



# Labour Heritage

## Bulletin Spring 2019

**Contents: West London History Day: Labour in London, Feltham Labour and the Railways, Alice Gilliatt, Peterloo, Jack Jones film, Reviews of Minnie Lansbury and Behemoth.**

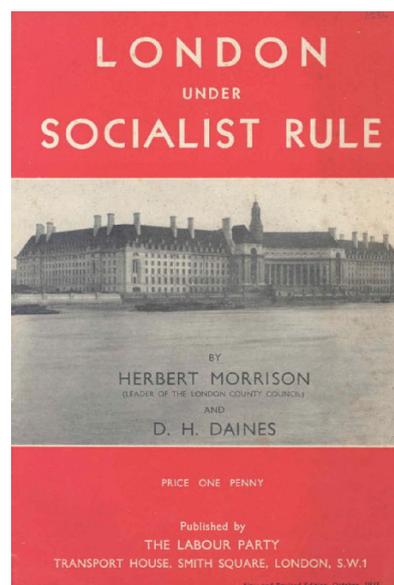
### West London History Day: Labour in London

This event was held on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> February at the Quaker Hall in Hammersmith. It was attended by over 30 people. Two of our scheduled speakers had been unable to attend due to ill health. However Dr Michael Tichelar, Visiting Fellow in History at the University of the West of England, gave us a summary of his speech to be read out. He has been commissioned by Routledge to write a book on 'Why is London Labour?'

### Why is London Labour? A History of Progressive Metropolitan Politics

This book will seek to answer why has London been a stronghold for the Labour Party for relatively long periods of the last century, apart from the period before 1914 and between the 1970s and the end of the 1990s? Before the First World War, London was regarded as a weak area for Labour politics with only three MPs and very few elected councillors. But during the 1920s and up to the 1960s London (mainly inner but also in some parts of the outer suburbs) became a solidly Labour area making a significant contribution to its national success as a governing party. It had by 1929 replaced the Liberals in London as the main opposition to the Conservatives, despite the debacle of 1931. By 1945 the capital had developed,

according to a recent study of the East End, into a 'municipal social democracy', in which the London County Council (LCC) and the local boroughs, together with the support of national government, 'had significantly improved the quality of life and had to a significant extent reversed the overcrowding, poverty and social disorganisation which had been characteristic of the East End before 1914.'



Labour Party Pamphlet from 1935

But after 1970 Labour's share of the vote declined in line with national trends such as growing working-class affluence, the slow de-alignment of class and voting and the dispersal and turnover of population to the suburbs and beyond. The economy of London was restructured from one based on manufacturing to one dominated by finance, services and the creative industries, becoming a 'City of Rampant

Capitalism,' by the turn of the twenty- first century. This coincided in the 1980s with the emergence of the 'New Left' on the Greater London Council (GLC) and many Labour-controlled councils. The growth of student radicalism and community activism, such as squatting, challenged the old guard which had controlled many constituency Labour parties and council Labour groups since the 1940s. Aging membership and poor political organisation, born of complacency and voter apathy, created the circumstances for a revival of the left. Taken together with a revival in the fortunes of the Liberal Party and the formation of the breakaway Social Democratic Party (SDP), these developments combined to badly reduce the national swing back to Labour in London in the 1987 General Election. But after the 1997 General Election, Labour regained its dominant position in the capital and this was consolidated in the two general elections which followed in 2001 and 2005. London continues to be a stronghold for the Party to this day to an extent that surprises many commentators. London now has an electorate that votes Labour by clear and increasing majorities. Its population has become 'socially liberal, multi-racial and cross-class', made up of a significant proportion of students and ethnic minorities (35% of the population is non-white, 54% of which votes Labour). It has been estimated that a quarter of the membership of Momentum, the left-wing pressure group supporting Jeremy Corbyn, lives in London.

A book on 'Why is London Labour?' remains a serious gap in the history of the capital, the Labour Party and national politics. The problems of London's size and complexity cannot and will not be ignored. The book will be based on a synthesis and summary of existing histories for London at a regional level as well as new research into four specific areas not covered in any depth by historians to date (Brent & Croydon in outer London and Lambeth & Hackney in

Inner London). The book will acknowledge the remarkable fluidity of London's boundaries and the extraordinary degree of population changes since 1900. A longer version of the paper I intended to give today is available on request, outlining the scope and approach of the book, its methodology and the debates and controversies to be addressed (Franchise Factor or effect of the First World War) for the earlier period and 'The Forward March of Labour Halted' for the later period. Michael Tichelar would welcome any feedback for his book.

### **Labour in London: Why the Late Start?**

The second speaker was John Grigg on Labour in London - Why the Late Start?

He said that the Labour Party in London was slow off the ground compared with other parts of the country. This was the period between 1900, when the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) was formed and the beginning of World War 1 in 1914.

During that time there was a virtual absence of Labour parliamentary candidates in the 58 London divisions, apart from three divisions – Woolwich, West Ham and Deptford, where the Liberal Party stood aside to give Labour a free run in 1906. This enabled Labour to get its first wins in London and was part of the deal which Ramsay MacDonald did with the Liberals, who stood down in some seats. In return Labour stood down in others where the Liberals feared that Labour would split the vote and let the Tories in. In fact there was a Liberal candidate in Deptford put up by the local Liberal Association that ignored the deal but Charles Bowerman managed to win for Labour.

As a result Labour won 29 seats in 1906 including the three in London, but half were in Lancashire and five were in the North East. Almost all were a result of the

Liberals providing free runs for Labour. What strength Labour had in the north of England was courtesy of the Liberals.



George Bowerman MP for Deptford 1906

In London between 1900 and 1914, apart from the three successful seats courtesy of the Liberals, Labour ran official candidates in only two seats. That was one less than the Social Democratic Federation (SDF). In seven seats there were the Lib/Lab candidates who were trade unionists allied to the Liberal Party. In four seats independent Labour candidates popped up, men standing as Labour without the official backing and support of the party. One of these was George Belt in Hammersmith in 1906, and is an illustration how right the Liberals were in fearing Labour candidates splitting the vote. George polled only 885 votes and the Tories sneaked in by 549. The Liberal candidate who tried twice more to win the seat in 1910 was predictably disgruntled.

So that was the situation in London. Why was this so? One reason was financial. In the North trade unions backed Labour candidates, but the trades union movement was not so strong in London and to an extent still retained links with the Liberal Party – a hangover from the past.

Also, of course there was Ramsay MacDonald's secret deal with the Liberals and we don't know which, if any, seats he had agreed to not contest in London in return for the free runs in Woolwich, West Ham and Deptford.

