to that he had grown up with in London. The Brighton Trades Council had been successful by 1895 in securing the election of a number of its candidates on the Town Council, Board of Guardians and School Board, but progressivism was underdeveloped and the absence of an organised alternative socialist voice to that of the influential Brighton SDF left him isolated. He was, therefore, quick to engage with the National Democratic League (NDL) when it was founded in October 1900 because it provided the opportunity to establish a local branch and reconnect with a political programme that he was familiar with and committed to. Conceived by its founder, W.M. Thompson, chief editor of *Reynolds Newspaper*, as a 'conscious revival of Chartism' [Barrow & Bullock (1996) 14], it also attempted to 'harness working-class radicalism to the twin causes of anti-war and social reform' [Biagini (2007) 332], thus appealing directly to Bartlett's established political sentiments and crucially his anti-militarism, expressed at this point in urgent opposition to Britain's military engagement in South Africa, which he found sadly lacking in the Fabian Society.

Bartlett became a central figure in the Brighton NDL acting as secretary from the end of 1901 and serving on the League's National Executive in 1901 and 1902. He conducted lectures, one inevitably on the taxation of land values and another, the notes of which have survived, entitled 'The Democratic Programme and Whence it Came', surveying the history of struggle for parliamentary reform since the eighteenth century and culminating in the work of the NDL [*Brighton Herald*, 27 July 1901; Bartlett Archive, Speeches and Writings]. For a time Bartlett had great hopes for the NDL, but despite a good deal of activity in Brighton it failed to make its mark, and by 1904 he was turning his attention back to the Fabian Society, working to establish a local branch, and considering how it might relate to a Labour Representation Committee (LRC) which would eventually emerge in the town.

Bartlett's efforts to build up a Fabian Society branch in Brighton—it was founded in November 1906—took place alongside public support for the suffragettes' struggle and three consecutive, but unsuccessful, attempts to win a seat on the Brighton Town Council, each campaign becoming explicitly more partisan than the last. He stood in 1906 as a 'Progressive' and stressed he was a candidate of 'no clique, political party or religious denomination' [*Brighton Herald*, 20 October 1906]. Two years later, his platform—'supported by organised and unorganised workers'—demanded 'work for all', and he announced after the poll that the election had been a fight between forces 'for socialism and anti-socialism' [*Brighton and Hove Times*, 6 November 1908]. The 1908 candidature had the backing of the recently established Brighton LRC, to which the Fabian Society sent its president, Bartlett, as representative. However, soon after his election as LRC treasurer in 1909, the connection with the movement was broken when the Fabian Society branch folded and with it the affiliation.

A family move along the coast to Hampshire, first to Southsea in 1912 and then to the small seaport of Emsworth in 1917, involved a transfer within the Post Office for William and a first job for Olive, who became a telephone exchange operator. Unsurprisingly, the war years left little scope for political activity, but by early 1919 William was successfully leading a campaign of Emsworth allotment holders in a fight with Warblington Urban District Council who had issued notices to quit land they required for industrial development. Aided by his heightened profile during the campaign, and an expansion of the electorate, Bartlett was one of two Labour candidates elected to the Council in April 1919 from where he was able to secure land suitable for the allotment holders. He was equally vocal on the need for the Council to respond to the

housing crisis in Emsworth, shaming it for its failure to establish a dedicated committee for this work, and then initiating the process that led to the first council houses being opened in Victoria Gardens in 1922. Unafraid of political controversy and upholding an anti-militarism present in his thinking since his youth, he was the lone voice in 1919 opposing the decision to fund peace celebrations in the town [*Hants and Sussex County Press*, 12 July 1919].

After losing the council seat in 1922 he was back again in 1923 and remained a member of the council until 1930. His retirement from the Post Office in 1924 made it easier to devote time for municipal duties, which he carried out as the only Labour party member of the council. Undeterred by isolation, he was consistent in his advocacy of what he believed were core trade union and socialist values declaring his support for improved wages and conditions of employees, pensions for manual staff as well as those in officer grades, opposition to contracting out of services, extending municipal housing and exposing vested corporate interests. Where he could help directly with trade union organisation he did, as when present as chairman at the inaugural meeting of the Emsworth branch of the Workers Union in 1919. He lost the council seat in 1930 only because of improved organisation of the Ratepayers Association, and although two further contests in 1931 and 1933 (the later for the new Havant and Waterloo Urban District Council) ended in defeat, he remained active in the Emsworth Labour party until it collapsed in 1936.

Alongside his municipal and Labour Party work, Bartlett played an active role in the Portsea Island Mutual Co-operative Society based in Portsmouth, but with stores across Hampshire, including one in Emsworth opened in 1919. Serving as an elected member of the Society's management board from 1922–1923 and 1925–1932, he took particular responsibility for organising the annual summer Co-operators Day at Chichester and was keen to encourage the participation of young adults and children in this and other events. On behalf of the Society he attended the Co-operative Union Congress in 1929 and the Co-operative Party conference in 1930. He retired from the management board in June 1932 having reached the age limit permitted by rule. Alice, also active in the Society, had helped set up the Emsworth Co-operative Women's Guild, and remained involved in its work until her death.

Without elected office and now in his seventies, Bartlett kept up an interest in local affairs participating in debates at the Emsworth Literary and Philosophical Society where, on one occasion, following a lecture on George Bernard Shaw by an invited speaker, he told the audience he had been on friendly terms with Shaw way back in the 1880s when they were both active for the socialist cause in the St Pancras district of London. He continued to read widely on the history of the English radical tradition, but did not add to his one published article on the subject. He regarded Thomas Paine as 'the greatest who ever lived' [*Sussex Express*, 11 December 1907] and in 1903 canvassed opinion among Paine scholars on the feasibility of an event to celebrate his life and work. The origins of the oil painting of Paine inherited from his father remained uncertain, in spite of Bartlett's diligent research involving correspondence with Paine's biographer and acquaintance from the 1880s, Moncure Daniel Conway, and consultation with experts at the National Portrait Gallery [Bartlett Archive correspondence 125–126; National Portrait Gallery Archive, Paine file 1, pre-1930].

An enthusiasm for the work of Charles Dickens was a constant in Bartlett's life, and he sometimes included references from the novels in speeches, notably in 1894 when making the case for municipal health services and not 'as at present time running them as so many dividend paying concerns in the interests of the money-bag classes and the young Bob Sawyers of the sawbone profession' [*Weekly News and Chronicle*, 17 March 1894]. In Brighton he and Alice were founder members of the local branch of the Dickens Fellowship, to which a lecture by Bartlett on 'The Animal Characters of Dickens', illustrating how 'Dickens showed a deep love for human nature in every animal character he drew', received a notice in the Fellowship's scholarly journal [*Brighton Gazette*, 29 November 1906; *The Dickensian*, January 1907].

In contrast to many of his fellow pioneers of the socialist movement whose interest in land reform waned, Bartlett kept up an active support, including a proposal in 1901 for the taxation of land values as a way to improve housing in rural areas by 'loosening the deadly grip of the landlords on the land' [*Daily News*, 2 November 1901]. Advocacy of taxing land values was always accompanied in Bartlett's public work with the call for farm workers to organise in trade unions, as in 1906 when he offered his 'considerable experience of agricultural labourers' unions' to establish organisation in the Southern counties' [*Daily News*, 30 July 1906]. He was still a member of the central council of the English League for the Taxation of Land Values (the successor body to the ELRL) in 1909, and much of his agitation in the Emsworth allotment campaign of 1919 resonated with the work two decades earlier from the Red Vans. He protested in 1934 when the National Government repealed the previous Labour Government's land valuation scheme.

Links with George Edwards, George Lansbury, and George Patterson were renewed in the 1930s and when an appeal was launched by the National Trade Union Club for veterans of the 1889 dock strike to come forward he offered his reminiscences. He loaned items for exhibitions on trade union and labour movement history, and in 1937, sold a large collection of pamphlets to the London School of Economics Library. His habit of keeping press cuttings was maintained until 1943 when ill-health set in and he became increasingly housebound. To mark the diamond jubilee of their marriage in November 1949, Alice wrote to Shaw asking for a memento and received a signed photograph attached to which was the note: 'Are you the Bartlett that was knocked about in the Battle of Trafalgar Square? If so, you were rather a good looking fellow then' [*The Hants and Sussex County Press*, 3 February 1950].

William Walter Bartlett died on 26 January, 1950, aged 88 years, at his home, since 1927, 11 Queen Street, Emsworth. He died intestate and was cremated at Southampton Crematorium on 31 January 1950. His death went unnoticed in the land reform, Fabian and labour press, a sadness and oversight, not least because his role in the 'invention' of labour's tradition of celebrating May Day with an annual demonstration had been forgotten [Hobsbawm (1983) 283]. Alice Maud Bartlett died at the Queen Street home on 23 December. Olive Maud, who remained unmarried, died at the Queen Street home on 5 December 1971. On Olive's death, William Bartlett's papers were passed to family relations on Alice's side of the family who, living in Hove, donated them in January 1973 to the University of Sussex, where they now form part of the Library's Special Collections section.

**Writings:** 'Radicals of the Past No1 – John Horne Took', *Weekly News and Chronicle*, 8 November 1893.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Bartlett Archive, University of Sussex Library, Special Collections; Socialist League Archive, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam; Fabian Society Archive, BLPES; H.A. Barker Archive, Peoples History Museum and Archive, Manchester; Records of the Treasury Solicitor, National Archives, London; Leaflets of the Central Finsbury Radical Club, BLPES; British Postal Museum, London; Minutes of Warblington Urban District Council, Hampshire Records Office; Archive of the Portsea Island Mutual Co-operative Society, Portsmouth City Records Office and Southern Co-operative Society; George Bernard Shaw papers, British Library; George Lansbury Archive, BLPES; National Portrait Gallery Archive, London. (**2**) **Newspapers, Periodicals and Annual Reports**: *Free Sunday Advocate* 1880–1885; *Club and Institute Journal* 1883–1889; *National Reformer* 1880–1886; *Reynolds's Newspaper* 1885–1923; *Our Corner* 1883–1888; *The Radical* 1880–1882; *Pall Mall Gazette* 1887–1895; *Holborn Guardian* 1885–1890; *St Pancras Guardian* 1885–1890*; Radical Leader* 1888; *The Standard* 1885–1900; *Marylebone Independent* 1885–1886; *Commonweal* 1885–1888; *The Link* 1888; *The Socialist* 1888–1889; *Labour Elector* 1888–1890; *Hornsey and Finsbury Journal* 1890–1896; *The Northern Light* 1891–1893; *North London Press* 1889–1890; *People's Press* 1890–1891; *Morning Post* 1890;

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STEPHEN WILLIAMS

*See also*: †Annie BESANT; †Henry Hyde CHAMPION; †Robert CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM; †Stewart Duckworth HEADLAM; †William James THORNE; †Frederick VERINDER

**BOLTON, Henry** (1874–1953)
SOCIALIST

Henry Bolton was born on 26 April 1874 in the pit village of Lumley, near Fence Houses, in County Durham. He was the second-born of sixteen siblings of Benjamin Bolton, a north Walian slate miner (from Llanberis). Bolton's mother was only sixteen when they married. She later claimed that, of all her children, Henry was the most dissatisfied with his lot. Henry followed his father down the mine and soon married a village girl, Elizabeth Anne Hope, in a love match that lasted until she died in 1951. Their first child, Wesley Hope, was born in 1900 and there were four daughters by 1910.

In 1907, the family moved the short distance from Hamsterley to the pit village of Chopwell in the north-west of the Durham coalfield, with Bolton taking work in the colliery. It was a new concern owned by the important Consett Iron Company (CIC), and Chopwell was then a coal boom-town, attracting migrant workers from across the great northern coalfield and further afield. Its community was something of a political and ethnic melting pot. A year after the move, Bolton signified his commitment to a crucial element of Wesleyan Methodism, abstinence from alcohol, when he signed the pledge. Bolton's temperance meant he frequently spoke out on the evils of drink. At around the same time, he converted to socialism. The occasion was recalled by Will Lawther, a member of a Northumberland mining family that had migrated to Chopwell in 1905. Lawther, already a young Independent Labour Party (ILP) activist, claimed (in his retirement) that he converted Bolton, and another ardent chapelgoer, Vipond Hardy, to socialism when they attended a Chopwell ILP meeting. Bolton (and Hardy) 'listened carefully, they questioned us closely, and at the end both were convinced' [*Newcastle Journal*, 15 March 1955]. This proved the beginning of an important alliance, as Bolton's and Lawther's political paths were to become closely entwined at least until the late 1930s. While Hardy moved away from Methodism, Bolton, by contrast, retained his faith in the aftermath of his conversion to socialism. Indeed, Bolton remained a lifelong Methodist; active as a lay-preacher and superintendent at his local chapel, developing friendships with noted ministers including the Christian socialist Hugh Price Hughes.

In the years before the Great War, Bolton was a rank-and-file figure, albeit with a position in the local ILP branch (auditor in 1911). Developing militant politics were evident in a letter Bolton penned to the radical Irish trade unionist Jim Larkin (19 July 1914). By this time Bolton had already established a correspondence with Larkin; presumably they met when Larkin visited Chopwell earlier in the same year on a speaking tour of the region. In the letter, Bolton urged

Larkin to speak again at Chopwell and invited him to stay. Bolton praised Larkin for his speech at Morpeth.

> I think you rung the bell. Your exposition of the greater unionism was finely done. Your disgust at the apologising spirit of the workers was very necessary and opportune. Your ridicule at the simple trust of the workers in obsolete methods and stage-coach leaders was excellently stated… [it was] a speech brim full of wise and daring statements.

But he added some advice:

> Don't gave [sic] too much of yourself away. Take it a little easier. You will perspire less and your native brogue will be better understood. Of course I can understand all you say but I heard one or two of them saying you were rather quick for them. Take more time Jim and I think it will add to your effectiveness [Harry Bolton letter to Jim Larkin, 19 July 1914].

Certainly a militant trade unionist, Bolton does not appear to have gravitated towards Lawther's growing syndicalist (and then from 1913 anarchist syndicalist) grouping in Chopwell, though he was certainly involved in another of Lawther's inspirations, Chopwell's 'Communist' (or 'Anarchist') Club which, auspiciously perhaps, was inaugurated in November 1913, in the midst of a bitter colliery strike. It came to supplement pre-existing opportunities for political education in the village available through the miners' reading rooms that were stocked with magazines, periodicals, newspapers, and books on religion, politics, philosophy, and a wealth of other subjects. Bolton himself—again, like Lawther—became a very well-read man. A growing interest in working-class education was practically manifest when Bolton established Chopwell's 'Socialist Sunday School' branch in 1913, which met at the Anarchist Club. The British Socialist Sunday School movement had begun in London in 1892, with Chopwell branch forming part of a wider Tyneside network; all adopted their socialist 'ten commandments' based upon mutual respect, tolerance, and socialist international fraternity. These, and the Biblical ten commandments came to constitute the basic tenet of Bolton's political life.

When hostilities broke out in August 1914, Bolton, who regarded the war as a crime against humanity that all Christians should denounce, a product of militarism and imperialism, adopted (like many in the ILP) an anti-war position. In this context, the Socialist Sunday School (Bolton was superintendent) came into its own as a means of fomenting and supporting anti-war resistance. In March 1916, Bolton appeared at a tribunal in support of Chopwell miners applying for total exemption from war service on grounds of conscience. A tribunal member asked one, Robert Bell, why he did not object to receiving wages that had increased as a result of the war (making him a party to it). Bolton attempted to intervene, but his request to answer this question was refused. Will Lawther, and his brother Steve appeared before the same tribunal. On this occasion, all applicants were granted exemption from combatant service, but stated their intention to appeal against being made to perform some form of medical service.

In September 1916, Bolton supported another Lawther brother, Eddie, in his tribunal. Eddie also refused service on conscientious grounds including refusing to join the Medical Corps. as this would help others get back to the fighting. In a letter read out in court, Bolton (who was also present) said he had known Eddie since he was a small boy and that he was a willing distributor of anti-militarist literature through the Socialist Sunday School. The panel, however, seized upon Eddie's admission that he had had a little help (presumably from Bolton) in drawing up his written answers to the questions (formulated by the Local Government Board) about his objection, with the military representative on the tribunal launching a thinly veiled attack on Bolton and the Socialist Sunday School. The tribunal refused Eddie's application, his appeal failed, and he was eventually gaoled, serving two years hard labour in Wormwood Scrubs.

The struggle against the war—Bolton became the secretary of Chopwell branch of both the 'No Conscription Fellowship' and the Union of Democratic Control (UDC)—facilitated the forging of new political alliances. Most notable were links developed with the former junior Liberal minister and Northumberland aristocrat C.P. Trevelyan, who had helped establish the Union of Democratic Control (UDC) in September 1914. Bolton and Trevelyan formed a strong friendship that was to last over forty years. In the inter-war period they collaborated on issues around education, with Trevelyan paying for much of Bolton's activity-incurred postage and reprographic costs. Through these connections, Bolton was at the heart of making Chopwell a significant coalfield centre of anti-war activity, attracting national anti-war speakers such as the son of Lord Buxton (also of the UDC) to speak in March 1916. While the local environment remained hostile—with over two hundred of its population killed, there was hardly a family in Chopwell not directly affected by the war—the 'Communist Club' was the organising base for a grouping, including Bolton, that became the post-war political leaders of their community. The war also gave some impetus to the working-class education movement, as it was easier and safer for socialists to propagandise inside their study classes than through the usual, more public means. Thus, in 1915, Will Lawther helped to found the North-East Labour College inspired by the Central Labour College in London, which Lawther had attended. It was not residential, however, but rather brought together miners' lodges, and other trade union branches and socialist societies, to promote and conduct study classes.

By 1919, Bolton was active on the college's organising committee. An incident that year revealed the confluence of Bolton's Methodism, his zest for working-class education and his changing politics, now inspired by the October 1917 Bolshevik revolution. As a Labour College organiser, Bolton met T.A. Jackson, a Marxist educator with a strong reputation, appointed North-East college lecturer in economics, history and philosophy in autumn 1919. Jackson described Bolton as 'A splendid type, he combined never-failing revolutionary ardour, with equally untiring practical work for a (Methodist) Brotherhood, which met on Sunday afternoons in Chopwell chapel. He and I got to be very friendly' [Jackson (1953) 153]. At a Labour College committee meeting, Jackson joked about preaching a sermon at Bolton's Brotherhood to prove that Isaiah was a Bolshevik: 'Harry [Henry] turned serious and said firmly "I'll hold you to that"' [Jackson (1953) 156]. Jackson's provocative title 'Isaiah the Bolshevik' stimulated great local interest and brought a packed house. Jackson's argument that, if he had been alive, Isaiah would have been a Bolshevik met with such applause that the windows rattled. The meeting then, instead of its normal hymn, sung 'these things shall be, a nobler race'—incidentally Bolton's favourite hymn that encapsulated his perspective—with such gusto that the sound 'would almost have put enthusiasm into a corpse' [Jackson (1953) 161]. The impact of Jackson's address secured him an increasingly inadequately sized venue for a series of lectures in Chopwell on the principles of socialism; 'and my comrade Harry – in great glee – rubbed it into the Methodists at their next business meeting that "the finest Christian sermon ever preached in their chapel" had been given by an Atheist Communist' [Jackson (1953) 161].

Bolton's religion, politics, and interest in working-class education was evident too in his involvement in the Co-operative Society's adult education activities. In 1923 he won a prize for an essay on this very topic, rich with religious vocabulary and biblical quotations. But it begins with a joke: 'Education, like cremation, is a burning question today' [Bolton (1923) 1]. The refinement of Bolton's own education was soon evident from the pamphlet's subsequent sentences, in which he launched a linguistic inquest into the word education; does it come from 'educare' or 'educere'? [Bolton (1923) 1]. A staunch co-operator, Bolton spent many terms on Blaydon Co-operative society's management committee. Later in life he helped to institute the Co-operative dental service in the north-east; he also sat on the regional Co-operative Society committee, regularly attending meetings in Newcastle, though he was to describe the Society's senior officials as 'a pack of bloody Tories'.

Notwithstanding his working closely with Marxists through the Labour College, Bolton became an official (financial secretary) of the newly-organised Blaydon constituency Labour Party (CLP). Crucially, the party offered Bolton a springboard for his public political career; he was duly elected a Labour representative for Chopwell ward of Blaydon Urban District Council (UDC) in April 1919. This afforded Bolton a new platform to act. Housing was a central concern, and Bolton was active on the issue from his first council meeting in May 1919, condemning the 'scandalous' (and prohibitive) cost of suitable building land [*Blaydon Courier*, 19 May 1919]. Proposals for peace celebrations soon became linked with housing: Bolton rejected spending council money on such celebrations 'while we were still at war', but he supported the building of three 'peace celebration' houses instead (which was overruled by the following month's meeting) [*Blaydon Courier*, 19 May 1919]. There were several controversial interventions on the memorialisation of the war: Bolton remarked on the abominable hypocrisy of the men who were leading the memorialisation efforts, yet failing to find ex-soldiers employment or to help the families of those killed or maimed in the war.

The painfully slow progress on house building was a source of ongoing frustration. Pointing to the gross overcrowding in Chopwell (with some houses in the village containing three families, and very many two), Bolton sought to limit new 'luxury' buildings like picture halls or pubs, that took material, labour and land away from house-building. Securing central government finance for house-building seemed the most intractable problem. In August 1920, Bolton condemned the government's 'brutal callousness and indifference', suggesting that the council withdraw support for house-building if it did not being soon, thereby throwing full responsibility for this failure onto the government [*Blaydon Courier*, 14 August 1920]. Almost a year later, however, nothing much had changed; yet Bolton still failed to get majority council support for his policy of non-cooperation. Eventually, the council could begin house-building; though even by January 1925 Bolton was clear that the programme had yet to reduce overcrowding.

Using his council seat, Bolton launched attacks on big businesses (coal mines, coke ovens and railways), attempting to secure a larger proportion of their profits for the council's works schemes. In championing the small owner-occupier Bolton regularly sought, unsuccessfully, to find a means of delivering the benefits and rates rebates (of up to 30%) enjoyed by the large house owners (like the coal companies) to single owner-occupiers and council renters. The coal companies also came under Bolton's repeated verbal assaults for refusing to build sufficient housing for their workforces; for buying up local farms to produce fodder for pit ponies (and thereby imperilling the local milk supply and working-class health); for holding back their rates in protest at the council's role in feeding the children of locked-out miners (in 1921) and for refusing to maintain the streets of Chopwell. Threats to stop cooperating with the CIC over its development plans brought the company quickly to a meeting on this last issue, though it then dragged its feet again.

The rights, pay and conditions of the council's own workers were also taken up by Bolton, as he argued (unsuccessfully) in October 1919 for an extra one week's annual holiday on full pay for them all. He supported the council's own striking 'cartmen' in November 1919 and was adamant that the council should always pay full trade union rates of pay, even to unemployed workers brought in by the government, thereby setting an example for other local councils. Indeed, Bolton intervened on a vast raft of local issues, large and small; from arguing for the right of council tenants to keep poultry to advocating the municipalisation of local water. He pronounced on national domestic issues in the council too. For example, in December 1921 he got the council to endorse a call for the government to reduce the cost of foodstuffs.

International questions were also firmly on Bolton's political agenda. In August 1920, he moved to suspend council standing orders to allow for an emergency resolution, as they were 'faced with the possibility of another Great War between this country and Russia' [*Blaydon Courier*, 14 August 1920]. The resolution he proposed protested at the government's 'bellicose attitude towards the Russian and Irish nations', opposed any British aid to Russia's enemies and

demanded the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. There was some opposition in the council; one councillor wanted nothing to do with it (as he was not elected for 'political purposes'). But the council nevertheless sent copies of its resolution to the prime minister and the press.

Outside the council, Bolton energetically made this same case (for example at a Labour May Day meeting that year), and he was also active in the 'Hands off Russia' campaign of 1920. By late August 1920, Bolton was prominent in the local machinery that had sprung up in the same from a national trade union and Labour Party 'council of action'. Bolton moved Chopwell and district 'Council of Action's' resolution 'unreservedly to do anything within its power, including "down tools" policy [sic; a strike], to stop a wanton attack on Soviet Russia' [*Blaydon Courier*, 28 August 1920]. At a 'Council of Action' mass meeting at Chopwell in October, Bolton remarked: 'All over the world there was a divine urge impelling the people to seek for a higher, fuller, finer human life. The Russian and Irish problems were rational manifestations of an international movement which must end in a new system of society' [*Blaydon Courier*, 23 October 1920].

Bolton's profile among the local miners was growing. A matter of months after the threat of intervention in Russia had been averted, Bolton was among the miners' leaders dealing with the crisis brought about by government de-control of the industry and the owners' subsequent demands for wage reductions. On 20 March 1921, he moved the resolution at a Chopwell miners' meeting calling for a national conference of miners and other workers to resist wage reductions. Such was his prominence that, by May, Bolton had come to the attention of the local police superintendent, who regarded him as a 'leading light' of the Chopwell miners, though not 'of a dangerous type as regards being the movers in militant acts […]' [TWAS, T148/5; 21 May 1921]. By March 1922, however, the superintendent was describing Bolton as 'the only communist in office' in his area (though he did not 'consider his influence to be strong enough to create any revolutionary activity') [TWAS, T148/6, 20 March 1922]. It is uncertain if this meant that Bolton was understood to be a paid-up member of the Communist Party or if the term 'communist' was being used as a generic and pejorative term for any left-wing militant. Bolton's name had not, as yet, featured prominently in Communist publications. Indeed, Bolton was remarkably supportive when Labour formed a government in January 1924, hailing the 'real progress' the government had achieved: 'While they [Labour] were a minority government and could not legislate very much on revolutionary lines [sic], yet they had done some things which the workers ought to be proud of […]' [*Blaydon Courier*, 10 May 1924]. In the council, too, Bolton was 'fully satisfied' with the £5000 of government support for housing that he was certain would not have been provided had Labour not been in power [*Blaydon Courier*, 21 June 1924].

Police surveillance records show Bolton remained active in Chopwell ILP branch, but he began to develop closer working relationships with actual Communist organisations. In March 1924, Bolton was one of twelve to attend a Young Communist League (YCL) meeting in Chopwell, though the police were unable to ascertain what transpired. On 13 April, Bolton was particularly busy, attending a suspected YCL meeting at about 2:30 p.m. and a Chopwell ILP meeting five hours later, but in the same venue. Bolton's status as a leading 'red', certainly in the eyes of the police, was confirmed when he (and Will Lawther) became the subjects, in early 1925, of weekly police reports.

In April 1925, Labour won a majority (2–1) on Blaydon council, and Bolton was elected council chairperson. Aware of press scrutiny of the first Labour-run Blaydon council, Bolton was characteristically reminded of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The same month that saw streets of new council housing in Chopwell named after, most controversially, Marx and Lenin—June 1925—saw Chopwell's miners locked out. This was the result of their rejection of a reorganisation plan that included increased hours and reduced pay, itself an early response to the renewed national coal crisis. Bolton had already launched a blistering attack on Peter Lee, a DMA fulltime official, in April 1925, in response to Lee's claim that miners would have to

accept 'some new things which are not very palatable to us'. He riposted 'The tears, the blood and the agony of the past are not going to be forgotten so lightly, no matter who gives the weighty advice, for other people to give away things which have been so dearly won' [*Evening Chronicle*, 1 April 1925].

As the Chopwell lockout began, Bolton again deployed his council power-base; in October 1925 it protested at the 'unnecessarily provocative', 'large numbers' of police present in the village, which tended to provoke disorder [*Blaydon Courier*, 10 October 1925]. Bolton supported the locked-out men and their families by refusing to evict those in rent arrears to the council. He could also offer council jobs; for example, the locked-out miner Steve Lawther became a Blaydon UDC rent collector from July 1925, a new council post. Frustrating government anti-strike plans was another possibility; the council refused to comply with a government circular seeking local authority support for the organisation of supplies in the event of a nationwide coal stoppage, in December 1925. In April 1926, Bolton sought to tighten his control on the council by 'liberating' non-Labour councillors from committee work for the forthcoming year, though he dropped the plan after opposition from Labour as well as non-Labour councillors. Nevertheless, when the national mining lockout finally came on 1 May 1926, Blaydon UDC refused to appoint a 'Coal officer' or to act on any of the other government emergency directives, despite repeated exhortations to do so.

The General Strike came into effect from midnight on 4 May 1926. Naturally, Bolton was prominent in the discussion at a district mass meeting of trade unionists and others on the evening of Sunday 2 May at which Robin Page Arnot—a national CP leader who had spoken at Chopwell's Mayday celebrations—presented a blueprint for action. Early next morning (Monday 3 May) Bolton went to Blaydon UDC offices; his leadership of the council was essential to Page Arnot's plan, which specifically envisaged transforming the council into strike machinery. At the council offices, Bolton immediately assumed control, speaking to all the staff, instructing those he did not trust to take their holidays immediately. He then turned the remaining staff, offices and machinery into an organ of the general strike. This was vital to the propaganda effort as the council's duplicator (codenamed 'the mangle') was used to produce the strike broadsheet *Northern Light*.

The first issue of *Northern Light* appeared the next morning, Tuesday 4 May. On Bolton's authority, the duplicator was transferred under the cover of night to the first of the various hide-outs—appropriately enough an unfinished Chopwell council house. The duplicator's hiding place changed regularly, to prevent the police from seizing it; so effective were Bolton's arrangements that over two weeks later the police had still not been able to find and seize it. Eyewitness accounts reveal a highly active and very well-coordinated local strike council, of which Bolton was rightly proud. Several days into the general strike, he remarked: 'We have the people behind us. We have paralysed the traffic […] Let Baldwin resign' [*Newcastle Journal*, 14 May 1926].

On Sunday 9 May, Bolton was in a car with Will Lawther and the driver, Jim Frost, returning to Chopwell from Blaydon where they had investigated (unfounded) rumours that the police had baton-charged a crowd. Stopping on the way home at a pub, the three came into a confrontation with the police, resulting in Bolton and Lawther's arrests. As to what specifically precipitated their arrests, the evidence given by the police at the trial, and Lawther's later accounts, suggested that it was only when the Police Inspector went outside to talk to Bolton (on Lawther's suggestion) that their arrests became unavoidable. (Bolton, as a teetotaller, had stayed in the car.) Bolton's threats to stop the police from delivering a lorry load of foodstuffs Lawther attributed to his being an 'excitable fellow – a Methodist' [Morris (1976) 57].

At Gateshead Court on Thursday 13 May, both men stood charged under the Emergency Powers Act (EPA) with interfering with food distribution and police intimidation. Bolton was in a particularly curious situation as his chairmanship of the council meant that he was a Justice of the Peace who could preside at the very court he appeared before. Bolton denied the accusation

that he was a communist, claiming that; 'I have walked round till half past two in the morning urging the pickets to work peacefully and refrain from violence'. Asked 'was it not an instruction to smash vehicles that came out without your permit?' Bolton responded 'That is one the biggest lies uttered' [*Newcastle Journal*, 14 May 1926]. He also claimed not to know if *Northern Light* was printed on council paper, though he agreed that it was similar to paper he got his council minutes on! After a six hour trial, they were found guilty. Both refused the £50 fine and so went to gaol for two months. Outside the court, there were violent scenes as the supportive crowd was attacked by the police, with Bolton's son Wesley among those assaulted. The Trades Union Congress called off the general strike the same day.

Thanks to Bolton, Blaydon UDC provided the one known example of a council providing direct assistance to strike organisers in the entire region; he had thus played a vital role in making the north-east one of the best organised regions during the general strike. Page Arnot deemed Bolton the 'outstanding figure' at Blaydon, which 'as far as Durham County was concerned remained the storm centre throughout' [Page Arnot (1961) 27]. His arrest made Bolton, momentarily a national figure. (His trial was the subject of a question in Parliament.) His and Lawther's arrests were regarded at the time as the most sensational of the more than two hundred Durham and Northumberland miners detained under the Emergency Powers Act. Notwithstanding his own Labour Party affiliation, Bolton helped build Chopwell's reputation as a communist stronghold; a 'Little Moscow'. A week after Bolton's court-case, forty-seven arrested during the general strike (mostly from the Chopwell district) appeared in court. The prosecutor condemned the local 'Council of Action' as a 'terrifying and despicable organisation'. Bolton's placing of council resources at its disposal was 'known now as "The Blaydon Scandal" [*Blaydon Courier*, 22 May 1926].

At a hero's welcome home meeting the day after his release on Saturday 27 June, Bolton remarked characteristically that he told the chaplain in gaol that 'Chopwell is a city set on a hill that cannot be hid – (laughter) – and the only thing that differentiates it from other towns is that it is a little bit higher in intelligence and in outlook than most of the other towns.' He then held up a red flag, saying it was 'symbolical of a movement' that would destroy capitalism and build in its place a new Jerusalem [MacIntyre (1979) 85]. Now released, Bolton re-engaged in the miners' struggle, though he managed to stay out of the courts. Chopwell itself remained quiet, as it was solidly out, at least until early October. In early December the Chopwell miners voted to return to work, on worse terms than those rejected in March. In the aftermath the coal owners blacklisted ring-leaders, and there was widespread victimisation in Chopwell and surrounding collieries. Unsurprisingly, Bolton was among the victimised, but he did not—unlike several of the Lawther brothers—emigrate. Initially unemployed, Bolton's staying put paid off when he was elected Chopwell colliery checkweighman in 1928; an achievement that reflected just how high Bolton's local profile had risen. The leading role he took in mining matters after the lockout was evident in, for example, an article in the Miners Federation of Great Britain's official paper, where Bolton condemned the management of Chopwell colliery (a 'gold mine') for 'robbing men in every direction', offering specific examples of miners being refused the minimum wage: 'If the mining industry cannot be resuscitated other than by the miners being reduced to a fodder basis, and a slave status, then let the mines be taken over and run by the people who can reorganise them that a decent living can be assured' [*The Miner*, October 1927].

Early sympathy towards Bolshevism and the Russian revolution and fairly low-key activity with the YCL now became increasingly characterised by a closer overt working relationship Bolton developed with the CP: in summer 1927, his name began appearing in Communist publications for the first time. In May 1927, the CP's weekly paper *Workers' Life* recorded that Bolton and Will Lawther sent letters of greeting to a YCL conference in Newcastle. Only these two local leaders were mentioned as explicitly Labour supporters of the event. In late May 1927, Bolton, described as a local ILP left-winger, spoke at a YCL/CP demonstration of 200 children with red rosettes and banners on 'Empire day', an occasion that had seen Bolton embroiled in

controversy in the past. Bolton stood alongside a well-known local communist who then led the crowd in singing 'the Red Flag'. Within three months, Bolton and several Lawthers were prominently involved on the Labour side of communist initiatives to form a 'united front' of the left in Chopwell. A Chopwell CP branch public meeting on the mining situation on Sunday 28 August resulted in the formation of a 'united front committee', involving Communist, Co-operative guild, and Labour Party sections. Later that same day, at the 'best attended meeting in Chopwell', Bolton moved the new committee's motion [*Workers' Life*, 9 September 1927].

Bolton's personal life was also becoming more closely tied to the CP as around this time his daughter Laura married a local communist. Direct emotional ties to the Soviet experiment were also strengthened in November 1927 when Bolton was among the British delegates (led by Will Lawther, chair of the British 'Friends of Soviet Russia' section) to the Soviet Union. Bolton had determined to go on such a visit some years before, but Lenin died unexpectedly. On the delegation, Bolton visited modern Soviet towns, 'Dietski Mir' (children's world), universities, hospitals, schools and leisure centres. At a Blaydon UDC meeting in December 1927, on his return, Bolton claimed to have seen things that gave the lie to stories run in the British 'dirty gutter press'. The Soviet Union was the only land of hope and glory that I know anything about […] I have been there and I have seen it and so far as contrasts and comparisons are concerned it is enough to break a man's heart to come into a howling desolate wildness like this where unemployment is rife, where destitution meets you at every turn, where wages are being reduced, where hours are being increased and were the general conditions of the workers who produce the wealth of this country are gradually, but surely, being worsened…

Bolton remarked on 'the atmosphere, the comradely feeling [in the Soviet Union], the lack of spite, and animosity and bad feeling which exists between workers and employers…' and hoped that 'one day the workers of this country would become so educated that, while he did not desire the same methods to be employed that their Russian comrades had to employ, they would rise and stamp out this unemployment, these low wages, longer hours and starvation conditions' [*Blaydon Courier*, 24 December 1927].

So impressed was Bolton, that he formally joined the CP for the first time. The first reference to his new party affiliation came in the Communist press on 27 July 1928 when *Workers' Life* described Bolton as 'still a Labour councillor despite being a Communist', whose dole money was being paid to him by Chopwell lodge. This was in defiance of the DMA executive, who wanted to stop the payments precisely because of Bolton's Communist affiliation. Yet Bolton's 'united front' approach to left politics was becoming rapidly outdated. The international Communist movement was moving towards its aggressively sectarian 'third period' of 'class against class', when it began identifying the rest of the left as 'social fascists' that should be attacked rather than cooperated with. By mid-February 1929, Bolton's expulsion from the CP was being discussed in the local press. The cause was a mining dispute involving the CIC and the 'non-political union' (in a tiny minority) agreeing to reduce piece-work rates. After losing a court case, the Chopwell management had given its workforce a week's notice to sign back on for work individually on the new rates. The CP had taken up the campaign, criticising DMA officials openly for negotiating an apparently unsatisfactory settlement. Bolton disassociated himself publicly from the communist critique and was consequently expelled for 'indiscipline and political unreliability [*North Mail*, 16 February 1929]. The expulsion apparently caused a 'sensation' as Bolton had for a 'long time' been recognised as an 'ardent Communist'. Yet his time inside the CP did not seem to damage his standing in any way. On his expulsion from the party in February 1929, the *North Mail* (16 February) claimed that Bolton remained 'one of the best known men in the district', and 'still an ardent Socialist' presiding over a 'Socialist' council.

In March 1930, Bolton was involved in a battle inside Blaydon Co-operative Society, arguing for it to re-affiliate to the Co-operative Party. It was a 'moral obligation on a man to use his intelligence, and that the co-operative movement, like so many other movements in the world

today, was being lost because of the lack of knowledge and because they had so many cowards who dare not use the knowledge they possessed. The time had arrived when a far more intensive propaganda and a far more intensive educational movement should be set up to educate the people'. Reminding his fellow co-operators of the benefits that had accrued since Labour got men onto public bodies, Bolton argued that 'it is time co-operators were examining their position and determining that they are going to stand by the ideals of the movement and not be fleeced by Tories and Liberals as they have been in the past' [*Blaydon Courier*, 1 March 1930]. This particular battle was lost, however; the anti-socialists in the society voted the motion down.

In Blaydon UDC, times were also tough, and Bolton characteristically combative. He argued for better wages for council workers in March 1930 and criticised the Labour Government in May for not supporting the council's five schemes to tackle unemployment. He came under increasing pressure as the council's finances began to get very stretched. The Autumn 1930 council audit caused tremendous ructions, with Bolton vigorously defending the council's decision to employ direct labour to build its housing rather than contractors; direct council workers got paid more, which they put back into the local economy. He attacked external groups like the ratepayers involving themselves in the audit process and seeking to make capital for Labour's political enemies.

By January 1931, the council had large numbers of rent payers in arrears; the 'crime' they had committed, according to Bolton, was to not turn 'scores of their unfortunate tenants out onto the street because they were confronted with economic conditions, economic forces over which they had no control. All the governments in the world won't compel me to do that' [*Blaydon Courier*, 31 January 1931]. Four of the biggest coal mines in the district, he explained, had been idle for various lengths of time even before the seven-month lockout. No wages meant no spending in local shops which put pressure on tradespeople too. There were, however, some stern words for some of Labour's apparent supporters among the electorate; Bolton pointed out, on several occasions, that it was not good enough for people to vote Labour and tell their friends to do the same and then to impede the council the rest of the time by not paying their rents. At the same time he admitted that with the Chopwell strike and the 1926 lockout that 'in their anxiety to help their men to win they erred on the generous side' [*Blaydon Courier*, 21 March 1931]. But issuing the 500 summonses that the auditor wanted would simply cost the council even more, he argued.

Naturally, Bolton retained his active sympathy for the unemployed. In October 1931, prompted by an unemployed delegation to the council, he proposed a motion to protest against the government's means testing of unemployment support, arguing that the measure threatened to further impoverish the district and that it was an insult to subject workers who had paid for the benefits through national insurance to it; 'that man might work 15 years and never lose an hour, but, unfortunately, as the evolution of capitalism works its unholy way they never know when they might find themselves without work … The means test was, in forcing the thrifty to disclose before a committee what their means were 'was immoral. They were going to penalise the thrifty' [*Blaydon Courier*, 24 October 1931]. In January 1932 he supported another protest resolution forwarded from another council and sent to the Prime Minister, pointing out that of the five Means Test committees in the district, the one that had a 'Moderate' (non-Labour) majority had made more cuts than the other four put together. There was a repeat of the political battle over the council's accounts in summer 1933 with Bolton again prominent in criticising Labour's enemies' attempts to make 'political capital out of willo-the-wisps…' [*Blaydon Courier*, 8 July 1933].

In the early 1930s, Bolton become more involved in foreign affairs, working initially through the League of Nations Union (LNU), an anti-war organisation. By 1934 Bolton was a leader in Chopwell's LNU branch. In July he led the Chopwell lodge contingent in a Chopwell LNU-organised procession, that included peace tableaux made by schoolchildren, Women's Institute members, and British Legion and church representatives, and mass rally in the village,

to end in a sports day and flower show. By 1936, Bolton was also chair of the Tyneside Joint Peace Council (TJPC), one of very many formed across Britain the year before, and composed of a wide spectrum of organisations and individuals (including communists) interested in peace issues. In late June 1936, Bolton was among five regional TJPC delegates to the World Peace congress in Brussels, scheduled for that September. Through the TJPC Bolton became integral to the regional movement's response to the Nationalist uprising in Spain against the Republican Government in July 1936. At a TJPC meeting in Newcastle in early August 1936, Bolton moved the motion demanding that the government take a 'sharp line' against fascism by refusing export licences to Spanish Fascists and supplying arms to the Republic. It exhorted the British labour movement to campaign for the Republic and a 'People's Front', and appealed to the International Federation of Trade Unions to prevent the movement of arms to the 'Fascist rebels' in Spain [*Daily Worker*, 3 August 1936]. This clear and radical stance was also the first public statement on the conflict from the left appearing in the regional press.

Bolton remained active in the TJPC, which organised meetings on Spain and other international issues throughout the late 1930s. Writing on the situation in October 1936, Bolton urged the *North Mail* editor to 'be fair even to the weak-kneed Labour Party. Read the doings of our own government and you will find plenty to criticise without attacking men and women who are trying to save the nation from a government they have been too timid to vigorously oppose' [*North Mail*, 9 October 1936]. While Bolton's outspoken public stance drew considerable criticism—there was even some public friction from Catholics inside the labour movement in Blaydon–the deteriorating international situation rekindled Bolton's demands for a united front of the left. Speaking in September 1936 in Blaydon, Bolton remarked that 'If the people willed it, there was no reason why a united front should not be secured in this country' [*Newcastle Journal*, 21 September 1936]. As Blaydon CLP's secretary, Bolton made the same case, calling for a united front including communists to combat fascism and save Spain in the party's 1936 annual report. He remained firmly on the left, arguing for the need 'do away with class society', and that the 'inevitability of gradualness' did not work. He was also integral to Blaydon CLP's anti-war and anti-fascist exhibition, opened in August 1936. In the press, Bolton praised the lead Will Lawther (a DMA fulltime official since 1934) and his colleagues had given the miners on Spain.

In Blaydon council, Bolton issued a long statement on the Spanish situation in mid-August 1936. Inside the council, Bolton also promoted the united front practically. In late August 1936, he reassured a deputation from the Communist-led National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM) to the council that their proposals against the government's punitive Unemployment Assistance Boards would be favourably considered. When the locality's NUWM Hunger March contingent set off in October 1936, Bolton was among the well-wishers, telling the marchers that 'If there was a united democratic force in this country no Government could stand in the way of reforms which were so urgent and long overdue' [*Blaydon Courier*, 17 October 1936]. He also received them at the council buildings on their return from London in mid-November.

Several north-east Hunger Marchers went to fight in the International Brigade in Spain from late 1936, among them Wilf Jobling, whom Bolton had taught at Socialist Sunday School, and who had since become a leading local communist. After Jobling died at Jarama, in February 1937, Bolton paid a moving tribute at a council session. Shortly after this, however, he stood down from Blaydon UDC, after serving eighteen years, and was elected instead to Durham County Council. This allowed him to pursue his passion for education further, supporting schooling in his ward. Foremost was his chairing the Board of Governors of a local secondary school (Hookergate), which to a great extent was built as a result of Bolton's pressure, and which afforded him considerable satisfaction. While Bolton's role was necessarily lower-profile in the County Council, his speaking out was still reported; for example, in February 1937, Bolton argued that Labour's northern MPs were 'far too tame and respectable in the House of Commons', when making the case for more help for unemployment-stricken Jarrow [*North*

*Mail*, 6 February 1937]. He was soon denouncing the expulsions of two former Labour Party activists and Jarrow March leaders, an episode that, according to Bolton, brought 'disgrace' on Labour [*Durham Chronicle*, 19 March 1937].

As with many other leftists, the Spanish Republic's deteriorating situation in 1938 saw Bolton embracing the popular front (of all anti-fascists, including Liberals). He made numerous references to Spain in a May Day 1938 speech, particularly a recent and unofficial national emergency conference on the issue in London that he had attended as Blaydon CLP delegate. Bolton quoted approvingly Liberal MP Wilfred Roberts' willingness to work 'with Conservatives, Liberals, Socialists, Communists or any other ists' who wanted to help Spain. He 'also mentioned his political ally Sir Charles. Trevelyan (now a retired Labour left-winger'), whose call for a Popular Front had received a 'great reception' [*Blaydon Courier*, 6 May 1938]. At a second May Day demonstration that year, Bolton shared the platform with a local communist Lieutenant Colonel in the International Brigade.

Bolton was soon a leading figure in agitation for a Popular Front. In May 1938, he presided at a United Peace Alliance conference in Gateshead town hall, criticising labour movement leaders who wanted the British Government to cooperate with other democracies against Fascism, but who 'were not themselves prepared to link up with other democratic organisations against the government of Chamberlain'. Bolton was 'confident that 'the rank-and-file of Labour would support a United Peace Alliance', but, while the meeting's attendance was impressive (over 300 delegates representing various Labour and other 'progressive' organisations) it failed to generate any real momentum [*Blaydon Courier*, 3 June 1938]. When the movement for a Popular Front became more formalised with Stafford Cripps' campaign to win the Labour Party over in January 1939, Bolton was quick to add his name to that of C.P. Trevelyan as the first signatories of Cripps' petition. Bolton was on Cripps' Newcastle meeting platform, which drew a crowd of 3200. However, the opposition to Cripps' campaign among national Labour leaders was replicated at regional level, though Bolton stood firm at a Durham Federation of Labour Parties meeting convened to discuss it, attacking the national Labour leadership for 'rejecting working-class unity' while simultaneously continuing 'to collaborate with the National Government' [*Tribune*, 17 February 1939]. Cripps' campaign was soon floundering, with support melting away as the national leadership began expelling members. The incredible success of the concurrent Tyneside foodship campaign (launched in December 1938 by Bolton's TJPC) offered no hope for the Popular Front, in spite of its galvanising the close cooperation of activists of most political parties and none. Its leading activists tended to emphasise that the non-political and humanitarian aspects of the issue; that the foodship was to aid the suffering civilians of all sides of the conflict.

Bolton's political alliance with Will Lawther, formed with his Edwardian conversion to the ILP, ruptured with the onset of the Second World War. Lawther turned dramatically against the Soviet Union, and communists, when Stalin signed the Non-aggression Pact with Hitler on 22 August 1939. Writing in 1955, Lawther deemed this an act of 'indescribable cynicism' [*Newcastle Journal*, 23 March 1955]. This was compounded when the CPGB declared, after some confusion, that the conflict that broke out in September 1939 was an 'imperialist' war and that communists should remain neutral. The full breach with Lawther was evident after the Soviet Union invaded Finland, on 30 November 1939. In February 1940, Bolton opposed a DMA executive proposal to grant £1000 to a labour movement 'Aid to Finland' fund. His name was one of twenty-five signatories to a leaflet attacking this proposal and attempting to influence DMA lodge delegates to vote against it. The leaflet argued that the struggle between Finland and the Soviet Union was that of capitalism versus socialism, and that it was imperative that workers support the latter. It pointed out that a Durham miners delegation itself had reported that 'the suppression of capitalism by socialism has been successfully accomplished', and berated Labour leaders like Will Lawther for condemning 'the Soviet Union for forcibly clearing a gang of imperialists from the Socialist [sic. Soviet's?] borders but [who] supports Chamberlain in

using force for an imperialist war with Germany'. The leaflet concluded: 'Our rule book says we "seek the abolition of capitalism and the substitution of the common ownership and control of the means of livelihood". In the spirit of this we say: "Stop the developing war against the only country where this has been done!"' [TWAS, Acc.5143, n.d., February 1940].

Durham lodges overwhelmingly endorsed the grant and the DMA Executive ruled that the signatories were guilty of a serious act of unconstitutional behaviour. On 19 March 1940, the DMA council (in theory its governing body) endorsed an Executive decision that all signatories be fined and obliged to sign an apology within a specified time. Bolton was one of only two to refuse. Both appeared before the Executive, with Bolton telling them that 'it would be soon enough to ask me to pay a fine and apologise when Mr. Will Lawther did so in respect of similar crimes he had committed' [*Consett Chronicle*, 2 April 1942]. On 22 April 1940 both men were expelled from the union. There were problems for Bolton in the Labour Party too. In January 1941, he, along with Steve Lawther, was suspended by the Blaydon DLP over their alleged opposition to official Labour Party policy on the Communist-organised 'People's Convention'. Will Lawther was outspoken in attacking the People's Convention for what he regarded as its attempts to undermine the British war effort. This conflict did not impact on Bolton's standing in his colliery however; in February 1942, he was reappointed assistant checkweighman at Chopwell, in spite of the ongoing legal proceedings he was involved in against his DMA expulsion. One reason for his continued high standing was the ongoing support he offered to his community: 'Many ex-servicemen and their dependants have reason to thank Henry Bolton for his assistance in fighting their cases for pensions when it seemed as if no pensions would be granted' [*Blaydon Courier*, 27 February 1942].

The appeal against expulsion from the DMA was heard in Durham Chancery court in early April 1942. The plaintiffs (Bolton and Jeffrey) argued that the leaflet they signed was merely 'honest political criticism of a line of action', and did not constitute a vicious or libellous attack upon anyone…' [*Consett Chronicle*, 2 April 1942]. This was not well received by the Chancellor who interjected: 'except the late Prime Minister, coal owners and one or two other small fry (Laughter)' [*Consett Chronicle*, 2 April 1942]. Bolton's precise role in writing the leaflet remained obscure in the evidence offered. His fellow plaintiff claimed Bolton had had 'a good deal' to do with the drafting of it, but he did not know who had written it. Bolton said simply that the leaflet was drafted by the chairmen and secretary of meetings of the signatories in Newcastle from statements they made. He attended several meetings in Newcastle in February 1940 for this purpose and 'always paid his bob' towards the expenses [*Blaydon Courier*, 10 April 1942]. Other of Bolton's comments in the court case, especially several highly critical references to Will Lawther's role, suggested that he had had a significant input into the leaflet's text. He claimed in court, for example, that as soon as the Russo-Finnish war began, '[Will] Lawther told me the war would go on until Hitlerism and Stalinism were obliterated' [*Consett Chronicle*, 2 April 1942]. Bolton denied that leaflet was intended to vilify DMA agents, arguing that 'If Lawther had written the leaflet it would have been ten times stronger'. He further defended it by asserting that 'every word in the leaflet was true… recent events have proved it' [*Consett Chronicle*, 2 April 1942].

A key plank of the case for the defence (the DMA's fulltime officials who included Lawther), was the claim that the leaflet was almost identical to communist propaganda, and that the signatories did not write it. Asked if he was a communist, Bolton replied that he had been a party member only for a few months in 1928. Jeffrey, also a checkweighman and long-standing DMA activist—he was seventy-six by this time, Bolton sixty-eight—claimed never to have been a CPGB member, denied having received any financial help towards the court case's costs, and did not regard the leaflet as a Communist document. Jeffrey thought the war was 'imperialist' when the leaflet was written but that it 'ceased to be an imperialist war after the manoeuvring to get us into a war with Russia ceased' [*Consett Chronicle*, 2 April 1942]. This was likely Bolton's position too. After a three-day hearing, the Chancellor found for the plaintiffs, with costs

awarded against the DMA, ruling that they had been expelled unconstitutionally. By the time of the court case, the geo-political landscape had altered dramatically. The Nazi offensive on the Soviet Union in summer 1941 saw the CP line change to wholehearted support for the war effort. Will Lawther, now MFGB president, was, by summer 1942, calling for a second front to be opened up to relieve the pressure on Britain's Soviet allies in the east. The political breach between Bolton and his old comrade was, momentarily at least, healed. And Bolton was soon active again in his local Labour Party, regularly reporting back to it on County Council business from spring 1943.

In the brave new world of Attlee's social democratic Britain, Bolton's working life ended: he retired as a checkweighman in 1947, just as coal was nationalised. He stood down from Durham County Council before the April 1949 elections. By then Bolton was seventy-four years old and the travelling to County Hall in Durham city was becoming too taxing. He had lived a political life steeped in the Chapel and the labour movement. A member of the Fabian Society and the 1930s left-wing Tribune group, Bolton was acquainted with a vast array of the leading figures of the era; these included writers John Galsworthy, G.B. Shaw and George Orwell, Viscount Stansgate, Bertrand Russell (Russell's wife Dora once spoke at Chopwell), George Lansbury, Clem Attlee, Ernie Bevin, Nye Bevan, Pethick Lawrence, Stafford Cripps, Manny Shinwell, Hugh Dalton, and Arthur Henderson. Among the others he had invited to Chopwell there were the most 'militant' (in terms of working-class politics) of the suffragettes, Sylvia Pankhurst, who stayed overnight in his house and after whom Bolton's granddaughter was named; there were also the Larkins, Jim and Pete (Henry himself was pro-Sinn Fein). He counted Margaret Bondfield, the first Labour female cabinet minister, among his friends and thanks to his deep and lifelong interest in education Bolton got to know Lord Eustace Percy, rector of King's College, Newcastle.

Commitment to education paid dividends among his own family. Bolton's son, Wesley, introduced as 'the boy', attended Blaydon grammar school, then Armstrong College to study for a physics degree before working as a secondary school teacher in Chopwell. But his progressive views allowed his daughter Laura to also attend Blaydon grammar school. (The other daughters were not educated at secondary level; Hilda worked as a Co-operative shop assistant until she got married; Annie went into domestic service for a middle-class family in Newcastle and Daisy helped out at home, later marrying a colliery electrician.) Four of his five grandchildren got degrees at a time when still only a tiny percentage attended university; three then became teachers.

Henry Bolton died on 6 March 1953, after a few weeks' illness, aged seventy-nine. He left effects valued at £246 3s 4d. When he died, he was still living in 6 Owen Terrace, Chopwell; a street named after the socialist pioneer from an earlier age, Robert Owen, in a house that Blaydon UDC had built in the 1920s when Bolton was in charge there. He was cremated in Newcastle following a memorial service in Trinity Methodist church. Blaydon Co-operative society, appropriately enough, organised the funeral arrangements. In the 1970s, as local researchers began recording the oral history of the coalfield, Bolton was remembered as eloquent and fiery, whose Nonconformist temperament had reminded many in the village of Lloyd George. He was recalled as 'an intelligent, independently-thinking man, well read with an impressive library of mainly political works' [Turnbull (1978)]. But perhaps the most appropriate epitaph came in the *Blaydon Courier* on 27 February 1942: remarking that Bolton was well known all over the north of England, it described him as 'one of the pioneer organisers of the Trade Union movements and a fighter for justice'.

**Writings:** Bolton, H., *The Place of the Co-operative Movement in the Sphere of Adult Education* (Pelaw-on-Tyne, 1923).

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Durham Record Office, D/Sho 97, Blaydon CLP Annual Report, 1936; National Library, Dublin, William O'Brien mss, MS 15679(1), Harry Bolton letter to Jim Larkin, 19 July 1914; Tyne and Wear Archives Service (TWAS), T148/5, /6 and /7, Reports of the Superintendent at Felling to Chief Constable (Durham), UD.BL/A/2/7–/15, Blaydon UDC minutes, 5 September 1916–13 April 1937, Acc. 5143, 'An Appeal to the Miners of Durham' (n.d., February? 1940). (**2**) **Newspapers and Periodicals**: *Blaydon Courier*; *Consett Chronicle*; *Daily Worker*; *Durham Chronicle*; *Evening Chronicle*; *The Miner*; *Morpeth Herald*; *Newcastle Journal*; *Northern Echo*; *North Mail*; *Stanley News*; *Sunderland Echo*; *Tribune*; *Workers' Life*; *Workers' Weekly*; *Northern Light*; *Workers' Chronicle*; *Labour Monthly*; *Parliamentary Debates*. (**3**) **Theses**: L. H. Mates, 'The United Front and the Popular Front in the North East of England 1936–1939' (PhD thesis, Newcastle University, 2002); R.J. Holton, 'Syndicalism and its Impact in Britain with Particular Reference to Merseyside 1910–1914' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 1971); A. Mason, 'The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham, with Special Reference to the General Strike of 1926' (Unpublished PhD thesis, Hull University, 1967). (**4**) **Books and Articles**: H. Barron, *The 1926 Miners' Lockout. Meanings of Community in the Durham Coalfield* (Oxford, 2009); H. Beynon and T. Austrin, *Masters and Servants. Class and Patronage in the Making of a Labour Organisation. The Durham Miners and the English Political Tradition* (1994); R. Challinor, 'Jimmy Stewart and his Revolting Children', *Bulletin of the North-east Group for the Study of Labour History*, 17 (1983); C. Farman, *The General Strike: May 1926* (St. Albans, 1974); T. A. Jackson, *Solo Trumpet: Some Memories of Socialist Agitation and Propaganda* (1953); A. Mason, *The General Strike in the North East* (Hull, 1970); L.H. Mates, *The Great Labour Unrest; Rank-And-File Movements and Political Change in the Durham Coalfield to 1914* (Manchester, 2016); L.H. Mates, 'The Limits and Potential of Syndicalist Influence in the Durham Coalfield before the Great War', *Labor History*, vol. 54, no. 1 (2013); L.H. Mates, 'Radical Cultures and Local Identities: the North-east Labour Movement's Response to the Spanish Civil War', in K. Cowman and I. Packer (eds), *Radical Cultures and Local Identities* (Newcastle, 2010); L.H. Mates, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Left: Political Activism and the Popular Front* (2007); L.H. Mates, 'Durham and South Wales Miners and the Spanish Civil War', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 17, no. 3 (2006); L.H. Mates, 'The North East and the Campaigns for a Popular Front, 1938–9', *Northern History*, vol. 43, no. 2 (2006); L.H. Mates, 'A "Most Fruitful Period"? The North East District Communist Party and the Popular Front Period, 1935–9', *North-East History*, 36 (2004); L. H. Mates, 'Britain's *De Facto* Popular Front? The Case of the Tyneside Foodship Campaign, 1938–1939', *Labour History Review*, vol. 69, no. 1 (2004); S. MacIntyre, 'Red Strongholds Between the Wars', *Marxism Today* (March, 1979); M. Morris, *The General Strike* (Harmondsworth, 1976); R. Page Arnot, 'The General Strike, 1926', *Our History*, Issue 22 (1961); G. Pattison, 'Anarchist Influence in the Durham Coalfield Before 1914', *The Raven*, Freedom Press, No. 11 (3:3), (July–Sept. 1990); G. Short, 'The General Strike and Class Struggles in the North East: 1925–28', *Marxism Today*, vol. 14 (October, 1970); R. Smith, 'Obituary article: Sir William Lawther', *Bulletin of the North-east Group for the Study of Labour History*, vol. 10 (1976); J. Symons, *The General Strike* (1959); L. Turnbull, *Chopwell's Story* (Gateshead, 1978); D. Watson, *No Justice without a Struggle* (2014); [no named author], 'A Council of Action – 40 Years Ago', *Labour Monthly*, vol. 48 (June, 1966). (**5**) **Other**: Friends of Soviet Russia International Congress, November 1927. Report and Resolutions. (London: Labour Research Department, 1928); 'Independent Order of Rechabites, Salford Unity, Friendly Society'. Declaration of Candidate' [Henry Bolton], 4 September 1908 (in possession of Jack Fletcher); [no named author], 'Police Persecutions', *Labour Monthly* (June 1926), pp. 379–386; 'Henry Bolton' in 'The Pearce Register of British WW1 Conscientious Objectors' available online at https://livesofthefirstworldwar.org/lifestory/7657095 (Accessed 31 May 2016). The author would like to thank Kevin Davies and Don Watson for their help in sourcing material on Bolton. (**6**) **Obituary**: *Blaydon Courier*, 13 March 1953.

LEWIS H. MATES and JACK FLETCHER

*See also*: James ANCRUM; †Sir William LAWTHER; †William WHITELEY

**BROOKS, Thomas Judson** (1880–1958)
LABOUR MP AND SPIRITUALIST

Thomas Judson Brooks was born in Thurgoland, South Yorkshire, on 7 July 1880, the son of William Brooks and his wife Sarah. William Brooks was a quarry labourer and occasional farmer. The family moved to Castleford in 1902. After an elementary education at the local village school Thomas was employed as a coal miner, aged eleven, in the Yorkshire coalfield at Deepcar as a trammer and filler and then at Glasshoughton Colliery, located between Castleford and Pontefract. He later recalled the harsh conditions he experienced underground: 'There were times when I couldn't hold my tools, and had to cover them with dust because of the sweat' [*Parliamentary Debates*, 13 July 1944, col. 1956]. His identity as a coalminer, spiritualist, and Yorkshireman was to shape his social and political outlook. In line with his peers in other coalfields he used the solidarity and communality of the coal mine and working-class community as a template for the kind of society he wished to see develop in the British Isles. Such pragmatism insulated him from the more radical currents in the labour movement in the first decades of the twentieth century. Yet Brooks was not wholly typical of mining trade unionists, and his lifelong belief and commitment to the cause of spiritualism made him more idiosyncratic in relation to some of his contemporaries. For Brooks, spiritualism, socialism, and trade unionism were inseparable and offered both a guide for living and a vehicle for the implementation of social reforms.

Brooks was exposed to trade union culture and activism while working underground in the Yorkshire coalfield. In 1906 he married Annie Carver. In 1911 he was elected lodge secretary of the Glasshoughton branch of the Yorkshire Miners' Association (YMA) which had over 3000 members, holding the position for over thirty years. Glasshoughton was also the colliery that produced Herbert Smith, the future president of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB). Smith continued to live in the village until 1916 and there is a possibility that he had some connection to Brooks through their activism in the YMA. Smith's biographer characterised the village as 'shirts off …pit ways and pit talk' thus making a 'separate people' [Lawson (1941) 16–17]. Like Smith, Brooks' experiences of poverty and unemployment in Castleford and the surrounding villages shaped his political sympathies and affiliations. He was steeped in the co-operative culture of Glasshoughton and Castleford that in his youth had a strong collective identity that was underpinned by trade unionism, politics, and religion.

In 1914, while still working at the coalface, Brooks was elected to Castleford District Council. Six years later he gained a seat on the West Riding County Council. His Labour politics were complemented by his belief in and advocacy of spiritualism and the supernatural. He later recalled that his conversion took place in the early 1900s and came from a position of initial scepticism. Brooks noted that he 'was very opposed to it' but a medium 'told me so many things' [*Psychic News*, 16 December 1950]. At this time he was a teacher in a local Sunday School in Castleford and a member of the choir. A local medium known in the spiritualist press as 'Dacre' introduced him to the 'other world' of spiritualism and he was amazed by the 'truth' of the claims that there was a spirit dimension that could be contacted. Brooks and Dacre sat two to three times a week and 'he realised he was being shown how a rescue circle works' [*Psychic News*, 11 December 1943]. In spiritualist practice, a 'rescue circle' was used to free spirits who were 'caught between' this world and the next. They are often confused and need help from mediums in order to connect with their guides who help them transition to the spirit world. Typically, these were people who had experienced sudden death such as military combat or

industrial calamity. Unsurprisingly, 'rescue circles' were prominent in the Great War and in the Second World War. No doubt they also brought much comfort to the families of miners in the process of grieving through the loss of loved ones in times of disaster and death.

Brooks' conversion to spiritualism can be understood in the context of the autodidact cultures that led working-class trade union and community activists to challenge both religious and political orthodoxies. The coalfields of Yorkshire and neighbouring Lancashire had been particularly receptive to spiritualism in the nineteenth century. Keighley was the hub of the movement in the mid-Victorian period, complemented by the network of spiritualist churches in the West Riding of Yorkshire. By the 1890s, Yorkshire had a number of churches, regional bodies, local mediums and a rich diversity of spiritualist literature. By 1908 Lancashire (88) and Yorkshire (62) had far more spiritualist societies than any other counties in the nation. As late as 1940, Yorkshire still had 56 churches affiliated to the Spiritualists' National Union (SNU) [Nelson (1969) 284–286]. In mining communities, belief in spiritualism and the supernatural became a resilient component of a broader working-class culture that continued well into the twentieth century. Brooks was part of a small but significant group of socialist spiritualists in northern England that included Ernest Marklew, later the MP for Colne Valley, who were critical of a purely materialist form of socialism. By the beginning of the twentieth century the spiritualist current in British socialism was in decline, but Brooks and others gave the movement some impetus and influence in the inter-war period and later in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Brooks experienced the power of spiritualism from his regular attendance at séances through which he remained a convinced advocate of life after death. Spiritualism complemented his socialism, which had been forged at the coalface and in the broader working-class milieu of the Yorkshire coalfields. The collective identity of coal miners was one that had been steeped in industrial struggle and the ever-present reality of death and disaster. Many collieries had resident ghosts, and belief in the supernatural was widespread in the mining communities of northern England. For Brooks, socialism and spiritualism were never contradictory. He claimed that 'spiritualism was "socialism with a soul in it"' and that 'spirit people' had always guided his social and political beliefs [*Psychic News*, 11 December 1943]. He was not himself a medium, but had experienced astral projection and precognition. He also occasionally received warnings from the spirit world in the form of premonitions relating to future events. Again, this could well be related to the occasional sense of foreboding that sometimes emerged amongst miners underground and the village surrounding the pit-top in times of hardship, death, and industrial disaster (the Gresford explosion in 1934 in which 266 men lost their lives being an example in the inter-war period). Brooks remained aware of the short life expectancy that was the lot of many miners and such images often illustrated his speeches: 'one saw strong, virile men from 30 to 40 years of age working among ganister, and also men making silica bricks who in a few years began to fade away … Their lungs were torn after a few years and they eventually lost their lives' [*Parliamentary Debates*, 9 December 1942, col. 1631].

By 1918 Brooks was a leading figure in the Castleford National Spiritualist Church, going on to become the president of the organisation in 1921. He was instrumental in finding a permanent residence for the church on Lower Oxford Street; the spiritualists having previously met in rooms close to the local police station. He had been the conductor of the spiritualist lyceum school, presiding over the education of children in both Castleford and Rothwell. The coal miners of Castleford had experienced the poverty, unemployment and victimisation that followed the major disputes of 1912, 1921, and 1926. As a local lodge official of the YMA, Brooks bore the scars of the adversarial industrial relations culture of the coalfields in this turbulent period. As the YMA gained more influence in the 1930s, Brooks was instrumental in extracting concessions from the coal owners. His role in miners' welfare was also important and he was instrumental in securing a canteen at Glasshoughton; the first colliery in Britain to provide hot

meals for its miners. He had been elected to the Yorkshire Miners' Welfare Committee in 1921 and for the rest of his life made a contribution to improving facilities in coalfield communities.

Throughout the 1920s Brooks established a career in local government as a County Councillor for the West Riding, serving on number of committees as well as becoming a JP. In 1931 he was awarded an MBE for his services to the people of his locality. In the same year he was honoured by the spiritualist movement for the work he had done as president of the Castleford Church. The spiritualist newspaper *The Two Worlds* presented a glowing profile, noting that Brooks carried their philosophy 'into every department of his life' [*The Two Worlds*, 27 March 1931]. In conjunction with other socialist spiritualists, Brooks was keen to push the SNU in a direction that was more formally committed to social reform and radicalism. He shared platforms with Ernest Marklew at spiritualist and socialist gatherings, but the appeal of a fusion of spiritualism and socialism proved to be elusive. The general trend in the SNU and wider spiritualist movement was to avoid any political affiliations. Such reluctance to commit to the politics of labour and socialism continued to concern Brooks and his allies who wanted to direct the energies of spiritualists towards social reform.

Brooks' parliamentary career was secured when he was selected and nominated by the YMA for the Rothwell constituency owing to the death of the sitting MP, William Lunn, in 1942. Lunn had also come from a background of coalmining and activism in the Independent Labour Party (ILP), and had taken the seat in 1918. Like Brooks, he had combined a commitment to labour politics with a fierce defence and advocacy of the concerns of local coalminers. The seat was uncontested because of the wartime electoral truce between the main parties, and Brooks was returned unopposed. On election to the House of Commons, Brooks aimed to highlight the plight of spiritualists and the discrimination and prosecution they faced under existing legislation, as well as the affairs of the coal industry. In one of his first speeches he proclaimed that he came to Parliament as 'a practical man'. He raised the plight of those injured in the nation's mines and advocated on behalf of miners' widows who were 'badly treated over the compensation laws' [*Parliamentary Debates*, 6 October 1942, c. 1098]. He later compared his work as an MP to that of his previous occupation as a coalminer: 'when you are working at the face… you first have to get your footings. After you have worked away at this for some time you put in your shot and bring down the coal. I go to work on MPs in the same way' [*Psychic News*, 16 December 1950]. This methodical approach to particular issues ensured that Brooks was able to fight a slow battle for the freedom of spiritualists from the public platform and in the House of Commons.

In the weeks prior to his election he was still sitting on Pit Production Committees and dealing with colliery affairs through his position as lodge secretary. During the war, the coal industry was partly taken under state control, and union officials were given more say over industrial relations practices and production targets. Nonetheless, disputes in 1942 and 1944, often led by rank and file miners, caused rifts within the districts of the MFGB and a straining of relations between officials and the Ministry of Fuel and Power. Brooks was critical of the way in which Government ministers were meddling in this process at the colliery level and felt that local management and trade unions could work co-operatively to solve the production glitches. In a speech in the Commons he implored ministers to 'give over pin-pricking and leave the chaps alone'. He also defended the level of absenteeism amongst young miners: 'think of the air they breathe, the very few clothes which they can wear, and out of which they have to wring the sweat many times a day' [*Parliamentary Debates*, 6 October 1942, col. 1142].

Brooks took on the mantle of the voice of spiritualism in the Commons, replacing Ernest Marklew who had 'passed over to the other side' in 1939. Marklew, working in conjunction with the SNU, had been laying the political groundwork for the freedoms of spiritualists in parliament and beyond in conjunction with socialist sympathisers such as the former and future Labour MP Oliver Baldwin and the tabloid journalist Hannen Swaffer. This included inviting mediums to display their particular powers in front of MPs and advocating the cause of spiritualism in print and on public platforms. Brooks was one of the principal advocates of political

support for the repeal of the Vagrancy and Witchcraft Acts during the war years, legislation that had been used periodically to persecute mediums. A policy for repeal had been drafted in 1923, followed by a presentation of a mass petition in 1926, and a further bill proposed by W.T. Kelly the Labour MP for Rochdale, which fell in 1930. The renewed activism by Brooks and the SNU had been given further impetus by the prosecution of the medium Helen Hughes in May 1942. In this period, Brooks and others penned letters to the newspapers, lobbied MPs, and sought to press their claims directly through the Home Office. These initiatives were developed in the context of an increased number of prosecutions of mediums during the war. In Cardiff, one was prosecuted for 'pretending to communicate with the spirits of the dead' [*Psychic News*, 2 December 1950]. Brooks contacted Home Office officials, defending mediums and claiming that 'the people who have passed on are coming back to prove they are still alive: I myself have had wonderful proof from my parents and children' [*The Two Worlds*, 5 November 1943].

On 27 July 1943, Brooks was part of spiritualist delegation to the Home Office to press their claims regarding the persecution of mediums in particular and the freedom of their movement and religion more generally. The delegation claimed that mediums were 'classed with those who desert their children, or are guilty of indecent exposure in public places, or those living on prostitution or its proceeds. It is in in such company that a decent medium might stand in the dock' [*The Two Worlds*, 5 November 1943]. Herbert Morrison informed the delegation that he could not meet their demands and was concerned that any amendment to the Acts would leave room for further fraud and abuse. The SNU responded, emphasising the importance of religious equality before the law and concern that the police could arrest mediums in their homes, labelling them as 'rogues and vagabonds [*The Two Worlds*, 24 December 1943]. Brooks penned his own letter pleading with Morrison to remember the progressive campaigns of which he had been involved as a socialist: 'You have been such a champion of freedom and justice that I cannot help but think… you can meet our entirely reasonable requests' [*The Two Worlds*, 28 January 1944]. Morrison and other Labour figures were not unsympathetic to the cause of the spiritualists, but felt that the matter was relatively trivial and should not be prioritised over other pressing problems that were facing the country.

The negative response of Morrison further energised the SNU; mass meetings and rallies were organised across the country. Brooks was at the centre of events and, with Swaffer, proselytised on behalf of the SNU on public platforms and in the popular press. Swaffer agitated for a pardon for the medium Helen Hughes and accused Morrison of behaving like an 'obstinate bureaucrat' [*Psychic News*, 5 June 1943; Swaffer (1945) 217]. Swaffer had a well-established Home Circle that had attracted politicians and celebrities, yet he felt that he was being treated as a criminal. The public fascination with spiritualism and the political struggle it engendered was perhaps personified by the Helen Duncan case, in which the Scottish medium became a martyr for the cause. Brooks was convinced of Duncan's abilities and had witnessed her materialisation of spirits on a number of occasions. He compared the cause of spiritualists to the fight against wider intolerance and fascism in the context of the war. He argued that they were 'fighting for religious freedom…. Surely it is part of the Atlantic Charter that Spiritualists should be granted it… Spiritualism is my religion' [*The Two Worlds*, 5 November 1943]. The war was increasing interest in spiritualism and no doubt brought comfort to the bereaved. Articles and letters in the spiritualist press chart the activity of spiritualists in the armed forces; displays of mediumship and the creation of 'healing circles' appeared on the Home Front in range of localities, as well as in RAF and Army bases. The Lancashire medium, Roy Morgan, found that he was getting an increased number of requests from the armed forces: 'the many questions put, not only show a desire for a wider knowledge of what spiritualism means, but a keen desire on the part of the troops for instruction on the development of mediumship and psychic gifts in general' [*The Two Worlds*, 4 August 1944].

The banning of a spiritualist meeting in Altrincham in 1944 was covered by the national press, with Swaffer penning letters to *The Times* and protest meetings attracting a large number of spiritualist activists. He also claimed that the suppression of spiritualism and the prosecution of

'genuine' mediums such as Duncan was dangerously close to the fascism that was being fought overseas. Brooks spoke in the House of Commons and argued that 'would it not be better if the police attended to the suppression of crime, and left the religious bodies to continue their work of educating people on higher moral and spiritual standards' [*Parliamentary Debates*, 26 October 1944, cols. 331–332]. The SNU established a Freedom Fund Fighting Committee to 'secure justice under the law for spiritualist mediums' [*Psychic News*, 2 June 1945] with Brooks playing a central role in the Commons and on public platforms. He was also supporting plans for the public ownership of the coal industry and the aims of the newly constituted National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). In a stirring speech in support of 'the miners' charter' he drew on his connection with the industry and mining trade unionism: 'give the miners better wages and conditions, and create a new confidence… Help the miner to feel his importance in the industrial life of the nation, and do not merely give him sympathy in the days of disaster' [*Parliamentary Debates*, 13 July 1944, col. 1952].

In February 1945, Brooks held a series of meetings with MPs sympathetic to the spiritualist cause in the House of Commons and a month later organised a further meeting with Morrison and Ellen Wilkinson. On this occasion Morrison proved to be more sympathetic and advocated legislative change, but warned that any move would be unlikely 'in the late stage of the present parliament' [*The Two Worlds*, 16 March 1945]. Attlee, the Labour leader, also responded to the SNU, but again felt that any future legislation should prioritise social and economic problems. An editorial in the spiritualist press welcomed the coming fragmentation of the Coalition Government in which Morrison had presided over 'the most repressive persecution of spiritualism and mediumship, which this country has experienced since the Middle Ages' [*The Two Worlds*, 1 June 1945]. The SNU felt that one positive aspect of the election would be the chance to move Morrison from his post. As in the 1935 election, in 1945 the SNU sent out questionnaires to potential candidates to canvass their views on repeal of the Witchcraft and Vagrancy Acts: Are you in favour of religious freedom? Are you in favour of Spiritualists having the right to practice their religion without intolerance? Will you support legislation designed to remove legal handicaps which interfere with the right of Spiritualists to practice their religion? Will you support an effort in the House of Commons to bring about the repeal of the Witchcraft Act, 1735, and Vagrancy Act 1824, in so far as they apply to mediums? Do you favour the principle that Spiritualists and members of other unorthodox religions should be allowed to broadcast? In response to the questionnaires the SNU garnered the support of over 100 MPs. In the background Brooks continued to press Labour MPs to support the spiritualists' quest for freedom.

Brooks was returned for his Rothwell constituency in the general election of 1945. During the campaign his speeches advocated 'true democracy' and the reorganisation of industry 'to meet the needs of the entire community' [*The Wakefield Express*, 23 June 1945].

Rothwell, 1945: electorate, 78,471, turnout 75.44%

| | |
|---|---|
| T.J. Brooks (Labour) | 43,829 (74.04%) |
| J.H. Bull (Conservative) | 14,669 (24.79%) |
| Majority | 29,830 (50.42%) |

During his victory speech Brooks noted that he had 'been working for the common people for close on forty years' and until he passed 'away to the higher sphere' he would 'continue to do so' [*The Wakefield Express*, 28 July 1945].

Spiritualists made supportive noises in favour of socialism in the general election and after noting that 'like the spiritualist movement, the Labour Party had risen from humble inauspicious beginnings' [*Psychic News*, 4 August 1945]. A further SNU delegation to the Home Office left unhappily, with Chuter Ede, the new Labour Home Secretary again rejecting their appeals [for coverage of the delegation see *The Two Worlds*, 4 October 1946]. This activity was again connected to the rising number of prosecutions of mediums, where the police were instructed to

differentiate between what were perceived as 'ordinary fortune tellers' and spiritualist mediums who engendered 'complaints by the public', were obvious 'imposters' or were 'taking money' [TNA MEPO 291/58]. Social class was prominent in characterising and prosecuting mediumship. Those arrested were often operating in working-class communities where they attracted a responsive and largely non-judgmental audience.

Brooks combined his campaign for the freedom of spiritualists with his advocacy of the building of a more socialist society through a Labour Government with its policies of welfare reform and the nationalisation of particular industries. At the annual conference of Rothwell's Labour Women's Division he had 'appealed to all people of goodwill to give consideration to the great work that had been done in the war' and he wanted a Labour Government 'to establish a socialist commonwealth, and create a sane and equitable society' [*The Wakefield Express*, 7 June 1945]. He remained an advocate of the nationalisation of the coal industry and the building of a new system of industrial relations and conciliation that would be a feature of reorganisation after 1947.

In 1946 Brooks hosted a dinner and a display of mediumship in the House of Commons by Estelle Roberts and Helen Hughes attended by around fifty MPs. This initiative had been started after the general election in order to lobby MPs who had supported the spiritualists' campaign for freedom during the campaign [for details of the dinner and their reception see *Psychic News*, 23 June 1951]. In 1948 Brooks tabled a motion to curtail the powers of police arrest regarding mediums, which later became part of a Criminal Justice Bill. Chuter Ede agreed that a warrant would now be needed and that 'the officer in charge of the police station to which the person is brought, should have the power to release the person arrested, if in his belief, it would tend to defeat the ends of justice' [*The Two Worlds*, 19 March 1948]. Brooks and the SNU were hoping for even more concessions, but this was a significant step in securing the legislation that would lead to the outcome that spiritualists had been aiming for in their political interventions since the 1920s. A year later, Brooks drafted a Private Members Bill backed by another spiritualist socialist George Rogers (MP for North Kensington), but he was unsuccessful in the ballot. However, he could now count on the support of over 50 Labour MPs and a political climate that was proving to be more conducive to social reform and more liberal responses to cultural and religious controversies. In line with his spiritualist beliefs Brooks was an ardent critic of the death penalty. In a debate on the issue in 1948 he told the House that 'hanging is a crime against humanity… All we do is to cast adrift in some other world another of the failures of life… I have often wondered why the bishops and our spiritual leaders in this country did not lead a crusade years ago against capital punishment' [*Parliamentary Debates*, 15 July 1948, cc. 1411–1455]. In the 1950 general election Brooks was returned for Normanton.

Normanton, 1950: electorate turnout, 87.54%

| | |
|---|---|
| T.J. Brooks (Labour) | 31,986 (74.53%) |
| T.Heseltine (Conservative) | 10,929 (25.47%) |
| Majority 21,057 | (49.07%) |

On his re-election to the House of Commons, Brooks again mostly dedicated his parliamentary work to the plight of spiritualists and the repeal of the Witchcraft and Vagrancy Acts. He was aided in this by his close friend and fellow Labour MP, Walter Monslow and sympathisers including Sidney Silverman, Leslie Hale, Walter Ayles, Peter Freeman, and S.O. Davies. Like Brooks, Monslow had a background in a coal mining community, in Wrexham, but now represented Barrow-in-Furness. He was not a spiritualist, but had pledged support to their Freedom Campaign. Monslow told Brooks that if he had the opportunity of wining the ballot he would use a Private Members' Bill to end the persecution of spiritualists. The subsequent Fraudulent Mediums Bill was moved by Monslow, but Brooks was the driving force behind the

drafting and implementation of the legislation. During the debate he claimed that 'we can never finish the noble task of life… we can never cease to be. No period is set to our being, for it is eternal' [*Parliamentary Debates*, 1 December 1950, cols. 1454–1522].

At an SNU conference in July 1951 delegates gathered to pay tribute to the success of the parliamentary campaign for freedom. Brooks shared the platform with Swaffer, Monslow and Lord Dowding. He told the gathering that he wanted their 'philosophy to spread farther' and that there was 'plenty of work to do at social meetings' and that 'it is no use being heavenly minded, if you are no earthly use' [*Psychic News*, 14 July 1951]. For his work on the Freedom Campaign, Brooks was made honorary vice-president of the SNU. In the same month the Spiritualist Parliamentary Committee held a celebration dinner in the House of Commons attended by Brooks, sympathetic Labour MPs and Arthur Colegate the only Conservative. A profile in the spiritualist press described Brooks' character:

> This ex-miner from Castleford is not the type to overpower you by sheer dynamic magnetism or verbal wizardry, but you know when he greets you that you are in the presence of a person who is prepared to trust others, and thereby inspire trust in himself. There are no fripperies, no airs and graces with Tom. His Yorkshire character assures you of a square deal, likewise it demands one in return. A John Blunt – but a kindly, gentle, jovial John Blunt [*Psychic News*, 16 December 1950].

In September 1951 Brooks announced that he would not be seeking re-election to the Commons. His role as the parliamentary leader for the spiritualist cause was later taken up by George Rogers the eccentric and colourful Labour MP for North Kensington.

Brooks had been shaped by the coal communities in which he was raised and the autodidact culture that they had nurtured. His political and religious beliefs that had been formed in the coal mine and the spiritualist church configured his trade union work and parliamentary interventions. A moderate within the trade union movement he said little about the rise of Communist officials in the National Union of Mineworkers. He would have worked comfortably in the relatively consensual culture of the coal industry of the 1950s and 1960s. Less obdurate than other Yorkshire miners' leaders such Herbert Smith, he was very principled none the less and defended his causes with much energy and vigour. His support of mediums and clairvoyants came from a genuine attachment to a sense that there was 'something beyond death'. Brooks died in his home on Leake Street, Castleford on 15 February 1958 and the funeral service was held in the local Spiritualist Church. He left effects valued at £6437 13s 11d.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Papers of the Spiritualists' National Union, the Arthur Findlay College, Stanstead; Home Office Papers on the Prosecution of Mediums, TNA, London; Papers relating to SNU delegations, the College of Psychic Studies, London. (**2**) **Newspapers and Periodicals**: *The Two Worlds*; *Psychic News*; *Pontefract and Castleford Express*; *The Times*; *Parliamentary Debates*; *The Wakefield Express*. (**3**) **Books**: Jack Lawson, *The Man in the Cap: The Life of Herbert Smith* (1941); Hannen Swaffer, *My Greatest Story* (1946); Simeon Edmunds, *Spiritualism: A Critical Survey* (Letchworth, 1966); G.K. Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society* (1969); Logie Barrow, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeians 1850–1910* (1986); Jean Bassett, *100 Years of National Spiritualism* (1990); Malcolm Gaskill, *Hellish Nell: Last of Britain's Witches* (2001). (**4**) **Obituaries**: *The Times*; 17 February 1958; *Pontefract and Castleford Express*, 21 February 1958; *Psychic News*, 22 February 1958; *The Two Worlds*, 22 February 1958.

KEITH GILDART

*See also*: †Oliver BALDWIN; †William LUNN; Ernest MARKLEW; †Herbert SMITH; †Walter MONSLOW

**BURGESS, Joseph** (1853–1934)
JOURNALIST, INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY CANDIDATE, PROPAGANDIST

Joseph Burgess was born in Old Lane, Failsworth, a textile village between Manchester and Oldham on 3 July 1853. His father, Thomas Burgess and his mother, Hannah, née Ogden were both power loom operators. Thomas Burgess enjoyed a good day at the races, with a sizeable win on the 1853 Chester Cup; he used the windfall to open a beer shop. The venture failed; by 1857 he was back in the mill and the following year supported a nine-month strike over a speed-up and wage cuts. Defeat meant the loss of his job and a series of flits for the family. Insecurity was deepened by the American Civil War and the consequential cotton famine. By 1865 the family had grown: Burgess had three sisters.

Economic privation meant that Joseph Burgess began work early. By his seventh birthday he was working part-time in the mill, eventually becoming a 'little piecer' under the half-time system. His formal education was limited; aged twelve, he had begun full-time employment in a succession of mills at Sett, Droylsden, and Mill Hill. As a young mill worker he began to read widely, including the novels of Charles Dickens, and was influenced by local dialect poets. By 1870 he was sufficiently confident to submit a poem on Dickens's death to the *Oldham Chronicle* for inclusion in its 'Poet's Corner'. Although this effort was rejected, a few months later 'Poet's Corner' saw Burgess's first published piece, 'Never Complain'. As suggested by the title, the verse acknowledged mid-Victorian inequalities but proclaimed acquiescence.

I always am pleasant
Although I cannot dine
Off salmon or pheasant
Or drink sparkling wine;
Though humble my fare is
I sing a glad strain;
Though scanty my share is,
I never complain.
I don't care for riches-
They're nothing to love;
And truth ever preaches
Of treasures above.
To work I am willing,
With hand, heart and brain,
And though my work's killing,
I never complain.
[Burgess (1927) 61–62]

Subsequently he published a large amount of verse through the 1870s, some in dialect. A small volume, *Lancashire Lyrics*, appeared in 1874.

An exemplar of an autodidactic self-improving culture, Burgess joined the Oldham Debating Society and the Mechanics Institute. Such a widening circle offered the possibility of social mobility. In September 1881 he left the cotton mill and joined the staff of the *Oldham Evening Express*. This newspaper was a fervent advocate of temperance; Burgess had taken the pledge several years earlier. He remained at the *Express* until October 1884 when he left to publish his own paper the *Oldham Operative*. This venture survived for only twelve weeks and was written solely by Burgess. Its coverage included local news, sports and theatre, along with short stories. The treatment of Oldham's dominant industry sided unambiguously with the cotton workers. Its tone epitomised the self-consciously pragmatic "business unionism" that was emerging as the hallmark of the trade's industrial relations [Burgess (1927) 143–144].

In the 1880s Burgess was a Liberal; he admired Henry Broadhurst the Oxfordshire stonemason who had entered parliament as a Liberal in 1880, and who in February 1886 would become the first working-class government minister. Broadhurst personified respectability and self-improvement; for Burgess he could seem a role model and the Liberal Party an appropriate and effective instrument for such aspirations. Yet in the mid-1880s this optimistic prospect was transformed by the emergence of Irish Home Rule as an issue that would significantly shape British politics for thirty years. By late 1884 it was apparent that in any future election an increasingly disciplined Irish Party would bargain for support with the Conservatives and the Liberals. This prospect appalled Burgess. In part this reflected the distinctive politics of much of Lancashire, with its significant Catholic Irish population. The demography meant that a well-organised Irish vote could have an impact in a closely fought constituency. More broadly his response was coloured by the way in which the Irish controversy had disrupted British politics, whether the calculated 'scenes' of the Irish Party in the Commons or the brutality of the Phoenix Park murders which had struck at the heart of the British political and social elite.

Given the political divisions within the Oldham working-class, not least over ethnicity and religion, Burgess proclaimed his paper's neutrality. 'The Operative knows no politics but imperial politics. It owes no subservience to Whig, Tory or Radical'. But he was adamant that any attempt by the Oldham Irish at electoral 'control' must be resisted. His indictment drew on popular stereotypes. 'They are an alien race. They refuse to merge themselves into the British nation. They talk treason and they do it. Their aims are in hostility to Britain and everything Britain holds dear. They have too much power in Parliament already. They waste time, spare no pains to make government impossible and do not conceal that their ultimate object is to obtain a separation of the sister isle from Great Britain.' Some spectres were the staple diet of attacks on migrants whatever their identity. 'There is trouble enough with the Irish in large Lancashire towns without having their interference in such matters. They claim Home Rule for themselves; surely they will allow it to Britons. They come here, overstock the labour market and keep down wages. That is enough to try the patience of those who are crowded on their own hearthstones by these invaders. Human nature will not bear patiently the prospect of an increase in their power'. In late 1884 Burgess's prognostication was optimistic. 'The interests of Great Britain are safe in the hands of either Liberal or Conservative Governments so long as there is no pandering to treason' [*Oldham Operative* 14, 21 November 1884]. In the December 1885 General Election the Irish Party's organisation within Britain, most significantly in Lancashire and the west of Scotland, was thrown on the Conservative side. Gladstone's subsequent commitment to Home Rule divided the Liberals, but cemented the Irish Party to the Liberal majority who had backed Gladstone. The immediate consequence was a strongly anti-Liberal majority at another general election in July 1886. Much of Lancashire, where the sentiments expressed in Burgess's journalism were widely shared, moved away from Gladstone. In contrast, Burgess remained a Liberal acquiescing in the party's commitment to Irish Home Rule, although probably with little initial enthusiasm.

Fundamental changes in the political landscape were accompanied by significant shifts in Burgess's own circumstances. At the end of January 1885 the *Oldham Operative* ceased publication. A threatened libel action against the paper had led to the printer refusing to provide any more copies. In retrospect Burgess claimed that the basic reason for this termination was the prospect of a better-resourced competitor. The *Cotton Factory Times* (CFT) was aimed not just at one town but at the whole cotton workforce. The new paper was run as a commercial venture by an Ashton-under-Lyne businessman John Andrew; the venture was the brainchild of the Operative Spinners' leader James Mawdsley. He was a tough and effective negotiator on behalf of his members, who were the industry's elite. Politically a Conservative, he envisaged trade union organisation as the basis for political influence which should be exercised not through connection with any specific interest but through lobbying and pressurising each party. Burgess was employed as a sub-editor by this new, and in the event, successful, paper. He embraced the

paper's pragmatism, evident in its aversion to strikes except as a last resort, and its rejection of anything that hinted at 'socialism'.

The CFT's commercial success encouraged the launch in 1889 of the *Yorkshire Factory Times*, directed at the West Riding's woollen workers. Burgess was appointed editor; he had to connect with a readership whose workplace and political cultures contrasted with what he had known in cotton Lancashire. The woollen district lacked the increasingly strong and disciplined trade unionism of the cotton towns. Workplaces were often small, wages frequently low, and conditions poor. Whereas Lancastrian Conservatism was strong, the West Riding was dominated by the Liberal Party. This hegemony was typically presided over by employers who combined economic and social conservatism with complacency. Trade union weakness meant that such leaders of Liberalism had no incentive to be flexible about the adoption of labour candidates under the Liberal banner. This combination of workplace and political constraints meant that working-class activists began to explore the feasibility of independent political action.

The *Yorkshire Factory Times* rapidly became a financial success; encouraged by this, a third paper was launched in 1890 with Burgess as editor. The *Workman's Times* was based initially in Huddersfield; its objective was to cultivate a readership amongst workers outside the textile trades that had been the concern of its predecessors. Perhaps the lack of a distinctive potential audience hampered its progress. The paper never secured the same circulation. By the end of 1890 with readership failing to grow beyond 10,000, economies became imperative. Most paid staff left, thereby weakening the influence of those who believed that labour objectives were best pursued through the Liberal Party. One key figure remained alongside Burgess. James Bartley was heavily involved in Bradford politics. The prolonged and unsuccessful strike at Manningham Mills and the pro-employer sentiments of prominent Liberals, made an independent political initiative increasingly attractive. The result was the formation of the Bradford Labour Union in April 1891.

Burgess was beginning to explore the desirability of independent labour politics. In October 1890 he asked *Workman's Times* readers, 'Are the Workers in Earnest about Direct Labour Representation?' [*Workman's Times*, 24 October 1890]. As yet the term 'Direct' rather than 'Independent' suggested perhaps some optimism that representation might be achieved through an established political party. By spring 1891 the *Workman's Times* was condemning these parties; at the end of May the paper backed the Bradford Labour Union.

This political journey was accompanied by a geographical one. In an attempt to raise its circulation the *Workman's Times* moved to London. Burgess's move south probably increased his familiarity with socialist arguments. He gravitated towards an increasingly unconditional advocacy of political independence. In October 1891 he engaged Robert Blatchford, a recent convert to socialism, as a contributor. The arrangement proved brief; Blatchford soon left to start his own newspaper the *Clarion*. Support for political independence was growing in many communities, particularly in the north. Enthusiasm was nurtured by and reflected in the coverage of the *Workman's Times* and the *Clarion*. Such initiatives demonstrated the aspirations and creativity of activists, but localism and supportive journalism were not enough. A national organisation seemed essential. On 30 April 1892 Burgess published an article on the necessity of an Independent Labour Party. Insisting that sentiments alone were insufficient he urged sympathetic readers to send their names to the *Workman's Times*.

## The Independent Labour Party

### Declaration of Adherence

> Believing that the interests of Labour are paramount to and must take precedence of all other interests, and that the advancement of these interests (of Labour) must be sought by political and constitutional action, I desire to have my name enrolled on the register of the Independent Labour Party [*Workman's Times*, 30 April 1892].

Throughout the summer of 1892 the *Workman's Times* carried details of local initiatives and lists of adherents. Some initiatives such as the Manchester and Salford Independent Labour Party proved durable and influential; others were ephemeral. Eventually the April initiative attracted 2483 responses.

The appeal of political independence was heightened by the July 1892 General Election. The Liberals showed little interest in promoting working-class candidacies; some advocates of independence achieved creditable polls. Three successful candidates claimed to be politically independent: Keir Hardie at West Ham South, John Burns at Battersea, and Havelock Wilson at Middlesbrough. Only Hardie would become a focus for and personification of political independence. In the second half of 1892 this outcome was not apparent; the prospects for an effective movement for independent labour were unclear. The need for clarification was accompanied by an anxiety that any initiative should not become an instrument for the backers of an established party. Many advocates of independence had experienced the difficulty of attempting to work with the Liberal Party without being absorbed into it. Such experiences had led many to support of independence. A more immediate concern for many was the activity of H.H. Champion and his associate Maltman Barry. They were seen by many as Conservative sympathisers; some distinguished between Champion, a sincere if tactless advocate of independence, and Barry, a Tory candidate in the 1892 election who was suspected widely of providing funding for Labour initiatives with the objective of splitting the anti-Tory vote. Initially, Burgess endorsed this distinction although by late 1892 he was becomingly increasingly critical of Champion.

Following the 1892 election a premature attempt to establish the basis for a national organisation was made. The curiously titled London Executive of the National Independent Labour Party (ILP) had seven members. All were London residents. Burgess was accompanied by Cunninghame Graham of the Scottish Labour Party, Tom Mann of the London ILP, Harry Quelch of the Social Democratic Federation, Ben Tillett of the Yorkshire ILP, Stephen Fay of the Manchester ILP and H.H. Champion representing a shadowy organisation, the Scottish United Trades Council Labour Party. The seven offered abundant potential for disagreement and personalised acrimony. The initiative could be represented as a confirmation of provincial activists' worst fear, that all their creativity and achievements would become a resource for metropolitan fixers with their own projects and little understanding of diverse local circumstances. Such anxiety would only be deepened by the septet's cursory acknowledgment of the problem: 'The Midlands and the North of England could nominate some Midlander or Northerner resident in London to act on their behalf' [*Workman's Times*, 30 July 1892]. W.H. Drew, the President of the Bradford Labour Union immediately wrote to Burgess.

> Depend upon it, no executive will suit the provincials that they have had no part in forming. What you should set your face towards is a conference of provincial men and Londoners, and you cockneys ought to unbend and come say to Bradford a central town, where you will find plenty of food for reflection [*Workman's Times*, 13 August 1892].

This criticism would be strengthened by the weakness of the London movement for political independence. Burgess worked hard during 1892 to establish a London ILP. He was handicapped by the character of the London economy with its blend of old-established skilled trades and often casual labour. The factory-based culture that characterised the emerging ILP's heartlands was weaker in London; the ideological options within the capital left little space for

an ILP. The success of the Progressives in the 1892 elections to the London County Council offered the prospect of an effective alliance between reforming Liberals and Labour. Burgess had responded effusively to this success; it was 'nothing less than a revolution in politics'. Yet by September 1892 Sidney Webb, the epitome of Fabian co-operation with Progressives whatever their political affiliation, was denouncing the *Workman's Times* as 'impossibilist'. The specifically socialist presence in London was often the preserve of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF). Although not the rigid sectarians of both contemporary polemic and some later historiography, the SDF was a source of further fragmentation. By early 1893 Burgess was becoming despondent: 'London is a dreadfully hopeless place… We labour and labour here but it is but rarely we are encouraged by such signs of progress as can be more readily detected in some smaller towns' [Thompson (1967) 159–162; Howell (1983) 255–259].

Although the importance of the *Workman's Times* as a forum for the diverse advocates of independence is undeniable, in the later months of 1892 the initiative passed to others. The Glasgow Trades Union Congress in September provided an opportunity for a meeting of sympathetic Congress delegates and members of local Independent Labour groups. They formed an arrangements committee to prepare for a national conference. Drew's admonition was heeded; the conference met at Bradford in late January 1893. The organisational basis for representation was ecumenical. The delegates were overwhelmingly from northern England especially the West Riding and Lancashire. Burgess participated as one of 14 London delegates; he represented the London ILP. He contributed to debates on the party's name, object and structure; he was one of a minority supporting the Fourth Clause of the Manchester and Salford ILP requiring electoral abstention in the absence of a socialist candidate.

The structure of the new party's Executive, or as it immediately became known, the National Administrative Council (NAC), was shaped by a desire for inclusivity. All regions should be represented. London and the South were allocated four places. George Bernard Shaw, controversially present as a Fabian delegate along with de Mattos, described the selection process in the *Workman's Times*:

> The moment I got to the table… I saw that London was practically out of the Conference. By far the most representative men there were Joseph Rogers of Battersea and F V Connolly of Clapham; and de Mattos and I did our best to get them nominated but without success. It ended in the selection on grounds of general popularity and celebrity of Burgess, Pete Curran, Katherine Conway and Aveling. Now neither Curran nor Miss Conway establish any real link between the ILP and London. Even Burgess who was at the top of the poll represents the circulation of the *Workman's Times*, the centre of which is certainly further north than London. Aveling, alone was emphatically a London delegate; but Aveling's peculiar Marxism has isolated him so completely that he is more out of the movement in London than any other equally well-known Socialist [*Workman's Times*, 28 January 1893].

Pete Curran was a 'New Unionist', a member of the Gasworkers' Union; Katherine Conway was a prominent propagandist for ethical socialism; Aveling by 1893 was an increasingly mistrusted presence. Burgess's significance was dependent on a newspaper that had transferred to London in a vain search for an improved circulation. More broadly this first NAC was an unwieldy body of 15 members plus the party secretary Shaw Maxwell and its treasurer John Lister. Representativeness was not just an issue for its London members; many significant advocates of political independence, most notably Hardie, were absent. Perhaps this distance from the metropolis provoked a belief that the ILP might prove to be short-lived.

During its first year the NAC met only twice, with a lengthy gap between March and November. By September Burgess expressed his impatience to Hardie. 'When the next meeting is likely to take place, you know as little as I do' [Burgess to Hardie, 18 September 1893, Francis Johnson Correspondence 1893/1899]. Nevertheless even this unwieldy group made some

decisions. Eleven members, including Burgess, signed a circular condemning Champion and his interventions. The near-invisibility of the NAC inevitably bred pressures for reform. Critics focussed on the NAC's size and its under-representation of the party's strongest districts. At the second ILP conference in February 1894, the NAC's structure was transformed. The NAC was reduced to nine members; the two existing officers plus a new position of Chairman together with six other members. They would be elected by all the delegates. With only seven London delegates compared with 31 from Yorkshire and 28 from Lancashire the change in NAC membership was dramatic. Apart from Lister only two of the old NAC survived. Burgess, having been nominated, withdrew from the election. He commended the reform but criticised what he saw as the consequential practices. 'We have seen introduced into the Conference the very worst features of the Trades Union Congress – namely the lobbying for seats which distinguishes the process of elections to the Parliamentary Committee… Lists are prepared and bargains made' [W*orkman's Times*, 10 February 1894; Howell (1983) 301–306].

Burgess's lack of interest in the NAC might have been influenced by the problems facing the *Workman's Times.* The newspaper's finances remained weak; in June 1893 he abandoned London and moved the operation to Manchester. He hoped to continue publication by buying the copyright from John Andrew. The purchase cost him £50 but he failed to form a limited liability company. Hope that the *Workman's Times* might become the official journal for the ILP proved barren. Less than half the members of the NAC made any response to this suggestion. Hardie was eager to shift his own *Labour Leader* to weekly publication. His ambition was realised in February 1894; in many respects the *Labour Leader* became *de facto* a party paper. Faced with this intervention and the often convivial journalism of Blatchford's *Clarion*, the *Workman's Times* ceased publication. Within a few weeks Burgess had forfeited his position near the centre of ILP politics. He would claim retrospectively that he spent the next 20 years as an ILP propagandist with an average income of 30 shillings a week. This portrait of reduced circumstances was an exaggeration, but the marginalisation was significant [Francis Johnson Correspondence 1893 contains material on Burgess's attempts to secure the paper's future].

In August 1894 Burgess contested a significant by-election as an ILP candidate. Leicester lay outside the ILP's strongholds but its economic conditions would provide a basis for a strong branch of the party. Two industries dominated the local economy, footware and hosiery. Whereas the latter was only weakly unionised, the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives (NUBSO) dominated the Leicester Trades Council. The union's members faced serious challenges in the 1890s. Employers responded to the threat of American competition by challenging the position of the industry's craftsmen. Their status and income were threatened by new technology; the division of labour became more fragmented; the new processes could be mastered without a prolonged apprenticeship. Skills were devalued; as one employer asserted, 'humanity must make room for iron' [Howell (1983) 94–104, 230–236; Lancaster (1987) especially Chap. 9].

The union's leader William Inskip was a Leicester Alderman; his negotiating skills were combined with a wholehearted endorsement of Liberal values. His life was a testimony to the self-improvement that he saw as the key to social progress. The developing crisis in the industry posed a challenge to this worldview; in response a socialist faction developed within the union. Its adherents expressed hostility towards the dilatoriness of the industry's arbitration procedures and proclaimed that a more aggressive policy would be more effective. The union's Leicester No. 1 Branch was led by a socialist, Freddy Richards. By 1894, with the industry increasingly polarised, a split over strategy ran through the union.

This fissure acquired political expression; its character was influenced heavily by Leicester's pattern of popular politics. The town's parliamentary representation was through a two-member constituency. Politics were notable for the strength of Liberalism, even within a broader East Midlands region that had a significant Liberal presence. Leicester's more affluent Liberals were a little more responsive to pressure for labour representation than the West Riding mill owners.

By the early 1890s a handful of Leicester councillors, including Inskip, were beneficiaries of an apparently comfortable relationship between the Trades Council and the Liberal Association. Yet the rise of a critical faction within the NUBSO challenged this relationship. If Inskip's trade union policy was rejected, his Liberalism might similarly be dismissed.

The Leicester Liberal Association had no problem with respectable, impeccably Liberal working men. In February 1894 one of the town's MPs announced his intention to retire at the next election. The Liberal Association chose Henry Broadhurst as his successor. His recent career had been difficult. Within the trade unions he had become a target for the left who presented him as a symbol of an old style trade unionism that was condemned as cautious and often too intimate with the employers. In the 1892 election he had been defeated at West Nottingham allegedly because local miners opposed his rejection of eight-hour day legislation for the industry. Subsequently he had lost a by-election at Grimsby, where he had been attacked by some advocates of Independent Labour, most notably Hardie. The selection of Broadhurst for Leicester had been made without the direct involvement of the Trades Council. The socialist element rejected his claim to be in any sense a labour candidate. In July, Richards wrote to Hardie emphasising the support within his NUBSO branch for an independent candidate. No time should be lost in finding a credible opponent against Broadhurst. 'Only a very strong man can bring about Broadhurst's defeat' [Richards to Hardie, 18 July 1894, Francis Johnson Correspondence 1894/161].

The need became urgent in August when Leicester's other Liberal Member retired and a dual by-election was called. As its second candidate the Liberal Association chose a London printing employer, W. Hazell, by a narrow margin over the town's Mayor, Sir Israel Hart. Affronted local patriotism and trades council opposition to an employer had a common target. Once Hazell had been selected Richards introduced Tom Mann, since February the ILP General Secretary, to the Trades Council. Mann commended Burgess, not without some simplification. He was 'a representative thorough-going working trade-unionist, connected with an ordinary trade, the same as the members of that Council. He was not in any sense a capitalist and was not in any way out of labour's ranks, saving that he was working with his pen and at a great deal of self-sacrifice'. The trade union emphasis was understandable. No branch of the ILP as yet had been formed in Leicester; a sprinkling of Anarchists, Social Democratic Federation members and Christian Socialists could hardly provide an effective opposition to Liberalism. Burgess's putative candidacy could only be credible with trade union support. The Trades Council voted 21–17 to invite Burgess to speak; having heard him they rejected a hostile amendment by 31–37 before taking responsibility for his candidacy with only two against. In his address to delegates he had highlighted the challenge in the boot and shoe trade. 'He would not object to the introduction of machinery… if they benefitted the labourer in the same way that they benefited the capitalist. Instead of that the workers were sweated while the capitalist was enriched' [Trades council deliberations in *Midland Free Press*, 25 August 1894]. Yet, perhaps because of his long-standing respect for Broadhurst, Burgess would not oppose him; his opposition must be directed at Liberal or Tory capitalists. His justification to Hardie combined wishful thinking about Broadhurst's politics, prudence and sentiment. 'He is coming round a bit and in any case to fight him under any circumstances would I believe do more harm than good and I couldn't fight with any stomach against him' [Burgess to Hardie, 16 August 1894, Francis Johnson Correspondence 1894/178].

The complexities of Leicester radicalism were evident when a Liberal meeting was held with the object of endorsing the controversial choice of Hazell. George Banton, a cabinet-maker and the President of the Trades Council, had been pessimistic about the feasibility of a Labour candidate. Now he attacked Hazell as an opponent of trade unionism and attempted unsuccessfully to move Burgess as 'a purely independent Labour man'. Burgess should be accommodated within the broad tent that was Leicester Radicalism. Banton's failure meant his own

decisive break with Liberalism. He would become a leading figure in the Leicester ILP and one of the borough's Labour MPs in 1922 [*Midland Free Press*, 25 August 1894].

During the brief campaign Burgess presented himself as an avowed socialist whose object was to bring about the collective ownership and control of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. Yet, he also stressed his common ground with Broadhurst and indeed with a broader Radicalism; he presented himself and not Hazell as the proper heir to Leicester's Radical traditions. Many trade unionists backed the Burgess–Broadhurst ticket, not the initial position of activists within the NUBSO but a policy that effectively isolated the union's Liberal old guard with their support for Broadhurst and Hazell. The result won the approval of the *Labour Leader*; the trade union support given to Burgess was emphasised.

Leicester, 1894: electorate 23,125, turnout, 77.2%

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|---|---|---|---|
| H. Broadhurst | (Liberal/Lab) | 9464 | (33.8%) |
| W. Hazell | (Liberal) | 7184 | (25.6%) |
| J.F.L. Rolleston | (Conservative) | 6967 | (24.9%) |
| J. Burgess | (Independent Labour Party) | 4402 | (15.7%) |

The breakdown of the vote revealed the complex patterns. Burgess had the support of a significant number who did not use their second vote; the Broadhurst–Burgess pairing sought by the candidate and many of his supporters was larger but far less than the number who voted the straight Liberal ticket. Burgess had some success in attracting the second vote of some Conservatives.

PATTERNS OF VOTING 1894 BY-ELECTION

| Plumpers | | Splits | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Broadhurst | 192 | Broadhurst/Hazell | 6913 |
| Hazell | 89 | Broadhurst/Rolleston | 287 |
| Rolleston | 5867 | Broadhurst/Burgess | 2.072 |
| Burgess | 1547 | Hazel/Rolleston | 106 |
| Total | 7695 | Hazel/Burgess | 76 |
| | | Rolleston/Burgess | 707 |
| | | Total | 17,856 |

The creditable ILP poll did not inhibit criticism within the ILP leadership of Burgess's partiality towards Broadhurst. There were repeated discussions about his candidacy within the NAC into 1895 and his eventual endorsement for the forthcoming general election was not a formality [ILP NAC Minutes, 10 September, 17 November, 4 December 1894; 6–7 February, 15 April 1895]. When the Liberal Government was defeated in the Commons on 21 June and Parliament was dissolved, the line-up was the same as in the by-election. In the interim the Leicester ILP had been formed and had won its first council seat late in 1894. The long-threatened clash in the boot and shoe industry had taken place. A six-week lock-out in March and April 1895 had ended with the employers free to introduce new machinery. The union survived but its radicalism was diminished. During the campaign Burgess was optimistic. 'We are painting the town red… are certain to win'. The outcome was anti-climactic. Burgess polled credibly but his support receded from the level of the previous August. The Labour organisation was limited and industrial defeat did not precipitate a shift towards Labour [Burgess to Tom Mann, 8 July 1895, Francis Johnson Correspondence, 1895/110; *Midland Free Press*, 20 July 1895].

Leicester, 1895: electorate 24,113, turnout 78.2%

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| H. Broadhurst | (Lib/Lab) | 9792 | (33.6%) |
| W. Hazell | (Liberal) | 7753 | (26.5%) |
| J.F.L. Rolleston | (Conservative) | 7654 | (26.2%) |
| J. Burgess | (Independent Labour Party) | 4009 | (13.7%) |

The pattern of the vote remained similar to the by-election.

PATTERN OF VOTING 1895 GENERAL ELECTION

| Plumpers | | Splits | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Broadhurst | 168 | Broadhurst/Hazell | 7333 |
| Hazell | 156 | Broadhurst/Rolleston | 359 |
| Rolleston | 6685 | Broadhurst/Burgess | 1932 |
| Burgess | 1517 | Hazel/Rolleston | 157 |
| Total | 8526 | Hazel/Burgess | 107 |
| | | Rolleston/Burgess | 453 |
| | | Total | 10,341 |

Burgess hoped that the arguments over his re-adoption at Leicester had resulted in a shift in the party leadership's position. He recounted his experience to Ramsay MacDonald in April 1896.

> I held that the time had gone by for accentuating the differences between the ILP and the Trade Unionists. I was called before the NAC to explain my position and I did not meet with the slightest support from a member present at the meeting. They now see the wisdom of my attitude. But they don't seem to forgive me for anticipating their better thoughts [Burgess to Ramsay MacDonald, 11 April 1896, MacDonald Papers 1142].

His judgement was optimistic; Burgess's relationship with Liberal trade unionists became contentious once again early in 1897. Blackburn was, like Leicester, a two-member seat; in January a by-election was anticipated but in the event never materialised. Burgess was brought forward as a prospective candidate by an alliance of the local ILP and SDF branches. This arrangement and the subsequent controversy must be placed within the peculiarities of local politics. Blackburn, like much of cotton Lancashire was represented at Westminster by Conservatives who appealed to cotton workers' sense of masculinity, exploited anti-Irish prejudice and enjoyed the resources and reputation of paternalistic employers. The Liberals were demoralised; in the 1895 election they had run only one candidate, who was heavily defeated. With a working class divided between the established parties Labour could aspire to attract Tory voters who were beyond the reach of Liberals. They also hoped to attract Radicals who were frustrated by the caution and failures of the local Liberal leadership. Yet the Blackburn labour movement was itself divided. The ILP and SDF came together under the label of the Blackburn Socialist Party to fight municipal contests; the Trades Council, dominated by the cotton unions, kept its distance from self-professed socialists. Burgess, having been selected at Blackburn, approached Lib-Lab trade unionists, including Broadhurst and Sam Woods, hoping that they might persuade Blackburn Liberals not to oppose him in any by-election. Burgess's courting of Liberals was discussed by the NAC who considered the matter closed but nevertheless declared that his 'method would if persisted in seriously damage our position and principle'.

The issue was ventilated at the party's 1897 conference, where a resolution was carried forbidding any candidate from collaboration 'with the enemies of Socialism, whether they be Liberal-Labour men or Tory-Labour men by recruiting their assistance on the platform'.

Burgess was attacked by Tom Mann and Pete Curran. Bruce Glasier reacted sceptically to their onslaughts. 'Mann and Curran both spoke unnecessarily indignantly, not sure they have always been so virtuous themselves' [ILP Conference Report 1897, pp. 13, 18–19; Glasier Diary, 19 April 1897]. The latter insisted that Burgess had made a serious mistake; most trade unionists supported socialism. Curran's assertion was tested to destruction in the Barnsley by-election in October 1897 when that strongly unionised mining electorate followed the lead of their union officials and backed a Liberal colliery owner rather than himself, a socialist trade unionist. Thereafter the ILP position shifted from hostility towards Liberal and Conservative trade union leaders to seeking co-operation through a Labour alliance.

Burgess's prominence within the national ILP revived. He was elected to the NAC in 1899 and again in 1900. This position meant that he was a member of the ILP delegations to two highly significant conferences; the formation of the Scottish Workers' Parliamentary Election Committee in January 1900 and, at the end of February, the founding conference in London of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC). His intervention at the latter came in the debate on the composition of the new body's executive. A trade unionist moved a resolution that the composition should be twelve trade unionists and six socialists; Burgess moved an amendment on behalf of the ILP, backed by Hardie that the committee be only twelve and composed of seven trade unionists and five socialists. Both Burgess and Hardie justified their proposal on ground of economy and efficiency. The political significance of the amendment was not lost on some trade unionists. Some likely trade union representatives were likely to be socialists and this could mean an executive majority favourable to socialist proposals. The ILP amendment was carried on a show of hands by 44 votes to 38; perhaps surprisingly when opponents demanded a card vote, some major unions endorsed the amendment. The vote was 331,000–161,000 [Report of the Conference on Labour Representation, February 1900, pp. 19–20].

Burgess's activities in the late 1890s and early 1900s combined political organising, propagandising and journalism. He became ILP secretary in Leeds in 1897; the party's principal local benefactor funded a local paper, *Forward*. Burgess became editor in 1899. The following year he moved to Glasgow to work as an organiser for the Workers' Municipal Election Committee, an alliance of avowedly democratic bodies committed to political independence—trade unions, co-operators, socialists and the United Irish League. He supplemented his income by writings, often serialised fiction, for a variety of newspapers. In 1902 Burgess became the first Englishman to win a seat on the Glasgow Town Council. He held this seat in Townhead ward for one term, retiring in 1905. His principal impact was on housing. He gave evidence to a Municipal Commission arguing that tenements should give way to suburban estates of cottages. His emphasis on municipal provision of decent housing for respectable working-class families anticipated what would become a central theme in Glasgow Labour politics identified with a future Labour Minister of Housing John Wheatley. Burgess's advocacy of homes for the respectable was at one with his artisan electorate and with the ethos of the ILP [Smyth (2000), 66–67].

Glaswegian politics had been reshaped by the Liberal Party's advocacy of and divisions over Irish Home Rule. Many Liberal voters and some Liberal politicians had abandoned the party; in 1885 all of the city's seven seats returned Liberals; in 1900 none did. Late in 1903 Burgess was adopted as candidate for Camlachie in the city's East End. The division included a well organised Irish Nationalist section and a significant group of Orangemen. The incumbent, Alexander Cross, sat as a Liberal Unionist, opposed to Irish Home Rule and committed to free trade. There was a history of interventions by Labour candidates. Robert Cunninghame Graham had fared poorly as a Scottish Labour Party candidate in 1892; three years later Robert Smillie standing for the ILP had fared even worse. But the contest in 1900 would have given Burgess some encouragement. No Liberal stood; instead the opposition to Cross was concentrated on A.E. Fletcher, a Radical journalist and former Liberal candidate, sponsored by the ILP and backed by the Irish Nationalists, the Trades Council, the SDF and eventually the Liberals. His

official designation was as a candidate of the Scottish Workers' Parliamentary Election Committee, the Scottish equivalent of the LRC. He personified not just the recently constructed Labour alliance between socialists and trade unionists but also a broader progressive coalition. He was ambiguous about his own political identity. But on the dominant issue of the South African war Fletcher was unequivocal. The war was waged in the interests of capitalists; the government was preoccupied with militarism and had neglected social reform. Despite the inevitable response that a vote for Fletcher was a vote for the Boers, Fletcher secured 41.8% of the vote. Cross's margin was sizeable by Camlachie standards, but the contest hinted at the possibilities for unseating him once the war issue had faded [Pelling (1967) 401–402; Howell (1983) 162–163].

Burgess's prospects depended on the Liberals not running a candidate. The Balfour Government's unpopularity was evident in mounting by-election losses. However, Cross, as a Free Trader, could distance himself from the opprobrium that attached to tariff reform. He might be in a minority amongst Unionists on the fiscal issue but this status was not necessarily a handicap. Burgess secured the backing of the United Irish League; he was sound on Irish Home Rule and was first in the field against the incumbent. A Liberal, W.M.R. Pringle, entered the contest in 1905; his intervention proved decisive. Significantly, the secret pact agreed in 1903 between Ramsay MacDonald and Herbert Gladstone did not operate in Scotland. Whereas in England several Labour candidates faced no Liberal opponent or in the case of two-member seats only one Liberal, any Labour victor in Scotland would have to defeat both older parties. Cross, faced with growing evidence of Unionist disasters elsewhere, played the Orange card. His sentiments recalled those of Burgess in 1884.

> A Parliament in Dublin in time of peace… would be all right, but when difficulties arose it would be impossible to control such an executive. He had seen in the House of Commons Irishmen rising in their seats and cheering at the news of disaster. The position of the North of Ireland in such an eventuality would be oppressive indeed [*Glasgow Herald*, 16 January 1906].

The result suggested that in a straight fight Cross would probably have lost; his share of the vote had fallen by 21.8% compared with 1900 and 8.8% compared with his previous worst share in 1892.

Glasgow Camlachie, 1906: electorate 10,174, turnout 84.1%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A. Cross (Liberal Unionist) | 3119 | (36.5%) |
| W.M.R. Pringle (Liberal) | 2871 | (33.5%) |
| J. Burgess (Labour) | 2568 | (30.0%) |
| Majority | 248 | (3.0%) |

Burgess's post-mortem emphasised Cross's identity as a Free Trader. 'When Tariff Reform was proving disastrous to his party (he) was able to say "I told you so"' [Burgess to Hardie, 20 January 1906, Francis Johnson Correspondence 1906/35]. Pringle 'proved a popular and unscrupulous Liberal candidate, and polled every possible Liberal vote'. Burgess was a target for Andrew Scott Gibson, a populist muck-raking orator, who dubbed him 'the Cockney Columbus who discovered Glasgow' and accused him of misusing corporation funds [Smyth (2000) 53–54]. A subsequent criticism by George Bernard Shaw that Burgess's overt socialism had cost him the seat neglected the character of Glasgow politics and the eagerness of Liberals to fight every seat. Camlachie would prove to be Burgess's best chance of a Westminster seat; its distinctive character would be demonstrated in the subsequent trajectory of Cross who shifted back to the Liberal Party he had left many years earlier over Ireland only to be defeated in January 1910.

After the Camlachie defeat Burgess had to find a secure source of income. His journalism had withered due to his political activities. Eventually he moved to Bradford in March 1907 and was employed part-time at £2 a week on the *Yorkshire Factory Times*. He returned to Scotland in April 1908 to contest a by-election for the Montrose District of Burghs. The contrast with Camlachie was marked. The five burghs were each of distinctive character, separated from one another by rural districts. The Irish presence was minimal; the seat was solidly Liberal with no history of Labour involvement. The Liberal strength was such that the Liberal intellectual, John Morley, had found a secure seat there after his eviction from Newcastle in 1895. Morley's shift to the Lords precipitated the 1908 contest.

Burgess was adopted by a meeting that reflected the limitations of local organisation. The smallest borough, Inverbervie, was unrepresented. Branches of the ILP came from the other four boroughs; Arbroath, Montrose, Brechin and Forfar. The Social Democratic Party, previously the SDF, sent a delegate from Arbroath although the party was not affiliated to the Labour Party. Mill-workers from both Brechin and Arbroath were present. A diverse collection of other groups came from Arbroath—the Trades Council, the Workers' Representative Committee, a Right to Work Committee, and union delegates from the Bakers, Moulders, Engineers and Railway Servants. Burgess in his speeches paid tribute to Morley, proclaimed his own socialism and insisted on the inevitability of gradualism. He suggested that he was the genuine Radical, not the official Liberal—a member of a prominent Liberal family imported from London. Visitors commented harshly on Burgess's campaigning style. Glasier asserted that 'his dreary speeches depressed the electorate'; Hardie dismissed him as an 'awful' candidate. Arthur Henderson on behalf of the Labour Party did not send Burgess a supportive telegram; he explained lamely to Burgess's agent that he had not had the opportunity to consult as to whether he should. Nevertheless at least three Labour MPs spoke for him: Hardie, Phillip Snowden and J.A. Seddon. These visits might have reflected the proximity of a high-profile by-election in nearby Dundee. Given that Montrose Burghs was new territory for Labour, Burgess's poll was creditable [the campaign is covered in *Montrose Standard*, 24 April and 15 May 1908; see also material in Francis Johnson Correspondence; for Glasier comment see his letter to Elizabeth Glasier-Foster, 15 May 1908; for Hardie his letter to Glasier, 11 May 1908, both in Glasier Correspondence].

Montrose District of Burghs, 1908: electorate 8205, turnout 80.4%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| R. Vernon-Harcourt (Liberal) | 3083 | (46.7%) |
| J. Burgess (Scottish Labour Party) | 1937 | (29.4%) |
| A.H.B. Constable (Conservative) | 1576 | (23.9%) |
| Majority | 1146 | (17.3%) |

Later in 1908 Burgess lost his job with the *Yorkshire Factory Times*, following a change of ownership. He was already developing idiosyncratic ideas on economics; his lack of background in the subject proved no deterrent to his enthusiasm. Early in 1909 he published his thoughts in the *Labour Leader.* His ideas had been foreshadowed in the Montrose campaign.

> Free Trade was not of itself able to stave off the attacks of the Tariff Reformers. Unless they were to build upon the Free Trade foundation a structure which liberalism would never build, then they were going to see the foundations of Free Trade swept away. At the present time they were suffering from foreign competition financed by British money – but the Labour Party were determined to go right to the centre of this great and growing abuse-capital [*Montrose Standard*, 1 May 1908].

Burgess's *Labour Leader* articles argued that taxation of overseas British investment would release funds for domestic investment and reduce cheap imports whose production had been funded by British money. The *Labour Leader* distanced itself from his ideas. Progressive Liberal economists, J.A. Hobson and Chiozza Money poured scorn on his claims. For Burgess the diagnosis and prescription became an obsession. He came to believe that what he saw as his increasing marginalisation within the labour movement was a consequence of opposition to his economic ideas. He felt that such treatment was evident in the subsequent history of his candidacy for Montrose Burghs. The local party were keen to retain him for a future election; one necessary step was to regularise the local organisation in accordance with the Labour Party constitution, a requirement that had acquired more salience since the recent contretemps over Victor Grayson's candidacy in Colne Valley. Verification that the body that subsequently nominated Burgess was in compliance with the party constitution proved protracted not least because it proved difficult to obtain a list of the organisations involved. Eventually endorsement was given; but in September 1909 Burgess painted a discouraging picture. Practically no money had been raised due to trade depression, short-time working and strikes. The constituency included four branches of the ILP with about 180 members. He, the candidate, had not visited the division since mid-March [Burgess to George Barnes, 15 September 1909, Francis Johnson Correspondence 1909/387].

When the crisis over the Budget and the House of Lords precipitated the dissolution of parliament late in 1909, the Labour Party sought to reduce its number of candidates. Many putative ones were culled; a small number where endorsement had been given found that this was withdrawn. They included Montrose Burghs; in this case as with other ILP withdrawals the prime mover was the NAC. Burgess insisted to Jowett, the ILP chairman that 'malignant influences have been at work all along' [Burgess to Jowett, 1 December 1909, Francis Johnson Correspondence 1909/573]. He claimed that early in 1909 Glasier had tried but failed to secure the abandonment of the Montrose candidacy at the Scottish conference of the ILP. Burgess's attempt to secure some redress at the ILP's election conference were unsuccessful. Eventually Burgess revealed his dismay in public [*Glasgow Forward*, 25 December 1909]. Entitled 'A Diary of Discipline! How Independent Action is Punished', he chronicled the chequered history of his candidacy. He suggested that Glasier as editor of the *Labour Leader* and a prominent ILP figure had always been unfriendly. 'When you have had the chance to do me on unfriendly terms you have done it'. He had been ready 'to take a rise out of me in semi-sneering banter' [Burgess to Glasier, 16 January 1909, cited in ibid.]. Glasier was dismissive. 'Extraordinary article in Glasgow *Forward* by Burgess attacking me and NAC over refusal to officially sanction his candidature at Montrose. Accuses me of personal spite, quotes private letters and instances many things to prove my animus. Poor Burgess he also is become a sour apple' [Glasier Diary, 28 December 1909].

