



Labour Heritage

Bulletin Summer 2018

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Book Launch for *Trico: a Victory to Remember* by Sally Groves and Vernon Merritt

On 29th July this long awaited book launch was held in the Dominion Centre in Southall, organised by Ealing Trades Union Council. It was attended by over 100 people, including women and men who took part in the strike for equal pay for women at Trico in 1976, and their relatives.



Photo: Oliver New

Eve Turner, chair of ETUC introduced the meeting, emphasizing the importance of trades union heritage for the membership today. Today's activists can be heartened by an account of a strike which was won by the

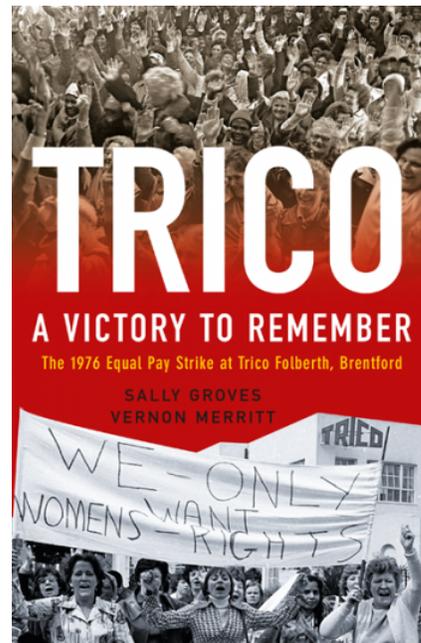
labour movement. It was now five years since Sally Groves, one of the leaders of the strike, had addressed a meeting organised on International Women's Day by ETUC. Sally Groves said that the strike at Trico had been the longest strike for equal pay for women in the history of the British trades union movement, lasting 21 weeks. It had taken 42 years for an account of the strike to be written. She outlined the developments which had led to the vote to strike by 400 women, and 17 men, at a meeting held in Boston Manor Park in May 1976. These men were called 'the diamonds'. Two of them were in the audience. Three weeks later, 150 more men walked out. Sadly some of the strike leaders have now passed away, like Eileen Ward, who was to become union convenor at Trico.

(full account of the strike and the story of the book can be read in Labour Heritage bulletins Autumn 2013 and Spring 2018). The other speakers were the co-author of the book, Vernon Merritt and historian Mary Davis. Vernon was secretary of Hounslow Trades Council in 1976, and a member of TASS (white collar section of the AUEW). He produced a weekly strike bulletin, which had involved collecting newspaper articles. Mary Davis gave an outline of the struggle for equal pay for women, which had been 'hidden from history'. It went back to the 19th century with the 1833 Glasgow Spinners' Equal Pay Strike. Equal pay had been TUC policy since 1888. After women were recruited to work during World War 1, on pay rates, often half that of men's, there was a successful equal pay strike on London Transport (trams and tube) in 1918. During World War 2, one in three engineering

workers was a woman, and the government had provided workplace canteens and nurseries to ease their domestic responsibilities. However after the War, women were expected to go back to the domestic hearth, and many trades unionists supported a 'family wage.' By the 1960s, equal pay was back on the agenda, with the strike of women at Ford's, Dagenham in 1968. In 1970 the Equal Pay Act was passed, with the support of government minister, Barbara Castle. The Act had a five year implementation period, which allowed employers to exploit loopholes in the legislation. Women's jobs could be varied so that they differed from men's jobs, and in many cases, women were doing completely different work. At the time of the strike at Trico, employers were claiming victories at Industrial Tribunals because there were so many loopholes in the law. That was why the AUEW did not go down this route. It was recognised that what was needed was not just equal pay, but equal pay for work of equal value. This was achieved when the 1970 Act was amended in 1983. However the struggle for equal pay in the workplace still goes on.

This book is written from interviews with those involved in the strike. It emphasises the importance of solidarity both from within the community in Brentford and the trades union movement. It shows the importance of having strong trades union support, as in the Southall District of the AUEW, who handled the negotiations, ensuring that no backroom deals were done. It also puts the strike into historical perspective. Trico management attempted to break the strike by employing road haulage firms to cross the picket lines in the middle of the night, with police support. These tactics were to be the norm when it came to the Grunwick's strike which began later in 1976, and some years later, the

miners and the print workers at Wapping were to face more of the same. The 1970s marked the beginning of an assault on trades union rights, from which the movement has not yet recovered.



Trico: a Victory to Remember by Sally Groves and Vernon Merritt is published by Lawrence and Wishart. £25

<https://www.lwbooks.co.uk/book/trico-a-victory-to-remember>

Morgan Phillips' Biography: Book Launch at Westminster

Members of Labour Heritage organised a book launch in Westminster for its publication, the autobiography of Morgan Phillips, former Labour General Secretary. Held over a lunch hour in Portcullis House, it attracted a number of Labour MPs and peers, some of them from former Welsh mining valley constituencies. It was chaired by Wayne David, President of Labour Heritage. Also in attendance was Andy Slaughter, MP for Hammersmith and Fulham, where Morgan Phillips lived when he moved to London. His son, Morgan

Phillips Junior, is a long standing resident of the constituency.

Wayne David is the MP for Caerphilly, close to the part of South Wales, the Rhondda Valley, where Morgan Phillips was born. As a labour historian he had read the autobiography with interest. Morgan Phillips had been General Secretary at the time of Labour's landslide election victory in 1945, when he had organised the campaign. Throughout the 1950s, he had faced a difficult time. In opposition the party had been torn by political divisions. However Morgan Phillips had succeeded in keeping it together. In addition he played an important part in the Second International, and in the reconstruction of socialist parties across Europe.



Wayne David and Nicklaus Thomas-Symonds

The first speaker was Nicklaus Thomas-Symonds, MP for Torfaen since 2015. He has written books on Clement Attlee and Nye Bevan. Giving a few biographical details, he said that Morgan Phillips had been born into a political family. His parents were members of the ILP and his father had been a parliamentary candidate in 1910. Morgan had begun work as an errand boy before going down the mines at the age of 14. He won a scholarship to the Central Labour College, like Nye Bevan, but unlike

Bevan, he had stayed in London when he finished. He became an organiser for the National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC), an election agent and local councillor in Fulham, but he never became an MP. His preference was for party organisation, and in 1937 he was appointed as Labour's Propaganda Officer. During World War 2 he joined the Coalition Government's Ministry of Information, and in 1941 he became secretary of the Labour Party Research Department. He became General Secretary in 1944.

