



Labour Heritage

BULLETIN

WINTER 2023/24

Contents:

The First Labour Government 1924

John Grigg P1-5

Holes in the Constitution and Recent History

Trevor Fisher P5-7

The Robert Owen and Reformers Memorials

John Grigg P7-10

The Watford Bus Strike of 1922

Martin Eady P10-11

Obituary

Norman Howard 1932 -2023
P12

The first Labour Government 1924

By John Grigg

Tariff reform.

Free Trade v Protectionism.

2024 is the centenary of the first Labour Government. That government was the only one in modern times when the party with the most seats did not form a government. At the December 1923 general election, the Conservatives won 248 seats but did not have an overall majority. Labour came second with 191 seats and the Liberals won 158.

One would have thought that a coalition of Conservatives and Liberals, or at least a Conservative minority government supported by the Liberals would be the natural outcome. That was not to be the case because the decisive issue that determined the result was Tariff Reform - Free Trade v. Protectionism.

Since 1900 the Conservative party, although by no means united on the issue, had favoured protectionism – that is a general tariff on all imports to protect British industry and agriculture. They claimed that protection would reduce unemployment and provide funds for social reform. The Liberal Party, the champion of free trade, opposed protectionism contending that tariffs would cause an increase in the cost of living by reducing the import of cheaper foodstuffs, particularly wheat.

This issue was a major factor that caused a landslide to the Liberals in the 1906 general election.

The infant Labour Party also opposed protectionism saying it would benefit industrialists while increasing living costs for the poor and low waged.

In the two general elections in 1910 the Conservatives stuck to their policy of protectionism, and this was opposed by the Liberal and Labour Parties. But the big issue was House of Lords reform. Although the Liberal Party narrowly won more seats than the Conservatives it did not have an overall majority. It retained power by support from the Irish Nationalists who were promised Home Rule legislation, and by Labour who gained some social reforms and modification of the House of Lords 'Osborne Judgment' that had prevented Trade Unions financially supporting the Labour Party.

The situation in the House of Commons in December 1910 was Liberal 271 seats, Conservative 254, Irish Nationalists 84, Labour 42.

Home Rule legislation was introduced in 1912. It was rejected in the House of Lords. But the Lords could now only delay legislation for two years and home rule might have been passed in 1914 but for the outbreak of World War 1 when legislation was suspended.

In December 1916 the Liberal Party split. Lloyd George deposed prime minister Asquith and took half the parliamentary Liberal party into a coalition with the Conservatives. Asquith remained leader of the reduced number of Liberal MPs and became leader of the opposition. Most Labour MPs supported the coalition - the prominent exception being Ramsey MacDonald who opposed the war. He relinquished leadership of the party to Arthur Henderson who Lloyd George brought into the cabinet.

With the war ending Lloyd George, the man who had won the war and promised 'a land fit for heroes' called an election in 1918.

The Conservatives, knowing they would poll badly if they opposed Lloyd George, stuck with the coalition and it swept the board winning 473 of the 707 seats. Labour however had pulled out of the coalition. It fielded its own candidates and increased its number in the House of Commons to 57, which was 21 ahead of Asquith's Liberals. MacDonald and Henderson, however, lost their seats. (This was the election where Sin Fein ousted the Irish National Party in Ireland by 73 to 9 but did not take up their seats and established their own parliament in Dublin).

Considerably more than half the coalition MPs were Conservatives and they kept Lloyd George in power until 1922 when they broke away and forced a general election. At that 1922 election the Liberals stood no chance because they were split between Lloyd George's 'National Liberals' (the remainder of the coalition) and Asquith's official Liberal Party. Lloyd George's popularity had waned, having failed to deliver a land fit for heroes. The result was:

Conservatives	334
Labour	142
Liberal (Asquith)	62
National Liberals (Lloyd George)	53
Others	24

This was the highest number of seats won by the Labour Party:

1906	29
1910 (February)	40
1910 (December)	42
1918	57
1922	142

The advance, of course, was greatly assisted by the disarray of the Liberal Party.

