

Labour Heritage



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Bulletin Autumn 2018

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Aneurin Bevan and the NHS

By Archie Potts

On 5 July 1948 Britain's first National Health Service (NHS) came into existence offering free treatment at the point of delivery to every man, woman and child in this country.



Celebration of NHS 70th Birthday at Ealing Hospital

It cannot be said that NHS's 70th birthday was neglected by the media. Far from it: the NHS was the subject of numerous articles in the press and several programmes on radio and television. A curious feature of this coverage, however, was the meagre attention paid to the

Minister of Health who created the NHS, Aneurin Bevan. A suggestion that he should be featured on a postage stamp was rejected by the Royal Mail on the grounds that it was policy not to feature political figures on postage stamps. Why was Aneurin Bevan not invited to the party? Was there an anti-left wing bias in the media, including the BBC or was it due to inadequate research into the historical background to the origins of the NHS and so Bevan's role was overlooked?

A Complex Question

The creation of the NHS was a very complex and difficult task. Bevan had to overcome opposition inside the Labour Cabinet from Herbert Morrison who spoke for local authorities anxious to retain control over their own hospitals. Bevan favoured a national, centralised structure and the Cabinet was divided on the issue. Prime Minister Attlee, who chaired the meeting, supported Bevan and tipped the outcome his way. Bevan also had to overcome opposition from the British Medical Association who feared that doctors would lose their professional status and be absorbed into the civil service. The present-day structure is the one created by Bevan and it has served the country very well. A more fragmented NHS would not have performed so well and would have been vulnerable to privatisation.

Funding

The funding of the NHS has been a problem from its inception. Bevan believed and he was not alone in this view that once the newly created NHS had

cleared a backlog of bad health the costs of the NHS would fall. The backlog of poor health was cleared and the demand for NHS services did not fall, and Bevan came to recognise this. New medical treatments became available and the NHS was expected to provide them. Improvements in health also meant that people, on average, were living longer and this created fresh demands for medical services. Bevan once observed that ‘Socialism is the language of priorities’, and there is little doubt that many people including Conservative voters- would agree with him that the NHS should have a high priority when it came to the allocation of scarce resources.



Bevan’s Reputation

Unlike many other famous politicians Aneurin Bevan’s reputation has grown since his death. Historians have recognised that the creation of the NHS was a colossal achievement and they are prepared to give him his due. His place in history is secure.



2015 General Election Poster

The Common Wealth Party

By Maurice Austin

My favourite author is J B Priestley (JB); his insightful tales of life in Yorkshire towns with their woollen mills, classical concerts, bustling night life and trips home on the tram enthralled this ‘soft southerner’. And the emotional and often unrequited love affairs are still relevant even 80 or so years after being written. JB had a sharp eye for the minutiae of life, he was aware of the cruel side of industrial life as well as the many pleasures of community living and was acutely aware of the contrasts between ‘the classes’ which seem to be reasserting themselves following a decade of Tory austerity. JB was clearly a socialist but seemed to have had some doubts about the contemporary Labour Party to achieve the sort of society he yearned for.

One of his short lived forays into national politics was to help fund and form the Common Wealth Party. This has long intrigued me as I have a long interest in the Co-operative Movement where terms such as Commonwealth and Commonweal are often used. Furthermore, I live in Chelmsford, Essex now in a ‘sea of blue’ politically but which once elected a Labour MP who had previously been an MP for the Common Wealth Party. My idle curiosity was jolted when I received an old copy of the *Exmoor Review* and found an article about a certain Sir Richard Acland, an Exmoor aristocratic land owner who became a Liberal MP and subsequently a Common Wealth Party MP.

Forward March

Sir Richard Acland came from a long line of Tory and Liberal supporters, many of whom held surprisingly radical views and often put these into practice. As an example, one of Sir Richard’s ancestors loved Exmoor so much that he initiated the campaign which led to the area becoming

a National Park by gifting much of his family estate to The National Trust.

Sir Richard inherited the family interests in Exmoor and around Killerton in particular. He became the fifteenth baronet in 1939. Four years earlier, he had been elected as Liberal MP for the North Devon of Barnstaple. At that time, Europe was suffering the effects of a vicious recession and the growth of Nazi and Fascist parties. This experience and, no doubt, the reforming instincts of some of his ancestors, lead to Sir Richard becoming an eager socialist. He wrote a book *Unser Kampf* (Our Struggle) as a counter to Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle). He sold 13,200 copies and managed to get himself near the top of Hitler's list of people to be eliminated if he won the War!

Sir Richard also formed a new political movement called Forward March which did attract much support as its ideals matched the popular mood of the early 1940s.

The 1941 Committee

Whilst Sir Richard was busy setting up Forward March, JB was instrumental in forming a similar political group. JB was too mercurial to invest much effort on the political slog to achieve his socialist ideal so he and Sir Richard joined together to form the Common Wealth Party.

Common Wealth Party

In 1942, Common Wealth was a merger of the Forward March movement, formed by the Liberal MP Sir Richard Acland, and the 1941 Committee of the playwright J. B. Priestley. An idealistic, socialist party, its membership was heavily middle class. Its two main themes were common ownership and vital democracy. The major parties had an electoral truce during the war. This gave a great fillip to Common Wealth, which won Conservative

seats at Skipton and Eddisbury. It also supported an independent candidate who won easily in West Derbyshire. The party's application to affiliate to Labour was rejected, but it won another sweeping victory in April 1945 at Chelmsford, a safe Conservative seat.

Once the electoral truce was over, Common Wealth suffered the fate of most new political parties. At the 1945 General Election it held only Chelmsford, where Labour did not run a candidate. After the election, Acland called upon the party to dissolve and for its members to enrol with Labour as individuals. The success of Common Wealth, though fragile, foreshadowed the Labour victory of 1945.

Common Wealth MPs

Richard Ackland (Barnstaple 1942-1945)

Vernon Bartlett (Bridgwater 1942-1945)

John Loverseed (Eddisbury 1943-1945)

Hugh Lawson (Skipton 1944-1945)

Ernest Millington (Chelmsford 1945-1946)

We have already spoken about Sir Richard Ackland although there is so much more to say that it would fill a book let alone this edition of the *Labour Heritage bulletin*.

Vernon Bartlett CBE (1894-1983), another West Country man was a journalist, prolific author and MP. He served as an MP from 1938 to 1950: first as an Independent Progressive advocating a Popular Front, then for the Common Wealth Party, and then again as an Independent Progressive. As to be expected from a journalist interested in politics in the 1930s and 40s, Vernon did write rather a lot about Hitler. At one time he was very critical about Chamberlain's appeasement policies but, ironically, was later dismissed from the BBC for seeming to be too sympathetic to Hitler!

