

Labour  
Heritage



# Labour Heritage

Bulletin Winter 2005

## 2006 – the Centenary of the Parliamentary Labour Party

On the 12 February 1906, 29 newly elected Labour MPs met in the first ever PLP meeting and, the following day, had their photograph taken on the Terrace of the House of Commons. After just six years of existence, the Labour Representation Committee (formed in January 1900 by trade unions, Fabians and the Independent Labour Party) metamorphosed into the Labour Party.

Sadly, the party has recently taken little interest in its history. 2000 passed by with just a couple of high profile events in London. By contrast, the 50th anniversary of the PLP, in 1956, was well celebrated by the then National Executive Committee. 2006, likewise, will be used both to learn more about, and record, our history and also to celebrate our achievements. It will start at the Spring Conference in Blackpool – now designed “The Centenary Conference” – which by chance ends on the 12 February 2006. A facsimile of a 1906 album of photos of 48 Lib-Lab MPs (which included the miners and other working class MPs still elected under the Liberal banner) will be on sale, along with other commemorative items, while exhibitions will be held in St Helens, Battersea and in seats won in

1906. Ince – alone of those 29 won in 1906 – has remained in Labour hands ever since and today is represented by the party’s Chairman, Ian McCartney.

In April, a book of Obituaries of those 29 pioneer MPs – written by their successor MPs in the same seats – and including a reprint of the 1956 commemorative pamphlet will be published by Cavendish. Edited by Alan Haworth (former Secretary of the PLP) and myself, its title, *Men Who Made Labour*, reminds us that women did not even have the vote then, much less to right to sit in Parliament.

Other events will take place throughout the year (including tree planting organised by SERA, the Society for the Study of Labour History Conference in London in November, and a history of the PLP by Robert Taylor). Ideally, every CLP and union should do something to commemorate this anniversary – please ask your local party to play its part so that we use this opportunity to take our interest in Labour’s heritage into every part of the movement.

Dianne Hayter  
Chair, 1906 Centenary Committee and  
Member of Labour’s NEC

For further information see the Labour  
1906 web site at –

<http://www.1906labourcentenary.org.uk/>



# ESSEX CHRONICLE

THREE HALPENCE

FRIDAY, JULY 27th, 1945

No. 9,437

## LABOUR WINS WITH LANDSLIDE, CLEAR MAJORITY EXCEEDS 150

Millington (2,000 majority) Holds Chelmsford and  
Driberg Increases Majority at Maldon

## TORIES LOSE COLCHESTER

R. A. Butler's 10,000 Majority at Walden Reduced to 1,000  
Metropolitan Districts Go All Out for Socialism

... about Grantham to Commons and... Wing-... took a... years ago... was going to... some time.

... favour; the Conservatives have lost... too heavily to stand any chance of... recovery now.

... with the tide... Captain Charles Smith, the victor,

... rumbles like the awful avalanche of... "Excelsior." This is not always... to the liking of the leaders of the... successful party. They know very

... at the speed of an operation of... war. At present three separate... Ministries, not to mention other... authorities, have a say in housing... and schemes are local, not national.

# ESSEX RESULTS

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ished writing... the Maldon... phone. So... his seat—or... said that his

sh to Tom is... is considered... before. Mr... famous con-... never went

om Driberg... the Conser-... ventional... this time he... to 7,727; of... aid of the... he having... status to

In both the... Divisions... has been... Left Front... Wing-Com-... Common... Driberg... Labour, is... supporters... cessive. And... record in

Below are the results in the Essex constituencies:—

**BARKING**  
(Electorate 48,429)

DR. S. HASTINGS (Lab.) 24,504  
K. E. B. Glennay (Con.) 15,593  
H. C. Willcock (Lib.) 4,674

Lab. majority .. 18,911

New Division.

**CHELMSFORD**  
(Electorate 79,336)

W/Cdr. E. R. MILLING-  
TON (Com. Wealth) 27,309  
Mr. Hubert Ashton (Con.) 25,229  
Miss Hilda Buckmaster  
(Lib.) 5,909

Common Wealth maj. 2,080

1935—Con. majority 16,624.  
1945—By-election, Com. Wealth majority 6,431.

**COLCHESTER**  
(Electorate 49,323)

Capt. C. SMITH (Lab.) 16,587  
Oswald Lewis (Con.) 14,123  
Capt. G. A. Routledge  
(Lib.) 9,899

Lab. majority .. 2,464

LABOUR GAIN  
1935—Con. majority 5,876.

**DAGENHAM**  
(Electorate 63,450)

J. PARKER (Lab.) 36,686  
Sqd.-Ldr. Cooper (Con.) 7,147

Lab. majority .. 29,539

New Division.

**EAST HAM, NORTH**  
(Electorate 36,692)

P. DAINES (Lab.) 18,373  
Sir J. Mayhew (Con.) 7,814

Lab. majority .. 10,559

LABOUR GAIN  
1935—Con. majority 533.

**EAST HAM, SOUTH**  
(Electorate 36,937)

A. J. BARNES (Lab.) 19,168  
Capt. M. G. Munthe  
(Con.) 6,734

Lab. majority .. 12,434

NO CHANGE  
1935—Lab. majority 5,956.

**EPPING**  
(Electorate 50,861)

Mrs. L. MANNING (Lab.) 15,993  
Lt.-Col. Wise (Con.) 15,006  
Sir S. Robinson (Lib.) 5,314

Lab. majority .. 987

LABOUR GAIN  
1935—Con. majority 20,419.

Division was split, and the sitting Member, the Prime Minister, went to the new division of Woodford.

**SOUTH-EAST ESSEX**  
(Electorate 72,412)

Capt. R. J. GUNTER  
(Lab.) 25,581  
Capt. Aubrey Jones (Con.) 21,990

Lab. majority .. 3,591

LABOUR GAIN  
1935—Con. majority 970.

**HARWICH**  
(Electorate 42,899)

Sir J. S. HOLMES (Nat. Lib.) 16,452  
J. Hewitt (Lab.) 13,067

Nat. Lib. majority .. 3,385

NO CHANGE  
1935—Lib. Nat. majority 12,546.

**ILFORD, NORTH**  
(Electorate 61,486)

Mrs. MABEL RIDEALGH  
(Lab.) 18,833  
Maj. G. Hutchinson (Con.) 16,013  
Lady Rhys Williams (Lib.) 9,128

Lab. majority .. 2,820

LABOUR GAIN  
1935—Con. majority 17,967.  
1937—By-election, Con. maj. 9,319

**ILFORD, SOUTH**  
(Electorate 56,669)

J. RANGER (Lab.) 19,339  
Major E. J. Boulton (Con.) 14,633  
E. Holloway (Lib.) 6,302

Lab. majority .. 4,706

New Division.

**LEYTON, EAST**  
(Electorate 29,093)

A. E. BECHERVAISE  
(Lab.) 13,048  
D. R. Braine (Con.) 6,802

Lab. majority .. 6,246

LABOUR GAIN  
1935—Con. majority 329.

**LEYTON, WEST**  
(Electorate 40,503)

R. W. SORENSON (Lab.) 17,246  
G. C. T. Rose (Con.) 8,507  
Dr. B. Guyster (Lib.) 3,708

Lab. majority .. 8,739

NO CHANGE  
1935—Lab. majority 128.