He gained a reputation for being able to get on with those on the left and right of the Party, from Nye Bevan to Herbert Morrison. He was quoted as saying that the Labour Party owed more to non-conformism, than to Marxism, in line with his own political upbringing, in the chapels of South Wales. He always strongly opposed attempts by the Communist Party of Great Britain to affiliate to Labour, as he upheld the politics of democratic socialism. Richard Crossman, MP, praised Morgan Phillips for keeping the left and right of the Party together in the 'civil war' atmosphere of the 1950s, after both Nye Bevan and Harold Wilson had resigned from the Cabinet over cuts in NHS funding. The Left also opposed the Government's policy of building a transatlantic alliance, favouring a non-aligned third way in international affairs. The main contribution made by Morgan Phillips however, was to lead the building of Labour's organisation machine, at a time when the Conservatives were in the lead, winning three general elections in a row. He produced a landmark document entitled *Signpost for the Sixties* which called for the building of a mass membership, including more young members and women. It was visionary, calling for a Festival of Labour. Taking on board the forthcoming 'scientific revolution', he anticipated the election of Harold Wilson as prime minister in 1964.

Sadly he was unable to speak to this report at Labour's 1960 annual conference, as he never fully recovered from the stroke that he had suffered in 1959. Following his father's death, Morgan Phillips junior tried to get a publisher for his father's autobiography, but it was rejected because he did not provide enough inside stories on political figures. But this was not him! Finally Labour Heritage published the book this year, and it is available from our web site. Morgan Phillips junior spoke about his attempts to get the autobiography published, and thanked Labour Heritage.

Copies this book are available from the Labour Heritage website at £14.99
[.http://www.labour-heritage.com](http://www.labour-heritage.com)

Labour in Kent and Sussex By Trevor Hopper

Of all the unexpected results in last year's General Election, probably the greatest shock must have been Labour's triumph in Canterbury. To say that the Home Counties and especially Kent do not have a great history of labour representation is an understatement. But this does not mean that these non-industrial and less urban areas were not sought out as possible areas for the early radicals of pre-World War 1 Britain. As my PhD theses was on the labour movement in the south east in its formative years 1880-1914, I have dug out some developments that may have been as unusual as the Canterbury result in their time.

There had been a burst of activity following the formation of the Labour Party in Parliament in 1906 after the election of 29 members of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) at the General Election of that year. One remarkable result of that election was the victory in nearby Chatham

of a Labour candidate, probably as a result of the dockyard trade union organisation, although this seat was lost at the next election in January 1910.

The first mention I could find of any labour/socialist activity in Canterbury in these years was in September 1907 when the *Labour Leader*, the weekly paper of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) reported that the first open air meetings for Socialism in Canterbury were held last Saturday evening, in an attempt to form a Canterbury ILP. The branch seemed to have been formed but no further activity was reported although a Trades Council was formed by 1913.



Clarion Van

Despite the supposed unity of the various strands of the movement coalescing into the Labour Party in Parliament there was still much campaigning by the various groups and individuals linked to the radical Social Democratic Federation (SDF), the ILP and the Clarion Movement, who supported all sorts of left candidates. All three still had their separate weekly papers. The Clarions were notable travelling propagandists by cycle and horse-drawn van, organising meetings and setting up branches of their Fellowship all over the south-east. The Clarion Van first visited Kent and Sussex in

1907. Indicative of perhaps some of the problems encountered was a report in 1909: 'In Gravesend, Maidstone, and Sittingbourne, Rochester, Tonbridge, Canterbury and Ashford, capitalism has laid its heavy hand and reduced the average worker to a degree of servility and fear which to a northerner is strange indeed.' But also: 'Meetings excellent, even in sleepy Canterbury' 'It is no light thing in these parts to be known as active socialists. It often means victimisation or dismissal.'

'Angry of Tunbridge Wells'

Perhaps one of the most unlikely political developments was also in Kent and gives a new meaning or perhaps an original meaning to 'Angry of Tunbridge Wells'. In 1884, the Science Library in the spa town stood out as the only address in the south-east outside of London as an agent for the SDF paper *Justice*. By 1896 a regular meeting place was established on the Common with notable speakers such as Henry Hyndman and John Burns and later an SDF Hall had been established. Attempts to organise the unemployed took a remarkable turn. It was reported that: 'On Tuesday we organised a procession of the unemployed through the principle streets of the town. About 200 took part in it headed by the Red Flag and banner with appropriate inscriptions. An overflow meeting of about 200 was also held and four delegates were elected to wait on the local board'. The board was the Board of Guardians who were often lobbied to give work to the unemployed. A fortnight later a torchlight procession was led to the Board of Guardians, resulting in the provision of work on the building of a sewerage extension. Electoral representation was pursued with mixed results, and indicative of much sectional fighting with candidates running as

SDF/Trade Union or simply Trade Union. However by 1898 a Fabian, H.L. Dodd was elected to the local council, although the result was not reported in the SDF paper *Justice*. There was even a Tunbridge Wells Socialist Sunday School, which paid a visit to the seaside in Hastings in 1907, opening the Hastings SDF meeting by singing socialist songs and hence attracting a good crowd.

A meeting the same year by the Clarion Van in Epsom, Surrey provoked a different response.

'A violent opposition organised in the Conservative Club was led by bookmakers and publicans, and supported by a number of well dressed cads and the rest of the hooligan element in the town.' A similar fate occurred in Lewes with socialists from Brighton being chased back to the station. 'On arrival we found a crowd of something like 2000 waiting to bar the socialists. The train party was met by the police who refused to take any responsibility for our safety and threatened a summons for obstruction' Although the size of the opposition may have seemed an exaggeration, the local paper reported that 'Councillor Evans was knocked off the box that served as a platform and the crowd was carried some yards down the hill. The socialists' red flag was waved aloft and torn down.'