One would have thought that with such a comfortable majority the Conservatives, could remain in power for five years. However, their leader, Bonar Law, no doubt to play safe, had promised not to introduce their favoured policy of protectionism until a second general election had been held specifically on that issue.

In May 1923 ill health forced Bonar Law's resignation and he was succeeded by Stanley Baldwin. Baldwin was a strong supporter of protectionism which he perceived was a solution to the problem of unemployment, and he decided to hold a general election on this one issue honouring the commitment given by Bonar Law at the 1922 election. As always, the Liberals, now united under Asquith, and Labour, with MacDonald back as its leader, opposed protection. The result, despite the Conservatives winning the highest number of seats, was a defeat for protectionism because Labour and the Liberals, both campaigned against protectionism and together won more seats.

Conservatives	248
Labour	191
Liberal	158

Baldwin went to the House of Commons as prime minister to seek endorsement but was defeated by 328 votes to 256 and resigned. As leader of the second largest party MacDonald, after considerable consultation in the party, accepted the king's invitation to form a government supported (for the time being) by the Liberals.

1924. The first Labour Government

Labour had fought the election with a wide-ranging programme of public works to tackle the unemployment problem (over a million out of work) and the public ownership of the mines, railways and electric power stations.

It proposed : a reduction in arms expenditure, a war debt redemption levy on fortunes in excess of £5,000 and taxation of land values, equality of education, abolition of slums, generous provision for aged people, widowed mothers, the sick and disabled, support for the League of nations, revision of the punitive Versailles Treaty and the resumption of economic and diplomatic relations with Russia.

After a brief introduction the manifesto's first paragraph headed '*Tariffs no remedy*' challenged the Conservatives protectionist policies which was the main issue on which the election was being fought.

In his budget Phillip Snowden, Labour's Chancellor of the Exchequer, abolished the 33 1/3 % levy on 'luxury' imports (motorcars and motorcycles, clocks, watches, musical instruments and cinematographic film) that had been levied in 1915 to help fund the war. He also lowered duties on tea, coffee, chicory and sugar. Strange how these 'breakfast table tariffs' had survived so long in an age of free trade. (There were campaigns against them in the mid-1800s.) However, none of these imports threatened British agriculture except, perhaps, sugar beet in East Anglia. So, it seems they were there just to raise revenue. The budget also provided for widows' pensions and reduction of pensionable age to 65 but these were not implemented prior to the government falling within nine months.

The Wheatley Housing Act established the building of council houses in the hands of local authorities with government subsidies and launched a 15-point programme. Trevelyan at the Board of Education established a committee to examine Labour's education proposals and although it did not report until 1926 it set up the ultimate reformed pattern for education in England. Neither of these changed anything during this first Labour government's tenure but ultimately benefited housing and education.

McDonald doubled as foreign Secretary and his principal concern was with foreign affairs. His mediation between France and Germany enabled acceptance of the Dawes plan which reduced reparations being paid by Germany to a realistic level. He also proposed at the League of Nations, jointly with the French Prime Minister Edouard Herriot, the Geneva Protocol, that pledged arbitration in international disputes, disarmament by agreement and mutual international support in the event of unprovoked aggression. After preliminary approval by all 47 member states of the League of Nations in 1924 it was not ratified the following year by the British Conservative government and the Protocol failed to materialise.

McDonald's work for international peace met with general approval but another aspect of foreign policy aroused unease in the Conservative and Liberal Parties. That was the relationship with communist Russia. On entering office, the government recognised the Soviet government. Subsequently it entered into a treaty whereby Russia would receive favourable trade terms with Britain in return for Russia's undertaking to compensate British holders of pre-revolutionary Russian bonds. This was to be underpinned by a loan to Russia on the London market at a later date.