An interesting illustration, maybe a typical one, was what happened in Brentford in 1905, a year before the 1906 General Election. Mr Osborne of Whitestile Road, Brentford wrote to Ramsay MacDonald, secretary of the Labour Representation Committee saying that Mr Haley had been invited to stand as a candidate for the Brentford Division at the forthcoming parliamentary election and as he had no money of his own was asking for financial support. Ramsay MacDonald asked his assistant secretary to explain to Mr. Osborne the expenses situation and how candidates should be selected. In the reply the assistant secretary explained that initially parliamentary candidates must be promoted by an affiliated society in the constituency that must undertake the financial responsibility of the candidature. Selection must take place at a local LRC conference of all affiliated trade unionist, socialist and Co-operative organisations in the constituency in the presence of a LRC National Executive Committee member who would report on the representative character of the local conference. The only financial support available was 25% of the returning officers' expenses. There was no individual membership of the party then. It was a coalition of trade unions, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and the Fabian Society and local branches of those organisations had to meet together to decide about a parliamentary candidate. The point about the returning officers expenses was that in those days the cost of the election was divided between the candidates. That could be considerable. So lack of funds was one factor for Labour in London. However there were more fundamental reasons.

The driving force behind the formation of the LRC in 1900 was the ILP. Although the ILP had strength in the North, where it was founded in the 1890s, it took a while to grow in London where the SDF and the Fabian Society were already established. The dominant part of the labour movement

in London was, of course, the trade unions. The London Trades Council (LTC) was formed in 1859 by the craft unions which as elsewhere were allied to the Liberal Party.

From 1906 the Party's National Executive Committee (NEC) unsuccessfully intervened several times to establish a London Labour Party. The breakthrough came in 1913.

(For more on the early years of Labour in London see article by John Grigg in the Labour Heritage Bulletin, Autumn 2018).

### **Labour in the West London Suburbs**

After the tea-break Barbara Humphries, who is completing a PhD on the history of the labour movement in west London 1918-1970, at the University of Reading, gave an assessment of Labour in the west London suburbs of Ealing and Hillingdon. As a 'west London girl', born in the area, she is untypical of the population of these suburbs, many of who moved into the area to find work over the years.

The history of the labour movement, which includes the Labour Party, trades unions and Co-operative Movement, as well as smaller parties of the left, in London suburbs has been neglected and received little attention from historians. Partly this is because most histories have been 'institutional', not relating to Labour's grassroots, but there is a particular problem in defining the geographical area of London's suburbs, many of which are towns in their own right as well as being part of the London conurbation. Ealing and Hillingdon for instance were part of the county of Middlesex in 1918.

West London was characterised by a changing and diverse population, and late industrialisation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which was to change the political landscape forever. However in spite of becoming one of the most industrialised parts of the

country, it was never to be regarded as a 'Labour Heartland'. In the 1950s the Conservatives were able to stage a comeback, based on post-war affluence, and the votes of middle class commuters, who still formed a large part of the electorate. Ealing, the 'Queen of Suburbs' existed alongside growing industrial towns, like Southall, Acton and Hayes. Neither was it the case that Labour's electoral gains in the interwar years rested on the building of a strong trades union movement. During the 1930s recession trades unions had an up-hill struggle in gaining a foothold in west London factories. However Labour ran Southall and Hayes councils for most of the 1920s and 1930 and built communities as in Botwell, Hayes from scratch, with schools and public health clinics as well as housing. The Co-operative Movement was also very strong on new housing estates, and there was a lot of support for organisations like the Labour Party Women's Sections and the Women's Co-operative Guild. By the 1930s local Labour Parties in west London had some of the fastest growing memberships. The area experienced population growth, many came from 'distressed areas' like the South Wales mining valleys. It was mainly a young population who migrated to find work, and this was reflected in the significant vote for Labour in 1945, with many first time voters.



EMI in Hayes made gramophone records. It attracted workers from South Wales. (Hayes Peoples History)

The backbone of the labour movement in 1918 had been the transport unions, the NUR and TGWU. They tried to get their

members adopted as parliamentary and council candidates and provided finance for the Labour Party in elections. Joe Sparks, an Acton councillor and elected MP for Acton in 1945 worked for the Great Western Railway. By 1945 however other trades unions, particularly the AEU gained ground in west London factories, and mobilised their members to support Labour candidates in 1945.

West London post 1945 continued to be an area of high employment and attracted migrant workers, from the Republic of Ireland and the Indian sub-continent. These workers, as individuals and communities were to provide support for Labour and the trades unions.

### **Chiswick's Working Class Glebe Estate**

The final speaker was Tracey Logan who gave a talk on Chiswick's Working Class Glebe Estate.

There is a working class-shaped hole in the Victorian history of Chiswick that research into its Glebe Estate is helping to fill. Much is known of the parish's aristocratic past; its eighteenth and nineteenth century neo-Palladian Chiswick House and landscaped gardens, for example, or the late-nineteenth century social and political whirl of its 'rural-minded' middle class commuters in the 'garden suburb' of Bedford Park. But of Chiswick's working classes, in an era famous for public health, social and political reform, we know little. This at a time when Thornycroft's riverside shipbuilders were launching the world's fastest steam-powered torpedo ships into the Thames at Chiswick.

In the 1890s the Vicar of Chiswick recalled that: 'In the fifties, large houses tenanted by well to do families were the rule throughout the parish; ... now [it] is the abode principally of artizans, mechanics, and grades of society considerably below these, while factories of various kinds cover sites formerly occupied by substantial residences and grounds'. Those artisans – men with a trade like builders, plumbers and engineers – had to live somewhere and by the 1860s expected healthier, more aspirational dwellings than

their forebears. That was what the Glebe Estate's *bijou* 'villas' and 'terraces' offered. Built between 1868 and the 1890s, its 470 dwellings offered gardens front and back, private WCs, fireplaces and large windows in every room. These housed the kind of men first granted the vote in 1867 by Benjamin Disraeli's Second Reform Act. Their stability and industry were thought worthy of the nation's trust, although Lord Derby, Disraeli's boss the Conservative Prime Minister, thought this was something of a 'leap in the dark.' From clues in the Glebe Estate's landscape we find evidence that Chiswick's Vicar, and its local government, were equally unsure that their new working class community would be sufficiently respectable.

It was not philanthropists but investors who leased and developed the Glebe Estate. It was all done on a purely capitalist basis. They were a four-man consortium of three leading water engineers and a starch salesman who almost certainly met as investors in limited liability joint stock companies between 1864 and 1865, just before that bubble burst with the collapse of Overend and Gurney. Unprotected now by limited liability, they would have been as keen as the Vicar of Chiswick, the Reverend LWT Dale, to ensure that any property development on his 20 acre Glebe Field would contain decent homes, since these would bring in the highest ground rents. The Vicar needed the money to support his energetic mission to the very poor of Chiswick, especially in Chiswick New Town whose dense housing (no front gardens here) bordered the future Glebe Estate's plot.