To judge the strength of these groups is difficult as what can seem like a vibrant and active campaigning party may well have been a small core of dedicated adherents to any of the strands of socialism. Or, merely a very efficient and keen Secretary reporting every meeting as a breakthrough with the wider populace. Clearly, in the south east and particularly in the towns of Sussex and Kent there was a working class with grievances and class identity, and there were

both middle and working class activists. In 1894, Brighton had six councillors of various socialist hues, more than some 'traditional' labour areas such as Bradford and Leeds. It was at that time a railway town with locomotives manufactured there and hence a vast workforce concentrated in two wards that produced these successes. Brighton was also a centre for Christian Socialism particularly in the Congregational churches. There was even a brief appearance of the Labour Church, very much a northern phenomenon, in Gillingham in 1912. Across the region the Fabians and other middle class agitators were prominent. The SDF was a notorious mix of middle and working class socialists. The ILP, with greater working class and trade union identity had largely struggled to gain a hold in London and the south in general. And it must be noted that the ILP was not the Labour Party, which despite being formed in Parliament did not have a national grass roots organisation and hence was not a national party at this stage.

The movement was often split amongst the various factions and at a local level the terms Labour and Socialist covered a multitude of groups and individuals. There were various attempts to remedy this with cries for Socialist Unity exemplified by one George Meek, whose book *Bath-Chair Man* chronicled his tour around Kent and Sussex attempting to liaise with socialists of all kinds to form a united movement in what were often referred to as 'lounger' or 'idler' towns by socialists, due to the number of genteel and retired or non-working upper classes resident. It has taken a long time but finally the Garden of England and the Sussex coast have shown how Labour can reach out of its heartlands.

Labour Heritage AGM 2018

This year's AGM was held on 16th June at St Pancras Church Hall.

In the business section, the following committee members were elected:

Chair Stan Newens, *Secretary* Linda Shampian, *Treasurer* John Grigg, *Bulletin Editor* Barbara Humphries.

Committee members Andy Love, Bill Bolland, Kit Snape, Mel Jones, Caroline Needham, Derek Wheatley, Brian Odell and *Honorary Members*: Stephen Bird and Khatchatur Pilikian.

We then had three speakers covering three centenaries to commemorate in 2018:

1918 Representation of the People Act and Women's Suffrage

Barbara Humphries talked about the impact of this Act which gave for the first time the vote to *some* women. The Act enfranchised *all* men over 21, and those women over 30 years old who were 'registered property occupiers' of homes with annual rateable value over £5 (the sole occupier or by their husband's status). The total electorate increased from 7 to 21 million – and the new voters comprised 6 million working class men, and 8 million women. However, 60% of women were still left *without* the vote, especially the younger single women, and those in live-in jobs such as domestic service.

The 1918 Act followed 50 years of women's suffrage campaigning, starting from 1867 when John Stuart Mill tried (and failed) to get the word 'person' rather than 'man' into the Suffrage Reform Bill. The first campaigners, Suffragists, were women from all walks of life – countesses to factory workers, beginning with Millicent Fawcett, and later Selina Cooper, Eva Gore Booth,

Ann Kenny and Ada Nield who took the struggle for the vote into the cotton mills of Lancashire and the factories. This is well narrated in Jill Liddington's book *One Hand Tied Behind Us*. Suffragist groups formed the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and campaigned peacefully, gaining support from the Women's Trade Union League, the Women's Labour League and the Women's Co-operative Guild.

Alongside the peaceful campaigning of the Suffragists, later emerged the more militant Women's Social and Political Union, established by the Pankhurst family in 1903. The Pankhursts were in the ILP and felt that the ILP was not giving women's votes enough priority, and felt the lack of support from male trade unionists. Their perspective was class based as the WSPU would have accepted a 'Ladies Bill' which could have enfranchised less than one million women and benefitted the Liberals and Tories. Emmeline Pankhurst resigned from the ILP in 1907. The term 'Suffragette' was given by the *Daily Mail*. Labour politicians, Keir Hardie and George Lansbury gave uncritical support to the Suffragettes.

Seeing the parliamentary route to women's suffrage fail to get government support, increasingly the Suffragettes took to direct action such as heckling Liberal politicians, setting fire to post boxes and smashing windows. Their planned attacks were on property not people, and they took considerable risks to themselves. They were imprisoned and force-fed. Working class women faced the toughest conditions in prison. Countess Lytton disguised her identity and got sent to prison as a seamstress to prove the point.

As described, the 1918 Act gave *some* women the vote – eventually, the 1928

Equal Franchise Act gave all women over 21 the vote.

What did the vote mean? Not enough, even in 1928, when women then formed the majority of the electorate in most constituencies. For working class women, issues of poor housing, infant and maternal mortality, public health, Poor Law reform and extension of education were the main issues. There were few women MPs in the interwar years. These included three Labour women MPs, including Margaret Bondfield, a former shop assistant, who became a Cabinet Minister. The first three women MPs were Constance Markovicz (A Sinn Fein candidate who didn't take up her seat), Nestor Astor (a Conservative), and Labour's Ellen Wilkinson.

In 1918, the Labour Party constitution established Women's Sections (LPWS), and an individual membership giving women full membership rights. This was to win the support of working class women who marched to the polls with their children. In 1924, the Labour Government introduced a bill to enfranchise all women over 21. This was lost when the Government fell, but was rescued by Tory Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin who, in defiance of his own party, brought it back to the Commons in 1927. It was passed in time for the 1929 General Election, making women the majority of the electorate with 2 million more votes than men. Was this why Labour then became the largest party in the House of Commons for the first time?

From 1918 onwards, women split on class issues in how they voted – the struggle for the right to work and equal pay continues to this day.

2018 is the Bicentenary of the Birth of Karl Marx

Stan Newens' talk on Marx is reproduced in this Bulletin as a full article.

Centenary of the Labour Party 1918 Constitution, Local Labour Parties and 'Clause 4'

John Grigg's talk was a poignant reminder of the rise and fall of Clause 4.

He began by setting the wider scene for these Labour landmarks – in 1918 there was a fear that there would be a revolution in Britain. There were revolutions in Russia, Germany and elsewhere in Europe. Britain, immensely rich before the World War 1 now had a huge debt. And the USA had emerged as the world's richest nation.

Millions of soldiers were returning from the war to camps in Britain where discontent was expressed in the form of protest and dissent in the ranks. Soldiers at the Pirbright and Shoreham camps refused duty and there was a major revolt in Folkestone when 10,000 soldiers paraded through the streets. The biggest revolts were by soldiers still in France and in one place the troops elected a Soldiers' Council, called a general strike and virtually took over the camp. The men were objecting to the continued army discipline after the war – parades, spit and polish, punishments for petty offences but most of all they wanted demobilization and, instead of that, many were being kept in the army or even sent to France once the war had finished, because the peace terms had not been agreed.

