A 'Mass' Party Frustrated?
The Development of the Labour Party in Manchester, 1918-31

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List of Abbreviations

ASE	Amalgamated Society of Engineers (later AEU)
ASW	Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers
Co-op	Co-operative Society/Party
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
DLP	Divisional Labour Party
GTC	Gorton Trades Council
IDL	Irish Democratic League
ILP	Independent Labour Party
ISTC	Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (previously BSS and BIS & KTA)
LCMF	Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation
LRC	Labour Representation Committee
MBLP	Manchester Borough Labour Party
MFGB	Miners' Federation of Great Britain
MWAC	Manchester Women's Advisory Committee
MLWAC	Manchester Labour Women's Advisory Committee
MSLRC	Manchester and Salford LRC
MSTC	Manchester and Salford Trades Council
NAC	National Administrative Council (of the ILP)
NATSOPA	National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants
NCLC	National Council of Labour Colleges
NEC	National Executive Committee (of the Labour Party)
NUDAW	National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers
NUGMW	National Union of General and Municipal Workers (previously NUGW)
NUR	National Union of Railwaymen (previously ASRS)
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
RCA	Railway Clerks' Association
SCLP	Salford Central Labour Party
SDF	Social Democratic Federation
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SPD	(German) Social Democratic Party
TGWU	Transport and General Workers' Union
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UIL	United Ireland League
VBU	Vehicle Builders' Union (previously NUVM and NUVB)
WEA	Workers Educational Association
WEWNC	War Emergency Workers' National Committee
WIL	Women's International League
WLL	Women's Labour League
YLL	Youth Labour League

Abstract

In 1918, the Labour leadership embarked on a plan of reorganisation that it hoped would transform the party from a trade union pressure group into an independent, national political party. It equipped the party with a comprehensive political programme and determined to create a national network of local branches based on a mass individual membership. In essence, the leadership sought to make Labour a modern 'mass' political party.

This study assesses how the national leadership's plan of reconstruction fared at grass roots level, by examining Labour's development in Manchester between 1918 and 1931. In doing so, it examines the nature and outlook of local members, in particular Labour's active core, exploring their role in the party and assessing how far their political views matched those expressed by the national leadership. A final section on Labour's electoral progress in Manchester draws these elements together, in an effort to explain the party's record at the polls.

The study argues that the reorganisation carried out after 1918 was not the total failure some have suggested. Nevertheless, it concludes that Manchester Labour was largely frustrated in its efforts to create a 'mass' party machine, and remained marginal to the lives of most members of the local community. Furthermore, despite making electoral progress in the city, it is shown that Labour struggled to attract support outside the working class. However, it is argued that these failings cannot simply be blamed on the party's relationship with the trade unions, as many have claimed. Rather, the study shows that Labour's failure to achieve its organisational goals, and the subsequent problems that created, owed to more complex and deep-rooted problems connected to the public's lack of interest in politics. In the process, it reveals much about the nature of Labour organisation, membership and electoral support in this and subsequent periods.

Introduction

The growth of the Labour party in the early part of the twentieth century constitutes perhaps the most important development in modern British politics. Formed in 1900, out of the trade union movement and a collection of small socialist groupings, the fledgling Labour party was initially regarded as little more than a pressure group for organised manual labour, and in the general election that year returned just two MPs. However, by virtue of a secret electoral pact with the Liberals, over the next few years the party grew in parliamentary numbers and by 1914 boasted 42 members in the House of Commons. Following the social and political disruption caused by the First World War and in view of plans for a substantial extension of the franchise, the leadership saw an opportunity for further electoral advance. Thus, in 1918, Labour sought to take advantage of a substantial extension of the franchise by making itself a genuinely national 'mass' political party, adopting a new constitution and political programme, *Labour and the New Social Order.* The next decade saw it overtake the Liberal party electorally, becoming the official Opposition to the Conservatives in 1922 and forming a government for the first time in 1924. Read as a chronology of events Labour's rise appeared smooth and almost unstoppable, and for a long time many in the party believed it was.

Although the collapse of the second minority Labour government, in 1931, represented a serious setback to that rise - a significant blip in what had otherwise been an upward curve - the landslide victory of 1945 appeared to signal that the party's march to power had been resumed. As Francis Williams commented at the time, Labour's face is always 'turned steadily forward. It is a part of the wave of the future'.[1] Yet, in the decade and more which followed, that wave appeared to have been broken on the rocks of successive Conservative election victories. Even a period in office between 1964 and 1970 under Harold Wilson - prompting him to claim that Labour was becoming 'the natural party of government' - could not dispel the feeling that Labour's ultimate triumph was not, after all, predestined. The Heath-led Conservatives defeated Labour in 1970 and although the party was re-elected in 1974 its share of the vote had fallen dramatically since the 1950s. Following the collapse of the troubled Callaghan government, in 1979, Labour entered a period of eighteen years in the political wilderness during which time a number of MPs split to form the rival Social Democratic party (SDP). Subsequently, many commentators speculated on whether the party would ever recapture power again, even questioning its long-term viability. Although, under Tony Blair, Labour has apparently disproved those claims, the party's poor electoral record for much of the post-1951 period encouraged some historians to reappraise earlier views of its development.

* * * * * * *

Many initial accounts argued that Labour's displacement of the Liberals after 1918 owed most to the onset of 'class' politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Henry Pelling, for one, saw the electoral realignment which occurred at that time as an inevitable process already underway before 1914. Employing a Marxist definition of class - which held that individuals in society are divided into different hierarchical layers according to their place in the organisation of production - he argued that long-term social and economic changes were 'simultaneously uniting Britain geographically and dividing her inhabitants in terms of class'.[2] For Pelling, the arrival of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) – forerunner of the Labour party – reflected these changing circumstances and effectively sealed the Liberals' fate. Though he felt that class politics were not fully developed prior to the 1914 war – accepting that regional and local differences could still outweigh class divisions - he nonetheless concluded that Labour's appeal to workers' loyalty, at a time when Britain was witnessing the growth of an increasingly class-conscious proletariat, guaranteed its rise and so doomed the Liberal party.[3]

Peter Clarke was among the first to challenge this interpretation of political change.[4] He agreed that important social changes were indeed underway before 1914, making class an increasingly influential factor in deciding political affiliations. However, instead of Marxist social theory, Clarke favoured Max Weber's conception of class, which held that, in addition to economic divisions, the different amount of prestige that society attaches to various social groups on account of factors such as ethnicity or religion also determines social stratification. Moreover, Clarke highlighted Weber's belief that class differences did not necessarily result in class conflicts, as the basis upon which to challenge the view that class-based politics ensured the Liberal party's decline.[5] Instead, he claimed that by adopting a 'progressive' political programme, the Liberals checked Labour's challenge and guaranteed their own future success. Clarke's view of Liberal vitality was supported by others such as Roy Douglas, who argued that the results of a number of by-elections held between 1910 and 1914 suggested that Labour, not the Liberals, was the party in decline.[6]

These accounts were soon attacked by historians who disputed the extent of the Liberals' radicalisation and questioned the solidity of their electoral position. Most notably, Ross McKibbin argued that, despite by-election losses, Labour's share of the vote was actually increasing before the war, in tandem with a sharp rise in trade union membership.[7] For McKibbin, this last point was crucial as, like Pelling, he viewed political action as 'the result of social and cultural attitudes which are not primarily political'.[8] Thus, for him, Labour's connection with the trade union movement was the key factor promoting its rise. In addition to providing a ready-made organisation, he claimed that the unions helped inculcate a sense of class-consciousness and class-loyalty amongst workers, upon which Labour's electoral growth came to be based.[9] Furthermore, with the help of two colleagues, he produced an analysis of the pre-1914 franchise that suggested Labour's electoral advance was being artificially held back.[10] This analysis contended that, of the millions of adult men and all women excluded from voting registers before the war, the overwhelming majority derived from the working class, and were therefore liable to support Labour.

These accounts of political change were very much a product of their time, drawing heavily on electoral studies undertaken by American and British political scientists in the 1950s and 1960s. That period, particularly the fifties, may now be seen as the high point of 'class politics'. In Britain, three successive general elections between 1951 and 1959 saw massive levels of turnout in which voting patterns appeared to be strongly polarised by social class.[11] In such circumstances, the notion that electoral behaviour reflected social change won much support among psephologists and political scientists, and proved equally attractive to historians. By the 1970s, however, developments in society and politics were undermining this interpretation of voting behaviour.

First, Marxist and Weberian conceptions of class were subjected to widespread criticism, beginning with an empirical critique that showed the social structure of industrial Britain, and indeed the modern world, to be more complex than either of these writers had thought. Despite important changes in the nature of production in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, clear-cut social boundaries could not be easily identified. The working class, in particular, remained extremely heterogeneous, not merely in terms of occupations but in the sphere of leisure, domesticity, consumption, religion, and perhaps most importantly of all, politics.[12] This realisation soon impacted on the work of historians, most notably feminist and post-modern historians, who began to challenge earlier class-based interpretations of history. The former argued that, for too long, historians had ignored half the participants, and urged commentators to investigate gender, rather than class, identities.[13] The second group, including writers such as James Vernon, Patrick Joyce and Gareth Stedman Jones, argued that as classes are essentially rhetorical constructions it is necessary to investigate the language people used to describe themselves.[14] These approaches challenged long-held assumptions about class and class voting, suggesting that the link between social being and political consciousness was more complex than had previously been thought.

At the same time, a more fundamental challenge to the alleged link between social being and political consciousness arose with new developments in politics. The revival of the Liberal party as an electoral force towards the end of the 1960s challenged the existing two-party system in Britain and was accompanied by a rise in cross-class voting and a collapse in membership of the Conservative and Labour parties.[15] This suggested that voting patterns could not be reduced to simple sociological explanations and that other factors influenced electoral behaviour. This realisation was reflected in the work of political scientists. Even Anthony Heath and colleagues, who continued to place a strong emphasis on the link between class and voting behaviour, accepted that it was ‘time to put the politics back into political science’.[16] This new approach in the field of political science eventually influenced the world of historical research. Rather than an inevitable process rooted in sociological change, Labour’s development was now presented as a complicated and at times faltering process in which the party itself was able to shape its own destiny.[17] Moreover, local studies revealed a multitude of factors influencing political change and detailed the variety of ways in which Labour and its competitors appealed to the electorate.[18]

Duncan Tanner crystallised many of these accounts, together with his own work, in a mammoth survey of Edwardian politics.[19] Based on his extensive research of British politics at the regional and local level, Tanner argued that Labour's electoral development before 1918 was markedly uneven and often dependent on co-operation with the Liberals.[20] Consequently, he claimed Labour's continued expansion was far from assured by 1914, even allowing for future electoral reform. Contesting earlier assertions that a class bias in the pre-1914 franchise imposed an artificial ceiling on the party's electoral, Tanner argued that, in any case, the notion that working-class voters were 'naturally' inclined to support Labour rested on very shaky foundations.[21] Thus, he concluded, Labour's lack of electoral success before 1914, and significant improvement after 1918, could not be explained by reference to simple sociological or electoral structures. Instead, explanations of Labour's development had to take account of how the party responded to social circumstances. Structure and agency could not be divorced; politics, in the broadest sense, had to receive greater attention. This meant exploring the policies and appeals that parties made in an effort to win support, and investigating how they adapted their own organisations and strategies in response to changing external circumstances.[22] This study of Labour's development in Manchester between 1918 and 1931 hopes to proceed along similar lines, with a particular focus on how the party reorganised itself in response to structural changes in society and politics, and how this influenced its character and electoral fortunes. In fact, this is scarcely a new approach to studying political change. For over a century, political scientists have been concerned with the nature and development of modern political parties and how organisational structures influence electoral performance. Thus, before proceeding with this inquiry, it will be fruitful to summarise some of their principal findings.

* * * * * * *

According to Maurice Duverger, political parties in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tended to consist of a small number of members and showed little desire for expansion.[23] Following the lead of the turn-of-the-century political scientist, Moisei Ostrogorski, Duverger described such parties as caucuses, where membership was achieved 'only by a kind of tacit co-option or by formal nomination'.[24] As a result, 'caucus' parties were based on usually wealthy political elites which controlled party affairs within their own territory and liased with other elites from their own party at the national level. Resembling Neumann's 'parties of individual representation', they placed few demands on members and tended to organise only intermittently, usually around elections.[25] Consequently, caucus parties were decentralised and weakly knit.[26] Such a structure reflected the nature of Western liberal democracies in the latter part of the nineteenth century, when electorates were relatively small – perhaps consisting of a few hundred thousand voters – and composed overwhelmingly of wealthy men. Thus, the caucus party structure reflected a particular set of circumstances at a particular time.[27] But by the end of the nineteenth century, changes to the franchise in democracies across Europe extended the vote to millions of previously disenfranchised men (though the vast majority of women were still excluded). With electorates now numbering millions, rather than hundreds of thousands, party organisers became convinced that the informal networks of the caucus party were inadequate to canvass, mobilise and organise the new voters.[28] As a result, a new system of party organisation emerged, based on a branch structure: the 'mass' party.[29]

Whereas the caucus structure made for a small and restrictive party, the branch-based structure of the mass party was intended to facilitate a more extensive organisation in which large numbers of members would be actively recruited. However, a mass membership did not in itself equate to a 'mass' party. As Duverger, who coined the phrase, pointed out, distinctions have to be made between 'direct' and 'indirect' members. In other words, party membership must be defined in terms of obligations and privileges.[30] For Duverger, in a genuine 'mass' party, in addition to contributing money through their subscriptions, members perform a variety of tasks: holding meetings, organising demonstrations, distributing literature and canvassing voters. In short, the party leadership expects a high level of commitment from the party members, whom it regards as potentially valuable electoral assets.[31] In return, these members gain certain privileges such as influence over party policy and a role in the selection of personnel. Moreover, in contrast to the older parties of 'individual representation', mass parties were intended to be parties of 'social integration', organising an individual's entire world: catering for their education, entertainment, even burial.[32] Thus, while the caucus party structure was only semi-permanent, emerging from stasis to fight elections, branch-based parties engaged in year-round activity.[33]

Most writers agree that the continental socialist parties – in particular the German SPD - were the pioneers of the 'mass' form of political organisation. These parties had emerged in the pre-1914 period following the extension of the franchise to include more voters of working class origin and, according to Duverger, their primary role was to win concessions from the State for that particular section of society which they represented.[34] Indeed, another political scientist, Otto Kirchheimer, characterised such parties as 'class-mass' parties, stating that they were a product of 'an age with harder class lines and more sharply protruding denominational structures'.[35] However, Kirchheimer argued that these parties continued to evolve after 1918, eventually developing into what he termed 'catch-all' parties. He claims that during the interwar period, their disappointing first experiences in government, allied to the harsh realities of electoral competition in a capitalist system, convinced the leaders and followers of 'class-mass' parties that they would have to broaden their appeal. Instead of focussing their message and basing their organisation on one particular section of the electorate, they adopted a 'catch-all' strategy, appealing for support across the whole spectrum of society. Significantly, however, Kirchheimer believed that this stage in party evolution only occurred after 1945, when collective social identities had begun to weaken. Only then, when parties were having difficulty identifying and appealing to specific segments of society, did they evolve into 'catch-all' parties, adopting leaders and policies thought capable of attracting a broad spectrum of electoral support. The result was a downgrading of ideology and a reduction in emphasis on class or other specific identities, while organisationally it meant strengthening the power of the leadership at the expense of the rank and file, though maintaining a mass membership.[36]

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Although Kirchheimer believed that the catch-all party only developed after the Second World War, the boundaries between different stages in party development are not at all clear-cut and many of the characteristics he identified in parties after 1945 were already evident in earlier times.[37] As we shall see, Labour pursued something akin to a 'catch-all' strategy after 1918, while the Liberal and Conservative parties displayed certain characteristics of the catch-all party even before the First World War.[38] Initially resembling the classic caucus party structure, these parties had already begun to alter their organisations in the 1860s, when the enlargement of the electorate encouraged both to acquire mass memberships.[39] Yet, while each was keen to gather a mass, cosmopolitan and active membership, neither wished to transfer much power to it.[40] Thus, while ordinary members of the two parties had obligations - such as the payment of affiliation fees, or activity for the party at election times - they had few privileges in terms of control over the direction of the party. Consequently, despite moves to appeal to an ever-wider body of the electorate, they nonetheless remained Westminster-centred organisations, dominated by a small elite which continued to derive from the wealthiest section of society. Significantly, neither party forwarded many working-class candidates before 1914.

Indeed, it was partly because of the established parties' reluctance to run working-class candidates that the LRC came into being in 1900. An alliance of socialist societies and trade unions, the Labour party differed from the Liberal and Conservative parties in that it originated outside parliament. As a result, with its conference of affiliated bodies given formal power over the direction of party policy, Labour claimed to be a more democratic and inclusive organisation than its older rivals. Yet, while Labour's structure may have differed from its competitors on paper, in practice it bore many of the 'caucus party' characteristics which they shared.[41] Like the rank and file of the Liberal and Conservative parties, Labour's affiliated members, overwhelmingly trade unionists, had only obligations – in the form of a political levy. As individuals they had no real influence in the party itself, though by virtue of the block vote at conference their delegates often did.[42] Indeed, the unions - the most important element in the alliance - were actually described by one senior Labour figure at the time as 'caucuses inside the party'.[43] Nevertheless, even the powers of these caucuses were circumscribed by the dominant contemporary assumptions and practice. Parties operating within the same structural arrangements and cultural configurations are likely to share similar characteristics. Thus Labour, like the Liberals and Conservatives, largely accepted the

'Westminster Model' of parliamentary democracy. Indeed, as Ralph Miliband famously observed, the Labour party was committed above all else to the idea and ideals of parliamentarism.[44] One aspect of the parliamentary system in Britain held that, as power was concentrated in parliament, it was relatively closed to outside influences; British governments could not share power with external interests, be they sub-national or supra-national.[45] Correspondingly, following the election of the first substantial batch of Labour MPs, in 1906, the Labour conference submitted to the view that the new MPs would be primarily responsive to the parliamentary party, rather than the party outside Westminster.[46]

Yet, given its unusual structure, prior to 1918 Labour in the country was scarcely a political party at all. As Eric Shaw notes, the fact that it had no comprehensive system of individual membership, and was an alliance of autonomous organisations, imparted to Labour a distinctive constitutional quality:

> it was a confederation, whose constituent units were sovereign in their own affairs. The Party's own directive organs - primarily its executive committee - exercised only such powers as affiliated organisations chose to relinquish. The Party had no constituency membership and no branches. Its organisation in the country...relied upon existing trade union branches and trades councils, over which Labour's Executive exercised some influence but little direct authority.[47]

This form of organisation did not suit everyone in the party, particularly those, like Arthur Henderson and Ramsay MacDonald, who were anxious to reduce the extent of trade union influence and broaden Labour's appeal and perspective. Despite attempts to restructure the party in the years before 1914 - which included proposals to admit individual members - it was not until 1918 that any programme of reorganisation was ever accepted by the conference. Resistance to change came not merely from the trade union leaders, but also from numbers of ostensibly more politically astute Independent Labour party (ILP) delegates. Opposition only began to soften when plans for an extension of the franchise were announced towards the end of the First World War. That allowed the Labour leadership to argue that some form of internal reorganisation was essential if the party was to compete effectively in the enlarged electorate. As Henderson, one of the co-authors of the 1918 party constitution, told the Labour conference, 'the importance of [the Representation of the People] Bill could not be exaggerated'. He warned the assembled delegates that Labour

> must organise and place their candidates so as to give to the greatest number of the 16,000,000 electors an opportunity of voting Labour, not at the second election or the third, but at the first election. All experience went to show that once people were allowed to get attached to another political organisation - as would be the case if candidates were not provided at the first election - they had to be weaned away from their allegiance and the work will be doubly hard for the Local Labour Party, the National Executive and the Head Office.[48]

In preparing for reorganisation, the party looked to developments on the European mainland, particularly in Germany, for inspiration. For many years, Labour had been impressed by the SPD's mass membership and its record of electoral success. At the 1914 party conference, Tom Fox, a senior figure in Manchester, used his presidential address to tell delegates that the prime cause of Labour's failure to achieve substantial progress, lay in 'the deplorable inefficiency of our methods of organisation'. Tellingly, he noted: 'Our German brethren have learned their lesson better and are using their experience to better purpose in spite of the greater political handicap they have to bear'.[49] By 1918, the Labour leadership had learned its own lesson and decided that a mass membership was the best means to harness the support of new voters in Britain.[50] It was believed that such a structure would provide a psychological cement binding electors to the party. Furthermore, it was hoped that a mass membership would supply Labour with a body of voluntary activists - often missing before 1914 - who would operate the proposed national network of local parties, running local election campaigns and propagating Labour's message. As a result, the reorganisation outlined in 1918 made provision for members to be allowed to join the party directly, on an individual basis, rather than merely through indirect membership of an affiliated body.