Alexander Fraser, architect of the Grand Junction Water Works (GJWW) Company's Italianate water tower at Brentford, was the first name on the 999 year Glebe Estate lease. He was joined by the GJWW's Chief Engineer Joseph Quick and his son, Joseph Quick Jr. who already had a string of property investments to his name. The consortium's fourth member was George Reckitt, London salesman for the new Hull-based firm of Reckitt and Sons. Their names, and those of the Duke of Devonshire and Reverend Dale, are commemorated in the Glebe Estate's street names along with that of their solicitor, William Binns Smith. At this time, solicitors were often the linchpins of such speculative

property developments, introducing investors to each other and to new opportunities. The Glebe Estate, just five minute's walk from the London and South Western Railway's new service from Turnham Green Terrace into town, opened in 1869, would make it a '*des res*' location-wise. Though Fraser and the others had water and sanitary engineering prowess, there is little evidence of this in the early Glebe Estate, whose effluent almost certainly flowed illegally into the Thames for its first decade of construction, and whose drinking water was unlikely to have been constantly on tap. But the generous layout of the Glebe Estate, its forty foot wide roads and its low terraces, make the streets surprisingly bright and airy. Could this landscape design have been intended help keep the Glebe respectable?

Charles Otter, in his *Making Liberalism Durable*, has argued that in late-Victorian cities, open and well-lit streetscapes constituted a 'bourgeois visual environment,' where '[t]he respectable mastered their passions in public spaces conducive to the exercise of clear, controlled perception of wide streets, squares.' This was not considered typical of the shadowy courts and alleys of working class slums. Chiswick's local government at the time appeared to have considered the Glebe Estate's wide streets a good idea, as in 1870 it passed bye-laws restricting the height of new buildings to the width of the road between them. It may have been influenced by conditions in the nearby estates of South Acton, whose recently-built working class dwellings were notorious for their pig-keeping and bone boiling for glue.

In the face of an early 1870s recession, the Glebe Estate's original lessees quickly abandoned the idea of developing its housing themselves and auctioned off plots to builders and smaller property investors, leading oversight to the Estate's unfortunate and complaining early residents and Chiswick's Improvement Commissioners. We know that the Estate developed as a kind of workers' town, set aside from the Chiswick High Road's main shopping area. By 1913 the Glebe had 32 shops, a very impressive pub and a temperance mission hall to make up for that. In 1895 fortnightly meetings of the Independent Labour Party were held there, but

not in 1896 for reasons still to be discovered. Had Charles Booth's poverty surveyors visited Chiswick in the 1890s, we might have understood whether, once completed, the Glebe Estate was home mainly to the 'vicious; semi-criminal' or the 'fairly comfortable.' We might then form a view as to why the embryonic Labour Party stayed away. But Booth's scrutineers did not step outside the London County borders of London, so we have to work harder to learn about Chiswick's Victorian poor. Further research is needed, in archives and in the Glebe Estate's now firmly middle-class streets, to extract more clues from this fossil, and others, of Chiswick's working class heritage and really understand our nineteenth century history.

## **The Labour Party in Feltham and the Influence of the Railway**

**By Derek Wheatley**

### **Introduction**

The hamlets of Feltham, Hanworth and Bedfont, which would later be combined into the Feltham Urban District Council (UDC), were located on Hounslow Heath and were primarily agricultural, vast acreages being devoted to orchards, market gardens and nurseries which supplied the London markets. Feltham was part of the Staines Rural District Council (RDC) but Hanworth and Bedfont were merely parishes with small populations. The coming of the railway in 1848 when the line from Richmond to Windsor was opened with a station in Feltham resulted in the centre moving from around the parish church on the Sunbury Road to the area of the station. The railway became a significant employer with its full station staff, three signal boxes and a small goods yard, but otherwise did not change the 'country' feel of the area.

In 1903 the Feltham District Council was created but remained part of the Staines RDC. In the early years its councillors would have mainly been the owners of the farm land with other prosperous business

men, all of whom probably took up their positions without the need for elections. If any elections were actually held the candidates described themselves as Independent or Ratepayer. Hanworth and Bedfont were not included in the new authority but would be absorbed into the new Feltham Urban District in 1930. By 1911 the population, including Hanworth and Feltham, had grown to 9,748 and stood at 11,567 in 1921.

1915 saw the appearance of an independent candidate who was a reformist, particularly interested in the housing of the working class according to his policy statement.

### **The Coming of Industry**

In the years immediately following World War 1 the London and South Western Railway (LSWR) commenced work on huge marshalling yards and a locomotive depot at Feltham. It was completed in 1923 by the Southern Railway (SR) and became the single largest employer in the area. In preparation for this the LSWR commenced a process of buying land and houses in the immediate vicinity for housing employees and their families in 1918. It was soon realised that a larger number of houses and flats were going to be needed than the open market could provide and plans were made for houses and flats to be built on the land acquired earlier. Eventually accommodation for 128 families was completed, the majority being by the SR.

The growth of the population and the increased activity brought about by the opening of the marshalling yards attracted a number of companies to build factories in the area. Among these was the Union Finance & Construction Company (UCC), which was formed in 1901 but remained moribund until a factory was opened in Feltham in 1925 for the construction of tube trains, trams and trolleybuses. It was short-lived, however, as it was forced to close down in 1933 when the London

Passenger Transport Board (LPTB) was set up. This latter organisation had acquired the company as part of the absorption of the Underground Electric Railways of London Company and the London General Omnibus Company ('the Combine') who together owned it. Prohibited from building rail or road vehicles the LPTB had no option but to wind up the UCC. Prior to this Minimax opened a factory in Feltham in 1911 manufacturing fire extinguishers, continuing to do so until closure in the 1980s.

Another company was General Aviation Ltd at Hanworth Air Park, building Monospar aircraft between 1935 and 1949. In addition there was a large Royal Army Service Corps depot in Feltham which even had its own spur line to the railway to its north. It is still in existence today although the spur line was lifted some years ago.

Many of the employees at the above would, of course, have been Feltham residents with the rest coming in from outside. Equally, a number of Feltham residents would have been employed in the factories on the Great West Road in Isleworth and Brentford (known as 'The Golden Mile'). After World War 2 the growing London Airport provided work for many more.

The extent to which industry growth in Feltham impacted on the population can be seen in the figures for 1931 (16,076), 1941 (estimated at 36,620), 1951 (44,861), and 1959 (estimated to be 51,750).