The government had good reason for avoiding mass demobilization because many would be out of work. Unemployment was on the increase because the munition

factories were closing down and it was taking time to return to a peace time economy. Also many jobs previously done solely by men were being done by women and employers would be reluctant to replace that cheaper workforce with men at higher wages - in the army they were at least getting weekly pay.

Although some attempts were made to put down insurrection by threats and force it was mainly contained by concessions - less parades and less discipline. What the men wanted most was to get home. At first coal miners, some ship building workers and then what were known as 'slip men' were released. Slip men were those who had confirmation of employment, usually with former employers before the war.

Added to the fear of soldiers mounting a revolution, there were numerous strikes. Even the police went on strike and there was a big railway strike. But was there a real prospect of revolution? Probably not. Most strikes were settled by concessions from employers. Demobilisation was speeded up and once released the soldiers and sailors were paid money. On demobilisation each man or woman was paid a furlough on full pay for two to three months and a bounty of between £20 and £50 depending upon their length of service. Furthermore if still unemployed after the furlough expired they could receive what was called an 'out of work donation' from the government for up to a year. 24 shillings for men, 20 shillings for women. There was extra for children. This 'out of work donation' also applied for ex-munition workers out of work after factories closed down.

Ex-servicemen's organizations sprang up which excluded officers. They lobbied for higher pensions and training for wounded soldiers and higher war widows' pensions.

These organisations eventually admitted officers and amalgamated to form the British Legion.

In March 1919 the Acton branch of the Discharged and Demobilized Soldiers and Sailors Federation decided to hold a whist drive to raise funds for the Acton War Memorial. Hardly evidence of impending revolution.

Final evidence of lack of enthusiasm for a revolution was that in the 1918 General Election, Lloyd George's Coalition, dominated by the Conservatives, polled 54% of the vote. This was despite a three-fold increase in the electorate following the 1918 Representation of the People Act, described earlier.

How did the constitutional changes in the Labour Party follow these wider changes?

The Labour Representation Committee had been founded in 1900 as a federation of trade unions, the ILP and some Socialist Societies. When the LRC won 29 seats at the 1906 election the new MPs adopted the name of 'Labour Party' although the name had come into more general use before that. However you couldn't join the Labour Party. You had to be a trade union member or a member of the ILP or an affiliated Socialist Society. Those organisations met together annually at national level to vote on national matters and at local level to choose candidates.

It is sometimes supposed that hardly any women were members through these organisations. That was not really true. The Women's Labour League affiliated in 1906 and had 5,000 members and 100 branches by 1913. And of course women joined the ILP and the Fabians. Also many trade unions had women members. The Northern Counties Weavers Amalgamation had

200,000 members and two thirds were women. The Amalgamated Association of Card and Blowing Room Operatives and Ringspinners had 56,000 members of which nine tenths were women.

Arthur Henderson, Secretary of the LRC (now called the 'Labour Party'), set about reorganizing the Party by officially setting up District Labour parties (now called Constituency Labour parties) which *individuals* could join. There were already a few local parties who had informally set themselves up and admitted individuals.

At national level, in this reorganisation the ten member National Executive Committee (NEC) set up in 1900 was replaced by one with twenty three seats. The old NEC had seven from the trade unions, two from the ILP and one from the Fabian Society. The new one had fourteen jointly from the trade unions and the Socialist Societies, five from the new local CLPs and four women members. The whole annual conference was to elect all three sections so the trade unions that had the big majority of the votes, could appoint the entire membership of the NEC. One objective was to encourage more middle class people, who were not trade unionists and did not to belong to a Socialist Society, to join the Labour Party and also, now that many women had the vote, to attract more women members.

Arthur Henderson was chairman, as well as national secretary of the party, and virtual leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP). He was greatly loved and known as 'Uncle Arthur'. He was in the War Cabinet until 1917, but was dismissed from it after he had been sent to Russia with instructions to find ways of keeping Russia in the war after the Revolution, but came back urging peace talks instead. He then stepped down from the PLP chairmanship and

concentrated on reforming the Labour Party organisation. What he successfully put to the National Conference was basically what we have today although there has over the years been some tidying up.

The other big change was the adoption of Clause 4 (originally Clause 3). Before then the party was guided by a vague compromise resolution agreed in 1900 that simply stated that the Labour Group in parliament should promote legislation which was in the direct interest of labour. The new clause drafted by Henderson and Sidney Webb set the party on a socialist course:

'To secure for the workers by hand and by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry and service.'
(The words 'distribution and exchange' were added in the late 1920s)

This got through the annual conference. The time was right for change and the old trade unions, often fearful of socialism, relented in the spirit of the times.

So did Clause 4 in practical terms turn the party into a socialist party?

John tested this by looking at the general election manifestos to see how much the words 'common ownership of the means of production distribution and exchange' are reflected in the manifesto proposals. Oddly, the 1900 manifesto included nationalization of land and the railways and 'measures to enable the people ultimately to obtain the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange'.

Perhaps somebody, maybe Keir Hardie, got away with that one because there is no mention of nationalization in the 1906 and the two 1910 manifestos.

Then came the 1918 'Clause 4', and the 1918 manifesto included nationalisation of land, mines, railway, shipping, armaments and electric power.

By the 1923 General Election, nationalisation was missing in the manifesto. Ramsay MacDonald was leader and believed that anything suggesting socialism would put off a large section of the electorate. But the 1924 manifesto included public ownership of the mines and power stations and the manifesto said that 'rail and canal nationalization is being considered.' In 1929 only coal nationalisation appears. In 1931 MacDonald was heading a coalition government with the Conservatives and in the General Election of that year, in which Labour was wiped out, the party's manifesto proposed nationalisation of coal, power, transport, iron and steel, and the banking system. Clause 4 was back with a vengeance. All that was in the 1935 manifesto with the addition of the cotton industry.

Then came 1945 when the Labour Government under Attlee took the mines, electricity, gas, water, the railways, canals, road transport, iron and steel and the Bank of England into public ownership. Nationalisation had become an ideological imperative for the Labour Party and, at the 1950 general election, sugar refining, cement and sections of the chemical industry were on the agenda. Labour just won, rather shakily, in 1950 and went out of office in 1951. There was no mention of nationalisation in the 1951 manifesto.

In 1955, renationalisation of iron and steel was in the manifesto (it had been

denationalised by the Tory Government), but about this time questions were being asked in the party about the validity of Clause 4 in what was no longer a capitalist dominated economy. This revisionist approach favoured by Hugh Gaitskell and Tony Crossland failed to change Clause 4, but the days of mass nationalisation were over. In 1959 the manifesto said there are 'no further plans for nationalisation' - apart from renationalisation of steel. In 1964, 1966 and 1970 there was barely a mention of nationalisation.