John Loverseed, AFC (1910-1962) was a Norfolk born man whose father was

Liberal MP for Sudbury, Suffolk. John was an RAF pilot who flew with Republican forces in the Spanish Civil War, 1937/38, and with the RAF again during the Battle of Britain. In 1943 he was elected as a MP for the Common Wealth Party in Eddisbury, Cheshire. He was later a co-founder of the pacifist Fellowship Party, a great supporter of CND.

Hugh Lawson (1912–1997) was elected MP for Skipton at a by-election in January 1944. He lost at the 1945 General Election and later unsuccessfully contested Rushcliffe in 1950 and King's Lynn in 1955 for the Labour Party.

Wing Commander Ernest

Millington DFC (1916-2009) was born in Ilford, went to school in Chigwell and London, to university in London and, after distinguished service with the RAF, he was elected MP for Chelmsford after a by-election in 1945. He won again at the General Election, and then became a Labour MP until 1950. He subsequently became involved in education and became Head of Education at Shoreditch Comprehensive School in 1965. He eventually retired to France where he lived until 2004. Ernest wrote an autobiography *Was that Really Me* published in 2006. He entered parliament the year after John Profumo and took from him the unofficial title of 'Baby of the House' for a few months before he lost that to Edward Carson.

Following the death of John Profumo on 10 March 2006, Millington was the only living former MP elected prior to the 1945 General Election. These were probably the only areas of common ground between Millington and Profumo!

He was also the last surviving person to have served as a Common Wealth Party MP.

Labour Heritage bulletin (Winter 2005) includes an interesting and detailed

presentation by our Chair, Stan Newens on Ernest Millington and the 1945 General Election in Essex. It can be found at: <http://labour-heritage.com>

Conclusion

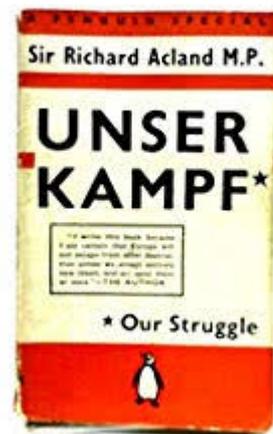
This brief note is intended to be a 'light trip' through a topic which has interested me for some time and its purpose is simply to set the issues in my mind into a format. There is so much more to say about the remarkable actors in this period and discussion about the political background, the philosophies and so much more that it does leave more unanswered questions than resolved ones.

Perhaps more about these issues can be produced in due course, subject to the indulgence of our indefatigable editor.

Sources:

The Oxford Companion to British History, 2002, originally published by Oxford University Press 2002, Wikipedia, *Exmoor Review*, vol. 55, 2014, article by Douglas Stuckey.

Personal notes, *Labour Heritage bulletins*



Essex Conference on Labour History 2018

The seventeenth Essex Conference on Labour History was held at the Witham Labour Hall on Saturday 20th October. It was sponsored by Labour Heritage, the Essex Labour Campaign Forum and the Essex Co-operative Party Council. Over 50 attended.



150 Years of the Trades Union Congress

To commemorate 150 years of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) the conference heard a talk by Adrian Weir, Assistant Chief of Staff for UNITE the Union. The TUC was founded in 1868. It had survived without any splits within the trades union movement in Britain, either on the basis of race and skills as in the US, or religious and political affiliations as in continental Europe. However as Vic Feather, chair of the TUC at the time of its centenary said, the ability to survive is not by itself a positive attribute.

There had been earlier attempts to bring the trades union movement in Britain under one banner. For the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union in the 1830s and the National Association for the Protection of Labour in the 1840s. There had been local federations and the London Trades Council was founded in 1860. The TUC held its first conference in Manchester. At its foundation it represented mainly skilled workers such as printers. The issues were mainly the same as today – working time, vocational training and workplace rights. After the 1867 Reform Act which had enfranchised some workers for the first time, the TUC

had a priority of influencing Parliament on safeguarding the rights of trades unionists. The Combination Acts which had outlawed trades unions had been repealed in 1825, but those joining a union, like the Tolpuddle Martyrs had faced a raft of laws which could lead them to prosecution and imprisonment or transportation.

In the 1860s two Royal Commissions were set up to look at the functions of trades unions. However there were no trades union representatives on these Commissions, only an observer. Some progress was made and in 1875 peaceful picketing was allowed by law in pursuit of a trades dispute.

In the late 19th century trades union membership grew amongst unskilled workers such as the dockers and gasworkers. Women workers, for instance at the Bryant and May Match Factory, joined the trades union movement. This went hand in hand with the growth in socialist politics. By 1918 the trades union movement had 6.5 million members. In 1901 an attack on trades union rights came when the Taff Vale Rail Company tried to make the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants responsible for its losses during strike action. This would have bankrupted a union. The campaign to overturn this court ruling culminated in the passing of the 1906 Trades Disputes Act, by the Liberal Government, with the support of 29 Labour MPs. It led to trades union support for the Labour Representation Committee (which became the Labour Party in 1906) as the trades unions sought parliamentary representation.

Industrial relations throughout much of the 20th century were based on voluntary agreement. There were no more serious attempts to shackle the trades union movement by legal means until the Thatcher government of the 1980s.

The defeat of the General Strike in 1926 and unemployment in the interwar years weakened the trades unions, but by the late 1930s membership increased in the new

car and aircraft engineering factories. During World War 2 Ernest Bevin as Minister for Labour, brought the unions into the machinery of government, with participation in Joint Production Committees in engineering factories. At the time of the TUC centenary, trades union militancy was on the rise, but the TUC was seen by some as part of the establishment. Its General Council contained members of the House of Lords, the Privy Council and holders of honours such as the OBE. Not exactly the centre of revolution. However there were attempts to shackle the power of the rank and file of the unions as increasingly unofficial strikes broke out. The 1964-70 Labour Government brought out a White Paper, *In Place of Strife*. However that was dropped in face of opposition from the trades union movement. The Heath Government in 1971 introduced an Industrial Relations Act which aimed to curb the unions. This was repealed by Labour, when elected in 1974. Building on the TUC-Labour Liaison Committee the Labour Government brought in a Trades Union Labour Relations Act, an Employment Protection Act, Health and Safety at Work Act and Sex Discrimination Act. TUC influence on government was at its zenith. All this ended however when the Government implemented cuts in expenditure at the behest of the International Monetary Fund. Tory policies under Thatcher, and continued under Tony Blair, led to a 'new realism' on the part of the TUC. It even brought out a visa card with the TUC logo. However it persuaded the Blair government elected in 1997 to introduce a National Minimum Wage. It continued to be the case that the TUC was frozen out of government. So where should it go from here? Frances O'Grady had been elected as the first woman General Secretary of the TUC. Should the TUC put all its hopes on the election of a Corbyn-led government which was committed to repealing the 2016 Trades Union Act, within the first

100 days in office? There had been a collapse in the membership of trades unions, particularly amongst young workers. It now stands at only 14% in the private sector. This had been paralleled by a collapse in collective bargaining. The share of GDP going to workers in wages which had been increasing since 1945, had been reversed since 1979, in favour of the richest one percent.