**MALDON**  
(Electorate 49,663)

T. DRIBERG (Lab.) 22,480  
Major Melford Stevenson,  
K.C. (Con.) 14,753

Lab. majority .. 7,727

NO CHANGE  
1935—Con. majority 7,808.  
1942—By-election; Ind. maj. 5,993

**ROMFORD**  
(Electorate 39,078)

T. MACPIERSON (Lab.) 16,979  
M. Berryman (Con.) 11,202  
Flt.-Lieut. H. J. G. Hare  
(Lib.) 3,957

Lab. majority .. 5,777

NO CHANGE  
1935—Lab. majority 8,307.

**SAFFRON WALDEN**  
(Electorate 48,286)

R. A. BUTLER (Con.) 16,950  
S. S. Wilson (Lab.) 15,792  
G. Edinger (Ind. Lib.) 3,395

Con. majority .. 1,158

NO CHANGE  
1935—Con. majority 10,036.

**SOUTHEND**  
(Electorate 72,258)

H. CHANNON (Con.) 23,712  
G. Sandison (Lab.) 20,635  
Lt.-Col. H. Douglas (Lib.) 8,735

Con. majority .. 3,077

NO CHANGE  
1935—Con. majority 24,931.

**THURROCK**  
(Electorate 43,106)

J. SOLLEY (Lab.) 29,171  
Major T. Adams (Con.) 9,909

Lab. majority .. 13,262

New Division.

**WALTHAMSTOW, EAST**  
(Electorate 41,676)

H. W. WALLACE (Lab.) 15,650  
E. Harrison (Con.) 9,118  
Lt.-Col. N. P. Dew (Lib.) 5,854

Lab. majority .. 6,532

LABOUR GAIN  
1935—Con. majority 2,488.

**WALTHAMSTOW, WEST**  
(Electorate 38,169)

V. L. MCENTEE (Lab.) 17,460  
L. Spicer (Lib.) 4,760  
C. Curran (Con.) 4,580

Lab. majority .. 12,700

NO CHANGE  
1935—Lab. majority 6,739.

**WOODFORD**  
(Electorate 58,161)

WINSTON CHURCHILL  
(Con.) 27,688  
A. Hancock (Ind.) 10,488

Con. majority .. 17,200

New Division.

**WEST HAM**  
**Plastow**  
(Electorate 28,930)

E. JONES (Lab.) 17,351  
J. B. RAPER (Con.) 2,963

Lab. majority .. 14,388

NO CHANGE  
1935—Lab. majority 14,763

**Silvertown**  
(Electorate 15,575)

DR. L. COMYNS (Lab.) 9,385  
Flt.-Lt. E. Elverston (Con.) 494  
A. Davies (Ind.) 401

Lab. majority .. 8,891

NO CHANGE  
1935—Lab. majority 13,901.  
1940—By-election, Lab. maj. 13,377

**Stratford**  
(Electorate 25,237)

H. R. NICHOLLS (Lab.) 11,484  
Lt.-Cdr. R. M. Prior (Con.) 3,162  
T. Groves (Ind.) 749

Lab. majority .. 8,322

NO CHANGE  
1935—Lab. majority 5,975.

**Upton**  
(Electorate 28,412)

A. W. J. LEWIS (Lab.) 14,381  
C. K. Collins (Con.) 4,885

Lab. majority .. 9,396

NO CHANGE  
1935—Lab. majority 1,665.

**CHELMSFORD**  
**MISS BUCKMASTER**  
**LOSES DEPOSIT**

**MR. ASHTON CONGRATULATES THE VICTOR**

THE result in the Chelmsford division was declared from outside the Shire Hall, Chelmsford, shortly after 11.30.

Only a small crowd, mostly women, gathered outside to hear the result announced by the High Sheriff, Sir Adam Ritchie, who stood, with the candidates, on two tables covered with A.R.P. blankets.

The result was—

W/Cdr. E. R. MILLING-  
TON (Com. Wealth) 27,309  
Mr. Hubert Ashton (Con.) 25,229  
Miss Hilda Buckmaster  
(Lib.) 5,909

Common Wealth maj. 2,080

As she has not polled an eighth of the poll, Miss Buckmaster forfeits her deposit of £150.

There was a burst of cheerin when the Wing-Commander came out first, followed by Mr. Ashton and then Miss Buckmaster.

**COMMON WEALTH**  
**TAKE THE BELL**

It is understood that the Chelmsford Corporation have let the Bell Hotel to the Chelmsford Common Wealth Party, who have taken it over on a five years' lease. It will be called the Chelmsford Common Wealth and Socialist Club, will be fully licensed, with billiard tables, etc.

Hornchurch  
E. 66,421; C. 59,303; B. 6; S. 7,112.

Bing, Capt. G. H. C. (Lab.) 26,856  
Vaizey, Col. J. T. (C.) 15,100  
Jones, N. C. (L.) 5,807  
Van der Elst, Mrs. V. (Ind.) 232

Wing-Commander Millington proposed thanks to the High Sheriff, the Returning Officer and the staff, the public servants, the police, the Post-office staff and others for their magnificent work in running the election so smoothly and well. He referred to the sad passing of the Returning Officer, Mr. J. Hamilton Gepp, and commended Mr. W. A. Eagle, of Mr. Gepp's staff, on the magnificent work he had done by stepping into the breach. "I want to thank the people for re-affirming their decision when they elected me last April," he said. "I hope to carry on for the next five years, trying to do my little bit in leading the people of Britain towards the better world which I know we can achieve together."

**SPORTING SPEECH**

Mr. Ashton congratulated his opponent on his victory and wished him good-luck in the very difficult years that were ahead. He associated himself heartily with the expression of thanks to all the officials and others; the election had been run smoothly and efficiently. He, too, deeply regretted the death of "his old friend," Mr. Hamilton Gepp. "I thank my supporters from the bottom of my heart; we are not discouraged," he said.

Miss Buckmaster added her expression of thanks to the officials, adding: "We, too, are not discouraged. What we Liberals have done in this—we have been preparing the ground for the next light."

**MALDON**

**DRIBERG'S RECORD MAJORITY**

**CONGRATULATES OPPONENT ON VIGOROUS FIGHT**

Mr. F. H. Bright read the declaration, and Mr. Tom Driberg, who was loudly acclaimed, thanked the officials, especially the police, for the splendid arrangements, and he returned thanks to his supporters for a really splendid victory.

Labour had been returned with a magnificent majority. He congratulated his opponent on the vigorous fight he had made.

Major Melford Stevenson, K.C., seconding the vote, expressed appreciation of the effort his supporters had made.

There was only a small crowd outside the Moot Hall, and there was a remarkable absence of colour. Mr. Driberg was congratulated on obtaining a record majority for the Maldon Division.

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## **ESSEX CONFERENCE ON LABOUR HISTORY**

The fourth Essex Conference on Labour History, run by the Essex County Labour Party and Labour Heritage was held on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> October at the Latton Bush Centre in Harlow. It was attended by over 60 people from all over the county. The theme was the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Labour's 1945 election victory.

### **The 1945 General Election in Essex**

The first speaker was John Gyford, historian and former Essex County Councillor on "The 1945 General Election in Essex".

Labour contested 24 out of the 26 Essex constituencies, winning 21 or 85% of seats contested. Labour did not contest Chelmsford which had been won by a candidate from the Common Wealth Party in an earlier by-election in 1945, nor did it contest Woodford, Winston Churchill's seat. This was a marked contrast to the situation in the 1935 general election when Labour had won only 8 of the Essex constituencies. There had been some redrawing of boundaries between 1935 and 1945.

