Labour Heritage

Bulletin June 2013

To commemorate the centenary of the death of suffragette Emily Wilding Davison in June 1913 Labour Heritage presents a June bulletin, including an article from a member of the 'Emily Inspires' campaign.

Emily Wilding Davison
11 October 1872 - 8 June 1913

Emily, daughter of Charles Davison, retired merchant, and his second wife, Margaret Caisley Davison both from Morpeth, Northumberland, was born shortly after the family moved south to Greenwich.
Known as a spirited child Emily grew to be an ardent cyclist and swimmer - as well as a writer, advocate, poet and artist. After attending Kensington High School (1885-91, now Kensington Preparatory School for girls) she won a place at Royal Holloway College to study English Literature. Two years later she was forced to leave as, after the death of her father, the fees were impossible to meet.
Thus Emily found work as a governess, saving enough money to pay for a term at St Hugh's College, Oxford.
She then taught, eventually raising enough money to return to university graduating from London University with a first class honours degree in English Literature though degrees were not then conferred on women!

Women's Social and Political Union

In 1906 Emily joined the Women's Social and Political Union (WPSU) and by 1908 had left teaching to dedicate her life to the suffrage movement. The WSPU had turned to militancy in frustration at the brutality shown to women seeking the vote; beatings, sexual assault of women on lawful protest (particularly on 'Black Friday'), ejection from legitimate attendence of meetings and repeated betrayal of promises by those in power.

On 20th March 1909 she was arrested for the first time, for attempting to hand a petition to Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith. Found guilty of creating a disturbance she was sentenced to one month's imprisonment. On 30th July she was arrested again (for trying to get into a hall where the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George was giving a speech). Imprisoned in Holloway, she went on hunger strike for 5 days. Whilst in Holloway she wrote ***'Rebellion against tyrants is obedience to God'*** on her cell wall.
Just over two weeks later she was arrested yet again for breaking windows of the Post Office and Liberal Club in Manchester. Found guilty she was sentenced to one month's hard labour in Strangeways Prison.

Prison and hunger strikes

As she embarked on another hunger strike the authorities chose a different response, deciding to force-feed her. Emily wrote of this ***'The scene which followed will haunt me with its horror all my life and is almost indescribable. The torture was barbaric'.*** To avoid more of this she barricaded the door of her cell. A hosepipe was forced through the cell window and she was doused with freezing water for over 15 minutes until the authorities broke her cell door open. She was force-fed again.
A national outcry followed this treatment with questions in Parliament. In January 1910 Emily brought an action against the Justices of Strangeways Gaol. Judge Parry found for her and awarded damages of forty shillings (£2).

Only a few days later Emily was caught trying to throw a stone (wrapped in a paper on which was written 'Rebellion against tyrants is obedience to God') at a car taking Lloyd George to a meeting in Newcastle.
In 1910/11 Emily hid in the House of Commons on three separate occasions, including the night of the 1911 census – meaning she could legitimately give the House of Commons as her place of residence.
In December 1911 she was arrested for setting fire to post boxes, and sentenced to six months in Holloway prison, enduring more force-feeding, and periods of solitary confinement. She wrote 'some desperate protest must be made to put a stop to this hideous torture', before throwing herself from the prison stairs. She suffered severe spinal injuries yet the force-feeding continued – only after she had lost over two stones (28lbs), was she released.
She was back in prison in November 1912 for assaulting a Baptist Minister she mistook for Lloyd George – immediately going on hunger strike and again force-fed she was released after four days.
In total Emily was force-fed forty-nine times - more than any other suffragette.

The Derby

In 1913 the Epsom Derby was one of the biggest sporting events in the world. As the horses approached Tattenham Corner, Emily ran onto the racecourse, apparently to attach the suffragette colours to the King's Horse, Anmer. Falling under the horse's hooves Emily was hit hard, suffering extensive injuries, including a fractured skull. Four days later she died - the fourth suffragette to die in the cause of Votes for Women. Anmer's jockey, Herbert Jones, was thrown to the ground, sustaining

concussion and minor injuries though he refused hospital treatment.
Popular opinion was reflected by the telegram sent by Queen Mary to Herbert Jones woshing him well after his 'sad accident caused through the abominable conduct of a brutal lunatic woman'. However Herbert Jones later made his support for Emily's cause clear and at the funeral of Mrs Pankhurst laid a wreath 'to do honour to the memory of Mrs Pankhurst and Miss Emily Davison'. He was deeply affected and some say the event influenced his suicide many years later.