TUC 150 Years Exhibition

The other three speakers were those who spoke at the Labour Heritage AGM. A full report is contained in the *Labour Heritage bulletin* (Summer 2018). These were Barbara Humphries on 100 years of Women's Suffrage, Stan Newens on the life and philosophy of Karl Marx and John Grigg on the 1918 Labour Party constitution and Clause 4, Part 4. However these sparked more questions and discussion. Members of the audience recalled their grandmothers getting the vote for the first time. On Clause 4 there was a discussion on what 'common ownership' meant – co-operation or nationalisation.

Foundation of the London Labour Party

By John H. Grigg

Today London is a Labour City, occasionally borrowed by the Tories, but in the early days Labour in London lagged behind other parts of the country. At the 1906 General Election, when Labour first won a number of parliamentary seats, only three of the 29 came from London. These were Charles Bowerman in Lewisham, Deptford, Will Crooks in Woolwich and Will Thorne in West Ham.

The Labour Party was created between 1900 and 1906 by several already established organisations that continued their separate existence. The driving force behind the Labour Party's emergence was the Independent Labour Party (ILP). But many trade unions who had previously been allied to the Liberal Party at election times and had several 'Lib-Lab' MPs, became the dominant force in this new political party. All but one of the 29 Labour MPs elected in 1906 were sponsored by trade unions. This is not surprising. At the outset the affiliated trade unions had a membership of 353,000. The other founding organisations – the ILP, the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and the Fabian Society had 23,000 members between them. The trade union links with the Liberal Party lingered on and many trade unions, including the miners, did not affiliate to the Labour Party at the outset. In London many trade unionists were concerned with representation on the London County Council (LCC) rather than socialism and the practise of Lib-Lab councillors continued. The Fabian Society favoured 'permeation' - influencing the Liberal Party towards Socialistic ideas. In 1892 half the Fabian Executive Committee belonged to the National Liberal Club. Several Fabians became LCC Liberal Councillors in the hope of gradually moving the Liberal Party towards measures to achieve a more equal society.

It did not favour a separate party for this purpose.

The Social Democratic Federation (SDF) was a part of the formation of the Labour Representation Committee (the immediate forerunner of the Labour Party) in 1900. However it favoured revolutionary class war methods and quickly disaffiliated. It was the largest of the London Socialist Societies and ran candidates in local elections and had 40 London branches by 1890. It was led by Henry Hyndman, an extraordinary Marxist who launched a 'Commune for London' proposing extensive municipalisation, housing at cost rent, free education, feeding of school children, municipal supplies of food, fairer wages and reduced hours for council workers. This was the first socialist programme for London. Among his several eccentric views Hyndman was anti-trade unionism, yet despite this there was sometimes co-operation with trade unions at election times.

So part of the problem for the Labour Party in London was the relatively successful SDF which opposed any co-operation with Labour. Other difficulties were the many trade union branches and the Fabian Society that retained links with the Liberals.

Paul Thompson in *Socialist, Liberals and Labour: The Struggle for London 1885 – 1914* suggests other reasons for the late emergence of Labour in London. The city was never a trade union stronghold because there were fewer large factories than elsewhere or a single industry as in many other towns which encouraged a degree of working class solidarity. He also suggests that religion (the importance of which is too often ignored) had less hold in London than elsewhere. Many early Labour leaders emerged from non-conformist chapels. He also thinks that changes of jobs and residences were more frequent in London, causing a lesser community feeling than elsewhere. Dan Weinbren in 'Sociable Capital: London's Labour Parties 1918-1945' suggests that

London was different from other parts of the country with a workforce of immigrants either from other parts of the UK or overseas and there wasn't an existing working class community.

Until 1907 the Liberals, calling themselves the 'Progressives', controlled the LCC. Then the Conservatives, under the name of the 'Municipal Reform Party' or 'Moderates', took over. Labour won its first three LCC seats in 1910 and held on to only one of them in 1913. What happened to Labour during this period? The ILP, the driving force behind the formation of a national Labour Party independent of the Liberals was weak in London whereas the SDF, which had originated in London, was more successful.

The dominant part of the labour movement in London was, of course, the trade unions. The London Trades Council was formed in 1860 by the craft unions, which as elsewhere were allied to the Liberal Party. In 1891 the London Trades Council set up the Labour Representation League to run LCC candidates against the Liberals. Fearful of splitting the Progressive vote the Liberals gave the League a free run in ten seats, nine of which were successful. The Liberals even allowed them three Aldermen. But this group of twelve was absorbed into the 'Progressives' thus continuing the alliance with the Liberals. The policy returned to arrangements with the Liberals to run 'working men' LCC candidates.

An exception to this was in West Ham in 1898 when a 'United Socialist and Labour Council' of the London Trades Council, the SDF, the ILP and Christian Socialists captured control of the local council. This was short lived and an anti-socialist alliance dislodged this united front in 1900. It would be interesting to research into whether or not this socialist Labour group was able to achieve anything during its limited time in power. But the 1898 election triumph in West Ham was a

lesson, unheeded, into what could be achieved by unity on the left.

The old craft unions' allegiance to the Liberals was challenged in the late 1880s by the emergence of new unions of unskilled workers – the dockers, gas workers, labourers and the famous match girls, often led by SDF members. From 1901 onwards there is evidence of moves at the London Trades Council to get a London-wide committee off the ground. It affiliated to the Labour Party. But delegates to the London Trades Council were split between SDF members, who did not want links with Labour Party, and trade unionists whose aim was to get trade unionists elected to the LCC and local councils. They did not mind which party got them there. So, little progress was made.

This, of course, is a simplification of the situation. There were Fabian and trade union members who were also ILP members who favoured uniting the factions for electoral purposes. Some trade union branches co-operated with the ILP and the SDF at election time. Many ILP and SDF members were very active in the trade unions. There were dozens of locally based societies spread across the capital such as the Clapham Labour League, the Paddington Socialist Society, the Chiswick Progressive League and the Hammersmith Socialist Society. In the 1900s membership of the Labour Party had to be through affiliated organisations but some constituencies established unofficial forms of individual membership. But in order to get a London-wide Labour Party the London-wide bodies had to get together.