It is difficult to imagine today that there was a three week delay between polling day and the election results being announced in 1945, as the forces' votes were awaited.

Labour's election tactics in Essex had been influenced by the debates around "left unity" – according to John "calls for left unity are often a very divisive thing"! Should there be one 'left' candidate running against the Conservatives? There was a lot of discussion on what the future for Britain should be after the end of the war. Also, due to the wartime electoral truce between Labour and the Conservatives, there had been a

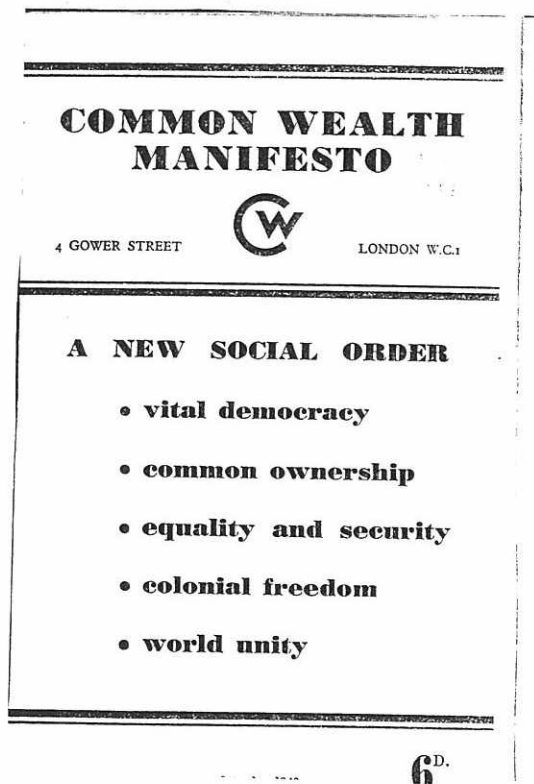
number of non-official Labour and other left wing candidates in by-elections, some of whom had been successful. Who was on the left? To be included were the Labour Party, the Communist Party, the Co-op Party and the Common Wealth Party, but what about the Liberal Party? In the main they would be asked to stand down! This they usually refused to do. However candidates from the left had won by-elections in Chelmsford in 1945 and Maldon in 1942. In fact there had been 50-60 such challenges to the wartime electoral pact throughout the country.

### **Chelmsford and Maldon**

In Maldon Tom Driberg had launched his own organisation named the Maldon Constituency Association. This did not comprise former Labour supporters. He had been elected as MP for Maldon in 1942. In the meantime the Labour Party had adopted a candidate in 1938 for the Maldon constituency but he was in a Japanese prisoner of war camp in 1945. A "left unity" conference was held in Braintree to debate the Maldon situation. This was attended by representatives from the Labour Party, trades councils, trades unions, Communist Party and Common Wealth Party. The outcome was that Tom would be adopted as the official Labour Party candidate on the condition that he joined the Party after his selection. This is what happened but the officers of the Maldon CLP were not happy and they resigned.

In Chelmsford a Labour candidate had been adopted in 1944 but when the sitting Conservative MP was killed in action in 1945 he did not contest the by-election. However the Common Wealth Party candidate, Wing Commander Ernest Millington did contest the election and won.

The Common Wealth Party had been founded by Sir Richard Acland after 1942. It was concerned with post-war reconstruction, its membership was largely idealistic and not from a Labour Party background. Many members were middle class professionals who saw themselves as consumers and managers rather than workers. Their attachment to socialism was from a moralistic rather than class point of view. A conference was called in London to resolve the dilemma in Chelmsford and, as the local Labour Party was already divided between two candidates, it was decided that Labour would not contest the seat. The sitting Common Wealth candidate won. However within a year he had applied for the Labour whip in the House of Commons.



Labour had little time to prepare for the 1945 general election which was held in July. Boundary changes meant that new constituencies were set up just months before the election. Also

the Party had virtually shut down between 1939 and 1945 when there had been no meetings. How would the Party relate to Driberg's organisation which had branches over all Essex? Few constituencies had any form of transport. Election propaganda was via public meetings as there was no TV in those days. There were many meetings. The Labour candidate for Saffron Walden held 12 meetings a night for 3 weeks. One was attended by 1500 people. Ray Gunter held over 20 meetings in South East Essex. Some meetings were rowdy with heckling on all sides. The outcome of the election had not been expected. Changed political attitudes on a national scale affected the favourable result for Labour but there were local changes in population including the large number of wartime evacuees in Essex.

### Labour's surprising election victory

The second speaker was Norman Howard, a former councillor, GLC Councillor and assistant secretary of the Post Office Engineering Union, who joined the Labour League of Youth in 1945. He gave an overview of "Labour's surprising election victory". Norman was an evacuee in Newton Abbott, Devon and remembers a meeting addressed by Stafford Cripps and attended by over 2,000 people. He said that the political swing to Labour began after the 1935 general election, when Labour had won 8 million votes, the same as in 1929, having lost ground in 1931. In the late 1930s Labour won a number of key by-elections. But after 1939 the Party organisation collapsed, Constituency Labour Parties did not meet, subs were not collected and there was an election truce even at local level. However trades union membership did increase as did the number of people in work. Social trends and attitudes were not

documented during the war as students and researchers were called up.

However at government level Labour held 18 important positions as part of the war time coalition. Attlee was effectively Churchill's deputy and ran the country when he was abroad. Ernest Bevin was the Minister for Labour, Herbert Morrison ran the Home Office, and even Stafford Cripps was in charge of aircraft production. Hence Labour had a lot of influence in the war time government and the chance to influence events after the end of the war. Labour's policies on social security, health, employment and regional planning were put into practice during this war time period. The Beveridge Report was commissioned. What could be done in wartime could also be done in peace time. There would be no return to the 1930s. Michael Young an officer from PEP (Politics and Planning) was taken on by Attlee to work at the Labour Party HQ and he had an input into "*Let us face the future*", Labour's election manifesto.

Labour candidates, once selected had to return to the armed forces. Jim Callaghan, for instance who was selected as Labour candidate for a Cardiff seat, was away in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) until 1945. Denis Healey was in Italy when he wrote a letter to his Yorkshire constituency, on the basis of which he was adopted. Tony Crosland was sent 14 letters from constituencies inviting him to a selection meeting but he was not able to reply to any of them. In January 1945 150 constituencies had no candidate. There were only two months between VE day and the general election.

There were also enormous problems in constructing an electoral roll. Wartime identity cards were used as the basis for this but there had been so much movement that it was an impossible task. Tons of ballot papers were flown

out to the armed forces. Every unit had an election officer and 57% of the forces ballots were returned compared to a 72% civilian turnout. The Army Education Service played a role in political education at a time when ballot papers did not include the party of the candidates, alongside the names. In the forces issues such as housing and health were discussed – all issues for post-war reconstruction. There were memories of how the "homes fit for heroes" promised after the end of World War 1 had not materialised. This was not to happen again.

Labour's victory was achieved in spite of the most radical manifesto of all time. A young conference delegate from Reading, Ian Mikardo had been chastised by Herbert Morrison for moving a resolution which was carried, calling for more nationalisation to go into the manifesto. This will cost us the election he said – but it did not!

The Labour Government carried all its manifesto commitments, except for the nationalisation of steel. In 1951 Labour's vote was higher than that of any political party before or after, even though the election was lost.