The proposed structural changes were intended as part of a wider agenda to extend the party's appeal beyond the manual, unionised, working class. In short, the scheme aimed, according to one observer, to transform the party 'from a group representing merely the class interests of the manual workers into a fully constituted political party of national scope ready to take over the government of the country'.[51] This was reflected in party pronouncements that described Labour as 'the party of the producers - of the workers, in the widest sense of that noble word: of all the people, without distinction of class or sex, who labour to enrich the community'.[52] The only people to be excluded from the new Labour party, and then only by inference, were 'the unoccupied and unproductive elements - recipients of rents and dividends - the so called "idle rich"'.[53] Far from seeking to represent and mobilise one particular section of the electorate, Labour sought to garner support from a wide spectrum of society. In effect, it was aiming to pursue a catch-all electoral strategy under the auspices of a mass party organisation. This represented a significant departure from the Duvergian blueprint of a mass party and is also at odds with Kirchheimer's periodisation of party change. Interestingly, though, this may not have been peculiar to the British Labour party. The contemporary political analyst, Robert Michels, certainly believed that this 'People's party' strategy was being repeated by social democratic parties across Europe at this time, as they also struggled to grapple with the realities of electoral politics in a capitalist system.[54] Such evidence might lead to the abandonment of Duvergian-Kirchheimian notions of mass parties - indeed, it has been suggested that no fully fledged mass party has ever existed.[55] Nonetheless, according to Katz and Mair, the mass party type 'has developed sufficiently as to justify the specification of an additional 'corner' in space, relative to which real-world cases can be anchored'.[56] It would seem reasonable, therefore, to employ the 'mass' party term as a marker against which Labour's development can be measured.

Certainly, many in the leadership desired to make Labour a 'mass' party, at least organisationally. Yet, even here, the end product was not entirely in accordance with the classic Duvergian typology. Significantly, Labour decided early on that it could not break entirely from its original federal structure. 'It would be practically impossible', Henderson told the 1918 conference, 'for [the party] to attempt such a course. Imagine the Executive saying to the Trade Unions upon whom they depended that they had no formal use for them'.[57] Consequently, the leadership was forced to compromise, maintaining the affiliated membership and simply grafting on to it an individual members' section. In addition, the unions were allowed to maintain their block vote at conference and given additional places on the national executive committee (NEC), which formulated party policy.[58]

This submission to the trade unions prompted many observers, both at the time and since, to question whether Labour was fundamentally transformed by its new constitution. Ramsay MacDonald, who had been involved in consultations concerning reorganisation, sharply disapproved of the concessions granted to the unions and described the eventual plan as 'only a new coat of paint - pouring new wine into old bottles'.[59] More recently, writers such as Paul Webb have questioned how serious Labour was about expanding and mobilising its membership. He asserts that, 'unlike some other European left-wing parties, the British Labour Party never really attempted to mobilise the indigenous working class'. Instead, it was 'content to allow the affiliated trade unions effectively to become its organisation. Thus, unlike other parties of mass integration, Labour has not really needed to become an authentic mass membership party.'[60] This view is supported by Rosa Mulé, who claims that Labour's heavy reliance on trade union political levies 'hampered the search for additional sources of income, thwarting the growth of constituency organisations'.[61]

Furthermore, according to Shaw, 'if the ideological and financial impulses towards bureaucratisation were lacking, so too were the political. For the protection afforded by the massed vote of the trade unions at Conference lessened the leadership's vulnerability to rank and file insurgency'.[62] Sidney Webb, one of the co-architects of the 1918 constitution, reflected this attitude in 1930 when he made the oft-quoted remark that 'constituency parties were frequently unrepresentative groups of nonentities dominated by fanatics and cranks, and extremists', concluding that 'if the block vote of the Trade Unions were eliminated it would be impracticable to continue to vest the control of policy in Labour Party Conferences'.[63] All this suggests that the leadership was not much interested in making Labour a mass party, that, in Susan Scarrow's words, individual members were 'something of an afterthought', viewed merely as 'a supplemental source of income'.[64]

For many commentators, these attitudes marred the constitutional reorganisation in 1918. In return for money and support, the unions were given control over the machinery of the party. Philip Gould, New Labour moderniser and adviser to Tony Blair, believes the result was a disaster: 'Discipline was gained, but flexibility and the influence of ordinary party members was weakened. The capacity to modernise and adapt was to be the ultimate casualty.'[65] Even allowing for Gould's contemporary political agenda, he represents the most outspoken element of a school of thought that regards the 1918 party reconstruction as a lost opportunity: if only the leadership had not given in to the trade unions, Labour could have become a more pluralistic, democratic body, capable of winning the support of a broader section of the electorate.[66] In effect, Labour could have become a fully developed 'catch-all' party.

According to this view, Sidney Webb and Arthur Henderson, the architects of the post-war reorganisation of the party, are the villains of the piece. Their scheme is held to have established Labour 'as a socialist party immutably linked to trade unionism', thereby cutting it off from the Liberal party and preventing the building of one united progressive party. 'Other possible options, which were still open at the start of the century, were closed down in 1918.'[67] This interpretation of Labour's history not only says that the party should have been something else, it argues that it *could* have been something else. Such an analysis, though interesting and compelling, is open to the charge that it is insufficiently based in a detailed analysis of what the party leadership was actually seeking to achieve in 1918 and what obstacles they faced in realising their aims.

While attitudes may have changed in later years, at the time of the 1918 reconstruction Labour's leaders were not indifferent about developing an individual membership; nor were they content to allow trade unions to effectively become the organisation. On the contrary, the network of local parties envisaged by the constitution, together with provisions for the admission of individual members, represented a determined attempt to move away from the pre-war situation. Herbert Drinkwater, one of Labour's senior organisers, believed that the growth of local parties was going to affect the outlook and government of the party. 'Individual membership', he claimed, 'had in it the genesis of a revolutionary transference of weight and power within the party'.[68] True, concessions were granted to the unions, but, as David Marquand observes, 'in the circumstances of 1918 Henderson's constitution was probably the best obtainable. The trade unions were being asked to pay higher affiliation fees; they were hardly likely to do so without a *quid pro quo.*'[69] This state of affairs was not the result of active choice, nor was it necessarily meant to be permanent. As Drinkwater noted in 1921, 'the Party constitution is nowhere a final and last word regarding its own structure...it will adapt itself to circumstances as it grows'.[70] Labour's organisational development, like the establishment of socialism, was intended to be an evolutionary process. The problem was that the organisational blueprint outlined by Henderson and Webb did not evolve as its authors intended.

According to Christopher Howard, it was Labour's failure to attract a large number of individual members - especially working-class men - that prevented the party from fulfilling the hopes enshrined in the 1918 constitution.[71] With few members involved, he believed, Labour failed to transform itself into a proper mass party. Instead, the shortage of recruits meant many local parties became dominated by a small hierarchy of individuals who 'clung to the power bases that they had built'. Furthermore, this numerical weakness hindered the party's capacity to play an active role in the local community. Thus, 'the image of a vibrant and expanding Labour party was an illusion'.[72] Howard's account has been, at least partly, challenged by Ross McKibbin and Keith Laybourn, who argue that his appraisal of the state of Labour's organisation was too pessimistic.[73] Although both accept that the recruitment of individual members was slow to develop, they assert that Labour's strong trade union links, especially at the local level, enabled the party to at least conduct 'intensive and vigorous' election campaigns.[74] Nevertheless, that both Laybourn and McKibbin agree Labour was forced to fall back on trade union support, lends credence to the suggestion that the 1918 constitution failed to fully transform the party's organisation and hindered attempts to build a broader coalition of electoral support. It is with these arguments about the form and nature of 'mass party' organisation in mind that the following study engages - using the development of the Labour party in Manchester between 1918 and 1931 as a case study.

(It should be pointed out that reference will also be made to Labour politics in neighbouring Salford. Although it was a city in its own right, with its own civic institutions, in essence Salford was part of the same urban settlement and until 1920 the Labour party was organised on a joint Manchester-Salford basis).

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The transformation of British politics in the first three decades of the twentieth century has become one of the most popular areas of historical study, with a plethora of work purporting to explain Labour's rise and the Liberals' decline. However, as any bibliography soon shows, the vast majority of these studies have been concerned with the period before 1914. In contrast, the years after the war, in particular the 1920s, have received limited attention. Yet, in the development of the Labour party, this was probably the most crucial phase in its history, the moment when it became a genuinely independent political party with a comprehensive programme. Though different groups may look back on this period with varying degrees of satisfaction, nobody discounts its importance.

The present work is an attempt to cast new light on this crucial phase in British political history. Most interpretations of Labour's development after 1918 so far produced have tended to rely on fairly limited sources, often failing to look further than the speeches of national figures, or beyond electoral performance at the parliamentary level. Consequently, many descriptions of Labour's progress hitherto advanced indicate that: local organisation failed to take shape as intended; this failure stemmed from the hostility of party leaders who viewed the rank and file as cranks and extremists; the trade unions effectively became the organisation; and Labour rose because of class politics. Yet, such confident assertions are often voiced with little real knowledge of what was actually happening on the ground. This situation has begun to change and the past few years have seen a number of local studies published which offer a more nuanced account of Labour's development.[75] According to these studies, no single, simplistic, explanation of Labour's growth can suffice. Local organisation varied in quality and size depending on a variety of factors: ethnic rivalry, the strength of local trade unionism, the nature of local economies, the role of the ILP, the attitude of party activists and so on. The complex nature of Labour's development, which these studies have uncovered, highlights the value of this kind of research in providing a better understanding of the party's rise. At the same time, these works also hint at the principal shortcoming of the local study; namely, its tendency to produce narrow findings that are often only relevant to the locality under analysis. For instance, the centrality of sectarianism to an understanding of politics in Liverpool makes it hard to extrapolate findings on Labour development in that city to localities elsewhere. Similar charges of local peculiarity can be made against various other sub-national accounts, and to some extent, that is bound to be the case with any local study. Having said that, it will be argued here that Manchester represents a more widely applicable case than most.

The birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, together with Salford this city was by 1900 home to around one million people, and boasted possibly the most diverse social and economic profile of any British city outside London.[76] This varied socio-economic composition was reflected in the city's ten parliamentary constituencies, which included middle-class suburbs, a business seat, industrial districts, slums and even a semi-mining constituency. At the level of municipal wards, the picture was even more nuanced, offering the chance to view politics in a range of contexts. As such, Manchester should provide clues about the nature of Labour's development that will have an application beyond the city's own boundaries. To that end, this study aims to examine the party's progress, focussing on three overlapping features: the construction and operation of the local organisation; the political ideas that inspired its members and affiliates, in particular those that formed the party's active core; and the response of voters to Labour's appeals through analysis of the party's electoral performance. In so doing, it is believed that some more general conclusions will emerge about the form and nature of the party. It is also intended to address some of the issues raised by those, like Philip Gould, who see this period as one where the chance of creating a broadly based socially cohesive progressive party was missed.

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It is important at this point to outline some of the difficulties inherent to an historical inquiry of this nature. One of the principal difficulties has been the lack of available source material. Although the National Museum of Labour History contains copious amounts of material on the activity of the national party leadership, it has less material relating to local parties and almost no material on the Manchester Labour party. In the latter case, the lack of existing information is largely explained by a German bomb attack on Labour's Clarence Street headquarters in 1941. This resulted in the destruction of most of the party's records, posing obvious difficulties for a study of party organisation in the city. Fortunately, annual reports of the Manchester Labour party for the years 1904-15 survive in Manchester Reference Library, while further reports for the period 1916-26 found their way into the Working Class Movement Library in Salford. The latter, in particular, provide invaluable information about party organisation in the Manchester area. In addition to general accounts of the party's progress during the course of a year, they also contain individual reports from secretaries of the divisional parties. Although the quality of their reports vary, they generally offered a decent account of party activity for the previous twelve months, and on occasion included figures relating to membership and income. However, despite this information the absence of minute books and other such records has made it difficult to obtain comprehensive data for many aspects of Labour's organisation and activity. Reliable information about the size of party membership was particularly scarce, while evidence regarding the political outlook of ordinary members was also hard to acquire. This would be a difficult task in any event. Any historical inquiry into the grass roots membership of a political party is inherently difficult, especially when it comes to an examination of members' thoughts. Whereas contemporary studies are able to question existing party members directly about their political views, an historical investigation has no such luxury and instead has to rely on party records, newspaper reports and the written accounts of former activists. Unfortunately, such evidence is far from perfect; it is impossible, for instance, to know if the views expressed by a party secretary in an annual report reflects the opinion of a wide body of members, or merely the outlook of the individual themselves. That said, despite imperfections, the party records that do exist, together with activists' biographies, conference reports and newspaper articles, provide us with some insight into the politics of those Labour members who had their thoughts recorded. In addition, the *Manchester Guardian* has been a particularly helpful source: although a national newspaper, the *Guardian* devoted much attention to politics in Manchester and often contained reports on local Labour meetings and resolutions passed by local parties. Likewise, *Labour's Northern Voice,* while primarily concerned with ILP affairs, was also produced in Manchester and likewise reported on local Labour activity. Utilising these and other sources, such as the personal papers, autobiographies and obituaries of local activists, it has been possible to build up a reasonable picture of the form and nature of Labour organisation in Manchester at this time. Indeed, it has even been possible to compile a 'Who's Who' of two hundred Labour activists operating in Manchester in the 1920s, which can be found in the appendix. This contains biographical data on these individuals including their occupations, record of party activity and, where possible, political opinions. Thus, despite some difficulties, it has been possible to produce the following account of Labour development in Manchester between 1918 and 1931.

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[1] F. Williams, *Fifty Years March. The Rise of the Labour Party*, (1950), p.378.

[2] Pelling, quoted in J. Lawrence & M. Taylor, Introduction: electoral sociology and the historians', J. Lawrence & M. Taylor (eds.), *Party, State and Society. Electoral behaviour in Britain since 1820*, (Aldershot, 1997), p.13.

[3] H. Pelling, *The Origins of the Labour Party*, (1954).

[4] P. F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, (Cambridge, 1971).

[5] Ibid., pp. 16-19; For a good discussion of the differences between Marxist and Weberian interpretations of class, see M. Mackintosh & G. Mooney, 'Identity, Inequality and Social Class', Chapter 3, K. Woodward (ed.), *Questioning Identity: Gender, Class, Nation*, (2000).

[6] R. Douglas, 'Labour in Decline, 1910-14', *Essays in Anti-Labour History*, K. D. Brown (ed.), (1974).

[7] R. McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party, 1910-24*, (Oxford, 1974), p.xiv.

[8] Ibid., p.xiii.

[9] Ibid., p.243; See also K. Laybourn, *The Rise of Labour*, (1988).

[10] H.C.G. Matthew, R. McKibbin & J. Kay, 'The franchise factor in the rise of the Labour party', R. McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class. Social Relations in Britain, 1880-1950*, (Oxford, 1991), Chapter 3.

[11] Lawrence and Taylor, 'Introduction', *Party*, pp.2-3.

[12] R. Roberts, *The Classic Slum. Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century*, (Harmondsworth, 1974); A. Reid, 'Class and Organisation', *Historical Journal*, (30) 1987; A. Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty: Working Class Culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900-39*, (Buckingham, 1992).

[13] S. Rowbotham, *Woman, Resistance and Revolution*, (Harmondsworth, 1975).

[14] J. Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, 1815-1867*, (Cambridge, 1983); P. Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1840-1914*, G. S. Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982*, (Cambridge, 1983). For a simplified discussion of the rise and fall of class history, see D. Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, Chapter 1, (2000).

[15] Lawrence & Taylor, 'Introduction', *Party*, p.3.

[16] A. Heath`*et al.*, *Understanding Political Change. The British Voter 1964-87*, (Exeter, 1991), p.78.

[17] See, for example, J. Lawrence, *Speaking for the People. Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914*, (Cambridge, 1998); 'Class and Gender and the Making of Urban Toryism, 1880-1914', *English Historical Review*, (108) 1993.

[18] F. Bealey, J. Blondel & W. P. McCann, *Constituency Politics. A Study of Newcastle-under-Lyme*, (1965); F. Carr, 'Municipal Socialism: Labour's Rise to Power', Chapter 6, B. Lancaster & T. Mason (eds.), *Life and Labour in a Twentieth Century City: The Experience of Coventry*; S. Davies, *Liverpool Labour. Social and Political Influences on the Development of the Labour Party in Liverpool, 1900-39*, (Keele, 1996); I.G.C. Hutchinson, 'Glasgow Working Class Politics', Chapter 5, R. Cage (ed.), *The Working Class in Glasgow, 1750-1914*, (1987); I. Wood, 'Hope Deferred: Labour in Scotland in the 1920s', Chapter 3, I. Donnachie, C. Harvie, I. Wood (eds.), *Forward! Labour Politics in Scotland, 1888-1988*, (Edinburgh, 1989); J. Marriott, *The Culture of Labourism. The East End between the Wars*, (Edinburgh, 1991); G. Rose, 'Imagining Poplar in the 1920s: Contested concepts of community', *Journal of Historical Geography*, (16) 1990; J. Gillespie, 'Popularism and Proletarianism:

Unemployment and Labour Politics in London, 1918-34' and T. Jeffrey, 'The Suburban Nation: Politics and Class in Lewisham', both in D. Feldman & G. S. Jones (eds.), *Metropolis. London: Histories and Representations since 1800*, (1989); M. Savage, *The Dynamics of Working Class Politics. The Labour Movement in Preston, 1880-1940*, (Cambridge, 1987). **These studies are discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters.**

[19] D. Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party, 1900-18*, (Cambridge, 1990).

[20] Ibid., pp.317-337.

[21] D. Tanner, 'The parliamentary electoral system, the "Fourth" Reform Act and the rise of Labour in England and Wales', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, (56) 1983.

[22] See also Tanner, 'Class voting and radical politics: the Liberal and Labour parties, 1910-31', Lawrence & Taylor, (eds.), *Party, State and Society*, Chapter Four.

[23] M. Duverger, *Political Parties*, (1954), p.18.

[24] Ibid.

[25] S. Neumann, *Modern Political Parties*, (Chicago, 1967), p.405.

[26] A. Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems*, (Oxford, 1997), p.95.

[27] A. J. Davies, *We, The Nation. The Conservative Party and the Pursuit of Power*, (1995), p.102.

[28] P. Mair, *Party System Change*, (Oxford, 1997), p.100.

[29] Duverger is credited with having brought this term into general use.

[30] Duverger, *Political*, pp.63-71.

[31] S. Scarrow, *Parties and their Members: Organising for victory in Britain and Germany*, (Oxford, 1996), p.20.

[32] Neumann, *Modern*, p.405; J. Garrard, 'Parties, Members and Voters after 1867', Chapter 6, T. R. Gourvish & A. O'Day (eds.), *Later Victorian Britain, 1867-1900*, (1988), pp. 127-128.

[33] Duverger, *Political*, pp.22-23.

[34] Ibid., p.101.

[35] O. Kirchheimer, 'The Transformation of West European Party Systems', J. LaPalombara & M. Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development*, (Princeton, 1966), p.184.

[36] Ibid., pp.184-192.

[37] R. Koole, 'Cadre, Catch-all or Cartel? A Comment on the Notion of the Cartel Party', *Party Politics*, (2) 1996, pp.519-521.

[38] Garrard, 'Parties, Members and Voters', p.128; pp.127-150.

[39] Davies, *We, The Nation*, pp.132-141.

[40] Ibid., p.140.

[41] R. T. McKenzie, *British Political Parties*, (1964), pp.639-642.

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[42] Duverger, *Political*, pp.18-19.

[43] S. Webb, 'The Reorganisation of the Labor Party', *New Republic*, 8 December 1917, p.151.

[44] R. Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*, (1972), p.13.

[45] M. J. Smith, *The Core Executive in Modern Britain*, (1999), pp.10-11; D. Marquand, *The Unprincipled Society*, (1988), p.9.

[46] D. Howell, *British Social Democracy*, (1980), p.15.

[47] E. Shaw, *Discipline and Discord in the Labour Party*, (Manchester, 1998), p.1.

[48] Labour Party Annual Conference Report (hereafter LPCR), (January) 1918, p.99, 101.

[49] Cf. Berger, *British Labour*, p.132.

[50] Shaw, *Discipline*, pp.1-7.

[51] *Manchester Guardian* (hereafter MG), 24 January 1924.

[52] Henderson, 'Outlook for Labour', p.124.

[53] Webb, 'Reorganisation of the Labor Party', p.150.

[54] R. Michels, *Political Parties*, (1962), p.254.

[55] P. Katz & P. Mair, 'Cadre, Catch-all or Cartel? A Rejoinder', *Party Politics*, (2) 1996, p.525.

[56] Ibid., 'Cadre', p.525.

[57] LPCR, (January) 1918, p.99.

[58] L. Minkin, *The Labour Party Conference*, (Manchester, 1980), p.8.

[59] D. Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, p.230.

[60] P. Webb, 'Party Organisational Change in Britain: The Iron Law of Centralisation?', Chapter 5, R. Katz & P. Mair (eds.), *How Parties Organise*, (1994), p.110.

[61] R. Mulé, 'Financial uncertainties of party formation and consolidation in Britain, Germany and Italy: the early years in theoretical perspective.', Chapter 3, P. Burnell & A. Ware (eds.), *Funding and Democratisation*, (Manchester, 1998), p.56.

[62] Shaw, *Discipline*, p.145.

[63] *Beatrice Webb's Diaries*, 19 May 1930, cited by R. McKenzie, *British Political Parties*, (1964), p.505.

[64] Scarrow, *Parties*, p.120, 71.

[65] P. Gould, *The Unfinished Revolution. How the Modernisers Saved the Labour Party*, (1998), p.26.

[66] The main academic exponent of this view is David Marquand. See D. Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma. From Lloyd George to Kinnock*, (1992).

[67] Gould, *Unfinished Revolution*, p.27, 26.

