Labour Heritage

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1948: the Nationalisation of the Railways

By Derek Wheatley

January 1st this year marked the 70th anniversary of the nationalisation of Britain's railways, thus fulfilling one of the pledges contained in the Labour Party's manifesto for the 1945 General Election, *Let Us Face the Future*. It had been party policy since 1918 when it had adopted a new constitution, including the late-lamented Clause IV which called for the common ownership of' the 'means of production, distribution and exchange'. It is undoubtedly the case that railways fell under the description of 'distribution', being the largest carrier of goods at that time, but if there were any possible doubt the same conference called for the nationalisation of the railways. Interestingly though, the reason behind this policy was to ensure that workers in the industries involved enjoyed the 'full fruits of their labour', the strategic importance of the railways not being mentioned.

Public Unrest and the Railways

This factor had been realised by the government as long as 1842. In the early years of the 19th Century there had been growing public unrest brought about by the excesses of the Industrial Revolution which resulted in employers and shareholders making fortunes whilst the very people who made it all possible worked under appalling conditions, were miserably paid and forced to live in fetid slums. At each attempt by the workers or those of a more privileged background who were ready to step into their ranks to obtain some relief from their drudgery the government of the day often took violent action and introduced legislation to stifle this opposition. For example, the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 resulted in legislation making all meetings of more than fifty persons illegal, and the banning of processions and marches. The trial of the leaders of the Spencean Philanthropists for high treason (punishable by execution) in 1816 which, although the accused men were acquitted, nevertheless was followed by an Act suppressing all associations known as 'Spencean.' The Cato Street conspiracy of 1820, orchestrated by a Home Office spy, was followed by the execution of the five 'conspirators'. The Tolpuddle Martyrs were transported to Australia for daring to attempt to form a branch of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union.

Riots and strikes followed the rejection by Parliament of a petition signed by nearly one and a quarter million presented by leaders of the People's Charter (Chartists) in 1839. This culminated in the arrest of the Chartist leaders, the killing of ten Chartists in Newport, South Wales, who were calling for the release of one of their companions from imprisonment and was followed by the arrest of seven of their leaders and subsequent transportation.

Clearly the many attempts to quell this unrest only inflamed the situation further. Concerned that a new outbreak could occur anywhere in the country, it occurred to the government that the expanding railway network could be used to transport troops quickly to any such outbreak. The result was an Act in 1842 that enabled the government to use emergency powers over the railways. However, the Chartists continued with their fight and Parliament began to see that something needed to be done to protect women and children in the mines, ensure that juveniles were not to be employed for more than ten hours a day, and reconsider the law on political groups communicating with each other. The Chartists therefore switched from an emphasis on demonstrations to political action and a sort of peace prevailed. The need to take control of the railways diminished accordingly.

The American Civil War (1861-1865) demonstrated the importance of railways in any conflict and parliamentary scrutiny here in Britain of legislation authorising new lines began to take defence requirements into account. But even the Great Western Railway's broad gauge (8'0" as opposed to the standard gauge of 4'8½" in use elsewhere) came under attack by the War Office because of the problem of the break of gauge on moving men and materiel from one company's line to another.

It was the Boer War that saw the British Army making extensive use of the railways although this was confined to the workings of the London & South Western Railway between London and Southampton. This was achieved with much co-operation between the railway and the military authorities and without direct government interference. It was observed that the concentration of traffic on London was inefficient and, in the build-up to the 1914-1918 War, links between the military training and rear concentration areas around Salisbury and the coast were improved.

World War 1 and Government Control

Before the outbreak of World War 1 the Liberal government had begun to consider nationalisation of the railways but as war loomed the idea was put aside. Instead more extensive powers over the railways were put in place. The President of the Board of Trade, whose department was responsible for railways, took control and acted as Chairman of the Railway Executive Committee which had been formed in 1912. The railway companies were now directed to provide trains for military purposes at the government's behest. There was, however, no requirement to meet any standards as to stock to be used and, frequently, obsolete stock set aside for the purpose, was used. The worst railway disaster in Britain, which occurred at Quintinshill, near Carlisle (1917), in which at least 227 people were killed and 245 injured most of

whom were soldiers on their way to France from Scotland, involved a troop train comprising old obsolete stock, two goods trains and a northbound express. The stock itself was not the cause of the initial collision but its old wooden bodies were crushed and then consumed by the resultant fire which broke out.

One aspect of government control which did emerge was a system that enabled resources to be directed to where they were most needed rather than allowing companies to keep equipment for themselves while another company suffered under wartime pressures. But while the government had power over the railways it had no long-term responsibility for their technical or financial health. This was to prove to be a short-sighted and improvident policy.

Financially the war years were a disaster for the railway companies. Compensation had been paid to them based on pre-war earnings. In 1913 the combined profits of the companies had been £45 million. By 1921, when government control had ended overall losses of around £9 million had been incurred. This situation occurred mainly because of dramatic increases in costs of manpower which rose from £47 million in 1913 to £160 million in 1920 due to improvements in rates of pay. It was probably because of their poor financial position that calls for railway nationalisation were dropped.

Something had to be done to keep the railway system going. Nationalisation having been ruled out, the only solution was to create four more-or-less regional companies which would take over the more than 120 companies operating within their designated area, economy of scale being the justification. Joint lines, owned by two companies, would continue but under the ownership of the new companies, for example, the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway, owned originally by the Midland Railway and the London & South Western Railway, would pass to their successors. Excluded from this reorganisation were narrow gauge railways and light railways, these latter usually being small companies running a service between two local communities, and the London Underground system.

The four companies created were: the London Midland & Scottish Railway (LMS), its constituents being primarily the London & North Western Railway and the Midland Railway; the London & North Eastern Railway (LNER) absorbing the Great Northern Railway, the Great Eastern Railway and the North Eastern Railway plus a number of others and the Southern Railway (SR) comprising mainly the London & South Western Railway, the London Brighton & South Coast Railway and the South Eastern & Chatham Railway with a few others. The fourth, the Great Western Railway (GWR) was already in existence but absorbed a number of Welsh Valley lines and the Cambrian Railway.

Vesting day was January 1st 1923 and was referred to as the grouping. The three new companies inherited a number of different working practices and a range of rolling stock. In both cases the tendency was for the largest absorbed company's practices to be rolled out across their system and, with rolling stock, for new builds to be based on the output of the largest predecessor.

