

Labour Heritage

Bulletin Spring 2005

Conference on Labour history in Essex

The third conference on labour history in Essex, organized jointly by Labour Heritage and the Essex County Labour Party took place on Saturday 23rd October 2004, at Witham Labour Hall. It was chaired by John Kotz and attended by over 50 people.

Labour on Essex County Council

In the morning the first speaker was John Gyford, himself a former Essex county councillor, who spoke on the Labour representation on the Essex County Council.

The Essex County Council was set up in 1889 and covered the whole geographical area of Essex, including the south-west metropolitan area, now the boroughs of Newham, Waltham Foerst, Redbridge, Havering and Barking. In 1965 these boroughs left the Essex county council and became part of greater London, changing the whole character of representation in Essex. Most of Essex remained largely rural. Initially the county council had responsibility for road and bridge maintenance and planning, infectious diseases, etc. but later took over education, social services and libraries.

John's talk focused on Labour representation between 1930 and 1965. It was based on the records of the Federation of Essex Labour Parties, which were included in the papers of a former chairman, the late Kenneth Cuthbe, now donated to the Essex Record Office. In 1919 the first Labour candidates agreed a programme for the county council. This was essentially based on the policies of the agricultural workers union and included the abolition of tied cottages and payment of county councilors. It was difficult for workers to stand for the position of councilor as all meetings took place during the day. Leisured volunteers were called for ! The first Labour candidates included a solicitor, a Methodist clergyman and a cinema owner. In 1919 the candidate for Ilford South, was the only one to win, but during the 1920s some of the future key players such as Perry Astins and Joseph Hewitt were elected to the council. Some of the councillors were working men, such as an engine driver and they faced severe problems to do with time and transport within the county. Councillors ended up using all their holiday entitlement on meetings and had to have a sympathetic employer. Perry Astins, for instance, was a full time general secretary for one of the small print unions. It was accepted that some councillors would only be able to attend the four quarterly meetings of the

LABOUR AT COUNTY HALL 1930-1965



Percy Astins Trade Union Secretary
 County Councillor (Walthamstow) 1925-1937
 County Alderman 1937-1955
 Chairman of General Purposes Committee 1944-1946
 Vice-Chairman of the Council 1944-1946
 Chairman of the Council 1946-April 1948 and October 1948-1949
 Secretary of the Labour Group 1931-1943



William Bennett Railway Clerk
 County Councillor (Tilbury) 1934-1937 and (Becontree) 1937-1946
 County Alderman 1946-1970
 Vice-Chairman of the Council 1948-1949 and 1960-1961
 Chairman of the Council 1952-1955 and 1958-1960
 Chief Whip of the Labour Group 1946-1948
 Deputy Leader of the Labour Group 1955-1958 and 1961-1967
 Leader of the Labour Group 1948-1952 and 1960-1961



Joseph Hewett Headmaster
 County Councillor (Loughton) 1925-1938
 County Alderman 1938-1948
 Vice-Chairman of the Council 1946-1948
 Chairman of the Council April-September 1948
 Leader of the Labour Group 1937-1948



Charles Leatherland Journalist
 County Alderman 1946-1948
 Chairman of Finance Committee 1952-1955 and 1958-1960
 Vice-Chairman of the Council 1952-1955 and 1958-1960
 Chairman of the Council 1960-1961
 Chief Whip of the Labour Group 1948-1952
 Leader of the Labour Group 1952-1960 and 1961-1968
 Vice-Chairman of Essex Federation of Labour Parties 1947-1949
 Chairman of Essex Federation of Labour Parties 1949-1965

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL 1930-1965

Political composition after county and aldermanic elections

	Labour (Councillors + Aldermen)	Conservatives & Independents (Councillors + Aldermen)	Total
1931	16 (16 + 0)	100 (71 + 29)	116
1934	19 (17 + 2)	106 (77 + 29)	125
1937	30 (27 + 3)	95 (67 + 28)	125
1946	73 (55 + 18)	52 (39 + 13)	125
1949	38 (21 + 17)	87 (73 + 14)	125
1952	67 (52 + 15)	58 (42 + 16)	125
1955	58 (43 + 15)	87 (66 + 21)	145
1958	74 (56 + 18)	71 (53 + 18)	145
1961	60 (42 + 18)	85 (67 + 18)	145

Obituary of Ken Cuthbe, March 1987

Kenneth Cuthbe dies aged 88

FIRST World War veteran and former magistrate Kenneth Cuthbe has died. He was 88.

Mr Cuthbe was one of the first Silver End residents and lived with his wife, Ruby, in their Valentine Way home for 60 years.

He worked in the building trade and helped to build the first house in Silver Street and the village hall.