Whatever the personal tensions between Burgess and some within the ILP hierarchy there were compelling reasons of funding, organisational strength and credibility for not fighting Montrose Burghs. In contrast to other ILP candidacies denied official status, the Montrose Labour organisation decided that Burgess should contest the election. Local groups held sales of work and of cake and candy to augment sparse funding. The lack of official status meant that Burgess had no outside speakers. Despite his campaign's limitations, Burgess's vote remained almost at its 1908 level. His agent acknowledged the limitations of Labour's position. The party was weak in Montrose and Inverbervie; the position in Brechin had been damaged by dissent between ILP members and Social Democrats. The majority of Labour's support came from factory workers in Arbroath and Forfar but they were too few to win an election, not least on the limited franchise [*Glasgow Forward*, 29 January 1910].

Montrose District of Burghs, 1910: Electorate 8414, turnout 84.2%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| R. Vernon-Harcourt (Liberal) | 3606 | (50.9%) |
| J. Burgess (Scottish Labour Party) | 1888 | (26.6%) |
| W. Low (Conservative) | 1592 | (22.5%) |
| Majority | 1718 | (24.3%) |

After 1906 Burgess could seem a survivor from the ILP's founding generation who had not made it to Westminster. His resentment at his treatment over the Montrose candidacy fed a sense of victimisation. His grievances meant a personalised if limited involvement in the arguments that divided the party. Some criticisms centred around the priorities and style of Victor Grayson, others around a campaign for the democratisation of the ILP that culminated in 1910 in the Green Manifesto, *Let Us Reform the Labour Party.* Beneath these specificities there were more fundamental concerns about the ILP's apparent loss of socialist momentum. At the tempestuous ILP Conference in 1909 Burgess to a degree aligned himself with the critics; he insisted that the ILP had been made by its fighting spirit and they must not be led away by cautious statesmanlike advice. The following year he moved the reference back of the passage in the NAC Report on Montrose. His defeat by 198 to 117 suggested significant sympathy [ILP Conference Report 1909, p. 58; 1910, pp. 19, 62]. This assessment was born out by the NAC elections. For the chairmanship Burgess polled 152 against W.C. Anderson's 264; in the election to the national section of the NAC he took Glasier to a second ballot losing by 197 to 175. Glasier acknowledged 'a narrow squeak… His posing as a martyr over Montrose wins him sympathy' [Letter to Katherine Bruce Glasier, March 1910 Glasier Correspondence]. With the formation of the British Socialist Party (BSP) in 1911 several critics quit the ILP. Those who remained emphasised the need for Labour to be independent of the Liberals and for the ILP to sustain its socialist commitment within the broader Labour alliance. Over the next three years Burgess's message to conference delegates was constant; ILP-sponsored MPs must take an unequivocally socialist position in the Commons and the party must recover its campaigning vitality [ILP Conference Report, 1911, p. 67; 1912, pp. 82–83; 1913, p. 58]. In the build-up to the ILP's coming of age conference in Bradford in April 1914 he concluded his review of the party's history with diagnosis and prescription. 'The ILP is sickening of statesmanship and yearns for a revival of its special work of agitation. And there is a feeling growing that future campaigns must concern themselves less with social reform and more with Socialism' [*Bradford Pioneer*, 10 April 1914]. He emerged as the strongest opponent of Jowett for the chairmanship, taking him to the third ballot before losing by 205 votes to 170. His position as a significant figure in the party seemed to be assured; he became President of the Bradford ILP and editor of its paper, the *Bradford Pioneer*.

The same concern with the recovery of the ILP past and the perils of reformism had inspired his 1911 book on the President of the Local Government Board—*John Burns the Rise and Progress of a Right Honourable*.

> The Labour Party… is in peril of sinning collectively in the same way that Burns sinned individually. I do not believe any of its present leaders are ambitious to follow Burns into the bondage of office, but I do feel there is a danger that, despite their Socialism, the Labour Party may become purely a reforming party, living from hand to mouth on palliatives… Either the Socialist members of the Labour Party must bring their colleagues forward, or they must themselves form an advanced group with the liberty, which they do not now enjoy, to ventilate their Socialist views in the House of Commons [Burgess (1911) xvi].

The book contains significant fictionalisation of Burgess's own life. He presented himself as working in the Nottingham lace industry, before becoming a journalist and launching the brief

life of the *Operative* in Nottingham not in Oldham. This fictional paper supposedly supported Burns in his Social Democratic candidacy in West Nottingham in December 1885. Subsequently Burgess's move to London was placed in the mid-1880s not the early 1890s allowing an immediacy in his account of Burns' early career. The bulk of the text covers the ground previously presented in a series on the early years of the ILP, published in the *Clarion* in 1909–1910. This material would be recycled in Burgess's subsequent writing. The fictional elements within the book have influenced subsequent scholars. Henry Pelling in his seminal *Origins of the Labour Party* dated Burgess's commitment to Independent Labour in the mid-1880s citing Burgess's claim that he had edited a *Nottingham Operative* in support of Burns's candidacy [Pelling (1965) 94, footnote 1 citing Burgess (1911) 5ff]. Lancaster in his study of Leicester politics suggests Burgess's credibility as a candidate in 1894 was strengthened by his having 'a deep knowledge of the hosiery trade' [Lancaster (1987) 24; The source given is Burgess (1911) 3–4, which apart from being fictitious referred to lace and not to hosiery].

British imminent entry into the European war in August 1914 found Burgess in agreement with the ILP mainstream. He suggested that the conflict had its roots in investors' pursuit of overseas profits and urged workers to resist patriotic appeals. He acknowledged that a defensive war would be justifiable, but this was not the issue. 'The Socialists to-day are the only peace party. Stand by the Red Flag, workers. Your greatest interest is the preservation of peace'. Such were his sentiments on the last weekend of peace [*Bradford Pioneer*, 7 August 1914]. Once war was a reality the ILP might regret the situation but had to adapt to the new state of affairs. Many, including MacDonald and Snowden, concentrated on protecting pre-war liberal decencies against the pressure for a more thorough pursuit of the war. For Burgess his analysis of the basic cause of the conflict served to underline his contention that overseas investments had a destructive effect upon the British economy and the wider society. In January 1915 he published *Homeland or Empire?* Its central theme was that national self-sufficiency could end economic rivalries. Characteristically, he felt that no existing organisation could persuade the Labour Party that his plan was the way forward; he therefore formed the Homeland League.

The 1915 ILP Conference was held at Norwich in difficult conditions. The owners of the original venue had withdrawn their permission on account of the party's position on the war; eventually delegates met in a Methodist chapel. Burgess's contributions were at odds with the overall mood of unity in the face of hostility. He found the NAC position on the war ambiguous and backed a resolution supporting a defensive war. Above all he spoke for twenty minutes on his economic analysis. An observer acknowledged Burgess's 'sheer persistence' in expounding his pet nostrum. But the effort would be counter-productive. 'Friend Burgess is one of those men who unwittingly create an opposition to themselves every time they speak and whatever one thinks of Burgess's pet idea… one has the feeling that someone other than the parent of the idea will have to take it up before it makes much headway' [Quote from *Huddersfield Worker* in *Bradford Pioneer*, 16 April 1915].

The Preface to *Homeland or Empire?* stated that the book attempted to 'weld together the forces of Nationalism and Socialism'. By mid-1915 this synthesis was at the heart of the Socialist National Defence Committee, under the leadership of Victor Fisher, hitherto a leading figure in the BSP. The Committee's objective was to combat 'the pernicious and pestilential piffle of the Pacifist cranks'. The initiative secured support from some Labour MPs; Burgess was attracted by the Committee's position. He resigned as editor of the *Bradford Pioneer* and in early July announced his support for the SNDC. He endorsed the Committee's statement of aims centred on the proposition that the success of socialism required the maintenance of 'the British Federation of Free States'. German socialism was 'fettered and limited by political immaturity and bureaucratic domination… The war must be prosecuted until the democratic principle had triumphed completely… There can be neither peace nor truce till the human menace of Prussian militarism has been destroyed to its very roots'. Subsequently Burgess left Bradford for Ilford [*Bradford Pioneer*, 4 June, 9 July 1915; McPhillips (2005) 146–155].

The SNDC became the British Workers National League early in 1916. In both guises it enjoyed financial support from the social imperialist Lord Milner who envisaged the forging of a link between patriotic labour and the Conservative Party. Burgess did not take this path but nevertheless retained the sentiments that had led him to the SNDC. His pre-war contacts with the Social Democrats and its *de facto* successor the BSP had been slight. Like many within the ILP he had criticised what they regarded as Social Democratic dogmatism. Nevertheless, H.M. Hyndman had contributed a Foreword to Burgess's 1911 book on John Burns. From August 1914 the BSP split between an anti-war majority and a Hyndman-led pro-war minority. In April 1916, 22 pro-war delegates walked out of the party's annual conference and formed a separate organisation in a Manchester hotel. Initially named the National Socialist Advisory Committee, it took the name National Socialist Party (NSP) in June. The name was suggested by Burgess; he became the new party's organiser. Although 43 branches were claimed by the end of 1916, the NSP seemed dependent on Hyndman's leadership.

Burgess's energies became increasingly concentrated on a vendetta against Phillip Snowden who personified for him the iniquities of Free Trade economics and ignorance or worse about the war. Late in 1916 he envisaged opposing Snowden in the latter's Blackburn constituency as a NSP candidate. From early 1917 he wrote a column in a Conservative newspaper, the *Blackburn Times*. Beginning as an attack on Snowden's economics the onslaught broadened to cover the ILP, Ramsay MacDonald and Bruce Glasier; the latter was dismissed as 'the evil genius of the ILP' [the articles are in *Blackburn Times* 1917; the Glasier comment on 14 April 1917]. His attempt to secure a hearing from the Blackburn Trades Council was unsuccessful. Eventually he abandoned both the Blackburn candidacy and the NSP. The party had never broken its links with the wider labour movement. Hyndman had continued to be active on the War Emergency Workers' National Committee, Will Thorne remained within the Parliamentary Labour Party, others prominent within the NSP hoped to join him as Labour Members. When the NSP re-affiliated to the Labour Party in 1918 Burgess quit the party.

Burgess's hyperbole reappeared in the *Blackburn Times* in November 1918. His distaste for Snowden extended to the bizarre claim that he and the ILP had had a malign influence on the Labour Party's programme, an assertion that was oblivious to the revision of the Labour Party constitution with its enhancement of the trade unions' position.

> Since Hardie's death the ILP has degenerated into a Revolutionary Bolshevik Party, imitating Lenin's confiscatory policy and it has camouflaged its proposals so skilfully that Mr Snowden at the Labour Party Conference last January was able to induce the Labour Party *nem con* to adopt the ILP proposal for the Conscription ("Confiscation") of wealth. I have always been against confiscatory policies which can never be carried out in this country at less cost than civil war such as is now ravishing Russia, a prospect our ultra-pacifists seem to contemplate with complacency [*Blackburn Times*, 30 November 1918].

Unlike his former associates in the NDP his ties with Labour were broken. Snowden's decisive defeat in December 1918 by a Conservative–Liberal combination and Burgess's evident desire for this outcome underlined his alienation from the labour movement. He was subsequently employed by the *Evening Standard* until the paper was purchased by Beaverbrook in 1924. His initial attempts to re-enter the Labour Party were unsuccessful; he became a member again in 1925. During the mid-twenties he produced two books, under the auspices of 'The Joseph Burgess Publication Depot' located at his Ilford house. *Will Lloyd George Supplant Ramsay MacDonald?* published in 1926 looked at the contemporary state of the Labour Party through the perspective of MacDonald's pre-1914 relationship with the Liberals. This section was supplemented with material revisiting the 1890s and focussing on the machinations of the Tory, Maltman Barry, and the Fabians. The overall sense is of an assiduous raking over old scores with the help of lengthy quotation, not least from his earlier writings. *A Potential Poet?* followed in

1927. Much of this is an autobiography in verse with a lengthy section on his eventual isolation —'A Political and Economic Ishmaelite'.

Burgess died at his house in Ilford on 8 January 1934; he was married three times. He married his first wife Jane Ann Turner, born 1852, in Chadderton, Oldham on 26 November 1874. The marriage lasted less than a month; his wife died on Christmas Eve. His second marriage was to Sarah Wild, born 1850, on 12 November 1882, again in Oldham. They had one son and three daughters. Sarah Burgess died on 4 April 1912; the following year he married Evelyn Haigh Miller born 6 June 1862 in Streatham. Born in Kent she was indicated in the 1911 census as living on 'Private Means'. One of his grandchildren, Wilfred Fienburgh was Labour Member for North Islington 1951–1958, who wrote a novel, *No Love for Johnnie*, made into a 1961 film with Peter Finch in the lead role.

Contemporaries often viewed Burgess as garrulous and egotistical. His speeches were lengthy and his writings increasingly prolix and repetitive. His most significant political moment was his contribution to the formation of the ILP as editor of the *Workman's Times*. How crucial Burgess was to this outcome is debateable. The foundation conference of the ILP was the product of complex negotiations and competing expectations. Burgess's early politics exemplify the nuances of the shift from respectable working-class Liberalism to support for Independent Labour and ethical socialism. He retained for many years the status of an ILP pioneer but his influence within the party was limited. The *Workman's Times* was quickly superseded by the *Labour Leader* and the *Clarion.* Increasingly the party became dominated by a not always harmonious quartet—Hardie, MacDonald, Snowden and Glasier. Burgess increasingly saw himself as an outsider. Eventually he became on occasions a focus for dissent within the party but his own pre-war criticisms were limited to regretting the impact of parliament on socialist idealism. His intemperate and personalised response to war from 1915 exiled him from the ILP at what would become remembered as the party's heroic moment.

**Writings:** *Lancashire Lyrics* (1874); *John Burns: The Rise and Progress of a Right Honourable* (1911); *Homeland or Empire?* (1915); *Will Lloyd George Supplant Ramsay MacDonald?* (Ilford, 1926); A *Potential Poet?* (Ilford, 1927); his journalism can be found in *Oldham Evening Express*; *Oldham Operative*; *Cotton Factory Times*; *Yorkshire Factory Times*; *Workman's Times*; *Clarion; Labour Leader*; *Glasgow Forward*; *Bradford Pioneer*; *Blackburn Times.*

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: BLPES, Francis Johnson Correspondence, Independent Labour Party National Administrative Council Minutes; People's History Museum Archives, Manchester, Labour Party Representation Committee Letter Files, Labour Party General Correspondence; National Archives, Ramsay MacDonald Papers; Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool, John Bruce Glasier, Correspondence and Diaries. (**2**) **Newspapers Reports and Periodicals**: *Independent Labour Party Conference Reports*; *Foundation Conference of the Labour Representation Committee February 1900*; *Labour Leader*; *Clarion*; *Glasgow Forward*. (**3**) **Books**: Henry Pelling, *The Origins of the Labour Party* (Oxford, 1965); *Social Geography of British Elections 1885–1910* (1967) David Howell *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party 1888–1906* (Manchester, 1983); Bill Lancaster, *Radicalism Co-operation and Socialism: Working Class Politics 1860–1906* (Leicester, 1987); J.J. Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow 1896–1936: Socialism Suffrage Sectarianism* (East Linton, 2000); Kevin McPhillips, *Joseph Burgess (1853–1934) and the Founding of the Independent Labour Party* (Lampeter, 2005); Ned Newitt, *A People's History of Leicester: A Pictorial History of Working Class Life and Politics* (Derby, 2008). (**4**) **Obituaries**: *Manchester Guardian*, 11 and 12 January 1934; *Cotton Factory Times*, 12 January 1934.

DAVID HOWELL

**CLAY, Harold Ewart** (1885–1961)
TRADE UNIONIST AND EDUCATIONALIST

Harold Ewart Clay was born in Horncastle, Lincolnshire, on 24 December 1885, the son of George Clay, a joiner, and his wife Mary. In later life Clay revealed that he owed much to the influence of both his parents. He was immersed in politics from an early age: his father, one of the earliest members of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), was also active in the Leeds Trades Council. Clay became a tram driver in Leeds in the early years of the twentieth century. He was soon involved in both the political and industrial parts of the labour movement. In July 1908 he married Annie Richardson, daughter of John Richardson, a cloth miller. By 1911, Clay was a member of the Executive of the Amalgamated Association of Tramway and Vehicle Workers (AATW).

The growth of transport unions lagged behind that of other unions in the era before the First World War. The AATW emerged from a series of mergers of northern transport unions, thereby overcoming the division between freight and passenger unions. In 1904 the AATW took over the London Tramway Employees' Association and became a national union. Despite this the AATW remained based in Manchester and was dominated by its northern membership. It was a moderate union, known as the 'blue button union' to distinguish from its radical rival, the London and Provincial Union of Licensed Vehicle Workers (LPU), the 'red button' union. Clay was the President of the AATW in 1912–1913. His career as a full-time union official began in 1913 by which time the AATW comprised over 25,000 members.

By 1915, Clay was the President of the Leeds Labour Party. He used the Leeds party's annual report of that year to warn against the dangers of militarism, which was 'growing in power and arrogance'. Working-class solidarity could counteract the threat to free speech and a free press. In January 1917, Clay co-organised a conference at Ilkley, which was chaired by Arnold Rowntree. Amongst the delegates from seventeen unions was Ernest Bevin. Clay's contribution to this event emphasised his interest in industrial democracy. Workers' control was a theme he would return to at regular intervals throughout his career. He later claimed that many suggestions from the Ilkley conference found their way into the Whitley Report, which appeared a few months later and recommended formal consultative processes between unions and employers.

The AATW's membership grew significantly during the First World War, partly due to a large influx of women conductors. The presence of women working on the trams created tensions, which Clay had to defuse. In July 1917, for instance, the proposed appointment of six women as tramway inspectors in Leeds caused uproar. Clay managed to persuade male tramway workers not to strike in protest. Some women tramway workers were also unhappy, as they believed that the jobs should have been given to ex-servicemen instead. The dispute was settled without industrial action. It was agreed that the duties of the women tramway inspectors would be limited to supervision of the (mostly women) conductors and inspection of tickets. They would have no control over the motormen, and assurances were given that the appointments were purely a wartime measure. Clay and John Cliff, the President of the Leeds AATW, represented the unions at the meetings of the municipal tramways committee. The union's report into the episode acknowledged that the situation had required 'careful handling'. Its successful conclusion owed much to Clay's deft negotiating skills.

The AATW and LPU amalgamated to form the United Vehicle Workers' Union (UVW) in 1920. This followed a period at the end of the First World War when the two unions bickered over women tramway workers' demands for equal pay: AATW officials accused their LPU counterparts of failing to support the campaign. Not surprisingly the merger was fraught. The LPU had elected its officials. In contrast, AATW officials were appointed. A vote was held to determine the issue for the new amalgamated union. There were more ex-AATW members in the UVW so the outcome of the vote was predictable: the UVW continued the AATW's

tradition of appointing its officials. The UVW, like the AATW, was moderate: a majority of its officials, such as Clay, were ex-AATW men. The union did, however, move its headquarters south to London: many London busmen, still far from reconciled to their new union, called it 'traitor's gate'. Clay was the UVW's organiser in Yorkshire area. The Leeds branch, one of the biggest in the region, comprised 2333 members just prior to the amalgamation.

In January 1921, the tramway workers took their case for improved wages and conditions to arbitration. Ernest Bevin, who represented the Transport Workers' Federation, was their principal advocate but he was supported by Clay and John Cliff. The timing of the inquiry was far from ideal. Unemployment had begun to climb steeply after the end of the post-war boom. Meanwhile, wages and prices were declining. Whereas the dockers had achieved a good settlement in 1920, the tramway workers fared less well. Their demand for a significant increase in pay was rejected: instead they were forced to settle for a sliding scale varying with the cost of living. The UVW's conflicts with rival unions such as the National Union of Vehicle Workers had convinced Clay that further amalgamation of the various transport worker unions was necessary. In 1922, Clay's hopes were realised when the UVW became part of the newly formed Transport and General Workers Workers' Union (TGWU). Clay was one of eleven area secretaries of the new union. By 1923, he had finally succeeded after several election defeats in becoming a Labour councillor (for West Hunslet) on Leeds council. His prominence in the local labour movement was underlined by his presidency of the Leeds Trades Council.

In 1924, Clay left Leeds for London, having been appointed as the Group Officer of the Passenger Services' Group of the TGWU. That year a tribunal considered tramway workers' wages again. This time, Clay rather than Bevin presented their case. The resulting agreement on the standardisation of wages proved to be a watershed. From then on tramway workers' wages were calculated on a national basis. Clay was promoted to National Secretary of the Passenger Services' Group of the TGWU in 1925.

Like many other unions the TGWU suffered in the aftermath of the failure of the General Strike in May 1926. The TGWU lost 40,000 members that year, just over 10% of its membership. In February 1927, Clay and other TGWU officials gathered in Shornhells, a large country house, to discuss organisation and policy. He presented a long, detailed analysis of the General Strike, which illustrated his firm grasp of economics and his intimate knowledge of trade union history. Clay accepted Keynes' conclusions that the return to the Gold Standard had blunted the UK's competitive edge and had forced employers, notably the mine owners, to attempt to force down wages to compensate for an overvalued pound. His paper on the General Strike revealed his disdain for the Communist-inspired Minority Movement, which he viewed as a threat to the labour movement, his anger about 'indiscipline' of some workers (notably print workers, whose unofficial action at the *Daily Mail* had precipitated the strike), and his belief that the General Strike had constitutional implications and was doomed from the start. The government's forces would almost inevitably succeed.

Another theme that emerged from Clay's talk was his essential moderation—the strike weapon was the last resort. Furthermore the threat of strike action was at least as potent as the strike itself as it gave scope for skilled negotiation to further the workers' cause. The experience of the General Strike had underlined the need for further amalgamations within the labour movement. This, Clay felt, was a better alternative than granting increased powers to the Trades Union Congress (TUC) General Council, a suggestion which he opposed. He emphasised the importance of centralising control within unions during strikes. Workers had to trust their representatives to negotiate on their behalf. Clay also felt the strike had strengthened the case for setting up permanent national negotiating processes. His vision extended beyond considering the immediate lessons of the strike in terms of union organisation. He recommended that the labour movement examine possibilities for the strategic nationalisation of industries allied to mining as well as the mines themselves.

Clay urged that the TGWU take the initiative in taking these ideas forward. In the spring of 1927, Clay and other national officers accompanied Bevin, the TGWU General Secretary, in a tour around the country in an effort to rebuild morale. Visits to regions frequently lasted two to three days. There is some circumstantial evidence that these tours were effective. The TGWU lost a lower percentage of members in 1927 than other unions. Its deficit of £396,000 in 1926 was transformed into a surplus of £61,000 in 1927. Bevin claimed that national officers had significant autonomy within the union. A critical motion about Bevin's leadership at the TGWU's biennial conference in July 1931 had portrayed him as inaccessible to members. His riposte expressed his confidence in Clay and his colleagues: 'I helped to build this Union in groups and I have religiously refused to attend Group meetings unless it is a crisis. I think I am right. If you appoint Clay and Corrin and Beard to run national groups, I think they ought to do their jobs' [Bullock (1960) 474].

Clay played a prominent role in this period in the TGWU's campaign for workers' representation in industry. This subject had been a source of controversy during the Labour Government of 1929–1931. Herbert Morrison, the Transport Minister, had wanted to appoint members of the putative London Passenger Transport Board (LPTB) solely on the grounds of ability. The railway unions accepted this but the TGWU demanded workers' representatives. The controversy continued after the fall of the Labour Government and prompted Clay to speak on the TGWU's behalf at the TUC in 1932. Although the TGWU's motion only demanded that boards of nationalised industries be appointed after consultation with the unions, Clay went further, urging direct representation. He returned to the theme in a debate at the Labour Party conference in October 1932. The main business of the conference was to consider reports prepared by the Policy Committee in the aftermath of the General Election disaster of the previous year. Morrison moved a motion to accept the reports on the national planning of transport and electricity. In his response, Clay disagreed on the proposed composition of the boards of these industries, which he claimed should include a workers' representative. Otherwise the workers would be excluded from power and controlled by a bureaucracy without effective public control. Consultation related to wages and hours was not enough: 'I believe in political democracy but I don't believe that it can become complete until you have industrial democracy' [Bullock (1960) 514].

Clay's speech impressed the conference. Morrison did not attempt to reply. He offered instead to withdraw the controversial section of the report for further consideration. Bevin accepted this, but only on condition that the whole issue of workers' control was discussed. Clay continued to spell out his views on the issue in a Socialist League pamphlet: he was critical of capitalism, which created wealth in abundance but also poverty in the midst of plenty. Representatives of the trade unions should comprise half of the personnel of the boards of nationalised industries, which must also be accountable to parliament. Workers' control would enable trade unions to evolve a new function in a socialist society. Clay did not accept that workers were at the same level as consumers or bondholders: 'to accept that view would be to accept the commodity status of labour and deny the possibility of an effective partnership of workers in socialised industry' [Clay (1933) 4]. Industrial democracy would raise workers from cogs in a machine to the status of 'conscious partner in a social service'. Nevertheless, he suggested that unions would not be interested in representation on the boards of privately owned industries. Clay was a member of the National Council of the Socialist League until 1935. The League had been founded in 1932 as a socialist society affiliated with the Labour Party. Clay was not alone in using the League to promote the idea of workers' control: G.D.H. Cole, another prominent member, did likewise. Clay, however, represented the only significant connection between the trade union movement and the League. Bevin, in contrast, refused to have anything to with it.

Much of Clay's time as a TGWU official in the 1930s was spent building up representation of provincial bus workers and negotiating on their behalf. The Road Traffic Act 1930 included a

fair-wages clause, which strengthened the unions' bargaining position and prompted significant growth in membership in provincial companies. Union organisation was also assisted by the demise of numerous smaller bus undertakings, which were absorbed into the major companies by the mid-1930s. From 1933, there were three distinct groups of employers, which negotiated separately: the London Passenger Transport Board and its successors; municipally owned undertakings outside London; and provincial bus companies. Provincial bus company workers initially lagged well behind their counterparts in London in terms of the proportion of the workforce in unions. The notoriously long hours and low wages of some workers in the provincial bus industry reflected this, as did the wide variations in their terms and conditions. Clay and Bevin's strategy aimed to use settlements for municipal bus workers as benchmarks for those of provincial bus workers. The longer term aim was to secure national wages and conditions for both groups of workers. This strategy received a boost in 1937 when negotiations for municipal bus workers were brought under the aegis of the National Joint Industrial Council for the Tramway Industry.

The two main unions in the provincial bus industry were the TGWU and the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR): an agreement of 1932 divided representation between them. The TGWU's bus worker membership dwarfed that of the NUR: by the late 1930s there were 150,000 passenger service members in the TGWU. In contrast the number of bus workers in the NUR amounted to a few thousand. By 1937 the TGWU had made considerable progress in organising provincial bus workers. Only five provincial companies of any size had not been involved in negotiations with unions by the time Clay chaired the first national conference of provincial bus workers at Leeds in February 1937. Clay was critical of the attitude of some bus workers: in particular, he urged that agreements be respected. Without this the unions' negotiating position with employers would be undermined. His advice was ignored when bus workers staged brief unofficial strikes in Kent, Oxford, Northampton, east Yorkshire and the Eastern counties in April 1937. Shortly afterwards, London bus workers walked out over their demand for a 7½ hour day. The TGWU Executive Council withdrew its support on 25 May as Bevin believed that arbitration had already given London busmen most of their demands. The defeat of the strike, which had begun on 1 May, broke the hitherto powerful Rank and File movement. Clay was critical of the Rank and File movement, which was heavily influenced by the Communist Party. He claimed that the strike was politically motivated and had been continued needlessly in an attempt to discredit the TGWU leadership.

Clay's career was notable for his loyalty to his union but he was not always at one with his colleagues. In 1938, for example, a resolution to the Trades Union Congress stated that a stand must be taken to defend Czechoslovakia. The resolution had been drafted by the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party and agreed by the General Council of the TUC. The Czech delegation to the TUC was delighted but Clay caused uproar by moving that the resolution be reconsidered. As a new statement of policy it should have been submitted to the Congress first and not handed out to the press the previous night. Arthur Deakin, the TGWU Assistant General Secretary, disowned Clay's statement. Clay's suggestion that the motion be referred back was overwhelmingly defeated. In the same year he led the trade union side of the committee on road transport hours at the International Labour Organization conference in Geneva. A profile of Clay which appeared shortly afterwards in the *Daily Herald* described his 'outstanding success' in this role. He continued to combine his responsibilities as a union official with party political activity, having succeeded Tommy Naylor as chairman of the London Labour Party in 1933.

Shortly after the Second World War broke out, Clay helped negotiate war bonuses on behalf of London bus workers and their counterparts in the provincial bus companies and the municipalities. In April 1940 he argued successfully in an Industrial Court that women conductors entering the municipal bus industry should, subject to a couple of minor caveats, be paid the same wages as men for the duration of the war. This decision, which benefitted thousands of

women, was subsequently accepted by the London Passenger Transport Board and by most provincial bus companies. Ernest Bevin was seconded from the TGWU in May 1940 to join the Cabinet as Minister of Labour. As a consequence Clay was promoted to Acting Assistant General Secretary of the TGWU. In June 1940, the Standstill Agreement was negotiated between the unions and provincial bus companies. This guaranteed that conditions would remain unchanged throughout the war although provincial bus workers would receive flat rate increases. The Standstill Agreement was not universally popular amongst bus workers but Clay defended it as helping to remove differentials between lower- and higher-paid employees.

In 1941, Clay was chosen by the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) to be their Acting President. He stood in for R.H. Tawney, who had been seconded to the British Embassy in Washington as labour attaché. Clay had been elected as a vice-president of the WEA in March 1932. His interest in adult education was long-standing, both as a student and a teacher: he was voted on to the local district WEA executive committee in 1917. G.H. Thompson, the Secretary of the North Yorkshire WEA, remembered Clay as one of those rare students, who shone in adult education classes to the extent of rivalling the tutor despite little or no formal education beyond elementary school. He joined a university tutorial class in economics in south Leeds before becoming a tutor teaching trade union history and 'social ideals'. He also lectured in trade union policy problems and law at summer schools. Clay's involvement in education stretched beyond the WEA: he had an active interest in policy-making, which led him to take over from H.B. Lees-Smith as chairman of the Labour Party education advisory committee in November 1941. Labour Party opinion on multilateral (i.e. non-selective) schools was divided roughly into three categories: opposition, support for their limited introduction, and support for all schools being multilateral. Clay appeared to be a firm believer in non-selective education for all children, which put him in the minority. In May 1942, he proposed a motion at the Labour Party conference which demanded a new type of multilateral school for 'children of all normal types'.

> We believe that it is sound that every child in the State should go to the same kind of school… We have been somewhat concerned at the suggestion that has been made in regard to the grammar school, the technical high school, and the modern school, the suggestion being that there is a difference between certain types of children of a character that we do not quite appreciate [Barker (1972) 77–78].

Clay gave the Chairman's address to the WEA annual conference in July 1942. He was critical of an education system, which 'limits… the opportunity for many children from less prosperous homes and family'. The next Education Act should be a 'charter of equal opportunity for every boy and girl in the land'. In the same month, Clay and G.D.H. Cole were named as the Labour representatives on the Fleming Committee, which was set up to investigate the relationship between public schools and the general educational system. In April 1943, the Committee issued its first report. A majority, including Clay and Cole, recommended that all fees in direct-grant schools be abolished and that only direct-grant schools with unusual functions should remain outside local authority control.

Meanwhile there was discontent among provincial bus workers about war wages. It was felt that rates of pay did not reflect the heavier workload caused by evacuees increasing the population in some areas. There was a widespread feeling that that war wages should also include additional payments for overtime. The unions' case, that war-time difficulties deserved recognition in terms of a rise in the war rate and improved conditions, was rejected in May 1943 by a tribunal which included Harold Laski. Bus workers walked out in protest: the unofficial strikes, which had began in Yorkshire and spread to the Midlands and the Thames Valley, quickly petered out. Clay later claimed that the arbitration tribunal's award was 'wrongly conceived' and that some employers were just as surprised as the unions by the tribunal's verdict. Unions

and employers subsequently agreed on an increase of 4s 6d a week. Clay helped persuade his colleagues to accept the settlement, albeit by a narrow majority, when the unions reported back to their members.

In 1944, Clay succeeded Tawney as President of the WEA. He proved a fine, unflappable chairman of the Association, which provided education for over 80,000 students that year. It was clear by this stage that Clay had modified his previous support for non-selective education. The White Paper of 1943 had proposed selective education in the form of grammar, secondary modern and technical schools. Clay appeared to be satisfied with this. He told his colleagues on the Labour Party's education committee that the proportion of various types of state schools was less significant than the fact that they would all come under the same regulations. In June 1944 the Fleming Committee issued its final report, which was unanimous. The Committee recommended that public schools make a quarter of their places available to non-fee-paying children in return for local authority subsidies. This satisfied no-one. It did however provide the Conservatives with useful cover in successfully defending the public schools against potential Labour attack.

Clay was appointed as the Assistant General Secretary of the TGWU in 1946. Despite these wider responsibilities, he continued to co-ordinate concerted attempts by provincial bus workers to achieve national pay and conditions. The forum for the negotiations was the National Council for the Omnibus Industry (NCOI), which had been formed in June 1940. The original remit of the NCOI excluded national negotiations. Instead, its purpose was to settle disputes between individual companies and unions. It was clear from 1944 that there was a split between the employers over whether to edge towards national conditions. British Electric Traction (BET) remained adamantly opposed, but the Tilling companies and the other employers were more accommodating and were prepared to offer model agreements, the precursor to national conditions. There were significant differences between the approaches of the TGWU and the NUR in terms of their negotiations with provincial companies. The TGWU were content to leave negotiations to local officials: the NUR controlled all negotiations from the centre. Clay's approach was to accept varying interpretations of the model agreements and to allow differences between negotiations with Tilling and negotiations with BET companies. He was keen to avoid falling out with the companies just before the unions put in a renewed application for a national conditions agreement. Despite the TGWU's devolved approach to negotiations, Clay retained much influence. John Spencer Wills, a director at BET, paid tribute to his skill in out-manoeuvring less experienced company negotiators to get increased wages: 'there are all sorts of reasons which have induced the various companies to pay the various wages they do pay, and one of the most potent reasons is Mr. Clay himself' [Proceedings of Court of Inquiry, 13 March 1946, p. 162, BET Archive, reference 21178].

In July 1945, municipal bus workers agreed improved national conditions, an agreement welcomed by Clay as the 'best terms we could obtain at this time by negotiations'. This ratcheted up the pressure on the unions and employers to reach a similar agreement for provincial bus workers. In December 1945, the provincial bus companies finally conceded the principle of a national conditions agreement. They also offered the unions wages based on national groupings. Negotiations broke down, however, and Clay presented the unions' case at the subsequent Court of Inquiry, chaired by Sir John Forster, in March 1946. Clay's mastery of his brief was clear: the employers' counsel, Fox-Andrews, conceded that 'Mr Clay has an almost unequalled knowledge that I could never hope to rival' [Proceedings of Court of Inquiry, 5 March 1946, p. 66, BET Archive, reference 21178]. The Forster Inquiry refused to support the case for national conditions but it did agree a wage rise of 7s 6d a week, a clear victory for the unions.

The struggle for bus workers' conditions and wages in the immediate post-war period took place in an industrial and political context which favoured the unions. The proportion of union members amongst workers in the road transport industry rose from 72.3% in 1938 to 92.6% a decade later. Over two million workers were given a 44-hour week in 1946. In March 1947

municipal bus workers were awarded increased Sunday payments and more paid leave. Provincial bus companies refused to match this offer. The standoff which followed prompted the NCOI to set up a tribunal. This time the result was disappointing to the unions: the inquiry accepted that provincial bus workers should have a 44-hour week but refused to grant them a similar national agreement to that of the municipal bus workers. Many provincial bus workers were outraged and walked out in June and July 1947 in defiance of Clay's pleas. Although only around 10% of provincial bus workers went on strike, bus services almost ground to a standstill in some areas, such as the Potteries. During the hearings for the Forster inquiry of 1946 Clay had claimed that closer integration of provincial and municipal service would heighten the resentment of provincial company bus workers if their pay and conditions continued to lag behind their municipal counterparts. He gave specific examples and the pattern of industrial action in 1947 supported his case. Western National and the Ribble Motor Services were mentioned by Clay: all the workers at both companies walked out in June 1947. In Bristol, another of Clay's examples, bus transport was brought to a halt.

Clay used the threat of more strike action to increase the pressure on the provincial bus companies. He warned the employers in July 1947 that unless significant concessions were made 'it would be impossible for the trade union officials to hold their members'. Reports from Birmingham and the Potteries suggested that this was no idle threat. Clay was in an enviable position in that he could also claim, quite legitimately, that he and his colleagues had prevented the strikes from spreading. This strengthened the unions' hand at the subsequent Court of Inquiry, headed by William Gorman. The Gorman Inquiry reported in August 1947: its findings, that provincial bus workers should be awarded national conditions virtually identical to those of municipal bus workers, were a triumph for the unions. Clay welcomed them as a 'substantial step forward'. Warm tributes were paid to Clay for his leadership of the provincial bus workers by officials of other unions such as Wal Hannington of the engineers and Jim Campbell of the NUR. There were limits to Clay's achievement however. Despite his efforts, neither the Forster Inquiry of 1946 nor the Gorman Inquiry tackled the disparity between the lower wages of many women in the provincial bus industry and their male counterparts. The unions had yet to achieve a fundamental objective—a single negotiating body for both provincial and municipal bus workers.

Clay's long career at the TGWU ended in 1948 when he was appointed as a board member of the Road Transport Executive (later renamed the Road Haulage Executive), which was part of the newly established British Transport Commission (BTC) set up by the Attlee Government to oversee and co-ordinate transport on the railways, roads and waterways. Clay was responsible for establishment, staff, and welfare. In practice this involved his establishing training and development courses. He also created a negotiating structure between employers and the unions. Assisted by G.W. Quick Smith, the legal adviser to the Road Haulage Executive (RHE), Clay led negotiations with the Ministry of Labour to create a mechanism for arbitration in the form of a joint council, comprising representatives of the RHE, the Road Haulage Association and trade unions. In July 1949 the RHE concluded negotiations with the unions to form a National Staff Council and three national joint committees. A pamphlet by Clay on industrial democracy published in 1949 suggested that he had lost none of his passion for this issue. There was a need to extend consultative machinery throughout industry. Joint consultative committees must be genuinely representative. Nationalisation was an opportunity to extend industrial democracy, and state-owned industries must be accountable to consumers. A year later, Clay used an article in the *Journal of the Institute of Transport* to explain his approach to industrial relations and consultation in the road haulage industry: he stressed the importance of de-centralisation and training. Clay's system worked well. Wages were standardised and wage rises in the nationalised firms under the RHE were broadly in line with non-RHE firms. There was one strike in 1951 but otherwise industrial relations within the RHE were good.

Archie Henderson, Clay's old union colleague and rival who had left the TGWU in 1931, joined him on the board of the Road Transport Executive as Head of Organisation, Development and Research. Henderson's career had run in such close parallel to Clay's that it was rumoured that they had once been driver and conductor of the same Leeds tram. There were occasional disagreements between the two men although, as a colleague G.R. Hayes recalled, 'they seemed to pull well enough together'. Hayes described Clay as a small, 'father figure' of a man: although usually gentle, Clay was never afraid of putting 'on the gloves if need be… to stand out against his old colleague, Archie Henderson' [Bonavia (1987) 54]. Clay was well paid for his work with the RHE, with a salary of £3500 in 1949. In October 1950, he gave the presidential address at the WEA annual conference in Whitley Bay. Clay believed that WEA education should not be a passive accumulation of knowledge but rather the 'process of learning in order to translate what is learned into constructive social action'. He also used his speech to echo the views of his predecessor as President, R.H. Tawney. Both men believed that the WEA should stretch its students with intellectually demanding courses.

By the end of 1951, British Road Services (the trading name of the Road Haulage Executive) comprised 3766 former haulage firms, 41,265 motor buses, and 80,212 staff. However, the Conservative victory in the General Election in October 1951 proved to be its downfall. One of the aims of the Transport Act of 1953 was to return much of the road haulage industry to the private sector. In practice this was to prove difficult. The Road Haulage Executive and the other BTC Executives were abolished in October 1953 and replaced with Boards of Management. Both Henderson and Clay became part-time members of the new road haulage board. Clay was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws by the University of Manchester in the same year as recognition of his work in education. His presidential speech at the WEA conference of 1955 was critical of the level of educational spending, which Clay claimed ensured 'thousands of children should endure their teaching in school buildings condemned a quarter of a century ago'. Three years later, he retired as WEA President and was succeeded by Asa Briggs. Clay's valedictory speech included passages warning against cuts in educational grants. He also pleaded with the government to show compassion by anticipating the effects of industrial change on working-class families.

Shortly afterwards, in June 1958, Clay retired from the road haulage board. He remained active, however. At a seminar in May 1960, for instance, he outlined his theory that transport systems would become chaotic if private interests were allowed to win out over the public good. A few months later, he presided over a House of Commons dinner to celebrate R.H. Tawney's eightieth birthday. Harold Clay collapsed and died on 19 September 1961 whilst playing golf in North Middlesex with some fellow retired TGWU officials. His funeral at Golders Green was attended by representatives from his old union, the wider labour movement, employers' organisations, and the workers' educational movement. He left effects valued at £7506 19s 10d.

Clay was remembered as genial, witty and unpretentious. He could occasionally be long-winded—an employer's representative once regretted that Clay's many virtues did not include 'a capacity for brevity' [Notes of proceedings of a meeting of the employers' side of the Council, 8 February 1946, BET archive, reference 21185, p. 72]—but he was an immensely gifted negotiator whose vast knowledge of the road transport industry was respected by employers and union colleagues alike. R.H. Tawney, amongst others, paid tribute to Clay's contribution to workers' education. As well as golf, Clay loved roses and cricket. A leg-spinner, he played club cricket at a good level until past the age of fifty and he would sometimes use cricketing analogies in speech. He was survived by his wife Annie.

**Writings:** *Workers' Control* (1933); *Trade Unionism: Some Problems and Proposals* (1933); *Industrial Democracy: Its Development and Significance to the Individual* (Oxford, 1949); 'Industrial Relations in Road Transport', *The Journal of the Institute of Transport*, vol. 23, no. 11 (July 1950), 339–342, 350.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Transport and General Workers' Union archive (reference MSS. 126) at the Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick; Workers' Educational Association archive, Amalgamated Association of Tramway and Vehicle Workers annual reports, Leeds Trade Council annual reports at London Metropolitan University; Trades Union Congress Library Collections; BET Archives, National Tramway Museum. (**2**) **Other**: R.H. Tawney, 'Harold Clay – an appreciation', *Highway*, vol. XXXII, (January 1945); M. Stocks, *The Workers' Educational Association: The First Fifty Years* (1953); A. Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin*, *Volume 1*, *Trade Union Leader*, *1881–1940* (1960); R. Barker, *Education and Politics*, *1900–1951; A Study of the Labour Party* (Oxford, 1972); P. Addison, *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War* (1975); R. Fieldhouse, *The Workers' Educational Association: Aims and Achievements*, *1903–1977* (Syracuse, NY, 1977); B. Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977); K. Fuller, *Radical Aristocrats: London Busworkers from the 1880s to the 1980s* (1985); M.R. Bonavia, *The Nationalisation of British Transport: The Early Years of the British Transport Commission*, *1948–53* (1987); K. Coates and A. Topham, *The History of the Transport and General Workers' Union. Volume 1*, *The Making of the Transport and General Workers' Union: The Emergence of the Labour Movement* (Oxford, 1991); H.A. Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889*, volume 3, 1934–1951 (Oxford, 1994); A. Ingram and G. Mustoe, *BRS: The Early Years*, *1948–1953: An Account of the Origins and Growth of Britain's Nationalised Road Transport*, *Fifty Years On* (Wellington, 1999).

**Author's Note:** The rumour about Archie Henderson (1886–1962) and Harold Clay as conductor and driver on the same Leeds tram seems unlikely to be true as Henderson, who was educated in Scotland, worked in London from 1901. A much more plausible candidate for Clay's co-worker was John Cliff (1883–1977), who began working on the trams in Leeds in 1900. The similarities between the subsequent careers of Clay and Cliff are even more striking than the parallels between Clay and Henderson. Like Clay, Cliff held the post of National Secretary of the TGWU Passenger Services' Group before becoming Assistant General Secretary. Both men left the TGWU to continue their careers in transport in the public sector. Cliff's responsibilities as a full-time member of the London Passenger Transport Board from 1935, which included oversight for staff and welfare, were broadly similar to Clay's a decade later at the Road Haulage Executive.

RICHARD TEMPLE

*See also*: †Arthur DEAKIN; †Harry GOSLING; †Benjamin (Ben) TILLETT

**CRAMP, Concemore Thomas Thwaites ('Charlie')** (1876–1933)
RAILWAY TRADE UNION OFFICIAL

Concemore Thomas Thwaites Cramp, always known as 'Charlie', was born in Staplehurst Kent on 19 March 1876. His mother, Cedelia Jane Cramp, was born in Staplehurst but previously had been a domestic servant in St Pancras; his birth certificate provides no name for his father. Initially Cramp lived with his mother and grandmother, a head tailoress; he was entered as 'grandson' on the 1881 census. In October 1882 Cedelia Cramp married John Chaining, a blacksmith. Subsequently, Cramp was a member of their growing family. He left Staplehurst Board School aged 12 to work as a gardener for the local squire; subsequently he worked near London and in Portsmouth before moving north to Yorkshire aged 20. He joined the Midland Railway on 17 November 1896, initially as a platform porter at Shipley for a wage of 16 shillings (£0.80) a week; subsequently he was a porter at Rotherham and Sheffield where by December

1899 his wage had advanced to 19 shillings (£0.95). In December 1903 he was promoted to a passenger guard third class. Smartly turned out he personified the respectability of the uniformed working class. On 28 October 1900 he married Elizabeth Frances, the daughter of a Staplehurst farmer, James Baker in Sheffield. They had two children and lived in Heeley, a respectable working-class district.

His interest in socialism began before his move to the West Riding; a *Clarion* cyclist had given him a copy of Edward Bellamy's regimented but influential vision of socialism, *Looking Backward* [Bagwell (1963) 535]. In contrast, his early years in the city brought him into the circle of the inspirational ethical socialist Edward Carpenter. Many years later Cramp recalled their first meeting: 'He was speaking in a small and dingy room in Sheffield to a little body of men and women one Sunday evening.' Carpenter's topic was 'The Simplification of Life.' He articulated the vision of a more liberated future world and sensitised his audience to the losses resulting from industrialisation. Cramp remembered Carpenter as 'a great scholar and gentleman'—and a democrat. At Holmsfield just across the Derbyshire border away from the grime of the city, Carpenter's hospitality epitomised these values. 'The Sheffield cutler, engineer, miner or railwayman met poet, musician, or dramatist beneath his roof and all were made to feel one of a great family'. Cramp saw Carpenter as the prophet of a qualitatively better society: 'in the middle of our modern and specialised civilisation, an all-round man both physically and mentally'. With Carpenter's encouragement Cramp began to read widely, including Thoreau's *Walden*, and the works of Thomas Carlyle [Beith (1931) 20–23; Rowbotham (2008)].

A letter from Cramp to Carpenter discusses a pamphlet written by the latter. The work was probably one published by the Fabian Society in 1907, *The Village and the Landlord*, or possibly an earlier version from 1888–89, *Our Parish and Our Duke.* The earlier version refers specifically to Holmsfield and to the Duke of Rutland; the latter uses this local material to make a case for land reform. Cramp welcomed its presentation of the enclosures and the elucidation of 'the system by which people were robbed'. The focus less than two years before Lloyd George's People's Budget demonstrated the extent to which ethical socialists were shaped by a broader radicalism [Cramp to Carpenter, 9 January 1908, Carpenter Papers MSS 386. 144].

Few from Sheffield's working-class were drawn to Carpenter's vision; Cramp's enthusiasm was a minority sentiment in a city where Liberalism and Conservatism dominated working-class politics. But for Cramp, ethical socialism cohabited with trade unionism. He was a member of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) in an industry where trade union activism was viewed with hostility by most companies. The Midland Railway, like its rivals, faced the challenge of modernisation; procedures and practices that had developed over many years had to be reviewed and, if necessary, replaced. The company enjoyed few monopoly traffics; its need to remain competitive gave this challenge a heightened urgency. From 1906 the Midland hierarchy was dominated by a new General Manager, Guy Granet and the General Superintendent, Cecil Paget, son of the company chairman. Their policies brought economies and, gradually from 1909, the implementation of a system of centralised, top–down control of traffic. This innovation was Paget's brainchild and made a significant contribution to a more efficiently run system. Shareholders approved, but the costs in terms of low wages, onerous conditions and sometimes rigid and unimaginative discipline were borne by the company's employees. In particular Paget combined innovative policies and visceral antipathy towards trade unionism. He verbally abused and threatened trade union activists. His authoritarianism was replicated, albeit discreetly, by others within his managerial team [Howell (1999) 68–75]. Within this challenging arena Cramp began to establish himself as an effective champion for his colleagues. One colleague recalled, 'I was with him on his first deputation to interview the district superintendent. It was then that I first began to find that he was the man we needed to lead us' [*Railway Review*, 21 July 1933].

The ASRS was beginning to establish itself as a credible response to company policies. In 1907, the union's 'All Grades' campaign for improved wages and shorter hours was increasing and mobilising the membership. Behind the issues of wages and conditions loomed a deadlock over recognition. The companies, with the exception of the North Eastern, insisted that recognition of the unions would be corrosive of a necessary hierarchy and inimical to discipline. The Midland management were thoroughly committed to this position. By 1907, the 'All Grades' campaign and company opposition to both its demands and to recognition had precipitated a crisis. A national railway strike seemed possible. Cramp participated in a meeting in the Sheffield Corn Exchange along with George Barnes of the Engineers, two recent by-election victors, Pete Curran and Victor Grayson, and Edward Carpenter. Barnes and Cramp were characterised by Carpenter as 'fine solid and sensible' men. Indeed Carpenter was impressed by the railwaymen as a body: 'Perhaps from their close and constant contact with the flow of humanity' they 'have a discernment and reasonableness of outlook which is quite peculiar' [Carpenter (1916) 260]. Cramp's work as a guard gave him space for reflection. He enjoyed the critical response of the Conservative-supporting *Sheffield Telegraph* to one of Carpenter's lectures: 'I was on the road to Barnsley when I read it and I laughed all the way when I thought of how you had made them squirm… Hoping that you may give many such lectures in the near future which together with the power of your pen cause confusion in the ranks of our enemies' [Cramp to Carpenter, 9 January 1908, Carpenter Papers MSS 386. 144].

The Liberal Government responded to managerial intransigence and railwaymen's growing assertiveness with negotiations masterminded by the President of the Board of Trade, David Lloyd George. He negotiated separately with the companies and the unions. A compromise was brokered: each company would have a system of sectional conciliation boards along with a central board to which unresolved issues would be passed; if agreement remained elusive, differences would be settled by an arbitrator. The company's employees would elect representatives to the boards. Many would in all probability be union members, but company representatives would discuss with them, not as trade unionists, but as representatives of the workforce. The principle of non-recognition would be safeguarded.

The Midland made limited attempts to promote the cause of non-unionists in the consequential elections. They failed. ASRS members took 55 of the 60 available places; the General Railway Workers' Union took four more. Cramp's activism in Sheffield brought him into the conciliation system as one of the ASRS contingent. The consequential proceedings were protracted. Many trade unionists felt that the Midland, like many other companies was dragging its feet. Employees on the boards could feel discouraged when faced with the implacable opposition of the company representatives. Eventually in March 1909 the many areas of disagreement went to arbitration under Lord Cromer [Howell (1999) 86–98].

One of Granet's management team, William Clower, led for the Midland. He asserted that the 'agitation' had consumed much valuable managerial time that would have been better spent on other issues: 'We really do not desire a repetition of this'. The ASRS was permitted the presence of a full-time official at arbitration hearings, in this case Richard Bell the General Secretary, but most of the hearings involved employees from the sectional boards presenting their cases. Cramp gave evidence of his experiences as a passenger guard. He presented an outline of his duties on local services from Sheffield. His working day could be up to twelve hours; his average time was about an hour less. He had been at the top of the pay scale for his grade for two years. His weekly wage was 26 shillings (£1.30). He claimed that this static income had to cope with rising costs for food, coal, and rent.

Clower's cross-examination of successive witnesses relied on claims of managerial wisdom and knowledge, a world of expertise from which employees were inevitably excluded. The strategy could be facilitated by the limited self-confidence of many of those he interrogated in such a formal setting. When Cramp claimed that his duties could be performed within a ten hour day, Clower played his well-worn card.

Clower: 'I suppose you have some measure of confidence in the Company's officers, have you not?'
Cramp: 'Yes.'
Clower: 'Do you not think that if it were possible to arrange the turns so as to save men, they would do it?'
Cramp: 'I do not think they would.'

Cromer, earning a thousand-guinea fee, for eighteen days of hearings plus the writing of his report, proved receptive to most of the company's case. The award gave the Midland men little; the decisions would operate until the end of 1913. Cramp and his colleagues were predictably critical of this outcome, the more so as the Midland management seemingly sought evasion of some increases by re-grading potential beneficiaries [Verbatim Report of Cromer Arbitration in NUR collection, MSS 127/NU/MV1/1/126; the union's response is in ASRS Executive minutes, June 1909, pp. 55–62].

As tensions on the railways over stagnant wages, managerial bullying and non-recognition rose, culminating in the 1911 strike, Cramp began to build a national profile within his trade union. He first attended the ASRS annual meeting as a delegate in 1909 and rapidly established a reputation within the wider union. He emphasised that the tendency for companies to establish working agreements for the avoidance of duplication and perhaps to amalgamate would mean redundancies. The only solution was nationalisation, which would mean the redundancy of directors. He supported Lloyd George's People's Budget; his sentiments echoed the pamphleteering of Edward Carpenter but also demonstrated the affinity between ethical socialism and strands within Progressive Liberalism.

> It was a good beginning as disturbing the people who lay lazily like slugs on a lettuce leaf. No doubt when the Budget was once passed its principles would be strengthened by someone else in the future. He was in favour of the land taxes and showed by quoting the case of the Duke of Norfolk in the Derwent valley to show their reasonable character. He also welcomed the tax on the minerals, pointing to cases in which the colliery had not paid a penny to its shareholders, it had paid £100,000 to the owners of royalties [*Railway Review*, 8 October 1909].

In tandem with this commendation of a Liberal policy he moved a resolution affirming that socialism was the only solution to industrial problems and that workers' emancipation necessitated 'a more effective economic and political unity'.

Within the factionalism of the ASRS political differences focussed on the General Secretary and Derby MP, Richard Bell. Although he was sponsored by the union, he was not a member of the Labour Party and on occasions backed the Liberal Government in opposition to both Labour MPs and ASRS policy. The 1909 AGM saw a lengthy debate on Bell's parliamentary behaviour in which Cramp sided with Bell's critics. He dismissed the General Secretary's claim that his critics were a clique of socialist malcontents; rather in Cramp's view they expressed the feeling of thousands of union members. Certainly Cramp articulated the view of the coming generation amongst ASRS activists; two years later he was elected to the union's Executive. His election was perhaps to some degree symptomatic of complex changes in the union's industrial politics. Richard Bell, a competent autocrat, had resigned as general secretary at the end of 1909 to be replaced by Jimmy Williams, a man from the same generation, similarly Lib-Lab in his politics and conciliatory in his trade union strategy. Yet Williams's retiring personality and uncertain health meant that increasingly the initiative was taken by his replacement as Assistant General Secretary, Jimmy Thomas, flamboyant where Williams was discreet and guileful where he was transparent. Thomas was committed to independent Labour politics but any references to socialism were at best formal, and withered over time. The contrast in 1911 between Thomas and Cramp was striking. The latter was an ethical socialist, and contrary to Phillip Bagwell's characterisation, neither a Marxist, nor as Hugh Clegg suggested a syndicalist [Bagwell (1963)

326; Clegg (1985) 277]; he expressed the resentment of the railwaymen whom he knew at Sheffield against poor pay and conditions and managerial authoritarianism and partiality. Yet he remained committed to working within the institutions and procedures of the union; his politics contrasted with those of another Midland activist, Charles Watkin, the Clay Cross syndicalist.

Cramp, as a newly elected member of the executive was involved in the discussions which preceded the August 1911 stoppage. On 17 August all the railway unions' executive members met the Prime Minister Asquith who concluded his offer of a Royal Commission by lecturing his audience on the negative consequences of a refusal. Despite his disclaiming 'the language of menace' his tone produced a hostile response from some trade unionists. G.R. Askwith, the government's arbitrator in industrial disputes, recalled the consequences of prime ministerial insensitivity: 'As the speech went on I saw the jaws of the northerners stiffen. They took his words as a threat and his tone as "take it or leave it"… At three o' clock they came back and told him curtly that they were not prepared to accept his proposal. Matters were not improved when he muttered, "Then your blood be on your own head," as he left the room, the members at once going off to call out the railwaymen all over the country' [Askwith (1920) 162–164]. Here was the impact of a younger generation of activists including Cramp, empathetic to the mood of activists especially in industrial districts. The stoppage was driven from the bottom, dependent on initiatives taken by men in goods yards, signal boxes and locomotive depots, all the pressure points within the intricate networks. In this brief stoppage the old hierarchies were often overturned, not least in Cramp's Sheffield [Howell (1999) 122–129].

The stoppage ended messily; as in 1907 Lloyd George was an intermediary, the consequential Royal Commission gave the railway unions little. Cramp dismissed its report as 'a bitter farce' [*Railway Review*, 10 November 1911]. A subsequent ballot ended in a decisive majority for another strike, but the turnout could be characterised as insufficient. The result was never disclosed publicly; the ASRS executive including Cramp judged that the moment for action had passed. Yet he and his colleagues had acquired one valuable asset. The company managements knew that their traditional authority had been successfully challenged in many places. Memories of August 1911 would inevitably colour future negotiations [for ballot result see NUR collection MSS 127/AS//3/1/2A].

The aftermath of the strike brought widespread accusations of victimisation especially on the Midland. Cramp's base in Sheffield was a prime target. The Midland stationmaster, Lewis Shannon, discouraged union membership and attempted to purge or downgrade activists. Predictably the policy was backed by Cecil Paget with his declared objective of 'clearing the whole gang at Sheffield out'. A local branch official felt that the retributive policy had been all too successful. At the time of the strike, 'practically every man upon the Midland passenger station was a member of the ASRS'. Eighteen months later this solidarity had given way to 'an unorganised mob of whom hardly a man was in the ASRS and what few were in dare not let it be known… the trade unionist had to clear out of the best positions in favour of the company's members' [*Sheffield Independent*, 3 and 14 February 1913].

Cramp featured in the union's Midland victimisation cases forwarded to the Board of Trade, albeit in singular circumstances.

> Cramp had been absenting himself from the station premises, when on this particular turn of duty, with such regularity as to cause suspicion, and his movements were watched. He was noticed to be in the company of a female in the public road just outside the station premises for about 20 minutes and he was observed during that time to be acting in an indecorous manner. In view of the scandal caused by such impropriety on the part of a servant of the Company in uniform, it is considered desirable in the interests of the man himself and of discipline generally, that he should be removed to some other station. It is not intended to reduce his wages.

A cover note to the Board of Trade from Cramp's old adversary, William Clower, noted that Cramp had been suspended but not as yet dismissed. The case went no further. The Midland hierarchy could reflect that their Sheffield representatives had acted with the required thoroughness. A comment added to the documentation recorded that Cramp had been observed 'for a period of 22 minutes' [Midland Railway Victimisation Cases and the Board of Trade MT6/2198/4].

A more serious issue arose on the Midland in February 1913 over the dismissal of a Normanton Goods Guard, Richardson, because of his refusal to accept an instruction from the controller to overload his train. Cramp placed the issue in the context of widespread victimisation by the company: 'They had now reached the time when they must put their foot down. Everyone who was working for the Midland Railway knew there was victimisation going on'. He expressed optimism that because of the union's growing strength; there would be no resort to the ineffective procedures of the past: 'When this matter has to be faced, there will be no more commissions appointed if they are anything like the others… I do not think we shall agree to that. We are now stronger than ever we were'. In this case the union strategy proved successful; the ASRS leadership utilised the obvious discontent of a significant section of its members to pressurise a company whose priority of defending the authority of the control system at all costs, arguably even at the expense of safety was vulnerable to criticism [*NUR Reports* 1913; *Railway Gazette*, February, March 1913; *Sheffield Daily Independent*, 22 February–8 March 1913; Howell (1999) 132–135].

Cramp's emphasis on enhanced union strength resonated strongly in early 1913. One consequence of the 1911 strike had been a renewed interest in the fusion of existing railway unions. Eventually on 14 February 1913, the ASRS, GRWU and the United Pointsmen and Signalmen's Society agreed to form one union. The National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) became the new would-be industrial union six weeks later from 29 March. Cramp had played a positive and effective role in the negotiations. Once the NUR had been formed, he argued that the customary three-year term of executive membership should be waived in his case since the NUR was a new union. His case was accepted, allowing him to stay on the executive until the 1917 AGM whereupon he was elected President for a further two years by 56 votes to 2. Although not a full-time official he was becoming one of the most visible members of the union; his retention of an executive position followed by the presidency might indicate a burgeoning ambition. His success suggested that many members viewed him positively.

His rise within the union was concurrent with decisive changes in the economic position of the railway companies and the relationship between companies and unions. The outbreak of war in August 1914 immediately brought state control of the railways; a committee composed of managers from the major companies organised the industry's collective contribution to the war effort. State control brought union recognition. Most officials and members of the NUR were firm supporters of the war. Collaboration in the war effort had to be married with the protection of members' economic interests. This combination was personified in the leadership of Jimmy Thomas. Already the union's dominant figure, this eminence was confirmed in 1916. Jimmy Williams retired as General Secretary on health grounds; Thomas was elected as his successor with an overwhelming majority. Cramp, stylistically a contrast with the ebullient Thomas and as yet still a Midland employee, played an increasingly influential part in the union's wartime strategy.

The NUR leadership was under persistent pressure from members to negotiate wage increases that would provide some compensation for war-generated inflation. Managers bargained enjoying the reassurance that the government would give significant funding in support of any increases. The consequential war bonuses, arrived at through face-to-face bargaining, were paid on a national and not a company-by-company basis. The cumulative consequence of this process was a narrowing of differentials, exacerbating tensions between the NUR and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen.

Union officials found themselves increasingly at home within a bargaining system that gave members some economic protection. Yet the limited wage advances and the lengthy bargaining process inevitably bred discontent within sections of the membership. Such grievances were exacerbated by difficult working conditions resulting from heavy wartime traffic and deteriorating standards of maintenance. An oppositional network began to develop amongst some delegates to the union's Annual General Meeting and was replicated in some localities. Sometimes discontent was expressed through unofficial local strikes. Cramp's earlier radical sentiments as a Sheffield activist could sometimes find echoes in his wartime rhetoric, but he stood firmly as a member of the union leadership opposing unofficial stoppages.

His first Presidential address in June 1918 commended 'that spirit of independence and self-respect without which democracy can never rise to its full stature, no matter what marked concessions may be won on its behalf'. Fears that the war and its emotions might damage trade unionism had proved groundless, not least because of shameless profiteering by 'those who might justly be described as the Huns of this country… They have brought home to the mind of the worker the conviction often lacking before that he has not only to fight the capitalist class in the field of production, but in that of distribution also, and with a sure instinct he has turned once more to Trade Unions'. Political action was also essential, but as yet much remained 'to be done to educate those who are still lukewarm in its support'. He had anticipated this theme at a pre-AGM rally: 'A new spirit must prevail amongst the working classes for unless they took an active interest in their own affairs, it was impossible for their representatives to put forward their case with half the force they ought to be able to'. He insisted on the need to elevate working-class educational standards all round—'not the singling out of clever children for special advancement'. With the war entering its final phase Cramp welcomed the prospect of a transformed role for trade unions: 'Today organisation has taken the place of isolated action… The time was fast approaching when they would see instead of Parliament political, Parliament industrial and it would then be a purer reflex of the real state of things in the country than any other form of representation' [*Railway Review*, 21 June 1918].

Lloyd George's rapid calling of a general election for December 1918, following the Armistice, produced Cramp's only parliamentary candidacy. The vastly expanded franchise, new parliamentary boundaries, the desire of Coalition ministers to continue their alliance and the ambivalent position of many Liberals towards the Coalition all made for uncertainty. Cramp stood in Middlesbrough West, a new constituency. His only opponent, W.T. Thomson, was a Liberal. His ambiguity about his future relationship with the Lloyd George Coalition indicated both uncertainty about the prospects for a divided Liberalism and electoral prudence.

Cramp's strategy was to emphasise Labour as a class party: 'It was the duty of the workers to vote for men of their own class, who know their needs and would do their best to see that the promises which had been made would be fulfilled. The issue of the present election is that of Labour on one side and Capitalism on the other' [*Northern Echo*, 4 December 1918]. Wartime gains such as those secured by the NUR had to be defended. For the future he hoped for a six-hour working day, the nationalisation of all forms of transport, and the equal representation of labour on the industry's governing bodies. He added a proposal from the agenda of pre-war radicalism—the House of Lords should be ended [*Northern Echo*, 9 December 1918].

The turnout was low even by the standard of December 1918; the Liberal victory was decisive.

Middlesbrough West, 1918: electorate 32,286, turnout 50.5%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| W.T. Thomson (Liberal) | 10,958 | (67.2%) |
| C.R. Cramp (Labour) | 5350 | (32.8%) |
| Majority | 5608 | (34.4%) |

The Liberals, successful in the two Middlesbrough seats, claimed to stand for both Liberalism and Labour. They denied that they were pledged to support the Lloyd George Coalition, but reaffirmed that they would support the Prime Minister at least until a satisfactory peace settlement had been secured. Such uncertainties typified the Liberal predicament in 1918, but Liberalism in Middlesbrough West proved resilient. Socially more mixed than the neighbouring East constituency, it would be held by the Liberals in every inter-war election, an almost unique sequence for an English urban seat. Only in 1945 would it be won by Labour.

The overwhelming electoral victory for the Lloyd George Coalition and the Labour Party's disappointing parliamentary representation contrasted with the optimism of many trade unionists during 1919. Expectations were high. Wartime advances could be a springboard for more successes. The Triple Alliance of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB), the NUR and the National Federation of Transport Workers suggested, however ambiguously, an expectation of solidarity. In his presidential address to the union's 1919 AGM in June, Cramp analysed the complex situation facing the labour movement:

> There were those who fondly believed that once hostilities ceased society would automatically revert to the old order of things and that the classes would fall into the relative positions they occupied before the war, and that the workers would tamely acquiesce in the old system of exploitation. Certainly the results of the General Election were such as to encourage that view, but the temper of the organised workers as displayed during the past few months has gone a long way to upset that calculation.

Lloyd George, 'a past master in the art of political strategy' had played upon prejudices backed by the 'lies and abuse' of the 'capitalist press'. Cramp rejected the assertion that Labour must work patiently for the construction of a parliamentary majority. He insisted that in current circumstances the political system was inevitably loaded against Labour:

> Under the existing system of education the subjects dealing with citizenship are taught in the elementary schools from the point of view of the ruling class, and thus the well springs of political intelligence are poisoned at the source. A campaign of calumny launched at any General Election is always likely to achieve its end, and the logical outcome must be that for a generation at least the workers must remain in bondage because drastic action in any industry which serves the national interests would be bound to have political repercussions. Therefore it is impossible for the workers to accept this.

He insisted that the labour movement should not abandon the political field, but claimed that 'the centre of gravity is passing from the House of Commons to the headquarters of the great Trade Unions'. The shift meant new responsibilities.

> In the past it was an axiom that Trade Unions merely formulated and submitted their demands and it was for others to say how these demands should be met. We have now progressed beyond that point and… our ultimate aim is the control of industry. If it be proved that any demands of ours impose too great a burden on the community we must be prepared to point the way to such developments as will serve the communal welfare, as well as our own, for no section of workers ought to be able to ignore the interests of Labour as a whole.

Cramp acknowledged that this agenda required not just determination and courage but also 'brains, character, judgment and ability'. He was optimistic. 'It does not need a college education to ensure these qualities' [*Railway Review*, 20 June 1919].

Such was the optimistic mood in some circles at least in the summer of 1919; Cramp addressing a Triple Alliance conference in July, insisted that beyond Westminster there had been a radical change.

> I believe today that the capitalists, for the first time, are getting seriously alarmed. We have had our Socialist propaganda for years. We have expected the revolution to come next week or next year, or as soon as maybe, but the capitalists have never looked on us seriously. He has always known that behind the whirlwind of words there has not been any very great amount of steam. But today the capitalist is getting alarmed. All over the country he finds a new spirit in evidence [*Railway Review*, 23 July 1919].

Yet two months later when the NUR engaged in a brief, solid, and effective strike, the issue was specific to the railways and the union made no request for support from beyond the industry. The dispute had arisen from the wartime introduction of national bargaining. War bonuses had been nationally negotiated supplements to wage rates settled pre-war on a company-by-company basis. In 1919, the NUR demanded the standardisation of wages across companies upwards to the highest payment for each grade. Rhetoric on both sides could be dramatic; the stoppage was a threat to constitutional government; the railwaymen's battle would be an exemplar for the wider working-class in the struggle to protect and expand on wartime advances. In reality the settlement helped to secure the economic security of NUR members. Perhaps for good reason, Lloyd George could see the outcome as a critical step in the pacification of industrial relations. In any subsequent crisis probably involving the miners, the railwaymen would hopefully be unwilling to initiate sympathetic action which might put at risk their own position. The settlement was a testimony to Thomas's bargaining skills and his positive relationship with Lloyd George.

Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary to the Cabinet, apparently endorsed the more hyperbolic rhetoric on the government side: 'The Railwaymen's Union pointed a pistol at the Government and after two days' most hectic discussions suddenly broke off negotiations and declared a strike'. Hankey suggested a mistaken contrast: 'J.H. Thomas tried his utmost to effect a settlement but since his trip to America he has been losing ground to his deputy Cramp a sinister looking fellow reported to be a Bolshevist' [Hankey diary, 28 September 1919 in Roskill (1972) 121]. During the dispute Cramp responded to Government hyperbole by clarifying his views on trade unions and industrial democracy in *The Observer*: 'It is becoming clear that the complex economic life of the country is concerned with problems with which Parliament is unable to deal effectively. As I visualise the community of the future, an ever-growing place will be found for what I might call organs of economic Government'. Such institutions could be effectively democratic only with the active participation of the unions [*Railway Review*, 10 October 1919]. The political characterisation of Cramp was indicative of the paranoia that affected some within Whitehall in 1919. It was reflected in press attempts to separate an allegedly radical Cramp from a pragmatic Thomas. But Cramp was a firm supporter of Thomas's strategy on wages. The mistaken labelling of him as Thomas's 'deputy' suggests how far he has established himself as one of the union's key figures. By the end of 1919, his position would be confirmed formally.

The NUR's membership had expanded massively since 1914, from just over 273,000 to a peak of 481,000 five years later. After the 1918 election Thomas was the only NUR-sponsored MP. Together his political commitments and the union's industrial agenda were an unmanageable burden. A joint committee of the union's Executive and AGM considered the situation and proposed that the General Secretary's responsibilities be apportioned into two separate posts—parliamentary and industrial. The latter's responsibilities would be apparently clear-cut. He 'will devote the whole of his time to the industrial side of the movement and not be eligible for the House of Commons. He will be in charge of the industrial side of the union's work'. In contrast, the Parliamentary remit would be to promote legislation on behalf of the union and to

look after local organisation in seats where the NUR sponsored candidates. The distinction seemed clear, but these Parliamentary responsibilities could be supplemented. The Executive or the AGM could call on this incumbent 'to undertake other work of importance on behalf of the members'.

A Special General Meeting formally created the two posts and gave an obvious answer to an inevitable question: 'The recognised head of the union shall be decided upon by the EC and AGM as circumstances warrant upon the qualifications of the two respective sections, and not by the particular office they occupy. We further decide that Mr. J.H. Thomas is the man who should now be appointed supreme head'. In September 1919 the Executive invited nominations for the post of Industrial General Secretary; 465 branches nominated Cramp; only 24 favoured W.G. Loraine, who accordingly withdrew. Cramp took up his appointment in December 1919. The decision to divide the General Secretary's post had come with an insistence that salaries 'should be of a substantial character and more commensurate with the work and standing of the union'. Cramp and his family moved south to suburban Harrow, an easy commute from the NUR headquarters in Euston Road [*NUR Reports*, 1919; the 1921 AGM discussed the consequential division of responsibilities, *Railway Review*, 22 July 1921; the union's Executive Committee minutes for September 1931 include a discussion of the 1919 decision to divide the General Secretaryship, *NUR Reports* 1931].

A more political interpretation of these events could present the change as an attack on Thomas's accumulation of power by a NUR Executive that was to the left of him. The insistence on Thomas's overall control on this interpretation could be seen as an intervention by AGM delegates, many of whom were more sympathetic to Thomas. Whatever the expectations the reform did not radicalise NUR policies. Stylistically contrasting and strategically in harmony, Cramp and Thomas formed an effective combination that dominated the NUR for more than a decade. The formal demarcation between the posts was not maintained. Thomas would remain heavily involved in industrial negotiations especially at critical moments; Cramp would maintain a significant presence in the Labour Party.

The 1921 AGM was offered Cramp's assessment of their relationship:

> Mr Thomas and he varied sometimes in an unofficial way, one with the other. They rather talked as chums, and though they occasionally used strong language to each other, they were always most polite to their enemies. They usually called themselves by their Christian names and there was very little officialdom between them.

Cramp suggested that he was the more resilient in facing critics. 'In these matters he… was pretty thick skinned… He could hit back and give anyone as good as they sent. He did not get excited and was temperamentally fitted to stand buffeting' [*Railway Review*, 22 July 1921]. As he told a pre-AGM rally in 1924: 'those who were afraid to take the unpopular position when it was necessary to tell men the truth were the curse of democratic movements' [*Railway Review*, 11 July 1924]. These self-portraits were complemented retrospectively by a colleague. Cramp 'was not given to slogans or what is commonly known as sob-stuff, neither had he any liking for creating or being concerned with dramatic situations. He was definitely not fond of the limelight' [*Railway Review*, 21 July 1933].

The duumvirate's dominance within the union owed much to the transformation of industrial relations. Cramp could look back to his early days on the Midland, characterised by low wages, long hours, authoritarianism, the intimidation of union activists, and non-recognition. In contrast, in 1921 the government terminated state control of the railway industry in an orderly fashion. The numerous companies would be grouped into the 'Big Four' from New Year's Day 1923. This rationalisation was complemented by a rule-governed structure for negotiating wages and conditions. Representatives of companies and unions met at the Central Wages Board (CWB); unresolved issues went to a National Wages Board with an independent chair and the

two sections from within the industry complemented by independent members. This system protected basic wage rates until a 2.5% cut was agreed in 1928. That the reduction occurred only in the face of growing road competition and depression in staple industries underlined the relatively secure position of railway workers. Cramp's advocacy at the CWB lacked flamboyance but demonstrated a command of detail. He appealed to a shared interest that the divisions of the past should not be revisited; he emphasised 'the importance of maintaining the feeling of good faith. If that was once disturbed, it would be difficult to conduct affairs in the same spirit as has been shown in the past few years'. He commended the NUR constitution whereby settlements were considered by a General Meeting as facilitating beneficial outcomes. 'He never wanted to see the NUR indulge in a strike and come to a settlement, and then ballot its members as to whether they would accept that settlement or not. Lasting strength was not obtained in that way' [*Railway Review*, 11 July 1924].

This record of relative stability offered NUR leaders a resource in their attempts to limit or avoid involvement in any solidarity action in sympathy with the MFGB. When the miners struck briefly in October 1920, NUR members were divided in their response to MFGB appeals for sympathetic action [for decisions of SGMs in September and October 1920 see NUR Reports 1920]. The miners reached a settlement that, unlike the accommodation on the railways, proved fleeting. The Government's hasty decontrol of the coal industry brought demands for sizeable wage cuts in many districts and a lockout from 1 April 1921. Thomas sought to exploit division and uncertainty within the NUR to protect his members from what he saw as the folly of sympathetic action. An intervention by some MPs and a comment by the MFGB secretary Frank Hodges led Lloyd George to offer a meeting with the Miners' Federation. The MFGB Executive refused; the railway and other transport unions withdrew from any sympathetic action; the Triple Alliance collapsed; the miners were left isolated, and three months later were thoroughly defeated [for verbatim report of discussions on sympathetic action see the bound volume *Coal Crisis 1921*, Special General Meetings and Other Conferences, 31 March–14 April 1921; NUR collection MSS 127/NU/GS/3/1/97xxxiii); Clegg (1985) 297–302; Howell (1999) 314–319].

Cramp's reactions to this debacle on 15 April, 'Black Friday' were expressed in correspondence with union members. On the morning of 'Black Friday' he remained optimistic that the ambiguous discussions between Hodges and some MPs would lead to a settlement. He insisted that 'the Triple Alliance will not strike unless it is absolutely necessary'. Once any prospect of sympathetic action had been abandoned provoking hostile responses from the MFGB and some NUR branches he seemed at a loss for an immediate response. 'I have never passed through such a period of mental distress since my association with the trade union movement and I pray heaven I never will again… I have been through hell these past few days.' His justification of a temporary restraint suggested what his diagnosis would be.

> The present difficulty is that one cannot fully explain the case without putting words in the mouths of those who are fighting the miners and that must be avoided whatever happens. We had better take all the gruelling which may be given than to say one word which will render the miners' position more difficult at the moment… Some day and that before long the full explanation of all the circumstances will be given so far as I at any rate know this [Correspondence in NUR collection MSS 127/NU/GA/3/98].

That day came early in July as the miners were close to defeat. The union's AGM debated the events of 'Black Friday'. Cramp in harmony with Thomas condemned the majority on the MFGB Executive who had refused the opportunity to reopen negotiations with Lloyd George: 'If only they had gone down and seen the Prime Minister and found that a settlement was impossible, then our strike would have gone on and it could not have been prevented. It was an absolute blundering in tactics… Do you think we would have done that?' The line between

pragmatic NUR negotiators and blinkered miners' leaders had been drawn [*Railway Review*, 15 July 1921].

The experience of 'Black Friday', the alleged contrast between coalfield chaos and the railway settlement, and the ebbing of post-war trade union optimism in the light of defeat and depression, led Cramp to reassess his view of sympathetic action. At the union's AGM he had dismissed the possibility that a stoppage could have been effective: 'If we had all gone into that dispute… If practically every man had come out, we would still have been beaten' [*Railway Review*, 15 July 1921]. At the 1922 Trades Union Congress (TUC) he expanded on this pessimism suggesting on the basis perhaps of his union's experiences that only sudden and in all probability brief stoppages had any chance of success. Elaborate debates about the appropriate machinery for constructing solidarity were beside the point.

> The general assumption underlying all proposals which make for mass action is that there is always virtue and certain success in a general strike… My own view is that only under certain given circumstances, at certain times, can the greatest mass action be effected… You cannot get mass action by any proper constitution or Standing Orders which you choose to frame. You can only do this when the minds of men and women who are concerned are thoroughly in unison with the objects sought to be achieved… The possibility of attaining all those things… cannot definitely be fixed long beforehand [Phillips (1976) 16; citing TUC Report 1922, pp. 403–404].

Cramp insisted that he had not lost his faith in industrial action 'intelligently applied'. He affirmed his opposition to dictatorship but claimed significant autonomy for leaders.

> Leadership consists in my opinion, in advising, in inspiring, and in utilising the collective power and the intelligence of the whole of your members as far as you possibly can. (Hear, hear). But there are occasions when your representative must in the ordinary nature of things use his intelligence in the best possible way, when we cannot turn to you for advice, because you are a long way off. He must use initiative, and if you prevent a man from using initiative, you deprive yourself of one of your most valuable assets. (Hear, hear). Critics sought to undermine the integrity of your officials [*Railway Review*, 15 July 1921].

Whatever Cramp's scepticism about sympathetic action, renewed crisis in the mining industry produced 'Red Friday' in July 1925; the threat of a boycott on the movement of coal led to a six months' government subsidy to the industry and to the Samuel Commission. This apparent *volte face* merely postponed the confrontation. On 1 May 1926 with the subsidy ended, no agreement over the acceptability of the Commission's recommendations and many miners facing sizeable wage cuts, Cramp chaired a conference of trade union executives, called by the TUC that supported sympathetic action in support of the Miners. Cramp was privately sceptical. William Gillies a Labour Party employee claimed that Cramp had told him before the vote was taken that the decision reflected 'pure fatalism. We can't win.' Gillies felt, admittedly in retrospect, that the decisive feeling was that 'they had to do it', that the rank and file would expect it, and another Black Friday would be 'intolerable' [Beatrice Webb, 22 May 1926, Mackenzie and Mackenzie (1985) 83].

When the TUC held its post-mortem early in 1927 Cramp confirmed Gillies' claim and was perhaps amnesiac about his earlier politics: 'I have never believed in a general strike to achieve something positive, though I believe it could be used to negative something which might be thrust upon this nation, but I know this perfectly well, that at the time of the Memorial Hall conference, the great bulk of the workers did believe in a general strike and the few of us who did not were in a tiny minority' [TUC Congress of Executives, 21 January 1927, p. 17]. Ben Turner of the Woollen Textile Workers commented 'Cramp never expressed his view then'.

Instead with Thomas desperately seeking a settlement, Cramp as Industrial General Secretary communicated with companies about the imminent stoppage and signed the circulars calling on NUR members to stop work.

The call was successful but Thomas and Cramp remained dubious perhaps against the evidence that this solidarity could last for long. Cramp insisted to Ben Turner that the strike 'must not go on much longer than the second week' [cited in Phillips (1976) 149]. Despite such pessimism the stoppage on the railways was notable for its thoroughness and durability. When the TUC General Council ended the strike on 12 May, Cramp immediately telegraphed all NUR branches: 'Trades Union Congress notify strike called off. Members must present themselves for duty at once, keep me advised if necessary.' The same telegram went to the companies; Cramp added, 'Under the circumstances I am asking that you will make the necessary arrangements for the resumption of their duties.' This expectation was naïve. Two days earlier the companies had agreed that while they had no wish to destroy the railway unions they proposed to impose severe penalties. Surplus men need not be reinstated, strikers found guilty of serious offences should be dismissed, others should be liable to disciplinary measures for striking without due notice. When men responded to Cramp's telegram they found abundant evidence that many local company officials were responding with hostility and partiality.

Cramp subsequently acknowledged that when he sent his telegram he was unaware of the General Council's failure to secure more than a platitudinous response from Baldwin. On 13 May in concert with Bromley of the Locomotive Men and Walkden of the Railway Clerks he telegraphed that 'all railwaymen should continue strike until we receive satisfactory assurances'. Concurrently Cramp tried to pressurise the companies. 'Very large number of Railwaymen have definitely refused to take up duty under the conditions which obtained and it is only right that I should make it very clear that I cannot hope to influence them to speedily take up their duties under present conditions.' He complemented such pressure with the disowning of some NUR activists:

> Certain circulars have been issued up and down the country by Union members without the authority or instructions of Headquarters, and the men responsible therefore are even more nuisance to the Trade Unions than to the Companies. The Trade Unions are prepared to give an undertaking that they will, in future, deal with men responsible for such actions by expulsion or otherwise. They would rather do that than have to apologise for them, as they do now.

Negotiations on 13–14 May removed many of the companies' more punitive proposals. The terms of settlement included humiliating elements, some of which were matters of form rather than substance. There remained scope to penalise strikers in the higher grades and to give preferential treatment to men who had not struck. The reduction of services resulting from the continuing coal dispute meant continuing unemployment and short-time work allowing scope for local partiality and victimisation.

This settlement was commended by Cramp to NUR members in misleading terms: 'Complete reinstatement secured without penalties. All members should report for duty immediately.' A follow-up letter was disingenuous, 'in the circumstances with what we were faced, the settlement must be regarded as highly satisfactory. It safeguards the position of the whole of the men who were on strike and assures their return to duty.' Within a few days the hollowness of this claim was apparent. On 20 May, Cramp told the companies' representatives that there was widespread evidence of victimisation and intimidation. He presented a trade union trying to hold the line against an increasingly resentful workforce; more flexibility from management would be welcome: 'We are agreed that the general strike was a national calamity and really a social upheaval. Our difficulty now is to get our people to believe your bona fides and our bona fides in signing the Settlement. We are getting all sorts of suggestions from the men to refuse to

handle traffic. Our endurance is such that we shall not be able to stand up to the position much longer.' The difficulties continued for several months and for some individual NUR members were never resolved. But for Cramp and Thomas within a year, the stability of pre-strike industrial relations seemed to have been restored [Discussions between company managers and union officials are in RAIL 786/6].

Cramp's criticism of the General Strike recognised that the action extended beyond the conventionally industrial. Speaking in June 1926 at Melton Constable, a railway centre in rural Norfolk, he insisted that the struggle was essentially political; the objective 'was to compel the government to take action and we had better face right up to that fact at once' [*Railway Review*, 18 June 1926]. He developed this theme shortly afterwards at the 1926 AGM with the union leadership under attack from delegates not associated with the NUR left: 'There is no middle course… between the ballot and the machine-gun… A general strike is merely a negative thing… It does not create, it merely withholds for the time being… We need something more. We need positive action' [verbatim record debate on the General Strike AGM 1926 MSS 127]. The contrast with his rhetoric in 1919 was clear. With trade membership and self-confidence at what would prove to be a peak, he had proclaimed an imminent shift in power from Westminster to trade unions; after the defeat of the General Strike, he, like many trade union leaders placed his hopes in the election of a Labour Government. He had been at the heart of Labour Party politics since 1918 when he was elected to the Trade Union section of the party's National Executive Committee (NEC). He welcomed and defended the first Labour Government at the union's 1924 AGM against criticism from the left. The party had taken office as a minority to demonstrate its administrative capacity and had succeeded. Amongst those committed to this objective Thomas exhibited his enthusiasm for Empire at the Colonial Office. The alternative was unacceptable, the seizure of power by a minority without popular consent. The time for rhetoric was past.

> They had never stood out in a thorough-going sense to consider the problems of the organisation of industry. The capitalist system in this country was one of long standing and great complexity, and had worked with considerable efficiency both from the point of view of the capitalist class, and from the point of view of providing certain facilities for the people of this country. They must not underestimate the capitalist or those who were employed in administrative positions, because if they did underestimate such people they would not realise the magnitude of their task and it will take them all the longer to achieve their objective [*Railway Review*, 18 July 1924].

The party held its 1924 conference with the government expecting to lose a vote of confidence in the Commons. MacDonald was that year's party chairman and Cramp as chairman-elect substituted in some sessions when the political crisis meant that the Prime Minister was absent. Cramp also moved a resolution of congratulation to the government. He saw the months in office as a demonstration of the limits of trade union action: 'The Trade Unions during that period had begun to realise that not simply by perfect organisation and not simply by aggressive action internally considered could they ever permanently better the conditions of those whom they represented' [Labour Party Conference Report 1924, pp. 113–114]. His position as a loyal supporter of MacDonald and the wider leadership was confirmed during his year as chair.

The initial relationship between the Labour Party and the Communist Party had been complex and in some respects ambiguous. Until 1924 Communists could stand for election as Labour candidates. That year's conference ended such dualism but Communists could still participate within the party as members of trade union delegations. Although some trade unions vigorously defended their right to select their own delegates, opinion within the party was shifting towards a more thorough separation. Labour's defeat in the October 1924 election in the face of anti-Bolshevik hysteria epitomised by the Zinovieff letter suggested that a vigorous

denunciation of the Communists could have electoral benefits. Whatever their sentiments about trade union autonomy many trade union leaders, not least Cramp, were hostile to Communist activities within their own organisations. The hostility had been deepened with Communist attempts to construct a broader left wing Minority Movement within several unions including the NUR: 'Wherever the hand of the British Communist has revealed itself in a trade dispute disaster has swiftly overtaken the workers. I speak as a convinced Socialist when I say that not all the efforts of the capitalist class can weaken the organised Labour movement as would the British Communist Party if they had their way' [*Railway Review*, 20 June 1924].

When the Labour Party National Executive met in Liverpool in September 1925 prior to the party conference, Sidney Webb noted the chairman's key task:

> We are of course having difficulty with the Communists in the preliminary proceedings; and proceedings promise to be stormy tomorrow in Conference, as they want to suspend all standing orders… and generally to make their issue dominate the whole week…We decided today that the chairman (Cramp) should take a firm stand [Sidney to Beatrice Webb, 28 September 1925, in Mackenzie (1978) 247].

Cramp took the initiative with his opening address from the chair. He built on his earlier support for the 1924 Government but emphasised the 'enormous obstacles', inertia, 'malignant efforts of the newspapers owned by millionaires to debauch the public mind'. He acknowledged the existence of classes, and insisted that the task of the Labour Party was to transcend class conflict. The party must appeal for support from all classes and concentrate on parliamentary methods. Constructive proposals were essential. 'Revolution cannot be an end in itself. To be justified it must fulfil at least two requirements. It must increase material well-being and it must bestow perfect freedom of thought and expression… It would avail them little to conquer a waste land; to succeed to a heritage of silent and decaying factories would be a barren victory, and the colour of a flag would be of no importance as compared with the condition of the people over which it floated' [Labour Party Conference Report 1925, pp. 172–179]. Sidney Webb approved. 'The Chairman… is reading his address, excellent in tone and temper and substance, *explicitly* repudiating violence etc. but of course not very stirring' [Sidney Webb to Beatrice Webb, 29 September 1925 in Mackenzie (1978) 248]. The overture was an accurate anticipation of the subsequent proceedings, with most trade union delegations backing the party leadership and the heavy defeat of any resolution deemed to be Communist-inspired.

Cramp and Thomas fought vigorously and effectively against left-wing critics within the NUR; the union firmly backed TUC and Labour Party leaderships. Their strategy was aided by the shift of the Communist Party to the sectarianism of 'Class against Class' and by the broad sentiment across much of the trade union movement that the defeat of 1926 and its damaging consequences necessitated the early election of a Labour Government. One key task was the preparation of a Labour Party policy statement for the next election. The 1927 party conference decided to set up a NEC sub-committee to produce a document. Cramp was a member, a firm supporter of MacDonald who could be relied on to hold the line against any proposal viewed sceptically by the party leader. The choice became one between a statement of principles and broad proposals, and a more precise agenda of measures that a newly elected government would proceed with as an immediate priority. The proponents of immediacy and specificity were three MPs, Oswald Mosley, Sir Charles Trevelyan, and Ellen Wilkinson. Their attempt failed; the result was a draft which became the policy document *Labour and the Nation.* Approved with little dissent at the 1928 conference it was in its final form largely the work of R.H. Tawney; it epitomised the style of MacDonald's party, visionary rhetoric but no substantive programme for early action.

This politics was readily endorsed by Cramp. He complemented this support with an industrial strategy that acknowledged the serious constraints on any radical initiatives. He

backed the Mond–Turner talks; the TUC initiative to explore the prospects for modernisation with business leaders. His diagnosis of the economic predicament was in a key respect orthodox; international trade must be stimulated. More fundamentally his approach commended thoroughness and realism: 'They had to understand these great problems of industry and trade. They did not lend themselves to treatment by flamboyant declarations. They involved study and research. There was no royal road out of their position in which workers were today. Even a Labour Government would not be able to do anything in five minutes by waging a magic wand'. Such sentiments were at one with the railway unions' response to the companies' deteriorating economic position. In August 1928 without resorting to the formal machinery bargaining produced an all-round wage reduction of 2.5%. Little more than two years after the General Strike both sides presented the settlement as evidence of the industry's co-operative industrial relations. For the NUR membership there seemed little option [Cramp's comments at 1928 AGM in *Railway Review*, 13 July 1928; for the wage settlement see material in NUR Reports 1928].

The 1929 election brought Thomas back into the government, this time as Lord Privy Seal. Responsible for policies to promote employment, mounting unemployment produced widespread criticism of him within the labour movement; he became increasingly the scapegoat for wider ministerial failure. He was transferred to the Dominions Office in June 1930. In Thomas's absence Cramp became effectively head of the union, backed by the Assistant General Secretary John Marchbank. Unlike in 1924, Thomas and Cramp exchanged their TUC and Labour Party positions. From September 1929 Cramp sat on the General Council and became aware of the growing distance between the TUC leaders and Labour ministers. In part this reflected senior trade unionists' disappointment at the substance of government policy, particularly on employment and unemployment insurance; alienation also expressed a growing realisation that many Labour ministers, keen to assuage orthodox economic opinion preferred to keep the TUC at some distance.

Cramp insisted from the government's formation that it would be foolish and fatal to expect too much from the Labour Government. The administration's minority position was not the root cause. It was a natural fallacy and a mistake to suppose that Governments are omnipotent or to credit them with greater powers than they possess. His view of the state's economic role was limited, restricted to the creation of conditions for a return to prosperity and the stimulation of industry. Trade unions had the obligation to defend their members; they were not looking to the Government as a national board of guardians doling out pocket money. Unfortunately for Cramp and his members, the railway companies' economic position undermined the NUR's ability to carry out its core function effectively. Apparently improving business in 1929 led the NUR to press for the restoration of the previous year's wage cut. The cut was restored on 13 May 1930 but only for six months during which neither side would table fresh demands. In 1930, railway revenue fell sharply and late in the year the companies demanded more economies. Cramp's response was to dismiss their proposals as 'absolutely absurd'. The NWB findings in March 1931 meant a further 2.5% cut, on top of the reduction originally made in 1928, an outcome accepted by a SGM although with a sizeable minority. Such an outcome reflected the weakness of the NUR in a context where unionisation levels were often modest and the downturn in the economy had seriously damaged some railway traffics [*NUR Reports* 1930 and 1931].

Faced by the bleak economic climate Cramp and many within the NUR remained doggedly supportive of the Labour Government. They defended Thomas against criticism over his ministerial failure on unemployment. When he was defeated in the party NEC elections in October 1930 and the NUR lost its seat on the Executive, the NUR establishment claimed that the rejection was the result of 'a personal vendetta on the part of a few' [*Railway Review*, 17 October 1930]. At the 1931 AGM Cramp was modestly critical of ministerial aloofness from the unions; his cautiously expressed concern was typical of a deepening estrangement between major trade unions and the Labour Governmemt. [for Cramp see *Railway Review*, 17 July 1931]. Nevertheless the labour movement, despite all the setbacks, remained largely united in July

1931. Within a few weeks the majority recommendations of the May Commission on public expenditure, combined with a financial crisis, would destroy the Labour Government. Cramp was absent on holiday from the critical meeting on August 20 when members of the party NEC and the General Council met MacDonald and Phillip Snowden; his future within the NUR decisively altered as a consequence of that afternoon's meeting. The General Council's rejection of the government's suggested economies helped to split the Labour cabinet. The TUC thoroughly opposed the subsequent National Government and condemned its few but senior Labour participants. Cramp endorsed the General Council position but found himself at odds with Thomas, the only trade unionist to join the National Government.

Cramp was still on holiday when Thomas met the NUR Executive on the evening of 24 August, following the new government's formation; no decision was taken about Thomas's position. On his return, Cramp, together with the union President Will Dobbie, met Thomas on the south coast at Portslade on Sunday 30 August. The following day Cramp called a meeting of the executive which resolved unanimously that all NUR-sponsored members must sit with the Labour Opposition. Thomas was informed verbally by Cramp and Dobbie; he subsequently resigned as General Secretary, a decision formally accepted by the union executive. When Cramp informed him of this decision, he added his testimony to their partnership: 'I would just add a personal note to express my sorrow that our association as NUR colleagues should have terminated in this way and that I shall always remember with pleasure the many happy years we have spent together in the service of the railwaymen.'

Such amicability, a characterisation subsequently endorsed by Thomas, withered as the former General Secretary appealed against the union's denial of any pension as he had resigned prior to his retirement age. By the time the appeal was heard by a Special General Meeting on 30 October the Labour Party had been heavily defeated in a general election in which Thomas had attacked former colleagues without inhibition. After the Appeal had been comprehensively rejected, Cramp with characteristic sobriety defended the Executive's decision. His justification was not in terms of Thomas's political actions but of case law. His treatment had followed the precedent set in the ASRS response to Richard Bell's resignation in 1909 [Material in NUR Reports 1931; J.H. Thomas Papers section 014; the Cramp letter is dated 1 September 1931; memorandum by Thomas in Malcolm MacDonald Papers 6/3/33/50].

Following Thomas's resignation Cramp became General Secretary; there would be no more division of responsibilities at the top of the union. The electoral disaster had removed all NUR-sponsored Members from the Commons; more seriously the economic condition of the railways deteriorated further. Net revenue, £45.8 million in 1929, was down to £27.2 million in 1932. By September the companies were asking that previous reductions be consolidated and augmented into a 10% cut. Early in 1933 the National Wages Board issued six separate reports. An attempt by the companies to secure agreement around the report produced by the chairman Sir Harold Morris for a further 4 1/6% cut was rejected by the unions; the conciliation machinery that had operated effectively since 1921 had broken down. The Chairman of the London Midland and Scottish Railway felt that the reason for the failure was not the level of wages but a political agenda. 'The avowed intention of many is to force a situation in which the railway personnel and its wage level, independent of economic merits shall be foisted fairly and squarely upon the community in State ownership of one form or another' [*Railway Gazette*, 21 February 1933; hearings and findings of the NWB are in NUR Reports 1933, Appendix A to meetings for the first quarter].

Early in July Cramp acknowledged at the union's AGM that to date there had been no attempt to resolve the impasse but that at some point negotiations would occur. The alternative would be the loss of the rule-governed procedures that had operated since 1921. What could happen in that event had been apparent in Northern Ireland where cash-strapped companies

had demanded a 10% wage cut and the unions had resisted. A strike began on 30 January 1933 and ended with the acceptance of a 7.5% cut three months later. Cramp acknowledged that the strike had been unavoidable but never winnable. Economic circumstances, the extent of non-unionism and an unsympathetic Stormont administration ensured defeat. Cramp's preference for rule-governed incremental politics was also evident at the 1933 AGM in his response to a proposal for a united front of all working-class organisations. The Communist International was beginning to inch away from the sectarianism of 'Class against Class' in the light of the destruction of the German left. Cramp's response was blunt. Any alliance with Communists would mean an end to legally elected government; instead commissars would dictate. The minority favouring the proposal was relatively large, perhaps a response to the years of retrenchment [*Railway Review*, 14 July 1933].

This meeting was Cramp's last major NUR gathering. At 4.10 p.m. on 16 July 1933, he collapsed with a cerebral haemorrhage whilst addressing a meeting of the executive; he died at 3.00 a.m. the next morning in a nursing home in Beaumont Street, London. He left £1304 17s 8d.

Cramp's pragmatic, careful presentation of often complex arguments meant that he was overshadowed by the extroverted populism of Jimmy Thomas. He played central roles in both the railway industry and the trade union presence within the Labour Party. The peak of these involvements was in the 1920s, when railway wages survived the early impacts of decline in staple traffics and road competition with little erosion, and MacDonald's Labour Party seemed an increasingly credible candidate for office. Between 1929 and 1931 economic depression threatened the carefully constructing bargaining system within the railway industry and split the Labour Party. Cramp's close colleague Thomas epitomised this disintegration of expectations; Cramp succeeded to leadership of the NUR amidst the debris.

Cramp's own political journey remains elusive. By the mid-twenties, he was a strong supporter of the Labour leadership, a thorough anti-communist and an almost Fabian believer in order, rationality, and the necessity for research. His earlier political identity is more elusive. The characterisations of him as a Marxist or syndicalist are misleading. The early association with Carpenter left an enduring mark. In 1930, he spoke at a memorial meeting to mark the first anniversary of Carpenter's death. His contribution to a memorial volume for Carpenter offered some sense of how Cramp saw the political landscape on the left by the late twenties. One target was those he described as 'the dilettante, semi-literary type who apparently saw life through opera-glasses and imagined that the society of the future would consist of men and women entirely divorced from the ordinary affairs of life who would carry on civilisation in the atmosphere of the theatre, the club or the literary debating society'. Such people, Cramp asserted often 'in theory believe fervently in revolutions and express their sentiments violently and picturesquely'. Here was the self-consciously practical trade unionist's condemnation of the febrile enthusiasms of intellectuals. In contrast Cramp characterised a trade union left which included his opponents in the NUR. Their claim to authenticity was false. They were 'so-called representatives of the "proletariat" who continually speak of the workshop and the "Boss Class" and of Karl Marx in a manner which suggests that higher wages, shorter hours and freedom from discipline constituted the heaven to which their fellow-workers should aspire'. Cramp's indictment suggested these positions, whatever their rhetorical differences, shared a common weakness. They 'talked of men and women who do not exist except on paper'. Their expositions showed 'little knowledge of real life and none of human nature' [Beith (1931) 23]. In contrast Cramp's politics from his Sheffield days had always shown a strong sense of how small improvements in wages and conditions mattered. Detailed negotiation was Cramp's forte; how this connected to his professed and continuing faith in ethical socialism and the feasibility of a qualitatively better society was inevitably unclear.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: University of Warwick, NUR collection MS 127; National Archives, Post-General Strike negotiations, Rail 786/6; National Archives, Scotland, LNER, BR/LNE/8/779/Box 18; MT6/2198/4; Sheffield City Archives, Carpenter Papers; Kent County Record Office, Maidstone, J.H. Thomas Papers; University of Durham Library Archives and Special Collections, Malcolm MacDonald Papers. (**2**) **Newspapers and Periodicals**: *Labour Party Conference Reports*; *Trades Union Congress Reports*; *Railway Review*; *Kentish Express*; *Sheffield Independent*; *Sheffield Telegraph*; *Railway Gazette.* (**3**) **Books and Articles**: Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams* (1916); Lord Askwith, *Industrial Problems and Disputes* (1920); G.W. Alcock, *Fifty Years of Railway Trade Unionism* (1922); Gilbert Beith (ed), *Edward Carpenter An Appreciation* (1931); Stephen Roskill, *Hankey, Man of Secrets. Volume II 1919–1931* (1972); G.A. Phillips, *The General Strike: The Politics of Industrial Conflict* (1976); Norman Mackenzie (ed.) *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb. Volume III Pilgrimage 1912–1947* (1978); H. Clegg, A. Fox and A.F. Thompson, *A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889: Volume 2* (Oxford, 1985); Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie (eds.) *The Diary of Beatrice Webb. Volume Four 1924–1943* (1985); Tony Adams, 'Leadership and Oligarchy: British Rail Unions 1914–22', *Studies in History and Politics*, vol. 5 (1986); D. Howell, *Respectable Radicals: Studies in the Politics of Railway Trade Unionism* (Aldershot, 1999); *MacDonald's Party: Labour Identities and Crisis 1922–31* (Oxford, 2002); "Cramp, Concemore Thomas Thwaites", Oxford Dictionary of National Biography 2004; Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A Life of Liberty and Love* (2008).

DAVID HOWELL

*See also*: †Richard BELL; †John BROMLEY; James FIGGINS; †Edward HARFORD; †Walter HUDSON; John MARCHBANK; †Walter Victor OSBORNE; †George James WARDLE

## FIGGINS, James Hugh Blair ('Jim') (1893–1956)

RAILWAY TRADE UNION OFFICIAL

James Hugh Blair Figgins, usually known as Jim' was born on 8 March 1893, at Spring Gardens, Largs, Ayrshire, the eldest child of William Figgins, a gardener and, later a bowling green keeper, and Elizabeth née Fairlie, a domestic servant. After an elementary education Figgins joined the railways initially as a boy porter at Largs; subsequently he moved to Glasgow and became a signalman. In February 1916, he married Annie Clark, a widow and daughter of Andrew White, a coal merchant. At the time of his marriage he lived in Corkerhill, a railway community built by the Glasgow and South Western Railway in the 1890s.

Figgins joined the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) in 1911 and became a member of the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) following the 1913 amalgamation. An opponent of British involvement in the 1914–18 War he became active in the NUR's Glasgow No. 7 branch. His first appearance in the union's national debates was as a delegate to the Annual General Meeting in July 1924. Delegates met during the sixth month of the first Labour Government. Many shared the sentiments of a resolution that viewed 'with extreme satisfaction' the Government's record. They were admittedly in 'office but not in power'. Pride could be taken in the appointment of Jimmy Thomas, the union's senior official to the cabinet. In contrast Figgins introduced a discordant note. The Labour Government should be condemned for its 'pusillanimity'. It was implementing 'what was in effect a capitalist policy'. The unemployment problem had not been addressed; John Wheatley's housing policy would produce homes for rent but only beyond the financial reach of the working class. He criticised the abandonment of the proposal for a capital levy and urged the rapid recognition of the Soviet Government [*Railway Review*, 11 July 1924].

Such criticisms secured little support from delegates; his interventions on trade union issues had a more sympathetic reception. In response to a resolution welcoming the recent grouping into the 'Big Four' railway companies as a step towards national ownership and joint control Figgins characterised the policy as 'the necessary reorganisation under private ownership to conform to post-war economic requirements'. He condemned the suggestion that 'the Grouping' represented progress towards nationalisation and democratic control. That strategy demonstrated 'the old Fabian standpoint, believing that capital could be fought peacefully and that the proper method to adopt was to buy out industry after industry… unfortunately history itself condemned the Fabian idea'. He argued for the railways to be 'common property with workers in control'. An amendment for control of the industry from the bottom up secured support from the platform. Figgins emphasised the elusiveness of the reference to 'democratic control'. He dismissed talk about team spirit within the industry as meaning that 'they would have to co-operate with the capitalist class' [*Railway Review*, 18 July 1924].

Figgins's national debut was shaped also by the emergence of the National Minority Movement (NMM). This uneasy alliance of left trade unionists both communist and non-communist, and the Communist Party began formally at a conference in August 1924 after a lengthy gestation period. The initial objective was to unify militant movements within individual trade unions into a national organisation that could mobilise and expand trade unionists' support for such initiatives as the means towards a more radical politics. The ultimate objective was to hasten working-class revolution. The tension between specific industrial priorities and long-term and revolutionary political transformation was complemented by a second possible conflict between sectional and inclusive agendas. The NMM was Communist-controlled at the top but depended for its vitality on local co-operation between varieties of left trade unionists. The fortunes of the NMM were heavily shaped by the vagaries of Communist policy both in rhetoric and strategy. Figgins never formally held a Communist Party card but he saw communists as a legitimate element within the left who made a valuable contribution. His attitude towards the Soviet Union was consistently enthusiastic and uncritical. Inevitably his trade union career would be significantly shaped by the degree of legitimacy accorded to communists both within the labour movement and the wider society.

Figgins became heavily involved with the Railwaymen's Minority Movement (RMM). Within some industries the prospects for radical initiatives seemed promising. The miners' defeat in 1921 was the precursor to a credible Miners' Minority Movement in some coalfields where conditions were bleak. The Miners' Federation devolved structure allowed space and legitimacy for such initiatives. In contrast the left within the NUR faced serious difficulties. The union's structures were highly centralised. Past radicalism whether in 1911 or during the 1914–18 War had been successfully canalised by officials. In contrast to the coalfields, the railway industry's problems seemed in the mid-twenties to be manageable. Compared with pre-1914, wages were higher, the union was recognised; employment was relatively secure. Despite adverse economic circumstances, not least growing road competition, the complex post-war wage bargaining system would protect basic rates until 1928. The NUR was a self-consciously respectable organisation representing the uniformed working-class; many of its activists were established members of their communities. They responded positively to the leadership of Jimmy Thomas and C.T. Cramp, not least its representation of critics as irresponsible, naïve, and sometimes malicious malcontents who threatened the union's achievements.

Yet the RMM offered an alternative programme that could appeal to railwaymen who felt that the leadership was too conciliatory towards the companies. A 42-hour week, a £3 10s minimum wage, two weeks holiday a year with pay, the lowering of the adult age to 18; alongside these demands the RMM proclaimed one union for the industry, an ambition at one with the NUR's policy and identity. The credibility of this programme was inevitably affected by the state of the industry and the broader economic climate. 1924 was a relatively prosperous year, with trade unions' expectations reviving. The NMM could be optimistic; 1925 was notable for 'Red

Friday' and the retreat of the Baldwin Government in the face of imminent sympathetic action by transport workers in support of the miners. The 1925 Trades Union Congress (TUC) appeared, at least in terms of rhetoric, to have shifted to the left.

The collapse of the General Strike in May 1926, the subsequent lengthy, but unavailing resistance of the miners, and the consequential recriminations within and between unions, damaged the position of the NMM, not least in the NUR. The Communist Party abandoned what in retrospect seem naïve expectations about the radicalism of some trade union leaders and became more adversarial and recriminatory. The NMM shared this hostility; their targets within union leaderships replied in kind. The NUR's 1926 AGM was held in the third month of the miners' lockout. Many railway workers were still to be re-employed after the General Strike or were on short time. Thomas made his opposition to the General Strike clear and attacked the leaders of the Miners' Federation. Figgins led the attack on the General Secretary; he insisted that the General Strike had been unavoidable.

> It was a struggle for the maintenance of the existing conditions of labour, and for the maintenance of the existing hours. They thought that sectional action could not possibly maintain those hours of labour and those wages, consequently the rank and file thought this was not merely a miners' struggle but a working class struggle [A Verbatim Report of Proceedings on the General Strike, NUR AGM, 6 July 1926, p. 36, MSS 127].

His criticism was endorsed by a future President of the union who would eventually serve as a whip in the Parliamentary Labour Party, Joseph Henderson. 'The turmoil in which you have left your districts is not the atmosphere of this tranquil assembly. The shunting yards… are not like this room [A Verbatim Report of Proceedings on the General Strike, NUR AGM, 6 July 1926, p. 38, MSS 127].

Thomas's response was to draw a distinction between legitimate critics such as Henderson, whom he characterised as friendly and hard-hitting, and those whom he dismissed as beyond the pale. He read delegates a Communist Party circular advising how Party members should seek to persuade delegates to vote on tabled resolutions. His appraisal was typically melodramatic: 'These are the methods of a coward… the methods of underhand people. (They) stamp you as unworthy of calling yourself representatives of decent honest railwaymen'. He quoted from a letter written by the leading RMM activist, W.C. Loeber, to Figgins proposing a pre-AGM caucus of sympathetic delegates, plus a further letter from a Newport delegate. Thomas insisted that such critics had no moral standing.

> I ask you to take no notice of men who have received their instructions from outside bodies. The NUR was not built by these methods. These are the people who have been wanting to get hold of the NUR machine. It is because I have been a barrier to their machinations that we hear so much about Thomas that and Thomas the other [A Verbatim Report of Proceedings on the General Strike, NUR AGM, 6 July 1926, pp. 44–45, MSS 127].

His personalised appeal could divert attention from the controversy over the General Strike and helped to confirm his majority amongst the delegates. But on this issue, with members living the consequences of the defeat, the discontent extended beyond the committed left: on a procedural motion Figgins secured the support of 22 more delegates. The weakness of the left became evident when a proposal for Thomas's resignation secured the support of only six delegates.

A year later support for the left at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) was under pressure. A pre-AGM edition of the NMM paper *The Worker* had proclaimed 'End of Thomas is the Beginning of Hope'. Its author suggested that 'too often are the delegates intimidated by Thomas's big bluff and reputation' [*The Worker*, 8 July 1927]. In response, delegates supportive of the General Secretary attacked the NMM. Figgins's most significant intervention at the AGM

came when he moved a resolution critical of Thomas's support for British intervention in China. He insisted that 'China… would be the next country to be involved in the world revolution'; Thomas's response was to personalise the issue as a vote of censure. Figgins's resolution failed by a margin of just over 2 to 1. Yet, overall, the left were marginal. *The Worker* ruefully acknowledged Thomas's 'superior strategy and tactics' [*The Worker*, 8 July 1927]. A similar dominance was evident at the 1928 AGM with delegates endorsing the Mond–Turner talks between the TUC and leading industrialists and leaving the way clear for the officials to negotiate a wage reduction with the companies. Figgins, under the union's rules was ineligible for this AGM; he felt that the voice of the membership had been 'muffled'. Delegates had 'shown a lack of faith in the rank and file' [*Worker*, 20 July 1928].

The space for the left was shrinking also within the Labour Party. Its 1928 Conference carefully choreographed support for the policy statement *Labour and the Nation* and for MacDonald's leadership. The conference also took the final step to exclude all members of the Communist Party from participation within party institutions as trade union delegates. All affiliated unions received the consequential rubric. The NUR Executive decided in December 1928 that all nominations for the union's delegations to party conferences be passed to the union's Political Sub-Committee for assessment of their eligibility. Figgins's nomination by his branch as a delegate to the annual meeting of the Labour Party's Scottish Council was considered by the Sub-Committee. Thomas made the final decision. 'Mr Figgins in reply to my inquiry admitted that he was a member of the Minority Movement, and I accordingly ruled his nomination out of order' [NUR Executive Minutes, December 1928, Decision 930].

When the Glasgow No 7 Branch appealed to the Executive a minority felt the appeal should be upheld on the ground that 'the Minority Movement is not a political party'; the majority underwrote Thomas's assessment. The Political Sub-Committee was instructed that no member of the NMM could be eligible as a delegate to Labour Party conferences. The issue was raised at the 1929 AGM with critics insisting that the NMM was not a political body and therefore did not fall within the Labour Party prohibition. In response Cramp insisted that the NMM was 'in effect part of the Communist Party'. The insistence was the stronger with the Communist Party shift to the sectarianism of 'Class against Class' with a damaging impact on the fortunes of the NMM [*Railway Review*, 12 July 1929].

Figgins was a victim of this marginalisation. He failed to be elected to the 1929 AGM on the fourth count, his nomination as a delegate to the 1929 Labour Party conference was inevitably blocked; he was unsuccessful in both 1929 and 1930 in his attempts to be elected to the NUR's delegation to the Scottish TUC. Yet at the end of 1930 Figgins was elected to the union's executive. The result hardly demonstrated a surge of support for the left. He was elected on the 19th count by a majority of 97: 1996 votes to 1899 for his nearest rival. On the 18th count the three remaining contenders had been separated by only 36 votes. He was the beneficiary of the vagaries of the electoral system combined with a low poll [NUR Executive Minutes, December 1930].

Once on the Executive he was often an isolated voice. In October 1930 Thomas had been defeated in the election to the Trade Union section of the Labour Party National Executive Committee (NEC). Several major unions had targeted him as the minister who, until the previous June, had failed conspicuously to address the deepening unemployment crisis. Thomas's supporters within the NUR had responded angrily to this rejection and nominated him again for the 1931 conference. Figgins stood alone on the Executive in his opposition [NUR Executive Minutes, May–June 1931]. Thomas's membership of the National Government and subsequent resignation from the union and expulsion from the Labour Party nullified this nomination. Yet, as with the wider left within the Labour Party, the events of August 1931 were not viewed by NUR loyalists as a vindication of long-term critics. When a branch suggested that Cramp should be reprimanded for suggesting that Thomas be given a superannuation grant the Executive opposed

this response. 'Mr Cramp was only expressing his good feeling towards Mr J.H. Thomas'. Figgins once again was an isolated critic [NUR Executive Minutes September 1931].

The decay of the NMM was accompanied by signs of union rank and file opposition to wage cuts and deteriorating conditions. The Railwaymen's Vigilance Movement emerged in autumn 1932, campaigning on local issues where the formal machinery of the railway unions seemed inflexible and unresponsive. By the beginning of 1933, the surviving stalwarts of the RMM had moved into the Vigilance Movement seeking to expand Communist influence but acknowledging that the rank and file movements could not become instruments of the party. Figgins was very much part of this movement. Following C.T. Cramp's death in July 1933 and John Marchbank's election as his successor, Figgins became the Vigilance Movement's candidate for the consequential vacancy as Assistant General Secretary. Yet in a sequel to the 1929 decision the Executive, with seven dissentients, blocked Figgins's candidacy. The majority case rested on a dubious interpretation of the NUR rulebook. The post was a specifically trade union post yet the incumbent was required when necessary to deputise for the General Secretary, and this could involve attendance at the Labour Party Conference. One Executive member explained the issue to critics at the union's Manchester District Council: 'He had served on the EC with Bro Figgins and paid tribute to his fine qualities as a militant trade unionist and an honest and sincere Socialist. At the same time, he informed us that Figgins would never be permitted to attend the Labour Party Conference because of his militant views. Consequently according to rule he could not be our Assistant General Secretary'. A subsequent Figgins article referred to 'the Fascistisation of the NUR'. The decision was confirmed by 49 votes to 29 at the 1934 AGM. His first appearance as a member of the NUR delegation to the TUC had been in 1927; he subsequently reappeared at the 1934 and 1935 TUCs as a forthright critic of the General Council's attacks on communist activity within Trades Councils. He seemed restricted to a role as the perpetual outsider within his union [see NUR Executive Minutes March 1934; *Railway Vigilant*, May 1934; *TUC Reports* 1934, pp. 233–234, 1935, pp. 277–278].

The increasing strength of the left amongst NUR activists and Figgins's own perseverance combined to end his marginality. The belief that a Popular or United Front could offer a way forward both domestically and internationally strengthened the left. At the 1937 AGM he could secure a vote of 30 against 47 for a resolution supporting a Franco-Soviet-British pact. In 1938 he was elected a full-time organiser initially for the union's Road Transport section and from 1940 for the South-East Region [for his vote see NUR Executive Minutes May 1938]. He left Glasgow and became a member of the NUR administration. The union hierarchy still viewed him with suspicion but when the post of Assistant General Secretary became vacant once again in 1939, the previous prohibition on his candidacy was not repeated. Marchbank censored his electoral material on the grounds of alleged inaccuracies and irrelevance; six executive members opposed this 'editing' [NUR Executive Committee Minutes, July 1939]. The election was won by the union's rising moderate John Benstead. It appeared that Figgins would remain an organiser, his role as critic replaced by the routines of his administrative post.

Marchbank's retirement in January 1943 brought Benstead to the General Secretaryship; W.T. Watson, formerly Assistant to the General Secretary, took over Benstead's previous position. Figgins, probably benefiting from the wartime shift to the left, was elected as Watson's successor. The ballot went to the sixth count. Figgins secured 40,011 votes, his closest opponent, W.E. Webster, 30,277 (20,733 votes were non-transferable) [NUR Report 1943]. Later in 1943, delegates at the AGM voted in favour of Communist Party affiliation to the Labour Party. In the context of proclaimed Anglo-Soviet friendship Figgins's associations with Communists were no longer a decisive handicap in union elections. He had reached third place in the NUR hierarchy.

Compared with his treatment in 1934 the transformation had been remarkable. Yet in the mid -1940s this seemed the unlikely peak of his career. Benstead was four years his junior and could expect to be leader of the NUR until 1957. The advent of the Attlee Government decisively if unintentionally shifted the balance of power amongst the NUR leadership. Fred Burrows, a

stalwart member of the NUR right and recently union President, became Governor of Bengal. More significantly, Benstead resigned from the union to become a member of the British Transport Commission in September 1947. Watson had recently died. Figgins became Acting General Secretary, and decisively the best-known of the possible candidates for General Secretary. In contrast, the union's right which through many vicissitudes had always held the senior post had no credible candidate, not least since Benstead's departure was unexpected.

Once again the issue of Figgins's communist associations emerged. The former Independent Labour Party (ILP) Member John McGovern speaking in the Commons on December 10, 1947 alleged that the Communist Party General Secretary Harry Pollitt had told him in the 1930s that he had instructed Figgins and another Glasgow NUR member Joe Mc Millan 'to deny that they were members of the Communist Party although they were secret members' [*Parliamentary Debates*, 10 December 1947, col. 1128]. McGovern, beginning a shift rightwards across the labour movement, had long been an outspoken anti-communist with a taste for sensationalism. Figgins drafted a letter to Pollitt in which he asserted that he was not a member of the Communist Party; Pollitt predictably confirmed his statement. With the deepening of the Cold War the space for communists and their associates within the unions was under increasing pressure. Yet seniority proved decisive. Figgins won the subsequent contest by the largest margin since J.H. Thomas in 1916, defeating the two subsequent General Secretaries and the father of the third.

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|---|---|
| J.B. Figgins | 74,826 |
| S.F. Greene | 16,388 |
| J.S. Campbell | 8999 |
| M. Pounder | 5842 |
| J. Barker | 5472 |
| F.E. Bell | 5388 |
| J.T. Weighell | 3491 |

As General Secretary, Figgins faced serious challenges. The railway industry's financial condition had been problematic since the 1920s. The impact of competition from road transport and prolonged economic difficulties in regions dominated by heavy industry had eroded profits, restricted investment and depressed wages. War had brought Government control, a guaranteed net revenue, the freezing of fares and freight rates. Much equipment was already obsolescent, maintenance was minimal. Railway workers handled vastly expanded traffic, the shifts were long, working conditions were often grim.

Wage rates improved throughout the war and continued to rise until July 1947. These advances, backed by increased union membership, fed the optimism of railway workers—as did the imminence of public ownership. But the railway companies' revenues plummeted post-war. Costs had risen steeply but charges were pegged until July 1946 and then increased only modestly. The minimal maintenance of the war years and the decrepitude of some equipment and track became increasingly evident in a series of accidents attributable to obsolescence and declining standards. Railway workers' initial experience of public ownership was often bleak. The previous management remained, with authority structures unreformed. Ministerial enthusiasm for early modernisation was minimal and effectively limited to the schemes begun by the companies pre-war. Managers, in the guise of the Railway Executive, and ministers shared a sensitivity towards increased costs at a time of declining revenue and were unsympathetic towards wage demands. Wage rates on the railways had often been relatively low but had been compensated for by job security in an often uncertain world. With post-war full employment that benefit was less significant; in some districts the railways faced the challenge of retaining workers attracted by more lucrative and seemingly stable employment.

Figgins's difficulties within the industry were intensified by the political context. He had achieved his position partly through the contingencies of internal union politics but also through the wartime strengthening of the left evident within the NUR and several other unions. This asset proved short-lived. The deepening of the Cold War meant the revival of anti-communist sentiments within many unions. Factional alignments became more rigid; issues were not always debated on their merits. From September 1947, Figgins sat on the TUC General Council taking the seat customarily reserved for the NUR. The right dominated the General Council. Politically he was in a small minority. He was in sympathetic contact with the Communist Party's Industrial Organiser, Peter Kerrigan. In all probability Figgins was one of four General Council members who supported Arthur Horner, the Communist General Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, in his unsuccessful attempt to fill a casual vacancy on the Council in 1950. In 1952, he apparently showed sympathy with a Communist-inspired proposal for a one-day national strike against the recently elected Conservative Government [Fishman (2010), 794, 844, 1019 fn285, 1030 fn364].

The dominance of the trade union right was fuelled by the thorough loyalty of many trade unionists towards the Attlee Government. Whatever its shortcomings in specific areas the administration was viewed widely as 'our' government, credited with the achievement of full employment and an expanded welfare state. Such visceral loyalty fuelled trade union support for the Government's foreign policy with all its anti-communist consequences and, more reluctantly, for the wages policy initiated early in 1948 and identified with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps. Figgins stood outside this consensus, critical of the Government's Cold War stance and hostile to any policy of wage restriction in an industry where many wage rates remained low.

Faced with these many difficulties Figgins had to maintain a productive relationship with NUR activists. By the late-1940s, the union's General Meeting had shifted to the left compared with pre-war. Delegates backed 'Progressive Unity' and the reconciliation of the divided international trade union movement. Both decisions rejected the politics of the Cold War and were supported strongly by the Communist Party. Delegates favoured an extensive list of candidates for nationalisation and in 1951 opposed the Attlee Government's rearmament programme that had precipitated the ministerial resignations of Aneurin Bevan and two ministerial colleagues. The NUR also advocated workers' control in publicly owned industries, a policy that was informed by members' experiences and indicated early dissatisfaction with public ownership. The number of Communist delegates to the General Meeting was small, no more than eight (10%) in 1948. Around twenty more could be seen as committed to a strongly right-wing position. Overall, the NUR amongst the large trade unions in the post-war decade was frequently on the left but was not Communist controlled. The General Meeting was far from monolithic, a profile which did not deter Hugh Gaitskell some years later from describing the union as 'Communist dominated' [Gaitskell diary, 25 March 1955, in Williams (1983) p. 387].

This diversity was evident at an SGM in December 1948 held to discuss two recent statements on Communist influence within trade unions. Delegates were divided; some made clear their lack of enthusiasm for the General Secretary and his politics, others attacked the TUC statements. Figgins acknowledged that he had supported one of the statements because it contained a positive reference to the Marshall Plan. Such support was in accordance with the union's policy, although his presentation of this justification suggested that this was not his personal opinion. His opposition to a second circular hostile to communists holding office within trade unions was unequivocal. Delegates reached no clear decision; all proposals were defeated, in effect leaving the union opposed to the TUC initiative [NUR SGM Verbatim Minutes, 21 December 1948; for Figgins on the two issues see pp. 100–101].

The first wage claim under Figgins's leadership, for a 12s 6d increase, was tabled in August 1948. The decision to act unilaterally rather than in co-operation with the other railway unions

provoked criticism. Figgins justified such action, partly because other unions had their own priorities, but also because the strategy seemed viable.

'We considered as an organisation we had the power to go forward on our own and to obtain that which we had put forward. We felt it was a very moderate request and that our organisation, with the vast majority of railwaymen inside it, we could go forward and fight the matter out'. Such optimism was misplaced. The union's hope that the Minister of Labour, George Isaacs, would set up a Court of Inquiry was unfulfilled. The claim ground its way through the machinery only for the Railway Staff National Tribunal to decide against the NUR. A resubmission for a 10s rise produced no positive movement from the Railway Executive; at some goods depots by June 1949 discontented members began working to rule [The protracted negotiations can be followed in *NUR Reports* 1948, 1949].

At this point discontent over wages became entwined with another dispute symptomatic of dissatisfaction with early experience of nationalisation. In May and June 1949 significant numbers of locomotive men, members of both the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) and the NUR, took unofficial action over lodging turns. Such duties had long been a manifestation of the companies' concern with control of their employees' lives. Timetable demands and pressure to restrict costs meant many men involved in train movements lodged away from home at the end of their shifts. Demands for a reduction in or abolition of the system had a long history, but the weakening of the unions between the wars had blocked any change. Wartime uncertainties over train operation had led to a significant reduction in lodging. Managers viewed wartime circumstances as exceptional; many railway men saw them as the overture to future reductions. ASLEF and the NUR worked harmoniously on an agenda of incremental reduction, but in July 1947 the NUR AGM insisted that union policy should be the 'elimination' of lodging. This decision was made in the final weeks of Benstead's leadership. In all probability the NUR officials including Figgins realised its impracticability. The NUR continued its incremental strategy of seeking reductions on a case-by-case basis; unlike ASLEF, the NUR expressed principled opposition to the introduction of new lodging turns [Howell (1999) 360–388; Verbatim Report, 1947 NUR AGM, Benstead's opposition to policy at p. 104].

The crisis came in March 1949. Bill Allen formerly General Secretary of ASLEF and now a member of the Railway Executive, proposed a small number of new lodging turns on the main line between London King's Cross and Newcastle. Tyneside crews from both unions were thoroughly opposed. By mid-May an unofficial strike committee was organising and expanding Sunday stoppages. The NUR Executive raised the stakes, calling for an end to unofficial action but instructing Figgins to seek what he probably believed to be impossible: 'the total withdrawal of all lodging turns'. He presented this demand to the Railway Executive who predictably rejected it. The NUR Executive's escalation was perhaps a response to increasing discontent over the lack of progress on its wage claim. The move gave the Railway Executive and unsympathetic Labour politicians the opportunity to present the NUR's politically uncongenial General Secretary as the root of the problem [See material for May 1949 in *NUR Reports* 1949, including Executive, 24 May 1949].