They set about a massive programme of investment with the aim of improving timings of their inter-city expresses and providing modern, comfortable coaching stock to attract more passengers. Prestigious trains were introduced into the late 1930s such as the Cheltenham Flyer and Cornish Riviera Express (GWR), the Flying Scotsman and Coronation (LNER), the Coronation Scot (LMS), and the Atlantic Coast Express and Golden Arrow, the latter in conjunction with French

National Railways (SR). The early years following the grouping were rightly known as the golden years of railways but it was not to last. Increased use of road transport for the carriage of goods ate into the companies' revenues. Motor coach travel and, to a lesser extent, where the more affluent members of the public were concerned, the use of the private car increased. In the last few years profits declined and, therefore, dividends to shareholders fell to derisory levels such that by 1939 only the SR was reporting a profit and paying a dividend, thanks to its London commuter services and the fact that it carried far less freight than the others.

In the meantime the first railways to pass into public ownership were those of the London Underground with the creation of the London Passenger Transport Board in 1933. This was the brainchild of Herbert Morrison whose aim was to unify and co-ordinate public transport including buses and trams in the London area. This was achieved and London Transport, as it came to be known, was to become the most efficient public transport system in Britain if not the world.

As the 1930s progressed the storm clouds of war loomed and it was anticipated that, if war came, the immediate threat would come from aerial bombardment rather than an invasion, as had been seen in cinema footage of the Spanish Civil War, the Italian invasion of Abyssinia and Japanese actions in China. Preparations for this eventuality were put in hand as early as 1937 with the formation of a Railway Technical Committee. This committee examined all aspects of public and staff safety, protection of key points, provision of stocks for emergency repairs, and possible lighting restrictions on both the national railways and London Transport. Funding for these precautions at first was seen to be a problem and, when the cost was estimated at just under £5¼ million, it was inevitable that the government would provide a grant of £4 million with the companies left to fund the balance themselves.

Part of the money was spent on relocating the headquarters of the four mainline companies with the GWR going to a location near Aldermaston, the SR to Dorking, the LMS to a country mansion near Watford, whereas the LNER's different departments were spread to a number of different locations.

Railway Executive Committee

In 1938 a new Railway Executive Committee (REC) was created, initially as an advisory body whilst allowing the companies' managements to be responsible for operations. Headquarters were set up at the closed Down Street underground station. Then, just before the outbreak of war in 1939, the government took control of the railways including light railways. The 15" narrow gauge Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway was even requisitioned by the Army. The REC came under the control of the Minister of Transport, later the Minister of War Transport. There was some delay in finalising arrangements for compensation and, in November, a Labour MP asked the government to consider nationalisation, a suggestion which was rejected. Delay continued and there were rumours that nationalisation was being considered but this might well have been a ploy engineered to put pressure on the four companies.

Finally, in February 1940, agreement was reached and it was decreed that the railway companies would be contractors to the government. All revenue was to become the government's and this would be shared between the four companies and London Transport from a pool set at a guaranteed £40 million, the percentage shares being

based on the average net revenues (defined as their standard revenue) for the companies and London Transport in the years 1935-1937. If actual revenues exceeded the guaranteed figure the excess, up to £3.5 million would be disbursed on the same percentage basis. Beyond £43.5 million any excess would be shared by the government and the pool, with the latter's half being shared on the same percentage basis. If the revenues exceeded £56 million and one or more of the shares were greater than the companies' standard revenues, the excess was to be shared out proportionately to the remaining companies. In the event that revenues reached a point where all standard revenues had been disbursed but there was still an excess, this would pass to the government. This arrangement, it was believed, would incentivise all the parties to maximise efficiency and increase revenues. That this was to be case is demonstrated by the levels of excess passing to the government totalled £155 million for the years 1943-1945!

Thus, the vast amount of freight (including war materiel) and the large number of troop movements over the years were handled with speed and efficiency but this was to be at a cost. Maintenance of stock and infrastructure had been neglected due to the need to prioritise rail operations. The use of railway workshops for the manufacture of equipment for the armed services (which was paid for by the government) restricted materials and labour for rolling stock maintenance. The result was that, at the end of the war, the railways were on their knees. They had performed magnificently, sometimes in the most difficult circumstances, for nearly six years but they were now in dire straits. Many of their locomotives and passenger coaches would have been scrapped and replaced had there been no war but they were desperately needed. They were now worn out and only fit for the scrapyard but were patched up and soldiered on in the early post-war years because there were few funds available to replace them

Rail Nationalisation

The new Labour government, committed to nationalisation, quickly took steps to take them into public ownership. This was, of course, opposed by the Tories, but they failed to come up with any alternative policy to save the railways from collapse. The Transport Act of 1947 was passed and the deed was done. This created the British Transport Commission whose brief extended not only to the railways but to bus companies offering stage services (other than those already owned by local authorities) and road freight haulage, docks and inland waterways, railway-owned hotels and even London Transport, each of which had its own executive.

For the railways the country was divided into six regions, Western (the old GWR), Southern (SR), Eastern (LNER), North Eastern (the LNER's lines north of Doncaster), Midland (LMS) and Scottish (the former lines of the LMS and LNER). Nothing much seemed to change at first. The four companies no longer existed but their managements were still in place under the direction of the Railway Executive whose headquarters were at first in two upper floors at 55 Broadway (the London Transport HQ) but when these were found to be inadequate a move was made to the Great Central Hotel at Marylebone which quickly became known as 'The Kremlin'.

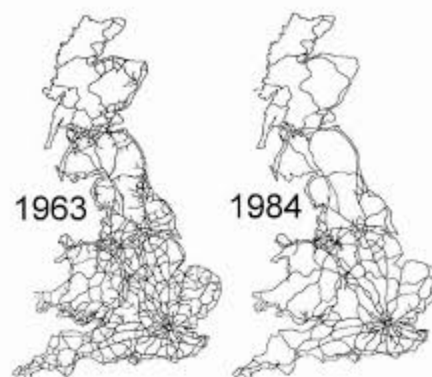
Slowly but surely the railways returned to normal but as was anticipated they required subsidy. This, of course, was a bonus for the Tories and their national press friends who belaboured Labour over the 'inefficiency' and 'profligacy' of nationalisation, conveniently ignoring the fact that Britain's railways would not have survived in private hands without subsidy.

A classic example of not letting the truth get in the way of the facts was demonstrated by an article in a failing Tory-supporting *Sunday Dispatch* in January 1953 which was headlined RAILWAY'S BIGGEST FIASCO - £500,000 WASTED ON THREE USELESS ENGINES/THEY TRIED TO HUSH IT UP!' and went on to proclaim that 'Three huge railway engines which cost altogether about £500,000 to build, now lie rusting and useless in sheds and sidings – silent and hidden evidence of the biggest fiasco produced by Britain's nationalised railways' and went on with a host of quotes which they had somehow gathered from different sources.