*In the afternoon Michael Foot had been due to speak but unfortunately he was ill and unable to attend. Stan Newens, chair of Labour Heritage stepped in at short notice to give a talk on 1945 in the Epping Constituency. (Stan's speech in full follows this report).*

This was followed by a discussion with contributions from those in the audience who had memories of 1945 including the former headmaster of Latton Bush comprehensive school, which had occupied the buildings in which the conference took place, before it was closed.

Finally the BBC video "*How Churchill lost the peace*" was shown. This contained comments from Denis Healey, Winston Churchill's daughter, Clement Attlee's daughter and Derek Clark, who in 1945 was a campaigner for the independent candidate against Churchill but later became a leading Labour personality in Epping.

### **The Epping Divisional Labour Party and the 1945 General Election**

The original Epping constituency or division, as it was more commonly called in past times, was created in 1885 and included Chingford, Wanstead and Woodford, Chigwell, Buckhurst Hill and Loughton, Waltham Abbey, Epping and Harlow, plus all the villages around Epping and Harlow. It was largely rural but included attractive suburban developments in the south. It was a huge area.

Throughout its existence from 1885-1945, it was a bastion of Conservative strength, never once failing to return a Conservative MP to the House of Commons. The boundary division just prior to 1945 divided it into Woodford (which included Wanstead, Chigwell, Buckhurst Hill and Loughton) and Epping (which included Chingford, Waltham Abbey, Epping, Harlow and the villages).

Winston Churchill, who had been the MP for the old Epping division, opted to stand for Woodford, but it was taken for granted that the new Epping seat would be a safe Conservative seat. There was a tradition in the area of giving scant toleration to anyone who questioned the Tory hegemony which went back a long way. In August 1889 the National Liberal Federation's van visited the area and was surrounded by a hostile crowd of 200. According to the *Loughton and District Advertiser* "a drunken lout without a coat came up

and demanded to know what right the Liberal contingent had to upset the peace". When told that they wanted no disturbance, he took out a bag of flour and hurled it in the face of the speaker. Other members of the crowd joined in while two policemen looked on and did nothing. There were subsequent protests but nothing of substance.

In later elections there were also disturbances. Sir Henry Selwyn-Ibbetson MP claimed to represent the working classes because he employed so many of them! In these times there was no Labour presence but meetings were held. The Independent Labour Party had a branch before World War 1 and Clement Attlee had spoken in Epping Market Place in June 1911

### **Early days for Labour in Epping**

The Epping Divisional Labour Party was first founded in the early months of 1920, based effectively in the southern part of the division – Chingford, Woodford and Buckhurst Hill. A Labour candidate was put forward for the first time for Epping in the October 1924 General Election – a school teacher from Kingston, Mr Mcphie. The result was :

*W.S.Churchill (Con) 19,243*

*G.C.Sharp (Lib) 10,080*

*JRM Mcphie 3,268*

The Tory majority was 9,763 and Labour lost its deposit.

In 1929 Labour again fought the Epping seat and chose as its candidate Walton Newbold, a former communist who had contested Motherwell in Scotland. Bert Lee, a Labour stalwart recorded the campaign.

*I was chairman of the (Chingford) branch then and at an election meeting at North Chingford, the place was packed with Tories. Newbold,*

*anticipating this had brought along a large Union Jack which he placed in front of the platform. I had just opened the meeting and called on him to speak when there was uproar from the Tory sections of the audience. They accused Newbold of insulting the Monarchy by having the Union Jack on a socialist platform. After repeated interruptions, off came his jacket and he said he would fight anyone who interrupted again! Pandemonium broke out in the hall when Newbold quoted Churchill's words on the Tory party whilst he was a Liberal. – "a party of real vested interests banded together in a formidable federation: corruption at home and aggression abroad." Newbold came off the platform to get among the audience. There was panic and men and women scrambled to get out of the hall. He then made a fighting speech to those who remained'.*

Bert Lee refused to chair any more meetings for him.

The election result was :-

*Conservative 23,972*

*Liberal 19,005*

*Labour 6,472*

Labour did not lose its deposit this time but came a poor third.

In 1931 and 1935 James Ranger was the Labour parliamentary candidate.

The result in 1935 was –

*Conservative 34,849*

*Liberal 14,450*

*Labour 9,748*

## 1945

James Ranger did not contest Epping again but won Ilford South for Labour in 1945.

The new Epping Divisional Labour Party was established in April 1945. A

selection conference was called and attended by 13 delegates. They selected Leah Manning, a former president of the National Union of Teachers, MP for Islington for a new months in 1931 and an NUT official. She was then 59 years of age and had given up hope of becoming an MP. She had offered to fight a seat where there was no hope of winning and not one where she might be made to look like a fool. Initially she rejected fighting Epping on the grounds that it was Churchill's seat, but when it became clear that he would be the candidate for Woodford she relented.

Epping was regarded as a certainty for the Tories but there had been a number of population changes since 1935. A new London County Council estate had been built in Chingford, there were a number of servicemen based at the North Weald Aerodrome and there had been an influx of evacuees from London. These people would have been inclined to vote Labour, but in addition there had been a revival of socialist activity in the division, fostered by the Workers Education Association. Activists included farm worker Chris Morris in Epping. Labour Party branches which had become defunct were revived and public meetings were organised in every part of the constituency, including the villages and they were packed with supporters. Canvassing was carried out and provided very encouraging returns, Polling day was July 5<sup>th</sup> but as with the rest of the country, the result was not announced until July 26<sup>th</sup> to allow the forces vote to be included.

When the count began, Leah Manning greeted the Tory candidate with the words "*..we are running neck to neck, if not nose to nose*". The Liberal candidate had already conceded defeat. In the end the result was –

*Leah Manning (Labour) 15,993*



*Lt.Col. A.R. Wise (Conservative)*  
15,006

*Sir Sydney Robinson (Liberal) 5,314*

This was a big change from 1935 when Labour in the old Epping division had come a poor third and the Conservatives had had a majority of over 20,000.

The sheer joy of Labour supporters knew no bounds. Chris Morris, captain of the bell-ringers as well as chairman of the Epping CLP, immediately arranged for the church bells in Epping to be rung to celebrate the triumph.

I was working picking peas in a remote field at Theydon, accessible only by an earth track. All day long the workforce, working class women, a few elderly men and a couple of teenagers like myself had no news. Then in the late afternoon I saw a man pedalling his bicycle furiously down the track. As he got to the field he raised his arms up in the air and shouted "*They're in! They're in!*" No-one was in any doubt who was in and they cheered and cheered. This however masked the deep shock suffered by that part of the community which had always voted Conservative. Lean Manning turned out to be an excellent spokeswoman on education, foreign affairs and women's issues. She sometimes voted against the whip when she thought that the government had got it wrong. She was a first rate constituency MP also. She supported the nationalisation of the utilities which provided electricity, gas and water for homes which had previously lacked it. She supported the NHS. She campaigned for the designation of Harlow as a new town. She became a critic of Ernest Bevin and voted against the American loan to the British government. She wholeheartedly supported Indian independence and revisited Spain where she had helped to evacuate

children to Britain during the Spanish Civil War.

Despite building a magnificent personal profile and winning the respect of a large number of her constituents of all parties, Lean Manning did not however succeed in penetrating the Tory bedrock in the Epping constituency. In spite of a tremendous campaign she lost the seat in the 1950 General Election. The results were:-

*Nigel Davies (Conservative) 24,292*

*Leah Manning (Labour) 20,385*

*Peter Lewis (Liberal) 4,755*

The hatred that Leah's 1945 victory caused was shown at the count, when two Tory women spat in her face, and afterwards when a group of North Weald Conservatives burnt her effigy. Harlow new town was receiving newcomers who were often Labour but the servicemen and evacuees from 1945 had departed and in some cases were no longer voting Labour.