1974 brought a sudden revival for nationalisation. There were two general elections that year and the manifestos included public ownership of airframes and engines manufacture, sections of the pharmaceuticals, road haulage, machine tools, and development land. Also insurance and building societies were under consideration. None of this was enacted by Harold Wilson's minority Government. All went quiet on the public ownership from apart from a brief revival in 1987 and after that nationalisation was absent in Labour manifestos and Clause 4 was finally laid to rest by Tony Blair in 1995. The goal of public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange died peacefully at the age of 77.



Celebrating the Bicentenary of Karl Marx's Birth

Talk given by Stan Newens at Labour Heritage AGM 16 June 2018

Early Years

Karl Marx was born just over 200 years ago on the 5th May 1818 at Trier in the Rhineland. He was the son of Heinrich Marx, a Jew, who had converted to Protestant Christianity to preserve his right to work for the Prussian state. Heinrich's father had been a rabbi and a descendant of rabbis. Heinrich's wife, Henrietta, was also the descendant of Dutch rabbis also, and could trace this back to the 16th century.

Marx had a middle class upbringing – at school, he learnt Latin, Greek, French, maths and history and late he studied at Bonn University and Berlin University, where he reportedly drank heavily, duelled and overspent his allowance.

The dominating figure at Berlin University was the philosopher, Hegel, who had died in 1831. Hegel analysed the development of thought and postulated the concept of positive and negative ideas – thesis and anti-thesis – which merged to form a new idea ie a synthesis, which became the new thesis. This was his system of dialectics. Marx became a Hegelian, but with reservations. He clearly read very widely and was influenced by earlier German philosophers, Kant and Fichte, and wrote a thesis on the ancient philosopher, Epicurus, which was accepted by the University of Jena. He first hoped to become a university professor but then began to write critical articles on the lack of freedom in Germany. Also, he fell in love with Jenny von Westphalen and wrote numerous poems. He went to Cologne and began to write for the *Rheinische Zeitung*, a political paper, and became its

editor, criticising the system. In March 1843, he resigned as editor and went to Paris, where he agreed to edit a new review for a salary. In the period 1843-44, he became a socialist. He married Jenny von Westphalen in June 1843.

Marx had briefly met Frederick Engels earlier in the Rhineland, but it was in Paris that he began his commitment as Engels' life-long friend and supporter. Engels' great grandfather had founded a lace factory. Engels' father diversified into cotton spinning, based in Barmen and Manchester, and Engels was sent to manage the Manchester factory. Engels, like Marx, became a Young Hegelian, but wrote for Robert Owen's *New Model World*, got to know the Chartists, especially Julian Harvey. He wrote a book *Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*. Marx wrote *The Holy Family* with some assistance from Engels, attacking the stance of Bruno Bauer, a Young Hegelian and his following. Marx was known as a rebel. Shortly after, he was expelled from Paris and went to Brussels where he wrote *Theses on Feuerbach* and *The German Ideology*, setting out his views on historical materialism.

The Communist Manifesto

Marx also founded a branch of the League of the Just, which changed its name to the Communist League in 1847. Shortly after this, in 1848, Marx was arrested and then expelled from Belgium and went to Paris again. In that same year, 1848, a succession of revolutions broke out against reactionary cantons in Switzerland and the Prussian King in Berlin, and overthrowing King Ferdinand of Naples, King Louis Philippe in France and the reactionary Metternich in Vienna.

At this juncture, Marx and Engels produced one of their outstanding works: *The Communist Manifesto*, published in February 1848 for the Communist League. Marx was the principal author. It was translated and published in numerous countries. In Britain, it was published in G.J. Harney's *Red Republican* in 1850. It read 'A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism. All the powers of old Europe have entered into a Holy Alliance to exorcise this spectre: Pope and Tsar, Metternich and Guizot, French radicals and German police spies.....The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles: freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word – oppressor and oppressed..... Working Men of all countries, unite!' *The Communist Manifesto* is one of history's outstanding historical documents, like the *Declaration of American Independence*, which helped to shape world history.

Marx's Life in England

After the workers were crushed in Paris, Marx went to Cologne, but his arrest was ordered, after he signed a revolutionary statement and he had to flee. Marx again returned to Paris, but was then forced to leave for England, where he unexpectedly spent the majority of the remainder of his life.

The German leaders of the Communist League were put on trial, and the Communist League ceased to exist. Marx was therefore without a party and remained unattached in the 1850s but kept in touch with various political refugees in London, between whom there were constant factional fights.

Marx obtained a ticket in the British Museum Library in June 1850 and began the work which culminated in *The Grundrisse* in 1858, and later in *Capital*, the last two volumes of which were completed for publication by Engels after Marx's death. During this period, Marx was chronically short of money and lived at various addresses in confusion and squalor. His wife, Jenny, was frequently pregnant and produced a number of children, all of whom died young except his three daughters – Laura, Eleanor and Jenny.

Despite being short of money, Marx and his wife kept a housekeeper, Helen Lenchen Demuth, and it appears that Marx fathered a child by her – Frederick Demuth, born in 1851 at Marx's then home, 28 Dean Street (Soho). Freddy was sent to foster-parents and had no contact with the Marx household until after Marx's death, when he resumed contact with his mother – hardly a very socialist story, which reflected on some of Marx's statements. Engels apparently accepted paternity to Freddy, but revealed the truth to Marx's daughter Eleanor, on his death bed.

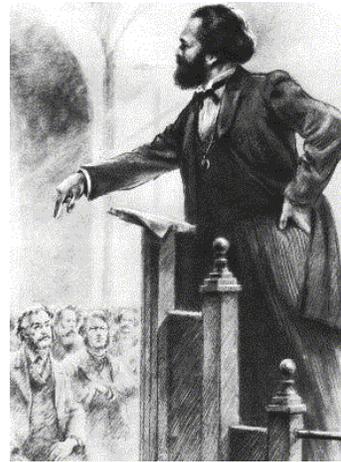
Marx adopted the stance of a Victorian father, when he asked Paul Lafargue, who later married his daughter, Laura, about his background and prospects. Paul and Laura's children all died in infancy, and Eleanor never married, but committed suicide after being misled by Edward Aveling. Marx's daughter Jenny, married Charles Longuet, and had six children, who then produced seven grandchildren.