Mr Cuthbe first joined the Army when he was 16 but was sent home from France. He returned there, however, later in the war.

After the war he worked in the civil service and during the second world war he was a food controller.

Mr Cuthbe served on Essex County Council's planning committee for 25 years and was vice-chairman from 1952 to 1953 and chairman from 1953 to 1955 and from 1958 to 1961.

In 1952, Mr Cuthbe became a magistrate and served on the bench at Witham magistrates court.

He was a member of Witham Urban Council from 1933 to 1950 and was vice-chairman for six years.

He was on the Essex and South Joint Police Authority from 1968 to 1974 and was



Kenneth Cuthbe

awarded an MBE for public services in 1968.

Mr Cuthbe died in William Julien Courtauld Hospital after a six-month illness.

His funeral is at Silver End Congregational Church on Friday at 1.30pm before cremation at Chelmsford Crematorium at 2.45pm.

full council. No-one had cars in those days and transport links in rural Essex were patchy. Timetables for a five hour round bus service had to be studied and meetings often had to finish early in order for councillors to catch the last bus home. Meetings took place in London, as this provided easier transport links but this meant that the councillors could not focus on Essex. The growth of industry facilitated Labour gains in the south-west metropolitan area, but the Labour Party aimed to win rural seats in the 1930s, such as Witham and Harwich as well.

Labour gains control

Labour gained control of the council in 1946 and held it until 1949. There were 77 Labour councillors, 20 of whom were women. Under the leadership of Joseph Hewitt, a headmaster, a new style of party politics was introduced at County Hall, which the Tories had to accept. Committee membership for instance was to be selected on party lines. When Labour lost control councillors would withdraw from the committees chairs.

One of the priorities for Labour in office was education. Maintenance grants for higher education were increased as entrance on merit alone was the aim. Labour was also opposed to small village schools believed to be suitable only for "the supply of farmhands for farmers", many were closed to provide a wider education. Labour in Essex was strongly committed to comprehensive education campaigning vigorously against a Tory government in Westminster in the 1950s. In health and public assistance Labour wanted an end to the "workhouse mentality". Labour councillors took up the issue of wages for council employees believing that

blue collar workers should be better paid and white-collar workers less so! In the 1930s the Labour group had opposed cuts in the pay of hospital porters and tried to increase wages for road workers. (these were deliberately kept low by local councillors so that farmers would not lose their labourers to the road gangs in the 1930s.) Labour was also instrumental in opening up the system of appointing more ordinary people as magistrates.

In 1965 when the south-west metropolitan area went into Greater London the Essex council and Labour representation changed for ever. "Old Essex" had gone.

Crittalls

The second speaker was Ariel Crittall who spoke about the Crittall Metal Windows Company. This company grew from a Braintree ironmongery business purchased in 1849 by Francis Berington Crittall from Kent. It was renowned for being a model employer. Ariel had married into the Crittall family and her wedding to John Crittall, grandson of Francis Henry Crittall (1860-1935) who built the business up, had been conducted by Noel Conrad, the vicar of Thaxted.

Crittalls which made metal windows had a good record on industrial relations being the first engineering firm to implement a closed shop in 1919. This was to lead to a rift with the employers organisation – the Engineering Federation. Its employees worked through the 1926 General Strike. Ariel recalled her own memories of the General Strike which her mother had supported, but she had been kept at home from school, in case there were riots in the streets.

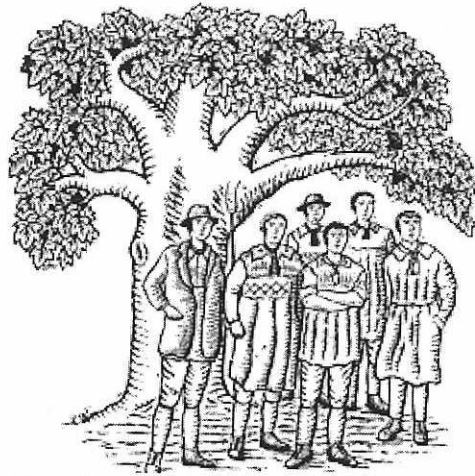
Crittalls placed a strong emphasis on workers' welfare and social life. Coffee rooms and a library for the workforce were opened at an early stage. Also provided was an athletic club, a drama group, social club and a bath for those who did not have them in their own homes. There was a 65 club for pensioners and metal was provided so that they could maintain their metalworking skills and make goods for their own families. But the jewel in the crown was the housing scheme at Silver End. This was inspired by other garden cities and was set in quite an idyllic place. Francis Henry Crittall insisted on houses with all mod-cons and designed in varied styles to avoid monotony, with shops, amenities and open spaces.