The truth was somewhat different. The three engines cost £100,000 (admittedly a high figure), had been scrapped in 1951, and were not of British Railways design. They were conceived by the Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Southern Railway in 1946 and were of a revolutionary design. Five were authorised for construction which commenced in July 1947 at Brighton. The first was not completed until June 1949 and then went on trials until September 1950. The fact that these were extended was due to a series of problems which occurred on various occasions although the last was successful but by then British Rail management had decided to stop all further testing and work. Without going into the rights or wrongs of the affair it is clear that British Rail's only fault was in delaying the decision to cancel the project. But even this could be excused because if the revolutionary design had turned out to be successful it would have brought enormous benefits to the railways.

Most of us will know the later history of Britain's railways in public ownership and the various attempts to cut government subsidy (for example, the Beeching axing of over route 6,000 miles and the indecent haste to eliminate steam traction which meant that a large number of steam locomotives were withdrawn with many years of working lives still in prospect). But subsidies continued to grow. Even Thatcher, the great destroyer of industry in the cause of a 'reduced state' and one who would never travel by train, could not contemplate privatisation. It fell to Major to come up with a crazy scheme to sell off tracks and signalling (and some mainline termini) and create a private company, and offer a number of franchises for the operation of trains over all routes. We all know of the odd failure with these ventures and it has now reached the stage where a majority of people are calling for the renationalisation of our railways. We also have the stupid situation where the state-owned railways of France, Germany and even China have taken over franchises thus enabling them to repatriate profits for investment in their own railways while, at the same time, our own government prohibits any public involvement of its own.

Let us hope that Jeremy Corbyn will be able to restore ownership where it belongs –with the public.



Fred Jowett 1864-1944

By John H. Grigg

In last year's summer edition of the Bulletin, I wrote that John Wheatley was the only Independent Labour Party (ILP) member to be appointed to Ramsay MacDonald's cabinet in the short lived first Labour Government in 1924. A Labour Heritage member has pointed out that this was not so and that another ILP member, Fred Jowett, was also in the cabinet as Minister for Works. This oversight illustrates how Fred Jowett has been largely forgotten. Yet his contribution to the movement was considerable. He was chairman of the ILP in 1909/1910 and again from 1914 to 1917. Furthermore he was chairman of the Labour Party 1921/22. He was one of the 29 first Labour Party MPs elected in 1906 and was the man who proposed that the new group in the House of Commons be named the 'Labour Party'. He lost his seat a number of times, finally in the Labour debacle in 1931. Is his obscurity because his loyalty was more to the ILP than the established Labour Party, or because unlike nearly all the 1906 Labour MPs, he did not come through the trades union movement?

Bradford and the ILP

Fred was one of eight children. His full time education ended when he was eight when he started work in a Bradford weaving mill. He became a 'half timer' – in the mill in the mornings and at school in the afternoons. This was not an unusual childhood for the 29 Labour MPs in 1906. Half of them became 'half timers' before their tenth year. Only a handful were 'full timers' at school beyond the age of twelve. Fred's further education came from the Mechanics Institute and the Bradford Technical College.

Both Fred's parents were active in the Co-operative Movement His mother had been sent from Devon with two older brothers at the age of seven, as part of a consignment by the Poor Law Guardians, to work in the Bradford mills. In his biography, Fred recalls how she told him of the Chartist meetings she was at when a child. Fred's father was a gaffer (foreman) in a Bradford textile mill. He discussed politics with Fred and it is probable that Fred's political views stemmed from his parents' beliefs. In 1882 he married Emily Foster, daughter of a wool waste dealer, and they had three children

Fred was elected chairman of the local Co-operative Association when he was 24. By then he was a manager in one of the textile mills. He was also a member of the Socialist League, led by William Morris, a breakaway group from the Marxist Social Democratic Federation. Later he was a founder member of the short lived Labour Electoral Association (LEA), a group that supported Labour representation in parliament but never managed to settle the question of whether such representation should remain a part of the Liberal Party, as it had been in the past, or totally independent. The LEA was succeeded by Keir Hardie's Independent Labour Party (ILP), founded in Bradford in 1893, which was a more successful movement that with a number of trade unions lead to the formation of the Labour Party.

What propelled Jowett into active politics was the Manningham Mills strike/lock out in 1890. It was an industrial dispute that could be claimed as one of many events that led to the formation of the Labour Party. The Manningham Mill owner, Samuel Lister, insisted on a wage cut of 30%. The 5,000 operatives, mostly women, came out on strike. The Conservatives and Liberals on Bradford Council supported the mill owner and banned strike meetings. The Durham Light Infantry were called in to quell a huge rally of 25,000 or more people that grew into a

major riot. A number of local socialists, including Jowett, supported the strikers and formed the Bradford Labour Union, later renamed the Bradford Independent Labour Party. Poverty forced the workers back to work after 19 weeks.

In 1892 two men, including Jowett, were returned to Bradford Council in the Mannington Ward standing as Bradford's independent Labour candidates. Jowett's words on his election address include:-

'*In the Lister strike, the people of Bradford saw plainly, as they had never seen before, that whether their rulers are Liberal or Tory, they are capitalists first and politicians afterwards.'*

Jowett spent the next 15 years on Bradford Council battling against the vested interests of property owners. As chair of the Sanitary Committee he overcame determined resistance of landlords to the conversion of ash-pit 'middens' to water closets. He had some limited success in slum clearance and the provision of houses under the Housing of the Working Classes Act. In 1904 Bradford Council was the first in the country to provide free school meals, thanks to pressure over many years from Jowett.

Labour's First MPs

In 1900 the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) was formed, the main driving force being ILP pressure within the Trade Union Congress (TUC). The LRC fought 15 seats at the 1900 General Election. Five were sponsored by trade unions, nine by the ILP - one of them jointly with the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), and one sponsored solely by the Marxist SDF. In eight of the seats the Liberals stood down to give the LRC a free run. One of these was Bradford West where Jowettt polled the highest percentage of all LRC candidates (49.8%). But he lost by 41 votes. He would have certainly won but for his opposition to the Boer War, which he regarded as an imperialist war in the interests of capitalists. Only two Labour candidates were successful, both in two-member seats where the Liberals put up only one candidate. Keir Hardie, in Methyr Tydfil, was one of them.

For the 1906 General Election, Ramsey MacDonald did a secret deal with the Liberals. Lists of seats were drawn up where the LRC and the Liberals would not stand against each other. So in 30 seats the LRC had a free run against Tory candidates (ten of these were two member seats where the Liberals ran only one candidate.) Of these 30 seats the LRC won 23.