Construction of houses and flats, both municipal and private, was carried out at an ever-increasing annual rate throughout this period.

### **British Railways**

Following the 1960 Reshaping Plan, British Railways began a programme of dispensing with wagonload and short-trip freight workings and moving towards block trains of mineral and ore wagons,

containers and car transporters. These measures, together with the transfer of the Southern Region lines west of Salisbury to the Western Region in 1963, had a devastating effect on activities in the marshalling yards and locomotive depot. I recall a visit to an old schoolboy haunt on Hounslow Heath overlooking the complex in 1965. There was hardly anything going on in the marshalling yards and the shed lines were almost empty when, in Feltham's heyday, there would have been rows of locomotives. All the goods lines and sidings were taken out of use in 1969. The shed was closed to steam in 1967 but survived for a handful of diesels until it, too, became derelict in 1970. Obviously the number of employees fell dramatically to almost zero during this period. It would be only a few retired railwaymen who would remain from the fairly large contingent of railwaymen in the membership of the Labour Party in earlier years. There is no doubt that these stalwarts were instrumental in building its strength over the years.

### **The Fortunes of the Labour Party 1919 to 1963**

The first recorded mention of the Labour Party that I have been able to find was in 1919 when the local newspaper reported that four Labour candidates fought for seats in Feltham for the first time. Two were successful. It can be deduced from this that the Party had been formed only a few years before this. At that time, and for many years, the council comprised 18 councillors who served three years; one-third of them retired every year but could, of course, seek re-election. At the beginning of each municipal year the councillors elected a chairman, there being no aldermen or mayor. For each annual election there was only one ballot paper listing all nominated candidates (bear in mind that this was for Feltham only, Hanworth and Bedfont not yet being part of the authority).

In 1920 Labour was able to find six candidates (one of whom was a railway clerk) but, again, only two were successful. In the next few years there was little change in the composition of the council until 1930 with the creation of the Feltham UDC embracing Feltham (9 councillors), Hanworth (5 councillors) and Bedfont (4 councillors). The turning point was 1938 when the three Labour candidates in Feltham were elected (one a locomotive mechanic), two were successful in Hanworth (one a Southern Railway employee, the other his wife(!), the first woman to sit on the council), but the one independent in Bedfont could not be deposed. The result meant that Labour and the Independents each held nine seats but at an acrimonious first meeting the Independent chairman used his casting vote in favour of his colleague in the election of a new chairman. Justice was done, however, in December when Labour gained a seat from the Independents in a Feltham by-election and thus gained control for the first time albeit by only ten to eight.

The seemingly unstoppable march of the Party must have disillusioned the Independents as they withdrew entirely in Feltham and Hanworth in the 1939 election. This action gave the unopposed Labour Party 3 seats in Feltham and 3 gains from the Independents in Hanworth. Bedfont, a more affluent area than the other two, remained true to the Independents, however. The council was now Labour 16, Independents 2.

### **Post 1945**

There would not have been any full elections during World War 2. The electoral truce agreed between the Labour, Conservative and Liberals would have given the Independents a clear run in any by-elections and it is apparent from the pre-1946 composition of the council that Independents won three from Labour during this period. In 1946 the

Conservative and Communist Parties put up one and three candidates respectively in Feltham itself to no avail and the council remained at Labour 13, Independents 5.

At a by-election in Feltham in 1947 a Conservative who was previously an Independent won a seat from Labour and, then, at the full elections they gained three seats in Feltham and two in Hanworth from Labour, and won one in Bedfont, all in straight fights. The local newspaper reported that the new council was Labour 10, Conservatives 7 and Independents 3 but the figures do not stack up (there would have been only 18 councillors in total – surely the council was Labour 7, Conservatives 6 and Independents 3 but then what happened to two of the Independents?)

In 1948, the Conservatives had a clean sweep, recording gains in Feltham (four seats; a lone Communist also stood), Hanworth (two seats in a straight fight) and held one in Bedfont (also a straight fight). Nevertheless the Labour vote overall was higher than anything previously achieved! The local paper reported that the council now comprised Conservatives 13 and Labour 5 but again there is an unexplained mystery. Why were four seats contested in Feltham, why did Labour only drop to five when they lost six seats, and what happened to the three Independents?

The rate of decline was halted in 1949 when the Conservatives gained only one seat (in Feltham, where the lone Communist continued to plug away) while Labour held the other two, and their two seats in Hanworth in a straight fight, and the Conservatives held their single seat in Bedfont, again in a straight fight. The composition of the council was now Conservatives 14, Labour 4.

At this point, it should be explained that the Labour Government had become unpopular because the public perceived that the land of milk and honey they thought should have arrived (in spite of the enormous problems faced by the

government) was being denied to them, a perception gleefully stoked up by the Conservatives and their press allies. In spite of this 1950 was a turning-point for Labour in the Feltham area. They had a clean sweep in Feltham (against Conservative, Liberal and Communist candidates) taking the three seats, in Hanworth where they gained two (in a straight fight with the Conservatives), and even gained a seat in Bedfont for the first time ever (again in a straight fight). Labour were back in control by 10 seats to 8.

### **Labour Gains in the 1950s and 1960s**

1951 saw an increase in the number of councillors to 21 no doubt because of the population growth since 1931. At the same time elections were held on a ward basis; Feltham North would have three councillors, Feltham South nine, Hanworth six, and Bedfont three. In this year the Conservatives won two seats against Labour's one in Feltham North, all four in Feltham South and two in Bedfont, while Labour gained the one in Hanworth. The results were very close in nearly every ward but Labour just scraped a majority of 11-10.

A long sequence of Labour winning every seat commenced with the 1952 elections and continued through to 1959. These victories were nearly always in straight fights with the Conservatives although in 1959 two Liberals in Hanworth also tried their luck. The elimination of the opposition on the council took three years from 1951. Labour majorities were successively 1952 14-7, 1953 15-6 and 1954 21-0 and remained at 100% until 1960. A strange incident was reported at the 1958 elections: it seems that a 13-year old boy was able to cast his vote in one of the wards and Middlesex County Council Alderman Frank Towell (Labour) was later fined £1 in the local magistrates' court for permitting it!

The first Conservative wins for a number of years came in 1960. They gained three

in Feltham South where there was Liberal intervention, and one in Bedfont but failed to unseat the Labour members in Feltham North and Hanworth in spite of Liberal intervention in both. These losses only dented the overall majority to 17-4.

Interestingly two of the Labour candidates in Feltham South were railwaymen, one describing himself as a member of the Amalgamated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, the other as a locomotive driver, clearly employed at the Feltham locomotive depot.