The Crittall family had a political record and Valentine Crittall stood as a Labour candidate, winning Malden in the 1923 general election. He was later to become Lord Braintree. A member of the family, Harriet Garland is currently the Labour mayor for Camden.

This was all set to change however when Slater Walker took over the company and embarked on an asset stripping course creating many redundancies. He wanted to sell Silver End. In fact the trades unions persuaded the management not to sell to the private sector but to give Silver End to the local authority. Ariel Crittall's husband, John was the last family member to head the firm.

In the audience were several people who had worked for Crittalls. One of them, Mike King, spoke of the support that he received when he stood for the local county council. An office worker however said that she had experienced victimization as a trades unionist and ended up leaving Crittalls, although she paid tribute to progressive aspects of Crittall's policies.

The Tolpuddle Martyrs in Essex



James Loveless John Standfield James Brine
James Hammett George Loveless Thomas Standfield

In the afternoon Stan Newens spoke on the Tolpuddle Martyrs and their connection with Essex. George Loveless, his brother James, Thomas Standfield and his son John, James Brine and James Hammett formed a Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers in their home village of Tolpuddle in Dorset. Having been sentenced to transportation for seven years allegedly for taking illegal oaths but actually for their trades union activities the Tolpuddle farm workers were sent to Australia where they were at times treated like slaves working on road gangs. However opinion in Britain was still running high with demonstrations and petitions organized by the trades union movement and after the 1935 General Election the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne and the Home Secretary, Lord Russell agreed a pardon in March 1836.

News of this pardon did not reach Australia until some time later and as the six labourers were not all together they took over a year to return. George

Loveless went back to Tolpuddle and wrote a pamphlet 'The victims of whiggery', calling on the oppressed to stand up. He and the other five however settled in Essex where a couple of farm leases had been bought from the proceeds of a successful financial campaign. One of these was New House Farm, at Greensted and the other was Fenner's Farm, High Laver. The Tolpuddle Martyrs continued their political activities in Essex, founding a branch of the National Chartist Association which was campaigning for the right to vote. Much to the dismay of local farmers, farm workers throughout Essex were encouraged to take part in Chartist activities, including on a Sunday morning, during the Lord's hour! Rallies were held in fields and some farmers expressed fear of a Chartist uprising. They and the local vicar criticized the decision of Lord Melbourne to grant a pardon and claimed that Essex was being filled up with criminals. In 1844 the lease on the farms came to an end however. James Hammett went back to Tolpuddle where he died in the workhouse aged 79, in 1891.

Memorials

The Loveless brothers, the Standfields and James Brine went to Canada where they made a new start. They and their families kept quiet about their past but it was not forgotten. Joseph Arch, leader of the National Agricultural Labourers Union addressed a rally of 2000 supporters on the Martyrs at Briantspuddle in 1875.

In 1908 efforts were made to build two cottages at Tolpuddle and endow a scholarship at Ruskin College in their memory. In 1934 the TUC organised an essay competition, agreed to build six

commemorative cottages and published a memorial volume. A headstone was raised over the grave of James Hammett. In Canada, where there are now several hundred descendants, similar endeavors to commemorate the Tolpuddle Martyrs were made. These have continued to this day in Britain and wherever the trades union movement is honoured.

The links between Essex and the Tolpuddle Martyrs are still commemorated with a plaque on the walls of Tudor Cottage, at Greensted where George Loveless and his family lived. As founders of the Chartist Movement in the 1830s, the working class movement at the time, they were the forerunners of the labour movement in Essex.

West London Labour Heritage Day School

The third West London Labour Heritage Day School was held in Ruskin Hall, Acton on Saturday 13th November. It was attended during the course of the day by 20 people.

1965 strike at Woolfs

The first speaker was Barbara Humphries who spoke on the strike at Woolfs, Southall 1965/1966. An article on this strike was included in the Labour Heritage bulletin of Autumn 2004 but the speaker began by highlighting some of the press coverage from the time of the strike. Most of the national and local press had tried to play up the racial dimension of the strike, ignoring the fact that it was basically an industrial dispute. For instance the *Daily Mail* called it "Sad, mad, bad – the strike that

exists on “tick”- a reference to the fact that shopkeepers in Southall were letting strikers build up credit with them during the dispute. The reporter wrote on 5th January 1966 that “a turbaned Sikh from the Punjab called everyone out and 500 Indians obeyed him”. This ‘reflected a failure on the part of the Punjabi community to integrate according to her!’ Even the *Times* referred to a clash between Indians and Pakistanis” and the *Guardian* reported “race riots which could be another Kashmir” – this referred to a conflict between some Pakistani workers who had been brought in to strike-break by the management and the mainly Punjabi workforce. The *Observer* reported that the “town could become another Smethwick”. Even BBC and ITN portrayed the strike as a racial dispute and attempts by a local official from the Transport and General Workers Union to put the record straight were ignored. The local paper, the *Middlesex County Times* made one reference to the strike in January 1966, which was linked to an act of assault in the area, completely unconnected to the strike.