ASLEF officials, holding their Annual Assembly of Delegates, were happy to present their rival union, and particularly Figgins, as the villain:

> Wherever negotiators enter the chamber just to say "No", the people who will suffer will be the workers themselves… It will be tragic when in an organised movement leadership is assessed on the basis of noise. Anybody can beat the big drum, but it is not everybody who can enter into negotiations and get reasonable conditions for their people [Joseph Baty, ASLEF AAD, 1949, pp. 331, 334].

As the Sunday strikes continued the NUR leadership became increasingly beleaguered. By 9 June Allen was linking the lodging dispute to the wage claim. He insisted that a NUR circular issued on 24 May offering union support to any member who was disciplined for his

participation in unofficial action must be withdrawn before there could be any further discussion on wages. The union Executive insisted that Figgins write to Attlee requesting his intervention. In return he received an unsympathetic reply from George Isaacs.

> I note that your Executive takes the view that the Sunday strikes are a separate issue and are in no way related to the pay claim. However that may be, the fact remains that in the vitally important matter the Railway Executive are subject to duress in a way that is bound to preclude that freedom of discussion that is fundamental to any system of voluntary joint negotiation [Lab10/840, the decision to write to Attlee is in NUR Special Executive Minutes, 9 June 1949].

In response the NUR Executive called an SGM. The union's leader met Sir Robert Gould, Chief Commissioner at the Ministry of Labour. Gould saw Figgins's brand of trade unionism as unacceptable; he feared that Figgins might use the SGM to seek a mandate for an official strike. He warned his minister; 'Nothing should be done either to save Mr. Figgins's face, or to give way to the unofficial strikes' [Gould to Isaacs, 13 June 1949, Lab 10/840].

NUR officials persuaded their members in the north-east to suspend the Sunday stoppages prior to the SGM. Whether the momentum of the strike movement could be recaptured should there be no settlement was questionable. The SGM lasted for seven hours. Far from encouraging an official strike Figgins sought to lead the union back from what he believed was an untenable position. The 1947 AGM's commitment to principled opposition to lodging should be rescinded. As one Executive member, L. Akehurst, insisted 'You have not given the General Secretary any negotiating latitude' [Verbatim Minutes NUR SGM, 16 June 1949, p. 102]. Figgins acknowledged that the policy had failed; the union would be unable to respond effectively to aggressive action by the Railway Executive Committee.

> If men were to refuse to work these lodging turns and the REC suspended them, we would have to use the whole resources of the Union to protect them. I ask you – do we believe that we have the membership sufficiently enthusiastic on this problem of lodgings as to be prepared to use all the resources of the Union – you know what that means – to compel our policy to be immediately accepted? [Verbatim Minutes NUR SGM, 16 June 1949, p. 113].

Although the lodging issue produced strong emotions amongst many locomotive men, it was not a significant issue for many other NUR members. Those in the poorly paid grades could view the locomotive men as an elite for whom they would be reluctant to strike. The subsequent vote demonstrated the tensions within an organisation founded on the principle of industrial unionism. 'In principle' opposition to lodging turns was ended by 42 votes to 37. All nine locomotive grade delegates voted with the minority; the majority included three Irish delegates who had no connection with the dispute.

Subsequent discussions resolved the controversy over the new lodging turns that had precipitated the strike. In contrast further negotiations on the NUR wage claim achieved nothing. A SGM on 28 June called for a Work to Rule from 3 July; in response the Minister of Labour established a Board of Conciliation. Figgins presented the union case to the Board in early August. He stressed how wages had fallen behind the cost of living. The loss of staff to higher-paid employment had meant extensive overtime. Apparently Board members were impressed by a Railway Executive document highlighting the distance between basic rates and average earnings. NUR responses that this contrast was the result of long hours and that many remained on the basic rate were ignored. The Board rejected all of the NUR's claims on 8 September; they were not in the 'national interest'. Figgins's critics could not only condemn his alleged irresponsibility; they could highlight his failure to win a pay rise [*NUR Reports* 1949].

Nineteen-forty-nine was a febrile year for the labour movement. Many politicians and trade union officials saw communist conspiracy in every industrial dispute. The imminence of a general election generated intolerance of those deemed irresponsible or divisive. *Tribune*, had a left-wing past and would have a left-wing future. In 1949 it was broadly supportive of the Attlee Government. Its reaction to unrest on the railways was to compare Figgins unfavourably with his predecessors. *Tribune* claimed falsely that he had not attempted to persuade unofficial strikers to resume work: 'This was the habit of former general secretaries of the NUR… The problem on the railways – as in other nationalised industries – is partly a question of trade union statesmanship' [*Tribune*, 3 June 1949]. Figgins criticised railway management at the 1949 Labour Party Conference and advocated workers' participation at every level in the industry. Senior figures within the party ignored the substantive issue; with an eye to electoral calculations, Herbert Morrison, so closely identified with the public corporation model, instead attacked unofficial action. 'This action is not calculated to do the progressive cause any good whether it be political or industrial'. Aneurin Bevan was even more dismissive of the quotidian experiences of those whom Labour claimed to represent: 'It is necessary to tell some of our people in industry that they are beginning to lose heart, and that some of them appear to have achieved material prosperity in excess of their moral stature. Some of them have got what they have got too easily and they are in danger of throwing away by a few months of dissipating anarchy what we have spent our life time in building up' [*Manchester Guardian*, 6 June 1949]. Criticism from within the labour movement was endorsed by a civil servant in a note to George Isaacs following the end of the lodging dispute:

> It is particularly necessary that you should not make yourself available to Mr. Figgins whenever he wants to see you. So long as he can run to you whenever he likes there will be no settlement on the railways. Furthermore, the moderate trade unionists are still very angry with Mr. Figgins and are still very critical of the action you took to rescue him from the untenable position in which he had placed himself [Minute (unsigned) to Isaacs, 16 July 1949, Lab 10/840].

These assessments showed an ignorance of the politics of Figgins's union and of the experiences of many who worked in the railway industry. The hostile assessments of Figgins's leadership were at odds with his own conception of his role within the union. During the critical SGM in June 1949 he expressed his conviction in terms that could have come from his predecessors, not least Jimmy Thomas. 'It is the duty of the General Secretary to face up to any position courageously and to advise the membership' [Verbatim Minutes NUR SGM, 16 June 1949, p. 108]. Late in September 1949 a SGM met to consider the negative decision of the Board of Conciliation. Figgins successfully opposed calls for a work to rule or an overtime ban. Such actions would undermine what little chance there was of economic recovery and political independence. The union must not damage the Labour Government's chance of re-election. His own political instincts, the priorities of members, his sense of what was feasible politically and industrially—all had to be reconciled. Most fundamentally, any NUR General Secretary had to come to terms with the industry's economic problems.

This challenge continued through 1950 and into 1951. After an award giving 3s 6d on the basic rate was secured in July 1950, the effective end of the Government's pay policy encouraged the NUR in concert with the other rail unions to demand a 10% increase. The Railway Executive offered some revision of basic rates but insisted that any advance must linked to the union's participation in negotiations on staff economies. The dispute went to a Court of Inquiry chaired by W.C. Guillebaud. Figgins presented the NUR's case for a 10% increase in January 1951. Once again he stressed the increased cost of living, the difficulty of attracting and retaining staff, and the prevalence of shift and weekend working. In response Allen claimed that wages and

conditions were reasonably good, and the Railway Executive was unable to fund the proposed increase [*Railway Review*, 12 January 1951].

Guillebaud published his report on 8 February. He rejected the 10% claim, instead awarding 1s 6d on the basic rate and up to 7s for higher grades. Overall the package was worth about 5%. But the award was tied to a commitment to 'substantial and progressive economies'. Some NUR members in the north-west began a work to rule. Officials of all three unions met the Minister of Labour, now Aneurin Bevan, on 16 February. Figgins recalled that the 1911 strike had begun in the north-west. He articulated the anger of his members. 'The NUR membership bitterly resented the recommendations made and it was beyond his Executive's powers to persuade the men to accept them. No general increase had been granted to railway workers since 1947 although the cost of living had risen considerably… The NUR were not enamoured with Nationalisation and considered that the men were better off under the old Company conditions.' The minister became involved in negotiations culminating a week later in a settlement worth on average 7½%. The insistence that economies must be pursued was no longer tied to the award. Figgins reflected on his strategic challenge. 'They were in a difficult situation, they had to retain the men's faith in their Executive and they had to carry the men along with them.' Further rises in the cost of living produced a Railway Staff National Tribunal (RSNT) award of 8% in November 1951; the NUR had asked for 10%. Figgins's final pay negotiation came under the Conservative Government. A demand for 10% was countered by the claim that such an award would necessitate higher fares and probably a disproportionate loss of traffic. The award was a 7s flat increase. After the difficulties of 1949, wage bargaining for the NUR under Figgins was always exacting but not unproductive. The basic problems facing the industry remained and would confront successive General Secretaries [LAB 10/21 for response to Court of Inquiry; *Railway Review*, 23 February 1951; Bagwell (1963) 612–616, 644–646].

Figgins resigned as General Secretary on reaching the retirement age, 60, in March 1953. During his retirement he served as vice-chairman of the British Peace Committee, in close association with members of the Communist Party. He died on 27 December 1956. His wealth at death was £4394.

Figgins was a smart dresser, a large man with a booming voice, sometimes likened to that of a Regimental Sergeant Major. Jim Campbell, his successor as General Secretary, had known him since his early Glasgow days. He recalled how often in the west of Scotland Figgins was at the centre of the storm. He was a 'curious mixture of boyishness and brilliance… everything… was intense' [*Railway Review*, 4 January 1957]. Richard Crossman on the eve of the tumultuous Morecambe Labour Party Conference in 1952 shared a platform with Figgins. His diary entry captures something of his style and places him at a particular historical moment:

> We picked up Figgins who looks like a retired Anglo-Indian country gentleman farmer… and reached Fleetwood in drenching rain, to find to our amazement some 500 people assembled in the hall. Figgins was announced as speaking on denationalization and he spoke on it for a few minutes, after which he entered into a panegyric on the Soviet Union, which was warmly cheered by the audience which then warmly cheered my Bevanite speech on the dangers of American and Russian imperialism. Then a very nice old age pensioner got up and asked whether I thought it was fair that his rubber heels cost 4s 6d, so we were in a real Labour Party meeting, which was completed by a high tea with the Conservative Mayor in a butterfly collar [Morgan (1981) 145–146].

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: University of Warwick, NUR collection, MS 127; National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, London, Verbatim Records of Delegate Meetings; National Archives Ministry of Labour files 10/840, 10/1021. (**2**) **Newspapers Reports and Periodicals**: *Parliamentary Debates*; *Labour Party Conference Reports*; *Trades Union Congress Reports*; *Railway Review*; *The Worker*; *Railway Vigilant*; *Manchester Guardian*. (**3**) **Books**: P.S. Bagwell, *The*

*Railwaymen: The History of the National Union of Railwaymen* (1963); Roderick Martin, *Communism and the British Trade Unions 1924–33* (Oxford, 1969); Janet Morgan (ed.), *The Backbench Diaries of Richard Crossman* (1981); David Howell, *Respectable Radicals; Studies in the Politics of Railway Trade Unions* (Aldershot, 1999); "Figgins, James Hugh Blair" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 2004; Nina Fishman *Arthur Horner: A Political Biography*, *Vol. II*, *1944–1988* (2010).

DAVID HOWELL

*See also*: †Richard BELL; †John BROMLEY; Thomas CRAMP; †Edward HARFORD; †Walter HUDSON; John MARCHBANK; †Walter Victor OSBORNE; †George James

**FROW, Stephen Edmund** (1906–1997)
COMMUNIST, TRADE UNIONIST, HISTORIAN

**FROW, Ruth** (1922–2008)
COMMUNIST, PEACE ACTIVIST, HISTORIAN

In contributing the only previous joint *Dictionary of Labour Biography* (DLB) entry, on Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Margaret Cole's reasoning was that it was pointless to try to write of the Webbs separately. For those familiar with Ruth and Edmund Frow's achievement in setting up the Working Class Movement Library (WCML), the idea of separating one contribution from the other may also seem a futile undertaking. Even so, no such partnership begins at birth, and none is ever achieved except through some process of give and take in which neither party entirely relinquishes their particular identity. Just as Beatrice Webb could publish a first volume of autobiography in which Sidney appeared only in the final pages, so too the Frows' partnership did not begin until both were well advanced in years and experience. Theirs were therefore distinct if finally converging trajectories, and the closer union they arrived at was not without its initial stresses. To accommodate this, the following entry provides each subject in turn with the usual biographical summary before concluding with a special note on the library which came to define the Frows' lives together. If Edmund Frow is given priority, it is only because he was the elder of them by sixteen years.

**(Stephen) Edmund Frow** was born in Harrington, Lincolnshire, on 5 June 1906, the third of five children of George Frow, a farmer, and his wife Mary Ann née Bentley—though only Edmund and his younger sister Millicent survived infancy. In 1909, the family moved to nearby Alford where the children's father and uncle opened an ironmongers and Eddie began his education at a local private establishment, the Alford Grammar School. The business failed to prosper, and George Frow worked first as a gardener, and then as a railway porter for the Great Northern Railway, which had a monopoly of the network in East Lincolnshire. The GNR had also developed networks south and west of Leeds and in 1915 George was transferred to Tingley in the Yorkshire coalfield. Remaining in the locality, he was subsequently employed in the office and then the coke ovens at Tingley colliery. Eddie, meanwhile, continued his education at the local elementary school and at the Holbeck Boys' Day Preparatory Trades' School.

Eddie was always close to his mother, who lived to the age of 101, and would remember her as a cultured person with a love of poetry which he inherited. Relations with his father proved less straightforward. Originally Anglicans, in Tingley the family had begun attending the Primitive Methodist chapel, and Eddie was sent to the Wesleyan Sunday school. It was a radical-minded science teacher, Arthur Haigh, who was the decisive influence in his beginning to question these ties. From the start Eddie had been an avid reader, and it was Haigh whom he recalled guiding

him as he graduated from *Comic Cuts* and H. Rider Haggard to the autodidact's staples of Jack London and H.G. Wells. In particular, he recollected Wells's *Outline of History*, published in 1919–1920, and intended by its author as the antidote to the 'King and Country' history taught in schools. Wells's treatment of the world's religions was also unconducive to the hold of Christian teachings on enquiring young minds, and Eddie's differences with his father were of a sharpness that he came to regret. Nevertheless, his parents had both in their different ways encouraged his reading; George Frow in particular was determined on his children getting the best possible education, and on Eddie becoming established in a trade. It may have been at Haigh's prompting that he read *The Outline of History*, but it was his father even so who bought him the fortnightly sixpenny parts [Frow papers, 20, EF, 'George Frow', (1992) and 21, EF 'A worker's search for Karl Marx'; RF, *Edmund Frow*, p. 15; Wells (1934) 716–721].

Leaving school aged fourteen, Eddie began his apprenticeship at a Wakefield machine manufacturers, George Rhodes & Sons, while also attending evening classes at Leeds Technical School. He would remember his first taste of workshop life as 'crude & rough', with an oppressive sense of constraint and 'deadly monotony' which he would liken to a prison [Frow papers 21, EF, autobiographical MS, 1973]. By the time he recorded these impressions, he was certainly aware of the echo of Alfred Williams's *Life in a Railway Factory*, whose analogies with the lot of the prisoner had drawn directly on the contrast with traditional agricultural pursuits in Williams's native Wiltshire [Williams (1984) 284]. Eddie shared with Williams the two great loves of poetry and countryside rambles, and it was through these that he would describe finding a world he could breathe in outside of work [Frow papers, 56, EF to RF, 29 August 1953]. Even as passages from Marx and Trotsky begin to appear in his notebooks, they continue to rub shoulders with Milton, Goethe and Shelley. At no point was Eddie's relish for the English poets in particular ever superseded.

Though Haigh was a committed socialist, and Eddie in his later teens would attend the classes he gave at Leeds Labour College, it was to an Independent Labour Party (ILP) railwayman, Isaac Clay, that he attributed his introduction to the labour movement. Through Clay's influence he bought the first ever issue of the ILP's *New Leader*, in October 1922, which, he recollected, marked 'the beginning of my attachment to the working class movement' [Frow papers, 21, biographical notes, December 1981]. He also recalled hearing socialist speakers in Leeds Town Hall Square, and visiting the Bradford Reformers' Bookshop with Clay towards the end of 1923 he fatefully picked up copies of Ernst Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe* and Lenin's *State and Revolution*. Though Eddie had already stopped attending chapel, it was Haeckel's secularist bestseller which now confirmed for him the break with religion. *The State and Revolution*, meanwhile, proved timely reading as the formation of Britain's first Labour government occasioned feelings verging on euphoria among Eddie's workmates. Inoculated against such illusions by his reading of Lenin, in March 1924 Eddie joined the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). He was still just short of his eighteenth birthday [EF, interview, 15 Oct 1987; Frow papers, heirloom memories book].

*The State and Revolution* would remain a favourite political text, and by the time he met Ruth in the 1950s Eddie had read it 'quite a few times' [Frow papers, 56, EF to RF, 21–22 August 1953]. Written between the February and October revolutions, Lenin's text upheld an ideal of direct democracy that was strongly influenced by the Paris Commune and is generally regarded as the most libertarian of his writings. Much later in Eddie's life, it would provide a point of reference for critical reflections on a Soviet state that showed no sign of withering away as Lenin had at first anticipated. The more immediate lesson that he drew from it, which also proved an enduring one, was that the reformist path to socialism was a fallacy and that there was no alternative to the path of October.

With its dramatically varying phases of policy, a characteristic feature of the communist movement was that those recruited to it typically bore long afterwards the imprint of the moment of their joining. For those, like Eddie, drawn to it in the years immediately following

the Russian revolution, this was a distinctly revolutionary imprint. At the same time, this was also a period of considerable fluidity of relations within the wider labour movement, and communists were a key element in the mobilisations that culminated in the 1926 General Strike. Though Eddie's socialism almost from the outset was inseparable from the disciplines of party, it was also marked by a formative experience that did not at this stage exclude the wider associations through which he had initially become politicised. He was never the type of communist, like some of those of the 1930s, who might easily have joined the Labour Party instead. But equally, he was never one of those communists who moved only in a rarefied world comprising principally communists themselves.

Co-existing with his communism in a state of tension rather than equilibrium, for Eddie these broader associations were first of all represented by his strong commitment to the movement for independent working-class education. In his admirable reconstruction of this swansong of the politicised autodidact, Stuart Macintyre has commented on the considerable demands that the ponderous neologisms of writers like Haeckel must have made upon the self-taught worker [Macintyre (1980) 108]. Eddie himself would recall the struggle he had with Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, which he read in the late 1920s, and he admitted having never entirely got to grips with Marx's *Capital*. That he nevertheless was among the 'earnest minority' that made the effort—the phrase is one that Macintyre borrows from Richard Hoggart—is suggestive of the scientific basis and command of theory which they believed essential to any genuine prospect of capitalism's overthrow. At the same time, Eddie was also of the generation for which the simpler expositions of a codified 'Leninism' offered that promise of a mutually reinforcing theory and practice which was one of the Third International's most compelling attractions. This, of course, was the time of Stalin's increasing ascendancy at the head of the Bolshevik party, or Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Though recent accounts have located his thinking squarely within the marxist tradition [notably van Ree (2002)], students of socialist thought have tended to deplore Stalin's intellectual philistinism and pour scorn upon him as at best a competent vulgariser. Nevertheless, it was just this easy intelligibility that Eddie would continue to commend in Stalin even while reacting against his political legacy; for 'whether he was a genius, a villain or a devil, he was very, very clear and lucid … very easy to read and understand' [EF, interview, 28 January 1985].

Eddie singled out Stalin's *Theory and Practice of Leninism*, along with Alexander Bogdanov's *Short Course in Economic Science*, as readings that influenced him in his earliest years as a communist. He would also describe as 'the authentic version of the Communist Bible' the famous (or notorious) *History of the CPSU (B): Short Course*, published under Stalin's direct editorial oversight in 1938. 'To read and think independently is indispensable for every active Communist', Eddie wrote in his notes upon the English edition of the *Short Course* published the following year. The linking of such a precept with this most canonical of party texts encapsulates the paradoxical quality of Britain's autodidact tradition in this late phase of contraction and overt politicisation. Like so many others, Eddie passed through the Plebs League, formed in 1908 as the standard-bearer of militant self-education. As he did so, he can be numbered with the last of the cohorts of working-class activists for whom a combative ideal of class-based learning meant ambivalence if not outright hostility regarding forms of knowledge and education licensed to serve the interests of a class society. On the other hand, the thirst for knowledge was bound up by now with a communist commitment that in time would attenuate the generic distrust of university-trained intellectuals. The basis of this accommodation was acceptance of a common commitment and political discipline, as exemplified by the Left Book Club selections of the late 1930s which Eddie like so many others played a part in distributing. In particular, he discovered in John Strachey's club selection *The Theory and Practice of Socialism* (1936) just those qualities of clear exposition that he so appreciated in Stalin [Frow papers, box 2, EF, TS notes, 1990; Frow interview, 28 January 1985; EF, 'A worker's search'].

As Eddie by this time settled into regular employment, the problem was always to find enough time to keep on top of the literature that communist parties generated in such daunting quantitities. For a few years, at least, he had had somewhat greater leisure in which to do so courtesy of long-term unemployment and a stint behind bars such as in this period marked out the fully committed communist activist. When the General Strike was called, Eddie was an apprentice at the Diamond Coal Cutting Machinery Co in Wakefield. He downed tools on his own initiative to assist in local strike activities, and as a result had his first taste of victimisation. It was not to be the last. Following an interlude as part-time secretary of Wakefield Labour College, Eddie then completed his apprenticeship at British Celanese in Derby. There were further spells of employment in Liverpool, at the prompting of the Meccano's communist toolroom steward Charlie Hoyle, and at Trafford Park, where Ford's British operations were for the time being still based. But on leaving Ford's in 1930, Eddie, who remained in Salford, was then more or less continuously unemployed until 1934.

As the CPGB itself acquired something of the character of an unemployed workers' party, the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM) emerged as in this phase the most effective and almost the only real vehicle of a genuine communist mass politics. In 1928 Eddie had served as secretary of the NUWM's Derby branch, and in this way became active locally in the Minority Movement—the body set up in 1924 to co-ordinate communist activities in industry. Resuming activity within the NUWM in Salford, he then figured as the unnamed 'finely featured young man' who leads the unemployed demonstration depicted in Walter Greenwood's best-selling novel *Love on the Dole* (1933). The real-life version, on 1 October 1931, entered local legend as the 'Battle of Bexley Square', as a crowd some thousands strong marched on Salford town hall to protest against the Means Test. As they were turned upon by mounted police, twelve of the demonstrators were arrested and charged. Eddie alone of them was called upon to defend himself. Having already had his nose broken by a police baton, he was given a five-month sentence which he served in Strangeways Gaol.

'Three cheers for machine-guns!', he is supposed to have urged on demonstrators the previous year. 'Shoot for it, comrades, as they have done in Russia!' [*Manchester Evening News*, 7 March 1930]. Though this principally reminds us of the dubious reliability of police informants, there is no question that Eddie during the Class Against Class period was a sufficiently zealous proponent of his party's maximalist rhetoric and sectarianism. In 1929 he had served as the CPGB's Liverpool organiser, cycling around to muster support while in reality, as he later conceded, the party locally was 'falling to pieces' [Frow papers, EF, notebook 1973]. He was on record as complaining that the party's central committee had mostly been 'divorced from the workshops for years'; and when the CPGB's stormy eleventh national congress of November 1929 saw the leadership's drastic overhaul, Eddie was among those pressing for such action from below [Worley (2002) 137].

The Sheffield communist and former engineer, J.T. Murphy, was one of those who certainly had become divorced from the workshops. Though he was not among those ousted from his leadership position in 1929, Murphy did the following year pay back these criticisms when he ridiculed the verbal excesses of the Manchester party local in which Eddie was now to the fore. Not only had it been urging anti-militarist action at a non-existent Burnley barracks, but it was clear from its leaders' speeches 'that all questions of strike strategy and tactics had been resolved into the simple proposition of calling for strike action on all occasions, at all times, irrespective of conditions' [Murphy, 'The right danger in new clothes']. As such positions were for the time being encouraged rather than the reverse by the official party line, such criticisms did not prevent Eddie from securing his one overseas mission of the Comintern era, as one of four district representatives attending the Comintern's British commission of August 1930. The following May, he came forward as a 'demonstration' candidate in an Ardwick by-election, with a manifesto that disregarded local claims and contentions in favour of a generalised appeal for a Revolutionary Workers' Government. As Worley has shown, it was to younger working-class

activists that the abrasiveness of Class Against Class appealed most strongly. Eddie was unreservedly among them; and when subsequently a negative appraisal of the period prevailed even in Noreen Branson's official CPGB history of the 1980s, Eddie along with Ruth continued to take issue with such a verdict.

Between 1926 and 1937, some 160 such activists went from Britain to the Comintern's Lenin School. Few matched its class-based admission criteria better than Eddie. Fewer still can have been so obviously committed to the ideal of a revolutionary class-conscious education. As Eddie as yet exercised no significant political responsibility, and still had no constraining domestic obligations, it is in some ways surprising that he was not among them. Whatever the explanation, his remaining in Manchester would prove crucial to his identity as what he would later describe as an industrial communist. Throughout the 1930s Eddie was active on the CPGB's Manchester area committee and in 1938–1939 he served as its chairman. He also took on various party responsibilities after the war. Nevertheless, there were no further sojourns in Moscow, nor in Spain, nor even London, nor any experience of employment as a party functionary. Instead, Eddie's principal sphere of activity, and eventually of employment as a full-time official, was the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU). When his first marriage broke up in 1953, it was, as we shall see, the strength of his local industrial base that proved the primary consideration in his remaining in Manchester even at the expense of his immediate personal interests.

Nearing the end of his apprenticeship, Eddie had initially been admitted to the AEU's section 4 as a fitter. By securing work in Meccano's toolroom he then joined its most highly skilled members in the union's section 1, and this would prove an important credential in his later contesting union elections. Eddie had had his first experience as shop steward at Garnett Whitleys in Liverpool. Resuming more continuous employment from 1934, he was then convenor at Salford Electrical Instruments from 1936 to 1941 before being removed to what proved to be a series of smaller contract toolshops. It was not until the end of 1956 that he again held a more secure position, at the Salford electrical components' manufacturers, Ward & Goldstone. Well-regarded by management as well as union members, he remained there as convenor until his election to full-time union office in 1961.

He was by this time a well-known figure within the union. On its formation in 1920, the AEU had sought to balance centralisation with accountability through provision for elected national and divisional committees from which full-time officers were excluded. From 1937 to 1945, Eddie was already a member of the union's Manchester district committee. With the expansion of communist influence in the industry post-1941 he was then regularly elected as an AEU divisional and national committee delegate. From 1950, despite some keenly fought contests, he was uninterruptedly a delegate to the latter until rendered ineligible by his election in 1961 as Manchester's full-time district secretary. Having first stood for this position as far back as 1937, this meant the achievement of a longstanding ambition and one demonstrating the element of strong continuity in Eddie's career once the CPGB in the early 1930s had made its irrevocable turn towards the unions.

This did not mean that his progress had been free of incident. With the AEU's formation, the tension between officials and lay activists had not so much been resolved by the intricacies of the union's rulebook as overlain by factional rivalries of which the union's strong communist presence was a key structural element. Finely balanced between left and right, the AEU proved responsive to the pressure of its communist element in periods of relative unity like the late 1930s and later war years. Conversely, the greater the divergence between the communists' perspectives and those of union moderates, the sharper the union's internal rivalries became. In these latter, more militant phases of communst policy Eddie was consequently involved in a whole series of contentions and disciplinary actions concerning the forms of activity that were allowable within the terms of the union's rulebook.

In 1931, he was one of twenty members expelled for promotion of unofficial activities under the auspices of the Minority Movement, only to be reinstated the following July following the

successful mobilisation of a Members' Rights Movement. With the CPGB's shift to what Fishman described as 'revolutionary pragmatism' respecting established union rules and procedures, Eddie in 1937 was one of numerous communists awarded the TUC's Tolpuddle medal for union recruitment. By 1940, however, differences had once again emerged over communist attitudes to the war, and he was again among fourteen communists threatened with expulsion for attending the national stewards' conference by which the Engineering and Allied Trades' Shop Stewards' National Council was effectively inaugurated. Eddie was also censured for the inclusion of inappropriate matter in an internal union communication, and with the Cold War renewal of tensions a similar issue was once more raised in connection with his standing for the union's Executive Council. Even following his election as district secretary in 1961, Eddie was suspended for three months for what was essentially a technical infringement of the union's rules. As so often, the use and abuse of the union's rulebook served as an instrument of faction, and just as in 1931–1932 Eddie's formal appeal against such practices was ultimately upheld [Frow papers, 22, for relevant correspondence with AEU officials; RF, *Edmund Frow*, pp. 112–113].

Reconstruction of the world of the shopfloor communist points to a complex relationship between industrial commitments and political ones. Croucher's verdict is that communist shop stewards were above all the representatives of their trade union members and cannot be assumed simply to have put the 'King Street' party line. Fishman, while not exactly dissenting, argues that the King Street line itself was not only flexible and open to interpretation, but usually—Fishman says invariably—prioritised union loyalism as the precondition of effective communist work within the unions. Frow certainly described his own activities in just these sorts of terms. He was active in CPGB bodies like the pre-war Manchester metal bureau, for which he was responsible, and its post-war industrial advisories. On the other hand, these activities were easily rationalised as part of a longer tradition of partisan agitation within the confines of a common movement. Jack Tanner, whom Eddie recalled as one of those exercising union discipline in 1940, would himself make the transition from revolutionary syndicalist to AEU national president to eventual Cold War anti-communist. As Tanner put it, there was 'nothing new in the Movement at all'—unless perhaps it was the communists' greater attentiveness by the 1930s to at least the formal observance of the conventions which accommodated them within an undivided movement [Tanner cited in Fishman (1995) 335].

Certainly in Eddie's case, when he felt the pull of party discipline it was in support of the 'trade union legalism' which had counted for so little in his formative years as a communist militant. Following his censure and threatened expulsion from the AEU in the summer of 1940, it was thus on the party's instructions that he did not attend the People's Convention which for a period was the main focus of the CPGB's political campaigning. 'I was trying to keep my head down a bit … and I'd got orders: the party told me, "You've not got to get yourself expelled from the union because we don't want to lose people that have influence … just by them sticking their necks out."' Despite his being a signatory to the People's Convention manifesto, Eddie's papers thus include his unused delegate's credential slip, and his correspondence with the AEU demonstrating his having attended to carefully documented union business at the time [Frow papers, 22; Morgan (1989) 131].

When seemingly he jeopardised his prospects within the union in 1952, he was actually disciplined by the party, and debarred from attending the CPGB's 22nd national congress that Easter. 'It is harder … when it affects someone with such a long and good record as yourself in the struggle', wrote the CPGB district secretary Syd Abbott, 'but at the same time it is also easier because everyone recognises that … disciplinary measures … are taken in the knowledge that they are decisions which are self imposed'. The handling of party cadres was to generate much contention in Lancashire and Cheshire and this was not the last time that Eddie came the wrong side of it. It must have come as comfort as well as reassurance when some weeks later the national industrial organiser Peter Kerrigan sent him a note of appreciation for his efforts in various party causes, precisely in view of his recent 'difficult problems'. When the following year

Eddie and Ruth met at a party school in Sussex, Ruth was powerfully impressed by 'that historic & windy evening when we walked along the front at Hastings [and] you told me of your behaviour when you were punished and that you had won respect because of the way you took it'. Though Kerrigan has something of the reputation of a martinet, he would again impress Ruth with the humanity of his response during the Frows' subsequent difficulties with the party [Frow papers, 20, Abbott to EF, March 1952 and Kerrigan to EF, 20 May 1952; Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, 17 December 1953; Callaghan (2003) 45–46].

Eddie in any case knew as well any party functionary the practical constraints upon carrying through communist directives on the shopfloor. There was no significant party policy that he did not formally uphold. He did so, for example, following its shift over the war in 1939, and he recalled the active hostility which communists encountered at the time of the Soviet invasion of Finland. Two years later, as its line on the war was once again reversed, he expounded his party's new-found commitment to war production with such fervency and persuasiveness as to earn the personal commendation of the Minister of Supply, Lord Beaverbrook [Frow papers, 22, Beaverbrook to EF, 10 November 1941]. Despite these several convulsive policy changes, Eddie nevertheless warned in retrospect against overstating their implications in respect of the communists' industrial work:

> rightly or wrongly we were fundamentally trade unionists who were dealing with industrial issues on a day-to-day basis as we were confronted with them. We were political animals inasmuch as we were a small circle of people who were able and willing to explain our political case. But what we were doing on the industrial side wouldn't have been a great deal different, in my opinion, whichever policy we'd had [Morgan (1989) 131–133].

If seemingly this supports the Croucher–Fishman view that the priority was to heed the industrial wishes of workplace constituents, confirmation lies, not so much in Eddie's own retrospective testimony, as in the votes of confidence he received both in union elections and as a shopfloor convenor.

Eddie afterwards expressed substantial reservations regarding the communists' abandonment of the more radical positions of his younger years. The so-called Yalta perspective of 1944–1945 envisaged a disposition to post-war social and international co-operation which he came to regard as 'absolute and utter rubbish' that should never have been entertained. He also found flawed and regrettable the modified version of this gradualist scenario in the CPGB programme first adopted in 1951, *The British Road to Socialism*. On meeting Ruth two years later, Eddie wrote of how 'as a youth I held the banner high but am afraid it has been lowered a lot since', and also referred more cryptically to the issue of principle against expediency 'in both little and large things' [EF, interview, 11 September 1987; Frow papers, 56, EF to RF, 31 August 1953].

By the large things, he did not necessarily mean expediency in the transition to socialism itself. Nevertheless, the lasting imprint is clearly discernible of the communist influences of Eddie's formative years, along with the writers and poets of an older radical tradition whom he had encountered even earlier still. In August 1953, he enumerated for Ruth his favourite prose writings. Though as yet there had been no real hint of destalinisation, it is notable that Eddie's list should have included nothing from the two decades or more of Stalin's political dominance. Instead, Eddie included the *Communist Manifesto*, Milton's *Areopagitica*, Jack London, Maxim Gorky and the final article of Rosa Luxemburg (1919). He also specified the manifesto of the second and effectively founding world congress of the Comintern in 1920 rather than any of the later ones.

More remarkably, he cited works by Bolsheviks who had since been marginalised by communist orthodoxy or shot as enemies of the people. In the first category was the 1920s' commissar for education, Anatoly Lunacharsky, whose writings Eddie noted finding it difficult to get hold of. In the second category was Lenin's nearest peer as theoretician, Nikolai Bukharin, the

author of an article which Eddie again 'often wanted to re-read but could never find'. Another favourite piece was the essay on the Cheka's founder Dzershinsky by Karl Radek, who like Bukharin had been a very public victim of the Moscow show trials. Eddie's cadre training notwithstanding, it was as if he were oblivious to the fate of these writers and the reason why their works might have proved so elusive. He would not have shown Trotsky such tolerance, and in the very same breath he discountenanced Paul Frolich's 'anti-party' life of Luxemburg. Eddie was therefore not in any sense at this time a conscious dissenter. Nevertheless, it is not altogether surprising that he should afterwards have been affected by reading of the plight of this generation of Bolsheviks in Roy Medvedev's *Let History Judge* [Frow papers, 56, EF to RF, 23 August 1953].

For the time being, however, the immediate pressures of the party line proved irresistible. Despite his earlier scepticism regarding the Labour Party's socialist credentials, Eddie joined with everyone else in swallowing 'hook, line and sinker' the optimistic vison of a post-war Labour Britain. During the 1945 election, he got together with workmates to campaign for Labour in their dinner-breaks, and his papers still contain the contribution sheet he organised for Labour's Fighting Fund. When his AEU colleague Fred Lee was returned as MP for the nearby Hulme constituency, he wrote to Eddie of the 'wonderful experience' of Labour's new parliamentary intake as it launched into its famous impromptu rendition of the *Red Flag*. Eddie on reading the letter must have agreed that these were 'remarkable times'. Almost before he put the letter down, the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima had nevertheless already cast its darker shadow over Labour's initial ebullience. Communists would in due course voice a general sense of disillusionment in the Attlee years. Nevertheless, it was the manufacturing of Britain's own atom bomb that Eddie would single out as its most truly infamous act. It is suggestive of his deep-seated distrust of Labour's reformism and Great Power chauvinism that in standing for union election in 1949 he should have been warned by Abbott against a generalised attack on the Attlee government that might assist in the communists' isolation [Frow papers, 22, Lee to EF, 4 August 1945, Abbott to EF, 15 December 1948; EF, Interviews, 10 and 11 September 1988].

Even in the personal matter of Eddie's marriage there was acceptance, however grudgingly, of the party's legitimate authority. In 1935 he had married Marjorie Sherwood, whom he had met at a Young Communist League dance and who was then working as a waitress. They married that June and the following year their one child Eric was born. Like many party marriages, theirs was a shared political allegiance but not a shared life of engagement. On the contrary, if Eddie could afterwards describe a relentless commitment centred on the workplace, it was on the basis of a conventional division of labour and the gendered allocation of public and private spheres. Like so many other party marriages, this one therefore bore the strain of political responsibilities that fell heavily on one partner while requiring the active but largely unacknowledged support and understanding of the other.

It was on meeting Ruth in 1953 that Eddie saw the chance of a more truly companionate political marriage, albeit one that required Ruth's forthright challenge to these assumptions before Eddie fully appreciated what such a relationship involved. According to Eddie's oldest friend Frank Morgan, another communist engineer, his breaking up with Marjorie had been on the cards for years [Frow papers, 56, EF to RF, 16 August 1953]. Nevertheless, though Ruth by now was an unattached free agent, Eddie as yet was not; and as Marjorie was not amenable to an easy dissolution, the couple were for the time being required by the party to abandon or at least postpone their plans for living together. Eddie now moved out of his home with Marjorie; but it was on Ruth that the immediate practical impact principally fell. It proved a singular test of her party commitment and is discussed more fully below.

Eddie would afterwards describe them as ardent Stalinists. Though Stalin had died in March 1953, his presence among British communists was in some ways never more palpable than at the moment of his passing. A key consideration for the bibliophile was the appearance from 1952 of

the regular instalments of his *Works*. Most of these had not previously been issued in English, and for the first time there now filtered through a corpus of writings and obiter dicta resembling those of Lenin or Marx. 'I must go to bed & read my Stalin', Ruth wrote of volume 4, while the first passage Eddie ever copied for her was from Stalin's tribute to the Bolshevik Telia in volume 2. Though Stalin's birthday had in his lifetime been noticed mainly on the decade markers, the first anniversary of his death already had Eddie pondering how best to mark the occasion at the party's area committee. 'Volume 6 is exceptionally interesting', the same letter continues. 'I must let you have it to read as soon as possible.' Even at the party school at which Ruth and Eddie met, the syllabus featured the nineteenth congress of the CPSU, the last of Stalin's lifetime, and Stalin's final work, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR* [Frow papers, 2, EF, MS notes, 1990; Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, 17 December 1953, 13 and 17 January 1954].

For the communist of Ruth's later formation, the realisation of socialist ideals in Eastern Europe was at this point as central to her conception of socialism as the ideal of the Russian revolution had been for Eddie. Eddie's own links with 'actually existing socialism' were also renewed at this time through the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). The WFTU had been established in 1945 as a unitary body. It had then been reduced in effect to a communist sphere of influence as western affiliates like the British Trades Union Congress (TUC) broke off to form a rival body, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. The WFTU still had the support of the dominant union confederations in France and Italy, and in Latin America and the emerging post-colonial world its presence and credibility were far greater than its rival's. Nevertheless, its European centre of gravity was in the Soviet bloc, and it lacked any genuine popular basis in Britain. When Eddie attended the WFTU's third world congress in Vienna in 1953, it was not therefore as a delegate as such, but as one of seven British 'observers'. 'What a lark', he wrote of his £45 fare. 'It would be better if it were 45/- from the way we are doing in raising cash.' What the congress did nevertheless provide was the sense of a world movement which, though meeting in neutral Vienna, remained both spiritually and organisationally centred on the USSR. Eddie himself described 'scenes of great enthusiasm' for the Soviet delegate Shvernik as well as a film he found compelling of the Volga–Don Canal, a two-hour colloquy with a Soviet toolmaker and the positive 'thrill' of having his photograph taken with the Russians. More clearly than ever before, he wrote to Ruth, he saw in Vienna 'what a great movement you & I are part of', and picked up so many books and 'wonderful' Soviet photographs that he had no idea how to get them home [Frow papers, 56, EF to RF, 6 October 1953 and n.d. but October 1953; Frow papers, 21, EF to RF, October 1953].

The Khrushchev speech repudiating Stalin's crimes followed barely two years later, in February 1956. Eddie's immediate response was to dismiss it as a forgery. When later in the year thousands of British communists were further alienated by the suppression of the Hungarian rising, he did what he could in holding the party together and could never have willingly broken with it. When subsequently the CPGB fell prey to deep-seated internal divisions, both he and Ruth identified strongly with its more traditional elements. In doing so, they were among those moved far more by the drift away from class politics in Britain than by any differences over the socialist regimes of the East [Andrews (2004) Chap. 7]. When in 1982 a *Marxism Today* article brought into question alleged malpractices of British trade union officers, the Frows were among those who saw in this an affront both to their communism and to their union loyalism. Fourteen years later this still figured in the pamphlet they published attacking the revisionist elements they held so largely responsible for the CPGB's late tribulations. In respect of Europe's ruling communist regimes, there was certainly not the same forthrightness. Following his retirement in 1971 Eddie went on a CPGB veterans' trip to the USSR, and still in the 1980s he upheld the Soviets' achievement as one that was actually strengthening over time. Nevertheless, this did not by this time preclude an awareness of the darker side of Soviet history, as notably revealed to him on reading Medvedev's account on its publication in English in 1972

[EF and RF, *The Liquidation of the Communist Party of Great Britain*; EF, interview, 18 February 1988].

Following the shock of the Khrushchev revelations, Eddie had looked for a renewal of socialist ideals that was consistent with his basic party loyalism, and found this, not in Soviet or generically communist traditions, but in specifically British ones. Convinced of the importance of revolutionary theory, he had first of all looked to Lenin, and to the reminder of communism's founding principles in *The State and Revolution*. However, in his then turning to past legacies rather than future anticipations there was a conscious reorientation to Britain's own radical heritage. By the spring of 1958, word was getting round that he and Ruth were 'building up a collection' of books and documents on working-class history [Frow papers, 2, Joan Simon to RF, 16 March 1958]. Later that year, Eddie made his bow as historian of socialism with a lecture and article for the Robert Owen centenary. Both were delivered under broadly communist auspices, and the motivations for such activities must have included the legitimising of the CPGB itself by recourse to history. Nevertheless, with the unsettling of old alignments there was also the possibility of common ground with those defectors from the party who also sought the regeneration of socialist ideals through Britain's own rich history of political contestation.

The most important of these was E.P. Thompson. Already, as a communist, Thompson had authored a brilliant proselytising study of William Morris, whom Eddie described as his 'real favourite' among the poets [Frow papers, 56, EF to RF, 12 August 1953]. In his writings on socialist humanism on breaking with the CPGB, Thompson also invoked figures like Tom Mann, another of Eddie's favourites, as bearers of an untainted socialist morality that needed to be recovered from Stalinism. Eddie would in due course group these texts with Medvedev's as influences upon his later thinking. Whatever he may have made of Thompson's more polemical writings, the recovery of a radical history did also provide a common frame of reference in which there was, for the time being, the reaffirmation rather than obscuring of the primacy of class. When in 1960, the Society for the Study of Labour History (SSLH) was formed, Eddie had no hesitation in joining and his name appears in the list of members in the society's second bulletin. Subsequently following his retirement he was to serve for some years as the society's treasurer.

The sense of an alternative radical history had been part of his political make-up from the beginning. A printed CPGB training syllabus still bears in Eddie's hand his name, address and the Boxing Day date in 1924 when he must have been introduced to its five-part periodisation of modern British history. He also attended a course on industrial history which Haigh gave the following year using Mark Starr's Plebs League textbook *A Worker Looks at History*. Subsequently there were CPGB classes like those of 1928–1929 which William Paul delivered on the development of political institutions; though these, in the spirit of the communists' internationalism, were neither confined to nor primarily focused on British institutions [see RF, *Edmund Frow*, pp. 20–22].

Eddie would comment later that he had 'read more Russian history than English'. He did not specify the period he had in mind, but there are obvious signs of what he meant by the time of the Cold War. In 1951, for example, he enrolled on a '6 Months' Personal Study Programme for Leading Cadres' based on the CPSU's *Short Course* history with a reading list of essentially Soviet provenance [Frow papers, box 2, EF, MS 'Notes', 1990 and CPGB Central Education Department circular, 11 January 1951]. Even so, the communists' turn to the popular front had also given rise to a sustained engagement with specifically British traditions of protest and even revolution. Eddie recalled in particular being enthralled in 1937 by a lecture on the English revolution which the CPGB's London district organiser Ted Bramley gave in Manchester. 'Here was the class struggle at its sharpest on English soil', he commented half a century later, as figures like Cromwell and the Leveller Lilburne were brought to life, and new context provided for his love of Milton [RF, *Edmund Frow*, p. 19; EF, 'A workers' search'].

Already in the 1940s, there was also the stirring of a radical labour history providing more immediate focus and meaning for Eddie's own activities as an industrial militant. It helped that

its first important production was the engineers' history commissioned from the young communist historian James Jefferys in one of the AEU's phases of unity. It was in just this spirit that Eddie himself in 1946 chaired the AEU national school in Blackpool and is pictured there chatting amicably with the still benignly disposed Jack Tanner. Jefferys was one of the speakers at the school, and Eddie's report conveys his unabashed appreciation.

> The history of the Trade Union Movement, and of our Union in particular, was shown not dead and detached from the events of today, but alive and vital for the successful carrying forward of our society … The skill with which the economic, political and social background of each period, and the technical stage of development of industry was shown to present problems to the Union and how the working class tackled and solved them was outstanding [Frow papers, 22, AEU *Monthly Journal* cutting, October 1946].

The immediate influence of such histories is discernible in Eddie's next AEU election address, with its defence of the engineers' much maligned 'restrictive practices' as a 'heritage handed down to use from the pioneers of the old ASE which we must jealously guard' [Frow papers, 21, EF, AEU election brochure, 1949]. A longer term legacy was to see the continuing value of such writings even following the break with communism of so many of this cohort of historians in 1956–1957.

Eddie was not, on the other hand, much enthralled by the renewal of marxist theory after 1956. Already by the 1930s, Macintyre observes how the autodidact had been displaced from any central role in formulating questions of theory. This, however, had been made more palatable by the shared commitment, identity and structure of authority within which communists of different social location set about their separate tasks on the principle of each according to their opportunities. The academic marxism of a later generation, by contrast, was experienced by Eddie as the appropriation of what had originally been the workers' own property, with the object of perverting or at least diluting its political message [EF, 'A worker's search']. Eddie had never shied away from writings on philosophy and economics; still in 1954 he was rising to the challenge of Maurice Dobb's *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, and still he was finding it 'very tough' [Frow papers, 56, EF to RF, 3 and 17 August 1954]. But Ruth was not a product of this culture, nor of its almost polymathic ideal of self-betterment. When twenty years later the space began to run out in the Frows' Old Trafford home, these were now the 'esoteric subjects' that got consigned to the garage [Frow papers, 31, 'Living in a library', n.d.].

Pride of place went instead to Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*. Published in 1963, this was the one book that Eddie would have rescued from the flames; it was the one that showed how working-class history really should be written, and which at the same time provided a corrective to 'mechanical Marxism' to which he was increasingly receptive. This was also the period of radical history that drew him most, and among biographies Eddie would single out as his favourite Cecil Driver's life of Richard Oastler, *Tory Radical*. More than this, however, Thompson's was one of the foundational texts of the British new left, written in just the period that the Frows' own collection of radical history materials was becoming properly established. To this extent they may therefore be grouped together as among the many unintended consequences of Khrushchev's destalinisation [EF, 'A worker's search', EF, interview, 18 February 1988; EF to author, 23 June 1992].

The story of how the library came about is impossible to tell without also knowing something of Ruth's prior history. Indeed, without her particular skills as what she called an 'organising female' it would certainly have been just another of the radical book collections that were personal to their creators and disappeared with them. What Eddie brought to the enterprise was the truly voracious appetite for books of one who could boast of recollecting entire lists of them, and who mentally stored this information according to principles which not even Ruth could fully comprehend. Macintyre comments on the sheer energy and determination with which the

worker-intellectuals of the labour movement set about their pursuit of knowledge. He also notes how some were viewed as 'queer' on this account, and how some reciprocated with intolerance or even contempt for those of laxer habits [Macintyre (1980) 38–39, 71–72]. The founding of a library is certainly a mark of singularity. The one we owe to the Frows is not a monument to the individual, but to the written and visual culture of the wider movement whose name it bears. Nevertheless, like every monument, by its merely standing out as such it does also testify to some quality that manifestly did mark its originators out from their peers.

Not only was Eddie born with the proverbial 'book in his hand'; sometimes it seemed impossible to prise it from him. The souvenir of a British Workers' Sports Federation camp in 1932 records good-humouredly his insistence on bringing with him 'a typewriter, Lenin's collected works and volumes one to six of *Inprecorr*' [cited in Worley (2002) 212]. Eddie himself confirmed later that a real party activist at this time always reckoned on having their own typewriter and access to a duplicator [EF interview, 10 September 1987]. That was certainly one mark of distinctiveness. Another was Eddie's self-exclusion from the heavy-drinking camaraderie so characteristic of the English engineers. His father too, while keeping a barrel of home-brew, had never been seen to enter a pub. Nevertheless, Eddie wrote that it was not morally but 'intellectually and physically' that he found that even social drinking did not suit him. It was in this context that he mentioned the love of poetry and solitary rambles that provided his own respite from the pressures of the workplace. In Ruth for the first time he found someone with whom both could be shared, and as instantly he fell in love he gave vent to his feelings in passages from Shelley, Keats, Whitman, Swinburne and above all Morris. He might be a toolmaker, he reminded Ruth as if to defend himself; but he also cared for poetry, opera and other things that toolmakers typically did not care about [Frow papers, 21, autobiographical notes, n.d.; 56, EF to RF, 12, 27, 28 and 29 August 1953].

Eddie's circumstances were nevertheless very different from those of the full-time political workers whom Macintyre mentions, such as Jack Lawson and Harry Quelch. Self-education in his case was at no stage the means of his extricating himself from the workshop, or from the city in which he had made his life. Nor, as he overcame his initial revulsion, did he withdraw into a sort of internal emigration, as Alfred Williams did even before he left the workshop. On the contrary, when Eddie mentioned his walks and love of poetry it was to explain how he drew from them the strength to 'continue working in the movement'. As a shopfloor worker until well into his fifties, his political identity was centred on the workplace, and it was here that he was entrusted with a long series of responsibilities by his fellows. Not all of these, moreover, were the 'lads' with whom he refrained from going out 'on the binge'. More particularly, the stewards' committee he organised at Ward & Goldstone's from 1956 primarily comprised and represented women. A degree of detachment from the engineers' gendered social rites, reinforced by this time by Ruth's influence, may in these circumstances have been positively conducive to a broadening out beyond the AEU's traditional exclusiveness [Frow papers, 56, EF to RF, 29 August 1953].

Eddie in any case had the roots in workplace culture that came of being part of it. He told one story of how during the wartime blackout he turned up at his freethinking doctor's aiming to get on the right side of him by taking along a copy of Cassels's *Supernatural Religion*. As his doctor launched forth upon its contents and duly wrote him a sick note, Eddie sat there 'laughing my head off', and set off on a week's illicit holiday in the Isle of Man. Returning to work nicely tanned, he explained that he had been convalescing in the garden. 'They all knew it was a bloody lie, even the foreman knew' [EF interview, 28 January 1985]. Eddie had exacting views about diet and physical culture as well as the culture of the mind. Nevertheless, bookish enthusiasms were not in this case cultivated to the exclusion of an informal workplace culture that included skiving and getting one over on the foreman. Another of his favourite books was Tressell's *Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, which through its socialist hero Owen conveys so marked a sense of social distance between the socialists and those who so hesitated to follow their lead

[Samuel (1988)]. Eddie, however, could never have spoken of his workmates in the way that Owen spoke of his, nor indeed have addressed them in the self-regarding accents of received pronunciation. In his tribute to Tressell 'Socialism or Mugsborough?', Harry Pollitt himself warned against Owen's contempt for his fellow workers. The distinctiveness of the earnest minority was in this instance clearly tempered both by Eddie's communist convictions and by his daily interaction with the shopfloor majority.

Afternoons in the sunshine would eventually take their toll. As Eddie approached his tenth decade he needed repeated laser treatment for skin cancers, and after months of discomfort and pain died on 15 May 1997, just short of his ninety-first birthday. Ruth in paying tribute wrote that he had remained on a continuously ascending learning curve. In learning, as he did, through history, this could also mean returning to first principles. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Eddie lived long enough to reflect on the collapse of Europe's communist regimes and of the USSR itself. In doing so, he once more had recourse to *The State and Revolution*, and now described this most utopian of Lenin's writings as the 'direct opposite to the monstrous bureaucratic state' established by ruling communist parties. One is reminded of another communist autodidact, the French railwayman Jean Chaintron, who was born within three months of Eddie, and who at just the same age converted to communism on reading the *Communist Manifesto*. Here again, communism as a system contained the seeds of its own critique in the founding texts which it disseminated; for exactly like Eddie, though some years earlier, Chaintron also found in this earliest and most formative of his communist readings the means of disengaging himself from Stalinism [Frow papers, 2, EF handwritten notes on 'Lenin. State and Revolution', 1990; Chaintron (1993)].

Though Eddie's was a far more protracted return to first principles, there was in his case too the unfinished business of 1956. Harry Ratner was a London-born Trotskyist whom Eddie had got to know as an AEU shopfloor activist in Manchester and Salford. In his autobiography, Ratner recalled how Eddie afterwards told him of the impression that the arguments between them had made in the 1950s, though not of course to the extent of ever bringing into question his party allegiance [Ratner (1994) 204]. Eddie would not have been confronted with Edward Thompson's more political writings in the same informal way, and it is likely that he gave serious attention to them at some undetermined point after reading *The Making of the English Working Class*. Nevertheless, as the USSR by 1990 teetered on the brink, it was Thompson's famous exposition of socialist humanism, appeaing in the first *New Reasoner* in 1957, that Eddie invoked as a text now vindicted by history itself. As he noted acerbically, even the official *World Marxist Review* had come round to saying 'precisely the same as Edward said in 1957. Only it was 33 years later.' Not marxism itself had been found wanting, he added, but only its 'distortion and debasement' by Stalinism [Frow papers, 2, EF handwritten notes on 'Stalinism' and untitled, both 1990].

In the same breath, Eddie also called to mind the democratic nature of his own union and social movement activism. This might have been a necessary corrective to Stalinism and the way in which his generation had avoided its worst excesses. Clearly shaken by the scale of communism's debacle, Eddie posed this as a question rather than a fully compelling answer. Nevertheless, in the form of the Working Class Movement Library there certainly did remain the legacy of a culture of activism and self-education that went beyond the narrower preoccupations of the communist movement and had always been intended to. This, however, was so much the Frows' joint undertaking that it cannot simply be recounted as a part of Eddie's personal history and it is therefore dealt with in the special note below.

**Ruth Frow** was born Ruth Engel in St John's Wood, London on 28 July 1922, the eldest of three children of Leon Alfred Engel and his wife Ethel née Reid. Her father was Jewish and her mother, Leon's second wife, a Roman Catholic of Irish extraction who had converted to Judaism on their marriage. Leon Engel had at one time been a concert pianist, retiring, it was

said, because of rheumatism. He then embarked on a second career as a commercial traveller in embroideries who travelled extensively in Europe and North America. The family enjoyed a more-than-comfortable middle-class upbringing, and when Ruth was five they moved to Engel Park, Mill Hill, a salubrious estate newly built by a cousin in the building trade. Though her father died when she was thirteen, there is no hint in Ruth's later recollections of either emotional or material deprivation. Nor is there any record of significant family differences arising from her later attachment to communism. Though neither of her brothers remotely shared her political views, and her younger brother Bernard became a prominent Conservative in Hertfordshire, family relations were always cordial if occasionally uncomprehending.

The Engel family's commitment to Judaism was liberal and largely formalistic. Briefly Ruth attended the Jewish *schul*; but already in 1928 she transferred to the private Downhurst School, run by the wife of the rector of Hendon, and remained there until matriculating in 1939. Certificates record her proficiencies variously in elocution, recitation, music and dancing; their object was the production of a young lady, and according to Ruth 'they failed miserably'. She did excel in sports, and as a keen tennis player was selected for the junior Middlesex team. She also had a maternal grandfather who had trained horses for the Earl of Ellesmere, and apparently acquired some basic competence in this respect too. On the other hand, she described the academic aspect of her education as 'sadly lacking', though it did at least extend to the facility in written expression which Ruth would draw upon in her party work and in the Frows' extensive output of historical writings [RF, interview, 17 March 2000].

Ruth had dreamt of going to university and studying medicine. Perhaps, as she later consoled herself, a socialist Britain would allow the opportunity to do so, and give Eddie the chance of a degree in engineering [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, 26 September 1953]. Though in reality she got no further than her Red Cross training, on leaving school as Europe descended into war she did work briefly as a nurse. In April 1940 she then volunteered for the RAF with the object, as she later put it, both of doing something for the war and of getting away from home for a bit of 'life' [RF, interview, 17 March 2000]. She was impatient enough for this to have falsified her birth date to be able to enlist three months under-age. The altered date is still recorded in her discharge papers, along with commendations of an unblemished service record that ended only when she became pregnant towards the end of 1944. Enlisting just in time for the Battle of Britain, she had worked first of all in the Fighter Command control room and then in radar, where she was based at Sandwich on the Kent coast.

This was a key sector of the war effort and one of the century's prime sites of national myth and collective memory. It is therefore remarkable how little Ruth ever made of her war record. She did once evoke in passing the spirit of morale in which the British when united surpassed even the people of the USSR. 'We experienced something of the sort during the bombing in London', she wrote to Eddie, and held that this boded well for a future socialist Britain [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, 2 March 1954]. Any curious journalist might have thought that Ruth of the two had had the more eventful war. It therefore says a good deal about the communists' prioritising of the point of production that both the Frows themselves and future researchers (like the present one) took much greater care in documenting Eddie's relatively undisrupted wartime activities.

Contrary to prevailing stereotypes, women in the post-war years did not always sink willingly back into domesticity. Many, indeed, viewed the contraction of their wartime horizons with dismay, and their independence of spirit was to be a factor in the rising divorce rates of the 1950s. Ruth was certainly of this number and she despised what she called the clinging vine type of female [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, 25 September 1953]. This led both to the break-up of her first marriage and the hopes of comradeship that she invested in her second one. What was distinctive in her case was how these issues took a distinctly politicised form that was bound up indissolubly with her commitment to communism.

This too was a by-product of her wartime experience. It was in the RAF that Ruth first encountered 'mildly political' people, and in Sandwich that she met her first husband Dennis Haines, who was working as an electrical engineer. Following their marriage, and Ruth's discharge in December 1944, the couple remained in the area and campaigned for the successful Labour candidate, J.R. Thomas, in the following year's general election. In this way they came into contact with communist miners at the nearby Betteshanger pit who were helping in Thomas's campaign exactly as Eddie was assisting in Salford. The Labour Party itself, by comparison, 'quite frankly looked a bit fuddy-duddy'; and through the miners' urging and example, Ruth and Dennis joined the CPGB. Deeper conviction followed with the reading of communist literature. In particular, Ruth described the exposition of a materialist philosophy in Emile Burns's *What Is Marxism?* as coming to her like a 'flash of light' that settled the issue of her uncertain religious identity. With her 'mixed background' she had previously been troubled that she didn't seem to 'fit anywhere'. In marxism she not only found the reason why she didn't fit, but somewhere where she did [RF, interview, 17 March 2000].

Ruth and Dennis's baby was still-born. When the couple returned to London after the war, Ruth worked for a time in production planning for a hospital equipment manufacturers. She then joined the Emergency Teacher Training Scheme, and in 1949 began what proved to be a thirty-year teaching career with an appointment in East London. There were many communist teachers, and a well-organised party teachers' group which provided the main focus of her political activities. Dennis, meanwhile, had secured a position as a sound engineer with the BBC World Service. In an atmosphere of Cold War retreat in both politics and gender relations, he came to regard both his own and Ruth's political commitments as potentially jeopardising his career. Ruth, on the other hand, had no intention of relinquishing hers and there was in any case some quality of true and equal comradeship that was evidently lacking in their marriage. Ruth admitted that some 'instinctive part' of her hankered for the hearth. This, nevertheless, was only a very small part, and she neither wanted nor felt able to play the domesticated role that appeared to be expected of her. 'I am an independent type', she wrote when the effort had finally failed, 'and I find "leaning" an abhorrent process except in the political sense when I am so deeply conscious of my need for support. I spent ten years fighting to be allowed to stand on my own two feet as an individual with equal status and rights and my inclination is to say "Go to hell" to anyone who tries to impose his will on mine' [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, 10 (?) November 1953 and 7 January 1954].

The differences between Ruth and her husband went deeper than the issues of current politics. Nevertheless, it seems noteworthy that Ruth should finally have left Dennis just two days after Stalin's death on 5 March 1953 [Frow papers, Ruth to Eddie, 7 March 1954]. She connected this in retrospect with International Women's Day, which fell the following day. Nevertheless, it was Stalin's death that dominated the daily news, and filled the papers with evaluations of his career that for the most part seemed a world away from the *Daily Worker*'s. It is not hard to see how this could have helped in bringing the issues between the couple to a head. Whatever did finally trigger the break, it meant that Ruth henceforth could enter fully into political undertakings without the risk of domestic difficulties. More than that, through these party networks she now found a source of both moral and practical support as she set about once more securing her independence.

For a time she took a room with two prominent London party members, Bill and Molly Wainwright. The former was at this time full-time secretary of the British Peace Committee (BPC). This was the national section of the World Peace Council, established in 1950 and in this period the principal focus of the communists' broader campaigning activities. Through Wainwright's initiative Ruth took on the role of CPGB liaison for the various 'cultural' peace groups affiliated to the BPC and in due course succeeded her friend Marie Philibert as secretary of Teachers for Peace (TFP). The year's work culminated in December 1953 in a TFP conference addressed by the poet C. Day Lewis, and with the participation of such international

delegates as could get past the Cold War visa restrictions. It all required a frenetic level of activity that gave even Eddie when Ruth met him cause for concern. 'Can one work too hard?', she reassured him, and described for him the satisfaction of testing one capacities to the limit by increasing 'more & still more' the pace:

> It is exhilarating to go flat out fighting against time. In some ways it is similar to galloping a horse. You have to be so balanced and so organised in every movement that nothing impedes your progress.

Of course, she added, she usually fell off the horse. On another occasion, she described how by Friday evening she always felt as if aged a hundred. 'But by Saturday morning I only feel 66.' The sardonically self-deprecating note was characteristic, and Ruth admitted to a tendency to flippancy in which Eddie if anything was rather deficient [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, 5 October and 28 November 1953, 22 March 1954].

It was Eddie whom for over a year Ruth entertained with her skills in letter-writing. They had met in August 1953 at a party school at Netherwood, a left-wing guest house in Hastings (and the location where the occultist Alesteir Crowley spent his final days). The rapport between them was instantaneous: Ruth agreed to move to Manchester, and, despite her cavils at domesticity, found by December that her trunks were packed for leaving and her mind full of 'carpets & beds & chairs' [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, 6 December 1953]. All might have gone smoothly but for Marjorie's sense of dereliction. Though the details are unclear, party officials evidently feared a scandal. At first they proposed that Eddie and Ruth be forbidden even to write to each other, and finally settled with them that Ruth's move north be put off until the following Easter. A compromise of sorts was reached in February, and Ruth relocated for the time being to Liverpool where, subject to their respective political responsibilities, they were able to meet up at weekends. As several months passed, the situation seemed to be spinning out indefinitely. As Ruth determined at last on taking the fight to the offending party officials, she discovered that their objections had all been dissipated. 'He was left a battered & bleeding mass on the floor sobbing for mercy', she wrote of one encounter, which may presumably be taken as a measure of past frustration [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, 16 September 1954]. Any final hiccups were overcome, and the Frows duly set up home together at the beginning of 1955, though the formalisation of their marriage was not possible until 1960.

While Eddie had always inclined more to defiance, Ruth at first had even derived some satisfaction from having their commitment tested in this exemplary way. The party, she said, should not have to go begging from them, and it was she in the end who decided that they should accede to its requirements. Communists themselves were not usually narrow-minded about such personal relationships. In Liverpool Ruth was to value the comradeship of two local party members, Joe and Olive Cope, who not only put her up, but were happy to have Eddie over while they played with toddler Dave. This was what Ruth meant in describing a communist party that never let you down because there was always somebody who would help you out. The Wainwrights, on the other hand, had cited the possible effect upon their children in explaining their objections to Eddie staying over, and had also referred in offensive terms to Ruth's sense of her own prerogatives. Ruth hated and resented the contrivance of having to register in hotels under a pretended married name, and with this slight from those so close to her she had, uncharateristically, 'cried like a baby'. But if the criticisms cut so deep, it was also because she half agreed with them. Should the matter be posed as one of party interest, she had always known that she would have to act 'as a Communist should'; and when she thought of comrades elsewhere in the world who did so in so much harder circumstances, she felt almost ashamed to have succumbed to despondency [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, n.d. but September 1953, also 21 September, 8 November, 17, 19 and 27 December 1953, 7 January 1954].

Where Eddie ran the risk of embitterment, Ruth saw that she had to guard against becoming 'insufferably pious' [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, 30 January 1954]. There was also the crucial difference between them that she alone faced upheaval in every aspect of her life. Though Eddie spoke of their relocating to the industrial Midlands, the CPGB ruled out any option involving his removal from his Manchester union base. Ruth, on the other hand, was to uproot herself to a world that initially must have seemed rather daunting. Her mother by now lived on the Wirral, and Ruth had a soft spot for Chester, '[i]t is so County and upper class'. On the other hand, one cannot miss the echo of that other southerner George Orwell when she writes of glimpsing from the train the 'squalor of Levenshulme and Stockport with their rows of dingy soul-destroying semi-slums', or of encountering in Liverpool 'a horrible place as dirty and dreary as it is possible for a town to be' [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, n.d. and 24 February 1954]. The south for Ruth also included the Stepney state schools in which she had begun her teaching career. Again unlike Orwell, she also stayed long enough in the north to understand how regional stereotypes both needed to be challenged and were being challenged from the inside. Nevertheless, these at first were clearly trying circumstances. If the result was the strengthening of Ruth's communist ties, it was not only as a source of stability in her life, but through the comfort she derived from being able to 'prove our ability to accept the Party's ruling'. Describing this as a condition of indebtedness to the party, she threw herself still more unremittingly into her political work in seeking to pay it off [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, n.d. but December 1953 and 27 December 1953].

There was also the issue of Ruth's feminism. Ruth herself was ambivalent about such a label, which she sometimes disavowed and sometimes insisted upon. She was certainly of that generation of communist women that looked askance at any tendency to separatism or the waging of the 'sex war' [Morgan et al. (2007) Chap. 5]. What she did have was what she described as the 'suffragette instinct'. As a matter of basic principle she held that women 'are men, with a difference'; given identical circumstances, they thought and acted in the same way, and she herself expected to be treated as any other comrade, male or female. With this strand of equality feminism, she was therefore critical of the confinement of women's political activities to so-called women's work. She also troubled over the notion of herself playing a part held to be 'the equal of any man', but without it necessarily being interchangeable with a man's part. She could even admit to a degree of jealousy at the roles that men were able to take on; and she wrote of her yearning for a woman to take her place among the 'really great leaders of the working class' like Lenin, Mao and Engels—whom curiously she warmed to rather more than to Marx or Stalin [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, n.d. but August 1953, 3 October 1953, 13 January 1954, 22 and 23 March 1954, 3 August 1954].

Refusing the idea of a discretionary equal treatment as an 'exceptional sort of female', she therefore rejected the 'sort of equality which separates me from other women', and rejected still more the sort of inequality that lumped them together as 'pleasant but inferior creatures'. Even Eddie was susceptible to such notions, and exposed to them not least through his literary enthusiasms. 'When you said it was bound to be worse for me because I am a woman, I realised, with a jerk, that I must have given you that impression and I made a mental apology to all women', Ruth wrote to him of their shared predicament:

> We are proud, we progressive women, and we neither need, nor will we accept, pity or special consideration because we are women. We claim equality as our right & are willing to prove our ability to take an equal part, tho' not necessarily an identical part, in the working class movement.

The distinctiveness or otherwise of the sexes was clearly a question on which Ruth found it difficult to settle on a fixed position. Self-sufficiency if necessary was to be preferred to dependency; but better still was the comradeship of interdependence and the interplay of

personalities [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, 16 and 25 September and 27 December 1953, 30 January 1954].

Whatever the complexities of her outlook, Ruth was consistent throughout in challenging what she called the 'male egotism' which had blighted her first marriage, and which she was determined should not do so a second time. It was thus that she looked to Eddie for a truly communist relationship that would restore her faith 'in men, in marriage & to some extent the party'—as well as in herself. Eddie appeared to her, if not exactly in shining armour, as the closest to a complete communist that she had ever met and as the 'living representative of the abstract and material ideals' that she held. As that 'finest of all animals, the real working class fighter', he was thus the living embodiment of his class whom she could not help identifying with Stalin's tribute to Telia or with the hero of Ostrovsky's Soviet Bildungsroman *How the Steel was Tempered*. Aspiring to a 'living ideal of comradeship', she thought it on balance a good thing that they were denied the legal marriage basis in which so much was embedded that she now rejected. Both had tried these bourgeois conceptions; both had known them fail. Let them therefore build a 'true marriage based on equality & mutual respect'. There was no thought at this stage of the library, but only of their joint work in the cause of communism. Paraphrasing the Bulgarian worker poet Nikola Vaptsarov, shot dead by the fascists in 1942, Ruth wrote of she and Eddie 'being reborn as a team synthesised out of two aspiring communists', and in this way building themselves afresh on the basis of mutual love and shared convictions [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, 13 August, 17 October and 17 December 1953, 2 and 7 February, 22 March, 21 April and 22 October 1954].

The achievement of such an ideal could hardly be without its tensions. As Ruth herself recognised, real equality of opportunity had not yet been realised even in the USSR. Within the CPGB there was also the prioritisation of particular areas of work that were mostly, as in Eddie's case, those of male communists, and which both reinforced and depended upon the carving out of separate spheres which Ruth found so objectionable. As an exemplar of the communist marriage she cited the alleged atomic spies Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, whom the US government had executed in 1953 and who captured the imaginations of Cold War communists as Sacco and Vanzetti had their parents' generation [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, 10 December 1953]. Eddie also turned his mind to readings by which he and Ruth might be guided in their future relationship. Specifically he mentioned Gorky, Krupskyaya and Clara Zetkin on Lenin and Wilhelm Liebknecht and David Riazanov on Marx. He even thought of sending Ruth Jack London's *Iron Heel*, whose middle-class narrator Avis abandons her class for her 'hero-husband' Everhard and consummates their love through merging into his life as both wife and secretary. This, like *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, was one of Harry Pollitt's favourite books; but Eddie on reflection decided that there were false notes in it that were better discussed in person [Frow papers, 56, EF to RF, 21 and 29 August 1953].

Ruth in any case had no intention of being Avis to anybody's Everhard. According to Florence Keyworth, for many years a *Daily Worker* journalist, communism was a male-centred movement that reserved its principal vanguard roles for men. According to the historian Sue Bruley, communist women in these circumstances tended to take on the role of either cadres or supporters. Ruth was adamant that even for Eddie she would not slip into the role of supporter. As finally in August 1954 the objections were lifted to their living together, she spelt out once again her credo as as 'rabid feminist' and her categorical refusal to play the Victorian female to Eddie's protective male. Together, but if necessary apart, she was and would remain an active communist. She had made her concession to Eddie's work on coming north, but she did not believe it more important than her own, and she had no intention of ministering to his needs while he carried it out: 'You will have to get it into your head that I am not a woman conforming to your idealistic conception.' On the basis of her own experience, Keyworth recalled that even communists with feminist leanings struggled at this time for the vocabulary with which to articulate them. In Ruth's case, it is nevertheless hard to see that being caught between the

different waves of feminism left her lost for words [Frow papers, 57, RF to EF, n.d. and 24 November 1954; Morgan et al. (2007) Chap. 5].

Recounting the history of their library twenty years later, the Frows—and the hand is clearly Ruth's—described how it took time for a communion of interests to emerge and how the first years of a marriage were 'inevitably fraught with problems of identity':

> Neither party wishes to become lost in the process of assimilation and a certain jockeying for position takes place. After a time either the books are placed on the same shelves – or the marriage breaks.

Of course, the marriage did not break. The shelving of the books together might just have been a metaphor; but it could also be that the library itself provided the sense of common endeavour that they needed to make their free and equal partnership a reality. 'Of course', Ruth wrote at the very end of her life, 'when Eddie and I got together, we both tried to adjust our lives so that we neither of us obliterated the other. To some extent, our book collecting was the result.' Certainly, the Frows identified the beginning of their joint life, not with the flat they initially occupied in south Manchester, but with their moving to the famous house in Old Trafford in which together with their books they would take on the character of an indissoluble entity [EF and RF, 'Travels in a caravan'; RF to the author, 12 December 2006].

Each had ground to give in the course of assimilation. Among the CPGB's younger metropolitan milieux, no special stigma attached to drinking or to smoking. Ruth had been no exception. 'You can drink cocoa out of a bleeding bucket if you want to', she advised Eddie in a terser moment, and evoked her prayers to Lenin, Stalin, Mao and Harry Pollitt as she tried to wean herself off tobacco. Having had polio and two abdominal operations, she also believed that Eddie might have dogmatised less about the perils of aspirin had he himself experienced any serious physical discomfort. Eddie indeed set such a stiff pace, 'not only politically, but culturally & physically & morally', that she described trying to keep up with him as exhilarating but also exacting. He did not, however, set such a tempo in attending to his domestic affairs. 'Do not repeat not try to feed me with bread one week old', Ruth wrote on one occasion. On another she threatened punitive action should he again try wearing the same white shirt all week. There were echoes here of that other communist bibliophile T.A. Jackson, with whom Ruth recalled having had tea in Deal in 1945, watching aghast as Jackson placed his dentures on the pristine tablecloth [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, 16 December 1953, 13 June, 5 July, 22 August, 13 October and 3 November 1954; RF, interview, 17 March 2000]. Though one would not have guessed it in later years, Eddie at this time was known for doing less around the house even than his father. On the other hand, Ruth if anything came to surpass him in her abhorrence for the evil effects of drink. When in the 1970s, she sought to convey this in a fictional item for the Federation of Worker Writers, it was rejected by its communist editor as a moralising temperance tract, and it is true that it would not have disgraced the Salvation Army [Frow papers, 80, RF correspondence with Ben Ainley, October 1975].

When finally in 1955 Ruth got to Manchester, there was no easing up in her activities. One advantage of the CPGB, as of the communist movement generally, was that wherever one ended up one had friends. Another advantage, not mentioned by Ruth, was that one could also always be found a political job to do. Already in Liverpool Ruth had taken the lead in setting up another broad-based peace committee. On her arriving in Manchester there then fell open a vacancy as secretary of the Manchester Peace Committee, which Ruth once more filled. In this way she was subsequently drawn into the earliest phases of the Manchester Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), serving as vice-chair to the historian Donald Pennington, then a lecturer at Manchester University. Meetings were held at the Didsbury home of politician and benefactor Ernest Simon. According to Ruth, Simon's munificence had the unintended consequence of dissipating the campaigning momentum that came of having to generate funds.

Even so, the ebbing of the peace movement in the early 1960s was a national phenomenon, irrespective of the local circumstances. Though subsequently there was a revival of activities over Vietnam, Ruth in any case was by this time fully absorbed in the shared undertaking of the library.

She had also by this time resumed a more settled pattern of teaching. Like many other communists in the 1940s, she had been drawn by the transformative potential of education, and she would dream of the day when she could 'openly and proudly' educate the children in the rudiments of marxism and socialist morality. Her methods and temperament in the meantime were evidently better suited to older children than to the primary classes she was allocated during her interlude of supply teaching. One need not take too literally her allusion to a 'peculiar form of military discipline'. Nevertheless, she found it difficult to adapt her language to younger children, and on one occasion described losing her patience and haranguing them on their responsibilities as the country's 'future workers and leaders'. Drawing to a halt as she recognised the absurdity of the situation, she saw to her astonishment that they were listening open-mouthed, One even piped up reassuringly, 'Coo Mrs Haines, you do talk lovely.' How she longed for the day, she added, when she could make real use of her ability to lead them, as the Pioneers did in the USSR [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, 15 September 1953, 12 February 1954].

Even under the present order of things, teaching English to older classes offered scope for Ruth to realise her calling by drawing on her own love of the classics. If Eddie had had a blind spot for women writers, it was Ruth who introduced him to Elizabeth Browning and *Aurora Leigh*. She also shared his taste for Morris and Shelley, and for the 'wonderful flow of words' in Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* (though she also thought it 'complete balls'). In London, there were trips with the children to see Shakespeare as well as Soviet dancers. Even in Liverpool, Ruth described finding the note she was looking for in that masterpiece of Victorian uplift, Arthur Hugh Clough's 'Say Not The Struggle Nought Availeth'. Her object, confronted with those whom streaming cast already to the bottom of the pile, was the instilling of confidence both in themselves and in their class. Assisted by Clough, she wrote of awakening their interest in abstract ideas and realising the 'fire and … potential energy' that was in them just waiting to be used in the fight for the decent things in life [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, n.d. but 1953, 9 February, 25 August and 30 September 1954].

It was on this belief in the child's capacity to reason that Ruth was to draw throughout her long career as a teacher. In the shorter term, it also lent itself to the dichotomies of the cultural Cold War in which both teachers and the peace movement played such active role. While Ruth was introducing Clough into her teaching, E.P. Thompson was at just this moment identifying him with the troubled middle-class sensibility out of which Morris made his way from romanticism to socialism. Through publications like *The American Threat to British Culture*, to which Thompson also supplied a Morris angle, these sensibilities were now redefined according to a two-camps world view in which America represented the degradation of the human spirit and the new people's democracies that reconciliation of science and morality that had eluded the Victorians. It was thus that Ruth described the reasoning powers of the child as the answer to the 'brutality and conditioning' of the comics and films which most of all symbolised capitalism's moral decay. Both communist teachers and the International Women's Day Committee played important roles in the campaign against American comics which Ruth strongly supported through her own activities.

She herself had the chance to witness at first hand the communist alternative when she visited Poland on a peace delegation in April–May 1954. Impressed by what seemed to her a higher conception of the child's capacities, she described in the *Daily Worker*'s 'Children's Corner' how Polish children were busily planting trees, clearing rubble and pledging their support for the congress of the United Workers' Party. 'Imagine what a real thrill it must be to help rebuild a city', the article enthused; and when Joe Cope subjected it to a debunking session, Ruth herself conceded affably that it had them 'rocking with laughter'. But there were also articles for Polish

readers describing the bleaker side of the conditions she had encountered in British schools, assisted by the contact she had established with an English-speaking Polish communist, Mikołaj Kozakiewicz ['Children in Poland', *Daily Worker*, 3 August 1954; Frow papers, RF to EF, 10 September 1954].

It was Ruth's generation rather than Eddie's that the events of 1956 sent flooding out of the CPGB. Her own immediate instinct, like Eddie's, was nevertheless to close ranks still more closely round the party, and thus around the Soviet-centred worldview which was misnamed proletarian internationalism. Poland was the one socialist country she had visited and the one next to Hungary that was most deeply shaken by the revolt against Europe's ruling communist parties. It was thus amidst mounting tension with the Soviets that in October 1956 the reform-minded communist Wladyslaw Gomulka was reinstated as Polish party secretary. Kozakiewicz was unabashedly a supporter of this reforming current. Urging Ruth to ignore misrepresentations of the brutally suppressed Poznań revolt, he described how Poland's people had set about constructing a 'true, free, democratic socialism … in our own Polish way'. Three months later, Kozakiewicz wrote again describing the battle against party reactionaries who hankered for the 'good old times' of Stalinism and the cult of personality. Ruth's response, she later recalled, was to drop him 'like a hot brick'. In Romania five years later, the only criticism the Frows could think of was that the roads would not be enough to accommodate future socialist traffic levels. Only much later did she see the denial of democracy as a fundamental deficiency of these systems, and one inimical to the construction of a communist or even a socialist society [Frow papers, 12, Kozakiewicz to RF, 21 October 1956 and 16 January 1957; RF interviews, 17 March 2000 and 9 May 2000].

Though Ruth until the early 1960s was a regular participant at CPGB congresses, she now increasingly turned to the library and related activities as her main field of activity outside of paid employment. Enrolling at Manchester University for a Diploma in Education, she wrote a dissertation on the half-time system that was subsequently published, followed by a Masters thesis on the labour college movement. Stll active in her party branch, in 1973 she took up the last of her teaching posts as deputy head at one of Manchester's largest comprehensives. Six years later she took early retirement to be able to free up time to give to the library. Well-respected in her career, she commented that she had at no point had the sense of being disadvantaged in it by her communist commitments [RF interview, 17 March 2000].

Ruth's party membership came to an end in 1987 as one of a large group of communists locally who were expelled in the course of the CPGB's degeneration into factional infighting. Though technically she had grounds for appeal against expulsion—like Eddie all those years before she had not attended the meeting whose proscription provided the pretext for such a cleansing—she was deeply disenchanted with the direction the party was taking and had no thought of separating herself from those expelled with her. She thus continued her membership through the breakaway Communist Party of Britain, and was particularly disposed to the view that agents of the state were working to break up the CPGB from within. 'That's tittle-tattle, Ruth', Eddie commented of one such rumour that circulated widely at the time. But despite his greater caution, Eddie did not remain in the party when Ruth was expelled, and with her he joined the breakaway Communist Party of Britain.

When in the 1970s, Manchester's younger feminist historians organised women-only meetings, Ruth similarly declined to take part if Eddie was excluded. The Frows through the library had achieved their comradely ideal; they both seemed and were, as in these two instances, as if inseparable. Ruth, however, could never have settled very long for the role of an Avis Everhard. Following Eddie's death in 1996, she did take greater care in documenting his life than she did her own, and she memorialised him in a biography-cum-memoir that well might suggest the analogy with Krupskaya's *Memories of Lenin*. The job completed, she nevertheless moved on once more, though on the territory that she and Eddie had jointly occupied. Although the Frows' collaboration as respectively writer and researcher had been brought to a close by

Eddie's passing, Ruth was tireless in her work for the WCML until almost the moment of her own sudden death on 11 January 2008. She had said that if it were necessary she could do without a man, and once again she had proved it. But at the same time, the Frows had surely been vindicated in the belief that there was more that they could achieve together than apart.

## Special Note: The Working Class Movement Library

Both the study and the conservation of British labour history have depended disproportionately on the two subsidiary traditions of Fabianism and communism. The DLB itself can trace its origins to the biographical files of G.D.H. Cole, who maintained the Fabian contribution to labour studies that began with the Webbs and resulted in major research collections at the London School of Economics and Nuffield College, Oxford. More immediately, the DLB was one of several legacies of John Saville, with whom Cole's files were entrusted on his death, and who was a leading light in turn of the CPGB historians, the post-1956 New Left and the SSLH. Saville also oversaw the establishment of a further important radical history collection at Hull, though this, like the one at Warwick, was by now also a mark of labour history's emergence by the 1970s into full academic respectability. Still in 1960, when the SSLH was formed, it felt like a pioneering field of study in which activist-historians proliferated and which neither was nor should be the exclusive preserve of academics.

The inception of the Working Class Movement Library (WCML) can be located firmly within this context. Its origins lay in the collections which the Frows had accumulated independently, and they testify to the reverence to the written word that was so much a feature of communist political culture. Neither Ruth nor Eddie had the habit of dating or inscribing their acquisitions, and the disentangling of these materials is now largely impossible. Nevertheless, it clear that Eddie's acquisitions more than Ruth's provided the core of the later collection. Quite apart from his twenty years' head start, and what Ruth described as his disease of book-collecting, Eddie had the stronger interest at this early stage in the forging of a democratic political culture within Britain itself. The volumes one to six of *Inprecorr* were still being added to, and now sat with volumes one to six of Stalin. Nevertheless, when Eddie reported a typical day's haul in the year of Stalin's death, it comprised Fielding's *Tom Jones*, a 'book on Lancashire' and *The Three Trials of William Hone*—'What a find!'—that set him off for days enthusing about John Wilkes. Though Ruth was not quite so purposive in her collecting, her tastes were both more contemporary and more international. At this stage they therefore tended to complement Eddie's preferences rather than overlap with them. His poetry, for example, made a fine collection that fitted well with hers; but it was 'deficient in Modern Poets', and this was the deficiency she supplied [Frow papers, 56, EF to RF, 28 August 1953, RF to EF, 2 January 1954].

The shared love of books leaps out at the reader from the Frows' earliest correspondence. 'Wait while you & I get our books together', Eddie wrote already in one of his earliest love letters, 'we will have a fine library'. Ruth in her bantering way speculated that it was on her books rather than her person that he had designs, and the story of their coming together in this way was one that she never tired of telling [Frow papers, 56, EF to RF, 13 September 1953, RF to EF, 15 September 1953]. Nevertheless, the transformation of a private enthusiasm into something of greater scope and political intent is clearly traceable only from communism's crisis year of 1956–1957.

A basic material consideration was the legacy left Ruth by her mother and the Frows' taking occupancy of a roomy suburban dwelling in King's Road, Old Trafford. There were also two further specific influences to which Eddie in particular would accredit the library's inception. The first was Khrushchev's revelation of Stalin's crimes. In Eddie's recollection, it was this, as its enormity sank in, that set the Frows to thinking that they ought to be less concerned with Russian history and more concerned with workers' lives and struggles closer to home. This, of

course, left it open what attitude might still be adopted to Russia's own past and present, and did not imply one definite moment of reckoning with Stalinism. In this concern with British workers' lives and struggles there is nevertheless an obvious parallel with Thompson, who in breaking with official communism also sought this validation and renewal of the socialist ideal through a home-grown radical tradition [Frow papers, 2, EF, 'The 20th Congress of the CPSU'].

If Khrushchev in Eddie's words was unwittingly the library's godfather, a second and more immediate influence was the British communist James Klugmann. One of the most gifted of the CPGB's pre-war intellectual recruits, Klugmann had spent much time in popular-front Paris and was greatly affected by how communists in France set about the recovery and appropriation of their own alternative national past. Klugmann's own efforts as historian, including the first two volumes of the CPGB's official history, do not bear close scrutiny. Nevertheless, he had been a fixture at meetings of the CPGB Historians' Group: he was among those addressing the summer school at which the Frows met, and Ruth described him as 'a wonderful lecturer with a disconcerting habit of looking right into your eyes while he is speaking' [Frow papers, 56, RF to EF, 13 August 1953]. Crucially, Klugmann was also an avid collector of radical history materials, and following the war and his demobilisation from the Special Operations Executive began hunting down the bibliographical rarities which still at this time were remarkably undervalued. It was not until 1960 that the Frows visited Klugmann's London home with its profusion of books and memorabilia in every nook and cranny. Klugmann, however, had already visited King's Road in early 1957 and commented on the empty wall spaces waiting to be filled. He also advised on how to fill them, and it was likewise under Klugmann's editorship that Eddie's first labour history article appeared in *Marxism Today*. Already by this time word of the Frows' own labour history collection was getting round. 'It was the Khrushchev speech and the influence of James Klugmann', Eddie summarised, 'that impelled us to collect books on the History of the Labour Movement' [EF, 'The 20th Congress of the CPSU', 'A worker's search for Karl Marx'].

Klugmann in a rather superior way once referred to it as his Frankenstein's creation. What he did not see was how much more the Frows were able to achieve than he could himself. Despite their many publications on radical and labour history topics, Ruth was not just being self-effacing when she described the couple as first and foremost socialist propagandists. The Frows were activists to their very bones, and the distinctiveness of the collection they established is due more than anything to this sense of public engagement formed within the culture of independent working-class education. Three particular features marked it from an early stage. The first is that it was conceived of as a public resource and not just a form of recreation. The second is that it was therefore a collective endeavour and not a purely personal one. The third is that it was inspired by a political ideal that was rooted in the Frows' communism, and yet represented in an inclusive conception of working-class history without restriction of period or political affiliation. None of these features was unique to the WCML. The combination, however, was; and still today it continues to be reflected and as far as possible safeguarded in the library's ethos and forms of governance.

Already in the 1960s, the Frows sought to accommodate such visitors to King' Road as their working commitments allowed. Nevertheless, it was through the vesting of responsibility in a body of trustees in 1969 that the public nature of the enterprise was put on a formal footing. The main motivation was to secure the collection's integrity. Well-publicised through the CPGB Historians' Group was the break-up of John Burns's famous radical library after it came into the possession of the AEU. Following Klugmann's death in 1977, there was further dismay as his library, too, was broken up. The older materials were and are safeguarded in London's Marx Memorial Library, and for a period much was also retained in the library and archive of the CPGB itself. Nevertheless, even prior to its wider dispersal the lack of any wider provision seemed to indicate that Klugmann himself had not properly thought through what responsibility for such a collection involved [Frow papers, 155, Mary Ashraf to RF and EF, late 1970s].

The Frows in establishing a library trust were thus first of all concerned that the collection should remain intact, *in situ* and secure from the vagaries of executors and death duties. At the same time, the securing of the library's charitable status formalised the condition that it be publicly accessible as an educational resource. The Frows themselves had not always had positive experiences in seeking access to materials in academic institutions. They also understood that it was not just formalities of admission but the environment created that could wittingly or otherwise have an offputting effect. In providing access to their own collections they therefore saw it as basic to the library's *raison d'être* that there should be no restriction according to reader's card or status and that the non-academic user should be made to feel positively welcome. Though other specialist libraries have since become much more aware of issues of public engagement, this was a feature of the Frow collection from the start.

Because of its public profile, it therefore became something more than the personal collection of its owners. In 1976, the Frows told the story of their collecting in an article for *History Workshop Journal*, 'Travels with a caravan'. Initially guided by Klugmann, they had become well-known frequenters of the country's second-hand booksellers. It was on this aspect of their activity that the article lovingly dwelt, and through the library's charitable status the Frows were now assisted in such activities by the exemption from tax of their own acquisitions. Even so, what in many ways was more important was how the library's reputation as a public resource was reflected, not only in the number of researchers, but in the materials that increasingly were donated to it as a place where these would be properly valued and made accessible. This henceforth was a collective and not a purely personal undertaking, and the Frows now appeared not merely as inveterate hoarders but as custodians of a wider heritage. There is no full documentation of the process by which this took place. The Frows were not trained archivists or librarians; they kept no acquisitions register, and even the classification of their holdings was a mystery to which Eddie alone of them had the key. But what they had that was more important was the trust of fellow activists and a formidable breadth of contact.

Numerous individuals deposited material deserving of a lasting home. Some were collections of personal papers, like those of Frank Allaun, Salford MP, peace activist and later president of the library's friends organisation; or of Benny Rothman, synonymous with the 1932 Kinder mass trespass, but along with Eddie also a lifelong AEU activist. Collectors and historians could also look to the library as a congenial environment for their own collections. Vivien Morton, for example, entrusted the Frows with the Irish collections accumulated by her father Tommy Jackson in writing his well-known history of Ireland's national struggle, *Ireland Her Own*. The library's Irish holdings were also augmented by the important bequest of C. Desmond Greaves, biographer of James Connolly and mainstay of the Connolly Association. Another important deposit was the Tom Paine collection of the film director Adrian Brunel and his son Christopher. One of the Frows' own favourite mottos was Paine's 'The world is my country /All men are my brothers'. Despite this internationalism, a practical limitation of the collection, on grounds primarily of space and accessibility, has been its restriction in all essentials to English-language materials.

Though there were also countless smaller deposits of individual provenance, the Frows themselves held that the library's most valued asset was its trade union collections. In view of the space constraints, they never made a general appeal for union materials, as Nuffield once had, and as Warwick would so successfully. Nevertheless, Manchester was a trade union centre of national and not just regional importance, and this was reflected in the materials that came to be deposited in the library. As well as the strong representation of local and regional labour movement bodies and activists, national materials of local provenance included an important deposit from the General, Municipal and Boilermakers' Union (GMB) that included records of several northern textile unions that had become absorbed into the GMB or one of its predecessors. When in the early 1990s, the library's archival holdings were briefly summarised for the

National Register of Archives, it was on these materials that the Frows placed greatest emphasis.

The third key feature of the library is encapsulated in the inclusiveness of its very name. To some extent this was a matter of happenstance. The original idea was to call it the Labour Movement Library, but for the legal objection that this implied a 'political creed' that might be deemed inconsistent with its prospective charitable status. Another suggestion was the Engels Memorial Library, suggesting a parallel with the Marx Memorial Library, established by communists in 1933 as a response to the burning of the books in Hitler's Germany. There was nevertheless concern that such a designation might be open to similar possible objections, and to preempt these the name of the Working Class Movement Library was decided upon.

As awkward as it initially sounded, it is difficult to see how even so widely venerated a symbol as Engels could have served the library's interests so well. The richness of the labour movement's legacy has lain as much as anything in the differences that it has argued out over time; and the avoidance of any credo of a more sectarian character has allowed the library to represent the full breadth, diversity and contentiousness that this necessarily implied. In latter years it has had no hesitation in welcoming anarchist speakers, or social-democratic ones, or taking in the materials of the old ILP, with which the communists had had so many political differences. There is, however, nothing new in this. Eddie himself had been happy to recall old struggles at the invitation of the Socialist Workers' Party, and in an interview in 1976 said that communism represented only a minority aspect of the movement and that the library went 'all the way from left to right, from anarchism to Lib-Labism' [Brian Hope, 'The house of 10,000 books', *Manchester Evening News*, 18 March 1976].

In this respect, it was indeed Khrushchev more than Klugmann who was the library's godfather. In the halcyon years of the CPGB Historians' Group, Klugmann had been on cordial terms with Dorothy Thompson, historian of Chartism and far more than her husband Edward one of the driving forces in the group's activities. Together she and Klugmann would rummage around in second-hand bookshops; and yet following the Thompsons' break with Stalinism in 1956, the contact between them was broken off irrevocably. Eddie, by contrast, not only described Edward Thompson as peerless among the historians of working-class movements. With Ruth he also had the friendliest personal relations with both the Thompsons and John Saville, that other historian-defector from the CPGB. Curiously it was Eric Hobsbawm, who of course remained a fellow communist, who incurred Ruth's lasting enmity by his appearing to grant or withhold respect according to scholarly credentials when he and Eddie were both active in the SSLH. Both the Thompsons and Saville, on the other hand, were part of that larger group of labour historians that both enjoyed and reciprocated the Frows' hospitality at King's Road.

The Frows continued to have decided views on almost any matter of political controversy. The irony nevertheless was that these were now likelier to translate into overt political differences within the communists' divided ranks than beyond them. It was not therefore in spite of their politics but very much in line with them that the Frows got on better with the Saville of the *Socialist Register* than the Hobsbawm of the Eurocommunist *Marxism Today*. Symptomatically, the records of the north-west district of the CPGB, whose natural home the library was, were deposited instead in Manchester's county record office. Even prior to Ruth's expulsion from the party, it is difficult to miss the sense of outright antagonism that such a decision must have conveyed. Conversely, the library holds a section of the papers of veteran British communist R. Palme Dutt which Pollitt's biographer John Mahon, whom Eddie had known since the days of the Minority Movement, held to be too sensitive to be entrusted to the CPGB library in King Street. Unsure as to what they were meant to do with them, it was following the shock of the communist collapse in Eastern Europe that the Frows concluded that the rationale for any such contrivances had now passed, allowing the present author to use them in his own Pollitt biography.

Ruth even now was outspokenly critical of the disintegrative tendencies within communism and the sinister forces she held to have undermined the CPGB from within. In 1996, as the Frows expressed these views without equivocation in their pamphlet on the CPGB's demise, they also joined Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party (SLP), and Ruth remained a member until the beginning of 2002. What nevertheless matters in the present context is that this was never mentioned even to their closest friends and collaborators in the library's running. Despite the political differences, Ruth hoped that even among communists the library would serve as a 'cohesive factor', and certainly these differences were not meant to interfere with its wider *raison d'être* [RF, interview, 9 May 2000]. The year the Frows joined the SLP was thus also the year in which they were entertained by Labour MEPs in Brussels. Along with a string of honorary degrees and other respectable tokens of achievement there was also a successful group of parliamentary friends of the library organised by Salford Labour MP Stan Orme. At a personal level, the Frows positively relished the airing of different opinions without these providing barriers to either friendship or co-operation. Harry Ratner recalled how even as Trotskyist and Stalinist he and Eddie had associated amicably on workplace issues and talked through political differences in a spirit of mutual respect. Ruth in the same period had had the habit of movng among both PMs—party members—and NPMs. The force of this distinction had over the years largely disappeared. But what remained from such campaigns was the instinct for working with a broader section of opinion, and the insight that unity, subject to a common purpose and values, was strength.

It was on this basis that the Frows provided for the library's future. On establishing the trust in 1969, they had envisaged that the collection could be maintained in perpetuity in King's Road. Nevertheless, the filling of the walls as Klugmann had envisaged meant that even within their lifetimes they had reached the limits of the collection's possible development there. Not only were they committed to the broadest conception of the working-class movement politically. They had also come to see that the subjects of working-class history were as extensive as the workers' own interests, and thus required the inclusion of 'poetry, trials, fiction, cartoons and songs as well as the ephemera produced by each generation to get the message across to fellow workers' [Frow papers, 31, 'Living in a library', n.d.]. In many ways, it was therefore impossible to rationalise the collection without also impoverishing it. Looking beyond the Frows' own lifetimes, provision would also clearly be necessary for at least that level of staffing that could take the place of their own voluntary efforts and the formidable knowledge of the collections that was stored in Eddie's head.

Discussions did briefly take place with academic institutions in the area. However, it was through the library's labour movement connections, and the parties of visitors that were regularly entertained there, that word of its predicament reached the Labour-run Salford City Council. Coming, as Ruth put it, to the library's rescue, Salford in 1986 took over the management and care of the collections while ownership and long-term responsibility continued to be vested in what soon became a much expanded group of trustees. In 1987, the collections were moved to Jubilee House, an Edwardian nursing home designed by Henry Lord, Salford's principal public architect of the period and ironically vice-chairman of the South Salford Conservative Association. Lord would have a shock today to see the seditious imagery that now embellishes the walls of his establishment. Not the least of the benefits of this arrangement was the housing for the time being of the Frows themselves amongst their collections. This helped in ensuring a smooth transition to the library's running by trustees, a large body of volunteers and a small but highly dedicated professional staff. With Eddie's deteriorating health, and need for some respite from the flow of visitors, the Frows then found themselves a static caravan at Hendwr near Corwen in north Wales and increasingly spent much of their time there. Characteristically, one of the first things they did was research the history of the locality and publish their findings as a pamphlet.

Salford has continued to support the library to the extent that other commitments allow. These, however, are many and pressing, and against a background of government cutbacks Salford's own very difficult financial situation meant that the library's trustees were asked in 2005 to prepare to operate on a fully independent basis. At the time of writing, the library has not only succeeded in doing so, but is positively flourishing. Financially it relies on a combination of individual and labour movement support including a number of crucial legacies. It has also secured a number of grants for specific purposes, beginning already in the 1990s with a large-scale cataloguing project. Importantly, Salford, amongst other continuing forms of support, has committed to the collection's long-term housing in Jubilee House, where good relations have been established with the nearby university and other local institutions. The collections themselves are better used than ever and there is an active programme of conferences, talks, performances and other cultural and educational activities. Securing the library's long-term financial basis remains one major challenge. Another, closely connected with it, is the need to secure the further space required to continue developing the collections, as Jubilee House now bursts at the seams just as the Frows' home had begun to by the 1980s. A third major challenge, but a far more general one, is that of digitisation and the electronic archive, and the implications that this may have both for existing holdings and future collection development.

Whatever the future holds, the library is an extraordinary achievement. Klugmann in later years stated that he would hate to be remembered by his collection and that this was the most insignificant part of his life [Andrews (2015) 234]. Ruth and Edmund Frow had no such misgivings. Their collection, once seriously embarked upon, was never a purely private indulgence, or some residue of a compromising bourgeois upbringing. This was the continuation of their activism in the world of ideas, and a monument to the spirit of militant self-education so central to their vision of a process of emancipation to be achieved by working people themselves. 'Knowledge', runs the motto that they borrowed from the *Poor Man's Guardian*, 'is power'; which they understood as meaning that empowering the oppressed requires the continuous generation of their own forms of knowledge.

It was for the empowerment of the working class, and only incidentally of those who studied it, that the library was therefore founded. The Frows themselves did not need telling that there were many ambiguities in this position, and it was precisely out of these ambiguities that the library emerged in the difficult years after 1956. It was at once a by-product of their communist commitment, and of the broader conception of working-class education that they came in time to see went beyond any particular party. Cole's ideal in his youth had been self-government in industry. Theirs was self-government in education; and with all the challenges that this poses in such very different circumstances, that is what the magnificent library they created still stands for.

**Writings: (1) Books and Pamphlets** (by Edmund and Ruth Frow unless indicated). *1868, Year Of The Unions—A Documentary Survey* (by EF, 1968); *The History of British Trade Unionism: A Select Bibliography* (with Michael Katanka, 1969); *Strikes—A Documentary History* (with Michael Katanka, 1971); *A Survey of the Half-Time System in Education* (1970); *To Make That Future—Now!—A History of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council* (1976); *The Communist Party in Manchester 1920–1926* (c. 1979); *Chartism in Manchester 1838–58* (1980); *The Dark Satanic Mills: Child Apprentices in Derbyshire Spinning Factories* (1980); *Shop Stewards and Workshop Struggles* (1980); *Democracy in the Engineering Union* (with Ernie Roberts, 1982); *Engineering Struggles: Episodes in the Story of the Shop Stewards' Movement* (1982); *Manchester's Big House in Trafford Park: Class Conflict and Collaboration at Metro-Vicks* (1983); *Radical Salford: Episodes in Labour History* (1984); *Karl Marx in Manchester* (1985); *The New Moral World: Robert Owen and Owenism in Manchester and Salford* (1986); *Jack Askins 1919–1987: A Short Biography Compiled from Contributions from Many of his Comrades and Friends* (c. 1987);

*Political Women 1800–1850* (1989); *The Politics of Hope—The Origins of Socialism in Britain 1880–1914* (1989); *General Strike in Salford in 1911* (1990); *Essays on the Irish in Manchester* (1991); *Hendwr: The Story of a Farm* (1992); *The Battle of Bexley Square—Salford Unemployed Workers' Demonstration—1st October, 1931* (EF, 1994); *The New Paths Are Begun—A History of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council* (with Jim Arnison, 1993); *Radical and Red Poets and Poetry* (1994); *Frederick Engels in Manchester and 'The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844'* (1995); *Citizen Guillotine* (1996); *Essays in Insurrection* (1996); *The Liquidation of the Communist Party of Great Britain: A Contribution to Discussion* (1996); *Manchester and Salford Chartists* (1996); *Pit and Factory Papers Issued by the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1927–1934* (1996); *William Morris in Manchester and Salford* (1996); *Roots of our Rights—A Tribute to Edmund Frow* (RF, 1998); *Edmund Frow, 1906–1997—The Making of an Activist* (RF, 1999); *Bob and Sarah Lovell, Crusaders for a Better Society* (n.d.); *Clem Beckett and the Oldham Men who Fought in Spain, 1936–1938* (n.d.); *Frank Bright: Miner, Marxist and Communist Organiser, 1891–1944* (n.d.); *International Working Men's Association and the Working Class Movement in Manchester 1865–1885* (n.d.). (**2**) **Articles**: Both Ruth and Eddie as political activists contributed articles or shorter topical items to a range of mainly communist-edited periodicals including the *Daily Worker*; *Communist Review*, *Labour Monthly* and *New Poland*. Eddie also contributed smaller items of this type to the AEU *Monthly Journal*. Together they published many articles and especially reviews on labour history, beginning with Eddie's 'Robert Owen' published in *Marxism Today* in October 1958. The Frow archive in the WCML has typescripts, copies, drafts and lists of many of these items and would be the starting place for anybody wishing to compile a comprehensive Frow bibliography. However, the earlier contributions of a topical rather than historical character did not necessarily carry their names and such a listing could never be complete. (**3**) **Dictionary of Labour Biography**: Particular mention should be made here of the thirteen entries they contributed to the DLB: E.O. Greening (vol. 1, EF with Joyce Bellamy and John Saville); Lawrence Finlay (vol. 4); Benjamin Stott (vol. 4, with Margaret 'Espinasse); John Teer (vol. 4, with Margaret 'Espinasse); George Peet (vol. 5, with John Saville); Sarah Dickenson (vol. 6, with Barbara Neild); Abel Heywood (vol. 6); W.F. Watson (vol. 6, with John Saville); W.H. Chadwick (vol. 7, with John Saville); Jack Munro (vol. 7); Clem Beckett (vol. 9); James Leach (vol. 9, with John Saville); Leo McGree (vol. 9, with Stephen F. Kelly and John Saville).

**Sources:** (**1**) **MS**: Edmund and Ruth Frow Papers, Working Class Movement Library, Salford. (**2**) **Newspapers and periodicals**: J.T. Murphy, 'The Right Danger in New Clothes', *Communist Review*, June 1930. (**3**) **Interviews**: with EF by the author, 28 January 1985, 10 and 11 September 1987 and 15 October 1987, and by 'M.A.', 18 February 1988; with RF by the author. (**4**) **Other**: Jack London, *The Iron Heel* (1907); H.G. Wells, *Experiment in Biography* (1934); James B. Jefferys, *The Story of the Engineers* (1945); Harry Pollitt, 'Socialism or Mugsborough?', *World News*, 1 October 1955; E.P. Thompson, 'Socialist Humanism: An Epistle to the Philistines', *New Reasoner*, 1 (1957); Sue Bruley, 'Socialism and Feminism in the Communist Party of Great Britain 1920–1939' (London: PhD thesis, 1980); Stuart Macintyre, *A Proletarian Science. Marxism in Britain 1917–1933* (Cambridge, 1980); Richard Croucher, *Engineers at War* (1982); Geraldine Knight, 'The Working Class Movement Library, Manchester' (library studies dissertation held by WCML, 1983); Alfred Williams, *Life in a Railway Factory* (Gloucester, 1984); Kevin Morgan, 'Eddie Frow: Engineering Struggles', *North West Labour History Group Journal*, 13 (1988); Raphael Samuel, 'A Spiritual Elect? Robert Tressell and the Early Socialists' in D. Alfred (ed.), *The Robert Tressell Lectures 1981–88* (1988); Kevin Morgan, *Against Fascism and War. Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics 1935–1941* (Manchester, 1989); Jean Chaintron, *Le Vent soufflait devant ma porte* (Paris, 1993); Harry Ratner, *Reluctant Revolutionary: Memoirs of a Trotskyist 1936–1960* (1994); Nina Fishman, *The British Communist Party and the Trade Unions* (Aldershot, 1995); Michael Herbert and Eric Taplin (eds), *Born With*

*a Book in his Hand: A Tribute to Edmund Frow* (Salord, 1998); Ruth Frow, *Edmund Frow (Eddie) 1906–1997: The Making of an Activist* (Salford, 1999); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York, 1999); Matthew Worley, *Class Against Class. The Communist Party in Britain Between the Wars* (2002); Erik van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin. A Study in Twentieth-Century Revolutionary Patriotism* (2002); John Callaghan, *Cold War, Crisis and Conflict. The History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1951–68* (2003); Geoff Andrews, *End Games and New Times. The Final Years of British Communism 1964–1991* (2004); Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen and Andrew Flinn, *Communists in British Society 1920–1991* (2007); Geoff Andrews, *The Shadow Man. At the Heart of the Cambridge Spy Circle* (2015).

KEVIN MORGAN

*See also*: †Dona TORR; †Frderick John (Jack) TANNER

**GOULD, Alfred** (1856–1927)
TRADE UNIONIST

Alfred Gould was born on 23 May 1856 to Henry and Mary Ann Gould in Paradise Place Hull, where he later served an apprenticeship as a carpenter and joiner. His father was a warehouse keeper. For a short time Gould worked as a ship's carpenter. However, shore life being more to his liking, he soon returned to Hull. In 1881, at the age of 25, he joined the Hull 6th Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners (ASC&J). The union, founded in 1860 in London, had by then grown to become one of the largest of the Victorian age, with more than 17,000 members—in particular thanks to the action of another Hull-born, Robert Applegarth, its General Secretary from 1862 to 1871. From the start, a vigorous participant in the affairs of the society, 'Brother' Gould was to take on ever-growing responsibilities, at both local and national level.

In the mid-1890s, Gould engaged in the fight for the construction of an Independent Labour Party (ILP), a struggle that was to become his lifetime passion. Joining the ILP shortly after its foundation in 1893, he campaigned in 1895 in favour of docker Tom McCarthy, the first labour candidate ever to challenge Liberal ship-owner Charles Henry Wilson in his West Hull stronghold albeit without official support from the Hull Trades Council. Indeed, since the dissolution of the dockers' union in the aftermath of the 1893 lockout, the Trades Council had embraced a 'Lib-Lab' course, and its figurehead, Fred Maddison, was chosen to represent the Liberal Party in the Central Hull constituency. Neither McCarthy nor Maddison were returned. But Gould was so shocked by the Lib-Lab partnership that the following year, he presented the Executive Committee of the Hull Trades Council with a motion stating that only independent labour candidates should be supported. It was defeated by 67 votes to 25, illustrating the solidity of the Lib-Lab current, as well as the growing credibility of the ILP. That same year (1896), another ILPer, George Belt, was elected Deputy Chairman of the Council, after a campaign stressing the necessity to recruit the casual port workers which group the 1893 defeat had virtually atomised. However, from 1896 to 1900, the cause of labour was almost muted in Hull, the Trades Council even failing to organise any May Day celebrations. Meanwhile, Gould was asserting himself inside the ASC&J. In 1897, at the age of 41, he was elected to its General Council, where he was one of the first leaders to advocate the inclusion of labour representation in the society's objects. Yet in Hull, Gould was still a secondary figure when in 1899 the Hull building workers engaged in a determined and eventually victorious strike. From then on, the Hull Trades Council and its Executive Committee were dominated by a nucleus made of

masons, painters, carpenters and joiners. Initially in the shadow of strike leader Watson Boyes, Gould was to become a pillar of the Trades Council.

It was not until the Taff Vale Judgment in 1901 that Gould's advocacy of independent working-class politics started to be heard again. The Labour Representation Committee (LRC), founded on 27 February 1900, soon found in Gould its most obstinate defender on Humberside. On 23 October 1901, his first letter to Ramsay MacDonald, the LRC's secretary, was a plea to receive propaganda material, in order to inform the members of the Trades Council of the organisation's purpose and activities. In the following months, Gould repeatedly spoke out in favour of a 'United Labour Group' in the Commons, to the point of irritating his old friend Frederick W. Booth, the editor of the Trades Council's *Monthly Labour Journal*. Gould's insistence was rewarded in 1902, when the Council agreed to send two of its leaders (R.W. Lazenby and Gould himself) to the LRC conference in Birmingham. From that moment onwards, the sending of pamphlets and tracts from the LRC headquarters to Hull became regular.

In 1904, on Gould's suggestion, the Council unanimously asked the dockers' leader James Sexton to represent the LRC in Hull in the next general election. Sexton declined the invitation and the LRC was unable to run any candidates in Hull in the 1906 election. But that disappointment was compensated by a near-simultaneous breakthrough in local politics: the formation, in March 1905, of a Labour Group on the City Council. Seven out of the nine city councillors affiliated to the Trades Council signed a text in which they proclaimed their refusal of any links with the Liberal and Conservative Parties, thereby dissolving the 'Progressive Party' that had dominated Hull politics since the mid-1890s. The passing from one era to another was symbolised by the sudden death, on 9 December 1905, of W.G. Millington, one of the two labour councillors who had refused to cross the bridge. The Lib-Lab sentiment however, survived, and former secretaries of the Trades Council such as Watson Boyes and T.G. Hall (vilified by ILPers as 'Renegade Labour') refused to walk in Gould's footsteps.

In the years that followed the Trades Council's takeover by the Gould team, it was once again on the offensive. In June 1905, a massive demonstration was organised in favour of 'the right to work'. Gould explained to the crowd 'how capital exacted toll from the workers, and when the best had been taken out of them, they could take refuge in the workhouse or the gaol'. The 'right to work' campaign, punctuated by visits from national leaders such as MacDonald and Will Thorne, culminated with a mass meeting on 27 September 1908, during which two motions submitted by Gould were adopted by the crowd: one demanding the direct recruitment of unemployed workers by the Corporation, the other imploring the Liberal government to support the Labour Party's Right to Work Bill. The gathering ended with a speech by Ben Tillett, who 'outgoulded Gould' in both form and content—and almost faced prosecution for his wild talk about the crimes of the 'master class'. The campaign, however spectacular, did not stop the rise of joblessness, especially in the building and shipbuilding industries. Gould also inspired a victorious campaign against the closing of several passageways to the public by the Northern Eastern Railway Company (NER), which was trying to privatise the shores of the Humber. The combative mood instilled by Gould played a major role in attracting socialist militants such as Joe Higgins and Gustav Schmidt (Gus Smith) back into the Council's everyday activities. More surprisingly it even led Booth, a Lib-Lab at heart, to embrace the independence turn.

By 1905, Gould's local influence was acknowledged beyond the labour movement milieu, as revealed by a micro-scandal in which he played the central part. In December 1905, Gould was discretely contacted by an agent of the Conservative Party, who promised him substantial financial help should he choose to run for the Labour Party in the upcoming general election. He was hoping that this popular trade union leader could take away votes from the Liberals, thus enabling the Conservatives to conquer East Hull. Gould arranged a meeting with the agent to let him know whether he was interested—this time making sure that a journalist from the *Eastern Morning News* was present, behind a screen, to record the terms of the deal. The paper

immediately published all the details of the attempted bribery. The Conservatives' local reputation was seriously damaged, while Gould's image, on the contrary, became associated with incorruptibility and confidence in labour independence. T.E. Ferens, the Liberal candidate for East Hull (he was also the director of the Reckitt factory), then tried to convince Gould to stand with him on an electoral platform to denounce 'the amazing Tory intrigue' [*Woodworkers' Journal*, April 1906]. Gould agreed, on condition he could explain 'the policy and the principles of the Labour Party'—a compromise Ferens refused. The whole affair was thus turned by Gould into an opportunity to declare the Labour Party proudly independent from both of the 'orthodox parties' that served the 'idle class' [*Woodworkers' Journal*, April 1906].

In the wake of the scandal, Gould declined the *Eastern Morning News*'s offer of one pound a week to write a weekly column on labour affairs in Hull, as he considered he would not be 'allowed a free hand' by the pro-Liberal daily: 'This put an end to my career as an amateur journalist', he recalled with a smile [Monthly report of the Hull Branch of the Woodworkers' Amalgamated Society, February 1906]. In the eyes of the Trades Council, the net result of the failed plot was 'credit and honour to the Labour Party in general, and to Mr. Alf Gould in particular' [*Monthly Labour Journal*, January 1906], especially as he had recently been in and out of jobs and was financially stressed. Though the Hull supporters of the LRC did not feel confident enough to run candidates of their own in the 1906 general election, they seized the day on the occasion of a by-election in West Hull. On 29 November 1907, their candidate James Holmes, a national official of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS), only came third. But, securing 29% of the votes, he was not far behind the Conservative and the Liberal candidates (35 and 36% respectively). Gould's resistance to the manipulations of the two big parties, coinciding with the creation of a Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) in the Commons, had played an essential part in that affirmation. Much to Gould's disappointment, the Labour Party's progress in Hull then slowed down, in particular due to the 1909 Osborne, Judgment which squeezed the party's finances to the point that it was not able to run any candidates in Hull in the general elections of 1910.

Still, the Labour Group on the City Council took root, with around five representatives on top of Gould himself. Year in year out, they used their position to promote working-class interests in matters great and small. To the forefront in initiating progressive measures, they campaigned successfully for Hull Corporation to keep control of the telephone system; to open a hygienically suitable public abattoir; to cut the price of tram fares for workers; and to provide schoolchildren with free meals. They also placed the question of wages at the heart of their propaganda, insisting that the Corporation should not sign any contracts with employers that underpaid their workers, and that municipal employees should receive fair pay. In 1909, on Gould's initiative, the Trades Council became affiliated to the National Committee to Promote the Break-Up of the Poor Law, which called for the abolition of the Boards of Guardians. This did not stop the Labour Group from campaigning in the Guardians' elections—with results that showed almost continuous improvement from 1905 to the outbreak of the Great War. For many a worker, Gould came to be seen as a reliable watchdog and an effective spokesman—for example when he voted against the raising of the Chief Constable's salary to £700 per annum and reminded the other councillors that 'thousands of working-men in Hull (lived) on incomes of less than £80 per year' [City Council (Watch Committee) Minutes, 11 February 1914].

Significantly, Gould was the only Hull delegate to be present at every Trades Union Congress (TUC) from 1906 to the outbreak of war. More than Booth, who was also regularly delegated by his union, he became 'the voice of Hull' in the trade unions' national arena and was responsible for a number of memorable outbursts. In September 1907 at Bath he presented an unsuccessful motion opposing a pay raise for the TUC's Parliamentary Secretary, W.C. Steadman. In 1908 in Nottingham, he called into question the legitimacy of the TUC, arguing that a comprehensive body, uniting the Labour Party and the trade unions, would be more efficient—a motion which almost secured a majority of votes at the 1910 TUC in Sheffield. Gould was also adamant that

the TUC should publicly condemn those of its members who, in general elections, stood as Liberal candidates, even when faced with a Labour or Socialist candidate. Ex-Hull man Fred Maddison was one of the 'vultures and jackals' targeted [TUC Annual Report, 1907]. When the chairman asked him to withdraw his insults, he agreed to withdraw 'vulture'. Though Gould's position was almost unanimously rejected in 1907, it was almost unanimously adopted in 1908, when delegates realised many Lib-Lab MPs had refused to support Labour's Unemployed Workmen's Bill. Once again, Gould had seen the light just a bit too early. Gould's other interventions at the TUC were warnings against collaboration with the capitalist interest. In 1908, he expressed his disapproval at the sight of delegates accepting an invitation to eat at a buffet organised by a local mine owner well known for his hatred of strikers. In 1910, he denounced the presence of David Shackleton, a member of the TUC's Parliamentary Committee, on Blackburn's Chamber of Commerce. Critical of trade union intimacy with employers, Gould sought to convince Hull Trades Council that the TUC was ripe for dissolution inside a wider Labour Party, and persuaded a relative majority of his defiant views. The same logic made him a steadfast advocate of the *Clarion* scheme of federation.

All in all, Gould was the main driving force in Hull behind the ILP's march forward in the years following the 1905–1906 local and national breakthroughs. The monthly 'ILP notes' published in the *Monthly Labour Journal* from October 1907 onwards, signed in turn by Arthur Lockwood and James Major, testify to the energy animating Gould and his comrades in those pioneering years. The articles seldom focused on ideological questions. Gould, although the staunchest of ILP partisans, never called himself a socialist but must have found the ILP's conception of socialism vague enough to be tolerated. What Lockwood and Major aptly conveyed was the devotion and enthusiasm that led old crusaders, such as Joe Higgins, and new converts, such as Joe Cavanagh, to hold out the banner of Labour and Socialism on Hull streets, even after work or on Sundays. Gould's disciples shared the conviction that, due to the recent electoral advances, industrial action was becoming superfluous, and that conquering majorities in the institutions was now paramount.

Gould's views on women's votes or on working women's problems can only be guessed, and with little precision. On 18 April 1906, he chaired the founding meeting of the Hull Branch of the Women's Labour League (WLL), which had been set up in London the month before, as a female counterpart of the ILP. His wife, Elizabeth was the branch's first president. In June 1908, she became the branch's secretary, replacing a certain Mrs S.E. Cawthorne. In branch meetings men were welcome, and Gould's presence was often recorded alongside that of his wife. Their relationship was apparently a free collaboration between equals. Their daughter Lizzie was also involved in the activities of the WLL. In October 1913, she set up a concert for their annual conference and, one year later, married Walter Dobson, an active member of the Hull Labour Party. As a husband and a father, Gould evidently encouraged, rather than restrained female activism, and did not seek to erect a wall between his public and private lives. One should not infer from that open-minded attitude that he saw himself as a feminist or supported the radical means used by the suffragettes. Like the mainstream of male labour activists in the Edwardian age, he was probably less a supporter of suffragism as such than a man who believed the male–female alliance to be beneficial for his class.

In April 1913, Gould was associated with the launch of a new monthly, *The Dawn*. The title was hardly original—Derby had harboured a socialist paper of the same name from 1902 to 1905, and the sunrise metaphor was typical of labour evocations of a 'New Jerusalem'. The full title, *Hull's Labour Monthly A Review of Local Government and Politics*, gave it a respectable front, appropriate for a publication that advertised for the Labour Party's new paper, *The Daily Citizen* (launched in October 1912), rather than for its turbulent rival, George Lansbury's *Daily Herald.* Sold at a reasonable price (one shilling a year) and with a circulation of 10–20,000 copies, *The Dawn* complemented the Trades Council's *Monthly Labour Journal*, with an emphasis on electoral matters and smaller attention paid to workplace news. Its launch

coincided with the Guardians' election of 1913, in which Mrs Gould was one of the five female candidates selected by the Hull Labour Party. *The Dawn* was also Labour's main broadcasting medium in the municipal elections of 1 November 1913. On that occasion Gould contested (and won) the East Central ward, allowing him to return to the City Council after two years of absence—alongside railwayman Robert Mell. The Labour Party presence thus went up from four to six councillors, out of sixty-four. Possibly because Gould felt he could master the ship alone, the Hull branch did not immediately make use of 'the system of a Full-Time Agent' which the party headquarters were ready to finance for Hull [Labour Party Records, Peoples' History Museum, LP/CAM/13/1/86]. It was not until early 1914 that a certain J. Rule, from Stockport, was appointed Parliamentary agent in West Hull.

Though Gould was not the official editor of *The Dawn*, he was usually granted the whole of page two to express his opinions, in texts that had all the characteristics of editorials. *The Dawn* therefore constitutes an invaluable source to understand Gould's fundamental ideas in his years of maturity—even though only eleven issues of out of fifty have been kept. Gould's first piece was a classical ILP denunciation of 'rich shirkers' and 'orthodox parties', and a Hardie-like plea for class independence and the Labour Party vote. Its conclusion ('the pace is quickening, for the General Election of 1906 showed it, the present Industrial Unrest proves it') was more original, presenting the political and the industrial tools to change 'our present vicious social system' as complementary rather than contradictory [*The Dawn*, April 1913]. This was a denial of the fact that the 'Great Labour Unrest' of 1911–1914 was largely a rebellion against Labour's impotence in Parliament and against trade union 'officialdom' Gould was now part of. Indeed, though in style Gould remained passionate and at times outrageous, his texts are underpinned by a deep-rooted moderation, at odds with the syndicalist mood of the day. Explaining 'Why the workers demonstrate on May Sunday', Gould wrote a whole page without using the words 'socialism' and 'revolution', preferring to define the event as 'a Democratic carnival' and 'the anniversary of the workers' freedom… throughout the civilised world' [*The Dawn*, May 1913]. A vehement article entitled 'A Call to Arms', in which he quoted Shelley's 'Rise like lions', presented 'the failure of the strike method' as a matter of fact, and electoral battles as the only perspective [*The Dawn*, June 1913]. In September 1913, Gould expressed his disapproval of the use of 'the forces of the Crown' against the Dublin dockers, but the monarchy as such he never criticised. His occasional attacks on Liberal or Tory clergymen were made in the name of true Christian values, but religion was never a target. His prose could display sympathy for working-class struggles abroad, but its tone was definitely more emotional when evoking 'the nation's greatness' [*The Dawn*, June 1913] and Britain's 'strong and healthy race' [*The Dawn*, October 1913]. When Joe Higgins and Alfred Grainger, young members of the British Socialist Party (BSP) acquainted with Cornelius Shearsmith, complained that the TUC's support for Jim Larkin and the Dublin dockers was too timid, it is significant that Gould should have been the one to discourage them from writing to the Parliamentary Committee. Gradualist and patriotic at heart, Gould's discourse was thus typical of a strand of pre-war British labourism.

In 1914, Gould was at the local forefront of two national campaigns. When nine South African trade unionists were deported to Britain for their role in violent railway and mining strikes, they travelled around the country to plead their cause, and Gould chaired two meetings held in Hull on 29 March. He used his column in *The Dawn* to denounce martial law and give details about the repression. Like most of his trade union contemporaries, he praised the activists for their refusal to see 'the conditions of the white man' reduced to 'the level of that of coloured or Chinese labour', and presented the Boer farmers who had repressed the strikers as 'dirty and disreputable' [*The Dawn*, May 1914]. The second campaign in spring 1914 concerned the employment of Chinese sailors on British vessels. Gould introduced a Trades Council debate over the question and also chaired a mass meeting organised by John R. Bell for the Hull branch of the National Seamen and Firemen's Union (NSFU) on 15 April. Adhering to

Havelock's Wilson 'yellow peril' leitmotiv, he embraced his call for the exclusion of all coloured workers from British ships. Both examples show that Gould, in spite of his attachment to class unity, conformed to the stereotypes and hierarchies of his time, without imagining that racial barriers could (or should) be overcome.

During the 'great unrest', Gould kept the Hull Trades and Labour Council at a safe distance from the large-scale social conflicts affecting the port and its workforce. Blaming workers for their electoral 'apathy' and the 'slavishness' that led too many of them to vote for the Liberals and Tories, he insisted that nothing could be as efficient as a strong working-class party in Parliament to resist the growing concentration of the employers' forces. A determined fighter for workers' interests in the City Council arena, he believed his everyday harassment of vested interests on the municipal level could be replicated in the Commons, and would eventually be more useful to obtain concrete changes in favour of the labouring majority than extra-institutional agitation—though he did march and agitate on May Days.

When the war broke out, *The Dawn* stuck to the ILP's national position, opposing conscription, campaigning for a negotiated peace, and portraying the German worker as a friend, not an enemy—a line that Gould felt ill at ease with. Like Booth in his *Monthly Labour Journal*, he chose to limit his field of intervention to material issues, calling for the provision of work for unemployed adults and of food for needy children in the name of 'true patriotism', without criticising the coalition government's foreign policy [*The Dawn*, August 1914]. By November 1914, for financial reasons, *The Dawn*'s format was reduced both in size and in pages—and for the same reason Gould withdrew his candidature for West Hull, postponing any decision on that question until the end of the war. In the last known copy of *The Dawn* (January 1916), the anti-war stance was more vocal than ever: *The Dawn* now advertised for Lansbury's *Daily Herald*, supported the Clyde Workers' Committee against Lloyd George, and left-winger Mell had become the Labour councillor whose name was printed the most often—while Gould's words were significantly absent.