### **The legacy of 1945**

However the 1945-50 Labour Government had achieved a peaceful revolution in Britain, which set up the welfare state and the NHS, brought a rebirth to coal mining, rail transport, electricity, gas, water and other utilities by nationalising them, provided many hundreds of thousands of new homes at affordable prices for people in need of housing or re-housing in new towns, transformed the education system offering new opportunities to a vast number of young people, gave support to agriculture and laid the basis for improving the environment by insisting on the green belt and planned development in the countryside. This was not the 'lost decade' as the BBC has suggested but the most constructive and fruitful decade of the

20<sup>th</sup> century, in which the basis for a caring community was laid, until the 1980s when Mrs Thatcher began to dismantle it.



The general election victory in Epping in 1945 also laid the basis for a strong Labour presence in the constituency on which I was able to build to win the 1964 election, as Leah Manning's only successor – the only other Labour MP for Epping that there has ever been.

1945 was a seminal victory for the labour movement in Britain. It represented the triumph of the fledgling insignificant little party that was launched in 1900 and it fulfilled the visions and dreams of a century of pioneers. Like Moses they never lived to see the promised land ; their endeavours were based on the faith that generations to come after them would reap the harvest they had sown. In reviewing and celebrating the 1945 General Election victory, we are hopefully reminding ourselves where we came from and what the direction

of our movement should be. Our day of reflection on the history of what occurred sixty years ago has been designed to restore and revive the idealism which was realised in that singular triumph. Even if many of us here do not live to see it, I am convinced that it will come again.

Stan Newens (October 2005)

### West London Labour Heritage Day School

The 4<sup>th</sup> West London Labour Heritage Day School was held on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> November at Ruskin Hall, Church Rd, Acton.

It was opened by Mike Elliott, the current mayor of Ealing and a member of Labour Heritage. He spoke on the changing roles of mayors, past and present. Traditionally the role of the mayor had been a civic one, not political. In some cases selection was based on seniority and not necessarily from the majority party. Most mayors stayed in post for a year, but some had continued for more. It was a busy time – Mike said that he is glad he is retired, as he has taken on over 300 engagements during his time as mayor. Four London boroughs now have directly elected mayors. This idea was narrowly rejected in Ealing. It has been found that where there is a political mayor another civic post has had to be created for the traditional mayoral activities. Newham for instance has a civic ambassador. The public enjoyed the ceremonial role of the traditional mayor, especially school children who loved the robes!

There followed a discussion on the issue of directly elected mayors. Mike made the point that it was an American concept and invested too much power in the hands of one person. This reduced the role of elected councillors

and went against the whole concept of the celebration of diversity which is Mike's theme in his year as mayor.

Following on from the Labour Heritage AGM and Essex Conference in October, the day school in Acton returned to the theme of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Labour's 1945 election victory.

### **Army Bureau of Current Affairs**

The first speaker was Len Snow, a former mayor of Brent, who spoke on that Army Education Corps and the Army Bureau of Current Affairs. This was set up in 1941 to improve morale in the armed forces by providing a medium for discussing what life would be like in post-war Britain. Fortnightly pamphlets were sent to army units and lieutenants were expected to lead discussions on themes such as "Rebuilding London after the war" and "Rebuilding our schools". Other subjects included the trades unions, the press, the Beveridge Report and birth control. Members of the Communist Party were active in these discussion groups and it has been argued that they played a role in delivering the forces' vote for Labour in 1945.

Much of the mood in the armed forces was there amongst the civilian population as well – there was a "sense of community", "common cause in peacetime as in war", the view that the government had to promote equality. There was also respect for the role that the Soviet Union had played in the War. Voters refused to forget the pre-war Tory decade of unemployment and appeasement. The trade unions also played a role. Workers in aircraft factories in Acton, such as Napiers, were well organised and again the Communist Party was very active.

Len said that both Brent constituencies went Labour in 1945. Brent South

however was lost to the Tories in the general election of 1951. Labour lost overall in 1951, although it polled more votes than in 1945. Was this due to disillusionment with austerity and the continuation or rationing? Or was it the changed electoral boundaries on which the 1951 General Election was fought, which cost Labour many seats? Labour gained more votes in 1951 than in 1945.

Len also mentioned the RAF mutiny over demobilisation in India. This incident involved members of the CP in the armed forces based in Karachi. The full story is on the Socialist History website <http://www.socialisthistorysociety.co.uk/>

### **By-elections during World War 2**

The second speaker was Bill Bolland, member of Acton and Shepherds Bush CLP who spoke on by-elections during World War 2. In spite of an electoral truce between the main political parties at Westminster under which by-elections were supposed to be uncontested, out of 141 by-elections between 1939 and 1945 75 were contested. There was a total of 104 opposition candidates.

By-elections posed many problems. The electoral roll was out of date – many 21 year olds were not on it, whilst people who had died were. Paper for campaigning material was rationed, as was petrol. This proved difficult in rural areas –often giving wealthy farmers the upper hand. But the worst obstacle was the attitude of the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill who regarded a contested by-election as a form of treason. Attlee had a more relaxed attitude, and even Beaverbrook was supportive of opposition candidates. In other countries general elections were held in wartime.

Up until 1942 opposition candidates tended to be from fringe parties often with an axe to grind. Some were pacifists – others outright fascists, and others wanted to campaign for a more efficient war effort. Nevertheless they were polling up to 20% of the vote. An opposition candidate in Kings Norton who campaigned on the idea of lighting up the entrance to the English Channel so that German pilots would be dazzled and crash into the sea won no less than 37% of the vote in a by-election. In Brighton a candidate campaigning to increase the government's guaranteed 10% rate of profit for wartime businesses won 52% of the vote. There were two successful by-election opposition candidates in Rugby and Wallasey.

After 1942 serious anti-Tory candidates contested seats. This included Tom Driberg in Maldon. In the same year the Common Wealth Party was set up. Led by Sir Richard Acland who provided much of the finance it had 12,500 members, over 300 branches and 68 prospective candidates. The rate of contested by-elections increased with 7 in one week in 1943. The Common Wealth Party was regularly winning 30-40% of the vote or more.

Bill concluded his speech in 1943 but has a lot more material going up to 1945 which we hope to publish in future issues of the bulletin.

### **1945 on Acton Council**

In the afternoon Phil Portwood, a local councillor, spoke on the council elections in Acton in 1945.

Acton had changed due to industrialisation in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Formerly the centre of the laundry industry, it became the largest engineering centre in the country south of Coventry. During World War 2

Napier s, now the site of the Acton Vale housing estate was one of the largest aircraft engineering factories. It had a strong trades union presence and was also a base for the Communist Party.