On the other hand, Paul Foot writing in *Tribune* on the 14th January 1966 points out that this industrial dispute, which led to a victory for the strikes showed that Asian workers were integrated into British society. Also Peter Marsh of the Institute for Race Relations writing in one of their publications in 1967 said – “The point was lost by many journalists reporting this strike by exotic looking figures living in the greyness of a London industrial suburb was that it was basically a labour dispute, complicated by the fact that the overwhelming majority of the strikers were Punjabis and that in addition it also involved the small Pakistani community in Southall.”

The union, the Transport and General Workers Union also came under scrutiny as the strike was not made official on the grounds that many workers had not paid their subs. However writing in the TGWU Record in January 1966 Brother Ray, a national officer of the union put the union’s case. The workforce had been reinstated and “It is hoped that this report will eradicate the conflicting statements which have been implanted in the minds of members all over the country, and to demonstrate that the members of this organization receive the service to which they are entitled regardless of caste, colour or creed.”

Acton Labour councillors

The second speaker of the day was Councillor Philip Portwood who spoke on the first Labour councillors in Acton. Acton had had an Urban District Council from the 1890s and some “labour and progressive” councillors. The first Labour councillors were elected in 1907 They were Robert Dunsmore, who lived in Avenue Road and was known as the ‘socialist cobbler,’ He had links with the Temperance Movement. There was also a councillor Shillaker who made an impact in campaigning for free school meals and fair wages for council workmen. In 1910 he chaired the Housing Committee although Labour was not in control. In 1910 Labour ran a full slate of councillors including a James Jarrett who was a bricklayer and a Fred Carter who was to become leader of the Labour Group. He also had connections with the Temperance Movement. By 1918 Labour controlled 50% of the council in Acton. There were two women Labour councillors, a Lavinia Salmon who was the wife of a railwayman, and Annie

Ratcliffe who was national secretary of the National Union of Women Workers. In 1921 all the seats in the South West ward went to Labour.

Labour was to run Acton Council from 1945 until 1965 when the council was amalgamated with the rest of the London Borough of Ealing. The area was becoming industrialised – in Acton Vale there were factories such as CAVs, Eversheds, and Napiers. But the vast industrial area of Park Royal had less impact on the town than it did on neighbouring Brent. Jo Sparks the first Acton Labour MP was elected as a councillor in the 1930s and gained a reputation as a firebrand. On one occasion he compared the Tories to Hitler in the Council Chamber. Most Labour councillors were workers and they did not receive expenses in those days. They wanted later meetings which they could attend in the evening. The Tories tended to be shop owners who could meet during the day. This was to change as more Tory candidates were office workers working in central London, and in the 1960s and 1970s it was they who were asking for later meetings.

Enclosure and the working class in rural Middlesex

In the afternoon Paul Carter from the National Archives spoke on “Enclosure and the working class in rural Middlesex 1700-1835” for which he presented a slide show. Before enclosure villagers had rights to access common land, whether they owned it or not. They could collect wood for fuel and graze animals. After a crop had been harvested land often returned to common use for grazing. The Enclosure Movement of the late 18th century meant that these rights

were lost. 28% of land in rural Middlesex had been common land.

Enclosure of land had to be decided by an Act of Parliament but landowners had all the advantages. But there was a lot of opposition by the local people. There was pressure on land use in the environs of London as land was at a premium price, used for crop cultivation for market gardening and the growing of hay for horses fodder. Working conditions and wages for hay makers were bad, some starved to death in Acton and in Islington there was a strike. The Times in 1830 reported that two of the “poor fellows” had been found dead in a ditch in Acton, two more in Willesden and another in Hampstead. It reported that “upon opening the bodies, no sustenance was found in the stomachs, excepting some sorrel, upon which plant the poor creatures had subsisted until death put a period to their sufferings.”

Starvation levels of poverty of farm workers around London were to impact on opposition to the enclosing of land.