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[68] *Labour Organiser*, (35) 1923, p.15.

[69] Marquand, *Ramsay*, p.229.

[70] *Labour Organiser*, (6) 1921, p.7.

[71] C. Howard, 'Expectations born to death: local Labour party expansion in the 1920s', J. Winter (ed.) *The Working Class in Modern British History: Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling*, (Cambridge, 1983).

[72] Ibid., pp.78-79.

[73] Laybourn, *Rise of Labour*, p.66.

[74] McKibbin, *Evolution*, p.144.

[75] See footnotes 17, 18 and 19 above. These local studies are discussed in greater detail in chapters four, five and six, below.

[76] Chapter two explores the socio-economic profile of Manchester in greater detail.

Chapter Two

Manchester and Salford: A Socio-Economic Profile

Before exploring the development of the Labour party - first nationally and subsequently in Manchester - it is important to say something about the social geography of the city at the beginning of the twentieth century. In so doing, it is necessary to briefly outline the sources employed in producing the following portrait of the Manchester area. The 'hundred year rule', which restricts access to much of the information contained in census records, means a great deal of potential data is unavailable. Consequently, in the absence of much alternative quantitative data, most of the material used here is qualitative, including historical writing, first-hand anecdotal evidence, contemporary newspaper accounts and various social surveys carried out in the first half of the century. Some quantitative data has been gleaned from census findings and this is presented in Tables 1A and 2A in the appendix.[1] Further tables and maps illustrate the distribution of municipal wards within parliamentary constituencies in Manchester and Salford.[2] Finally, two further maps outline the approximate location of people, industry, commerce and new housing estates in Manchester in the 1920s.[3]

2.1 Manchester and Salford: an economic survey 1800-1914

At the time of the first ever census, in 1801, the combined population of Manchester and Salford was recorded as 94,876. That figure represented a huge rise on the previous fifty years; in 1756, the population had been calculated as just 20,000. Yet, the sudden increase in population represented only the start of an unprecedented period of social and economic development; by the time of the 1921 census, Manchester and Salford had become home to almost one million people.[4] The reason for such explosive growth is now part of history. As the birthplace of the industrial revolution, Manchester experienced first-hand the technological and economic changes which heralded a new era of human development.

From its position as a country market town in the mid-eighteenth century, Manchester quickly became an important industrial centre. By 1802, 52 factories operated in the area and most were connected to the cotton textile trade. Although cotton was the main ingredient in Manchester's economic development, the opening of the Bridgewater Canal in 1761 was a crucial step, enabling trade and the distribution of goods to be carried out on a wide scale. Other lines of communication soon followed, the most significant being the opening of the first great railway in the town in 1830. By now, Manchester was becoming recognised not merely as a factory town, but as the distributing and commercial centre of the cotton industry - the Cottonopolis.[5] The importance of the textile industry to Manchester's economy was illustrated in a survey of the workforce carried out in 1839.[6] This revealed, not only the direct importance of cotton in the employment of people in the Manchester area, but also hinted at the dependence of other businesses on the textile trade. Warehouses, offices and packaging departments acted as the arteries of this trade, and helped shape the city's physical appearance. Between 1820 and 1830 the number of warehouses in Manchester increased from 126 to over a thousand. In fact, over the next few decades, Manchester's interest in cotton increasingly moved away from production and instead focussed on distribution and exchange. Between 1841 and 1861, the number of warehouse workers increased from five to twelve thousand, the number of clerks rose from three thousand to over five thousand, while the numbers engaged in the transport industry, including porters, carters, and railway workers, quadrupled to almost eight thousand.[7] Between 1861 and 1881 there was a threefold increase in the number of accountants and commission agents and a sixty percent rise in the number of attorneys and solicitors.[8] In addition, the opening of the Manchester Royal Exchange, which dealt with foreign transactions, firmly established the city as the commercial centre of the Lancashire cotton industry.[9] By the 1920s it had become the largest commodity market in the world, boasting eleven thousand members. Indeed, one observer, writing in 1929, commented that while 'it may be inaccurate to call the English a nation of shopkeepers...one is on safer ground in calling Manchester a city of middle men...commerce rather than industry is Manchester's most prominent feature'.[10]

While cotton trading became an increasingly important part of Manchester's economy after 1850, cotton production stagnated. Although the number of cotton operatives in Lancashire as a whole almost doubled between 1850 and 1914, Manchester's cotton workforce shrunk. One indication of this was the proportionately low number of cotton workers laid off in the city during the 1860s 'cotton famine', compared to those made unemployed in other smaller towns. Confirmation of the decline of cotton production came with the census of 1911, which recorded just over 20,000 men and women working in textiles out of a total workforce of 350,000.[11] However, this did not signal the end of manufacturing industry in Manchester. Rather, the economy began to diversify into other areas. The textile engineering industry developed and gradually expanded into machine-tool production and also locomotive and tractor construction. In 1861, nearly twenty thousand people were employed in engineering and this number continued to grow. By the turn of the century, metals and engineering had become the foremost industries in Manchester, employing twice as many people as cotton. Textile work of a kind continued to flourish, but this assumed the form of clothing manufacture in small workshops dotted throughout the city. By 1911 around

40,000 people were employed in this ill-regulated occupation, many in the Cheetham Hill area of North Manchester. Connected to this was the dye and chemical industry, which also became significant after 1900. This was also concentrated in the north of the city, notably in the Blackley and Moston areas, although chemical works could also be found in Clayton in the east of Manchester.

The transport sector continued to expand in the second half of the nineteenth century. By 1911 over 27,000 worked on Manchester's roads and railways, while the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal in the 1890s created further jobs in this sector, especially in Salford where the majority of Manchester's new docks were located. The opening of the Canal provided a much-needed boost to the local economy, which was suffering, along with many other places, from a depression in the trade cycle during the 1880s. Although primarily intended to benefit the cotton industry, the Canal's greatest impact was on the local engineering industry by opening up export opportunities and thereby stimulating a boom in textile machine-making. The Canal also transformed Manchester into an international port; by 1914 it had captured nearly five percent of UK imports by value and 4.4 percent of domestic exports, making it the fourth biggest port in Britain. The Canal also led to the construction, in 1896, of the world's first industrial estate -Trafford Park - situated in nearby Stretford. Originally designed to attract a cross-section of firms, the estate came to be dominated by medium to heavy industry, the oil industry and the chemical industry. Thus, according to Alan Kidd, by 1914 'Manchester had become an industrial centre of the first rank with a diverse manufacturing base.'[12]

2.2 Manchester: a social geography 1850-1931

Despite being home to over half a million people in 1901, Manchester showed no signs of slowing its growth. Instead, during the next thirty years the city gained over two hundred thousand new residents and by 1918 had a population of 767,530. Although much of this increase was due to a continuing influx of outsiders into the city, notably (but not exclusively) Irish and East European immigrants, expansions of the city's boundaries in 1911 and 1921 were also responsible. The extension of civic powers was recognition of Manchester's growing influence and also a reflection of the movement of the city's wealthier inhabitants away from the centre into the leafier suburbs. This process had begun during the 1850s when the city centre was gradually restructured into a commercial zone, with offices, shops, and warehouses lining former residential streets. Alan Kidd has calculated that the central Manchester subdistricts of Market Street, Deansgate and London Road, located in the St. Ann's, Oxford and Exchange wards, housed 92,176 people in 1851 but only one third of this figure fifty years later. Reflecting the growing importance of business, offices and shops replaced the dwelling houses, and commercial occupations escalated. Between 1871 and 1914, the number of firms occupying office space increased by 41 per cent.[13] Thus, while the population of Manchester as a whole increased, the number of people living in the city centre actually declined.

First to leave, according to Martin Hewitt, were the upper and middle classes, who took advantage of the mobility provided by omnibuses and railways to move south. Census returns show that, between 1911 and 1921, Chorlton and Withington experienced the largest increases in population of any Manchester wards, a trend that continued into the twenties.[14] Together with Didsbury, which also grew in population during this period, these three wards formed the Withington constituency, described in

1915 as 'a kind of upper middle class Olympia with a rather pronounced air of "culture" and the higher life'.[15]

Yet, although the middle classes preponderated in these and other suburban wards, working-class residents were also moving away from the city centre. The growth of public transport and developments such as bicycle ownership enabled growing numbers of workers to live away from their place of work, a process that produced an increasingly diverse population in many suburban areas. Furthermore, this migration was also assisted by the construction of private suburban housing estates in the spacious southern districts of the city, some specifically built for working-class residents. 'Chorltonville', constructed in the 1890s, and Burnage Garden Village, a co-operative venture opened in Withington in 1907, were examples of this.[16] Indeed, between 1920 and 1929 some 6000 new homes were erected in the Withington district. However, while lower rents in these areas were designed to attract lower income families, it seems that most of the inhabitants who took advantage of these developments came from the more prosperous ranks of skilled workers and the growing army of clerks.[17] Assessing the social composition of the Rusholme constituency in the run-up to the 1929 general election, the *Manchester Guardian* concluded that despite new housing developments, the Rusholme, Levenshulme and Longsight wards that made up the division had 'not greatly changed' since the war. Overall, it remained 'almost exclusively residential, and mostly peopled by what is called "the lower middle class"', though artisans were said to outnumber black-coated residents in the Longsight ward on account of a concentration of railwaymen in that district.[18]

However, a notable increase in working-class residents did occur in the south-west of the city following the construction of the Trafford Park Industrial Estate. By the mid-1920s, over 140 firms were listed in Trafford Park, with one works alone employing

7000 men, and the construction of the Estate helped to alter the social character of nearby constituencies.[19] Hulme, for instance, though predominantly working class even before the war, was also home to an important middle-class population by virtue of Moss Side West's inclusion within its constituency boundaries. Over time, however, this population found itself increasingly marginalised, as the nearby Industrial Estate attracted large numbers of unskilled workers into the area.[20] By 1923, a constituency which in 1885 had been described as artisan and clerkly, had become home to 'perhaps the poorest, most miserable, and least cared for [people] in the city'.[21] This was especially true of the two northern wards in the division, Medlock Street and St. George's, where overcrowding was a serious problem.[22] The insanitary conditions created by congestion in these areas had dire social consequences; after the war the death rate in Medlock Street was almost ten per cent higher than the average for the city.[23] In addition, the proliferation of licensed public houses in these districts, a hallmark of the down-at-heel area, was also apparent; Annot Robinson, the defeated Labour candidate for Medlock Street in a municipal election in 1920, went so far as to describe it as a 'drink sodden' ward.[24]

Changing social composition was even starker in the neighbouring Moss Side division. Having previously exhibited a distinct middle-class complexion, by the 1920s the Moss Side West, All Saints and St. Luke's wards which comprised that constituency had been inundated with poorer working-class residents, leading to congestion and consequent problems of insanitary living conditions. At first glance such a change does not appear obvious. Table 1A, in the appendix, suggests that overcrowding was very low in the district.[25] Yet, a curious anomaly found in these wards was the peculiarly high level of families sharing dwellings. This suggests that pockets of poorer residents were crowding into large town houses in what had previously been wealthy districts. Thus, while Hulme as a whole was undoubtedly the poorer constituency, the class composition of the Moss Side division was also changing. From being regarded as a middle-class constituency at the turn of the century, by 1929 it was said to hold a majority of working-class residents. Ten years later, it was described as a 'poor and declining residential area...in grave danger of becoming a slum'.[26]

In the 1920s, however, Moss Side still had a long way to before it could match the atrocious conditions of wards that ringed Manchester's commercial centre. In these areas, notably in New Cross, St. Clement's and St. Michael's, problems of overcrowding and insanitary living conditions were serious and widespread.[27] Surveys of such areas carried out in the 1930s found large blocks of housing dating back to the 1740s. Inspectors surveying St. Clement's ward in 1931 described 'property throughout the area [as] damp, dismal, and dilapidated, and can only relatively be considered fit for human habitation'.[28] Similar findings were reported in adjacent wards, and surveys also revealed that most local inhabitants were engaged in casual and unskilled employment. Investigating Ancoats (predominantly the New Cross ward) and St. Michael's ward in 1902, Thomas Marr, a local housing reformer, found that the most common form of occupation was labouring; very few skilled workers were found living in the area.[29] Surveys conducted thirty years later reveal that little changed during the intervening period. Employment amongst men and boys was still in 'humble labour' spread across a very large number of industries. Of these, the metal and engineering trades employed the largest number, though the railways were also important. Amongst women and girls, by far the largest number was employed in the clothing trade. Next in order came cotton waste and paper bag making, though some women also operated as small shopkeepers out of their front rooms. Unsurprisingly, low incomes predominated - more than half of the families surveyed in Ancoats had incomes under 40 shillings a week.[30]

Further evidence of the harsh living conditions in this part of the city was provided by Ernest Simon, a Liberal councillor and leading campaigner for housing reform, who noted in 1926 that ‘the infant death-rate in Ancoats is over twice as great as in the best Manchester suburbs’.[31] William Turner Jackson, a senior Labour councillor, who along with Simon fought for the construction of the Wythenshawe estate in the 1930s, reiterated this point five years later in a speech to the Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda (SSIP). Comparing living conditions in the slums with those in the suburbs, he revealed that diphtheria and tuberculosis were approximately twice as prevalent in wards such as New Cross, St. Clement’s and St. Michael’s, than in wards such as Blackley, Chorlton, Moston, Levenshulme and Longsight.[32] In areas of extreme poverty, members of Manchester’s immigrant population could generally be found. New Cross and St. Michael’s wards, at the start of the century, were home to an Italian community numbering about 1500, in addition to a larger and politically more significant Irish population. In 1901, for instance, the Catholic population of Ancoats - a good indicator of Irish presence - was measured at 40 per cent. In municipal elections in these two wards, both before and after the war, Irish Nationalist candidates were not unusual and helped shape the political climate of the district. These wards formed part of the Ardwick and Platting constituencies, within which the greater number of Manchester’s Irish community resided.

Although both these constituencies may be described as ‘working class’, levels of wealth and social status differed from ward to ward. As indicated above, parts of the New Cross and St. Michael’s wards were effectively slums, and overcrowding was also a serious problem in the St. Mark’s, Collyhurst and Miles Platting wards. A survey of the latter ward, in 1933, revealed that 18 per cent of its inhabitants were living in ‘primary poverty’, while a further 26 per cent were only ‘marginally above’ the poverty line. It seems likely that inhabitants in these wards were employed in much the same labouring occupations as those surveyed in New Cross and St. Michael's.

However, in wards such as Ardwick and Harpurhey, problems of poverty and overcrowding, though still evident, were less severe, and inhabitants were probably better off than in neighbouring areas. Ardwick, for instance, where the railways provided an important source of local employment, was described in 1922 as a 'purely artisan ward', suggesting a large number of skilled workers lived in the area.[33] Nevertheless, despite the higher incomes, these were still essentially working-class districts. In 1909, the *Manchester Guardian* described Harpurhey as 'almost entirely of a working class character'.[34] Here, too, the Irish influence was significant and the United Irish League and the Catholic Federation were important sources of support for any prospective public representative to attract.

While the Irish were the most significant immigrant community in this part of Manchester, elsewhere other ethnic groups predominated. Jews, for instance, were conspicuous in the north of the city, notably in the Collegiate and Cheetham areas. Here, wrote H. McKechnie, 'the shops advertise in Hebrew and Saturday is the first day of the week', while another commentator recalled that the tram stop on Great Cheetham Street was announced by one conductor as 'Jerusalem Junction'.[35] The clothing trade was probably the most important local employer, though clothing factories were rare and where they existed generally small. Instead, much of the trade was performed by 'sub-contractors, mostly Jewish, who work[ed] in small tenement workshops'.[36] By 1929, however, this class was apparently in slow decline. Part of the explanation may derive from the decision of many richer Jews to move away from the Cheetham area in favour of the suburbs in the south and north of the city.[37]

This migration appears to have resulted from the large scale immigration of East European Jews prior to the First World War, most arriving from Russia, Austria, and Romania. Although the bulk of this movement took place between 1840 and 1880, immigrants from these countries continued to arrive in Manchester up to the war; between 1875 and 1914 Manchester's Jewish population rose from under 10,000 to stand at over 35,000.[38] Most of these immigrants were poor, unable to speak English, and culturally alien to the surrounding population. The city's established Jewry, by now an accepted part of the local business community, feared the invasion of East European Jews could cause an anti-Semitic backlash that would threaten their own position. Consequently, the existing Jewish elite embarked on a policy of 'Anglicisation' designed to imbue the immigrants with English customs and traditions, which gradually eroded the culture of the East European Jewry and facilitated their integration into local society.[39]

While the bulk of Manchester's ethnic population tended to concentrate in the central or northern districts of the city, numbers of immigrants could also be found dispersed amongst the native working-class population in the heavily industrialised north-east and east of the city. In these areas the most common form of occupation was in the metals and engineering plants, notably in Gorton and Openshaw. Here, aeroplanes, boilers, motors and textile machinery were produced in plants such as the enormous Beyer-Peacock works. Engineering works were also located in the Bradford district of the city, though the most important industry here was coal mining. Employing 1200 men in 1929, the two Bradford mines produced around a quarter of a million tons of coal each year. In addition, just north of Bradford, the Moston colliery at Newton Heath employed 850 workers above and below ground.[40]

The high concentration of heavy industry in this part of Manchester drew large numbers of people into the area in search of employment. The result, unsurprisingly, was overcrowding, most notably in Bradford, Openshaw and Beswick. In 1923, the local Labour councillor described the latter ward, where 12,000 people were squeezed into 96 acres of land, as 'a dump of cottages packed like bricks on a lurry. The people are packed in the houses like rabbits in a warren'.[41] That said, congestion in the east of the city was by no means the worst in Manchester, and a further point should be added in saying that even in east and north-eastern Manchester the local population was by no means exclusively working class. Parts of Newton Heath, for example, were considered quite affluent. Indeed, during a by-election in Clayton, in 1922, the Labour candidate lamented that the inclusion of Newton Heath in the constituency (following boundary changes) had 'introduced a middle-class element' into the area.[42]

Further north, in the Blackley constituency, that middle-class element grew stronger. In this less-densely populated area of the city, heavy industry was more scarce. In 1929, the Co-operative Wholesale Society's biscuit factory and the British Dyestuffs Corporation factory were the largest industrial buildings to be found. Consequently, the division had a residential feel with much of its housing occupied by wealthier residents. Crumpsall, for instance, was akin to one of the city's southern suburbs, though its housing tended to be of a smaller size and more tightly packed than that found in wards such as Chorlton and Didsbury. Blackley and Moston, while themselves residential areas, were rather more socially-mixed following the construction of post-war municipal and private housing estates.[43] However, as indicated earlier, the extent to which working-class residents benefitted from such schemes is debatable. 'Of the Manchester Corporation houses built by 1924,' Kidd notes, 'over half had gone to clerks or others from lower middle class employments and by no means all the manual workers who occupied the rest had come from the slums'.[44]

Thus, by the 1920s, although Manchester's population displayed the cosmopolitan characteristics of any major commercial and industrial city, the mix was not evenly spread. The city's poorest inhabitants were concentrated in congested slum wards circling the city's commercial centre, where much of the immigrant population lived. From there, a swathe of better quality working-class homes snaked north-east and east along the lines of industry which invaded the Ardwick, Platting and Gorton divisions. A number of working-class residents also congregated in the northside of the city, where industry and housing rapidly encroached upon rural territory. Yet, this increasingly suburbanised area of the city contained a large middle-class population keen to escape the overcrowded inner city. This was also true of the more desirable south Manchester wards. Although housing schemes helped to bring some social variation to these areas, they continued to serve as home to the city's wealthiest inhabitants. Thus, the geographical division of the city's classes and cultures, though far from precise, was clearly identifiable.

2.3 Salford: a social geography

Despite having separate civic institutions, Salford was, and still is, part of the same urban development as Manchester. In economic terms the city shared many of the same characteristics as its bigger neighbour and witnessed a similar pattern of population growth. Between 1841 and 1901, its population trebled from 70,224 to 220, 957, largely due to the economic expansion experienced during the industrial revolution.[45] The importance of the industrial boom to this rise is confirmed by occupational statistics, which show that between 1871 and 1891 the proportion of those engaged in industrial occupations grew rapidly, until it represented the most common form of occupation in Salford.[46] This helped to create the image of Salford as the quintessential working-class city, a generally accurate characterisation: for much of the twentieth century, two-thirds of the city's residents belonged to the manual working class.[47]

Nevertheless, despite its status as a thoroughly proletarian city, 'the classic slum', Salford's population was not exclusively working class. Salford North, one of three parliamentary divisions in the city, was home to both a working-class population, employed in coal-mines, factories and at various works in Trafford Park, and an equally significant residential middle-class population. Primarily located in the Kersal ward, the latter community included growing numbers of affluent Jews who began moving away from Manchester in this period. In 1929, the *Manchester Guardian* estimated that Jews amounted to some 8000 names on the division's electoral register.[48] However, Jews were not the only important ethnic group in the North constituency. An important Irish community also resided there. This group formed part of North Salford's substantial working-class population, mainly congregated in Charlestown, Grosvenor, and St. Matthias's wards. These working-class residential areas contained a number of industrial premises and, according to census records, suffered from varying degrees of overcrowding.[49]

While North Salford was a socially-mixed constituency, South Salford was the most solidly working-class district in the city. Overcrowding was endemic throughout the area, worse even than in the poorest Manchester wards. The Islington and Trinity wards were particularly congested and recorded a high level of families sharing dwellings.[50] Moreover, the physical condition of buildings in these areas was very substandard; a survey of housing conditions in parts of the Crescent and Islington wards in 1930 found most premises dated back over a century. These neighbourhoods were frequently located side by side with the numerous industrial works which lay in the area: Mather and Platt's foundry, gasworks, engineering works, manufacturing chemists, finishers, starch makers, and other works for the manufacture of gum, weighing machines, waterproofs, rubber tyres, leather goods and sheet metal. The concentration of industry within such a small area led to high levels of pollution, and inspectors reported the air thick with smoke and houses grimy with soot.[51]

Conditions were little better further south, where industry began to give way to dockside work. Created by virtue of the Ship Canal, most of Manchester's docks were actually to be found in Salford, around Ordsall, Trafford and parts of Weaste. These docks were a crucial source of employment for local residents, either in the loading bays, warehouses, offices and stores, or on the railways which criss-crossed the quayside. In addition to dockwork, residents in this area also found employment in the nearby Trafford Park Industrial Estate.[52]

The remaining division in the city was the predominantly working-class West Salford constituency. The bulk of this population was to be found in the St. Paul's, St. Thomas's, and Seedley wards nearest to the city's industrial centre. However, despite being regarded as working-class wards, these were not the poorest parts of Salford. Seedley, in particular, was more prosperous than most areas; overcrowding, for instance, was seemingly uncommon in the ward.[53] Yet, by far the most affluent district in West Salford was Hope, the largest ward in Salford with the second largest population and a swathe of middle-class houses.[54] Thus, as in Manchester, the wealthiest inhabitants in Salford were moving away from the congested centre, towards the cleaner and greener new suburbs.