1960 was a bad year for Labour nationally following the huge Conservative victory at the 1959 'You've never had it so good' General Election. Yet in 1961 Labour again had a clean sweep and included two extra seats (one each in Feltham North and Hanworth) with strong Liberal intervention everywhere. These results gave Labour a 19-4 majority according to the local newspaper. It is not clear why these two extra seats were fought for unless they were vacancies created by the retirement or death of sitting councillors and the newspaper wrongly reported what was, in fact, a 17-4 majority.

Labour again won all seats in 1962 and the majority was once more said to be 19-4. The mystery remained of where the two extra seats came from. The Liberals were now a strong fighting force in the Feltham area and they had some sort of success in pushing some Conservatives into third place in the two Feltham wards and in Bedfont. Strangely the only opposition to Labour in Hanworth was the candidature of an Independent Christian.

### **Last Year of the Feltham Urban District Council**

The last year of the Feltham UDC was 1963. The new London Boroughs would be taking over in 1964 and Feltham UDC was combined with Heston & Isleworth and Brentford & Chiswick Borough Councils to create the London Borough of Hounslow (Spelthorne Urban District

Council was also to have been included in this but a local revolt resulted in them being allowed to opt out and become a Borough Council under Surrey County Council). Labour went out with a blaze of glory with another clean sweep and 100% control of the council. As in 1962 there were some very close battles between the Conservatives and Liberals.

At the 1963 elections for the new London Borough Labour won all the seats on offer in Feltham and also had remarkable results in the other two areas. These gave Labour a 48-12 majority on the new authority.

### **County Council and Parliamentary Elections**

Until 1930 Feltham did not send any representatives to the Middlesex County Council, instead voting was as part of the Staines Rural District. From this year the Feltham UDC was entitled to one representative. I have not researched the results of elections but it is safe to assume that more often than not that the representative would have been Labour. Even though having a large population it was not until 1955 that Feltham became a parliamentary constituency. Prior to this the area was part of the Spelthorne constituency and although the Labour vote here would have been heavy it would have been swamped by the Conservative votes in the more affluent Staines, Sunbury, Ashford, Shepperton, Laleham and Stanwell wards. The first Labour MP was Albert Hunter, a much-respected man, who won the seat with a comfortable 3,350 majority. He also won in 1959 and 1964 but stood down for the first 1966 election. He was succeeded by Russell Kerr who represented both Feltham and the new Feltham & Heston constituencies until 1983 when he lost the seat in the Conservative landslide.

## The Role of the Ladies

It has clearly been demonstrated that the railwaymen made a significant contribution to the success of Labour in Feltham from modest beginnings to electoral invincibility. Of course, there would be other men not employed on the railway and their participation would have had some influence, and the valuable part played by the ladies should not be underestimated. Some of these were known to be wives of railwaymen and some could have worked on the railway during the Second World War as ticket collectors, ticket office clerks and cleaners. Their forte was canvassing, running committee rooms, and number taking at polling stations, all important functions during elections.

There is a file of minutes of the Women's Section at the London Metropolitan Archives but I only examined one of minute books for the period 22 June 1939 to 29 February 1940 and it makes for pretty mundane reading. Attendances ranged between 6 and 11 but, after September 1940, the threat of evening air raids could have dissuaded some of the ladies from venturing out.

### Alice Gilliatt (1880-1957)

**By Kath Shawcross (Archivist, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham)**

Little is known about Alice Gilliatt today besides that a housing estate (Gilliatt Court) and school (Gilliatt Fulham, now Fulham Cross) were named in her honour and I expect many aren't familiar with the origins of the name.

However, a great deal should be known about Alice as she was a pioneering woman, active as a campaigner for women's suffrage, a founding member of the Association of Women Pharmacists, a London County Council Justice of the Peace and last but not least the first female mayor of the Borough of Fulham.



Alice as Mayor

Alice was born in December 1880 in Boston, Lincolnshire to William and Alice Gilliatt. She was the eldest of four siblings (two sisters and a brother). Her father was a chemist and merchant but died when Alice was just eight years old. After his death her mother took on running the pharmaceutical business founded by her husband. So from an early age we can see that Alice and her siblings had a strong female role model in their mother. Alice went to school locally and at some point made her way to London where she enrolled at the South London School for Pharmacy. In 1903 it was noted in the press that she had successfully passed the minor examination, being awarded two medals.

For a short period of time we lose track of Alice but we know from references in the Local Studies Collection that she moved to 6 Stevenage Road, Fulham in 1907. Alice remained at Stevenage Road until her death in 1957.

We know of some of Alice's activity as a suffrage campaigner from *The Suffragette*, the weekly organ of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). Between October 1912 and the summer of 1914 she



## Film Reviews

By Barbara Humphries

### Peterloo and its Place in History



2019 is the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historical event known as Peterloo. Over 60,000 peaceful demonstrators calling for the right to vote at St Peters Fields in Manchester on August 16<sup>th</sup> 1819 faced an onslaught from the local yeomanry. As a result of this attack at the command of Manchester magistrates, fifteen demonstrators were killed, and several hundred more were injured.

Peterloo, as it was called took place after the defeat of the French by British troops at the Battle of Waterloo. However its significance in history has not received the same extent of publicity. After the end of the Napoleonic Wars workers in England faced large scale unemployment. The Corn Laws designed to protect prices for the landed gentry were keeping the cost of bread high, thus leading to widespread hunger. Industrialisation was taking its toll on the livelihoods of hand loom weavers as their jobs were replaced in modern factories in the cotton trade of Lancashire. In 1819 there was mass discontent, leading to an insurrectionary mood in parts of the country. The British Establishment feared a revolution as in France and sent its spies into radical political groups.

Peterloo however was a mass peaceful demonstration of the working class for

political change. In 1819 very few had the right to vote in Britain. Only the landed gentry were represented in Parliament. Growing industrial cities like Manchester had no MPs at all. The demonstrators at St Peters Fields called for universal manhood suffrage.

Mike Leigh's film Peterloo was therefore a welcome attempt to familiarise the public, using the medium of the cinema, of this event of epic significance in British history. Films about the working class are few and far between. Usually they are kitchen-sink dramas which portray their subjects as victims fallen on hard times, sometimes turning to crime as a way out. Rarely is the working class portrayed as standing up for its rights, and if violence is used by the authorities, it is in a far-away country, not ours. Can we know that people were killed whilst demanding the right to vote in Manchester?

So this film has been a brave initiative. For those of us who saw the film, whether we knew about the events at Peterloo or not, to see on screen images of ordinary people peacefully protesting, dressed up for a day out even, with their children, struck down without mercy by the local troops, is indeed very powerful and sickening.