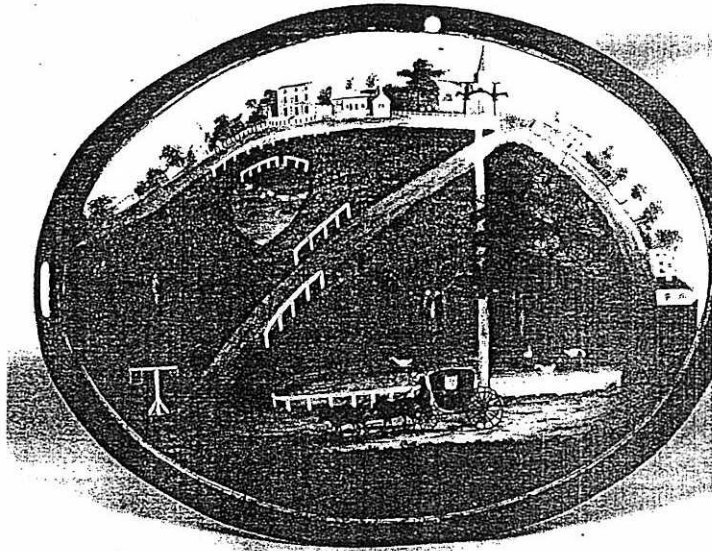
Landowners try to justify enclosure of land

Landowners complained of the “idleness of the poor” who did not want to work because of the existence of the commons. In other words the only work they recognized was work done as paid labour for them. They also argued that improved cultivation patterns under an Enclosure system would benefit everyone.

For instance this was a memorial of John Hale, Clerk of Enfield Manor Court to George II.

“People from South Mimms, Enfield, Edmonton and Hadley were an

Enclosure and the working class in rural Middlesex c. 1700-1835.



Befont Tray c. 1801: Parish Church.

20

abundance of loose, idle, and disorderly persons...and make great havock and waste of your majesty's best timber and underwood [on Enfield Chase].

William Gardner said to the 9th Earl of Huntingdon.

"commons are the real cause of idleness. The like has been sufficiently evident to me this summer past, but fifteen months off at Stanwell in Middlesex, where there are large common fields, and other commons, and lammas meadows, where the poor people that have nothing but a poor house and a little orchard...by keeping mares and foals, cows and calves, hogs and geese, without stint, they and families make shift just to live, some of them without doing any work at all, and those that go to day labour are very lazy, and care not whether they are employed or not...it [Enclosure] would be of great service to them and [their families], as it

would oblige them to work and to bring up their children to industry instead of idleness."

And " T.Baird. in the 'General view of the agriculture of the County of Middlesex 1793'

"It is said that twelve contiguous parishes, have an interest in their extensive common (Hounslow). To the poor class there, the rights of pasturage, may be a matter of some little conveniency as well as emolument, but the advantages that would redound to the community at large, from its improvement, would, it is obvious, greatly overbalance any trifling private convenience of that kind."

Opposition to Enclosure took a number of forms. In Hanwell the Enclosure of land was held up as the local map went missing. In Harrow there was an Association for Opposing Enclosure. In

Sunbury and Ruislip small landowners refused to sign Enclosure bills. In Hillingdon and Finchley animals were turned on to previous common land after Enclosure. Fences were broken down. And in Bedfont there was the tray! A tray was discovered in Bedfont Church with anti-Enclosure inscription on it – one of the few pieces of surviving evidence of the extent of opposition to enclosures of land.

The Hayes Labour Association 1910-1920

Michael Walker, an official for UNISON and former secretary of Hayes CLP spoke on the Hayes Labour Association 1910-1920.

In 1901 only 2,000 people had lived in Hayes. It was an agricultural workforce who produced food for London. There had been radical activity in neighbouring areas. In the 1830s there had been Swing riots in Iver, during which farmworkers had destroyed farm machinery in defence of their livelihoods. A branch of the Chartists had existed in Uxbridge. Chartist leader Feargus O'Connor's model village - O'Connorville was set up in Rickmansworth. Joseph Arch, the leader of the agricultural workers union in the 1860s had addressed meetings in Ickenham, Iver, Denham and Bedfont. During the agricultural depression in the late 19th century many farm labourers from Uxbridge had left for New Zealand and Canada as they were starving but they did not have an easy time in exile. Brickmaking was the first industry to come to this part of west Middlesex. In 1891 brickmakers took strike action as members of the general union, across the area and they were also the strongest supporters of the London gasworkers strike of 1891.