Acton Council consisted of 4 wards, each with 6 councillors. South-West ward was a Labour stronghold, returning 6 councillors unopposed by 1938. Council elections were held on a rotating basis, so some councillors came up for election every year. The other wards were mixed with a growing trend towards Labour in the 1930s. The leader of the Labour Group on Acton Council was Joe Sparks- a former railway clerk with the Great Western Railway. He was also to become Acton's first Labour MP. Other Labour councillors included Tom Newson and Barry Barwick. There were no council elections during 1939-45, the war years, but there was also no "consensus coalition spirit" in Acton. There were vigorous debates on deep air raid shelters and British restaurants, where families of working mothers could obtain cheap meals. Joe Sparks used to talk of fighting Hitler and the Tories! The Acton Tories feared that a coalition on the council would give Labour too much power in a situation where Labour was rapidly gaining ground. Labour councillors were able to push through some important policies – compulsory purchase of houses for nurseries (some still exist today) and a deep shelter on Acton Green. Increasingly the Tories became tired and irrelevant. In 1945 due to the end of the wartime election truce most council seats in Acton were to come up for election. Ted Bramley of the local Communist Party wanted an election pact with Labour whereby he would not stand as a parliamentary candidate in order for a free run for CP councillors in South West ward. In the end there was a contest in this ward

and the 2 CPers lost to Labour by 100 votes. There were no Tory candidates in this ward. Labour took all other wards and a clean sweep of the council. In 1946 the Aldermen were abolished. Labour was to retain control of Acton Council until it was merged into the Borough of Ealing in 1964.

The Communist Party was to disappear as an influence in Acton politics but it had played a key role during the wartime years due to the base in Napiers. CP members in the factory took on shop stewards positions, were prepared to do the work and could convince their workmates that change was possible. When the Soviet Union entered the war CP members argued for increased productivity to support the war effort, but they were also concerned with workplace issues such as the quality of the tea. Later on the Cold War kicked in but still towns in the UK stayed twinned with towns in the Soviet Union and in 1952 the Soviet government send funds to flood victims in the UK.

### **Labour election victories in 1945 in South-West Middlesex**

The final speaker was John Grigg, a former councillor and member of Acton and Shepherds Bush CLP. He gave an outline of the 1945 victory quoting from Norman Howard's recently published book "*New Dawn*". The atmosphere of the election was completely different from those held recently. There was no slick marketing, no opinion polls, and no sudden shift of opinion as Labour had been gaining seats since 1936. There was a collectivist spirit – a better society was possible.

Locally in West London (South West Middlesex) Labour candidates did very well. Francis Noel Baker was the Labour candidate for Brentford and Chiswick. During his campaign

thousands of people turned up to Brentford football ground to hear Ernest Bevin outline an emergency programme for housing. He also welcomed the wartime contribution from the Soviet Union and predicted that rationing would soon end. The Labour candidate won the constituency turning a former Conservative majority of 8,000 into a 4,500 Labour one. Bill Williams an officer with the Post Office Engineering Union contested Heston and Isleworth. He announced that the "sun of socialism would soon rise above the horizon". Opposing Reg Maudling a future Tory cabinet minister, he won by 6,500 votes.

In Ealing West James Hudson, a former MP for Huddersfield who "had no difficulty in dealing with hecklers", won the seat for Labour with a 17,000 majority. His Tory opponent had claimed that "free enterprise had developed Greenford, Perivale and Northolt" and should be allowed a free reign again. Vigorous election activity was reported in Greenford on election day. In Ealing East however the Tory candidate won with a 4,000 majority. A man with a dubious political past he had had links with pro-fascist organisations such as the Anglo-German Friendship Society. Acton was won for Labour by Joe Sparks, and George Pargiter won Spelthorne with a 9,000 majority. In Southall, Walter Ayles (a fiery speaker) won for Labour with a 24,000 majority,

The theme of the Tory campaign was an end to war time controls and to let private enterprise do the job. "State control is odious", they claimed. They also hoped to win on the basis of Churchill having been the wartime leader. Labour stressed that government organisation would win the peace just as it had won the war. There should be no return to the Tories and mass unemployment. Poverty was as bad as Hitler and socialism had been

demonstrated in wartime. Tory meetings were frequently disrupted by hecklers.

Of the 9 seats in South West Middlesex Labour won 7, losing only Ealing East and Twickenham. In 1935 Labour had not held any seats in this area.

How important was the services' vote? 3,000 services votes in each constituency would have balanced some marginal seats but not when there were large majorities. This complete change of political alignment was mainly won on the home-front over years.

Finally Attlee heard about the extent of his election victory on the 6 o'clock news on the day that result was declared.

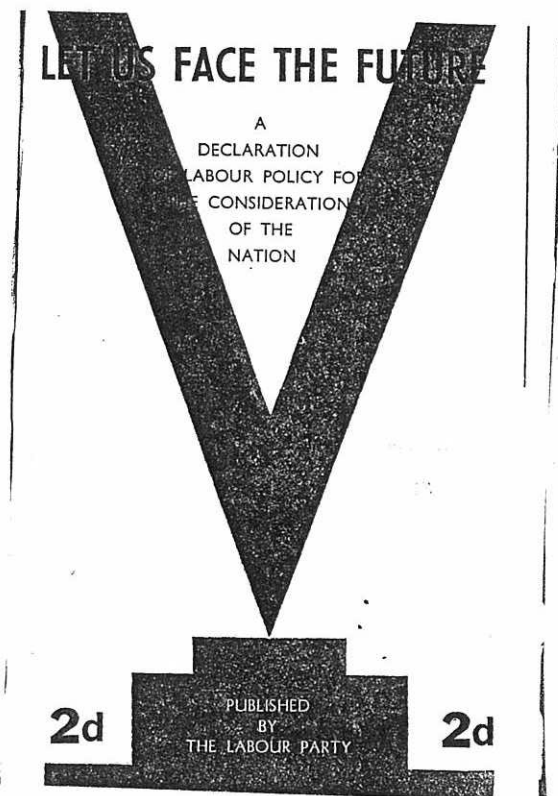
#### Quotes from "Let us face the future" – Labour's 1945 manifesto

*"They (the Tories) accuse the Labour Party of wishing to impose controls for the sake of control. That is not true, and they know it. What is true is that the anti-controllers and anti-planners desire to sweep away public controls, simply in order to give the profiteering interests and the privileged rich an entirely free hand to plunder the rest of the nation as shamelessly as they did in the nineteen-twenties."*

*"Does freedom for the profiteer mean freedom for the ordinary man and woman, whether they be wage-earners or small business or professional men or housewives? Just think back over the depressions of the 20 years between the wars, when there were precious few public controls of any kind and the Big Interests had things all their own way. Never was so much injury done to so many by so few. Freedom is not an abstract thing. To*

*be real it must be won, it must be worked for"*

*"The Labour Party stands for freedom - for freedom of worship, freedom of speech, freedom of the Press. The Labour Party will see to it that we keep and enlarge these freedoms, and that we enjoy again the personal civil liberties we have, of our own free will, sacrificed to win the war. The freedom of the Trade Unions, denied by the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, 1927, must also be restored. But there are certain so-called freedoms that Labour will not tolerate: freedom to exploit other people; freedom to pay poor wages and to push up prices for selfish profit; freedom to deprive the people of the means of living full, happy, healthy lives."*



*"They (The Tories) say, "Full employment. Yes! If we can get it without interfering too much with*

*private industry." We say, "Full employment in any case, and if we need to keep a firm public hand on industry in order to get jobs for all, very well. No more dole queues, in order to let the Czars of Big Business remain kings in their own castles. The price of so-called 'economic freedom' for the few is too high if it is bought at the cost of idleness and misery for millions."*

*"Housing will be one of the greatest and one of the earliest tests of a Government's real determination to put the nation first. Labour's pledge is firm and direct - it will proceed with a housing programme with the maximum practical speed until every family in this island has a good standard of accommodation. That may well mean centralising and pooling of building materials and components by the State, together with price control. If that is necessary to get the houses as it was necessary to get the guns and planes, Labour is ready."*

**Review of "Labour's grass roots: essays on the activities of local Labour Parties and members 1918-1945' edited by Matthew Worley. Ashgate Press, £47.50 0754640078**

The years between the wars 1918-1945 saw the establishment of the Labour Party as a mass political party with an individual membership. The Party was to become the second main party in the UK after 1918, forming a minority government in 1924 and again in 1929. In 1931 however the Labour government was split by pressure from international bankers to cut unemployment benefit, a measure which was unacceptable to trades unionists, the party membership and in

the end the majority of the Labour Cabinet. As a result the Prime Minister, Ramsay Macdonald formed a coalition government with the other main political parties in order to carry out these cuts. A snap election in 1931 was won overwhelmingly by the National Government- Labour was reduced to a small number of seats in its heartlands and was to remain out of power for the whole of the 1930s – a decade which saw mass unemployment and the rise of fascism and threat of war in Europe. Labour was not to win another general election until the celebrated victory in 1945.