Out of step with the ILP, Gould turned most of his attention to his trade union activity. He served on the General Council of the ASC&J until 19l7, when he resigned to seek election to the new National Executive Council (NEC), of which he became the first chairman. By then, the union claimed 125,000 members across the English-speaking world. Gould's union was one of many which sought to unite the workers employed in the building sector, from the slaters and tilers to the bricklayers and labourers, inside one federation. The organisation created in 1914, the National Building Trades Council, never existed more than on paper. But it did lead to the foundation, in 1918, of the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives (NFBTO), of which Gould was the first chairman, and which soon led a successful campaign for a shorter working week. In 1920, Gould was replaced by Richard Coppock, who presided over the NFBTO until 1961.

In 1918, aged 62, Gould contested Hull's North West constituency for Labour—a long-awaited challenge, since his columns in *The Dawn* had always been signed 'Alf Gould, Prospective Labour Candidate for West Hull'. At his first meeting on Friday 6 December, he complained about the choice of the date for the general election, which meant the working-class men still serving as soldiers on the Western Front, in Mesopotamia or on the seas would not be able to vote. Presenting the Labour Party as 'the only true democrats', he castigated the 'fossilised old Tories', but found little to reproach Prime Minister Lloyd George, except that he was ill-advised [*Hull Daily Mail*, 7 December 1918]. One of Gould's *pro domo* arguments was his probity: he explained he was not after the £400 a year received by MPs, having previously refused a £500 per year position offered by the wartime government. In the overpowering khaki atmosphere, Gould's choice was to distinguish himself from his opponents personally rather than politically. He expressed 'no sympathy' [*Hull Daily Mail*, 6 December 1918] for conscientious objectors—which set him apart from Labour's candidate in South West Hull, Councillor Mell, who defined himself as an enemy of war and capitalism, supported the 'Soldiers' and

Sailors' Charter' and spoke favourably of both the Russian and the German revolution [Gould Election Addresses, Working-Class Movement Library, Salford]. During the campaign, Gould admitted there were now 'two Labour Parties in Hull' [*Hull Daily Mail*, 6 December 1918], a split that grew stronger in the following years—as demonstrated in the correspondence between the Hull Trades Council and City Labour Party secretary, H.E. Jordan, and the secretary of the Propaganda Committee of its Industrial Section, O. Langdale, in July 1921 [unclassified material, WCML]. Though Gould came third and last behind the Conservative and Liberal candidates, his result was honourable: with 3528 votes and 19.3%, he was only 300 votes (not even 2%) behind Guy Greville Wilson, the director of Earle shipyards and the son of shipping magnate C.H. Wilson. His score was no better and no worse than those registered by his Labour comrades in Hull South West (where Mell came third with 19%) and Hull East (where R. H. Farrah came third with 20%). His defeat, however, did open a period of lesser political involvement on his part, a withdrawal that coincided with a rise of communism that he disapproved of and with a decline in his physical and intellectual forces.

Hull North West, 1918: electorate, turnout 58.1%

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|---|---|---|
| Col. Albert Lambert Ward (Unionist) | 10,898 | (59.7%) |
| Lt.-Col. Hon. Guy Greville Wilson (Liberal) | 3827 | (21.0%) |
| Alfred Gould (Labour) | 3528 | (19.3%) |
| Majority | 7071 | (38.7%) |

For a couple of years his disappointment on the political front pushed him to focus on the trade union and co-operative fields. In 1921, the ASC&J merged with a smaller rival, the General Union of Carpenters and Joiners, to form the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers (ASW), and Gould was one of its first national leaders. An ardent supporter of the National Building Guild, Gould also took part in the Hull Co-operative Builders Ltd., a trade union experiment in house-building. Yet in the 1920s, he had to relinquish some of his responsibilities, in particular because of an alteration of rule inside the ASC&J/ASW, which appointed a full-time executive committee and fixed an age limit of 63 for its members—forcing Gould to retirement in 1925.

Alfred Gould 'was found by his daughter hanging dead at his home (313 Inglemire Lane) in Cottingham' on Monday 30 May 1927 [*Yorkshire Post*, 1 June 1927]. The coroner's diagnosis was 'suicide while of unsound mind'—though a recent breakdown in health makes a conscious suicide just as plausible. A few days before, a local businessman with Liberal sympathies, Arthur B. Reckitt, had taken his life at nearby Elloughton. Gould was buried on the following Thursday in Hull's Northern Cemetery. The ceremony brought together many Labour sympathisers, especially woodworkers, and several framed photographs of Gould were given to the local Labour Club and to the Hull 6th Branch of the ASC&J/ASW he had belonged to for 46 years. Five months later, on 2 November 1927, members of the building trades gathered once again in honour of Gould. After a tribute by Councillor Walter Turner, Mrs Gould was presented with a framed photograph of her late husband, and a cheque from the Trades and Labour Council [*Hull Daily Mail*, 4 November 1927]. He had married Elizabeth Broadstreet in 1880 and they had five daughters and two sons.

Gould died only shortly before the Hull Labour Party achieved a municipal majority for the first time at the end of 1929. Though he was to miss both Hull's 'greatest May Day ever' [*Hull Sentinel*, June 1930], on 4 May 1930, and the fiftieth anniversary of the Hull Trades Council on 3 May 1931, homage was paid, on both occasions, to the man who had contributed so vitally to the growth and coming of age of the local labour movement. Gould also died before seeing the NFBTO's efforts to reach out to foreign workers crowned with the foundation, in 1934, of the International Federation of Building and Wood Workers. But those who had known him were

conscious of how much they owed him. This 'born fighter' [*The Dawn*, October 1913], who had served thirteen years on the City Council, and attended scores of ASC&J, TUC, ILP and Labour Party national conferences, was indeed respected, in Hull and beyond, for his constancy and stamina. 'Well done, Mr Gould! Another point for Labour!' *The Dawn* rejoiced, in March 1914, after another of his conquests on the City Council. In retrospect, if Gould's name is now virtually forgotten, it may be because his less flamboyant post-war years came to overshadow his achievements as a labour activist and social reformer in his golden years before the war.

**Writings:** His only signed articles were printed in *The Dawn*, often on page 2, between April 1913 and August 1914.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Hull City Council minutes, Hull History Centre; Labour Party Records, People's History Museum, Manchester; Trades Union Congress (TUC) Annual Reports; Robert Mell, 1918 Electoral Address, Working-Class Movement Library, Salford; Woodworkers' Amalgamated Society, Hull Branch (L352/13992), Hull History Centre. (**2**) **Newspapers and Periodicals**: *The Dawn*; *Eastern Morning News*; *Hull Daily Mail*; *Hull Sentinel*; *Hull Times* especially F.W. Booth's weekly column 'Among the Workers', written under the pseudonym of 'Peter Progress'; *Monthly Labour Journal (Official Organ of the Hull Trades and Labour Council)*; *Woodworkers' Journal*. (**3**) **Books and Articles**: Raymond Brown, *Waterfront Organisation in Hull, 1870–1900* (Hull, 1972); Kenneth Gillett and Edward MacMahon, *The History of Hull* (Hull, 1989); Yann Béliard, 'The Origins of the Great Labour Unrest: Class Relations in Hull, 1894–1910', (unpublished PhD thesis, Paris 13 University, 2007); Yann Béliard, 'Les proto-travaillistes et l'argent des conservateurs: du scandale Hyndman–Champion (1885) à l'affaire Alfred Gould (1905)', in David Fée and Jean-Claude Sergeant, *Ethique, politique et corruption au Royaume-Uni* (Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2013), 11–28. (**4**) **Obituaries**: *Eastern Morning News*, 3 June 1927; *Hull News*, 4 June 1927. (**5**) **Websites**: unionancestors.co.uk/ASW (consulted 20 August 2011).

YANN BELIARD

*See also*: †John ARNOTT; †Watson BOYES; †Fred MADDISON; †W.G. MILLINGTON; Cornelius SHEARSMITH; Gus SMITH

**HAMMOND, James ('Jim')** (1907–1980)
MINERS' LEADER

Jim Hammond was born 7 August 1907 in Wigan, Lancashire, the son of John Hammond (an overhead wireman) and Elizabeth née Dawber. He attended Warrington Lane Council School in Wigan until the age of 13. His father was a freethinker and his mother, who was of Irish ancestry, was keen on passing on her interest in the English language and poetry to her son. Hammond first went to work in coalmining in 1921 at the age of 14 at the Victoria Colliery of the Wigan Coal and Iron Company, Standish, in the Lancashire coalfield. He worked underground for the company for over eleven years while also attending mining engineering classes at Wigan Mining College. However, in 1933 at the age of 25 he was dismissed and forced to leave the industry, having been 'blacklisted' by the company for taking a stance for better terms and conditions [*Coal*, July 1947]. Hammond became an embittered young activist, who whiled away his days in Wigan public library among the history and politics books. He was going to get his revenge by being smarter than the opposition [National Union of Mineworkers, North Western Area (NUMNWA), Area Committee Meeting Minutes, 16 September 1967]. During this period Hammond was one of a number of people George Orwell met while researching for

the book *The Road to Wigan Pier* to be published by Victor Gollancz. Between spells of unemployment, Hammond embarked upon a period as an itinerant, working in a steel works and a chemical factory followed by a brief spell in a food-processing factory from where he was again dismissed for 'activism' [*Wigan Observer*, 4 April 1980]. A period working on building an oil refinery followed by time as a merchant seaman working as an engineer on an oil tanker, which took him to Texas, completed these episodes as an itinerant worker.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, Hammond was directed by Government emergency labour decree to work in coal mining again, and established himself working underground at Garswood Hall Colliery, situated between Wigan and St Helens. He quickly became involved again with industrial activism, earning a reputation as a formidable and respected negotiator through the work of the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation (LCMF) Branch Production Committee at the colliery. In 1942 at the age of 34, Hammond was elected full-time miners' agent for the influential panel of branches in the Wigan district of the coalfield, following the retirement of Seth Blackledge, who had held the post since 1917, a post Hammond held until his retirement in 1967. Hammond was returned with a massive endorsement for a candidate of the left, registering a vote twice as high as either of his rivals on the right: Edwin Hall and Laurence Plover and with a majority of over 9000 votes [LCMF, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, 11 and 25 April 1942].

Longevity of office for full-time miners' agents allowed Hammond to continue in the Wigan fiefdom within the coalfield, from where he was able to exercise power and influence within the Lancashire union. The front room of Hammond's home in Poolstock, near Wigan, became his office and study, where he held regular counsel with other union officials and heard grievances from a steady succession of mineworkers. Thereafter Hammond's rise within the Lancashire miners' union was meteoric as the LCMF became the National Union of Mineworkers Lancashire Area (NUMLA) from 1945. He held the vice-presidency of the union in 1944 and in 1945, and unsuccessfully contested the post of General Secretary, the most important position in the union, following the retirement of Peter Pemberton, losing to Edwin Hall [NUMLA, Monthly Conference Report, 28 April 1945].

Hammond held the presidency of the Lancashire union, a distinguished, but largely nominal, post between 1946 and 1948 and again in 1952. At the national level Hammond was elected by the NUMLA to serve on the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) National Executive Committee (NEC) for the two years between 1945 and 1947. During this period he headed NEC delegations to both the Soviet Union and Poland and a mission to the Dutch Trade Union Congress. At the same time he visited Dutch state mines to obtain information and ideas on colliery modernisation, working conditions and practices where he noted that one recently modernised pit in the Netherlands could produce a quarter of the tonnage of all the collieries in his native Lancashire [*Coal*, July 1947]. Hammond emerged as the most powerful figure in the NUMLA after the General Secretary during the late 1940s and 1950s. This was helped by the growing appeal of the left assisted by production and operational difficulties in Lancashire pits caused by wartime exigencies having to be met by largely dilapidated collieries and as a result of issues arising from the nationalisation of the industry and the need for modernisation that this set in motion.

Hammond's rising prominence in the Lancashire miners' union was matched by his growing influence, both nationally and in the north-west of England in the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) which he joined in 1942. As an ideal recruit for the CPGB, he became a leading figure in the region until his resignation in 1956. Thereafter, he retained his left-wing views, but worked for the return of a Labour government. Hammond, together with his wife Phyllis, whom he had married at the age of 23, were important figures in reorganising and ensuring the rising importance of the CPGB in Lancashire during the late 1940s and early 1950s in a relatively fruitful period for the party in the north-west. Rising support in Lancashire brought party reorganisation in the coalfield, which provided a more effective base from which to campaign for

Hammond. His accession to the post of full-time miners' agent for Wigan in 1942 was a major coup, presaging the extension of its influence into several key union branches. Consistently an electoral irrelevance, the CPGB nevertheless made its presence felt within the coalfield [CPGB Lancashire and Cheshire News: Bulletin of the Lancashire Division of the CPGB, 5 September 1942, 10 October 1942, 26 December 1942, Call No CP/LOC/NW/3/3: 1942; *The Bulletin (Incorporating Lancashire and Cheshire News)* 8 March 1952, 27 September 1952, Call No CP/LOC/NW/3/13: 1952, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester].

While Hammond was henceforth seen as the standard-bearer for the left in Lancashire his stock amongst miners, union officials and indeed management of the newly nationalised industry, irrespective of political affiliation, rose immeasurably as a result of what was seen as his equitable and skilful handling of a difficult and protracted dispute in the Lancashire coalfield over the contentious issue of concessionary coal for local miners. These men had hitherto enjoyed special privileges relative to other coalfield regions in the private coal industry; such concessions were now formalised, uniform and reduced under nationalisation. Hammond was instrumental in achieving a settlement in 1952 which allowed miners to retain some measure of the privileges they had previously enjoyed, but only after the dispute had culminated in a serious and widespread strike in the Lancashire coalfield. Hammond was lauded for the role he played [NUMLA, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, 22 September 1952; *Wigan Observer*, 4 April 1980]. His prominent status was assured as the second most powerful figure in the Lancashire union behind General Secretary Edwin Hall. Hammond was the NUMLA nomination for NUM national presidency in 1959 which he unsuccessfully contested, coming a poor seventh, being dismissed in the first round of voting. Again, in 1960 he unsuccessfully contested the post of General Secretary against an aspirant candidate of the right, Joe Gormley.

There is a tendency to contrast both the personal and political differences between Gormley and Hammond. Emphasising the differences between the two became part of Gormley's own attempt to create and perpetuate the 'Gormley myth' so well expressed in his memoirs [Gormley (1982)]. Moreover, it is convenient to take a view of Lancashire coalfield politics of the period which emphasises the differences between the two leading figures and strands of opinion they represented. This was typified by the events of 1960 over the ballot-rigging affair, when matters came to a head. Gormley and Hall were accused of rigging the ballot in favour of Gormley's bid for the post of NUMLA secretary against Hammond. Hammond alleged that Gormley had convinced Hall that his support for his chosen successor, Arthur Bubbins, should be switched to Gormley because Bubbins had no chance against Hammond, thus letting in Hammond and the left. They then allegedly 'cooked' the ballot result [Howell (1989) 11–13]. The outcome saw Hammond and his supporters picketing the Bolton headquarters of the Lancashire union [*Bolton Evening News*, 24 and 28 October 1960]. He felt that the right had deceived him again, as he believed was the case in 1945, when he alleged that Pemberton had 'arranged' Hall's succession in order to keep the left out [*Bolton Evening News*, 12 November 1960]. Gormley resigned the position and ran a second ballot in which the Electoral Reform Society counted the votes. The result saw a similar outcome to the first ballot. These events saw union business in uproar, recriminations flying and trench warfare breaking out between the two camps as it was widely believed there had at least been some 'interference' with the first ballot [Howell (1989) 11–13]. Nevertheless, it was Gormley who assumed the post of General Secretary of the Lancashire union in 1961 at the relatively young age of 43, on Hall's retirement.

It might be thought that this affair would have made it impossible to bring union officialdom back together again following the factionalism that ensued. Nonetheless, while ideological divisions were ever present, it is remarkable how the Lancashire union maintained a high level of agreement over the issues facing the coal industry. This was particularly the case over the need to modernise the industry against the pressing demands of coal's rapidly deteriorating situation. This transcended all ideological disagreements. The period of modernisation and rationalisation of the coal industry in Lancashire was dominated by two figures in the union: Joe

Gormley from the right and Jim Hammond from the left. Each represented aspects of the union's attitude toward industrial change. They were ideological and personal opponents. However, the late 1950s and 1960s were characterised by agreement on how the industry should respond to the challenges it faced. Both were reconciled to a view that modernisation represented 'progress' toward a sustainable and viable coal industry in Lancashire. They believed a Labour government would be best able to carry this through.

While Joe Gormley got the top job in the union in 1961, Hammond continued to be seen as the second most important figure in the coalfield as the most prominent and one of the longest-serving full-time miners' agents. Although the NUMLA leadership accepted the priorities of industrial change it appeared to offer a series of 'challenges' to the divisional coal board over a number of issues. The NUMLA leadership tackled the divisional board over the manner of industrial change, particularly the mode of colliery closures. Gormley and Hammond criticised the board over the reasons it gave for closure and over lack of consultation. For example, in 1958 they questioned the divisional board's handling of the closure of Garswood Hall Colliery. Hammond was 'incensed' that the board had closed the pit 'with a phone call'. Both claimed they had intended to fight the board's 'sudden decision to close the colliery' [*St Helens and District Reporter*, 10 May 1958]. There was certainly a lack of consultation. However, there was never any intention to oppose closure. Because the Lancashire area leadership had not objected to previous closures under similar circumstances it had effectively given the 'green light' to the divisional board to proceed with more closures [NUMLA, Area Conference Meeting Minutes, 14 June 1958].

Objections had not been raised to closures during the 1950s because the leadership saw these as essential to meet the manpower requirements of two new collieries being developed in the coalfield at Agecroft and Parkside and the modernisation of thirteen other collieries [*St Helens and District Reporter*, 10 May 1958]. What Gormley and Hammond found objectionable about the Garswood Hall situation was the insufficient time they had to 'prepare' the workforce for shutdown because of a premature closure announcement. They would have preferred closure under the Government's 1959 *Revised Plan for Coal* so they could promise the workforce a transfer to Parkside Colliery [NUMLA, Area Committee Meeting Minutes, 14 June 1958]. They questioned the board over the manner and timing of closure only in as much as it impinged on their ability to 'manage' the workforce.

Again, in 1959, Hammond reproached the divisional board over the 'impromptu' proposal to close Welch Whittle Colliery, Chorley. He had no intention of opposing closure. Instead, he produced a display of histrionics because closure was proving problematic for manpower transfers [*Chorley Guardian*, 8 January 1960]. He had known Welch Whittle was likely to close. It was a clear case of Hammond high on rhetoric and low on action. The leadership taking a principled stand to give the impression it was taking action over industrial change was amply illustrated over the open-cast mining question. In Lancashire opposition to open-cast appeared to be a leadership priority as colliery closures loomed. Two of the largest open-cast sites in Lancashire had a combined production equal to the output of the coalfield's most productive collieries. In addition, there were plans by the Ministry of Fuel and Power to develop new sites in Lancashire. The NUMLA made it clear to the divisional board that these developments were misguided while collieries were closing.

Hammond emerged as a leading critic of open-cast mining, opining that the NUMLA should oppose closures in the absence of the abandonment of all open-cast sites and an embargo on new developments. Hammond's assertion held widespread support. As one union delegate noted, open-cast 'would be a fight to the bitter end' [NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1958]. Open-cast was one issue on which the NUMLA leadership had considerable rank-and-file support to take industrial action had it chosen to do so, with calls for industrial action precipitated by colliery closure announcements during the late 1950s. As the primary cause of injustice it was open-cast which galvanised support for action rather than pit closures. Yet the NUMLA leadership rejected calls for industrial action. Strike action was rejected because it

might damage relations with the NCB [NUMLA, Area Committee Meeting Minutes, 7 November, 27 December 1958]. In particular, Hammond stressed the need for negotiations with the Coal Board rather than strike action, but only after he had created a whirlwind of excitement that his trenchant stand might signal his endorsement of strike action. Initially, Hammond, in positioning himself at the forefront of the open-cast debate created the prospect of schism within the Lancashire area leadership. A split between Hammond and both Gormley and Hall was avoided as Hammond quickly fell into line. He recognised the predominant leadership view that there was more advantage in manipulating open-cast for its political value than in a risky adventure with direct action. Hammond thus became like the grand old Duke of York marching his troops to the top of the hill only to have to march them down again. In any case, he was guilty of hyperbole on open-cast because the leadership calculated that the threat posed was of marginal consequence seen against the scale of contraction in deep mining being considered.

During an important early closure in the coalfield at Maypole Colliery, Abram, Wigan in 1959, Hammond asserted the primacy of the union and management to decide the outcome of colliery closure decisions rather than communities or mineworkers. The NUMLA's strategy was one of adopting the pretence of a principled position while effectively surrendering closure by agreeing to co-operate in exchange for substantive guarantees from the divisional board to make closure more acceptable to mineworkers particularly over problematic transfer arrangements for displaced miners to take up jobs mainly at the new colliery at Agecroft and modernised collieries in the Manchester district of the coalfield. Hall's position amounted to a NUMLA *de facto* acceptance of closure. The position adopted by leading officials, including Hammond, after the event, lends credence to this view. For example, Hammond, who had actively participated in negotiations, clung to the rather bizarre belief that the NUMLA had not conceded closure. He corrected the Maypole delegate for suggesting that because they had agreed to co-operate in closure they had by implication surrendered the 'principle of closure' [NUMLA, Area Committee Meeting Minutes, 24 January 1959]. There were reasons for Hammond's prickly attitude. Firstly, in spite of this exercise in semantics, the NUMLA leadership knew that playing with words would not avoid the conclusion that the colliery would be closing because of its acquiescence. Secondly, it knew that by surrendering Maypole they had opened the floodgates for wholesale pit closures in Lancashire. During the negotiations over Maypole it became apparent what the scale of closures might be under the Government's 1959 *Revised Plan for Coal*. Hammond cast himself in the role of a Cassandra, indicating to the divisional board that if collieries such as Maypole were to close then it put many more in jeopardy. However, Hammond did not press the board over the rationale for closures; rather he moved the debate to one about the manner and outcome of closures—an entirely different strategy accompanied by an entirely different set of priorities. The position adopted by the NUMLA in response to the reaction to closure is further evidence of its retreat from an engagement with the divisional board over Maypole. The local council at Abram demanded a mass protest involving the local community, mineworkers, and the unions. Labour dominated the authority with a strong and traditional representation by councillors with mining connections. Abram Council wanted to form a 'defence committee' against closure in the same way as a number of local authorities in other coalfields [*Iron and Coal Trades Review*, 12 December 1958]. There was a desire to save 'their' pit. The NUMLA was horrified at this prospect. Hall rejected the idea point-blank. He felt that talk of 'mass protests' was dangerous' [*Wigan Observer*, 19 December 1958]. The NCBNWD echoed this view believing that pit closures brought out 'interested amateurs' from the community [LRO, NCBNWD, Deposit No NC.acc.7950, File No 5: Chairman's Dept: National Plan Review: 1959]. Other leading officials rejected 'outside' involvement in closure. Hammond, in particular, rejected direct action. He unequivocally supported Hall by asserting that: 'we cannot barricade a pit off if the Board says it is going to close, but we will have to find

all means at our disposal to change the Board's policy. The Union will have to decide the means' [*Iron and Coal Trades Review*, 12 December 1958].

Again, in 1962 a difficult closure at Sandhole Colliery, located at Walkden between Manchester and Bolton, saw Hammond seemingly take an early stand together with colliery delegates who called for industrial action against pit closures on the basis that if they did nothing it would be a clear signal to the divisional board of NUMLA's *cart blanche* acceptance of closures. In calling for the mobilisation of the entire labour movement against Tory-inspired pit closures, Sandhole believed that closures would end with the return of a Labour Government with a more socialistic commitment to the coal industry [NUMLA, Area Committee Meeting Minutes, 27 December 1958]. However, in reality, Hammond actually stood with other leading Lancashire union officials such as Gormley who successfully argued that industrial action would weaken the union's case and risked jeopardising the transfer of miners to the new and modernised collieries of the coalfield. According to Gormley, co-operation rather than confrontation was required, in which miners should concentrate on making the coal industry competitive and efficient against its competitors. This amounted to an unequivocal endorsement of industrial change. While Hammond took a less supportive view of industrial change, he did so only in as much as he felt that the NCB could have taken measures to avoid closing pits and reduced its dependence on open-cast operations. Nevertheless, by endorsing Gormley's call for co-operation, he showed that he agreed with the tenets of industrial change. Thus, by the summer of 1961 the NUMLA appeared to be saying that pit closures should go no further and girding for a fight, the situation was in reality much more ambiguous.

While the union branch committee at Sandhole, and its supporters, wanted to make a stand, there were indications of greater reluctance from the union leadership. Leading officials only lent their support because of the strength of feeling developing in the branches. Even that support was contingent, expressed through strong protests to the divisional board and a great deal of rhetoric. Gormley seemed to mean business when he pledged support for Sandhole and made it clear to the divisional chairman, John Anderton, that the divisional board was pursuing its ambitions on rationalisation to the limit if they felt they could close Sandhole. Gormley told Anderton that Sandhole was the issue on which the NUMLA was prepared to engage in a 'struggle' to fight the board's attempts to destroy the coal industry in Lancashire [National Archives (NA), NCB, File COAL 30/86: Closure of Collieries 1960 May-1961 July]. Similarly, Hammond dutifully made an appearance on the pit-bank at Sandhole to address a mass meeting of miners in which he promised to personally lead a crusade to keep the pit open [Interviews, Mr William Kelly, General Secretary, National Union of Mineworkers, Lancashire Area, 1999]. Despite the rhetoric Gormley had already set clear limits on his commitment to fight for the colliery.

Joe Clarke, NUM branch secretary at Sandhole, supported by delegates from the Manchester district, had called for 'a fight against Coal Board policy' at the 1961 NUMLA annual conference [NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1961]. Gormley had rejected this demand in favour of the 'constructive' approach of dialogue with the NCB. Again, he argued that industrial action might be counter-productive to transferring men to other collieries, while a 'negative attitude' might threaten the opportunity to demonstrate that Sandhole could become viable. He asked delegates to think of the future of the Lancashire coalfield with a 'progressive outlook' [NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1961]. This was a long way from fighting talk. It very nearly amounted to an endorsement of Coal Board policy. If the union leadership felt reluctantly constrained to take some form of action it was to tackle the divisional board over Sandhole as a mining proposition. Hammond, while sympathetic to the demands of delegates for the union to take action, took a more cautious line—what he called the 'sane approach'—by asserting that the union had to be certain of its own case on the colliery as a mining proposition, before taking the fight to the Board [NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1961]. It was at Hammond's suggestion, with delegate and the divisional board agreement, that the union

engaged the services of an independent mining engineer to undertake a detailed report on Sandhole. This, too, constituted a conciliatory gesture from the union because the other option was to have demanded a joint NUM–NCB investigation, as was frequently the case in disputatious circumstances, thus giving the union some direct influence over the progress and outcome of the inquiry.

This retreat provoked conflict between the NUMLA leadership and the branch committee at Sandhole and others in the Manchester district. The union stood accused of reneging on a mandatory resolution to oppose the closure, agreed at the 1961 NUMLA annual conference supported by a leadership promise that Sandhole 'would be backed up to the hilt' [NUMLA, Area Committee Meeting Minutes, 19 August 1961]. At Sandhole there was a great deal of bitterness and frustration. This tended to obscure the fact that the union leadership, while uttering the language of opposition to pit closures, had been looking for a way out of opposing closure since the 1961 annual conference. Gormley took Clarke to task by suggesting that Clarke, as an executive committee member, had been privy to the union's discussions on Sandhole at the highest level. Gormley argued that it was not as though the rank-and-file at Sandhole had been ignored since the executive had sent its own investigating teams into Sandhole to assess the situation and talk to the men. Gormley felt that the idea of the independent inquiry was an appropriate measure which had the support of all parties including the miners at Sandhole [NUMLA, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, 30 May 1961, 10 July 1961].

Similarly, Hammond, believed that it was not a case of the NUMLA 'leaning over backwards' to accommodate the Coal Board. In his view, they had done more in Lancashire to oppose the closure of mines at Sandhole than cases in the 'so-called left-wing areas' such as South Wales [NUMLA, Area Committee Meeting Minutes, 29 April 1961, 17 June 1961, 19 August 1961]. The challenges and defences offered over the retreat on Sandhole demonstrated the widening chasm which had developed between the leadership and the Sandhole branch committee. While there were pre-existing ideological differences which increased tensions, the situation was aggravated by the increasing discomfort felt by the union leadership over the conduct of opposition to closure by the branch committee. Neither Gormley nor Hammond liked the way the branch committee and others in the Manchester district had taken it upon themselves to make Sandhole a martyred pit with which to start a 'holy war' against the divisional board. They believed that such action was dangerous and detrimental to the 'progress' of modernisation. Although leading figures such as Gormley and Hammond had initially supported the Sandhole cause because they believed it to be just, their support was collapsing by the day throughout 1961. For them, the only way forward became enunciated in Hammond's 'sane approach' [NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1961]. In the caustic atmosphere of accusations of betrayal, the union leadership sought its excuses. Hammond struck an optimistic note suggesting the recent decision by the divisional board to close some sections of the colliery might not be the 'end of the road' for Sandhole [NUMLA, Area Committee Meeting Minutes, 19 August 1961]. Few believed him. It had been tacit in discussing the closure of these sections that this would effectively mean the closure of the whole colliery.

In seeking to improve the presentation of its case the NUMLA discovered the value of special and weekend conferences to discuss particular aspects of industrial change and the wider issues involved [NUMLA, Special Delegate Conferences, 4 February 1960, 18 March 1961, 17 March 1962]. It was Hammond's idea to call a weekend conference for the first time in Lancashire in December 1963, a year in which the NUMLA had been re-designated the National Union of Mineworkers, North West Area (NUMNWA). The immediate issue was the imminent closure of Brackley Colliery, which Hammond used as the occasion to call the conference. This was in the style of a 'jolly' at a top Blackpool hotel where the focus was on social contact. There was a deliberate attempt to keep the format as informal as possible. The inauguration of these meetings in Lancashire had nothing to do with attempts to improve democracy within the union

as the leadership had suggested. They were about Hammond 'educating' the rank-and-file [NUMNWA, Weekend Conference Report, 7–8 December 1963]. It was a leadership device to propagate the necessity for industrial change. This was achieved by reaching a wider range of mineworkers either through direct rank-and-file participation or through taking the chance to spread the word more effectively.

The 'educating' process perceived by Hammond involved persuading participants of the need for industrial change by presenting the facts facing the industry from a range of speakers from both sides of the industry and from the Labour Party. Hammond indicated that they were not intended to be 'pep talks' though this is precisely what they were [NUMNWA, Weekend Conference Report, 7–8 December 1963]. They were Hammond's forte. He was able to display his guest speakers—on this occasion Will Paynter, NUM General Secretary, and James Anderton, NCBNWD chairman, to reinforce his assertions. Importantly, it was an opportunity, too, for Hammond to cajole participants, including a few old comrades, as he engaged them in the issues facing the industry. In this, Hammond demonstrated a gift for emollience. At the conference, he gave a favourable assessment of industrial change to-date. This was the cue for Paynter to provide a vindication of industrial change in which he developed another important theme of the conference—the possibility of a change of government. He established what he expected from Labour. This included a national fuel policy with a leading role for coal, together with socialist economic and social planning.

The conference was notable for its assemblage of leading 'militant' sceptics who opposed pit closures. Joe Clarke and Ted Woolley, previously at Sandhole, now at Brackley Colliery, another threatened pit, and Mick Weaver from Mosley Common were joined by the Trotskyist, Joe Ryan of Bradford Colliery, and the Communist, Jimmy Dowd—a rising figure on the left from Gormley's 'home' colliery of Bold, St Helens. Both Hammond and Paynter asked this plurality of left-wing opinion what they wanted for the future of the coal industry. They were asked to consider what it was that united rather than divided them. Was it not, as Paynter argued, a socialist vision? Did this universal objective not transcend all their trivial differences? Was this not the vision of a modernised coal industry playing its part within a national fuel policy which they most desired? Within this introspection the 'militants' were asked to consider their reaction to 'pit closures that inevitably arise' from this process.

For both Hammond and Paynter modernisation could only be delivered at a price. Closures were a sacrifice which was necessary to ensure the achievement of socialist objectives. Hammond was an advocate of socialist unity on the political left on questions of industrial change. His belief in the need for 'left unity' had increased rather than diminished throughout industrial change. He reiterated his call as the need for modernisation to proceed under a socialist government [NUMLA, Area Committee Meeting Minutes, 27 December 1958]. For Hammond and Paynter the exercise was quite intentional. The bait was the possibility of a Labour government working for coal under socialism. Hammond and Paynter proved convincing with their dazzling description of life under a future Labour government, but it was by reminding the 'militants' of their shared commitment to a socialist vision which proved so effective.

This commitment was put to the test in 1965 when the new Labour government embarked on its Accelerated Colliery Closure Plan (ACCP). One reaction to this in Lancashire was a 'stay down' protest at Clock Face Colliery, St Helens, against closure, in which Hammond was closely involved. Again, the vexed issue of transfer for displaced mineworkers was at the forefront for the nine rank and file miners who led the two-day underground protest, joined by six union officials including the branch president and treasurer, with the branch secretary co-ordinating the dispute on the surface [*Manchester Evening News*, 25 & 26 November 1965]. The dispute also involved a work to rule by the remaining 700 miners at Clock Face while the dispute threatened to involve the whole of the St Helens district. One notable feature of the Clock Face affair was the level of support Gormley received from Hammond, who skilfully rallied the rank-and-file

behind the leadership. This level of support ensured the leadership prevailed over the Clock Face protest. Unlike Gormley, the episode left Hammond's personal authority untainted, although he, too, was angered by these events leading to an emasculation of the Clock Face protest through his intervention.

Hammond saw the Clock Face dispute not as a blow against closure policy but a blow directed at the union's authority. Hitherto, Hammond, like Gormley, had felt that closure and transfers had been arranged relatively amicably. Hammond felt direct action ruined the union's chances of 'successful' negotiations with the divisional board over closures. He believed it was union leadership's prerogative to negotiate and, if necessary, protest. Hammond stressed the need for discipline in the movement. He was particularly critical of allegations of victimisation, describing the Clock Face men as those who 'hungered for martyrdom' [NUMNWA, Area Committee Meeting Minutes, 26 March 1966]. Hammond invoked these arguments to marginalise the Clock Face protest. At the same time he cannily cast himself in the role of peacemaker. At his insistence, the St Helens panel of union branches agreed to co-operate in the orderly transfer of the remaining workforce at Clock Face. This came too late for miners who were forced to leave the industry during the chaos of closure. Through these manoeuvres, Hammond gathered a majority of the rank-and-file behind him to win a debate to 'drop this talk of victimisation' [NUMNWA, Area Committee Meeting Minutes, 26 March 1966]. Nevertheless, accusations of victimisation persisted together with continuing allegations of shoddy treatment by both the divisional board and the NUMNWA in arranging transfers from Clock Face. In winning over a majority of the union, Hammond obtained high levels of support from those branches in Lancashire where closure and transfer had been handled in a smooth and open-handed way thus stifling any protest from Clock Face [NUMNWA, Area Committee Meeting Minutes, 26 March 1966, 23 April 1966].

The Clock Face affair raised some highly relevant questions about the character of colliery closures in Lancashire. This situation was evidenced by Hammond's ability to isolate the Clock Face 'cause'. The Clock Face affair also demonstrated that the NUMNWA leadership did not appreciate increasing concerns expressed by the rank-and-file over further contraction of the coal industry in Lancashire. Both Gormley and Hammond continued to pursue maximum co-operation with the divisional board and continued to believe these protests were counter-productive to the proper execution of closure and transfer of mineworkers. Both men seriously misjudged the moment. Both Gormley and Hammond shared a lack of empathy with miners facing onerous outcomes from closure as they failed to come to terms with the dynamics of industrial change.

While Hammond's position on colliery closures was highlighted by these episodes it is the position he took through his involvement with the protracted problems faced by Mosley Common Colliery, Tyldesley, in the Manchester district of the coalfield which exemplified Hammond's attitude towards modernisation of the coal industry and industrial change more generally. Mosley Common was an existing colliery which underwent a key large-scale and complex modernisation, significant not only for the Manchester district but for the whole of the Lancashire coalfield during the immediate post-nationalisation period. Significant capital investment, reorganisation and technical modernisation of operations and the transfer of mineworkers to the colliery from other collieries which had closed or were being rationalised underpinned its recognition as a 'flagship' project by both sides of the coal industry [LRO, NCNWD, Deposit No NC.acc.7950, File No 251: Secretary's Dept: No 1(Manchester) Area: Report on the Re-organisation of Mosley Common Colliery: Stage 1]. However, what became a combination of intractable technical, geological and labour problems dogged the project from the outset and throughout the 1950s. By the late 1950s it was considered a failing project which was losing money and threatened with outright abandonment of the modernisation project and the colliery's closure [*Manchester Guardian*, 13 June 1957].

It was, however, the intervention of the NCB at the highest levels, involving both national and divisional officials, who became increasingly impressed by the willingness of the NUMLA to support moves to keep it open by tackling its problems, which deflected this fate. Prior to 1961 the NUMLA executive and senior officials had been observers of the colliery's stuttering performance. In 1961, at the suggestion of Jim Hammond, the NUMLA and divisional board agreed to convene a Joint Investigation Committee (JIC) to assess and deliberate on the gamut of pit level problems afflicting the colliery [LRO, NCBNWD, Deposit No NC.acc.7950: File No 208: Mining Department: Mosley Common 1961–1967]. The NUMLA felt saving Mosley Common was a major priority because, like the NCBNWD, they saw its success as absolutely vital to modernisation of the industry in Lancashire. As a measure of the gravity with which the union viewed the situation, its side of the JIC was led by three senior figures: Joe Gormley, Jim Hammond, and Sid Vincent, the NUMLA Executive member responsible for the Atherton and Tyldesley panel of union branches in which the colliery was situated; a close associate of Gormley and later his successor as General Secretary of the Lancashire union [Taped interview, University of Wales Library, Swansea].

Hammond and Vincent led the NUMLA contingent of the joint teams sent into the colliery with the role of 'trouble-shooters' at large [LRO, NCBNWD: Deposit No NC.acc.7950: File No 279: East Lancashire Area, General Manager: Report on Mosley Common Colliery by Area General Manager 21 February 1961, Mossley Common JIC, Report of Sub-Committee, 3 November 1961]. The formation of the JIC was a defining moment in the history of the colliery. However, the need to press ahead with further modernisation stretched relations between the divisional board and NUMLA to breaking point, ensuring that all attempts to revive the colliery failed. The JIC did sterling work tackling the immediate causes of Mosley Common's difficulties. Such was the shock of the closure threat that a mood of co-operation descended under the auspices of the JIC. Significantly, the JIC was successful in providing an arena in which pit-level grievances could be discussed and resolved in a co-operative atmosphere. In this, NUM branch secretary, Mick Weaver, recognised the JIC as a legitimate forum, while the union leadership was able to keep a close eye on the colliery. Both Hammond and Gormley were omnipresent, while Gormley had in Vincent 'his' man in the colliery [Taped Interview, University of Wales Library, Swansea].

However, growing tensions within the JIC were accompanied by the persistence of difficult issues. Amongst these was the divisional board's insistence that the colliery's problems should be scrutinised through the imposition of the Study Method—a form of work assessment. The study method had been an issue which had exercised management and the NUM since the early 1950s having been debated nationally [NRA, Ministry of Fuel and Power, File POWE 37/372: Work Study in the Coal Mining Industry: Application of New Management Techniques, 1953–1956]. The NCB wished to deploy it to pave the way for changes in technology, working practices and methods of payment. In this way, it was linked to the vexed question of the introduction of power loading and of shift work. It was thus a crucial aspect of modernisation. The NCBNWD saw Mosley Common, with its special problems, as a colliery in which the study method should be applied.

The imposing of the study method in the extremely strained atmosphere of Mosley Common was an option too far. It became a favourite hobby-horse for the NUM branch committee at Mosley Common, led by Mick Weaver, as they vehemently opposed it. Although the JIC assuaged many of the grievances arising from application of the study method its imposition increased tensions within the JIC itself. Gormley and Tom Knowles, NCBNWD Area Manager responsible for Mosley Common, angrily clashed over its imposition. Both colliery and area management began to distrust Gormley and Hammond because they believed both had become sympathetic to Weaver on this and other pit-level issues. In particular, they felt that Hammond had become the *eminence grise* of Mosley Common through his close involvement with the JIC, from where it was believed he was orchestrating pit-level tensions. Hammond—a one-time

associate of Weaver in the CPGB—felt that Weaver was often justified on issues with which he confronted management [LRO, Deposit No NC.acc.7950: File No 208: Mining Department: Mosley Common 1961–1967]. However, Hammond was not using the opportunity to pursue an 'agenda' over changes to work practices. He supported modernisation, but had to achieve a balance between appeasing the rank-and-file and accepting the tenets of the modernisation dictated by the divisional board [NUMLA, Area Committee Meeting Minutes, 8 April 1961, 31 March 1962, 2 March 1963]. In fact, these suspicions arose from management frustration over continuing difficulties in implementing further modernisation in which they not only faced rank-and-file opposition, but were beginning to experience equivocation, if not outright opposition, from more senior figures within the NUMLA.

The divisional board had expected the NUMLA leadership to accept changes to work practices with few reservations, with the JIC providing the medium through which implementation could be achieved. Mosley Common was earmarked as a colliery in which multi-shift operations—the colliery working more than a single or double production shift—as the finale to its modernisation, together with the full implementation of new technology. The divisional board assumed it would be able to introduce multi-shift with the assistance of the JIC and the active co-operation of the NUMLA's senior officials. The exercise once again produced a crisis at Mosley Common. Widespread objections were raised. At branch level there was strong opposition to introduction with the significant support of Sid Vincent through the work of the JIC. Vincent became a leading opponent of multi-shift at Mosley Common with the backing of both Gormley and Hammond.

The arguments against multi-shift did not emerge from bloody-minded 'militant' rejection of the system. Rather, they were based on the circumstances of the colliery's 'flawed conception'. Weaver was consistent on this point. The branch committee had already rejected more intensive double-shift working. As Vincent concluded, they would be opposing multi-shift simply because 'it wouldn't work'. The branch committee argued that these issues were of such an intractable nature they outweighed questions of whether it should accept extra payments for working multi-shift [LRO, NCBNWD, Deposit No NC.acc.7950: File No 209: 1961–1967: Mosley Common JIC]. There was thus a fundamental objection to multi-shift at Mosley Common. Importantly, these sentiments gained support not just from Vincent through the JIC but also significantly from both Gormley and Hammond. While management anticipated objections at branch level, they were surprised at reaction from more senior levels in the union. Gormley and Hammond emerged as strong critics of management through the JIC over the introduction of multi-shift at Mosley Common.

Gormley and Hammond were dismayed at the imposition of such a contentious issue as multi-shift at a colliery with a recent record of strained relations which was just beginning to emerge from years of difficulties. In addition, they argued there would be difficult wage re-negotiations resulting from the introduction of multi-shift, while the concept of placing the entire colliery on multi-shift rather than particular productive sections—which would have been the norm—stretched co-operation to the limit [LRO, NCBNWD, Deposit No NC.acc.7950, File No 209: 1961–1967: Mossley Common JIC]. Again, it was evidence of pushing modernisation too far, this time on issues of work practices, accompanied by objections at all levels of the NUMNWA. The divisional board believed it was losing crucial support from those whom it expected would back modernisation without question. This realisation marked the point at which momentum began to gather at both national and divisional levels in favour of closing the colliery. However, there was one final act in the drama. This involved a switch of emphasis by both Hammond and Gormley on the question of multi-shift.

While the branch committee at Mosley Common anticipated continuing support from Gormley and Hammond, both had been engaged in a process of steadily consolidating and modifying their position on multi-shift throughout 1964–1965. They came to the view that the introduction of this pivot of modernisation was inevitable. Gormley argued that multi-shift had

been practised in other coalfields and was of increasing application throughout the industry [LRO, NCBNWD, Deposit No NC.acc.7950, File No 209: 1961–1967: Mosley Common JIC]. Traditionally, most Lancashire pits operated on a single-shift pattern, though working double- and multi-shift was not entirely unknown in Lancashire: some pits had always practised it, though they were relatively few. Nationally, Lancashire had been in the forefront of debates on the more general application of multi-shift in which Hammond had been an important participant. The wider debate increasingly turned from questions of 'should it be accepted generally' to one of 'at what price should it be accepted'. In Lancashire, this debate raged throughout the second half of 1964. While the branch committee at Mosley Common stuck to non-acceptance supported by a minority of NUMNWA branches, there was an increasing preparedness to move the debate toward acceptance on the right terms. This was a perspective which both Gormley and Hammond began to advance in earnest in moves to isolate the branch committee over multi-shift. Still, it was accepted that implementation at Mosley Common would be difficult, if not impossible. Gormley urged Weaver to accept multi-shift with increased pay, to no avail. Weaver upped the tone of debate by calling for industrial action over multi-shift [NUMNWA, Area Committee Meeting Minutes, 18 July 1964, 15 August 1964, 5 December 1964].

Crucially for Mosley Common, the continuing debate over acceptance of multi-shift produced a complete collapse of confidence in the future of the colliery by NCB management at all levels. Any hopes that the colliery had 'turned the corner' were dashed, raising doubts over its future. This, combined with a growing weariness with the colliery, finally broke management faith. The breach of faith coincided with a recrudescence of labour troubles during 1964 partly precipitated by attempts to introduce multi-shift. The collapse of confidence within the NCB was demonstrated in March 1965 at a routine meeting of the JIC. The language used by the Area Manager was apocalyptic. He announced that the future of the colliery depended on the successful unopposed implementation of multi-shift work despite continuing objections from Mosley Common branch. While Hammond continued to give qualified support to the branch, it was Vincent—the close ally of Gormley—who once again emerged as a champion of the branch cause at the meeting [LRO, NCBNWD, Deposit No NC.acc.7950, File No 208: Mining Department: Mosley Common 1961–1967]. Mosley Common's fate was effectively sealed in March 1965 before the ACCP announcement and more than two years before it eventually closed.

The events surrounding final closure in 1968 were the stuff of high emotion and drama. Amid the inquest at its passing there were protests, eleventh-hour interventions, and calls by Weaver for industrial action and a public inquiry [NNUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1967]. They all amounted to nothing. The die was cast, and it had been for some time. Events leading up to closure saw some of the most acrimonious exchanges in the turbulent history of the colliery, in which blame was apportioned and scapegoats sought. In particular, Gormley, writing later in his memoirs, found an excuse for the colliery's failure in his celebrated attack on the militant wreckers of Mosley Common whom he alleged had closed it [Howell (1989) 17]. This attack was all the more piquant given Gormley's frustration over his failure to persuade Weaver to accept multi-shift. This had strained relations within the JIC and between Weaver and Gormley. However, it was Gormley, Hammond and Vincent who played an equal part in precipitating closure. Their opposition to changes to work practices was instrumental in bringing about the collapse of confidence within the NCB over Mosley Common's future. The fact that both Gormley and Hammond modified their position on multi-shift more generally was not enough to reduce the divisional board's anxieties over Mosley Common one iota. Gormley, Hammond and Vincent failed to deliver the branch committee's support of their modified position, while it was clear that all three men continued to harbour grave doubts about the efficacy of introducing multi-shift in the circumstances of Mosley Common. For the divisional board, their raising objections to this vital element of modernisation was the final blow,

hastening the colliery's complete closure. Mosley Common was a modernisation too far—even for Jim Hammond.

Hammond's involvement in the Mosley Common saga was one of his last major interventions as a union official. He retired in September 1967 shortly after his sixtieth birthday, having held the largely figurehead role of NUMNWA president since 1962. It is some measure of the high regard in which Hammond was held as a trade union official and miners' leader that tributes poured into the union's Bolton headquarters from across the Lancashire coalfield and beyond [*Liverpool Echo*, 9 August 1967]. Not only was praise heaped on Hammond by both political friends and adversaries, but there was also some recognition that for an official who had been at the forefront of the Lancashire union for a quarter of a century to maintain this high regard throughout was no mean feat. During retirement Hammond maintained an interest in working-class education and in ensuring that the children of mineworkers were given the best access to educational attainment.

Hammond died on 30 March 1980 in Aspull. He was survived by his two sons, one of whom, Tony, won a scholarship to Wigan Grammar School, studied at Oxford University and went on to become a judge [Armstrong (2012) 44]. He had married Phyllis Eileen Callaghan in 1931. Following his death his name was given to a university scholarship offered to the best A-Level student in the Wigan local authority area from a deep-mining family. One reporter's impression on meeting Jim Hammond for the first time was that of a contrast between that of a large man of great 'physical strength', and one who 'before you have been long in his company you appreciate his clear brain, sincerity of purpose and deep faith in his fellow men' [*Coal*, July 1947].

What Hammond could offer was a formidable and respected negotiator, meticulous on detail, and capable of tackling management in a highly effective way. He was also no mean orator and one of the Lancashire union's more cerebral officials:

> a glance around his bookshelves will tell you the type of man he is; apart from volumes of the Lancashire and Miners' Federation, there are books on philosophy, on Marxism, volumes of Shaw and Dickens and Melville, Shelley's and Donne's poems, well-thumbed editions of Hamlet and Macbeth, and books in German, which he reads and speaks well [*Coal*, July 1947].

Hammond laid a great deal of emphasis on working class struggle, in which discipline and leadership were important. He believed that that 'working class education, self-respect and solidarity were the key to political advance' [NUMNWA, Area Committee Meeting Minutes, 13 September 1967]. Jack Dunn, Communist leader of the Kent miners, entered the 'Jim and Joe' debate after Joe Gormley had published his memoirs in 1982 with a stout defence of an old comrade. He observed:

> I knew both well – Jim was all that Joe wasn't, a dedicated committed socialist, well-read, analytical, erudite, who didn't have to rely on gut reaction. He had a profound understanding of society and didn't need a ghost writer for his speeches [*Morning Star*, 9 September 1982].

For all his talents Hammond had a number of limitations. There were two Jim Hammonds. One was the highly capable union official and party comrade whom Bernard Crick once interviewed; Crick felt he had met 'a shrewd old activist' [Crick (1981) 183]. The other Jim Hammond was touched with the quixotic. He was a man in danger of becoming intoxicated on his own rhetoric. His conference speeches were fantastic colourful voyages that assailed every failing of capitalism. Through these speeches he liked to present the broadest picture to miners in terms of the issues facing the industry, in which he took the moral high ground of debate—worthy but not practical. The problem for Hammond was that rhetoric and reality rarely matched. He often appeared less than wholly reliable on account of his weakness for exaggerated claims. This did

not go down well with phlegmatic officials and miners. His other drawback was his officiousness, not welcomed by both other union officials and management, made worse by the fact that he saw himself as the 'secretary who never was', having been twice thwarted for the post, in 1945 and 1961.

In later life as a senior union official, Hammond's preference for the hegemony of trade union and management officialdom over rank-and-file demands produced a penchant for compromise which often went against the grain of his own political instincts. This demonstrated a pragmatic turn which was less evident in the young industrial and political activist. Nevertheless, Hammond's assertion that he saw himself primarily as a working-class strategist and theorist and his reference to his job as 'his hobby' [NUMNWA, Area Committee Meeting Minutes, 13 September 1967] unarguably placed Hammond firmly as an idealist. Moreover, the manner by which he championed the visionary, but largely unrealisable, objective of coal industry modernisation against the reality of coalfield contraction, and despite having to confront its limitations and consequences, confirmed this. As Sid Vincent said of him, he managed to retain his popularity and respect but 'never got anywhere' (did not achieve higher union office) in the eminently pragmatic business of trade union leadership [Taped Interview, University of Wales Library, Swansea].

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: CPGB, Call Nos CP/LOC/NW/3/3 and CP/LOC/NW/3/13, 1952, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester; LCMF, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes; LRO, NCBNWD, Deposit No NC.acc.7950, File No 5: Chairman's Dept: National Plan Review:1959; File No 46: Deputy Chairman's Office: 1958 Dec–1959 Jan: Closure of Maypole Colliery; File No 208: Mining Department: Mosley Common 1961–1967; File No 209: 1961–1967: Mossley Common JIC; File No 246:1954 Jan–1961 Feb: Mossley Common Miscellaneous Reports: Area No 1 (Manchester) General Manager, File No 251: Secretary's Dept: No 1(Manchester) Area: Report on the Re-organisation of Mosley Common Colliery: Stage 1; File No 279: East Lancashire Area, General Manager: Report on Mosley Common Colliery by Area General Manager, 21 February 1961, Mossley Common JIC, Report of Sub-Committee, 3 November 1961; NUM Annual Conference Reports; NUM National Executive Committee Minutes; NUMLA, Annual Conference Reports; NUMLA Monthly Conference Reports; NUMLA Executive Committee Meeting Minutes; NUMLA Area Committee Meeting Minutes, NUMLA Special Conference Reports, 7 February 1952 & 29 October 1960; NUMLA Special Delegate Conference Reports, 4 February 1960, 18 March 1961 & 17 March 1962; NUMNWA, Annual Conference Reports; NUMNWA Area Committee Meeting Minutes; NUMNWA Weekend Conference Report, 7–8 December 1963; NRA, Ministry of Fuel and Power, File POWE 37/372: Work Study in the Coal Mining Industry: Application of New Management Techniques, 1953–1956; NCB, File COAL 30/86: Closure of Collieries 1960 May–1961 July; NRA, Ministry of Labour, File LAB/34/87: Trades Disputes: Coal Mining: North West: 1961–1965. (**2**) **Newspapers and Periodicals**: *Bolton Evening News* 1960; *Chorley Guardian* 1960; *Coal* 1947; *Farnworth and Worsley Journal* 1967; *Liverpool Echo*, 1967; *Iron and Coal Trades Review* 1955, 1958; *Manchester Evening News* 1965, 1967; *Manchester Guardian* 1948, 1957; *Morning Star* 1982; St *Helens and District Reporter* 1958; St *Helens Newspaper* 1965; *Wigan Examiner* 1942, 1959; *Wigan Observer* 1958, 1980, 1986. (**3**) **Books and Articles**: F.A. Gibson, *Statistical Summaries of Tables on behalf of the Mining Association of Great Britain to the Commission of Inquiry re: Minimum Wages and Hours* (1919); *Colliery Yearbook and Coal Trades Directory* 1947 (1948); T.J.R. Sales, 'Study Method', *Transactions of the St Helens Mining Society*, 3 (1956–1957); B. Crick, *George Orwell: A Life*, (1981); J. Gormley, *Battered Cherub: The Autobiography of Joe Gormley* (1982); D. Howell, The *Politics of the NUM: A Lancashire View* (Manchester, 1989); P.N. Grimshaw, *The Sunshine Miners* (1992); S. Catterall, 'The Lancashire Coalfield 1945–1972: NUM–Labour Party Hegemony and Industrial Change', *Manchester Region History Review*, 14 (2000); S. Armstrong, *The Road to Wigan Pier revisited* (2012).

(**4**) **Theses**: S.J. Catterall, 'The Lancashire Coalfield 1945–1972: The Politics of Industrial Change' (Unpublished DPhil thesis, University of York, 2001). (**5**) **Other**: Taped Interview with Sid Vincent, University of Wales, Swansea, Library and Information Services, South Wales Coalfield Collection, South Wales Miners' Library, I.D. No AUD/148; Interviews with Mr William Kelly, National Union of Mineworkers, Lancashire Area, 1999.

STEPHEN CATTERALL

*See also*: †Edwin HALL; †Peter PEMBERTON

**HAZELL, William ('Bill')** (1890–1964)
CO-OPERATOR, SOCIALIST, WRITER

William Hazell was born on 27 August 1890 in St Pancras, London, the son of Frederick Hazell, shoeing smith and one-time secretary of the Farriers Union and his wife Eliza Jane (née Cook). The youngest of five children, he spent his early boyhood days in London and attended a Board School. Hazell's mother died of typhoid when he was six years old. Hazell's father promptly enlisted in the army and served in the Boer War. After his return, he married Rose E. Lily, and the enlarged family, including two new step-brothers, moved to Reading, then Woking. At thirteen Hazell begun work in a builder's firm before working for a short period in the local co-operative society. Mistreatment at home by his step-mother led 'the stripling' William (known as Bill) and his brother Fred to run away. Bill travelled to South Wales to work in the coal mines, while Fred went to Kent. Attracted by high wages in the coal industry in South Wales, then at its peak, Hazell started work in Lady Windsor Colliery in Ynysybwl, which had been sunk in 1884. He exaggerated his age, so by 19 was earning a 'man's wage' as a collier, usually paid only at 21.

Hazell took lodgings with a local family and through them met Deborah Elizabeth Pask, the daughter of a local greengrocer, whom he married on 21 December 1910. On his marriage certificate he stated his age as 22 although he was only 20. Ynysybwl, in what he came to refer to as 'my valley', became Hazell's home for the rest of his life. Although its population was only 5149 in 1911, Hazell recalled that 'going down the main street one could hear all the dialects and accents of the British Isles', though as over 90% of the workers in the colliery lived in the village it was a self-contained and close community. Hazell arrived in South Wales at a time when class consciousness was taking hold, with a shift from Liberal to Labour in the local labour movement. Under the influence of Morgan Walters, who had helped establish the miners' lodge, the miners' institute, the co-operative society and the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in Ynysybwl, Hazell became one of a group of young men, including the brothers John E. and Abel Morgan, who would become leaders of those and other organisations in the village.

Hazell came of age during a period of ferment of action and ideas. The Cambrian collieries lockout with its related disturbances in Tonypandy in 1910, the Aberdare block strike, and troops quartered in nearby Pontypridd led Hazell to recall 'even my usually calm self was stirred and excited by the struggle'. That backdrop of industrial strife was informed by the publication in 1912 of the industrial unionist tract *The Miners' Next Step* by the Unofficial Reform Committee. For Hazell, a left-leaning man of huge intellectual curiosity, the pamphlet's industrial unionist outlook was bound to have an impact.

Hazell was a voracious reader, reading Gray's *Elegy* at 13 and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and Macaulay's *Essays* at the age of 16. He attended mining classes to become a colliery official, which was a popular path at that time for young men looking for self-improvement and advancement, before turning his attention to other subjects of learning, particularly political economy. For 15 years he attended Council, Workers' Educational

Association (WEA), Labour College and co-operative classes, studying industrial history and economics among others, and became a convinced lifelong educationalist. A committed Christian, he studied the gospels throughout his life, attending bible classes and sitting examinations on the scriptures until he was in his late sixties. With his faith as a guiding principle, Hazell was active in Glyn Street English Presbyterian Church, later becoming its secretary, deacon and elder.

Hazell became involved in the co-operative movement in 1913–1914 through the education programme of the Ynysybwl Co-operative Society (YCS) and joined the society's Management Committee in 1915. By then 24 years old and a father of three, he quickly assumed roles and responsibilities in the society, becoming immersed in co-operative life and culture. As a part of his wider view of voluntary community self-help as a driving force for social progress, Hazell had a vision of co-operation as a means of building a better future, being more than just economic activity or providing services through shops but as an economic and social alternative to capitalism and 'the genesis of a new social order'.

The co-operative movement had been slow to develop in South Wales; the Ynysybwl Society was established in 1889, one of 34 societies set up between 1888 and 1891 at the start of a second wave of co-operative development, which lasted until the beginning of the twentieth century. The YCS became a key institution in the village before opening new branches in surrounding villages and towns. It grew from 1665 members in 1914 to 6474 members in 1920, and turnover increased from £19,631 per annum to nearly £500,000, reflecting the level of affluence in coalfield society and the confidence of members in the YCS. As many as 1000 children and young people attended the society's education classes each year and its work was explained through the Local Pages of the monthly *Wheatsheaf* magazine, which had a circulation of 5000, and which Hazell later edited. In 1919–1920 the YCS outflanked private traders' attempts to stymie co-operative development by obtaining premises in the centre of Pontypridd, which was strategically located at the junction of the Rhondda and Taff/Cynon valleys.

By 1916 Hazell was prominent in the Lady Windsor miners' lodge when a major dispute between the Ocean Coal Company and the lodge over the Miners' Institute saw the men take over its control. Hazell became vice chairman of the institute, a post he held until 1923, when he became its secretary, a position he then held for a further 11 years. The assertion of independence by the workmen resulted in 'The Hall' becoming a much more substantial and successful venture, now open to labour propaganda meetings, as well as providing one more source of bad feeling between the formerly paternal colliery management and the miners' lodge. Lady Windsor lodge opposed the Great War and conscription, and took no part in recruiting, although little is known of Hazell's views on the war or activities related to it. The only evidence is of August 1917, when he moved the notice of motion at the Ynysybwl Co-operative Society Quarterly Meeting calling for the International Co-operative Alliance to join other democratic organisations in considering a basis of a people's peace based upon international co-operation, the ending of all secret diplomacy, and the control of foreign policy by the people. The motion was carried by a huge majority. That autumn he attended an emergency co-operative conference in London to air accumulated grievances over the way the Government was treating the movement during wartime. Hazell's influence grew as he accumulated roles and posts. In 1918 he chaired a meeting of the Mynachdy, Darranddu and Lady Windsor joint colliery lodges which selected T.E. Nicholas as the anti-war Labour Party candidate for the Aberdare constituency against the jingo, C.B. Stanton (Stanton won).

Hazell was an active member of the Lady Windsor strike committee during the 1921 miners' lockout. The lodge supported the South Wales Miners' Federation's (SWMF) decision to withdraw safetymen from the pits, who were usually allowed to work in disputes to keep the colliery in a working condition, which made the local situation very tense. After the Triple Alliance 'defected', a communal soup kitchen in the Institute provided 52,000 meals until the dispute ended with the miners' defeat. Throughout the three month lockout the co-operative

movement in South Wales played a prominent part in helping sustain the miners' struggle but its almost unconditional support proved disastrous for the movement in South Wales, including the YCS. A year later Hazell described the lockout as 'a hideous nightmare' with 'the trades unions having called the fight and left the co-operators to finance it'.

After the lockout, YCS's members' purchasing power dwindled, their capital declined and debts accumulated. It took the Society many years to recover. Cursed by bad timing, Hazell was elected president of the Society in 1921 but was de-selected after a year as the lockout left no surplus to pay a dividend to members, and he served instead as its vice president. The 1921 dispute was a salutary lesson: during the seven month 1926 lockout, the YCS would be more conditional in the support that it could lend to the miners' union. Even so, although co-operative growth in South Wales had been belated compared with much of Britain, the 1920s witnessed the development of a deep and loyal relationship between the people of the valleys and their co-operative societies, and the movement became a central part of the way that ordinary people assumed responsibility for organising their economic and social lives.

In 1923, Hazell became one of the first Labour councillors elected from Ynysybwl Ward to Mountain Ash UDC, on which he sat for 29 years. In his first years, the Labour Party was far from dominant; he was eventually joined by more Labour councillors, including fellow miner (later, Sir) Jack Bailey, of nearby Miskin, Mountain Ash, who went on to become General Secretary of the Co-operative Party. Hazell was characteristic of thousands of local leaders who emerged in south Wales and who shaped valleys society through their leadership of the miners' lodges, trades union branches, co-operative societies, trades and labour councils, workmen's institutes and local councils. What sets Hazell apart from that outstanding generation of labour leaders are his writings. For over four decades from the Great War until the late 1950s, hundreds of Hazell's articles were published on an extensive range of subjects including national and international affairs. An acute social observer and chronicler of south Wales, his was an authentic valleys voice and his writings a compendium of valleys life. Tutored by W.S. Collins, 'a journalist with ideals', Hazell used his everyday experiences as a miner, trade unionist, co-operator or local councillor to criticise the failures of capitalism: while some of his early writings could display bitterness, this was seen much less frequently in later years. Hazell said his articles were first published in 1917, although the earliest traced ones, in publications including the *Colliery Workers' Magazine* (the journal of the SWMF), the *Co-operative News* and *The Producer*, date from 1922.

Hazell's writings drew widely on a vast range of sources, from literature to reports of the Forestry Commission, and from the Bible to Karl Marx and Robert Owen, though in his politics he was always drawn towards Manchester rather than Moscow. From early on he displayed an interest in history, rooting contemporary lessons in past experiences. His use of original documents, such as Medical Officers of Health reports, made issues like the testing of food and drink or the inadequacy of the Lunacy Acts to deal with senility accessible to a wider audience in popular form. For Hazell, individual accomplishments such as being a musician, fine gardener or Christian, were insufficient on their own and needed to be complemented by loyalty to the union, the Labour Party and the Ynysybwl and other co-operative societies. Numerous articles on the principles, practices, structures, roles, dynamics and history of co-operation, locating co-operation as an integral part of the local labour movement, gave him a national prominence in the co-operative movement, where he was known as 'Hazell of Ynysybwl'. His values and ideals were of a man before his time and his writings over decades displayed both gender awareness and an environmental consciousness.

Although an advocate of women's equality Hazell's engagement with the labour movement was possible only because his wife carried the burden of all domestic responsibilities, as was then the norm in valleys households. Hazell and Deborah Elizabeth had six children between 1911 and 1922 and were aspirational for them. None of his four sons followed their father 'down the pit' and the eldest daughter Lilian became a district nurse. Working underground during the

day, with evenings spent in lodge and co-operative meetings, education classes or in writing articles, Hazell was able to sustain his levels of activity only at the cost of his family.

When the miners were again locked out by the colliery owners in 1926 and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) called a General Strike in support, the local miners' lodges and the National Union of Railwaymen branch formed a joint strike committee which was affiliated to the Pontypridd Central Strike Committee. The collapse of the General Strike changed the nature of the dispute and lodge activity focussed on relieving distress. With a long struggle in prospect the YCS could not afford the generous credit policy adopted by the co-operative movement in South Wales in 1921. Even so, the YCS played a central role in the dispute, organising 14 communal food centres on behalf of the miners' union, under the direct supervision of O.R. Jones the Society's General Manager, supported by the staff of the Society and miner volunteers. Throughout the dispute Hazell also served on the UDC's Coal Emergency Special Committee and Food Committee.

Short-time working and unemployment blighted Ynysybwl in the decade after 1926. With household economies broken, Hazell changed his position on one basic co-operative principle and recognised that the YCS had to provide credit to help its members survive, as well as deferring their debts accumulated during industrial disputes and economic depression. From 1927, YCS turnover consistently remained 30% below what it had been before the 1921 lockout. As the Society's membership grew from 7141 in 1920 to 9131 in 1940—a remarkable achievement at a time of economic hardship—stagnant turnover reflected individual members' declining purchasing power.

Through his local government role Hazell was involved in relieving distress, first on the Pontypridd Committee of the Lord Mayor's Distress Fund and later on the Coalfields Distress Committee. Hazell described those affected as 'the orphans of a pitiless economic blizzard' and his biting descriptions of the 'economic mortuary' that was inter-war South Wales, not least the exploitation of miners' daughters (including one of his own) as domestic servants, was matched by a recognition that it was the wives and mothers who provided the social glue that held together valley society at that time. He later described the inter-war years as a period of 'social hell, public distress and domestic agony', with the population 'bowed down by hopelessness, despair and let it now be said real demoralisation.' As late as 1936, 211 working days were lost at Lady Windsor Colliery and it was not until the rearmament programme in 1938 that local people were able to start to rebuild their domestic economies.

Hazell rose through the structures of the co-operative movement becoming a member of the Western Section of the Co-operative Coal Trade Association (CCTA) in 1931 on which he stayed throughout the 1930s. In 1932–33, as its chair, he joined the national executive of the CCTA. As early as 1929 he had advocated introducing co-operative democracy to the coal industry as an alternative to the management brutality of the coal combines. His decades of experience as a miner, allied to his views of how co-operation could be introduced into the industry, gave value to his practical, informed contributions through articles and in meetings. It was a message he repeated up to and beyond the nationalisation of the coal industry in 1947. Hazell also had long associations with other Co-operative National Committees, serving on the National Executives of the movement's Milk, Bakery and Meat Trades Associations.

The mid 1930s were a period of personal difficulty for Hazell. In July 1933, after a long illness, his wife, Deborah Elizabeth, died of acute heart problems aged 46. Her premature death took a heavy toll on Hazell. He had already suffered bouts of serious ill health, including an absence from the Board of the YCS for nine months, possibly as a result of tuberculosis. After the death of his wife, Hazell appears to have suffered some form of prolonged emotional collapse, later spending three weeks in the co-operative movement's Roden convalescent home. In the two years after Deborah Elizabeth's death, Hazell made considerable changes to the positions he held. In 1935 he stood down after 12 years as secretary of the Miners' Institute. The same year he was elected chair of the Lady Windsor lodge, which was part of the Ocean Combine

Committee, at the height of its battles against the company sponsored industrial or 'scab' union, and he held the post until 1937. Also, in 1935, on the death of William Brown (who had replaced Hazell as President of the YCS in 1922), Hazell succeeded him as president of the Ynysybwl Co-operative Society and would hold that post until his own death in 1964. In 1935, Hazell once again became Chairman of Mountain Ash UDC, a position to which he had first been elected in 1930.

The positions Hazell occupied required markedly different ways of operating. Being lodge chairman unavoidably involved antagonistic class relations, in contrast to the largely ceremonial role of Council Chairman or being president of the YCS, which combined the roles of collective entrepreneurship with ambassador and diplomat. Hazell said being president of a co-operative society often meant heading the largest business in a town as well as being the equivalent of being chair of a local authority or mayor of a city. Reports, even by opponents, referred to his honesty and integrity, and his level-headedness and sense of humour were also appreciated. Hazell was able to be simultaneously a co-operator, a trade union leader as well as a local councillor, managing any contradiction in those respective roles. Throughout the traumas of the inter-war years Hazell retained his gradualist vision of how to build a better society, always seeing co-operation as the means to building a better future, while dismissing the 'short cut to Utopia' offered by the Communist Party. On the local authority, for almost the whole period from his initial election as a councillor in 1923 until the Second World War, Hazell and the UDC were on the defensive, trying to ameliorate the conditions in which they found themselves. In late 1937 the radical yet responsible Hazell was nominated to become Labour candidate for Parliament for Pontypridd upon the death of the sitting MP, D.L. Davies, but was unsuccessful in the selection process.

Hazell remarried on 10 November 1936. His bride was Gwladys Sarah Thompson, head teacher of a special school in Mountain Ash, who gave up her comfortable professional life to become a miner's wife. Hazell was 46 and she 47 years of age. The marriage brought considerable strain into the family and a rift developed between Hazell and his children, which took years to heal. Over time his children accepted that the relationship with Gwladys was a happy one and grew to accept her.

From the mid-1930s Hazell led a campaign that the Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS) should invest in new works in South Wales. In the quarterly Divisional meetings of the CWS, Hazell raised with its directors the location of CWS plants in Britain, showing that south Wales had a disproportionately low number of factories and works. The lack of CWS response led to co-operative societies in south Wales taking concerted action. In September 1937 Hazell presided over an 'unofficial' conference in Cardiff, attended by 45 societies, which launched a campaign for more CWS factories in south Wales. Such exceptional action, with societies going outside the movement's formal organisational structures, highlighted their lack of patience and confidence in the CWS. Hazell was chairman of the follow-up October conference which led to a delegation going to London to meet CWS Directors. The 'unofficial' meetings led to a change of policy by the CWS and four new establishments were planned for south Wales. Hazell's preparedness to tackle 'the establishment' was also demonstrated by his two-decades-long criticisms of the BBC from the late 1930s for its anti-co-operative bias.

With the rise of fascism in Germany and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War Hazell embraced the Popular Front, arguing that under fascism the Labour Party would cease to exist. He threw himself wholeheartedly into the campaign against the Means Test on behalf of the YCS, linking the struggle against the proposed Unemployment Assistance Board regulations in Britain with the fight against fascism abroad. In a remarkable article in the *Co-operative News* in November 1936, Hazell advocated that the co-operative movement should lead the popular front. Arguing that co-op shops could be the best political cells yet invented he called for the mobilisation of Britain's seven million co-operators, saying that as they trusted co-operative societies to keep their savings and bury their dead why should they not respond to their political

lead too? Such a revolutionary call was completely outside the traditions of the co-operative movement, and it showed how inventive Hazell could be, although there were no indications that other co-operators were prepared to share such a daring viewpoint.

The Second World War tested Hazell's skills to the full, both in his co-operative capacity and in local government. As the demands of wartime gave the state and its local authority manifestation unprecedented powers to regulate, organise, and intervene, Hazell was centrally involved in air raid precautions as well as fuel and food control and evacuation preparations.

He was on countless committees including the government's East Glamorgan Emergency Coal Advisory Committee. He was chair of the Western Section of the Co-operative Coal Trades Association and on that Association's National Executive, with such work requiring frequent visits to London and Manchester during the blitz. The inflow of evacuees and the outflow of local inhabitants placed huge pressures on both YCS's and Mountain Ash UDC's organisations. The war required immediate changes to co-operative trading to deal with rationing and Hazell wrote about the inequalities within the rationing regulations. Undertaking a class-based analysis he pointed out that the middle class could continue to patronise hotels and restaurants, so receiving food on top of their rations, as well as game and salmon and other luxuries, while artisans did not have such options. Moreover the demands on industrial workers were not recognised and they received the same as office workers or 'idlers', despite having far greater calorific needs, and he called for the nutritional needs of miners, steelworkers and others in heavy industry to be recognised. As usual he did not confine his arguments to written form and argued for change through the tiers of the co-operative movement. He also became Chair of the newly formed Ynysybwl Citizens Advice Bureau and headed its panel for rationing and food problems, while his work on Mountain Ash UDC supported the establishing of feeding centres, state (British) restaurants, and pit head and factory canteens.

Hazell was prepared to be bravely independent. When the Beveridge Report was published in late 1942 to a rapturous welcome, Hazell wrote a piece dismissing it as 'ambulance work' saying it was nothing more than a report on social insurance on an actuarial basis which left financial and industrial interests untouched and did not provide the foundation for social or economic transformation. Likewise, at a time when strikes were banned and unofficial strikes were painted as unpatriotic, Hazell wrote a powerful article entitled 'The Whole Nation is In Debt to "Strikers"' arguing that strikes were important instruments towards emancipation and progress.

The increased employment and income levels of wartime transformed YCS's business, and in 1941 Hazell declared the society's finances had never been so sound. By 1945 YCS membership had grown to 11,145 (although the numbers registered for rations were double that) and capital had doubled to £429,538. The complete shift in the balance of retail power was confirmed in 1944 when YCS acquired the Pontypridd Shopping Arcade with 28 shops, with private traders no longer able to resist the economic might of YCS.

From 1943 Hazell was involved in post-war planning, both in the co-operative movement and through local government. The mobilisation of the state during wartime had demonstrated what could be achieved when political will and state resources were harnessed and local authorities were used as motors for change. During the last year of the war, Hazell was chair of both Housing and Finance Committees of Mountain Ash UDC and was also elected Council Chair. This unique vantage point allowed him to oversee every aspect of the Council's reconstruction plans. As President of the Brecon, Monmouth and East Glamorgan District of the Co-operative Union, he performed a similar role in the co-operative movement. In the transition back to peacetime, he called on the CWS to take over de-commissioned government factories, rather than allow them to pass to private enterprise, while accepting that only state resources and action could address the country's overwhelming housing needs.

Hazell welcomed the election of the 1945 Labour Government, recognised the benefits of state planning, the introduction of the NHS and—with caveats—the welfare state. He called on others to provide disciplined support of the Government and to remain united. However, Hazell

shared the concerns of many in the co-operative movement in holding considerable reservations about aspects of the Government's programme. He wrote that after a century of achievement, and within sight of triumph, state socialism was taking a short cut to the goal through nationalisation, contrasting it with co-operation, which he saw as the brightest example of public ownership in the country. From 1946 he criticised the method used to nationalise coal and then other industries, arguing against a top–down centralised approach and for a co-operative model. A decade later he was still questioning the efficiency of 'this three-lettered giant, the N.C.B.' and other nationalised industries strangled by bureaucratic controls, and pointed to public distrust in state management.

Hazell raised issues about the role of the co-operative movement in a socialist society and the nature of the relationship between the co-operative movement and a Labour Government during a period of social transformation. Hazell's belief in voluntary mutual aid to address social and economic issues was only strengthened by what he saw as the overwhelming role of the state from the late 1940s. He warned against state activity undermining both voluntary delivery and individuals' personal responsibility and argued for greater individual discipline within the welfare state which he considered to be overly paternal. He discounted 'the determination to have a ready-made, labelled, cellophane-wrapped, creased-and-folded new world', which he saw was an implicit danger in 'the reformer's eternal temptation to produce the finished article'. He counterposed the state's capacity to 'card-index, note, record, number and administer' with 'discovery, believing, journeying, questing and searching by the chart of a slender hope, an awful longing, and the keeping alight of the dying smoking flax of a pure idealism: this is not for bureaucracy, but for joyous, co-operative, hopeful, travelling.'

While he did not describe it as such, he indicated that the moral value of things was in the way they grew organically. Hazell also expressed concerns about the position of the individual in a collectivist society and the impact of the Government's approach on the relationship between the individual and the state. The clarity and strength of his sustained arguments about the labour movement building a non-state based mutual and co-operative model as an alternative to top down nationalisation after 1945, which he made over an extended period, confirm him as a serious thinker in British co-operation.

In 1947 Hazell suffered a serious injury underground and at the turn of the decade ceased working at Lady Windsor Colliery, after 43 years, suffering from 'dust' on his lungs. He received no occupational pension and did not qualify for his state pension until six years later, which caused financial difficulties. He described the psychological difficulties of seeking to claim national assistance which, with the return of the Conservative Government in 1951, meant subjection to a means test, which was 'mental torture'.

Hazell was unhappy that district councils' powers were markedly reduced after 1945. Compared with the roles they had performed during the war and when planning for post-war reconstruction, the responsibilities of the Council were emasculated after the war as education, public health, planning, fire and other services were lost, leaving only what he considered to be the insurmountable problem of housing. Consequently, in 1950, Hazell stood down from Mountain Ash UDC after 27 years as a member. Leaving the Council and the colliery within a short time of one another markedly changed the balance of Hazell's life in various ways and presented significant challenges, including financial. However it allowed him more time for public service and writing. In 1951, Hazell was elected to the Co-operative Union's Central Board which was the 93 member committee of the Union responsible for the national policy direction of the movement, as well as its machinery and governance. However, with the constant tension in the movement between democratic accountability based in local voluntary effort and business efficiency, this large and unwieldy group was abolished before he completed his full three-year term. The Co-operative Union nominated Hazell for a number of public appointments and he served on (not just became a member of, as he differentiated) the Transport

Users' Advisory Committee for Wales, the Welsh Regional Hospital Board and the Wales Gas Consultative Council, amongst others.

In 1950 and 1951 he wrote two short histories of the Ammanford and Tredegar Co-operative Societies before *The Gleaming Vision*, a history of Ynysybwl Co-operative Society was published in 1954. This was the most detailed account of a co-operative society in Wales produced in the twentieth century (although in his narrative of the inter-war years Hazell exercised some self-censorship in omitting the more political aspects of YCS's work as well as its internal conflicts). It was, in effect, a sister publication to J.E. Morgan's *Village Workers' Council*, the history of the Lady Windsor lodge. The two volumes provided a uniquely informed view of labour organisation in Ynysybwl—indeed for any village in south Wales—from the sinking of the colliery to the post-war period. While writing a full length history taxed him, he was an outstanding lay-historian of the movement. He wrote numerous articles on co-operative history, challenging incorrect versions of early co-operative history in Wales (some of which was still being recycled until recently) and he traced a legion of Welsh co-operative pioneers and activists. Hazell saw the need for a fully documented history of the co-operative movement in south Wales, called for a national monthly or quarterly journal of co-operative history—even if it required stopping the publication of another co-operative journal, and also called for a Professorship in Co-operative Studies at a university. Hazell stands alongside Ness Edwards, Bert Coombes, and Mark Starr as one of the writer–proselytisers from the south Wales valleys.

In contrast to his celebratory co-operative histories, in his many hundreds of articles Hazell wrote freely and critically. Hazell's attitude towards the Communist Party hardened after Stalin made a pact with Hitler in 1939 and after the Second World War Hazell became a staunch critic of communist dictatorships in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly with their ideological abuse of Marx's writings and their state takeovers of the co-operative movement. Although often couched in humour, such as his lampooning of the heavy influence of the Communist Party in the South Wales Area of the NUM, his sharp-edged dissection of events could be searing. When the Wales Tourist Board and Holiday Board's planned a beauty queen competition Hazell attacked it for its sexism and ageism, using arguments appropriate to the feminist movement 20 years later. Overall, though, there was though little sign of cynicism or disillusion in his writings (except about people who did the football pools) and his messages remained constructive and full of hope. His learning continued as he taught himself some Latin as well as Welsh.

Although the YCS sales exceeded £1 million for the first time in 1949, Hazell, still scarred by the inter-war experience and unconvinced that the post-war boom was anything other than a passing phase, continued to argue that unemployment, poverty and insecurity were the main enemies, as they had been before the war. As late as the mid-1950s, at a time when its economic position looked unassailable, the Society's officials and committee wondered how long such prosperity could last. However, the ending of rationing and austerity were to present different challenges through increased competition and changes in shopping preferences. Hazell captured some of them in a seminal 1955 article which looked at the coalminer as a consumer rather than a producer. Recognising the importance of consumer behaviour in the market place, Hazell's presentation of the coalminer–consumer as a primary agent of social change contrasted with the long-held tradition of the south Wales coalfield which placed an emphasis on the point of production. While Hazell might have considered that the 'long battle for the recognition of the consumer as the ultimate person of importance is within sight of being won', paradoxically it was that reshaping of consumption which provided the greatest challenge to Hazell, the YCS and the movement generally.

Changing shopping patterns led to national debates within the co-operative movement around the tensions between moves by some towards a more streamlined movement, which they argued was needed for efficiency to meet the rise of chain stores, and the autonomy of societies rooted in local democratic participation. Still partly sheltered in the valleys from the market

forces created by consumer society, Hazell criticised the centralising forces within the movement in meetings, conferences speeches and articles, perhaps failing to recognise the extent to which individual co-operative societies alone could not meet the challenges which threatened to undermine co-operation itself. From 1955 to 1959 Hazell attended some meetings of the Central Executive of the Co-operative Union and took part in its discussions to establish the independent commission on co-operation led by Hugh Gaitskell. Following the 1958 Special Co-operative Congress at which he spoke, Hazell considered the Gaitskell Commission's key proposal to amalgamate societies as naïve, while lamenting the absence of new ideas and novel approaches.

Hazell did not quite reach the top levels of the co-operative movement. His highest accolade was to be nominated unsuccessfully to be president of the 1958 Brighton Congress, which was the pinnacle of achievement for lay-members of the movement. In 1959 he stood down from his Co-operative Union posts, including the Western Sectional Board, under the age rule. He continued as president of the YCS, represented it at Co-operative Congress and at meetings of the CWS. He remaining active in the Co-operative Party, although he had to stand down from its National Executive, on which he had served from 1955 to 1959, again due to the age rule.

In 1963 he opened a new department store in Caerphilly, which was named Hazell House in his honour. However the pace of change in retailing meant such stores were already becoming dated in the supermarket age. In his last financial report, presented to the YCS in September 1964, Hazell reported that supermarkets with high trade volumes were becoming established in communities, co-operative branches were becoming uneconomic and rationalisation was necessary. By that time, YCS had had grown from 3345 members and a turnover of less than £160,000 when Hazell became President in 1935, to being a mini business empire with 20,000 members and a turnover of over £2 million per annum. Yet, while it would continue to grow in size, the social and economic circumstances which underpinned the movement and the relationship between the society and its membership were changing. The society underwent comparative long-term decline before it gave up its independence in 1981 and transferred its undertakings to the national Co-operative Retail Services.

Hazell remained active until his death on 11 November 1964, when he was 74 years old. While undertaking a series of half-yearly meetings of the YCS over four consecutive nights, he collapsed when leaving Hazell House, Caerphilly, and died a few feet from the plaque he had unveiled the previous year. He had been the Society's President for 29 years and on its Board almost continuously for 49 years. The cause of his death was given as bronchopneumonia and emphysema. His estate was valued at £2601.

William Hazell epitomised a generation of co-operative activists in south Wales who believed that they could build a better society primarily through the co-operative movement. He was committed to the moral economy of co-operation, and considered it a more efficient system than capitalist forms of enterprise. Hazell was equally critical of post-war state socialism for its inefficiency, dehumanisation and its bypassing or undermining of existing forms of working-class mutual organisation. His writings serve to remind that the post-war model of state control and nationalisation was not without opposition or alternatives. Hazell's ambitions for the co-operative movement went beyond what it was able to attain: at his death he and his fellow co-operators were still working to resolve the conundrum of how to fundamentally transform from within the market within which they were competing.

**Writings:** *1900–1950 50 Years of Service and Progress* (1950); *1901–1951 Jubilee Time at Tredegar* (Tredegar, 1951); *The Gleaming Vision being the History of the Ynysybwl Co-operative Society, 1889–1954* (Ynysybwl, 1954). Hazel also authored 400 articles published between 1922 and 1959 which are listed in Alan Burge, *William Hazell's Gleaming Vision* (Talybont, 2014).

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Co-operative Congress Reports; Co-operative Party annual reports, conference proceedings, National Committee minutes 1956–1959, Western Section, Affiliation Fees Book, 1936–1973, Brecon, Monmouth & East Glamorgan Federation Executive Committee minutes 1948–1964; Co-operative Union Central Board, minutes, Western Sectional Board, minutes and reports, Co-operative Coal Trades Association, National Executive and Western Section minutes and reports, National Co-operative Archives, Manchester; Lady Windsor Lodge minutes, Coalfield Collection, Swansea University; Mountain Ash UDC and Committees Minutes, Glamorgan Archives; Hazell/West/Brooks family papers, John E. Morgan papers, National Library of Wales; W.W. Price biographical index, Aberdare Library. (**2**) **Newspapers and Periodicals**: *Agenda*; *The Colliery Workers' Magazine*; *Co-operative News*; *Co-operative Official*; *Co-operative Party Monthly Letter; Co-operative Review*; *Millgate*; *Ocean and National Magazine*; *The Producer*; *South Wales Supplement*; *The Wheatsheaf* (later *Home Magazine*) and its *Ynysybwl Local Pages*. (**3**) **Books and Articles**: W.S. Collins, 'Hazell of Ynysybwl', *South Wales Supplement*, November 1935; A.R. Davies, 'Hazell of Ynysybwl: Historian and Writer of South Wales', *Co-operative Review*, October 1954; David Gilbert, *Class Community and Collective Action: Social Change in Two British Coalfields*, *1850–1926* (1992); Peter Gurney, *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England*, *1870–1930* (Manchester, 1996); Peter Gurney, 'Labor's great arch: Co-operation and Cultural Revolution in Britain, 1795–1926', in E. Furlough and C. Strickwerda (eds.) *Consumers against Capitalism? Consumer Co-operation in Europe*, *North America and Japan*, *1840–1990* (Lanham, MD, 1999), 135–171; Chris Baggs, *[T]he Whole Tragedy of Leisure in Penury: The South Wales Miners' Institute Libraries during the Depression*, 68th IFLA Council and General Conference, 18–24 August 2002; Michael Lieven, 'A Fractured Working-Class Consciousness? The Case of the Lady Windsor Colliery Lodge', 1921, *Welsh History Review*, vol. 21, no. 4 (December, 2003, 729–756; Philip N. Jones, 'A Valley Community in Transition: Ynysybwl in 1967', *Llafur*, vol. 9, no. 1, (2004) 85–94; Peter Gurney, 'The Battle of the Consumer in Postwar Britain', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 77, no. 4, (December 2005), 956–987; Alun Burge, '"A Task Worthy of the Most Sincere Devotion and Application": The Co-operative Movement in South Wales and Its History', *Welsh History Review*, (December 2007), 59–71; *William Hazell's Gleaming Vision* (Talybont, 2014); John E. Morgan, *A Village Workers' Council—and What it Accomplished*, *Being a Short History of the Lady Windsor Lodge*, *S.W.M.F.*, n.d.

ALUN BURGE

*See also*: †Sir Jack BAILEY; †Bert COOMBES; †T.E. NICHOLAS; †Samuel PERRY; †Charles Butt STANTON; †Mark STARR; †Alfred WATERSON

**HOWARD, James Henry** (1876–1947)
PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER AND LABOUR PARTY CANDIDATE

James Henry Howard was born in Swansea on 3 November 1876 to Joshua George Howard and Catherine née Bowen. His father claimed to be a direct descendant of the eighteenth-century prison reformer, John Howard. His mother was both poor and a Roman Catholic. Religion and class meant that the marriage was anathema to John Henry Howard's paternal grandmother, Lydia. Howard was orphaned before his third birthday. His father died of gunshot wounds aboard a ship; his mother followed, ten months later. Lydia Howard refused initially to help her grandsons, although eventually she relented in the cases of John Henry's two older brothers. But John Henry she refused to help—because he resembled his mother! They met only once, when John Henry Howard was 15. As a result he was moved between his mother's impoverished relatives before being placed in the Cottage Homes for orphans in the Swansea suburb of

Cockett. The regime was strict and included duties around the home and spartan food, together with attendance at St Peter's National School. Subsequently, as a teenager Howard was adopted by a miner Thomas Davies and his wife Mary. Their house at Llansamlet, between Swansea and Neath, was Welsh-speaking; Howard was a monoglot English-speaker. Nonetheless, for what must have been the first time in his life Howard felt like a member of a family.

He began work at Thomas Davies's colliery, Ty Draw. His first job was to open and close doors allowing passage of the pony-drawn trains and air ventilation. He was paid 7s 6d a week. After a year as a door-boy he took charge of a cart, a wooden box on iron shoes that carried two hundredweight of coal. Having filled the cart he would hitch it to a hook and drag the load through a two-foot tunnel for 150 yards. The lashing was leather, tied to his waist with a chain passing between his legs. Since boots were burdensome Howard wore none for the five years that he pulled the carts. His autobiography *Winding Lanes* (1938), recalls life in a south Wales colliery, its comradeship and the fatal accidents. He subsequently worked at Shepherd's Pit, Cwmamman near Aberdare in a valley where his two brothers had settled. Trade unionism in the coalfield remained weak; Howard came to know the early leaders such as William Abraham (Mabon) and Tom Richards, who were strongly rooted in Welsh Liberalism.

Howard was deeply and lastingly impressed by the Welsh Presbyterian Chapel of Capel-y-Cwm, Bonymaen, Llansamlet, by its ministers and elders and by visiting preachers. Early in 1898 he left mining and began preparation for the ministry within the Presbyterian Church of Wales, known then as the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church. The elders in Capel-y-Cwm were dubious because Howard's knowledge of Welsh was elementary. The denomination was bilingual but Howard preaching his early sermons in Welsh ran into difficulties. At a service in Cwmrhydyceirw near Morriston his Welsh mutations were so faulty that one elder reproved him in Welsh; 'Boy, go home and never again attempt to preach until you know Welsh' [Howard (1938) 76]. He was accepted for the ministry on a casting vote at a district meeting in Swansea and began his quest for education.

He began at Gwynfryn Academy Ammanford. The academy was an important centre for Christian Socialism; one of its tutors was John (Gwili) Jenkins, an activist in the Independent Labour Party (ILP). Howard met his future wife at Gwynfryn; Anne Mathilda Davies from Ammanford. They married on St David's Day 1905. They would have a son and a daughter. Howard was very critical of the educational provision at Gwynfryn and moved to another academy at Newcastle Emlyn. Subsequently he entered University College Cardiff where he became involved in the Forward Movement. The superintendent, Dr John Pugh, started 47 mission halls in south Wales. He persuaded Howard and his fellow students to canvass districts of Cardiff and to start new mission halls.

Ordination for Howard was in 1905; he began at a Presbyterian Church in Swansea at a stipend of £110 a year. He participated in the 1904–1905 Welsh Revival and supported its catalyst, Evan Roberts, like himself a former coalminer. His time in Swansea and experience of the Revival convinced him of the need for the social gospel. Within a year he moved to Tabernacle Welsh Presbyterian Chapel, Cwmafon near Port Talbot. His congregation were largely working-class, families of miners, tin-workers and men involved in the copper industry. Howard was a keen supporter of Sir Samuel Evans, the Liberal Member for Mid Glamorgan until 1910. In the same year, Howard left Cwmafon for the Wilmer Road Presbyterian Church of Wales in Birkenhead. He revitalised the church, initiating a branch of the Brotherhood movement where men met on Sunday afternoons to discuss current affairs in the light of the Christian faith. He organised temperance crusades and a successful open air ministry; he became a member of the Board of Guardians. This stability was disrupted by British entry into the war in August 1914. He contemplated resigning from the Presbyterian Ministry because so many prominent Welsh ministers had taken militarist positions. He was sustained by the support of the Society of Friends and the formation of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Practically, he

aided Belgian refugees who had been accommodated in Birkenhead. Politically, he became attracted by the stance of the ILP, which had previously engaged his interest in south Wales.

> Uncompromising pacifism seemed to me the nearest approach to Christianity. I met some of the leaders and was captivated by their readiness to suffer for their principles. I cared little for their economics and their literature, then, left me quite cold. But the contrast between their outlook and the jingoism of the churches was challenging [Howard (1938) 132].

By the time he left Birkenhead for an English speaking church in Colwyn Bay he claimed to have accepted the socialist creed and philosophy. Once in north Wales he became a visitor to conscientious objectors housed at Kimmel Park camp. He met Welsh-speaking ILP members such as Percy Ogwen Jones from Anglesey, later assistant editor of *Y Cymro*, W.D. Davies, later Professor of Theology at the United Theological College, Aberystwyth, and the socialist and pacifist, George M. Ll. Davies. Howard addressed peace conferences across Wales and, in March 1916, he persuaded the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Wales to express sympathy and support for all who stood for freedom of conscience in time of war. A branch of the ILP was formed in Colwyn Bay; more broadly Howard met leading figures in the party including Philip Snowden, Bruce Glasier, and F.W. Jowett. Above all he was drawn to Ramsay MacDonald: 'He seemed lonely and detached even in the midst of jovial friends who evidently loved him. He and I took several long walks together, and I caught glimpses of a mighty Presbyterian faith and courage' [Howard (1938) 159].

Howard turned down an invitation to stand as Labour candidate for Denbigh in the 1918 General Election. Instead the erstwhile Liberal Member, E.T. John, stood. Howard campaigned for him along with some other Nonconformist ministers such as the Reverend Dr Peter Price of Rhosllanerchrugog and the Reverend E.K. Jones of Brymbo. Their reception was sometimes hostile. In the political climate following military victory any candidate arguing for reconciliation was facing an impossible task. John received less than 17% of the vote in a straight fight against the Coalition Liberal David Davies. Through the 1920s, Howard remained a member of the ILP, but hoped for a realignment that would bring Labour into alliance with Progressive Liberals. Ellis Davies, the Liberal Member for Denbigh, recorded in his diary a breakfast that he and Howard had with Lloyd George in July 1924.

The first Labour administration relied on Liberal support for a parliamentary majority. Howard raised the possibility of an understanding in the constituencies. Lloyd George endorsed its desirability but insisted that any such arrangement was blocked by MacDonald's vanity. This was disingenuous; in 1924 Lloyd George was typically exploring diverse options. Equally, most within the Labour leadership saw the Liberal Party as obstacle rather than potential ally. Many within the Labour Party saw Lloyd George as the anti-Labour premier of 1918–1922 who had presided over major defeats for the trade unions. Howard's route to Labour had been through the peace movement; he was distant from the passions that shaped his old industry. His assessment of the miners' leader, A.J. Cook, who had once shared the religious sentiments of Howard, was dismissive; the verdict of the Labour establishment. He was 'the most disastrous miners' leader …in our time, deficient in all that makes for a good negotiator. Logic he despised and a catchphrase or resounding slogan always signified more to him than any argument. When the miners threw over Frank Hodges for Cook they committed industrial suicide; and the general strike, engineered chiefly by Cook split the Federation, and put the Labour Party back for a decade or more' [Howard (1936) 56]. Yet, as Howard acknowledged, many miners remained doggedly loyal to Cook until his early death in 1931.

In April 1927 Howard moved to Catherine Street Chapel in Liverpool with its sizeable Welsh population. Howard, like many others, felt that Labour's progress in Liverpool was held back by 'religious bigotry', although he felt that workers' apathy was more significant [Howard (1936) 226]. Yet he could subscribe to one of the caricatures that underpinned sectarianism: 'Irish

immigration is lowering the standard of living along the Clyde, and causes great concern to Protestant churches north of the Tweed' [Howard (1936) 189].

In his autobiography Howard states that in November 1929 he stood for Labour in the Liverpool municipal elections. He names the ward he contested as Windsor; in fact he was Labour candidate in Aigburth ward, one of the most affluent in the city. The Labour Party had no organised presence there until 1931 and its presence through the thirties was sporadic. The ward was strongly Conservative; Howard was Aigburth's first Labour candidate. His performance in what was Labour's best inter-war municipal performance was creditable.

Aigburth, Liverpool, Municipal Election 1929: electorate 7561, turnout, 49%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| F.C. Wilson (Conservative) | 2549 | (69%) |
| Reverend J.H. Howard (Labour) | 1147 | (31%) |
| Majority | 1402 | (38%) |

When Labour contested Aigburth with a different candidate a year later its share of the vote fell by 13%. The party's vote fell heavily across the city, reflecting not least diminishing support for the Labour Government. Labour never stood again in Aigburth in the pre-war period. Instead Liberals provided the only opposition to Conservative dominance.

Howard fought Merionethshire for Labour in the October 1931 General Election. The constituency was extensive and predominantly Welsh speaking. It was a safe Liberal seat, although in the 1920s Labour had secured creditable votes based largely on the slate-quarrying communities of Blaenau Ffestiniog and Corris. His agent, Samuel Williams, was the Blaenau Ffestiniog secretary of what had formerly been the North Wales Quarrymen's Union. The independent union had become a constituent of the Transport and General Workers Union in 1923. Conservatives, often seen as an English party, made intermittent and unsuccessful interventions in Merioneth. The Catherine Street chapel congregation was supportive of his candidacy although, as he acknowledged, many of them were Conservatives. Prior to the election he campaigned in Merioneth on Saturdays before returning for Sunday services in Liverpool. His recollections of supporting Labour speakers in his autobiography are mistakenly located by Howard as occurring within the election campaign. In fact they clearly relate to an earlier period of his candidacy. He was the first Welsh Presbyterian Minister to stand for the Labour Party in north Wales. Any expectation that this would generate support from other ministers proved misguided; Only two Nonconformist ministers backed him.

The election was a three-cornered contest where the formation of the National Government and candidates' reactions to this diverse coalition were the dominant feature. Howard must have been uncomfortable about the Labour split that had brought him into opposition to Ramsay MacDonald. His candidacy had been launched under MacDonald's leadership; the affinity between them had been a powerful influence in Howard's shift to Labour. Whereas Howard's response to the new Government was oppositional, his rivals competed with one another to assert their credentials as government supporters. The National election appeal with its demand for a 'doctor's mandate' formally presented an open mind on the tariff issue. In fact this strategy was a means of keeping most Liberals within the National alliance, although obviously a decisive National victory would be a majority for protection. Haydn Jones, the Liberal Member since 1910, emphasised his free trade credentials, but envisaged the possibility of specific tariffs. Phibbs, the Conservative, born in Sligo, but a local resident for ten years had no problem in backing tariffs. Their exchanges over their status as Government supporters allowed Howard to seize the mantle of unequivocal free trade. Electors were urged to vote for the 'Labour Candidate and Free Trade'. Phibbs's vote increased compared with his previous contest in 1929; unlike many Labour candidates in 1931, Howard's vote held firm. Even in a loudly proclaimed national crisis the Conservative appeal in Merioneth was limited.

Merionethshire, 1931: electorate 28,973, turnout 82.6%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| H.H. Jones (Liberal) | 9756 | (40.8%) |
| J.H. Howard (Labour) | 7807 | (32.6%) |
| C. Phibbs (Conservative) | 6372 | (26.6%) |
| Majority | 1949 | (8.2%) |

After their heavy defeat at the polls George Lansbury, essentially a Christian Socialist, became Labour Party leader. Howard found him an attractive and inspirational figure. In part the attraction came from Lansbury's religious commitment and pacifism. Howard recalled Lansbury's assertion that 'it is time to loose Christ upon the world' [Howard (1938) 270]. He also enjoyed Lansbury's optimism and his humour, the stories of Poplar and the Cockney songs.

Immediately after the election Howard joined Canon Charles Raven of the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral under the auspices of the Christian Industrial Fellowship to conduct a mission amongst the Liverpool dockers. He often joined them in their daily quest for employment. He wore old clothes, a cap and muffler as he stood amongst the men waiting to be chosen for employment; he was known by the dockers as 'Down and out Jim'. He also viewed Sir Frederick Marquis positively on account of his philosophy of business. Marquis was a committed Unitarian who had been involved in University settlement work in Manchester and Liverpool as a young man. Initially attracted to Fabianism he had retained his concern with addressing poverty but believed that entrepreneurship and an efficient economy offered the best path. As chairman of Lewis's in the 1930s he personified socially responsible business. As Lord Woolton he would serve in a non-party role in the wartime Churchill cabinet before becoming post-war chair of the Conservative Party.

Howard in the 1930s can be understood as someone who belonged within the broad cross-party and non-party search for a reforming and ethical alternative to the National Government. In 1941 Howard returned to his former church in Colwyn Bay. He retired in June 1947 and died on 7 July in Merridale Nursing Home, Colwyn Bay. He left effects valued at £2736 9s 10d.

Howard's life presents a variant on a complex theme, the transition from Liberalism inspired by Nonconformity to Labour politics. The impact of the First World War and the response of the ILP were critical; Howard's political shift was shaped by pacifism and internationalism rather than by economic doctrines or a sense of class. Therefore the boundaries between Labour and other political initiatives remained porous. He did not share the suspicion towards Lloyd George characteristic of many Labour people in the 1920s and he responded positively after 1931 to the ideas and sentiments of Sir Frederick Marquis. Underlying everything was his religious commitment forged in the circumstances of his early life and expressed within a Welsh culture whether in north Wales or Merseyside. Appropriately his one parliamentary contest came in Merioneth with its preponderantly Welsh discourse and competing claimants to represent its radicalism.

**Writings:** **(1) In Welsh**: *Y Bywyd Llawn o'r Ysbryd* (gan John Macneil) wedi ei gyfieithu gan y Parch J.H. Howard… ynghyd â rhagymadrodd gan y Parch J. Phillips ac A. Murray (1906), (A translation of John MacNeil's book, *The Spirit-Filled Life*. He was considerably helped with this task of translation by a colleague in Cwmafon, the Reverend John Phillips, pastor of Seion Welsh Independent Chapel; *Cristnogaeth a Chymdeithas* gyda Rhagair gan y Gwir Anrhydeddus D. Lloyd George (1914) (The title is *Christianity and Society*, and David Lloyd George, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, wrote an appreciative preface); *Perarogl Crist: Cofiant a Phregethau y Parch William Jones*, *Treforis* (1932) (A biography of the Reverend William Jones (1851–1931) Welsh Calvinistic Methodist minister at Bethania, Morriston,

1880–1904, an extremely popular preacher known as William Jones of Morriston and who befriended Howard during his boyhood). (**2**) **In English**: *Life Beyond the Veil* (1917) a volume which explores fellowship with the departed and the Doctrine of Eternal Hope; *Which Jesus? Young Britain's Choice* (1919); *Jesus the Agitator*, (with a forward by George Lansbury (1934); his autobiography *Winding Lanes: A Book of Impressions and Recollections* (1936/8).

**Sources:** (**1**) **Books and Articles**: Arnold J. James and John E. Thomas, *Wales at Westminster: A History of the Parliamentary Representation of Wales 1800–1979* (Llandysul, 1981); Ivor Thomas Rees, *Welsh Hustings 1885–2004* (Llandybie, 2005); Ivor Thomas Rees, 'Aristocrat, Pauper and Preacher', *Welsh Journal of Religious History*, 4, (2004), 65–79; Derwyn Jones, 'James Henry Howard' [in] *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig 1951–1970* (1997), 263. (**2**) **Obituary**: *Presbyterian Church of Wales Yearbook*, *1948*.

D. BEN REES

*See also*: †Huw T. EDWARDS; †Robert RICHARDS; †James Idwal JONES; †Thomas Evan NICHOLAS

## HUGHES, John (Jac Tŷ Isha) (1819–1905)

REBECCA RIOTER

John Hughes was born in 1819, the eldest of the seven children of Morgan and Mary Hughes of Tŷ Isha farm in the parish of Llanon, Carmarthenshire, in south-west Wales. The local economy was largely agrarian, with industrial interests in the form of coalmines scattered across the Gwendraeth Valley. An agricultural labourer, Hughes worked the land of Tŷ Isha farm with his parents and siblings. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Hughes was able to read and write.

The course of Hughes's life changed dramatically when as a young man he became involved in the Rebecca Riots. The riots were sparked by the dire socio-economic conditions of the 1830s, with failing harvests, an agricultural depression, decreasing wages and increasing rents. In this climate of despair, the tollgates became the initial target of the rioters. Administered by the Turnpike Trusts, the tollgates were introduced as a means of raising revenue for the maintenance of the roads. By 1843, south-west Wales saw twenty-three trusts in operation, responsible for nearly 10,000 miles of roads in Carmarthenshire, Cardiganshire and Pembrokeshire, where every four miles or so, a tollgate or tollbar was to be found. Some tollgates brought in more money than others, especially those situated on well-travelled roads, such as the outskirts of towns, or at junctions where several roads met. Tollgates also appeared along the routes to lime kilns, forcing farmers to pay the tolls on their way to collect lime, which was used as a fertiliser. Petitions and complaints regarding the tolls presented before local justices of the peace had little impact. Broader issues, such as grievances concerning high levels of rents, the new Poor Law and magisterial corruption also inflamed protests, and later in 1843 the rioters turned their sights towards the property of the landed interest [Jones (1989) 136–142; Rees (2011) 36–60].

The name 'Rebecca' probably derived from the Biblical verse in Genesis (Chap. 24, verse 60), whereby Rebecca's children were urged to 'possess the gates of those who hate them' [Jones (1989) 206]. A significant proportion of those who took part in the riots were tenant farmers, agricultural labourers and farm servants, but they were also joined by some craftsmen, millers, blacksmiths, fishermen, publicans, colliers, and other labourers from non-agricultural backgrounds. Many of the rioters were young men in their early twenties [Jones (1989) 242–243]. The first recorded attack on a tollgate by Rebecca and her daughters took place on 13 May 1839, when under cover of night, they appeared on the border between Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire to demolish the Efailwen tollgate. The gate was subsequently re-erected, only to

be torn down again on 6 June by a crowd of between 300 and 400 individuals. What was notable about these attacks was the manner by which the group assembled were dressed—they were reported as wearing women's clothing, with their faces blackened, presumably as a form of disguise.

The disturbances reached a peak during the summer of 1843, becoming more frequent, with a greater number of incidences concerning attacks upon private property. On 25 August 1843, a large meeting was held on *Mynydd Sylen* (Sylen Mountain), in order to relay grievances to the local gentry and petition the Queen. It was reported that between 3000 and 4000 attended the meeting, which was chaired by the landlord and industrialist, William Chambers the younger, of Llanelli House. During the meeting the lawyer Hugh Williams, openly sympathetic to the plight of the rioters, addressed the assembled crowd. He read the petition addressed to the Queen which had been drawn up, outlining the grievances concerning the tolls, which was duly adopted at the end of the meeting [*Cambrian*, 2 September 1843]. Being so close to his home at Tŷ Isha farm, and considering the significant scale and importance of this meeting, it is more than likely that Hughes would have been in attendance.

It is unknown how long Hughes had been concerned in Rebecca activities. Nonetheless, his involvement came to an abrupt end in the early hours of Thursday 7 September 1843 when he took part in an attack on the tollgate and tollhouse at Pontarddulais. This gate was placed at a strategic spot, at a busy junction where several principal roads met, roads to Carmarthen, Llanelli, Llandeilo and Swansea. On Wednesday 6 September, Captain Charles Frederick Napier, Chief Constable of the Glamorgan police, had been alerted to the proposed attack. He subsequently requested the company of two magistrates, the brothers John Dillwyn Llewelyn and Lewis Llewelyn Dillwyn, at the scene of the proposed attack. Later that evening, Napier, the magistrates, a Monmouthshire chief constable and around eight constables lay in wait for the rioters to appear. From around 11:30 pm onwards the party heard the sound of guns firing and the blowing of horns in the distance, as the crowd of around 150 approached. Later in court, Captain Napier was to describe the approach of the rioters:

> I heard a noise, as if of a body of men on the other side of the river. I also heard horns blowing, and a great many guns fired off. I also heard a voice, like that of a woman, crying out – "Come, come, come;" and a voice like the mewing of cats. This noise appeared to me to proceed from the direction of the Red Lion Inn, which is at a short distance from the turnpike-gate. Immediately after this, I heard a voice crying out aloud – "Gate!" and in a very short time afterwards I heard a noise, as if the gate was being destroyed [*Cambrian*, 16 September 1843].

It was the sound of glass shattering and the tollgate being torn apart, at approximately 12:50am, which signalled their ambush [Handwritten account by Lewis Llewelyn Dillwyn of his encounter with Rebecca Rioters at the Pontarddulais Turnpike Gate, 10 September 1843]. What happened next has since been described as 'a full–scale battle' [Jones (1989) 235].

It appears that Hughes was one of the three men on horseback supervising the destruction of the gate. In the press reports that followed, Hughes was described as leading the mob whilst on horseback, draped in a white cloak, with a white cloth over his hat, a red handkerchief around his neck, armed with a gun and carrying a tin horn [*Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser*, 16 September 1843]. He was alternatively described as being 'dressed in what appeared to me to be a gown and a bonnet, having something stuck in it resembling a feather, and his face was blackened' [*Cambrian*, 16 September 1843]. The crowd assembled were reportedly 'a number of men mounted on horseback, and disguised. Some had white dresses on them, and others had bonnets. Most of them appeared to be dressed like women, with their faces blackened' [*Cambrian*, 16 September 1843]. The *Carmarthen Journal* clearly identified Hughes as the ringleader of the attack: 'It seems the person who led on the rioters is a young man,

a respectable farmer's son, named Hughes, who resides in the village of Llanon' [*Carmarthen Journal*, 8 September 1843]. In the affray, Hughes was accused of drawing his gun on Captain Napier, who had been calling on the crowd to stop their attack. Amongst the commotion, Hughes was shot and severely wounded in his left arm. Following a struggle, he was overpowered and apprehended.

Reports in the *Cambrian* were sympathetic. However, the *Carmarthen Journal*, 'the mouthpiece' of the landed elite and 'the voice of High–Church Toryism', reported the capture of the rioters with glee [Jones (1989) 83, 85]. The article began with the bold statement:

> The strong arm of Justice has, at length, overtaken the guilty ringleaders of the disgraceful outrages which have, for such a lengthened period, disturbed and distracted the border of this, and the entire of the adjoining counties of Carmarthen and Cardigan [*Carmarthen Journal*, 8 September 1843].

What then follows is a very one-sided account of the attack, whereby the rioters are portrayed as rather incompetent, foolish and careless, cowardly leaving their injured behind.

Immediately following the attack, the damage was surveyed. The tollgate had been destroyed, with only the gate–posts remaining. The tollhouse had been gutted, its windows and door demolished, and a part of the structure's wall torn down. The implements were scattered at the scene, including crowbars, sledge–hammers, pickaxes and sticks. Along with Hughes, another two young men were wounded and captured, David Jones and John Hugh. All three were sent to Glamorgan goal and later questioned by magistrates. The *Cambrian* reported:

> We saw the prisoners previous to their entering the room in which they were examined. The two wounded men, John Hughes and David Jones, appeared to be in good health, although the arm of the former had been severely shattered. The other prisoner, John Hugh, appeared dressed in an old flannel gown, with a kind of straw bonnet on his head, as he was when first apprehended [*Cambrian*, 16 September 1843].

On being searched, Hughes was found in possession of a quantity of money, reportedly 'ten half-crowns, twenty-four shillings, nine sixpences, one penny, four half-pence, and a half-sovereign'. On his person were threatening notices, one written in Welsh. One of these notices read: 'Come with your armour or covering to [gap] on Wednesday next, to assist me, or you shall have no further notice (signed) Becca' [*Cambrian*, 16 September 1843; 4 November 1843]. The discovery of such sums of money, and threatening notices, further corroborated Hughes's involvement in the Rebecca movement. It also provided the authorities, desperate to quell the riots, the opportunity to declare the capture of a ringleader they could label as Rebecca.

On Monday 11 September the prisoners attended a public examination at the Town Hall in Swansea, with Hughes appearing before the authorities with his injured arm in a sling. Their defence lawyer was Hugh Williams, the Chartist who had spoken at the mass meeting at *Mynydd Sylen* only a few weeks previously. Tuesday 12 September saw the three prisoners under final examination at the Town Hall where amongst the evidence presented, it was claimed that the horse Hughes rode belonged to his father [*Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser*, 16 September 1843]. The three prisoners were charged with unlawful riotous assembly and the demolition of the tollkeeper's house. However, Hughes was also charged with shooting at Captain Napier with intent to murder. The three prisoners said nothing in their defence. They were refused bail and it was decided that they were to be tried for felony at the next County Assizes [*Cambrian*, 16 September 1843].

On reflection, concerned that an impartial hearing would not take place at the next Glamorgan County Assizes, the government appointed a Special Commission to be held at

Cardiff in order to try Hughes and others accused of crimes linked with Rebecca. The holding of the Special Commission also allowed the hearing to take place sooner, as the next assizes would not meet until the following spring. A sense of urgency was apparent, and a desire to punish the perpetrators swiftly in the hope of deterring further Rebecca attacks.

On the afternoon of Thursday 26 October, the Special Commission to trial Hughes and sixteen further prisoners accused of crimes linked with Rebecca began in the Town Hall in Cardiff. The *Cambrian* claimed that 'the popular feeling is strongly in favour of the prisoners'. The prosecutor had objected to any farmer being on the jury, in case any favouritism or sympathy for the plight of the rioters was shown. The jury therefore was comprised of three gentlemen and nine tradesmen from Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil [*Cambrian*, 28 October 1843]. On Friday 27 October, Hughes appeared in court, his arm still in a sling seven weeks after the injury was sustained. Attention was drawn to his wound, which was claimed to have caused a 'permanent disability of the arm' with medical opinion that Hughes 'would never recover the use of his limb'. Hughes pleaded not guilty to the charges brought against him. During the trial, his 'excellent character' was praised. The Solicitor General reminded the jury of the severity of the case and how Hughes's 'life was in their hands—that the effect of their verdict would be to send him into exile, which would be more galling than death' [*Cambrian*, 4 November 1843].

At the close of the trial, the sentence was delivered by Baron Gurney. He reminded the three men that they had been placed on trial 'in a remote part of the county – distant from the scenes of the unhappy disturbances, and where no prejudiced opinions could have been formed'. Whilst the Court had listened to their case, Baron Gurney believed an example should be made in order to maintain law and order and prevent others from committing similar crimes. All three were sentenced to transportation, David Jones and John Hugh to seven years. However, the Court took an even harsher stance regarding Hughes. Baron Gurney addressed Hughes directly during the sentencing:

> You appear to be of a different station in society, and ought not to have been led astray by others. You, moreover, appear to have been the leader and instigator of the riot. Your conduct at the time – the papers found in your possession, and some of which are very much like threatening letters, prove you to have been a prominent leader. You appear, also, to have been collecting succour and assistance in aid of your designs. You have been recommended by the jury to the mercy of the Court. The Court feels great pleasure in listening to that recommendation. But giving all due weight and consideration to the recommendation of the jury, the sentence upon you cannot be lighter than *transportation for twenty years* [*Cambrian*, 4 November 1843].

On closing his sentencing of the three men, Baron Gurney declared: 'I have now discharged one of the most painful duties that has ever fallen to my lot, and I sincerely hope and pray that it may have its proper effect upon the deluded people who have risen in opposition to the laws of the land' [*Cambrian*, 4 November 1843].

Following the sentencing of Hughes, Hugh and Jones, a further ten men were also sentenced to transportation for their involvement in the riots. Between 1843 and 1846, over a hundred individuals were placed on trial for crimes against the Turnpike Trust, but a remarkable two-thirds were allowed to walk free. It has been argued that the authorities had succeeded in making an example of these dozen or so men at the Special Commission of Autumn 1843, reinforcing the sense that justice had already been served [Jones (1989) 239]. Regardless of his unblemished record, Hughes was punished harshly for his involvement, as the standard minimum was seven years transportation, as received by John Hugh and David Jones.

A broadside issued in Welsh and English entitled 'to the public generally, and to our neighbours in particular' came from Cardiff gaol. It was dated 1 November 1843 and signed by John Hughes and David Jones, with John Hugh making his mark. Whilst lamenting their fate

'we are guilty, and doomed to suffer', the notice served as a warning to others involved in the riots to stop the attacks, lest they suffer the same consequences of the three who were to 'be banished as rogues – to be slaves to strangers, in a strange land. We must go, in the prime of life, from our dear homes, to live and labour with the worst of villains – looked upon as thieves' [Green (1924) 163].

Following the conviction at Cardiff, back in Carmarthenshire a meeting took place between a group of farmers from Hughes's home parish of Llanon and William Chambers junior, who had listened to their grievances whilst chairing the meeting on *Mynydd Sylen* earlier in August. The *Carmarthen Journal* reported that the farmers, wanting law and order to be restored in the area, offered their services by being sworn in as special constables. Notably, amongst the contingent of farmers was the father of John Hughes. It appears this act of solidarity was an attempt to convince Chambers to obtain a commutation of Hughes's sentence. Chambers however refused [*Carmarthen Journal*, 10 November 1843]. Despite attempts to secure a lesser punishment, Hughes was to be transported.

Whilst travelling by steamer to Bristol on their way to Millbank prison, Hughes met Sir Josiah John Guest, Bart, MP and iron master of the Cyfarthfa ironworks, who had been a member of the Grand Jury at the Special Commission. In her diary, Sir Josiah's wife, Lady Charlotte Guest, relates this encounter, and paints a highly romanticised portrayal of Hughes the 'personifyer [sic] of Rebecca himself' and 'my poor Welsh rebel'. The fact that Lady Charlotte was preoccupied with the predominantly heroic tales of Welsh history, explains the overly romanticised qualities she attributes to the Welsh rioter. An additional influence was Thomas Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843), which she had just finished reading. This book evoked the past whilst critiquing modern industrialised society [John (2007) 69–70]. Lady Charlotte reported how Hughes had requested to speak with Sir Josiah, to seek his advice on the best course of action. Sir Josiah advised him to keep quiet, comply with the authorities and tell the truth as to the events of that evening in Pontarddulais. Lady Charlotte wrote, with some sympathy, but also pity, how:

> The poor man entered into a long statement of the agricultural grievances of his neighbourhood which appeared to be very great. He had not, however, very enlightened views on any subject, which is scarcely to be wondered at when it is considered that this, his convict journey, was the first occasion of his ever going beyond the limits of his own little parish of Llanon. His astonishment at first seeing a ship, or steamer, is said to have been very great, and his perplexities on the Railway at the train moving without horses quite unassuageable [sic]. "Steam?" asked he. "What is steam?" Under all this excitement his spirits kept up bravely until he arrived in town and was shown the place of his confinement. "What, in that little narrow hole? Why, it was impossible to live in that!" And his heart seems at once to be crushed within him and every hope extinguished. Well might the free child of the mountain shudder and sicken at the sight of that cold and narrow cell! [Ponsonby (1950) 157].

John Hughes, David Jones and John Hugh, along with a further 247 convicts, were transported on the *London*, which set sail on 12 March 1844. Four months later, on 10 July 1844, they arrived at Hobart, Van Diemen's Land, renamed Tasmania in 1856 [CON33-1-56 entry 13214]. It has been estimated that between 1661 and 1870 around 240,000 men and women were transported from Britain to penal colonies, reaching a peak during the 1830s. Most had been convicted of crimes before, and transportation was a final punishment. The most common type of crimes were repeat petty thefts; however, there were those, such as Hughes, who were transported for committing acts of rebellion. Although these were in the minority, it has been estimated that around 1000 were either convicted of civil protests or open acts of rebellion [Maxwell-Stewart (2010) 1226].

Transportation to New South Wales came to an end in 1840, but continued in a different form to Van Diemen's Land until 1853. Transportation to Van Diemen's Land reached a peak in 1844, the year Hughes was transported there. During his time, transportation was under a modified form as a new probation system had been introduced. On arrival at Van Diemen's Land, all convicts had to undertake a period of probationary labour on the roads. After passing the probationary stage, they were hired by private individuals for a nominal wage. By providing convicts with a wage, the British government attempted to move away from accusations that transportation was effectively slavery in another guise. Convicts were not chattel slaves; they were assigned to a master only for the duration of their sentence, and they could lodge a petition and take their master to court if ill used [Harling (2014) 83]. At the time Hughes was transported, there was growing opposition to the system, with arguments that it was an immoral method of punishment. Whilst there was a growing anti-transportation movement, it took a while to put an end to transportation as it was such a convenient way for Britain to deal with her convicts. Criminals were being punished and subsequently released far away from home [Harling (2014) 85–86].

Hughes was sentenced to two years on gang probation at Maria Island. Work was hard, and convicts were expected to complete menial tasks, working long hours, sometimes without labour-saving devices in order to intensify the punishment. A Select Committee on Transportation found in 1838 that skilled labourers were generally treated better than unskilled workers. There were more instances of unskilled convicts being flogged or sent to work in chain gangs, road gangs or in penal stations in comparison with skilled convicts [Maxwell-Stewart (2010) 1234]. The convict records reveal that Hughes was classed as a skilled worker, described as a farm labourer who could plough [CON33-1-56 entry 13214]. Convict labour contributed to the development of the infrastructure of the British Empire colonies, building roads and bridges, and contributing to the pastoral economy.

Once transported to Van Diemen's Land, there would have been little chance of returning home. The despair Hughes felt is clear in a series of letters written home to his parents, some of which were printed in the local press and periodicals, signed with such sad statements as 'your banished but obedient son'. Before setting sail from Britain, Hughes wrote to his father, anxious about the voyage ahead and the fate that awaited him: 'I write these few lines to you, possibly the last forever, because we shall begin to cross the deep sea, to a strange land, to which we know nothing, and it is uncertain whether we shall see home after we leave land or not, because the voyage is so long'. A sense of regret for what had happened is clear as he lamented 'I hope you will not make yourselves unhappy about me. I take my oath before God and I had neither gun nor pistol in my possession.' Hughes remorsefully reflected 'I little thought last summer that I should be here now' [*Carmarthen Journal*, July 1846; Letter from John Hughes to his father, Morgan Hugh, 18 April 1864].

Hughes served his sentence relatively quietly and obediently. In October 1844 however he was charged with misconduct after accusing a fellow prisoner of stealing his knife, a claim that was not proven. On 18 July 1846 he emerged from his gang probation at Maria Island. He was subsequently praised for his actions in helping to capture a prisoner who had absconded. However, his record was not unblemished, in July 1848 he was absent without leave, and later in October 1852 served fourteen days in solitary confinement for allegedly feigning illness. On 22 February 1853 he was handed his ticket of leave, which was later revoked on 20 May 1856, only to be restored in September of that year. Hughes subsequently received a pardon on 19 May 1857, having served fourteen of his twenty year sentence. A decade later however, he had another encounter with the law, and was placed on trial on 17 October 1867 at Launceston for stealing a bill of exchange valued at £26 10s. He was later acquitted of this crime and there appear to be no further instances of lawlessness linked to his name [CON33-1-56 entry 13214].

Only one in four male convicts married after arriving in Australia, with the ratio of men to women being much higher. Generally, those who married were skilled workers on short

sentences [Maxwell-Stewart (2010) 1234–1235]. A single man on arriving in Tasmania, on 21 November 1864, the forty-five year old Hughes married the twenty-four year old Theresa Grey, the daughter of Irish immigrants. They were to have a son and daughter, William and Theresa [Brazell (1990) 53].

Riotous behaviour was punished harshly, in an attempt to quash rebellions and prevent uprising from escalating. The letters Hughes sent home present an insight into the fears and anxieties of a man, so little travelled, sent to the other side of the world. They add to our understanding of the experiences of those banished to the penal colonies. The longing for home of those forced to migrate was different to the homesickness felt by voluntary migrants, who could return without fear of reproach. Hughes's feelings of regret are apparent, as are his desires to return home—a desire that remained unfulfilled. On 8 January 1905 at Waratah, Tasmania, Hughes died at the age of eighty-six. The banished son, as he labelled himself, had spent more than sixty years away from Wales. Returning home would have been difficult for the former convict. Notwithstanding the cost and arduous voyage, the shame generated by the convict label and fear of disgracing the family could prove a substantial barrier. A choice had to be made, and Hughes chose to remain. With the young colony growing, there were work opportunities for those who found themselves transported to Australia and Tasmania. Following his release from penal servitude Hughes succeeded in building a new life for himself on the other side of the world.

In 1880 a novel based on the Rebecca Riots was published. Its author was Amy Dillwyn, daughter of the magistrate Lewis Llewelyn Dillwyn, who was present at the attack and subsequent capture of Hughes at Pontarddulais. Clearly her father's involvement in the riots formed the basis of this novel. At the end of her father's handwritten account of the attack at Pontarddulais, Amy Dillwyn made a note of the Special Commission, and the praise given to the authorities, including the two magistrates, her father and uncle for behaving 'with great firmness, temper, and moderation, under the trying and unusual circumstances in which they were placed' [Handwritten account by Lewis Llewelyn Dillwyn of his encounter with Rebecca Rioters at the Pontarddulais Turnpike Gate, 10 September 1843]. Interestingly, Amy Dillwyn was also an acquaintance of the Guest family [John (2007) 172]. Considering her interest in the riots, Amy Dillwyn must have heard Lady Charlotte describe the encounter with Hughes en-route to Millbank prison, which also would have influenced her writing. Amy Dillwyn's novel, *The Rebecca Rioter*, recounts the tale of the fictional Rebeccaite, Evan Williams. Katie Gramich claims that he appears as 'a composite character, sharing some of the traits of all the accused', an amalgam of Hughes and other convicted Rebecca rioters [Gramich (2004) xii]. Williams is portrayed as a hero, and in a similar fashion, a heroic image of Hughes has emerged.