Industrialisation

Further industrialisation of the Hayes area came with the Hayes Development Company which bought land near the canal and railway line. (Great Western Railway and Grand Union Canal) at the beginning of the 20th century. Land was cheap, local taxes were low and firms could avoid paying trades union rates that existed in other parts of London. This was the origin of the Hayes industrial area – firms such as EMI and Fairey Aviation go back to these times. In the 1920s the population of Hayes grew rapidly as the new large factories recruited. There were large numbers of workers from South Wales and this led to a long standing Welsh tradition in the area. There were other ethnic groups including a community of Belgian refugees during World War 1. Local factories took on a lot of war work. At its peak EMI was to employ 14,000 workers in electronic engineering. As late as the 1960s 60% of the population of Hayes worked in four factories. Hayes had the highest percentage of trades union membership per head of the population of anywhere in the UK. Trades unions were the bedrock of Labour in Hayes. Even as late as the 1990s trades union delegates to the Hayes CLP outnumbered ward delegates by 2 to 1. The first union was the gasworkers union, the next was the platelayers, later to become part of the National Union of Railwaymen. They were associated with the building and maintenance of the Great Western Railway. Between 1914-1918 war work provided the factories of Hayes with increased employment

HAYES URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

ELECTION, MONDAY, MARCH 27th, 1911.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Having been requested by many working-men of the district to become Labour Candidates for the Urban District Council, we respectfully solicit your votes and support. Our policy if elected will be as follows:—

Municipal Housing.

To press forward with all possible speed the construction by the Council of working-men's dwellings at low rentals. The Council are in a position to do this far more cheaply than any private owners or building societies, because they have the advantage of the power to compulsorily acquire at a fair price the necessary land, and the further advantage of a Government Loan for a long period at remarkably low interest. As even a very small rental will suffice to repay both capital and interest such a scheme would be self-supporting, and could be carried through without the addition of a farthing to the rates. There are hundreds of men working in the parish who live in other districts in which are spent the wages earned in Hayes, and we believe that all classes of the community, and especially the trades-people, must benefit from that money circulating here instead of being carried to other parishes. And we are further of the opinion that no more cottages should be closed until proper provision has been made for the housing of those who would thereby be evicted.

Town Planning.

We are in favour of the adoption of a Town Plan for Hayes. The position will be most serious if the district is allowed to be built over in a haphazard fashion, without regard for either its appearance or its convenience, and we are of the opinion that steps should at once be taken to provide a comprehensive and efficient scheme of development for the Parish.

Public Rights.

We are in favour of the maintenance and defence of all the Public Rights, such as Open Spaces, Gravel Pits and Footpaths remaining to the Parish, and if elected will take steps to prevent any infringement or curtailment of them by any individuals.

Fair Wages.

We strongly support the adoption of Fair Rates of Wages and conditions of labour for all employes of the Council, and the insertion of a clause to the same effect in all Council contracts.

Allotments.

We intend if elected to give special attention to the needs of the Allotment Holders in all parts of the Parish, and to press for the provision of additional land as and when required.

Extra Polling Stations.

We are of the opinion that the provision of an additional Polling Place at Botwell, is one of the urgent needs of that locality, owing to its greatly increased population, and its long distance from the present polling station.

General Policy.

Finally if elected we shall endeavour to represent so far as we are able the views of the electors and not merely our own personal opinions. We shall therefore consider it our duty to bring before the Council the reasonable complaint of any elector with regard to the administration of the district. We are fully prepared for the determined opposition of those whose interests are opposed to the public good, but we ask you to vote straight for men who will administer the district for the benefit of the whole people and not for any little clique or section of the community. For if you elect large landowners and their nominees the policy of the Council will be drafted to suit their wishes, whilst YOUR interests will only be studied if you are represented by those who know something of the hard struggle which is the lot of the working classes and the tradespeople alike in the present day. We therefore earnestly request you to vote for ALL THREE LABOUR CANDIDATES and thus place on the Council a strong body of men who will work for YOU and the good of the Parish without fear or favour.

The Polling place is Dr. Triplett's School, and the hours of Polling from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Vote early on Monday, 27th March, for

Yours obediently,

MOSES, GEORGE, 1, Blythe Road, Hayes,

PALMER, HENRY, Hope Cottage, High Road,

RAWLINS, WILLIAM, 1, Sydney Villas, Blythe Road,

Labour
Candidates.

VOTE
THUS

LIDDALL, BERTRAM	
MOSES, GEORGE	X
PALMER, HENRY	X
RAWLINS, WILLIAM	X

Political affiliations

What about political affiliations? In 1894 there was a Parish Council in Hayes – which consisted of 5 socialists and 4 ‘gentlemen’. So there was a socialist tradition from an early stage. There was also a non-conformist tradition. The Brotherhood Church which had Welsh links worked with the Labour Association. Labour activists in Southall played a role in building support in Hayes and Uxbridge and the Southall Clarion Fellowship sent vans out to the surrounding areas to drum up support.