The establishment of closer relations with communist Russia did not go down well with the opposition parties in the House of Commons, and inferences arose that the government was being influenced by extreme elements in the Labour Parliamentary Party and by the Communist Party.

Fall of the Labour Government

It was these malignant suspicions that led to the government being brought down by the Campbell case. John Campbell, stand-in editor of the Communist *Workers' Weekly*, had published an article urging soldiers not to obey orders if commanded to act against strikers.

The Director of Public Prosecutions initiated proceedings against Campbell for sedition. After some muddled deliberations MacDonald ordered withdrawal of the prosecution. The opposition parties accused the government of interference with the independence of the judicial system. The Conservatives put down a vote of censure. The Liberals tabled an amendment proposing a select committee to investigate the matter that MacDonald could have accepted but chose not to. He regarded the vote as a matter of confidence. The Conservatives supported the Liberal amendment, which was carried, and MacDonald resigned.

It has been suggested that MacDonald was tired of relying on the Liberals, a party he wished to replace, and the trivial issue of the Campbell case was the last straw.

In the ensuing election the issue of the Zinoviev letter has prominently featured in Labour history. The letter purported to be from Grigory Zinoviev, head of the Communist International (Comintern) in Moscow to the Communist Party of Great Britain. It ordered the CPGB to engage in seditious activities. It stated that the normalisation of British-Soviet relations under a Labour Government would put the CPGB in a favourable position to pursue a Bolshevik revolution. Copies of the letter curiously found their way to the Foreign Office and were equally curiously leaked to the Daily Mail that published the letter three days before the General Election. The opposition parties ensured that the issue received wide publicity and MacDonald's delay in responding caused confusion.

The letter is now accepted to be a fake. It is strange that numerous books and articles examined the letter's authenticity when Zinoviev himself denied two days before the election that he had written it. His denial was not published in England till December 1924.

Zinoviev pointed out that he was on holiday in Kislovodsk on 15th September when the letter was supposed to have been written and he could not have signed any official letter.

The general election on 29th October 1924:

Conservative	400 (gain of 152)
Labour	151 (loss of 40)
Liberal	40 (loss of 118)
Others	24 (gain of 6)

The prominent factor was the collapse of the Liberal vote which went mainly to the Conservatives, and this also boosted the Conservative vote in Labour held constituencies. Labour lost 55 seats to the Conservatives, offset a little in Northern industrial areas by gains from the Liberals and six from the Conservatives.

Labour's national vote was up by over a million, much of this being because they fought 87 more seats. Labour blamed the Zinoviev letter for its defeat but another factor, it is reckoned, was the Conservatives temporarily abandonment of protectionism which cost them the 1923 election.

The Verdict

To assess what the government achieved is an impractical exercise because it had just nine months in office, and it was kept there only by permission of the Liberal Party.

Herbert Asquith, the Liberal leader, is quoted as saying that if a Labour government were ever to be tried in Britain "*it could hardly be tried under safer conditions.*" Many on the left of the party believed the party should not have taken office because it would be impossible to introduce socialist policies. MacDonald, a constitutionalist, chose to do so. As leader of the second largest party in the commons, to not form a government might have despatched a message that Labour was shirking responsibility. Also, it was an opportunity to show that Labour was capable of running a government. In office it was attacked from the left for not being socialist and from the opposition parties for being too socialist.

MacDonald focussed on foreign affairs and had notable success. Maybe if he had given more attention to domestic affairs there would be a clearer picture of what the government's intentions were if it had a free hand. In fact, domestic affairs were largely in the hands of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Phillip Snowden, whose cautious orthodox budget, despite small measures on pensions and unemployment pay, did little to tackle unemployment.

MacDonald's mishandling of the Campbell case and the Zinoviev letter contributed to the government's downfall. Maybe it was better that MacDonald should seek an overall majority rather than carry on leading a powerless government. The Conservatives won overwhelmingly in the October 1924 general election, but Labour had replaced the Liberals as the alternative to the Conservatives and its time was to come.