Memorial for Emily

A memorial service for Emily took place in St George's Church Bloomsbury on 14 June. 6,000 women marched following her funeral cortege - her coffin was then taken by train to Morpeth where, on 15th June, thousands more lined the streets as she was borne on her final journey from the Railway station to St Mary's Church. On reaching the Lych gate the coffin was handed over to her family for a private burial
In recent years the researches of a local genealogist in close collaboration with the Davison and Caisley families has revealed much new information – giving lie to the idea that Emily acted alone and was intent on suicide. The protest was one of a series targeting major sports events (seen as a way of achieving a higher profile). Emily was one of a group of Morpeth suffragettes who were seen practising fixing colours to horses on the town common. And she drew the short straw. The rest, as they say, is history…

A suffragette's Family Album by Maureen Howes is published on 14 May 2013

Northumberland reclaims their 'Lawless Lassie through the Emily Inspires! Programme (www.emilyinspires.co.uk); including the Centennial weekend, 13-16 June 2013 - with commemorative procession, speakers Baroness Helena Kennedy and Associate Editor of the Sunday Times, Eleanor Mills, and the premiere of a searing new play about Emily: To Freedom's Cause

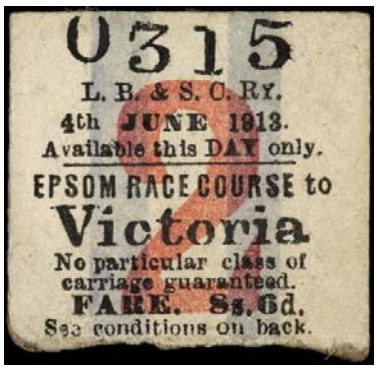
Penni Blythe-Jones
Co-ordinator, Emily Inspires!

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is running an exhibition "Dying for the vote" until July 27th at the Borough Museum, Bourne Hall, Spring Street, Ewell, Surrey.

Digital exhibition for Emily Wilding Davison

The Library of the London School of Economics, which has taken over the Women's Library has an online exhibition for Emily Wilding Davison. Exhibits include her return ticket to Epsom on the day in June 1913 when she died, and also letters (including hate mail) after her death.

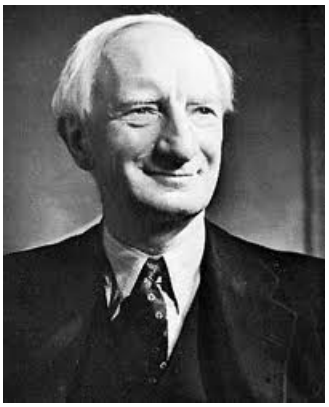
http://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/exhibitions/emily-wilding-davison-centenary



Labour Heritage AGM April 13th 2013

The Labour Heritage AGM was held in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, on Saturday 13th April. It was followed by a public meeting with two speakers and was attended by 30 people. The theme of the meeting was Beveridge, Attlee and the welfare state.

Beveridge and the welfare state



The first speaker, on Beveridge and the welfare state, was David Piachaud, a professor in the Social Policy Department at the London School of Economics LSE).
He gave an outline of the life of William Beveridge. Beveridge spent his early years in India where his parents were living. When he came back to England at the age of five, he attended boarding school. He did not see his mother for two years. He attended Charterhouse School, and Balliol College, Oxford, where he obtained a very good degree. His life was thus typical of many of his background , but he suffered from the ill-health and untimely deaths of his brother and sister. Taking up employment, he had worked as a journalist for the Morning Post and then

became a civil servant in the Board of Trade. During this time he was in charge of Labour Exchanges. In 1919 he became Director of the LSE, (where he upset lecturers by trying to introduce a course in social biology) and expanded it with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation.

At the outbreak of World War II, he went back to the Ministry of Labour, but did not get on with Ernest Bevin, who became Minister for Labour in the wartime coalition government. Bevin therefore ' sidelined' Beveridge, by putting him in charge of social insurance and getting him to produce a report on planning for a post-war world.

This report, which became known as the Beveridge Report, was published in 1942. It was based on three assumptions – that there would be national health service, arising out of the experience of wartime, the introduction of children's allowances, and that there would be full employment. Beveridge indentified five evils which had to be eradicated – want, idleness, ignorance, squalor and disease. He envisaged one flat rate benefit which would replace all existing schemes. The report received much publicity. By 1942 the tide of the war was turning and victories in battle gave rise to consideration as to what a post-war world would look like. 650,000 copies of the Report were sold. The Social Security League organized hundreds of meetings throughout the country. It received complete support from the Labour party, but not unequivocal support from Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister. He wanted to wait and see if the resources would be available. However, critically, it did get the support of the Treasury, where John Maynard Keynes had a large influence.

The Beveridge Report was to be implemented by the 1945 Labour Government. Beveridge himself was never a member of the Labour Party. He was an 'old-style'Liberal and in 1944 became the MP for Berwick on Tweed. Ironically he was to lose his seat to the Tories in 1945, much to their delight and that of the British Medical Association, who regarded him as their enemy! Attlee was to give him a peerage in 1946. He died in 1963 with little public recognition of his achievements.