But this is not the whole story of the Labour Party between 1918-1945. The other story is of Labour's grassroots – how did the Party work at a local level? Who were its members? This area of labour history looking at the Party from the grassroots has been insufficiently researched. The essays contained in this book "*Labour's grass roots*" edited by Matthew Worley are an important contribution to understanding how Labour functioned at a grass roots level.

This collection of essays illustrates how diverse Labour Party organisation was in different parts of the country. This diversity was affected by the relationship of the Party to other organisations – those that had created it such as the trades unions, the co-operative movement and the Independent Labour Party, but also the regional strengths of the other main political parties, such as the Liberal Party in Scotland and the Conservatives in mid-Lancashire. Ethnic groups such as Irish and Jewish communities played a large role in support and provided activists for Labour in some regions, particularly London. In London in particular the Party created a life for the working class, which did not have the same roots and long standing organisation as

in for instance mining areas. Finally there is a comparison with the German Social Democratic Party the organisation of which before World War 1 Labour had aimed to emulate.

After 1918 all the main political parties in the UK were faced with the challenge for the first time of a wider electorate as universal suffrage (or almost!) had been implemented. It was this that lay behind the drive of all parties to create organisational machines to get the faithful out at elections. In many cases this meant building organisations which could do this – maintaining activists who would do the canvassing, envelope stuffing etc. These people wanted however more – they wanted political education, a social life provided by the party. This was the case with the Conservative and Liberal Parties which had a thriving political life in these years as well as the Labour Party. In all cases there were similarities – loyalty was maintained, the ethos of public service was prominent and careerism was frowned upon. Women as well as men were involved in large numbers. Also local organisations did not tend to be affected by national controversies. However this was not universally the case. Often the party leadership regarded the membership with mistrust. Mass participation in politics in Britain was a new phenomenon. Matthew Worley describes as condescending and unfair the comment by Sidney Webb in 1930 that it was “fanatics and cranks and extremists” who dominated and maintained the Labour Party at a constituency level. (this was during the time of the Ramsay Macdonald government.) He goes on to say : “While trade union funds have traditionally and primarily financed the Party, Labour has simultaneously depended on a core of loyal volunteers to sustain its organisation beyond the Party’s

headquarters, most of whom were driven by deep-seated desire to change the world in which they lived”

### **The miners**

In the case of the Labour Party which was newer than its opponents and had been created from existing organisations, such as the trades unions, these organisations played a key role in the Party, in some areas substituting for the Party itself, as in mining areas such as Durham and South Wales. In these areas the Party’s role was marginal, votes could be guaranteed by the Durham Miners Association and the party could pass for a whole year without holding an executive meeting. This suited the MP Hugh Dalton who claimed that a “healthy party is an inactive one ...too many members might upset the applecart and bring in militants .” Some of this sounds fairly familiar! Ebbw Vale recorded one of the lowest levels of party membership in the country in the 1920s but had one of the highest Labour votes. Strong Labour Party organisation was more likely to be found in Labour’s marginal areas.

### **Independent Labour Party**

The importance of the Independent Labour Party varied from one area to another. Gideon Cohen compares two very different areas where the ILP was strong – Glasgow and Norwich, and the impact that this was to have on Labour’s fortunes in the 1930s. In 1932 the ILP was to disaffiliate from the Labour Party. In many areas the impact of this was marginal, but where the ILP had a strong base it was very large.

In Scotland for instance in 1929 67 out of 68 Labour candidates were ILP members. The main focus for this support was Glasgow. However the



legend of Red Clydeside was only part of the story of Labour in Scotland. The Highlands and even Edinburgh did not have the same radical traditions. It is interesting to note that the Scottish Labour Party supported home rule for Scotland from the outset but the Labour Party, although having "separate assemblies for Scotland, Wales and England" as a 1929 manifesto commitment did not give this area a priority.

The disaffiliation of the ILP from the Labour Party in 1932 brought about a collapse of the Labour machine in parts of Scotland. Within the ILP there was opposition to the disaffiliation. This led to the expulsion of activists such as David Kirkwood, a Clydeside MP. Ultimately the Scottish ILP lost 128 out of its 200 branches. A new organisation – the Scottish Labour Party was formed. The official Labour candidates opposing ILPers lost their deposits in Glasgow constituencies in 1935. The ILP also ran into difficulties with the Irish catholic vote in Glasgow over the issue of the Spanish Civil War. Catholics had tended to support the ILP in Scotland until the Catholic Church was attacked by ILPers for supporting Franco.

Cohen describes the ILP in Norwich a completely different area from Glasgow – not connected with the same levels of poverty or militancy. However in both areas the ILP which had strong support did not tend to go along with the CP controlled Revolutionary Policy Committee which had pushed for disaffiliation from Labour. In both cases the ILP had strong links with the unions and supported strikes by busworkers in the 1930s. In Norwich Fenner Brockway addressed a rally of 7,000 striking bus workers, who were on an unofficial strike. Membership of the ILP in Norwich actually climbed in the 1930s whereas it was withering elsewhere.

By 1940 there were 1,000 ILP members in the town, What sustained this membership? When the ILP backed "Keir Hardie" club broke from the party in the 1950s, the membership fell from 700 to 9. The club had provided a sound social and financial base for the ILP and this marked its demise.

### **Women in the Labour Party**

Women played an important role in the Labour Party in the inter-war years and Karen Hunt's survey of women in Manchester revealed that leading activists often had husbands who were trades union activists and they themselves had been organisers for the co-operative movement or a trades union. Some would have come through the suffragette movement and some had been involved in the Manchester and Salford Women's Citizens Association. Women activists in South Wales are considered for their impact on Labour's municipal policy in relation to welfare, children and health and birth control.

### **Lancashire and the Unions**

The role of the trades unions in the Lancashire Labour Party is discussed in one of the essays.. Firstly the links that the Labour Party had with particular industries was considered. The Miners Federation for instance had strong party links and that influenced the level of support for Labour in Lancashire towns which had mining populations. There was less support for Labour in cotton towns such as Oldham. This is attributed to the tradition of support amongst factory workers for the Conservative Party, a legacy of factory owners paternalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Also the trades unions in towns such as Oldham exercised a conservative influence on

the local party. Their concern was with labour representation rather than socialism, much to the frustration of party activists. Local trades unions had financial sway over local parties and councillors. They fully endorsed the TUC and Labour leadership's attempts to stamp out any unity campaigns with the Communist Party and carried out expulsions of activists such as Edmund Frow in Salford.