HOLES IN THE CONSTITUTION AND RECENT HISTORY

By Trevor Fisher

The recent short-lived attempt to commit Labour to bringing in Proportional Representation raised many questions, both constitutional and historical.

As the constitution is unwritten, unlike in America, it is easy not to see what the rules actually are. My understanding of the constitution is that once a precedent is set it has to be followed unless a law is passed to cancel it. In 2011 a precedent was indeed set that a change in the voting system was put to the vote, and that Labour was involved.

However, the other two parties were even more heavily involved, and it is strange that what happened has largely been forgotten.

It is undeniable that on May 5th, 2011, a national referendum was held on whether to change to the Alternative Vote from First Past the Post. Thus, unless an Act is passed to say otherwise, any change in the voting system must be done by referendum.

The proposal to change the voting system initially came from Gordon Brown's Labour government. Brown's government was struggling and proposed a constitutional reform bill to bolster its reformist credentials, using its Commons majority to pass an amendment to hold a referendum on the Alternative Vote in the next parliament.

This was February 2010, and seemed to many to be little more than a gimmick. Labour had been in power since 2005, a General Election was due shortly. Brown was expected to lose, and it was assumed the referendum would not be held.

The election resulted in a hung parliament and a deal between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, making Tory leader David Cameron the Prime Minister and Nick Clegg the Liberal leader Deputy Prime Minister.

Part of the deal was a commitment to a vote on electoral reform. Despite the Conservatives backing First Past the Post (FPTP), Clegg secured the referendum though it was not Proportional Representation which the Liberals wanted, presumably assuming Labour would back the Alternative Vote which with Lib Democrat voters would secure change.

This was the only way to get change, as the Conservatives would never back change even in coalition. Despite the then Labour leader Ed Miliband campaigning with Clegg for the Alternative Vote, it went down to massive defeat.

Labour split, and the issues were too over complicated for wide appeal. Plans not only targeted the voting system, but reduced the number of constituencies and resized them,

and brought in other changes including fixed term parliaments. So much change clouded the debate.

The "fixed term parliament" was separately approved, but some voters thought the Act meant the Liberals were not trusting of the Conservatives **not** to call an early election and leave them high and dry.

Why the result turned out as it did is controversial, but the outcome was not controversial at all. Nearly one third of those who voted – 32.1% - were in favour while 67.9% voted against.

In numbers those in favour were 6,152, 607 and 13,013,123 were against the change. The turnout was only 42.2% – showing that this was not a major concern to voters. The vote was nevertheless decisive and valid.

THE FORGOTTEN REFERENDUM 2011

The vote has been forgotten as the BBC noted nearly a decade after the event- the item on their website under this title was made on 20th March 2021 but does not explain why the vote has been forgotten. Historians have failed to make the episode as well-known as they should have done, but there are good reasons why politicians leave it untouched.

It was a disaster for the electoral reformers, who rarely seem prepared to accept the voters did not want change. A 2:1 ratio is decisive, and while this was not a vote on PR which was what the Lib Dems wanted, it was the step change they favoured even though under some circumstances AV can be less proportional than FPTP. A key problem was that it appeared a diversion of only interest to professional politicians.

The NO campaign played on this, showing – for example – a sick baby with the slogan "She needs a maternity unit, not the AV." The campaign never overcame the stigma that AV did not benefit ordinary people. For the Lib Dems this was particularly serious.

The Party seemed to prioritize its own interests and not those of ordinary people. The Lib Dems had a good argument that they did not get enough seats for the size of their vote, but when they got into government ordinary voters did not see them doing enough for them. At the May 2011 locals they lost many Councillors and in 2015 lost many of their small parliamentary party which they have not yet got back.

The Tories don't want to talk about the AV referendum as they have no interest in continuing the debate but have no issues with Referendums. David Cameron was perhaps overconfident and came unstuck with the 2016 EU referendum but had no problems with defending First Past the Post in a popular vote.