2.4 Summary

By the first quarter of the twentieth century, Manchester had established itself as perhaps the most important urban conurbation outside London. Long renowned as an industrial giant of the first rank, the city was also a vital commercial and administrative centre - as various commentators noted at the time: 'Approaching Manchester from east, west, or north', W. Gwyn Pilkington observed, 'one may see one's fill - and more than one's fill - of factories and mills, mines and engineering works, power stations and mills...but in the City itself and its immediate neighbourhood there is little but offices and warehouses and shops'.[55] The diversity of its economy imparted to the city a complex social structure; all manner of classes, religions and nationalities could be found working in Manchester, though not necessarily living together. As outlined above, the city's different social classes were geographically segregated.

Although this segregation was not clear-cut, it is possible to provide some general descriptions of the overall social division. Gordon Phillips, writing in 1929, felt that the main demarcation in Manchester was between the hills and mills of the north and the fields and plains of the south. Claiming that this geographical divide permeated the whole life of the city, he wrote that while south Manchester grew 'more and more like a London suburb', north Manchester was 'tougher and rather more true to the Lancashire type'.[56] Certainly, the southern districts of the city, particularly Chorlton, Didsbury and Withington, were the desired location of the middle classes, and exhibited a somewhat leafier feel than the rockier north. This is still notable today, and the north-south divide in Manchester to some extent reflects the basic shape of the city, which appears long and narrow on a map. However, then as now, the city's social segregation was more complex than this simple division suggests, and assumed more of a concentric form. In slums that ringed Manchester's commercial centre in the central west of the city, the poorest inhabitants, frequently immigrants, came to settle. East and north-east of them, in tightly packed terraced cottages, better-paid working-class residents congregated, while the richest Mancunians resided in large villas in the south and far north. This social segregation was reflected in the composition of Manchester's ten parliamentary seats, which included the business-dominated Exchange constituency, slum-infested Hulme, middle-class seats in Withington and Rusholme, industrial Gorton, working-class Platting and Ardwick, the socially-mixed Moss Side and Blackley constituencies, and even a semi-mining seat in Clayton. Obviously, these are only general descriptions, and the social composition of these constituencies was more complex in reality than the characterisations above would suggest. (In chapter eight, a more detailed survey based on the smaller municipal wards is presented, which offers a more nuanced picture of Manchester's social geography). Nonetheless, it should now be clear that early twentieth century Manchester was a melting pot of different occupations, classes, religions, nationalities and cultures. Unlike cities dominated by a particular industry or ethnic group, therefore, it is perhaps more representative of Britain as a whole. Thus, it is to be hoped that the conclusions reached here about Labour's political development will be relevant beyond the boundaries of this one city.

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[1] See appendix for Tables 1A-2A.

[2] See appendix for Tables 3A-5A and Maps 1, 4 and 5.

[3] See Maps 2 and 3.

[4] H. Clay & K. Brady (eds.), *Manchester at Work: A Survey*, (Manchester, 1929), p.31.

[5] Cf. Ibid., pp.7-22.

[6] Ibid., p.29.

[7] M. Hewitt, *The Emergence of Stability in the Industrial City: Manchester 1832-67*, (Cambridge, 1996), p.30.

[8] A. Kidd, *Manchester*, (Keele, 1993), p.105.

[9] Ibid., p.107.

[10] W. Gwyn Pilkington, 'Manchester's Merchants', W. Brindley (ed.), *The Soul of Manchester*, (Manchester, 1929), pp.210-211.

[11] Kidd, *Manchester*, p.111.

[12] Ibid., p.113. This account is indebted to A. Kidd, *Manchester*, pp.103-118.

[13] Kidd, *Manchester*, p.105.

[14] See appendix for Table 1A.

[15] H. M. McKechnie, *Manchester in 1915*, (Manchester, 1915), p.10.

[16] See chapter seven for more details on Burnage Garden Village.

[17] Cf. M. Harrison, 'Burnage Garden Village: An Ideal for Life in Manchester', *Town and Planning Review*, (47) 1976, p.265.

[18] MG, 23 May 1929.

[19] F. Rosamond, 'The Social and Economic Effects of Unemployment in Manchester and Salford 1919-26', (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Manchester, 1970), p.3.

[20] MG, 3 December 1923.

[21] Ibid. See MG, 19 November 1885 for earlier description.

[22] See appendix for Table 1A.

[23] Rosamond, 'Social and Economic', p.7.

[24] Manchester Reference Library Archive (hereafter M.R.L.A.), letter from Annot Robinson to Nellie (?), 5 November 1920.

[25] See appendix for Table 1A.

[26] S. Reece, *Manchester and Salford*, (1939), pp.147-155.

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[27] MG, 27 January 1921; See also Rosamond, 'Social and Economic', pp.5-9; and Table 1A for population and overcrowding in Manchester wards.

[28] *Under the Arches: Report of the Survey Undertaken in Part of St. Clement's Ward*, (Manchester, 1931), p.7.

[29] T. Marr, *Housing Conditions in Manchester and Salford*, (Manchester, 1902), pp.54-58; 60-63.

[30] *Ancoats: Study of a Slum Clearance Area 1937-38*, (Manchester, 1938), pp.11-15.

[31] E. D. Simon, *A City Council From Within*, (1926), p.231.

[32] MG, 16 February 1932.

[33] MG, 9 February 1922.

[34] MG, 2 November 1909.

[35] McKechnie, *Manchester in 1915*, p.10; Brindley, *Soul of Manchester*, p.267.

[36] Clay & Brady (eds.), *Manchester at Work*, p.119.

[37] Cf. Reece, *Manchester and Salford*, p.151.

[38] B. Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry*, (Manchester, 1976), p.327.

[39] Kidd, *Manchester*, p.124.

[40] Clay & Brady (eds.), *Manchester at Work*, p.106.

[41] M.R.L.A., Wright Robinson Diary, 20 October 1923.

[42] MG, 9 February 1922.

[43] MG, 18 May 1929.

[44] Kidd, *Manchester*, p.217.

[45] Clay & Brady (eds.), *Manchester at Work*, p.31.

[46] Cf. E. Morrison, 'South Salford Branch of the Social Democratic Federation', (BA Dissertation, Manchester Polytechnic, 1978).

[47] S. Fielding, 'The Salford Labour Party: A brief introduction to the microfilm edition of the Salford Labour Party Records', p.1.

[48] MG, 16 May 1929.

[49] See appendix for Table 2A.

[50] See ibid.

[51] *Report on a Survey of Housing Conditions in a Salford Area*, (Manchester, 1930), p.5.

[52] Cf. Map in Clay & Brady (eds.), *Manchester At Work*, p.50.

[53] See appendix for Table 2A.

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[54] Cf. Map in Clay & Brady (eds.), *Manchester At Work*, p.32.

[55] W. Gwyn Pilkington, 'Manchester's Merchants', W. Brindley (ed.), *The Soul of Manchester*, (Manchester, 1929), p.211.

[56] G. Phillips, 'Manchester and its Critics', ibid., p.266.

Chapter Three

Labour's Constitution: The Road to 1918

The 1918 Labour constitution was a defining moment in the party's history. Having been little more than a trade union pressure group before the First World War, Labour finally resolved to become an independent political party. To that end, Arthur Henderson and Sidney Webb set out to reconstruct the party's organisation on the basis of a national network of local branches which admitted individual members. In addition, they equipped Labour with an ultimate objective and an immediate programme for government. Fundamentally, claimed Henderson, the constitution and related programme, *Labour and the New Social Order*, aimed to transform Labour from a small, sectional, trade union-based grouping into 'a genuine national party'.[1] However, since then, critics have argued that the decisions taken in 1918 were disastrous for the party's subsequent electoral progress. Explaining its poor record throughout most of the twentieth century, New Labourite, Philip Gould, was in no doubt that 'the seeds of its decline were imbedded in its inception'. In 1918, they decisively took root; for it was then that Labour was established 'as a socialist party immutably linked with trade unionism'.[2] For such revisionists, subsequent Labour history has been one long battle to correct these earlier faults; only now, with the apparent triumph of New Labour, has the war finally been won.

While there is some truth in these claims, in many respects this account amounts to a misreading of history. Though the reconstruction of the party may have ultimately allowed the trade unions to become an overbearing force and, eventually, an electoral albatross round Labour's neck, it is not at all clear that this was the intended outcome.

Henderson and Webb's constitution may have granted concessions to the unions, but they hoped the reorganisation would ultimately see Labour evolve into a more eclectic body, representing and comprising a broad spectrum of the population. Crucial to this process was the construction of a network of local branches based on individual members which, it was hoped, would transfer power away from the affiliated bodies. If these branches failed to develop properly - a topic which the remainder of this thesis is largely devoted to - then the blame cannot merely be planted at the feet of the party's national leaders; other factors must be considered. However, before exploring that issue, it is intended in this chapter to look more closely at the origins and early development of the Labour party as a national body, examining the background to the 1918 reconstruction, and finally analysing the constitution itself. By doing this, it should be possible to address the claims of those who argue that Labour's post-war reorganisation ensured trade union domination of the party, and that a more favourable scheme could have been approved. As the following section will show, both these claims are based on numerous false premises.

3.1 The Labour party before 1918

Formed in 1900 as the Labour Representation Committee, it was six years before the alliance of trade unions and socialist societies which comprised that body felt confident enough to adopt the title 'Labour party'. Yet, although Labour may have described itself as a 'party' in 1906, its organisational structure remained unique among contemporary European socialist and social democratic parties. Unable to enrol members on an individual basis, membership of the Labour party was restricted to those attached to affiliated trade unions or socialist societies. In essence, Labour was a confederation, 'whose constituent units were sovereign in the management of their own affairs'.[3]

As its name implies, the LRC was formed with the basic aim of securing 'members of Parliament in sympathy with the Labour cause'.[4] However, the pledge to represent labour was rather vague, and prompted one delegate at the 1903 LRC conference to ask the assembled ranks: 'What was Labour Representation going to be?'[5] Some felt it should amount to no more than labour representatives in parliament promoting legislation in the direct interest of labour, or associating with any party in opposing measures which would be detrimental to labour. On purely political matters, such representatives should be left entirely free. As A. Wilkie, of the Shipwrights' Union, declared, 'it would be a mistake to attempt to bind the Labour members on other than purely labour questions'.[6] According to this perspective, Labour *politics* did not exist. Indeed, there were some delegates who expressed the hope that Liberal and Tory working men's' associations might be allowed to join the LRC.[7]

Such views did not sit easily with those who cherished a socialist ideology. They wished to effect a fundamental transformation of society by reform of the economy, replacing the capitalist system of production with one based on the principle of common ownership. For them, the LRC was political or it was nothing, and resolutions aimed at committing the LRC to socialist objectives were frequently, though generally unsuccessfully, tabled at the annual conference. Opponents of such moves tended to stress that, 'in these Conferences no one side should ram their principles down the throats of the other side'.[8] The fear was that any clear ideological commitment to socialism would frighten off the bulk of trade unionists who 'had only a vague idea of what Socialism was'.[9]

It was in the interests of unity that Labour's purpose remained vague and limited. As C. Duncan, of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE), pointed out in 1906, 'the Labour Party was in its first stages...If they laid down a hard and fast programme it was evident that they would be excluding all those who might otherwise join the party'.[10] Thus, if the adoption of a socialist objective in 1918 was functional to the Labour party's choice of political independence after the war, resistance to the adoption of a socialist objective before 1914 was functional to its political survival in the early days. Any decisive ideological commitment would have led to the break-up of the delicate alliance; consequently, the party focussed attention on specific labour and welfare issues. As J. R. Clynes told the conference in 1908, they 'were not out, as a matter of fact, for ultimate objects', but for old age pensions; for immediate industrial legislation; for some kind of effective and helpful legislation on the subject of unemployment.[11]

Before 1914, then, for practical political reasons Labour lacked any coherent political philosophy or solid organisational base. Only in 1918, it has been suggested, after the effects of war and the Russian Revolution had transformed the political landscape, did the party seriously attempt reorganisation. However, although events between 1914 and 1918 were crucial in swaying the bulk of the movement behind the drive for reform, examination of the Labour party in the years preceding the First World War reveals that moves to reorganise and redefine the party were already on the agenda.

Although Labour did not write any socialist objective into its constitution before 1918, various socialist policies were supported at the party's annual conferences. Indeed, the *Manchester Guardian* noted that the adoption of 'socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange' as a 'definite object' had made the party 'academically socialist' in 1908. However, it also pointed out that 'as a matter of practical politics the "definite object" did not matter much, and did not even frighten the non-socialist trade union leaders'.[12] Nevertheless, the various resolutions in favour of nationalisation of specific industries supported by the Labour conference in these years began to give the party a more socialist character.

In addition to attempts to reshape the politics of the Labour party before 1914, efforts were also directed at altering the party's organisational structure. Most notably, the Labour leadership tried to expand the party's membership by enrolling members on an individual basis. This followed concerns about the inefficiency of the party's existing structure, which was felt to be hindering Labour's electoral performance. Without constituency membership, Labour's organisation in the country rested largely on local trades councils, trade unions or ILP branches, whose members were only indirectly linked to the party. As a result, Labour offered no opportunity 'for the growth of local party loyalty from which its rivals benefitted' with the concurrent problem that the party suffered from a lack of workers, a problem illustrated in conference reports on Labour's performance in pre-war by-elections.[13] Reviewing election results in Houghton-le-Spring and South Lanark in 1914, the national executive noted that the 'chief disadvantage was the absence of any preliminary organisation, and the results demonstrate *once more* that the lack of permanent electoral machinery cannot be balanced by the most earnest enthusiasm at the polls'.[14]

Recognising this deficiency in organisation, the leadership made informal attempts to enlarge the party and in Henderson's own constituency, Barnard Castle, an individual members' section was established many years before the 1918 constitution came into effect.[15] Furthermore, in May 1911, the Labour party NEC appointed a sub-committee to investigate the possibility of introducing individual membership of the party on an official basis. In 1912 its proposals in favour of the idea were put forward at the party conference. Significantly, they were defeated, strong opposition coming from both trade union and ILP representatives who stressed the dangers they feared such a step would create. Mr H. Keen, of the Operative Bakers, claimed individual membership 'would open the door to men who had not the interests of the party at heart', while J.

Bruce Glasier, an ILP delegate, reflected a similar attitude, stating that 'if the proposal was to admit rich men as such, he was against it'.[16] The executive argued that the proposal aimed at nothing more than providing an entrance to the party for people who had no other avenue open to them. Individual members could not attend conference but would merely receive party literature. Interestingly, during the course of the debate it was revealed that individuals could already pay an annual subscription for all literature, a point brushed aside by Ramsay MacDonald, who replied somewhat cryptically that the NEC wanted to put that into 'a more satisfactory condition'.[17]

Ultimately, the debate turned on the suspicion of a majority of delegates that individual members could not be adequately screened. Typical was the view of one delegate that if people 'could not ally themselves with a trade union or one of the affiliated socialist societies he did not think they should be encouraged to join in any other way'.[18] The problem was that the Labour party did not require a true expression of faith in the same way as the ILP. To admit individuals would be too great a risk. Consequently, the conference retreated to the narrow, defensive attitude evident in the early years of the LRC, and voted that they 'maintain the Party as an essentially working-class organisation'.[19] Yet, six years later, the decision to reconstruct the party - including the admittance of individual members - was agreed. Clearly, the intervening years had been important.

3.2 The effects of war and revolution

The major development in this period was the outbreak of war in 1914. Lasting four years, the First World War had a major impact on British party politics. Perhaps most significant of all was the split it created in the Liberal party, a development that contributed to its decline to third party status. However, although less seriously affected, the war also divided the Labour party. The ILP, which adopted an anti-war stance, found itself in direct confrontation with those sections of the party, including most trade unionists and Fabian Socialists, who supported the war effort. Symbolically, Ramsay MacDonald, an ILP member and staunch pacifist, was replaced as party secretary by Arthur Henderson, a more patriotic trade unionist who was to serve in Lloyd George's War Cabinet.

According to A. McBriar, the ILP's opposition to the war created a determination amongst its opponents in the labour movement to reduce its status within the party. Thus, the decision to reorganise Labour at the end of the war 'was to some extent motivated by the Labour Party leaders disapproval of the ILP during the war years'.[20] Early signs of this attitude can be detected when, during the war, the Labour party amended its constitution so that the previously federal executive would be elected by ballot at the annual conference, with no organisation nominating more than one candidate unless its membership exceeded 500,000 - a move clearly designed to reduce ILP influence.

In place of the ILP, members of the Fabian Society began to act as Labour's intellectual guides. In particular, Sidney Webb came to the fore and from 1915 onwards established a firm connection with Arthur Henderson. According to Margaret Cole, 'they were both agreed on the need for a stronger Labour Party, and that the Labour Party could not become stronger unless it possessed both organisation and a policy'.[21] Initially, however, Henderson's participation in the War Cabinet meant he was unable to address the issue of party reorganisation. Nevertheless, the effects of the war were already promising to have a considerable bearing on Labour's future development.