Compared to the welfare reforms of the present government (universal credit will take three years to implement) , some of the Beveridge proposals, such as family allowances, were to be implemented within months. Beveridge is reported as saying that his greatest pleasure would be to leave the world a better place. His model of the welfare state was to lay the basis for post-war Britain and it survived largely intact until the Thatcher governments of 1979-1990. Even the funeral grant is still in place - £700 and tightly means-tested – which would not begin to pay for the lavish funeral of Thatcher planned for the following week!

Some aspects of welfare however had not been predicted by Beveridge. His plan that benefits should be flat-rate and contributory was never fully implemented. He did not envisage disability benefits, or benefits for lone parents and assumed that married women would be dependent upon their husbands. Life expectancy in the 1940s was not much more than sixty five on average so not that many people were able to claim their pensions for long. But above all he anticipated a world where there would be full employment which remains crucial for a just society.

The role of Aneurin Bevan and Clement Attlee in creating the welfare state

The second speaker was Francis Beckett, a free lance journalist, whose books include a biography of Clement Attlee. He began by saying that there had been two prime ministers in the 20th century with lasting achievements – Clement Attlee who had introduced a civilized society and Margaret Thatcher who had done her best to dismantle it. Most prime ministers had not been change-makers but had managed change. Harold Macmillan in particular had illustrated the vulnerability of those in government when he said to colleagues "events dear boy, events". (refering to how the best plans of politicians could be upset).
The elections of 1945, 1979 and 1997 had all indicated a shift in political mood. In the cases of the first two there had been a political leader who could take advantage of this.
But luck and chance allowed individual leaders to play the part that they did in changing society and none of this was a foregone conclusion. Attlee for example had faced leadership challenges before his term of office. If he had been successfully ousted the outcome would have been very different for him and for other outstanding figures in the 1945 Labour Government such as Aneurin Bevan. Bevan was appointed by Attlee to be Minister of Health, but it is doubtful if he would have been appointed by Herbert Morrison. In that case he would have been remembered as a South Wales miners' leader but not the creator of the National Health Service.
There was a discussion comparing the elections of 1945 and 1979.

Hounslow Trades Union Council 1966 – 1991

In 1991 the Hounslow Trades Union Council (HTUC or 'the Council') decided to publish a booklet to celebrate its first 25 years, and I was asked to write it, although it was not completed until 1993.I was then the longest serving delegate to the Council, since 1969, and had been its secretary from 1972 to 1982, so I was obviously fairly knowledgeable about its history.

I was recently asked if I would like to write about HTUC during this period, so what follows is a shortened version (about 2000 words) of the original booklet (about 10,000 words) of which there are only hard copies. I have two, although there may be some in Hounslow Library.

I have followed the format of the original, paraphrasing and editing, but reproducing certain passages. These are indicated by inverted commas.

Formation of the Hounslow Trades Council in 1966

The Hounslow Trades Council (renamed HTUC in 1971) was formed in May 1966 following the emergence of the new London Borough of Hounslow. It replaced three trades councils previously operating in the area covered by the new borough: Brentford and Chiswick, Feltham and District and Hounslow. Harry Francis became Chair and Syd Yates Secretary.

1966-71 – a movement of its time

"The new Trades Council reflected the trade union movement of the time. Its delegates were almost exclusively male, manual workers and white. In 1966 there were only two out of 58 affiliated branches that could be described as 'white collar', while the AEU had 10 affiliated branches and the TGWU 22. Delegates were addressed as' Brothers', and 'Dear Sir and Brother' was

the common address in letters. The author cannot recall a single female or black delegate until 1971, and white collar delegates like himself were treated with some suspicion as not being 'real' trade unionists. During this period the composition of the Council remained broadly as described above, with only five white collar branches out of a total of 64 affiliated in 1971. Attendance was good, averaging about 25 delegates per meeting."

A transport committee was formed, reflecting the involvement of many branches in bus, rail and civil air transport, and a public meeting was held in 1967.

Trade unions were supported in a number of disputes locally, including Turriff at Ivybridge 1968 -70, General Aviation Services at Heathrow 1971-2, postal workers 1970-71, local authority manual workers 1970, Rantons 1969 and Acton Works 1970.

The left wing MP for Feltham Russell Kerr spoke on a number of occasions.

The *'In Place of Strife'* proposals were opposed in 1969, and after 1970 with a new Conservative government entry to the Common Market and anti trade union laws were also opposed.
Annual dances were started in 1968 and these continued until 1981.

In 1972 Syd Yates stood down as secretary, having worked tirelessly to establish a large and active trades council, and I became secretary.