Most other parties also had no problem with taking a position. Wikipedia has 16 Parties in Favour, 10 parties against, and only 3 with no position. Two – the Socialist Party of Great Britain and the Official Monster Raving Loony Party - are not important. The third is very important.

It was the Labour Party.

Labour was the only party not to have an official position, though it had initially proposed switching to AV.

Ed Miliband as leader could not get members to take a consistent position. In fact, Margaret Beckett, former Labour Foreign Secretary, was President of the No to AV campaign. The Lib Dems objected to the poster of the baby, only to be told that the poster was devised by Dan Hodges, a Labour Party campaigner.

Labour was clearly split.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

In assessing the lessons to be learned from the 2011 vote, three stand out and may have influenced Keir Starmer in opposing the move to support PR.

First, electoral reform is not a popular issue and is open to the charge of being diversionary and of interest only to professional politicians. Secondly, the Tories and Lib Dems may be united, but Labour certainly is divided on electoral reform. Thirdly, while Labour cannot be limited to bread-and-butter issues, the PR campaign has yet to show – against the evidence of a low turnout in 2011 and the 2-1 majority against change – that this is a mobilizing issue. Perhaps regrettably, voters do not prioritise voting reform.

None of this explains why both historians and politicians have wiped a very big exercise from the historical memory. The vote was important.

Why is there so little discussion even in academic texts on what happened and its consequences? Some of the current campaigners appear unaware of the 2011 vote, it is time to raise the profile of referendums, and ensure that there are no significant holes in understanding the constitution or recent history. Currently this cannot be taken to be the case.

The Robert Owen and Reformers Memorials **By John Grigg**

On 13th October 1997 a group of co-operators, trade unionists and Labour Party members gathered in Kensal Green Cemetery to celebrate the refurbishment by Co-operative Funeral Services of the Robert Owen and Reformers Memorials.

Speeches to mark the occasion were made by Michael Foot (former leader of the Labour Party), Lord Graham (veteran co-operator), Jennifer Forsyth (Deputy Mayor of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea), Lord Graham and Stan Newens who was then a Labour and Co-operative member of the European Parliament. The two memorials were erected in 1885 by Joseph W. Corfield, a member of the South Place Institute Ethical

Society – today based in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London.

One column commemorates Robert Owen, the pioneer of co-operation, socialism and trade unionism. The other lists 85 reformers who have made an outstanding contribution to the progressive movement in Britain. Originally there were 50 names on the memorial and others have been added from time to time – some in 1907 by Joseph Corfield's daughter, Emma, whose additions included women pioneers.



Robert Owen's Obelisk and Reformers Memorial.

The original decision to erect a memorial to Robert Owen was made shortly after his death in 1858 and a fund was raised. There were delays until 1879, mainly because of objections to Owen's unorthodox religious views, but in 1879 the Robert Owen memorial was erected and alongside it the Reformers Memorial.

The memorials were sadly neglected over the passage of time until Co-operative Funeral Services came to their rescue in the late 1990s.

The purpose of the memorials is to remind us of what we owe to those who went before us and to engender respect for their endeavours. Hopefully they encourage later generations to cherish and defend their achievements and inspire those with social

ideals to dedicate themselves to their realisation.

In 1925 William Henry Brown, the historian of the Co-operative Movement, wrote *Pathfinders*, giving a brief biographical sketch of the 74 reformers whose names were on the memorial at that time. The book is out of print but in 1997 Stan Newens raised funds and organised a reprint which included names that had been added since Brown's 1925 book was published.

The original 50 names that were selected by Joseph Corfield in 1885, were listed before the historic significance of the revival of Socialism in the 1880s. The Social Democratic Federation and the Fabian Society had only just been formed. The matchgirls strike and the Dockers' Tanner strike, lay in the future. It was more than 15 years before the Labour Party was founded. The new unionism and the Independent Labour Party lay in the future.