However, there were 20 other seats not covered by the MacDonald deal where the local LRC ran candidates against the Liberals and Tories. Most of these were sponsored by trade unions and several by the ILP. Six extra seats were won including Bradford West for Jowett, sponsored by the ILP, giving a total of 29 in the 1906 House of Commons. So Fred Jowett's parliamentary career began in 1906. His first actions included proposing that the new group in parliament be called 'The Labour Party' and a maiden speech on school meals.

It has to be remembered that the Labour Party was a joint enterprise between the ILP, trade unions and the Fabian Society. Membership could only be through these organisations that sent delegates to the Labour Party at national and local level. In Parliament, MPs were sponsored either by the ILP or by a trade union. The Fabians did not sponsor MPs. From the outset the ILP was the left socialist wing of the party and the trade unions were the more moderate section although, of course, there was some overlap.

The ILP itself had two wings. One opposed any deals with the Liberals,

believing the Labour Party should be equally against the old capitalist supporting parties. The other wing tolerated MacDonald's arrangements with the Liberal party. In 1911 many ILP members and branches broke away to unite with the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) to establish the British Socialist Party, which eventually became the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920. The majority of the ILP members, including Jowett, remained with the trade union dominated Labour Party.

Parliamentary Reform

He did not, however, approve of the way the House of Commons operated. He believed too much power rested with the Prime Minister and the Cabinet and that MPs were shackled by party whips, often not knowing what they were voting for. He wanted a committee system in Parliament similar to that in local government with Health, Education, and Defence Committees chaired by a minister that would bring decisions to Parliament for endorsement. He also believed MPs should vote according to their consciences and that governments need not resign if defeated except by votes of no confidence.

When he was chairman of the ILP in 1909 an issue arose when some members of its National Council, unknown to Jowett, issued a pamphlet that became known as the *Green Manifesto* after the colour of its cover. The pamphlet included support for Jowett's views on Parliamentary reform and the right of MPs to vote as they wished. Jowett was caught in a controversy between MacDonald, who was an ILP member and who opposed Jowett's views, and the pamphleteers who had published their manifesto without his knowledge or consent. Caught between two factions he resigned his chairmanship of the ILP.

Once elected to Parliament in 1906, Jowett carried with him the causes he had fought for on Bradford Council. He succeeded on the question of school meals when the School Feeding Bill was passed, but his campaigning for government funding for working class housing had to wait until the first Labour government in 1924. He campaigned for measures to eradicate anthrax, known as the wool sorters' disease because it came from germs in imported wools. It was eventually eradicated by disinfection at ports of entry. He took up many other issues and was a strong supporter of women's suffrage and their militant activities. He retained his seat in the two 1910 elections

World War 1

He had become friends with Robert Blatchford, editor of *The Clarion*, and in its columns he propounded his views on parliamentary reform, the independence of MPs and women's suffrage. But as the threat of war with Germany approached, their views diverged. Blatchford favoured building up the British navy to deter Germany. Jowett saw the danger of international treaties that were dividing Europe into two armed camps. Britain's alliances with France and by proxy with Russia, done without reference to Parliament, have been described as 'secret diplomacy'. However they were not so secret that people like Jowett and MacDonald were unaware of what was going on, and they questioned the belief that such alliances reduced the danger of war. Tragically they were proved right in 1914.

Jowett was once again chairman of the ILP in 1914 and he was part of the ILP's opposition to the war. Many conscientious objectors were ILP members. Jowett was not a pacifist and believed in national defence, but he opposed entering a war on the grounds that it was one between capitalist and imperialist nations struggling

for power. He, like the other ILP MPs, refused to take part in recruiting drives and opposed conscription. He condemned profiteering from the war. He joined with Ramsay MacDonald and others in the Union of Democratic Control (UDC) to oppose the war and seek peace. At the same time he took up numerous cases on behalf of wounded servicemen and war widows to ensure they received their rightful entitlements to war pensions. Towards the end of the war there were attempts by European socialist parties to meet and seek a cessation of hostilities and a just peaceful settlement. On two occasions Jowett was part of delegations to these conferences but was prevented from attending, once by the government and once by seamen refusing to let them on board a ship bound for the conference in Norway.

However, the bulk of the Labour Party in parliament supported the government and entered into a war coalition. The ILP section of the Parliamentary Labour Party was alone in its opposition, but the Labour Party did not split apart and when the war ended in 1918 the Labour Party withdrew from the coalition in time for the 1918 General Election. Labour achieved a net gain of 15 seats but MPs who had been opposed to the war, like Jowett and MacDonald, lost their seats in the triumphant patriotic fever that dominated the election. Jowett, the ILP and many in the Labour Party condemned the punitive terms imposed on Germany which they claimed would only store up trouble for the future – and of course they were proved right.

Out of parliament he took on the post of Secretary of the Bradford ILP where the membership grew to 1,600 with eight branches. As a representative of the ILP on the Labour Party National Executive he went on a Labour Party delegation to Hungary and witnessed the 'terror' of the repressive regime there. He was also on a delegation to Ireland which reported and favoured the withdrawal of British troops and the right of Ireland to self-determination. As a fraternal delegate to the Polish Socialist Party he discovered that much of the Polish woollen industry was owned by Bradford magnates, who complained at home about the effects of foreign competition. He was a delegate to the 1920 International Socialist Conference in Geneva which he found to be unsatisfactory, because the German delegates were made to accept Germany's guilt for the war and the conference endorsed reparations.

Labour into Government

It was about this time that he was clarifying his thoughts on priorities for the socialist movement. Much emphasis was being put on nationalising industries but Jowett thought the priority should be the redistribution of wealth and the first thing to do was to challenge the government to meet human needs. As chairman of the Labour Party, in an outspoken speech at the 1922 Edinburgh national conference, he attacked the economic system that enriched 'mainly the class which already has more to spend than it can already spend' - the war had changed from a military to an economic one in the interests of capitalism. The speech caused condemnation in the press and in parliament. There was fear of a revolution in the post 1914 – 1918 war years and the chairman of the Labour Party talking of class conflict added to the fears. But Jowett was opposed to violent revolution. Violence, once let loose, leads to tyranny. He believed in educating the people on the merits of socialism and also in the reform of parliament. But revolution, which of course was never going to happen in Britain, he emphatically dismissed.