1972-77 – the Council sees a change in composition

The composition of the Council changed during this period, with a significant increase in the number of white collar branches affiliated, and it was this that mainly accounted for the growth in the number of women delegates, from one to seven.

Support was given in a number of local disputes, including Anglo Swiss Screw 1972, Middlesex Chronicle 1974, Rank Pullin and Rank Audio Visual in 1975, Firemen 1977 and the well-known Trico 1976 and Grunwick 1976-77.
A Public Sector Alliance was set up in 1973, and two meetings were held. A Miners support Committee was active during the 1974 strike. Also in 1974 the campaign to prevent the closure of the Reckitt and Colman factory was supported and a public meeting was organised. Unions at Heathrow were given consistent support over a variety of issues.

In 1974 Hounslow joined with other trades councils in Ealing and Hillingdon to form the West London Joint Trades Councils Committee which campaigned against unemployment, racism and the 'Social Contract'.

In 1975 the Council initiated a campaign for a 'No' vote in the Common Market referendum in June, of which I was secretary.

The growth of racism and the National Front in the area saw the Council help to set up a Hounslow anti racialism Committee (HARC) in 1977.

The Council was concerned with all the major trade union issues of the time, including the Industrial Relations Act 1972 – 4, the 'Social Contract' 1975 – 8 and the campaign to free the Shrewsbury Pickets 1974-5.

There was mounting concern with cuts, and two public meetings and a demonstration were held in 1976, with local health cuts being the prime focus.

Hounslow hospital 1977-78

The Council was very heavily involved in this major issue, and for that reason it has a separate chapter.

The background was a decision by the Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow Area Health Authority (AHA) in February 1977 to close three small hospitals, one of which was Hounslow, where staff voted to stage a 'work in' to prevent closure, something fully supported by the Council and local health unions, with leading members of both bodies actively involved on the Defence Committee.
The campaign delayed the closure, but on October 6th the infamous raid took place, with patients removed and wards left devastated. This was given national media publicity, which helped the subsequent campaign A decision was taken to occupy the hospital, and myself and other Council members were prominent on the Occupation Committee. Large lobbies of the AHA failed to re-open the hospital, but the occupation began to function as a centre for the launch of anti-cuts activities, which included what became a national organisation, '*Fightback*'. Meanwhile a detailed blueprint for Hounslow as a community hospital was developed and widely publicised.
In November 1978 the AHA agreed in principle to reopen the hospital when funds were available, but shortly after this, on November 28th, the occupation was ended, as it was felt that it could achieve no more.

" The occupation had involved the energies and commitment of most leading members of the Council and had had a significant impact on the campaigns against health cuts in Britain during this period, not least because the Council's involvement throughout gave the occupation a standing within and access to the official trade union movement which it would not otherwise have had."

1978-81 – years of disputes and anti-cuts activities

" The Council continued to be large, well attended and active during this period."
A number of disputes were supported, including those of the National Union of Journalists at local papers, Booths Gin in 1978, and Chix, Laings and the national steel strike in 1980.The Garners steak house dispute was supported by regular picketing on Friday evenings in 1978 – 9.

Opposition to cuts remained a major activity. Continuing cuts in health saw support given to a 'Campaign for Better Health' aimed against health cuts in Hounslow and for the reopening of Hounslow as a community hospital. Opposition to health cuts was increasingly channelled through a West London Co-ordinating Committee against Cuts comprising the five West London trades union councils, but big cuts went through.
In 1979 the Council set up a Hounslow Anti Cuts Committee (HARC) , and in 1981 held a mass lobby after Hounslow Council abandoned its 'no cuts' policy.

Anti racist activity was strong in 1978 through the HARC, although this lapsed in 1979 but was revived in 1981.

The Hounslow Law Centre was opened in 1981following a Council initiative in 1979.

Unemployment became a major issue with the closure of two large factories, Firestone and United Biscuits, in 1980. The Council campaigned on this issue, and supported the West London march on the TUC Day of Action in 1980 and the 'Peoples March for Jobs' in 1981.

In 1981 the Council supported the campaign to save the homes of tenants at Brentford Dock, and in the same year arranged for 200 young people to stay at a local unused school as part of the TUC 'Jobs for Youth 'campaign.

Divisions on the Council 1982-86

This was the only period in the Council's history that was marked by deep internal divisions, mainly to do with the Council's relationship to the Trade Union Support Unit and Centre for the Unemployed (TUSUCFU, or 'The Unit'), which was

established by the Council's efforts in 1984, following negotiation with and subsequent funding by the GLC and Hounslow Borough.