The chosen individuals represented the leading radicals of the time and further names have been added since Emma Corfield's additions in 1907.

Prominent among the names are many associated with the Co-operative Movement, also those who campaigned for the right of workers to vote. The importance of free speech is shown by the inclusion of radical journalists and writers. Trade Unionists and those advocating education and the rights of women are also included – although only 10 of the 85 names are of women.

The above is a revised and abridged article based upon Stan Newens's introduction to the republished 1998 Pathfinders book. The book contains 85 short biographies of those whose names appear on the memorial. Prominent names include Elizabeth Fry, Charles Kingsley, Robert Owen, Tom Paine, William Morris, John Stuart Mill and Beatrice Web. I have chosen a few biographies from the Pathfinders book of lesser-known people – including the shortest biography.

W. M. W. Call who died in 1890, was the writer of several poems of what were regarded in his day as a distinctly revolutionary kind. His volume published in 1842, was entitled “Reverberations” and his sonnets to Kossuth and Mazzini are now the best known. He was a friend of George Eliot.

Alexander Macdonald is recognised as having been the first workingman M.P. He was born in 1821, was elected for Stafford in 1874 as a miners’ representative and died in 1881. Beginning life ‘down under’ the house in which he slept, Macdonald entered Glasgow University in 1846, working and thinking in the mine in summer and studying in the winter. In 1850 he became a teacher, and in 1857 gave himself up to arousing the miners to the necessity of organisation.

The National Union of Miners elected him as their president in 1873, the year before he entered the House of Commons. The presence of a miner in the legislature was then a surprise although it subsequently became common place until about one-fifth of the total Labour representation in the Commons were miners.

Mrs Josephine Butler was one of the bravest women of the 19th century, battling for her sex on a question that was ignored by all who worshipped the conventional from behind the veils of a false modesty. She was born in Northumberland in 1828, and married the Rev George Butler who became a Canon of Winchester.

She was one of the originators of the movement for the higher education for women. Her greatest achievement was to lead the adventure – for it was an adventure – that secured the abolition of the Contagious Diseases Acts. They had been passed in 1864, 1866 and 1869, first for military centres and eventually leading to give legal sanction to vice and entailing the police supervision of women.

She began the movement and was honorary secretary of the agitation which won their partial repeal in 1883 and their abolition in 1886. With wonderful tenacity and an inspired strength, she enlisted the help of responsible Cabinet Ministers such as James Stanfield and the active campaigning of, in and out of prison, of W. T. Stead, the hazardous journalist of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

From her national work she went forth to the international field against the white slave traffic, where her efforts made her a memorial in the virtuous and purpose lives of thousands who, but for Josephine Butler, were doomed to an inferno as deep as that poetised by Dante. She died in 1906.

William Park was a tireless co-operator who did great organising work when things needed much sorting out and did useful service for his day and future generations. He was born at Birmingham in 1805 and died at Croydon in 1873. He was the first co-operative missionary and was introduced in the *Co-operative Miscellany* of 1830 as their ‘very respectable and indefatigable friend.’

He was the first corresponding secretary to the first Birmingham Cooperative Society, toured the country advocating co-operation, and introduced the word ‘congress’ into the movement from America. The first Co-operative Congress was held in Manchester in 1830.

Robert Owen then recognised his zeal, earnestness, and good counsel; and when he ceased to be a governor of the Owenite co-operative community at Queenwood in Hampshire in 1844 he became widely involved in the Co-operative Movement and proved one of the most popular leaders in that awkward world. That was three years after he had had to give up his position as the registrar of births, deaths and marriages in Birmingham, because of his sympathies towards Owenism.

He was secretary of the Co-operative Congress of 1869 and did much to direct the movement along its official ways. Pare was one of the literary executors of Robert Owen; and his account of the Ralahine Experiment* was the most complete record of the interesting chapter of Ireland's romantic history.