Meanwhile the government was grappling with the huge burden of war debt,

unemployment and industrial unrest. Labour condemned cuts in education and health spending that Jowett described as 'impoverishing children's health of body and mind'. In 1922 the Conservatives withdrew from Lloyd George's coalition and in the subsequent general election they won a comfortable majority led by Bonar Law, despite Labour increasing its strength from 76 to 138 seats. Jowett won with ease in East Bradford and was back in Parliament.

Bonar Law became very ill and was succeeded by Stanley Baldwin, who went to the country again in December 1923, seeking a mandate to introduce general import tariffs. He lost on that issue. Labour and the Liberals opposed tariffs and, when the results came in, they outnumbered the Conservatives. The result was: Conservatives 248 seats, Labour 191 seats, Liberals 158 seats. The outcome was a minority Labour government, led by Ramsay MacDonald, precariously propped up by the Liberals. MacDonald gave Jowett a place in the cabinet as First Commissioner of Works. He and John Wheatley, the ILP member who was appointed Minister of Health, refused to wear morning dress and top hats to receive their seals of office from the King. As Works Commissioner, responsible for all government property, including buildings and parks and even statues, the scope for achieving socialism was limited. However he discovered that 6,000 temporary estate dwellings left over from the war were in a shocking state of repair, and he broke convention by presenting his department's estimates early including £147,000 for the repair of these houses and improving the estate roads and drainage. He was also responsible for property abroad and extracted considerably higher rents from property leased in China to British firms. One firm, despite protests in the House of Commons, was forced to pay £40,000 per annum extra. Maybe it was this extra income from China that enabled him to finance and gain consent for the £147,000 to repair the 6,000 temporary dwellings. He was associated with the provision of public telephone boxes, and controversies concerning the Nurse Cavell statue near Trafalgar Square, and an extraordinary fierce row over the W.H.Hudson Memorial in Hyde Park. On both occasions he won battles against the more stilted conventions of what was artistically acceptable.

This first Labour government fell before a year was up when the Liberals withdrew support over a minor issue mishandled by MacDonald. In the 1924 general election Labour lost 40 seats and it has gone down in Labour history that this was the fault of the forged Zinoviev letter that appeared in the *Daily Mail* implying communist influence over the Labour Party. In fact Labour's vote went up by a million votes and it was a huge swing from the Liberals to the Conservatives that boosted the Conservative vote and gave them 400 seats – nearly twice as many as all other parties combined. Labour won 151 seats, a loss of 40 and the Liberals won 40, a loss of over 100. One Labour casualty was Fred Jowett. The Tories stood down in favour of a Liberal candidate and, in a straight fight, he lost by 66 votes.

As far as the 1926 General Strike was concerned Fred believed that the tactics were wrong. Instead of the transport workers and other trade unions coming out in support of the miners he believed it would be more effective if they remained in work and put an embargo on shifting coal. All trade unionists could then be levied to sustain the miners in their struggle. Instead the Conservative

government won and then proceeded with anti- trade union legislation.

The Labour Party went into the 1929 general election with a manifesto of practical proposals to fight unemployment designed to present Labour as a responsible party. An unpopular Conservative government lost seats and for the first time Labour was the biggest party in the House of Commons. But there was a minor Liberal revival and MacDonald for the second time had to form a minority government. This time no ILP MPs were given ministries. Jowett and Wheatley remained on the backbenches.

MacDonald's government was hazardous because of the need to have the Liberals keeping it in power, and to ward off socialist proposals from the ILP faction on the backbenches. Added to that was the Conservatives' use of parliamentary procedures to delay government bills, which Fred Jowett held would not be possible if Parliament was radically reformed along the lines he had suggested. Fred was a power in the ILP (he was its treasurer from 1927 to 1944) and on a number of occasions he and his fellow ILP MPs were moving amendments and speaking critically of MacDonald's government. The end came in 1931 when the international financial crisis brought down the government and MacDonald formed a national coalition with the Conservatives. He took a few Labour MPs with him. Labour was wiped out in the October 1931 election holding only 52 of its 289 seats. Fred was defeated by nearly 7,000 votes in East Bradford. A month earlier he suffered the blow of the loss of his wife Emily. They had been married for forty-seven years. She shared his socialist convictions and gave him devoted support during the ups and downs of his political life.

ILP Disaffiliates from the Labour Party

At the 1931 General Election the party's National Executive demanded that all candidates should sign up to accepting the standing orders of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) should they be elected. The ILP had always acted independently in parliament and Jowett had always valued the right of MPs to vote according to their consciences. Nineteen candidates refused to sign and the five that were elected in Scotland were excluded from the PLP. Jowett was prominent in the ILP in defending the independent rights of MPs. The ILP sought a compromise but the Labour Party would not budge and the ILP disaffiliated from the Labour Party in 1932. It was a matter of regret for Fred. The ILP had been the major force behind the Labour Party's foundation but the decision, which was by no means unanimous, was a matter of principle for him. He recognised that the decision to disaffiliate could mean the end of the ILP. But without its independence the ILP would be meaningless. 'Indeed there would no longer be any reason why it should live ….let it die honourably.'

Jowett was right. From then on the ILP declined. Some left to join the Labour Party and others to join ultra-left parties. Jowett stuck with the ILP and resisted moves for links with the Communist Party whose ideology he regarded as contrary to his belief that the way forward was to make a reformed Parliament truly representative of the working classes. He also opposed the use of violence against the British Union of Fascists, which he thought discredited the anti-fascist movement.

In the 1935 General Election he stood as an ILP candidate in East Bradford. Labour also ran a candidate and the split vote allowed the Conservatives to take the seat. It was a bitter campaign and the Labour

candidate attacked Jowett as a deserter the same as Ramsay MacDonald.

Rise of Fascism in Europe

International tensions were increasing in Europe and Jowett condemned the British government's embargo on selling arms to the Spanish government while Germany and Italy were supplying munitions to Franco's Fascist insurgency. The result in Spain 'dishonoured Britain and inflicted untold misery and suffering on the Spanish people'. He saw the drift towards war in the 1930s caused by capitalist imperial rivalries between European powers. He had a unique 'passive defence' attitude towards British rearmament. Only defensive weapons, such as anti-aircraft guns and fighter aeroplanes, should be produced. 'Long range bombers designed to reach Germany, is the surest way of bringing rival bombers to this country'. He pointed to the armed force used by Britain in its colonies that mocked Britain's condemnation of German aggression. He contended that the abolition of poverty 'would do more to undermine and destroy fascist Governments than anything else in this world can do'. With echoes of the calls for international working class solidarity before the First World War he believed that a League of Socialist Peoples offered a better a prospect for ensuring peace than the diplomatic 'jiggery-pokery' between capitalistic governments. His idealist opposition to the war continued after it began in September 1939.