A century later Hughes's involvement in the riots became the subject of the musical production *Jac Tŷ Isha*, subsequently performed locally by school groups. Hughes is portrayed as the principled rioter, fighting a just cause, the final scenes reflecting on the tragedy of his fate. Near the site of the attack on the Pontarddulais tollgate a commemorative stone was placed c. 2004, with Hughes being named on the attached plaque as the leader, the 'Rebecca', of this event. Closer to his former home of Tŷ Isha farm, in a public park maintained by Llanon community council, stands a wooden sculpture of Hughes. The statue looks longingly in the direction of his home down the road, further adding to the image of Hughes as 'the banished son'. These methods of commemoration perpetuate the image of Hughes as a leader, fighting for a just cause, driven to lawbreaking by dire socio-economic conditions, unfortunately captured and punished harshly by the authorities. Whilst Hughes has been portrayed as one of the just rioters, the Rebecca Riots are also characterised by a more violent element. Outsiders from the industrial valleys, such as John Jones (*Shoni Sgubor Fawr*) and David Davies (*Dai'r Cantwr*), reputedly joined the movement and committed outrages in Rebecca's name. Hughes's story nonetheless echoes that of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, their struggle for freedom, the injustice of their punishment, and the subsequent commemoration of their deeds. Hughes is therefore remembered locally as a leader who ultimately paid the price for his involvement in the riots.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Richard Burton Archives, Swansea University LAC/26/D/82 Handwritten account by Lewis Llewelyn Dillwyn of his encounter with Rebecca Rioters at the Pontarddulais Turnpike Gate (10 September 1843); Archives Office of Tasmania (digitised record) CON33-1-56 entry 13214; http://search.archives.tas.gov.au/ImageViewer/image_viewer.htm?CON33-1-56,259,101,L,80; National Library of Wales facsimiles 369/31 Letter from John Hughes to his father, Morgan Hugh (18 April 1864) and letter from Gertrude Thorne to her uncle Morgan (c.1905); 1841 census—Llanon parish. (**2**) **Newspaper and Periodicals**: *Cambrian*; *Carmarthen Journal*; *The Times*; *Y Diwygiwr*; *Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser*. (**3**) **Books and Articles**: Francis Green (ed.), 'Local history from a printer's file', *West Wales Historical Records*, vol. 10 (1924) 155–176; V.B. Ponsonby, Earl of Bessborough (ed.), *Lady Charlotte Guest: Extracts from her Journal 1833–1852* (1950); Pat Molloy, *And They Blessed Rebecca: an Account of the Welsh Toll-Gate Riots, 1839–1844* (Llandysul, 1983); David Williams, *The Rebecca Riots: A Study in Agrarian Discontent* (Cardiff, 1986 edn); David J.V. Jones, *Rebecca's Children: a Study of Rural Society, Crime and Protest* (Oxford, 1989); J. Phyllis Brazell, 'John Hughes (Jac Tŷ Isha): a banished son', *Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, 26 (1990) 51–56; Angela John with Revel Guest, *Lady Charlotte Guest: An Extraordinary Life* (Stroud, 2007); Amy Dillwyn, *The Rebecca Rioter* (South Glamorgan, 2008 edn); Katie Gramich, 'Introduction', in Amy Dillwyn, *The Rebecca Rioter: A Story of Killay Life* (South Glamorgan, 2008 edn); Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, 'Convict Transportation from Britain and Ireland, 1615–1870', *History Compass*, vol. 8, no. 11 (2010), 1221–1242; Lowri Ann Rees, 'Paternalism and Rural Protest: The Rebecca Riots and the Landed Interest of South-West Wales', *Agricultural History Review*, vol. lix, no. 1 (2011), 36–60; Philip Harling, 'The Trouble with Convicts: From Transportation to Penal Servitude, 1840–67', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 53, no. 1 (January 2014), 80–110; Rhian E. Jones, *Petticoat Heroes: Gender, Culture and Popular Protest in the Rebecca Riots* (Cardiff, 2015).

LOWRI ANN REES

**INKPIN, Albert Samuel** (1884–1944)
COMMUNIST

Albert Inkpin was born on 16 June 1884 at 14 Brougham Road, Haggerston, London, described by him as 'one of a series of dreary and dingy houses in a street occupied by the poorest section of the working class'. He was the youngest of seven children born to William Inkpin, a cabinet-maker, and his wife, Annie (née Collins). Inkpin later claimed that his mother had 'plumbed the depths of misery and poverty that only a respectable working class woman with a drunken workshy husband can understand' by the time of his birth. Inkpin was educated at St Paul's School, Hackney [Stephens (1989) 7]. Inkpin's mother had hoped that he would enter theological college but this idea was abandoned after the death of his father late in the century. Instead, Inkpin left school at fourteen and started work as an office boy in the London offices of a French newspaper: by 1901, Albert and his brother Harry were solicitor's clerks. Inkpin joined the Hackney branch of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), the first Marxist party in Britain, in 1904. He was the Assistant Secretary of the National Union of Clerks by 1907. In the same year, Inkpin was appointed as the Assistant Secretary of the SDF (later the British Socialist Party (BSP).

Quiet and unassuming, Inkpin possessed no great gifts either as an orator or as an agitator but was instead an honest and capable administrative worker. He stood five foot ten inches tall and had a sallow complexion, brown hair, which had begun to turn grey by the end of his life, and grey eyes. In 1910, he married Julia Raven (1887–1959), the daughter of Ted Raven, a socialist and trade unionist. Julia had joined the Hackney branch of the SDF at the age of eighteen by

which time her future husband was the branch secretary. She subsequently also became an active communist. There were three children from the marriage, two daughters and a son.

Inkpin succeeded H.W. Lee as the General Secretary of the BSP in 1913. The BSP aimed to gain power through the ballot box rather than through extra-parliamentary agitation. It was an uneasy amalgam of internationalists (those who believed that co-operation, especially class solidarity, should override national borders) and other socialists whose focus was more narrowly based on defending the national interest. Inkpin's brother Harry and many of Inkpin's friends had been involved in the internationalist opposition to the leadership of the BSP. His appointment therefore suggested an erosion of the power of Henry Hyndman, the leader of the BSP, who was a doughty opponent of the internationalists. The internationalist wing of BSP had much support among members who lived in the east end of London, many of whom were first- or second-generation immigrants who had fled pogroms in eastern Europe. During the First World War, the split in the BSP between the internationalists and their opponents became overt. The London section of the BSP condemned the leadership in February 1915, bringing the party closer to schism. In June 1915, the anti-internationalist right wing of the BSP formed the Socialist National Defence Committee (SNDC), which called a meeting on 21 July 1915 in support of the war, addressed by Hyndman, Will Thorne and Ben Tillett. The meeting was attended by members of the pro-war and anti-war factions of the BSP. Fights broke out and Inkpin was hit on the head before being thrown out of the meeting with blood streaming down his face and neck. The election of Joe Fineburg to the National Executive in October 1915 further strengthened the position of the internationalists within the BSP.

MI5 took great interest in Inkpin's activities, not least because of his opposition to the war in general and to conscription in particular. In March 1916, he was interviewed by an officer who tried unsuccessfully to recruit him as an informer. Inkpin denied that his BSP colleagues Edwin Fairchild and Joe Fineburg were pro-German, and claimed that it was 'quite impossible' that any BSP member was in receipt of any German money. Official suspicion of Inkpin and the internationalist, anti-war wing of the BSP was epitomised by the interviewing officer's conclusion that Inkpin was a 'deliberate liar'. One of MI5's informants, Victor Fisher, a former member of the BSP, had turned against Inkpin over the issue of the war. Fisher claimed that Inkpin was 'violently pro-German' and alleged that any money from German sources might well be channelled through him. In fact there is no evidence that Inkpin received any funds from Germany on the BSP's behalf. Nor was he pro-German. Inkpin remained under close surveillance by the secret services for the rest of his life.

The BSP split in 1916 after the foundation of the breakaway pro-war National Socialist Party led by Henry Hyndman. MI5 reported unguarded private comments by Inkpin in the spring of 1916 that the pro-war faction 'showed a complete lack of understanding of the real position of affairs and of the temper of the people and of our members' [National Archives file KV2/1532]. As a party official, Inkpin had to be seen as impartial regarding the struggle between the internationalists and those who opposed them within the BSP. Nevertheless, planning meetings between the leading internationalist campaigners took place at his house and Inkpin immediately gave loyal support to the new anti-war leadership of the BSP. He became the editor of *The Call*, the internationalist paper of the BSP, which had a circulation of roughly 6000. In the summer of 1916, the BSP was criticised for making insufficient efforts to obtain the release of John Maclean, the revolutionary socialist, who had been sentenced to three years imprisonment in Peterhead prison for appealing to soldiers to lay down their arms. Inkpin wrote to the radical paper *Nashe Slovo*, which was published by Russian émigrés in Paris, to deny the allegations. He was particularly critical of Georgy Chicherin, the London correspondent of *Nashe Slovo*, whose articles had been 'a crude lampoon' of the BSP. Leon Trotsky, who also worked for *Nashe Slovo*, reacted to Inkpin's criticisms by defending Chicherin's analysis of the situation on the Clyde.

Inkpin was exempted from military service in July 1916 on the grounds that it was against the national interest for leading figures of political parties to be conscripted. He was also considered to be medically unfit, although it was a borderline case. Officials at MI5 were pleased by this decision as they believed that it would prevent Inkpin from spreading sedition within the armed forces. Nevertheless, Inkpin continued to campaign against conscription. In January 1917, Inkpin and Francis Johnson of the Independent Labour Party [ILP] co-wrote a joint manifesto of the ILP and the BSP which unequivocally opposed industrial conscription. This reflected the consensus in the labour movement which opposed such conscription because it threatened exemption from military service in essential industries such as mining and munitions. MI5 regarded Inkpin as a 'clever and insidious propagandist': he was refused a passport to attend a socialist conference in Paris in March 1917. When news reached Inkpin of the Russian revolution that month, it was reported that he was 'overcome with joy'. He tried unsuccessfully to reach Philip Snowden and Ramsay MacDonald on the phone but received confirmatory news from another Labour MP, Will Thorne, with whom Inkpin had maintained cordial relations despite their differences over the war. Inkpin told Thorne: 'We must work up the revolution for all it is worth. From today onward we are on the winning side' [National Archives, file KV2/1532].

The Russian revolution threatened to have profound implications in terms of continued Russian participation in the war. Inkpin was one of two organising secretaries of a conference jointly arranged by the ILP and the BSP in Leeds at the beginning of June 1917 which welcomed the revolution and endorsed the call by the Russian government for a peace without annexations or indemnities. It was in this context that the Petrograd Soviet had proposed an Allied conference be held to discuss war aims. The British War Cabinet were extremely concerned that the Provisional Government in Russia would cave in to popular pressure and sue for peace with the central powers. But they were also aware that a refusal to engage in discussions about war aims would merely strengthen German anti-British propaganda in Russia. The Cabinet therefore approved Inkpin's application for a passport to attend the conference on behalf of the BSP as part of a labour delegation. Likewise, Fred Jowett and Ramsay MacDonald of the ILP, who also opposed the war, were given permission in June 1917 to travel to Petrograd for the conference. The delegation was dominated by men who could be relied upon to argue that the war must continue to ensure an Allied victory. But it never made it to the conference: the sailors' union, outraged by MacDonald's views on the war, refused to allow him to sail from Aberdeen therefore prompting the abandonment of the trip by the entire labour mission.

Inkpin had been nominated by the BSP to attend the third Zimmerwald conference of anti-war socialists in Stockholm, which was eventually held in September 1917. The cancellation of the Petrograd trip scuppered any hopes he might have had of stopping off at Stockholm en route to do this. The list of Zimmerwald conference participants therefore did not include any delegates from Britain. Instead, much of Inkpin's time that year was taken up by the question of his own potential participation in the war. Although Inkpin had already been exempted from military service, he wanted an absolute exemption on conscientious grounds. In his submission to the tribunal, Inkpin was clear about the basis of his objection to the war, which he opposed 'as a Socialist and an internationalist':

> I am strongly opposed to war, which I regard as arising from the conflict of capitalist interests and as inimical to the welfare of the working class…. I am convinced that it is the imperative duty of Socialists to strive to unite the workers of all countries in the cause of immediate peace [National Archives file MH 47/40/37].

Inkpin's application to be registered as a conscientious objector in June 1917 was turned down, as was his appeal against the decision in the following month. The tribunals considered that his objections to war were political and therefore could not be regarded as conscientious objection. In August 1917, however, Inkpin's exemption from military service was extended on the grounds

that staffing at the BSP office was already depleted by the war. It was claimed on Inkpin's behalf that he was doing the work of several men to compensate for this. MI5's attitude towards Inkpin's exemption from military service was very different from their reaction the previous year. This time Vernon Kell, the Director General of MI5, was distinctly unimpressed, believing that it was 'ridiculous' that Inkpin be given further opportunities to spread 'noxious' literature: 'his services would be more useful in the army as a clerk than carrying on anti-militarist and pacificist propaganda' [National Archives file KV2/1532].

The authorities duly tried to overturn Inkpin's certificate of exemption. Inkpin faced another tribunal in November 1917 during which the military representative alleged that Inkpin had produced pro-German propaganda. The tribunal was unconvinced by these allegations. It also needed evidence that Inkpin had indeed been engaged in other subversive activities apart from his allegedly all-consuming work for the BSP. In a minute written in the aftermath of the verdict, Kell recognised this but refused to lose hope that Inkpin would eventually be conscripted. The case was raised in the House of Commons by Philip Snowden in November 1917. He forced the Minister of National Service, Sir Auckland Geddes, to deny that he had initiated the review of Inkpin's exemption certificate, thereby hampering the activities of a political party. Inkpin was undeterred by the pressure put on him by the threat of conscription. Instead he continued to be an irritant to the government. In an article published in *The Call*, he railed against the official attitude towards conscientious objectors, claimed that tribunals were guided by 'blind, unreasoning prejudice' and that the Military Service Act had been wilfully misinterpreted. Conscientious objectors were persecuted even when tribunals found in their favour. Men who could have made a real contribution to society were needlessly imprisoned instead. Some idea of Inkpin's influence as a propagandist is given by the fact that the article was subsequently reprinted in the New Zealand journal *Maoriland Worker* in December 1917. A watchful, wary eye was kept on Inkpin: in January 1918, police seized all copies of *The Call*; a couple of months later, he was interviewed by police in connection with the distribution of his leaflet 'The Valley of Indemnities'; he was refused a passport to attend a socialist conference in France in October 1918.

Inkpin was a member of the committee formed at the launch of the 'Hands off Russia' campaign at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street in London in January 1919. The purpose of the meeting was to prepare for a general strike unless Allied intervention was brought to an end. In fact, the campaign never reached the point of launching political strikes against the government and it began to fizzle out in the summer months of 1919. A new national committee was set up, this time without Inkpin as a member, to replace the previous London-based committee. Inkpin was heavily involved in the negotiations which led to the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) at the Communist Unity Convention, which began in July 1920. The newly-formed CPBG was dominated by the BSP, which had supplied the majority of the delegates at the Unity Convention. Among the BSP delegates at the Convention were Harry Inkpin, who represented Ashton-under-Lyne, Harry's wife Maude, and Julia Inkpin, who represented Hornsey. Albert Inkpin and Arthur MacManus attended meetings on behalf of the CPGB with the Communist Labour Party, and the Communist Party (British Section of the Third International). These meetings bore fruit at a second Unity Convention in Leeds in January 1921, which incorporated these groups and other small revolutionary factions into the CPGB. Tom Bell, a long-standing CPGB colleague, later paid tribute to Inkpin's 'indefatigable' contribution to the success of the unity negotiations: Inkpin brought 'understanding and a sympathetic approach to people, qualities much in evidence during our protracted discussions leading up to the convention' [Bell (1941) 193].

Inkpin was appointed as the newly formed CPGB's business secretary and organiser. He oversaw the running of the CPGB's headquarters but over the following decade he was also elected to the party's main decision-making bodies, such as the political bureau. The CPGB offices were raided by the police in May 1921 and its records seized. Inkpin was arrested and

subsequently sentenced to six months hard labour for publishing the Theses of the Second Comintern Congress. He was imprisoned in January 1922 after his appeal against the sentence was dismissed. Inkpin, who had previously been diagnosed with Grave's disease, suffered ill-health within days of beginning his sentence and was moved to the infirmary at Pentonville prison after being unable to eat prison food. His case soon became a *cause celebre*: the *Daily Herald* published an appeal for Inkpin in February 1922, signatories against this 'grave miscarriage of justice' included Bertrand Russell, Jerome K. Jerome, and George Bernard Shaw. In the following month, the CPGB held a demonstration in Trafalgar Square to demand Inkpin's release, which was addressed by the veteran trade unionist Tom Mann. Fred Peet took over from Inkpin as acting secretary of the party from May 1921 until August 1922. Meanwhile, Inkpin was elected as an honorary president of the third congress of Comintern in June 1921.

Inkpin's brother, Harry, who was head of the CPGB's control commission, had detailed knowledge of the party's financial position and was therefore an important member of the three-man commission which investigated the party's finances and organization in 1922. The commission's recommendations included centralization and a reduction in the number of permanent staff. Despite these changes, the CPGB had run very short of money by November 1923: only Albert Inkpin, Willie Gallacher and Rajani Palme Dutt were retained on the payroll. In January 1924 a minority Labour government took office. Inkpin wrote to his opposite number in the Labour Party, Arthur Henderson, to welcome the Labour Party's triumph at the polls and to promise that Communists would throw themselves into making it 'a lasting victory'. Inkpin's message was criticised by his CPGB colleague, Bob Stewart, as too conciliatory and he urged Comintern to investigate. Comintern issued a resolution in February 1924 urging the CPGB to keep pressing the Labour government for reform beyond the capacity of the existing capitalist order.

Political tension was high in the autumn of 1925, not least because the coal subsidy was due to end in April the next year. It was widely acknowledged that the end of the subsidy would provoke an outbreak of militancy. The Cabinet accordingly gave orders for the detention of leading communists. In October 1925, Inkpin was arrested along with other leading CPGB figures and charged with breaching the Mutiny Act of 1797. He was convicted and, because of his previous conviction, sentenced to twelve months in prison. He was a rebellious prisoner. His request to be sent a copy of *Ten Days That Shook the World* by John Reed was refused. He responded by pointing out the inconsistency of this, given that the prison library contained anti-Soviet polemics such as *The Red Terror in Russia* by Sergei Melgunov. This forced the prison management to remove some contentious books from the prison library. The prison chaplain remarked of Inkpin that 'the petitioner is inclined to be argumentative'. Years later, Harry Pollitt, Inkpin's successor as CPGB Secretary, recalled how sharing a work table with him in prison was 'a political education'. Inkpin had reminisced to Pollitt about the SDF and about prominent socialists of that era such as Hyndman, Ben Tillett, and Tom Mann.

Bob Stewart took over as Secretary of the CPGB in Inkpin's absence, but the post reverted back to Inkpin after his release. An article in *Communist International* by Robin Page Arnot and Jack Murphy, which was inspired by the Executive Committee of Comintern, caused a huge row with the CPGB Central Executive Committee (CEC) in October 1926. Arnot and Murphy accused their colleagues of 'vacillations to the right': Inkpin, Gallacher, and John Campbell were incensed by this and repudiated the charges. There was also a heated debate within the CPGB political bureau in April 1927 over whether the party should support a slogan in favour of a general strike as a response to the Conservative government's restrictive trade union Bill. Inkpin supported the motion, which was narrowly carried. Inkpin's vote in favour of the resolution suggested that at that time he accepted the theory of the supposed radicalisation of the working class.

The CPGB received an annual, though covert, subsidy of $20,000 from the Soviet Union. The money would arrive at the Soviet embassy in a diplomatic bag and would then be taken in

cross-stitched envelopes across London by bicycle and sidecar to be delivered either to Inkpin or to Arthur MacManus. This money-laundering operation continued until May 1927 when the police raided the headquarters of the All Russian Co-operative Society (Arcos) in London. The Arcos raid, which was prompted by the apparent theft of a British military manual by a Soviet spy, resulted in the suspension of bilateral relations between Britain and the Soviet Union. After the Arcos raid, the annual Soviet subsidy was significantly reduced to $16,000 and Inkpin was forced to change the procedure for receiving Soviet funding. He now began to travel to Berlin to pick up the money in dollars. From there he would take the money to Paris, where he would meet a female courier (Rose Cohen, Dona Torr, or Olive Budden) at a rendezvous arranged by George Slocombe, the chief correspondent of the *Daily Herald* and a Soviet agent. The couriers brought the money to England, where arrangements were made to launder it before its eventual delivery to Inkpin on behalf of the CPGB. Having delivered the money to Paris, Inkpin normally returned to Berlin and subsequently re-entered the United Kingdom through Harwich, an ideal entry point for CPGB members as the Special Branch officers there were notoriously lax and he could therefore slip back into England unnoticed. In September 1927, Inkpin, Jack Murphy and Willie Gallacher represented the CPGB in a meeting with Nikolai Bukharin, who had replaced Zinoviev as the leading figure within Comintern. Comintern sections were being instructed by Bukharin to 'unmask' the 'treacherous and malicious role of social democracy'. This was the beginning of 'class against class', the policy of unremitting hostility towards social democratic parties. Bukharin and the CPGB representatives agreed on five points including intensifying the class struggle, and the need to focus the offensive against reformism. Bukharin sent a letter to the CPGB in October 1927 demanding that the attitude of the party towards social democratic parties be reconsidered, another indication that the Comintern push towards the 'class against class' policy was under way. Two months later, Gallacher and Inkpin represented the CPGB at the Comintern Executive Committee Presidium in Moscow. Pressure was put on the British delegates to abandon the CPGB's pragmatic policy of support for the election of a Labour government. Inkpin and Gallacher were unconvinced and, upon their return to Britain, outlined a milder version of the 'class against class policy', which amounted to not necessarily supporting Labour candidates rather than automatically opposing them.

Inkpin underlined his resistance to the 'class against class' line at a CEC meeting in January 1928. He was part of the moderate majority which resisted Comintern pressure to shift to the left (i.e. embrace 'class against class') on the basis that such a shift would reduce the party's appeal to the working class. A few months later, Inkpin's influence was severely curtailed after a police investigation revealed that funds for the CPGB were being laundered through the Moscow Narodny Bank in London. This revelation was acutely embarrassing for the CPGB, as its dependence on funding from the Soviet Union was made clear. It also exposed the Soviet Union at a time when western military intervention was feared. A Comintern investigation into the affair was set up and in May 1928 Inkpin admitted his negligence in overseeing the CPGB's clandestine operations. There was no evidence of any personal dishonesty but he had been seriously compromised and the right wing of the CPGB's leadership suffered as a consequence. Shortly afterwards, the CPGB political bureau decided that Bob Stewart would take over the party's secretive activities whilst Inkpin would remain responsible for more prosaic matters.

The delicate balance between the right-wing and left-wing factions of the CPGB was illustrated at the meeting of the CEC which began on 30 June 1928. A vote on affiliation to the Labour Party was tied at 9–9. Inkpin voted to support affiliation, a further indication that he tended to favour the right. In the following year, his position was further undermined by a campaign amongst Young Communists, including Walter Tapsell, Reg Groves, and Lily Webb, against the 'right errors' of Inkpin and of others in the leadership, such as Andrew Rothstein and Tom Bell. Despite this, Inkpin stuck to his guns against the 'class against class' line by supporting the idea that the CPGB would advise voting Labour when there was no Communist candidate. A vote at the CEC in March 1929 confirmed that this was very much a minority view. The Comintern took a dim view of Inkpin and his fellow dissidents, their votes clear evidence of

'right deviation'. In July 1929, there was strong criticism of the CPGB at the plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. Max Petrovsky, the Comintern representative in Britain, recommended that Inkpin and Rothstein be sent to the districts to show that the CPGB was committed to the 'class against class' line. Shortly afterwards, Inkpin was dispatched to the Birmingham district party. He was dropped from the political bureau and the secretariat of the CPGB. Despite clear evidence that Inkpin had been forced out for political reasons, MI5 wrongly concluded that his demotion had been prompted by his alleged womanising.

In August 1929, an MI5 informant reported that Inkpin was involved in discussions on the CPGB's behalf with the London Brigade of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) about potential IRA attacks and sabotage in the event of a British war with Russia. Inkpin subsequently sent a series of reports back to London on the Communist Party's activities in the West Midlands. Wolverhampton, for instance, was 'an industrial town and should offer great possibilities' yet there was only a group of five CPGB members there to build up the party's support. He also complained about what he perceived as police officiousness and intimidation in Birmingham, which was hindering the local party. Immediately after the CPGB congress in Leeds in December 1929, Inkpin was given notice that his employment with the party would be terminated at the end of the year. He was recalled to London so that his work could be supervised more closely. As a professional revolutionary, Inkpin's career prospects outside the party were bleak. Nevertheless, in January 1930 the CPGB political bureau prevented him from taking up a post at the Western Economic Bureau in Berlin, and also scuppered any chance of a job with Russian Oil Products in the Midlands. Harry Pollitt, who had taken over Inkpin's work in the party's secretariat, was infuriated by the political bureau's vindictiveness and his concerns were shared by the Comintern: Osip Piatnitsky, a senior Comintern official, feared that Inkpin would form his own fraction in response. The pragmatic case for keeping Inkpin involved with the party was summed up by Inkpin's response when he was asked to resign as Secretary: according to an MI5 source, he drew particular attention to the fact that they must remember 'how much he knew'. The political bureau was forced to backtrack and Inkpin became secretary of the International Bureau of the Friends of the Soviet Union (FSU).

The International Bureau reviewed the work of the FSU national branches. Inkpin himself defined the work of the FSU as opposing the 'mendacious chorus' of criticism of the Soviet Union. FSU propaganda usually aped that of the Communist parties, being directed firmly at the working class and often anti-religious. When Inkpin was appointed, the International Bureau's headquarters were in Berlin. He learned German (a 'very devil of a language') and led a nomadic life after 1930, writing home from addresses in Berlin, Moscow and Amsterdam. A source for the Metropolitan Police reported in September 1930 that Inkpin was lonely without his family, although he hadn't yet given up hope of regaining a senior position within the CPGB. Moreover, Julia Inkpin was frequently seen driving the family car in an era when car ownership was still the preserve of a small minority. The implication was that the Inkpins remained in comfortable circumstances. Inkpin contributed frequent articles in this period to Communist journals such as *International Press Correspondence* and *Russia Today*. In 1930, for instance, he witnessed the May Day procession in Berlin, 'a magnificent triumph for the German Communist Party'. Inkpin also found the time in 1930 to submit a lengthy memorandum on the *Daily Worker* to his erstwhile colleagues in Britain. Among Inkpin's criticisms of the paper were its failure to follow up issues sufficiently (such as the West Fulham by-election and the Palm Toffee dispute) and the paper's inappropriate fascination with 'capitalist sport'. He was also critical of the CPGB for not using the *Daily Worker* more effectively for recruitment purposes.

The Nazi takeover in Germany in 1933 forced the FSU to relocate its headquarters to Amsterdam. FSU strategy changed in the aftermath of Hitler's rise to power: FSU branches were instructed to seek out new non-communist audiences rather than duplicate the work of national Communist parties. In 1934 the FSU in Britain changed its name to the Russia Today Society, a change partly prompted by the relative success of the magazine *Russia Today* and partly a consequence of the Labour Party's proscription of the FSU. Inkpin received money on

behalf of the International Committee of the FSU through cover names from accounts controlled by trade delegations in London and elsewhere. Money would also be remitted though other accounts or passed on by go-betweens. It was a world of financial subterfuge with which he was familiar. Five or six times a year he would travel to Moscow to report to the Comintern.

Inkpin's travels were not without incident. He was arrested in Stockholm in February 1933, for example, and deported after a few days in prison. He had arrived during the congress of the Swedish Communist Party at a time when the Swedish police were especially vigilant about the activities of foreign communists. He was also believed to have encouraged a seaman's strike and handed over funds to support it.

Not surprisingly, Inkpin was conspicuously loyal to the Soviet Union throughout the purges. During the Zinoviev trial in August 1936, he described how the defendants had 'degenerated into a gang of common murderers, without any political programme and inspired only by an insane lust for personal power' [National Archives, file KV2/1537]. Others were more sceptical. When the third Moscow show trial was ending in March 1938, the *New Statesman* concluded that the trial of Bukharin and his fellow accused was 'even more appalling' than the other trials. Inkpin scolded the editor Kingsley Martin, warning him that enemies of the Soviet Union would applaud Martin's *Diary*. Martin retorted: 'What Soviet hero dare we praise today? Who is tomorrow's carrion?' [*New Statesman*, 12 March 1938, quoted in Upham, Chap. 6].

By the early years of the Second World War, most of the branches of the FSU had folded. The Russia Today Society of Great Britain (RTS) was an exception, but even the RTS was reduced to a handful of supporters in the aftermath of the Nazi–Soviet pact. Despite this, Inkpin continued stoically to beat the drum for the Soviet Union at public meetings, which were often poorly attended. He stuck scrupulously to the official Communist line which condemned the war as imperialist. For instance, he spoke at a meeting of the central London branch of the International Friendly League (IFL) in September 1940. An observer described the speech as 'anti-British and anti-war' which caused such dissatisfaction amongst the audience that many of them resigned from the IFL. It was decided by the IFL that no further such lectures would be given until after the war. Inkpin was relentlessly suspicious about the British government's war aims. He used a speech in early June 1941 to speculate that Rudolf Hess's flight to Britain was not motivated by a desire for peace. Inkpin claimed that Hess had in fact brought details of a proposed British–German pact to attack the Soviet Union.

On 22 June 1941, Inkpin spoke to an audience of about fifty at a Russia Today meeting at Brodsworth. He told them to expect a patched-up peace between Britain and Germany which would result in a British attack on the Soviet Union—after all, the British ruling classes preferred Nazism to Communism. The German invasion of the Soviet Union had begun that day, turning Inkpin's predictions on their head. The RTS was revitalised, and other groups sprang up to advocate British–Soviet co-operation; the National Council for British–Soviet Unity, for instance, had local committees in over 300 towns and cities. Inkpin became an immediate and passionate advocate of the Second Front to relieve the military pressure on the Soviet Union. He was now speaking to packed meetings: a meeting at Wembley Town Hall in November 1941 attracted an audience of 900.

Inkpin was hospitalised in September 1942. He never fully recovered and was sufficiently debilitated to be relieved of much RTS work by the appointment of an organiser in February 1943. He remained secretary of the RTS, and was still attending meetings daily until shortly before his death from cancer after a long illness on 29 March 1944. He was cremated at Golders Green Crematorium. He left his books and papers to his children Arthur, Kathleen, and Joan. The remainder of his estate, which was valued at £416 (gross), was left to his widow, Julia, who received hundreds of letters of condolence in the aftermath of his death. Harry Pollitt, who had first met Inkpin in 1913, wrote an obituary in the *Daily Worker* in which he mourned the loss of his old friend, one of the movement's 'finest sons'.

**Writings:** *The Menace of Industrial Conscription*, co-written with Francis Johnson (1917); *Friends of the USSR: The Story of the Russia Today Society* (1942); *The Glory of Stalingrad* (1942).

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Communist Party of Great Britain archives, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, People's History Museum (reference CP/CENT), Manchester; Metropolitan Police Service (file reference MEPO 38/37), National Archives, London (file references KV 2/1532-7, MH 47/40/37). (**2**) **Books and Articles**: T. Bell, *Pioneering Days* (1941); L. Nemzer, 'The Soviet Friendship Societies', *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 13, (summer 1949), 265–284; L.J. Macfarlane, *The British Communist Party: Its Origin and Development until 1929* (1966);W. Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain*, *1900–21: The Origins of British Communism* (1969); C. Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (2009); C. Holmes, 'The Raid on the Headquarters of the CPGB', *Labour History Review*, vol. 40 (1980), 23–28; N. Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, *1927–1941* (1985); B. Lazitch and M. Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern* (Stanford, CA, 1986); R. Craig, *War on War: Lenin*, *the Zimmerwald Left*, *and the Origins of Communist Internationalism* (Durham, NC, 1989); J. Saville, *The Politics of Continuity: British Foreign Policy and the Labour Government*, *1945–46* (1993); K. Laybourn and D. Murphy, *Under the Red Flag: A History of Communism in Britain*, *c. 1849–1991* (Stroud, 1999); R. Rempel (ed) B. Russell, *Uncertain Paths to Freedom: Russia and China*, *1919–22* (2000); A. Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow*, *1920–43* (Manchester, 2000); Worley, M. *Class against Class: The Communist Party in Britain Between the Wars* (2002); V. Madeira, 'Moscow's Interwar Infiltration of British Intelligence, 1919–1929', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 46, no. 4 (December 2003), 915–933. (**3**) **Other**: N. Stephens, 'The Political Life of Albert S. Inkpin' (unpublished dissertation, 1989, Albert Inkpin file, room 10, Working Class Movement Library, Salford); P. Harkison, 'David Lloyd George as the "Hammer" of Dissent: The War Premiership, 1916–1918' (Unpublished PhD thesis, McMaster University, 1994); D. Burke, 'Theodore Rothstein and the Russian Émigré Political Influence on the British Labour Movement, 1884–1920' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Greenwich, 1997); M. Upham, *The History of British Trotskyism to 1949* (https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/revhist/upham/06upham.html). (**4**) **Personal Information**: Tim Gillard-Stapleton and Linda Lee.

RICHARD TEMPLE

*See also*: †Rose COHEN; †Reginald Percy GROVES; †Henry Myers HYNDMAN; †Dona TORR

**JONES, Edward ('Ted')** (1897–1978)
MINERS' LEADER

Edward ('Ted') Jones was born at 27 Tower Hill, Trevor Isa, Llangollen, Denbighshire on 24 February 1896. His father Edward Henry Jones was a hewer born in Ruabon, his mother Sarah was born in Llangollen. Following Sarah Jones' death Edward Henry married Lydia; in 1911 they lived at 9 High Street Rhosymedre, Ruabon. Jones's elder brother Stephen worked underground as a horseman, Edward Jones aged 15 was entered as a baker's apprentice. He subsequently left baking for mining; his naval service during the 1914–18 war lists his occupation as collier. In the years following the conflict, Jones was employed as a miner in various collieries in the Denbighshire coalfield, where he became an activist in the North Wales Miners' Association (NWMA). In the early 1920s, the NWMA remained one of the smallest districts affiliated to the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB), having a total membership of around 18,000 men. It drew its support from the counties of Denbighshire and Flintshire, but mostly from the

collieries around Wrexham, Ruabon, and Chirk. Only three significant mines remained in the Flintshire coalfield: Point of Ayr, Bettisfield, and Englefield [for details of each colliery see Lerry (1968)]. The coalfield was marked by fragmentation, diversity, and strong local traditions that acted as a both a conduit and barrier to effective trade union organisation. The strength of the union was centred on the village of Rhosllanerchrugog (Rhos) which had a thriving socialist culture and produced a number of Labour MPs and trade union leaders. In other parts of the coalfield, particularly neighbouring Flintshire, both coal owners and miners were reluctant to embrace trade unionism, conciliation, and collective bargaining agreements. Edward Hughes, leader of the district in the years 1898–1925, had been victimised at Point of Ayr and the colliery remained a perennial problem for the NWMA through to the advent of public ownership.

Jones developed an acute sense of the fragility of trade union activity and consciousness in the coalfield through his experiences working underground at Wynnstay, Gresford, and Llay Main colliery where he was employed until he became a full-time paid official of the NWMA. Llay Main was one of the largest collieries in the coalfield, it had been operational since 1923 and employed over 2700 men. In 1924 an explosion at the colliery led to nine deaths. Some miners lived in the new village erected when the pit was sunk, but most travelled by bicycle and bus from localities around Wrexham and Mold. A year later a thirteen-week strike caused great distress in the village and tested the resolve of the NWMA [for details see Gildart (2001a) 42–48]. In the 1926 lockout the colliery faced problems with 'blacklegging' from August, no doubt related to hardship experienced in the previous year's dispute; the majority of miners had returned by November but many remained members of the union and there was no attempt to build a breakaway organisation [for a general history of the colliery see Tyler Jones (2011)]. Support for the MFGB was sporadic in north Wales, miners in Rhos remaining out in large numbers but others, particularly in the more peripheral collieries, returning before the end of the dispute in December. By 1931, Llay Main was a distinct mining village and the number of miners living in the locality increased; A.J. Cook had opened the miners' playground and Emmanuel Shinwell the pit-head baths [for an autobiographical account of Llay village life see Jones (1949) Chaps. 9 and 10].

Jones experienced the hardship of underground labour at Llay Main and the difficulty of maintaining a trade union presence in a hostile economic environment. He shared the moderation of his predecessors Edward and Hugh Hughes yet was aware of the need to take a more strident role in rebuilding membership that had been diluted by the aftermath of the 1926 lockout and the social turmoil that was a feature of the coalfield in the years that followed [for a comparison of the three leaders see Gildart (2000)]. One hindrance in rebuilding a collective identity in the coalfield was the fact that miners in Wrexham, Chirk and parts of Flintshire had differing identities and political cultures. Outside Wrexham, the shift to electoral support for the Labour Party was slow and non-unionism a recurring problem. Jones's predecessors, Edward and Hugh Hughes, had noted the weakness of trade union consciousness in some collieries when attempting to build a solid foundation for the NWMA in the first decades of the twentieth century. Trade union culture in other collieries in Denbighshire and Flintshire was marked by pragmatism and a realisation that the NWMA had to tread a delicate path between securing advances for the district's miners and reacting to the specific features of coalfield identities that sometimes undermined solidarity. Local miners had only sporadically supported the 1893 lockout and non-unionism remained endemic through to the early years of the twentieth century.

The template for the politics of the NWMA was forged by Edward Hughes, who had led the district from 1898 to 1925. Hughes remained a critic of the use of the strike weapon and a Liberal in politics until his conversion to the Labour Party after the affiliation of the MFGB in 1909. He died in 1925 and was replaced by his son, Hugh, who maintained his father's commitment to maintaining a trade union presence in Denbighshire and Flintshire in the aftermath of the 1926 lockout. The immediate problem facing Hughes was decline in membership due to the closure of a number of collieries across the district and the existence of a breakaway organisation that had been established at Point of Ayr. The death of Hugh Hughes in 1932 did not represent an opportunity to shift the coalfield to the left, as the district executive had been

free of political factionalism and generally remained committed to moderation. For the next two years the union was run by the district executive under the chairmanship of Thomas Jones; the organisation had two salaried positions, the financial secretary and the agent/secretary. In May 1933 the district executive informed all lodges that an election would be held to replace the late Hughes in January 1934.

Jones had worked his way through the union bureaucracy at the colliery and district level. He had been the delegate representing Llay Main on the NWMA council eventually becoming vice president of the association. At this time the NWMA leadership was governed by trade union pioneers who had struggled to build a viable labour organisation in a hostile industrial environment. In 1934 the collieries of Denbighshire and Flintshire were plagued by non-unionism and fluctuating numbers of financial members. In the latter, Bettisfield had a membership of 88; in neighbouring Point of Ayr the NWMA remained unrepresented. In the collieries around Wrexham membership was stronger; Hafod 1128, Plas Power 553 and Bersham 496. In Ruabon and Chirk, Ifton had 320 and Black Park 147. The strongest body of members were located in Llay Main. This was Jones's colliery and he could draw on the support of 2779 trade unionists, giving him status and respect across the coalfield, but more importantly votes in contests for district officialdom [NWMA Minutes of Triennial Delegate Meeting, 9 April 1934].

The position of agent/secretary for the NWMA drew much interest in the Denbighshire coalfield. The following nominations and their sponsoring lodge/lodges were presented to the district council meeting in December 1933: Robert Ellis (Hafod), Edward Jones (Llay Main), Thomas Jones (Ifton, Plas Power, Bagillt and Elm), Edward Povah (Gresford), Thomas Rogers (Black Park, Llay Hall, Brynmally) and Roger Williams (Bersham). A number of candidates eventually withdrew their nomination, leaving Jones to contest the election against Ellis and the then president Thomas Jones. No campaign literature produced by each candidate remains in the NWMA archive, but given the moderation of the coalfield, we can assume that members voted on the basis of experience, ability, and status. Jones was elected agent/secretary of the NWMA in 1934 on a salary of £260 per annum. He took up residence in the headquarters of the union on Bradley Road, Wrexham that had been opened by the south Wales miners' leader William Abraham (Mabon) in 1901, and was provided with a house on Water Street that was now vacated by Hughes' widow. On Jones's election the union changed its name to the North Wales and Border Counties Mineworkers' Association (NWBCMA).

The North Wales coalfield was in serious decline when Jones took up his role; in 1920 there had been 29 collieries, by 1928 only eighteen lodges remained, and in 1934 just ten. Like his predecessors the role of agent/secretary gave Jones the opportunity to represent the North Wales district on the executive of the MFGB. The first two years of his leadership were ones of severe crises for the coalfield, with Jones having to deal with the Gresford disaster and its aftermath and a lengthy strike at Bersham colliery. The explosion at Gresford colliery on 22 September 1934 led to the deaths of 266 men and left a dark scar on the collective memory of the district's miners. Industrial relations at the colliery were indicative of the difficulties that Jones faced in attempting to maintain and build trade union membership in north Wales. The colliery employed around 2200 men but at the time of the disaster only 548 were members of the district union. Unionisation had initially proved difficult due to the adversarial attitude of the owners and the fact that the miners were drawn from a multiplicity of locales around the town of Wrexham. Jones had already worked to increase the number of members at Bersham, Plas Power, and Brynmally, but Gresford was more difficult to crack. Divisions at the colliery between workers were also intensified by existence of the 'butty system' of sub-contracting and payment. The combination of dangerous working practices, an incessant drive for profits, and the lack of adequate trade union representation to monitor health and safety all contributed to the disaster. The subsequent inquiry sat for 38 days, with the NWMA/MFGB represented by Stafford Cripps and the company by Hartley Shawcross, the future Labour MP for St Helens. William Bonsall, the colliery manager, was convicted for failing to keep safety records and the

company was forced to pay a paltry fine [for account of the disaster see Williamson (1999)]. Yet the Gresford explosion and its indictment of coal capitalism in north Wales proved to be a catalyst for increased unionisation in the district and a significant step in Jones becoming a national figure in the politics of the MFGB.

A year after the Gresford disaster Jones was faced with a five-week strike at Bersham Colliery that was indicative of rising militancy in the Denbighshire coalfield and growing criticism of the moderation of the district executive. This was complemented by calls for a more muscular challenge to the existence of the Point of Ayr Industrial Union (POAIU) that had been created at the colliery in Flintshire in the aftermath of the 1926 lockout. The dispute at Bersham was linked to the attempt of the company to introduce new working practices that disrupted the consensual industrial relations culture of the colliery. Older miners were reluctant to work with new conveyor systems and other mechanised methods of coal extraction. The situation deteriorated when the company sought the employment of miners from Plas Power colliery which still retained elements of the 'butty system' or as it was known in the North Wales coalfield 'the chaltermaster system'. Mechanisation disrupted the allocation of tasks and the grading and pay of jobs underground. Complementing the changes in the labour process, the manager was also bypassing the lodge committee in terms of consultation and negotiation. The lack of communication over the employment of men from Plas Power triggered the initial walk-out. Jones attempted to settle the dispute through arbitration, but the owners refused to countenance any interference in their plans for the future of the colliery. This stalemate led to three days of violent clashes between pickets and miners from Plas Power who were continuing to work. Miners stoned the manager's car and attempted to prevent officials from entering the site on a number of occasions [for details of dispute and witness accounts see *Wrexham Leader*, 5–8 March and the *Daily Worker*, 21 and 27 February 1935].

The district executive threatened a coalfield-wide ballot to bring other pits into the Bersham dispute but the company held firm. Sixty more miners were brought in from Plas Power, which increased tensions in what was developing into a very volatile situation. Women joined the picket line and around ninety police constables were mobilised. Pickets broke the police cordon and continued to hurl stones at the vehicles. The police carried out baton charges leading to the injury of striking miners. Jones called for further negotiations, but the owners remained adamant concerning the employment of the Plas Power men. The strike lasted a further four weeks with a number of union activists at Bersham remaining critical of the settlement [for further details and analysis see Gildart (2001a) 48–54]. The dispute marked a significant turning point in symbolising the growing collective identity at some collieries which aided Jones's push for maximum membership. Yet the differing systems of working practices in each colliery and rates of pay continued to work against unity. The 'chaltermaster' system remained in place at Plas Power and Black Park collieries until 1941 and non-unionism remained an issue for lodges at the colliery level and the effectiveness of Jones as a district leader.

From 1935 onwards Jones worked hard to rebuild the membership of the district union and faced very little internal dissent from lodge officials and members of the executive. On the national executive of the MFGB Jones joined the group of moderates critical of left-wing elements in the union. At a special conference on wages in 1935 he argued for the defence of small districts and the federal nature of the MFGB and their representation on the executive stressing that they were 'little links in the chain' that should not be broken [MFGB Minutes of Special Conference on Wages, 17 October 1935]. Denbighshire and Flintshire contained few communists and the miners were generally averse to militancy and non-Labour or revolutionary politics. However, this did stop the incidence of both short official and unofficial disputes in the coalfield. In 1936 the lodges at Llay Hall, Bersham, Black Park, and Hafod, passed resolutions calling for strike action to deal with the problem of non-unionism. Jones forged a cautious path in trying to build a consensual relations culture in the coalfield while aware of the ways on which some lodges were appealing for more direct action on particular issues. He worked to abolish

the last remnants of the chaltermaster system at Plas Power colliery, with some miners exhibiting reluctance to dispense with sub-contracting, but was more cautious in his approach to a uniform wage policy [Letter from Edward Jones to Lodge secretaries, 12 July 1935]. In 1937 he opposed MFGB calls for an end to piece-work as a system of payment, maintaining that his miners favoured such a method of remuneration. In his notebooks he noted concern for Spanish workers as a result of the non-interventionist policy of the British Government. The union was involved in the initiative to provide homes for Basque children, and Jones was at the forefront of the campaign to free British volunteers who had been incarcerated by the Franco regime for fighting on the side of the republican cause. One Bersham miner, Tom Jones, had volunteered and was the last British prisoner to be released, in 1940. When he returned to the Wrexham coalfield Jones and a delegation from the NWBCMW were there to welcome him back [for biography see Pugh (1988)]. In this endeavour, Jones had worked closely with his friend Robert Richards, who had been elected Labour MP for Wrexham in 1922.

Ted Jones was aware of the need to educate young miners in the history and utility of trade unionism if the organisation was to have a long-term future. Unlike some of the larger districts of the MFGB, north Wales had no tradition of working-class education. Outside of Rhos the left remained weak, and the villages of Flintshire exhibited an absence of a socialist counter-culture. Nonetheless, throughout the 1930s, young boys working as haulage hands were beginning to complain about their rates of pay and treatment. Jones wanted to ensure that their protests would be dealt with officially through the auspices of the union. Aware of the sense of injustice that miners felt in the coalfield around working conditions and the limited role of the union in some collieries, he took advantage of such rising consciousness to develop a strategy to push for more members and the eradication of the breakaway organisation at Point of Ayr. The struggle against breakaway organisations was crucial to the effectiveness of the MFGB, and in the mid-1930s the campaign was already under way in South Wales, Durham, Derbyshire, and parts of Nottinghamshire [for details see Arnot (1961) Chap. 5].

The POAIU had emerged in the context of the aftermath of the 1926 lockout, during and after which there were accusations of victimisation, and a number of former NWMA members were not re-employed when the dispute ended. When men returned to the colliery there was no place for the former lodge officials. The owners of the colliery were largely hostile to both the local employers' association and the NWMA. In March 1927, the POAIU was established but remained unconnected to similar organisations in Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire and the initiatives of George Spencer. Thomas Jones, the secretary, was an official of the company and used the organisation to provide miners with gifts at Christmas and excursions to the seaside. In 1930 the POAIU organised a trip to Southport and the members were provided with pocket money. Four years later it provided funds to build a bike shed after miners chose this option in a ballot against the alternative choice of pit-head baths [for details of the colliery in this period see Gwilym Hughes's unpublished autobiography].

The isolation of the colliery in Flintshire imposed a geographical distance from miners in Denbighshire, and this made the campaign against the breakaway more difficult for the Wrexham-based officials. This factor was exploited by the colliery company, who were able to construct union officials in Denbighshire as 'agitators' and 'Germans'. This rhetoric had earlier been used by the North Wales Coal Owners' Association (NWCOA) in 1926 in claiming that the Point of Ayr miners were willing to return, but were being prevented by outside agitators from other collieries. By 1928 the NWMA had few members at Point of Ayr, but the POAIU was also slow to consolidate its membership base; in 1930 it had 230 on the books, rising to 482 in 1936. NWMA activists represented 'a lodge in exile' meeting in local pubs and miners' cottages under the cover of darkness. Jack Garreg Lwyd, Jack Griffiths and Moi Evans maintained a symbol of protest by erecting a table on the colliery road to collect funds and spread the message of effective unionisation [for background see Gildart (2001b)].

The district union produced propaganda in an attempt to undermine the attraction of the POAIU. Jones, along with miners and their widows, published letters in the press and attacked the organisation at public meetings. In 1935 a group of Point of Ayr miners met with Jones at an MGFB rally in Rhyl and persuaded him to build recruitment as a matter of urgency. The North Wales delegate also spoke on the matter at the annual conference of the MFGB in the same year. He claimed that in the years following the lockout organisers were not allowed on the colliery yard: 'In summer and winter, in sun or hail we had to stand out across the road… They have never realised, and don't realise the sacrifices our fathers made for the organisation' [Minutes of MFGB Special Conference, 14 February 1935]. Many miners now intimated that they wanted to be represented by the NWBCMA. The union also had support of the more enlightened coal owners such as W. Craig and Sons of Brynkinallt and Ifton collieries in Chirk. They posted notices at the collieries in February 1936 recommending miners to join the NWBCMA. This propaganda was used by Jones in appeals to the Point of Ayr Colliery Company but to no avail. With the successful moves against the breakaway in the south Wales coalfield offering a blueprint, Jones was confident of tipping the balance in establishing the NWBCMA at Point of Ayr [for struggle in south Wales see Francis and Smith (1980) Chap. 8].

Jones was more prepared for the battle with the POAIU in 1937 after he visited parts of the Nottinghamshire coalfield to campaign against the 'Spencer breakaway' that was undermining the solidarity and effectiveness of the MFGB both locally and nationally [for 'Spencerism' see Griffin (1962) Chap. 10]. The union had donated funds to the Nottinghamshire Miners' Association to aid their struggle against George Spencer thereby rebuilding the MFGB presence in the Midlands. One advantage the NWBCMA had in building recruitment was the inadequacy of the POAIU in fighting compensation cases for injured miners. The POAIU denied that they were not adequate advocates for miners in this respect and produced leaflets suggesting that there was distance between them and the colliery company. In response to rising NWBCMA activity around the villages that fed the colliery (including Ffynnongroyw, Trelogan, and Mostyn) the company posted guards at the entrance in order to repel recruiters for the union cause. Miners of the POAIU were also involved in whispering campaigns underground against those that were perceived as being sympathetic to the Wrexham leadership. This was complemented by a company petition that the under-manager carried on his inspections to collect signatures opposing MFGB membership. The small number of Point of Ayr miners belonging to the MFGB set up a base in a local chapel in Ffynnongroyw and collected contributions in a local draper's shop. Morris Owen, Jack Griffiths, Davis Isfryn, Will Gittins, and Owen Jones collected signatures and visited local pubs and miners' homes to slowly build NWBCMA membership at the colliery. The manager responded to the growing activism by organising a mass meeting and inviting the company solicitor, Kerfoot Roberts of Holywell to address them. This strategy backfired when the meeting grew hostile, symbolising the fact that miners were no longer willing to be dictated to in terms of what organisation they could join to represent their interests.

In October 1938 Jones announced that a district ballot would be held across the coalfield to press for a rise in wages and the eradication of the POAIU. The breakaway was now entrenched at the colliery and had established a benevolent and hospital fund [POAIU Annual Report 1937]. In a leaflet published in 1938 in response to one printed by the NWBCMA the POAIU showed no aversion to being described as a 'company organisation': 'Company unionism … is a compliment of which we are proud, and is far preferable to company antagonism, as the results of the past eleven years working have abundantly demonstrated' [POAIU leaflet 1938]. In his unpublished autobiography, Point of Ayr miner Gwilym Hughes claims that the POAIU was a 'management organisation'. He recalled that 'arrangements were made by the management to canvass all the men and ask them to sign a petition stating they had no desire of joining the North Wales union' [Hughes (n.d.) 53]. Einion Evans another former miner claimed that the POAIU 'was formed by the Manager and his sucklings – a union of management, by the management, for the management' [Evans (1994) 69]. Membership of the NWBCMA had now

significantly increased in other parts of the district with Bersham reporting the existence of only ten non-unionists. The Point of Ayr Colliery Company called for the ballot to be postponed and threatened Jones with legal action over his allegation that the company created the POAIU and encouraged membership. In the court case that followed the NWBCMA agreed to retract Jones's comments on company involvement. This was a strange decision given that the secretary of the POAIU, Thomas Jones, was a company official. The NWBCMA was granted the right to collect MFGB subscriptions but again the company reneged on the agreement. The lodge officials were only allowed in the vicinity of the colliery but not on the premises. Jones outlined the history of the dispute in correspondence with Robert Richards, the Labour MP for Wrexham, who had been a close ally of the miners through the struggles of the 1920s [Letter from Edward Jones to Robert Richards, 18 October 1939].

For the next five years Jones was frustrated by the intransigence of the company and the continued existence of the POAIU while breakaways in other coalfields were being reabsorbed into the MFGB. At various points in the dispute the NWCOA attempted to intervene but in response the company withdrew from the organisation. Pressure was rising in the coalfield and there were calls from some members of the district executive to ballot for a strike on the issue. Yet Jones felt that the incremental steps that were being taken would soon deliver a negotiated settlement. The North Wales Communist Party was also calling for the eradication of the POAIU; at their district congress in Rhyl in May 1939, the chairman, T.E. Nicholas, called for an end to 'the menace of company unionism' in the coalfield. During the war, the party had small pit branches at Hafod, Bersham and Llay Main, one or two lodge members, but no presence in terms of leadership positions on the district executive. Stanley Hughes of Hafod and Charlie Thomas of Llay Main proselytised for communism during the war but north Wales remained a shallow and peripheral outpost for the party [Communist Party, Report of Sixth District Congress Meeting, Rhyl, 1943]. Yet, local miners were showing signs of increased militancy through short strikes over pay and conditions at Bersham, Gresford, and Llay Hall. In 1941 Jones and the NWBCMA informed the coal owners that they would seek to settle all pay wages disputes by negotiation and conciliation for the duration of the war but 'insofar as non-unionists are concerned, we reserve the right to take any action our members deem necessary' [NWBCMA Minutes of Special Council Meeting, 16 September 1940].

The outbreak of war gave the trade union movement status and legitimacy both nationally and in north Wales. The NWBCMA was a beneficiary of these changes and worked with colliery companies to sustain production. Yet by 1941 Point of Ayr was still refusing to grant facilities to the union or recognise its growing presence at the colliery. There were now 145 members underground and an elected lodge committee; accusations of victimisation had heightened tensions. This emerged when 47 miners were laid-off because of geological problems in a section of the underground workings and only 20 were taken back. Members were also informing Jones that they wanted to take a stand in establishing bargaining rights and the ability to elect their own checkweighman. The district executive passed a resolution giving full support to the lodge at Point of Ayr and remained in close contact with the secretary Morris Owen. The union agreed to provide both manpower, finances, and, if needed, a ballot for strike action to establish the rights of the NWBCMA at the colliery.

In January 1942, Jones threatened to withdraw from the pit production committees that had been established during the war if the NWBCMA was not recognised at the colliery. In March a coalfield ballot sanctioned strike action supported by the majority of Point of Ayr miners that was only averted when the company agreed to participate in a Court of Inquiry announced by the Minister of Labour, Gwilym Lloyd George. The colliery was effectively now under state control and Jones's absence from the district production committee heightened the tensions. This enhanced Jones's position in terms of turning a national spotlight on the dispute and drawing north Wales into the broader debates around the reorganisation of the industry. The company and the local press maintained that the industrial relations culture of the colliery was

consensual and that it was 'a family pit'. This view was articulated by local Conservatives and in the House of Commons by those opposed to state control and the role of MFGB in pressing for public ownership [*Parliamentary Debates*, cols. 388, 50, 6 April 1943]. In response, Jones used MFGB officials and Labour MPs such as James Griffiths and David Grenfell to produce a counter-narrative of bullying, victimisation, and an industrial relations culture that was damaging the war effort. By June 1942 all mines were brought under state control, giving greater status to the MFGB and its district officials.

The subsequent Court of Inquiry was held at the Queen's Hotel in Chester under the chairmanship of Sir John Foster with its remit to explore the right of the NWBCMA to represent its members at the colliery. Jones proved to be very effective in setting out the history of Point of Ayr and the place of the MFGB in its development. Over two days the inquiry also heard representations from miners, officials and representatives from both the NWBCMA and the POAIU. Jones opened the case for the union presenting details of the history of unionisation at the colliery and the problems that emerged during and after the 1926 lockout. He argued that the NWMA had a long-established branch from the 1890s and a thriving membership that had been undermined in the context of the lockout. The issue of representation had been neglected by his predecessor owing to ill-health and the unwillingness of the colliery company to open negotiations with the union. From 1935 onwards the union had been frustrated with the situation at Point of Ayr, with members having the indignity of collecting union dues from its 111 members on the coast road that ran alongside the colliery between Flint and Prestatyn [for detailed narrative and analysis see Gildart (2001)]. In response, the company argued that the colliery had a settled culture of industrial relations with most miners showing no preference for the NWBCMA.

The eventual agreement was criticised by both the company and the NWBCMA. It did not lead to the immediate dissolution of the POAIU but it did grant the right for the lodge committee to collect subscriptions on the premises and represent its members in wage negotiations. Crucially, for the NWBCMA it gave a guarantee of no victimisation. For the next two years there was an uneasy truce with both organisations granted separate noticeboards and facilities. The NWBCMA returned to pit production committees in May 1942 but remained critical of the situation at Point of Ayr. In July 1942 the Point of Ayr lodge committee informed Jones of their 'dissatisfaction with the progress made with regards to… recognition at the colliery' [Minutes of Point of Ayr Lodge Committee, 2 July 1942]. The lodge also refused to sit with representatives of the POAIU on the pit production committee. In 1943 there was a short strike at the colliery over the dismissal of two female canteen workers, sisters who did not want to be split on different shifts, and the lodge continued to make accusations of victimisation [Hughes (n.d.) 62–65]. By 1944 the NWBCMA established mass membership at the colliery with only 96 remaining in the POAIU.

At the end of war conditions in the North Wales coalfield were more stable and Jones informed the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) National Executive Committee (NEC) that the production committees were working well and management interference was limited. With the formation of the NUM in 1944 and the subsequent nationalisation of the coal industry in 1947, the coalfield retained its position on the NEC, and both Jones and Peter Morris, the area president, quickly adapted to the new industrial relations culture of public ownership. Throughout the 1930s Jones had spoken at MFGB conferences on the need to retain the federated structure of the union. His ability to avoid a serious industrial dispute that would have hampered wartime production was an example of the cautious pragmatism that shaped his position as an NUM leader in the 1950s. There were some small-scale strikes, such as the dispute involving young miners at Bersham and Hafod collieries over wage rates, but nothing that stopped production across the coalfield. The boys claimed that their sisters and girlfriends were earning more in war production work than they were underground. Jones was aware of the need to instil a trade union identity amongst younger miners to maintain discipline and loyalty to the organisation. In his annual report for 1943 Jones noted that meetings of lodges and

general meetings were poorly attended. A conference of young miners was organised in the coalfield in September 1945. The serious disputes that impacted on production during the war in Kent, Scotland, south Wales, and Yorkshire did not materialise in north Wales. Jones felt that there would be new sets of problems for the industry after the war and that 'intelligence and reason must replace stoppages and force' [MWBCMO Annual Report, 1943]. He carried this pragmatism with him into the national forums of the NUM and in his work in local government and the Labour Party.

For Jones, the battles of the inter-war years had been won and the struggles of the past had given way to a consensual culture of industrial relations both in the North Wales coalfield and others. At the time of public ownership in 1947 ten lodges remained in the area: Point of Ayr, Black Park, Hafod, Bersham, Llay Hall, Gresford, Ifton, Llay Main, Black Lane and Smelt, with assets totalling £42,000. In the same year, Jones accompanied Tom Stephenson of Cumberland on an NUM delegation to the Ruhr coalfields in Germany [for details of trip see *Whitehaven News*, 8 May 1947]. In his own coalfield he remained embedded in the culture of local democracy as a member of Wrexham Borough Council and a magistrate. The factionalism that had been a feature of MFGB politics in the pre-war period continued to shape miners' responses to public ownership, communism, the Cold War, and colliery closures. Jones had voted for 'one big union' in 1938, but like other officials in smaller coalfields he remained an advocate of a particular level of district autonomy. Jones formed part of the right-wing block on the NUM NEC that was critical of militancy and the role of communists in the politics of the union and wider labour movement. At the annual conference in Blackpool in 1945 he attacked Arthur Horner for the way in which communist candidates often undermined labour support in council and parliamentary elections [NUM Annual Conference Report 1945]. North Wales had supported Communist Party affiliation to the Labour Party in 1943 but it is unclear from the records what position Jones took on this matter [NWBCMA, Report of Triennial Delegate Meeting, 19 April 1943].

The slow pace of transformation heralded by public ownership created tensions in the NUM areas and on the NEC. Jones was a keen advocate of the conciliation procedures that had been established, but remained critical of the way some managers were attempting to retain the divisions between officials and miners that had been a feature of the inter-war industry. In 1948 the annual delegate meeting of the North Wales Area passed a resolution calling for a 'greater measure of workers' control in the organisation and general direction of the coal mining industry [North Wales Area, Minutes of Annual Delegate Meeting, 1948]. Llay miner T.H. Jones recalled in his autobiography that 'there is much to be done in the mines, but the prospects today are definitely better. There is more security and the future for young men … is better' [Jones (1949) 70]. This was a view shared by Jones, and the flying of the National Coal Board (NCB) flag at collieries in Denbighshire and Flintshire was symbolic of the industrial consensus that he had been advocating throughout his career as a miners' leader.

In 1949 Jones, like a number of other NUM officials, was offered a position in the NCB that would have meant leaving north Wales. Hugh Gaitskell recalled in his diaries that Jones's wife was adamant that she would not leave the district [Williams (1983) 156]. Like leaders in other coalfields, Jones could enjoy loyalty and status that would have perhaps been less than forthcoming in the more alien environment of the national offices of the NCB. In 1950 North Wales passed a resolution calling for all miners to be granted the same privileges and concessions as all NCB staff. This was an issue that remained unresolved through the period of public ownership, with Deputies and Overmen being paid full wages when absent through sickness. This failure on the part of the NUM to press these issues more vociferously had a detrimental impact on miners' health for the rest of the century [for discussion of this aspect of NUM policy see McIvor and Johnston (2016)].

For officials of small coalfields such as North Wales the 1950s was a period of stability and industrial consensus. Jones and others had secure employment, thriving treasuries, political stability, local and in some cases national status, and political legitimacy. The federal nature of

the NUM ensured the protection of areas with a small number of collieries and gave them power in the decision-making bodies of the union. However, colliery closures and the rise of a younger generation of miners' leaders in particular coalfields who pressed for structural changes and more militant pursuit of wage claims. In the North Wales coalfield, Jones had to deal with the closure of Llay Hall (1948), Black Park (1954), and a reduction in the number of miners employed at Llay Main. Historians on the left have pointed to the federal nature of the NUM as being a barrier to militancy and a more progressive politics that could have made a major contribution to challenging the timidity of the labour movement [for example see Allen (1981)]. Yet leaders of small coalfield areas such as Jones saw their roles as being more than just 'political' in the factional sense of the word. Closely guarded area autonomy was rooted in concerns around the need to respect local peculiarities, the fragility of trade union unity, and the sensibilities of the politically disengaged coalminer.

In 1954, Jones was elected vice president of the NUM. At this time he had been the longest serving member of the NEC and was seen by many in the union as a pragmatic, decent, safe pair of hands. He worked closely with Ernest Jones, the president, who had played his own role in advocating moderation and conciliation in the industrial relations culture of the coal industry. He continued to identify with the right within the union, but remained on friendly terms with some left-wing officials such as Arthur Horner. He had visited the Soviet Union with Horner in 1937 and later Yugoslavia as part of an MFGB delegation [for details of trip see Horner (1960) 160–161, 212]. Jones also served a term as secretary of the International Miners' Federation. In many ways he was impatient and frustrated with the left in the union and the wider labour movement as opposed to having strong ideological aversion to critics of the Labour Party, public ownership, and the post-war settlement. He was challenged for the vice presidency in 1955 by Alex Moffat (Scotland) and J. Southall (Midlands) gaining 449 votes over 219 for Moffat and 60 for Southall. Abe Moffat saw Jones as part of the right-wing old-guard who was determined to hold back unity between the Communist and Labour parties [Moffat (1965) 265]. Jones was challenged again in 1959 by Moffat, but managed to retain the position by maintaining the support of the moderate coalfields. At the 1955 conference he spoke against an unsuccessful resolution from Yorkshire calling for five-year elections for all Area and National officials. Jones was aided by the support he could muster in the coalfields of Nottinghamshire, Lancashire, Leicestershire, the Midlands, and South Derbyshire. He successfully argued that 'experience' counted for more than rhetoric in trade union leadership.

> I cannot understand why some of the people who have spoken at the rostrum, who regard themselves as progressives in thought, who regard themselves as trade unionists, and to come here and argue that the wealth of experience that is acquired by a lifetime of service to the trade union movement should be subjected to the fluctuation and whims and often scurrilous campaigns of people who would have similar design on similar jobs [NUM Report of Annual Conference, 1955].

Jones's personality was well-suited to the role of vice president through which he would welcome delegates to the annual conference, dine with local dignitaries, and work for political consensus in decision-making. Yet he was also not averse to deploying anti-communist rhetoric from the rostrum and took a firm pro-American line in the developing divisions over the Cold War. For Jones, the long march of the district unions through strikes, conciliation, disasters, and closures was now complete with the public ownership of the industry and the central role of the NUM in planning its future. This view was beginning to be contested by some in the union who viewed the older moderate area leaders as barriers to a more progressive critique of the NCB [see Moffat (1965) Chap. 15]. In the following year, Mick Weaver, a communist delegate from the Lancashire Area, attacked the NCB for claiming that stoppages at Mosley Common Colliery were due to a small number of agitators [NUM Report of Annual Conference, 1956]. For Jones,

the NCB was not perfect, but it had delivered far more for the miners in terms of pay, working conditions, and recognition of trade unions than the system of private ownership which had a left a deep scar on the memories of his generation. At the opening of the Point of Ayr miners' welfare club in 1957 Jones claimed that there had 'been a transformation in everything affecting miners and their families that was beyond the wildest dreams of people 20 years ago' [*Wrexham Leader*, 28 June 1957]. The colliery was now wholly organised by the NUM and would go on to produce two future Area Secretaries (Ted McKay, elected in 1975, and Les Kelly elected in 1987). Yet, in the strike of 1984/1985 Point of Ayr was once again divided, with the majority of miners crossing the picket line and the establishment of a branch of the breakaway Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) [see Gildart (2002) Chap. 4].

In 1960, Jones became temporary president of the NUM. In the subsequent election the right were once again triumphant with the moderate Sidney Ford defeating Alex Moffat. The annual conference that year was held at the seaside resort of Llandudno in north Wales. For Jones this was a local event and an honour to welcome the NUM to the area. He chaired the conference which in many ways signified a changing of the old guard. Jimmy Hammond of Lancashire thanked Jones for all the work he had done for the union and intimated that many felt that north Wales had more of an affinity with his own district than it did with the South Wales coalfield. Paynter stressed that although he had often 'disagreed with Ted… personal relationships have always been most cordial and friendly' [NUM Annual Conference Report 1960]. Within a year Jones would retire along with other established figures on the NUM NEC such as Tom Stephenson of Cumberland. New voices were heard at the conference with the likes of Dennis Skinner and Joe Gormley setting out the respective positions of left and right within the coalfields. Jones spoke of the problems of closures across the coalfields and feared for the future of the north Wales industry. This was a harbinger for the wave of closures that swept through mining communities in the 1960s, which in the North Wales coalfield saw the closure of Llay Main (1966), Hafod (1968) and Ifton (1968), leaving only two mines in Wrexham (Bersham and Gresford). Jones felt that the character of some younger members of the NUM was different to those who were close to retirement. He left the conference with a plea to delegates: 'Our coal industry must adapt itself to the mental and moral make-up of the workmen of today, many of whom have no knowledge of the hardship and poverty of former days' [NUM Report of Annual Conference, 1960].

Jones retired in 1961 and was the last significant mining figure from north Wales who had a national profile in the NUM. To mark his retirement the area union organised a dinner at the Wynnstay Hotel, Ruabon that was attended by Labour Party dignitaries and members of the NUM NEC. His retirement also coincided with further mine closures in Denbighshire. By 1975 only two collieries remained: Bersham close to Wrexham and Point of Ayr on the Flintshire coast [for the North Wales coalfield in the post-war period see Gildart (2002)]. In retirement, Jones resided at Lilbourne Cottage, Coed Richard, in Acrefair. He died on 6 February 1978 and was cremated at Pentrebychan crematorium. He left an estate valued at £21,886. Jones's wife Elsie Victoria was born in Ruabon the daughter of Philip and Mary Edith Harper. Her father was a sawyer in the building trade. She died on 28 February 1971, they had no children. In 1979 the North Wales NUM erected a plaque in his honour in the Miners' Institute and Welfare in Wrexham town centre. Jones's reputation remained intact and his portrait adorned the walls of the area office in Wrexham until the closure of the last colliery, Point of Ayr in 1996, a reminder of the role he had played in rebuilding the MFGB in the coalfield and his elevation to national office in the NUM in the post-war period.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Edward Jones Papers and Notebooks, Records of the North Wales Miners' Association, the North Wales and Border Counties Mineworkers' Association, and the National Union of Mineworkers (North Wales Area), Records of the Point of Ayr Industrial Union, Gwilym Hughes 'My Life at Point of Ayr' (unpublished autobiography, n.d.), Flintshire Record Office; Records of the North Wales Coal Owners Association, Denbighshire Record Office,

Ruthin; Records of the Communist Party of Great Britain, People's History Museum, Manchester. (**2**) **Newspapers and Periodicals**: *Wrexham Leader*; *Rhos Herald*; *Prestatyn Weekly*; *Liverpool Daily Post*; *Colliery Guardian*; *Coal News*; *Whitehaven News*; *Daily Worker*. (**3**) **Books and Articles**: T.H. Jones, *Fingers In The Sky: A Miner's Life Story* (Wembley, 1949); R. Page Arnot, *The Miners: Years of Struggle* (1953); Arthur Horner, *Incorrigible Rebel* (1961); R. Page Arnot, *The Miners in Crisis and War* (1961); Alan R. Griffin, *The Miners of Nottinghamshire 1914–1944* (1962); Abe Moffat, *My Life with the Miners* (1965); G.G. Lerry, *The Collieries of Denbighshire* (Wrexham, 1968); R. Page Arnot, *The Miners: One Union One Industry* (1979); Hywel Francis and David Smith, *The Fed: a history of the South Wales Miners in the twentieth century* (1980); V.L. Allen, *The Militancy of British Miners* (Shipley, 1981); P. Williams (ed), *The Diary of Hugh Gaitskell* (1983); Jane Pugh, *A Most Expensive Prisoner: Tom Jones, Rhosllanerchrugog's Biography* (Llanrwst, 1988); Einion Evans, *Nearly A Miner* (Llandysul, 1994); Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman and David Howell (eds), *Miners, Unions and Politics, 1910–47* (Aldershot, 1996); Stanley Williamson, *Gresford: The Anatomy of a Disaster* (Liverpool, 1999); Eric Griffiths, 'Edward Hughes: The Making of a Miners' Agent', *Transactions of the Denbighshire Historical Society*, vol. 49 (2000) 128–150; Keith Gildart, 'Men of Coal: Miners' Leaders in North-East Wales 1898–1961', *Llafur: Journal of Welsh Labour History*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2000, 111–129; Keith Gildart, 'Co-operation and Conflict: Episodes from the North Wales Coalfield, 1925–35', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, vol. 12 (2001a), 27–56; Keith Gildart, 'Militancy, Moderation and the Struggle against Company Unionism in the North Wales Coalfield', *The Welsh History Review*, vol. 20, no. 3 (2001b), 532–564; Keith Gildart, *North Wales Miners: A Fragile Unity, 1945–1996* (Cardiff, 2002); Andrew Taylor, *The NUM and British Politics: Volume 1 1944–1968* (Aldershot, 2003); Keith Gildart, 'North Wales', in John McIlroy, Alan Campbell and Keith Gildart (eds), *Industrial Politics and the 1926 Mining Lockout: The Struggle for Dignity* (Cardiff, 2004), 157–172; Tom Ellis, *After The Dust Has Settled: The Autobiography of Tom Ellis* (Wrexham, 2004); Keith Gildart, 'Mining Memories: Reading Coalfield Autobiographies', *Labor History*, vol. 50, no. 2 (2009) 139–161; Vic Tyler-Jones, *The Miners of Llay Main* (Wrexham, 2011); Arthur McIvor and Ronald Johnston, *Miners' Lung: A History of Dust and Disease in British Coal Mining* (Aldershot, 2016). (**3**) **Theses**: Sally E. Venn, 'Labour Politics in North East Wales: A Study of the North Wales Miners' Association, 1898–1994 (Unpublished MA thesis, University of Wales, 1994: Keith Gildart, 'The Social and Political Development of the North Wales Miners' 1945–1996 (Unpublished DPhil thesis, University of York, 1995). (**4**) **Obituary**: *Wrexham Leader*, 10 February 1978.

KEITH GILDART

*See also*: †Edward HUGHES; †Hugh HUGHES; †James Idwal JONES; †Thomas William JONES; †Tom JONES; †Walter MONSLOW; †Robert RICHARDS

**MAJOR, Henry Francis ('Harry Francis')** (1908–1989)
MUSICIANS' UNION LEADER

Harry Francis (the professional name of Henry Francis Major) was a leading figure in the Musicians' Union (MU) for nearly forty years in the middle part of the twentieth century, a period which saw dramatic changes in the music profession and the union itself. While often struggling to come to terms with the former, he nevertheless played a significant role in shifting the politics of the union to the left, bringing with it a more internationalist outlook. He was born at 8 Junction Place Amhurst Road Hackney, London on 2 May 1908, the son of Henry Percy Major, a grocer's manager, and Sarah Ann née Cook. He began learning to play piano at the age of 7, but it was as a drummer and percussionist that he became a professional musician in 1926. Working mainly in suburban ballrooms, Francis had been inspired by seeing the Original

Dixieland Jazz Band in the post-war years and maintained a lifelong love of jazz that occasionally came into conflict with his role in the union. Playing with various bands during the difficult times of the 1930s motivated him to become politically engaged, as a member of the MU and also the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB).

With MU membership having crashed in the wake of the advent of talking films (most musicians had been employed in the cinemas prior to 1929), Francis helped instigate the union's recovery as a member of one of a number of Voluntary Organising Committees (VOCs). Formed in 1935, these saw existing members volunteering to recruit and organise new members at a time when the union's leadership lacked the resources and vision to do so. He joined the CPGB the following year, around the same time as a number of other significant MU members and officials, attracted by what Croft describes as its desire to 'take cultural work very seriously' [Croft (1998)] and its anti-fascist stance which played well among the many Jewish musicians within the London District.

Francis remained committed to his voluntary work for the union prior to the Second World War, but on its outbreak, he joined the fire service. He remained active not only in the MU, but also in the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) and the CPGB. He continued to play as a member of the London Fire Forces' Dance Orchestra, though these activities were curtailed when he sustained serious injuries from a bomb blast. He returned to work in early 1945, in the band of another CPGB member, Phil Cardew, before accepting a paid, permanent position with the MU as a Special Organiser in May of the same year. This meant giving up playing professionally, something he described as a 'considerable wrench'. By this point and in common with other members of MU who were members of the CPGB, Francis, who was identified as 'leader of the Musicians' Bureau of the London Communist Party' [TNA 3/375], had a file maintained on his activities by MI5. The concern of the Security Service was almost certainly an overreaction to the advances those with Communist sympathies were making within the Union but it was during this period that the party's influence peaked.

In 1948, Hardie Ratcliffe was elected General Secretary. Although not a member himself, he was nominated by Ted Anstey and Francis, both members, who were to become Assistant General Secretary and Assistant Secretary respectively. The election of another CPGB member, Van Phillips, to chair of the Executive Committee meant that three of the top four posts in the union were held by party members, with Ratcliffe widely viewed as a 'fellow traveller'. Perhaps more remarkably, Ratcliffe, Francis and Anstey all remained in post for over twenty years, the last retiring in 1969, facilitating the promotion of Francis to Assistant General Secretary. He even stood for election as General Secretary in 1970, losing heavily to the younger John Morton, under whom he served for a further three years before retiring. His attempts to stay in post were rebuffed by the MU executive, though he continued to work despite suffering from ill-health, drawing on his contacts in the entertainment industry to get a personnel job with one of the record companies. His retirement severed the union's last senior link with the pre-war era, and while he frequently railed against new forms of music, he still played a significant part in some of the union's more progressive policies. The former was evident in his role as the union's regular spokesperson in the press, responding to the varying challenges facing the organisation. In doing so he rarely handled such developments with tact and, in the 1960s, he continued to lament the standards of popular music when the union was trying to modernise and attract the new breed of musicians into its fold.

When Bill Haley came to the UK, in 1957, Francis declared himself 'appalled at the antics' of his band and their audience, which he claimed 'should have been won for jazz'. He also argued that the union could not be drawn into 'highly cultural polemics' while barely concealing his glee at the 'slump in the beat group scene' [*The Musician*, January 1965] he was describing, and told *Melody Maker* that 'many of the young musicians in the pop field are quite irresponsible people' [*Melody Maker*, 6 April 1968]. If this hardly endeared him to a growing cohort of MU members,

it would be remiss not to highlight the role he played in making the union more outward looking during the same period.

At the start of his paid union employment, he was charged with overseeing its approach to non-domestic musicians. This largely involved the setting up of exchanges with international musicians' unions, allowing the same number of (for example) Swedish or French musicians into the UK as there were British ones visiting these countries. These were devised to protect work for British musicians at home and worked well in countries where the demand for British musicians was greater than from the reciprocating nation. However, this was not the case with the USA. Though demand for American bands and jazz musicians was high in the UK, there was little demand for their British equivalents in the USA in the early 1950s. The failure of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) to reach any agreement with the British union dating back to the 1930s meant very few American musicians were able to perform in the UK between 1935 and 1955 (the Ministry of Labour refused them work permits after consulting the MU, who always refused). Barely any British acts went to the USA where the AFM were even more fiercely protectionist.

For a jazz fan like Francis, who had met Louis Armstrong on his 1932 British tour and seen Duke Ellington the following year, this was something of a curse. He wrote that while he was 'completely in agreement' with union policy on reciprocal exchanges, he was, nevertheless, 'just as keen as anyone else to hear, once again, such musicians'. His wishes were to be realised when Ratcliffe and James Petrillo, the leader of the AFM reached an agreement that allowed for tightly regulated exchanges to begin in 1956. Louis Armstrong was among those who visited the UK later that year, by which time Francis had assumed responsibility within the MU for the administration of the exchanges. This became more onerous as the number of acts involved increased dramatically with the popularity of British pop groups in the USA. It was not only bureaucratically that Francis was involved in the union's international outlook. He was also was heavily involved in two campaigns that became important parts of MU history. The first was when he successfully helped organise actions against British venues that operated colour bars. When the Dorchester Ballroom in Wolverhampton threatened to refuse entry to 'coloured people and Teddy Boys' [*New Musical Express*, 10 February 1956] the union threatened to withdraw its members working in the venue. Two years later, it did the same and took a landmark legal action against the owners of the Scala Ballroom (also in Wolverhampton) for operating a similar ban. Secondly, the MU was among the first trade unions to state its opposition to apartheid in South Africa. It passed a conference motion in 1957 [MU, 2/1/7/1959] and went further after the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, preventing its members from working in the country. In 1964 alone, Francis ensured that The Rolling Stones, Freddie and the Dreamers and the Swinging Blue Jeans were all prevented from undertaking lucrative Christmas engagements in South Africa. These restrictions on MU members, which pre-dated the United Nations' cultural boycott, were to remain in place until the end of the apartheid regime.

While both of these had a lasting impact, Francis also attached great symbolic significance to the visit of Paul Robeson to the MU conference in 1959, which he instigated. The singer, who had had his passport revoked for eight years by the House Un-American Activities Committee, was something of a hero to Francis as a musician, communist and civil rights campaigner. If each of these also described Francis (he was also active in the National Council of Civil Liberties), it is perhaps telling that his obituary in the MU publication, *The Musician*, focused more on his characteristics than achievements. It drily noted that he had 'strong political views that remained consistent throughout his working life' and praised his 'integrity and dedication' [*The Musician*, December 1989]. Francis died on 15 September 1989 in Devizes. He had married Winifred Chapman in 1931.

**Writings:** From the 1940s to 70s Francis wrote articles for the MU journal, *The Musician.* Some of his post-retirement writing on jazz can be found on the National Jazz Archive site.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: MU papers and publications, Musicians' Union archive, University of Stirling; MI5 files on Communist activity in the entertainment unions, The National Archives, London. (**2**) **Newspaper and Periodicals**: *The Musician*; *Melody Maker*; *New Musical Express*; *Morning Star*. (**3**) **Books**: Andy Croft, '*A Weapon in the Struggle': A Cultural History of the Communist Party in Britain* (1998); John Williamson and Martin Cloonan, *Players' Worktime: A History of the British Musician's Union*, *1893–2013* (Manchester, 2016). (**4**) **Online**: Harry Francis. '*The History of British Jazz*' http://jazzpro.nationaljazzarchive.org.uk/Francis/Francis_Jazz%20development.htm. (**5**) **Obituaries**: *The Morning Star*, 21 September 1989; *The Musician*, December 1989.

JOHN WILLIAMSON

*See also*: †Joseph WILLIAMS

**MARCHBANK, John** (1883–1946)
RAILWAY TRADE UNION OFFICIAL

John Marchbank was born at Lambfoot, Dumfriesshire on 19 January 1883, the son of a shepherd also called John Marchbank and his wife Isabella née Robison. After an elementary education he worked as a shepherd. Aged 18 he joined the Caledonian Railway as a porter at Beattock on the main line between Carlisle and Glasgow. He subsequently left the Caledonian for the Dumfriesshire constabulary, but returned to the Caledonian Railway in 1906. His new post was not in rural Dumfriesshire but in Glasgow as a shunter at Buchanan Street station. That October he married Helen Johnston Burns, a baker's saleswoman born in St Ninian's Stirlingshire. They lived in Springburn close to Marchbank's employment.

He joined the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) and became Branch Secretary of the union's Glasgow No. 4 branch. He subsequently served as a delegate at the union's Annual General Meeting (AGM) in October 1912 where he supported an unsuccessful attempt to make strike settlements subject to ballots by the membership. His status as an AGM delegate meant that he was involved in the fusion conferences early in 1913 that led to the formation of the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR). Although the ASRS and its successor the NUR was increasingly dominated by the pragmatic Jimmy Thomas, many activists within the union campaigned for a more forceful strategy. In 1916 Marchbank was elected to the NUR Executive for a two-year term; there, his interventions indicated sympathy for a more radical position than the leadership on conscription and wages policy.

Once his executive term had ended his contributions as a delegate to NUR's General Meetings demonstrated that he maintained his critical stance. In July 1920 he moved the rejection of a recent award by the National Wages Board as 'totally inadequate'. He was prepared to consider the option of a national strike and hinted that the previous year's stoppage could have achieved more.

> The industries of the country could not be run without the railwaymen and the railwaymen had never yet been properly tested in a national strike. The last occasion was only a nine day's struggle, and with all due respect to those responsible for sending them back to work, the opinion of many of the workers was that it was they who had taken cold feet because the rank and file in the country would have been determined to continue for another nine days [*Railway Review*, 16 July 1920].

In response Thomas vigorously urged acceptance, a proposition endorsed by delegates by 42 votes to 18. Three months later Marchbank argued strongly that the union should strike in

support of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) during what proved to be a brief coal strike.

This episode proved to be an overture to something more serious. Early in April 1921 the de-control of the coal industry and the posting of extensive wage cuts in several districts precipitated a lockout and a crisis for the NUR. The existence of the Triple Alliance of miners, railway workers and transport workers raised the imminent prospect of sympathetic action in support of the miners. At a Special General Meeting Marchbank moved a resolution calling for a national stoppage; Thomas, keen to avoid any sympathetic stoppage, backed an amendment making any strike conditional on simultaneous action by the Transport Workers' Federation. Delegates were split down the middle. The amendment was lost 31–29; Marchbank's resolution produced a 30–30 tie, whereupon the President, W.J. Abraham, declared it not carried. A subsequent vote returned to the sentiment of the defeated amendment; a resolution was carried by 35 votes to 23 favouring a strike but only as a co-ordinated action by the Triple Alliance. The disunity and the eventual decision provided some flexibility for Thomas committed as he was to the avoidance of any sympathetic action by the NUR. This confused debate illuminates some of the sentiments that would produce within days the debacle of 'Black Friday' with the MFGB left to fight alone and unsuccessfully [For verbatim reports of SGMs and other meetings see bound volume *Coal Crisis* 1921MSS 127/NU GS /3/197 Modern Record Centre]. Marchbank's reputation, as in NUR terms, a figure of the centre-left, in all probability facilitated his election to the union presidency at the 1921 AGM. Unusually, he displaced the incumbent, Abraham, who was eligible for a further year. Abraham had allied with Thomas in the concern to avoid the sympathetic strike and strongly supported the NUR's decision to abandon the miners on 'Black Friday'. His subsequent presidential address to the 1921 AGM proved controversial. Although Abraham's bid for re-election was opposed by four other candidates, Marchbank with 130 branch nominations was the opponent mounting a serious challenge. He won on the third ballot, defeating Abrahams by 43 votes [*Railway Review*, 22 July 1921].

The political and industrial optimism of the immediate post-war period had withered. The miners had suffered a devastating defeat; significant unemployment in staple industries had eroded union power; increasingly the priority was to protect recent gains, not to seek further improvements. For the NUR, the grouping of the companies into the 'Big Four' had come with a rule-governed system of wage bargaining that, for several years, would prove protective of established standards. The union enjoyed a status in the industry that in the pre-war years would have seemed fanciful. On the debit side, depression meant a decline in some major railway traffics; the growing challenge of road transport was becoming evident. This context suggested the merits of a prudential bargaining strategy that would be pursued zealously by the two full-time senior officials, Jimmy Thomas and C.T. Cramp. As President, Marchbank was formally a lay-officer, although ill health had prevented him working since the 1919 strike [*Railway Review*, 1 April 1921]. Immersed in union business he became fully supportive of their pragmatic strategy.

When he addressed delegates at the 1922 AGM the grouping was imminent; Marchbank insisted that effective use of the bargaining machinery necessitated strong organisation especially in the context of depression. Equally, he emphasised the need for political effectiveness. 'All industrial disputes of any magnitude during recent times have eventually found their way to the floor of the House of Commons'. The workers' current problems had been exacerbated by the outcome of the 1918 election—'a state of affairs for which they themselves are largely responsible' [*Railway Review*, 7 July 1922]. A year later his presidential address might proclaim that the capitalist system must be destroyed, but he highlighted the crucial contextual challenges —the Grouping, unemployment and the loss of foreign trade. He noted that as a consequence of the 1922 election, the Labour Party had become the official Opposition, albeit one with little expectation of early office. But a year later, when NUR delegates met in York, a minority Labour Government had survived for almost six months. Marchbank praised its foreign policy

and applauded the 'vision and courage' of the Housing Minister and Glasgow MP John Wheatley. He tacitly acknowledged the limitations of government policy by noting that there was at least improved maintenance for the unemployed.

Much of Marchbank's 1924 address concentrated on industrial policy and the perils of sectionalism. The advent of a Labour Government in January 1924 had coincided with the start of a brief stoppage by the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) against an award by the National Wages Board. NUR footplatemen had worked throughout the stoppage. Marchbank proclaimed the virtues of the formal bargaining system.

> Experience had proved that the machinery of the Central and National Wages Board is sound, and whilst it may not always give us everything we want it has also denied to the railway companies much they wanted. No sensible body of men wants to strike every time a difference arises with their employers and railwaymen are fortunate in having machinery which provides for full and immediate examination in open court of the circumstances surrounding any dispute in which they may be involved.

This exposition was directed not just at ASLEF but also against NUR members, Great Western shopmen and members on London Electric Railways who had struck unofficially. The NUR might be a centralised union, but its constitution was 'as advanced, democratic, and scientific as is possible to reach under present conditions The union's response to unofficial movements must be unyielding'.

> It is therefore a very serious matter when any section of members decide to break away from the constitutional machinery of the union, and by a sectional and improvised organisation necessarily of a primitive and undemocratic character decide to supersede the constitution and embark on an unofficial movement as such action is a direct challenge to the fundamental principles of Trade Unionism; it is reactionary; in fact it would rapidly lead to disintegration, non-unionism and disaster… It is the obvious duty of the Executive Committee and officials to denounce any and every such movement in the strongest possible manner as much in the interests of the misguided men themselves as in the interests of the union as a whole. Under no circumstances could the Union afford to countenance these unofficial movements [*Railway Review*, 11 July 1924].

Marchbank's position in the union on such issues was at one with Thomas and Cramp. His arrival within the NUR establishment was confirmed in August 1925 when he became Assistant General Secretary. With Thomas in the 1924 Labour cabinet, Marchbank substituted for him on the TUC General Council. During his term on the General Council as the NUR representative he became a member of its Special Industrial Committee (SIC). This began as a response to the coal crisis in mid-1925 when the threat of sympathetic action by the transport unions led to the Baldwin Government granting a nine-month subsidy to the coal industry whilst the Samuel Commission investigated its possible reorganisation. The SIC continued in the expectation that the crisis might well re-emerge once the subsidy had ended. Thomas's re-election to the General Council in autumn 1925 meant that Marchbank stepped down, but there was continuity in the NUR position within the SIC's discussions. In October 1920 and April 1921 Marchbank had argued for a strike in support of the miners. Long before the calling of the General Strike in May 1926 he had come to share his senior colleagues' scepticism about the participation of the railwaymen in a general strike.

> Whilst the NUR is ever ready to lend a helping hand to fellow workers in other industries, obviously the question of sympathetic strikes is a proposition which demands most serious consideration, as the nature of railway employment is such that under such a policy we would

> find ourselves involved in every industrial dispute, which would not only be unfair to the general public but even more serious for our organisation [*Railway Review*, 11 July 1924].

Marchbank supported the early termination of the General Strike and worked with Thomas and Cramp through the lengthy and difficult negotiations to reinstate strikers and to protect wages and conditions. As the third man in the NUR hierarchy he could have a credible expectation of becoming the senior official. Thomas's retirement was due in 1934 and that of Cramp two years later. However Thomas's decision to join the National Government in 1931 meant his resignation from the union. Marchbank became very much Cramp's heir apparent. The latter's sudden death in July 1933 was followed by Marchbank's decisive election as General Secretary. W.C. Loeber was the principal challenger from the left.

Election of NUR General Secretary 1933

| | |
|---|---|
| J. Marchbank | 82,283 |
| W.J. Watson | 32,058 |
| W.C. Loeber | 7025 |
| B. Dupree | 3155 |

His inheritance was bleak. The union's membership had fallen by 125,000 since 1925, a consequence of the demoralisation following the General Strike and of economic depression. The union had successfully defended wage standards until 1928 when negotiations produced an agreed all-round reduction of 2.5%. The restoration of this cut in May 1930 proved brief: the financial position of the railway companies was deteriorating rapidly. In March 1931 the National Wages Board (NWB) found in favour of an average reduction of rather less than 4%. All employees would face a reimposition of the 2.5% reduction; in addition all grades whose basic rate exceeded £2 a week would face a further 2.5% cut.

Marchbank had led for the union in the March 1931 hearings; he did so once again in Autumn 1932, when, faced with further falls in traffic, the companies proposed the replacement of the 1931 settlement with a general reduction of 10%. The outcome was a shambles. The NWB produced six divergent reports from amongst its 17 members. The companies endorsed the chairman's finding that there should be a further general reduction of just over 4%. When this option was rejected by the railway unions, the companies, wary of industrial conflict in a context of declining business, were unwilling to risk a strike. Instead they gave the stipulated twelve months' notice to terminate the negotiating machinery. Agreement on a replacement was reached slowly; only early in 1935 was a new system in place, with a Railway Staff National Tribunal of three independent assessors as its ultimate authority.

During the interim period the NUR enjoyed some success in restoring basic wage rates. When a Special General Meeting (SGM) met in August 1934 Marchbank's assessment was sombre. The cost of restoring all wage cuts would be £4 m, yet the companies claimed that their net revenue remained significantly less than when the first cuts had been enacted in 1928. He insisted that he was willing to fight if 'what they were going to fight for was there to be got' but the companies' returns were not such as they could be 'over-jubilant to fight on'. He backed a resolution instructing the union executive to meet the General Managers in an attempt to secure the best possible outcome for the lower-paid grades—adults whose rate was 50s or less. Despite his commendation this cautious strategy was rejected by 52 votes to 25. Instead, the Executive was instructed to try for the complete restoration of all cuts; if they were unsuccessful, there should be an 'ultimatum'—a strike in conjunction with the other railway unions within one month. Marchbank was openly sceptical about the policy. He insisted that the members were not 'boiling with enthusiasm to take to the streets'.

The companies responded rapidly. They agreed to the restoration of the second 2.5% cut in two phases, half to take effect on 1 October 1934 and half on New Year's Day 1935. The initial

2.5% reduction first agreed in 1928 would remain as would the reduced rates for overtime, nights and Sundays. When the SGM reconvened, Marchbank repeated his scepticism about strike action; the Railway Clerks' Association had already rejected this option. After an amendment favouring a further attempt to achieve complete restoration of the cuts for the low-paid had been defeated, the offer was accepted by 45 votes to 33. The settlement led to *The Times* praising the railway unions' 'considerable moderation', implying that a more ambitious strategy might have secured a better settlement for the unions. Such a sentiment would be heightened with mounting evidence that 1934 had proved to be a relatively good year for the companies. However, the finalisation of the new negotiation procedures and the perennial problem of dovetailing strategy with the priorities of the other railway unions meant that the pursuit of further improvements was delayed.

Meaningful discussions with the companies only began in January 1936. Marchbank based a pragmatic strategy on the continuing evidence of improvement in the companies' position. 'Economic recovery… provides the foundation upon which we build our hopes of restoring the wage position. We recognise that the problem of recovery will be retarded and even reversed by large-scale industrial conflicts.at the present time' [*Railway Review*, 24 January 1936]. NUR negotiators provisionally accepted an offer that half the remaining 2.5% cut be restored from 1 June 1936. A SGM on 12 May expressed the dilemma facing NUR delegates. The offer was rejected by 57–23, but the strike option was ruled out by 46–33. Instead, by a vote of 49–31, an amendment was passed for more talks with the companies. These discussions proved abortive. All claims from the railway unions were submitted to the Railway Staff National Tribunal (RSNT).

Its first meeting convened in mid-July. Marchbank 'spoke slowly and carefully from prepared notes' [*Railway Gazette*, 17 July 1936]. The essence of his case was that the remaining wage cuts had been implemented as a temporary measure and that any necessity for them had passed. The companies' response was to assert that net revenue in 1935 remained £4.75 million below the level of 1930 when the cut had been re-imposed and £7.5 million below that of 1928 when it had been first introduced. Any bargaining strategy by the NUR that connected wage rates to fluctuations in net revenue was clearly vulnerable. The tribunal decided that in keeping with the provisional settlement reached in March the wage cut should be halved to 1.25% along with some improvements in overtime payments. The union's SGM accepted this outcome by 53–26; there was little enthusiasm for a strike over such a small percentage.

Subsequent NUR policy concentrated on the restoration of the residual cuts and the establishment of a 50 shilling minimum. Marchbank presented the union's case to the RSNT on 20 July 1937. In advocating the 50 shilling minimum he made use of Seebohm Rowntree's *The Human Needs of Labour* and cited household budgets for the families of low-paid railway workers. The response of the companies' advocate Kenelm Kerr combined condescension and ignorance of working-class life: 'Difficulties of inadequate nutrition did not arise primarily from lack of means' but from 'unwise choice in marketing and insufficient skill in cooking'. The tribunal restored the final 1.25% deduction and standard overtime rates. The 50s minimum was rejected but all those with base rates under 45s were given a 1s rise and those on 45s got an extra 6d. An SGM endorsed the settlement decisively [*Railway Gazette*, 23, 30 July 1937; NUR Reports 1937].

The problem of company profitability reappeared when revenue declined sharply in 1938. Marchbank once again went to the RSNT to argue for the 50 shilling minimum; the company response was simply to highlight their financial problems. Marchbank's advocacy left the tribunal unmoved; the 50 shilling minimum was rejected. Once again the subsequent SGM whilst rejecting the award had no faith in the strike option. However company results showed a second improvement in the second quarter of 1939. Freight revenues grew as the rearmament programme made its impact. At the end of July the companies offered a 45 shilling minimum; in response an SGM rejected strike action but insisted on pressing the 50 shilling claim.

On 27 August Marchbank informed a reconvened SGM that the companies had not improved their offer. A sizeable minority of delegates, 32, backed a strike; but optimism about the credibility of their case led to its submission to the RSNT. War then intervened. The RSNT on 18 October granted the 50 shillings to London railway workers; for counterparts in industrial and rural areas the minima were 48 shillings and 47 shillings respectively. Thereafter, the NUR gained an additional 16s by the time Marchbank retired in January 1943 [*NUR Reports* 1939–42].

Under Marchbank's leadership the wage cuts implemented during the depression had been gradually restored, but in September 1939 wage rates, except for the lowest grades, were exactly as they had been before the reductions of March 1931. In real terms, railway workers were poorer; the cost of living index had risen by 9%. Economic depression and road competition meant cost cutting; opportunities for promotion diminished. The ability of management at local level to divide and rule was enhanced. Whether a more assertive strategy by the NUR leadership would have been more effective is contestable. Union membership revived only slowly, there seemed little enthusiasm for strike action. A labour-intensive industry faced continuing problems; investment was limited. Headline-grabbing innovations were far outweighed by increasingly obsolescent equipment. Whatever the level of wages, by the standards of the thirties railway employment remained secure.

Alongside the caution of many members, a growing section believed that a more assertive strategy was credible. This sentiment was perhaps reflected in the increasing visibility of the left within the union's institutions. From the mid-thirties General Meeting delegates included a significant left minority advocating a more militant industrial policy and often sympathetic to political positions such as Communist Party affiliation to the Labour Party and the United and Popular Fronts.

Marchbank and his allies could handle the General Meeting; a clear majority of delegates typically supported their leadership. The Executive posed more of a problem. In the high noon of Thomas and Cramp, left representation on the Executive had been minimal. In contrast, by March 1936 five Executive members backed Communist Party affiliation to the Labour Party. The following year this group was strengthened by W.C. Loeber, a member of the CPGB who had contested the 1933 election for General Secretary. The union presidency in the late thirties was held by W.T. Griffiths, a locomotive man from Newport and a close ally of Marchbank. In December 1938 he fell from a train near Swindon whilst returning to south Wales after union business. Delegates to the previous AGM were balloted on a successor. They narrowly chose the left candidate John Potts, a painter from the Dukinfield carriage works of the London and North Eastern, over Frederick Burrows the standard-bearer for the right. The left was beginning also to make inroads into the union's paid officials. Marchbank acquired a reliable ally in 1935 when John Benstead, a Peterborough moderate, became an organiser. Four years later he would become Assistant General Secretary. In contrast, Jim Figgins, a colourful and controversial left-winger, was elected as an organiser in 1938; Jimmy Campbell less colourfully on the left also secured a full-time post. Such shifts reflected the complex industrial politics of the thirties; union elections might be characterised by very low participation and in the case of the NUR complicated electoral procedures. But outcomes mattered. The emergence of these three contrasting personalities brought the next three general secretaries into full-time positions.

Within these changes Marchbank's politics remained unyielding. From 1934 he sat on the General Council, one of a group of trade union leaders whose political priorities had been shaped by the disaster of 1931. Significant Labour politicians and the unions had become distant from one another. The consequence had been the disintegration of the Labour Government. The unions sought a more respected and effective role within the party whilst endorsing an established demarcation between industrial and political questions. Late in 1936 he welcomed the revival of the Trade Union Group of Labour MPs.

> It seems to me quite a necessary step having regard to the fact that only three trade unionists were elected to the Executive of the Parliamentary Party at the beginning of the session. The remainder of the Committee are men of high ability, but it cannot be said that they have much industrial experience or direct contact with the trade unions and one or two of them have only a brief Parliamentary experience [*Railway Review*, 27 November 1936].

At critical moments trade unionists intervened publicly to ensure that the party was rescued from what they considered a disastrous course. A dramatic example came with the 1935 party conference debate at Brighton. The critical issue was whether to support League of Nations sanctions, including force if necessary, against Italy should they invade Abyssinia. The debate destroyed George Lansbury's leadership of the party. His pacifist views were demonstrably at odds with those of the majority. Hugh Dalton a leading opponent of Lansbury recalled how 'the heavy guns of the General Council… thundered in our support'. Ernest Bevin's bitter attack on Lansbury remains the dominant image of this onslaught, but Marchbank's contribution was also significant. He attacked Lansbury for inconsistency on sanctions, an inevitable consequence of the latter's attempts to reconcile party and personal positions [Dalton (1957) 69].

Marchbank's targets at Brighton also included Sir Stafford Cripps, a leading figure in the left-wing Socialist League, a rich lawyer who in the aftermath of 1931 had moved sharply to the left. Marchbank insisted that Cripps's contribution to the sanctions debate, whilst an eloquent critique of capitalism and imperialism, paid little attention to the current state of international relations. This criticism highlighted another legacy of 1931; trade union leaders' dismissal of those they dismissed as unreliable intellectuals. One target was the Independent Labour Party (ILP) both before and after its disaffiliation from the Labour Party in July 1932. Marchbank attacked the ILP two years after its disaffiliation, its membership declining and its election candidates struggling for support. It was 'a ghost with empty pockets grinning at the side of Keir Hardie's grave' [*Railway Review*, 4 May 1934]. Another anathema was Sir Oswald Mosley, suggested by some in the twenties as a future Labour leader but subsequently founder and leader of the British Union of Fascists (BUF). On 15 July 1934, speaking in Newcastle upon Tyne, Marchbank attacked the BUF for issuing secret instructions to members serving in the forces, compiling blacklists on political rivals and training in the use of arms. Mosley characteristically took legal action; the case was held in February 1936. Mosley was awarded one farthing damages. The Judge commented that Marchbank's statements were so near the truth as to be 'fair comment' [Hope (2000)].

Dislike of critical intellectuals and opposition within the NUR came together in Marchbank's consistent and thorough condemnation of communists and their policies. His antagonism to communist activity within the union continued the line that had been taken by C.T. Cramp. At the 1935 AGM he proclaimed that 'as a union we have not yielded an inch to Communist intimidation or Communist cajolery'. He attacked 'people using their position as members of the union not simply to propagate particular ideas but to disrupt and to destroy the Trade Union Movement' [*Railway Review*, 12 July 1935]. By 1937 with the communist shift from advocacy of a United Front to a much broader Popular Front the targets had widened:

> Why should we weaken party policy to accommodate Liberals like the "News Chronicle" group who haven't the courage to avow themselves Socialists? How will our socialist efforts be strengthened by alliance with the alleged Tory-Democrats of the Boothby-Macmillan type? In what way will party loyalty and effective party action be reinforced by collaboration with members of the Communist Party, the Socialist League and the ILP who have never ceased their efforts to discredit and injure the Trade Unions and the Labour Party? [*Railway Review*, 22 January 1937].

The claim that the only way forward was through a partnership of the Labour Party and the trade unions and that everything else was divisive and counter-productive had to face the fact that Labour's political recovery after 1931 had been slow and uncertain. Moreover, Labour faced for the first time a united opponent whose electoral dominance had been reconfirmed in the 1935 election. Subsequent by-election results were often discouraging. Marchbank perhaps felt that Attlee's leadership lacked vigour. 'The movement is fractious, peevish and distracted because it is not concentrated by firm leadership on its immediate task' [*Railway Review*, 8 January 1937]. The electors were 'dull and apathetic'. He felt that the party needed an effective 'Short Programme'. Labour's response was *Labour's Immediate Programme.* Yet by mid-summer 1937 Marchbank was acknowledging only that the party's campaign in the country was having limited impact. The 'stagnation and defeatism' in the political movement was 'inexplicable'. 'Instead of losing ground and losing seats through the apathy of their own supporters, they should be making converts by the thousands' [*Railway Review*, 9 July 1937].

This campaign took place under Hugh Dalton's party chairmanship. He was normally an ally of the trade union loyalists, but he responded to party activists' demands for constitutional reform with proposals that aroused the opposition of Marchbank and some other trade union leaders. A proposed reform of the National Executive Committee (NEC) would increase the number of Divisional Labour Party (DLP) representatives from five to seven; the electorate for these places would be limited to DLP members. This would be a departure from the situation as it had been since the constitutional changes of 1918 whereby all NEC seats were voted on by the entire conference in which trade union votes were preponderant. Marchbank thoroughly opposed the proposals with the backing of his union. 'They could not consent as a union to any changes which would lessen the influence of the union on all public questions'. When the party conference debated the proposals in October 1937, the unions divided. Marchbank and Charles Dukes of the General and Municipal Workers were implacably opposed along with the Engineers. Dalton claimed that the MFGB favoured the reforms as did the Distributive Workers and the Railway Clerks. Ernest Bevin, with the large Transport Workers' vote, seemed undecided. Dalton and he bargained over lunch; their compromise facilitated the passage of the key changes. Perhaps Bevin appreciated that the changes did not materially affect trade union influence within the party and could be a politically worthwhile concession. Perhaps Marchbank's inflexibility indicated his conservatism about political institutions. A few months earlier he had reacted to the Abdication crisis with a panegyric 'Truly the British Constitution is a marvellous invention and the British people stand pre-eminent in the practice of democratic government' [*Railway Review*, 18 December 1936]. Previously he had responded to the death of George V with a eulogy on the merits of monarchy:

> Republican sentiment was not so long ago a powerful influence in the Labour Movement. Republicanism is historically a Radical tradition. It seems more than a little old-fashioned to-day largely because in the last two reigns it has been demonstrated that constitutional monarchy and free citizenship are not antagonistic to each another. Within the past few years moreover we have seen how easily Republics can be transformed into dictatorships and Dictatorship degenerate into a ruthless tyranny under which the organisation of democracy can be destroyed. Kingship can be in fact, as it has been during the reign of the late King, a bulwark of parliamentary democracy [*Railway Review*, 31 January 1936].

Marchbank's criticism of the National Government's foreign policy became more and more thorough. His initial response to the hostilities in Spain was to endorse the TUC policy of non-intervention, but within weeks he had reacted to the evidence of Italian and German support for the rebels by acknowledging that the policy had collapsed. The Spanish tragedy and the Chamberlain Government's pursuit of understandings with Mussolini and Hitler made his criticism of its political position more and more vehement. By February 1938 he was praising Anthony Eden on his resignation as Foreign Secretary. 'The policy he has tried to follow is

certainly more in line with Labour's foreign policy than the one Mr Chamberlain and his pro-Fascist friends have decided to pursue' [*Railway Review*, 25 February 1938]. Within weeks the *Anschluss* had strengthened his indictment. He focussed on those 'loosely called' the Astor set. 'We all know that British foreign policy since Chamberlain became Prime Minister has been guided by the small pro-Fascist, pro-German, anti-Labour group with whom he spends his weekends and holidays' [*Railway Review*, 22 April 1938].

The Munich agreement was for Marchbank 'this great moral and political catastrophe'. He expressed concern about the consequential prospect of an agreement between Germany, Italy, France, and Britain. This scenario would be based 'on the plausible plea that it will lead to appeasement and reconciliation, but with the realistic intention of strengthening the barriers which capitalist imperialism has striven to erect against the growth of democratic sentiment and the spread of socialism' [*Railway Review*, 7 October 1938].

One left response to Munich was to insist on the need for an anti-Chamberlain electoral alliance that could extend to Liberals and anti-Chamberlain Conservatives. When a first attempt at the strategy at the Oxford by-election ended in defeat for the Progressive candidate, A.D. Lindsay, Marchbank suggested the irrelevance of the strategy; a few weeks later Vernon Bartlett won Bridgewater on the anti-Chamberlain ticket. Marchbank acknowledged the personal achievement but claimed that its wider political significance had been exaggerated [*Railway Review*, 4 November and 2 December 1938]. Above all Marchbank's ire was reserved for Cripps and his supporters who urged this policy within the Labour Party. He dismissed Cripps as 'defeatist' offering 'pure unadulterated Lib-Labism'. Marchbank emphasised the imperative of not compromising Labour's independence. He cited the Taff Vale and Osborne judgments, both central to his union's history as 'blows struck at the growing power of the organised workers'. The trauma of 1931 remained central to Marchbank's indictment. He referred to the 'subtle and insidious efforts… to detach the unions from the Labour Party'. Cripps and his cronies were effectively aiding Labour's opponents.

> The entire post-war struggle of the Labour Party… from the General Election of 1918 to the General Election of 1935 has been a struggle against the coalition of vested interests formed to keep Labour out of office… my own personal conviction is that the entire post-war reaction which has reached its culmination in the domination of Europe by the murderous tyrannies of Fascist and Nazi dictatorship was deliberately engineered for the same object. The totalitarian regimes were founded, and are being maintained by Labour's class enemies. The foreign policy of the Chamberlain Government is as plainly directed towards the maintenance of the Fascist and Nazi system as its domestic policy is towards discrediting and destroying the political organisation of the working class [*Railway Review*, 27 January 1939].

Cripps's campaign, decisively rejected by the Labour Party's National Executive, led only to his own and some prominent allies' expulsion from the party. For Marchbank such failure was predictable. 'The granite core of the Labour Party is constituted by the Trade Unions and not by the friable elements of middle-class opinion which have adhered to the party' [*Railway Review*, 17 February 1939]. Yet Marchbank's insistence that the Labour Party acting independently was the only credible alternative to the Chamberlain Government remained in mid-1939 an expression of optimism in the face of the electoral evidence.

The deteriorating international situation and the growing influence of the left on the NUR Executive posed problems for Marchbank within his own union. In May 1939 the Executive responded critically not just to the Chamberlain Government's proposals on military conscription but also to the TUC response. The NUR had been notably critical of the conscription campaign in 1915–16; there would be powerful reasons why railway workers would be sensitive to any move that hinted at militarisation. The NUR Executive response argued that opposition to Chamberlain's proposal should include the possibility of a general strike. At a special

conference of Trade Union Executives the NUR found itself in unfamiliar company with a minority of left-inclined and pacifistic unions. Appropriately, the union's case was presented not by Marchbank but by the left-wing President, John Potts [*NUR Reports* 1939].

The 1939 AGM demonstrated that Marchbank and his allies retained the backing of a majority of delegates. Resolutions for Communist Party affiliation to the Labour Party and backing the Popular Front were rejected decisively. In contrast, Marchbank encountered continuing difficulties with the Executive. In March 1940 they distanced themselves from any criticism of the Soviet invasion of Finland; they subsequently supported D.N. Pritt, a pro-Soviet lawyer, Labour MP and NEC member expelled from the party for his defence of Soviet intervention. In early 1940 with the Communist Party formally opposed to the war, such positions were seen as deeply at odds with the Labour Party mainstream. When the Labour Party conference met in May 1940 in the context of the party's entry into a Coalition Government and the German invasion of the Low Countries, the NUR stood out as a dissenter on issues that were both politically sensitive and increasingly anachronistic. The union's delegation was deeply divided over the desirability of underwriting executive positions arrived at in very different circumstances. Potts the union's nominee for the Labour Party NEC was unsuccessful. It seemed far removed from Marchbank's objective of a tightly controlled loyalist union. Subsequently, the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 reduced factional differences within the union, but the earlier controversies had illuminated the political shifts under Marchbank's leadership.

Marchbank retired from the NUR in January 1943. He was the first General Secretary of either the NUR or the ASRS to serve until his retirement date. He was subsequently appointed a director of the British Airways Corporation; he died on 23 March 1946 leaving effects valued at £6073 15s 11d.

His route to the NUR leadership was as a critic of official caution. Subsequently, as a colleague of Thomas and Cramp he endorsed their pragmatism and hostility towards the left. These sentiments shaped his strategy as General Secretary. Industrially, he sought the restoration of wage cuts within an industry facing long-term economic difficulties. Politically, he was committed to the dominant trade union response to the 1931 political crisis: a solid and effective Labour Party must be built around loyalist trade unions. By 1939 his industrial and political strategies had produced only limited advances. He faced increasing but as yet minority criticism within the NUR. The war would transform prospects for both his union and his party.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MS**: National Union of Railwaymen Reports and subject files, University of Warwick, Modern Records Centre, MSS 127. (**2**) **Newspapers Reports and Periodicals**: *The Times*; *Railway Review*; *Railway Gazette*; *Trades Union Congress Reports; Labour Party Conference Reports*. (**3**) **Books and Articles**: Hugh Dalton *The Fateful Years 1931–1945* (1957); Phillip Bagwell *The Railwaymen: The History of the National Union of Railwaymen* (1963); Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge 1977); *Hugh Dalton* (1985); *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton 1918–40; 1945–60* (1987); David Howell, *Respectable Radicals: Studies in the Politics of Railway Trade Unionism* (Aldershot, 1999); John Hope, 'Blackshirts, Knuckledusters and Lawyers: A Documentary Essay on the Mosley versus Marchbank Papers', *Labour History Review* (2000).

DAVID HOWELL

*See also*: †Richard BELL; †John BROMLEY; Concemore Thomas Thwaites CRAMP; James FIGGINS; †Edward HARFORD; †Walter HUDSON; †Walter Victor OSBORNE; †George James WARDLE

**MARKLEW, Ernest** (1874–1939)
LABOUR MP AND SPIRITUALIST

Ernest Marklew was born in Tipton on 16 April 1874 the second of what would become a family of five. His father, William, was a puddler, Methodist preacher and also a prominent spiritualist. By 1881 William and Esther Marklew and their growing family had moved to Ironville near Alfreton in Derbyshire; subsequently they would move to Greasborough in South Yorkshire. These moves reflected William Marklew's employment. Ernest would leave school at the earliest possible time to contribute to the family income. On leaving school Marklew worked in a variety of agricultural and industrial occupations. At the age of ten he was employed as a half-timer on a local farm. Four years later he was employed in a steel rolling mill in the Parkgate area of Rotherham working twelve-hour shifts. It was here where he served his political apprenticeship as both a trade unionist and a socialist and gained a reputation as a forceful speaker and debater. As a typical socialist autodidact Marklew read widely in 'free libraries' and absorbed the growing critiques of capitalism and society that were a feature of industrial communities in late-Victorian Britain. He quickly gained a reputation as an organiser, propagandist, and effective platform speaker for the Social Democratic Federation (SDF). In his teenage years Marklew had been equally attracted to socialism, marxism, spiritualism, 'faith healing', and the esoteric. His conversion to spiritualism occurred when he attended the Parkgate Spiritualist Church as a sceptic. His father also became convinced of spiritualist claims and embraced its beliefs and ethos. Marklew's political and spiritual beliefs became the causes to which he would commit himself both in his personal life and in his political interventions in the House of Commons.

In 1895 Marklew moved to Manchester and four years later was married in a spiritualist ceremony in Blackburn, with the relationship producing one child, Leonard. In this period he gained popularity as a socialist platform speaker and was acquainted with other leading labour movement figures including Keir Hardie and Tom Mann. Marklew was one of the 'Manchester School of Socialists' who became recognisable figures in meetings and on platforms across Lancashire. He worked as a confectioner, tobacconist, and travelling salesman. In 1902 Marklew moved to Preston as resident lecturer of the Preston Spiritualist Society. Yet these were financially precarious times and he filed for bankruptcy because of the failure of his confectionery business in Sheffield in the previous year [*Preston Herald*, 7 June 1902]. In Preston he edited his own publication *The Medium*. This was a monthly journal devoted to spiritual development, occult research and human progress 'conducted by Ernest Marklew'. He was editor, contributor and the main driving force behind its aims, politics, and distribution. His portrait appeared on the front page of each issue. *The Medium* was published for only four years but it enhanced Marklew's reputation as a spiritualist socialist with a national profile. Each issue contained an editorial and a feature by Marklew accompanied by a page dedicated to women, a letters section, and a page for book reviews and the reproduction of debates, lectures, and talks. Through the pages of *The Medium*, Marklew's politics, philosophy, and beliefs are clearly stated. As an advocate of spiritualism, socialism, meditation, faith healing, and the esoteric his beliefs and political activism illustrate the richness and diversity of working-class radicalism in Edwardian Lancashire. To Marklew, 'meditation was the magic staff of the mystics' and he 'knew of no better means to purge the human soul of its dirty pride than to take it out in the evening, when the spirit of hushed restfulness broods over the face of the earth' [*The Medium*, vol. 1, no. 1 June 1904]. His musings on life, love, death, religion and the esoteric, *The Devil's Dialogues with Aiman*, was published in 1904 and serialised in *The Medium* between 1904 and 1906.

As editor of *The Medium*, Marklew used his position to address questions posed to him by readers on subjects such as 'animals in the spirit world', the role of women in society, and the part that spiritualists should play in the struggle for social reform. On animals he felt that just because 'we are annoyed by vermin and parasites here, it does not follow that we shall be annoyed by them in the spirit world'. To Marklew, man and animals would live in tranquil harmony on the other side. He rejoiced in the fact 'in the land where there is no night or death

we shall share the companionship of the birds and the beasts whose affection and remembrance is in some cases stronger than that of some men' [*The Medium*, vol. 6, no. 1 and vol. 7, no. 1 November–December 1904]. Marklew also argued that spiritualism could offer a foundation for a new kind of society that complemented his broader socialist vision of the future. To him, the 'moral teachings of Spiritualism constituted a powerful lever which would enable man to effect the much-desired reformation of society as a basis of justice and righteousness… to realise goodness and truth' [*The Medium*, vol. 2, no. 3 March 1905]. At a meeting of Lancashire mediums in Oldham he extolled the virtues of practical action to remedy social ills and urged spiritualists to 'interest themselves in the problems of life' [*The Medium*, vol. 2, no. 3 March 1905]. For Marklew, the workers needed justice not the charitable donations bestowed on them by social elites and politicians. He became a regular speaker in Preston Market Square where he would speak from his truck on the principles of socialism and spiritualism.

In the years between 1903 and 1906 Marklew was a prominent fixture in northern towns such as Preston, Burnley, and Colne, proselytising for the twin causes of socialism and spiritualism in public meetings and outdoor demonstrations. One writer in the spiritualist press offered the following description: 'medium height, slight in build, but alert looking… in his early prime… finely chiselled and refined features… dark wavy hair… the index of a personality which has made a deep and enduring mark as a socialist speaker' [*The* Medium, vol. 4, no. 5, 1907]. In 1904, Marklew had presided over the first spiritualist wedding in Preston. The Preston Spiritualist Society was particularly active and took its campaign on to the streets, attracting large crowds containing both supportive and hostile elements. In August 1904 Marklew addressed a gathering of over 800 people on Ripon Street, but was prevented from finishing his speech. A description of events was reported in the local newspaper and the spiritualist press:

> Christians helped to break up the meeting by starting an impromptu 'Sacred Concert', lustily bawling selections from 'Sankey' and 'Hymns, Ancient and Modern' … Marklew closed his meeting amid scenes of wild disorder. He was escorted for nearly a mile to the Weavers' Hall. The howling of the mob roused the neighbourhood. An assault was made on the doors and windows. It required six policemen and a sergeant to disperse the mob. The police and Marklew were made the targets for various missiles of stone and steel [*The Medium*, vol. 1, no. 3 August 1904].

Preston proved to be a lively location for attacks on Marklew and his spiritualist comrades: on occasion, children from local Sunday Schools would pelt them with eggs and rotten fish. In this period, Marklew also began his long struggle for the repeal of the Witchcraft and Vagrancy Acts that were still used to prosecute mediums. This would become the central aim of the Spirtualists' National Union (SNU) through to the end of the Second World War. Arrests and prosecutions were used to deter the charlatans and rogues that could be found on the promenades of northern working-class resorts such as Blackpool, but also to diminish the popularity of mediums who were developing a national profile as 'genuine' examples of gifted individuals who transmitted spirit messages. Marklew played his own part in exposing charlatanry through his attendance at séances and exposing fraudulent practice in the pages of *The Medium*. In 1905 he exposed David Duguid at a séance in Manchester for fabricating an example of 'spirit trance painting', and a few months later he published an attack on the claims made by the medium Charles Eldred and his alleged skills of 'spirit manifestation'. Marklew had been initially ambivalent: 'I was a little disappointed… that no relative or friend of mine materialised… I should have liked to touch one of the forms myself', but at a later séance 'he had detected fraud' [*The Medium*, vol. 2, no. 10, 1905 and vol. 3, no. 3, 1906].

In January 1906 Marklew moved to Burnley as resident lecturer for Burnley Spiritualist Society, residing at 153 Rectory Road. A reception was held to welcome Marklew to the town at which he performed 'character impersonations' from Dickens' *Oliver Twist* [*The Medium*, vol. 3,

no. 2 February 1906]. A typical Spiritualist meeting would begin with Marklew opening the service with a prayer and hymn. He divided his time between advocacy for spiritualism and socialist activism for the SDF. According to Barrow, the SDF in Burnley was 'reformist', 'unsectarian' and more like the Independent Labour Party (ILP) [Barrow (1986) 120]. Marklew spoke regularly on both ILP and SDF platforms. Yet he remained critical of the timidity of the Labour Party and in particular the MPs who were proving to be more conservative than the voters had hoped. To Marklew, 'Shackleton was a Liberal, and so were Will Crooks and Arthur Henderson' [*Lancashire Evening* Post, 23 March 1906]. He was effective in fusing spiritualism and socialism in presenting a moral and political crusade that embraced the economic, the material, and the metaphysical. A fairly typical example of his political rhetoric often appeared in the pages of the local press and through his own spiritualist publishing house:

> This is age marked by the world-wide struggle of the great mases of men to free themselves from the dilettantism of a degenerate aristocracy… The Church has been found out. The Church has persisted in the fatal policy of directing men's attention towards heaven, and while they gazed towards the future life and yearned for its anticipated joys, cunning rascals robbed them of the joys of this life [*The Medium*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1906].

Marklew was elected to the national executive of the SDF and the national council of the SNU. He was now a regular speaker at both socialist and spiritualist events in the working-class towns and villages of north-east Lancashire and the Pennines. He campaigned with fellow socialist Jack Jones on a range of issues such as child labour in factories, poverty, unemployment, and the inequities of the capitalist system. Johnston and Hall, two of Marklew's religious opponents from Preston, continued to harangue him from the audience when he gave speeches in Burnley. They also organised counter-meetings in the market place to defend Christians against 'the infidelity of the spiritualists'. Members of the SDF responded with renditions of the Red Flag [*The Medium*, vol. 3, no. 8 August 1906]. Marklew's ability to organise both spiritualists and socialists in campaigns for social reform enhanced his reputation as an established political figure across Lancashire. He also used his Medium Press publishing company to produce pamphlets on a range of social issues. One example was the *Saviours of Men*, a text that presents a critical reading of Christianity and argument for spiritualist belief and practice.

> If there is any one thing which more than another is essential to the enjoyment of life, it is liberty. Those noble souls who by any method have helped to extend the blessings of freedom have earned the title "Saviours of Men". I am sorry to say I cannot include Jesus Christ in the list of such saviours [Marklew (n.d.) 5].

In May 1906 Marklew was arrested in Nelson and sentenced to fourteen days in prison for his advocacy of 'free speech' and causing an obstruction. This was part of an SDF campaign to hold open-air meetings in the town without police harassment. He claimed that 'the police had made great preparations to break-up the meeting on the pretended ground that we were causing an obstruction' but he was 'arrested for emphasising the injustice of treating one class of people differently to another class' and 'attempting to propagate socialism' [*The Medium*, vol. 3, no. 6 June 1906]. Marklew recounted his subsequent experiences of prison to readers of *The Medium* and noted the humiliation and weight loss he suffered as a result of his incarceration. However, his suffering was mediated by the spirit world and the 'tedium of confinement' and the 'material things' were no barrier to 'the coming and going of angels' and 'ministering spirits' who were with him in prison [*The Medium*, vol. 3, no. 10 October 1906].

By the summer of 1906, Marklew was facing financial difficulties and had to put out a public call for funds to ensure the future of his spiritualist publishing company and of *The Medium*. Readers gave donations and the publication was able to continue for a further year. During a speech in Rotherham he again called for a fusion of the spiritualist and socialist causes: 'we wish to see poverty banished. As spiritualists we are fully conscious of the fact that before the evil can

be eliminated we must eradicate the cause … I have long been convinced that socialism is not only desirable but inevitable' [*The Medium*, vol. 3, no. 8 August 1906]. At the SNU conference in Blackpool the following year he argued that the organisation 'as at present constituted and managed – or mismanaged – is of no good at all to the spiritualist movement' [*The Medium*, vol. 4, no. 6 July 1907]. He remained critical of the reluctance of spiritualist churches and the national organisations such as the SNU to become more involved in political causes. In the *Saviours of Men*, he argued that the 'vitality of religion depends on the good it accomplishes. Science furnishes true religion with powerful means to this end. That powerful means is organised knowledge, and, as Spiritualists we are more than content to accept that as the basis of our religion, and the instrument of the reforms we hope to accomplish' [Marklew (n.d.) 9].

In 1907 Marklew published *The Sacrament of Sex* which 'discussed sexuality mystically not physically' [Barrow (1986) 121]. His analysis of women and equality extended his views on the issue articulated in the spiritualist press and the wider movement where 'our sisters have not had to fight with us for recognition of their rights' [*The Medium*, vol. 4, no. 4 April 1907]. To Marklew, women were the 'repository of all the redemptive graces of humanity, the incarnation of the highest qualities both of the heart and the head' [Marklew (1907) 5]. For Marklew that fact that 'women were slaves' meant that 'men could not be free' [Marklew (1907) 185]. This fitted with his support for 'Votes for Women' and the aims and objectives of the broader movement for emancipation. He expresses throughout *The Sacrament of Sex* that 'love is the foundation of all things'. He critiques the scientific analysis of sex as being wholly materialistic and that it is something that is purely attributable to the soul. Yet he does not align himself with the cause of 'free love' which he sees as a 'fatal form of folly combined with wickedness' [Marklew (1907) preface]. The book is presented as an educational aid to understanding the basis of sexual desire and function. It provides a counterweight to materialist conceptions of sex and the ignorance that governed popular attitudes. For him, ignorance was the cause of 'lust… perversions, inversions, pederastic and masturbative pollutions' [Marklew (1907) 32]. He calls for legislative changes to deal with prostitution and the 'unnatural alliances between old vampires and their young victims' [Marklew (1907) 123]. Sexual love could however be 'not only procreative, but recreative, generative and regenerative'. Sexual intercourse was 'the bi-sexing of those that take part' [Marklew (1907) 60 and 72]. He envisages a future when women 'will be affiliated with no false shame when she grows conscious of awakened desire' [Marklew (1907) 192]. *The Sacrament of Sex* was no feminist classic, but it was nonetheless a reflective and heartfelt intervention into the nature of love and the patriarchal nature of Edwardian perceptions of women's sexuality. To Marklew, 'marriage could never be holy until women and men were freed from their economic bondage' [*Leeds Mercury*, 2 December 1907]. However, Marklew's own love life and marriage proved to be more complex and fraught than his writings on the matter suggested. In April 1913 he petitioned for divorce against his wife Elizabeth accusing her of adultery with two men. She denied the accusations and countered Marklew's claims by stating that he had also committed adultery from 1905 with the daughter of a Preston JP, but she was persuaded to stand by him to protect the reputation of the Preston Spiritualist Society. Each party gave details of incriminating letters and witness statements purporting to be proof of adultery and violence. Marklew was also accused of misconduct, cruelty, desertion, and threating his wife with a poker and a revolver. The case was settled in Marklew's favour and he was awarded a decree nisi [for details of the case see *Leeds Mercury*, 18 April 1913 and *Preston Herald*, 19 April 1913].