After settling in London, Marx wrote a series of brilliant political articles on European and world events including *Class Struggles in France*, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* and *The Cologne Communist Trials*. He wrote

articles for the *New York Herald Tribune* and *Das Volk*.

He also began his great study of economics which led to the publication of *Theories of Surplus Value*, *Grundrisse* and *Capital*.

First International



Having remained politically unattached during the 1850s after the demise of the Communist league in 1852, Marx became involved with the First International founded in 1864. This arose from a meeting convened in St Martin's Hall by George Odger, President of the London Trades Council on the 26th September 1864. Professor Beesley, a left wing academic, took the chair and said the meeting arose out of a solidarity meeting on Poland the previous year. He called for a fraternity of peoples to co-operate for the good of mankind. British, French, German and Italian workers spoke and the meeting agreed to appoint a committee which included Karl Marx.

In a subsequent Committee meeting, Marx effectively drafted the Committee's principles, which were published as an Address ending in the same words as the *Communist Manifesto* 'Workers of all countries unite.' Copies sold for one penny.

The International avoided any call for revolution, but was very class conscious, in opposition to the ideas of the Italian Mazzini, who was more of a nationalist. Marx declined a nomination as President on the grounds that a manual worker was more appropriate and George Odger was chosen. Marx was theoretically responsible for the German movement, but fundamentally disagreed with the German leader, Ferdinand Lassalle, who was killed in a duel shortly before the foundation of the International. Lassalle had advocated co-operating with the Prussian leader Otto von Bismarck. Marx was however in touch with the German socialist, Wilhelm Liebknecht and wrote for his newspaper, *The Social Democrat*.

Marx devoted immense energy to the International, which held international congresses but there were tough factional fights between different groups like followers of the French socialist, Proudhon and later the pro-anarchists like Bakunin. He missed some international congresses as he was working on *Capital*. The Basle Congress of 1869 was the zenith. Thereafter, it lost momentum.

The Paris Commune

The 1870 Congress was to have been held in Paris but in July, the France-Prussian War broke out. Marx drafted an address declaring the War to be purely dynastic, but he regarded it as defensive for Germany. He called on the German workers not to allow it to become other than defensive. Even John Stuart Mill congratulated the General Council on its address.

Marx drafted a second address denouncing the Prussians for what had become an aggressive war and forecast a war between Germany and Russia, which would lead to a

Russian Revolution. After the Prussian victory, Marx was against a revolutionary uprising in France for fear it would be crushed. Nonetheless, the uprising took place and established the Commune and despite his pessimism, Marx drafted an address entitled *The Civil War in France* defending the Commune, for which he became well-known. His three daughters were involved in support of the Commune. However, the influence of the International was declining. British trade unions were tending to an alliance with the Liberals. Bakunin was winning support in Switzerland. Eventually, at the Hague Conference in September 1872, it was agreed to transfer the seat of the General Council to New York. The International was finally dissolved in 1876. Marx's life then became less active and he worked on his writings. *Capital* was translated into French and Russian.

Birth of European Socialism

In Germany, two proletarian parties had come into existence, the Eisenach party, and the followers of Lassalle, who agreed to amalgamate and, at Gotha, formulated a united programme. Marx wrote *A Critique of the Gotha Programme*. Marx became more interested in Russia, and believed a revolution was possible there. In France, an amnesty for Communards was issued in 1880 and socialists began to organise anew. The leader of the revolutionary wing, Jules Guesde, came to London to consult Marx. Marx and Engels kept in touch with German socialists. In England, even Queen Victoria's eldest daughter, married to the German Crown Prince, asked a Liberal MP (Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff) to meet Marx and convey what he stood for to her. Marx was in contact with Henry Hyndman, founder of the Social Democratic Federation, but fell out with him when he

explained Marx's ideas in his book *England for All* without mentioning Marx by name. Marx's wife, Jenny died in December 1881. His daughter Jenny died on 11th January 1883. Marx died later the same year and was buried in Highgate Cemetery on 17th March 1883. Marx was undoubtedly a man of genius, but he was a human being with undoubted human faults and, of course the world has changed immensely since his death. His thought may be categorised as follows:

Philosophical Materialism

Marx believed that the world was real, but constantly changing. He did not believe in a divine power, which had created the world or which intervened in any way. He studied philosophy and was deeply influenced by Hegel whose view was that an idea developed as a thesis, it generated an opposite – an anti-thesis, and these merged to form a synthesis which became a new thesis. Marx turned this idea on its head and interpreted it in terms of countervailing material forces.

Marx read Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* and greatly appreciated his work, which he considered provided the natural history basis for his ideas and got rid of religious origins for living things.

Historical Materialism

Marx argued that the mode of production determined the character of society – social, political and spiritual life. Thus the Stone Ages and the subsequent Bronze and Iron Ages determined the social forms of those eras. Similarly, the Industrial Revolution determined the change from feudal society into modern capitalism. Marx did not consider that great men engineered social change, but that changes

in the mode of production produced the individual who responded.

The material forces of production, when they change, conflict with the existing relations of production and property relations and the entire superstructure is transformed.

Marx designated the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal and the capitalist societies. Marx's historical materialism transformed the study of history.

Marx's Economic Doctrines

Marx said each commodity produced contains a quantity of socially necessary labour time which in essence determined its value, which is expressed in monetary terms. Money functions are an equivalent of a commodity value, a means of circulation, a means of payment and a store of value. A worker produces commodities of a certain value, but is only paid the cost of his own and his family's maintenance. The employer (the capitalist) sells the commodity at its value but retains part of the value for himself, which is *surplus value*. Surplus value is accumulated by the capitalist as capital. The capitalist invests capital in labour-saving machinery, which is used to increase surplus value.

The fact that less labour is required may lead to workers being laid off and becoming a reserve army of labour, diminishing the market for the capitalist's output. Marx argued that this would lead to overproduction of what could be sold and lead to periodic capitalist crises. Marx also argued that the acquisition of labour-saving machinery would lead to a decline in profit.

Of course capitalism has developed since Marx's death and speculation plays an increasing part. The 2008 crisis was partly caused by speculation and collateral debt

obligations (CDOs) were invested in, although it turned out that they were not worth their nominal value. However, Marx's analysis of capitalism is basically still valid, and Gordon Brown's claim to the City that upsets were a thing of the past, proved to be wrong.