The negotiations had mainly been conducted by Vernon Merritt, who had become Council secretary after I stood down in 1982. He was appointed to one of the posts in the new unit, but was unwilling to relinquish the post of Council secretary, a condition of his appointment. He was dismissed from his new post and then resigned as secretary, having nothing more to do with the Council. He had substantial support, although this largely evaporated when it became clear that he had not been a trade union member for three years. Despite this he had made a major contribution to the Council, both in terms of the setting up of the Unit and the production of 'Trade Union News', a very professional bulletin which it was hoped would become a local trade union newspaper, although this was probably unrealistic and it did not appear again after his resignation.

Further divisions arose over whether to abandon a trade union majority on the management committee of the Unit in order to maintain GLC funding, which was agreed, and over the accountability and governance of the GLC funded Hounslow Police Monitoring Group.

Despite all this the Council continued to be active and well attended. Harry Francis stood down as chair in 1984, having held the post since the Council began, and Freddie Gore took over. Phyllis Driver became secretary in August 1984.

Disputes supported locally were Air India 1982 and Dimbleby Newspapers 1983/4, and nationally Water 1983, Print workers 1986 and of course the miners 1984-5, although the Miners support committee functioned independently but many delegates were involved.

Cuts in the Health Service remained a major issue and a GLC funded Health Emergency Campaign was set up in 83 which called public meetings and lobbies.
In 1984 premises in Montague Road were opened as the Oxley Centre in recognition of Joan Oxley's work for the Hounslow Hospital community project. In 1984 the Hounslow Anti Racialism Committee and the Womens Sub-Committee were both revived. In 1983 the council helped to form a Hounslow Employees Liaison Committee.

Decline and unemployment 1986-91

"Sadly, this last period was one of decline, and branch affiliations, attendance at meetings and the level of activity all fell" Average attendance had been 27 and branch affiliation 67 up to 1986, but had fallen to 9 and 28 respectively by 1990. This was mainly due to unemployment and de-industrialisation which saw a large decline in trade union membership with fewer branches and unions and Hounslow's experience was reflected everywhere else to a greater or lesser extent.

John Patrick became secretary in 1986. Dave Mallon became chair in 1986 followed by Graham Roberts in 1988 and Ron Hurley in 1990.

A number of national disputes were supported in this period including print workers and teachers in 1986, post office engineers in 1987, nurses in 1988, local authority workers in 1989 and ambulance drivers and college lecturers in 1990. Locally, support was given to Kenure Plastics in 1986, Tillings 1986, Keatons 1989 and British Aerospace at Kingston 1990. Health continued as a major focus mainly through support for the *Hospital Alert* organisation. The Council organised a local march and rally in support of nurses in 1988.

In 1989 the Council mounted a "Hounslow against the poll tax campaign" which held a number of meetings including one for

neighbouring trades union councils and this led to a lively campaign in 1990. The Council was well represented on the management committee of various local organisations including the Law Centre, the Unit, the Citizens Advice Bureau, the Co-operative Development Agency and the Oxley Centre.

The Council was concerned with a number of other issues including privatisation, low pay and South Africa during this period.

Conclusion

The Trades Council remained in existence throughout the 1990s with John Patrick continuing as secretary but I left Hounslow in 2003 and have lost contact with those who were involved. However, I notice sadly that Hounslow is no longer registered as a Trades Council with the TUC, like other localities in London and elsewhere. Perhaps this account of its earlier history will stimulate some keen young trade unionists to revive it!

Peter Rowlands June 2013

1976 and all that

Can we learn from history and not repeat the mistakes of the past? In the midst of the Eurozone crisis and the role of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in imposing budgetary cuts on Eurozone countries, it is interesting to look back at the time when a Labour Government in Britain had a "run-in," as I will call it, with the IMF.

How did it feel at the time? It was presented as a crisis for the Government. Cuts in public spending had already been implemented which threatened the government's "social contract" with the trades unions, by which the social wage was to be protected in return for wage restraint. Further cuts would have threatened this. Chancellor of the Exchequer Denis Healey describes the time as amongst the "worst few months of his life." His announcement at the 1976 Labour Party conference that he had gone to the IMF for a loan met with boos and hostility. But he was to get the support of the Prime Minister Jim Callaghan.

In the labour movement memories of the split of 1931 were raised – could the scale of the cuts demanded by the IMF again bring down a Labour Government? Tony Benn even circulated cabinet minutes from 1931.

What caused the crisis? The comparison with 1931 is that there was a temporary " run" on sterling, which was a reserve currency still in 1976. But it had little to do with the government's public expenditure policy, any more than in 1931. Cuts were being advocated by the IMF and some of the UK treasury but they would not solve the "crisis" one way or another. It was a confidence trick – just as the pressure to stay on the "gold standard" (a form of fixed exchange rate

system) had been in 1931. In the end the Tory led National Government took Britain off the "gold standard", in effect floating the pound.