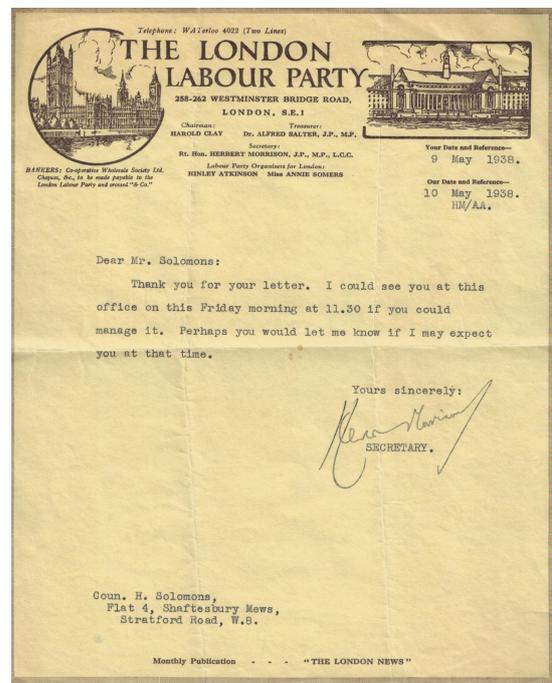
In 1905 a group of local Trade Councils called a conference to consider forming a London Labour Party but the London Trades Council did not back the proposal. The SDF and ILP were not invited to that conference. But they were at a later conference with some local trade unions that made no progress because of lack of support from the London Trades Council.

An important factor was the SDF's significant presence on the London Trades Council. The Council's chairman, Harry Quelch, was a leading SDF member who opposed proposals to work with other groups. Harry Quelch had left full-time school at ten and had taught himself French in order to read Marx's *Das Kapital*. He was a one-time General Secretary of a Dockers' Union. From 1906 Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) unsuccessfully intervened several times to establish a London Labour Party. The breakthrough came in 1913. The SDF was debating re-affiliation to the Labour Party. This was opposed by Quelch. His opposition was significant for London because he was still chairman of the London Trades Council. But he was an ill man and died on 17th September. After Quelch's death the SDF, now called the British Socialist Party (BSP) re-affiliated to the Labour Party. The BSP became the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920.

In March 1914 the London Trades Council, under the chairmanship of John Stokes and with Fred Knee as secretary, (both BSP members) proposed that it should call a conference for the purpose of establishing a united working class party on the LCC at the 1916 election. The conference took place in May. There were 420 delegates, 18 from local Labour Parties, 29 from Trades Councils, 11 from the Women's Labour League, 39 from the ILP, 39 from the BSP (formerly the SDF) and 292 from the trade unions. Fred Knee argued for unity and tolerance to sink all differences. The London Labour Party was established with 134,000 affiliated members and with Fred Knee as its first secretary.

It is ironic that the BSP (formerly the SDF), which through its influence at the London Trades Council had prevented the establishment of a united London Labour Party, should be the body that achieved its establishment – with a BSP member as its first secretary.

Fred Knee died in 1915 and Herbert Morrison took over as secretary. The War cancelled the 1916 elections. In 1919 Labour won half of London's metropolitan boroughs and 15 Labour members were elected to the LCC. By 1925 Labour had replaced the Progressive/Liberal party as the opposition on the LCC and finally captured the LCC in 1934. It remained Labour controlled until abolished in 1965, when it was replaced by the Greater London Council (GLC). The GLC which now included large parts of suburban London fluctuated between Labour and Conservative control. It was Labour controlled when it was abolished by Margaret Thatcher in 1986.



Sources

Paul Thompson. *Socialist, Liberals and Labour: The Struggle for London 1885 – 1914*. Routledge and Kegan, 1967.

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More on 100 Years of Votes for Women

Tower Hamlets Local Library and Archive held an exhibition featuring Sylvia Pankhurst's East London Federation of Suffragettes. Unlike her mother Emmeline, or her sister Christobel, Sylvia campaigned amongst working class women in London's East End. Christobel Pankhurst described 'working women the weakest of our sex'. In fact working class women faced harsher conditions in prison than their more well-to-do counterparts. Countess Lytton got herself arrested as a Liverpool seamstress and found her gaol sentence harsher than the first time that she had been arrested. The exhibition contained a letter to Keir Hardie from Sylvia Pankhurst in 1913, describing how she had been forcibly fed twice in one day. When she left prison she was too ill to walk or look after herself. Whilst looking after her, neighbours in Poplar had to hide her from the 'cats' – the police who were trying to re-arrest her under the Cat and Mouse Act. This letter is held in the Women's Library @ LSE.

The Woman's Hall in Old Ford Road was opened by the East London Federation of Suffragettes. It was reconstructed in an exhibition at Tower Hamlets archive. It included a meeting hall, cost price restaurant and nursery. Sylvia Pankhurst also opened a boot and toy co-operative to provide a livelihood for women who lost their jobs at the beginning of World War 1. Bessie Lansbury, wife of George Lansbury ran the nursery and a laundry.

Some women in the East London Federation of Suffragettes became councillors in Poplar, and went to prison for breaking the law, rather than the poor. Minnie Lansbury died in of pneumonia in 1921 after a spell in prison. Julia Scurr was elected to the Poplar Board of Guardian's, and the London County Council in 1925. Nellie Frances Wilson worked in a Whitechapel Laundry. In 1907 she joined

the ILP and became Mayor of Poplar in 1943. Another Poplar rates rebel was Susan Lawrence who was to become the first woman to chair the Labour Party.

In recognition of class politics the East London Federation of Suffragettes became the East London Workers' Suffrage Federation in 1916 and campaigned for universal suffrage at 21.

It was 90 Years for Us – 1928 was the year when all women over 21 got the vote. This was the theme of a meeting called by Reading Trades Union Council and the Reading GMB.

VOTE 90!
It's not 100 years for us.
Why working class women didn't get the vote in 1918
and how they are still ignored now

19th September 2018
at The Outlook, Kings Rd, RG1 3BJ

Doors open 7pm Seats are first come first served Donations welcome.

With **Shami Chakrabarti**
Shadow Attorney General and former Director of Liberty

Lisa McKenzie
Sociologist at London School of Economics and Class War activist

and **Louise Raw**
Historian author and Matchwomen's Festival organiser

Book by our speakers will be on sale at the event. Sorry but we cannot accept card payments cash only.

GMB READING, TRADES UNION COUNCIL, READING Labour, GMB READING

Eleanor Marx and the British Labour Movement

By Barbara Humphries

Eleanor Marx was Karl Marx's youngest daughter. Her family called her 'Tussy'. She was born in Soho, London in 1855, and later moved to Hampstead with her family.

At the early age of eight years Eleanor was involved in the life of political refugees in London, who stayed with the Marx family. She could conduct a political argument and

supported causes like the anti-slavery North in the American Civil War.

She was a lifelong socialist and feminist. This meant a lot in Victorian England, where women were excluded from public life. Even her father had hoped for a boy. She was to co-author *The Woman Question from a Socialist Point of View*, with her partner Edward Aveling. The lives of women concerned her. In her early years, her life revolved around her family. She felt sympathy with her father's friend, Frederick Engels, who, in 1884 published his *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. She earned her living teaching and translating, and was a linguist and literature lover. Much work came her way. She frequently accompanied her father Karl Marx to the British Museum.