### **London Labour – a way of life**

Dan Weinbren wrote the essay on London "Social capital: London's Labour Parties 1918-45". London was different in many ways to the rest of the country. Its workforce is made up of immigrants either from other parts of the UK or overseas and it had little heavy industry like mining or textiles. People worked in transport such as the docks or in small factories. There was no one dominant trades union with deep seated roots. Rather than resting on an existing working class community Labour in London created working class communities. Of the Woolwich CLP it was written "The Labour Party is not politics – it is life – do you belong?". Poplar Labour Party was described by Beatrice Webb as "essentially a benefit society". Labour provided a home for immigrant workers who brought their labour movement traditions with them to the capital. In Stepney one third of Labour councillor between the wars were Jewish or Irish. Labour in London provided a vibrant political and social life, and this brought political control to the Party at a local level. Labour had gained control of the London County Council in 1934 and by 1920 controlled West Ham, Enfield and Edmonton and Hayes. Support increased in the 1930s as new factories opened up in Erith, Silvertown, Deptford, Harlesden and Acton. Four

fifths of the new factories which opened at this time were in London. In Hayes workers from South Wales came to work at EMI's. With a workforce of 25,000 it already had a closed shop in the 1920s. Workers brought their trades union traditions with them. The Labour controlled LCC expanded council housing into areas such as Becontree and Dagenham, changing the whole political landscape. Labour organised in these new industrial areas – not just political meetings but using increased leisure time – whist drives, dances, fetes and football teams.

There are additional essays in this book on municipal politics in Yorkshire, the co-operative movement in the West Midlands and also the South West of England which was the most backward area for Labour, even in towns such as Plymouth.

Finally the concluding chapter looks at the similarities between the Labour Party in Britain and the Social Democratic Party in Germany. Stefan Berger argues that the German SPD before the war was the model for Labour Party organisation. However in most areas Labour's organisation was not as comprehensive and all embracing as that of the German Party. This was because there were other organisations to which workers in the UK could belong besides the Labour Party. Some of these organisations were involved in the creation of the Labour Party. In Germany the working class was excluded from bourgeois society and thus the SPD provided a way of life for them. The downside of this was that the German Party did not have the same roots in the working class that the Labour Party had in the UK. Splits within the German labour movement after 1918 weakened the position of the SPD.

This book fills a gap in the history of the labour movement. Clearly there is

much more research that can be done. It is interesting for labour activists to look at the history of the party from this perspective as it shows how thousands of people were actually making history. The collection covers the years 1918-1945. Perhaps we should now start thinking about the history of the Party post 1945 and consider how social change, mass communication, changes in the working class and the arrival of large ethnic minority communities have affected the Labour Party and its policies. People who remember the 1930s and could live a historical survey with vivid memories are now few and far between.

Reviewed by Barbara Humphries

#### **Obituary Harold Smith (1918-2005)**

Harold Smith, who died on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2005, was for a number of years active in Labour Heritage. Born in Hackney in 1918 to Jewish parents, he lost his father when he was six months old and grew up in straightened circumstances. After becoming a socialist at an early age, he joined the Communist Party and participated in its activities until Soviet military intervention in 1956. This disgusted him and thereafter, almost to the end of his life, he was an active member of the Labour Party.

During the Second World War he served in the army and was posted to South Africa for some years. Here he was influenced by what he saw to become a long-term opponent of apartheid, which was introduced in 1948. Here he also studied librarianship, which enabled him to enter the library service in London following demobilisation. After working as an assistant in Westminster, he became deputy borough librarian in Battersea and then

Wandsworth, in the wake of amalgamation. However, in 1975 he was obliged to bring a case for unlawful dismissal against Wandsworth – which he won, though he declined to return to his post.

He specialised in the history of the labour movement and produced a bibliography of apartheid in South Africa (1965) and Remember 1926 (1976) – a bibliography of the 1926 General Strike. In 1981 he produced “The British labour movement to 1970 - a bibliography.

Parallel with this interest, he built up an outstanding collection of works on labour history including numerous rare books. Many of these will go to specialist repositories under the terms of his will.

Harold Smith took a close interest in the Marx Memorial Library at Clerkenwell Green and served as a committee member, vice-chairman (1981-98) and chairman (1998-99). He was in addition, an active member of the Society for the Study of Labour History, the William Morris Society and the Economic History Society.

He established the Nine Elms Press, which published short works on left-wing artists, including William Morris, C.R. Ashbee and Walter Crane. He also functioned as an occasional second-hand book dealer, circulating lists of left-wing books he had acquired which were surplus to his requirements.

He read voraciously and had an encyclopaedic knowledge of political history and current political affairs, extending to many countries. This was also based on regular trips abroad. At the same time, he was deeply attached to his home environment and joined the Putney Society and Roehampton Garden Society.

Despite his long commitment to the Labour Party, he grew more and more alienated by Tony Blair and New

Labour as time passed and in 2000, much to the regret of many longstanding friends, he left.

Harold Smith is survived by his wife, Mary, a former teacher and lecturer, (at one time in South Africa) and a silk weaver. She is seeking to arrange for his papers and books to be preserved and made available for students and researchers in accord with his longstanding wishes.

Stan Newens

### Mrs Caroline Ganley

I was interested to read Larry Ille's article about Ethel Bentham and Dorothea Jewson. This prompted me to remember Caroline Ganley our Labour and Co-operative MP for South Battersea from 1945 to 1951.

At 65 Caroline Ganley was one of the oldest of the newly elected Labour women MPs in 1945. She was also probably one of the first elected housewives and mothers with only an elementary education.

Caroline Ganley (nee Blumfield) was born in East Stonehouse, Devon in 1879 and was brought up by her widowed mother. She spent some time in an orphanage and, after leaving school, took employment as a nurse domestic in London. She married in 1901 and had three children. With her husband she campaigned for socialism in Battersea and first stood, unsuccessfully, for the local council in 1909. She also began her life-long connection as an activist in the co-operative movement. Eventually, in 1919, she became a member of Battersea Borough Council and chairman of the Health and Maternity Committees. She achieved what she considered to be one of her greatest successes in local government work – the building of a maternity home at Bolingbroke Grove.

After being elected to the London County Council and unsuccessfully contesting North Paddington at the 1935 General Election, she gained the seat at South Battersea in 1945. At the time of her election she was President of the London Co-operative Society. She maintained a high level of attendance at the House of Commons and was meticulous in her constituency casework and surgeries. Although crucified by boundary changes, she managed to retain her seat by 368 votes in 1950, but lost by 494 votes the following year. On both occasions the percentage of the poll was an enormous 85.6.

Politics were Caroline Ganley's greatest interest and she was returned to Battersea Borough Council in 1953 and served on the Council until Battersea was subsumed in Wandsworth in 1965.

During an interview with the local press she gave the following advice to those wishing to take up public life – serve because you want to serve not because of what you are going to get out of it. Sentiments as apt now as when she expressed them.

Caroline Ganley died on August 1966 and a copy of her unpublished autobiography is held at the Bishopsgate Institute.

### **By Terence Chapman**

“THE GENERAL STRIKE IN EALING : AN 80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

speaker :Dr Jonathan Oates (Local historian, London Borough of Ealing)

7.00 pm Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January at Ealing Central Library, Town Centre, Uxbridge Rd. W.5

~~Articles for the next bulletin to Barbara Humphries, 117A Uxbridge Rd. W.7~~

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~~mickandbarbara@btopenworld.com~~