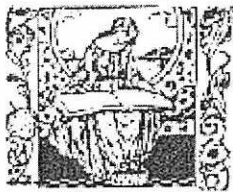


## Labour Heritage



# Labour Heritage

Bulletin Spring 2004

## LABOUR HERITAGE WEST LONDON DAY SCHOOL

Labour Heritage held a day school in Ruskin Hall, Acton, on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December to commemorate the 60 year's anniversary of the 1943 Acton by-election. This by-election was held during World War 2 and challenged the electoral pact between the Labour and Conservative parties. When the Conservative MP – Hubert Duggan died, the official Labour Party position was not to contest the seat. However the local branch of the Independent Labour Party selected Walter Padley, the party national industrial organizer to fight the election.

### Walter Padley and the Acton by-election

Bill Bolland, member of Labour Heritage and Acton and Shepherds Bush CLP spoke on the research which he has conducted on Walter Padley and the 1943 by-election. This has included reports from the local Gazette and from talking to relatives of Walter Padley who are still alive.

Walter Padley was an industrial organizer with a large amount of support from the shop stewards at Napiers, an engineering firm located in Acton Vale. During the war he had been a conscientious objector believing the war to be imperialist in its aims. However he

had also been rejected by a medical board for military service on the grounds that he suffered from asthma.

**WIN ACTON FOR SOCIALISM**

**WALTER PADLEY**  
**JAMES MAXTON, M.P.**  
**SYLVIA PADLEY**

**Co-op Hall, Western Ave., East Acton**  
**SUNDAY, 12th December, 3 p.m.**

**YOUR VOTES WILL DECIDE**

Published by Fred. G. Barton, Agent, 318, Uxbridge Rd., Acton, W.3

**WHY LABOUR WILL NOT CONTEST THE BY-ELECTION**

1. Because the National Government is based upon an agreement by the political parties composing it not to contest each other at by-elections. The Labour Party will honour the agreement because it does not wish to undermine the stability of the Government in these critical times.
2. The voting register is nearly five years old. Thousands of voters are in the forces, and others are scattered throughout the country on war work, whilst thousands of people now living in Acton will have no vote in this election. The election therefore cannot represent the will of Acton people.
3. Our main job is to get on with the war effort and bring it to an early and victorious conclusion.

**IN THE MEANTIME**

*Keep your powder dry for the election that matters at the end of hostilities.*  
*The Labour Candidate for that election will be*  
**Clr. J. A. SPARKS.**

Issued by the Secretary of the Acton Labour Party, 37 Allison Rd., Acton, W3

The by-election was held in unusual circumstances on an electoral roll, which had not been updated since 1937. Local people serving in the forces could vote using their last civilian address in Acton.

Initially there were six candidates but the independent labour and Liberal candidates withdrew leaving Walter Padley, a Edward Godfrey (reported as a founder of the pro-Geman British Nationalist Party), a Dorothy Crisp (who wrote for the Sunday Dispatch) and the official Conservative candidate – Henry Longhurst. Walter Padley held public meetings in Acton and ILP speakers such as Jimmy Maxton spoke to an audience of 100 people. Padley defended the decision to fight a by-election – after all other countries involved in the War such as Australia and the USA had held general elections. He rejected the anti-patriotic labels – his Tory opponent Longhurst, he pointed out, had visited Germany on a golfing holiday and had praised Hitler. Winston Churchill made a point of writing to the local Gazette calling for a Conservative victory. When election day came the turn out was 20%. Longhurst gained 5104 votes to Padley's 2336. However Padley had won 28% of the vote, the best ILP result until that date, during the wartime years. He was selected again as an ILP candidate for Acton in 1944. After 1945 the ILP joined with the Labour Party and Padley was selected as a Labour candidate, though not for Acton and went on to have a career in the Foreign Office in the 1964-70 Wilson government. (more on Walter Padley in article by Bill Bolland in this Bulletin).

### **Southall**

The second speaker of the day was Oliver New, RMT London Region Transport President and Southall local activist. He spoke on the history of the labour movement in Southall, explaining how the area had long been one of economic change and transition. In the

1930s emigrants from Wales sought jobs in factories such as AEC and Quaker Oats. They often faced the same violence and hostility from local people as the immigrants from the Indian subcontinent who began to arrive in the 1950s. By 1965 there were over 9,000 immigrants in Southall from the 'New Commonwealth' – the area changed very quickly. Oliver spoke of the conditions in which they worked, in factories such as Woolfs, the impact on housing and education and the controversial issue of bussing. In the 1960s the British National Party attempted to organize in Southall, holding nine public meetings. The Indian Workers Association was set up as a welfare organization for Asian workers and in 1967 the first Asian councilor, Sardul Gill was elected. In the 1970s the Labour Party moved to the left and campaigns against racialism by the Anti-Nazi League helped to transform the situation in Southall. The local Labour Party was on the left with MP Sid Bidwell. The the Asian community organized itself into the labour movement, including the Labour Party which has a large membership but not a large active base. In recent years we have seen the rise of Asian businessmen within the community and an increasingly divisive role of religious institutions which have become more inward looking. There was a lot of discussion on the events in Southall on April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1979 when the National Front was allowed by the Tories on Ealing Council to meet in the Southall Town Hall. It was announced that 2004 would see the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this event when a teacher Blair Peach was killed and a commemoration would take place.