The film explores the background to the demonstration, introducing us to some of the participants and their reasons for taking part in it. It shows the differences of opinion between those who wanted a peaceful orderly protest without arms, and those who advocated that the workers needed armed protection. Orator Henry Hunt who was dragged off the platform and arrested on the day, was adamant that the demonstration, in contrast to earlier protests had to be dignified and peaceful. It was probably this above all else that alarmed the ruling class. The working class could organise on a political basis. The film shows the collusion between the Government of Lord Liverpool in

Westminster and local magistrates, although the latter were divided about how soon they could 'read the Riot Act' and send in the troops.

However there is no postscript at the end of the film to put Peterloo into a historical context, and show what was to happen next. It was to be over 100 years before universal manhood suffrage came about, when the Representation of the People Act was passed in 1918. Up until that time the right to vote had been limited, and with property ownership qualifications. The popular demand for annual elections has never been achieved. So what happened?

The struggle for political reform continued. The violence used by the Establishment was a sign of their own political bankruptcy. E.P. Thompson in his *Making of the English Working Class* wrote that the enduring influence of Peterloo lay in its sheer horror. Ten years later it was an event to be remembered, even among the gentry with guilt. As a massacre it went down to the next generation, and because of its odium it became a victory for 'The Free Born Englishman'. Even Old Corruption knew in its heart 'that it dare not do this again.' Hence the right to public assembly had been effectively granted. Future generations were to face violence, as in Bloody Sunday in 1887, and during the Great Unrest of 1911, where two railway workers were killed. But not on the same scale as the massacre of Peterloo.

Peterloo had two impacts on the movement for political reform. Firstly it was questioned whether there could be a peaceful route to political change in Britain. This was to be reflected later in the divisions within the Chartist Movement between Moral Force Chartism and Physical Force Chartism. ('peacefully if we may, forcibly if we must.'). The second change was in the class nature of political reform movement. Demonstrators

at Peterloo had been overwhelmingly working class. The film has clips of workless handloom weavers from Lancashire cotton towns drilling on the local moors. On the Monday of the demonstration, local factories in Manchester are idle as the cotton spinners 'took the day off.' We get an insight into the appalling housing conditions in which local people lived, and the brutal injustice handed out by magistrates. People could be hanged for stealing a coat, for instance. By the time of the 1832 Reform Act leaders of the movement for political reform tended to come from the rising class of industrial factory owners and manufacturers and those who spoke for them. They were the main beneficiaries of the 1832 Act. When the National Chartist Association was born in 1839, the working class was again on its own to continue the fight for the right to vote. A right which increasingly became linked to the aim of improving their lives. As one of the Chartists said, the vote will bring us more bread, beef and beer!

### **Jack Jones Unsung Hero**

Ealing Trades Union Council and Labour Heritage held a film show of *Jack Jones Unsung Hero* at the West London Trades Union Club in January. Originally publicised for Friday 11<sup>th</sup> January, a second showing was offered by the WLTUC for the following Tuesday, because it was very popular and more people wanted to book than we could fit in one evening. In total 59 people attended.



The film was made by the Jack Jones Trust to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth in Liverpool in 1913. It tells the story of his life, including interviews with himself, his wife and son, current prominent trades union leaders such as Frances O'Grady secretary of the TUC and Len McCluskey of UNITE, and journalist Owen Jones.

Jack Jones was born into a poverty stricken family in Liverpool. His father, a docker and a trades union activist had been involved in the 1926 General Strike. Jack himself had been a messenger runner for the local Council of Action during the strike. After a number of jobs, Jack followed his father on to the Liverpool docks where he became a shop steward for the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU). This is now part of UNITE. He became a socialist after reading Robert Tressell's *Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*. He soon joined the local Labour Party. During the 1930s he was involved in the fight against Oswald Mosley's fascists in his local town. His anti-fascist activities led him to involvement in Aid for Spain, supporting those who were fighting in Spain to defend the democratically elected left wing government against the forces of General Franco. He also went out to fight in Spain in the International Brigades. He joined the Major Clement Attlee Battalion. He returned home in 1938 having been seriously injured.

Jack Jones went on to become a full time trades union organiser for the TGWU and moved to Coventry during World War 2. He organised workers in the car industry and he took up the demands of women workers for equal pay. Frances O'Grady described him as a feminist. He became General Secretary of the TGWU in 1968, at the beginning of what was to become a stormy period for industrial relations in Britain. He was portrayed by the media at the time as a powerful industrial militant,

even 'the real prime minister'. When Edward Heath's Conservative Government attempted to curb the power of the unions through its Industrial Relations Act, the country came to the verge of a general strike.

Jack Jones and his counterpart Hugh Scanlon of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) played a major role in the Labour Party in the 1970s, helping to tack the Party to the Left. However he became a loyal supporter of the Social Contract (voluntary pay restraint) during the years of the 1974-1979 Labour Government, saying that it was the only way to keep the Labour government in power and keep out the Tories, now led by Thatcher. For this he faced opposition within the ranks of his own union.

When he retired from the TGWU Jack Jones became very involved with the National Pensioners' Convention and the International Brigades Memorial Trust. After he died in 2009 the UNITE HQ in Liverpool was named Jack Jones House.

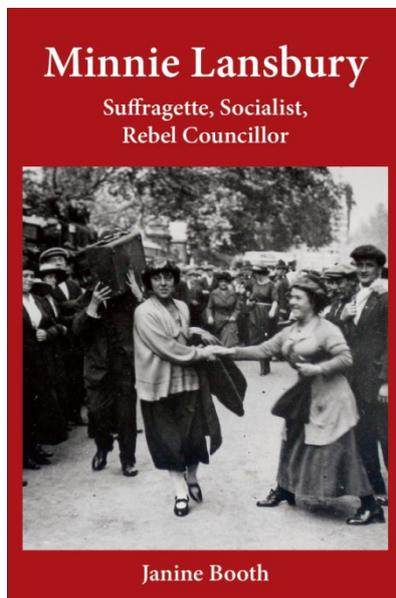
This film has extensive historical footage of Liverpool in the 1930s, scenes from the Spanish Civil War, aerial bombing of Coventry during World War 2 and trades union demonstrations from the 1970s.

These are interspersed with coverage of current trades union campaigns, for instance to organise workers in the 'gig economy'. Casualisation of the workforce today is compared to conditions on the docks and the car factories in the 1930s, where no-one's job was secure. As one commentator said 'we are going backwards now to what happened in those days'. The rise of the far right across Europe is shown in comparison with the anti-fascist struggles of the 1930s. So the life of Jack Jones is not just a history lesson, but an example to be followed by all those concerned with the future of the labour movement today.