The Ralahine Experiment was an Owenite agricultural co-operative project sponsored by John Scott Vandeleur in 1831 in Co. Clare. It collapsed in 1833 due to Vandeleur's gambling losses.

THE WATFORD BUS STRIKE OF 1922

By Martin Eady

Based on reports in the Watford Observer collected by the late Ian Read

2nd May:

Staff employed by the National Omnibus and Transport Company Ltd. claim that there is a lockout. Management deny this. They say that conditions are the same as in other provincial undertakings.

6th May:

The Company claim that there is no dispute and there have been no claims from the staff. The strike has been in progress "this week" according to the newspaper report. The grievances are that the Company refuses to recognise the Transport and General Workers Union, that the hours of work are too long, and the Company refuse to operate the 8 hour day agreed by the London General Omnibus Company (LGOC). Staff employed by the LGOC have threatened to curtail their routes at the Metropolitan boundary in sympathy with the Watford claim.

The National Company have sent a registered letter to all Watford strikers threatening them with dismissal if the strike continues.

The letters were handed to the Branch Secretary to be returned to the Company. The Company are running a service between Apsley and Boxmoor for Apsley Mill workers. In response the strikers are running a charabanc between Apsley, Hemel Hempstead, Boxmoor and Watford, for which they are seeking a licence.

A mass meeting of strikers on Sunday called for a boycott of Company services.

The Company have given an extension of the time to return to work before dismissals take place. The Ministry of Labour arranged a meeting of delegates with the Company, but the Company refused to meet Union officials and negotiations broke down.

13th May:

The strike continues. Feelings have run so high that Police Court proceedings have been taken, it being alleged that on Saturday assaults were committed upon 'new drivers engaged by the Company'. The Company do not recognize the Union or the 8-hour day. It is reported that 'negotiations broke down over allowing Union officials to voice grievances. 16 buses were running from Watford garage – only the Chesham and Barnet routes were not running. The support of London members of the Union was sought. There were more mass meetings, with attendances of 200-300 people.

20th May:

There was a mass meeting at the Palace Theatre, called under the joint auspices of the Watford Divisional Labour Party and the T&GWU in support of the strike. It was reported that there was no prospect of an immediate settlement. The strikers were supported by Union officials and Mr. J.J.Mallon, the Labour candidate for the Watford division.

At the Berkhamstead Petty Sessions Robert Jones of Nunhead was summoned for assaulting and beating Walter Holliman of Hemel Hempstead on May 6th, and William Cain of Watford on May 5th. In the first case Jones was fined 2 guineas and in the second was bound over to keep the peace. In another case Frank Perry of Watford was charged with 'obstructing the highway so as to prevent free passage of an omnibus, at Hemel Hempstead on May 3rd'. Arising out of the same case Perry then charged PC Beecroft with assault. PC Beecroft said that he accompanied a motor omnibus from the Swan public house to Apsley Mills. There were two inspectors on the bus.

Two cyclists (who were strikers) got in front of the bus and cycled very slowly. An argument broke out, and PC Beecroft placed his hand on the defendant and pushed him off his bicycle. The magistrate dismissed this as no more than 'a technical assault' and the summons against him was dismissed.

The Chairman said that the Bench did not want to embitter feeling and would not record a conviction against Perry. He was bound over for 3 Months and ordered to pay the court costs, the Magistrate observing that perhaps his Union would pay it.

27th May:

The 4th week of the strike – little or no prospect of an early settlement. A mass meeting was held in the Marketplace, chaired by the Secretary of North Watford Labour party. Mr. T.A. Munns, one of the organisers, stated that not one man had returned to work, and the boycott had been carried out successfully by the public. Six charabancs were run by the strikers in opposition to the 'National' buses. The newspaper states that 'the Company are running a full service and the strikers' places have all been filled'.