Socialists were isolated in mid Victorian England. Respectable trades unionists supported the Liberals. The defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871 led to many refugees fleeing to London. It signalled the end of the First International founded by her father. By this time Eleanor Marx was now fifteen. Her first political activity was supporting a woman candidate Miss Westlake, who was elected to a School Board, as a secular candidate.

Eleanor was in her 30s when there was a revival of socialism and trades unionism in England, not seen since the Chartists, and to this she devoted her life. In 1884 she joined the Social Democratic Federation, becoming an Executive Committee member. She along with others including William Morris fell out with Henry Hyndman, its founder and they went on to form the Socialist League. One of the problems with Hyndman was his attitude to the unions. He had described himself as a Marxist, but could not relate to the workers movement. The Socialist League contained anarchist members and soon it split. It had a very small membership, no more than 700. Only one in ten members

of the Socialist League was a woman. It published a newspaper called *The Commonweal*.

By the 1880s unemployment was rising. In 1887 every day the unemployed gathered in Trafalgar Square. But this was spoiling things for the well off. There were calls for public meetings in Trafalgar Square to be banned. Trafalgar Square however was a public space for protest and on 13 November 1887 Irish protestors against repression took to the streets on 'Bloody Sunday.' Marchers were confronted by mounted police and as a result 200 of them were taken to hospital. On the 20th November a protest demonstration led to the death of Alfred Linnell, a bystander. William Morris wrote a poem to raise funds for his family and his funeral. He is buried in Tower Hamlets cemetery, now with a headstone, provided by Labour Heritage. (See *Labour Heritage bulletins* from 2015).

In 1881 trade unions were very weak in England. There were only 250,000 members. Eleanor Marx worked with trades unionists such as Will Thorne and Ben Tillett, offering her services as a secretary and public speaker, in the East End of London. She did not however play a role in the strike of the match women in 1888 or the docks strike of 1889. The union with which she was most involved with was the National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers (NUGWGL) led by Will Thorne. This was a forerunner of the GMB Union of today. Eleanor was elected to its Executive Committee and its delegate to conferences of the Second International and ILP .

In 1889 there was a strike at India Rubber Gutta Percha and Telegraph Company in Silvertown. This company which made cables employed 2000 workers. Eleanor Marx became secretary of the Silvertown Women's Branch of the Gas Workers

Union, which organised the strike. This was the first women's branch of the union. She commuted to Silvertown, West Ham every day from Chancery Lane to their picket line and spoke at rallies of thousands in Hyde Park and Victoria Park. Defeat of the workers at Silvertown was due, she believed, to lack of support from the Amalgamated Society of Engineers.

In 1881 women formed a third of the total UK workforce. They worked in textile mills, and two million were in domestic service. Their wages were half that of men's. Eleanor Marx organised women into the labour movement. She tried to convince the men that it was in their interests to organise women in the workplace, and that for many women the 'family wage' was not enough. She supported women shop workers in Hammersmith, and at Barratts' Sweets in Tottenham, where women struck against fines. But she also supported male workers in industries such as brick-making.

Eleanor Marx played an important role in organising Jewish workers in London's East End. Asserting her Jewish family heritage she learnt Yiddish, which was their first language. She helped these workers find their way into the trades union movement, teaching them to speak English. She combated anti-semitism amongst gentile workers, some who would not work with Jews. The TUC had supported immigration controls in 1895. These would be used against Jewish workers fleeing persecution in Eastern Europe. They claimed that these immigrants were undercutting local wages. The reality however was that these workers were concentrated in sweated trades, making clothing and furniture, shunned by the native workforce due to poor pay and conditions. The Aliens Act passed by Parliament in 1905, was the first time immigration controls had been introduced in Britain. By then the TUC was opposed to them.

Jewish workers in East London formed their own unions. In the furnishing trade in Whitechapel, for example, there was the Hebrew Cabinet Makers' Society. These came together to form the Federation of East London Labour Unions. There were however class tensions within the Jewish community, and radical activity was not approved by their 'elders'. On one occasion the Chief Rabbi joined with the local Tory MP to prevent a socialist meeting in the Great Assembly Hall in the Mile End Road. They had no sympathy for the socialist leanings of the poor.

In the East End Irish and Jewish communities worked and lived in different workplaces and neighbourhoods. However they could work together in the spirit of solidarity. Inspired by the strike of mainly Irish dock workers in 1889, there was a strike of Jewish tailors for six weeks, which was successful. This was to be repeated in 1911, with strikes against 'Sweating' in East London. In 1936 Irish dockers and their families supported the Jewish community in Cable Street when faced with a march of Oswald Mosley's fascists through London's East End.

Eleanor Marx was also to play a role in the Second International Congress in 1889, travelling to meet socialists in the USA and Europe. In 1889 May Day was adopted as the workers day by the Second International. She campaigned for the celebration of May Day in Britain. As a member of the Eight Hours League she favoured one May Day on 1st May, (not the nearest Sunday). This caused a rift with other comrades. In 1890 there were two May Day rallies in London. The larger one of 250,000 was in support of the 8 hour day, was addressed by Eleanor Marx.

She died tragically at the young age of forty three. Her partner, Edward Aveling was implicated in her taking her own life, following a bout of depression. She was mourned by the British labour movement

as a heroine and one of its own, especially by Will Thorne, whom she had mentored. In 2014 the new GMB headquarters in Reading was opened and named Eleanor Marx House in her memory.

This was a talk given to a meeting of Hastings Trades Union Council, May Day 2018.

Red Leaflets in Acton Research by John Grigg from the *Acton Gazette and Express* 15 August 1919

‘Detectives raid on Saturday at Station Parade: Alleged plans for Revolution’

Reports of the raid in Acton in search of revolutionary literature appear to have been somewhat exaggerated. Only one leaflet of any importance was found, the great majority seized being ordinary socialist propaganda works which have been in circulation for some time.

The local police were informed that a large quantity of literature, alleged to be of a violent and seditious character, was in the room of a young man lodging above Bell’s Coffee Tavern at Station Parade in Horn Lane. The police informed Scotland Yard and three detectives from the Special Service Branch knocked on the Tavern’s side door and asked to see Mr Tate. They were shown up to his room and Mr Tate readily produced the leaflets and answered a number of questions. About 150 leaflets were confiscated and have been placed before the Home Office and no action has been taken pending a decision of the department. Among the documents seized were several leaflets bearing the fictitious imprint ‘The New Press, Princes Street, Edinburgh’. No such firm existing so far as can be ascertained.

One of the most important leaflets is headed ‘British Workers: What are we going to do?’

The leaflet, which is reprinted in full in the *Acton Gazette and Express*, condemns the exploitation of the workers by the employing class which results in poverty and starvation.