*Jack Jones Unsung Hero* can be hired from the Jack Jones Memorial Trust.

## Book Reviews

**Minnie Lansbury Suffragette, Socialist Rebel Councillor, by Janine Booth (Five Leaves Publications £12.99)  
Reviewed by Janet Mearns**



Minnie Lansbury was a suffragette, socialist and rebel councillor, born into a Polish Russian Jewish refugee family in 1889 in London's East End. Her parents were poor but she managed to gain a scholarship to Coborn School for Girls and train as a teacher at a time when there was no state secondary education. Sensitive to the inequality and poverty she saw around her, she was a natural campaigner. Her campaigning style was working for causes and organising, only later on, occasionally, public speaking. Her story should have been told before now. In 2018 when we remembered that some women voted for the first time, Janine Booth has produced an excellent biography of Minnie. Minnie always lived and worked in the area where she was born and brought up. She left teaching to work with Sylvia Pankhurst's break-away women's suffrage movement which was uncompromising in its demands for universal women's suffrage and also worked to challenge poor working conditions and poverty in the East End. When the World War 1 broke out

Minnie saw the problems faced by wives whose husbands were at the front, widows and wounded men and their families. Despite her anti-war views, she worked with the War Pensions Committee to make sure they were getting the help they were due. After the war, Minnie, a communist and Labour Party member, stood for the local council, took up causes, albeit ones which are still today considered 'feminine' such as health and welfare. One of the glaring injustices experienced by areas, such as London's East End boroughs, where there was much poverty, was that, in those days, each borough had to finance what benefits there were themselves. Poor boroughs had to levy higher rates than ones with better off residents because there were more people needing benefits. She was one of the still remembered group of Poplar Councillors who went to prison when they challenged this.

Janine Booth's book is very readable with her clear, unobtrusive style. The chapters are subdivided with headings so, if you are using it as a text book, not just an interesting read, you can readily find the information you want. She takes the trouble to explain such terms the reader might not understand, to the extent that she tells us twice that a quart is two pints. It is just a pity that she does not make it clear that the Bromley area which figures frequently in Minnie's life is Bromley-by-Bow, not the larger, more well-known Bromley in Kent. Janine's research is very thorough and extensive. Footnotes clearly reference her bibliography which lists the minutes of council meetings, many journals and newspapers as well as a wide-ranging collection of books.

Minnie's life was her campaigning and relief work. Although we hear about her marriage, her homes and the fact that, although avowedly working class, she employed a housekeeper, most of the book is about her work for the causes she espoused. There is probably little else to tell. It is not a long book and as well as detailing Minnie's activities we are

provided with much background information about conditions in London's East End, Sylvia Pankhurst's campaigning, privations brought about by the first world war and local efforts to combat the problems and the emergent Labour Party's work on London's local councils. Minnie's campaigning for votes for women did not lead her, as it did many, to prison, but she was one of the still remembered Poplar councillors imprisoned for refusing to levy what they regarded as unduly heavy rates. The pressure of support from local people brought about speedy resolutions, including council meetings held inside Brixton prison, to what the authorities tried to claim were intractable problems. Perhaps today's politicians should take note.

Janine Booth, who is a performance poet and activist as well as doing her day job for London Underground, has written a timely, first-rate biography which adds a lot to our knowledge of women's campaigning. I am pleased to recommend it to students and those with a more passing interest.

**Behemoth: a History of the Factory and the Making of the Modern World by Joshua B. Freeman (Wiley, 2018, £22)**

**Reviewed by Linda Shampan**

I didn't expect to enjoy a book about the history of factories – but within a few pages I was hooked into this fascinating, well-written story spanning over two centuries from the earliest factories in Lancashire and the New England to the industrialisation of the Soviet Union, and the 21<sup>st</sup> century giant factories of China and Vietnam. Freeman shows how the history of the factory, framed by scientific discoveries and technology advances, is woven the social and economic history of this period. While in present day Britain, only a minority still work in factories, he points out that almost all of us live in 'a

factory-made world'. Looking around our homes, we will find few things which are *not* factory-made – and our lifestyle, in particular the dominance of computers and mobile phones, is dependent on the labour of people on other continents, often in appalling factory conditions.

Freeman is an American historian, but begins this history in England in 1721 with what he defines as the *first factory* - 'a large workforce engaged in coordinated production using powered machinery', housed in 'a five-story rectangular brick building'. This is a description of John & Thomas Lombe's Derby Silk Mill, powered by a water wheel, built by Lombe as a commercial opportunity to take advantage of a shortage of silk yarn. Government interest grew in promoting industrial development, and in 1732 a large cash payment was made to Lombe for making public the design of his machinery.

The long-term impact of Lombe's factory was as a template not for silk mills but for cotton mills. Until the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, clothing was made from wool, flax, hemp or silk, (while imported cotton cloth, mainly from India, was used for household goods). In 1774 Britain ended restrictions on producing cotton textiles, fuelling a huge demand for imported raw cotton. This in turn fuelled a growth in the slave trade – by the early 1800s, over 90% of cotton used in Britain was grown by slaves in the Americas. Marx pointed out this exploitation and dependence when he wrote in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, 1847 that: 'Without slavery you have no cotton, without cotton you have no modern industry'.

**Factory Workers in Britain and the USA**

Addressing *why* the cotton manufacturers adopted factory production and why factories became so large, Freeman points

out that even in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, many textile manufacturers employed networks of domestic hand-weavers along with factories. The growing attraction of the factories for those seeking profit, rested not just on increased efficiency and speed of production, but of greater control over the workforce.

A crucial shift, ushering in our current era of directly polluting earth's atmosphere, was the move from water power on sites in rural areas suitable for a water mill, to steam power dependent on coal-fired boilers, (thus greatly increasing the coal-mining industry) – which increasingly in England led to factories in urban areas.

Towns changed as huge numbers of people sought work near to new cotton mills, doubling the population of Lancashire between 1801 and 1851. Engels wrote of the terrible living conditions of English factory workers in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* and was appalled not only by the poverty but also the impact of the 'machine paced production, the iron discipline demanded by the overseers and the endless boredom'. English 19<sup>th</sup> century factory conditions were the driving force and context of Marx's and Engels' analysis of society.

The growth of factories in America, initially followed a different path. For decades, Britain tried to keep a monopoly of advanced technology – with a ban on exports of textile machinery only lifted in 1843, and a ban on emigration of skilled workers. Francis Lowell, in the 1820s, was the first successful American cotton manufacturer; along with visiting Britain to study the methods of production, he also conceived of a new way to generate capital by forming 'joint stock-holder corporations'. He built his factories in rural areas, using water power, and established a workforce by building virtually a new town around the factory, with boarding houses for (mainly female)

workers, churches and other facilities – a form of company paternalism. Freeman quotes Charles Dickens, on a United States tour in 1842, visiting cotton factories in Massachusetts, and comparing them to the cotton mills of Manchester: 'The contrast would be a strong one, for it would be between Good and Evil, the living light and deepest shadow'. While the conditions of American factories at that time may have been better than those in Britain, they still depended on the exploitation of African Americans in slavery to produce the raw cotton.