The extent and nature of the war had forced the state to play a greater role in the running of the country than ever before. In particular, important areas of the economy such as the coal industry had been brought under state control, while in several places, notably the Clydeside shipyards, the issue of workers' control was high on the agenda. Of particular importance, Royden Harrison believes, was the role of the War Emergency Workers' National Committee (WEWNC). Formed by the Labour party at the outset of the war, it contained both pro and anti-war elements in the labour movement and was designed to defend working-class interests and prevent the disintegration of the labour movement. While historians such as McKibbin have ignored its role, others have claimed that the WEWNC forced the issue of public ownership to the forefront of Labour Party politics. Right from the start of the war, it 'insisted that what had been brought into the public sector must not be returned to private hands'.[22]

Resolutions concerning the ownership of industry had frequently been raised and supported at Labour conferences before 1914 and in this respect the principle of nationalisation was not alien to the labour movement. However, these resolutions tended to be supported only in isolation. Demands for the adoption of a more general socialist objective were less successful or were not seriously considered. What had changed as a result of wartime experience and the activities of the WEWNC, Harrison claims, was that public ownership 'was now a global demand' among organised labour and that this demand led to clause IV.[23]

While Harrison believes that the impact of war helped convince the general bulk of the labour movement of the need for party reform, Jay Winter believes that another momentous event helped to convince Arthur Henderson. Winter claims that 'Henderson came to advocate the reconstruction of the Labour Party only after and partly as a result of his visit to Russia in mid-1917'.[24] In fact, Henderson had been involved in attempts at party reform before 1917, yet his visit to Russia and experience of Bolshevism convinced him of the importance of Labour's role in preventing revolutionary organisations from flourishing in Britain.[25] More generally, however, Winter agrees with Harrison that wartime advances and war-related political and industrial struggles explain why Labour's reconstruction took place.[26]

Clearly, wartime developments had a significant impact on the timing and nature of Labour's reorganisation in 1918. After all, attempts to reform the party before 1914 had met with widespread opposition, and the fact that this opposition declined during the war suggests that developments in that period were important, at least in encouraging certain elements in the labour movement to open their minds to the possibility of change. Certainly, it would be wrong to ignore such aspects of the wartime period as the WEWNC. Nevertheless, while wartime developments were important, Ross McKibbin is probably right in arguing that the changes of 1917-18 'were more likely to have been a response to the Representation of the People Act, which made reorganisation necessary; and to the disintegration of the Liberal Party, which made more apparent courses of action that were already present'.[27]

3.3 Political developments

In 1918, as the Labour party gathered to discuss the proposals for its reorganisation, the executive told the conference that 'this great world conflict has created an entirely new situation'.[28] This was particularly true of changes underway in the British political system. One observer, writing for the American journal *New Republic* in late 1917, claimed that 'a new grouping of political parties in Great Britain is in visible progress'.[29] Reporting on this process, he noted that a new 'National Party', largely the creation of Unionist MP, Henry Page Croft, was drawing support from right-wing Conservatives opposed to Lloyd George.[30] In addition to this, the unfolding political drama in Ireland suggested that the number of Irish Nationalist MPs in the House of Commons would soon be reduced. Most striking of all, however, was the chaotic state of the Liberal party, described as being 'in complete disintegration. The right wing of the party has thrown itself into full co-operation with the Coalition government. The centre gives the government uneasy and unenthusiastic support on patriotic grounds. The left, which is much more influential outside the House of Commons than it is in it, is openly ready to break with the party tradition and strike an alliance, if an alliance on reasonable terms is offered, with the independent and iconoclastic forces of Labour.'[31]

Further evidence of this political shift emerged three months later, when the *Manchester Guardian* reported that a number of left-wing Liberals had gathered in London 'to hear what a member of the Labour Party - or to be more precise of the ILP - Mr W. C. Anderson, had to say about the future of democratic politics...One might say that it consisted of advanced Liberals who are looking longingly at the Labour Party to give them a new political hope.'[32] Labour's new constitution, with its provision for individual membership, was regarded as the 'bridge' over which a substantial block of the Liberal left would pass into the Labour camp.[33] In some respects, therefore, Labour's new constitution aimed to take advantage of the political disruption caused by the war. Arthur Henderson suggested as much when he speculated in 1917 that a new political climate would soon prevail. 'Two great parties will emerge. The hand and brain workers, and the adherents of democracy, will come together, perhaps under the Labour Party name. Against them will be the party of the capitalists, in which capital will be organised more strongly than ever before.'[34]

3.4 The franchise factor

The provision for individual membership of the party was a crucial component of the new constitution, and promised to act as an avenue for former Liberals to enter the party. More generally, however, it was regarded as a necessary response to the extension of the franchise. Henderson believed that the forthcoming Representation of the People Act made reorganisation essential if Labour was ever to become a serious political force. In a lecture delivered to the Fabian Society he outlined the effects of the new electoral register and how the party should address them. In 1914, the register contained eight million names. The new electoral register would increase this number to 16,300,000; the additional voters would consist of five million married women, mostly wives of working men, one million single women, and two million more men. The new House would now contain 710 members. Previously, Labour had run no more than 78 candidates across Britain at any one time and Henderson believed that this had to be rectified. 'We must run', he said, 'enough candidates to ensure that the new electors do not join other parties because Labour is not in the field.'[35]

On 26 September 1917 Henderson presented the NEC with proposals for reorganisation 'with a view to a wider extension of membership, the strengthening and development of local parties in the constituencies, together with the promotion of a larger number of candidatures, and the suggestion that a Party programme should be adopted'. The committee, 'recognising the need for reorganisation and strengthening of the Party', resolved to appoint a sub-committee dealing with the process consisting of the chairman (W.F. Purdy), treasurer (MacDonald), and the secretary and Messrs. Hutchinson, Robinson, Wake, Wardle and Webb.[36] In fact, NEC minutes show that two months prior to this meeting, and the establishment of a 'Party Re-organisation Sub-Committee', a draft version of the later adopted constitution had already been submitted; plans for altering the constitution had been in the pipeline for some time. As indicated above, attempts had been made for many years to open up party membership, yet opposition from the ILP and the trade unions had always prevented such changes being made. The effects of war now created a climate in which such an attempt might succeed. Speaking at Hammersmith Labour Council, in 1918, S. Higgenbotam, the party's national organiser, 'condemned the pre-war tendency on the part of prominent men in the Labour Party to think that it was big enough. The war...had taught them that a handful was no use'.[37] The executive now felt confident enough to announce to conference that the confederal structure adopted in 1899 was 'altogether inadequate' and that fundamental changes had to be made.[38]

Sidney Webb argued that it was 'unreasonable practically to exclude from the party all the men who do not enter through the narrow gate of trade unionism or that of membership of a definitely Socialist propagandist body'. Moreover, the party had to consider the many women who were not eligible for trade union membership. Hence, it now proposed to construct local Labour branches admitting members on an individual basis. Under this system, wrote Webb, 'it is hoped to enrol...and to enlist in the service of the party, not only many hundreds of thousands of new working class electors, but also to attract many men and women of the shopkeeping, manufacturing, and professional classes who are dissatisfied with the old political parties'.[39]

Ramsay MacDonald, assessing these developments in the *Socialist Review*, believed his contemporaries were 'witnessing the birth of a new political party, for the new constitution of the Labour Party is so intended'.[40] The initial formation of the Labour party as the LRC, under the eyes of the TUC, had prevented Labour from becoming anything more than a political machine for securing trade union and socialist nominees for parliament. That machine, he believed, 'can do no more without transforming itself'. The party had 'discovered two great faults in itself': it had failed to cultivate 'young and active intelligences' and instead had been forced to allocate its best positions to ageing trade unionists whose 'pursuits and methods...were but a poor training for Parliamentary life'. The new Reform Bill, MacDonald believed, had 'compelled the Party to examine itself' in view of its future parliamentary role.[41]

Webb made a similar point, asserting that Labour 'must have, not only the right purpose, but also the right measures; and this means brains and training. It is altogether admirable...that its leader...Henderson, should have made his appeal to those younger men who have enjoyed the advantages of a wider education than the workman can secure, and of a training other than that of life at the forge, to come into the Labour Party, and work side by side with the trade union leaders, within Parliament and without, at the social and economic problems with which it has to grapple'.[42] The extension of Labour's membership, along with the construction of a party programme, can thus be seen as an attempt to infuse the party with a greater intellectual capacity and also to widen its electoral appeal. As Henderson explained at the time, the reconstruction 'will serve to remove the idea that the Party is the Party of the manual wage earners merely, and that its politics is the politics of the Trade Unions'.[43] Labour, 'had never in the proper sense claimed to be a national party'.[44] Recent changes meant it now had to do so.

3.5 The construction of the 1918 constitution

For Henderson's scheme to be accepted at conference the support of the unions was critical. In his work for the re-organisation sub-committee he had been on frequent visits to constituency Labour parties and trade union officials, in an attempt to build up support for his proposals. According to McKibbin, these visits were devoted 'almost entirely to those areas where opposition might have been expected'.[45] Nevertheless, the reports of these meetings consistently showed widespread support and enthusiasm for the new plans. On visiting the Glasgow Labour party, for example, Henderson noted 'the complete willingness on the part of all concerned to co-operate in bringing into existence a new organisation on our draft lines'.[46]

Yet, despite these apparently favourable reactions, Beatrice Webb's diary shows that on the eve of the January 1918 conference, Henderson was 'nervous about the rejection of his new constitution by the block vote of the big unions'.[47] Indeed, there were still many leading trade unionists who did not see the need to establish a more powerfully independent Labour party. Tom Shaw, for example, secretary of the Textile-Cotton Union, was one of those who Beatrice Webb described as wanting Labour 'to remain the preserve of the officials of the great Unions....making terms with either of the principal parties and securing places for leading trade union officials either as Ministers or as permanent officials'.[48]

Thus, Henderson faced strong opposition from the conservative section of the trade unions, notably the Manchester-based Catholic Federation, who were alarmed at the apparent transformation of Labour into a Socialist party and began to tout the possibility of creating a right-wing Trade Union party. Opposition was not restricted to this group, however. Henderson also faced obstacles in the form of revolutionary syndicalists, who opposed parliamentarism and would block any further movement in this direction. More importantly, the ILP was eager to construct a 'People's party' and wanted to reduce trade union power, but was concerned that the creation of rival local Labour parties would reduce its own membership. Speaking at the ILP conference in 1918, R. Climie, of Kilmarnock, claimed that Labour's decision to admit individual members 'was a direct challenge to the Socialists in the Party'.[49] Responding to this array of opponents, Henderson tinkered with the constitution in an effort to placate them. Although this meant he and Webb were forced to adapt their plans and grant concessions where they would have preferred not to, they felt the most important thing was to reorganise the party in time for the new franchise. For the first time since its creation, Labour was presented with an opportunity to establish itself, in place of the Liberals, as an alternative party of government to the Conservatives.

Henderson's role in the passage of the new constitution was crucial, and represents a key point in Labour party history. Along with Webb, he carefully constructed a design that gained the approval of the majority of those groups and individuals concerned. One of the best examples of their delicate balancing act was the form of words used to produce the party's socialist objective (clause IV) and its immediate programme, *Labour and the New Social Order*, officially adopted at a special conference in June 1918. Significantly, the word 'socialism' still did not appear in the constitution, but there was no doubting the implications of clause IV, which called for 'common ownership of the means of production'. Building on this, *Labour and the New Social Order* provided the party with a manifesto for the future. Outlining specific industries which Labour would put under state control, such as the mines, railways and electricity, it explained that the various detailed proposals of the Labour party rested on four central pillars: 'The Universal Enforcement of the National Minimum'; 'The Democratic Control of Industry'; 'The Revolution in National Finance'; and 'The Surplus Wealth for the Common Good'.

However, neither clause IV nor the programme that set out Labour's aims in more detail reflected a significant lurch to the left. McBriar claims that the socialism written into the constitution was of 'a very moderate, constitutional, evolutionary kind'.[50] Indeed, the vagueness of this declaration is illustrated in pronouncements made by Sidney Webb, who claimed that while clause IV brought Labour 'decidedly under the general designation of Socialist, it is a Socialism which is no more specific than a definite repudiation of the individualism that characterised all political parties...that still dominate the House of Commons'.[51] Such a blurred vision of socialism inevitably raised more questions than it answered. That was at least consistent: while Labour members were often clear about what they opposed they were less definite about what they stood for. This was picked up by a Tory opponent during a House of Commons debate on socialism in 1923. Noting that Labour members were less concerned to praise socialism than to condemn capitalism, Sir Alfred Mond pointed out that they 'draw a lurid picture but then, when it comes to the remedy, they say very little about it'.[52] However, it was precisely because of its flexibility and vagueness that clause IV was acceptable to trade union elements in the party.

As the senior Liberal, Sir Lynden Macassey, noted in 1920, 'one of Labour's devices is ever to secure temporary solidarity by elastic and vague general principles'.[53] The formula of nationalisation and democratic control outlined in clause IV and *Labour and the New Social Order* was one such device. For, as Rodney Barker points out, under MacDonald and his successors, nationalisation 'provided the fold within which...the socialist lion, the trade union sheep and the starry eyed child of liberal idealism had lain down together'.[54] So long as Labour was not in office, the details of how clause IV should be implemented could be avoided and the socialist commitment used as a unifying force. In fact, it is interesting to note that during this period clause IV attracted very little attention. In conference reports, newspapers, and journal articles the adoption of a socialist objective passed almost unnoticed.

In 1918 the issues of real concern to those in the Labour party related to conditions of membership and voting rights. Even the ILP, which had fought to get Labour to adopt socialism as its programme for many years, did not view clause IV as the main priority. According to McKibbin, they had long seen that 'a nominal adherence to socialism in no way diminished the power of the predominantly anti-socialist unions within the party'.[55] Instead, both the unions and the ILP seem 'to have concluded that the composition of the National Executive was at the heart of the constitution'.[56] Previously a federal executive, a constitutional amendment in 1917 had weakened the position of ILP members and they had hoped for changes to be made in their favour at the conference in January 1918.

However, this proved not to be the case and the new party structure was heavily weighted in the trade unions favour. Under the new structure, the ILP and other socialist societies were deprived of any guaranteed representation on the national executive. Instead, the NEC was enlarged from 16 to 21 members of which 11 were to represent members of national affiliated organisations as a single group, including socialist societies and trade unions. Five seats were allotted to local Labour parties, four were reserved for women, with the treasurer taking the final place. However, as G.D.H. Cole describes, 'whereas previously each section had elected its own representatives, now only nominations were to be made separately for each section' and all groups had to be voted on by the entire conference, which was dominated by the trade unions.[57]

Yet even this arrangement did not satisfy the unions. They continued to block Henderson's efforts until further concessions were granted, forcing the January conference to be halted. Reporting on the manoeuvrings at the reconvened conference in February, *Labour Leader*, the newspaper of the ILP, concluded that the opposition of the big unions had 'apparently been bought off by the offer of two additional seats on the National Executive Committee'.[58] This meant that membership of the NEC grew to 23 in number, of which 13 at least were directly controlled by trade unions. These actions, according to *Labour Leader*, 'put the trade unions in the position of having overwhelming control of the executive of the party'.[59]

The increasing strength of the trade unions within the party exacerbated tensions among other sections of the labour movement, especially in the ILP. *Labour Leader* declared that the actions seen at the reconvened conference 'shows that the worst principles and practices of the plutocratic political parties can find shelter under the cloak of a profession of democracy'.[60] The possibility of a split in the Labour party now became increasingly likely. Beatrice Webb observed in her diaries at this time that 'the cleavage between the somewhat neurotic intellectuals of the ILP and the trade unions is becoming more marked'.[61]

The prospect of the ILP leaving the party caused concern for Henderson, not least because it would make the implementation of the constituency parties more difficult. As Cole points out, Henderson and Webb were well aware, if the trade unions were not, 'that the new Labour Party could by no means afford to do without the ILP's help, because its members were the tried experts in local organisation'.[62] If Labour was to successfully build up its local machinery, their knowledge and experience would be invaluable. Yet, because of the money they provided, it was more important that the Labour leadership won the support of the unions to the new scheme. As Henderson had earlier made clear, they could not in all practicality tell the trade unions that they had no formal use for them.[63] It was almost inevitable, then, that the internal structure of the party would be engineered to give the unions maximum control.

Naturally, this upset non-trade unionists, and Ramsay MacDonald commented that 'every day that passes increases rather than diminishes the reasons why the ILP should dissociate itself with the Labour Party'.[64] Aware of the growing disaffection being expressed by groups such as the ILP at the form which the new constitution was beginning to take, the authors of the scheme sought to offer a positive justification for the central position being given to the trade unions inside the party. Arthur Henderson offered reassurance by claiming that the trade union connection 'saves the party from any temptation to lower its standards of financial purity, and absolves it from the necessity of accepting the subsidies of wealthy men, who would naturally claim in return a secret control over the party machine'.[65] Critics pointed out that under the proposed system trade unions would demand a large degree of control over the party. In response to this, Sidney Webb declared that 'all political parties are subject in their choice of policy, and in their decision upon particular issues, to the bias given by the social environment of their predominant membership'. But, he continued, 'so long as the British Labour Party is anchored in the trade union movement...we may rely confidently on its dominant bias being always for the mitigation of that inequality of circumstance which at present brutalizes our population and disgraces our civilisation'.[66] Finally, Henderson stressed the importance of the network of local Labour parties and the provision for individual members laid out in the new constitution. Under this scheme, he claimed, 'the centre of gravity...is shifted from the national societies to the constituency organisations upon which the main burden of electoral organisation and political propaganda will fall'.[67]

In fact, this was cold comfort for the ILP, which looked upon the plans for local Labour parties as a considerable threat to its own local organisation. Consequently, when the ILP conference in 1918 debated whether or not to put forward a nomination for the Labour NEC, the subsequent report showed the party to be heavily divided. However, while recognising that the unions were trying to push them out of the party, the conference resolved to fight the ILP corner and the motion was passed with 301 votes for and 74 against.[68] The ILP's decision to maintain its position within the Labour party signalled a major victory for Henderson and his comrades. The new constitution was implemented in February 1918, along with the adoption of a party programme - *Labour and the New Social Order* - at the June conference later that year. Significantly, Labour had put in place the conditions necessary for its post-war expansion without creating a formal division within the movement.

3.6 The significance of the 1918 constitution

Opinions on Labour's programme of reconstruction have varied greatly. Of particular interest are the claims, made by writers such as Mary Hamilton, that following reconstruction in 1918 Labour became 'quite definitely, a socialist party'.[69] Twenty years later, G.D.H. Cole took a similar line, stating that *Labour and the New Social Order* 'unequivocally committed the Labour party to Socialist objectives'.[70] Since the publication of these accounts the consensus of opinion among historians suggests that this was not the case. According to Barker, the adoption of socialism in 1918 'was largely an illusion'.[71] Clause IV and the subsequent party programme, he claims, were 'cast at such a level of generality that it committed the party to virtually nothing'.[72] This view also receives strong support from McKibbin, who cites the widespread involvement of the trade unions in the formulation of Labour's constitution as the reason why clause IV and *Labour and the New Social Order* were so ambiguous.

McKibbin suggests that clause IV was implanted 'partly as a sop to the professional bourgeoisie', for whom socialism had become politically appealing, and partly because it helped to sharpen the divide between Labour and its political opponents at a time when the party was striving for greater independence.[73] It should be added that Labour was opening its ranks to individual members at this time, and so a socialist commitment served as a useful way of screening new recruits. Samuel Beer has argued along these lines, claiming that the adoption of socialism was functional to Labour's choice of political independence.[74] He believes that socialist ideas were only developed as a consequence of Labour's thrust for power. Thus, for him, clause IV did not signify the establishment of socialist beliefs in the Labour party, but represented a rallying point for the party's disparate elements and, for the unions, an acceptable concession if the labour movement was to remain united.

In any case, as we have seen, the significance of clause IV at the time was considerably less than it was to become later. The real battleground in the establishment of the 1918 constitution lay with issues of voting and membership. Once again, developments in these areas suggest that the constitution was significant primarily because of the power it gave to the unions. Despite the introduction of individual membership into the party, Labour retained much of its traditional federal structure. As McKibbin notes, Henderson and his colleagues were so aware of the need to reorganise the party, and of the necessity of having trade union support, that they acceded to union demands to formalise their practice of voting as a block in conference - thereby not registering minority elements within them.[75] Consequently, trade union members dominated the NEC which required nominees for its posts to be subject to votes by the whole conference which the unions had the power to control. The role of conference and the NEC in the development of Labour policies also offered the unions further control of the party. Clause V (1) of the constitution stated that conference would decide by a two-thirds majority what proposals were to be included in the party programme, while clause V (2) allocated the task of preparing an election manifesto to the NEC and parliamentary committee of the PLP. Clause VI stated that 'the work of the party shall be under the direction and control of the party conference'.[76]

In particular, the constitution accelerated the demise of the ILP in the party. Although choosing to remain affiliated to the party, the effects of rival local Labour parties in the constituencies and the weakening of their position in the internal machinery of the Labour party ensured ILP influence would gradually be eroded. In the long run, claims McBriar, the new constitution 'made possible that separation in the 1930s which was to prove fatal'.[77] In their place, as we have seen, the Fabian Society began to exert an intellectual influence. The role of prominent Fabians such as Sidney Webb in drafting the new constitution has been well documented. Commenting on *Labour and the New Social Order*, Margaret Cole described it as 'nearly as possible the purest milk of the Fabian word'.[78] Labour, it seemed, had accepted Fabianism as its doctrinal basis - but only at the expense of trade union control over the party organisation.

The fact that Labour's new constitution gave the trade unions such potential for control of the party has led to the charge that 1918, quite definitely, did not see Labour become a socialist party. It is hard to disagree with McKibbin's claim that 'in all essentials the trade unions had their way'.[79] However, it is easy to take the unions position of formal hegemony within the party as a signal of how Labour would behave after 1918. As Robert McKenzie notes, 'During most of Labour's history it has been overwhelmingly clear that the initiative in the main areas of policy making...has lain with the Parliamentary leaders than with their trade union allies'.[80]

In fact, this was evident in the 1920s, shortly after the constitution had been adopted. In this period, as Stuart Macintyre notes, Ramsay MacDonald led the party during its first term in office 'in a notoriously autocratic manner'.[81] Prepared to send troops in to deal with striking dockers and determined to move Labour away from its role as merely a trade union watchdog, MacDonald was able to take an independent line from trade union demands, and attacked the actions of unions in striking for higher wages and limited output as not being socialism. Moreover, he was able to act in this way despite the dominant position of the unions in Labour's political machinery.

Macintyre disputes the claim that the powers the unions were granted in 1918 significantly determined Labour's future political role. Instead, he believes that the actions of 1918 did establish Labour as an independent political force and pointed to the emergence of an ideology distinct from 'Labourism' - that exclusive concern with manual workers' interests commonly held to have dominated trade union and Labour party thinking. As Macintyre notes, Labour's parliamentary leaders at this time claimed to be socialists, though this was not socialism in Marxian terms. Rather, it was what he describes as 'Labour Socialism', an ideology which looked beyond Labourist 'bread-and-butter' issues regarding wage demands and working conditions, towards a fundamental reconstruction of society.

Labour Socialism also differed from Labourism in that it did not talk the language of class conflict. As early as 1911, MacDonald declared that the anti-socialist 'makes class appeals; the socialist makes social appeals'.[82] Such a view is consistent with pronouncements made during debates on the 1918 constitution. At the June conference that year the chairman stated that Labour 'aimed to secure that all classes as far as possible, shall come together'.[83] Indeed the terms of clause IV, referring to workers 'by hand or brain', is further evidence for the existence of a Labour Socialist ideology.