Marklew continued to attend séances such as those conducted by Thomas Potts, a Northumbrian coal miner, and retained his 'unsparing scorn for the craven-hearted incarnations of selfishness, who know the truth of spiritualism, but are silent for prudential reasons' [*The Medium*, vol. 2, no. 1 January 1905]. He was prominent in Victor Grayson's campaign in seeking election as an independent socialist Member of Parliament in 1907, where according to the local press he acted as his 'lieutenant' [*Colne Valley Guardian*, 16 June 1939]. Marklew and Grayson were close allies in socialist agitation across northern England. He later recalled that he often

shared a room with Grayson and that once he had to stay in bed all day while his breeches were repaired [*Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph*, 15 June 1939]. At public meetings organised by the ILP he defended Grayson's speeches and performances in the House of Commons. Grayson's biographer later claimed that Marklew knew the secret of Grayson's disappearance, but respected his wishes to remain anonymous [Clark (1985) 135–136].

Marklew's political activism continued to shape his critique of existing spiritualist organisations and their unwillingness to take a more formal stance on the advocacy of socialism and support for the Labour Party. He called for a new National League of Spiritualists that would be 'more inclined to help than to sneer at any sincere effort for the amelioration of social evils' [*The Medium*, vol. 4, no. 3 March 1907]. In September 1907, Marklew was adopted as Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Leigh, Lancashire by the town's Social Democrats. Leigh was a solid mining seat and also had a thriving network of spiritualist churches that attracted local coal miners and cotton workers. He later withdrew in favour of Thomas Greenall, the president of the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation. He continued to agitate for an 'economic and ethical socialism'. He was 'revolutionary in the sense that he wanted to reverse things on the principle of "ours for us"'. Ethically, he felt that 'the Angels of God… God himself was on their side' [*Banbury Advertiser*, 22 October 1908].

In 1911 Marklew made an interesting intervention on debates between 'free traders' and 'protectionists' in his pamphlet *On the Spot in Germany: A Socialist's Reply to Ramsay MacDonald* (1911). This was a critique of MacDonald's negative view of Germany that had appeared in a series of articles published in the *Daily News*, which presented images of inadequate food, poor housing and social deprivation. Marklew visited the country as part of a delegation of from Burnley stopping in cities such as Berlin, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Cologne and Essen. In the pamphlet he provides counter-examples to MacDonald's, showing that the general condition of the workers in Germany was far better than back in England. Marklew claimed that he saw no 'corner boys' 'nor the filth, nor the slums, nor the obtrusive poverty of the poorer quarters of Manchester' [Marklew (1911) 4 and 7]. He concluded that 'protectionism' had enabled great advances in the development of industry and delivered a higher standard of education, living conditions, and general prosperity for the German working-class.

In 1911 Marklew became a fishmonger in Grimsby where he established a branch of the British Socialist Party (BSP) going on to become president of the organisation, yet the records suggest that he played no national role. He entered this unlikely occupation for a socialist through his marriage to the widow of a fish merchant. Grimsby had a working-class population consisting of fishermen, seamen, dockers, and railwaymen. However, the voters tended to swing behind candidates who were perceived as being the most effective in protecting the industries crucial to the port. From 1895 the seat had been held by a Liberal Unionist with the exception of a brief Liberal interlude between the two 1910 elections. A Labour candidate, Tom Proctor, had stood in 1906 but had secured less than a fifth of the vote. Marklew was by now a significant figure in the labour movement, working with Robert Blatchford, Keir Hardie, and Tom Mann in spreading the gospel of socialism. In the same year he was approached by the Colne Valley Socialist League to become the Prospective Parliamentary candidate for the constituency but he declined the offer. In 1913 he was living in Cleethorpes and was a manager for a local fish salesman. During his divorce case he also revealed that he 'could even earn a fair amount of money at fortune telling and in other ways' [*Leeds Mercury*, 18 April 1913]. Marklew's divorce was also implicated in the cancellation of a speech in Grimsby by Jim Larkin in support of the Dublin workers. Larkin refused to speak if Marklew was in the Chair. Marklew was at a loss to see how his marital status had any relevance to working-class solidarity. In reply, Larkin told Marklew: 'you may be wrong or you may be right; you probably are right but that's my view' [*Burnley News*, 6 December 1913]. The BSP executive stood firm and would not countenance the removal of Marklew from the platform.

In 1914 Marklew was considered by the Grimsby Trades and Labour Council to stand in the Great Grimsby by-election. He claimed that he had received a 'mysterious telegram' from Sheffield urging him to stand. He met with the sender of the telegram and was given £40 in election expenses which he handed over to the BSP. He withdrew when the BSP was unwilling

to resource the campaign. According to Barrow, during the Great War 'he was among those urging workers to enlist' [Barrow (1981) 307]. Yet other sources suggest that he was anti-war, including Clark who claims that he was a conscientious objector [Clark (2007) 148–149]. A friend of Marklew's writing in the aftermath of his death in 1939 stated that he opposed wars and 'was a pacifist' [*Grimsby Daily Telegraph*, 17 June 1939]. The Grimsby press for August–December 1914 makes no reference to Marklew and the war, neither does the BSP newspaper *The Call* during the conflict, suggesting that it was unlikely he actually was a conscientious objector. His spiritualism would suggest an adherence to pacifism, but maybe he just kept silent on the issue given the geographical and economic context of Grimsby in 1914–1918 (two trawlers had been lost to German mines). The nearby ports of Whitby and Scarborough had also been subject to German bombardment.

It was in this period that Marklew started to suffer from poor health; because of a heart condition he was advised by his doctor to cut down on the number of platform speeches. In the aftermath of the 1926 miners' lock-out he supported the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) in their campaign against 'non-political unionism' in Nottinghamshire and other coalfields. On 10 March 1927 he participated in a debate with J.A. Seddon on the politics of the lockout and the advent of the Spencer Union in Nottinghamshire [for details see *Mansfield Advertiser*, 11 March 1927]. In 1928 he was elected to Grimsby Town Council, but continued to travel the country supporting socialist candidates in a number of electoral contests. His second wife Clara (née Bramwell) was also a councillor and fellow socialist activist. They had two children.

Throughout the 1920s Marklew had been invited to stand as a Labour candidate in parliamentary elections in various constituencies including Rochdale, Carlisle, Aberdeen, and Northampton. In 1929 he stood unsuccessfully for Labour in Grimsby against the Unionist candidate Walter James Womersley a self-made businessman who proclaimed his rags to riches story. Marklew generated much support in the constituency amongst trade unionists and progressives. However, the Unionist was able to exploit the links he had with the fishing trade and as 'Fish Wormesley' contrasted their conditions with industrial workers: 'our fishermen when they go to sea in the winter have a far harder time than any miner who goes down the pit' [*Grimsby Daily Telegraph*, 23 May 1929]. Marklew committed himself to fighting the campaign in terms of policies not personalities, although supporters of both candidates accused each other of the opposite. On the doorstep he raised the important issues of unemployment and housing. In terms of foreign policy, he argued that 'Russia was the country above all others which offered scope for the development of British industry… and there was great opportunity for interchange' [*Grimsby Daily Telegraph*, 13 May 1929]. Yet Marklew remained averse to Soviet Communism and felt that there was an incompatibility between the Russian communist model and British socialism. This belief was rooted in his conception of the ethical basis of socialism and his advocacy of both the materialist and spiritual basis of community, solidarity, and a society that could be constructed democratically for the good of all. To Marklew, 'socialists were out, first of all, to destroy poverty; but they aimed also to meet the needs of the mind' [*Grimsby Daily Telegraph*, 13 May 1929]. Womersley attempted to use scare tactics to paint Marklew and Labour as more radical than they were presented on public platforms. He claimed that 'the moderate socialists in the House of Commons were hopelessly outnumbered by the extremists… Until they get rid of these people the Socialist Party could not come before the people of this country and claim to be a moderate party who did not want revolution' [*Grimsby Daily Telegraph*, 21 May 1929].

| Grimsby, 1929: electorate, 68,465 turnout 71.9% | | |
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| Walter James Womersley (Unionist) | 27,001 | (54.8%) |
| Ernest Marklew (Labour) | 22,254 | (45.2%) |
| Majority | 4747 | (9.6%) |

In the aftermath of the unsuccessful attempt to gain election to the House of Commons Marklew and his wife maintained their work on Grimsby council and continued to agitate for socialism on both local and national platforms. He spoke at the Labour Party Conference in 1930 as a delegate from the SDF, castigating the role of social elites in local politics and the undemocratic processes of selecting mayors. In one particularly provocative speech he argued that 'no person can qualify for the mayoral chains unless he has his passport stamped with the qualifications of money and masonry' [*Aberdeen Journal*, 10 November 1931].

In September 1931, Marklew was invited to a selection meeting of the Colne Valley Labour Party for the position of prospective parliamentary candidate. The meeting was held at the Socialist Club in Slaithwaite with delegates drawn from the Trades Councils, the ILP and occupational groups such as miners, cotton operatives, and spinners. He defeated the three other candidates, his experiences in the constituency in 1907 giving him an insight into the culture of the local labour movement [for details see Colne Valley Divisional Labour Party Minutes, 12 September 1931]. After his selection he continued to reside in Grimsby, but made regular visits to the towns and villages of the constituency speaking at socialist meetings, public debates and opening fund-raising events for organisations such as Marsden Socialist Club. Yet the campaigning could not retain the seat for Labour and in the 1931 general election the Liberals were successful.

Colne Valley, 1931: electorate 55,197, turnout 79.06%

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| E.L. Mallalieu (Liberal) | 17,119 | (39.23%) |
| E. Marklew (Labour) | 13,734 | (31.47%) |
| Lt-Col E.W. Lascelles (Conservative) | 15,581 | (25.83%) |
| M.A.E. Franklin (National Labour) | 202 | (0.46%) |
| Majority | 3385 | (7.76%) |

Marklew was also an active cyclist and in April 1935, as a Grimsby councillor, spoke at a demonstration in Hull in support of the Cyclists' Touring Club's criticisms of road policy and the increasing number of accidents and deaths involving riders. His political work was complemented by his unshaken belief and advocacy of spiritualism, faith healing, and the supernormal. While attending the Parkgate spiritualist church he had developed skills as a deep trance medium. Marklew was also a faith healer and claimed to have saved his son's life with the 'laying on of hands' after 'a doctor said he would die in the night' [*Psychic News*, 28 March 1936]. Marklew aimed to demonstrate the compatibility of socialism and spiritualism. He argued that 'if all spiritualists were as keen for social construction as their spiritualism is capable of achieving it, we should have a different world'. At the SNU Annual Conference in 1933 he declared that it was his 'business to relate the philosophy of spiritualism to the social problems of our time'. In the same speech he castigated the Anglican Church, claiming that 'it no longer counts in the great work of social construction except as a defender of class, property and privilege' [*Psychic News*, 8 July 1933]. A year later, he told the SNU that they must face the social problems of Britain that could lead to the destruction of civilisation. Marklew felt that the practical application of his beliefs would lead to a more humane and socialist society. Hannen Swaffer, the socialist journalist, shared a similar conviction in attempting to fuse spiritualism and socialism; he and Marklew appeared together on many platforms. The coalfields of Yorkshire, Durham, Lancashire and South Wales had a thriving network of spiritualist churches, with new ones opening throughout the inter-war period. For example, a new church was erected at Easington Colliery in November 1935. The mayor of the Lancashire mining town of Leigh, W. Blackshaw, was also an ardent spiritualist [See *The Two Worlds*, 15 and 12 November 1935]. In south Wales the most celebrated

medium who gained a national profile was the ex-miner Jack Webber (1907–1940). Spiritualists were also increasingly active in the capital city. In 1934 a mass séance was held in the Aeolian Hall with over 500 people in attendance. The recently deceased Labour MP and Yorkshire Miners' official George Hirst, spoke through a medium: 'give my greetings to George Lansbury… I wish him well and will help him all I can' [*Psychic News*, 5 May 1934].

The agitation of Marklew led to a debate in the pages of the spiritualist press about how far the movement should align itself to a political ideology. One letter from Albert Clay of Leeds was indicative: 'unless we get a system politically and economically sound on truth, love and justice, religion under any banner fails. Spiritualism and socialism go together' [*Psychic News*, 29 July 1933]. In the 1935 general election campaign the SNU used prominent socialists such as Marklew and Swaffer to get its message to a broader audience. Lansbury also produced copy for the spiritualist press and expressed his support for political reform. In one article he noted that 'in the spirit world there could not possibly be a colour barrier, or an educational barrier… I want mankind to follow the dictates of the spirit, which I believe tells us all that it is better to be a sharer than a taker' [*Psychic News*, 7 September 1935]. He also expressed the belief that his wife and children were not dead and still around him [*Psychic News*, 30 November 1935]. Robert Blatchford also made a contribution, opining that life after death 'was at least comprehensible' [*Psychic News*, 6 April 1935]. An editorial in the *Psychic News* professed that the 'individual who is content to go to séance after séance, and is not concerned with the problems of unemployment, slums, malnutrition… war… vivisection, does not… understand spirit teachings' [*Psychic News*, 23 November 1935]. Similarly, *The Two Worlds* featured articles and letters opposing the immorality of war and agreeing with the sentiments of the socialist spiritualist, Oliver Baldwin, who hated war 'more than anything else in the world' [*The Two Worlds*, 11 October 1935]. In the context of the 1930s, socialist spiritualists found confirmation of their suspicion of the ability of scientific orthodoxy and conventional religious belief to deal with the economic and social problems that were a feature of the contemporary world. In an article penned for *Psychic News*, Marklew attempted to fuse the material and the spiritual: 'spiritualism is concerned with the body of man, equally with the spirit, and therefore, with all the affairs of whole man, including his economic activities' [*Psychic News*, 2 November 1935]. He campaigned against militarism and war from spiritualist and socialist platforms. At a meeting in Manchester in April 1935 he claimed that 'peace could not be obtained by preparing for war' [*Manchester Guardian*, 20 April 1935].

In Manchester in 1935, Keir Hardie apparently 'spoke' at a séance and declared that 'he had lost faith in the Labour Party' [*The Two Worlds*, 29 November 1935]. Yet Marklew's socialist spiritualism remained committed to the Labour Party and representation in the House of Commons. He used his experiences of earlier campaigns in his fight to win the seat of Colne Valley through committing the various radical organisations to parliamentary socialism. Yet anti-Labour forces in the constituency were hoping to undermine the appeal of socialism in the localities that had been attracted to the appeal of Grayson, Snowden, and now Marklew. In August 1935 the Colne Valley Conservative Association and the Anti-Socialist Union held a series of meetings with the object of creating 'a country in which every capitalist was a worker and every worker a capitalist' [*Colne Valley Guardian*, 23 August 1935]. When Marklew was re-selected he immediately faced an attack resembling that which had been levelled against him and the socialist cause in Grimsby. Morgen Crofton, the National Government candidate, argued that 'the socialists are nothing more nothing less than communists' [*Colne Valley Guardian*, 1 November 1935]. At some local meetings, Marklew toned down the radicalism of his socialist rhetoric. He concentrated on issues such as unemployment, housing problems, and poverty and stressed that 'the Labour Party was a constitutional party, never wanting to advance one step beyond what an educated democracy was prepared to give it a mandate for' [*Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 7 November 1935].

Editorials in the local press strongly supported Marklew's opponents, as did Snowden's widow, who supported Lance Mallalieu, the Liberal candidate, but Marklew could draw on an influential group of Labour activists to press the claims of socialism. He once again expressed

the practical and ethical aspects of his beliefs and castigated the National Government for failing to deal with unemployment and poverty. For Marklew, the election of Labour was 'no idle dream, no utopian optimist's idea that could not be realised' [*Colne Valley Guardian*, 1 November 1935]. In April 1935, W.W. Ely, a clairvoyant, had predicted at a platform meeting with Marklew that he would comfortably win the seat [*Manchester Guardian*, 20 April, 1935].

Colne Valley, 1935: electorate 55,739, turnout 75.95%

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| E. Marklew (Labour) | 16,725 | (39.5%) |
| E.L. Mallalieu (Liberal) | 12,946 | (30.57%) |
| M.G. Crofton (Conservative) | 10,917 | (25.78%) |
| W.G. Bagnall (Independent) | 1754 | (4.14%) |
| Majority | 3779 | (8.92%) |

In his post-declaration speech Marklew claimed that his was 'a victory for undiluted socialism' and 'that he had always followed the same line that he wanted no one to cast a vote for him unless they could conscientiously follow the radicalism he had advocated all his life' [*Colne Valley Guardian*, 22 November 1935]. Veteran socialists saw this as a vindication of the socialist pioneers and the culture that they had developed in the Colne Valley. In a letter to the local press, Stanley Chadwick viewed the victory as being 'in the true Grayson tradition… a reminder of the days when the valley staggered the whole country by its rejection of the son of a famous Liberal in favour of… socialism' [*Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 19 November 1935]. Marklew also penned a letter attacking the politics of Philip Snowden and the National Government, stating that the election was a battle between 'capitalism and socialism' [*Manchester Guardian*, 22 November 1935].

After the election Marklew became a leading figure in the parliamentary campaign to end the prosecution of spiritualists, but remained a critical of some who were unwilling to politicise the movement. He consistently denounced spiritualists who wanted to remain outside the struggle for political reform: 'retreat to the séance room when occasion demands for renewal of strength and spiritual refreshment. But remember, only the cowardly will remain there while the battle for Justice, Freedom and Life is raging in the outer world' [*Psychic News*, 2 November 1935]. He quickly established himself as the spokesman for spiritualists in the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP). In 1936 he told the House of Commons that 'I owe everything I have, everything I am and all the hopes that I entertain so far as the future is concerned to spiritualism' [*Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 314, 6 July 1936, cols. 863–991]. One of his early campaigns was an attempt to get the BBC to recognise spiritualists as an established religion and therefore entitled to broadcasting space. The BBC refused numerous requests from the SNU, informing them that their Religious Advisory Committee decided that spiritualists did not 'conform to the broad stream of Christian tradition' [*The Two Worlds*, 17 July 1936]. In response, Marklew argued that spiritualists had the support of a range of individuals in society and that this was clear case of religious discrimination [for exchanges with other MPs on this matter see *Parliamentary Debates*, 6 July 1936].

Marklew's parliamentary interventions also tackled subjects such as unemployment, poverty, and the articulation of his spiritualist beliefs. He argued that 'training was no remedy for unemployment' and that the objective of all industry under capitalism is not to satisfy the needs of the community… the only consideration is the amount of profit that can be made… as long as it is run for profit it means that the worker does not have wages comparable to the wealth he has created and is unable to buy back the wealth that he has created' [*Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 309, 3 March 1936, col. 1275]. Similarly, he castigated capitalism for being 'responsible for the circumstances that people shiver in cold' [*Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 309, 11 March 1936, col. 2249]. In a speech in London he argued that 'those who seek to enrich themselves not only impoverish others, but also impoverish themselves' [*Psychic News*, 1 August 1936]. He was also

concerned about the prospect of future hostilities between the European powers. In a speech to Padiham socialists Marklew claimed that 'we were nearer war today… than in those days preceding the outbreak of war in 1914. Nobody wanted war' [*Burnley Express*, 12 December 1936]. His constituency work was often disrupted by his poor health, which was becoming more acute as his case load increased. He retained the support of both the Colne Valley Labour Party and the wider electorate and he was commended by the former for his efforts in 1937. In the same year he was given two months to live after a cancer diagnosis, but later claimed he had been cured by a faith healer, a Grimsby engine-driver.

At a spiritualist conference held in Manchester in 1938 to celebrate the ninetieth anniversary of the movement Marklew was the keynote speaker. He told delegates that he was grateful for election to the Commons because it 'enabled him to bear testimony publicly to the value of spiritualism' [*The Two Worlds*, 22 April 1938]. His view on religion was liberal and pragmatic although he felt all orthodox denominations were obsolete. He believed that 'life hereafter is a natural fact, and did not depend upon any religious belief whatever. No one could escape from it [and] on the [other] side of the grave, all shams, all hypocrisies disappeared' [*The Two Worlds*, 5 April 1938]. Moreover, he felt that all people had the capacity for mediumship and that they 'were missing realms of reality by neglecting to cultivate and utilise psychic powers' [*Psychic News*, 22 October 1938]. For Marklew and his spiritualist associates in the PLP what was needed was a form of socialism that came from the mind, heart, and soul and was responsive to the needs of each. His ethical socialism shaped his aversion to the politics of communism and Stalinism. At a General Meeting of the Colne Valley Labour Party in February 1939 he argued against involvement in any form of 'Popular Front' [Colne Valley Labour Party Minutes of General Meeting, 11 February 1939]. In a statement to the party in the same month he commented on the state of his health, but hoped to be standing again for the constituency in any forthcoming general election. The executive remained concerned about his general health and voted to defer a decision on his selection for two months.

In the months leading up to his death, and suffering from poor health, Marklew resided in a nursing home in Cleethorpes. He passed to the other side and the 'socialism of the afterlife' on 14 June 1939. His wife had visited him, then he collapsed and did not recover. At his funeral spiritualists mixed with socialists performing a rendition of the Red Flag [For funeral details and those in attendance see *The Two Worlds*, 23 June 1939]. Lansbury noted that 'the passing of Ernest is for him the entering into a fuller and wider life' [*Grimsby Daily Telegraph*, 16 June 1939]. The spiritualist press reported that he had 'joined the great army who sacrificed so much for freedom and for spiritual truth… one more to await us beyond the little white gate… Thank you, Ernest… We shall meet again' [*The Two Worlds*, 23 June 1939]. One obituary writer noted how Marklew 'breathed lightning and sulphuric acid! He poured contempt on his opponents in words acid and biting' [*Grimsby Daily Telegraph*, 17 June 1939]. On death Marklew's estate was valued at £1535.

The day after his 'transition' Marklew 'appeared' at a séance in Middlesbrough conducted by the medium Helen Duncan, which he had planned to attend. His son told the press that 'there could be some truth in it' [*Colne Valley Guardian*, 30 June 1939]. Duncan was later prosecuted under the Witchcraft Act and became a martyr for the cause of spiritualist emancipation from the draconian laws that had been used to oppress them. He appeared out of the medium's cabinet and declared 'It's Marklew' [*Psychic News*, 24 June 1939]. He then addressed the sitters: 'It is up to you to Spiritualists to fight, but I am not here to give you a lecture' [*The Two Worlds*, 23 June 1939]. In November, at a séance in Doncaster led by the medium Ivy Northage, he put in another 'appearance' to comfort his widow who was also in attendance. His voice initially came through a floating trumpet and informed the audience that he would materialise later in the proceedings. After some singing by the congregation Marklew 'appeared' from the Cabinet holding a rose that had been cut from his garden. He comforted his wife and then told her that her mother was there and she dutifully appeared to hold a conversation with Mrs Marklew before retreating back to the other side [*The Two Worlds*, 1 December 1939]. This no doubt

conformed to Marklew's view that spiritualism had 'stripped the terror from the tomb, and restored joy and gladness where grief and darkness had prevailed' [*Psychic News*, 23 January 1937].

The outbreak of the Second World War gave further impetus to the spiritualist movement in terms of both its popularity and its ability to press its claims in the House of Commons. Marklew 'spoke' again from 'the other side' at a séance in Grimsby, voicing his concerns regarding the international situation: 'he had been in touch with General Foch, Earl Haig, Lord Roberts, and several others' and 'they were doing all in their power to secure peace' [*The Two Worlds*, 8 September 1939]. Back on earth, his work in propagandising for spiritualism in parliament was continued by Thomas Brooks, who was elected Labour MP for Rothwell in a by-election in 1942.

Marklew's career and particular brand of English socialism was indicative of an ethical current that underpinned the working-class radicalism of Lancashire and Yorkshire in the Edwardian era. His belief in the spiritual and the esoteric is a dimension of socialist politics that has been marginalised in much of the historiography of the Edwardian labour movement. Marklew's spiritualism blended easily with his advocacy of socialism and the hardships, dignity, and struggles of the 'everyday life' of the British working-class. The parliamentary work he had done for the spiritualist cause was realised with the repeal of the Witchcraft Acts in 1951. Marklew's ethical socialism and incursions into the supernatural and the esoteric later became a feature of the new social movements and counter-cultures of the 1960s. His life illustrates the diversity, complexity, and richness of British working-class politics in the first half of the twentieth century.

**Writings:** *The Devil's Dialogues with Aiman* (1904); *Spiritualism: Is It True* (1905); *Saviours of* Men (n.d.); The *Sacrament of Sex* (1907); various articles as editor of *The Medium* (1904–1907) and *Psychic News*; articles for the SDF newspaper *Justice*; *On the Spot in Germany*, *a Socialist Reply to Ramsay MacDonald MP* (1911).

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Colne Valley Labour Records, University of Huddersfield Library; Labour Party Papers, Peoples' History Museum, Manchester; Colne Valley Labour Party material, Burnley Public Library; British Socialist Party Annual Conference Reports, Working Class Movement Library, Salford. (**2**) **Newspapers and Periodicals**: *Preston Herald*; *The Medium*; *Lancashire Evening Post*; *Leeds Mercury*; *Colne Valley Guardian*; *Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph*; *Burnley News*; *Grimsby Daily Telegraph*; *Banbury Advertiser*; *Aberdeen Journal*; *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*; *The Two Worlds*; *Psychic News*; *Burnley Express*; *Parliamentary Debates*; *Justice*; *Mansfield Advertiser*; *Manchester Guardian*. (**3**) **Books and Articles**: Hannen Swaffer, *My Greatest Story* (1945); Percy Redfern, *Journey to Understanding* (1946); Simeon Edmunds, *Spiritualism: A Critical* Survey (Letchworth, 1966); Henry Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections 1885–1910* (1967); G.K. Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society* (1969); David Clark, *Colne Valley: Radicalism to Socialism* (1981); David Clark, *Victor Grayson: Labour's Lost Leader* (1985); Logie Barrow, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeians 1850–1910* (1986); Jenny Hazelgrove, *Spiritualism and British Society between the wars* (Manchester, 2000); David Clark, 'The Labour Party in Colne Valley', in Brendan Evans, Keith Laybourn, John Lancaster and Brian Haigh (eds) *Sons and Daughters of Labour: A History and Recollection of the Labour Party within the historic boundaries of the West Riding of Yorkshire* (Huddersfield, 2007); Emmet O'Connor, *Big Jim Larkin: Hero or Wrecker?* (Dublin, 2015); David Clark *Victor Grayson The Man & the Mystery* (2016). (**4**) **Obituaries**: *The Times*, 15 June 1939; *Manchester Guardian*, 16 June 1939; Grimsby *Daily Telegraph*, 17 June 1939; Scunthorpe *Evening Telegraph*, 15 June 1939; *Leeds Mercury*, 15 June 1939; *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 15 June 1939; *The Two Worlds*, 23 June 1939.

KEITH GILDART

*See also*: Thomas BROOKS; †Walter MONSLOW

**RAMELSON, Bert** (1910–1994)
COMMUNIST

Baruch Rachmilevitch (Bert Ramelson) was born on 22 March 1910 into a Yiddish-speaking and highly political family of Ukrainian Jews living in the ghetto quarters of a small town (Cherkassy) on the banks of the Dnieper River opposite Kiev. His father was a Talmudist scholar while his adored mother was the main breadwinner, and the bedrock on which the family stood against the threats of poverty, civil war, and anti-Semitic pogroms. After the Russian revolution in 1917 the family split; Rosa, Ramelson's older sister, stayed on as a communist while the parents and Bert left to live with a wealthy fur-trading uncle in Edmonton (Canada) in 1922.

When the family arrived in Edmonton none of his immediate family spoke English, but Ramelson soon picked up the language and became a strong student studying law at Alberta University, and becoming a lawyer soon after. By the early 1930s the family had been hard-hit by the depression and Bert found part-time work on the railways, meeting trade union activists for the first time. Ramelson was now a Marxist Zionist, and decided in 1935 to see for himself the kind of life being made by settler Jews in a Kibbutz in Palestine. Like many other 'Western' left-wing Zionists, his experiences were mixed. While he welcomed the socialist-style camaraderie of Kibbutz life he was shocked by the increasingly rough treatment of Palestinian workers. He returned to Edmonton in 1936 having rejected Zionism and threw his energies into assisting the anti-fascist movement.

He decided to fight alongside the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, and in the early spring of 1937 he turned up on the doorstep of the King Street headquarters of the Communist Party (CPGB) in London's Covent Garden [Branson (1985)]. Within days he was in Paris en route to Spain, and a fortnight later he was making the perilous night-time crossing over the Pyrenees on foot. Ramelson graphically remembered serving with both the Spanish Fifth Army and the Mackenzie–Papineau Battalion, the Canadian contingent of the 15th International Brigade [Thomas (1961) 601–604]. He fought both on the Aragon Front as a Company Commander of an Artillery Battalion and in the Ebro Offensive. In both operations he was wounded and taken to hospital with bullet and shrapnel wounds. During the retreat before Moorish troops, Ramelson who had been nervous about water ever since the drowning of his brother some twenty years earlier, was forced to float across the Ebro on a door.

After the International Brigade was disbanded Ramelson renewed his London contacts and joined the CPGB. Within a few months he had married Marian Jessop, a leading communist activist in Leeds, and started a new life in Yorkshire thanks to a surprising employer, Marks and Spencer. Marian Ramelson was a formidable political figure in her own right. She was able to provide Bert with both guidance and support, particularly in his early years as a Communist Party full-time worker.

By 1941, Ramelson, then thirty-one, was eligible for military service, having spent two years in Britain. He was called up in May 1941, trained as a tank driver and mechanic for a few months, and then was posted to Cairo. After a disastrous desert campaign near Tobruk, Ramelson, with thousands of other British troops, was captured by the German army in September and spent the next six months in an Italian-run desert prison camp where he almost starved and hundreds of his fellow prisoners died of dysentery. In these appalling conditions Ramelson organised political education classes for the prisoners. He gave a lecture on Marxism every morning and his captive audience grew from a handful to over two thousand in a matter of weeks.

Later the prisoners were moved to mainland Italy, from where Ramelson and others escaped to rejoin the British army. He remembered:

> I sometimes – thinking over my experiences in the camp and what I did there – think that I owe the greatest debt of all to my feeling for the party because if I didn't feel that as a

> communist I could face the Communist Party if I behaved in the way which I was tempted to more than once, driven by hunger, to participate in the fiddles that were going on in the camp in order to get some extra food. If it hadn't been for this powerful feeling within me that I belonged to a party that I couldn't face if I had acted in such an unprincipled way and if I didn't feel as a communist it was my duty to do all I could in order to help my fellow prisoners of war to understand what it is that makes people misbehave. It's not because of their nature.

After two months leave Ramelson was sent to Catterick to be trained as an artillery officer from where he graduated as a Second Lieutenant. He was then sent to Bishop Auckland training centre, and during this period spoke on several general election platforms in support of local Labour candidates. In August 1945 he was sent to India, where he was posted to Deolali as a legal officer, and soon after was appointed Acting Staff Captain (Legal), where his role was mainly to defend troops charged by the Army with disciplinary offences.

Ramelson had received a letter from the Yorkshire CPGB District Secretary, Mick Bennett, offering him a full-time party position as Leeds Area Secretary. And so it was to Yorkshire that he returned after the war. Confident that it was moving into a new and much more favourable political environment, the CPGB leadership saw prospects for significant electoral advance and a new relationship with Labour in the early post-war years. During this time (1945–1948) the party failed to prioritise industrial work, concentrating instead on building its electoral base in the towns and cities, rather than in building new factory branches and strengthening existing ones. By the late 1940s this failure had been addressed as the Cold War took root, and Ramelson was quick to recognise that the big workplaces could become the centres of industrial struggles that were much more politically focussed than those traditionally engaged in by trade unionists.

In the most important areas, the pits and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), political progress was being made. An industrial base was eventually laid for future struggles led by the left, and for the emergence of a new and progressive leadership; Ramelson and Jock Kane (rank-and-file miners' leader in the 1969 unofficial strikes in Yorkshire) were at the centre of these developments. His central political message was twofold: eschew economism by campaigning on political as well as economic issues and build the revolutionary party, 'because the class struggle cannot destroy capitalism to build socialism – a revolutionary Party is needed to co-ordinate and guide the class struggle with the sole aim of enabling the working class to seize power'. In British conditions he argued that a united working-class party based on Marxism could only eventuate if there was a strong Communist Party capable of fundamentally influencing the broader labour and trade union movement. These political tenets were the basis of Ramelson's politics until he died: the relevance of an influential Marxist political party, the necessity of revolution, the need to tackle economism and reformism, and the vital importance of unity and struggle [CP Archives, CP/RAM/IND/06/06].

By the mid-1950s Ramelson was firmly established as one of Britain's foremost communists. He was acknowledged as a leader in both the industrial field and the peace movement, and also as an authority on the Middle East and the associated special issues relating to the resettlement of Jews in Israel. Within the CPGB his growing influence was recognised when in summer 1956 he was appointed to the three-person British delegation to the Soviet Union for top-level discussions on the implications of the CPSU's Twentieth Congress. He was re-elected to the Executive Committee at the 1957 Special Congress, and subsequently appointed to the Political Committee and the Economic Committee.

The great advances made by the international communist movement after 1945 came to a shuddering halt in 1956. In the early part of the year came the revelations of Stalinist crimes, when in a secret speech to delegates Khrushchev laid before the CPSU Twentieth Congress a horrific litany of state-sponsored murder and barbarity. This was followed by civil and industrial

unrest in Poland, and towards the end of the year by the outbreak of civil war in Hungary which led to a military intervention by Soviet troops, to put down what Ramelson and the British communist leadership considered to be a counter-revolution. Shock waves reverberated around the world communist movement, which lost hundreds of thousands of members in protest against the use of force in Hungary and the recognition of Stalin's atrocities.

Ramelson was at the centre of the action in the UK from the beginning; and, as it happened, the most important challenge to the unity of the organisation and the Communist Party's democratic centralist practices came from his Yorkshire District, in the shape of two academics, Edward Thompson (in Halifax) and John Saville (in Hull). His view was that with rampant anti-communism and Cold War hysteria outside the labour movement, there was no room inside it for ill-disciplined dissent. In the face of the enormity of the problems which the events of 1956 presented to the communist movement, the British Party's resilience was impressive. Some 20% of the membership resigned or did not re-card in January 1957, mainly as a result of the events in Hungary; this fraction included many trade union leaders and activists. Yet by the early 1960s membership was back up to pre-1956 levels, and at least in Yorkshire the broad left strategy mapped out by Ramelson and his colleagues was bearing fruit. Some of this resilience was due to the leading role played by communists in the wider peace movement and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).

In the early 1960s both Bert and, more seriously, Marian had periods of illness. None the less, he spent much of this time in developing strong CPGB branches in the factories of Sheffield, the docks of Hull, and the mines of Yorkshire, motivated by the belief that only through action among workers in struggle could the communist case be won and the propaganda of the anti-communist movement blunted. This spread over into the wider labour movement with Ramelson working ceaselessly to build bridges with sympathetic Labour activists who later became MPs such as Joan Maynard and Martin Flannery (both elected in 1974 for Sheffield constituencies).

When Ramelson arrived in London in 1965 to take up a new job as industrial organiser of the CPGB his personal life was overshadowed by his wife Marian's serious and long-standing illness. It was now clear that she had terminal cancer, and she died in 1967. He was also, at the age of fifty-four, leaving his home of nearly twenty years, and moving to the centre stage in British industrial relations and the trade union movement. The main issues he faced included the relations of communists with Labour left-wingers in the unions and inside the Labour Party; the pivotal role of opposition to all forms of incomes policies through industrial militancy, union programmes, and economic debate; and the practical ways in which a small communist party could influence events and ideas through the setting up of industrial advisories and the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU).

The CPGB was at that time a well-organised and important element within the left. It was very effective in helping to move the trade union movement in a significantly militant and progressive direction through left unity as Ramelson later explained:

> Because our Party is based on Marxism-Leninism – the science of social change – we are better able to understand the world we live in and how to change it. It is not an easy task, nor will it necessarily be achieved in one jump, and certainly not by a handful of dedicated socialists acting on their own. It will require the unity in struggle of the majority of our people with, as the core, the mass organisations of the working class. But to achieve this level of mass activity and socialist understanding, a party of dedicated socialists committed to this objective, basing itself on the creative application of Marxism to British conditions, is needed. This party is the Communist Party, and it plays a key role in the development of the movement [(1973b) 20].

During this period the CPGB focused on defeating proposed and actual legislation to limit union power (the 1970 Trades Union Congress (TUC) passed a motion of opposition to the Industrial Relations Bill, and there were mass days of action on 8 December 1970 and 12 January 1971), and on neutering attempts by successive governments to impose effective wage

controls. Successes in these areas were accompanied by radically new approaches to the struggle to protect jobs, as in the work-in in the Upper Clyde Shipyards (UCS), and a genuine widening of traditional trade union political and social agendas [Foster and Woolfson (1986)]. These agendas included, among other things, alternative economic strategies to challenge capitalism's hegemony; international solidarity; and women's and minority groups' rights [Aaronovitch (1981)]. The progress achieved in terms of membership growth of both trade unions (membership was 11.1 million in 1971 rising to a peak of 13.2 million by 1979) and the CPGB (at about 30,000 members), the willingness to use industrial action to promote political objectives, and the fight against the threat to trade union rights, was evidence of significant labour movement achievements.

Ramelson shared and helped develop CPGB policy and strategy based on the Leninist view that world and British capitalism and imperialism were entering a new phase of state monopoly capitalism, and that policies had to be formulated to maximise working-class unity in alliance with other social groups [Lenin (1917)]. He argued that both the contradictions and the consequences of capitalism remained, and it was in the interests of the working-class to move away from capitalism and towards socialism through a social revolution. Uppermost in the minds of those involved was the desperate impact of the Cold War on all things communist, and this further shaped the presentation and arguments in the CPGB's main programme, *The British Road to Socialism* [Childs (1988)].

Ramelson's tasks as national industrial organiser were to keep the party's executive apprised of developments in the trade union movement, and of industrial trends and developments; to oversee the work of the party's National Industrial Advisory Committee based on industries and unions; to help develop party policy for individual industries; and to assist in preparing analysis and propaganda materials on current industrial issues, not least government, Labour Party and TUC policies on these questions. Ramelson saw his main function as promoting Communist Party policy in the labour movement, which he did through the production of numerous pamphlets and articles, endless public and private meetings with union activists, and promoting the development of broad left platforms. These included the 'Needs of the Hour' bulletins which proposed model resolutions for inclusion in trade union and other labour movement organisations conference agendas.

The link between organisational forms and political strategies was quite clear in the way in which Ramelson developed the industrial department. The key political idea was that of the 'broad left', a loose grouping of left-minded colleagues within a particular union or part of a union seeking to push through policy issues, agree points on the bargaining agenda, and win positions as shop stewards and regional and national officials. This union-style 'broad left' came out of the wider party position on 'left unity', and corresponded with both the realities faced by communists and the traditions of the British left; and it also fed into the need to co-ordinate such cadres inside unions through the umbrella of party policy and industrial strategy: hence the advisory system. Much of this was debated through CPGB-backed journals such as *Marxism Today* and *Labour Monthly* to which Ramelson was a regular contributor.

A central and decisively important plank of party strategy at this time was the founding of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU), under the leadership of communist activist Kevin Halpin. The LCDTU was set up in 1966 as a loose co-ordinating body, but it really came into its own with opposition to *In Place of Strife* in the late 1960s, and to the 1971 Industrial Relations Act [Halpin (2012)].

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s one of the major themes of public policy and trade union concern was that of incomes policies. What to do strategically and tactically was more of a problem for the left, and especially the industrial leadership under Ramelson. He became a key figure in these debates, and by 1966 he was known as one of the most powerful figures in the labour movement, mainly because of his intimate involvement in the seafarers' strike of that year. The political logic applied by Ramelson was clear: incomes policies were designed to

control wages in order to boost profits; and, as both were economic representations of the income derived from the use of factors of production—labour and capital—so they also represented classes with different interests and with conflicting political objectives. To control wages meant reforming the main wage-determination system—collective bargaining—and that in turn meant weakening the unions, through changes in their ability to influence the short-term supply of labour to any employer (industrial action), and, now that Labour was in office, to keep union leaders friendly to the government and its policies [Minkin (1991)]. This meant that he had to counter arguments about both the economics of wages and the politics of the use of state power and authority. In February 1965 the historic logic of wage restraint (especially under Labour governments), from exhortation through voluntarism to compulsion, was once again enacted. Only the communists under Ramelson's direction opposed all and any version of state-regulated wage controls [Ramelson (1966a, b)]. He argued that,

> It is not an accident that the "incomes policy" has become the pet theory of most bourgeois economists. There was a time when the very thought of the State interfering with the free play of the market as the only possible determinant of wages and earnings was anathema to the bourgeois economists. But times have changed and with them bourgeois attitudes to State intervention to frustrate the free play of the market. What is the essence of the change?
>
> In the past the reserve army of labour—the unemployed—was a built-in feature of the capitalist system. The commodity, labour power, was more or less permanently a glut on the market. In these circumstances of supply in excess of demand, the employer, as purchaser of the commodity, was able to use the conditions of the market to his advantage. In bargaining with the workers as represented by the trade unions, the sellers of the commodity, the conditions of the market favoured the employing class. Therefore, "No State interference with the free play of the market in determining wages" was the employers' rallying cry.
>
> However, for the past two decades in a number of advanced capitalist countries, and particularly in Britain, there has existed a situation unique in capitalist history. Since 1946 (except for brief periods) far from there being a reserve army of unemployed with three workers chasing one job, the reverse has been the case. There has been a general shortage of labour power and a chronic shortage of skilled labour in particular.
>
> For the first time in the history of capitalist society this has led to the position that the seller of the commodity labour power (the trade unions) has the advantage in bargaining with the purchaser (the employer). This situation provides the best setting for advances on the economic front within the confines of capitalist society. The higher the standard won, the more powerful become the forces for further advance.
>
> The true nature of the State (in this connection it is irrelevant whether there is a Labour or Conservative Government) as the agent of the ruling class now emerges and begins to assert itself. It rushes to the aid of the employers who may be bested in free bargaining with the trade unions [1966a, 11].

In 1965 there had been a flurry of activity around the reform of industrial relations. This was the usual mixed bag of regulation, legislation, and exhortation [Wedderburn (1986) 40–47]. But this was also the period in which the government began to marshal its arguments about the trade union movement being too powerful, and the threat to the economy posed by rank-and-file action to increase wages. To gather evidence for these arguments they set up the Donovan Commission, which would be dominated by Hugh Clegg and Allan Flanders [Ramelson (1968); Seifert (2015)].

Labour won the March 1966 general election easily enough, but the larger majority in Parliament brought with it no change in the wider economy and in the deteriorating international situation. These familiar problems were soon compounded by the seafarers' strike, which began

in May and lasted six weeks [Morgan (1990)]. By the end of June, after a forty-five day strike, the seafarers had won a 'definite victory': a move from a fifty-six-hour to a forty-hour working week, and agreement to increase annual holidays from thirty-nine to forty-eight days [*Morning Star*, 30 June 1966]. The strike was seen by the government as responsible for economic chaos. The dispute captured the nature of class struggle at the time with rank-and file-union members at the forefront of the fight against exploitation by powerful employers—frequently they had to battle against their own union leaders as well as the employers, media, and now a Labour government. This was made more difficult by the confusion sown by incomes policies as the 'epitome of right-wing social democratic use of the labour movement to carry out reforms and restructurings on behalf of the class enemy, the capitalists'. It 'helped create the myths and legends about communist influence in the unions, both exaggerated and distorted, and showed the importance to a Labour government of having the TUC and other union leaders on board' [Thorpe (2001)]. As Communist organiser Dennis Goodwin explained, it also raised the importance of exposing the secretive employers, and the need for far-reaching reform of the industry and the ways in which major industrialists carried out their business [*Comment*, June 1966].

The impact of the dispute was clear—it enhanced the reputation and influence of Ramelson himself, and of the CPGB inside the seafarers' union, the NUS, and the wider union movement, as witnessed by a surge of communists elected into positions of power and authority in major unions. The rise of so-called 'political strikes' was noticeable [Hain (1986) 103–106], and while the list of disputes was impressive, spanning mining, railways, engineering, docks, and building [Darlington and Lyddon (2001)], the winning of a range of key positions in the unions (and on the TUC General Council) by communists and their allies was clear evidence of the Ramelson's influence. The list was impressive including, for example, Ken Gill (AUEW–TASS), George Wake (AEU), Max Morris (NUT), Lou Lewis (UCATT), Alan Sapper (ACTT), Ray Buckton (ASLEF), Jack Jones (TGWU), Hugh Scanlon (AEU), and Ken Cameron (FBU) [Andrews (2004) 108–109].

Equally, the strike was herald to a period of intense struggle over wages, trade union rights and jobs, in which Ramelson was a prime mover. He was one of those branded in Parliament by the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, as 'a tightly knit group of politically motivated men' who were seeking to bring down the government [*Parliamentary Debates*, 28 June 1966, cols. 38–54]. Part of Wilson's speech was based on MI5's spying networks on Ramelson and other communist leaders [Andrew (2009) 527–528]. In October 1967 the dockers' strike sent out the same signals as the seafarers' dispute a year earlier: the government was not governing. This dispute triggered the run on the pound that brought about the inevitable sterling devaluation on 18 November 1967 [Morgan (1990)], and again enhanced Ramelson's reputation for political organisation and strategy. The strike was part of the battle for implementation of the long-fought over decasualisation of dock work [Wilson (1972) 187].

When Barbara Castle was made Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity in April 1968 she brought renewed energy to the role, and started on a road aimed at bringing some order to the 'chaos' of industrial relations. In 1969 she unveiled *In Place of Strife*, which sought to use anti-union laws to shift the balance towards greater state intervention. Ramelson led the communist fight-back against all forms of proposed legislation that curtailed union and worker rights. This was to be rooted in shop steward and shop floor power where the communists on the ground could make the most difference and carry the most influence. Thousands of workers went on unofficial strike on May Day 1969 to oppose the proposed union laws, and this was made official by the special TUC congress on 5 June. By early 1970 the strike wave brought action, for example, at Pilkington Glass and Port Talbot steel works.

Left unity around issues identified as of critical importance to the working class became the main game in town. As Ramelson wrote:

> The aims of such a convention, it was suggested, would be to bring together, without exclusions, members of different left organisations and groups to discuss their common problems;

> to try to reach agreement on a minimum statement of common policy; and to find ways of promoting left co-operation, especially on a local basis, in ways that did not supplant members' commitments to their existing organisations, but offered an opportunity for talking and working together on the many issues where united left action was urgently needed [*Marxism Today*, June 1969].

Left unity therefore addressed the central concern for the trade union movement, which was to counter TUC backing for incomes policy and productivity bargaining, and to bring inside the tent the forces of the so-called new movements. The party was leading the way in an understanding of the failures of incomes policies in their own terms, but also in terms of the way they confused activists and leaders into the false belief that wage controls also meant profit controls so that productivity increases could be used to help the country rather than big business.

A major international test of 'left unity' was the Prague Spring of 1968. On the night of 20–21 August, Warsaw Pact troops (overwhelmingly Russian) entered Czechoslovakia. The first British communist to hear of this was Ramelson: at 3 a.m. on the morning of 21 August, Ramelson, a Russian-speaker, was phoned by the Soviet Embassy and urgently summoned to see the Ambassador. Ramelson asked for the names of Czech leaders who had requested military intervention, but this information was refused.

> In the heated exchange which followed, Ramelson challenged the truth of the claim that the Czechoslovak Party leadership had invited the Warsaw Pact troops in, and warned that the British Communist Party would not accept so blatant an intrusion into the affairs of a fraternal party and another Socialist country [Falber (1995) 51].

In Ramelson's judgement these developments were a serious setback for the communist and peace movements and to all those struggling to advance the interests of working people and their allies. The renewed activity of the Czech people, most of it a positive expression of democratic aspirations, as well as the war in Vietnam, and the student revolts in Paris, at first encouraged progressive forces to believe that the people in action could make a positive difference. A viewed shared by his new wife, Joan Smith, an active communist with three children of her own who bought a family life into Ramelson's political world.

The early months of 1970 saw more strikes in the UK, as tension mounted in the battle against wage controls [Ramelson (1969) 1970]. In the run-up to the June general election little was said by either main party about the real issues of economic and social crisis; but there was some, *sotto voce*, cross-party agreement on union reform, wage controls, the denial of civil rights, condemnation of militancy and strikes, and on a wholesale anti-socialist and anti-progressive line. The years of the Conservative Government of Edward Heath (1970–74) proved to be among the most turbulent in the history of the British working-class. The Tories now embarked on a strategy to constrain union power through legislation; through wage controls, beginning in the public sector; and through withdrawing, withholding or reducing state assistance to so-called 'lame duck' industries (such as shipbuilding and coal mining), where unions were often strongly organised. The Tory strategy depended on legislation to curb strikes and weaken collective bargaining. The proposals in the 1971 Industrial Relations Act aimed to put the unions into a legislative straitjacket and destroy normal collective bargaining [Ramelson (1970)].

The working-class response, partly led by Ramelson and the CPGB's industrial department, was powerful and effective. Political strikes, mass demonstrations, and a wave of workplace occupations and sit-ins stopped many Tory initiatives, and created the conditions for the return of Labour government in 1974 [Andrews (2004); Lyddon and Darlington (2001)]. The trade unions and the left in the Labour Party emerged stronger at the end of this period, but the CPGB, though proving itself to be an effective force in influencing trade union policies and linking rank-and-file struggles, was unable to make the political breakthrough its revolutionary strategy demanded. Indeed, the entire political thrust of the *British Road to Socialism* was

increasingly out of reach and out of touch with the realities of working-class sentiment. Ramelson pointed out that:

> this year's TUC and Labour Party conferences [1970] marked a key advance of the left in the labour movement – especially in the trade unions… as a result of unremitting united activity between comrades, Labour party members and other militants, many trade unions – above all the two largest and most powerful ones, the TGWU and the AEF [Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundry Workers] – have now militant, progressive leaderships, and these dominated both conferences both in the speeches made by Jack Jones, Hugh Scanlon and others, and in the weight of their massive votes behind progressive resolutions or in opposition to reactionary ones [*Marxism Today*, November 1970].

Ramelson played a major part in some of the most important and famous disputes in the early 1970s: from dockers and shipbuilders, to miners and building workers, and from engineers to postal workers, Bert was there leading, persuading, arguing, and mobilising communist activists and rank-and-file supporters. Most of the detailed studies of these disputes show the clear link between the role of communist activists working within the general strategy of the CPGB, the tactics used, and the wider lessons learnt from the strikes.

In spring 1972 a dockers' dispute was looming, and Jack Jones of the TGWU sought support and assurances from the TUC leadership that they would back the union. At this point the London Docks joint union stewards committee decided to picket firms at Chobham Farm, and the National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC) took action against their leaders, threatening them with prison for contempt if they refused to appear before the court. They were dubbed the 'Pentonville Five': 'On the previous Saturday, 10 June, an LCDTU conference, attended by over 1200 delegates from 500 union branches and shop stewards' committees, had already called for strike action if any trade unionist was imprisoned by the NIRC' [Darlington and Lyddon (2001) 157]. At this stage of the dispute, the government, through the Courts, backed down.

There were several other major disputes; the Con-Mech dispute in particular was a classic example of Ramelson's all-round work. Ken Gill recalled in an interview how Ramelson covered all the angles. Firstly, he convinced Gill of the necessity of attending the AUEW Executive meeting called to discuss the issue, which had the potential of either bankrupting the union or fatally weakening the anti-union laws and the Tory government. The stakes were high, and Ramelson urged Gill to use his position to fight for defiance of the law. According to Gill, Ramelson also phoned Scanlon, the AUEW President and most influential member of the EC, assuring him that the CPGB would pull out all the stops to build a solidarity movement behind the country's most powerful industrial union.

The struggle to save the Upper Clyde shipyards from closure with the loss of 6000 jobs started in June 1971. The workforce, led by their shop stewards, including a number of communists, refused to accept the liquidation of the shipyards and the sell-off of assets and sites for redevelopment. They decided on a work-in, keeping the workforce together and machinery intact, working on current contracts while campaigning to force the company and the government to withdraw the closure threat [Thompson and Hart (1972)]. Elsewhere, after a nine-week national strike in defiance of the government's wages policy, the postal workers were forced back to work in March 1971 without achieving their main objectives. During this strike Tom Jackson, the union's general secretary, who knew Ramelson from their Leeds days, accused Ramelson of interfering in union affairs and encouraging workers who were short of money to continue a strike which could not be won. Ramelson rejected the accusation of interference and criticised the union leadership for not seeking solidarity support from the rest of the movement.

The biggest setback for the CPGB's strategy during Heath's government, however, concerned the Shrewsbury pickets, a number of whom were jailed under nineteenth-century conspiracy laws, including Des Warren, a leading communist rank-and-file trade union leader from the

north-west of England [Darlington and Lyddon (2001) 179–208]. Their picketing was part of a militant pursuit of a national building workers' union claim for significant improvements in wages and conditions, a claim that was based on the twelve points of the Building Workers Charter. This had been formulated by a rank-and-file movement which spanned Britain and was greatly influenced by communist activists like Warren.

The real nemesis of Tory pay and industrial policy was the clash with the miners and the NUM [Pitt (1979)]. The scene was well set: by 1972 miners' pay had been falling behind comparable groups for some time; world energy prices were volatile and the supply of coal to power stations was still the mainstay of electricity generation in the UK. The left was now a major political force in the union, although its authority was patchy in some areas and the balance on the NEC and at conference was not always decisively in its favour. Two of three nationally elected officials (Lawrence Daly, who had been general secretary since 1968, and the Communist Mick McGahey, who was Vice President) were on the left, while the more traditional right-wing President, Joe Gormley, sought compromise rather than confrontation in most circumstances.

In the mining industry the patient work which Ramelson had done so much to encourage in the 1950s in the Yorkshire and other coalfields was now paying dividends—despite differences, Ramelson worked closely with figures such as Bert Wynn of the Derbyshire NUM in the 1960s laying down left-wing legacies in the coalfields. By the early 1970s the left was in a powerful position within the NUM leadership nationally, as well as in Yorkshire, Scotland, Wales, and Kent—and for the first time in the Nottinghamshire coalfield, where the communist Joe Whelan won a seat on the NEC despite the coalfield's strong anti-left traditions. This move to the left corresponded to a growing tide of unrest in the coalfields, particularly on the question of wages, aggravated by the effects of successive income policies.

A key moment in the 1972 miners' strike was the closure of the massive Saltley coke depot in Birmingham, both as a symbol of working-class power and as a tactical success in the dispute. Over 2000 'flying pickets', orchestrated by Yorkshire miners' leader and Ramelson protégée, Arthur Scargill, were deployed, backed up by 15,000 engineering workers. On 21 February the strike ended, and a week later the *Morning Star* headline ran: 'Miners show the way to oust Heath'; and it proclaimed the call by communists 'to follow up this great victory' [Pitt (1979)]. Within two years, with oil prices soaring, the price of coal rose and with it miners' expectations. The second strike was called for 9 February 1974, and on 7 February the government called a general election. The general election of 28 February resulted in a narrow Labour victory, and the new government set about settling the miners' strike and preparing the ground for electoral consolidation in a second election by replacing the Tories' statutory restrictions on wage bargaining with a new voluntary incomes policy, agreed with union leaders. This became the Social Contract, the development and subsequent failure of which are the single most important events in the history of the 1974–1979 Labour government—which eventually ended in the strike wave known as 'the winter of discontent' and ignominious defeat at the polls for Labour in May 1979 [Shepherd (2013)].

The hallmark of much of Ramelson's work was opposition to all forms of incomes policy. This required analysing critically the actual details of the policies—mainly through pamphlets, arguing at meetings with union leaders and activists, helping to frame motions to union conferences, opening up debate through the pages of the *Morning Star* (*Daily Worker*), feeding information into education classes, formulating deeper comments around the nature of inflation, and offering an alternative. He fought against the thinking behind the Social Contract, and waged a war of words and deeds against both the immediate and long-term damage it would wreak on the lives of workers and their families. He struggled in particular to keep both the TUC and the Labour Party true to their own conference resolutions and electoral manifestos. Industrial relations and the unions formed the central concern of government. Incomes policy

was to be negotiated with the unions through the Social Contract, but once more it was seen as the only means of reducing inflation, paying back debts, and therefore saving public services. All of this was much sound and fury but in essence signified very little. Yet there had been no further evidence that wage controls of any type would work. Meanwhile the unions were growing rapidly, especially in the public sector and among white-collar workers, partly because of the general economic ills of inflation, and partly because of the state's involvement in labour market matters.

In December 1974 the CPGB produced another pamphlet by Ramelson, *Social Contract: Cure-all or Con-trick?* This followed on from his previous critiques of wage restraint, productivity bargaining, and the thinking and reality of Donovan. His previous pamphlets on incomes policies had been produced under the Labour governments of 1964–1970 and the Tory government of 1970–1974, but now Labour and Wilson were back in office and the line had to shift, given that the audience was trade union activists largely supporting the Labour government. Both this 1974 pamphlet and a further one written in March 1977—*Bury the Social Contract: the Case for an Alternative Policy*—are part of the same summary arguments that had been forged from the debate with left-wing union leaders and party economists. As Gill said in his review of the pamphlet: 'Bert Ramelson's pamphlet will help that struggle, and is essential reading for the whole movement' [Gill (1975) 47].

The 1974 pamphlet states that its purpose is to show that 'the Social Contract, far from solving the problems facing the British people, would make them worse'; and to provide an alternative set of policies to fight inflation and unemployment; it also sought to demonstrate that the alternative policy would 'at the same time weaken the grip which the big monopolists have on Britain and create conditions for achieving the aim set out in the Labour Party election manifesto – "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of the working people and their families"' [Ramelson (1974 December) 3]. The case for an 'alternative' economic and political strategy developed from these early writings into a more fully fledged set of policies based on state ownership, greater democracy, greater regulation of finance and large businesses, more planning, more local control, and more say for workers in the workplace and in their communities.

The government's parliamentary majority was dwindling as by-election losses mounted up, and just as the seafarers called a strike so Bank Rate went up to 15% and the pound slumped. Again the government 'went cap in hand' to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and, despite endless Cabinet meetings to discuss terms, Denis Healey came back with the requirement to cut and cut again. This was the real start of monetarism and the demise of traditional Keynesian policies, thus, as Miliband foretold, paving the way for a more strident right-wing government [Miliband (1972)]. The immediate impact was that intended, however, with a short period of market and currency calm, and with it a sanguine optimism that all would now be well —especially with a UK friend in the White House (Jimmy Carter) and North Sea oil revenues reversing the balance-of-payments deficit.

As all this was taking place, the CPGB was preparing for its National Congress, at which the Party's revolutionary strategy, the *British Road to Socialism*, was up for debate and revision. As the Party's opposition to the direction of the Labour government had grown, and as its disappointment with some left-leaning union leaders was becoming more apparent, so the search was on to broaden the party's base and to refashion its image and message in line with changes in the working class itself. Ramelson himself was very interested by the developments inside the working class, with the rise of new technical and white-collar jobs, and the relative change in the proportion of skilled manual workers amongst men. He understood how this might impact on

the arguments needed to persuade this generation of workers about exploitation and unionism, but also that different ways of working mattered.

Ramelson's retirement from the industrial department was announced at the end of the 1977 CPGB Congress. In a short thank you speech Gordon McLennan, the new general secretary, referred to Ramelson as a much-loved comrade who had given him and other leading communists invaluable advice over the years, based on his long and varied experience in the movement and his unswerving loyalty to the party and to the international communist movement. He then announced that Ramelson would still be working full-time at the party's London headquarters, though in an as yet unspecified role.

From his 'retirement' in 1977 to his death in 1994 Ramelson remained active across the spectrum of his main interests: foreign and industrial policy; peace and the Israeli/Palestine conflict; and the future of communism and the CPGB itself. Much of this was achieved through his position on the editorial board of *World Marxist Review.* While he was nominally full-time, he managed to negotiate a special arrangement which typically involved spending one week a month in Prague to attend editorial board and other business meetings (including international seminars on topical theoretical issues), while the rest of the month could be spent in Britain, where he would liaise with the printers and distributors of the English-language edition and commission articles from British contributors.

Ramelson's role as a sort of Minister without Portfolio attached to the party's international department was about to take a new and important turn. During the 1970s the communist movement in Afghanistan had made significant advances and established a strong base among young officers within the armed forces. By 1978 these elements were strong enough to win state power through a military coup against the corrupt regime of Daud Khan, and to establish a progressive regime guaranteeing new social and economic rights for the people such as women's equality and land reform. At the same time links at state level were established with the neighbouring Soviet Union, and these were formalised in treaties pledging military and economic aid. Ramelson was one of a handful of Western observers of these events which later ended with the catastrophic involvement of the Taliban in Afghan life. He also followed events in Poland, as he reported 'I have heard four Polish representatives from the current leadership in Havana, Prague, and twice in Sofia at international gatherings… [all] stressed precisely the fact of the genuinely spontaneous and understandable eruption of the movement of discontent' [*Marxism Today*, July 1988]. He was endlessly embroiled in Middle East affairs, especially focussed on berating the Israeli government's treatment of the Palestinians and failure to move towards a peace settlement.

Ramelson was still regularly consulted by both CPGB and trade union leaders such as Arthur Scargill, Jack Jones, and Ken Gill. He continued to take a close interest in trade union questions and was supplied with copies of TUC General Council papers by his trade union comrades for most of the 1980s. It is no surprise, therefore, that from the start of the NUM's overtime ban and then the first day that the miners came out on strike in March 1984 Ramelson became deeply engaged in support for their cause. It was after all with the Yorkshire miners that he had first developed the broad left strategy which was to transform the NUM and to lead to positive developments in many other unions. In particular, he had a good working relationship with Arthur Scargill, Mick McGahey, and Peter Heathfield, the three senior officials in the union.

The central question that had been at issue during the 1977 CPGB congress debate on the *British Road to Socialism*—the level of relative importance in the movement for socialism of the working class and other social forces, and of the industrial struggle in comparison to other battles—simply would not go away [Ramelson (1986)]. The end of the CPGB was not long in coming. In March 1988 the neo-Gramscians (aligned with the so-called Euro-communists) in

the leadership of the party turned their attention to strategic issues. In their eyes it was necessary to abandon the approach of the *British Road to Socialism* with its emphasis on class struggle and the labour movement. What they required was an entirely new way forward that stressed the role played by the various social movements outside the labour movement. This was allied with attacks on what they saw as the economism of the CPGB's position and its pro-Soviet policies. Inspired in part by their interpretation of what was happening in France and Italy (the 'historic compromise') these 'Euro-communist' cadres fought for new definitions of class and against the hegemony of the working-class as debated in the pages of *Marxism Today*, edited by the influential Martin Jacques [Andrews (2004) 159–166].

Ramelson bitterly opposed both the analysis and the practical implications in terms of the role of the communists. He along with others argued that the Euro-communists had produced a document that 'failed to recognize the centrality of the class struggle in capitalist Britain today', and that its 'definitions of class were un-Marxist and confused – it is… unsustainable from any point of view' [*Daily Telegraph*, 24 August 1988]. While he was still engaged in the struggle to save the CPGB, Ramelson's health continued to give him problems. Although he had a strong physical constitution, years of good living and lack of exercise had taken their toll, while the legacy of his Spanish civil war wound to his right leg remained. In June 1985, at seventy-five, he had had a further operation on his leg to bypass an arterial blockage. Nonetheless, he continued to remain politically involved. For example, he shared a platform with Arthur Scargill in Barnsley during the May 1987 General Election campaign, where, addressing a packed meeting, he urged the audience to 'go out and fight for Labour' and to go on after the election campaigning for socialist policies [*Morning Star*, 16 May 1987].

As 1993 progressed Ramelson found it increasingly difficult to read or to express himself, whether verbally or in writing. Nonetheless, he continued with his taped interviews with Rodney Bickerstaffe, and he always made visitors welcome, anxious as he was to keep abreast of political developments. He remained in good spirits and retained his optimism about possibilities for social and political advance in Britain and the world. By the second half of the year he was relying on others to read to him. Two of his readers both recall that Ramelson never tired of discussing trends and events, and that he always had something forceful and pertinent to say, even if he sometimes had difficulty in finding the words he wanted. During most weeks in this period Ramelson spent several hours with Jim Mortimer, who read to him from books dealing with theoretical questions from a Marxist perspective. The book which engaged them most was Alec Nove's *The Economics of Feasible Socialism* (1983), with Ramelson supporting the argument that within the context of state ownership of the main industrial and financial centres, socialism could best be developed through decentralised forms of ownership, and that regulated markets rather than rigid central planning were the best way of allocating resources in commodity production and exchange.

Early in 1994, Ramelson was taken ill with what was diagnosed as respiratory failure. In April he was admitted to Lewisham Hospital, where he died on 13 April 1994. On the day before he died he asked his wife Joan to be sure to post a donation to the African National Congress Election Fund in South Africa to assist the liberation movement's triumph at the first post-apartheid elections.

Ramelson lived a life of a revolutionary at work. He succeeded for a time in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but eventually, the problems mounted and the world which he had been brought up in, and contributed to, disappeared. All the same, he never stopped believing in and fighting for a socialist alternative. Lengthy obituaries appeared, ranging in tone from eulogistic to respectful; all recognised the passing of a leading communist who had made a substantial contribution to working-class struggles and labour movement politics. In the *Morning Star*, Kevin Halpin paid tribute to 'an outstanding Communist', and gave particular recognition to Ramelson's role as an innovator and strategist. Seumas Milne in the *Guardian* said: 'Ramelson was a master strategist with a powerful intellect who gave the Communist Party influence far

beyond its membership and supporters and trained a whole generation of industrial militants'. But as he also pointed out, 'Ramelson was a strong believer in building organisation from the shop floor and the strategy paid off handsomely'. The *Times* obituarist recognised Ramelson as 'a brilliant organiser' and a man who made a 'great contribution to the Communist Party and labour movement militancy'.

Ramelson was deeply influenced by his roots and early experiences in the Ukraine, Canada, Palestine, and later fighting in the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. These events and activities created in him a burning sense of the need to and possibility of removing injustice and inequality through the overthrow of the state that kept them alive, the capitalist state. Ramelson was never negative, and saw that replacing like with like was of no use, and that what was needed therefore was a socialism built on liberty, equality, solidarity, and democracy. This was no idle sentiment, and his whole adult life was dedicated to its achievement through the development of styles of work, strategic consideration of British conditions, and the need to act in a disciplined as well as a principled way inside a revolutionary party working with the wider labour movement. He died believing that socialism was the best possible system, and that struggling for such an outcome was to live the best possible life.

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**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: All quotes from Ramelson himself come either from transcripts of interviews held at the Imperial War Museum or from interviews with Rodney Bickerstaffe; CPGB archives in People's History Museum, Manchester (CP/RAM/IND). (**2**) **Newspapers and Periodicals**: *Comment*; *Marxism Today*; *Morning Star/Daily Worker*; *Needs of the Hour*; *World Marxist Review*; *Labour Monthly*. (**3**) **Books and Articles**: K. Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. (1885); K. Marx, *Capital: a critical analysis of capitalist production*, (1887); V. Lenin, *State and Revolution* (1917); H. Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (Harmondsworth, 1961); J.E. Williams, *The Derbyshire miners: a study in industrial and social history* (1962); D. Wilson, *Dockers* (1972); W. Thompson and H. Finlay, *The UCS Work-In* (1972); R. Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (1973); K. Gill, 'Review of 'Social contract' by Bert Ramelson', *Comment*, 8 February 1975; M. Ramelson, *The Petticoat Rebellion: A Century of Struggle for Women's Rights* (1976); J. Gollan, 'The 20th Congress of the CPSU in Retrospect', *Marxism Today* (January 1976); G. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence (Oxford, 1978); B.* McCormick, *Industrial Relations in the Coal Industry* (1979); M. Pitt, *The World on our Backs: the Kent Miners and the 1972 Miners' Strike* (1979); S. Aaronovitch, *The Road from Thatcherism: The Alternative Economic Strategy* (1981); J. Gormley, *Battered Cherub* (1982); N. Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927–1941* (1985); A. Bunyan, 'From Saltley to Orgreave via Brixton', *Journal of Law and Society*, vol. 12, no. 3 (1985); A.A. Carruth and A.J. Oswald, 'Miners' Wages in Post-war Britain: An Application of a Model Of Trade Union Behaviour', *The Economic Journal*, vol. 95, no. 380, (1985); W. Wedderburn, *The Worker and the Law*, (Harmondsworth, 1986); J. Foster and C. Woolfson, *The Politics of the UCS Work-in*, (1986); D. Childs, 'The Cold War and the 'British Road', 1946–53', *Journal of Contemporary History*, *vol. 23 (1988); J. Winterton and R. Winterton*, *Coal*, *Crisis*, *and Conflict (Manchester*, *1989); K.* Morgan, *The People's Peace: British*

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ROGER SEIFERT AND TOM SIBLEY

*See also*: †Reginald 'Reg' BIRCH; †Michael 'Mick' McGAHEY

**SANDERS, Haydn** (1860–1937)
SOCIALIST AND LEADER OF THE BRITISH KNIGHTS OF LABOR

Hadyn Sanders was born on 25 February 1860 in Walsall. His father, William H. Sanders, owned a small cabinet-lock-making workshop in the town and had long played a prominent role in local radical politics. Hadyn was nothing if not his father's son. He spent time in his father's workshop and later claimed to have developed lock-making patents of his own [*Walsall Free Press*, 27 April 1889]. He also passed through a wide range of radical tendencies in his early twenties, and according to one of his critics he became, at turns, 'a flaming Bradlaughite, a Freethinker, a Malthusian, a Spiritualist, a Liberal, a Radical, a Socialist or soloist, and goodness knows what else besides' [*Walsall Free Press*, 19 January 1889]. By 1887 he settled on socialism and for the next ten years he became one of the first socialists to win election to a town council in the United Kingdom. His career as a trade unionist mirrored the rise and fall of the 'New Unionism', that period in the late 1880s and early 1890s which saw the rapid growth of strikes and union membership and a whole host of unions representing hitherto unorganised workers, including female and unskilled labour. Sanders also played an instrumental role in the British and Irish history of the Knights of Labor, an American labour organisation that briefly became a global movement in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and organised upwards of 10–15,000 workers in Britain and Ireland at its peak.

In 1887 Sanders became the secretary of a new Walsall branch of the Socialist League, a party that split from the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) in 1884. Two branches of the League soon opened in the vicinity of Walsall. *Commonweal*, the League's official organ, reported in July 1887 that the Walsall branch 'was making exceptional progress,' and soon described the Midlands as 'a good field for Socialist propaganda' [*Commonweal*, 16 and 23 July and 8 October 1887]. Sanders even became 'responsible for the first socialist propagandist effort in north Wales to be recorded in print' while on holiday there [Wright (2011) 39]. Through a series of debates around Walsall in 1888 with Christian Socialists and other radicals, where he urged 'no compromise on the part of Socialists with Radicals or Liberals,' Sanders became an increasingly visible player on Walsall's political scene [*Walsall Observer*, 24 March 1888]. He also developed close ties with socialists in nearby Birmingham, most of whom remained affiliated with the SDF.

By 1888, 'Sanders of Walsall' was a regular feature (and speaker) at socialist gatherings, demonstrations and congresses all over the Birmingham area [*Justice*, 11 August 1888].

In the middle of 1888 Sanders took a large step forward within the socialist movement. A vacancy opened up on the Walsall Town Council in St George's Ward and he put himself forward as a socialist candidate for the election in October. His explicitly socialist platform offered the eight-hour day for council employees, cheap working-class accommodation, free baths and libraries, and the use of council revenues to fund work schemes to relieve unemployment, amongst other demands [*Walsall Observer*, 20 October 1888]. Sanders held regular public meetings at The Bridge, a major thoroughfare in the town that also witnessed speeches from the Salvation Army, temperance groups, and other organisations. His meetings were well attended and raised his profile and that of the Socialist League as a whole. They also provoked complaints from local residents who became annoyed when the crowds of listeners disrupted traffic and, according to the *Walsall Observer*, took 'to throwing stones and brickends about' [*Walsall Observer*, 13 October 1888]. The Town Council acted on these complaints and ordered the police to prevent any further meetings at The Bridge. Sanders and the Walsall socialists now campaigned on the basis of free speech and assembly as well as socialism and on 22 October they went to the polls against Dr. J. Scott Wilson, an independent candidate, and John Venables, representing the Liberal Association.

Their campaign ended in failure. Dr Wilson topped the poll with 1002 votes, Venables came second with 646, and Sanders came last with 445 [*Walsall Observer*, 27 October 1888]. But another election in the same ward occurred only a week later, and Sanders put his name forward again. The result of that election stunned the town. Sanders came first with 1055 votes, while Councillor E.S. Hildick received 986 and J.N. Lester, 901 [*Walsall Observer*, 3 November 1888]. A large crowd gathered to hear the official result announced at the Walsall Guildhall and when it finished 'Mr Sanders was then taken possession of by his supporters, and carried shoulder high down to the Bridge amid continued cheers' [*Walsall Observer*, 3 November 1888]. Rumours soon spread around the town that many Conservatives voted for Sanders in order to embarrass the Liberals, and these rumours soon compelled a representative of the local Conservative Working Men's Club to deny them in print [*Walsall Observer*, 3 November 1888]. The local newspapers were openly shocked and appalled by the result. Walsall had, according to the *Observer*, achieved 'the high position of being the only town in the kingdom, we believe, in which a Socialist has been elected' [*Walsall Observer*, 3 November 1888].

Sanders' election to the Walsall Town Council was indeed a remarkable result. It came at almost the same time that socialists elsewhere in Britain celebrated their first major electoral victory—the ascension of Annie Besant, supported by the SDF, to the London School Board. It came a year before John Burns won election to the London County Council whilst still an SDF member. It came in a town known for its Liberal politics, aside from occasional Conservative victories, for most of the nineteenth century and even for much of the twentieth, certainly well after the Labour Party had achieved electoral dominance in many other parts of the country [Dean (1972) 5]. Sanders's victory also made for a stark comparison with the electoral fortunes of socialists in nearby Birmingham. There, socialists came last in every municipal election throughout the 1880s and 1890s. It is certainly true that Sanders's victory was due in large part to the issue of free speech and assembly which he and the socialists took up in earnest after the Council prevented them from holding meetings at The Bridge. But there were also signs that many newly enfranchised working-class electors felt that Walsall's Liberal consensus needed shaking up at the very least. Sanders might 'promise a lot,' one worker wrote to the *Observer*, 'but 'perhaps he'll do a little bit, which will be a sight better than promising a little and doing nothing at all' [*Walsall Observer*, 13 October 1888].

Local newspaper editors hoped that Sanders's election would moderate his views and leave the tranquillity of local politics undisturbed. 'While we honestly confess that we deplore his election as a matter of principle,' claimed the *Walsall Observer*, 'we believe that as he finds the

impracticability of his ideals, he will be ready to try and do his best with what is possible, and thus become a useful and respected member of our governing body' [*Walsall Observer*, 3 November 1888]. If anything Sanders only grew more strident while in office. He frequently punctuated council meetings with sharp questions that he directed at other councillors, with speeches directed to his supporters in the audience, and with advice to the town clerk on matters ranging from the poor state of housing and the hours and wages of municipal employees to, as the report of one council meeting put it, 'fleecers, bondholders, shareholders, light men and dark men, fleabites, and other "relevant" matters' [*Walsall Free Press*, 16 March 1889]. One town councillor told the press that he 'felt humiliated to have to go there time after time and listen for hours to the rubbish which Mr Sanders uttered' [*Walsall Advertiser*, 19 March 1889]. Despite this criticism, however, Sanders brought important and hitherto neglected issues to the fore at council meetings, such as the profits of the municipal gasworks, which the council owned. He also encouraged a number of other councillors to profess their support, rhetorically at least, for serious attention to working-class housing in the town and the surrounding area [*Walsall Free Press*, 19 October 1889].

Sanders also refused to moderate the manner in which he practised politics. If the Mayor and the council did not seem interested in what he had to say he was not above speaking over them. At one meeting in June, 1889, Councillor Baker, the chairman of the Finance Committee, rose to adopt the finding of its report, and 'Councillor H Sanders was seen also to be talking.' When Baker stopped Sanders continued. 'No sooner had a member arisen to asked as to the legality of such an interruption on the very threshold of the business,' the *Walsall Free Press* reported:

> That like the lion shaking the dew-drops from his mane, Councillor Sanders rose in his might, the "coo" became an excited roar, verging at times on the hysterical, and as it became a question of who could shout the loudest, the room fairly rang with the rounded periods and Demosthenes-like eloquence of the member for St George's Ward. It was in this form the business of the Council was conducted for a period of exactly half an hour [*Walsall Free Press*, 15 June 1889].

He faced particularly heavy criticism from the local press when, at a meeting of the Birmingham Trades Council in April 1889, he described his fellow town councillors as 'bald-headed, pot-bellied old town councillors, who were fonder of guzzling than of justice.' One newspaper added that 'after the word "guzzling" Councillor Sanders used the words "and gutsing;" but as the latter was a word of uncertain orthography and meaning, and withal more indecent than some other words which were printed, it was omitted from the report' [*Birmingham Daily Post*, 7 April 1889].

The local press pounced on these words. The *Walsall Free Press* claimed that 'there is not an out and out "bald-headed" man among them, and "pot-bellies" are as scarce as bald-heads; while the "guzzling" propensities of "each and all" are wonderfully conspicuous by their absence' [*Walsall Free Press*, 13 April 1889]. The *Walsall Advertiser* suggested that Sanders nurtured his own penchant for "guzzling,' and claimed that 'there is much talk going on as to the state this model Town Councillor was in himself when he left Birmingham that same evening' [*Walsall Advertiser*, 18 April 1889]. Other newspapers generally deplored his 'radicalism and unsavoury behaviour' [*Midland Counties Express*, 2 November 1889] and admitted that Sanders had succeeded 'in perplexing almost beyond endurance the journalists of the town' [*Walsall Observer*, 23 February 1889].

Sanders and the local branches of the Socialist League, meanwhile, spent 1889 trying to get more socialists to join him on the Walsall Town Council and other municipal bodies. Their candidate for the Walsall School Board, Jean Guillemard, came last place in the January election and the *Walsall Advertiser* predicted that the Socialists had 'polled their last man' [*Walsall Advertiser*, 26 January 1889]. The Walsall socialists now looked to an unusual source of

support in their attempts to establish a permanent political presence in the town. 'Having been deprived of all public speaking places in the borough,' the Liverpool *Halfpenny Weekly* later explained, 'the Socialist party turned their attention to the next best work that lay to their hands. They finally hit upon and decided to start the Knights of Labour' [*Halfpenny Weekly*, 4 January 1890].

The Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor began in Philadelphia in 1869, grew slowly in the 1870s and then exploded onto the American scene in the following decade. In 1886 they numbered nearly a million members and led many of the strikes, boycotts and political campaigns that historians now collectively term the Great Upheaval (1885–1887). Indeed, American Knights boasted an enviable record of winning municipal elections across the United States during the 1880s, whether through independent labour parties or local Democratic and Republican parties, that must have attracted Sanders and his colleagues. The Knights also expanded beyond the United States, firstly in Canada from the 1870s and then, in the 1880s and 1890s, organising their assemblies, as they called their branches, in Belgium, England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, France, Italy, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand [Parfitt 2015]. The Knights established their first English assembly in 1884, organising window-glass workers in St Helens, Sunderland, and West Bromwich, and their assemblies spread throughout the Black Country in the next four years [Pelling (1956)]. They attracted the membership of leading or soon-to-be leading socialists and trade unionists such as Ben Turner, James Sexton, Samuel Reeves, Robert Cunninghame Graham, and Michael Davitt.

By 1888 they established their first assembly in Walsall, Local Assembly 454 (LA454). By the end of November, 1888, LA454 was already described by *Reynolds's Newspaper* as 'a force in the town and district' of Walsall [*Reynolds's Newspaper*, 24 November 1888]. Knights in Walsall maintained strict secrecy around all of their activities until August 1889, as American Knights had done until they became an open organisation in the early 1880s. Their first public meeting featured James P. Archibald, one of the Order's visiting organisers; Hadyn Sanders served as the chairman. Introducing Archibald, Sanders claimed that 'local knights were making rapid headway in and around Walsall' and instanced a strike of bit-filers and forgers that they had supported financially and otherwise [*Labour Tribune*, 31 August 1889]. By that time, if not before, Sanders had become LA454's Master Workman, the top executive position in a local assembly of the Knights of Labor.

The assembly grew rapidly in the rest of 1889 and the start of the following year. In November, 1889, the Knights claimed to organise forty distinct trades and as many as 1000 workers in the Walsall area [*Halfpenny Weekly*, 30 November 1889]. In December, Sanders opened LA1743 in nearby Bloxwich with Frederick Eglington, the leader of the Walsall and Bloxwich Bit-filers' and Forgers' Association, as its Master Workman [*Walsall Free Press*, December 7, 1889]. Sanders also proved to be a capable negotiator. Thanks to his leadership, local bridle-bit-makers won a 5% increase in addition to a further 10% over the preceding year, all without needing to strike, and the cased-hame, solid-hame and awl-blade makers, representing other local saddlery trades, presented their claims to employers and also managed to secure wage rises without the need for industrial action [*Halfpenny Weekly*, 30 November 1889; *Walsall Observer*, 14 December 1889, 25 January 1890]. Indeed, the Walsall Knights grew so quickly because they absorbed many small societies of craftsmen that hoped that the Order would grant them financial support, and other groups of workers whose unions had broken down and now saw the Knights as the means to reviving them. Not everyone in the local labour movement welcomed this process. Samuel Welsh, the President of the local Coach Harness Furniture Trade Society, a body which the Knights hoped to absorb into LA454, argued that 'the Knights operated with 'money obtained by means of delusive promises incapable of realisation [which] is wastefully expended in providing residences and exorbitant salaries for domineering officials' in the United States [*Walsall Observer*, 11 January 1890].

Most of all, Sanders and the Walsall socialists sought to make LA454 the basis of a working-class political movement in the town. In early October, 1889, an assembly meeting put forward four possible candidates for the upcoming council elections. Of these they selected two, Frederick Eglington and Haydn Sanders' father, W.H. Sanders. [*Walsall Observer*, October 12 and 19, 1889] The *Observer* noted that 'the Socialists, as a body, will not, we learn, put forward any candidate of their own, but will give their influence and votes to those selected by the Knights of Labour' [*Walsall Observer*, 12 October 1889]. In these elections, unlike the one that brought Sanders onto the Town Council the year before, Walsall's political elites united against the Knights of Labor candidates. 'In view of the disaster of last November,' the *Walsall Advertiser* exhorted the town, 'it behoves every burgesses to interest himself in the matter, and to see that the character of the Council is maintained' [*Walsall Advertiser*, 19 October 1889]. 'Abstentions from the poll may be dangerous,' the *Midland Counties Express* concluded [*Midland Counties Express*, 26 October 1889]. Local labour leaders with connections to the Liberal Party, such as Benjamin Dean, the leader of the local miners' union, also refused to support the Knights of Labor candidates and urged the election of their Liberal opponents. Dean's name appeared on handbills attacking the Knights that circulated around the town just before the poll [*Walsall Free Press*, 7 December 1889].

Local newspapers even claimed that LA454 was by no means united behind Sanders and the Knights of Labor candidates. The *Walsall Free Press* claimed that Sanders was taking 'a too dominant attitude' within the local assembly and raised the question of 'whether Messrs Sanders, being employers of labour, can according to the principles of the order, consistently be members of an institution which declines to recognise employers or professions with regard to membership.' The council campaign, moreover, 'was by no means a unanimous piece of business,' and the *Free Press* suggested that 'the contests in both wards consequently appear to have been forced on the constituencies by one particular section of the order' [*Walsall Free Press*, 26 October 1889]. Whether or not these claims were true they certainly sowed doubt in the minds of the Knights' supporters. The political establishment of Walsall then closed the campaign with the circulation of anonymous leaflets around the town, which questioned Eglington's working-class credentials and accused W.H. Sanders of embezzling the proceeds from a concert held to raise money for a local hospital [*Walsall Free Press*, 7 December 1889].

The election took place on 1 November 1889 with a low turnout, possibly because of the unprecedentedly dirty nature of the campaign. Neither of the Knights of Labour candidates secured election to the council. W.H. Sanders, standing in St George's Ward, gained 753 votes, well behind J.N. Lester on 1401 votes and T. Franks on 1065. Frederick Eglington, however, only narrowly failed to win in the Foreign Ward, securing 706 votes against 771 and 767, respectively, for his opponents [*Walsall Observer*, 2 November 1889]. After the results were declared, Haydn Sanders told his supporters to 'stick to it lads,' and added that 'they belonged… to the largest trades-union in the world [the Knights of Labor], and if they made as much progress in the next twelve months as they had done in the last they "would make the bosses sit up."' The *Walsall Advertiser* scoffed at this remark. Comparing Hadyn's 1055 votes in 1888 with his father's 753 votes in 1889, one of the paper's writers concluded that 'I may be stupid, but it really does appear to me that if the progress goes on at this rate, it will be some time before the "bosses" need trouble themselves as to what the consequences will be of their having to "sit up"' [*Walsall Advertiser*, 9 November 1889].

Sanders remained on Walsall Council after the election. He continued to disrupt business when he felt that insufficient attention was being paid to issues such as working-class housing, the pay of municipal employees, and the running of the municipal gasworks. In November 1889, for example, police ejected him from the proceedings of the Gas Committee, still protesting from his chair, when he tried to address the committee (of which he was not a member) and refused to leave when asked [*Midland Advertiser*, 16 November 1889]. Sanders also continued to direct the growth of the Knights in Walsall and even brought about the revival of the Walsall

Trades Council, which had disintegrated in the 1870s. The creation of the new Trades Council also allowed him to mend fences with Samuel Welsh and other enemies in the Walsall labour movement: Sanders and the Knights on the one hand, and Welsh and local trade unionists on the other, had each held separate meetings in support of a new Trades Council and in March 1890 they agreed to join their respective forces to make it happen [*Walsall Observer*, February 22, March 8 and March 22, 1890].

Sanders also sought to give the upsurge in socialist and working-class politics in Walsall an institutional shape. At the 1890 congress of the Labour Electoral Association (LEA), a body loosely connected with the Trades Union Congress (TUC) that promoted the election of working-class representatives to all levels of government, he told delegates that his experience of municipal politics in Walsall had convinced him that the labour movement needed people who could devote all their time to the task of representing their constituents. 'Everything was usually cut and dried by the Mayors and Town Clerks before the council meetings were held,' he claimed, and he 'maintained that the most practicable and only satisfactory method for those who sent working men to represent them on local bodies was to pay them for their services' [*Labour Electoral Association*, 1890, p. 29]. Sanders, and local Knights and socialists, put this lesson into action when they created the Walsall Labour Representative Wages Fund. Frederick Eglington, the Master Workman of LA1743, acted as its secretary and J.T. Deakin, a member of the Socialist League, acted as its treasurer.

The Fund's rationale was simple. 'Until the present time,' its manifesto declared, Sanders 'has given his time and services gratuitously'; after his election to the council, however, it became 'impossible for him to bear the increased strain unless some financial assistance is afforded him' [*Walsall Wages Fund*, 1]. The manifesto then listed his achievements as a Knight and as a Town Councillor and rather disingenuously suggested that 'his policy and programme is entirely free from Political Parties' [*Walsall Wages Fund*, 1]. The fund's balance sheets no longer exist but there is strong evidence that a number of societies and individuals, especially those that benefited from Sanders' leadership during a strike or dispute, did contribute money towards it. The Walsall and Bloxwich Bit-filers' and Forgers' Association, for instance, contributed £2 in the year ending July 1890 [*Walsall Free Press*, 12 July 1890]. The Walsall Wages Fund was directly comparable, if on a smaller scale, with the Battersea Labour League that paid and campaigned for John Burns as a London County Councillor and then as a Member of Parliament during the 1890s. Both were based around a charismatic labour leader, and indeed Sanders' rising star between 1888 and 1890 mirrored that of Burns, even if the latter appeared on the largest political stage in the country—London—while Sanders only bestrode a middling-sized provincial town.

In those years, as trade improved and unemployment receded, existing unions organised thousands of new members and a whole host of new unions emerged, many of them catering to hitherto unorganised and, often enough, unskilled and female workers. The TUC, which represented 817,000 workers in 1888, organised 1,470,000 in 1890. The number of strikes rose from 517 in 1888 to 1211 in 1889, and the number of strikers increased from 119,000 in 1888 to around 400,000 in 1890. Burns and other 'New Unionists', such as Tom Mann and Will Thorne, many of them from a socialist background, encouraged a more militant attitude at meetings of the TUC from 1890 onwards. They particularly opposed the Lib-Lab leaders of the TUC for their caution and conservatism, even if, as revisionist historians have noted, many of the New Unionists, Burns chief amongst them, soon resembled the 'Old Unionists' more than the other way around.

The same improvement in trade had also sped the growth of the Knights of Labor in Britain, and in Walsall in particular. It certainly propelled Haydn Sanders to leadership of the town's labour movement, especially given his organisational and oratorical gifts. In addition to his duties as Master Workman of LA454 he served in 1889 and 1890 as secretary for the Walsall branch of one of the iconic 'new unions', the National Union of Gas Workers and General

Labourers, as well [*Walsall Observer*, 16 November 1889]. Sanders also created his own new union, one that survives, albeit after a series of mergers with and absorptions into other unions over the years, into the present: the National Union of Stove-Grate Workers. The creation of this new union led Sanders from Walsall to Rotherham in south Yorkshire, the centre of the stove-grate industry [Munford (2003) 77], and severed his ties with the Walsall Town Council and the Knights of Labor.

Rotherham stove-grate workers began to join the Knights of Labor at the end of 1888, at about the same time as LA454. The first assembly, LA1266, was joined in August 1889 by another, with a combined membership of 400, and by the beginning of 1890 ten assemblies organised the vast majority of stove-grate workers in the industry [*Rotherham Advertiser*, 31 August 1889; *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 11 May 1890]. In March, 1890, the stove-grate workers decided to take advantage of improving economic conditions and demand an immediate wage advance of 10%. They claimed that this rise was justified given recent productivity improvements in the industry [*Reynolds's Newspaper*, 11 May 1890]. Thomas Dean, one of the leaders of the Birmingham Knights, led a delegation to meet with the Rotherham stove-grate manufacturers and win this 10% rise through a negotiated settlement. Few employers even deigned to meet with the Knights. In mid-March, stove-grate workers across Rotherham handed in their notices and went on strike [*Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 10 March 1890].

The stove-grate workers now called on Haydn Sanders, with his trade union experience and notoriety in Walsall, to lead their strike to a successful finish. Sanders, who had already agitated around Rotherham on behalf of the Knights in 1889, arrived on 24 March [*Rotherham Advertiser*, 28 September 1889]. He emphasised his determination to win the strike through a negotiated settlement. Employers viewed him as a 'paid agitator' and refused to meet with any delegation of strikers that he led [*Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 12 May 1890]. The strikers, on the other hand, quickly took to Sanders. Even one of his few critics within the ranks of the stove-grate workers admitted that many of them 'have got "Sanders on the brain"' [*Rotherham Advertiser*, 3 May 1890]. The Knights continued to grow in the midst of the strike and in the middle of May, the employers conceded the 10% increase. The *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* credited Sanders, along with the employers' representatives, for their 'delicate management of the negotiations' [*Rotherham Advertiser*, 17 May 1890; *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 12 May 1890]. The Knights, under Sanders' leadership, won the largest strike in their British and Irish history.

But the Knights failed to capitalise on their success. The assemblies either did not or could provide strike pay to all of the strikers, and as soon as the strike ended, stove-grate workers began to organise a new union that covered workers in the industry all over Britain [*Reynolds's Newspaper*, 11 May 1890; *Rotherham Advertiser*, 17 May 1890]. The new National Union of Stove-Grate Workers soon left the assemblies of the Knights of Labor with few functions to perform, even if stove-grate workers initially planned to affiliate their new union with the Knights [*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 20 May 1890]. The Knights also lost the services of Sanders, who became the first President of the National Union of Stove-Grate Workers, and moved from Walsall to Rotherham, where the new union established its headquarters.

This meant that Sanders gave up his position on the Walsall Town Council. The town's press greeted this news with relief, even if the *Walsall Free Press*, along with other newspapers, now also admitted that 'there can be no doubt that a great number of people in Walsall have benefited by his advocacy of their interests, and they will regret his departure' [*Walsall Free Press*, 31 May 1890]. The new Stove-Grate Union, meanwhile, grew rapidly as Sanders toured the other major English centres of stove-grate production. By July, 1890, the union possessed eight branches and more than two thousand members [*Rotherham Advertiser*, 12 July 1890]. The branch at Belper, in Derbyshire, went on strike in August; Sanders led that battle to victory as well [*Rotherham Advertiser*, 30 August 1890]. In September, Sanders went to organise stove-grate workers in London into his union, which he claimed would soon encompass all

15,000 British workers engaged in the stove-grate industry [*Reynolds's Newspaper*, 28 September 1890]. While there Sanders spoke at meetings alongside John Burns, the man whose career appeared as mirror image, if a larger one, of his own. At this point Sanders had certainly become one of the more successful of the 'new' British trade unionists.

He also became the leader *de facto* of the Rotherham labour movement. In May, 1891, he led calls for a new Rotherham Trades Council that could organise future May Day demonstrations and bring together the organised, and unorganised, workers of the town. In the same month a meeting of five unions agreed on the necessity for a Trades Council and the new body began in September with an affiliated membership of 2000 [James (1968) 4–5]. One of its supporters later claimed that it was 'established on lines never before attempted by any section of the Trade Unionist world.' Instead of merely providing the means for organised workers to 'exchange opinions, advise each other in time of strike, and allow the members to collect at the shop gates of the various unions federated with the different councils,' as with all previous trades councils, the Rotherham Trades Council embodied a 'new idea, viz., of having a Trades Council, whose members paid one penny per week, and got 5s in return for it while on strike' [*Rotherham Advertiser*, 12 March 1892]. This idea very closely resembled what Sanders had claimed that the Knights of Labor would do in Walsall several years earlier. Needless to say, Sanders also became the first secretary of the new Rotherham Trades Council. He also transferred his political activities from Walsall to Rotherham. In November, 1890, Sanders stood for election to the Rotherham School Board as part of the 'Unsectarian Five', a self-explanatory ticket that favoured a more secular approach to education. With union backing he easily won election [*Rotherham Advertiser*, 15 November 1890]. Characteristically, the chairman of the first meeting of the new School Board had to call Sanders to order after he directed a blast of rhetoric against the members of the old Board [*Rotherham Advertiser*, 29 November 1890].

Yet Sanders' fortunes now began to turn for the worse. His outspoken style soon led to a running battle with the leaders of the Sheffield Trades Council. His Stove-Grate Union, which sought to organise all workers in the industry regardless of skill, also found itself under attack from established unions of skilled workers in the stove-grate trades. The Friendly Society of Iron Founders, which had raised money to support the Rotherham strikers between March and May 1890, soon 'resolved not to recognise in any way such a union which is antagonistic to our interests,' and the two sides began to trade accusations of strike-breaking as well as interfering with the jurisdictional boundaries of the other side [Ironfounders Minutes; *Rotherham Advertiser*, February 14 and 21, 1891]. Sanders injudiciously labelled the Iron Founders as 'knobsticks'; leaders of the Sheffield Trades Council described Sanders as 'not being a trade unionist, but an adventurer,' and further claimed that he had 'a great aspiration to become a paid MP' [National Union and the Ironfounders; *Rotherham Advertiser*, 23 July 1892].

Sanders suffered the most damaging blow to his stature as a labour leader at the Newcastle Trades Union Congress in 1891. Although he had attended the 1890 Congress as President of the National Union of Stove-Grate Workers, the Standing Orders Committee argued that Sanders "had never been a workman,' and must leave the Congress at once. Sanders and other 'New Unionists' attacked this decision, but after some discussion the Congress upheld the decision of the Standing Orders Committee by 199 votes to 159 [*Sanders and the Trades Union Congress*, 2–7]. The malaise soon spread to his political career as well. He ran for the Rotherham Town Council in 1891 with the support of the Trades Council, the Stove-Grate Workers and the local assemblies of the Knights of Labor [*Rotherham Advertiser*, 26 September 1891]. Despite this support, however, Sanders failed to win election to the Council [*Rotherham Advertiser*, 7 November 1891]. He ran again for the Town Council in 1892, with the same support —but with same result [*Rotherham Advertiser*, 31 December 1892]. The only consolation for Sanders at this time was that his move from Walsall to Rotherham meant that he was not caught up in the Walsall bomb plot of 1892. The former treasurer of the Walsall Labour Representative Wages Fund, J.T. Deakin, along with other anarchists associated with the Walsall branch of the

Socialist League, was arrested on charges of manufacturing explosives. Sanders, at a safe remove from the plot and its consequences, defended Deakin and insisted that the conspiracy, insofar as it actually existed, was the result of 'several foreign refugees' who took advantage of Deakin's 'friendship and sympathy' towards them [*Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 January 1892].

Even his leadership of the National Union of Stove-Grate Workers soon came into question. Sanders had led stove-grate workers in a series of successful strikes at Belper, Openshaw, Bradford, and Stanningley, amongst others, between 1890 and 1893. In the process he had to defend himself (successfully) in court on charges of obstruction and intimidation of non-strikers [*Huddersfield Chronicle*, 12 June 1893]. In 1894, however, Sanders faced challenges from union members who cast him as an autocratic and unreasonable union leader. 'The first time I had the misfortune to differ in opinion with Mr. H Sanders,' one anonymous stove-grate worker claimed in January 1894, 'I was arraigned before an impromptu court martial, the great HS presiding' [*Rotherham Advertiser*, 20 January 1894]. By May, a majority of the union's Executive Council publicly accused Sanders of misappropriating union funds, and in June these divisions became an open split within the union [*Rotherham Advertiser*, 12 May 1894]. Sanders and a minority of the Executive Council left to form their own union, and the two organisations entered into open conflict [*Rotherham Advertiser*, July–October 1894].

Sanders' alleged improprieties received a wide hearing in the local press, especially after his own union took him to court [*Rotherham Advertiser*, 16 February 1895]. In 1895 he was replaced as secretary of the Rotherham Trades Council after further allegations emerged, charging Sanders with stealing or losing £16 from the Trade Council's Free Breakfast Fund, a scheme designed to feed poor children in the area [*Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 27 April 1895]. Sanders managed to escape prosecution in both cases. He even managed to secure re-election to the Rotherham School Board in 1896 [*Rotherham Advertiser*, 20 July 1895; *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 14 November 1896]. His time as a labour leader, however, had ended. His new stove-grate union soon merged into the old one, and Sanders pursued a mixed career as a journalist. He joined the editorial staff of the *Birmingham Owl* in 1889, then started an unsuccessful paper, the *Rotherham Herald*. When that paper failed he filed for bankruptcy. He then moved to Belper, started another unsuccessful newspaper, and then took up a new job as a lecturer. By 1911 he and his wife Louisa and their four children lived in Croydon, not far from the Battersea constituency of John Burns whose career, until the reverses of the mid-1890s, had been so analogous with his own.

Sanders died on 4 April 1937, far removed from the movement that he had briefly helped to build. He left effects valued at £115.00. His career as a labour leader lasted barely more than seven years, from 1888 to 1895. In those seven years, however, he became one of the first socialist town councillors in the United Kingdom, played a crucial role in the rise and fall of the Knights of Labor in Walsall, and after leading a large strike he founded a new union, the National Union of Stove-Grate Workers, which survived as an independent body well into the twentieth century. He also helped to create or revive trades councils in Walsall and Rotherham. Indeed, Sanders' career as a labour leader symbolised in many ways the rise and fall of New Unionism, which exploded onto the British industrial scene in the late 1880s and faded away in the mid-1890s, as trade again declined. Sanders' charisma and his organisational and oratorical talents ensured that he rode the crest of the union wave; his outspoken and often divisive style meant that when the waters of union organisation receded his fortunes receded with them. His subsequent exile from the British labour movement meant that his contributions to that movement have been neglected ever since. John Burns, Tom Mann, Keir Hardie and other figures associated with New Unionism have been commemorated in many ways, and their names have graced parks, schools and other public buildings. Haydn Sanders' name graces only a small square on a council estate in Walsall, and readers must judge whether that serves as an appropriate tribute to his life and work.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Minutes of the Friendly Society of Iron Founders, MSS.41/FSIF/1/4, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick; National Union of Stove Grate Workers and the Ironfounders' Friendly Society: Important Correspondence Between the two Executive Councils, BLPES; Proceedings of the Labour Electoral Association, LSE Library; Mr. Hadyn Sanders and the Trades Union Congress in Newcastle, BLPES; Walsall Labour Representative Wages Fund, Walsall Local History Centre. (**2**) **Periodicals**: *Walsall Free Press*; *Commonweal*; *Justice*; *Walsall Observer*; *Walsall Advertiser*; *Birmingham Daily Post*; *Midland Counties Express*; *Halfpenny Weekly*; *Reynolds's Newspaper*; *Labour Tribune*; *Midland Advertiser*; *Rotherham Advertiser*; *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*; *Pall Mall Gazette*; *Huddersfield Chronicle*. (**3**) **Books**, **Articles and Theses**: unknown author, *Hadyn Sanders and the National Union of Stovegrate Workers* (Walsall, n.d.); Henry Pelling, 'The Knights of Labor in Britain, 1880–1901,' *Economic History Review*, vol. 9 (1956), 313–331; T.H. James, *Stone by Stone: The History of the Rotherham Trades Council*, *1891–1966* (Rotherham, 1968); K.D. Dean, *Town and Westminster: A Political History of Walsall* (Walsall, 1972); Chris Wrigley, 'Liberals and the Desire for Working Class Representatives in Battersea 1886–1922,' in K.D. Brown, (ed.), *Essays In Anti-Labour History* (1974); J. Cronin, 'Strikes, 1870–1914,' in C.J. Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations*, *1875–1914* (Amherst, MA, 1982); Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana, IL, 1983); Tony Munford, *Iron and Steel Town: An Industrial History of Rotherham* (Stroud, 2003); M. Wright, 'Wales and Socialism: Political Culture and National Identity, c. 1880–1914' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cardiff, 2011); Steven Parfitt, 'The First-and-a-half International: The Knights of Labor and the History of International Labour Organizations in the Nineteenth Century,' *Labour History Review*, vol. 80, no. 2 (2015), 135–67.

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*See also*: †John BURNS; †Robert Cunninghame GRAHAME; †Michael DAVITT; †Samuel REEVES; †Ben TURNER; †James SEXTON

**SANKEY, John (Viscount Sankey)** (1866–1948)
LORD CHANCELLOR

John Sankey was born in Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire on 26 October 1866, one of two sons and a daughter of Thomas Sankey and his second wife Catalina, née Dewsbury. Thomas Sankey has been variously described as a grocer specialising in dry goods, a draper, and an undertaker. Catalina Sankey was the daughter of a Manchester clerk, and prior to her marriage had worked as a teacher in Evesham. Thomas Sankey died whilst his children were young; the family subsequently moved to south Wales to be close to Catalina Sankey's brothers in law.

Sankey's education was shaped by the Anglican Church and more specifically the Church of Wales; he went to a local church school and with the financial support of a vicar went to Lancing College. He would remain a committed High Anglican throughout his life. From Lancing he won a scholarship to Jesus College Oxford, a college with long-standing Welsh connections. He achieved Seconds in Honour Moderations in 1887 and in Modern History two years later. He subsequently read for the Bachelor of Civil Law, and was awarded a Third in 1891. A year later he was called to the bar by the Middle Temple.

Returning to South Wales he developed a common-law practice, eventually specialising in workmen's compensation cases. He moved to London in 1907 and became a King's Counsel in 1909. Five years later he was promoted to the King's Bench and was knighted. From 1915 he

acted as chairman of the Enemy Aliens Advisory Committee; his work included assessment of the Irish prisoners interned after the Easter Rising. In 1917 he was appointed GBE.

At the end of the war Sankey had achieved a reputation as an industrious, careful, conciliatory and increasingly senior member of the legal profession. Politically he was a Conservative. In the London County Council (LCC) Election of March 1910, he had stood successfully for one of the two Stepney seats as a Conservative and Municipal Reform Candidate. His party had achieved a large majority at the previous LCC election in 1907 evicting the Progressives who had controlled the authority since its inception. 1910 saw a repeat of this victory albeit with a smaller majority. Sankey's seat was traditionally Conservative. The enfranchisement level was low, many residents were transient and therefore did not qualify for the franchise; overcrowding meant that often tenants did not meet the franchise requirements. The Liberals, effectively in municipal terms the Progressives, were identified with the sizeable local Irish population; the Conservatives could appeal as the English party, an approach that further advantaged them given the sizeable and largely disenfranchised Jewish community. Labour organisation which might have offered an alternative identity to conflicting ethnicities was virtually absent. Sankey, the respectable outsider, fought his only election in an impoverished community far removed from the self-improving respectability that he had grown up in and the legal establishment that he was becoming part of. He served one term on the LCC and did not contest the 1913 election [Sankey Papers (SP) C502, ff 68–69].

Sankey's pre-war political passion was spent not on remedies for the miseries of Stepney but in vigorously opposing the disestablishment of the Church of Wales. In 1909 he had become Chancellor of the Diocese of Llandaff; less than three years later in February 1912 he was amongst the speakers at a rally in the Royal Albert Hall protesting against Welsh Disestablishment. Although the issue was of limited significance compared with Irish Home Rule, the politics of both issues had changed dramatically because the Parliament Act had removed the absolute veto of the House of Lords. Sankey's contribution offered a taste of the absolutist rhetoric that was increasingly the mark of pre-war Conservatism. 'It is said that the majority of the Welsh members of Parliament are in favour of this measure. When a thing is morally wrong, majorities do not count… A majority which has not justice on its side is a tyrant. At a moment of history, it was a majority who voted for Barabbas.' Here was the political emotion that had fuelled the peers' revolt against the People's Budget and would bring Conservative leaders arguably to support the prospect of armed action against Home Rule in Ulster. Yet Sankey, perhaps through his legal work in south Wales, was aware that the most pressing Welsh issues were not inter-denominational rivalries but the conflicts precipitated by industrialisation and working-class demands for decent standards. Disputes in mining and on the railways had been marked by violent episodes during the Cambrian Combine strike and on the Great Western at Llanelli. Sankey insisted that 'the problem before the Churches in Wales is not the problem of tithe or glebe but is the problem of Tonypandy and Llanelly (sic)' [SP c502 f 90, pp. 35, 38]. Disestablishment although law by 1914 was suspended for the duration of the war. When the issue re-emerged Sankey the passionate opponent had become the accommodating pragmatist; by October 1917 he was proposing a lengthy detailed scheme for the operation of the disestablished Church [SP c504 f52].

The polarised and unpredictable industrial situation early in 1919 suddenly and unexpectedly catapulted Sankey into the crisis within the mining industry and thereby into public prominence. Coal had eventually been taken into state control in 1917; any subsequent dispute necessarily involved not just the coalowners and the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) but also the government. Wartime conditions had strengthened mining trade unionism and heightened the expectations of miners. In January 1919 the MFGB approved a programme that included a 30% wage increase, a reduction of the underground working day from eight hours to six and the nationalisation of the coal industry. Politically, the MFGB faced the Coalition Government returned with a massive majority in the December 1918 General Election. The Liberal Prime

Minister, Lloyd George, was dependent on the support of Conservative Members. Yet, despite this parliamentary dominance ministers were all too aware of the forces making for instability. Europe's geo-political map was being remade in Paris; regimes had collapsed, the Bolshevik revolution offered encouragement or warning dependent on taste. In Britain, in the eyes of some, not least ministers, trade union assertiveness and the reality or prospect of strikes in a febrile climate, threatened a wider disorder [Supple (1987) Chap. 4].

Miners' leaders met ministers on 31 January; a week later the War Cabinet rejected their wage claim, instead offering a shilling day increase. The Minister of Labour, Sir Robert Horne, floated the idea that the MFGB's wider programme should be investigated by a committee with its membership drawn from a variety of groups. He suggested a putative composition of two members each from the MFGB, the coalowners, other industries and other trade unions plus a prominent banker and an economist with a departmental head as chair. In some ways this blueprint anticipated subsequent developments, as did the suggestion that that such a committee would produce an interim report on wages and hours followed by an investigation into joint control or nationalisation.

A miners' conference rejected the government's offer and instead voted to hold a strike ballot with a recommendation to vote for a stoppage. The result, declared on 25 February, emphatically endorsed the leadership's position, 615,164 in favour of a strike and 105,082 against. Ministers were concerned about the wider industrial situation and in particular that a coal strike could also generate sympathetic action from the two other elements—railway workers and transport workers—in the Triple Alliance. On 20 February the MFGB executive met Lloyd George and Horne. The Prime Minister revisited the option of an inquiry in two stages. He contrasted discussion with apocalypse. 'If there is a conflict it will be a conflict between one industry and the whole of the State… I cannot conceive anything graver than that. The State… could not surrender without abdicating its functions' [Report of Meeting with Ministers, 20 February 1919, MFGB Report 1919]. Over the next few days Lloyd George worked to make the proposed inquiry more acceptable to the MFGB. He used Sidney Webb as an intermediary between himself and the MFGB leadership. On 24 February the Commons debated and passed the Coal Industry Commission Bill. The inquiry would be a Royal Commission. Lloyd George announced the chairman agreed three days earlier.

> We have come to the conclusion that it is desirable here to appoint a judge, and we have chosen for this purpose, not merely one of the ablest judges on the Bench, but one who has special qualifications in this respect, because he has been practising in one of the most important coalfields, has seen a good deal of local miners during that period and knows more about them than probably any other Judge on the Bench. I mean Mr. Justice Sankey. He has consented to take the Chair [*Parliamentary Debates*, 24 February 1919, col. 1450].

The MFGB executive responded by deciding to recommend acceptance of the commission to a delegate conference, provided that the MFGB have the right to nominate half of its members. The conference decision to accept was ultimately unanimous but some delegates voiced their concerns. The MFGB President, Robert Smillie, felt that the cost of refusal was too great. 'If we did not take part in it, the general public… will say that the miners were afraid to go into their own case'. Against this assessment, a future Miners' President, Will Lawther, suggested a trap. 'We ought to decide to accept the verdict given by the rank and file and not accept at this eleventh hour something which is nothing more or less than a new political dodge by Lloyd George because we know what our claims are and we have no right to go back on our demands'. Such critics could take encouragement from the decision that strike action had been postponed for just one week from 15 to 22 March. On wages and hours Sankey and his colleagues would have to work rapidly [MFGB Special Conference, 26 and 27 February 1919].

Ministers were aware of the need for quick results; the MFGB demand over the membership was accepted. The Coal Commission's membership was announced on 1 March. Three miners' officials Robert Smillie, Herbert Smith and Frank Hodges were joined by three sympathetic intellectuals, Sir Leo Chiozza Money, R.H. Tawney and Sidney Webb. Ranged against them were three coalowners, the President of the Mining Association of Great Britain (MAGB), Evan Williams, R.W. Cooper and J.T. Forgie, together with Arthur Balfour, a Sheffield steel master, Sir Arthur Duckham, an innovative gas engineer who had played a leading role in the organisation of munitions production. and Sir Thomas Royden, a ship-owner and Conservative MP. The following day the commission met in private. Sankey, always prone to pessimism, feared that 'they will be a difficult lot to handle' [SP e273 diary, 2 March 1919].

Public sessions were held amidst the ornate frescos of the robing room of the House of Lords. Sankey quickly decided that the owners were 'hopeless. The men are getting it all their own way'. The owners' predicament was worsened by revelations that damaged their position. 'Intense public interest. Sensational figures as to Coal owners' profits have come out'. These figures were supplemented by evidence of the deplorable housing in some coalfields. The coalowners' evidence failed to offer an effective riposte. Sankey's verdict remained unchanged [SP e 273 diary, 6 and 7 March 1919].

Beatrice Webb saw the proceedings as inaccurately titled. This was not so much a royal commission judiciously exploring the complexities of the coal industry; hearings were 'far more like a revolutionary tribunal sitting in judgement on the capitalist owners and organisers of the nation's industries'. Sankey, she saw as 'an urbane lawyer who treats every commissioner in turn as the most distinguished of the lot, and gives almost unlimited licence to questions and answers, interruptions and retorts'. Smillie 'is the protagonist of the men's cause, Chiozza Money… the most aggressive and self-confident of the miners' advocates, Sidney draws out damaging admissions… Tawney raises the whole discussion to the highest planes of moral rectitude and sweet reasonableness'. Beatrice Webb agreed with Sankey that 'the other side are absurdly outclassed'. 'Narrow-minded' coalowners with apparently little awareness of the wider political issues received little help from the three industrialists. Balfour was 'a heavy reactionary', Duckham, whilst able, 'gives the impression of being indifferent to the result or uncertain about what he wants it to be', Royden with his eye on a political career 'is not over-anxious to offend the coming democracy'. Yet the spectacle had a time limit; the report on wages and hours had to be completed by 20 March [Beatrice Webb Diary, 12 March 1919, Mackenzie and Mackenzie (1984) 337–338].

At the end of the first week Sankey was already considering the content of his report; by 13 March he was drafting his findings. Five days later the commissioners met in private. He spoke for about an hour giving what was effectively a precis of his report. There was no hope of agreement. He reflected that the miners were 'flexible', but the owners 'will not abate a jot' [SP e273 diary, 13 and 18 March 1919]. Eventually three reports were produced. One signed by the three miners and their supportive trio found in favour of the 30% wage advance and a six- hour day. These six signatories asserted that 'in the interests of the consumers as much as in that of miners, nationalisation ought to be in principle at once determined upon'. The coalowners' report proposed a wage advance of 1s 6d a day and a seven- hour day. They were silent on the broader questions.

Sankey's own report was signed also by the three industrialists. He noted that 'I did my best with Smillie and Webb and with owners but no chance of agreement. Then I took the three independent men … and asked if they agreed to sign my report' [SP e273 diary, 19 March 1919]. They recommended an immediate move to a seven-hour day with, subject to the state of the industry, a further reduction to six at the end of 1920. Wages should be raised by 2s a day and a levy of 1d on every ton of coal raised should be used to improve housing and amenities in mining communities. Two further paragraphs revealed Sankey's developing thoughts on public ownership.

> IX Even on the evidence already given, the present system of ownership and working in the coal industry stands condemned, and some other system must be substituted for it, either nationalisation or a measure of unification by national purchase and/or joint control.
>
> X We are prepared… to report now that it is in the interests of the country that the colliery worker shall in the future have an effective voice in the direction of the mine. For a generation the colliery worker has been educated socially and technically. The result is a great national asset. Why not use it? [First Report of the Sankey Commission, March 1919, pp. viii–ix]

The response of the War Cabinet was guided by immediate political considerations. Austen Chamberlain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, suggested that the detail of Sankey's report was at best secondary. The content 'could not be considered on its actual merits, but the Cabinet possessed a report of an independent kind (Mr Justice Sankey's), the rejection of which would put the Government completely in the wrong and make it impossible for them to fight a strike'. Bonar Law, the Conservative leader and Lloyd George's deputy, noted that the outcome was unexpected in that the three employers' representatives had signed Sankey's document, lending it extra authority. 'When the Commission started, it looked as if there would be a report by the six Labour representatives, another report by the six employers and a further report by the chairman'. He too believed 'there was no alternative' to acceptance of Sankey's specific proposals. The nationalisation issue should be deferred for further consideration; Lloyd George, away at the Paris conference, suggested that this last decision for deferral should be presented positively. Otherwise in the light of Sankey's comments there could be 'legitimate resentment on the part of the miners'. Rather, the Prime Minister noted that 'in view of this condemnation of existing conditions under which the industry is conducted, it is essential in the national interests that the question should be further investigated by the Commission with a view to ascertaining what can be substituted for the present system'. This response was accompanied by ministerial hysteria about the prospect of a miners' strike perhaps accompanied by a wider mobilisation of the Triple Alliance. The War Cabinet considered that such action would be 'a conspiracy against the State'; legislation could be rushed through Parliament permitting the arrest of trade union leaders. Tom Jones told the Webbs that 'the Cabinet was obdurate… all the arrangements had been made—tanks were ready, the army could be depended on, food would be withdrawn' [CAB 23/9/35, 20 March 1919; Beatrice Webb Diary, 20 March 1919].

Lloyd George's contribution offered a placatory and incremental strategy which uncoupled the question of wages and hours from the controversy over ownership. Law's statement to the Commons on 20 March included bellicose comments on the government response to any strike. However he confirmed the government's acceptance of Sankey's report, emphasised its negative characterisation of the existing system of ownership and pledged the government's willingness 'to carry out in the spirit and the letter the recommendations of Mr Justice Sankey's Report'. This commitment was confirmed the following day in a handwritten letter to the MFGB conference [*Parliamentary Debates*, 20 March 1919, cols. 2341–2348]. The pledge clearly covered the Sankey Report's recommendations on wages and hours; whether it carried any weight on the issue of nationalisation would prove understandably contentious. One Scottish delegate felt that the Sankey Report meant 'admittance of the principle of nationalisation of the mines and control to some extent by the Government'. A subsequent exchange however illuminated the problem. George Spencer the cautious Nottinghamshire Miners' official foresaw a difficulty.

> Nationalisation is the most important question and I want to know whether the Cabinet or Parliament is prepared to accept the ultimate report from that Commission, if that report is in favour of nationalisation, because that is not in Judge Sankey's Report. I take it, it means that he is not going to pledge this Commission to nationalisation … What I am asking is whether the report of the Commission will be accepted by the Cabinet if it is in favour of nationalisation?

Smillie's response blended trust in ministerial good faith with optimism about trade union solidarity: 'I do not think any Government could stand for a moment if it sets up a Commission and asks for a report and then refuses to accept that report, but that would be a matter for Parliament after hearing the Commission's report. We should however, have the weapon of the Triple Alliance' [MFGB Special Conference, 21 March 1919].

Such ambiguities were for the future. Following further discussions with ministers the MFGB executive recommended acceptance of the Sankey Report terms, a position endorsed by the reconvened conference. Whilst the MFGB balloted on this proposal the Sankey Commission was in abeyance. Its second stage was conditional on the MFGB accepting the wages and hours terms. On 15 April the ballot result showed a massive majority for acceptance—693,684 to 76,992. The commission rapidly reconvened. Its personnel had changed and signalled a more aggressive strategy by the employers. J.T. Forgie was replaced by Adam Nimmo of the Fife Coal Company, leader of the Scottish coalowners. He had commented in February that claims on wages and hours were 'an affair of outpost; the big battle would be joined later'. He agreed to join the commission having secured from Sankey an acknowledgment that the big battle remained to be fought. He would be assisted in this by Sir Allan Smith, head of the Engineering Employers' Federation, 'a contumacious replacement for Royden'. Smith soon made his abrasive presence felt, insisting that the agenda should not be restricted to nationalisation or unification of the industry and if it were then they, presumably the employers and coalowners, might as well resign. According to Sidney Webb 'Sankey got very angry with him', but managed after negotiating separately with the two sides to establish a brittle peace [for Nimmo see SP c 504 f130; for row see Sidney Webb to Beatrice Webb, 22 April 1919 Mackenzie (1978) 116].

The consequential hearings lasted from 24 April until 14 June. Whereas the first stage had been relatively focussed on the urgent issues of wages and hours, these later sessions concerned the future shape of the industry. The MFGB emphasised the need for public ownership and joint control. On 23 May they submitted to the commission a draft Bill for the enactment of their scheme. Sankey found the exchanges disturbing. He felt as if he were sitting on a keg of gunpowder; after the conclusion of the public sessions he found the private gatherings involved 'great unpleasantness… very bitter feelings'. He noted that 'Sir Allan Smith… refused to shake hands with me' [SP e 273 diary 6, 14/517/6, 1919]. Beatrice Webb noted how Nimmo and Smith 'carried the war into the enemies' camp, but in such an objectionable way that at the end of the sittings they were no longer on speaking terms with the chairman'. She acknowledged that 'Sankey's temper gave way at the end'. Sankey reflected that the commission had been 'the most unpleasant, anxious and exhausting job I have ever had' [SP e 273 diary, 20 June 1919; Beatrice Webb Diary, 23 June 1919, Mackenzie and Mackenzie (1984) 343–44].

This time there were four reports. The three coalowners together with Balfour and Smith rejected nationalisation and suggested very limited changes to the operation of the coal industry. In contrast, Duckham presented his own report proposing the unification of all coal companies within a series of designated areas. This geographically based scheme for amalgamation had resemblances with the amalgamation of the railway companies that the government would implement in its 1921 Act. The MFGB representatives and their supportive intellectuals predictably endorsed public ownership along the lines of the MFGB draft Bill. Sankey produced his own report; crucially he supported public ownership, but rejected the MFGB proposal for effective joint control of the industry. He argued that miners' contracts in a publicly owned coal industry should include an undertaking not to strike until the matter had been considered by local bodies within which the miners' representatives were a minority. Predictably this proposal was firmly opposed by the six signatories to the other pro-public ownership report. Despite the sulphurous exchanges on the commission, Sankey's justification for public ownership depended less on putative economic benefits and more on optimism about a change in atmosphere. Hopefully public ownership might exorcise 'the present atmosphere of distrust and recrimination', and instead generate harmony. He relied on 'the honour of the men's leaders and the men

to maintain output'. His job over, Sankey effectively retired from the field. His diary for the remainder of 1919 is silent on the subsequent fate of the Sankey Commission's work [Details are in Second Report of Sankey Commission].

Yet the fate of his recommendations shaped his subsequent political reputation. None of the four reports had the support of a majority of commissioners; but it could be argued that seven of the thirteen had backed public ownership of the mining industry and that the differences between Sankey and the other six advocates of this position were negotiable. More broadly, party politics in mid-1919 could appear molten. Lloyd George, the pre-war radical depended on a predominantly Conservative majority. He suggested to Sankey on the publication of his report that he approved of his support of nationalisation, and also that there would be another election within a few months with nationalisation of the mines in his programme. Whether this amounted to more than a Lloyd Georgian blend of flattery and fancy is unclear. Beatrice Webb placed the suggestion within Lloyd George's continuing strategic problem, one that would remain unresolved until the Coalition disintegrated in October 1922.

> Lloyd George is busy putting it about that a general election is imminent and that it will be precipitated by a breach between him and the reactionaries in the Cabinet. Whether this is merely part of the process of bluffing the Conservatives into his policy or whether it is a feeler for Radical and Labour support, none of us know – perhaps he does not know himself. If the first policy fails, he may fall back on the second [Beatrice Webb Diary, 23 June 1919].

The Sankey Report was seen within the labour movement as a vindication of the miners' case by an impartial lawyer. Yet the prospects for its implementation were diminishing. The first stage of the commission's hearings had awoken coalowners and private industry more broadly to the need for an effective campaign against public ownership. Coal nationalisation, if conceded, could be the thin end of a very long wedge. Conservative backbenchers mobilised effectively against the Sankey proposals. It appears that the hearings on ownership had not awoken public sympathy for the miners to the degree that had been evident over wages and hours. The other Triple Alliance unions made it clear that they would not strike in support of coal nationalisation and even within the MFGB concern with ownership was secondary to the minutiae of piece-rate adjustments consequential upon the reduction in hours. Negotiators faced with complex systems of payments had to ensure that a cut in hours did not result in a cut in wages. Collieries in Yorkshire struck from 17 July, in some cases for more than a month, over this issue, a stoppage that was used by ministers to turn public sympathy against the miners. A sharp and unexpected increase in the price of coal in June was presented as a demonstration of the cost of the Sankey wage award in a context of falling productivity. For supporters of the miners it was a cynical and perhaps effective political ploy. Overall, the pressure on the government to embark on radical initiatives to prevent a destabilising strike in the coalfields, let alone a wider sympathetic stoppage, was diminishing.

Ministers eventually reached their decision on the Sankey Report in August. Their discussions claimed the impossibility of passing any nationalisation measure through parliament but beneath that practical constraint for many lay a thorough opposition to the principle. The Lord Chancellor, Birkenhead, suggested that the whole episode had been a manoeuvre to buy time in a critical situation. 'When the Sankey Commission was appointed, the Government was in a difficult position and he thought no-one undertook that we were bound by any conclusions reached by the Commissioners.' Some degree of sympathy for public ownership was shown by those within the government who had once been Labour Party members, George Barnes and George Roberts, together with the social imperialist, Lord Milner, and the Minister of Health and future Labour minister, Christopher Addison. Lloyd George came down firmly against public ownership. The case had not been made, a majority within parliament was hostile and the miners had prejudiced their own case. 'The miners had made themselves exceedingly unpopular

during the last year or two by their unreasonable demands and by their reduction of output without regard to the safety of the country'. He insisted that the supporters of nationalisation had behaved badly on the commission. They had done 'all they could to prejudice their own case. Up to the publication of their first Report they had done well, but afterwards their conduct of the proceedings had alienated public opinion' [CAB 23/15/24, 25, 28, 30, 7, 11, 14, 17 August 1919].

Lloyd George's rejection of the Sankey Report was announced to the Commons on 18 August. He accepted the need for unification which he identified as the vital point in Sankey's statement on the issue in his March report, but insisted that this requirement could be met by a scheme along the lines proposed by Duckham, albeit falling short of his specific recommendations. He rejected Sankey's reasoning that public ownership would increase harmony within the industry. 'Since Mr. Justice Sankey penned that Report two or three things have happened which I think would have induced him to change his mind had he had them before his mind at the time'. Thus the Yorkshire strike 'was a direct strike against the Government' and similar issues had arisen on the state-controlled railways. Such *ad hominem* arguments were supplemented by a crude attack on two of the commissioners, Sidney Webb and R.H. Tawney. He suggested that their conclusions were tainted because they had also given evidence. 'It is difficult to treat with respect decisions arrived at by Commissioners who take that view of their functions… They were supposed to reserve judgment whatever their preconceived opinions until they had heard the whole of their evidence'. Such dual roles were not unique; the same juxtaposition had occurred on the pre-war Royal Commission on the Poor Law. Clearly Lloyd George, whatever the alternatives he had previously conjured, had decided that the industrial and political situation permitted firm resistance to public ownership and that such resistance was in his short-term interest [*Parliamentary Debates*, 18 August 1919, cols. 2000–2008].

The MFGB response was that the whole affair had been a fraud. Vernon Hartshorn, a South Wales Miners' Member responded with an indictment that would become established as the miners' verdict on the Sankey Commission.

> We did not ask for a Commission. We accepted it. We gave evidence before it. Why was the Commission set up? Was it a huge game of bluff? Was it never intended that, if the Reports favoured nationalisation, we were to get it? Why was the question sent at all to the Commission? That is the kind of question the miners of the country will ask, and they will say. 'We have been deceived, betrayed, duped' [*Parliamentary Debates*, 18 August 1919, col. 2096].