In his later years he was writing up his views on a volatile international banking system that controlled the world's economy and produced regular crises which impoverished the working classes. The banks caused these catastrophes and forced the governments they controlled to reduce the population's spending power. The real answer Fred believed, reflecting to a degree the theories of Maynard Keynes, was the opposite. Banks should be taken into state ownership and spending power controlled and increased to stimulate production. Public works to strengthen the economy were needed but were not enough. He advocated distribution to all sections of society a national dividend derived from the nation's wealth. All contributed to the nation's wealth and all should justly benefit.

There's a lot more to Fred Jowett than I've been able to fit into this article. Fenner Brockway, his biographer, lists four contributions which were specially Jowett's. They were his pioneer works for the health of children, the principle of social security for the working population, his conception of a truly representative democracy, and his association with the theory of social credit and socialist planning. He died in Bradford in 1944. Brockway, who knew him well, says 'the simplicity of Fred Jowett was his humanity, his honesty, his doggedness, his humility.' He had his faults. His sustained opposition to World War 2 was questionable. His reliance on the power of the working class was unrealistic. But his integrity cannot be questioned. He never compromised his principles, and to that I would add that he was one of those politicians who resisted all personal ambition.

Bradford Town Councillor 1892 -1906
Independent Labour Party Chairman 1909-1910 and 1914-1917
Independent Labour Party Treasurer 1927 - 1944
Labour Party Chairman 1921-1922
MP for Bradford West 1906 – 1918
MP for Bradford East 1922 –1924 and 1929 – 1931
First Commissioner of Works and Cabinet Member 1924

This article is based on *Socialism over Sixty Years, the biography of Fred Jowett,* by Fenner Brockway. An additional source was *Left in the Centre: the Independent Labour Party 1893 – 1940* by Robert E Dowse.

Kicking Off 100 Years of Labour in Reading

The centenary of Reading Labour Party founded in 1918 is being celebrated this year by Reading District Labour Party, Reading Trades Union Council and the local Co-operative Party. Reading Trades Council was set up earlier, in 1891.

Reading Labour 100 held its launch event on Thursday 25th January, attended by 50 people. Members of Reading Labour and the Trades Union Council gave three minute presentations on different aspects of the history of the labour movement in Reading.

The most well known employer in Reading over the years was the Huntley and Palmer biscuit factory on the banks of the river Kennet. Nikki Dancey of the trades council and GMB union gave a graphic account of the strike in 1916, when hundreds of women at the factory came out against the victimisation and dismissal of one of their colleagues. Attempts by the union to talk to the management were refused, and picketing started in earnest. Hat pins and sticks were used. The factory owners were furious when crates of biscuits were thrown into the River Kennet, and called on their private fire service to attack the women pickets with fire hoses. However these hoses were seized by the women, and some hapless fire fighters ended up in the Kennet themselves. The strike ended successfully for the women, they were re-instated and pay rises negotiated. The Reading branch of the National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers (forerunner of the GMB) became the largest branch of the union in the country, based on women workers.

Reading's first Labour MP, Somerville Hastings was elected in 1923. Tom Lake said that he was a surgeon who became involved in the Socialist Medical Association, campaigning for a free and universal state health service. He lost his seat in the 1924 General Election, won again in 1929, but lost in 1931 and 1935. He was not to win Reading for Labour again, but went on to become the MP for Barking.

Reading's most famous Labour MP was Ian Mikardo, who was elected in 1945. He took a resolution to Labour Party conference in 1944 calling for the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy. Supported by railway workers, a key section of the Reading workforce, this resolution came from local branches of the NUR, who wanted to see public ownership of their industry. This was described by Reading RMT member and President of Reading Trades Union Council, Chris Reilly. Ian Mikardo gave an impassioned speech to the conference, and was congratulated by Herbert Morrison, who then went to say (infamously) that it would lose Labour the forthcoming general election! The rest is history.

Christine Borgars talked about Mikardo's achievement in refining election organisation by the invention of the 'Reading pad.' This was well before the days of computers, and saved hours of time in committee rooms on election days. Numbers were collected at polling stations, and recorded on these pads, as Christine described. They were to be used in committee rooms up and down the country.

Ray Parkes and Tony Jones spoke about the contribution of two members of Reading Labour Party to the Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War. One of them Thora Silverthorne, a nurse, went out to Spain in 1936, where she became known as the 'Red Matron'. Ray Parkes also talked about Dr Reginald Saxton, and his contribution to saving lives in the blood transfusion service.

Keith Jerrome gave an overview of the development of the labour movement in Reading. Can anything be learned from the past? Yes, we definitely need to keep on fighting!

Labour on Reading Council

Jo Lovelock concluded by sharing her highlights of the Reading and District Labour Party from the 1980s. The Reading and District Labour Party was formed in 1984, combining Reading East and Reading West Constituencies. It was critical in winning control of Reading Borough Council. In 1983 Labour had held only 13 out of 45 seats on the council, with the Tories in control. In 1986 however, Labour took minority control after a deal with two disgruntled Tories, Hamza and Pam Fuad. It took overall control in 1987, winning more seats, which enabled it to build houses and provide more services such as play areas for local children. Support was organised for the Miners Strike 1984/85 with collections of food and clothes for the families of striking miners particularly in South Wales.

Following angry demonstrations against Thatcher's Poll Tax, the local elections saw some of the biggest majorities that Labour had ever achieved in Reading, giving it 36 out of 45 seats on the council. The abolition of the Berkshire County Council led to the creation of Reading Borough Council as a unitary body in 1998. In 1997 Labour MPs were elected for both Reading constituencies and Labour Government allowed the council to build and repair schools and hospitals, and to open children's centres. Sadly the Iraq war, Gordon Brown's reversal of the ten pence tax for the lowest paid and some local issues led to results which meant that Labour's majority was lost, including the Council Leader losing his seat. Labour had minority control from 2008 to 2010, in an issue by issue agreement with the Green Party.

In 2010 the Tories and Lib-Debs formed a local coalition to match the national situation. They made a major error in allowing the Labour Deputy Mayor, Gul Khan, to become Mayor. A year later they realised their mistake – Labour was back up to 22/46 seats and with the Mayor's casting vote and the two Green Councillors abstaining Labour regained minority control. Gul was subjected to abuse and intense pressure in the run-up to the meeting, but he held firm and suffered further abuse from Tory councillors, who boycotted the Mayoral reception.