The Independent Labour Party and the Social Democratic Federation had roots in the area, but the Hayes Labour Association was founded in 1910 by a bricklayer and a plumber. Some of the candidates for the local council did not see themselves as socialists, describing themselves as “working men’s candidates”. Henry Palmer was one of these. He stood for better housing and allotments. In 1911 he was elected on a programme of municipal housing, footpath access, fair pay for council workers, allotments and more polling stations.

Municipal housing was to be one of the key issues for Labour in Hayes. Thousands traveled into Hayes to work and the only local accommodation was rural hovels. The local Tories thought that factories should provide housing for their workers. Labour campaigned for municipal housing. In 1914 5 of the 9 councillors in Hayes were Labour. This was one of the first Labour controlled councils in the south of England. Acton had a Labour majority in 1919. In 1920 2,000 council houses were built, together with a municipal cinema and shops. Due to the availability of land in Hayes, these

were good houses – no tenement blocks were built. The local council played a key role in developing Hayes, recreation grounds and sanitation all came under its jurisdiction.

The 1909 Fulwell tram strike

The final speaker was John Grigg of Acton and Shepherds Bush Labour Party who spoke about the 1909 Fulwell tram strike. (an article appeared in the Autumn 2004 Labour Heritage Bulletin).

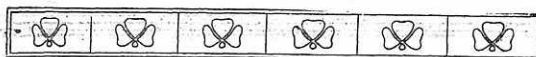
John pointed out that the tram was again a topical issue in West London as the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone has plans for a tram to run along the Uxbridge Road from Shepherds Bush to Uxbridge. This has caused controversy in the area because of the amount of disruption anticipated while tram lines are being laid. Over 100 years ago when horse drawn trams were due to be replaced by electric trams there were complaints about “unsightly wires” and the local authorities complained to the tram company about the amount of disruption caused. In 1899 there were even pro and anti electric tram candidates in local elections. The company concerned was the London United Tram Company, a private firm which was very anti-union. In central London trams were run by the London County Council.

Conditions for the workforce in the London United Tram Company were very poor. It was not unusual to have to work 20 hour shifts without a break. Any worker showing an interest in joining a union would be reported to the company by “spots”, company spies and dismissed. There would be many men waiting to take on their jobs. New tram drivers were taken on without training

and in those days it was not necessary to have a driving license. The audience was appalled to hear that these people would have responsibility for the lives of up to 100 people on a tram!

Finally a strike took place at the Fulwell tram depot in 1909 over union recognition. As reported in the last bulletin its failure was largely due to the failure of the union to win support from tram drivers working at the Hanwell and Chiswick depots. These men were paid extra money to strike break and bitter scenes took place on picket lines. The failure of the strike led some the strike leaders to look to political action as an alternative to industrial action.

It was noted that in 1919 there was a tram drivers strike in Hayes for equal pay for women tram drivers.



CLARION PAMPHLET.
No. 39.

The Truth about the Trams.

By R. B. SUTHERS.

Id.

London:
THE CLARION PRESS,
72, Fleet Street, E.C.

1903.

G. F. WILSON

8 1/2"

Report of Labour History Group John Smith Memorial Meeting

House of Lords, 19th October 2004

Speakers:

The Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP,
Secretary of State for Environment,
Food and Rural Affairs

Pat McFadden, Director of Political
Operations, 10 Downing Street, and
Former Adviser to John Smith

Mark Stuart, Biographer of
John Smith

Mark Stuart

Mark Stuart provided an overview of John Smith's life and career and. He said that John Smith's father taught him to be egalitarian in outlook in an idyllic Argyll childhood: "Strong radicalism in a rural setting."

His Glasgow Union experience equipped him with the debating skills that he later deployed so well in Parliament. These skills preceded his law studies.

He was a supporter of Hugh Gaitskell and the Campaign for Democratic Socialism. Smith - like Gaitskell - believed in the pursuit of power to put principles into practice.

He was elected MP for Lanarkshire North in 1970 and displayed his early independence by voting against the party line on EEC entry in 1971.

He turned down Harold Wilson's offer of Solicitor General for Scotland in 1974. Instead he was appointed a junior

Clarion pamphlet exposing the activities
of privately owned tram companies

minister at the Department of Energy, serving under Eric Varley and Tony Benn. With the latter he showed he could work with left-wingers.

When Jim Callaghan became prime minister in 1976 he appointed Smith to the Privy Council's office, as deputy to Michael Foot. He was responsible for steering through the devolution legislation.

He was appointed trade secretary in November 1978 but instead of foreign trips, he spent most of his time on keeping Labour MPs in line.

When he started at the department he asked his official when the PLP meeting was taking place. The official asked him what the PLP was, as his predecessor, Edmund Dell, clearly hadn't attended the meetings.