In New England, industrial conditions changed in the late 1840s, with stronger workers' organisation, criticism of conditions and fewer rural people wanting to come to the mill towns. At the same time a whole new labour pool emerged, with 'mass migration from famine-gripped Ireland'. The veneer of company paternalism was dropped, and workers mainly had to find their own rented accommodation, and increasing numbers of children were employed. The American Civil War, by making raw cotton almost unobtainable, stimulated the growth of steam power to increase profits and after the war, workers' organising and strike actions increased.

With the growth of factories, came efforts to regulate the oppressive conditions of workers – such as the UK Factory Acts of 1802, 1819, 1825, 1831 and 1833 – but limitations were modest (eg. banning employment of children under 9 in the cotton mills in 1833) and enforcement minimal. And at the same time, despite legal prohibitions, came the beginnings of workers organising within industry. Freeman corrects our frequent misuse of the term 'Luddite' to mean people opposed to all technology, and tells of the original Luddites as 'the bands of workers who in 1811-17 attacked textile machinery as a form of protest about the poor conditions.

The coming of the railways, from the 1840s onwards on both sides of the Atlantic, brought demand for iron and for machinery to roll out the iron rails, and to produce steel – this took over from cotton as the main focus of industry. By the 1880s, more goods ‘flowed out of American factories than British ones, and by 1914, American manufacturing output ‘topped that of Britain, France and Germany combined’.

As this history of factories moves into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the story follows two new paths, which surprisingly interact at several points.

First, the invention of the automobile and Ford’s first factory to build the Model T in 1908 soon ‘turned the automobile from a luxury plaything into a mass consumer good..... by 1927, fifteen million had been produced’. Ford developed the new ideas of ‘mass production... the modern method by which great quantities of a single standardised commodity are manufactured’. He built on two innovations: ‘interchangeable parts and continuous flow’ to establish the concept of the assembly line – which increased productivity, but at the expense of workers’ health: ‘more than ever, workers were extensions of machinery, at the mercy of its demands and pace’. The Marxist artist, Diego Rivera, was surprisingly inspired by the huge car plants of Detroit – and his huge mural ‘*Detroit Industry*’ 1933 is an amazing visual (apparently uncritical) representation of the factory.

### **Industrialisation in the Soviet Union**

The second path described is that of the Soviet Union after the Revolution: ‘a feverish drive to rapidly industrialize, boosting its standard of living and increasing its defensive capacity on the road to creating a socialist society.’

While the car was the symbol of Western consumerism and individual profit, it was the tractor which became the symbol of creating socialism. By the late 1920s, huge state-controlled Soviet factories began to be established - what seems surprising was the involvement with the United States in achieving this. By 1926, the Soviet government had ordered 24,600 Ford tractors – but Ford turned down their request to set up a Russian tractor plant. In 1928, Russian engineers were sent to the USA to study tractor production and in 1929 the Soviets signed a contract with Detroit factory architect Albert Kahn to design the first tractor factory in Stalingrad. Factory officials ‘set up a recruiting office in Detroit, hiring some 350 engineers, mechanics and skilled workers’. The American assembly line system was established. Trotsky (*Culture & Socialism 1926*), acknowledged the negative impact of the conveyor belt on the workers, but said ‘The fundamental task is to abolish poverty. It is necessary that human labour produce the maximum possible quantity of goods....the monotony of labour is compensated for by its reduced duration and increased easiness...’. He believed the Soviet model would develop differently because the pace and hours of work would be set by a workers’ regime.

The Soviet welfare state came to be centred on the large factory ‘with factories all over the country taking responsibility for housing and feeding their workers and their families, educating and uplifting them’ – and initially people were drawn by the improved social conditions, but this became harder to sustain. A huge part of the modernisation programme was establishing the iron and steel industry. By 1933 the factory complex of Magnitogorsk employed 40,000 workers - living conditions were very difficult, and increasingly the factory came to rely on forced labour: prisoners, and also peasants dispossessed by collectivisation and deported there. Industrial development,

emerging in the aftermath of World War One, also had a big defensive aspect – major factories were built in the Urals ‘to distance them any land invasion and aerial bombardment’ and many were designed to be ‘quickly convertible to armaments production’. This crucially impacted on Russia’s role in World War Two.

The following chapters follow Russia and the USA after 1945 and the period of the Cold War. In the USA, there was increased mass production, changes in labour organisation and decreased industrial employment. Freeman compares the Rouge factory complex in Detroit, with 100,000 workers in the mid-thirties, to the largest American factories in the seventies with some 23,000, and most new factories being built on a much smaller scale.

This is contrasted with the continued growth of giant complexes in Russia, and ‘under Soviet influence, the *gigant* model spread to Eastern Europe and China.’ He describes this also being a feature of some parts of Western Europe and some developing countries – large complexes being seen as a quick means of economic advance.

### **China and Vietnam**

The final chapter explores the industrialisation of China and Vietnam. He describes ‘Foxconn’ in Longhua, China which produces iPads and iPhones and is believed to be the largest factory in history, with some 300,000 workers. It came to global attention in 2010 with the suicide of 13 of its workers, which their families blamed on the punishing work schedules of China’s factories.

In his introduction, Freeman says ‘the factory led a revolution that transformed human life and the global environment’. The sad irony is that while the ‘cumulative effect of increased production and services’ has enabled a huge rise in living

conditions worldwide – a measure of this is that life expectancy has doubled in 250 years - meanwhile ‘the surface of the earth, the oceans, and the temperature of the air have been profoundly altered, to the extent of threatening the species itself.’ The book does not explore this in detail – perhaps that is his next book. I think it is significant that the steep rise in carbon emitted into the air begins not with the visible pollution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but since 1950 and increasing reliance on petroleum as well as coal.

One criticism - Freeman quotes in his introduction from current International Labor Organization figures that seem significantly wrong. Checking the ILO sources, I found that in 2018, 22% of the world’s work-force are in industry – including 19% of American workforce, 18% of UK workforce and 26% of China’s workforce. (he quotes 8% for USA and 43% for China). I don’t know if some other statistics given are also shaky, but nevertheless the book’s strength is Freeman’s descriptions and global perspective, the stories behind labour organisation and politics, which I found really informative and insightful.

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