In 2012 Labour regained overall control and currently holds 31 out of 46 seats. Of course with the Tories' (supported by the Lib-Dems until 2015) austerity regime, it has been increasingly difficult for all local authorities, particularly Labour-run unitary councils. It is worth noting that between 2010 and 2020 the government grant to Reading will have reduced from £58million to nothing. The council gets some special grants for transport projects, but these can only be spent on those specific projects.

Jo said: "The election of Matt Rodda as Reading East's Labour MP in 2017 was a fantastic result – if we can get a Labour MP for Reading West elected, then we would be on course for the Labour Government the people we represent so desperately need".

There were a number of exhibits at the meeting, including a banner from the Major Attlee Company of the British Battalion from the Spanish Civil War. The most amazing exhibit was a table cloth from 1928. All the members of the Reading Trades Council and Labour Party at the time had signed their names on this cloth. These were then stitched into the cloth by an embroiderer. Some of these names were recognised by members of the local party today. Over the course of the year *Reading Labour 100* plans to set up exhibitions in the Museum of Reading and Museum of English Rural Life.
Martin Salter, MP for Reading West until 2010, concluded the meeting with cutting a cake, especially made to celebrate Reading Labour's centenary.

West London Labour History Day

Labour Heritage held its west London history day on Saturday 17th February 2018, in the Hammersmith Quaker Meeting Hall. It was attended by around 30 people. On the theme of 'writing and recording our history' there were three speakers.

Morgan Phillips

The first of these was Morgan D. Phillips, son of Labour Party secretary, from 1944-1962. He spoke about his experiences when researching sporting, local and family history. For years he had tried to get his father's memoirs published. These were in two parts, running the Labour Party during the years of the Attlee government, and in opposition during the 1950s, when in the shadow of the Cold War, and the atomic bomb, the party was divided on foreign policy. In spite of his reputation as a 'right winger' Phillips came to the defense of Aneurin Bevan, praising his spectacular speech in opposition to the attempt by Hugh Gaitskell to get Clause 4, Part 4 (on public ownership) removed from the Party's constitution. His father had a stroke before he could get his memoirs published, and his son had been unable before last year to find a publisher. In the internet age, he was able to publish a kindle edition, which attracted interest world-wide, and eventually in 2017, the print edition was published by Spokesman Press for Labour Heritage. It is available for purchase from the Labour Heritage website, is full of interesting anecdotes from the inside world of Labour conferences, plus the lesser known role that Morgan Phillips played in international affairs.

Trico: A Victory to Remember

Our second speaker was Sally Groves, who has been working hard to get a book published on the 1976 landmark strike for equal pay for women at Trico in Brentford. It is now 42 years since this strike, and she said that getting the book published has proved to be more difficult than winning the strike in the first place! The story of the strike at Trico has been related in previous issues of the *Labour Heritage* bulletin, but the story of the book is interesting in itself. Sally was publicity officer during the strike, and because of this, she had kept a vast number of the press cuttings, photos, strike bulletins, and documents relating to the strike. As Trico closed its Brentford factory in the 1990s and the factory was demolished objects such as the donations book, listing the vast extent of solidarity given to the strikers were lost. The union involved, the

Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AUEW) had closed its local offices in Southall and, later, its national office in Peckham, and is now effectively part of UNITE. However Sally managed to track down Roger Butler, former District Secretary of the Southall AUEW. She found that the first part of the story of the strike written by Vernon Merritt had been retained by Roger Butler. It was later passed on to the TUC Library Collection at Metropolitan University where Sally was able to photocopy the script and use it as a basis to continue writing the book which is due to be published within the next two months.

As well as including photos from the strike, Sally made a determined effort to contact as many as possible of the surviving women and some of the men, who were involved in the strike, to gather anecdotes from them. This was possible because many of them were local people, one or two living on a housing estate in Brentford, and had worked at Trico for years. Peggy Farmer who had been born on the estate, and Phyllis Green, an Irish friend, who had also been on strike helped Sally tracking down people. Where the women had married and changed their surnames this was more tricky.The quest to find Trico strikers involved door knocking and even leafletting in the Boston Manor Road, and some chance encounters in Wilkos in West Ealing, and on a local bus! Eleven interviews were conducted. The closeness of the local community helped in the writing of the book, as it did in the winning of the dispute. The strikers reveal the diversity of the Trico workforce. They included Irish workers, and some from the Caribbean and the Asian community, including young Ugandan Asians who had escaped Idi Amin's regime, when they came to Britain.

Trico: A Victory to Remember, co-authored by Sally Groves and Vernon Merritt, will be published by Lawrence and Wishart, and local book launches will be arranged by UNITE and Ealing Trades Council. It will appeal to the many who remember the 'Costa Del Trico' in the summer of 1976, and inspire those women who are still fighting for equal pay.

Barbara Castle and the Mau Mau Insurgency in Kenya in the 1950s

The third and final speaker was Olivia Stewart of the Museum of British Colonial History. She spoke about the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya 1952-1960, and the quest by a Labour politician, Barbara Castle to reveal the truth about what was happening in one of Britain's former colonies. Although India had won its independence in 1947, ending a large chunk of Britain's colonial rule, African countries, like Kenya, were not considered 'ready' for independence. The Conservatives won the 1951 General Election, and with Winston Churchill as Prime Minister, they were using violence to hold back the growing mood for independence across Africa. Churchill was particularly supported by his colonial secretary, Alan Lennox Boyd, appointed in 1954, who was determined to fight the Kenyan independence fighters, the Mau Mau, with force.

With the support of the *Daily Mirror*, Barbara Castle set out for Kenya to conduct an independent investigation into the devices used by the colonial administration to maintain power. At the same time a small group of Labour MPs, including Fenner Brockway and Aneurin Bevan founded the Movement for Colonial Freedom. Although they received no co-operation from the local administration, they uncovered instances of detention without trial, torture of suspects, and maltreatment of prisoners leading to their death. Furthermore these were not isolated cases. In 1959 the parliamentary Labour Party called for an independent inquiry

into the events in Kenya, but with the Conservatives in power, their motion in the House of Commons was lost by 288 to 232 votes. The Tory Press denounced the so-called 'failed ploy of the socialists'.

After Kenya won its independence in 1963, it was revealed that thousands of documents related to the Mau Mau insurgency, had been lost or destroyed. This was revealed in 2005, as five Kenyans sued the British government for violent crimes endured at the hands of the British colonial administration. A documentary, *Operation Legacy,* dealing with the destroyed and concealed records of the colonial administration across the Empire will be screened later in the year by Dan Snow's new digital history channel, History Hit TV.