Yet the Commission was never going to deliver a strong let alone a unanimous verdict in favour of public ownership. The outcome was about as favourable as possible for the MFGB, but this nevertheless left the government, not least the Prime Minister with scope to respond according to the opportunities and constraints within the wider political situation.

The consequences for the miners were bleak. Strike action on the issue by the MFGB let alone the Triple Alliance seemed remote; instead the MFGB embarked on an educational campaign 'Mines for the Nation'. But if there had ever been a moment when public ownership of the coal industry seemed feasible, it had passed. Instead from 1 April 1921 the state precipitously terminated its control of the industry; miners in several coalfields faced serious wage cuts. The consequential dispute lasted three months and ended in defeat. In the difficult years that followed, the Sankey Report and its author represented for miners a suppressed future. Sidney Webb, as the miners were in the final weeks of another disastrous stoppage in 1926, wrote to him recalling those dramatic weeks seven years earlier. 'How people must wish that the then Government had been wise enough to accept your Report in 1919!' [Sidney Webb to Sankey, 25 October 1926 SPc 505]. Once that lengthy dispute had ended, Sankey lugubriously claimed that the optimism of 1919 was dead. 'The miners were at last driven back to work by hunger and it seemed that my advice was discredited and all my work on the Coal Commission

thrown away' [Diary, 31 December 1926]. He had been depressed by attacks from those he was accustomed to see as politically sympathetic. Lovat Fraser who had made the journey from Conservative to Labour sought to encourage him.

> I think you take too much to heart the viciousness and malignancy of the capitalist crowd… believe me you have many more friends than enemies. I would undertake to elicit applause at your name from any working class meeting. Take it from me, some day your name will be mentioned as a pioneer who had the foresight to see the inevitable solution of the Coal difficulties. Nationalisation is certain [SP c 504 f 197].

Sankey's legal career continued to prosper in the 1920s; he was made a member of the Court of Appeal and a Privy Councillor in 1928. Yet perhaps his weeks on the Coal Commission had made him dissatisfied with judicial routine. He reflected that a trip to Wells Assizes to try cases of bigamy and wrongful dismissal in July 1919 was 'rather simple fare after the highly spiced dishes I have lately been sampling' [Sankey to Haldane, 10 July 1919, cited in Heuston (1964) 505]. Despite his distance from party politics the events of 1919 and memories of his role brought him into contact with figures on the left. He developed a friendship and correspondence with Harold Laski. In the summer of 1925 he responded warmly to Laski's *A Grammar of Politics*. 'It is a really wonderful work… I saw so many of my own views so admirably put… it has supplied me with many a useful argument'. He praised Laski as 'one of the best missionaries for the cause I have at heart' [Sankey to Laski, 24 September 1925, 25 February 1928, cited in Heuston (1964) 507–508]. More significantly, Sankey was viewed positively by Ramsay MacDonald, always keen to widen the Labour Party's social base by recruiting individuals whom he viewed as both respectable and in some sense progressive. When a Labour Government first seemed a serious possibility following the election in December 1923 MacDonald saw Sankey as a possible Lord Chancellor. Five days after the poll, on 11 December, MacDonald dined with the lawyer and Member for Wallsend, Patrick Hastings, who was to become the first Labour Attorney General. After dinner Sankey joined them. MacDonald noted, 'Discussed law appointments. S apparently prepared to accept LD Chancellorship. Thorough exploration of position' [MacDonald Diary, 21 December 1923, SPe 276]. Sankey's name appears as Lord Chancellor in an early list of putative appointments in the MacDonald Papers. According to a subsequent diary note by Sankey he was offered the Chancellorship and accepted it. In the event the appointment went to Lord Haldane, following a visit by MacDonald to Haldane's home in Perthshire. Sankey anticipated this outcome; he had dined with Haldane whom he characterised as 'a vain old man' on 21 December. The ultimate choice in part reflected Haldane's administrative experience, not least as Lord Chancellor in the Asquith Government. Haldane had made it clear that the Lord Chancellorship was the only post he would take. MacDonald told Sankey that 'Haldane has held a pistol to his head and threatens to give no help unless he is made Chancellor'. MacDonald having accepted this condition emphasised the claims of Sankey to his putative Lord Chancellor.

> I am still very anxious that Sankey might be used, but I am afraid it is absolutely impossible now. I have the best reasons for believing that he wished to come in and help us, and that he is devotedly with us in his heart, though, believing in all the highest and finest traditions of the Bench, he would never indicate any political leanings. I am drawn very much to that man. I am an absolute outsider to all your legal world, but there is something about Sankey which convinces me that he would find more happiness and welfare with us than where he is [MacDonald to Haldane, 12 January 1924 cited in Heuston (1964) 505–506].

Early in January, Hastings, acting as an intermediary between MacDonald and Sankey, had sounded out the latter about another cabinet post linked to a peerage; given Labour's minimal

presence in the Lords this offer was understandable. Sankey refused. His objective was the Chancellorship. Haldane's appointment brought a reaction compounded of ambition and pessimism. 'I shall never get anything now. All my chances are gone' [SP e 276, 277, diaries 1923, 1924 specifically 11 December 1923 for meeting with MacDonald; 21 December1923 for 'vain old man' reference, 23 January 1924 for 'all my chances are gone'].

When Labour took office for the second time in June 1929, Haldane had died and Sankey became Lord Chancellor. He inherited the perplexing problem of Labour's weakness in the House of Lords. Labour peers were few and typically ageing. Sankey, soon after his appointment, attended a meeting of his colleagues: 'About 12 there. A great deal of work has to be spread over a few people' [Diary, 28 June 1929, SP e 282]. The party's leader in the Lords, Beatrice Webb's brother in law, Lord Parmoor was frail and often ineffective; as a Conservative MP he had shared a platform with Sankey at the rally against Welsh Disestablishment in 1912. Now as cabinet colleagues they faced an impossible situation. The government's minority status denied them the argument that controversial measures at least had the endorsement of the electorate. Conservative strategy, initially under Salisbury and subsequently under the more overt partisanship of Hailsham, made few concessions. Sankey's task deepened his natural pessimism. 'What is the use of argument in the Lords? You might as well address a brick wall… It is heartbreaking… They are always 20 to 1 against you' [Diary, 15 and 17 July 1930, SPe 284].

These thoughts were provoked by the seemingly insoluble problems of the coal industry. The Labour Party's 1929 election manifesto had included commitments to nationalisation and to restoration of the seven-hour day following the reversion to eight hours under legislation introduced by the Baldwin Government in 1926. But the newly elected administration faced both the constraint of its minority status and the parlous condition of much of the industry. Public ownership was obviously a non-starter. After the coal owners had insisted that a reduction of one hour would mean either increased prices with consequential closures or wage reductions, the government decided that a half-hour reduction in the working day was all that was feasible. Eventually after much debate the MFGB accepted this compromise, even though the maintenance of wage levels was not guaranteed. The Bill also included complex proposals for amalgamations and marketing which were intended to promote a stronger industry, given that public ownership was not a feasible objective. At this early stage in the government's life the Conservatives were prepared to allow the Bill through the Commons rather than capitalise on Liberal opposition. When the Bill had its Second Reading in the Lords on 29 April 1930 Sankey made his first major speech in the Lords.

He noted that since the drama of 1919 he had remained silent on the subject but felt the need to clarify his own position:

> I have not changed my mind. I still firmly believe that nationalisation is the only solution of our difficulties… I had good grounds for believing that my suggestions would be adapted. My hopes were to provide a system funded on local and individual effort with central control; to see the best brains in the country working directly for the good of the State rather than indirectly through over-capitalised companies struggling to pay dividends by using obsolete methods and antiquated machinery which ought long ago to have been consigned to the scrap heap; to improve and regulate the sale and distribution of the product of the industry. What we wanted was modern minds, modern methods, modern machinery and willing workers. But it was not to be.

He acknowledged that a minority government was limited in what it could achieve but remained certain that in the near future there would be a 'substantial majority' for nationalisation. Beyond the attempt to 'correlate production with demand' lay Sankey's broader vision, one that was ethical and inclusive, abjuring partisanship.

> Let us renew a right spirit within ourselves, not only in one class but in every class… We have no room for slackers. What we want is not only the opportunity for work but what is more important the will to work… It is men not machines who have made and will maintain our Empire. Let us have a truce to Party politics and political manoeuvres. It is the country that matters [*Parliamentary Debates (Lords)*, 29 April 1930, cols. 165–180].

The speech was warmly welcomed not least by the miners' leader, A.J. Cook. He praised Sankey for his 'magnificent support of our interests'. Whilst acknowledging that the Bill 'is not what we all desire', Cook felt that 'it is a step in the right direction' [Cook to Sankey, 6 May 1930, SPc 507]. The Lords gave the Bill a Second Reading but then precipitated a crisis for the government. In committee the coalowner, Lord Gainsford, successfully moved an amendment allowing the option of a 90-hour fortnight. This could be characterised as equivalent to six seven and a half shifts each week; however local customs including the extent of Saturday working meant that for many miners this spread-over would mean the continuation of the eight-hour day. The Lords insistence on the Gainsford amendment meant critical meetings between MFGB officials, miners' MPs and ministers. In the end the spread-over was accepted with the condition that its introduction needed the consent at District level of both owners and union.

The Act became law on 1 December 1930. The spread-over was widely implemented as evidence mounted that otherwise a seven and a half hour day would mean wage reductions. The weakness of the union and the determination of the employers exposed the emptiness of Sankey's widely praised high-mindedness. A further crisis threatened in July 1931. The Eight Hours Act of 1926 would expire imminently and if the government failed to respond, the working day would necessarily revert to the seven hours introduced after the 1919 Coal Commission. This would have disastrous consequences for employment and wages. The MFGB sought revised minimum wage legislation; ministers were sceptical. Sankey sat through the interminable meetings. He relived the emotions of 1919. 'The owners as usual are unreasonable and impossible. No wonder there is trouble in the coalfield' [Diary, 29 June, SPe 285]. Eventually the ministerial response was minimal—an extension of the seven and a half hour day including spread-overs for twelve months with existing minimum rates. Sankey introduced the last-minute legislation in the Lords. 'If we work we shall win if we do not work we shall go under… A shortening of the working hours – or what is worse, a cessation of work – might prove a fatal disaster from which we should never recover, coming as it would, at the crisis of our industrial development' [*Parliamentary Debates (Lords)*, 8 July 1931, cols. 653–657].

Sankey spent the first half of August 1931 at Llandrindod Wells with Arthur Henderson and his wife. The May Report had just been published, proclaiming the necessity for major cuts in public expenditure. The government hoped to use the summer recess to construct a parliamentary majority in favour of a credible response but the onset of a financial crisis destroyed this agenda. By 11 August Sankey was noting in his diary that the flight from the pound was making everybody very anxious. Henderson went briefly to London two days later for a cabinet sub-committee on the crisis. Eventually Sankey left for an emergency cabinet meeting on 19 August. Four days later the cabinet voted 11 to 9 in favour of a 10% cut in unemployment benefit; Sankey sided with the majority. He saw the split and the subsequent resignation of the government as the result of TUC opposition to cuts and the consequential impact on Henderson whose status within the party strengthened dissenters. When MacDonald formed a National Government Sankey agreed to stay on alongside Phillip Snowden and Jimmy Thomas. This decision, Sankey noted, was determined by two factors, his loyalty to MacDonald and his strong commitment to the Indian Round Table Conference. Yet his response to 'the great political excitement and bitterness' suggested the power of another factor [Sankey Diary, 24 and 28 August, SPc 508]. Along with Malcolm MacDonald, who had sided with his father, he attended a meeting of the Parliamentary Party on 28 August. Sankey defended his choice in a lengthy speech. Some appreciated his and Malcolm MacDonald's attendance when other

Labour supporters of the new administration stayed away. Charles Roden Buxton, one of those who retained sympathy for MacDonald whilst staying with the Labour Party, reassured Sankey. 'How deeply I appreciated you coming to the Party meeting and speaking as you did; and how glad I was at the way you were received' [C.R. Buxton to Sankey, 30 August 1931 SP c508].

A fellow supporter of MacDonald, Sir Richard Denman, reassured Sankey that a minority within the PLP preferred conciliation. 'I talked to a few of our men, Oldfield, Strauss and Malone, and found that they held the view that while the Party should go into Opposition, its opposition should be discriminating and that we ought to maintain friendly contact with the PM. I hear that Lady Noel Buxton and C.R. Buxton think similarly' [Denman to Sankey, 28 August 1931, SP c508]. Such perceptions were held by a few whose social networks typically brought little contact with trade union sentiments about loyalty and solidarity. In August 1931 those who saw the Labour Party as a home for high-minded Progressives encountered a visceral hostility to the principal defectors. Sankey's own response was bleak: 'Very hostile, as all the Trade Unionists were there…They have gone mad and talk about the class war'. He reflected that all he was doing was supporting a policy previously endorsed by a large majority in the Labour cabinet, but they 'daren't say so for fear of the Trade Union Congress. God help England'. When the Labour Party was reduced to a rump in the October 1931 election he felt that this outcome had confirmed his diagnosis. The disaster 'was the result of running away at the crisis and listening to TUC dictation' [SP c285 diary 18 August, 29 October 1931] His assessment to Laski early in 1932 was more temperate.

> I do not think… that my principles, even now, are very different from yours. If I may borrow an analogy from the Law, at the moment I do not see eye to eye with you about practice and procedure. Last August I came to the conclusion, rightly or wrongly, that the country was not only in grave difficulties, but in immediate danger, and that there was need for drastic action. I regret that it was not possible to persuade my colleagues either of the immediate danger or of the need for drastic remedies. Time will show which of us was right… Necessity sometimes has to check progress [Sankey to Laski, 15 February 1932 cited in Heuston (1964) 510–511].

When MacDonald asked Sankey to remain with him in the National Government he suggested that he become Secretary of State for India. Sankey refused on the ground that he was not equipped for such an administrative task but would stay on as Lord Chancellor to see through the current round of negotiations on Indian constitutional reform. He had been very involved in the Imperial Conference in late 1930; more significantly he became a central figure at a critical moment in Anglo-Indian relations. In 1917 Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, had stated that the objective of the Raj was responsible government for India within the Empire. The Montagu–Chelmsford reforms two years later, limited in themselves, nevertheless triggered a durable process of political change. Scepticism and increasingly antagonism amongst those Indians deemed essential for an incremental transition to responsible government were accentuated by the initially limited devolution of power to elected provincial politicians and the paucity of funds for economic and social betterment. The Simon Commission investigated the effectiveness of the 1919 reforms in 1928; its cautious response was undercut in October 1929 by the declaration by the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, that the goal of British policy was Dominion Status. He coupled this with the announcement of a round table conference, with the purpose of socialising Indian politicians into the politics of compromise within parameters which would be significantly shaped by the inclusion of conservative Indian princes. This initiative by a former and future Conservative politician enjoyed the backing of the Labour Government and of Baldwin, but not of significant senior Liberals nor the Conservative Right. Within India, opinion was predictably divided, and such divisions intensified once the extent of differences amongst the British political class became evident.

When the Round Table Conference (RTC) eventually met late in 1930, Sankey played a significant role. The government team of eight included him alongside MacDonald and the Secretary of State for India, Wedgwood Benn. In addition to the Indian delegations there were also British Conservative and Liberal politicians. The princes suggested an all-India Federation that would allow them autonomy from the British and also serve as a check on nationalists. Sankey chaired the RTC's Federal Structure Committee. Inaugurated on 17 November 1930, it worked briskly under his guidance producing an interim report on 16 December and a second one on 15 January 1931. It suggested a bicameral federal legislature with Indian and states' representatives in both houses. Gradually the envisaged federal authority would exercise the powers currently held by the Government of India. The work of the Federal Structure Committee provided a basis for the RTC to close on 19 January with an appearance of harmony. Further details would be considered at a second RTC in autumn 1931. His success as chair of the Federal Structure Committee led to him being given the task of preparing a Government of India Bill. Not only had he a major stake in the continuing process, his experience of cross-party collaboration within the RTC had been positive.

When the second Round Table Conference met in September 1931 Sankey participated as Lord Chancellor in the National Government; initially his assessment of the new Conservative Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare, was dubious; 'a difficult fellow, I must not lose my temper with him'. Following this RTC's termination in December he defended its agenda of simultaneous advance towards provincial autonomy and central federation against the criticisms of Diehard peers. By 1933 he acknowledged that Hoare 'has advanced greatly in his views… I am content to see the seed gradually growing… The majority of the Conservative Party gradually coming over' [Diary September 1931, 1933, written on 5 January 1934]. The process culminated in the Government of India Act of 1935, an outcome which for Sankey helped to justify his continuing participation in the National Government. Malcolm MacDonald found Sankey's chairmanship a model that perhaps many years later would influence his actions as a key figure in the post-war process of decolonisation. Sankey 'showed a clear legal mind and a humanity that led him to treat all as complete equals and friends and very eminent personages' [Sanger (1995) 78]. This appraisal echoed Beatrice Webb's characterisation of his chairing of the Coal Commission.

Initially Sankey was sceptical about his new political home. 'I do not like my Conservative colleagues. Their outlook is not my outlook and I miss my old colleagues and friends'. Yet his retrospective view was different. 'With my new colleagues I naturally got on well. It is true they were all Conservatives, but they were all public school men or all University men and therefore I knew how to get on with them because they were the sort of people I have spent my life with' [Diary, 2 September 1931, SPe 285; SPc 512]. Sankey's position in that administration was necessarily shaped not so much by social affinities as by the inevitably fluctuating fortunes of its party components. The National Labour element, and in particular MacDonald's leadership, was widely believed to have turned a Labour defeat into a rout in the 1931 election and to have provided the consequential government with a legitimacy that a purely Conservative administration would have lacked. Sankey shared with some other National Labour colleagues a perception that whatever its short-term alliances, National Labour was on the side of Progress in a way that was impossible for a trade-union-dominated party. Sankey expressed this sentiment to another National Labour peer, Godfrey Elton in April 1932. He applauded McDonald's work in building the Labour Party and his choice in August 1931.

> Had it not been for him, I think our Party would have remained a Labour Party and would never become a Socialist one. A mere Labour party would never obtain real power in England, nor would it deserve it. It is a class party just as much as the right wing of the Conservative is a class party. The Socialist party, on the other hand, is a National Party in which all classes can find a home. It is because I feel most strongly on this matter that I am an

> ardent supporter of the Prime Minister and I have no shadow of doubt as to an eventual success [Sankey to Elton copy, 6 April 1932, SPe 509].

Sankey's desire to maintain the Government was evident in January 1932 when he supported Lord Hailsham's unconventional suggestion that cabinet ministers be allowed to differ over the introduction of tariffs. Despite this manoeuvre to keep free traders on side, Sir Herbert Samuel's Liberal group grew increasingly disenchanted and its ministers resigned in September 1932. In contrast Sir John Simon's Liberal section remained, but were becoming indistinguishable from their Conservative cabinet colleagues. The position of the National Labour contingent became less secure within an administration that was looking more like a Conservative Government with a National Labour Prime Minister. National Labour had no distinctive body of support within the electorate and any claim to be an electoral asset seemed unconvincing. MacDonald wrote to Sankey in July 1934 despairing of the future. 'Our little body is so weak in numbers… no organisation of our own, no platform and no political creed' [Ramsay MacDonald to Sankey, 15 July 1934, SPc511; Cowling (1975) 61–62 for Sankey's political vulnerability].

Sankey was aware that his own position was weak. In February 1934 Neville Chamberlain attempted to secure the replacement of Sankey by Hailsham as part of a wider reshuffle. Sankey when approached by MacDonald, according to one source 'made a terrible scene', MacDonald supported him and he remained in office [Neville Chamberlain Diary, 1 March 1934, cited in Cowling (1975) 54]. He felt his isolation. 'The Conservatives are a big group and have worked together for years. I am not one of them… I am not and never was a politician. All I care for is England and not any party' [Diary 1934, written 5 January 1935 SPe 288]. But in June 1935 MacDonald resigned as Prime Minister. His successor, Baldwin, appointed Hailsham to the Woolsack. Sankey's removal arguably reflected Hailsham's desire to return to the post that he had previously held in 1928–1929; cabinet making also involved the careful balancing of parties. Malcolm MacDonald was viewed as a credible cabinet minister; his appointment necessitated the removal of a National Labour member. Ramsay MacDonald was determined that Jimmy Thomas should remain in the government. Sankey saw himself as the sacrifice. 'The PM and J. H. Thomas have thrown me to the wolves… (they) started an initiative against me so as to get Malcolm MacDonald into the Cabinet!!! Save me from my friends!' This assessment was confirmed by Baldwin, who emphasised that National Labour representation in the cabinet could not be increased [Diary, 29–31 May 1935, SPe 289]. His parting from Ramsay MacDonald was acrimonious. His erstwhile leader was dismissed as 'a man not to be trusted who deceived and betrayed his friends'. Austen Chamberlain's verdict lacked grace; 'Sankey when told by SB that he must go, showed the yellow streak in him and made it a personal quarrel.' The enmity endured; on the day after the 1935 election Sankey celebrated. 'Thank God… Ramsay Mc D and his son both defeated' [Austen Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 11 June 1935 in Self (1995), 484; Sankey Diary, 15 November 1935, SPe 289].

Loss of office was followed by a prolonged withdrawal from legal work; in December 1935 he intervened in the Lords in a debate on the coal industry. Despite the split of 1931 his relationships with some miners' leaders had remained friendly He corresponded with A.J. Cook during the last weeks of the latter's life and visited him in hospital. Cook praised Sankey's work on India but feared that he would damage his reputation by consenting to attacks on the unemployed. But Cook's respect for him endured. 'I shall always remember you for your great work on behalf of our poor mineworkers… We are living in very difficult times and we must trust to great men like you to help us'. Sankey corresponded warmly with Ebby Edwards on his election to succeed Cook as General Secretary of the MFGB [Cook to Sankey, 24 September 1931, SPc 508; Ebby Edwards to Sankey, 14 March 1932, SPc 509]. In 1935 the Federation, under the leadership of Edwards, made a national claim following a conference decision to demand a 2s per day increase. A campaign for 'The Miners' Two Bob' preceded a Special Conference on 17 October and a decision for a ballot vote to enforce the claim. Following

unproductive meetings between the Minister for Mines, Harry Crookshank, and both the Federation and the coal owners, a ballot was held in mid-November. The vote for pursuing the claim backed by a strike if necessary was overwhelming, 409,351–29,215. Sankey's intervention came at this point. He reaffirmed his commitment to nationalisation and commended a system of national wage determination based on a properly co-ordinated and organised industry. Sankey combined his conciliatory outlook and support for modernisation with an insistence that the miners' situation was intolerable.

> If I were a miner I most certainly would not strike. To strike simply means misery and privation to thousands and thousands of your fellow countrymen… It dislocates the trade of the country, and you may lose foreign markets that you may never get back again. The miners are a patriotic body, and they do not want to do anything to bring about such a catastrophe as that. But if I were a miner I would never be a willing worker. Necessity might compel me, for a time, to accept that inadequate wage, but year by year by all lawful means I would protest and agitate against a condition of affairs in our coalfields which I believe to be unjust to the individual, injurious to my country and a standing reproach to British business brains [*Parliamentary Debates (Lords)*, 11 December 1935, col. 206].

Gradually and district by district the coal owners began to offer increases. Eventually the Federation Executive called off the strike having gained uneven increases and the offer by the coal owners of machinery for discussing matters of common interest including wages. The reality was that for the MFGB the problem of divergent District interests remained unresolved.

Sankey spoke on the coal question from the Opposition benches; as he noted 'next to Labour' [Diary, 11 November 1935, SPe 289]. Perhaps this reflected a shift in his politics following his removal from the cabinet. The Baldwin Government's very decisive election victory in November 1935 had evoked a bleak response from Sankey. 'Labour suffered a bad reverse in Election. I am greatly disappointed. No further chance for me in public life'. His relationships with some in the labour movement remained decent. He never faced the vilification suffered by MacDonald, Snowden and Thomas. Labour in the mid and late thirties remained short of legal talent. Sir William Jowitt, characterised by Sankey as 'a brilliant advocate but not trusted', having been Attorney General in the 1929 Government, went with MacDonald in 1931, but later switched back, becoming a Labour Member once again in 1939 and Lord Chancellor in 1945 [Diary for 1935 but comments written 7 January 1936, SPe 289]. Perhaps Sankey's comments were not just speculative musings, but after 1935 he remained a detached figure.

Perhaps surprisingly, Sankey played no part in the debates on the Chamberlain Government's reorganisation of the coal industry in 1938. However he became a contributor to the Lords debates on the deteriorating international situation, welcoming the Munich settlement, admiring Chamberlain and Halifax but acknowledging that the Czechs had paid the price for peace. He felt that Germany had been treated badly at Versailles and hoped until summer 1939 for a peaceful solution; faced with the likelihood of war he evinced the spirit of 1931. 'In peace we have political parties but they cease to exist when the safety and honour of Britain are at stake' [For Munich *Parliamentary Debates (Lords)*, 3 October 1938, cols. 1344–1347; for non-partisanship, 13 April 1939, col. 623].

A Viscount since 1932, Sankey could be characterised as one of 'the Great and the Good', a signatory to declarations of principle such as *The Times* letter in September 1938 calling for a new spirit in international affairs and influenced initially to Baldwin's disquiet by Moral Rearmament. Early in 1940 he became involved in something much more significant. He became the titular, although in practice not the effective, head of a committee convened to develop a declaration on The Rights of Man. The inspiration came from H.G. Wells; other members included the physician, Lord Horder, Ritchie Calder, Margaret Bondfield, Sir John Boyd Orr, Sir Norman Angell, and Francis Williams. The grouping could be seen as in the

tradition of those inter-war progressive initiatives which were not tied to a specific party. The gestation was not without difficulty. The campaign was launched in the *Daily Herald*; Wells's initial article on 5 February 1940 attacked the appeasers, Neville Chamberlain and Halifax. One participant, the Conservative politician, Lord Lytton resigned, insisting that such an attack diminished the campaign to 'merely a left-wing political debate'. Sankey also resigned, characteristically claiming that Wells had prejudiced an impartial discussion. Calder brought Sankey back into the committee, replacing Wells as chairman. Wells' agreement was perhaps unexpected; he remained the vital figure but the resulting statement became known misleadingly as the Sankey Declaration. Published initially in the *Daily Herald* on 20 April 1940 it was translated into ten languages and published in 48 countries [Smith (1986) Chap. 17; Mackenzie and Mackenzie (1992) Chap. 25].

In Britain the Declaration appeared at a fortunate moment, less than three weeks before the downfall of the Chamberlain Government, the formation of the Churchill Coalition and a shift to the left in popular sentiment that would ultimately produce the Labour victory in 1945. Sankey spoke in the Lords during the war on India, the post-war settlement, the Beveridge Report and the continuing problems in the coal industry. The inter-war problems had left a toxic legacy of obsolescence and a discounted work force. Sankey acknowledged that without cross-party agreement there could not be nationalisation during the war; but the measure remained indispensable. 'A democratic State with large industries governed autocratically is a house divided against itself. It becomes inevitable to apply to some industries, the democratic principles which have functioned so well in political life'. His concern about excessive centralised control could be met by drawing on the expertise and ambitions of the miners through a system of joint councils for the industry. His final contribution in the Lords on 4 June 1945 recalled another long-lasting commitment, the Welsh Church (Burial Grounds) Bill [For coal *Parliamentary Debates (Lords)*, 28 October 1943, cols. 415–419, 4 June 1945, col. 338].

Sankey died on 6 February 1948; he was unmarried and for several years had shared a house with his sister Edith. An urbane lawyer, clubbable and with strong attachments to both Lancing and Jesus, he took pains to remain on good terms with all his acquaintances. The style was central to his work on both the Coal Commission and the India Round Table. Lord Crawford referred to him as 'amiable, indolent and acquiescent' [Crawford Diary, 2 June 1932, Vincent 1984, 546]. But beneath the urbanity and geniality was a morose and pessimistic man who relied for solace on his religious faith. His mother's death in 1921 left an enduring wound. His correspondence was carried out on black edged paper. On being sworn in as Lord Chancellor in 1929 he 'celebrated'; 'have reached height of my ambition. How delighted my darling mother would have been and how I long to see her again. That is all I want, then I shall be happy' [Diary, 10 June 1929, SPe 283].

Opinions vary about his quality as a Lord Chancellor; his credibility could be questioned easily on the basis that the supply of qualified talent within Labour ranks was limited and that after 1931 his continuing tenure of the Woolsack owed more to political arithmetic than to his own qualities. But some commentators have claimed that his judgments, not least on the autonomy of the Dominions, support a positive view of his 'liberal' Lord Chancellorship. Politically his importance came out of the events of 1919. He acted in the Coal Commission as a reasoning arbiter not as a partisan, but his findings, argued for on consensual grounds, became a symbol in mining communities of defeat and of hope for something better. A judge with no links to the miners had come out on their side. Sankey was never deeply embedded in the labour movement culture; this relative detachment along with his demeanour explains why after 1931 he was never reviled as a traitor.

The relationship between Sankey and the miners can be captured by an episode in August 1931. The Secretary of the Durham Miners' Association's Sacriston Lodge sent a photograph of the new Lodge banner recently displayed at the Durham Gala. It carried portraits of two men of 1919—Sankey and Smillie. Sankey replied on the last day of the month, as a member of the

National Government. 'It is the greatest compliment I have ever had paid to me… I have always stuck up for the miners and shall always do so and they want a friend more than ever now' [SP c508 Ben Lambert, Secretary of Sacriston Lodge to Sankey, 14 August 1931, copy reply, 31 August 1931]. His wealth at death was £85 588 13s 2d.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Bodleian library University of Oxford, Sankey Papers, correspondence, diaries and papers; correspondence with Lord Ponsonby, Ponsonby Papers; British Library Oriental and India Office Collections, letters to Lord Reading; National Archives, Scotland, letters to Lord Lothian; National Archives MSS Lord Chancellor's Office; Ramsay MacDonald Papers. National Library, Scotland letters to Lord Haldane. (**2**) **Reports**: Reports of the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry (Sankey) 1919, Cmd 84, 85, 86, 210359 XI; 361 XIII. (**3**) **Books and articles**: G.D.H. Cole, *Labour in the Coal Mining Industry* (1923); Richard Burdon Haldane, *An Autobiography*; (1929); R.F.V. Heuston, *Lives of the Lord Chancellors 1885–1940* (Oxford, 1964); R.J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity 1917–1940* (Oxford, 1974); Stephen Koss, *Lord Haldane*, *Scapegoat for Liberalism* (NY, 1969); Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler*, *1933–40* (Cambridge, 1975); David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (1977); N. Mackenzie (ed), *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb Volume 3 1912–1947* (1978); R. Stevens, *Law and Politics: the House of Lords as a Judicial Body 1800–1976* (Oxford, 1979); N and J. Mackenzie (eds.), *The Diary of Beatrice Webb*, *Vol. 3*, *1905–1924* (1984); John Vincent (ed), *The Crawford Papers: The Journals of David Lindsay Twenty-Seventh Earl of Crawford and Tenth Earl of Balclarres* (Manchester, 1985); Barry Supple, *The History of the British Coal Industry Volume 4 1913–1946: The Political Economy of Decline* (Oxford, 1987); Phillip Williamson, 'The Labour Party and the House of Lords 1918–1931', *Parliamentary History*, vol. 10 (1991), 317–341; David C. Smith, *The Time Traveller: The Life of H.G. Wells* (1992); Clyde Sanger, *Malcolm MacDonald: An End to Empire* (Liverpool, 1995); R. Self (ed), *The Austen Chamberlain Diary Letters* (1995); D. Howell *Macdonald's Party: Identities and Crisis 1922–31* (Oxford, 2002); "Sankey, John, Viscount Sankey", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 2004; Nicholas Owen, *The British Left and India* (Oxford, 2007).

DAVID HOWELL

*See also*: †William JOWITT; †Robert SMILLIE; †Sidney James WEBB

**SHEARSMITH, Cornelius Tonge** (1884–1914)
SOCIALIST AND TRADE UNIONIST

Cornelius ('Con') Tonge Shearsmith was born on 19 August 1884, the son of Edwin Shearsmith (1845–1893) and Mary Ann Tonge. Edwin, a Hull-born butcher, had married Mary, of Immingham, nine years his junior, in 1873. They settled at 4 Emporium Buildings, on Spring Bank. The arrival of Cornelius completed the family, which already contained two sons and three daughters. Cornelius Shearsmith started work at age fifteen in 1899 as a clerk for J.A. Carhill, a chartered accountant established in one of Hull's small and busy streets, the Land of Green Ginger.

Shearsmith was soon politically involved, joining the local Fabian Society branch, headed, in the years before the First World War, by a medical man, Dr Joseph Nelson. He also became acquainted with Reverend Reeman, a pastor at the Old Salem Congregational Church, probably in spring 1909, when a trio of Nonconformist preachers launched a local 'Socialist Crusade'. As an aspiring journalist, Shearsmith is said to have contributed a couple of articles to the *Christian World* magazine—but he was remembered less as a religious person than as a staunch socialist. His last and most solid loyalty was to the Hull branch of the British Socialist Party (BSP), the party that succeeded the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1911.

Shearsmith's socialist faith went hand-in-hand with his trade union activism. A member of the National Union of Clerks (NUC), he became vice-chairman of its Hull branch in the early 1910s and was elected as its chair at the beginning of 1914, taking over from a certain A.C. Hall. The local branch was particularly dynamic at this time, having recruited a sizeable number of women members. Consequently, at Whitsuntide 1914, the NUC's annual congress came to Hull. Shearsmith, appreciated for his 'considerable ability as a speaker' and his 'clear way of expounding his views', was amongst those who addressed the clerks' Paragon Square mass meeting on the event's final day [*Hull Daily Mail*, 2 July 1914]. The 200 delegates at the congress represented 13,000 dues payers nationally, a figure that had increased by 25% in only one year. Just a week before Shearsmith died, the *Hull Daily Mail* published his response to two clerks who had expressed scepticism about the value of NUC membership [*Hull Daily Mail*, 29 June 1914]: it is a well-argued and energetic plea, making it easy to understand why he was perceived locally as 'a hard worker and a clear thinker' [*Monthly Labour Journal*, July 1914].

As a representative of the NUC branch, Shearsmith also sat on the Executive of the Hull Trades and Labour Council from the end of 1912. According to Fred Booth, the Lib-Lab editor of Hull's *Monthly Labour Journal*, he acted, with other 'rebel members', as 'a veritable watchdog' [*Hull Times*, 4 July 1914]. Indeed, in the turbulent months that followed the seamen and dockers' strike of June 1911, the Trades Council became home to a new generation of activists, often members of the BSP, who defined themselves as revolutionary socialists. They took a sympathetic view of the syndicalism associated with the 'Great Labour Unrest' of the period and supported what they termed 'greater unionism'. 'The real battlefield of Labour', Shearsmith wrote, 'is not at Westminster, but in the workshop and in the factory, in the mine and in the mill' [*Monthly Labour Journal*, February 1914]. During the Dublin dockers' lock-out of 1913–1914, Shearsmith was in charge of the local support fund and, alongside the Hull branch of the Daily Herald League, welcomed Jim Larkin heartily when he visited the city. When a meeting was organised in Hull on Sunday 29 March 1914 to support nine South African trade-unionists who had just been deported by their government, Shearsmith was one of the few local activists to mention the plight of the black workforce exploited in the British-owned mines [*Monthly Labour Journal*, June 1914]. Such initiatives did not go down well with the older, more moderate generation inside the Trades Council, which explains why many felt that he could be 'stinging' and even 'waspish' [*Hull Times*, 4 July 1914].

All in all, though 'his views for the re-organisation of society… did not find general favour', Shearsmith seems to have run his NUC branch in an open-minded way, making sure that 'all phases of political thought (were) fully and adequately represented, and (managed) to work in harmony' [*Hull Daily Mail*, 2 July 1914]. The feeling conveyed in various tributes to his memory was that he wanted, above all, to be 'serviceable to his class': 'What a big heart for mankind this little fellow had' [*Monthly Labour Journal*, July 1914], Booth lamented, expressing a grief shared beyond the socialist milieu. On the verge of a war that was to put British labour's internationalism to a test, it should also be noted that his loss considerably weakened the local voice for pacifism.

Shearsmith died at his home, at 8 Milton Street, of acute meningitis, on Wednesday 1 July 1914, at the age of 29. He had just returned from a holiday in a houseboat on the upper reaches of the River Hull when he started developing rheumatic fever. His old comrade, Dr Joseph Nelson, was unable to stop the illness and shop assistant William A. Grainger, a fellow BSPer, took a week's leave to nurse his comrade in his final unconscious days. He was buried on Friday 3 July in the Borough Cemetery on Spring Bank. The funeral was paid for by the NUC. Of the two poems sent by 'friends of our late Comrade C.T. Shearsmith' published on the front page of the October edition of the *Monthly Labour Journal*, one was signed by 'a Lady Member'. But there is no evidence of him ever being married.

**Writings:** The articles that Shearsmith wrote for the *Monthly Labour Journal* (Official Organ of the Hull Trades and Labour Council) were published between January and June 1914.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Letter from Steve R. Shearsmith, Cottingham, East Yorkshire, 27 July 2003. (**2**) **Newspapers and Periodicals**: *Hull Daily Mail*; *Hull Socialist*; *Hull Times*; *Monthly Labour Journal.* (**3**) **Books, Articles and Thesis**: Kenneth Gillett and Edward MacMahon, *The History of Hull* (Hull, 1989); Yann Béliard, 'The Origins of the Great Labour Unrest: Class Relations in Hull, 1894–1910' (unpublished PhD diss., Paris 13 University, 2007); Yann Béliard, 'Imperial Internationalism? Hull Labour's Support for South African Trade-Unionism on the Eve of the Great War", *Labour History Review*, vol. 74, no. 3 (2009), 319–329. (**4**) **Obituaries**: *Hull Daily Mail*, 2 July 1914; *Hull Times*, 4 July 1914; *Monthly Labour Journal*, July 1914.

YANN BELIARD

*See also*: †John ARNOTT; Alfred GOULD; Gus SMITH

**SCHMIDT, Gustav Adolph (SMITH, Gus)** (1854–1913)
SOCIALIST AND TRADE UNIONIST

In more ways than one, Gus(tav) Smith/Schmidt was a militant 'in between'. A revolutionary of German origin, he often began his speeches with 'We, the workers of Great Britain'. Remembered as 'a familiar figure at the meetings of the Hull Labour Party', he never made a mystery of his admiration for Malatesta and Kropotkin [*Monthly Labour Journal*, 5 July 1913]. A skilled cabinetmaker, he was above all preoccupied with 'the organising of the unorganised'; the thousands of casual workers employed in the port of Hull. A pillar of the local Socialist Club, he adhered neither to the Independent Labour Party (ILP) nor to the Social Democratic Federation (SDF). Though he never sought nor achieved any kind of national recognition, this 'consistent worker for Socialism and Trade Unionism' [*Monthly Labour Journal*, 3 November 1906], this 'hopeful enthusiast in the movement, who looked at life with a cheery smile' [*Hull Daily Mail*, 23 June 1913] played a major role in the development of Hull's labour movement in the late-Victorian and Edwardian years.

Gustav Schmidt, son of Friedrich Wilhelm and Friederike Mathilde Schmidt, was born on 26 February 1854 in Delitzsch, a small town situated in the province of Saxony. In his teens, he left his hometown for nearby Leipzig, the industrial capital of the region, to train as a cabinetmaker. For five years (1868–1873), his apprenticeship led him from one German city to another, until he left for Norway, where he spent two years (1874–1875). Upon returning to Germany, he was forced to do his military service. Eleven months later he deserted, escaping first to Holland, then to Britain. By 1877, he was working as a cabinetmaker in London, but he only stayed there for a short time. In 1878, at the age of twenty-four, his peregrinations led him to Hull, which was to be his terminus. Bismarck passed the first anti-socialist laws in 1878, making it impossible for him to travel back home. In 1881, Schmidt married a local girl, never to move from Humberside again.

In the early 1880s, Schmidt founded the 'Hull Liberty Socialist Club', with the help of half a dozen other German exiles. Though it was officially registered as a cultural association, the authorities were conscious of the political character of the club. Yet, because the club's function was apparently social more than agitational, it seems to have been tolerated. The name was borrowed from *Die Freiheit*, a weekly paper edited in London by the German anarchist-communist Johann Most (1846–1906) between 1879 and 1882. *Freiheit* was also the name of circles founded in Germany by a great admirer of Most's, anarcho-syndicalist Rudolf Rocker (1873–1958), who was an exile in Britain from 1895 to 1918. Schmidt's scarce writings

prove his attachment to the anarchist current. One of his fondest memories was of an 1891 meeting with Louise Michel in London, where he argued that going on strike was not enough: the workers needed to start running the factories for themselves. But Schmidt was an open-minded and even eclectic secretary. In 1889–1890 the club subscribed to the *Sozialdemocrat*, the Marxist weekly published by the Sozialdemocratische Partei Deutschland (SPD). Schmidt, on this occasion, sent his 'revolutionary greetings' to the editor, Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932), who had been living in London since 1888 and would remain there until 1901 [Julius Motteler papers, 1032]. A fraternal body for Schmidt's *Genossen* (comrades) and *Mitbürgers* (fellow-countrymen), the Club Freiheit made little impact on the local labour movement and there are no traces of the club after 1893.

In 1890, Schmidt founded another organisation, over which he would preside until his death: the Hull Furnishing Trades Society. This creation resulted from a prolonged strike led by the cabinetmakers for better pay and working conditions. Encouraged by the strike wave among unskilled workers that had begun the year before in London, they held out for several weeks, with support from the Hull Trades Council, until the struggle was victorious. Alongside the president of the Cabinetmakers' Union (Charlie Reynolds, a follower of Will Thorne), Schmidt, because so many cabinetmakers were of German origin, played a crucial part in the fight. From then on, he became known as Gustav Smith, or simply 'Gus' Smith. In May 1890, Smith organised the first local meeting ever in favour of the eight-hour day, leading thousands of workers to gather for the cause on Drypool Green. Three years later, in 1893, during the lockout that paralysed the port for seven weeks, Smith invited hundreds of dockers' wives to meet up on Corporation Field, the other favourite spot for labour gatherings. Though the fight did not manage to save the closed shop system that had been established in 1889 (the dockers' union was destroyed and did not reappear until 1900), Smith was by then known far beyond the circle of German refugees.

Smith held revolutionary socialist views that were at odds with the opinions professed by the 'Lib-Lab' leaders of the Trades Council, Fred Maddison and W.G. Millington. Several factors, however, enabled him to be accepted by the Hull labour movement. The local activists could only feel gratitude towards the man who had been able to organise a whole new section of the local working class. Further, the national breakthrough of New Unionism and the socialist revival that accompanied it created a favourable atmosphere. In 1895, the recently founded ILP presented its first local candidate in west Hull, docker Tom McCarthy, who dared to challenge Liberal MP and ship-owner Charles Henry Wilson. So when Smith defended the class struggle or the collective ownership of the means of production, he was speaking a language more workers could understand. The only manuscript he left behind, a presentation given to the Hull Secularist Society in 1892 that is full of uncanny expressions and spelling mistakes, is testimony to the efforts he made to master the English language. It also gives us a taste of his personality, since it illustrates both his 'very extreme views' (the workers could only save themselves by overthrowing the capitalists) and his sense of humour: 'Put them all in a balloon, and send them off to the moon. What would we suffer? The toilers without the rich would be as happy as "a dog who lost his fleas"' [Max Nettlau papers, 2987].

In the years following the defeat of the dockers in their struggle against the Shipping Federation (1893) and that of the ILP against the Liberals (1895), the Trades Council adopted a progressive policy in which Smith could have no part. The field of industrial action was abandoned, the focus being set instead on having labour men elected on the Board of Guardians, the Board of Education and the Town/City Council, where they were to collaborate with the Liberals as part of the same 'Progressive Party'. Between 1895 and 1900, no May Days were organised. Smith's role inside the Trades Council was therefore limited to that of a stirrer, who insisted in vain upon reviving trade unionism among port workers. Those years just before and after the Boer War, unfavourable to socialist propaganda, obliged Smith to occupy a marginal

position—his antireligious streak constituting one more point of friction with a 'Lib-Lab' majority that swore by Nonconformist Protestantism.

In 1905, Smith, who had been employed by Hull and East Riding Furnishing Stores for five years and was deemed 'sober, honest and highly respectable' by his employer [HO 144/796/131876], became a British citizen. Having just reached the age of fifty and about to celebrate his silver wedding, he stepped forward once again. A local Labour breakthrough that year, the ILP tendency inside the Hull Trades Council overthrew the old guard, leading to the dissolution of the 'Progressive Party' and the formation of an autonomous labour group on the City Council, combined with the parliamentary breakthrough of 1906 to boost his morale. He played a part in the growth of a circle founded in 1896, the Hull Socialist Club ('Not merely a Socialist, but a Sociable Club'), which became so popular that its premises in Balmoral House had to be refurbished—Smith, always a practical man, covered its floors with linoleum. He also participated in the activities of the local *Clarion* Fellowship, which had its headquarters at the Socialist Club. Whenever the *Clarion* Van visited Hull or Beverley, one could be sure to find Smith among the propagandists, side by side with other activists who were often miles away from his political standpoint, e.g. Walter Litchfield, the president of the Hull co-operative movement. The same lively atmosphere took over the Trades Council, which incited Smith to once again to attend its Thursday evening fortnightly meetings. In 1905, when the City Council tried to ban the outdoor gatherings that the SDF and the ILP were used to holding, Smith urged the Trades Council and its city councillors to resist the ban. Following his calls, the local labour movement resisted and won.

In March 1907 Smith was elected a Guardian, possibly thanks to a reminder from printer and journalist F.W. Booth: 'The candidate bearing the foreign-sounding name of "Schmidt" is no other than our good old time friend Mr Gus Smith' [*Hull Times*, 16 March 1907]. Smith, still a revolutionary at heart, was seeking to continue the struggle for socialism using all means possible—a pragmatic conception which, in a place like England, could hardly exclude participation in elections. His hope, it seems, was that the Trades Councils would develop into something solid enough for the seizing of power by the working-class. In 1910, Smith asked the Trades Council for a revision of its statutes, as he was in favour of opening the door to representatives of 'all Labour and Socialist bodies', not only to trade union delegates, so as to allow other hard-boiled socialists, such as Fabian doctor Joseph Nelson or pawnbroker Ernest Gaunt, to participate in the council's decisions [*Hull Times*, 29 January 1910]. In January 1910, the revised statuses were adopted unanimously. Yet in July 1910, Smith was the only delegate on the Trades Council's executive committee to vote in favour of supporting a public meeting organised by the dockers' union, the others being too afraid of the 'adverse criticism' that the main speaker, Tom Mann, would surely inflict on the Labour Party [*Hull Times*, 16 July 1910]. The episode is symbolical of Smith's difficulties in winning over his fellow trade-unionists to his radical views. Though they tolerated his eccentricities, neither Booth nor Alfred Gould, the leader of the ILP branch, had any intention of abandoning the parliamentary path for that of direct action recommended in America by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and in France by the General Confederation of Labour (CGT).

In 1911, British society was shaken by an unprecedented strike wave, in which Smith came to play a prominent role. From January to June 1912, he produced five texts which formed his political testament. Of the five papers, which were all published in the Trades Council's *Monthly Labour Journal*, two were printed on the first page, as editorials. For the first time in three decades, Smith was the spokesman for the whole of the local labour movement—though his belated ascent was perhaps linked to the relative decline of the Trades Council as the brain and spine of Hull's labour movement, and its gradual replacement by the newly constituted Hull branch of the Labour Party. Smith's tribunes came in the form of a continued dialogue between two labour activists: himself, hardly disguised as an 'old veteran' named 'George', and a certain 'Tom', much younger than him but curious of all matters political and bursting with good will—possibly a pseudonym for BSP activist Cornelius Shearsmith who, due to the turbulent social

climate, was also beginning to exercise influence inside the council. While the three shorter texts were denunciations of the social order: 'in the present damnable system of exploitation… no working man is free' [*Monthly Labour Journal*, February 1912], the two longer ones allowed Smith to expand more positively on his fundamental beliefs. 'There is joy in fighting,' he told his disciples, reminding him of the progress made since the 1880s. He saw the foundation of a Hull and District branch of the Labour Party as a historical step forward in 'labour class consciousness', since in his eyes it coupled 'Trades Unionism with Revolutionary Socialism', while not excluding co-operation and labour representation inside local and national institutions [*Monthly Labour Journal*, April 1912].

This testament is revealing of Smith's syncretistic approach, maybe of his wishful thinking, certainly of the way he tried to conciliate political sensibilities that were highly contradictory. In his last text for the *Monthly Labour Journal*, for example, he praised syndicalism for being less anti-parliamentarian than anarchism and industrial unionism—an appreciation that could be interpreted as a tactical attempt not to irritate his Labourite readers, but also a betrayal of his radical youth. His praise of the syndicalists aptly sums up his own convictions: what he appreciated was that they did not seek to create entirely new unions to compete with and replace existing ones, but to work inside them so as to bring about their amalgamation, federation, and radicalisation—precisely what he had always tried to do on a local level. Whether he achieved his aim, of course, is doubtful. By remaining outside the two major socialist groupings, the ILP and the SDF/SDP/BSP, Smith shaped neither. The Hull branch of the ILP remained under the influence of Alf Gould, who was vocal in the defence of labour independence but did not call himself a socialist, while the Hull branch of the SDF/SDP/BSP always lacked the proletarian backing that a popular figure like Smith might have attracted. Too attached to his individual liberty to bear any discipline tighter than the very loose one that characterised Trades Council activities, Smith devoted most of his energy to the solidifying of an organisation that, as the 1914 crisis would reveal, could not be used for revolutionary purposes. Favouring principles over party, Smith managed to avoid social isolation, but not to overcome a certain political impotence.

In May 1913, the *Monthly Labour Journal* announced that the 'willing horse' would not take part in the spring campaign of open-air meetings, as he was suffering from 'gastric carcinoma' [*Monthly Labour Journal*, May 1913]. Smith left his home at 89 Spring Street (he had been a tenant there since 1899) for the Co-operative Convalescent Home, then for the Hull Infirmary, where he underwent an operation from which he did not recover. He died on Monday 23 June 1913, at the age of 59. The funeral took place on the Wednesday in the Western Cemetery, where many a worker 'followed him to his last resting place'. On his grave was laid 'a token of respect' from the Trades Council, 'in the form of the letter "S", which was covered with deep red sweet peas' [*Monthly Labour Journal*, February 1914].

Smith left a wife and three children, Gustav Albert, Louise Sophia and Bertha Clare, then respectively aged 27, 22 and 18. His death was a great loss for the labour movement in Hull, for he might have played a special role in August 1914, when the British and the German empires declared war upon each other. A Hull man of German origin, Smith the dedicated internationalist would probably have contributed to the expression of anti-war sentiment, and to the constitution of a local opposition to the patriotic consensus advocated by employers, politicians, and many labour activists alike. His premature passing left the Trades Council politically disarmed and its *Monthly Labour Journal*, after embracing the Labour Party's calls for a social truce, rapidly ceased to exist. At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, it is safe to say that no one in Hull was as persevering as Gus Smith in the propagation of the socialist ideal. A frequent speaker at the meetings held in Paragon Square, this migrant worker came to play a prominent part in the local public life and embodied the very notion of proletarian internationalism.

**Writings:** Presentation given to the Hull Branch of the National Secularist Society, Sunday 6 March 1892 (Max Nettlau papers, 2987, International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam); "How the World Moves," *Monthly Labour Journal (Official Organ of the Hull Trades and Labour Council)*, January 1912, 5–7; 'Where Are We Now?, *Monthly Labour Journal*, February 1912, 5–6; 'Where Are We Now?', *Monthly Labour Journal*, May 1912, 3–4; 'Where Are We Now?', *Monthly Labour Journal*, June 1912, 1–3; 'Where Are We Now?', *Monthly Labour Journal*, May 1913, 3–4.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: A handful of Club Freiheit papers can be found in the Julius Motteler papers, 1032/2, International Institute of Social History Amsterdam; Naturalisation certificate, HO 334/41/15539 and Supplementary papers, HO 144/796/131876 (National Archives, London). (**2**) **Newspapers and Periodicals**: *Monthly Labour Journal (Official Organ of the Hull Trades and Labour Council)*; *Hull Times*, especially F.W. Booth's weekly column 'Among the Workers', written under the pseudonym of 'Peter Progress'. (**3**) **Books, Articles and Theses**: Raymond Brown, *Waterfront Organisation in Hull, 1870–1900* (Hull, 1972); Kenneth Gillett and Edward MacMahon, *The History of Hull* (Hull, 1989); Yann Béliard, 'The Origins of the Great Labour Unrest: Class Relations in Hull, 1894–1910' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Paris 13 University, 2007); Yann Béliard, 'From Gustav Schmidt to Gus Smith: A Tale of Labour Integration (Hull, 1878–1913)', in Constance Bantman and David Berry (eds.), *New Perspectives on Anarchism, Labour and Syndicalism. The Individual, the National and the Transnational* (Newcastle, 2010) pp. 44–60. (**4**) **Obituaries**: *Hull Daily Mail*, 23 June 1913; *Monthly Labour Journal*, 5 July 1913.

YANN BELIARD

*See also*: †John ARNOTT; Alfred GOULD; Cornelius SHEARSMITH

**STUBBS, Albert Ernest** (1877–1962)
LABOUR MP

Albert Stubbs is a good example of the many unsung heroes, who, for decades, in inauspicious areas, single-mindedly dedicated their lives to serving the labour movement. An active trade unionist, (initially unpaid), he undertook the thankless task of organising farmworkers. He was a key player in the regrettable rivalry over rural workers which took place between the National Union of Agricultural Workers (NUAW) and the Workers' Union (WU). Stubbs was also a devoted local Labour party politician, for which he was respected and loved in both his rural and urban communities for nearly fifty years. He stood as a token Labour candidate in rural Parliamentary seats in eight general elections and achieved the remarkable and unique feat of winning Cambridgeshire for Labour by 44 votes in the 1945 landslide.

Stubbs was born in Middlesbrough on 29 September 1877, the third son and fourth of what would be six children of William and Eliza nee Hockney. His father was a bricklayer and moved around Yorkshire in search of work. Albert Stubbs's birth was registered by William whilst he was residing in Hull. In 1881 the family were living at Copmanthorpe near York and ten years later at Cottingham near Hull. After an elementary education, at eleven years old, the young Stubbs started work as a street newspaper seller; subsequently he secured an apprenticeship as a printer. Having served his time he joined the Typographical Association. As a craftsman he earned a reasonable living. The 1901 census records him as a boarder in Bournemouth. In January 1908 he married Emily in Salford, his wife's birthplace. Their first two children, Leslie and Raymond were born in Batley, but by the 1911 census they had crossed the Pennines and lived in Blackley, Manchester. A daughter, Gladys, was born in 1915. Stubbs joined the Independent Labour Party (ILP) aged twenty and promoted its causes during his time in West

Yorkshire. He was then actively involved in the Black Country strikes of 1913, where he encountered the WU. Early in 1914 Stubbs moved to the market and university town of Cambridge where he had been appointed to the print room of the *Cambridge Daily News.* As a member of the Cambridge Chapel of the Typographical Association, he was a delegate to the fledgling Cambridge Trades and Labour Council, which had been formed three years earlier in 1911 [Johnson and Walsh (2013) 13].

His arrival in East Anglia coincided with the national revival of agricultural trade unionism, at a time when socialism was first actively promoted in the villages. This was described by one of his comrades years later: 'Great credit is due to the Cambridge Trades Council for the splendid work done in the early days by going out at weekends to the villages to preach trades unionism that has brought the farm workers from semi-feudalism to conditions that are at least tolerable and on the way towards a standard of life that would be in keeping… with the wage standards of any other workers employed on other industries' [Hardman (1947) 15]. This rural movement involved both the mainly Norfolk-based NUAW founded by George Edwards in 1906, and the more opportunist WU, which was keen to extend its general unionism to farmworkers [See note on nomenclature below]. The WU took advantage of several existing disputes over low wage levels in the villages surrounding Cambridge. This led to a more serious wave of strikes on the Cambridgeshire/Suffolk/Essex borders in the early spring of 1914. The WU had already called a county meeting of farmworkers in February 1914 and Stubbs, having previously worked with the WU and ILP, was central to the Cambridge Trades Council's campaign.

Rural labour historians have consistently underestimated the bitterness of the twenty-odd year rivalry between the WU and the NUAW over their respective claims to organise workers on the land. Farmworkers were always notoriously difficult to organise; being badly paid, and working in small groups, often alongside with their (sometimes paternalistic) employers. Their unions were difficult to sustain and activity was patchy. Having virtually ceased to exist, the NUAW was (re-)founded in 1906 in its Norfolk heartland by activists from Joseph Arch's National Agricultural Labourers' Union (NALU) of the 1870s, within a culture of radical Liberalism and nonconformity. It remained a small East Anglian organisation until the wave of rural strikes in early 1914.

The WU was founded by trade union veteran, Tom Mann, in 1898, as a general union. The following year, a young Shropshire socialist, John Beard, joined the WU and set up farm-workers' branches in the north of that county. Though soon defeated, the campaign gave the WU an entrée to the countryside. Beard argued that raising farm wages would help the WU's core urban unskilled membership by reducing undercutting of their wages by rural migrants. Beard was elected WU president, committing the union to rural campaigning, usually in the form of 'mixed branches' in country towns. These combined workers in small local industries, like agricultural implement makers, tanneries, quarries, saw mills, with farm workers which could be very effective in prosperous times. On the back of successful urban recruitment, the WU also employed large numbers of socialist organisers who were partly paid by results—typically by the numbers of new recruits. However, the WU often failed to consolidate its members, especially in slumps. Branches were short-lived and its lay-activists few and unsupported. In contrast, the NUAW's network of village activists had deep local roots, often in the Nonconformist chapels. As early as 1914 both unions were competing for members in the same districts. As the local press is the main source for historians, and the published reports are often vague, it is difficult to untangle the intricate pattern of this rivalry. Both unions experienced a major growth in membership during the First World War and took advantage of their opportunities created by the growing national shortage of skilled farm labour.

Already thirty-seven on the outbreak of the First World War, Stubbs did not enlist in the forces. The WU, having been radical both at national and local level, largely developed quickly into a jingoistic supporter of the war effort. President John Beard delighted to appear in his volunteer's uniform at union meetings, and both he and the Secretary, Charles Duncan MP,

flirted with the government-sponsored British Workers' League (BWL). Patriotic sentiments were shared by the vast majority of farmworkers, as 200,000 volunteered for the forces over the next few years. Hard-won union membership briefly plummeted in 1914–1915 as key activists enlisted. Unlike many farmworkers' activists, Stubbs did not speak at recruiting meetings, nor did he take up a workers' place on the Military Service Tribunals set up from 1916 to judge appeals against conscription. Unlike many other middle-aged men, Stubbs himself does not seem to have received call-up papers after 1916. A small man, he may have been below minimum height levels, especially as he was already approaching the maximum age for conscription. Through Cambridge Trades Council—where he had become president in 1916—he also joined the Cambridge Borough Soldiers and Sailors Pension Committee. His forceful campaigning for citizen soldiers, including many of his members now in khaki, drew widespread support from these working-class volunteers, which was to have lasting effect. In contrast to his welfare work with soldiers, he also attended the 'Leeds Soviet of May 1917 to welcome the Russian Revolution and to Organise the British Democracy' [Mansfield (2001) Chap. 4; Stubbs' own annotated copy of the programme for the Leeds meeting is in the LSE collection].

As the war progressed, many younger activists from both unions enlisted and both leaderships were largely supportive of the war effort. The WU extensively recruited unskilled workers in the new munitions industries, which established unions ignored, so that by 1920, it was the largest non-federated British union, with half a million members. The WU's policy of flexibility in war industries made it the government's preferred trade union. As Beard continued to steer union policy towards the countryside, with state intervention in farming in 1917, the WU's appetite for compromise with employers, along with their ultra-patriotism, also found favour with the government.

The Corn Production Act (CPA) of 1917 was introduced as a package of innovative government interventions to counter the crisis which threatened the nation's food supply. This was directly caused by the successful German U boat strategy, in conjunction with sluggish and unambitious agricultural outputs. As well as guaranteed corn prices for growers, the CPA established the principle of a minimum wage. Agricultural Wages Boards (AWBs) were set up, with representatives of employers and workers, to establish wage levels for every county, with earnings often decided by neutral members. (These arrangements were consolidated by an umbrella national AWB.) The AWBs exercised real power, so the allocation of places for workers' representatives became a source of conflict between the rival unions and a powerful tool for future member recruitment. To the outrage of the NUAW, who had many more farmworkers than the WU, the latter union benefitted from government favouritism in the allocation of AWB places, even in counties where it had no members at all. The WU received roughly equal numbers to the NUAW and was often allowed to nominate the independent AWB members. This intensified the conflict between the unions and decreased opportunities for compromise. There is even some evidence that the rivalry mirrored centuries' old antagonism between neighbouring villages [Mansfield (2001) 200].

Stubbs became part of this inter-union conflict and was appointed as a WU representative on the Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely AWB in 1917. He later became chair of the workers' side of the county AWB, and remained a member until his death in 1962. His long service of over forty years was probably unique. The CPA legislation and high produce prices in the last year of the war caused wages to increase and made union recruitment easier as real benefit accrued from membership. Forty shillings was the rate decided by the AWB in the county by December 1918. The growth in membership led to Stubbs's full time appointment as WU District Officer for Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely in 1919, enabling him to leave printing and devote himself full-time to the labour movement.

Stubbs's campaigning efforts signed up more Cambridgeshire farmworkers than did the local NUAW. In particular, he continued the WU tactic of 'mixed branches' of farmworkers and other semi-rural groups, like the 1000 new members claimed in 1918 in Histon, just north of

Cambridge, the site of the Chivers Jam factory and fruit cannery [Johnson and Walsh (2013) 18]. The branch also attracted workers from the large-scale fruit farms which fed the Chivers factory, as well as supplying growing demand for market produce, aided by good railway links with London. These farms were concentrated in large 'open' fen edge villages, with strong independent and chapel traditions, which provided a critical core for Stubbs' efforts. His links with the nearby town of Cambridge, still inter-twined in the surrounding rural economy, also helped. He needed to cover huge distances in the flat fenlands around Cambridge, servicing quite isolated branches as well as coping with a daunting casework load. Unlike the NUAW organisers, who were issued with bicycles, Stubbs, like many WU staff, eventually acquired a motorbike, which became his trade mark.

By the end of the war, Stubbs's activities had made him a well-known labour figure in the area. It was natural, therefore, that he was approached by the fledgling Cambridgeshire Labour Party, only formed in September, to stand in the 'coupon election' as the war ended. He was adopted on 2 December 1918, only twelve days before polling day and the candidature was not endorsed by Labour headquarters, so officially he was 'Independent Labour'. Within two days, he had issued a one-page programme stressing his support for ex-servicemen and farmworkers and for the already old-fashioned policy of smallholdings, alongside the extension of state ownership of industry [Johnson and Walsh (2013) 18].

Stubbs was also backed by the unlikely figure of the former High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire; Sir Herbert Fordham (1854–1929). A landowner, geologist, and coprolite magnate in Ashwell, south Cambridgeshire, Fordham was a respected local Liberal politician. Though he had opposed conscription in 1916, he stood unsuccessfully as a ('non-coupon') Liberal Candidate for West Fulham in 1918. But this did not prevent him from endorsing Stubbs, as one of several former Liberal rural grandees who went over to Labour in the immediate post-war period. In South Norfolk, for example, the founder of the NUAW, George Edwards MP, was supported by the Earl of Kimberley, who became the first-ever Labour member of the House of Lords (Kimberley's own father had served in successive cabinets under Gladstone and Lord Rosebery) [See letter in Stubbs Collection, LSE].

'Stubbs had fought the hurriedly planned 1918 campaign with tremendous energy, continuing his work as a printer by day and cycling from village to village on the stump by night' [Howard 3]. The only time he could have off work was an hour to hand in his nomination papers, but he managed to hold up to three meetings each evening, despite the December weather. His election budget was comparatively generous; with the newly formed Cambridgeshire Trades and Labour Council, buoyed up by the still expanding WU and by rural National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) branches, underwriting the campaign by over £241; over half this was spent hiring premises in the villages. This was a necessary expense, given the rushed nature of the fight and the dark season preventing outside meetings, the usual tradition of rural radicalism. Despite proposing three pounds a week for farm workers, their tendency to vote for Liberalism continued, often fostered by the strong Nonconformist tradition in the Fenland-edge villages. Stubbs' opponent was E.S. Montague (1879–1924), former Munitions Minister and now the Secretary of State for India. Montague's urban background was antipathetic to rural Cambridgeshire, but he was a strong supporter of the Lloyd George coalition, warmly embraced by 'the man that won the war' and had been given a clear run by the Conservatives. Given the hurried campaign with an inadequate electoral roll, Montague's victory was inevitable.

Cambridgeshire, 1918: electorate 37,410, turnout 51.3%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| E.S. Montague (Coalition Liberal) | 12,497 | (65.1%) |
| A.E. Stubbs (Independent Labour) | 6686 | (34.9%) |
| Majority | 5811 | (30.2%) |

Stubbs did well, considering the options and circumstances, with a higher vote than the Labour candidate in Cambridge itself. His instant campaign built good foundations for the future, as the rural Liberal/Nonconformist tradition associated with fenland smallholders and farmworkers gradually declined. The 'coupon election' had the lowest turn-out of any twentieth century General Election at 57% and Stubbs was in correspondence with several soldiers waiting for demobilisation who complained that they were deliberately omitted from voters' lists or intimidated: 'The present government is worse than Jerry' and 'we are following the elections very closely here and can observe the 'twisting' going on… Please do not divulge my name as it would be a shooting case for me.' Ex-service campaigners became his firm supporters: 'You ought to secure the solid backing and support of the Discharged Sailors and Soldiers, for have you not proved – not by words but by deeds – on the Cambridgeshire Pension Committee, how you can champion their cause'. Stubbs had 'come in daily contact with the pitiful condition of the disabled and discharged soldier'. He was to continue campaigning on behalf of the unemployed throughout the inter-war period. Curiously, he shared the passion of the old guard of the rival NUAW for smallholdings for rural ex-servicemen, at a time when this ex-Liberal policy was being discarded by modern elements in both unions, and he continued to advocate 'back to the land' for the rest of his career [Letters in Stubbs papers LSE, 1918 and 1922].

Stubbs fought the 1922 General Election on a smaller budget of £171. This partly reflected the overall decline of rural trade unionism, with major falls in farm prices from the summer of 1920. Despite being opposed by candidates from both the Conservatives and National Liberals (Montague again), Stubbs increased his vote substantially on an improved turnout, to be beaten by only 679 votes, declaring prophetically: 'We live to fight another day and we shall win' [Johnson and Walsh (2013) 31; *Cambridge Daily News*, 16 November 1922].

Cambridgeshire, 1922: electorate 36,636, turnout 70.8%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| H.S. Gray (Conservative) | 9846 | (38.0%) |
| A.E. Stubbs (Labour) | 9167 | (35.3%) |
| E.S. Montague (National Liberal) | 6942 | (26.7%) |
| Majority | 679 | (2.7%) |

Stubbs' performance here was again comparatively better than that of the Labour candidate in Cambridge, who had been better funded by Labour Party Headquarters. Many felt aggrieved and the Cambridge University Labour Club complained formally to the General Secretary, declaring that Stubbs would have won had his campaign been adequately funded by the party. Future MP Leah Manning later claimed that 'Stubbs seriously complained that he was being left to fight the County single handed… Silly tactics because the Borough result was a foregone conclusion, whereas he had a sporting chance in the County' [Letter in Stubbs Collection, LSE and Hardman (1947) 24]. But this is not borne out by his performance in the General Election of the following year when a resurgent Conservative vote and a stubborn core of Liberal supporters brought about a more substantial defeat for Stubbs:

Cambridgeshire, 1923: electorate 37,078, turnout 72.5%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| R.G.Briscoe (Conservative) | 11,710 | (43.6%) |
| A.E. Stubbs (Labour) | 8554 | (31.8%) |
| E. Dimsdale (Liberal) | 6619 | (24.6%) |
| Majority | 3156 | (11.8%) |

Stubbs found himself increasingly sidelined by the Cambridgeshire Labour Party and possibly by Labour headquarters and he was passed over for selection as PPC for the constituency in 1924. Chris Howard claims that this was because: 'he was too militant for the more moderate elements such as the county party secretary, who insisted that he would only undertake the job if all policies were presented in a moderate terms.' Howard's evidence for this is contained in a ragbag of Stubbs' pronouncements over the whole inter-war period, suggesting that he was part of an 'ILP cell'. Though it is true that Ramsay MacDonald's policy of moderation to prepare Labour for office trickled down to rural parties, there are likely to be more nuanced explanations than betrayal of rank-and-file aspirations by the leadership. Though Stubbs did attend the 'Leeds Soviet' in 1917 and retained an overall fondness for the USSR, his politics was mainly unsophisticated and his style remained staunchly working class, folksy, and often naive. In addition, with the decline of rural trade unionism from its 1916–1920 heyday, the Labour parties in the countryside were virtually penniless. As Griffiths persuasively argues, Labour sought wealthy rural candidates who would bankroll their own campaigns and advocate modern agriculture, which was part of MacDonald's overall progressive policy. An ideal candidate became available in Cambridgeshire with G.T. Garratt, ex-public school Fabian and former Indian civil servant, who, after war service, farmed in a 'progressive and practical' way in the constituency and publicised his work in the farming press. Garratt fought the seat in the 1924, 1929 and 1931 elections, with less success than Stubbs, though clearly the seat was then unwinnable for Labour. In the interests of party solidarity, Stubbs appeared to show little resentment at his rejection, and, undaunted, carried on his tireless work organising farmworkers and other rural workers in the Eastern counties [Howard, 4 and 7; Johnson and Walsh (2013) 50; Mansfield (2001) Chap. 5; Griffiths (2007) 359].

Meanwhile, on the economic front, agricultural prices dropped from the summer of 1920. This resulted in the loss of most of the farmworkers' wage increases made during the war and in steep reductions in membership for both unions, worsened by the abolition of the AWBs in 1921. Though the WU was more prepared to compromise with employers, to the extent of blacklegging in some NUAW disputes, it was hampered by its lack of village activists. The WU's urban membership also suffered gravely with the sluggish post war economy, and many of its full-time officials were dismissed. With the emphasis on fruit-growing and processing in Cambridgeshire, Stubbs did comparatively well. He largely retained his local membership and continued his position as organiser [Mansfield (2001) 159–162; Griffiths (2007) 114–17].

Widespread farmworkers' strikes against wage cuts occurred in many English counties in the spring of 1923. Though threatened, they did not materialise in Cambridgeshire. However the local press included reports from the larger Norfolk disputes, where the NUAW was making a national test case to halt falling wages. Though in other rural areas, like Shropshire, the WU effectively acted as blacklegs, undermining the strikes of NUAW branches, this did not take place in Cambridgeshire. Indeed Stubbs wrote a letter of support for the Norfolk NUAW men in the *Cambridge Daily News* [Mansfield (2001) 83; *Cambridge Daily News*, 31 March 1923]. The conflict between the two rural unions rumbled on. More complaints about the WU were made to the TUC over the poaching of members, than any other union. Aside from the NUAW, between 1919 and 1930 five unions successfully registered seven complaints with the TUC. One of the few cases where the WU prevailed occurred in March 1925, ironically the month after the launch of the TUC's rural campaign which was meant to recruit unorganised farmworkers and bring both unions together. This case centred on Great Wilbraham, a Cambridgeshire village which was part of Stubbs' County Council ward, where he was accused of 'causing 21 members to go over'. R.B. Walker, the formidable General Secretary of the NUAW presented his union's case, which was refuted by Stubbs himself, who claimed that: 'There was no [NUAW] organisation in that county at all. The Branches had gone. The members had nobody to look after them.' Stubbs was seconded by his boss, George Dallas, the WU's chief agricultural organiser who made a firm defence stressing Stubbs's wider role:

> Mr Stubbs was probably the best known Labour official in the County of Cambridge. He was a member of the Cambridgeshire County Council and has acted as the leader of the unemployed in the City of Cambridge, and hardly a week passes when his name does not figure in the local press in connection with the Labour movement. Mr Stubbs had been in the employment of the WU for a considerable number of years. Mr Stubbs organised the whole of the unemployed and marched them on several occasions to the Guardians. He organised the Direct Food Supply for the unemployed, getting fish directly from the sea, cutting out the dealers and getting it cheap for the unemployed.

Dallas' impassioned description, together with the NUAW's failure to prove more than nominal organising in that part of the county, led A.A.H. Finlay, General Secretary of the United Patternmakers Association, hearing the case on behalf of the TUC, to decide in the WU's favour. He added though: 'it was imperative in the interests of the agricultural workers that more co-operation should be adopted between the two unions' [MRC, TUC Collection, 85.5 and Mansfield (1997) 78].

In 1925 the TUC sponsored a rural campaign with the twin aims of decreasing the rivalry and attempting to staunch the haemorrhage of members. This was a dismal failure, largely as a result of the poor rural economy and because of the NUAW's reluctance to compromise with its old enemies. By 1929 though, the WU was bankrupt. Discussions about amalgamation with the NUAW were blighted by bad blood, and the WU had to be rescued by the giant Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), with the former Somerset farm boy, Ernest Bevin, taking a personal interest. Where existing WU rural membership was maintained, relatively successful officials like Stubbs became TGWU officials. As late as 1937, Stubbs claimed to represent 3000 Cambridgeshire members within the TGWU Agriculture section. Agricultural wages improved somewhat by the 1930s, with government intervention via state sugar beet factories, the agricultural Marketing Boards and the Forestry Commission, a trend intensified as Britain went to war again in 1939.

Throughout the inter-war period Stubbs made time to stand for the Labour Party in the Cambridge Town Council elections, winning his first seat in 1923 in the Abbey ward, though defeated in 1926. He rejoined the council representing St Matthews the following year, in a campaign which challenged the Council's flouting of the Trades Dispute Act, in refusing to meet with the union representatives of its workforce. Stubbs gained support from the Cambridge Co-operative Society, in which he was active, and in 1928 he also became a Poor Law Guardian for the Ward. He was appointed the first ever Labour Alderman on Cambridge Town Council in 1937. Both wards were in the dense working-class terraces on the east side of the town, between Newmarket Road and Mill Road. People here worked as college servants, laundresses, caterers, railwaymen and printing and building trade workers. Only the latter groups were interested in the labour movement, and all of their employment was dependent (either directly or indirectly) on the patronage of the dominant Cambridge University. Conservatism had economic hegemony over the Cambridge working-class, with the powerful paternalism of college-dominated employment. In the era of mass democracy this extended to political loyalty. The Conservative Party bankrolled cultural institutions like the Primrose League and Salisbury clubs (offering cheap beer) resulting in a substantial working-class Tory vote in the area. The university colleges also supported Anglican religious groups like Bible classes and sports clubs, especially cricket—the doyen of the latter was Sir Jack Hobbs (1882–1963), who worked as a college groundsman. But Stubbs was able to transcend these political differences through sheer force of personality and painstaking representation of case work to make St Matthews a safe Labour seat.

Stubbs worked in Cambridge Labour politics with Hugh Dalton who contested the March 1922 by-election and the progressive educationalist Leah Manning. During the General Strike, in which he served on the Cambridge strike committee, he made nightly runs on his motorbike between Cambridge and London, with Leah Manning riding pillion. He was also heavily

involved in the campaigns to build and run alternative labour premises in the town, with the worker-constructed Romsey Town Labour Club (opened by Ramsay MacDonald in 1928), and the Alex Wood Hall (opened with a *Temple of Vision* pageant in 1927), as well as the Labour Club in the village of Lode, where Stubbs laid the foundation stone in 1931. He became President of the Romsey Town Labour Club and frequently presented competition prizes there. He was one of the widely recognisable Labour characters portrayed by a very young Ronald Searle (1920–2011) for the *Cambridge Daily News* in a 1937 cartoon, celebrating the first Labour mayor [Johnson and Walsh (2013) 13, 34, 38, 46, 52 and 54; Mansfield (2013) 94–96].

Yet Stubbs did not live in the St Mathews ward. From around 1920 until he died in 1962, his home was on Arbury Road in the northern suburbs of Cambridge. This location was close to the large open Fenland edge villages with its WU and then TGWU 'mixed branches', largely associated with commercial fruit-growing, marketing and processing. Stubbs also fought likely County Council seats for Labour in these large Fenland edge villages: losing at Swavesey and Bottisham in 1921 and 1922 but winning the latter seat in 1925, becoming part of a small Labour opposition group. Though he lost the seat briefly, he regained it in 1933 and served thereafter as a County Councillor until his death in 1962, having become a County Alderman in 1942. In the 1920s, the Labour party subcontracted to the WU (effectively Stubbs) the task of organising twenty village branches out of the thirty existing in Cambridgeshire. The results were very impressive, in a period of low rural wages and austerity. By 1929, the Labour party branch in the large fruit-gowing/fenland edge village of Willingham boasted 126 individual members, out of a total electorate of 800. All but two of the 132 villages in the division had branches or local 'correspondents'. Stubbs' efforts were cited as a model of good practice in party literature [Griffiths (2007) 150].

The first Labour government of 1924 had reconstituted the AWBs, though they had lost some of their mandatory powers. Stubbs continued to argue forcibly for wage increases: 'We are fed up with thirty shillings. Was it wonder that boys leaving school would not look at the land as a means of providing them a career in life but left the village and got work in towns at higher wages and better conditions.' Stubbs had a knack of getting his points covered by the local press, helped probably by previous work as a newspaper printer. His letter to the *Cambridge Daily News* in January 1927 listed the family budget of the farmworker and claimed that one shilling a week was left from immediate essentials to cover 'clothes, boots, household things that wore out – such as bedding, pots, pans doctor's bills, clubs… farm workers had to exist on a standard lower than a pauper.' At times his strong arguments led to farmers leaving the AWB meetings; a common National Farmers' Union (NFU) tactic. Though his proposed wage increases were generally opposed by the neutral co-opted members, farm wages gradually rose in the 1930s, and by 1938 the county rate had risen to thirty-eight shillings a week [*Cambridge Daily News*, 21 and 27 January 1927; Groves, (1949) 252].

Even after losing the Cambridgeshire nomination in 1924, Stubbs still harboured parliamentary ambitions. He briefly became adopted as PPC for Newark, up the Great North Road, but did not fight an election there. Instead he was adopted by the rural Leicestershire seat of Melton and fought the next three general elections there. In 1929, a good year nationally for Labour, in a three cornered fight the result was:

Melton, 1929: electorate 47,396, turnout 83.2%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| W.L. Everard (Conservative) | 18,707 | (47.4%) |
| G.H. Dixon (Liberal) | 14,144 | (35.9%) |
| A.E. Stubbs (Labour) | 6569 | (16.7%) |
| Majority | 4563 | (11.5%) |

Stubbs was the first-ever Labour candidate and his poor result may be explained by the constituency having few working-class movement traditions. Farmworkers' unions were

comparatively weak in a strong fox-hunting area of 'loyalist' landed estates. Aside from a smattering of small donations from local NUR branches, the largest contributions to Stubbs's election budget in 1931 (just over £200) were from the National Labour party and his own employers, the TGWU. Though there was move in the Cambridgeshire party to entice Stubbs to return and he wrote to the TGWU requesting their permission, in the end this did not materialise and he persisted with Melton. Thereafter, the Liberals put up no candidate in the constituency, but Stubbs' efforts could do nothing to restrain massive anti-socialist majorities for a paternalistic brewer Tory candidate and the National Government in the next two elections:

Melton, 1931: electorate 50,318, turnout 76.4%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| W.L. Everard (Conservative) | 30,355 | (78.9%) |
| A.E. Stubbs (Labour) | 8100 | (21.1%) |
| Majority | 22,255 | (57.8%) |

Melton, 1935: electorate 54,312, turnout 71.9%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| W.L. Everard (Conservative) | 26,325 | (67.4%) |
| A.E. Stubbs (Labour) | 12,724 | (32.6%) |
| Majority | 13,601 | (34.8%) |

Melton would always be an impossible seat for Labour, and even in 1945 their candidate was still over 5000 short.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Stubbs briefly followed that part of the Labour party which shared the Communist Party of Great Britain's policy. He justified the Nazi–Soviet pact on account of Neville Chamberlain's 'duplicity and vacillations'. By the spring of 1940, though, he was firmly behind the wartime coalition. Massive state intervention, from the very beginning of the conflict, with guaranteed prices, gave tremendous opportunities for successful agricultural trade unionism. The AWBs, with their powers restored, were able to raise wages substantially, and they nearly tripled to ninety shillings a week by 1947, with corresponding increases in union membership. For the first time, too, the farmworkers' unions attracted substantial numbers of women members. The Women's Land Army in particular proved to be a productive sector for recruitment, with branches organised through their large billets in empty country houses. With his broad experience of farming, Stubbs was also involved in the workers' side of bodies tasked with raising vital wartime production, and he served on the Cambridgeshire War Agricultural Executive Committee and the Eastern Region Production Committee [Johnson and Walsh (2013) 64; Groves (1949) 252].

Stubbs retired as a full-time TGWU officer in 1944 aged 67, but he was soon to find a new focus for his considerable energies. Two years previously, G.T. Garratt, the former Cambridgeshire Labour PPC, who had rejoined the army, was killed in a training accident. Almost incidentally, Stubbs found himself county Labour PPC again. His election campaign was firmly based on preserving government intervention in agriculture, and especially the retention of the Wages Boards, arguing that Labour had also been good to farmers. He further emphasised rural housing and argued for special treatment for ex-servicemen and pensioners. He made a particular point of supporting the work of the United Nations. He held four meetings every evening during nearly a month of hectic campaigning, this time with a reasonable budget of approaching £1000. His former TGWU boss, Ernest Bevin, found time from his own campaign for Wandsworth Central, to speak twice in support of Stubbs.

The result was truly amazing and the highlight of Stubbs' political career. 'When the local party secretary in … Histon called on a housebound 80-year-old to tell her the news of Albert Stubbs' victory, her response was "At last!"' [Griffiths (2007) 359].

Cambridgeshire, 1945: electorate 63,302, turnout 69.9%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A.E. Stubbs (Labour) | 18,714 | (42.2%) |
| S.G. Howard (Conservative) | 18,670 | (42.2%) |
| L.E. Goodman (Liberal) | 6867 | (15.5%) |
| Majority | 44 | (0.1%) |

Nationally Labour won 69 rural constituencies overall in 1945 out of 203 seats, many for the first time. Stubbs' victory was part of a particularly good Labour vote in East Anglia, with a clean sweep in the NUAW heartland of Norfolk and such isolated seats as Sudbury in Suffolk.

Stubbs applied his usual energy to the job of being a backbench MP, asking written and verbal questions and frequently speaking in the House. Nearly all his interventions were related to rural issues, with his maiden speech, made as early as 15 October 1945, on the Women's Land Army, whose members had become unionised. He was particularly concerned to speed demobilisation of key workers. He was remembered in gratitude by the author's family by personally intervening to prevent my father, Fred Mansfield (1912–2004), being sent to the Middle East, where he would have arrived after his demobilisation date. In the House he covered the vital minutiae of rural life, raising such topics as the supply of bicycle tyres, rubber boots, meat rations and paraffin. He campaigned for rural housing, and, significantly, for increased numbers of county council smallholdings, especially for returning ex-servicemen. He served on the House Standing Committee on Agriculture and later claimed some credit for the 1947 Agricultural Act, in particular securing an amendment on the size of county council smallholdings. Stubbs' continuing espousal of this old fashioned policy, increasingly abandoned by the farmworkers' unions, sits oddly with describing him as an ILP mole or as a fellow-travelling Soviet sympathiser. The reality was that Stubbs continued as a strong Labour man, with broad, relatively unsophisticated opinions.

As well as pressing in the House for a better deal for his beloved farmworkers he did not neglect other poorly paid rural groups. This included public servants such as teachers and policemen, along with displaced European former allied combatants, refugees working on the land, and Irish migrants. He clashed with Winston Churchill several times; over the Representation of the People Act and the proposed suspension of the death penalty for murder in 1948. But Stubbs was not a bleeding-heart liberal. He spoke against the proposed Hunting and Coursing Prohibition Bill, arguing that that abolishing traditional country sports would adversely affect his constituents in the Newmarket horse-breeding community. (Such views were also shared by his colleagues in the NUAW, which did not start campaigning on the issue until the 1980s.) Stubbs was also fairly hostile to the early repatriation of German POWs, arguing that their continuing work on the land made some amends for the depredations of the Nazis and their treatment of Soviet prisoners. A film fan, Stubbs was involved in legislation for government aid for the British movie industry. A surviving photograph from 1949, of interested MPs touring the Pinewood Studios, shows the tall character actor, Cecil Parker towering over a diminutive Stubbs [People's History Museum collection].

Whilst serving as an MP, Stubbs also continued as Cambridge town Alderman, concentrating on the St Matthews ward. In November 1945 he contributed to the ambitious and aspirational *Labour Plan for Cambridge.* This plea for municipal socialism spearheaded the party's town council elections and resulted in fifteen Labour councillors. Within a hung council, they were briefly able to implement parts of the programme until the Conservatives regained control in

1947 under the impact of post-war austerity. That year Stubbs also stood down as an Alderman to concentrate on Parliament. Stubbs stood again for Parliament in the 1950 election under slogan 'The Man Known by Everyone', arguing that 'Our Country had good cause to be proud of the Labour Government's achievements. Never before in peacetime have so many enjoyed good wages and good health.' He emphasised the rise in agricultural wages from ten shillings in 1914, when he started organising, to four pounds ten shillings in 1947. Despite increasing the number of his votes in a falling electorate, he lost significantly to the Conservatives. It is likely that Stubbs would have retained the seat were it not for the fenland-edge smallholders' rump, which continued to support the Liberals. Labour also failed to retain the Cambridge town seat.

Cambridgeshire, 1950: electorate 56,622, turnout 62.9%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| S.G. Howard (Conservative) | 21,846 | (46.2%) |
| A.E. Stubbs (Labour) | 19,046 | (40.3%) |
| R.T. Howlett (Liberal) | 6348 | (13.4%) |
| Majority | 2800 | (0.1%) |

Now seventy-four, Stubbs decided not to seek readoption in 1951. His Labour replacement, a local progressive farmer, who had been educated at Eton and Cambridge and had been a Liberal PPC in 1945, lost by over 3500 votes in 1951.

For Labour thereafter Cambridgeshire was an impossible seat to win. Stubbs set out to enjoy his retirement, though his wife died shortly after his defeat. He continued as county councillor and also served on the Cambridgeshire AWB until his death on 4 January 1962, at the age of eighty-three. He had an Anglican Church funeral service with a large congregation, including his old opponents in the NFU and his old rivals in the NUAW. The wide range of mourners was indicative of his ability to get on at some level, with everyone he encountered. In an obituary, his former agent Fred Drake wrote: 'Stubbs had a stubborn disposition… His philosophy of life was based on Christian application of socialism…. For this sincerity he was much loved by his many friends and respected by his opponents. The trade union of which he became full time organiser became known as 'Stubbs' union'. As the result of these persistent activities he was thrown in more than one village pond. There are people in every village in the county who remember him with affection and gratitude' [obituary and funeral report in *Cambridge Daily News*, 12 January 1962]. Stubbs was a folk figure in the author's childhood in the St Matthews ward in the 1950s and 60s and as late as 1985 he was remembered thus by a correspondent: 'He worked hard for the underdog and he will be remembered by many citizens of Cambridge' [Letter from G. Blows, *Cambridge Evening News*, 16 February 1985]. He left effects valued at £599 0s 1d.

**Note on nomenclature**

For the sake of convenience, the trade union founded in Norfolk in 1906, from which the present day farmworkers' union traces its direct descent, is referred to throughout this entry as the NUAW (National Union of Agricultural Workers). This union was founded as the Eastern Counties Agricultural Labourers' and Small Holders' Union. Despite its regional remit, in its personnel and centralising tendency, it was the direct heir to Joseph Arch's National Agricultural Labourers' Union (NALU) of the 1870s. In 1910, it claimed a national role and became the National Agricultural Labourers' and Rural Workers' Union. This was simplified to National Union of Agricultural Workers in 1920 and the 'Allied' suffix added in 1968. In 1982 the union joined the descendents of its old rival, the Workers' Union (WU), in the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), the WU having joined the TGWU in 1929. Both unions are now united as part of the Food, Drink & Agriculture sector of Unite.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Cambridgeshire Collection (Cambridgeshire County Council, Archives & Local Studies), A.E. Stubbs files; Cambridgeshire Record Office, (Cambridgeshire County Council, Archives & Local Studies), Papers of Cambridgeshire Trades Council, Cambridgeshire DLP and Michael Pease Collection; Modern Records Centre, (University of Warwick), TUC and WU (Unite) Collections; London School of Economics, COLL MISC 0815; Labour Party Archive, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, People's History Museum, Manchester; Hansard on line, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/people/mr-albert-stubbs/. (**2**) **Newspapers and Periodicals**: *Workers' Union Record*; *The Landworker*; *Cambridge Daily News*; *Cambridge Evening News*; *Cambridge Labour Review*. (**3**) **Books, Articles and Thesis**: C.J. Howard, 'Cambridge and Cambridgeshire Trades Council and Local Labour Parties, 1906–1951', (unpublished paper in Cambridgeshire Collection); *Labour's Who's Who* (1924); D. Hardman (ed.) *Twenty Five years in the History of the Cambridge Labour Party* (Cambridge, 1947); Reg Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle—The History of the Farm Workers' Union*, (1949); Richard Hyman, *The Workers' Union*, *1898–1929*, (Oxford, 1971); Howard Newby, *The Deferential Worker—A Study of Farm Workers in East Anglia* (1977); Alun Howkins, *Poor Labouring Men—Rural Radicalism in Norfolk*, *1870–1923* (1985); Roy Brazier, *The Empty Fields—The Agricultural Strike of 1914*, (Romford, 1989); David A. Pretty, *The Rural Revolt that Failed—Farm Workers' Trade Unions in Wales*, (Cardiff, 1989); Nick Mansfield, 'Grads and Snobs: John Brown, Town and Gown in 19th Century Cambridge', *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 35 (Spring 1993), 184–198; Nick Mansfield, 'Agricultural Trades Unionism in Shropshire, 1900–1930' (unpublished PhD thesis, Wolverhampton University, 1997); Nick Mansfield, *English Farmworkers and Local Patriotism*, *1900–1930*, (Aldershot, 2001); Clare V.J. Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside—The Politics of Rural Britain 1918–1939*, (Oxford, 2007); Richard Johnson and Ashley Walsh, *Camaraderie—One Hundred Years of the Labour Party*, *1912–2012*, (Cambridge, 2013); Nick Mansfield, *Buildings of the Labour Movement* (Swindon, 2013); David Swift, *For Class and Country: The Patriotic Left and the First World War* (Liverpool, 2017). (**4**) **Personal Communications**: at various times from Chris Jakes, the late Reg Holmes, Adam Longcroft, the late Fred Mansfield, Robin Mansfield, Mary Naylor, the late Alf Peacock, Mike Petty and Josephine Stubbs.

NICK MANSFIELD

*See also*: †Joseph ARCH; †(Sir) George EDWARDS; †Sidney DYE; †Tom WILLIAMS

**WHATELY, Monica** (1889–1960)
FEMINIST AND CHRISTIAN SOCIALIST

Mary Monica Whately was born on 30 November 1889 at 16 Trebovir Road, Brompton, London, the eldest daughter of Reginald Pepys Whately, an officer in the Royal Sussex Regiment, and Maude Isabel Whately (née Davis) a concert singer and daughter of a Church of England clergyman. Monica Whately was a great-great-niece of the theologian Dr Richard Whately, Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin 1831–1863. Monica's parents converted to Roman Catholicism in 1899, and her own confirmation followed. She remained a practising Catholic for the rest of her life. She was educated at home by private tutor and at the London School of Economics, where she studied politics and international affairs but did not graduate.

When a young woman Whately became an active member of the militant suffragette movement, where she gained her first experience of public speaking and political activism. During her campaigning she suffered assault, ridicule, and arrest. She recalled of her days as a suffragette 'If we made a demonstration in a theatre, we got as far from the door as possible because the further they have to throw you out the better. If in a restaurant, we grabbed the edge of the table

so that when we were thrown out we took the cloth and china with us. It made a much better effect' [Quoted in interview with Rosemary Small, *Daily Worker*, 16 September 1960].

In 1912, together with her mother, she became a founder member of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society, and later became treasurer and secretary of its post-1918 successor the St Joan's Social and Political Union. However she was more at home in the Six Point Group formed in 1921. The Group's motto was 'Equality First', and it campaigned for six specific objectives aimed at securing social justice for women: pensions for widows, equal rights of guardianship for married parents, reform of the laws dealing with child assault and the position of the unmarried mother, equal pay for teachers, and equal pay and opportunities for civil service employees. Whately was an active member of the group and often spoke on its behalf at open-air meetings held in Hyde Park. In 1933 she was its delegate to the World Conference of Women against War and Fascism, and throughout the inter-war years she, together with other members of the Six Point Group, lobbied the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization on women's issues. She served as secretary of the Six Point Group in the 1930s and 40s with meetings being held in her London flat, and as chairwoman 1951–1960. She represented the group on both the National Council for Civil Liberties and the National Assembly of Women in the 1950s. The survival of the Six Point Group was in doubt on several occasions in its sixty years' history and Whately played a major role in keeping it in existence. At the time of her death she was campaigning for the right of married women to be allowed separate assessment of their income tax.

She was also a founder member, and for several years the treasurer, of the Open Door Council, an organisation set up in 1926 to press for the removal of restrictions on women's right to work. In 1933 Sir Herbert Austin, the motor manufacturer, made a speech in which he called for male workers to replace female workers as a means of alleviating the unemployment problem. Monica Whately responded by bringing together twenty-nine women's organisations to protest at the speech, and in October they carried out a picket of the Motor Show held at Olympia in London. Sir Herbert declared himself unimpressed by the picket, but the women's demonstration received considerable publicity and drew attention to a woman's claim to employment.

Whately was an active supporter of the Cecil Houses in London, which provided overnight accommodation for homeless women, where they could obtain 'a clean bed, with plenty of hot water for baths, tea and biscuits, for one shilling a night, with no questions asked' [Chesterton (1941) 274]. The houses were the brainchild of Ada Chesterton, a journalist who publicised the plight of homeless women in London. The first house was opened in 1927 and was named a Cecil House in memory of Ada Chesterton's late husband. Four more Cecil houses were opened in the 1930s as additional finance became available, and houses for young working women and female pensioners were opened in the 1940s. Whately was one of Ada Chesterton's most energetic associates in this philanthropic enterprise, and she served as chairperson of Cecil Houses 1954–1960.

During the Great War, Whately served on the headquarters staff of the Girl Guides' Association in London. After the war she worked on famine relief in Austria, Hungary and Poland, the beginning of a lifelong commitment to the Save the Children charity. In 1921 she witnessed the new Bolshevik Government's efforts to cope with famine and disease in its western border areas, made more difficult by the imposition of an Allied blockade on the infant Soviet republic. This early contact with Bolshevik Russia gave her a sympathy for the new state that she never lost. Her experiences in post-war Europe converted her to socialism, and she joined the Labour Party on her return to Britain. She embraced left-wing politics with characteristic vigour, and fought St Albans as a Labour candidate at the 1929 general election. In a policy statement she declared that Labour's programme was 'a mixture of Christianity, humanity and common sense. The Labour Party is neither Bolshevik nor Communist. It is opposed to force, revolution, and confiscation as a means of establishing a new social order. It believes in ordered progress and democratic methods' [*Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times*,

17 May 1929]. She considered unemployment to be the major problem facing the country and put forward Labour's plans to introduce export credits to help revive the staple industries, with state help to improve the marketing of agricultural products, and increased public spending on schools and council housing. Labour also proposed to raise the school-leaving age to fifteen and expand secondary education. She made a special appeal to women voters, warning 'the fight for women's emancipation is not yet finished' [*Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times*, 17 May 1929] and made a plea for measures to reduce maternal mortality in Britain. In foreign affairs she gave strong support to the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization, and favoured the restoration of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.

Whately received assistance from her colleagues in various women's organisations. Lady Rhondda, founder of the Six Point Group, put her car at the disposal of her campaign team; members of the St Joan's Social and Political Union came to canvass for her; and the writers Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby canvassed and spoke on her behalf. The Christian Socialists Lord Parmoor, an Anglican Labour Peer, and the Reverend James Barr, a member of the United Free Church of Scotland and Labour MP for Motherwell, both addressed meetings in support of her candidature. Vera Brittain remarked on Monica Whately's 'unremitting energy' [Brittain (1957) 58] in which she sometimes addressed nine meetings a day during the campaign and observed: 'She was particularly well equipped for a Parliamentary contest having a mind which worked with great rapidity, an unusual facility for translating ideas into words, and a powerful voice which her supporters declared would carry over three counties' [*Manchester Guardian*, 5 June 1929].

In spite of her spirited campaign St Albans was retained by the Conservative, F.E. Fremantle, a former medical officer of health.

Hertfordshire, St Albans, 1929: electorate 58,418, turnout 72.6%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| F.E. Fremantle (Conservative) | 20,436 | (48.1%) |
| M.M. Whately (Labour) | 11,699 | (27.6%) |
| G.G. Honeyman (Liberal) | 10,299 | (24.3%) |
| Majority | 8737 | (20.5%) |

Whately fought the same seat in the 1931 General Election against the same opponent, and lost heavily in the 'National' landslide of that year.

Hertfordshire, St Albans, 1931: electorate 65,365, turnout 71.9%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| F.E. Fremantle (Conservative) | 36,690 | (78.1%) |
| M.M. Whately (Labour) | 10,289 | (21.9%) |
| Majority | 26,401 | (56.2%) |

Whately was selected to fight the Clapham constituency at the 1935 general election. Speaking on her behalf in a run-up meeting to the election campaign, Ellen Wilkinson described Monica Whately as 'a star… a candidate of quality' [*Clapham Observer*, 20 September 1935]. Foreign affairs at this time were dominated by Fascist Italy's invasion of Abyssinia. Whately was a strong supporter of the League of Nations and she favoured the application of sanctions against the aggressor state. She argued that a resort to arms would not be necessary if the British Government took the lead in applying sanctions against Italy, and she hammered home this point during her election campaign. On domestic policy she argued that unemployment was a product of the capitalist system and that socialist measures were necessary to eradicate it. A housing boom was under way but Whately pointed out that too few new houses were within the reach of low-income families. The veteran suffragette, Charlotte Despard, then in her

nineties, travelled from her home in Belfast to speak in support of Whately; and the local Liberal Party urged all Liberals, in the absence of a Liberal candidate, to vote for her. The outcome was that although Whately reduced the Conservative majority by eight thousand, the sitting member, Sir John Leigh, a former proprietor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, retained the seat.

Wandsworth, Clapham, 1935: electorate 47,612, turnout 60.5%

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sir John Leigh (Conservative) | 17,458 | (60.6%) |
| M.M. Whately (Labour) | 11,368 | (39.4%) |
| Majority | 6090 | (21.2%) |

Whately had more success in the London County Council (LCC) elections of March 1937. Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) decided to contest the three double-member wards of Bethnal Green North East, Stepney, and Shoreditch. She was selected to partner Richard Coppock, a trade union official, as one of the Labour candidates in the Stepney ward. It was a hard-fought local election contest with the BUF concentrating its resources on these three wards. The BUF candidates in Stepney were Anne Brock Griggs, the BUF's chief women's organiser, and Charles Wegg-Prosser, a young Catholic lawyer whose religion was calculated to appeal to the local Irish vote. 'East London,' declared Mosley, 'will be asked to choose between us and the parties of Jewry' [Cross (1961) 159]; and anti-Semitism was the main plank in the BUF's campaign. Whately was equal to the challenge and was elected to one of the two seats.

LCC elections, Stepney (Limehouse) March 1937

| | |
|---|---|
| R. Coppock (Labour) | 8272 |
| M.M. Whately (Labour) | 8042 |
| V.G. Weeple (Municipal Reform) | 2542 |
| G.E. Abrahams (Municipal Reform) | 2431 |
| A. Brock Griggs (BUF) | 2086 |
| C. Wegg-Prosser (BUF) | 2086 |

(Labour 54%, Municipal Reform 27%, BUF 19%)

Whateley was an active member of the LCC for nine years, serving on the management committees of several schools and hospitals. The LCC ban on the employment of married midwives was lifted in 1940 largely through her efforts. During the London blitz she was appointed the Mayor of Stepney's representative on a committee tasked with organising accommodation for bombed-out East End families. Later she worked for the Ministry of Labour assisting in the mobilisation of female labour for the war effort, and she did some lecturing for the Ministry of Information.

After fighting three general elections as a Labour candidate and retaining Stepney for Labour in the 1937 LCC elections under difficult circumstances, Whately might have expected to be selected for a winnable Labour constituency in the 1945 general election, but this did not happen. She was then fifty-six years of age, but not too old to be entering Parliament at a time when retired trade union officials often secured safe Labour seats. Furthermore, she did not look her age and retained more than a hint of the glamour of her younger years. She took great pains with her personal appearance and invariably dressed in black, often wearing a sweeping black cloak lined in red silk.

The main reason for her being passed over undoubtedly owed much to the fact that she was never a docile member of the tightly disciplined London Labour Party, largely created—and still

strongly influenced—by Herbert Morrison. She never disguised her left-wing views and was prepared to work with communists in pursuit of common causes. Her readiness to co-operate with communists also probably alienated some Catholics in the Labour Party who otherwise might have favoured her. Her support for the feminist agenda had brought her into conflict with the Catholic Church on several occasions and she was once threatened with excommunication. Finally, there was her lifestyle. Whately never married, and indeed she had a poor view of the male sex. She once observed men were 'such oppressors and sources of evil and if she had a daughter she would deliberately urge her to enter into a lesbian relationship rather than seek marriage' [Berry and Bostridge (1995) 273]. Whately did not attempt to conceal her own lesbianism. She lived with a female partner for several years and had numerous affairs with other women. Far from attempting to conceal her sexual relationships she enjoyed shocking people by gossiping about them. This did not endear her to everyone in the Labour Party. Although she was capable of exercising great charm, if this was necessary for her ends, her determination not to be put down—especially by men—sometimes made her appear imperious. For a variety of reasons she did not contest the 1945 general election and did not defend her Stepney seat on the LCC in the following year.

Whately was an internationalist and she had the time and money to travel abroad in support of the causes she favoured. Her usual approach was to visit a foreign country as the representative of an organisation of which she was a member, and on her return to present a report on what she had seen and heard, gaining maximum publicity for her findings. This would often include her addressing a series of meetings. Like many of her generation she was shocked by the slaughter and suffering caused by the Great War and she looked to the League of Nations to prevent further conflicts. She was a member of the Peace Army, the No More War Movement, and the League of Nations Union. She was a member of the India League and visited India in 1931 and 1934, where she met Gandhi and other leaders of the Indian independence movement. After the arrest of the Congress leaders in 1940 Whately joined the protest campaign in Britain and was one of the main speakers at a 'Release Nehru' meeting held in the Conway Hall, London, in January 1941. A keen supporter of the temperance movement in Britain she visited the USA in the 1920s to study the effects of the Volstead Act.

In the 1930s Monica Whately was a critical observer of the growth of fascism in Europe, and after Mussolini's invasion of Abysinnia she reluctantly accepted the need to resist fascist aggression by force of arms. In 1934 she visited Nazi Germany with Selina Cooper, on behalf of the Women's World Committee against War and Fascism, to draw attention to the plight of women held in concentration camps, and on her return she helped to organise a boycott of goods made in Nazi Germany. When the Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936 Monica Whately came out in support of the Republic. She visited Barcelona in the early months of the war and on her return to Britain she tried to reassure Catholics that although churches had been burned and priests and nuns molested following the outbreak of the military uprising, the Republican Government had clamped down on these excesses and was firmly committed to a policy of religious freedom. Her views were not well received in Catholic circles and some church publications refused to publish her reports and letters.

In April 1937, Whately returned to Spain as one of a party of nine practising Christians, led by Hewlett Johnson the Dean of Canterbury. The group went at the invitation of the Republican Government, with the aim of inquiring into the state of religion in Republican-controlled areas. In the Basque country the party found all churches to be open and well attended. During the visit the party witnessed the bombing of Durango by Nationalist warplanes, and were able to counter the charge that the town's churches had been severely damaged by Republican forces. On visits to Barcelona, Valencia, and Madrid the group found that Catholic churches had been closed while Protestant churches remained open. A Republican spokesman assured the visitors that his Government's policy remained one of religious freedom and all Catholic churches would be allowed to reopen when the military situation improved. In the meantime the Government would not tolerate any mob attacks on church property. Monica Whately helped to draft the report of the visit, which was published by Victor Gollancz and copies circulated

through the Left Book Club. After the trip to Spain she visited South Africa where she studied the operation of the colour bar; and the outbreak of the Second World War found her in the USA addressing a meeting of the League for the Boycott of Aggressor Nations.

After the Second World War, Whately resumed her foreign travels. In October 1946 she visited Franco's Spain to lobby for the release of a group of women who had languished in prison for two years without being brought to trial. She visited South Africa where she witnessed the first steps in the introduction of apartheid by the newly elected Nationalist Government. She was appalled by what she saw and what was being planned. On her return to Britain she became active in the Anti-Apartheid Movement. When the Mau Mau uprising broke out in Kenya in 1952 Whately joined the Kenya Committee. The Committee was composed of Kenyan exiles and their British sympathisers, and its purpose was to expose the repressive measures being used against the African population under the guise of countering Mau Mau atrocities. Monica Whately paid a fact-finding visit to Kenya in the autumn of 1953 and on her return she wrote:

> Under the smokescreen of Mau Mau the British Government sent its troops and armed cars. The screen is no more, and the exposure enables the British people to take effective action to see that the Government is called to a halt. The wealth of evidence that accumulates around the charge of genocide can no longer be ignored [*Labour Monthly*, January, 1954].

On 9 December 1953, as part of a National Day of Protest organised by the Kenya Committee, Monica Whately led a lobby of the House of Commons to protest against the use of brutal police methods in Kenya.

Whately joined the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR when it was formed in 1924 and became an active member, but she did not visit the Soviet Union until 1950. She followed this up with trips to Czechoslovakia and Poland. On her visits she was impressed by the evidence of post-war reconstruction and viewed with favour the measures taken to promote the equality of women and the welfare of children. In a talk on religion in Poland to the British–Polish Friendship Society in February 1956 she reported that the Catholic Church coexisted well enough with the communist authorities in Poland, and indeed that it occupied an influential position in Polish society. If she witnessed any signs of repression on these visits to communist states she did not report them on her return to Britain. Whately was concerned at the advent of the Cold War and she became active in the World Peace Movement. When the Movement's Council organised a People's Congress for Peace to be held in Vienna in December 1952, Monica Whately was a member of the British sponsoring committee, responsible for raising the money needed to send a British delegation to the congress. In the summer of 1955, Whately paid her third visit to the USA, then in the grip of a wave of 'McCarthyism', and she did not like what she found. She sat in on one of the Senate's investigating committees and watched the browbeating of witnesses. On her return to Britain she wrote an article 'America's faceless informers' for the *Daily Worker* [*Daily Worker*, 9 August 1955] highly critical of the USA's anti-communist 'witch hunts'.

In her mid-sixties Whately's health began to deteriorate. She developed heart trouble and was forced to cut back on some of her commitments. Her last trip abroad was to the People's Republic of China, where she was pleased to observe the improvement in women's lives brought about by Chairman Mao's revolution. Whately died of rheumatic heart disease on 12 September 1960 at 35 Amherst Road, Ealing. There was no funeral because she had donated her body for medical research to the Middlesex Hospital and her eyes to the Moorfield Hospital. However requiem masses were said for her at the London churches of St Joan of Arc in Highbury and Notre Dame de France off Leicester Square; and Fenner Brockway, on behalf of the National Council for Civil Liberties and the Six Point Group, arranged a memorial meeting for her in a committee room of the House of Commons. She rated short obituaries in *The Times* and *Daily Worker*, and R. Palme Dutt paid tribute to 'Monica Whately, well known for her selfless service

in progressive causes' in the October 1960 edition of *Labour Monthly*. She left an estate valued at £9046 11s 2d.

Whately had a privileged upbringing and could have led a life of leisure; instead she chose to devote herself to progressive causes. She had three main interests in life: Catholicism, Socialism, and Feminism, and she pursued all three with considerable panache. As someone who knew her well observed she 'splashed her talents around' [Brian Simon interview], and the same observer described her as a 'useful conduit of ideas' between different organisations. Yet at times her aims must have been difficult to combine. For example, her support for feminist issues sometimes clashed with Catholic doctrine, as did her sympathy for aspects of communist states run counter to Vatican policy. Furthermore, she was critical of Western imperialism but uncritical—or certainly never voiced any criticism—of Soviet expansionism. She was an active member of the National Council for Civil Liberties in Britain and condemned 'McCarthyism' in the USA, but never spoke out against abuses of human rights in Communist states. Whether she was aware of applying double standards is difficult to say. One of her friends described her as a 'lively maverick' [Brian Simon interview]. Yet in spite of her contradictions she supported, with her time and money, many left-wing and feminist campaigns and had some personal achievements to her credit in the causes she chose to serve.

**Writings:** Monica Whately wrote a number of articles and short pieces for newspapers and journals; and contributed to the pamphlets *Condition of India* (1933); *Women Behind Bars* (1935); and *Report of a Religious Delegation to Spain* (1937). She also wrote unpublished reports on prohibition in the USA, the position of women in Nazi Germany, and the colour bar in South Africa.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: Records of the Six Point Group, including the Hazel Hunkins Hallinan Papers, the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society and the Open Door Council, Women's Library, London; Records of Cecil Houses, Central and Cecil Housing Trust, London; Murumbi Papers, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi. (**2**) **Newspapers and Periodicals**: *Birmingham Gazette; Clapham Observer; Daily Herald; Daily Worker; Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times; Labour Monthly; Manchester Guardian; New Poland; Socialist Review; Time and Tide; The Times*. (**3**) **Books**: F.C. Burnand (ed.), *The Catholic Who's Who and Yearbook* (1924); *Hutchinson's Women's Who's Who* (1934); Vera Brittain, *Testament of Friendship: The Story of Winifred Holtby* (1940); C. Chesterton, *The Chestertons* (1941); Sir Harold J. Hood (ed.), *The Catholic Who's Who* (1952); Vera Brittain, *Testament of Experience* (1957); Colin Cross, *The Fascists in Britain* (1961); Hewlett Johnson, *Searching for Light* (1968); F.W.S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1918–49*, rev. edn. (1979); Betty D. Vernon, *Ellen Wilkinson 1891–1947* (1982); Jill Liddington, *The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel: Selina Cooper 1864–1946* (1984); Paul Berry and Alan Bishop (eds.), *Testament of a Generation: The Journalism of Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby* (1985); Alan Bishop (ed.) *Chronicles of Friendship—Vera Brittain's Diaries of the Thirties 1932–39* (1986); Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 1914–1959* (1992); Paul Berry and Mark Bostridge, *Vera Brittain—A Life* (1995); Deborah Gorham, *Vera Brittain—A Feminist Life* (Oxford, 1996); Janaki Ram, *V.K. Krishna Menon—A Personal Memoir* (Oxford, 1997); Sheila Rowbotham, *A Century of Women—The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (1997); Marion Shaw, *The Clear Stream: A Life of Winifred Holtby* (1999); Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. 58, entry on Monica Whately by Linda Walker (Oxford, 2004); Laura Beers, *Red Ellen: The Life of Ellen Wilkinson*, *Socialist*, *Feminist*, *Internationalist* (Cambridge, 2016). (**4**) **Interview**: Brian Simon interview with Hazel Hunkins Hallinan, 8 February 1975, tape in Women's Library, London. (**5**) **Obituaries**: *Daily Worker*, 16 September 1960; *The Times*, 16 September 1960.

ARCHIE POTTS

*See also*: †James BARR; †Sir Richard COPPOCK

**WHELAN, Joseph Patrick ('Joe')** (1925–1982)
MINERS' LEADER

Joseph Patrick Whelan was born on 1 March 1925 in Dun Laoghaire to a family that was involved in the struggle for Irish Independence. His father also called Joseph was recorded as a coal labourer in the 1911 census and later as a night watchman at the time of his son's marriage. His mother, Ellen nee Cahill died in 1927. His father had been born around 1870, his mother about eight years later. They had married in 1904. Whelan had a brother and two sisters. He left Ireland in 1940 at the age of 15 to join the Royal Air Force (RAF). Whilst in the RAF Joe married Ethel Goodman a coalminer's daughter from Hucknall in Nottinghamshire on 15 December 1945 at Basford Registry Office, Nottingham. Whelan was based in Buxton whilst giving his home as Dun Laoghaire, transcribed as 'Dunleary' by the Superintendent Registrar. They settled at Hucknall in the heart of the Nottinghamshire coalfield and went on to have five children, four boys and one girl. At Hucknall they first lived on Bestwood Road at Butlers Hill, then at Ward Avenue, Bacon Springs and finally on the Welbeck Estate, Hucknall. After leaving the RAF, Joe went to work in the deep coalmining industry at Linby Colliery near Hucknall. He remained at Linby Colliery until becoming a full-time Area official of the Nottingham Area of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in 1965.

At Linby Colliery, Whelan became active in the union at branch level, initially being elected to the committee, then president and eventually becoming secretary. Whelan was a lifelong communist, joining the party in 1949 eventually becoming secretary of the Hucknall branch. He stood as a Communist Party candidate in several local council elections during the late 1950s and early 1960s. In a public meeting prior to the local elections on 9 April 1961, Whelan shared a platform with Arthur Horner, former General Secretary of the NUM. In the subsequent local election he increased the communist vote in Hucknall from 240 to 499. As an active branch representative, he came under the guidance of fellow comrades Bernard Savage, Les Ellis, and Frank Ellis, the latter two being fellow NUM branch officials and communists at Linby. From them he gained trade union skills and went on to develop his own unique style, having great ability as a public speaker and becoming a great interpreter of complex issues which he could put over to the rank-and-file in a simple, clear, and understandable way. Even if he disagreed with a certain point of view, Whelan would go out of his way to try and understand it [Johnson, interview 2010]. Through the influence of Frank and Les Ellis, Whelan became a key figure in creating conditions for moving the Nottingham Area of the NUM away from the shadow of Spencerism during the 1960s and 1970s. He studied trade unionism, economics, politics, and social insurance through the National Council of Labour Colleges and the Workers Education Association at the University of Nottingham.

Whelan first stood for a full time Nottingham Area NUM Official at the age of 39 in the Area ballot to replace the retiring J.T. Tighe in the autumn of 1964 [Nottingham NUM Area Minutes, 12 October 1964]. Tighe was due to retire in January 1965. Twenty-one nominations were received for the initial Area ballot and, following the first ballot, five nominations, including that of Whelan, went to a second ballot on 7 January 1965. The Area ballots were conducted under the single transferable vote system. Despite leading on the first preferences in the second ballot, and following a cross check of the voting papers, Whelan eventually lost by just 70 votes to Albert Martin of the Mansfield Colliery NUM Branch [Nottingham NUM Area Minutes, 25th January 1965]. Whelan immediately launched an appeal that the result of the second ballot should be declared null and void on the grounds that illicit documentation by an outside organisation, namely the Labour Party, had been distributed in the lead-up to the ballot. After a lengthy appeal procedure that went well into the spring of 1965, and which eventually went to Will Paynter (NUM National General Secretary) for adjudication, the appeal was turned down. During the appeal, circumstances were to occur that eventually saw Whelan become a full-time official of the Nottingham NUM.

Early in 1965 Les Ellis died suddenly whilst in office. An Area ballot to replace Ellis was arranged for 17 June 1965. Thirteen nominations were received and in the ensuing ballot Whelan was elected as a Nottingham Area official, taking up his post on 28 June 1965 as Pensions Officer. His campaign centred on an improvement of miners' terms and conditions of employment, placing an emphasis on a significant wage increase against the Labour Government's incomes policy, a reduction in the hours of work, improved unsocial hours payments increased holidays and pensions at aged sixty [Joe Whelan's Manifesto: Election for Nottingham Area NUM Official, 1965]. In his manifesto he made reference to the conspiracy and dirty tricks campaign which had been launched against him in the previous Area ballot which saw Albert Martin elected. He also criticised the NUM right-wing leadership, which in his opinion had led the miners away from their traditional role of leading the fight for a progressive policy in the labour movement. Whelan attended his first full Area Council meeting on 28 June 1965 where he was welcomed by the Chairman, Len Clarke, following his recent appointment as an Area Official.

During his time as an Area Official, Whelan and controversy were never far apart. As Vic Allen commented, Joe, as a communist left-winger, was a contradiction in a moderate NUM Area with a reputation of being the hard core of trade union conservatism [Allen (1981) 174]. For left-wing union officials like Whelan in a coalfield where the miners were known for their moderation in union matters there was always the issue of the check of the rank-and-file membership, and because of this Joe could not consistently vote where his sympathies lay. An example of this came when the National Power Loading Agreement (NPLA) was brought in at a NUM Special Conference on 15 April 1966. The arguments against the standardisation of faceworkers' wages were that in the more profitable coalfield areas like Nottinghamshire face-men would suffer significant wage reductions, and in effect these areas would be subsidising loss-making pits in other areas with the knock-on effect being a restriction in output. It was on these grounds that Whelan delivered one of the main speeches in opposition to the introduction of the NPLA, stating that whilst he believed in the principle of NPLA and the standard rate of wages for faceworkers, there were justifiable reasons to feel that it would be at the expense of piece workers in the Nottinghamshire coalfield [Morgan and Coates (1989) 8]. An immediate attack on Whelan's speech was made by another delegate and he was accused of pure selfishness, at which his response was to offer to discuss the issue outside with the said delegate! [Taylor (2005) 20]. The NPLA was voted in at the 1966 NUM Special Conference with parity on coalfaces wages in all coalfields being achieved in 1971. The subsequent dismay at the reduction of wages for coalface workers caused by the introduction of NPLA, combined with a general disillusionment with the energy policies of the Labour Government of 1964–1970 were chief factors which eventually saw the Nottinghamshire miners at the forefront of the fight for better wages and a better deal for the coal industry in the national strikes of 1972 and 1974.

Following the retirement of Albert Martin in 1971, Whelan became one of the two NUM Nottingham Area representatives on the NUM National Executive Committee (NEC). The other representative was Len Clarke, a moderate of the traditional Nottinghamshire calibre. The controversy surrounding Whelan continued, showing itself in the internal NUM politics that led to the introduction of the Area Incentives Schemes in 1977/78. In the aftermath of the 1972 miners' strike, and as part of the settlement under the Wilberforce Enquiry, the National Coal Board (NCB) started looking at the issue of linking productivity to miners' pay. An ideological argument ensued in the NUM about whether a productivity bonus should be a national or locally based scheme. The NCB were keen for Area-based schemes, whilst the left-wing members of the NUM NEC were pushing for a nationally based productivity scheme, if any at all. The eventual outcome of the negotiations, which initially started in 1972, was that national productivity schemes were turned down by the NUM membership in national ballots in 1974 and 1977 respectively. In the negotiations in the lead up to the NUM ballot in the autumn of 1974, and following the NCB conceding to a national scheme, the NUM NEC rejected the

deal by 14 votes to 12. It was claimed that Whelan had switched votes contrary to his region's mandate to him, and that he was subsequently strongly criticised by the Area Executive [Braithwaite (2014) 53]. Whelan defended himself stating he had never been mandated by the NUM Nottingham Area, stating that he was in favour of a productivity scheme but one that 'didn't breed an atmosphere of greed, which means the survival of the strongest and the weakest going to the wall' [Brown (1977) 345]. The rejection of a national productivity scheme in 1974 and the part played by Whelan in the NUM NEC voting, led to acrimonious exchanges in the Nottinghamshire press between the moderate George Cheshire and Whelan, both Nottingham Area NUM Officials [see Brown (1977) 326–352]. The dispute carried on at Area level, with the New Hucknall NUM Branch complaining that George Cheshire had tried to influence their attitude towards Whelan. Despite the rejection of the introduction of a national productivity scheme in the two ballots of 1974 and 1977, self-financing Area Incentives Schemes were introduced in 1977/1978 following a South Derbyshire NUM resolution to the 1977 NUM Annual Conference. Shortly following the introduction of the Area Incentive Schemes Whelan commented on the likely affects for solidarity in the NUM: 'The incentive scheme has knocked lot of the militancy out of the miners and that is what it was designed to do' [Krieger (1983) 275]. To this day, a left-wing point of view maintains that the introduction of the Area Incentive Schemes in 1977 was a significant factor in the fracturing of unity within the NUM in the strike of 1984–1985.

Whelan's position as a contradiction in a moderate area of the NUM at times led to controversy and an uneasy alliance within the Nottinghamshire coalfield. In 1979, when moderate Roy Lynk was elected as an Area Official, as he surged ahead at the ballot count at NUM Area HQ, Whelan was heard to say 'It looks like the village idiot is going to get in!' [Lynk, interview 2005]. In 1974 the Cotgrave Branch asked that Whelan be removed as a NEC member for Nottingham because of his continual rejection of Area policy at national level. The complaint was rejected by the Nottingham NUM Area Council. The initial appointment of Whelan as one of the two Nottingham Area members to the NUM NEC in 1971 led to the suspension from office for six-months of two branch delegates for voting against mandates. The two delegates concerned, Brian Walker of the Newstead Branch and Bernard Savage of the Blidworth Branch, both voted for Whelan as one of the Nottingham Area NUM NEC members, against the mandates from branch meetings. Both were comrades of Whelan and all three had been active in the left-wing Miners' Forum in the Nottinghamshire coalfield during the 1960s. Both appealed against their suspensions, both were turned down by the Nottingham Area. In Savage's case, his appeal was also turned down by the NUM NEC. Despite the controversies and uneasy alliances, Whelan remained as an Area Official for seventeen years until his untimely death in 1982.

Whelan died at the relatively young age of 57 on 30 August 1982 after being taken ill whilst playing golf at Coxmoor Golf Club near Mansfield. There is some confusion as to which local golf course he died at: the *Hucknall Dispatch* reported he had been taken ill at Oxton Golf Course [*Hucknall Dispatch*, 3 September 1982]. He died whist still in office as the General Secretary of the NUM Nottingham Area, having been in that role since 1977. He had suffered a heart attack earlier in the year following the end of the 1982 Nottingham Miners' Gala and Demonstration in June and had spent several weeks in hospital before returning to work shortly before his death. Fellow mining communists Michael McGahey (NUM National Vice President) and Jack Collins (Kent Area NUM) attended the funeral, as did Gordon McLennan (General Secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain). Messages of sympathy came from many top trade union officials and civic dignitaries including Don Concannon and Frank Haynes, Labour Members of Parliament for the Mansfield and Ashfield Constituencies respectively, Wilfred Miron, former Director of the East Midlands Division of the NCB, TUC General Secretary, Len Murray and NUM National President, Arthur Scargill. Scargill paid tribute to his close friend, who he described as being an outstanding leader of the British miners, commenting that

Whelan's untimely death had robbed the Nottinghamshire miners and the NUM as a whole of one of its finest sons [*Nottingham Evening Post*, 1 September 1982]. Scargill also delivered an address at Whelan's funeral which was broadcast through loudspeakers to the crowds outside of Mansfield Crematorium. The address ended with the words 'I salute you Joe, as a colleague and a very close friend' [*Mansfield Chronicle Advertiser*, 9 September 1982]. Whelan had endorsed Scargill's candidature for the position of NUM National President late in 1981, adding his signature to his manifesto, *Mining in the Eighties* [Routledge (1993) 106]. Scargill concluded that the inescapable conclusion was that Whelan's death meant the loss of a very great man, a tremendous colleague and a personal friend [*Hucknall Dispatch*, 3 September 1982]. He left an estate not exceeding £25,000.

At the first meeting of the Nottingham Area Executive following Whelan's death, the committee stood in silence as a mark of respect, following which an appreciation of his service to the union, at branch, area, and national level, was put on record. This was reiterated at the first Nottingham Area NUM Council meeting following his death, at which mention was made of his 'lifetime of selfless dedication to the course of trade union members in his work at colliery, area and national level [Nottingham NUM Area Minutes, 13 September 1982]. In honour of Whelan's memory, and to reflect his dedication to trade union education, two bursaries were made available through the Nottingham Area of the NUM, to be known as The Joe Whelan Memorial Bursaries. These were to be for the benefit of members and/or their dependents for scholarly study, to commence from the 1983/84 educational year.

In the subsequent tributes paid to Whelan following his death, there was the great irony of the *Nottingham Evening Post* paying tribute to a dedicated and respected union official of the Nottinghamshire miners, described as being a man of principle [*Nottingham Evening Post*, 1 September 1982]. Less than four years earlier they had dismissed twenty-eight journalists, members of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), for taking part in sympathetic strike action in support of journalists in the north over the issue of terms of employment. In the ensuing Nottingham NUM Area ballot to replace Whelan on 15 December 1982, Henry Richardson from the Creswell Branch, was elected as an Area Official, becoming the Area General Secretary at the Nottingham NUM Area Council meeting in January 1983, beating the moderate, Roy Lynk, on a card vote 333 to 320 after losing the initial branch vote 16–15. Richardson's period in office would prove to be both eventful and controversial, dominated by the events of the 1984–85 strike and its aftermath, following which the majority of the Nottinghamshire miners split with the NUM and formed the Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) in December 1985.

So what of Whelan's legacy in the Nottinghamshire Coalfield? Only eighteen months following his death, the 1984–85 strike started, and the Nottingham Area of the NUM would be at the centre of the controversy which has surrounded the dispute ever since. Whilst argument and counter-argument still surround the logistics of the dispute and its wrongs and rights, it is generally agreed by commentators on both sides of the divide that the loss of Whelan was a serious blow to the NUM. Just how much influence he would have had on the way that the dispute evolved in the Nottinghamshire coalfield is unclear, but it is generally agreed that his extensive knowledge and experience could have led the course of the strike in the coalfield on a different path. How that path would have been will never be known, but the general feeling is that his sway and magnetism within the NUM NEC would have been influential in dealing with the 'Nottingham problem'. However, other commentators suggest that despite Whelan giving the Nottinghamshire Area a distinct left-wing presence in a hard-core area of trade-union conservatism, that presence was only activist-deep and the left had neither the time nor the will to change the traditions of the Nottinghamshire miners [Adeney and Lloyd (1986) 260]. In the end, a belief that militancy could be forced on them ended up breaking the NUM in Nottinghamshire.

In 2007, twenty-five years on from Whelan's death, a family memorial published in the Mansfield newspaper, *The Mansfield Chad*, formerly *The Chronicle Advertiser*, paid tribute. In a vastly changed society to the one that Whelan would have recognised, it commented; 'Your party has ended but your life's work was not in vain… all those warnings you gave, there are a few pits left, but the fabric has changed. Of all the things you tried to change, and the one you most hated, man's inhumanity to man goes on unabated, hard working men, dumped on the scrap heap… you got out just in time, you were better off Red' [*Mansfield Chad*, 24 August 2007].