Many Labourists never looked upon the Labour party as being anything more than a pressure group. For them the notion of 'party' was itself anathema. They regarded Labour as no more than a means for securing representation for working men in Westminster. To some extent, as Jon Lawrence has shown, it was precisely this anti-party feeling which had attracted many trade unionists to the idea of a Labour alliance in the first place.[84] Labour was not considered a new political party at all, but instead as 'an alternative to party politics', a Labour group to address labour questions.[85] Consequently, the new constitution establishing Labour as a national party reopened the old pre-war tensions about the ultimate purpose of the organisation. For a minority, the reconstruction was too radical a departure and forced them to leave the party amidst attempts to form a rival independent Trade Union party.[86] Although that came to nothing, a Centre Labour party advocating a policy of Christian Democracy was subsequently formed, with its base in Manchester.[87] Dominated by Catholics, the new party emerged as a direct response to Labour's 1918 reorganisation, which it claimed had set the party 'on a course to abolish private ownership'.[88]

In fact, had they listened more carefully, adherents of the Centre Labour party would have been reassured to find that, even after 1918, it was still common to hear Labour MPs telling voters, 'If they had politics at all in a working class community...it must be bread-and-butter politics'.[89] That said, while defensive Labourist voices still abounded in the party, Macintyre argues that the new constitution had indeed 'set loose powerful Labour Socialist forces'.[90] The establishment of a national network of constituency parties based on individual membership meant political activity was organised 'on a geographical basis drawing individuals without regard to their class or background', while even trade unionists participated in the party as individuals. Thus, the establishment of a more autonomous local organisation helped to undermine the power of trade unions as institutions, and in so doing weakened the influence of Labourism. Party organisers openly declared that the local parties would help transfer power away from the unions to the rank and file and these changes, Macintyre claims, facilitated the spread of Labour Socialist ideology. Henceforward, 'community rather than class became the party's point of reference and...class rhetoric was increasingly eschewed in the party's pronouncements'.[91] Consequently, Macintyre believes that in 1918 Labour became a national party prepared for office, no longer satisfied with its position as a trade union pressure group.

3.7 Conclusion

There can be little doubt that the constitutional reorganisation undertaken after the war marked a decisive turning point in the history of the Labour party - and in British politics. Having been a fairly narrow, sectional grouping before 1914, Labour emerged after 1918 as a genuinely independent political party with ambitions to form a government. Determined to take advantage of the Liberals' internal strife and acknowledging the opportunities for electoral advance created by the extension of the franchise, Labour's leadership sought to reorganise the party as a mass membership organisation with a broad base and a comprehensive political programme. To this end, Henderson and Webb set about providing a blue print for the construction of a national network of local parties admitting members on an individual basis, and formulated a manifesto with common ownership of industry at its heart.

For some, the constitutional reorganisation transformed Labour into a proper Duvergian-style mass political party, with socialism as its creed. However, while acknowledging the importance of the changes enacted by Henderson and Webb, critics argue that the constitution of 1918 failed to really alter the party's character and composition. The advances made, they argue, were only secured at the cost of increasing trade union influence within the party, which prevented Labour from becoming truly socialist. Thus, while clause IV won the support of the unions, their conversion to socialism must be treated with some scepticism. As Tim May points out, 'so far as the trade unions were interested in the 1918 constitution, it was the organisational rather than the ideological aspects that concerned them', and in this sphere, there is no doubt that they had their way. Given overwhelming control over the party conference, the unions were also provided with a majority on the national executive.

However, although the unions became the dominant element in the organisation and finance of the party, potential control over the central machinery did not guarantee control over policy. Indeed, the experience of two minority Labour governments in 1924 and 1929-31 quickly showed that the parliamentary leadership was able to pursue its own political line, often at variance with union demands, and emphasised that the Labour party and the trade unions 'were far from being the same body under two different labels'.[92] Yet, the fact that the leadership of the Labour party was able to defy the trade union hierarchy is not in itself evidence that the constitution had worked as intended. After all, the 1918 reorganisation was designed to make Labour into a mass political party appealing to a wider spectrum of the electorate than ever before. Central to this end was the establishment of a network of local branches, based on individually subscribing members. Only if this aspect of the reconstruction was achieved could Labour claim to have fundamentally altered its character and composition from a sectional, Labourist grouping, into a national, ideologically stronger party. With this point in mind, it is now intended to examine the development of local Labour organisation in the Manchester area in order to assess how the proposed constitutional changes functioned in reality.

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[1] A. Henderson, 'The Outlook for Labour', *Contemporary Review*, (113) 1918, p.122.

[2] Gould, *Unfinished Revolution*, pp.26-27.

[3] Shaw, *Discipline and Discord*, p.1.

[4] Chairman's Address, Labour Representation Committee Foundation Conference Report, (hereafter LRCCR), 1900, p.15.

[5] LRCCR, 1903, p.26.

[6] LRCCR, 1900, p.12.

[7] LRCCR, 1903, p.26.

[8] LRCCR, 1901, p.21.

[9] LRCCR, 1902, p.23.

[10] Labour Party Conference Report (hereafter LPCR), 1906, p.53.

[11] LPCR, 1908, p.58.

[12] *Manchester Guardian* (hereafter MG), 24 January 1924.

[13] B. Waites, 'Popular Politics in WW1 and the post-war period', *Popular Politics 1870-1950*, (Open University Course Guide), p.16.

[14] LPCR, 1914, p.4 [my italics].

[15] M. Hamilton, *Arthur Henderson*, (1931), p.177.

[16] LPCR, 1912, p.85.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., p.84

[19] Ibid., p.85.

[20] A. M. McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics, 1884-1918*, (Cambridge, 1962), p.341.

[21] M. Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, (1961), p.169.

[22] R. Harrison, 'The War Emergency Workers' National Committee 1914-20', (eds.) Asa Briggs & John Saville, *Essays in Labour History*, pp.211-60, Vol.2, p.254.

[23] Ibid., p.254.

[24] J. M. Winter, 'Arthur Henderson, the Russian Revolution, and the Reconstruction of the Labour Party', *Historical Journal*, 4 (15) 1972, p.753.

[25] Ibid., p.771.

[26] J. M. Winter, Conference Report on 'Labour and Politics in the Great War', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, (34) 1977, p.4.

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[27] R. McKibbin, Conference Report, Ibid., p.4.

[28] LPCR, (January) 1918, p.98.

[29] *New Republic*, 'British Labor in the Ascendant', 1 December 1917, p.118.

[30] P. Barberis, J. McHugh & M. Tyldsley, *Encyclopaedia of British and Irish Political Organisations*, (2000), p.189. Although a short-lived grouping, the National Party did cause some disruption to the Conservative Party, standing twenty-five candidates in the 1918 'coupon election'.

[31] *New Republic*, 1 December 1917, p.119.

[32] MG, 6 March 1918.

[33] *New Republic*, 1 December 1917.

[34] *Fabian News*, 2 (29) January 1918, p.6.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Labour Party National Executive Committee (hereafter NEC) Minutes, 26 September 1917, no.138.

[37] Higgenbotam quoted by Waites, *Popular Politics*, p.16.

[38] LPCR, (January) 1918, p.99.

[39] S. Webb, 'The Reorganisation of the British Labor Party', *New Republic*, 8 December 1917, p.150.

[40] R. MacDonald, 'The Review Outlook', *Socialist Review*, (15/16) 1918, p.6.

[41] Ibid., p.7.

[42] Webb, 'Reorganisation of the British Labor Party', p.152.

[43] Henderson, 'Outlook for Labour', p.122.

[44] LPCR, (January) 1918, p.99.

[45] McKibbin, *Evolution*, p.98.

[46] NEC Minutes, no date.

[47] M. Cole (ed.), *Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1912-24*, (1952) p.106.

[48] Ibid., p.106.

[49] ILP Conference Report (hereafter ILPCR), 1918, p.51.

[50] McBriar, *Fabian Socialism*, p.343.

[51] *New Republic*, 8 December 1917, p.150.

[52] House of Commons Debates (Fifth Series),1923, vol.161, col.2493.

[53] L. Macassey, 'The Labour Party and its Policy', *Quarterly Review*, (234) October 1920, p.333.

[54] R. Barker, *Education and politics 1900-1951: A study of the Labour Party*, (1972) p.82.

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[55] McKibbin, *Evolution*, p.98.

[56] Ibid., p.98.

[57] G. D. H. Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*, (1948), p.48.

[58] *Labour Leader*, 28 February 1918.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] M. Cole (ed.), *Diaries*, p.107.

[62] Cole, *History*, p.46.

[63] LPCR, (January) 1918, p.99.

[64] MacDonald, 'Review Outlook', p.9.

[65] Henderson, 'Outlook for Labour', p.123.

[66] *New Republic*, 8 December 1917, p.152.

[67] Henderson, 'Outlook for Labour', p.123.

[68] ILPCR, 1918, p.52.

[69] Hamilton, *Henderson*, p.180.

[70] Cole, *History*, p.56.

[71] Barker, *Education*, p.35.

[72] Ibid., p.85.

[73] McKibbin, *Evolution*, p.97.

[74] S. H. Beer, *Modern British Politics*, (1965), p.149.

[75] McKibbin, *Evolution*, p.99; L. Minkin, *The Labour Party Conference*, (Manchester, 1980), p.6.

[76] LPCR, 1965, Appendix IV, p.281.

[77] McBriar, *Fabian Socialism*, p.342.

[78] M. Cole, *Story*, p.172.

[79] McKibbin, *Evolution*, p.102.

[80] McKenzie, *Political*, p.640.

[81] S. Macintyre, 'Socialism, the unions and the Labour Party after 1918', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, (36) 1975, p.103.

[82] MacDonald quoted by Macintyre, Ibid., p.109.

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[83] LPCR, (June) 1918, Chairman's Address.

[84] Cf. J. Lawrence, *Speaking for the People. Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914*, (Cambridge, 1998), pp.250-257.

[85] Ibid., p.254.

[86] Tanner, *Political Change*, p.399.

[87] MG, 24 September 1918.

[88] MG, 31 March 1919.

[89] Joe Toole quoted by S. Fielding, Introduction to the Microfilm Records of the Salford City Labour Party, p.3.

[90] Macintyre, 'Socialism', p.111.

[91] Ibid.

[92] T. C. May, *Trade Unions and Pressure Group Politics*, (Farnborough, 1978), p.24.

Chapter Four

Labour's Organisational Development in Manchester after 1918

Although 1918 saw the Labour conference endorse the leadership's scheme for internal reorganisation, subsequent events demonstrated that those involved in carrying out the reconstruction were still unclear as to the exact form the new organisation should take. Straightforward measures such as the expansion of the NEC could quickly be put into practice, but less easily definable questions such as how to structure the party on a new regional basis took more time to implement. In a draft scheme put before the NEC in late 1919, plans were laid out to divide England, Scotland and Wales into seven areas. Surprisingly, while Scotland was considered a region in itself, Wales was to be split in two, forming part of the north-west and south-west regions. Eventually, this anomaly was rectified, and treating Wales as one whole, the scheme was expanded, dividing Britain into nine regions, each with its own organiser.

The authors of the plan stated that the regional scheme would 'bring the whole country into direct touch with Staff, to ensure periodical visitation, consultation, inspection and report, and would bring every part of the country under the special charge of a Chief Agent, with a responsible official in each area. The present method of having two organisers travelling the whole country has served its purpose and with the growth of the party and the increase of the constituencies, some more direct and comprehensive method is required.'[1] Finally adopted in 1920, the regional scheme was attributed with having established 'a more rapid and efficient organisation of the constituencies' and by 1922 the appointment of regional propagandists provided further help for local parties to mobilise support and co-ordinate election campaigns.[2]

The reconstitution of party organisation on regional lines was a response to plans for the development of a national network of local parties and, as with the regional scheme, it took time to establish what form the local organisation should take. Although Labour's leadership had a basic notion about the structure and role they wished local parties to assume, no precise definition was initially given. Thus, the conception of local organisation continued to evolve throughout the 1920s. It was not until 1929, in fact, that the party finally felt it necessary 'to codify and make more definite and explicit' the various precedents, rulings, and customs which had been derived from the application of the principles of the old constitution.[3]

However, on one aspect of local organisation Labour was clear from the beginning; all sections of the movement - trade unions, socialist societies, individual members' and women's sections - were to be guaranteed representation in the local parties.[4] This principle was enshrined in the 'model rules' for local parties, which held that the new parties would be founded on ward associations comprised of all members of affiliated societies and all individual members living in the ward. Management of the divisional party was to be in the hands of a general committee of four sections: representatives of affiliated unions, of other societies eligible for affiliation, individual members, and a women's section.[5] Finally, an executive committee (EC) was to be formed, composed of persons elected by and from the general management committee (GMC). The provision for representation of each section was explained by Herbert Drinkwater, editor of the journal for party agents, *Labour Organiser*, who claimed that without such a safeguard 'we might readily find the local machinery captured entirely by this or that section in its early days and consciously or unconsciously perverted to its own ends'.[6] Yet, while the local constitutions had to provide representation for all sections, no attempt was made to state exactly what proportion of each section should be elected to the ECs of the local parties. Drinkwater accounted for this by saying that 'the composition and relative strength of the various movements vary widely in different localities; a hard and fast rule could not work universally well, and so is left alone.'[7] However, some saw the omission as a concession to the unions, as they were the strongest element of the movement in most areas and thus had the potential to dominate local parties.

Indeed, for all their hopes of constructing a network of local parties based on a large and varied individual membership, Labour's organisers quickly submitted to Henderson's judgement that it was impossible for the party to break its special bond with the unions. As the *Labour Organiser* put it in 1922, the 'first endeavour' of those involved in building the new constituency machinery should be 'to try and get possession of all possible information concerning the latent Trade Unionism in the Division'.[8] Such comments led Ross McKibbin to argue that most of the new parties were 'not strikingly different, if they were different at all, from the pre-war delegate parties' - parties whose only members were delegates from affiliated societies, and whose strength derived essentially from trade union branches. 'Almost everywhere', he claims, 'the proliferating trades councils became the local agencies of the Labour Party'.[9] Christopher Howard took this argument further and asserted that trade union domination of local parties prevented the construction of a vibrant network of active local parties.[10] Instead of investigating the possibilities for ideological and social mobilisation that an individual membership may have offered, Labour's senior officials were seemingly content to allow the party to continue as a purely electoral machine in which the trade unions held the central place.[11]

These accounts of Labour's local organisation have since been challenged by more recent work, which asserts that the picture was at least more nuanced than these descriptions suggest. Though trade unions remained a major element in local party organisation after 1918, Stefan Berger has shown that Labour was keen to move away from the pre-1914, union-dominated style of organisation.[12] He demonstrates how the party's senior organisers gave encouragement to 'machine-building' and instituted regular campaigns to recruit individual members. While the results were patchy, it is not true to say that these measures met with universal failure. Michael Savage has shown that, in Preston, Labour organisation was transformed in the 1920s from a party dominated by trade unions to one based around ward activity in the neighbourhoods.[13] Individual membership was sizeable and women played a key role in the organisation.[14] Gillian Rose has shown that a similar style of Labour organisation arose in Poplar.[15] There, too, the party arranged its activity on a neighbourhood basis, and acquired an unusually large individual membership - in 1923, South Poplar constituency had the biggest individual membership of any London division. Furthermore, as in Preston, women were prominent in the organisation; Bow and Bromley Labour party women's section had over 600 members.[16] Woolwich and Barrow-in-Furness Labour parties also had large women's sections - over 1000 members in each group - and also boasted mass male memberships. Elsewhere, Labour parties in Huddersfield, Derby and Leeds claimed individual memberships of between 600 and 2500 by the mid-1920s.[17] In these areas, Labour was apparently more successful in gathering a mass individual membership than writers such as McKibbin and Howard have suggested.

Nevertheless, though it is unfair to dismiss Labour's attempts to recruit individuals after 1918 as a failure, it would be equally inaccurate to claim that the sort of memberships outlined above were typical of local parties everywhere. While G.D.H. Cole celebrated the fact of 3000 local parties in 1924, research in localities such as Liverpool suggests that many of these led little more than a paper existence. In that city, Sam Davies found Labour organisation in a chaotic state.[18] A variety of factors, most notably the prevalence of sectarianism and the resistance of unskilled workers to Labour's message, prevented the development of Labour politics and the recruitment of members. In 1925, individual party membership for the entire city totalled just 960, and though new recruits were subsequently made, it seems that many quickly drifted away. Instead, the party remained reliant on affiliated organisations and succumbed to a style of 'boss politics' in which powerful individuals dominated local machinery.[19] In view of its unique socio-economic composition, Liverpool has been seen as something of an exception and therefore unrepresentative of political development elsewhere. However, some of the problems identified in that city seemingly beset Labour parties in more typical areas.

In 1965, a study of constituency politics in Newcastle-under-Lyme concluded that 1947-50 was the only period in history when a 'well-organised mass Labour Party' existed in the area.[20] Before 1939, Josiah Wedgwood's domination of the local party apparently prevented the organisation from expanding.[21] In other areas, notably in Birmingham and the depressed districts of London, the high proportion of unskilled, unorganised workers in the local economy produced a weak trade union movement which in turn hindered Labour's attempts to organise.[22] In Leicester, political developments were to blame for weak organisation. In that city, D. Cox showed that the strong organisation established by the ILP before 1914 denied Labour access to individual members when it tried to construct its own organisation after 1918. Unable to compete with the ILP, Labour membership remained at a low level throughout the 1920s, with the result that local organisation was inactive and heavily reliant on affiliated bodies.[23] A similar state of affairs existed in Coventry, where the decision of the local ILP to form an alliance with the Communist party in 1918 undermined Labour's ability to construct effective party machinery. Although the Coventry Labour party managed to recruit its one thousandth member in 1925, four years later its membership had dwindled to 500 and by the 1930s it was lower than in smaller satellite towns such as Nuneaton and Rugby.[24]

So, which reality was more typical and what factors influenced the size and quality of Labour's organisation during the 1920s? In an effort to provide answers to these questions, the rest of this chapter explores the state of local party machinery in Manchester, focusing on the role of trade unions, the efforts to recruit individual members, and the development of women's and youth sections. First, however, it is necessary to provide a brief description of how Labour organisation evolved in Manchester before the First World War.

4.1 The origins of Labour party organisation in Manchester

Manchester Labour's formal origins can be dated to 1902, when the Manchester and Salford Trades Council (MSTC) - a body of local trade union delegates - called a meeting of trade union, ILP and Social Democratic Federation (SDF) representatives, at which the Manchester and Salford LRC (MSLRC) was established. This development represented the culmination of years of work and actually owed more to the activities of the local ILP than the trades council. Formed in May 1892, one year earlier than the national ILP, the Manchester and Salford ILP (MSILP) had worked avidly during the 1890s to convert the local trades council to the cause of independent labour representation.[25] This was not an easy process. The MSTC had traditionally been close to the Liberal Party and was initially suspicious of the ILP, which it correctly regarded as a socialist organisation. The local SDF, meanwhile, a Marxist-based grouping with strong support in South Salford, was distrustful of the non-socialist trades council, which it feared might pollute its ideology.[26] Consequently, though it was involved in the consultations which helped to form the Manchester and Salford LRC, the SDF initially refused to have an official role in the new body.

Nevertheless, the group did not shun all contact and a degree of co-ordination between the various bodies was evident during municipal elections in the early years of the century. This period saw a growth in support for independent labour politics and by 1906 the Manchester and Salford ILP totalled 13 branches with a combined membership of 810, while the SDF also reported progress.[27] The increasing strength of these organisations and the growing involvement of 'Labour' candidates in local elections led to calls for greater cohesion among the different bodies.[28] The local LRC was the obvious means for achieving this and in the run-up to the 1906 general election that body was given power over the selection and placement of parliamentary candidates in Manchester and Salford.

Operating in accordance with the terms of the secret electoral agreement negotiated by national LRC secretary, Ramsay MacDonald, and Liberal chief whip, Herbert Gladstone, the MSLRC ensured that Labour candidates were kept away from divisions where Liberals were running. In the event, the progressive alliance worked well, and in Manchester all the sitting Conservative MPs were unseated by six Liberals and three Labour MPs.[29] Following this triumph, the Manchester and Salford LRC was given power to co-ordinate future municipal and parliamentary election campaigns. Moreover, in the euphoria of the occasion the South Salford SDF voted to affiliate to the MSLRC, restoring its connection with the ILP, which was already strongly represented on that body. Although trade union branches and the trades council were also heavily represented, the existence of a strong LRC meant primary political power in the Manchester labour movement lay not in the hands of a trade union or trades council, as in many other areas, but with an established Labour party. Indeed, according to Ross McKibbin, the pre-war Manchester and Salford LRC was 'probably the most effective central party' in the country.[30] As a result, when the blueprint for the construction of a network of local parties was outlined in 1918, the Manchester Labour party was better placed than most to react to the change.

4.2 The construction of Labour party organisation in Manchester after 1918

Nevertheless, the construction of Labour's new organisation in Manchester was not an entirely smooth process. Many trade unionists were clearly suspicious of the proposed local parties, and were especially concerned by Labour's decision to admit individual members. Significantly, the Manchester and Salford Trades Council had only voted by the narrow majority of 71 to 66 to instruct its delegates to the 1918 Labour conference to vote in support of this measure, and even after the constitution had been ratified sections of the labour movement in Manchester refused to adhere to some of the new rulings. This opposition reflected the fears of some trade unions that participation in the new organisation would entail a loss of autonomy. Notably, the Manchester and Salford Trades Council resisted demands for it to merge with the local LRC. Even a direct approach from Henderson failed to resolve the situation and the MSTC continued to affiliate separately to the national party until 1927, when the Trade Union Act created uncertainty over the collection and use of political funds. Gorton Trades Council (GTC) also refused to affiliate or give funds to the MSLRC, despite the fact that boundary changes in 1918 had included the constituency in the Borough of Manchester for the first time - a step which substantially eroded its claim to be separate and distinct. Consistently fighting to maintain its sovereignty in political affairs, Gorton came under severe pressure from the Manchester Labour party to adhere to its constitution, finally capitulating in 1924 after a lengthy dispute. Yet, notwithstanding these problems, Manchester Labour reacted fairly quickly to the changes outlined in the new constitution.