The political effects however were more long lasting. There were disputes in the Labour cabinet as described by Denis Healy in his autobiography "*The time of my life*". But the mood in the labour movement led him to tell the IMF "hands off" when more cuts were demanded. Negotiations went on from June 1976 until the end of the year. The *Observer* reported that *"The Chancellor, Mr Healey, is to take a very tough line with Britain's foreign creditors. He will warn them if necessary that the Government will introduce general import controls and other restrictive measures rather than yield to further demands for public expenditure cuts or tax increases*." (25/7/1976). The IMF was warned that further measures demanded by them in return for a loan in the autumn of 1976 would destroy the government, and that it would be impossible to go back and ask the TUC for more. But by November the IMF was issuing an ultimatum in return for a £2.4 billion loan. The government had expected that its existing policies were sufficient. Even if approved it was not clear when the loan would become available or even how it would be paid (*Guardian* 23/11/1976). The Treasury was instructed to draw up contingency plans for stricter exchange controls to ease the run on sterling. By December the government was set to tell the IMF that no more cuts could be implemented and that it was already on target for reducing the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement (PSBR). Any further cuts and the government would fall.

In the "*Time of my life*", Denis Healey describes how he had to tell the Managing Director of the IMF to "*take a running jump"*, and that if he persisted with his demand for yet another one billion pounds worth of cuts, "*We would call a general election on the issue of the IMF versus the people*." . Much to the fury of the Tory press, the IMF seemed to have surrendered.

Healey goes on to say that in retrospect he felt that the whole affair had been unnecessary and that the UK Treasury had grossly overestimated the PSBR. In a word, the IMF loan had been unnecessary. By 1978 some of the cuts could be reversed. Only half the IMF loan was drawn and it was paid off long before Healey left office. He writes *"During the long agony of the IMF negotiations I used to talk longingly of "Sod off Day – when I would be free of IMF control.* " That came earlier than expected. But if the economy had improved, the political damage had been done. The social contract between the Labour Government and the unions fell apart, leading ultimately to the so-called "Winter of discontent." When a Labour Government cannot keep the unions on board then its chances of staying in office are slim. But it was not to be a repeat of 1931 – or at least not yet, or in the same way?

In retrospect also 1976 had marked the end of an era in international financial relations, signaling the end of the Bretton Woods agreement, a system of fixed exchange rates set up after the Second World War. From then on the value of currencies depended on demand in the financial markets, which is where we still are today. Markets distrusted governments which were in debt both at home and abroad, and economists were no longer wedded to Keynesian

economics, which would allow them to borrow. Healey writes "*The financial markets were advised by clever young men who are particularly susceptible to changes in academic fashion* - "*teenage scribblers*" according to Nigel Lawson, who were converts to monetarism. Does this sound familiar? This caused conflicts within the UK Treasury and organisations such as the IMF, throughout 1976.
Healey went on to be elected as Chairman of the IMF's Interim Committee, so saw first hand the way in which loans were used to bully Third World countries into changing their policies and punishing the poor. He writes "*In the 1980s the IMF compelled the debtor countries in the Third World to accept draconian conditions in return for financing their deficits. But it was unable to persuade the Western world and Japan to reverse their policies of inadequate growth and import restriction which were in part responsible for creating the Third World deficits in the first place."* The IMF has never been able to impose conditions on the US. The same was true of the European Monetary System (forerunner of the Euro). He writes *"It can impose agreed disciplines only on its weaker members, the strong are able to reject them*". Very prophetic indeed!

Barbara Humphries

Obituaries

Jim Mortimer

Jim Mortimer, General Secretary of the Labour Party 1982-85, who died on 23rd April, was born into a working-class family in Bradford in 1921. His father, crippled since childhood, sold newspapers, and his mother had been a spinner in a textile mill. Both had a Methodist background and socialist convictions.

Owing to the breakdown of his father's health, the family moved to Portsmouth and took a shop. Jim attended a technical school and became an apprentice shipfitter at fifteen years of age. He joined a trade union, was elected to the Trades Council and became active in the Labour League of Youth. He took National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC) courses, read the *Tribune*, Left Book Club and other socialist publications and joined the left-wing Socialist League.

After moving to Brixton to take a clerical job with the London County Council (LCC), he met Ted Willis (who later became a playwright) then a key figure in the Labour League of Youth, and campaigned for a popular front between Labour, Liberals and the Communists to defeat fascism.

Having been turned down for the Fleet Air Arm, Jim took a job as a lathe operator and trained as a draughtsman, which led him to join the Association of Engineering & Shipbuilding Draughtsmen. He obtained a place at Ruskin College, which led to a job with the TUC under General Secretary George Woodcock. In 1948 he became a national official of the AESD, later the Draughtsmen & Allied Technicians' Association (DATA). In this capacity he became known as a leading left-wing trade unionist, alongside Ken Gill, George Doughty, Clive Jenkins and others.