‘Comrades in Russia and Hungary have taken the only action possible and have overthrown the master class and the workers are now deciding for themselves how they should live and how the country should be managed’.

The leaflet continues and condemns the allies’ military activity in Russia against the Bolsheviks.

‘Are we British workers to allow ourselves to be used by our masters to crush our fellow workers in Russia? Will engineers in this country continue to make munitions to be used against the workers in Russia and Hungary? Will dockers continue to load the ships? Will sailors still work to carry food, clothes and ammunition to anti-Bolsheviks who are fighting our Russian comrades? Are British soldiers and sailors still going to fight their own class?’

‘Italian sailors and Norwegian seaman are boycotting all anti-Bolshevik goods. Fellow workers in Italy and France are in revolt. They are asking British workers to join them in a general strike. We have done enough talking. Now is the time to act! Make a list of factories and workshops in your district. Find out from where they get their supplies. Find out where local food supplies come from. Prepare to take direct action to abolish poverty, unemployment and overwork. Get ready for the revolution!’

Other leaflets are said to outline plans for the seizure of guns and rifles for distribution and securing soldiers for a ‘Red’ army. Others, bearing the Edinburgh imprint, are believed to have

been printed in London by a secret hand-press.

Mr Tate is described as a slight fair-haired man of about 25 employed at Berwick Engineering works in Acton. He has been lodging at Station Parade for about six weeks but his landlord has told him to go elsewhere. He spends his weekends with his wife in Kent.

There does not appear to be evidence he is in any way responsible for the plans outlined in the documents, although he is an ardent socialist.

Interviewed by the *Daily Chronicle* he said the leaflet printed above was handed to him at a Woolwich open-air meeting he attended on the Sunday before last. "I am only a philosophical student of socialism and do not believe in direct action. I formerly belonged to the Socialist Labour Party*, but now am a member of the Herald League." He denied having literature which dealt with the formation of a 'Red' army and most of the seized pamphlets had been in circulation for years.

The raid was carried out very quietly and none of the tavern's customers were aware of the visit. To his landlord he confessed his Saturday experience had 'quite cured him.'

In the House of Commons J.H.Thomas asked why no action had been taken in respect of reports of Bolshevik conspiracies. Bonar Law said a great deal of pernicious literature was being circulated but it was difficult to get proof for the courts.

**The Socialist Labour Party, founded in 1903, was a breakaway from the Marxist Socialist Democratic Federation. It survived until 1980. The name is now used by the party founded by Arthur Scargill in 1996.*

Why and How We Will be Celebrating the Life and Work of Clara, Dorothea Rackham (1875-1966)

Professor Mary Joannou explains her significance

An event was sponsored by the Labour History Research Unit, Anglia Ruskin University, commemorating the remarkable life of feminist Clara Rackham (1875-1966). She was a Cambridge social reformer but her importance is far greater than that. A blue plaque is to be erected at 9 Park Terrace in her honour.

Alderman Clara Dorothea Rackham was a pioneering magistrate, feminist, penal reformer, peace campaigner, chair of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and a towering figure in the history of the early twentieth-century Labour Party and the Co-operative Movement.

Clara believed strongly in co-operative values and founded the Cambridge branch of the Co-operative Women's Guild in 1902. She was a Labour councillor for West Chesterton (1919-22) and for Romsey from 1929 until 1948. She served as both a city and county councillor, as vice-chairman of Cambridge County Council (1956-58) and chairman of the County Council education committee (1945-57) working tirelessly to improve the daily living conditions of the poor and disadvantaged.

Had she lived today Clara would certainly have been horrified at plans to sell off Shire Hall, to privatise our libraries, close children's centres, or relocate the magistrates' court out of the city, all buildings and public services close to her heart. Indeed there was hardly a radical cause, organisation or initiative to which she did not give her time and support including the establishment of the first family planning clinic, the Rock Road

Library, and the heated swimming pool on Parker's Piece. Clara helped to finance and build the Romsey Town Labour Club. The Cambridge Headquarters of the General Strike in 1926 was in the basement of her house. She walked on the Aldermaston March in 1961 at the age of eighty-five. One of Cambridge's first women magistrates, she was a lifelong supporter of the Howard League for Penal Reform, campaigning for women police officers, and the use of the Probation Service to keep young people out of the courts.

Clara called for free school milk and dinners in schools, fighting innumerable battles to eradicate poverty, to educate working-class girls, and to expand educational opportunities for adults as a part-time tutor and Chairman of the Eastern District of the Workers Educational Association. A strong cyclist and environmentalist, who swam in the river Cam, she lobbied for better cycling facilities and the preservation of footpaths in the countryside.

Clara stood as a Labour parliamentary candidate in Chelmsford and in Saffron Walden but in a male-dominated party was never given the chance to contest a winnable seat. She was invited to broadcast on BBC radio and acquired a national reputation for her expertise in employment law, factory legislation, national insurance, unemployment benefits and the 40 hour week, in which she became interested after her appointment as one of a handful of women government factory inspectors during the First World War.

Book Reviews

The Women's Pilgrimage 1913

***Hearts and Minds* by Jane Robinson, Transworld Publishers, 2018.**

Reviewed by Linda Shampan

The 'Suffragettes' (Women's Social & Political Union – WSPU) are remembered for their dramatic actions and courage in facing brutal prison treatment. In contrast, the non-militant 'Suffragists' (the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies – NUWSS), who worked tirelessly for decades to achieve votes for women, are generally seen to seek political pathways rather than direct action. So I was surprised to learn from Jane Robinson's book about a neglected episode of inspiring non-violent direct action organised by the NUWSS in the summer of 1913 – a six week protest march, involving thousands of women across England and Wales. They called it 'The Great Pilgrimage'.

The book's first section gives a good introduction to the history of the suffragists from the first ever public suffrage meeting in 1867, addressed by Millicent Fawcett and the growth of suffrage societies across the country to 600,000 members. It also shows the range of views regarding women's suffrage at the time; for example, Gertrude Bell, the celebrated solitary woman traveller, staunchly upheld her right *not* to be allowed to vote: 'Parliament', she said, 'was no place for ladies'; while Dr Henry Maudsley claimed that 'if women used their brains too much, their wombs would wither'. The main section then gives the history of the 1913 March. Much of it is in the words of the women themselves, rediscovered by Jane Robinson in women's diaries (which had been kept in local libraries), and newspaper reports from the county record offices. The final

section, tells of the period after 1913, and the suffragists' work during World War 1.

The WSPU had begun their policy of militant action in 1906 in response both to the lack of progress towards women's votes, and to the violence women often encountered from anti-suffrage opponents. When they held peaceful public meetings initially Millicent Fawcett (and other Suffragists) were supportive. Millicent wrote in the *Times* 'far from having injured the movement, they have done more during the last twelve months to bring [suffrage] within the realms of practical politics than we have been able to achieve in forty years'. However, this soon changed. It became obvious to the constitutional campaigners 'that in order to win the hearts and minds of the British people, something would have to be done to persuade the public that the idea of giving women the vote was neither dangerous nor distasteful.' They saw the militant tactics as counter-productive.