Marx was also a far-seeing judge of political developments. He studied history from the ancient world to the world of his own day and was able to make some astute forecasts, although not always correct.

Marx and Engels formulated the ideas of modern socialism. They studied the ideas of what they termed Utopian Socialists, like Henri de Saint-Simon and Robert Owen, and argued in favour of common ownership. Marx rejected the ideas of the French socialist, Pierre Joseph Proudhon, in a book *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847), and argued that Proudhon did not understand the nature of capitalist society. Marx and Engels believed in the overthrow of the state and the acquisition of control by the working class.

When Marx was buried, Frederick Engels said: 'Just as Darwin discovered the law of the evolution of organic nature, so Marx discovered the evolutionary law of human history.' Wilhelm Liebknecht, the German socialist leader said: 'He has raised social democracy from a seat, from a school, to a party which in the end will win the victory.'

There is one last comment, I must make: Marx was *not* responsible for Stalinism. The Labour Party issued a copy of the *Communist Manifesto* with a preface by Harold Laski. Marx should be regarded as one of the great pioneers of socialism – the movement to create a true caring sharing society throughout the world.

The Labour Church: The Movement and its Message by Neil Johnson, (Routledge, 2018)

Reviewed by Linda Shampan

Harold Wilson is remembered for saying 'The Labour Party is a moral crusade or it is nothing', echoing Morgan Phillips' assertion, when General Secretary, that 'The Labour Party owes more to Methodism than to Marxism'. I mistakenly began Johnson's book expecting it would be a general history of this duality in the journey of the party – however, the first half is a detailed account of a small forgotten by-way off the main highway, one which I found fascinating.

The 'Labour Church' was an *actual* bricks-and-mortar church, founded in 1891 in Manchester by John Trevor, who sought to develop a 'radical post-Christian political theology'. From 1892 the Church published its own monthly paper *Labour Prophet*, and congregations appeared across the North West. With the General Election of 1892 approaching, the Labour Church declared support for independent Labour candidates, and when the ILP was established in January 1893, the inaugural conference took place in the Bradford Labour Institute, a building run by the local Labour Church. The Labour Church service which followed, attracted thousands and was attended by Keir Hardie and George Bernard Shaw.

There was a rapid growth – reaching a peak of 54 congregations across England in 1895 (mainly in the North), and churches in the United States, Australia, New Zealand and later in Canada. But from the mid-1930s, there was a rapid decline and the last surviving congregation in Britain in Hyde, Manchester closed in the late 1950s.

Theological Socialism

Johnson structures his book around the central question about the importance of 'Theological Socialism' from different vantage points' including that of Moritz Kaufmann 'who viewed the Labour Church through the lens of utopianism'. He challenges earlier histories of the Church which had viewed it as all but finished by 1914, and charts its revival in the years following the First World War. He views the Labour Church 'as a signpost to the continuous theological imperative within the British and international labour movement that labour history can be read as religious history.' He describes late 19th century British society as 'infused with traditional religiosity.' Christianity gave a cultural setting to all aspects of life and Jesus had a role as a 'great moral teacher.'

John Trevor

John Trevor's life is described within this frame. Johnson's starting point is Trevor's own autobiography *My Quest for God*. Born in Liverpool in 1855, the son of a linen draper, he said: 'my father, after my birth, contracted syphilis in a public closet. Unwittingly he conveyed it to my mother...he died when I was four, and my mother died when I was nine, for many years an inmate of a lunatic asylum... suffering was to me therefore never a mystery, much less a horrible curse. It had its place in the divine economy, as a discipline for this life and a preparation for the life to come.' In early childhood Trevor and his older sister were moved around various family members. His maternal grandparents had a key influence on his development: they were 'Johnsonian Baptists' (founded by John Johnson), a sect with a strict Calvinistic theology, described by Eric Hobsbawm as 'one of those small

super-pious sects of working class puritans which were always splitting away to form more godly communities.'

Trevor was boarded at a harsh Dame School in Wisbech, where he experienced fear of both the proprietor and the cruelty of the older boys, growing into 'a nervous lonely and unsociable child'. But he attributes his survival to both to his maternal relatives who helped him find 'the sanity of life - an abiding sense of humour and the charm and grace of things', and to an elderly teacher at his second boarding school who gave him encouragement and helped him pass the Cambridge Board school examinations at fourteen.

He was articled to an architect in Norwich for five years, a period when he 'worked, studied and brooded alone' and was in poor physical and psychological health. He was influenced by the leaders of the Higher Life Movement who proclaimed that 'justification came through faith as the free gift of God'. He read John Ruskin's lectures. Returning to Liverpool in 1876, he had a breakdown. During his recovery he decided to sail to Australia and he later said that working alongside the sailors 'taught me the relativity of things'. In Sydney he became involved with the Free Thought Progressive Society, then continued to San Francisco and Chicago. He contrasted the two countries of his travels, seeing the difference between a colony dependent on those wielding power from far away, to the independent character of America's 'smart, energetic and with precision directness.' He read Ralph Waldo Emerson, and began to think of 'God's divine purpose [being] in tune with the growing sense of unity and fellowship revealed by the unfolding of human history.'

Returning to Britain in 1879, he sought a ministry in the Unitarian Church, and began a round of preaching. He married his cousin, Eliza and to provide for his wife and son, he set up an architect's practice – which failed within a few years. He then did a formal training with the Unitarians, and in 1890 became minister at the Unitarian chapel in Upper Brook Street Manchester, a city which was a centre for the development of both Liberalism and the labour movement. Soon Trevor was restless again, seeking new inspiration from the local Socialist League – in particular his friend William Bailie, whom he described as ‘Anarchist, Communist, Revolutionist, Atheist and of course very poor’. He was also interested in the work of the Salvation Army.

Johnson describes how the shared concern of the labour movement and the Salvation Army for the social conditions of the urban poor met in the life and work of Frank Smith, the Salvationist Socialist who founded the Labour Army in 1891. Its charter called for adult suffrage, labour representation in Parliament, payment of MPs, land nationalisation, free education, nationalisation of key industries and utilities, and state control of working rights and conditions.

But rather than throw his efforts behind Smith's Labour Army, Trevor began to form the idea of a Labour Church. He believed he had discovered what his lifelong quest had been about - the realisation of the unfolding God's will for the world, the belief that God was working *in* and *through* the labour movement. It was a literal experience of socialism as religion, ‘living in partnership with God towards the better world of God's earthly kingdom’.