Despite having opposed the 1964-70 Labour Government's incomes policy, Jim accepted an invitation from Labour Minister Barbara Castle to join the Prices & Incomes Board in 1968. This later cost him his seat on the Board of the London Co-operative Society which he had won earlier the same year. However, he was offered a place on the London Transport Executive, on which he served for three years.

From 1974-80 he chaired the Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service (ACAS) set up by the Labour Government and given legal force under the Employment Protection Act 1975. This received the support of the major trade unions. The appointment involved giving up his place on the London Transport Executive, but it was a key position. After his retirement from ACAS, Jim was elected by the NEC of the Labour Party to take over as General Secretary in December 1981.

Having been a member of the Young Communist League during World War II, and been excluded from the Labour Party in 1953 for being a member of the Britain-China Friendship Association, a proscribed organisation, Jim Mortimer was no witch hunter. However, the Labour Party was deeply divided and facing acute financial problems. Jim was wholly committed to supporting Michael Foot as leader in keeping the Party together and preparing for what became the 1983 General Election. One of his first tasks, however, was to deal with an NEC inspired report stating that membership of the Militant Tendency was not compatible with Labour Party membership. He felt he had no alternative to implementing NEC decisions on this issue.

In 1982 Bob Mellish precipitated the Bermondsey by-election, which was lost by Peter Tatchell, the Labour candidate, after a disgraceful campaign by the media and other parties focussing on his sexual orientation.
The biggest adverse factor at this time, however, was the defection of nearly thirty Labour MPs, led by Roy Jenkins, David Owen, Shirley Williams and Bill Rogers, to form the SDP.
Michael Foot has never been accorded the credit he deserves for holding the depleted Labour Party together in the 1983 General Election and keeping ahead of the Alliance. Jim Mortimer played a vital part in this process. Blaming him for saying the Party had full confidence in its leader is nonsensical, although this criticism has been voiced in some obituaries. Gerald Kaufman blamed the manifesto, which he described as "the longest suicide note in history", but the current recession has vindicated key parts of its contents.

Jim Mortimer wrote *A History of the Boilermakers* in three volumes, *History*

of the Association of Engineering & Shipbuilding Draughtsmen, *The Kind of Laws the Unions Ought to Want* with Clive Jenkins, his autobiography *A Life on the Left* and other books. He wrote articles and pamphlets and continued to give talks and lectures into his nineties. On a number of occasions, he spoke at Labour Heritage conferences and his contributions were outstanding.
He was a dedicated socialist, trade unionist and co-operator who devoted his life to the Labour Movement. He is survived by his second wife, Pat, two sons and one daughter.

Stan Newens,

Hilda Smith

Hilda Smith contributed not only to the labour movement during her lifetime, but to its history. It matters that women know that they have been central to the labour movement since its inception, both as members of the Labour Party, the trades Unions and the Co-operative Movement, and in their own organisations, run by women, for women. Hilda lent me her papers and her support to write *The Newer Eve*, which tells the story of these organisations, their aims and activities. The National Joint Committee on which she served had a widely researched, comprehensive and connected plan for running the social services – education, child care, housing, health; for fostering women's employment with decent working conditions and pay; for women's rights as consumers. It did battle with the young Margaret Thatcher, insisting that government should not merely reflect women's position in society, but actively seek its improvement. Here is Hilda Smith's 1982 resolution to the NJC, which could be echoed today: '*That this Committee is seriously concerned at the threat to the welfare state proposed by this Tory Government which will have a disastrous effect on working women and their families'*. Hilda Smith was a fighter; let us hope she continues to inspire others.

Christine Collette

Reports of meetings

Oral labour histories – Britain at work 1945-95

Britain at work (B@W) organized an oral labour history day at the Bishopsgate Institute on Saturday 11th May. It was organized with the Oral History Society and the theme was immigration and migrant workers. This was to celebrate the role that migrant workers have played in the British workforce.
The first presentation was on the Asian women who took strike action at Grunwicks and Gate Gourmet. It was introduced by Dr Sundari Anitha of the University of Lincoln and Professor Ruth Pearson of the University of Leeds and was accompanied by an exhibition. 2006 was the 30th anniversary of the Grunwicks strike. The official history of the strike has been well documented by organisations such as Brent Trades Council. The leader of the strike – Mrs Desai died a few years ago. But researchers have received funding to look at the story from the point of view of the women involved. Based on interviews, they wanted to look at their larger life stories and put their involvement in the strike into perspective. The women involved in the

strike were mainly Asians who had come to the UK from East Africa. They faced class as well as race issues. In Africa they had been professional people with qualifications. They were homeowners who probably employed domestic servants. When they came to the UK and could only find manual labour it was a shock for them. They most resented being bullied and humiliated by the management, who even timed their toilet breaks. They had never taken strike action before. So this was to be a steep learning curve for them. It was for the local workforce as well. But the solidarity of the labour movement prevailed when the North London postal workers – a traditionally white male workforce, opted to put their livelihoods on the line by refusing to handle mail for Grunwicks. These workers however did not get the backing of their union (UPW).