He joined Solidarity and was Roy Hattersley's campaign manager in the 1983 leadership contest. But – in Stuart's opinion - he was never an organiser like Neil Kinnock or wordsmith like Donald Dewar or Roy Hattersley.

Stuart said that even in the dark days of Thatcherism, Smith never lost faith in the idea that the free market wasn't the only solution.

He became Mr Prudence as Shadow Chancellor between 1987 and 1992. The Shadow Budget was widely blamed for the 1992 defeat but Mark Stuart believed it stemmed from a distrust of Labour.

When he became leader in July 1992 a family photograph was arranged in Hyde Park. Stuart recalled that bemused

photographers wondered what that bald guy was doing with those three models. This was said to be his proudest moment.

Stuart believed Smith restored the morale of the party after its fourth election defeat. He knew where he was headed and what he had to do to win. Stuart said that for every Gaitskell, Kinnock or Blair there has been a Wilson, Callaghan or Smith - party men for whom unity was the priority.

In Stuart's view, OMOV was a more important battle with Clause IV because it showed the electorate that the Labour Party could organise itself democratically and broke the union barons hold of the party. OMOV was the harder of the two battles. Smith was opposed to tackling Clause IV. Jack Straw set out an alternative Clause IV in a pamphlet. Smith was furious and famously threw Jack Straw's pamphlet at him.

Mark Stuart finished by saying that when John Smith died in 1994 the public mourned a man of great character. He said that Smith was a normal member of the human race. And that he was extraordinary at being ordinary.

Margaret Beckett

Margaret Beckett said that there was appearance and reality with John Smith. He appeared formidable, he was. There was the other reality: a warm, witty human being. She quoted Donald Dewar from Smith's funeral, "John could start a party in an empty room."

Beckett said that he could be ill-tempered but he was immensely hard-

working and conscientious. He set high standards. He was also a good team leader who gave his team their head, allowing people to flourish. And he was a good team player too.

She said that he had immense self-confidence. He knew he could do what he needed to do without arrogance or conceit.

John Smith sang the theme tune to Neighbours to Nigel Lawson in the Commons during his dispute with Alan Walters. Margaret Beckett said she was convinced this precipitated Lawson's exit from the Thatcher government in 1989.

She said that when he died, someone asked what shall we put him down as and Elizabeth Smith said "politician" because he was proud of being a politician.

Margaret Beckett ended with a quote which she believed summed up his philosophy, "What's the point of being in politics if it isn't to help people who can't help themselves."

Pat McFadden

Pat McFadden said John Smith's politics were based on simple but deeply held foundations. He was passionately pro-European. He was passionate about educational opportunity. He has a strong belief in social justice, inspired by his Christian Socialism.

He also had a great love of life – partying and a fondness for company. But he also said that we weren't put on earth to enjoy ourselves.

Pat McFadden discussed the OMOV (One Member One Vote) battle, which

he said now seemed unexceptional. He said that the blow to Smith's authority would have been terrible if he had lost. The battle began in the early summer of 1993, after a review group had looked at the changes. He was advancing reforms in the teeth of opposition from Labour Party staff as well as the trade unions. It wasn't felt that he could win.

The change was important not only as a symbol but because it was right for the direction that the Labour Party should go and where power in the party should lie. It was important also to show that Labour could change itself as the electorate still had doubts about the party in the early nineties.

Smith organised a campaign in the constituencies by getting key shadow cabinet on his side, which wasn't easy as they had differing views on how OMOV could work.

On the eve of the conference he was still behind. Canvassing of the constituencies was taking place but most observers felt that Smith should prepare for defeat. However, Smith was focused on winning the vote.

His team visited Smith in his bedroom the night before the vote. His leadership was on the line. It all depended on a union delegation decision by the MSF. He didn't know what would happen the next day.

The MSF delegation were committed to two things: opposition to OMOV and support for all-women shortlists. Those who supported OMOV in the MSF delegation said that they should abstain and called a vote within the delegation which they won by two.

Then came John Prescott's speech. John Prescott's speech changed the atmosphere in which OMOV was received. The first resolution for OMOV was moved by Jimmy Knapp by RMT and seconded by Maggie Jones of Unison. It was 48.926 in favour and 48.127 against. A resolution against OMOV was also won narrowly.

The key thing was the rule change. MSF abstention ensured it was passed by 47.5 per cent to 44.4 per cent. The unions had a 70 per cent block vote in those days. The constituencies voted two to one in favour. Despite his victory, John Smith's instinctive reaction was to reach out to the unions.

Pat McFadden finished by saying that it would have been interesting to see what John Smith's positive offer to the electorate would have been. And that he touched the public in a deeper way than he realised – his death affected people beyond the ranks of Labour members and voters.

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