George Woolcott, a bus driver, was charged with unlawfully and maliciously inflicting on Thomas Turner grievous bodily harm on May 19th. (Turner was a scab conductor taken on 2 weeks previously). The defendant said he was not there, it was dark, and Turner could not positively identify him. Bail was granted in two sureties of £50 each. Subsequently Woolcott was discharged. The decision was received with loud applause.

3rd June:

More assault cases were heard. Union organisers from London arrived.

10th June:

The strike continues. A well-attended mass meeting was addressed by Ben Tillett MP. It was stated that there is no likelihood of negotiations being opened.

8th July:

'The National Omnibus and transport Co. Ltd. and the Transport & General Workers Union have pleasure in advising the travelling public in Watford and District that a settlement has been

arrived at in the dispute, both sides having agreed to modify their terms, and normal services will be resumed immediately'.

22nd July:

'The Watford branch of the Transport and General Workers Union have passed a vote of thanks to Mr. J.J.Mallon, the Labour candidate for Watford, for his untiring efforts as mediator in the omnibus disputes, which efforts have been the means of bringing the dispute to a favourable termination'.

I wonder what the details of the settlement were. Can any reader help with this?

It is significant that the Labour candidate was open in his support of the strikers.

Also noteworthy is the attitude of the Magistrates. While not supporting the strike, they were quite fair in dealing with the assault allegations.

Obituary

Norman Howard 1928-2023

Norman, a long standing Labour Heritage supporter and contributor to our bulletin and meetings, died aged 95 in December . A lifelong socialist and member of the Labour Party, his book *A New Dawn* (now out of print) was inspired by the 1945 Attlee government. Norman was also commissioned to edit and annotate the political diaries of Douglas Jay MP which was completed but as yet, not published. Norman was born in Acton, West London in 1928. His father ,Harold, was a motor mechanic and haulage contractor. His mother, Alice, died when Norman was eight. During the war he and his brother and sister were evacuated and spent the war billeted, separately, with a variety of foster parents in Dartmouth & Newton Abbot. Norman always said that once the War started the family had been split up and never came back together again.

Back in Acton after the war he was Head Boy of his School but had barely started in the sixth form before he was called up on January 1st 1947 for two years of National Service in the RAF.

In 1951 he was in Southampton where he became the Labour Party's youngest campaign agent and secured the re-election of Dr. Horace King who later became House of Commons Speaker. In Southampton and Poole, Norman secured the presence of Atlee, Wilson & Gaitskell at his campaigning events. It was in Southampton that Norman met, and married Joyce (nee Randell).

In 1956 he worked with Francis Williams on the left-wing newspaper Forward and later on the left-leaning Sunday paper Reynolds News. After a brief job as a civil servant in the Board of Trade he moved to a press officer role for the Post Office Engineering Union. Finally he was recruited by British Telecom (BT), where he spent the

rest of his career. He continued his political connections, recalling that once he was in Blackpool three times in one month, attending Party and Union conferences. Later, he was asked to start up and lead the BT Community Affairs Unit.

Norman was a Royal Borough of Kingston on Thames councillor in 1964, and then in 1974 was elected to the Greater London Council (GLC). He was Chair of the GLC Planning Committee and was particularly proud of signing the agreement with London Transport to carry out Labour's election pledge of free bus passes.

In addition to his political work, Norman continued his commitment to social justice with service on the Parole Board and Industrial Tribunals, and he also helped to produce a series of TV documentaries on social issues for TV South.

Norman's emotionally formative years away from his family in the War, and the post-war inspiration of a practical, socialist vision were to form a thread into his later life. In his 60s he negotiated for a blue plaque to be erected in Dartmouth to commemorate the evacuees. Norman was a founder member of the Aneurin Bevan Society.

Norman is survived by his sister Hazel, children, Jane and Martin, four grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

Letters and articles can be sent to LabourHeritage45@btinternet.com
For more information about Labour Heritage including access to previous bulletins, go to the website at:
www.labour-heritage.com