In 1907 the NUWSS 'hit upon a completely novel idea..... [they would] take to the streets, but not in a combative spirit, not as protesters....[but] to demonstrate belief in themselves and in the power of democracy with a vast celebratory parade' They painted banners such as 'Gentle but Resolute' and 'Justice not Privilege'. 3,000 women marched from Hyde Park Corner to the Strand – where there were speeches and music, a joyful occasion; it became nicknamed 'the Mud March' – from the effect of the wet cold weather on the women's skirts, which dragged at their heels.

In 1908, there were *two* mass peaceful gatherings in London: one organised by the WSPU on 21st June and one the week before by the NUWSS. In both a new fashion for campaigners became established – wearing white dresses to represent the purity of women's desire for the vote. This was adapted further in the

Women's Pilgrimage five years later, by 'raising skirt hems a daring four inches' to avoid the problems of the 'Mud March'.

The press and the public found it hard to distinguish between the suffragettes and suffragists, but were aware that women were 'not of one accord'. So from 1908 onwards the NUWSS continued to seek more visible action and 'decided to take to the road again, not in a spirit of defiance but of evangelism' – this time by horse-drawn caravans, holding meetings along the way. It was perhaps inspired by the fashion for caravanning which had grown in Edwardian England. The first of these suffrage tours was around the South of England, and three others followed that summer including from Selkirk to Tynemouth.

The impetus for the Women's Pilgrimage of 1913 was disappointment with Asquith - he repeatedly pledged to introduce women's suffrage and each time backed off, indicating that he still needed to be convinced that women really wanted the vote. The NUWSS committee response was two-fold- first, to 'pledge support exclusively to Labour candidates in general or by-elections' and secondly, to take up the proposal of Katherine Harley, President of the Shropshire Women's Suffrage Society, to organise a women's pilgrimage This aimed 'to prove there were thousands of law-abiding people who believed it was only right and just that women should have the vote as well as men'. With their network of groups, and a campaigning newspaper *The Common Cause*, the NUWSS officers organised the Pilgrimage in just two months. All over the country suffragist groups started to prepare. The first pilgrims set off from Newcastle, Carlisle and Land's End in mid-June 1913, on a six-week journey to London. A few women (and men) came the whole distance, some joined for part of the way. Most travelled on foot, with a few horse-drawn caravans. Some camped

in tents along the way and some found accommodation with local groups. Hundreds of local meetings were held along the route. Jane Robinson brings the history to life, with dozens of personal accounts from the diaries she has discovered. It was shocking to read of the level of violence meted out to the women in several places (including attacks on their caravans and tents as they slept).

The account of suffragists' experiences from 1914 includes the founding of the Scottish Women's Hospital (SWH) – another neglected piece of history. Elsie Inglis trained as a doctor at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital in London and, returning to Scotland in 1899, opened a women's hospital for the poor; she worked as a surgeon, while continuing to be a popular committed suffrage speaker. When war broke out she offered to help the Red Cross open a hospital in Edinburgh, but no premises could be found. She then contacted the War Office to offer to set up units of the Western Front, to be staffed by her female colleagues, and says she was told 'My good lady, go home and sit still'. She approached the Scottish Federation of Suffrage Societies, and was told they would gladly sponsor a unit if her offer was accepted elsewhere. She wrote to the French and Serbian ambassadors in London, who both welcomed her offer and in November 1914, she set off for France where a SWH unit was set up in three weeks in an abandoned abbey. All the staff – doctors, nurses, administrators were women apart from the two male cooks. By the end of the war, there were fourteen SWH units in seven different countries. Several women who had been on the Women's Pilgrimage worked in the SWH units, including Katherine Hurley (originator of the idea) who was a SWH administrator.

The Women's Pilgrimage in West London

Hearts and Minds inspired me to look for information about the Pilgrimage in our local area – and I searched the newspaper archive collected by John Grigg, which covers the *Chiswick Times* and *Chiswick Gazette*.

On 11th July 1913, the *Chiswick Times* reported on:

'a garden meeting in delightful surroundings at Milton House, Bedford Park of the Chiswick & West Hammersmith branch of the London Society for Women's Suffrage. They heard the news and arrangements for the Great Suffrage Pilgrimage. The branch is taking an active part and on the 25th, a contingent ... will pass along Chiswick High Road having come from the Bath Road. Full particulars may be obtained from the Pilgrimage Committee, 140 Hamlet Gardens, Ravenscourt Park.'

On 18th July, the *Chiswick Gazette* reported that the pilgrims are:

'tramping to London to join the great demo at Hyde Park on Saturday... they come by six main roads and some have come as their song says 'From Land's End by the blue sea coast, from far beyond the Tweed.'

The contingent is to pass through Ealing and Acton started from Carlisle on 18th June and have picked up members in Manchester, Liverpool, Chester, Stafford, Birmingham and Oxford and appear to have had a good reception in all places. They will arrive at Uxbridge at 7pm where a meeting will be held at the Pump. On Friday, they will march along the Uxbridge Road through Southall and Hanwell, arriving at Ealing Common at 12.30 where a meeting will be addressed, among others, by Rev. W. Templeton King (Vicar of Christ Church, Ealing). Well-known Ealing suffragists, Professor

Sumichrast, Miss Edith Palliser and Miss Mildred Watson, who will also speak. At about 4 o'clock, they will set off through Acton for Birkbeck Road. Persons wishing to join the last part of Friday's march (Wood Lane to Queen's Rd Ethical Church) may obtain a seat at 1/- in a charabanc on applying to Miss Debac, 37 Uxbridge Road.'

'Pilgrims' hat cockades in the red, white and blue of the NUWSS can be bought for 3d from Mrs Comins, 39a Bond St, Ealing.'

'Pilgrims from other routes will enter Hyde Park through the Alexandra Gate, Marble Arch and Hyde Park Corner and the great demo will start at 5 o'clock.'

In the days following the Great Rally, the local papers gave their verdict on the event. The *Chiswick Times* commented on 1st August, that:

'One cannot fail to be struck that the manner of claiming the vote adopted by the non-militant 'pilgrims', who passed through Chiswick last Friday, is likely to be more effective than those of the irresponsible party who adopt the virulent forms of propaganda. Journeying by road from such places as Land's End and Portsmouth, they showed a devotion to the cause.

Whether that devotion is a mistaken one is quite another matter, but a result of the peaceful methods was that the ladies were allowed to pass unmolested through Chiswick streets and hold a big meeting in Ravenscourt Park without interruptions. However, the ladies of Chiswick did not turn out in large numbers and if they desire the 'man in the street' to be convinced there is a genuine desire amongst the town's women folk, they will have to come out more in the open than they did last Friday.'