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: National Union of Mineworkers: Nottingham Area Minutes, 1964, 1965, 1971, 1974, 1982 and 1983, Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) Offices, Rees House, Nursery Street, Mansfield; Joe Whelan Manifesto—Election of Nottingham NUM Area Official 1965, personal collection of David Amos. (**2**) **Newspapers and Periodicals**: *Mansfield Chronicle Advertiser* (*The Chad*); *Nottingham Evening Post*; *Hucknall Dispatch*. (**3**) **Oral Interviews**: Interview with Barry Johnson, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Labour History Society, Derby, 18 September 2010; interview with Roy Lynk, former Nottingham NUM and UDM Area Official, Sutton-in-Ashfield, 28 December 2005. (**4**) **Books and Articles**: G. Brown, *Sabotage: A Study in Industrial Conflict* (Nottingham, 1977); V. Allen, *The Militancy of British Miners* (Shipley, 1981); J. Krieger, *Undermining Capitalism: State Ownership and Dialectical Control in the British Coal Industry* (Pinceton, 1983); M. Adeney and J. Lloyd, *The Miners' Strike 1984–85: Loss without Limit* (1986); W.J. Morgan and K. Coates, *The Nottinghamshire Coalfield and the British Miners' Strike 1984–85* (Nottingham, 1989); P. Routledge, *Scargill: The Unauthorised Biography* (1993); A. Taylor, *The NUM and British Politics*, *Vol. 2*, *1969–1995* (Aldershot, 2005); R. Braithwaite (ed.), *Derek Ezra: Leadership in Energy—A Collective Memoir on the Life and Works of Lord Ezra of Horsham: Chairman of the National Coal Board (1971–1982)* (2014). (**5**) **Obituaries**: *Mansfield Chronicle Advertiser*, 9 September 1982; *Hucknall Dispatch*, 10 September 1982.

DAVID AMOS

*See also*: †William CARTER; Jim HAMMOND; Edward JONES; †Mick MCGAHEY; †George SPENCER; †Frank VARLEY; Emlyn WILLIAMS

**WILLIAMS, Emlyn** (1921–1995)
MINERS' LEADER

Emlyn Williams was born in Aberdare, in Glamorgan, on 20 February 1921, the son of William Charles Williams, a coalminer, and his wife, Sarah, née Enoch. He was born into an intensely political family, later recalling: 'My father was an ardent Marxist… and I come from that kind of a family'. Williams left school at fourteen years of age and began his career as a miner in 1937, working alongside his father at the nearby Nantmelin Colliery. His father, the chairman of the local miners' lodge, had been victimised for four years in the early 1930s by the Powell Duffryn colliery company for his trade union activism. This had a profound formative effect upon the young Emlyn Williams: 'Of course, to be a trade unionist then you had to be a very strong character. Well, I was trained in that background; I knew what it was all about. I knew what socialism meant. I knew the ideals of people that were older than me. It was fairly easy for me, then, to commit myself to the political and trade union movement'. Looking back on this period, Williams described the Powell Duffryn coalowners as 'one of the most vicious employers that had ever been known, even amongst the coalowners. And if you were to mention the word "trade union", as far as they were concerned you were out… They believed in quick returns and mass exploitation' [SWML interview (AUD/161)].

When the Second World War broke out in 1939 Williams volunteered for the armed forces, later recalling that 'we were going to fight Fascism'. He was in France within four days of enlisting in Pontypridd and spent the duration of the war on active service with the Royal Horse Artillery and the Tank Corps. Williams remained in the army and did not return to the pits until 1947 because life in the army was 'better than going back to work under the PDs' [SWML interview (AUD/161)].

In 1947 the coal industry was nationalised. Williams was sceptical from the beginning about the extent to which the mines really were now 'owned by the people', remaining so all his life. He later commented that 'I would rather have seen socialisation than nationalisation… But if you ask me truthfully if I regretted nationalisation – no, never. Nationalisation *did* bring the miners together and the betterment of the miners was as a result of the pressure within the unions within the nationalised industry. And I think that was a good thing in itself'. In contrast to the eulogising of trade union leaders who urged miners to make it a 'socialist' success, Williams and his generation of rank-and-file miners were returning from the forces and determined to fight for better conditions: 'there was this influx of miners coming back from the armed forces. And I believe it did a lot to strengthen the role of the NUM after nationalisation. Because a lot of these lads then became active, they were not going back to the old systems. And I can say that for myself' [SWML interview (AUD/161)].

On his return to the south Wales coalfield, Williams worked as a miner at Bwllfa Colliery, near Aberdare. His work at the coalface led to him contracting the emphysema that would plague him for the rest of his life and ultimately contribute to his eventual death in 1995. He was elected chairman for the Bwllfa lodge of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in 1947 and thereafter chairman of the famous Maerdy lodge (after the two collieries and their attendant lodges had amalgamated). In 1955 he was elected onto the rank-and-file Executive Council of the South Wales Area NUM, being re-elected in 1957. His trade union career continued to develop further and in 1959 he was elected as a full-time NUM official, as miners' agent for the Aberdare and Rhondda District. Although a Marxist in his political outlook who worked and campaigned readily alongside members of the Communist Party throughout his career, Williams was himself only ever a member of the Labour Party. In an interview conducted in 1980, he explained that the reason for this was because he wanted to be a member of the party which was the main political organisation of the British labour movement, as he believed that this would provide the most influential platform from which to try to effect socialist change [SWML interview (AUD/33)].

In his role as miners' agent, Williams played a central role in organising a campaign against the sweeping pit closures that were taking place all across south Wales in the 1960s. This took the form of attempting to galvanise the coalfield into strike action in response to a series of closure threats to individual collieries from the mid-1960s until the end of that decade. At that time in south Wales, opposition to the closure programme was not led by the Area officials but by groups of lodge activists, a loose network known as the 'unofficial movement'. Williams later commented that 'as far as the official leadership of the South Wales Area was concerned, there was no resistance whatsoever – campaigns, yes… but no positive resistance to pit closures' [SWML interview (AUD/33)]. The movement centred on pits in the middle of the coalfield, traditionally the most radical region, and aimed to influence official Area policy in favour of wage militancy and strike action in opposition to colliery closures. Williams was an important figure for the 'unofficial movement'; in this respect, his status as a full-time Area Official placed him in a potentially ambivalent situation. However, as he later explained, 'we were not a movement against the leadership … we were a ginger group trying to get some movement going in relation to pit closures and other matters in South Wales, particularly on wages' [SWML interview (AUD/161)].

Williams was elected vice-president of the South Wales Area NUM in 1966. By this time, he had acquired a formidable reputation as a political campaigner: the union's newspaper *The*

*Miner* described him as 'an ardent socialist, [who] has organised many campaigns in his district against the war in Vietnam, [and is] a keen supporter of CND and the peace movement' [*The Miner*, November/December 1966]. His most significant contribution in this respect was at the NUM National Annual Conference in Swansea in 1968, when he called on the miners to support the Vietnamese National Liberation Front and successfully moved the motion that changed the NUM's official policy on the subject to one of complete opposition to the US military presence in Vietnam [*The Miner*, July/August 1968; *Western Mail*, 4 July 1968]. The year of Williams's election as Area vice-president also saw the establishment of the National Power Loading Agreement (NPLA), which meant that faceworkers were to be paid a standard daywage for the first time in the history of the industry. The South Wales NUM was one of the areas which had been the most determined proponents of the NPLA: for miners such as Emlyn Williams, it was a landmark achievement because it enshrined the principle of equal pay for equal work, led to increased unity between the British coalfields, and made miners less likely to take short-cuts with safety in pursuit of increased output.

The year 1969 saw the return of large-scale industrial action to the coal-mining industry across Britain. The most prominent manifestation of this was the 'surfacemen's strike' of October 1969, an unofficial strike which mainly affected Yorkshire, Scotland and south Wales. This was the biggest stoppage since the industry's nationalisation in 1947, involving 130,000 miners from 140 pits across Britain and lasting from 13 to 27 October 1969. The strike aimed to reduce surfacemen's working hours: this was an emotive topic, since surfacemen were the lowest-paid mineworkers and were often men who had been disabled by industrial accident or industrial disease. In many respects, the surfacemen's strike was the culmination of tensions which had built up over the preceding decade. In south Wales, the strike was led by lodge officials from Cwm, Fernhill, and Coedely collieries; Williams seemingly played no role in instigating or leading unofficial strike action on this occasion [*Western Mail*, 23 October 1969]. Although the strike was ultimately unsuccessful in effecting a reduction in surfacemen's working hours, it did prompt the National Coal Board (NCB) to take the unprecedented step of conceding in full the demand for increased wages for which the NUM had been campaigning at that time, thereby provided the biggest wage increases in the history of the nationalised industry.

The 1970s were a good time for Williams. He was the chief organiser in south Wales for the strike of 1972 and subsequently was a member of the NEC when the miners triumphantly defeated the Heath government in 1974. He also served on the National Executive of the Labour Party at this time. His replacement of Sid Vincent as NUM nominee perhaps indicated a shift in the union's politics. Most significantly, he was elected unopposed as president of the south Wales miners in 1973—something which had not happened since William Abraham (Mabon) became president in 1898. In 1976, Williams was one of the first trade union leaders to attack the Labour Government's 'social contract'. His speech to the Area Annual Conference that year was arguably his finest hour as a union leader, a syndicalist clarion call with strong echoes of Noah Ablett and A.J. Cook. Defending his demand for £100-a-week wages for faceworkers, he said:

> At some point of time some workers have got to challenge the grossly unequal distribution of wages in British society. Some workers have got to insist that we are all paid according to what we contribute to the community…
>
> Why should men who risk their lives through injuries and disease, who work physically hard, who produce a commodity which is essential for British industry, not be paid accordingly? And if the answer is that society cannot afford it, then my reply is that society must be changed so it can afford it.

This uncompromising statement panicked stockbrokers into causing a fall in the exchange rate and the value of the stock exchange, propelling the Area president into national prominence

with such rapidity that the report in the *Daily Mail* on the conference inadvertently featured a picture of the playwright and actor Emlyn Williams instead [*Western Mail*, 4, 6, 7, May 1976].

During the 1970s and beyond, Williams's presidency was one of 'leading from the front and relying on the dying art of platform oratory', a style which had 'all the marks and scars of a bygone age' [Francis (1996) 5]. At the 1978 Area Annual Conference, he called for a new militancy amongst miners in response to the clouds of uncertainty on the industry's horizon, emphasising: 'we have got to … create a new resolve amongst South Wales miners … We must campaign until every miner is involved … We want an articulate, intelligent, politically-conscious labour force, for that is our only safeguard against being prostituted in the future by money and false promises'. His political ideas and his militant trade union principles were moulded by his early years in the mining communities of the Cynon Valley. A modern-day equivalent of Noah Ablett and A.J. Cook, he was happy to work alongside the Communist Party and saw politics in syndicalist-influenced terms; the union was for him *the* primary political force. In May 1981, at the South Wales Area NUM annual conference, he addressed the delegates and told them that the south Wales miners 'are associated in people's minds with resistance and struggles… There is no doubt in my mind that miners have an historical mission to lead in class struggles'.

This perspective did not preclude an interest in and an engagement with parliamentary politics. As the NUM's elected representative on Labour's National Executive Committee between 1974 and 1978, he was arguably one of the most significant Marxists within the Party. Along with many on the left, he advocated such reforms as the right to democratically elect the Labour Party leader, the right to have reselection of MPs and the assertion of the authority of conferences as the ultimate decision-making body within the party. One of the key themes of his address to the 1978 South Wales NUM Annual Conference was the need for a democratic overhaul of the Labour Party's internal machinery. In 1980, Williams optimistically predicted 'the inevitability of true democracy' within Labour [SWML interview (AUD/33)]. In 1983, he was also the first trade union leader to publicly endorse Neil Kinnock for leadership of the Labour Party, at the South Wales Miners' Gala following the General Election.

In the fine traditions of the South Wales Area NUM and its forerunner, the South Wales Miners' Federation ('the Fed'), he did not neglect a wider cultural perspective. A fluent Welsh speaker, he protected the activities of the Miners' Eisteddfod (a unique cultural event within British trade unionism) and the Miners' Gala, despite the vitiating effect of a declining membership. Keenly aware of the historical legacy of the south Wales miners, he was resolute in his defence of the educational and research work of the South Wales Miners' Library. Similarly, he was vice-president of Llafur, the Welsh People's History Society, whose platform he shared with such distinguished academics as Raymond Williams. He was also one of the prominent leaders in the 1970s of the campaigns for a Wales TUC (which was successful) and for a Welsh Assembly (which was not).

His tenure as president was not an easy one, witnessing a rapid run-down of the industry and at the same time having the unenviable task of alerting his members as to what was about to engulf them. From his election up until 1984, the workforce in the south Wales collieries shrank from 31,000 to 20,000; but no pit was closed without a determined fight. Without his strong, dedicated leadership, the decline would have been even steeper. Following the success of the 1974 strike, the first setback to befall Williams as Area president was the introduction of the 'incentive bonus scheme'. This was a particularly controversial and divisive episode within the NUM, which both reflected and exacerbated pre-existing left–right factionalism, since it was brought about by the NUM national president Joe Gormley despite its rejection in national ballots of the membership in November 1974 and October 1977. Although some coalfield areas were strongly in favour of 'incentive bonuses', the South Wales Area was the most resolutely opposed and was the last coalfield to fall into line with the others. This hostility was partly because of safety factors, partly because of the difficult geological conditions in south Wales, but

also because the scheme undermined unity, creating competition and tension at every level of the NUM as miners strove to maximise their own output—the antithesis of co-operative trade union principles; as Williams commented in 1978, 'it's the law of the jungle and we haven't even got spears' [Francis and Smith (1980) 481].

The election of the Conservative Government in 1979 and its subsequent re-election in 1983 were a bitter blow to both Williams and the south Wales miners as a whole. The South Wales Area Annual Conferences in 1981 and 1982 expressed hostility towards the government's new anti-trade union legislation and called on the TUC to defy it. At the 1981 conference, Williams stated: 'As real democrats we have a responsibility to stop an oppressive Government just as in the early 1930s the German trade unions had a responsibility to prevent the spread of Nazism… We have a social responsibility to take extra-Parliamentary action against Mrs Thatcher's Government' [NUM (South Wales Area) Annual Conference Minutes, 1981].

The last five years of his presidency were the most testing time for Williams and the men he led; with the return of the spectre of mass pit closures threatening to end mining operations in many parts of 'peripheral' coalfields such as south Wales. During this period, unemployment in Britain increased from one million in 1979 to 3.1 million by late 1982, staying at over 3 million until 1987 [England (2004) 59]. He articulated the feelings of the south Wales miners on this subject when he stated that '[t]his level of unemployment is not a disgrace to be deplored, it is a crime against humanity' [*The Miner*, May/June 1981]. Williams was adamant that the south Wales miners would not passively accept the inevitability of the demise of their industry. He always saw the defence of pits and steelworks not simply in terms of jobs, but of communities, and Wales itself. Consequently, in January and February 1980 he led the calls for a solidarity strike in support of the steelworkers' fight against sweeping job cuts. The failure of the membership to heed this call was a bitter blow to him but it was typical of his bold leadership. Despite this setback, he remained determined to reinforce the miners' resolve to fight to defend their industry. At an Area conference in November 1980 which endorsed strike action in opposition to colliery closures, Williams stressed the need for the south Wales miners to fulfil a vanguard role in the forthcoming confrontation:

> [W]hen the crunch comes the National President [Joe Gormley] will insist on an Individual Ballot… before strike action. We all know… that Areas unaffected by closures… will not succumb to an appeal for industrial action that will be worded against the more progressive Areas. The answer is that somewhere in the British Coalfield one Area has got to make the initial sacrifice and immediately extend their appeal… for support to the grass roots of the British Coalfield … I would plead with the leadership here that the task is to prepare our men for the inevitability of a clash with the Coal Board and this Government.

Almost exactly a year after the failure of the Area to strike in support of steelworkers in 1980, Williams was able to lead the south Wales miners into action in opposition to the government's colliery closure programme. On the eve of the momentous February 1981 strike by the south Wales miners, which temporarily halted the closure programme, he declared: 'I won't call it a strike. I would call it a demonstration for existence. The miners in south Wales are saying "we are not accepting the dereliction of our mining valleys, we are not allowing our children to go immediately from school into the dole queue. It is time we fought"' [Francis (1996) 7].

Joe Gormley retired as NUM president at the end of 1981. He had been the bulwark of NUM conservatism for a decade and represented the antithesis of the radicalism of the south Wales miners. The candidate adopted by the left-wing NUM Areas was Arthur Scargill, the Yorkshire Area president. Scargill addressed South Wales NUM annual conferences in 1980 and 1981, and received their formal backing. He also benefited from the support of the Communist Party and various other left-wing groups that were emerging in the early 1980s, all of which wanted to see the union adopting a more militant stance. In the run-up to the election, he spoke at several

meetings in south Wales. In the NUM presidential election in December 1981 Scargill scored a resounding victory with over 70% of the vote, a result which appeared to represent a clear mandate for action against pit closures [NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council minutes, 20 October 1981; *The Miner*, February 1982]. Describing Scargill's election as 'a tremendous victory for progressive reforms in the Union', Williams told the 1982 South Wales NUM annual conference that: 'For the first time in the history of the NUM we have a progressive leadership… There are no limits this Union cannot reach with an active, democratic, campaigning leadership' [NUM (South Wales Area) Annual Conference minutes, 1982].

Despite the election of Scargill and the seeming defeat of the colliery closure programme by the February 1981 strike, the pits continued to shut. All but one of the seven pits in south Wales threatened in 1981 were closed by 1984. Inter-coalfield solidarity proved elusive. The south Wales miners attempted unsuccessfully to obtain national strike action in 1983 over the threat to Lewis Merthyr /Tymawr Colliery and there were three successive national ballots rejecting strike action in 1982 and 1983. Nevertheless, Williams remained convinced of the necessity of decisive measures to defend the industry. In his 1983 presidential address he threw down a challenge to his members: 'the standards expected of the South Wales miners is high. In my view it is not a victory when 55% of our membership supports an official call for strike action because I expect an 85% response… Our reputations as political leaders in the British coalfields, built by Arthur Horner, Bill Paynter and Dai Francis, is at stake' [NUM (South Wales Area) Annual Conference Minutes, 1983].

The 1984–1985 strike occurred at the very time when Williams was preparing for retirement. The decision by the miners to strike in March 1984 was essentially a defensive response to a direct threat. By early 1984, the NUM was bracing itself for a clash over the fate of the coal industry. The NCB announcement on 5 March 1984 of the closure of Cortonwood colliery in Yorkshire and Polmaise colliery in Scotland was seen by the union leadership as a signal for the long-anticipated conflict. On 8 March, Scargill announced that the strikes under way in Yorkshire and Scotland were official under Rule 41 of the union's constitution (which empowered the NEC to give official endorsement to strike action by individual Areas) and called on the other coalfields to support them. As Williams explained:

> History will record that the British miner decided on a strategy of industrial action because he could not accept that the role of families was to go to unemployment exchanges… This has been… a strike on behalf of every man, woman and child in the United Kingdom. With… the Tories carrying out their policy of further unemployment the miners have said, we are standing up to be counted [*Western Mail*, 24 January 1985].

During the dispute, the relationship between the NUM Area leadership and the managers of the NCB in south Wales was an object lesson in industrial relations—an example which did not find favour with Ian McGregor, the hardline 'union busting' NCB chairman. Throughout the strike, the relative absence of confrontation in south Wales was at least partly due to the unwillingness of South Wales NCB director Philip Weekes to take aggressive steps to force the miners into conceding defeat, remaining unenthusiastic about the attempts by a few individuals to return to work and also the harsh methods used by MacGregor [See Philip Weekes Diary]. Consequently, the south Wales coalfield was spared the full extent of the picket-line clashes that characterised the strike in most of the other coalfields.

Throughout the strike, the south Wales miners had been its most solid supporters. The Area leadership had adhered faithfully to national NUM policy, even when it disagreed with particular decisions. By 1985, however, it had begun to speak out. For many of the coalfield's leaders, the primary concern by this stage had become the struggle to ensure the survival of the NUM. In January, Williams stated: '[Thatcher] is out to grind the miners into the dust… This is no longer an issue of strike – [for her,] it is an issue to destroy the NUM.' Although the South

Wales leadership reiterated that it would stand firm, evidence of tension was apparent in the Area officials' frustration at a statement by Scargill at that time that he would rather see the return-to-work continue than 'prostitute his principles' by bringing the strike to an end [NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council minutes, 21 January, 12, 19 February 1985; *Western Mail*, 3, 26 January 1985]. A controversial figure in these intra-union tensions at this time was Kim Howells, the research officer and spokesman for the South Wales NUM. Although never an elected representative, by early 1985 he was being used by Williams as a channel to express viewpoints about the strike which did not conform to NUM policy, and that displeased Scargill intensely [SWML interview (AUD/574); Beckett and Hencke (2009) 197]. During January 1985, Howells claimed publicly that south Wales miners were becoming disillusioned with the lack of initiative from the national leadership and criticised the union's mass picketing tactics. The following month, he suggested a possible return to work without a settlement and made veiled criticisms of Scargill's conduct of the strike. These statements met with incredulous opposition within the Area; in response, Howells was suspended as Area spokesman, though he was reinstated a few days later. The episode highlighted clearly the pressures and tensions within the NUM hierarchy as the miners were forced to confront the unpleasant reality of the probability of impending defeat.

The struggle and its aftermath proved to be the final one for south Wales as a major coal-producing region. The epic strike which ended in March 1985 tested the mettle of the miners almost to the point of destruction. That the South Wales Area emerged largely intact owes much to Williams. He was a popular leader and widely supported, as could be seen by the incredible loyalty shown by the miners of south Wales during the year-long dispute: they remained literally 100% solid up until November 1984 and as late as mid-February 1985 around 97.5% of them were still on strike—far more so than in any other coalfield by this time. Given the declining situation at a national level, in March 1985 Williams had the courage to make a successful call for a return to work when the British miners were facing an apocalypse. The march back to collieries like Maerdy, where he once worked, exemplified the dignity and fortitude displayed by the mining communities of the south Wales coalfield in the face of defeat. It could be argued that his greatest achievement was that the south Wales miners stayed loyal to the NUM, both during and after the strike; south Wales was the one coalfield where the breakaway Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) made absolutely no impact whatsoever.

Within the NUM, in the aftermath of the strike Williams and the South Wales leadership became critical of Scargill's policies, with the main differences between them focussed on the potential for renewing the struggle through industrial action, the necessity of a public campaign to reinstate sacked miners, and the centralisation of decision-making within the NUM at the possible expense of local democracy. This tendency became more pronounced following Williams's retirement as Area President at the end of 1985. Given the extent of the crisis facing their industry, the South Wales NUM leaders decided that the only way to avoid the elimination of mining in south Wales was to be prepared to negotiate with British Coal. Flexible working patterns were a key topic where they led the 'moderate' dissenters, an issue that came to a head when British Coal announced that development of the proposed Margam 'super pit' was conditional on the acceptance of flexible working. South Wales decided to break with national policy and in March 1987 Area president Des Dutfield agreed to discuss flexible working [*South Wales Miner*, March, June, July, December 1987]. This willingness to be accommodating, however, could do nothing to change the government's total opposition to any expansion of coal production: the Margam mine never materialised and the colliery closures continued apace.

Williams retired at the end of 1985, after the tumultuous events of the 1984–1985 strike. He had been a leading figure in the South Wales Area for thirty years and by the time he retired in 1985 he was the longest-serving full-time official within the whole of the NUM. He spent his retirement years quietly and relatively uneventfully at his home in Cwmbach, a village in his native Cynon Valley. He was married to Elsie May, with whom he had one son and one

daughter. Williams died in Cwmbach on 14 July 1995. At the time of his death, Williams was described by Kim Howells, the MP for Pontypridd, as 'a miner's miner'. He was very much a product of south Wales coalfield society, whose politics were shaped by radical socialism, who also possessed the wisdom and courage to take tough decisions—such as calling for a return to work in March 1985, in what were by then the disastrous circumstances in the coalmining communities of Britain. A stocky and powerful man with a gravelly voice, 'Em Swan' or 'Swannie'—as he was known to the men he led with distinction from 1973 to 1985—personified the political militancy, the independent spirit and the tenacity of the south Wales miners.

**Writings:** *Address (at South Wales Area Congress)* [Pamphlet] (National Union of Mineworkers (South Wales Area), 1983.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: NUM (South Wales Area) Conference minutes (1964–1985), NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Annual Reports (1964–1986), NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council minutes (1955–1959, 1964–1985), South Wales Miners' Library (SWML), University of Swansea; oral history interviews with Emlyn Williams (AUD/33, AUD/161, AUD/574); The Diary of Philip Weekes, Philip Weekes Papers, National Library of Wales. (**2**) **Newspapers and Periodicals**: *South Wales Miner*; *The Miner*; *The Times*; *Western Mail*; *Independent*. (**3**) **Books and Articles**: Hywel Francis and David Smith, *The Fed: A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century* (1980); John Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics* (Cardiff, 1985); Hywel Francis, 'Emlyn Williams (1921–1995)', *Llafur: Journal of Welsh Labour History*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1996); Joe England, *The Wales TUC 1974–2004: Devolution and Industrial Politics* (Cardiff, 2004); 'Williams, Emlyn', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 2004; Francis Beckett Francis and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (2009); Ben Curtis, *The South Wales Miners*, *1964–1985* (Cardiff, 2013).

BEN CURTIS

*See also*: †Arthur HORNER; Edward JONES; †Michael McGAHEY; Joe WHELAN

**WISE, Frank Edward** (1885–1933)
LABOUR MP

Edward Frank Wise was born on July 3, 1885 at 13 Albert Street Bury St Edmunds Suffolk, the elder son of Edward Wise a fishmonger and Ellen Clayton née Peel. His father died in February 1888; he and his brother were subsequently brought up by their mother who established a ladies outfitters and baby linen shop in the town. Wise was educated at Guildhall Feoffment Elementary School, King Edward VI School Bury St Edmunds, where he was athletic champion, football captain, and Head of School, and at Sidney Sussex College Cambridge. He graduated as second senior optime in the mathematical tripos in 1906 and took a second in part one of the natural sciences tripos the following year. Later in 1907 he became a junior clerk in the House of Commons and was called to the bar at the Middle Temple in 1911. The same year he became sub-warden at Toynbee Hall. In 1912 he became principal clerk to the National Health Insurance Commission [Trevelyan MSS 195 for transcript of talk given at Wise's old school 1934].

He was very much an Edwardian meritocrat who was involved in his twenties as a civil servant in the reforms of the Liberal Government. Equally significant for his political development his residence at Toynbee Hall in Stepney meant a sharp awareness of the working-class poverty of London's East End. He investigated working conditions in poorly paid trades in the context of the 1909 Trades Boards Act. J.J. Mallon, later Warden of Toynbee Hall, recalled how they 'went

together to poor homes and workshops and saw much wretchedness'. They 'held meetings, published leaflets explanatory of Trades Boards and showered them upon the East End'. Wise also campaigned to improve dockers' conditions; he brought Lloyd George to witness the dawn 'call-on' where men presented themselves in the hope of a day's work. He was involved in a campaign by the London Charwomen's and Cleaner's Association to secure improved standards for those employed by the London County Council [Pimlott (1935) x–xi, 138, 141, 204]. Ted Lloyd who would become a close friend recalled their first meeting in the summer of 1914.

> He burst into the study at Toynbee Hall where I was having an interview with the Warden. He was wearing a white sweater, grey flannel trousers, gym shoes and no hat. He was bubbling over with enthusiasm over a new scheme for decasualisation of labour in the docks which he hoped to push through by taking advantage of some provision in the National Insurance Act. His animation and vigour arrested attention; his whole being radiated energy. Here was a man of action believing in himself and his work and obviously enjoying life. An impression of strength and determination was given by his athletic frame, his large head and powerful jaw. His deep set eyes had a boyish twinkle and expressed vivacity and high spirits [Lloyd Papers 1/3, material for projected biography collected 1934].

His campaigns brought him into electoral politics in 1909 when he stood unsuccessfully in the Stepney Borough elections on a non-party platform; he was one of a slate run by the Council of Public Welfare, a body committed to developing a strong sense of citizenship. The prospect was discouraging. Labour in Stepney was poorly organised both politically and industrially and the turnover of population helped to ensure that enfranchisement levels were low. One of his Toynbee Hall colleagues had already made his political choice. Clement Attlee was two years older than Wise; after graduating from Oxford and an unhappy spell in a solicitor's office he had turned to social work in the East End and then to socialism with membership of the Stepney Independent Labour Party. In contrast, Wise worked with Progressive Liberals, trade unionists, socialists and Conservative social reformers; he epitomised a progressivism that crossed partisan demarcations.

He was much more than an administrator and campaigner against poverty. He captained the Civil Service football team, he was also a skilled climber and rider. His marriage in Hampstead in November 1912 epitomised his social mobility and his interests. His wife Dorothy Lillian Owen was the daughter of a bank manager and a graduate of University College London (UCL). She had lectured in English at Darlington Training College and taught at Cheltenham Ladies College before taking a post at UCL. She too had a commitment to social work, living in Poplar for three years [*Leicester Mercury*, 29 May 1929]. They would have four children, three girls and one boy.

Wise's civil service career was affected radically by the outbreak of war in August 1914. He became in turn secretary to the Anglo-Russian supplies committee of the War Office, 1914–1915, assistant director of army contracts in charge of clothing and raw materials 1915–1917, and principal assistant secretary to the Ministry of Food 1917–1918. Wise's posts indicate the extent to which his abilities and personality were valued within the wartime state. C.P. Trevelyan, a sceptic about British involvement in the war, would become a Labour Party colleague and political ally. He recalled that the formation of the Lloyd George Coalition in December 1916 had benefited Wise. He was 'one of the young men whom Lloyd George as prime minister pitched upon for their sheer capacity, gave them responsibility without a name or title, and got them to do the big things which the older and slower brains were incapable of doing' [Trevelyan MSS 195, p. 4]. The classic Whitehall insider, Tom Jones, another beneficiary of Lloyd George's coup, dined at Brooke's in the early weeks of the new government. His companions included Wise, (War Office Contracts), Arthur (subsequently Lord) Salter, (Admiralty), J.R. Brooke, (War Office), Ralph Enfield, (Ministry of Munitions and Explosives),

Ted Lloyd, (War Office Contracts) and J.J. Mallon, (Trade Boards). They subsequently dined together regularly; Jones dubbed them the 'Family'. By March 1918 Jones was acknowledging their effectiveness at the heart of the wartime state. 'They were the first to recognise that control of the final product and prices could only be made effective by controlling production at every stage. They have absolutely eliminated middle-men and speculators'. Wise qualified comprehensively as one of Lloyd George's men of 'push and go', vigorous and adroit within the state machine [Middlemass (ed) (1969); Tom Jones diary, 28 December 1916, 20 March 1918, pp. 17, 54; Harris (1982) 151].

In the immediate post-war years Wise remained at the centre of government. He was a British representative on the Inter-Allied Supreme Economic Council in Paris in 1919 and became assistant secretary at the Board of Trade in 1922. He was involved with post-war international conferences at San Remo in 1920 and Genoa in 1922, a significant figure in the post-war Coalition Government's attempts to reconstruct a viable European settlement. His involvement in Anglo-Russian relations would have a decisive effect on his career. The connection had begun early in the war with the Anglo-Russian Supply Committee. Subsequently his time at the Ministry of Food brought him into contact with the Russian co-operative movement. During 1919 he argued within government for an end to the Allied blockade of the Bolsheviks and the re-establishment of trade links through the co-operative movement. Pre-1914, Russian agricultural produce, flax, timber, and, most importantly, wheat had been a significant element in European trade; Wise claimed that the restoration of the European economy necessitated a renewal of access to these resources. He envisaged the prospect of a vast agricultural surplus rendered inaccessible by civil war, the Allied blockade and the dislocation of Russia's transport network. His case was based on dubious assumptions about the likely size of Russia's wheat harvest and the capacities of the Soviet administration. Could a government whose control of the countryside remained problematic gain possession of the crop and ship it to overseas markets? Would the likely exports significantly increase the food supply to and enhance the political stability of Central Europe? [Ullman (1972) 68; Morgan (2006) Chap. 9].

The attractiveness of Wise's proposal was enhanced by his suggestion that negotiations be with the Central Union of Russian co-operators, Centrosyus. Those of its officials who were abroad retained an uncertain autonomy from the Soviet government; some were hostile to the Bolsheviks. Thus any negotiation ostensibly between Russian and British co-operators avoided at least formally the vexed question of recognition of the Bolshevik regime. Lloyd George brought Wise's proposal to the Allies' Supreme Economic Council in Paris; it was endorsed on 16 January 1920. Wise chaired the committee that was responsible on the British side for the consequential negotiations. Rapidly they agreed that trade at the British end should not be restricted to co-operators. Whatever distance there was between the Russian regime and the co-operative organisation quickly vanished; a state decree merged all Russian co-operatives. The elected members of Centrosyus were removed and, where feasible, arrested. The co-operative organisation was now run by Bolshevik veterans. Wise had worked closely with the now displaced Centrosyus President, Berkenheim. He shifted readily to a similar relationship with the newly arrived replacements from Moscow, led by Krasin.

He was present with officials from his secretariat when Lloyd George met the Russian delegation; also in attendance were senior Conservative ministers including Bonar Law, Curzon and Austen Chamberlain. They were at best reluctant participants in the policy and felt that Wise was a damaging influence. Curzon as Foreign Secretary was aggrieved not just on substantive grounds but because he rejected Lloyd George's use of advisors in order to exclude the Foreign Office, especially on issues where established departmental opinion was opposed to the prime minister's position. Thus in August 1920 Curzon complained that the Russian talks had found his officials marginalised by the 'ubiquitous Wise'. Lloyd George's response was that if Wise 'did not exist we would have to invent him'. Wise's ubiquity also perturbed Sir Basil Thomson Director of Intelligence at the Home Office; always obsessed with subversives, he informed senior military figures that he was concerned that Wise, a man with allegedly

pro-Bolshevik sentiments had easy access to Downing Street; he felt the implication of the prime minister's association with Wise was far-reaching. 'He was seriously beginning to think that Lloyd George was a traitor' [for Lloyd George comment, August 1920 see Morgan (1980) 113; Curzon comment in Sir Henry Wilson Diary, 18 August 1920, cited in Ullman (1972) 277].

The utility of Wise for Lloyd George was that he offered support for a Russian policy where established senior politicians and administrators were unsympathetic. This strategy marked the continuation of methods that both had employed since December 1916, but the environment had changed both internationally and in terms of domestic politics. Wise argued that a successful outcome to the trade negotiations would have positive implications for the character of the Soviet Government and its external policies. His understandable desire that his favoured policy be successfully implemented was buttressed by material provided by L.G.M. Gall, who had worked in the British embassy in Petrograd and was now secretary to a committee set up by Curzon to study the character of the Bolshevik regime. At the beginning of 1921 Wise drew upon Gall's work on Bolshevik factionalism, an early example of what would become "Kremlinology", in mounting the case for the securing of a trade agreement:

> You may I think take it that the Right and Centre are in favour of a Trade Agreement even at the cost of undertaking to stop propaganda. The Right… will, I think carry it out in the letter and the spirit. The Centre will decide as to whether they carry it out by the course of events. They are genuinely anxious for the internal reconstruction and economic reorganisation of Russia and they realise, as was shown by Lenin's speech on foreign concessions, that they are absolutely dependent on foreign capital and initiative if they are to get a move on within a reasonable time. But they have an eye on the world revolution even if it is delayed for several years. The Left are the out and out Eastern propagandists whose policy is based on the assumption that Europe is just waiting for them to lead the world revolution.

He suggested that a trade deal would help to stabilise Russia and reduce the possibility of revolution elsewhere, not least by dispelling the attraction of the Bolshevik model:

> My impression… is that if we can get trade going on a substantial basis we need not worry very much about propaganda from the Centre because the facts of the European situation and the true information which will be brought out of Russia by traders and others as to the mess there… will provide a full and sufficient antidote for all the gas which the Left and others may emit [Wise to Phillip Kerr7, January 1921 cited in Ullman (1972) 442].

The episode ended with a deal in March 1921; the outcome could be read in Russian terms as an overture to the New Economic Policy; within Britain, Wise's activities could be seen as exemplifying a broader phenomenon. Experience of the wartime state, combined perhaps with pre-existing sympathies, moved some state administrators to the left at precisely the moment when the plight of and prospects for Bolshevik Russia became a focus for both passion and controversy. Even in the Lloyd George Coalition's final months, Curzon was still complaining about the activities of 'that arch-Bolshevik Wise' to his party leader Austen Chamberlain. But Wise's arguments for the diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union had little impact as Lloyd George's dominance diminished. If the ending of the coalition in October 1922 marked the marginalisation of the unconventional within British politics, Wise was one of those pushed to the periphery [Curzon comment in letter to Austen Chamberlain, 13 May 1922, cited in Ullman (1968) 327].

His subsequent trajectory was distinctive. He resigned from the civil service in February 1923 and became a salaried economic advisor to Centrosyus; over time he added directorships in Russian companies trading in timber and grain. He was in effect an intermediary between the Russian and British governments with his salary paid by the Russians. His connection began under the NEP and would continue through to the forced collectivisation of agriculture. The

economic lobbying came with an optimism that after the privations of 'war communism'; co-operation was facilitating a 'humanising and democratic' influence within Russia. His vision had echoes of what was dismissed in Bolshevik circles as a syndicalist heresy. The co-operatives were a 'great school for working class administrators and business organisers'. With the securing of a more stable order the Russian future lay with the first post-revolution generation. 'Their philosophy of life, their standards of value are those of the Soviet' [for Wise's published assessments see Morgan (2006) 199].

Wise had begun as a progressive social reformer within the pre-war New Liberal coalition. His experience of the wartime state brought him to an explicitly socialist politics which centred upon modernisation, collectivism and the protection and strengthening of the public good. Lloyd reflected on the circumstances that had nurtured his politics:

> Patriotism, social idealism, the prospect of power and personal advancement, combined with zest for adventure and creative activity stimulated Wise to meet the challenge. For the rest of his official career he was fighting private interests and defending the public welfare. Gradually in the process he found himself more and more in sympathy with the Socialist outlook. Idealism and the circumstances of his upbringing made him a social reformer. The experiences of State control during the war made him a Socialist [Lloyd Papers 1/3].

Such a perspective could be dismissive of sectional claims. At the Ministry of Food he had experienced how marginalised middle men could use their political allies to oppose ministerial policy. Such dismissals were not limited to business lobbyists. He demonstrated little sympathy for Direct Action by the trade unions. Many within the labour movement and particularly on its left saw the failure of the railway and transport unions to back the locked-out Miners' Federation in April 1921 as a decisive betrayal. Wise's assessment in the days immediately preceding the denouement was very different:

> The army has been mobilised and every effort made to convince the working-man that the only answer to his demands is force… If the Government wins trade unionism in this country has received an unprecedented setback, and I am sure that the bitterness that will be evoked will be extremely dangerous. If the men win then the seat of power has shifted from the Cabinet and Westminster to Robert Williams and his friends of the Triple Alliance. Either prospect is such as to cause alarm [Wise to Lloyd, 12 April 1921, Lloyd Papers 7/6].

In April 1921, Robert Williams of the Transport Workers' Federation was a member, albeit briefly, of the British Communist Party. Clearly the appeal of communism for Wise was not its association with trade union radicalism, which could be characterised as irrational and disruptive. Rather, any attraction came from the prospect of a planned rational and thereby liberating economic and social order. The continuities with Toynbee Hall where he had returned briefly after the war and the wartime state were perhaps significant.

Despite his close involvement from 1923 with the Soviet regime Wise never seems to have been attracted by the Communist Party as an instrument for his political objectives. Its marginality within British politics was presumably one consideration; perhaps most significant was the existence of a far more attractive organisation. The position of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) had been threatened by the new 1918 Labour Party constitution. No longer would the ILP hold a virtual monopoly over individual access to the Labour Party. The provision for individual membership within divisional Labour parties offered a more direct route. In the short run the threat to the ILP's status proved more apparent than real. Some within the party sought to develop a new and hopefully influential role within the wider labour movement. Their agenda was based on an appreciation that the war had transformed Europe. Long-established regimes had gone, new states had arisen from the debris; the Soviet Union offered inspiration for some and a nightmare for others. A new socialist strategy for Britain with its massively expanded

franchise and volatile political loyalties seemed imperative. The ILP could serve as a socialist think tank for the labour movement.

The party had acquired a potent mythology which many of its members revered. Many remembered when the party's purpose had been propagandising for ethical socialism without much concern for the minutiae of policy. Others emphasised the 1914–18 War as the party's heroic age with its fervent internationalism, defence of civil liberties and for a significant number, gaol as conscientious objectors. The principal advocate of the think-tank strategy Clifford Allen personified the party's anti-war tradition; by the early twenties he combined a commitment to a new political agenda with dismissal of those whose socialism was limited in his view to sentimental rhetoric. His capacity as a fund raiser was prodigious; ILP organisation expanded. The party's paper, the *New Leader*, flourished under H.N. Brailsford's editorship; study groups and summer schools were funded as essential to the modernising project. The attraction of this political home to Wise was understandable. He had no links with the ILP's past but the project fitted in with his concerns and predispositions. Moreover he could offer something distinctive and valuable. His first contribution came on the party's agriculture policy; a proposal for the bulk purchase of agricultural imports in order to stabilise domestic prices was included in a party document *A Socialist Policy for Agriculture*, published in 1924. The document was published under Brailsford's name, the foretaste of a more significant collaboration [Howell (2002) Chaps. 15 and 16].

Wise fought his first parliamentary election in October 1924 in North Bradford. In the previous election in December 1923 only 173 votes had covered three candidates with a Liberal returned and Labour third. Labour had a significant municipal base in the city with one third of the councillors. A Liberal–Conservative alliance on the council kept Labour in opposition. Following the 1923 election Labour and the Liberals each held two Bradford seats. After nine months of minority Labour Government with Liberal acquiescence Labour strategists hoped to attract some previously Liberal voters; in contrast, Conservatives believed that the act of allowing a Labour Government to take office would shift some Liberals to the Right. The campaign was dominated by debate about the fitness of Labour to govern. Wise praised the MacDonald Government's record and defended the terms of its proposed trade treaty with Russia. His Conservative opponent attacked Labour's competence and dramatically insisted on the horrors of Bolshevism. The culmination of the Conservative campaign was the *Daily Mail's* publication of the Zinoviev Letter which symbolically fused the themes of competence and Bolshevism; Bradford's Conservative press proclaimed that faced with a national peril Conservatives and Liberals must come together (*Yorkshire Evening Argus* through October 1924 gives a good sense of Conservative campaign). Wise recalled to Tom Jones the Zinoviev Letter's impact, not least on his confidence in Ramsay MacDonald. 'He was pretty sick at the way in which the late Prime Minister handled the Zinoviev business… he was completely in the dark… All the Labour candidates turned to him, but he could give them no guidance.' Jones noted that Wise's background gave him the confidence to make a response. He 'did a smart thing by publicly inviting the business men of Bradford to a public meeting at which they could subject him to any questions they liked on Russia' [Middlemass (1969) diary entry 23 November 1924, pp. 306–307]. The Conservative strategy proved effective nationally and in Bradford.

Bradford North, October 1924:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Electorate 34,114, turnout 84.7% | | |
| E.J.S.H. Ramsden (Conservative) | 11,459 | (39.6%) |
| E.F. Wise (Labour) | 9442 | (32.7%) |
| W.R. Rea (Liberal) | 8007 | (27.7%) |
| Majority | 2017 | (6.9%) |

Compared with December 1923 the Labour share of the poll remained the same; the Conservative and Liberal shares rose and fell respectively by 6.3%. In two other Bradford seats, East and Central, three-cornered fights in 1923 became straight fights ten months later. In each case the Labour incumbent was defeated, giving a gain to each of the other parties. The outcome in Liberal-held Bradford South was different; a decline in the Liberal poll benefited both opponents similarly and as nearer challenger Labour took the seat. Although the strategy symbolised by the Zinoviev Letter clearly damaged Wise, the result must be located within the context of the complicated three-party politics of the 1920s. Although Labour had been defeated decisively in the 1924 election the Liberals had been firmly relegated to third place.

Clifford Allen's strategy for the ILP involved the appointment of six commissions to develop new policies. The most significant one was authorised at the ILP's Gloucester conference at Easter 1925. Its agenda was to develop a policy for the abolition of poverty within the framework of an advance towards socialism. Wise was a member of the commission along with the chairman, the economist J.A. Hobson, Brailsford, and Arthur Creech Jones, an official of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU). They worked speedily; the quartet's central theme, the 'Living Wage' was popularised in the *New Leader*. Their starting point was the under-consumptionist position identified with Hobson; working-class poverty and economic inequality depressed demand and thereby limited employment. Early in 1926 the commission produced an interim report, *Socialism In Our Time*; later in the year this was followed by the definitive document, *The Living Wage*. Its level should be determined by a body on which the labour movement would be represented. Its realisation would necessitate both trade union activities and legislation. The latter would include the public ownership of banks and of public utilities. One proposal for family allowances was both well publicised and highly controversial, not least within the labour movement. The required expenditure would be funded out of direct taxation. The overall perspective articulated both Allen and Wise's vision of social transformation. Radical change would come out of agreement and well- being, not conflict and despair.

Wise would be a prime advocate for the policy, but whatever its intellectual and political merits, the vision of the ILP as a socialist think tank faced serious obstacles. Others within the party developed their own programmes with affinities to and distinctions from *The Living Wage*. John Wheatley a successful minister in the 1924 government, emphasised economic planning and insulation of the British economy; Oswald Mosley, a recent recruit to Labour, emphasised the 'scientific' control of credit in *Revolution By Reason*, a title that echoed Wise's political approach. If the ILP could be viewed as a hospitable space where policies could be discussed, for many members such debates had little impact. They were more concerned with traditional propagandising where the minutiae of economic policy were an irrelevance. Most significantly, the think tank model faced a fundamental challenge. The purpose of the exercise was to develop proposals for the wider labour movement. If the proposals proved uncongenial to this audience, the position of the ILP would become problematic. Its likely reaction would be affected by the beginning of what proved to be a thorough shift in the party's political balance. Post-mortems on the 1924 Government had strengthened the left within the ILP. By October 1925 Allen, hypersensitive to criticism, had marginalised himself within the party; gradually the left, personified by James Maxton and John Wheatley, strengthened its influence; old ILP stalwarts, most notably MacDonald and Snowden, were often targets of their criticism. The ILP's growing reputation as a vehicle of the left weakened its influence within the Labour Party as Wise and other advocates attempted to gain support for The Living Wage.

MacDonald rapidly and publicly condemned the proposals, a reflection of his distaste for the ILP's leftward shift; the trade unions were hostile to the programme because of its alleged threat to the fundamental distinction between industrial and political responsibilities. This specific criticism was heightened by a broader concern: several within the ILP had been hostile to prominent trade unionists in the aftermath of the General Strike. The latter, concerned to rebuild their organisations, resented external critics and took the view that all must be

subordinated to the election of a Labour Government. In such a context, discussion over a Living Wage could be counter-productive. The 1926 Labour Party Conference decided that a joint Labour Party–Trades Union Congress (TUC) committee should develop a credible scheme based on the Living Wage principle [Howell (2002) 264–277].

The result was procrastination and eventual dismemberment. The committee only began work after a nine-month delay; at the 1927 Labour Party conference Arthur Henderson suggested that at best some elements from the Living Wage programme might be incorporated in the Labour Party's programme for the next election. Wise spoke for the ILP in this discussion; on behalf of the party he attempted to negotiate a compromise [Labour Party Conference Report, 1927, pp. 220–221]. Discussions between the Joint Committee and Wise, Hobson, and Brailsford in December 1927 revealed the unlikelihood of any agreement. Wise developed his conception of an increasing level of public control of industry and a 'rapid increase in the possibilities of transference to public ownership'. He responded to the caution and pessimism of a senior trade unionist, Ben Turner, on the nationalisation of the banks:

> Your assumption that it would take 10 years astounds me. I cannot conceive why a bill for nationalising the Bank of England, granted a Labour majority cannot go through in the first session. Why wait for the Bankers to give us permission to do it. If anybody proposes that the nationalising of the banks can only come about when the bankers agreed, I think he is a pessimist.

Overall Wise's vision was of an 'ordered and constructive scheme of reorganisation. By means of child allowances and the living wage it would facilitate the transition from capitalism to a socialist commonwealth'. Walter Citrine the TUC General Secretary voiced a characteristic trade union criticism—'you are either consciously or unconsciously discrediting Trade Unionism'. Wise responded by citing the agricultural industry as an example of the inadequacy of trade union action. 'The whole situation in the villages could be changed by children's allowances'. His case extended more widely. 'Neither in mining, agriculture, nor the woollen and worsted trades are you likely to get the drastic reorganisation by which higher wages could be paid without political action'. Wise's arguments had no impact on the committee's Chair, Margaret Bondfield. She suggested that the ILP representatives were naïve in assuming that either family allowances or the Living Wage could be settled within a single parliament. The problem was not just the need for a parliamentary majority; the industrial wing of the labour movement needed persuasion. She voiced what would become a frequent criticism. 'You are not familiar with the machinery of the Trade Union Movement'. Eventually the committee failed to reach agreement even on family allowances. Inter-union disagreements meant that the committee proved sterile; the living wage had been marginalised [TUC Archive, MS 292 117/10].

The radicalisation of the ILP paralleled and interacted with the committee's stifling of the challenge of *The Living Wage*. Wise was elected to the ILP's National Administrative Council (NAC) as the Midlands Division representative in 1927. His election was the result of an attempt by Mosley and others to replace the incumbent Fred Longden, a traditionalist with a moderniser. Mosley was one possibility; in the event he stood successfully for the Council's National Section and was joined by Wise [On the prelude to this outcome see Allan Young to Wilfrid Whiteley, 6 March 1927, Whiteley Papers UL6/3]. The NAC in the late twenties was a diverse body including some supporters of the Labour Party leadership, a left personified by James Maxton, and individuals such as Wise and Mosley who saw the party as a credible instrument for a radical modernising politics. In July 1928 the Council divided over its attitude to Maxton's collaboration with the miners' leader, A.J. Cook, in the Cook–Maxton Manifesto Campaign. Its purpose and style were far removed from Wise's priorities and approach; Maxton presented his initiative as socialist revivalism, 'a kind of Moody–Sankey campaign'. Although expressing doubts about its autonomy from the ILP, Wise was in the bare majority endorsing the

initiative [for NAC discussions see *New Leader*, 6 July 1928]. Such disagreements showed the tensions within the ILP's leadership; three months later the 1928 Labour Party Conference illuminated the ILP's diminishing influence. The policy statement *Labour and the Nation* was carried overwhelmingly with the consistent backing of the major trade unions. Wise spoke at length in the debate on Banking and Finance suggesting that the document was unclear about Labour policy towards the Bank of England; he insisted that a Labour Government could be effective only if both sectors were publicly owned [Labour Party Conference Report 1928, pp. 233–236].

Wise fought Leicester East in the May 1929 election. Support from the sizeable Leicester ILP had been significant in his election to the ILP's NAC. In 1924 Labour had lost Leicester East by 421 votes in a straight fight with a Conservative. As in several seats, 1929 saw the reappearance of a Liberal, an intervention that was to Labour's advantage.

Leicester East, 1929: electorate 54,364, turnout 81.3%

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|---|---|---|
| E.F. Wise (Labour) | 22,533 | (50.8%) |
| J.V. de Loder (Conservative) | 13,801 | (31.1%) |
| F. Lawson (Liberal) | 8054 | (18.1%) |
| Majority | 8732 | (19.7%) |

Wise stood out amongst the new Labour Members. Tom Jones in 1925 had predicted that he would become a leading figure. 'He had some of the qualities likely to carry him very far in politics – great physical vitality, great self-confidence, and great faith in the possibilities of helping mankind by political action; he might even become a Labour Prime Minister – certainly a Cabinet Minister' [Middlemass (1969) diary entry, 24 November 1924, conversation with Stanley Baldwin, p. 307]. Beatrice Webb found him a 'forceful' personality, 'imposing but not prepossessing'. She responded positively to those qualities that had attracted Lloyd George—his 'bonhomie, great mental energy, high spirits – he enjoys life: he is decisive and lucid in speech, a good debater'. She found him 'honest'. Sidney Webb perhaps saw Wise as a contrast to himself 'a rough person doing rough things in a rough way' [Beatrice Webb Diary, 27 April 1931]. Not surprisingly Wise could appear stand-offish to many Labour Members; a sizeable house in the Chilterns and a comfortable Bloomsbury flat were the outward evidence of a man experienced in the worlds of public administration and business in a way that offered something distinctive to the Labour Party. Yet such qualities and experiences could distance him from the party's ethos.

Wise's optimism about the effectiveness of political action would be severely tested by the 1929 Labour Government. Initially, he shared in the hopes of the administration's early months. The constraining consequences of its minority status, the impact of serious economic depression and the economic orthodoxy of ministers and most Labour MPs were as yet in the future. Wise made his maiden speech on 30 October 1929 in a debate on the dumping of German wheat. The question of bread prices had exercised him during the production of *The Living Wage* with its proposal for control of the supply and price of imported food and raw materials. Also in 1926 he had been a witness representing the ILP before the Royal Commission on Food Prices. His maiden speech advocated a price stabilisation scheme for wheat that would be financed and directed by the government. His presentation was lucid and substantial; Beatrice Webb eulogised his intervention as 'a brilliant debut' [*Parliamentary Debates*, 30 October 1929, cols. 188–195; Beatrice Webb, Diary, 2 November 1929].

Sir Charles Trevelyan recalled his impact in the Commons. 'He was never an easy or superficial speaker… He was secretly nervous of his audience at first, but soon conquered any disadvantage when he became fully aware that he was listened to. He was exceptional in never being content with destructive criticism, for he championed eagerly and forcefully constructive measures for application to whatever problem he was dealing with' [Trevelyan MSS 195, p. 5].

His impact was heightened by his evident grasp of his subject and by his strongly individual approach. 'He eschewed partisan slogans.' Alongside these strengths was a perhaps a lack of interest in and familiarity with the wiles of partisan politics. After a May Day rally in Leicester Wise talked with the guest speaker Aneurin Bevan and others into the early hours. Bevan's verdict—'Frank is an infant in politics, but a brilliant executive mind' [Recalled by Will Owen, Wise's Leicester agent and later Labour MP for Morpeth, Lloyd Papers 1/3].

Wise's early parliamentary activities were dominated by the government's negotiations to resume diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, one of the achievements of the 1924 Labour Government, but broken off by the Baldwin Government in 1927. Hugh Dalton was Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office; he recollected the private hyper-activity. 'We are lobbied by Labour MPs and there is a swarm of would-be intermediaries, politicians, Labour journalists – some turned violently anti-Russian later – and businessmen buzzing round our head. Frank Wise buzzed loudest. He knew all the answers, and was always offering himself as a go-between. Sometimes he went with our cautious blessing, sometimes without it. We doubted his discretion and he had, as he freely admitted, a personal axe to grind as an employee of Centrosyus' [Dalton (1953) 230]. His parliamentary contributions on Russia were self-consciously pragmatic. The issue should be addressed in 'a business like, sensible way'. While he could claim familiarity with the Soviet Union based on his business trips, his portrait was at best naïve. Russia, he claimed was almost unique in having since the war raised its production agriculturally and industrially to more than its pre-war figure [*Parliamentary Debates*, 5 November 1929, cols. 981–987; 18 December, cols. 1476–1480].

The rising unemployment over the 1929–1930 winter began to expose tensions within the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP). The Government's Coal Mines Bill had become a victim of its minority position; public ownership was clearly not practical politics. Instead a limited Bill would perhaps promote a degree of rationalisation and offer some reduction in hours. This outcome was far less than the Miners' Federation had hoped for. The union reluctantly accepted the measure; the Federation's sponsored Members stifled whatever criticisms they might have had. On 1 April 1930 Wise moved an amendment for a levy on the industry with the object of compensating miners made redundant as a result of rationalisation. He justified the proposal as a means of enhancing harmony in the workplace:

> The whole scheme of the Bill is a bribe to force coal owners to rationalise their industry… How can you expect trade unionists and workers generally in the mining industry, and in other districts and industries if it be extended, to co-operate in a process whose direct purpose is to put the employers in a position to make larger profits and to throw the whole burden of that process on the unfortunate workers, generally the older workers who will therefore be squeezed out of the industry.

The proposal was seconded by John Wheatley, former miner and minister, now firmly identified with the ILP left. After the proposal had been dismissed by the responsible minister Willie Graham, the Scottish Miners' Member Duncan Graham condemned the proposal, not so much for its content but on the ground of visceral loyalty. The Miners' Federation and its Members backed the Government; those who differed were irresponsible and sought to spread dissension in the coalfields. As the government's problems deepened, such sentiments would be a resource for loyalists that was employed frequently to marginalise critics [*Parliamentary Debates*, cols. 1229–1234, comment at 1231, Wheatley, 1234–1236, Duncan Graham 1241–1220].

The Government's situation rapidly became more serious. The resignation from the Government of Sir Oswald Mosley on the ground of its failure to address unemployment and, more fundamentally, economic obsolescence led on 28 May to a Commons debate in which

Mosley presented his economic programme in what was generally reckoned to be an oratorical triumph. Wise's contribution to the subsequent debate was the most sympathetic towards Mosley from the Labour benches. He largely endorsed Mosley's position on the need to build up domestic markets and to expand public expenditure to both modernise and to boost demand. His principal disagreement came on Mosley's scepticism about any serious revival of the export trade. He acknowledged the difficulty of recapturing lost markets, but felt that Mosley was unduly pessimistic about the consequences of rationalisation and technological change. Wise was dismissive about MacDonald's woolly response to Mosley and was pessimistic about the government's economic strategy. Rather he endorsed a contribution from Lloyd George pleading for ministers to respond with bold proposals for which they should seek a parliamentary majority. He concluded that any ministerial failure to embark on this strategy would carry for Wise a bleak message. 'It is about time they gave way to someone else'. Whatever the vigour with which critics demanded radical measures their oratory had no impact on the majority of Labour Members [*Parliamentary Debates*, cols. 1414–1420, comment at 1420].

Labour critics were few in number and were divided. Wise and Mosley shared much in terms of policy, yet following the latter's resignation they never worked closely. Perhaps there was a clash of styles; Wise's detailed presentations contrasted with Mosley's taste for the theatrical. What is clear is that after May 1930 Mosley attracted a small group of political companions, some within the PLP and some young Conservatives who were disenchanted with Baldwin and their party's Old Guard. At least in discussion, Wise might be considered a putative sympathiser. Harold Macmillan assessed the situation to Harold Nicolson in early July. 'The old party machines are worn out… the economic situation is so serious that it will lead to a breakdown of the whole party system… the Tories may return with a majority of 20 and then be swept away on a snap vote. No single party will form a Government and then there will be a Cabinet of young men. Mosley as PM and others including himself and Wise'. In contrast Wise's critical agenda was expressed not through putative cross-party alliances but through the ILP [Nicolson Diary, 2 July 1930].

That party's members within the Commons formed a Parliamentary Group; its size was increased by the electoral gains of 1929. Wise had become one of its 142 members. They included not only those sympathetic to the ILP's leftward shift, but many more who had retained a party card over many years through habit and perhaps sentimentality, and some who had joined as a resource for securing a parliamentary nomination. Gradually, over the first year of the new Labour Government, divisions developed between those who prioritised the ILP's distinctive positions and those who were loyal to the Government. A crucial episode was precipitated in autumn 1929 by the Unemployment Insurance Bill, where the critical minority within the Parliamentary Group had the support of the ILP's extra-parliamentary bodies. Eventually the 1930 ILP Conference passed a resolution requiring the Parliamentary Group to be reconstructed. Members should be required to accept ILP policy. The consequence was a contraction of the Group to only 18 members. Wise remained a member, albeit in many ways a distinctive presence. Some of his colleagues were notorious in the eyes of loyalists for parliamentary scenes; few if any were interested in the sort of detailed policy presentations that were Wise's hallmark. Wheatley who had similar concerns had died in May 1930; he would have been a valuable link between Wise and a diverse and sometimes idiosyncratic crowd of critics. As the government became more beleaguered the small ILP group became the object of loyalist hostility. They responded by sitting together; they collectively defended the protests of colleagues even when they might doubt the wisdom of particular actions [Howell (2002) 288–295].

As the economic situation deteriorated, Wise maintained his detailed analyses of the crisis in the global economy and the need for a response that involved collaboration initially on the maintenance of a viable world trade in raw materials. Inevitably this included an emphasis on co-operation with the Dominions that could evoke positive reactions from some Conservatives and which differentiated him from several of his ILP colleagues. His insistence that uncritical

adherence to Free Trade blocked any effective response separated him from many on the Labour benches, not least those on the left who occluded support for Free Trade with internationalism [*Parliamentary Debates*, 4 November 1930, cols. 737–748]. Yet Wise's heterodoxy in terms of traditional ILP sentiments did not lead him to support the Mosley Manifesto in December 1930. This statement endorsed, in addition to Sir Oswald Mosley, by sixteen Labour MPs and the Miners' leader, A.J. Cook, was self-consciously practical. Socialist commitment must be subordinated to the demands of the immediate crisis. Any response must focus on the domestic market with an Import Control Board for agricultural products and a Commodity Board empowered to permit tariffs for industries that met criteria of efficiency, prices and wage levels. This agenda was complemented by a housing policy funded by loans. Although Wise had differed consistently with Mosley over what he took to be the latter's excessive focus on the domestic economy, there perhaps was sufficient in the Manifesto to elicit his support. This was not forthcoming, although three other members of the ILP Group endorsed the proposals.

The official ILP verdict was dismissive. The proposals were devoid of any socialist content; they were more in keeping with Tory protectionism than socialism. Wise nevertheless remained open to discussions beyond the ILP. Morgan Phillips Price was a Harrow-educated former Liberal who had been radicalised by his time in Russia covering the Bolshevik Revolution for the *Manchester Guardian*. As MP for Whitehaven he had signed the Mosley Manifesto, which he viewed in retrospect as 'the only sensible and practical proposal to come from the rank and file of the Parliamentary Party'. His concerns led him to discussions with other Labour Members. 'With certain Labour MPs with long outlooks, like Frank Wise, I began also to think in terms of regulating imports by publicly controlled boards and of not leaving everything to the crude law of supply and demand'. Another participant, the Member for Sunderland, Marion Phillips, was the Party's Chief Woman's Officer. Wise's collaborators extended beyond the increasingly beleaguered ILP but here too he was isolated. Phillips Price recalled: 'We met to discuss these problems but found no one else in the Party who seemed to have the least idea of what was going on. Chaos in ideas and policy seemed to reign supreme' [Phillips Price (1969) 263–264]. Within this maelstrom Wise, his ILP affiliation notwithstanding, was a vigorous participant within the debates between divergent thinkers of all parties.

The early months of 1931 saw a reduction in the space available to dissenters. The ILP strengthened its opposition to Mosley's proposals; within the Labour Party the ILP critics were met by increasing hostility. When the ILP Group introduced a draft Bill for the Living Wage on 6 February Wise was a vigorous advocate; he insisted on the Bill's practicality. It offered an application of the living wage principle 'as closely as we can within the limits of the situation as it exists at this moment under a capitalist State and with a Parliament which is still very far from Socialist in its attitude'. Despite this assessment, he and his colleagues met with predictable negativity from the Minister of Labour, Margaret Bondfield [*Parliamentary Debates*, 6 February 1931, cols. 2330–2337, comment at 2332–2333]. What this meant became more evident five days later when a debate on unemployment revealed the thorough orthodoxy of ministers and the apparent development of a Labour–Liberal understanding that would promote a policy of austerity. Wise noted Snowden's 'very remarkable and disturbing speech'. He expressed disquiet at 'the amount of applause it received from the benches opposite' [*Parliamentary Debates*, 11 February 1931, cols. 516–523, for Wise's contribution, comment at 522]. In contrast, four of Mosley's supporters produced a more detailed version of the Manifesto, a prelude to the exit of Mosley and four other Labour MPs; all but one joined the New Party. Wise was scathing. Whatever radicalism Mosley had once evinced had vanished. He had become the 'Discreet Buccaneer' sensitive to the demands of vested interests. How far Wise had been aware of the more authoritarian sentiments in Mosley's earlier discussions and drafts is uncertain; he suggested that his departure could have an anti-democratic legacy. 'But of Mussolinis and Pilsudskis we are suspicious [*New Leader*, 6 March 1931].

Wise supported whoever within the PLP demonstrated dismay at ministerial passivity. When Sir Charles Trevelyan resigned from the Board of Education at the beginning of March he encountered hostility from loyalist Labour Members. Wise responded by praising Trevelyan's 'brave action' and his 'magnificent and courageous statement'. He suggested that many agreed with the former minister but lacked the courage to say so. Phillips Price, Trevelyan's cousin, suggested that the support of the ILP was perhaps a negative for Trevelyan. 'The ILP of course are pleased but the others seem to resent your reflection on Macdonald's (sic) leadership' [Wise to Trevelyan, 3 March 1931; M Phillips Price to Trevelyan 4 March 1931, Trevelyan MSS 142]. This polarisation was beginning to have existential implications for the ILP. The decision that members of the Parliamentary Group should prioritise ILP policy over that of Labour in the event of a conflict was, in the eyes of Labour loyalists, untenable. Either the ILP should climb down or the party's affiliation to Labour would become questionable. Some within the ILP were beginning to suggest that the government's failures and the deepening economic crisis presented a real opportunity for a genuinely socialist party committed to *Socialism in Our Time*. The polarisation became very evident in mid-July; a bargain had been struck between the Labour Government and the TUC over the interim findings of the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance. Proposals for extensive reductions in benefits should await a final report; for the moment changes should be limited to the removal of so-called 'anomalies' particularly the conditions determining the payment of benefits to married women. The compromise offered procrastination as a response by orthodox ministers to trade union pressure. The ILP left stood alone in opposition to the deal. In an all-night session on July 15–16 they forced 32 divisions. Wise was not prominent in the debate but participated in every vote. Backbenchers loyal to the government could respond harshly to those who in some cases could be caricatured as middle-class socialists who knew nothing about the rigours of working-class life [*Parliamentary Debates*, 15 July 1931, cols. 481–740].

Two weeks later the Commons adjourned for the summer recess. The report of the May Committee on Public Expenditure, one of the legacies of the February Labour–Liberal concordat, was imminent. Its majority were expected to recommend widespread cuts; ministers hoped that the recess would allow negotiation over a package that could secure a parliamentary majority. Wise offered an assessment that summarised his politics. He acknowledged the tentative achievement of stability. 'In this country… we have preserved a certain amount of confidence in the mass of the population that they and their children are not going to starve. We have left them with a very emaciated and not very luxurious or satisfactory life, but at any rate they have been saved and believe themselves safe from complete and irreparable disaster'. He believed that the capitalist system was collapsing on a world scale; there could be no return to the world as it had been. Like several of his contemporaries on the left and equipped with his specialist knowledge he suggested an alternative to capitalist chaos. 'Russia has insulated herself very largely from the disasters which have befallen the capitalist organisations of the rest of the world and has weathered the storm'. In the medium term there must be a reconstruction of the whole basis of world trade. With the May Committee about to report Wise warned the government that any attempt to implement a response that included cuts in wages and allowances would be opposed [*Parliamentary Debates*, cols. 2528–2535, comments at 2531–2532].

The conjuncture of the May Report and a European financial crisis upset the Government's timetable. By 24 August the Labour Government had fallen; instead a National administration, initially assumed to be temporary, had taken office headed by MacDonald but opposed by almost all Labour MPs, the party in the country, and the trade unions. When the Commons reconvened early in September to implement cuts with the object of keeping Britain on the Gold Standard, Wise's condemnation of the new Government was notable for its thoroughness. Unlike most of his Labour colleagues he had always been sceptical about the return to gold in 1925, insisting, like Mosley, that the prioritising of financial interests had damaged the productive economy. 'We have for years now, ever since 1925, sacrificed the industry of this country

to the interests of the City of London. We have preferred that the City should be prosperous and the great industries derelict. The profits of the banks and the insurance companies and of that vast apparatus which works the gold standard at its very centre in the City of London have been maintained, but unemployment has ravaged the industrial districts' [*Parliamentary Debates*, 10 September 1931 cols. 332–340, comment at 340]. When the National Government abandoned the Gold Standard ten days later, Wise emphasised that the administration had failed in its primary purpose. Yet he welcomed what he considered as the consequential opportunity to abandon the capitalist basis of international finance and trade [*Parliamentary Debates*, 21 September 1931, cols. 1304–1311].

He remained heavily involved in parliamentary debates until an election was called early in October. Having quit the Gold Standard, the government claimed that any prospect of Labour regaining office threatened a fragile recovery. Whatever the differences within the government, not least over free trade, all could agree on this diagnosis and the consequential vilification. As a member of the ILP Parliamentary Group Wise faced a potential obstacle to endorsement as a Labour Party candidate. The collapse of the Labour Government and the defection of MacDonald Snowden and Thomas had not lessened the distaste of Labour loyalists towards long-term internal critics. The constitutional question had become focussed on the requirement that all Labour candidates agree to accept decisions of the Parliamentary Party. Some members of the ILP Group refused on the ground that this commitment could prevent them from supporting ILP policy and stood as specifically ILP candidates. Wise, in contrast, agreed to the Labour Party conditions and stood in East Leicester as a mainstream candidate.

Wise faced a much more difficult prospect than in 1929. Each of the three Leicester seats was a straight fight. Compared with the previous election, two Liberals and one Conservative had withdrawn in the expectation that their former voters would combine against Labour. Against his Conservative opponent he proposed his alternative to tariffs. 'Labour would save the home market by far the most important to British industry by reversing a false economy programme which by cutting down the purchasing power of salaried and manual workers and the unemployed to meet the losses of the banks, inevitably reduces orders for the factories. It would balance the Budget by reducing armaments and putting the main burden of taxation on the rich rather than on the poor'. Wise emphasised the destructive role of the banks, 'we must control the banks or they will control us', and the need for Import Boards to prevent the exploitation of producers and consumers [*Leicester Mercury*, 20 and 22 October 1931]. He confronted a problem in the city's shoe trade by claiming the irrelevance of tariffs. 'Labour conditions in Czechoslovakia where the boots were made, were regarded as unsatisfactory by every country in Europe. A tariff would not have prevented the boots being dumped here because they would have cut wages to combat that. What we want to do is ban them altogether and that is what I would advocate'. He dismissed the National Government's insistence that Labour was in some sense anti-British. 'All this loose and sloppy stuff about patriotism is so much wool over your eyes' [*Leicester Mercury*, 20 October 1931]. Such admonitions were ineffective. Wise in 1929 had secured just over 50% of the vote; two years later he retained less than a third.

Leicester East, 1931: electorate 55,719, turnout 79.1%

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|---|---|---|
| A.M. Lyons (Conservative) | 30,265 | (68.7%) |
| E.F. Wise (Labour) | 13,801 | (31.3%) |
| Majority | 16,454 | (37.4%) |

Labour's results in Leicester were disastrous even by the standard of 1931. W.E. Pethick Lawrence, Wise's political neighbour lost the seat that he had held for almost eight years with a similar turnover of votes, in his case to a Liberal. Wise responded to the debacle by attacking his opponent's tactics—'the success of a very subtle psychological campaign of motives of fear. The

electors were both confused and afraid because of their confusion' [*Leicester Mercury*, 28 October 1931].

A local journalist noted Dorothy Wise's distress at the result [*Leicester Mercury*, 28 October 1930]. She had always campaigned vigorously for her husband and had a significant public persona as an activist on social questions. During the 1926 lockout she had worked within the Labour Women's organisation raising money for Scottish mining families. The 1931 election was not the only reason for her misery. She had recently discovered that her husband had fallen in love with a parliamentary colleague. Jennie Lee the daughter of a Fife miner was almost 20 years younger than Frank Wise. After Edinburgh University she had worked as a schoolteacher before entering the Commons at a by-election early in 1929. Their affair began early in the 1929 parliament. Both remained as members of the ILP Group after its reformation in mid-1930. Perhaps he endorsed her verdict on Mosley and his coterie. 'The Mosley–Bevan group is young, vigorous, unscrupulous. They are to be reckoned with but I simply cannot conceive of myself working with them. There is something fundamentally unsound mentally and spiritually' [Jennie Lee to Wise, 12 October 1930, cited in Hollis (1997) 51]. As their relationship became widely known in political circles, the turmoil increased. Dorothy Wise threatened divorce; in the early 1930s this outcome would have meant political death for both.

During the months after the 1931 election political controversy ensured that the public and the personal became entangled and divisive. The crisis over the ILP's relationship with the Labour Party remained unresolved. The defection of MacDonald and his allies guaranteed that all sources of potential division were viewed with hostility. For many, MacDonald, Mosley and the ILP were at root guilty of the same crime against the labour movement. Within the ILP leadership criticism of the 1929 government and resentment at what was seen as Labour intolerance of dissent strengthened the belief of some that the ILP would be better off breaking with the Labour Party. Discussions on the party's NAC became heated. Patrick Dollan, a dominant figure in the Scottish ILP and Frank Wise were the major figures urging the continuation of the link with the Labour Party. Fenner Brockway, the ILP chairman and an advocate of disaffiliation recalled Wise's contribution to the debates.

> It was Frank Wise… who troubled me most, despite my admiration for his knowledge and long-term constructive mind. He lectured us at length from Olympian heights, showing his contempt for the contributions of less educated and more emotionally elementary colleagues and forgetting that the working-class experience of comrades around him might be as valuable as his civil service experience and his mastery of economic facts [Brockway (1942) 239].

In the early months of 1932 the decisions of divisional conferences suggested that support for maintaining the link remained strong. The largest division, Scotland, plus Lancashire, Wales, Yorkshire, and the North East all backed this position; so did the Midlands provided the Standing Orders issue be satisfactorily resolved. Only in London and the South together with the two smallest divisions, East Anglia and the South West was the verdict in favour of disaffiliation.

Yet by the time the ILP conference met at Easter 1932 there seemed no likelihood of an agreed settlement with a Labour Party leadership resolved to prevent any return to the disunity of 1929–1931. Delegates considered three options—disaffiliation, unconditional affiliation, and conditional affiliation. The outcome was disappointing for Wise. Unconditional affiliation was rejected by 214–298; disaffiliation was defeated by a narrower margin, 183–144. The third, and on the available evidence, unrealistic option was backed by 250–53. The decision was an attempt to postpone the inevitable; within weeks the evidence that this was so was overwhelming; at a special conference in Bradford on July 30 delegates voted by 241 to 142 that the ILP leave the Labour Party. For some, the decision represented a choice to build a revolutionary alternative to

a failed Labour Party; for many others the impasse over Standing Orders was decisive [see Cohen (2007)].

Wise's position reflected the reasoning that had brought him to the ILP in the early twenties. He had been attracted by Clifford Allen's vision of the party as a socialist think tank, an instrument for radical modernisation. He had remained with the party as it had moved leftward but for him the prime requirement was the possibility of influence. Disaffiliation in his view would destroy this prospect. Jennie Lee chose to remain with the ILP; she insisted that any putative marriage would render the conflict between their political outlooks destructive. 'But myself presiding at your table, with the Coles and Laskis and Cramps and Greenwoods and Cripps as typical of some of the best of your closest political colleagues, is a prospect unreal, and without belief or stimulus for me'. In contrast, Wise was committed to and optimistic about the radicalisation of the Labour Party [Lee to Wise, 8 March 1933, cited in Hollis (1997) 77–78]. He felt, mistakenly, that her separation from the Labour Party whilst understandable under the circumstances would prove brief. 'I don't think that in the light of her local and family associations she could have refused to follow Maxton. But this is a temporary phase for her and the ILPers if she keeps reasonably free of acrimonious and personal discussions' [handwritten PS dated 6 September 1932, Wise to Trevelyan 2 September 1932, Trevelyan MSS 145].

Many within the ILP had opposed disaffiliation from the Labour Party. They remained committed to campaigning within the Labour Party for socialist policies; many believed that effectiveness necessitated organisation that would hopefully avoid the fate of the ILP. Wise was centrally involved in the formation of a National ILP Affiliation Committee. An immediate concern was the appropriate relationship with the Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda. This initiative by G.D.H. and Margaret Cole pre-dated the demise of the Labour Government; its purpose was essentially that favoured by Allen for the ILP, the development of carefully constructed socialist policies but without any factional aspirations. Phillips Price reported to Trevelyan on a SSIP weekend at Welwyn Garden City in November 1931.

> I was agreeably surprised at the type of people …There were a lot of young men in their thirties who had fought seats at the election and were clearly the men of the future… Bevin and one or two of the younger Trade Union element and… the young Fabians who have formed themselves into a special group for detailed research… It was decided to work in with the Party machine but also to do some independent work so as to have a freer hand to throw out suggestions without committing the Party officially [Phillips Price to Sir Charles Trevelyan, 2 November 1931, Trevelyan MSS 144].

There was much here that would be attractive to Wise and initially he seemed to welcome a SSIP suggestion that former ILP members join that organisation. He rapidly changed his mind. 'I thought at first that SSIP might suffice, but I soon discovered that this was not the case. In any case, the ILPers who will refuse to go out of the Party must number ten thousand or so in organised branches all over the country, whereas SSIP, though it has some very eminent members, still does not number more than a few hundreds'. Numbers were not the only issue for Wise:

> SSIP is doing extremely good work of an investigation and policymaking kind. It suffers from a lack of contact with the rank and file in the Trade Unions and Co-operative Societies and from the fact, inevitable in the circumstances that its approach is of a rather vague, academic and theoretical kind. The deficiencies from this point of view in its composition could be supplied by the more proletarian and rank and file element in the affiliated branches of the ILP.

Wise also felt the need for much more than a metropolitan base. 'So far as Scotland is concerned SSIP doesn't exist and in Lancashire and Yorkshire and indeed generally outside London, it hardly counts' [Wise to Sir Charles Trevelyan, 3 September 1932, Trevelyan MSS 145]. Negotiations opened for a merger; on the SSIP side this appears to have been in effect a decision taken after hesitation by G.D.H. Cole. The bargaining proved difficult. Ernest Bevin the personification of trade union resistance to MacDonald in August 1931 had been chair of the SSIP; Cole wished to retain him in the amalgamated body. The former ILP contingent insisted on Wise. Cole gave way and Bevin quit with a characteristic diatribe against intellectuals.

The new body named the Socialist League had its first public outing in Leicester on 2 October 1932. Tensions between the two components were evident; Beatrice Webb was an observer, the League 'did not start well owing to the dislike of Wise its chairman; the inaugural meeting… was captious and depressed'. This assessment might well have reflected the sentiments of the SSIP contingent who attempted unsuccessfully to amend the draft constitution to strengthen safeguards against any repeat of the ILP's factionalism. The group included some who were far removed from the Labour left, not least Hugh Gaitskell and Evan Durbin. Wise would chair a National Council on which the former ILP contingent were a minority. Its composition appeared ecumenical, including Wise's former Leicester colleague Pethick Lawrence and, briefly, the Steelworkers' leader, Arthur Pugh.

The League's inaugural meeting was followed immediately by the Labour Party Conference also held in Leicester. The delegates reacting against the MacDonald years with their generally docile conferences had none of the inhibitions that had shaped the pre-election gathering the year before. They backed the immediate introduction of a socialist programme by a future Labour Government; Wise successfully proposed against Bevin's opposition the nationalisation of the joint-stock banks [Labour Party Conference Report, 1932, pp. 188–189]. Subsequently Wise would work with Attlee on detailed plans for implementing this proposal; at the 1933 party conference he would respond positively to the party leadership's position on the issue as presented in the document, *Socialism and the Condition of the People* [Labour Party Conference Report, 1933, p. 174].

The League had not been represented directly at the Leicester Party Conference; its subsequent affiliation meant that it would be in future years. Initially, under Wise's chairmanship, the League seemingly falsified fears that the recent conflicts with the ILP would be repeated. He was well aware of the danger. 'We hope to avoid the causes which landed the ILP in its present mess… I want to get going this winter an organisation that will work out the application of broad Socialist policies in terms of local industry and local problems'. Wise in private suggested that the recent actions of the ILP leadership had been damaging. He hoped that the new organisation would attract 'large numbers of keen young Socialists who found the tactics in the last few years of the ILP unbearable' [Wise to Trevelyan, 3 September 1932, Trevelyan MSS 145].

Branches engaged in detailed research; London lectures given by Wise, Attlee, Addison, and others led to pamphlets indicating an agenda for a majority socialist government. But gradually the aspiration to produce a radical and credible programme resurrected the spectre of the ILP. Ironically such developments were not a consequence of a takeover from the former ILP faction. Wise ceased to be chair at the League's conference in June 1933 and became a National Council member. Many of the former SSIP contingent had largely departed but the more radical content and style was ascribable to some who had joined from that organisation, most notably Sir Stafford Cripps.

The League's increasing reputation for radicalism also owed something to the ebbing of left-wing sentiments within the broader party and particularly within the trade unions. One sign came with the intervention of Walter Citrine, the TUC General Secretary, in May 1933. He accused the League of favouring dictatorship. He cited Cripps's views on constitutional issues and claimed that Wise had suggested that free speech was no more one of the eternal verities than free trade. This accusation was to neglect the context of his comment which was that in

Britain the vast majority of the press was anti-Labour; his focus was not on a principle but existing practice. The crux of the controversy was the League response to the trauma of 1931. Cripps and the League at its 1933 conference asserted that a government elected on an unequivocally socialist programme would need emergency powers to implement its programme. Wise took a thoroughly negative view of the National Government and its economic protectionism. 'Economic nationalism is the first cousin of Fascism… The economic policy of our own National Government differs little in principle from that of Hitler, except that, as usual, the Germans are more ruthless, more blatant and less subtle'. Such assessments were common within the Labour Party in the aftermath of 1931. As yet the Socialist League was not positioned as an oppositional minority; its leaders in general could be positive about their impact at the 1933 Labour Party Conference [Pimlott (1977) 43–51]. Yet the conference exchanges showed early signs of polarisation. Bevin, still smarting perhaps from the choice of Wise as Socialist League chair, attacked both Cripps and Wise, the latter for his allegedly limited respect for free speech. Wise's response in the aftermath of the Nazi destruction of the German left was unequivocal. 'We are at the parting of the ways. We have either to go forward to Socialism or acquiesce in Fascism' [Labour Party Conference Report, 1933, p. 163; Bevin's criticism is at p. 162].

As a National Council member, Wise endorsed this policy but remained committed to the construction of an economic policy that was well-researched and could be endorsed by the labour movement. The Socialist League published two of his interventions on the appropriate monetary policy for a Labour Government—*The Control of Finance and Financiers* (1932) and *The Socialisation of Banking* (1934). He hoped for adoption at a promising by-election, he had been selected as prospective candidate for Nelson and Colne; previously Arthur Greenwood's seat it seemed eminently winnable and would be regained by the party in the 1935 election. At the beginning of November 1933 Wise spent the weekend with Sir Charles Trevelyan at the latter's Wallington estate in Northumberland. On Sunday 5 November he died suddenly of a heart attack whilst walking. He left effects valued at £14,710 8s 7d.

In all probability Wise, if returned to the Commons in 1935, would have been an influential figure in the PLP; he would have been sixty at the time of the 1945 election, very much one of the generation that supplied Labour's leadership through the war and the subsequent Labour Government. His combination of socialist commitment and awareness of the practicalities of administration was unique on the Labour left in the early thirties. Clem Attlee appreciated the significance of his death, 'a serious loss to the movement. Despite a certain lack of judgement he was valuable because of his courage and vigour and he will be very difficult to replace. He travelled a long road from the time when I knew him at Toynbee… Personally I was very fond of him' [Clement Attlee to Tom Attlee, 6 November 1933, Attlee Papers MS Eng c 4792].

Whether his death effectively determined that the Socialist League would inevitably become a left-wing faction doomed to repeat the trajectory of the ILP is questionable. The process of marginalisation had already begun; the left's high tide had been at the 1932 conference. Increasingly, the large trade unions ensured that the Socialist League's influence was minimal. The significant question is not whether Wise could have modified this trend but how he would have reassessed his prospects for influence within the party as a voice from the left who could connect effectively with debates over economic policy not just within but beyond the party. Trevelyan suggested that his experiences as a wartime civil servant had taught him that 'in times of emergency, unheard-of-innovations can be put through in an hour and accepted which at normal times will be prevented by timidity… if only there is the will and determination to do them' [Trevelyan MSS 195]. Yet his experiences as a politician were in an environment where iconoclastic radicalism was mistrusted and politicians and electors, most notably in 1931, favoured the familiar and the safe. The left would escape from that predicament only after the military disaster of May 1940.

**Sources:** (**1**) **MSS**: BLPES, E.H. Lloyd Papers, Beatrice Webb Diaries; Open University, Milton Keynes, Jennie Lee Papers; University of Newcastle Library, Sir Charles Trevelyan Papers; Bodleian Library University of Oxford, Attlee Papers MS Eng. c 4792; Nicolson Diaries, Balliol College Oxford; Parliamentary Archive, correspondence with Lloyd George and others on Board of Trade matters. (**2**) **Newspapers Reports and Periodicals**: *Parliamentary Debates*; *Independent Labour Party Conference Reports*; *New Leader; Yorkshire Evening Argus*; *Leicester Mercury*; *Labour Party Conference Reports*. (**3**) **Books and Articles**: J.A.R. Pimlott, *Toynbee Hall Fifty Years of Social Progress 1884–1934* (1935); Fenner Brockway, *Inside the Left* (1942); Hugh Dalton, *Call Back Yesterday Memoirs 1887–1931* (1953); R.H. Ullman *Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917–1921* Volumes Two and Three (Princeton, 1968, 1972); Keith Middlemass, *Whitehall Diary Volume 1 (Diary of Thomas Jones)* (1969); M.V. Glenny, 'The Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement March 1921', *Journal of Contemporary History* (1970); A. Oldfield, 'The Independent Labour Party and planning 1920–26', *International Review of Social History* (21) (1976); Jose Harris, *William Beveridge: A Biography* (Oxford, 1977); Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the left in the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977); K.O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government 1918–22* (Oxford, 1979); Jennie Lee, *My Life with Nye* (1980); E.F. Durbin, *New Jerusalems: The Labour Party and the Economics of Democratic Socialism* (1985); N. Thompson *Strachey*, *An Intellectual Biography* (1993); Patricia Hollis, *Jennie Lee A Life* (Oxford, 1997); David Howell, *MacDonald's Party: Labour Identities and Crisis 1922–31* (Oxford, 2002); 'Wise, Edward, Frank,' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 2004; Kevin Morgan, *The Webbs and Soviet Communism* (2006); Gidon Cohen *The Failure of a Dream: The Independent Labour Party from Disaffiliation to World War Two* (Aldershot, 2007); David Howell, *Mosley and British Politics: Oswald's Odyssey* (Basingstoke, 2014).

DAVID HOWELL

*See also*: †Reginald Clifford ALLEN; †Henry Noel BRAILSFORD; †John Atkinson HOBSON

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**COULTHARD, Samuel** (1853–1931) **II**
**COURT, Sir Josiah** (1841–1938) **I**
**COURT, Cowen Joseph** (1829–1900) **I**
**COWEN, Edward (Ned)** (1839–1903) **I**
**CRABTREE, James** (1831–1917) **I**
**CRAIG, Edward Thomas** (1804–1894) **I**
**CRAMP, Concemore Thomas Thwaites (Charlie)** (1876–1933) **XIV**
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**CRAWFORD, William** (1833–1890) **I**
**CREMER, Sir William Randal** (1828–1908) **V**
**CRONIN, John Desmond** (1916–1986) **XII**
**CROOKS, William** (1852–1921) **II**
**CRUMP, James** (1873–1960) **V**
**CUFFAY, Wiliam** (1788–1870) **VI**
**CULLEN, Alice** (1891–1969) **VII**
**CUMMINGS, David Charles** (1861–1942) **VI**
**CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM, Robert Bontine** (1852–1936) **VI**
**CURRAN, Peter (Pete) Francis** (1860–1910) **IV**
**CUSDEN, (Anne) Phoebe Ellen** (1887–1981) **XIII**
**DAGGAR, George** (1879–1950) **III**
**DALLAS, George** (1878–1961) **IV**
**DALLAWAY, William** (1857–1939) **I**
**DALTON, Florence Ruth (nee HAMILTON FOX)** (1890–1966) **XIII**
**DALY, James** (?–1849) **I**
**DARCH, Charles Thomas** (1876–1934) **I**
**DARLING, George (Baron Darling of Hillsborough)** (1905–1985) **IX**
**DASH, Jack O'Brien** (1907–1989) **IX**
**DAVENPORT, Allen** (1775–1846) **VIII**
**DAVIES, Florence Rose** (1882–1958) **XI**
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**DAVISON, John** (1846–1930) **I**
**DEAKIN, Arthur** (1890–1955) **II**
**DEAKIN, Charles** (1864–1941) **III**
**DEAKIN, Jane** (1869–1942) **III**
**DEAKIN, Joseph Thomas** (1858–1937) **III**
**DEAN, Benjamin** (1839–1910) **I**
**DEAN, Frederick James** (1868–1941) **II**
**DEANS, James** (1843/4?–1935) **I**
**DEANS, Robert** (1904–1959) **I**
**DENMAN, Sir Richard Douglas** (1876–1957) **XI**
**DENT, John James** (1856–1936) **I**
**DIAMOND, Charles** (1858–1934) **VIII**
**DICKENSON, Sarah** (1868–1954) **VI**
**DILKE, Emily (Emilia) Francis Strong, Lady** (1840–1904) **III**
**DIX, Bernard Hubert** (1925–1995) **XIII**
**DIXON, George Henry** (1902–1972) **VII**
**DIXON, John** (1828–1876) **I**
**DIXON, John** (1850–1914) **IV**
**DOBB, Maurice Herbert** (1900–1976) **IX**
**DOCKER, Abraham** (1788/91?–1857) **II**
**DODDS, Ruth** (1890–1976) **VII**
**DOUSE, William John** (1842?–1927) **VII**
**DOUTHWAITE, Christopher Thomas** (1875–1949) **XII**
**DRAKE, Henry John** (1878–1934) **I**
**DREW, William Henry (Harry)** (1854–1933) **IV**
**DUDLEY, Sir William Edward** (1868–1938) **I**
**DUNCAN, Andrew** (1898–1965) **II**
**DUNCAN, Charles** (1865–1933) **II**
**DUNCAN, James Elmzlie** (1822–?) **XII**
**DUNN, Edward** (1880–1945) **III**
**DUNNICO, Sir Reverend James Herbert** (1875–1953) **XII**
**DUNNING, Thomas Joseph** (1799–1873) **II**
**DYE, Sidney** (1900–1958) **I**
**DYSON, James** (1822/3–1902) **I**
**DYSON, William Henry** (1880–1938) **IX**
**EADES, Arthur** (1863–1933) **II**

**EATON, Daniel Isaac** (1753?–1814) **X**
**EDWARDS, Alfred** (1888–1958) **IV**
**EDWARDS, Allen Clement** (1869–1938) **III**
**EDWARDS, Ebenezer (Ebby)** (1884–1961) **V**
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**EDWARDS, George (Sir)** (1850–1933) **XII**
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**EDWARDS, John** (1861–1922) **VII**
**EDWARDS, John Charles** (1833–1881) **I**
**EDWARDS, Wyndham Ivor** (1878–1938) **I**
**ELTON, Godfrey (First Baron Elton)** (1892–1973) **XIII**
**ELVIN, Herbert Henry** (1874–1949) **VI**
**ENFIELD, Alice Honora** (1882–1935) **I**
**ETHERIDGE, Richard (Dick) Albert** (1909–1985) **IX**
**EVANS, George** (1842–1893) **VI**
**EVANS, Isaac** (1847?–1897) **I**
**EVANS, Jonah** (1826–1907) **I**
**EVANS, Sir Lincoln** (1889–1970) **IX**
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**EWART, Richard** (1904–1953) **IV**
**FAIRBOTHAM, Harold** (1883–1968) **VI**
**FAIRHURST, (nee Silcock) Helen (Ellen)** (1865–1951) **XIII**
**FALLOWS, John Arthur** (1864–1935) **II**
**FARMERY, George Edward** (1883–1942) **V**
**FARRIMOND, Thomas** (1766–1828?) **VIII**
**FENWICK, Charles** (1850–1918) **I**
**FIELD, Arthur George** (1869–1944) **XIII**
**FIGGINS, James Hugh Blair (Jim)** (1893–1956) **XIV**
**FINCH, John** (1784–1857) **I**
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**FINNEY, Samuel** (1857–1935) **I**
**FISHWICK, Jonathan** (1832–1908) **I**
**FLANAGAN, James Aloysius** (1876–1953) **III**
**FLANAGAN, James Desmond** (1912–1969) **IV**
**FLEMING, Robert** (1869–1939) **I**
**FLETCHER, George Henry** (1879–1958) **IX**
**FLYNN, Charles Richard** (1882–1957) **III**
**FORD, Isabella Ormston** (1855–1924) **VIII**
**FORGAN, Robert** (1891–1976) **VI**
**FORMAN, John** (1822/3–1900) **I**
**FOSTER, William** (1887–1947) **I**
**FOULGER, Sydney** (1863–1919) **I**
**FOWE, Thomas** (1832/3?–1894) **I**
**FOX, James Challinor** (1837–1877) **I**
**FOX, Thomas (Tom)** (1860–1934) **II**
**FOX, Thomas (Tom) Samuel** (1905–1956) **V**
**FOX, William** (1890–1968) **V**
**FREEMAN, Arnold James** (1886–1972) **IX**
**FRITH, John** (1837–1904) **I**
**FROW, Stephen Edmund** (1906–1997) **XIV**
**FROW, Ruth** (1922–2008) **XIV**
**GALBRAITH, Samuel** (1853–1936) **I**
**GALLAGHER, Patrick (Paddy the Cope)** (1871–1966) **I**
**GAMMAGE, Robert George** (1820/21–1888) **VI**
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**GOLIGHTLY, Alfred William** (1857–1948) **I**
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**GOSLING, Harry** (1861–1930) **IV**
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**HALL, George Henry (1st Viscount Hall of Cynon Valley)** (1881–1965) **II**
**HALL, Joseph Arthur (Joe)** (1887–1964) **II**
**HALL, Thomas George** (1858–1938) **II**
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**HANCOCK, Dame Florence May** (1893–1974) **IX**
**HANCOCK, John George** (1857–1940) **II**
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**HARNEY, George Julian** (1817–1897) **X**
**HARRIS, Samuel** (1855–1915) **III**
**HARRISON, Frederic** (1831–1923) **II**
**HARRISON, James** (1899–1959) **II**
**HARTLEY, Edward Robertshaw** (1855–1918) **III**
**HARTSHORN, Vernon** (1872–1931) **I**
**HARVEY, William Edwin** (1852–1914) **I**
**HASLAM, James** (1842–1913) **I**
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**HASTINGS, Sir Patrick Gardner** (1880–1952) **XI**
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**HAWKINS, George** (1844–1908) **I**
**HAYHURST, George** (1862–1936) **I**
**HAYWARD, Sir Fred** (1876–1944) **I**
**HAZELL, William (Bill)** (1890–1964) **XIV**
**HEAD, Albert (Bert) Edward** (1892–1978) **VII**
**HEADLAM, Stewart Duckworth** (1847–1924) **II**
**HEALY, Thomas Gerard (Gerry)** (1913–1989) **XII**
**HEATH, David William** (1827/8?–1880) **V**
**HEMM, William Peck** (1820–1889) **VI**
**HEMMERDE, Edward George** (1871–1948) **IX**
**HENDERSON, Arthur** (1863–1935) **I**
**HENSHALL, Henry (Harry)** (1865–1946) **VI**
**HENSON, John (Jack)** (1879–1969) **V**
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**HERRIOTTS, John** (1874–1935) **III**

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**HERRINGTON, Henry** (1792–1849) **I**
**HEYWOOD, Abel** (1810–1893) **VI**
**HIBBERT, Charles** (1828–1902) **I**
**HICKEN, Henry** (1882–1964) **I**
**HICKS, Amelia (Amie) Jane** (1839/40?–1917) **IV**
**HIGDON, Annie Catharine** (1864–1946) **VII**
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**HILL, John** (1862–1945) **III**
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**HILTON, James** (1814–1890) **I**
**HINDEN, Rita** (1909–1971) **II**
**HINES, George Lelly** (1839–1914) **I**
**HIRST, George Henry** (1868–1933) **III**
**HOBSON, Charles** (1845–1923) **VII**
**HOBSON, John Atkinson** (1858–1940) **I**
**HOBSON, Joshua** (1810–1876) **VIII**
**HODGE, John** (1855–1937) **III**
**HODGKINSON, George Edward** (1893–1986) **X**
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**HOLBERRY, Samuel** (1814–1842) **IV**
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**HOLWELL, Walter Charles** (1885–1965) **V**
**HOLYOAKE, Austin** (1826–1874) **I**
**HOLYOAKE, George Jacob** (1817–1906) **I**
**HOOSON, Edward** (1825–1869) **I**
**HOPKIN, Daniel** (1886–1951) **IV**
**HORNER, Arthur Lewis** (1894–1968) **V**
**HORNER, (Frederick) John** (1911–1997) **XIII**
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**HOWARD, James Henry** (1876–1964) **XIV**
**HOWARTH, Charles** (1814–1868) **I**
**HOWELL, George** (1833–1910) **II**
**HUCKER, Henry** (1871–1954) **II**
**HUDSON, Walter** (1852–1935) **II**
**HUGHES, Agnes Paterson (Nan Hardie)** (1885–1947) **VII**
**HUGHES, Edward** (1856–1925) **II**
**HUGHES, Hugh** (1878–1932) **I**
**HUGHES, John (Jac Ty Isha)** (1819–1905) **XIV**
**HUGHES, Will** (1873–1938) **V**
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**HUTCHINGS, Harry** (1864–1930) **II**
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**HYND, John Burns** (1902–1971) **X**
**HYNDMAN, Henry Mayers** (1842–1921) **X**
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**IRVING, David Daniel (Dan)** (1854–1924) **VIII**
**JACKSON, Henry** (1840–1920) **I**
**JACKSON, Thomas Alfred** (1879–1955) **IV**
**JARVIS, Henry** (1839–1907) **I**
**JENKINS, Arthur** (1882–1946) **VIII**
**JENKINS, Hubert** (1866–1943) **I**
**JENKINS, John Hogan** (1852–1936) **IV**
**JEWSON, Dorothea (Dorothy)** (1884–1964) **V**
**JOHN, William** (1878–1955) **I**
**JOHNS, John Ernest** (1855/6–1928) **II**
**JOHNSON, Henry** (1869–1939) **II**
**JOHNSON, John** (1850–1910) **I**
**JOHNSON, William** (1849–1919) **II**
**JOHNSTON, James** (1846–1928) **V**
**JONES, Benjamin** (1847–1942) **I**
**JONES, Edward (Ted)** (1897–1978) **XIV**
**JONES, Ernest Charles** (1819–1869) **XI**
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**JONES, Joseph (Joe)** (1891–1948) **V**
**JONES, Joseph William (Bill)** (1900–1988) **XIII**
**JONES, Morgan** (1885–1939) **IX**
**JONES, Patrick Lloyd** (1811–1886) **I**
**JONES, Thomas (Tom)** (1908–1990) **XI**
**JONES, Thomas William (Lord Maelor)** (1898–1984) **XIII**
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**JOYNES, James Leigh** (1853–1893) **VIII**
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**KANE, John** (1819–1876) **III**
**KEAN, Charles** (1874–1944) **X**
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**KELLEY, George Davy** (1848–1911) **II**
**KENDALL, George** (1811–1886) **VI**
**KENDALL, Walter Frank Harrison** (1926–2003) **XIII**
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**KERR, Anne Patricia** (1925–1973) **X**
**KESSACK, James O'Connor** (1879–1916) **VI**
**KILLON, Thomas** (1853–1931) **I**
**KING, William** (1786–1865) **I**
**KINLEY, John (Jack)** (1878–1957) **XIII**
**KLINGENDER, Francis Donald** (1907–1955) **IX**
**KNEE, Fred** (1868–1914) **V**
**KNIGHT, Albert** (1903–1979) **VII**
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**KNIGHT, John** (1762–1838) **IX**
**KNIGHT, Robert** (1833–1911) **VI**
**KUMARAMANGALAM, Surendra Mohan** (1916–1973) **V**
**LACEY, James Philip Durnford** (1881–1974) **III**
**LANNG, James** (1870–1966) **I**
**LANSBURY, George** (1859–1940) **II**
**LARKIN, James** (1874–1947) **XIII**
**LAST, Robert** (1829–?) **III**
**LATHAN, George** (1875–1942) **IX**
**LAW, Harriet Teresa** (1831–1897) **V**
**LAWRENCE, Arabella Susan** (1871–1947) **III**
**LAWSON, Hugh McDowall** (1912–1997) **XI**
**LAWSON, John James (1st Baron Lawson of Beamish)** (1881–1965) **II**
**LAWTHER, Sir William (Will)** (1889–1976) **VII**
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**LEES-SMITH, Hastings Bertrand** (1878–1941) **IX**
**LEICESTER, Joseph Lynn** (1825–1903) **III**
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**LEVY, Hyman (Hymie)** (1889–1975) **IX**
**LEWIN, Julius** (1907–1984) **IX**
**LEWINGTON, William James** (1863–1933) **VI**
**LEWIS, Richard James** (1900–1966) **I**
**LEWIS, Thomas (Tommy)** (1873–1962) **I**
**LEWIS, Walter Samuel** (1894–1962) **III**
**LEYS, Norman Maclean** (1875–1944) **VIII**
**LIDDLE, Thomas** (1863–1954) **I**
**LINDGREN, George Samuel (Baron Lindgren of Welwyn Garden City)** (1900–1971) **II**
**LINNEY, Joseph** (1808–1887) **VI**
**LISTER, David Cook** (1888–1961) **VI**
**LITTLEWOOD, France** (1863–1941) **VII**
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**LOCKEY, Walter Dalglish** (1891–1956) **V**
**LOCKWOOD, Arthur** (1883–1966) **II**
**LONGDEN, Fred** (1886–1952) **II**
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**LOWERY, Robert** (1809–1963) **IV**
**LUCRAFT, Benjamin** (1809–1897) **VII**
**LUDLOW, John Malcolm Forbes** (1821–1911) **II**
**LUNN, William (Willie)** (1872–1942) **II**
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**McGHEE, Richard** (1851–1930) **VII**
**McGREE, Leo Joseph** (1900–1967) **IX**
**McGURK, John** (1874–1944) **V**
**McHUGH, Edward** (1853–1915) **VII**
**McKEE, George William** (1865–1949) **V**
**MACPHERSON, John Thomas** (1872–1921) **V**
**McSHANE, Annie** (1888–1962) **IV**
**McSHEEDY, James Joseph** (1852–1923) **VIII**
**MADDISON, Fred** (1856–1937) **IV**
**MAJOR, Henry Francis (Harry Francis)** (1908–1989) **XIV**
**MALLESON, John Graeme** (1899–1956) **X**
**MALLESON, William Miles** (1888–1969) **IX**
**MALONE, Cecil John L'Estrange** (1890–1965) **VII**
**MANN, Amos** (1855–1939) **I**
**MANN, James** (1784?–1832) **VIII**
**MANN, Jean** (1889–1964) **VII**
**MANNING, (Elizabeth) Leah** (1886–1977) **VII**
**MARCHBANK, John** (1883–1946) **XIV**
**MARCROFT, William** (1822–1894) **I**
**MARKHAM, Sir Sydney Frank** (1897–1975) **XII**
**MARKLEW, Ernest** (1874–1939) **XIV**
**MARLAND (later MARLAND-BRODIE Ann Buckley (Annie)** (1861–1947) **XIII**
**MARLOW, Arnold** (1891–1939) **I**
**MARSDEN, Richard** (1802/3–1858) **VIII**
**MARSON, Charles Latimer** (1859–1914) **IX**
**MARTIN, Emma** (1812–1851) **VI**
**MARTIN, James** (1850–1933) **I**
**MARTYN, Caroline Eliza Derecourt** (1867–1896) **VIII**
**MATHER, Joseph** (1737–1804) **VIII**
**MATHERS, George (1st Baron Mathers of Newton St Boswells)** (1886–1965) **VII**
**MATTHEWS, Sir James (Henry John)** (1887–1981) **VII**
**MATTHIAS, Thomas Davies** (1823–1904) **VII**
**MAW, James** (1807–1875) **X**
**MAXWELL, Sir William** (1841–1929) **I**
**MAY, Henry John** (1867–1939) **I**
**MEEK, George Edward** (1868–1921) **X**
**MELL, Robert** (1872–1941) **V**
**MELLOR, William** (1888–1942) **IV**
**MELVILLE, Sir James Benjamin** (1885–1931) **IX**
**MERCER, Thomas William** (1884–1947) **I**
**MERCHANT, Emmanuel** (1854–1924) **VII**
**MERSON, Allan Leslie** (1916–1995) **X**
**MESSER, Sir Frederick (Fred)** (1886–1971) **II**
**MIDDLETON, Dora Miriam** (1897–1972) **IV**
**MIDDLETON, George Edward** (1886–1931) **II**
**MIDDLETON, Lucy Annie** (1894–1983) **XI**
**MILLER, William Thomas** (1880–1963) **IX**
**MILLERCHIP, William** (1863–1939) **I**
**MILLIGAN, George Jardine** (1868–1925) **V**
**MILLINGTON, Joseph** (1866–1952) **II**
**MILLINGTON, William Greenwood** (1850–1906) **III**
**MITCHELL, John Thomas Whitehead** (1828–1895) **I**
**MITCHISON, Gilbert Richard (Baron Mitchison of Carradale)** (1890–1970) **II**
**MOFFAT, Abraham (Abe)** (1896–1975) **XII**
**MOLE, Harriet Fisher (Jeannie)** (1841–1912) **IX**
**MOLESWORTH, William Nassau** (1816–1890) **I**
**MOLL, William Edmund** (1856–1932) **VIII**
**MOLYNEUX, Sir John (Harry)** (1882–1968) **VII**
**MONSLOW, Walter (Baron Monslow of Barrow-in-Furness)** (1895–1966) **XIII**
**MOORHOUSE, Thomas Edwin** (1854–1922) **I**
**MORGAN, David (Dai o'r Nant)** (1840–1900) **I**
**MORGAN, David Watts** (1867–1933) **I**

**MORGAN, Dr Hyacinth Bernard Wenceslaus** (1885–1956) **IX**
**MORGAN, John Minter** (1782–1854) **I**
**MORLEY, Iris Vivienne** (1910–1953) **IV**
**MORLEY, Ralph** (1882–1955) **VIII**
**MORLEY, Robert** (1863–1931) **IX**
**MORT, David Llewellyn** (1888–1963) **XIII**
**MOSLEY, Cynthia Blanche, Lady** (1898–1933) **V**
**MOTT, William Henry** (1812–1882) **VI**
**MUDIE, George** (1788?–?) **I**
**MUGGERIDGE, Henry Thomas Benjamin** (1864–1942) **V**
**MUIR, John William** (1879–1931) **VII**
**MUNRO, William John (Jack)** (1873–1948) **VII**
**MURDOCH, Mary Charlotte** (1864–1916) **V**
**MURNIN, Hugh** (1861–1932) **II**
**MURPHY, John Thomas** (1888–1965) **XII**
**MURRAY, Robert** (1869–1951) **I**
**MURRAY, John (Seăn)** (1898–1961) **XI**
**MYCOCK, William Salter** (1872–1950) **III**
**NAHUM, Ram (Ephraim) Albert** (1918–1942) **X**
**NEALE, Edward Vansittart** (1810–1892) **I**
**NEESOM, Charles Hodgson** (1785–1861) **VIII**
**NEWBOLD, John Turner Walton** (1888–1943) **X**
**NEWCOMB, William Alfred** (1849–1901) **III**
**NEWTON, William** (1822–1876) **II**
**NICHOL, Muriel Edith** (1893–1983) **XII**
**NICHOL, Robert** (1890–1925) **VII**
**NICHOLAS, Peter** (1914–2003) **XIII**
**NICHOLAS, Thomas Evan (Niclas y Glais)** (1879–1971) **XIII**
**NICHOLLS, George** (1864–1943) **V**
**NOEL, Conrad le Despenser Roden** (1869–1942) **II**
**NOEL-BUXTON, 1st Baron Noel-Buxton of Aylsham.** *See* **BUXTON, Noel Edward, V**
**NOEL-BUXTON, Lucy Edith Pelham, Lady** (1880–1960) **V**
**NOONAN, Robert** (1870–1911) **X**
**NORMANSELL, John** (1830–1875) **I**
**NUTTALL, William** (1835–1905) **I**
**OAKEY, Thomas** (1887–1953) **IV**
**ODGER, George** (1813–1877) **XIII**
**O'GRADY, Sir James** (1866–1934) **II**
**OLIVER, John** (1861–1942) **I**
**OLIVIER, Sydney Haldane (1st Baron Olivier of Ramsden)** (1859–1943) **VIII**
**O'NEILL, Arthur George** (1819–1896) **VI**
**ONIONS, Alfred** (1858–1921) **I**
**OPENSHAW, James** (1876–1957) **XIII**
**ORAGE, [James] Alfred Richard** (1873–1934) **VI**
**OSBORNE, Walter Victor** (1870–1950) **XII**
**OUTHWAITE, Robert Leonard** (1868–1930) **VIII**
**OWEN, Robert** (1771–1858) **VI**
**OWEN, William** (1844–1912) **IX**
**PALFREMAN, Robert William (Bill)** (1904–1954) **IX**
**PALFREMAN, Stanley (Stan)** (1919–1980) **IX**
**PALIN, John Henry** (1870–1934) **IV**
**PALING, Wilfrid** (1883–1971) **X**
**PARE, William** (1805–1873) **I**
**PARKER, James** (1863–1948) **II**
**PARKINSON, John Allen** (1870–1941) **II**
**PARKINSON, Joseph** (1854–1929) **X**
**PARKINSON, Tom Bamford** (1865–1939) **I**
**PARROTT, William** (1843–1905) **II**
**PASSFIELD, 1st Baron Passfield of Passfield Corner.** *See* **WEBB, Sidney James II**
**PATERSON, Emma Anne** (1848–1886) **I**
**PATON, Florence Beatrice** (1891–1976) **XII**
**PATTERSON, William Hammond** (1847–1896) **I**
**PATTISON, Lewis** (1873–1956) **I**
**PEASE, Edward Reynolds** (1857–1955) **II**
**PEASE, Mary Gammell (Marjory)** (1861–1950) **II**
**PEET, George** (1883–1967) **V**
**PEMBERTON, Peter** (1875–1955) **XII**
**PENNY, John** (1870–1938) **I**
**PERKINS, George Leydon** (1885–1961) **I**
**PERRY, Samuel Frederick** (1877–1954) **XII**
**PETCH, Arthur William** (1886–1935) **IV**
**PETRIE, George** (1791–1836) **X**
**PHILLIPS, Marion** (1881–1932) **V**
**PHIPPEN, William George** (1889–1968) **V**
**PICKARD, Benjamin** (1842–1904) **I**
**PICKARD, William** (1821–1887) **I**
**PICTON-TURBERVILL, Edith** (1872–1960) **IV**
**PIGGOTT, Thomas** (1836–1887) **II**

**PILLING, Richard** (1799–1874) **VI**
**PITMAN, Henry** (1826–1909) **I**
**PLUNKETT, Sir Horace Curzon** (1854–1932) **V**
**POINTER, Joseph** (1875–1914) **II**
**POLE, David Graham** (1877–1952) **XIII**
**POLLARD, William** (1832/3?–1909) **I**
**POLLITT, James** (1857–1935) **III**
**PONSONBY, Arthur Augustus William Harry (1st Baron Ponsonby of Shulbrede)** (1871–1946) **VII**
**POOLE, Stephen George** (1862–1924) **IV**
**POSTGATE, Daisy** (1892–1971) **II**
**POSTGATE, Raymond William** (1896–1971) **II**
**POTTER, George** (1832–1893) **VI**
**POTTS, John Samuel** (1861–1938) **II**
**PRATT, Hodgson** (1824–1907) **I**
**PRESTON, Thomas** (1774–1850) **VIII**
**PRICE, Gabriel** (1879–1934) **III**
**PRICE, Thomas William** (1876–1945) **V**
**PRINGLE, William Joseph Sommerville** (1916–1962) **II**
**PRIOR, John Damrel** (1840–1923) **VI**
**PROTHERO, Cliff** (1898–1990) **X**
**PRYDE, David Johnstone** (1890–1959) **II**
**PURCELL, Albert Arthur** (1872–1935) **I**
**QUELCH, Henry Harry** (1858–1913) **VIII**
**QUELCH, Lorenzo (Len) Edward** (1862–1937) **XIII**
**RACKHAM, Clara Dorothea** (1875–1966) **IX**
**RACKSTRAW, Marjorie** (1888–1981) **VIII**
**RADFORD, John** *c.* (1834–1906) **XII**
**RAE, William Robert** (1858–1936) **II**
**RAMELSON, Bert** (1910–1994) **XIV**
**RAMSAY, Thomas (Tommy)** (1810/11–1873) **I**
**RAWLINGS, Joseph** (1894–1978) **VIII**
**RAYNES, William Robert (Will)** (1871–1966) **XII**
**READE, Arthur Essex Edgeworth** (1902–1971) **XI**
**READE, Henry Musgrave** (1860–?) **III**
**RECKITT, Eva Collet** (1890–1976) **IX**
**REDFERN, Percy** (1875–1958) **I**
**REED, Richard Bagnall** (1831–1908) **IV**
**REES, Dorothy Mary** (1898–1987) **XII**
**REEVES, Samuel** (1862–1930) **I**
**REEVES, William Pember** (1857–1932) **II**
**RENTON, Donald** (1912–1977) **IX**
**REYNOLDS, George William MacArthur** (1814–1879) **III**
**REYNOLDS, Jack** (1915–1988) **X**
**RICHARDS, Robert (Bob)** (1884–1954) **XII**
**RICHARDS, Thomas** (1859–1931) **I**
**RICHARDS, Thomas Frederick (Freddy)** (1863–1942) **III**
**RICHARDSON, Reginald John** (1808–1861) **XI**
**RICHARDSON, Robert** (1862–1943) **II**
**RICHARDSON, Thomas (Tom)** (1868–1928) **IV**
**RICHARDSON, William Pallister** (1873–1930) **III**
**RIDEALGH, Mabel (nee JEWITT)** (1898–1989) **XIII**
**RITSON, Joshua (Josh)** (1874–1955) **II**
**ROBERTS, George Henry** (1868–1928) **IV**
**ROBERTS, John (Jack)** (1899–1979) **VII**
**ROBINSON, Annot Erskine** (1874–1925) **VIII**
**ROBINSON, Charles Leonard** (1845–1911) **III**
**ROBINSON, Richard** (1879–1937) **I**
**ROBSON, James** (1860–1934) **II**
**ROBSON, John** (1862–1929) **II**
**ROEBUCK, Samuel** (1871–1924) **IV**
**ROGERS, Frederick** (1846–1915) **I**
**ROGERSON, William Matts** (1873–1941) **III**
**ROLLIN, Aaron Rapoport** (1885–1972) **XII**
**ROSBOTHAM, Sir Samuel Thomas** (1864–1950) **XII**
**ROTHSTEIN, Theodore** (1871–1953) **VII**
**ROWLANDS, James** (1851–1920) **VI**
**ROWLINSON, Ernest George** (1882–1941) **VI**
**ROWLINSON, George Henry** (1852–1937) **I**
**ROWSON, Guy** (1883–1937) **II**
**ROYCE, William Stapleton** (1858–1924) **XI**
**RUDLAND, Frederick William** (1866–1941) **VII**
**RUST, Henry** (1831–1902) **II**
**RUTHERFORD, John Hunter** (1826–1890) **I**
**SAKLATVALA, Shapurji Dorabji** (1874–1936) **VI**
**SANDERS, Haydn** (1860–1937) **XIV**

**SANDHAM, Elijah** (1875–1944) **XI**
**SANKEY, John (Viscount Sankey)** (1866–1948) **XIV**
**SAMUELSON, James** (1829–1918) **II**
**SARA, Henry Thomas William** (1886–1953) **XI**
**SAUNDERS, William** (1823–1895) **VIII**
**SAWYER, George Francis** (1871–1960) **VIII**
**SCHMIDT, Gustav Adolph (SMITH, Gus)** (1854–1913) **XIV**
**SCHOFIELD, Thomas** (1825–1879) **II**
**SCHOLEFIELD, James** (1790–1855) **XI**
**SCHOLES, Benjamin** (1779?–1823) **VIII**
**SCOTTON, Amos** (1833–1904) **VII**
**SCOTT-BATEY, Rowland William John** (1913–1980) **IX**
**SCRYMGEOUR, Edwin** (1866–1947) **VII**
**SCURR, John** (1876–1932) **IV**
**SEDDON, James Andrew** (1868–1939) **II**
**SEWELL, William** (1852–1948) **I**
**SEXTON, Sir James** (1856–1938) **IX**
**SHACKLETON, Sir David James** (1863–1938) **II**
**SHAFTOE, Samuel** (1841–1911) **III**
**SHALLARD, George** (1877–1958) **I**
**SHANN, George** (1876–1919) **II**
**SHARP, Andrew** (1841–1919) **I**
**SHARP, Clifford Dyce** (1883–1935) **VII**
**SHAW, Benjamin Howard** (1865–1942) **VIII**
**SHAW, Clarice Marion McNab** (1883–1946) **VIII**
**SHAW, Fred** (1881–1951) **IV**
**SHEARSMITH, Cornelius Tonge** (1884–1914) **XIV**
**SHEPPARD, Frank** (1861–1956) **III**
**SHIELD, George William** (1876–1935) **III**
**SHIELS, Sir Thomas Drummond** (1881–1953) **VIII**
**SHILLITO, John** (1832–1915) **I**
**SHORROCKS, Peter** (1834–1886) **VI**
**SHORT, Alfred** (1882–1938) **IX**
**SHURMER, Percy Lionel Edward** (1888–1959) **II**
**SILKIN, John Ernest** (1923–1987) **X**
**SILKIN, Lewis (Baron Silkin of Dulwich)** (1889–1972) **X**
**SIMMONS, Charles James (Jim)** (1893–1975) **XIII**
**SIMPSON, Henry** (1866–1937) **III**
**SIMPSON, James** (1826–1895) **I**
**SIMPSON, William Shaw** (1829–1883) **II**
**SITCH, Charles Henry** (1887–1960) **II**
**SITCH, Thomas** (1852–1923) **I**
**SKEFFINGTON, Arthur Massey** (1908–1971) **V**
**SKEVINGTON, John** (1801–1851) **I**
**SKINNER, (James) Allen** (1890–1974) **V**
**SLATER, Harriet** (1903–1976) **VII**
**SLESSER, Sir Henry Herman** (1883–1979) **IX**
**SLOAN, Alexander (Sandy)** (1879–1945) **II**
**SMILLIE, Robert** (1857–1940) **III**
**SMITH, Albert** (1867–1942) **III**
**SMITH, Alfred** (1877–1969) **III**
**SMITH, Ellis** (1896–1969) **IX**
**SMITH, Francis Samuel (Frank)** (1854–1940) **IX**
**SMITH, Henry Norman** (1890–1962) **XI**
**SMITH, Herbert** (1862–1938) **II**
**SMITH, Rosina (Rose)** (1891–1985) **XI**
**SMITHIES, James** (1819–1869) **I**
**SNELL, Harold (Harry) (Lord Snell of Plumstead)** (1865–1944) **XIII**
**SOUTHALL, Joseph Edward** (1861–1944) **V**
**SPARKES, Malcolm** (1881–1933) **II**
**SPENCE, Thomas** (1750–1814) **III**
**SPENCER, George Alfred** (1873–1957) **I**
**SPENCER, John Samuel** (1868–1943) **I**
**STANLEY, Albert** (1862–1915) **I**
**STANTON, Charles Butt** (1873–1946) **I**
**STARR, Mark** (1894–1985) **IX**
**STEAD, Francis Herbert** (1857–1928) **IV**
**STEADMAN, William (Will) Charles** (1851–1911) **V**
**STEPHEN, Campbell** (1884–1947) **VII**
**STEPHENSON, Tom** (1895–1962) **XI**
**STEVENS, John Valentine** (1852–1925) **II**
**STEWART, Aaron** (1845–1910) **I**
**STEWART, James** (1863–1931) **VII**
**STOKES, Richard Rapier** (1897–1957) **VIII**
**STOKES, William (Billy) Henry** (1894–1977) **X**
**STOTT, Benjamin** (1813–1850) **IV**
**STRACHEY, John St Loe** (1901–1963) **X**
**STRAKER, William** (1855–1941) **II**
**STRINGER, Sidney** (1889–1969) **V**
**STUBBS, Albert Ernest** (1877–1962) **XIV**
**SULLIVAN, Joseph** (1866–1935) **II**
**SUMMERBELL, Thomas** (1861–1910) **IV**

**SUTHERLAND, Mary Elizabeth** (1895–1972) **VI**
**SUTHERS, Robert Bentley** (1870–1950) **IV**
**SUTTON, John (Jack) Edward** (1862–1945) **III**
**SWAN, John Edmund** (1877–1956) **III**
**SWANWICK, Helena Maria Lucy** (1864–1939) **IV**
**SWEET, James** (1804/5?–1879) **IV**
**SWIFT, Fred** (1874–1959) **II**
**SWINGLER, Stephen Thomas** (1915–1969) **III**
**SYLVESTER, George Oscar** (1898–1961) **III**
**TANNER, Frederick John (Jack) Shirley** (1889–1965) **XI**
**TAYLOR, John Wilkinson** (1855–1934) **I**
**TAYLOR, Robert Arthur** (1866–1934) **IV**
**TAYLOR, John Thomas** (1863–1958) **X**
**TEER, John** (1809?–1883?) **IV**
**THESIGER, Frederic John Napier 3rd Baron and 1st Viscount Chelmsford** (1868–1933) **V**
**THICKETT, Joseph** (1865–1938) **II**
**THOMAS, David** (1880–1967) **XIII**
**THOMPSON, William Henry** (1885–1947) **X**
**THORNE, William James** (1857–1946) **I**
**THORPE, George** (1854–1945) **I**
**THRING, Lillian Mary** (1887–1964) **VIII**
**TILLETT, Benjamin (Ben)** (1860–1943) **IV**
**TINKER, John Joseph (Joe)** (1875–1957) **XII**
**TOFAHRN, Paul** (1901–1979) **X**
**TOOLE, Joseph (Joe)** (1887–1945) **VII**
**TOOTILL, Robert** (1850–1934) **II**
**TOPHAM, Edward** (1894–1966) **I**
**TORKINGTON, James** (1811–1867) **II**
**TORR, Dona** (1883–1957) **XII**
**TOYN, Joseph** (1838–1924) **II**
**TRAVIS, Henry** (1807–1884) **I**
**TRESSELL/TRESSALL.** *See* **NOONAN, Robert, X**
**TREVOR, John** (1855–1930) **VI**
**TROTTER, Thomas Ernest Newlands** (1871–1932) **III**
**TROW, Edward** (1833–1899) **III**
**TUCKWELL, Gertrude Mary** (1861–1951) **VI**
**TURNER, Sir Ben** (1863–1912) **VIII**
**TWEDDELL, Thomas** (1839–1916) **I**
**TWIGG, Herbert James Thomas** (1900–1957) **I**
**TWIST, Henry (Harry)** (1871–1934) **II**
**TYLECOTE, Mabel** (1896–1987) **X**
**VALLANCE, John** (1794–1882) **IX**
**VARLEY, Frank Bradley** (1885–1929) **II**
**VARLEY, Julia** (1871–1952) **V**
**VEITCH, Marian** (1913–1973) **III**
**VERINDER, Frederick** (1858–1948) **VIII**
**VINCENT, Henry** (1813–1878) **I**
**VIVIAN, Henry Harvey** (1868–1931) **I**
**WADE, Arthur Savage** (1787–1845) **XI**
**WADSWORTH, John** (1851–1921) **I**
**WALKDEN, Alexander George (1st Baron Walkden of Great Bookham)** (1873–1951) **V**
**WALKER, Benjamin** (1803/4?–1883) **I**
**WALKER, William** (1870–1918) **XII**
**WALLAS, Graham** (1858–1932) **V**
**WALLHEAD, Richard [Christopher] Collingham** (1869–1934) **III**
**WALLWORK, Daniel** (1824–1909) **VI**
**WALSH, Stephen** (1859–1929) **IV**
**WALSHAM, Cornelius** (1880–1958) **I**
**WALTON, Alfred Armstrong** (1816–1883) **X**
**WARD, George Herbert Bridges** (1876–1957) **VII**
**WARD, John** (1866–1934) **IV**
**WARDLE, George James** (1865–1947) **II**
**WARNE, George Henry** (1881–1928) **IV**
**WARWICK, Frances Evelyn (Daisy) Countess of** (1861–1938) **V**
**WATERSON, Alfred Edward** (1880–1964) **XII**
**WATKINS, John** (1808–1858) **XII**
**WATKINS, William Henry** (1862–1924) **I**
**WATSON, William** (1849–1901) **III**
**WATSON, William Foster** (1881–1943) **VI**
**WATTS, John** (1818–1887) **I**
**WEBB, Beatrice** (1858–1943) **II**
**WEBB, Catherine** (1859–1947) **II**
**WEBB, Sidney James (1st Baron Passfield of Passfield Corner)** (1859–1947) **II**
**WEBB, Simeon** (1864–1929) **I**
**WEBB, Thomas Edward** (1829–1896) **I**
**WEDDERBURN, Robert** (1762-c.–1835) **VIII**
**WEIR, John** (1851–1908) **I**
**WEIR, William** (1868–1926) **II**
**WELLOCK, Wilfred** (1879–1972) **V**

**WELSH, James Carmichael** (1880–1954) **II**
**WEST, John** (1812–1887) **VII**
**WESTWOOD, Joseph** (1884–1948) **II**
**WHATELY, Monica** (1889–1960) **XIV**
**WHEATLEY, John** (1869–1930) **VII**
**WHELAN, Joseph Patrick (Joe)** (1925–1982) **XIV**
**WHEELER, Thomas Marlin** (1811–1862) **VI**
**WHITE, Arthur Daniel** (1881–1961) **III**
**WHITE, Charles Frederick** (1891–1956) **V**
**WHITEFIELD, William** (1850–1926) **II**
**WHITEHEAD, Alfred** (1862–1945) **I**
**WHITEHOUSE, Samuel Henry** (1849–1919) **IV**
**WHITELEY, Wilfrid** (1882–1970) **XII**
**WHITELEY, William** (1881–1955) **III**
**WHITTAKER, James** (1865–1940) **VIII**
**WIGNALL, James** (1856–1925) **III**
**WILKES, Lyall** (1914–1991) **XII**
**WILKIE, Alexander** (1850–1928) **III**
**WILLIAMS, Aneurin** (1859–1924) **I**
**WILLIAMS, David James** (1897–1972) **IV**
**WILLIAMS, Sir Edward (Ted) John** (1890–1963) **III**
**WILLIAMS, Emlyn** (1921–1995) **XIV**
**WILLIAMS, John** (1861–1922) **I**
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