Members of the audience were able to comment on their own experience in the RAF in the 1950s, and in the formation of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, now called Liberation.

'Women's Suffrage and Political Activism' Conference held at Murray Edwards College, Cambridge, February 3rd 2018

There have been a number of events to commemorate the centenary of (some) women getting the vote in 1918. This conference was surely one of the best, as it had an impressive line up of keynote speakers and workshop papers. It was focussed on working women and the vote, and received sponsorship from the Labour History Unit of Anglia Ruskin University, and the Cambridge Labour Party.

The conference was opened by Jill Liddington, writer of a number of books on the history of women's suffrage, including *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, published in 1978. It was about the involvement of women textile workers in the Lancashire cotton mills, like Selina Cooper, in the campaign for the right of women to vote. These women, who were part of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), did not support the tactics of the militant suffragettes, but used peaceful campaigning and lobbying as a means of getting the vote. They were known as suffragists and their colours were not white, green and purple, but white, green and red.

There were a number of parallel workshops, covering the Women's Co-operative Guild and its role in the campaign for women's suffrage, the right of married women to work, and how gender and class issues were brought to the fore by the campaign. There was a paper on Countess Lytton, who disguised herself as a seamstress in Liverpool, ensured that she got arrested by throwing a brick, in order to find out what prison conditions would be like for working women. She found out that a working woman was treated very differently from a 'lady!' This took her to the path of prison reform.

Jane Robinson gave a presentation on the Great Pilgrimage of 1913. Weeks before the death of Emily Wilding Davidson at Epsom, this event did not remain so long in public memory, but it involved thousands of women from all parts of the country, who marched to London for a rally. Some of them were on the road for weeks, holding public meetings en route. At the height of the Suffragette campaign of direct action, they frequently met with hostility as well as support. For instance one of their overnight caravans was set alight in Oxfordshire. Jane has written the story of these women in a new book entitled *Hearts and Minds*, published by Penguin Books.

International Women's Day at the West London Trades Union Club

I was asked to speak at this annual event, organised by Ealing Trades Council, about the women *who did not get the vote in 1918, because they were too young or too poor.*

The 1918 Representation of the People Act trebled the British electorate, the largest increase ever. The number of voters increased from seven to twenty one million. In parts of London and other cities, the increase was more like six fold. Fourteen million were enfranchised for the first time, and of these, roughly six million were working class men over 21. The remaining eight million were women over 30, who were 'registered property occupiers' of homes with an annual rateable value of £5 or more, or their wives. In all only 40% of women got the vote in 1918. It did include some working class women, the wives of miners, transport workers or engineers, but not the many young women who were lodgers, working in munitions factories during World War 1, or those who worked in domestic service, or who were live-in shop assistants. So women's access to the ballot box was via their husband's status. Those under 30 comprised a larger percentage of the population than today, as 35 was considered to be 'middle aged' then.

The fight for women's suffrage went back 50 years to 1867, when John Stuart Mill attempted to get the word 'person' rather than 'man' into the Suffrage Reform Bill. Unfortunately this was spotted and rejected by MPs. Millicent Fawcett led the Suffragist Movement, which became the NUWSS. Women like Selina Cooper and others took this campaign out of Victorian drawing rooms and into the factories. It had the support of the Women's Trades Union League, the Women's Labour League and the Women's Co-operative Guild.

The Pankhursts were an ILP family, but Emmeline set up the Women's Social and Political Union (WPSU) when she and her daughters felt that the ILP was not doing enough to prioritise the women's suffrage issue. There were to be further rifts with sections of the labour movement, when the WPSU signalled that it would accept a 'Ladies Bill' as a step forward, even though very few women would have been enfranchised. There were still millions of working class men who did not have the vote. The militant tactics of the Suffragettes also did not always have the support of the NUWSS, which continued to use peaceful methods to get women the vote. Nevertheless the tactics of the Suffragettes was to target property, not human life, and it was acknowledged that they suffered disproportionate mistreatment in prison, which put their own lives in danger.

For working women, the vote was a step towards an end. For many, dangerous working conditions in factories, overcrowded housing and high maternal and infant mortality rates were their main concerns. Sylvia Pankhurst founded the East London Federation of Suffragettes, which organised soup kitchens as well as campaigning for the vote. The fight for equal pay of course continues.

The evening included a speaker from Sister Supporters , who are campaigning to protect women attending a local clinic in Ealing from intimidation and harassment, Janine Booth, who treated us to more of her political poems, and a singer, Kirsty Newton.

Reports by Barbara Humphries

Acton Education Committee: Women Teachers and Marriage
By John H. Grigg

Councillor Reverend R. G. Davies moved that women teachers intending to be married shall tender resignation to the committee and the resignation should be accepted unless there are special reasons for retention. This was an easing of the former rule where under no circumstances would married teachers beretained. Davies argued that many women were excellent teachers and should not automatically be compelled to relinquish their posts on marriage.

Labour Councillor Fred Carter moved an amendment to entirely discard the obligation to resign upon marriage. To consider each case on merit meant that preferential treatment might ensue. The old rule prevented many women from marrying and should be entirely removed. Carter's amendment was rejected by 11 votes to 10 and the Reverend Davies proposal was carried.

Reverend Davies further moved, and it was agreed, that those retained women teachers be allowed six months leave of absence before the birth of a child and three months after the birth. During the absence the woman to be paid the difference between her salary and the salary of a supply teacher.

Report in the *Acton Gazette and Express*, 25th May 1919.

For earlier bulletins and to purchase Labour Heritage publications please visit our web site at

http://www.labour-heritage.com/

Remembering Frederic Douglass
By Archie Potts

On 28th February 2018 the Lord Mayor of Newcastle upon Tyne, Linda Wright, unveiled a commemoration plaque to Frederic Douglass at 5 Summerhill Grove in the city. The ceremony took place on the 200th anniversary of the birth of Frederic Douglass, who was born a slave in Maryland, USA in 1818. At the age of twenty he escaped from the bonds of slavery and became one of the 19th century's most famous abolitionists.
He campaigned against slavery across the world and this included a tour of North East England in the 1860s, where he spoke at the Music Hall in Newcastle and the Albion Assembly Rooms in North Shields. During his time on Tyneside he stayed with the Richardson family, Henry, his wife Anna and sister Ellen. The Richardsons were Quakers, who lived at 5 Summerhill Grove – which still survives and they raised the money to buy the fugitive his freedom. In his autobiography he wrote 'Newcastle had a heart that could feel for three millions of oppressed slaves in the United States.' Frederic Douglass died in 1895.