The *Chiswick Gazette* reported on 1st August that:

'Mrs Ramsay, the grey-haired lady who had been with the Land's End van for the whole of the journey, received a hearty reception, and said she had a daughter who was a doctor who had higher qualifications than her son, but she, like 670 other women doctors, had no vote. Women paying rates and taxes should have the vote on that score alone.

Mrs Corbett Ashby, a Wandsworth Board of Guardians member, dealt with the great increase of women engaged in labour. She denied women were not interested in political questions of the day. The membership of the Primrose League and the Women's Liberal Federation supported her argument. The men of the parties (Liberals & Conservatives) took the money and help of these women and should allow women to vote with them.'

'A gathering of Chiswick and Bedford Park members awaited the Land's End contingent which was not as large as some expected, it being explained that not many ladies had been able to march for the whole 6 days. One lady was Mrs Ramsay, who despite her age had come all the way. Chiswick had a banner saying 'Welcome'. The Chiswick contingent fell in and the way was made to Ravenscourt Park.

There was a large crowd of children about who were diplomatically dealt with by a bottle of sweets being produced by one of the ladies. When the Portsmouth contingent arrived across Hammersmith Bridge, the gathering swelled to 300 or 400.

At Ravenscourt Park, the Land's End van was used as a platform and Miss Frances Stirling took the chair – a fluent unruffled speaker who, without interruption, pointed out that during its 50 year existence the society had sought to gain its end by law-abiding methods only.

When sensational incidents filled the newspapers it was difficult to impress upon the public the size and power of the

society. Yet it had over 50,000 members and subscribers. They did not desire to dictate but to be in a position to make sure Parliament knew what it was about before legislating for women. The minds of women could not be got at without the vote.’

***A Party with Socialists in it: A History of the Labour Left* by Simon Hannan, published by Pluto Press, as part of the Left Book Club Series**

Reviewed by Barbara Humphries

An influx of new members since 2015 has sparked new interest in the history of the Labour Party. There have been many histories of the Party, probably more than of all the other political parties in Britain put together. This book does not claim to be impartial and is a guide to activists from the standpoint of the Labour left. It does not however fall into the trap of trying to draw ‘lessons of history’ in a mechanical way. History does not repeat itself and historical events are unique. We learn from the past to ensure that history is not repeated. For instance the General Election of 2017 did not, as some predicted, have the same outcome as the General Election of 1983.

The late Tony Benn described the Labour Party as ‘a party with socialists in it’, and this book relates the story of these socialists from its early days until the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader in 2015. In his introduction John McDonnell explains how the Party became in its early years ‘a party of radical transformation’, reflecting the experience of those who experienced ‘the harshness of our economic system’. In 1918 the Party adopted Clause 4, Part 4 committing it to public ownership. The harshness of the economic system has returned with a vengeance, especially since the financial crash of 2008/9. It is the effects of this crash and its aftermath, otherwise known as the politics of ‘austerity,’ that underpins so much of public anger and in

the transformation of the Labour Party over the last three years. The grim facts of austerity were described by one delegate after another at the recent Party conference.

The book describes how successive Labour leaderships in the past acted to constrain the influence of the Labour left. Ramsay MacDonald marginalised MPs from the Independent Labour Party (ILP), the organised left in the 1920s, keeping them out of his Cabinet in 1929. Members of so-called ‘Communist front organisations’ such as the National Unemployed Workers’ Movement could face expulsion. Those local parties who refused to expel them faced disaffiliation. Members of the Socialist League which became the Labour left in the 1930s, such as Stafford Cripps and Nye Bevan, were expelled for calling for a united front against fascism. However both of these were later re-admitted to the party and became ministers in the 1945 Government led by Clement Attlee.

After 1945 dissent within the Party centred around foreign policy, with the left rejecting Cold War politics. The launch of CND attracted Labour activists to the policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament, and at the 1960 conference a resolution endorsing this policy was passed, with the support of the two main trades unions, the AEU and TGWU. The following year this policy was reversed. However right wing leader Hugh Gaitskell was unsuccessful in getting the Party to abandon Clause 4. When he died unexpectedly, he was replaced by Harold Wilson, an MP who had come from the left.

The book charts the rise of the Left in the 1970s and the campaign led by Tony Benn for an Alternative Economic Strategy. It also saw the rise of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CPLD), as activists sought to make MPs and the leader more accountable. In 1981 a special conference approved rule changes which included mandatory re-selection. For the

first time ever the PLP lost its sole right to choose the Party's leader.

New Labour was not the 'broad church' that Tony Benn had advocated. In Parliament the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs was down to 7% of the PLP after 1997. Tony Blair wanted to wipe out the Party and its trades union base altogether. However he was not successful. Trades union leaders opposed to him became the 'awkward squad' who tried to 'reclaim the Party'. At a grassroots level the Labour Representation Committee was formed 'as an explicitly socialist organisation in the belly of the New Labour Machine' and members of the Centre Grassroots Left Alliance won four seats on the NEC in 1998. The left never gave up.

Comments from Sally Groves on the Trico Strike for Equal Pay for Women

Thanks for the Labour Heritage summer bulletin and for covering the Trico book launch which I wasn't expecting and was very welcome. There are a few errors in it which I thought I had better point out. Vernon was not Secretary of Hounslow Trades Council in 1976. In fact he was a delegate and Pete Rowlands was Secretary. Our strike bulletins were produced by myself, Vernon and Jack Dromey not by Vernon on his own or from newspaper articles. Also the book is not written from interviews with those involved. The anecdotes I collected from surviving strikers and a few others closely involved was a completely separate project to the story. The intention was to make the whole book more inclusive and not simply the voice of two authors. The first half of the actual story was originally written by Vernon in 1977 but then abandoned and which I then picked up and continued after retirement.

Pete Rowlands pointed out that Vernon was secretary of Hounslow Trades Council from 1982-1984, but that he made an important contribution to the Trico strike.

A memorial to the Match Girls Strike

Samantha Johnson's great grandmother was one of the leaders of the Match Girls Strike in 1888. Sarah Chapman (1862-1945). She was on the strike committee and met Annie Besant to gain support. She was a delegate to the International TUC in London in 1888 and to the TUC in Liverpool in 1890.

However she is buried in an unmarked pauper's grave in Manor Park Cemetery in Forest Gate. Her great grand-daughter is trying to get a memorial for her grave and a statute to mark the strikers in Tower Hamlets, including a blue plaque on the now gated community, occupied by the one time Bryant and May match factory. For more information and to support – contact matchgirls1888statue@gmail.com.



For more information about Labour Heritage, bulletins and publications see <http://www.labour-heritage.com/>