By 1919, a year after Henderson's reorganisation of the party had been approved by the Labour Conference, a divisional Labour party (DLP) existed in every constituency in Manchester and Salford, bar the commercial Exchange division, where a party was formed the following year. These parties soon began organising themselves on the basis outlined in Diagram 1A in the appendix. Although the new organisation was initially arranged on a joint Manchester and Salford basis, in 1920 the Manchester and Salford LRC resolved to split in two. In its place, two separate organisations emerged, the Manchester Borough Labour party (MBLP) and the Salford Central Labour party (SCLP). This amicable divorce was designed to give the Salford Labour movement greater control over its own affairs.[31] At the time of its separation, the new SCLP estimated that, based on the records from 103 of the 156 affiliated branches, membership of the Manchester party was 22,683 while its own membership was 6,528.[32] Although the bulk of this affiliated membership comprised of trade unionists, other smaller groups were also counted among the figures, most notably the ILP, which, with its own national executive, regional organisation and local branches was really a party within a party. Notwithstanding the occasional problems caused by its quasi-independent position, the ILP had co-existed fairly easily alongside Labour before 1914. Even after 1918, despite the concern of its national leaders that Labour's new branches would damage their own organisation, locally the ILP resolved to assist the new bodies. Most ILP members considered that Labour was still not a socialist party and, therefore, that their own party should maintain its propaganda role. Thus, as in Scotland, ILP branches in Manchester and Salford worked closely with the fledgling DLPs, often providing key personnel who did much to establish the new branches.[33] However, while the two organisations initially flourished alongside each other, by the 1930s most ILP branches in Manchester were in terminal decline. The trade unions, on the other hand, managed to retain their powerful position despite the changes, and it was their influence that proved most crucial in shaping and cultivating Labour organisation in the city.

4.3 Local Labour parties and trade unions

Although trade union branches assumed a vital position in the Labour machine in Manchester, their influence was not evident in every local party in the city. The social character of certain divisions, particularly Exchange, Moss Side, Rusholme and Withington, meant that parties in those areas were unable to call on union branches for support, and were instead forced to investigate alternative means of obtaining revenue and personnel, usually through attempts to establish an individual membership. Naturally, this different basis of organisation gave these divisional parties a character distinct from those in more industrial constituencies, such as Ardwick, Clayton, Gorton and Platting, where trade union support was more forthcoming.

Local Labour parties deprived of trade union support were generally weaker, both financially and numerically, than those which gained from such patronage. Especially because of the finance they provided, trade union backing was crucial to the development of a strong organisation. In return for this support, however, local parties had to surrender some of their freedom, most significantly at election times when the most generous trade union usually held sway over candidate selection. Yet, this should not be taken as decisive proof of union domination. Outside of election times, divisional parties enjoyed considerable freedom of action, and although this was partly due to the reluctance of most trade unions to become involved in year-round party work, it at least showed that their control over the political organisation was usually fairly relaxed.

Indeed, far from acting as an obstructive force, the existence of a strong union presence in a division tended to offer greater potential for local party development than in areas devoid of such support. After all, the bulk of Labour activists, and later on individual members, were trade unionists, and even those parties assisted by unions proved amenable to the concept of acquiring an individual membership. In fact, by the end of the decade, the DLPs in Manchester and Salford which most closely matched the ideal enshrined in the 1918 constitution were those in which trade unions were most heavily involved.

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Even before war had ended, Labour activists and organisers in Manchester were working to increase the party's affiliated membership, and between 1917 and 1919 the list of names on the rolls of the Manchester and Salford party nearly doubled, rising from 17,206 to 29,293.[34] Although in part a reflection of the sharp increase in trade union membership which had occurred during the war, the role of the Manchester Borough Labour party executive had been crucial in raising the affiliated membership. Its members had actively met trade union branches in an effort to win their support, and the EC continued to profit from the tactic; during the course of 1920, it secured affiliations from 72 new societies.[35]

The determination to increase trade union affiliations was heightened by the realisation that the proposed new organisation would cost money. In response to this, the Borough party EC raised annual affiliation fees in 1919 from 2d to 3d on each member, appointing a full-time organiser in the process.[36] The fledgling local parties were also keen to secure trade union backing, tempted by the promise of funds to meet accommodation and election expenses. In addition, they hoped that the mass, affiliated, membership of the unions would contribute volunteers prepared to maintain the party machine. However, the extent to which divisional parties were able to secure union backing depended almost entirely upon the social character of the constituency in which they operated. Thus, in the industrialised, working-class divisions of the city - Ardwick, Clayton, Gorton, Platting and, to a lesser extent, Blackley - union support was generally forthcoming, likewise in the North and West divisions of Salford. This was largely due to the fact that these areas contained an abundance of union branches, whose willingness to sponsor local parties was helped by the strength of the Labour vote in many of these divisions. Popular support for the party carried the promise of electoral success, and as many trade unions were keen to expand into the political arena, support for these DLPs was seen by some as a means of getting 'their man' elected.

However, not all divisional parties in working-class districts found trade union interest so easy to attract. In Hulme and South Salford, perhaps the poorest divisions in the area, the nature of many of the inhabitants' occupations produced working-class constituencies with a low level of trade union membership. In Hulme, especially, the proliferation of unskilled workers engaged in 'casual and curious occupations' meant that few residents were, or could be made into, trade unionists.[37] Furthermore, most trade unions in these districts represented manual, unskilled workers and were notoriously reluctant to become involved in Labour Party affairs. As the MBLP executive noted in 1920, 'a glance at the list of our constituent organisations reveals the unquestionable fact that it is to the better educated workers that political action makes its strongest appeal'.[38] Whereas trade unions such as the Postal Workers and Railway Clerks were well represented within the party, the manual trade unions were not. South Salford also contained a high degree of unskilled workers, and it too struggled to gain union support. In addition, problems in that constituency were compounded by the existence of Communist groups in the area, a throw-back to South Salford's days as a strong SDF centre. The presence of these left-wing groups apparently dissuaded several trade union branches from becoming involved in local Labour affairs.

Local parties also faced a hard task gaining union sponsorship in commercial and middle-class areas, such as Exchange, Moss Side, Rusholme and Withington. For different reasons, these districts were also devoid of a strong trade union presence and as a result local Labour branches found it difficult to establish their organisation. To add further hardship, the very social character that denied these parties access to union patronage in the first place also undermined Labour's chances of electoral success - a fact which did little to excite the interest of those trade union branches which did exist.

It was not long before local parties experienced the practical implications of these varying levels of trade union involvement. In Ardwick, Clayton, Gorton, Platting and North Salford, divisional parties established a close relationship with one particular union, ensuring that the funding of parliamentary campaigns posed no great difficulty.[39] In general elections held during 1918-29 the same candidates, sponsored by the same unions, stood in the same constituencies. In Ardwick, an important railway centre, the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) acted as sponsor for Tom Lowth; in Clayton, where coal mining was important, the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation (LCMF) sponsored Jack Sutton; and in Platting, the National Union of General Workers (NUGW) sponsored J.R. Clynes. In North Salford, meanwhile, Ben Tillett was supported by the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), which he had helped form.

Similarly, Hulme DLP, which at first struggled to attract union sponsorship, followed a comparable course after 1923 when the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers (ASW) became involved in the constituency. Their involvement illustrated how trade unions often viewed divisional parties primarily as vehicles for sending their own spokesmen to parliament. Seeing Hulme as a division that could potentially secure a Labour victory and keen to get its member elected, the ASW approached the divisional party with an offer of financial support. Soon afterwards, the party selected Andrew McElwee, a Glaswegian and a senior member of the ASW, as the Labour parliamentary candidate. Despite this selfish motive for involvement, the ASW's role in Hulme undoubtedly transformed Labour organisation in the constituency. After 1924 the union helped finance Leo Corcoran as a full-time agent, and he played a key role setting up ward organisation in the constituency, which was finally completed in 1927.

Trade union involvement was similarly influential in providing a full-time agent for other divisional parties. In Ardwick, Clayton, Gorton, Platting, North Salford and West Salford, local parties enjoyed fairly constant service from a party agent at a time when most constituency organisations were denied such help.[40] In the cases of Ardwick, Gorton, and Platting, these agents were partly financed by a grant from head office under its scheme to improve local organisation. Nevertheless, this grant did not cover the entire cost of the agent and trade union money was also essential. Indeed, in Clayton, North Salford and West Salford, agents were financed entirely by affiliated organisations. Significantly, when the LCMF temporarily withdrew its agent from Clayton in 1923, the DLP was unable to replace him.

Parties lacking significant trade union interest looked upon full-time professional agents as an unaffordable luxury. Instead, they were forced to lean heavily on the voluntary effort of local activists who often lacked the requisite skills to properly organise a party. Many of such volunteers, if competent, struggled to balance the demands of the party with that of their own jobs. Moss Side DLP reported in 1922 that 'the absence of the secretary, whose business [as a portrait artist] has kept him out of Manchester during the greater part of the year, and the difficulty of finding a suitable successor to permit his proffered resignation to take effect, has hampered the work of the party'.[41] Similar difficulties were occasionally reported in other similarly-placed parties. The most striking shortcoming of such divisional parties was their inability, due to lack of funds, to contest elections. The Withington DLP was unable to fight a general election until 1924, when Edgar Whiteley, a 'gentleman of some means', came forward as the Labour candidate.[42] Exchange DLP had to wait even longer, failing to contest a parliamentary election until 1929, while Moss Side DLP, though running a Co-operative Party candidate in 1922, also had to wait until 1929 before putting forward a Labour man.[43] Such divisional parties also struggled to cope with the financial demands of municipal elections. DLPs in Exchange, Moss Side, Rusholme and Withington rarely, if ever, contested all the wards within their divisions. Even when they did, it often proved a bridge too far. Moss Side DLP contested all three wards in the division for the first time in 1928, but by the end of the campaign conceded that it had been 'severely handicapped by extreme financial stringency'.[44]

Despite the benefits of trade union funding, the MBLP was nevertheless concerned that this form of sponsorship could have a negative effect. In 1920, its Executive Committee warned:

> So long as constituency organisations are abjectly dependent on wealthy trade unions to finance their national and local candidates the party will never command the best brains of the movement to represent them. Whilst it is most essential that important divisions of industry should have adequate political representation, it is better on all hands that such representatives should hold their position as fit and worthy units in a truly national movement rather than as the oft-times mediocre delegates of sectional interest.[45]

These sentiments reflected wider criticism of Labour's trade union personnel, especially in the House of Commons, where the union-dominated Parliamentary Labour party (PLP) was labelled a failure.[46]

In addition to its concern about the poor standard of candidates which reliance on trade union finance allegedly produced, the MBLP was also paradoxically upset by the unwillingness of many affiliated societies to become involved in party affairs outside election times. Such lack of interest was not universal; Blackley DLP, for instance, announced that the Railway Clerks' Association (RCA) - notably a non-manual union - had been 'generous beyond praise' in its year-round commitment to the party.[47] But, on the whole, local union branches displayed little enthusiasm for consistent involvement in party affairs. In 1919, Ardwick DLP referred to the 'old-time difficulty of getting trade unions to take up representation on the Division EC', while a year later Clayton DLP reported the 'great efforts' it had made in an attempt to 'rouse the trade union section of the movement to a sense of their responsibility'.[48] Similarly, when the Rusholme DLP held a meeting for the selection of a Parliamentary candidate in 1921, the secretary claimed that up to 700 invitations were sent to affiliated members, from which only 200 responses were received.[49]

The Borough party executive was well aware of the problem of trade union detachment. In its annual report of 1921, the EC complained about the poor record of attendance at monthly meetings of the Borough party - an average of only 102 out of 380 delegates. 'Whilst many attended regularly and conscientiously,' the report noted, 'there were 98 who were not present on a single occasion'.[50] The executive was even more alarmed by the failure of many affiliated societies to honour their financial obligations. In July 1921, the Borough party raised annual affiliation fees of societies from 3d to 6d per member. However, the executive noted with some disappointment that a number of societies had met the call for a higher fee by paying on a lower membership, and asked for this situation not to be repeated the following year.[51] These words had little effect and three years later the executive angrily reported that it was still not uncommon for some unions to pay for half their previously stated membership, or even less. 'If trade unionists were politically intelligent,' the EC concluded, 'or, if that is too much to expect, even politically conscious, every trade union branch in Manchester would be affiliated to the Labour Party, and be prepared to pay much more than the miserable sum of ½d per month'.[52]

It is interesting to note that despite regularly criticising trade unions for their unreliability and lack of interest in political affairs, the Borough EC always remained keen to award them a central position in constituency organisation. In 1926, when the Blackley DLP sent in a draft constitution for executive approval, the EC altered it to allow for a larger degree of control over the party by its trade union members. Significantly, though, it stressed that trade unionists should demonstrate greater interest in their political duties, and the EC clearly hoped to stimulate trade union activity through closer involvement in the party machinery.[53] Similarly, the MBLP executive consistently worked to win non-affiliated organisations to the Labour cause. In 1925 it asked DLPs to draw up lists of trade union branches to which individual members belonged, in order that non-affiliated branches could then be approached. Notably, however, the scheme had to be dropped owing to 'the almost complete lack of response from the DLPs'.[54] In part, this failure was due to the apathy of local party officials, but as the scheme may well have been unpopular with trade unions already affiliated to divisional parties, it is possible that hostility from that quarter prevented its operation. Many unions had secured influential positions in local parties and presumably did not want this threatened by a challenge from rival societies. Certainly, trade unions often guarded their position in a constituency, most visibly in the Gorton organisation.

Gorton was the only constituency in Manchester in which a trades council was responsible for Labour party organisation and this may explain why competition and rivalry between affiliated societies was so prevalent. Almost immediately after the war had ended, divisions between trade unions represented on the council began to emerge, centring on the selection of a parliamentary candidate for the Gorton seat. Initially, a meeting of the Gorton Trades Council had resolved to renominate John Hodge, the sitting Labour MP, who had the backing of the Iron and Steel Federation. However, a subsequent meeting of the council reversed that decision and Mr Binns of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) was selected in his place. Hodge, who had taken a strong stand in favour of the war and served as a minister in Lloyd George's Coalition government, claimed hostile ILPers on the council had been behind the move. Subsequently, he threatened to resign his seat and fight the resulting by-election as an independent trade union candidate if the decision was not changed. Although hostility towards Hodge may have been a factor in the trades council's actions, his own agent, Sam Hague, offered another explanation which highlighted disunity and competition on the trades council as the real reason for the dispute. Claiming that the vote rejecting Hodge had been unrepresentative, Hague argued that 'a number of Mr Hodge's staunchest supporters were [absent from the meeting], as they thought his renomination was a foregone conclusion. Several of the railwaymen's branches, for instance, were not represented. There was a big rally of ASE men not so much because they have any grievance against Mr Hodge, but because one of their own men was in the running.'[55] Ultimately, the row was resolved in Hodge's favour, but the episode revealed organisational disunity to be rife in Gorton. This was further displayed during municipal elections in November 1921, when Labour surrendered a seat to the Conservatives which it had held for twelve years. The defeat was not caused by any increase in Conservative support, but because three Labour men had stood for the same seat; what was more, all three were trade unionists and members of branches affiliated to the trades council.[56]

Such inter-union rivalry severely undermined the trades council's attempts to develop its political organisation. As a result little or no attempt was made to expand the individual membership of the council, which was effectively the local branch of the ILP. In large part, the failure to improve the political machinery resulted from the dominant position of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) on the Gorton Trades Council. Since 1903, the ISTC had subsidised the Gorton Trades Council and as a result controlled the selection of the parliamentary Labour candidate in the constituency. Anxious to maintain its commanding position, the ISTC was naturally reluctant to develop rival aspects of organisation, such as an individual membership, and so the political machinery in Gorton stagnated.

This unsatisfactory state of affairs was eventually remedied in 1923, following a crisis brought about by John Hodge's retirement as MP. In a letter to the trades council announcing his intention to step down, Hodge pointed out that the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC), of which he was secretary, had for years maintained at its own expense the Labour political organisation in the constituency. Consequently, Hodge argued that the next Labour candidate should be its nominee. 'If the trades council accepted that', he concluded, 'the Confederation would keep up the organisation in the constituency: if it did not accept it the organisation would be closed down.' Following a 'long and lively discussion' the council agreed to this 'in principle', 33 votes to 30.[57] However, the decision subsequently aroused so much hostility among the local trade union branches that a special meeting of the trades council had to be called, where it was rescinded by 39 votes to 29. Furthermore, a NUDAW resolution was passed insisting that 'nominations shall be asked from the whole of the branches affiliated to the trades council.'[58] Following this, the council selected Joseph Compton, of the Vehicle Builders' Union (VBU), as its prospective Labour parliamentary candidate, thus breaking the

ISTC's domination of the Gorton organisation. This marked a turning point in the council's fortunes. The passing of Hodge, and with him Sam Hague, prompted the appointment of a new agent, W. H. Oldfield, and in 1924 the council made its first payment, of £60, to the Manchester Borough Labour party. This ended a long dispute which for three years had seen the council refuse to release any funds from the affiliation fees of its 10,000 members.[59]

With its first payment the trades council had at last resolved to abide by the Manchester constitution, and under Oldfield's direction work began on constructing ward organisations and a proper individual members' section. In the meantime, action was taken to boost the contributions from affiliated societies and in 1924 the agent reported that record fees had been received from the branches.[60] The following period witnessed a greater degree of unity in the Gorton labour movement, as illustrated by the smoother running of municipal elections where continued success meant the area regained its reputation as a Labour stronghold.

The change in Gorton reflected similar organisational developments underway in divisional parties elsewhere in Manchester as the shortcomings of total reliance on one trade union gradually became apparent. Encouraged by the MBLP executive, divisional parties across the city began to investigate the value of acquiring individual members. Yet, while pushing DLPs to recruit individual paying members, the Borough EC still stressed the importance of maintaining the affiliated membership. For all the potential benefits offered by individual members, the party recognised that support from local trade unions and other eligible bodies remained essential to the development of local Labour organisation. Such a belief was not peculiar to Manchester; Woolwich and Barrow, two of the best organised parties in the country, both with large individual memberships, also stressed the importance of close co-operation with local trade unions.[61] The ideal was to marry the two components together.

4.4 Local Labour parties and individual members

Very soon after local parties had been established in Manchester, moves were made to develop individual members' sections. Moreover, this was not confined to those divisions where trade union backing was unavailable. Indeed, by the end of the decade individual members' sections had been established in every constituency in the city. However, the success of these efforts tended to vary from place to place, and it was ironically in those divisions where trade union influence was greatest that the development of individual members' sections generally proved most fruitful. Where levels of trade unionism were low, on the other hand, notably in middle-class districts, members proved much harder to attract. That said, while social context had a crucial bearing on the strength and type of organisation which emerged, it was not the sole determinant. The influence of a host of other factors helped to produce a network of local parties whose outstanding feature was their diversity.

* * * * * * *

In the predominantly middle-class divisions of Manchester - Moss Side, Rusholme and Withington - individual membership immediately became a means for survival. Hence, the secretary of Rusholme DLP, which in 1918 claimed fifty individual members, noted that 'as the finances of the party depend on the subscriptions of such members...it is urgently desired to enlarge this number...the party covers an area within which few trade unions or other affiliated bodies meet, so that we cannot depend on those bodies for any considerable support'.[62] Even for those parties that found trade union aid more easily obtainable, the prospect of boosting funds by securing individual members proved just as enticing. Platting DLP, which enjoyed close links with the NUGW, reported as early as 1919 that rising prices meant a financial balance could not be maintained unless a new source of income was found. '[T]herefore', its secretary wrote, 'efforts are being made to increase the individual sections of the party, and the co-operation of each member is asked to impress upon all supporters of the Labour movement to become attached through these sections'.[63] The DLP in Blackley went even further, making personal financial contribution a requirement of party membership. While recognising that trade unionists in the constituency were nominally members of the local party, its secretary, W. A. Spofforth, stated that 'only those who subscribe to our funds have given proof of their allegiance to the Political Labour Movement'.[64] These comments reflected a more general desire within the Labour party to identify its active members - an important motive for building up the individual sections.