The lasting impact on some of the Grunwicks strikers was that they had been traumatised by what became a long and bitter dispute. For years they wanted to blot it out of their memory. Most of the interviews were conducted in Hindi. For the labour movement, it had been on the one hand a defeat in that the union (APEX) did not gain recognition. But it was a triumph in showing that worker solidarity existed across an increasingly diverse workforce. For some of the women involved, who went on to find other employment, many lessons were learnt and they would not put up with intimidation and bullying in the workforce again.

In contrast the workers at Gate Gourmet (2005 dispute), a firm which delivered aeroplane meals, came from a very different background to the Grunwick strikers. They were originally peasants from the Punjab province of India. They had come to the UK for economic reasons in the 1950s and 1960s, and had long experience of low paid jobs. Some had been in previous industrial disputes. As the dispute progressed these workers were dismissed by megaphone in their coffee break, for refusing to accept worse conditions. When the union (TGWU) accepted a compromise settlement, some turned their anger on the union. But industrial relations law had changed since Grunwicks, making secondary action by airport baggage handlers illegal.

The travelling exhibition “From Grunwicks to Gate Gourment” has been taken into schools for young people to become familiar with aspects of history completely unknown to them. Even for the family descendants of the strikers it has been a eye-opener. They were unaware of how their relatives had been involved in these disputes. This has been the added value or impact of this research.

The afternoon session featured presentations on Irish building workers in the UK, with Linda Clarke, Christine Wall and Sara Goek illustrating how oral history could be used. One of the interviewees – Jack Henry , a former UCATT shop steward on the Barbican building site in the 1960s, was present and contributed to the discussion. Interviews covered not only industrial relations and health and safety at work, but the experience of Irish immigrants and how they maintained their cultural identity by means of their music. Irish music, thought as “peasant music” in Ireland, became popular in London, making it one of the most important centers for Irish music in the world.

Wilf Sullivan (TUC) and Glenroy Watson (RMT) talked about the experience of black workers on the

railways. Black workers have been part of the British working class, for centuries but in the 1950s many were recruited in the Caribbean to work on London Transport. LT offered basic accommodation for these workers near to large bus depots, as in Brixton and Tottenham and these areas were to become the basis for the black communities that we know today.
Finally Joanna Bornat (Oral History Society) spoke about the role of immigrant workers in creating the NHS. So much so that it should be called the "International health service". Many nurses came from Ireland or the Caribbean. But even in 1946 there were 1,000 Asian doctors in the UK. Many faced discrimination and entered what were regarded as unpopular ghettos such as psychiatry or geriatric nursing. We were shown a poster from the 1950s entitled "Black angels from the Empire".
The day was attended by over 50 people – a mix of academic researchers, activists in the trades union movement, and those representing migrant workers with special concern for their welfare. It was the second event hosted by "Britain at work" . The TUC library web site has details and links to tapes of interviewees for the "Britain at work" project. These include some members of Labour Heritage who have been interviewed.
http://www.unionhistory.info/britainatwork/

Socialist History Society meeting on Sylvia Pankhurst

This was held on Wednesday 15th May at the Bishopsgate Institute. Katherine Connelly a research student from Queen Mary College, University of London gave a talk on Sylvia Pankhurst – the dangerous suffragette. The Suffragette Movement was now part of our political heritage but some of the more militant suffragettes were not so kindly regarded by the establishment. Another was Emily Wilding Davidson – it had been difficult to persuade the organisers of the Epsom Derby to hold a one minute silence in respect of the anniversary of her death 100 years ago. Sylvia's political commitment extended beyond women's suffrage. She regarded herself as a revolutionary. She supported the Russian Revolution of 1917 , admired Lenin and declared herself in favour of communism. She believed that the campaign for votes for women was part of the struggle for social change. She identified with the unemployed and with the anti-fascist movement in Ethiopia. Increasingly she differentiated herself from the" respectable" wing of the suffragettes, and would always point out that the movement had its roots in the Independent Labour Party and class politics.
In 1911 she supported the great Bermondsey Uprising of women factory workers – meeting some of the women. Whilst visiting the US she had the courage to speak out against racism and attend meetings of black workers in what were segregated areas, such as Missouri. She saw that there was a common struggle between all those who were oppressed.