[At this point, I found myself picturing Moses coming down the mountain carrying

Das Kapital – but there is no record of Trevor having this particular image].

He initially thought his new organisation would be named the ‘Workingman's Church’ but was dissuaded from this by William Bailie who felt this could be accused of ‘promoting class segregation’ – he then chose the name ‘Labour Church’.

Its first service was held at the Chorlton Town Hall on 4 October 1891. ‘Rousing songs were sung including the socialist anthem *England, Arise*, and Trevor preached about the ‘need to bring the religious dimension into the struggle for the liberation of the workers’. He attacked the traditional churches for not supporting the cause. The movement rapidly spread and in 1893 the Labour Church Union was formed to draw together Labour churches across the country.

Trevor saw the Labour Church ‘as an organised expression of the individual relationship to God of the men and women in the labour movement and also of the collective relationship of the whole movement to God working within it.’ He saw the labour movement as a religious force, not only a political one. From 1892 to 1895, Trevor was an accepted figure in the British labour movement, consulting with Keir Hardie and Robert Blatchford. But his temperament and fragile health impacted on his leadership. Sadly also, his wife Eliza and their son both died in 1894. In 1901, a statement from Trevor appeared in the *Labour Church Record* announcing his withdrawal from the movement he had founded. He lived on till 1930, a varied peripatetic life which included a second marriage, writing novellas, chicken-farming, travel to America, increasingly in poverty. He remained true to the beliefs that had inspired his vision for the Labour Church.

An obituary in the newspaper of the Unitarian Church said ‘Unstable he was not, but he was always restless and unsatisfied. Many people will renew their feeling of gratitude for this man whose executive ability was never equal to ideas he cherished.’

Johnson’s book is both a tribute to Trevor, an interesting account of his life and work and an analysis of the continuing interweaving strands of faith and political struggle. Since the forties, the British labour movement has become more pluralistic and multi-cultural, but these strands continue. Dennis Skinner wrote in his memoirs of the importance of Methodism to the shaping of his political perspective and describes the ‘Good Samaritan’ parable as a ‘socialist story’. Sadiq Khan has written how his Muslim faith brought him into Labour politics and argues for ‘the recognition of faith identity in the formation of Labour Party vision and policies.’ Johnson briefly cites the history of Jewish Socialism as ‘very diverse, incorporating involvement throughout the breadth of the politics of the Left over several centuries’ and notes the existence of the Jewish Labour Movement, but has no quotations from individuals. As recent events reflect, this is a somewhat conflicted area (so perhaps he wisely did not give much detail). But as a Jewish Socialist, I have certainly met many Jewish Labour activists who draw on our faith background, and Alf Dubs in particular has been tireless and outspoken on the need for more humane treatment of refugees, drawing on his own experience of coming to the UK as a Jewish refugee in 1939.

John Grigg, our Labour Heritage Treasurer, once recounted to me a dream in which he was called on to make a rousing speech – “the Labour Party,” he had declaimed “is like an old shoe which has lost its sole”.

When he woke up, he wondered if this reflected the feeling that ‘the Labour Party is losing its soul.’

This is a book I would recommend ordering from your library or buying as a Kindle, as the hard-back edition costs £115.

Review of *Red Ellen: the Life of Ellen Wilkinson, Socialist, Feminist, Internationalist* by Laura Beers (Cambridge, Mass, 2016)

Reviewed by Barbara Humphries

Ellen Wilkinson MP is best known for leading the Jarrow Hunger March of 1936. Elected in 1935 MP for Jarrow, she marched alongside several unemployed workers from her town, who had lost their jobs when the shipyard closed. This had led to a local unemployment rate of 80%. The Jarrow march was one of the iconic moments of the 1930s, and a reminder of why ‘never again’ should a town be allowed to die in this way.

The story of the rest of Ellen Wilkinson’s political life we know little about, and this is related in detail by Laura Beers. She was born to working class parents in Manchester, but obtained a scholarship to Manchester University. She lived for politics. At an early age she joined the Communist Party, and took part in its founding conference, having visited Russia to see the revolution for herself. She had been involved in the women’s suffrage movement in Manchester, as a suffragist, rather than a suffragette. She became a full time trades union organiser for the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers (NUDAW), a union which recruited women workers.

It was with the support of her union that Ellen was first elected to parliament in

October 1924, for the Middlesbrough East constituency. Now as a Labour MP she had to take the decision to break with the Communist Party, as dual membership for MPs was no longer permitted. She regarded herself as a left winger however. She championed women's issues such as the campaign to get all women over 21 enfranchised. She also took up the cause of widows and orphans and equal pay and pension rights for working women. She tried, with less success to change Labour Party policy on family allowances and birth control, both issues which were controversial with some men in the party, but popular with women. Being in Parliament was a lonely place for women in the 1920s. Ellen was one of a handful. She made friends with the Tory MP, Lady Astor. On the Labour side she was joined by Margaret Bondfield, former shop-worker, who became a Cabinet Minister in the 1929-1931 Labour Government.

Ellen Wilkinson was unconventional in her personal and political life. She travelled widely, took up many causes, such as support for Indian home rule and aid for the Spanish Republic in the 1930s. Her devotion to the anti-fascist cause led her to work with leading Communists again and to support the call for a united front against fascism in Europe. She finally entered government during World War 2, working with Herbert Morrison at the Home Office. Here she was known as Minister for Air Raid Shelters. In 1945 she was the only female member of Attlee's government, and became Minister for Education. She was therefore responsible for the implementation of the 1944 Education Act, by which all children in the UK would receive free secondary education for the first time. To some she was a disappointment in this role, as she did not seize the moment to introduce comprehensive education, and to end the

private and public schools system. However the author considers that she was by now in her 50s and grappling with ill health. Asthma had plagued her throughout her life forcing her to take frequent rests. In the cold winter of 1947 she was struck down again and died in her prime, much to the sorrow of her friends and comrades.

This is a very good read, an account of Ellen as a person and her political life. We are given an insight into the political controversies in the labour movement in the interwar years, the challenges that Ellen faced as a woman MP and how her political principles guided her. We are told by the author that the Jarrow March was shunned as a 'publicity stunt' by some in the leadership of the TUC and Labour Party at the time. It was ironic that in the 1950 General Election the party adopted the image of Jarrow as a reminder to voters of 'never again.'



Ellen Wilkinson on the Jarrow March