In 1922, the MBLP executive changed the basis of DLP membership from the original format - whereby all members of societies affiliated to the Borough party automatically became members of the divisional party in the constituency in which they resided - to a new system whereby affiliated members, predominantly trade unionists, only became members of a DLP if they actively signed the party's constitution. In essence, the ruling meant that only those members of affiliated societies who enrolled in the party individually would now be counted as members of a DLP. However, since they had already paid a political levy to their society it was decided they could do so without making a further financial contribution.[65] Previously, the national party had discouraged local branches from affiliating trade unionists as individual members due to the apparent danger of enrolling people twice. Instead, individual membership was designed to provide a home for those people who were not already in the party - primarily women, and men 'who did not find ready avenues through the unions and socialist societies - such as the shop-keeping and professional classes'.[66]

In fact, during the 1920s there was some movement of middle-class individuals into Labour's ranks, partly due to the collapse of the Liberal party. In 1919, William Mellor, secretary of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, claimed that 'many members of it [the Liberal party] were seriously thinking of joining the Labour Party,' and in 1925 the Borough party noted the 'increasing accession to its ranks of men and women of all classes'.[67] Wright Robinson, a Manchester Labour councillor in the 1920s, also noted with some surprise 'how many men of [the technical and administrative] class are coming along and how many tradespeople who once would not have shown their hand now openly identify themselves with Labour'.[68] Nevertheless, as in many other cities, the salaried workers whom Labour had hoped to enrol as individuals were not joining in numbers sufficient to provide a workforce to run the local parties.[69] It was this failure that persuaded Manchester Labour to actively enrol trade unionised men on an individual basis - essentially an attempt to uncover useful trade unionists lying anonymous among the lists of largely dead-wood affiliated members. As the MBLP reluctantly informed its local branches: trade unionists, though 'not necessarily Labour politicians', were 'nevertheless, on the whole, the best material from which to build up a strong organisation'.[70]

Thus, by the mid-twenties, party officials were encouraging colleagues to discount earlier warnings about overlapping membership. W. A. Spofforth told a meeting of Lancashire and Cheshire Labour Agents that he did 'not care about counting heads twice...I would prefer to have a man or woman of worth twice enrolled than to have missed him or her altogether, and I have found a good many souls through getting them in as individual members who were never known in the unnamed returns of affiliated members. And the individual section, if properly worked, sorts out the wheat from the chaff of your trade unionists'.[71] Increasingly, therefore, individual members' sections were seen as home to the 'active' membership of the party. Secretarial reports from the Clayton and Hulme divisional parties, which were both closely connected to trade unions and had previously done little in this direction, show a growing realisation that individual members were essential to the establishment of model ward organisation.[72]

The fact that Labour was now turning to trade unionised men for its individual membership boded ill for those parties operating in areas devoid of organised workers. Unsurprisingly, over the next few years the most successful parties in terms of recruiting individual members were those situated in predominantly working-class constituencies. Although precise figures relating to Labour's individual membership in this period are often unavailable or unreliable, information included in annual reports from the various divisions means it is possible to provide some indication of levels of membership.[73] Ardwick was the most successful in this task, claiming one of the most substantial individual members' sections in the country with around 4000 paying members by 1924. Furthermore, by 1926, divisional parties in Blackley, Gorton and Platting all claimed an individual membership approaching 1000, a target which the North and West Salford parties had officially met by 1930. The Clayton and Hulme DLPs were less successful, having failed to develop their individual sections until later in the period, but both claimed increasing numbers of members by the end of the decade. Elsewhere, however, with the exception of the Rusholme DLP, individual membership was much lower, probably averaging somewhere between 50 and 100 in each local party.

The clear implication of these figures is that there was a correlation between social context and the acquisition of Labour members. This was most starkly demonstrated in Withington, the wealthiest residential division in Manchester, where the

DLP faced a harder task in developing its organisation than perhaps any other local party. Claiming around fifty members at the time of its formation in 1920, the party found its support almost entirely restricted to Burnage Garden Village - a small housing co-operative in the Withington ward. In the Chorlton and Didsbury wards, which made up the division, Labour could generate almost no support. Furthermore, over the next few years, what little membership existed suffered a decline; by October 1924 the secretary reported that the DLP had only forty-three members.[74]

Similarly, the Exchange DLP reported in 1926 that although it had formed ward committees in the mainly working-class Cheetham, Collegiate, St. Clement's and St. John's districts of the division, it had failed to establish any organisation outside these areas.[75] Moss Side DLP also struggled to build up its organisation, partly due to a high turnover of secretaries which hindered its development. It was only in 1923 that the DLP had established a membership 'sufficient to warrant the organisation of the various activities of a fully constituted Labour Party, which lack of numbers has hitherto made impossible'.[76] In fact, even this claim was probably exaggerated as the party failed to establish ward committees until 1926.

The one divisional party which managed to establish a significant individual members' section in spite of its largely middle-class surroundings was Rusholme. At first glance, this constituency would not have been considered a profitable area in which to canvass for Labour support. However, by virtue of the determined efforts of a small band of activists and the organisational skills of E. J. Hookway, briefly the local party secretary, Rusholme DLP established a solid base of individual members. Between 1918 and 1921, membership steadily grew from around 50 to 250 and continued to expand thereafter. The key to this expansion appears to have been the early construction of ward committees, fully constituted by 1919. In this, the party owed much to the work of

Hookway, who as president of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council was able to use his administrative experience and personal contacts to lay the foundations for Rusholme's subsequent growth. A further factor aiding Rusholme's recruitment appears to have been the involvement of the Communist party (CPGB) in local Labour affairs. In 1925, Will Crick, then secretary of the Rusholme DLP, told the Labour conference that the involvement of Communist members had helped increase the individual membership in Rusholme by 600 per cent.[77] Although Crick thought this a cause for celebration, many others did not share his enthusiasm, and later moves to expel Communists from the Labour party predictably caused much upheaval in Rusholme, where the DLP was reorganised in 1928.

Thus, while social context was without question the main determinant governing the amount of members a local party could hope to attract, other factors were also influential. In particular, the role of divisional secretaries and the tactics employed in the recruitment of members were of crucial importance. In Blackley, for instance, the role of Spofforth, full-time secretary and organiser from 1918 to 1922, was pivotal in building an individual members' section. Under his stewardship Blackley increased its membership from *49 in 1918 to 506 in 1921, and by the end of 1922 claimed to be 'out* for 1000 members'.[78] Key to the growth of Labour's individual membership in Blackley was the method of recruitment adopted by the DLP. Twenty supervisors of polling districts canvassed the wards, collecting subscriptions from members. With this system in place, the party was able to maintain its organisation even after Spofforth's departure. Its flourishing individual membership and insistence that affiliated members make a direct contribution to the local party ensured that the organisation and finances of the DLP were kept in good shape. Thus, in 1924 and 1929, the divisional party was sufficiently strong to finance parliamentary candidates without recourse to specific trade union assistance.

Other divisional parties that followed Blackley's methods reported similar recruitment success, most spectacularly in Ardwick. In 1921, that DLP inaugurated an individual membership scheme using polling district captains to collect monthly subscriptions of 4d per member. Within two years the party had secured a paying membership of 622 men and women. Following the appointment of Thomas Larrad as secretary, at the beginning of 1923, the individual section witnessed an even more startling increase in numbers. By the end of the year membership stood at over 2500 and was apparently pressing 4000 by 1924.[79] Following this success the divisional party was praised in the *Labour Organiser*, where its membership scheme was held up as a model for others to follow.

The Platting DLP was another to employ these methods, reporting in 1921 that polling captains and assistants had been appointed in every ward in the division and a "Catch-my-Pal" scheme initiated.[80] Although total membership figures of the Platting DLP are not available for any one year, in 1922 the party claimed a 'very high membership'. By 1924, party premises were established in almost every ward (previously the local ILP had allowed them use of their rooms), and in the same year the secretary claimed an increase of 317 members. In 1925, the party claimed to have doubled its membership and the following year bigger meetings rooms were required in every ward.[81]

An interesting point to examine here is the role played by local ILP branches and personnel in the construction of Labour organisation. In contrast to cities like Leicester and Coventry, where the ILP treated Labour as a rival, in Manchester the two parties worked closely together.[82] Indeed, in almost all the divisional parties that acquired a decent individual membership the involvement of the ILP can be detected. In Platting, for instance, the local ILP was described in *Labour Organiser* as 'the force behind the organisation in the Division'; in West Salford, the secretary of the DLP, James Openshaw, was a leading member of the local ILP; and in North Salford the secretary of the ILP, Alf Dunkley, was also heavily involved in Labour party affairs. Similarly, Tom Larrad simultaneously acted as secretary and agent of the Ardwick DLP, vice-president of the Manchester Borough Labour party, and secretary of the ILP Central branch.

Undoubtedly, these men did much to develop local Labour organisation, particularly individual members' sections. However, it seems that their Labour party work was sometimes carried out to the detriment of their ILP commitments. In 1921, the national administrative council (NAC) of the ILP sent a letter to all branches in which it noted that, 'The ILP has suffered in some places by its members throwing the whole of their energies into the Labour Party'.[83] In Manchester, evidence of such problems was perhaps most apparent in Ardwick. For while Tom Larrad guided the DLP to an individual membership of several thousand, membership of the Central branch of the ILP, for which he was also responsible, collapsed to just 25. Similarly, the North Salford ILP, which began the decade as one of the strongest branches in the area, saw its membership drain away whilst at the same time the local Labour party watched its own steadily increase. In this area, too, the local ILP had been denied the full attention of its secretary, this time due to his work as president of the Salford Central Labour party.[84]

The importance of energetic officials and recruitment tactics to the development of party organisation is perhaps best illustrated by the experience of Clayton DLP. Despite operating in an ostensibly favourable social context, with a large number of trade unionised workers residing locally, the party was nonetheless poorly organised for much of the early 1920s, doing little to recruit individual members. The explanation for this neglect may stem from the party's early organisational development. Before 1914, Labour machinery in this semi-mining seat had been almost solely reliant on the LCMF, which remained central to constituency organisation after 1918.[85] Perhaps because of this, the DLP initially made little effort to broaden its scope and as a result failed to attract many members. This suggests that while residence in a strongly working-class district offered local Labour parties the best opportunity of acquiring an individual membership, the process was not automatic. Local parties had to actively seek individual members, and it was only after the Clayton DLP pursued such tactics in the mid-twenties that the party began to make organisational headway.

Yet, the fact party membership might rest on little more than the call of a canvasser invites questions as to how serious or reliable many of Labour's new recruits were. More than likely, their commitment to the cause did not extend far beyond the payment of monthly fees to a party collector. Bearing this in mind, one must be particularly cautious about taking claims of a sudden boom in membership to be an indication of the actual strength and size of a local party. In Gorton, for instance, where almost no work had been done to attract new members in the initial period after the war, the local agent reported that a first canvass of the wards in 1925 had secured 900 individual members, increased the following year by a canvass of Openshaw which apparently recruited 1000 members in that ward alone.[86] Ostensibly, these figures suggest a vibrant and expanding party, and organisation in Gorton was undoubtedly being improved at this time. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that most of the new recruits maintained their membership for any long period, still less likely that they would have become active workers in the party.

In addition to recruitment drives, election campaigns could also generate a sudden burst of interest in political affairs. In Withington, the involvement of a Labour candidate in the general election in 1924 led to a rapid increase in membership. Prior to the contest, membership of the DLP amounted to less than fifty individuals, almost all of whom were concentrated in one ward. Yet, by the end of the campaign that number had soared to around 150 with support coming from all areas of the division. Such was the improvement that by 1925 organisation had been established in all three wards.[87] Once again, while the additions made during periods of heightened activity were not entirely ephemeral, they should not be overestimated. During the 1930s, the Labour party in Manchester embarked on a series of ambitious campaigns to enrol thousands of new names. Yet, later analysis suggested that the majority of members captured during these campaigns represented 'only small and transient gains'.[88] It is likely that the same was true of similar schemes in the 1920s.

This raises the question of how beneficial individual members actually were to local parties. Obviously, in financial terms, individual members could provide a useful source of income. Moreover, when this income was substantial enough, it enabled local parties to act with considerable freedom, most notably in the adoption of candidates at election times. In Blackley, Rusholme and West Salford, divisional parties were freed from reliance on a trade union or wealthy individual and were thereby able to exercise complete control over their choice of parliamentary candidate. In addition to financial independence, individual members were also the best means from which to build ward organisation. Significantly, the divisional parties quickest to set about recruiting individuals - Ardwick, Blackley, Platting and Rusholme - all had fully formed ward committees by 1921. In the cases of the remaining divisional parties, the completion of ward organisation was only achieved after the mid-twenties, when they first began to recruit significant numbers of individual members.[89] Clearly, individual members were crucial to the successful formation of local party organisation. In addition, it was also hoped that individual members would tackle the bulk of Labour's routine work. However, as the following chapter is devoted to the question of activism, it is not intended to explore the matter further here.

In summary, analysis of the situation in Manchester reveals that the construction of individual members' sections was neither a wholesale success, nor a widespread failure. Rather, what emerges is a picture of mixed fortunes in which parties succeeded or failed to attract individuals according to several factors. The first point to make is that membership of the Labour party appears to have been relatively more appealing to those of working-class origin. Hence, the most successful divisional parties in terms of recruiting individuals were found in working-class districts, particularly in those areas where a high degree of trade union membership provided a catchment of residents already institutionally linked to the party. Outside these areas, especially in the middle-class quarters, local parties found it far harder to attract members. That said, location in an industrial working-class constituency did not in itself guarantee a sizeable individual membership. Instead, local parties had to actively recruit new members, and in this, the attitude of senior officials and the tactics they employed were crucial in determining how many members could be acquired. A scheme of house-to-house collections, for instance, was clearly the most successful means of acquiring and maintaining a membership.

However, the fact that adherence to the party often failed to stretch beyond the payment of monthly fees indicates the inert nature of the vast bulk of Labour's membership. Very often, new recruits were won by a determined canvasser or in the heat of an election and could not be relied upon to sustain their membership or participate in the party's activities for any length of time. Nevertheless, despite this, an individual section was still crucial to the development of local organisation owing to the vital minority of interested members who did join. For it was largely through their efforts that the fully constituted ward organisations were built. Indeed, it is significant that local parties lacking any decent individual membership were the last to complete their organisation.

Furthermore, in those parties which were determined and successful enough, the construction of a substantial individual members' section offered a degree of freedom in the sphere of candidate selection. Such parties were in the minority, however, and the most popular parties in terms of individual members tended also to gain from a high level of trade union interest. Indeed, it was often to trade unionised workers that Labour had to turn to find its individual members. Thus, the ultimate ideal of local parties based entirely on a mass individual membership was not generally evident. Nevertheless, these were not the pre-war delegate parties pictured by McKibbin. As Bernard Barker pointed out in his study of the Labour party in West Riding after 1918, it is difficult to distinguish union delegates from other members.[90] Labour members tended to be wage-earners, and wage-earners tended to be trade union members. Yet, this did not mean that such individuals acted as the political tools of their unions. On the contrary, as later chapters will show, individual trade unionists often held views at variance to those of their union, while even in parties closely allied to particular unions, individual members' sections were given substantial freedom of action. Consequently, when encouragement was given to the special organisation of new groups, such as women, most parties demonstrated a keenness to press forward and develop the necessary sections.

4.5 Women and women's sections

A commonly held view of Labour party development after 1918 is that while the organisation of individual male supporters was largely unsuccessful, or even ignored, the establishment of women's sections met with far greater success.[91] Study of the situation in Manchester warns that such a description cannot be universally applied. By the early 1920s, as we have seen, almost all local parties in this city were eagerly constructing individual members' sections, and while some were more successful than others, few parties were hostile to such moves. In terms of the organisation of women, analysis of the Manchester experience again illustrates that no hard and fast rules can be applied which describe the whole situation. The recruitment and organisation of women was certainly a live issue in Manchester and very active work was carried out to achieve this end. As with male individual membership, however, the degree of success in the organisation of women varied from one constituency to another.

The official party publication, *Labour Woman*, noted in May 1920 that while very good progress had been made in the organisation of women's sections throughout the country, 'in County Divisions and Divided Boroughs work is more difficult, and in these progress is less marked.'[92] In these larger areas harmonisation of activity was harder to achieve and so the key to organising women in a divided borough was the formation of a central co-ordinating body. In Manchester this appeared in the guise of a Labour Women's Advisory Council (MLWAC) which had its roots in a conference of Labour women, held in Heaton Hall in June 1920. There, a deputation of women was appointed to lobby the Manchester Borough Labour party to set up such a council. Established soon afterwards, the MLWAC consisted of one delegate from each Divisional Labour Party, two each from the Manchester and the Salford Borough Labour Parties, six representatives from the women's group of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, the women members of the Borough party executive, and all Labour women on elected bodies.[93]

The stated aim of the MLWAC was to co-ordinate the work of the Labour, socialist and trade union women of Manchester and Salford, to promote the candidatures of women to elected bodies and the magisterial bench, to increase the women membership of the party, and to assist in forming women's sections.[94] By 1921, the work of the Council had aided the formation of five women's section in Manchester: Ardwick, Blackley, Clayton, Platting and Rusholme. The very existence of women's sections in these divisions suggests that these parties were in a state of general good health. Furthermore, following a visit to Salford in 1922, the north-west women's organiser, Mrs Anderson, reported that in the North and West constituencies there were active groups of women at work and in South Salford a women's section had recently been started.[95]

As noted in the introduction, exact membership figures for this period are generally lacking. Nevertheless, it has been possible to acquire complete membership figures for Ardwick, in 1922, and Blackley, a year earlier. Although providing only a snapshot of the membership at a particular time, the figures are nonetheless quite revealing.[96] (The basic figures are presented in the Table 4.1 and 4.2 below. A more detailed statistical analysis can be found in Tables 13A and 14A in the appendix).

Table 4.1 Individual membership in Blackley DLP 1921.

1921	Men	Women	Total
Blackley Ward	99	71	170
Crumpsall Ward	54	33	87
Moston Ward	157	92	249
Total	310	196	506

Table 4.2 Individual membership in Ardwick DLP 1922.

1922	Men	Women	Total
Ardwick Ward	200	50	250
St. Mark's Ward	163	36	199
New Cross Ward	109	29	138
Ardwick W.S.		35	35
Total	472	150	622

The most obvious feature of these figures is the greater number of men enrolled, contradicting claims that Labour was more successful in attracting female individual members. That said, in the case of Blackley, it should be noted that additional evidence reveals the increase on the previous twelve months' membership was 47 men and 65 women, so the latter were entering the party at a faster rate in that year.[97] Looking specifically at the numbers of women enrolled, it appears that social context had a significant bearing on female party membership. In the socially-mixed Blackley constituency, women accounted for 39 per cent of the total membership, compared to just 24 per cent in working-class Ardwick. Indeed, although Ardwick had a larger total membership than Blackley around this time - 622 to 506 - the latter constituency had more women members - 196 to 150. This does not mean that working-class women were less inclined to join Labour than more affluent females. On the contrary, inspecting the figures more closely, it is clear that Labour membership was most attractive to women of working-class origin. However, like the male membership, female members were most numerous in wards dominated by the skilled, organised, industrial working class: Moston, Ardwick, and to a lesser extent, Blackley. Like its sister parties in France and Germany, it seems that Labour membership was most attractive to women with some trade union connection, either through their own or perhaps their husbands' union membership.[98] Notably, in the slum districts of St. Mark's and New Cross and the middle-class suburbs of Crumpsall, where the occupational composition of residents made for fewer trade unionists, female (and male) Labour membership was much lower.

Organisational factors contributed further to the differences in female membership. Blackley DLP put considerable effort into recruiting women members after 1918, and within a year had established at least one fully functioning women's section. By contrast, Ardwick DLP did not construct its first women's section until 1921, when a group was organised in the Ardwick ward. Significantly, that ward soon accounted for 57 per cent of the total female Labour membership in the division, while the unorganised St. Mark's and New Cross wards contributed just 43 per cent. That said, it is worth noting that in Ardwick ward fewer women joined the women's section than did not, suggesting that the sectional policy did not appeal to every female. However, in general terms, the women's sections appear to have been useful vehicles for recruiting female members - in Platting, for instance, the party secretary claimed in 1921 that five or six members were being added at every meeting of the group.[99]

That same year the MLWAC and representatives from local women's sections were active in organising the annual conference of Labour women held in Manchester. The conference was said to have led to an increase in female members and the formation of several new women's sections. Nevertheless, certain areas of Manchester remained without women's sections for some time. In Withington, weakness in organisation meant the division was without a women's section until 1924, while even Blackley women's section experienced problems temporarily due to an 'unsatisfactory secretary'.[100] In general, however, these problems were quickly sorted out and good progress was made in women's organisation. In Hulme, where a women's section had earlier disappeared from view, by 1926 the agent reported that following reorganisation it promised to be 'the most successful of all our sections'.[101]

However, the role of women in the Labour party in Manchester was not confined to the separate sections; as earlier figures show, many women chose not to be involved in that aspect of organisation at all, preferring instead to join the mainstream party in which some played an important role. At various times in the 1920s women acted as secretaries for DLPs in the Exchange, Moss Side, Rusholme, Withington and South Salford constituencies. Interestingly, these were all DLPs that had avoided domination by a single - and presumably male-dominated - trade union. Furthermore, in almost every case, these women were related by marriage or birth to another member of the party and very often took turns each year with their husband to assume the secretarial role. This suggests that Labour politics was often a 'family affair'. Being related to a male member of the party may have enabled some women to attain important positions more easily than others, but the fact that husband and wife teams shared secretarial posts probably reflects the general difficulty Labour experienced in finding people to take on such roles. In this sense, it was inevitable that members of the same family would predominate in particular local parties. Indeed, familial connections were not restricted to husband and wife but extended to father and son and even father and daughter. Once again, this state of affairs was not unique to Labour; it was common in various other political parties and organisations.[102]

In a similar vein, female delegates to the party conference were often married to local MPs - as in the case of Mrs C. Compton and Mrs M. G. Davies - or were connected to important figures in local politics, as with Mrs A. Openshaw.[103] This is not to say that such women did not really work for the party or that conference trips were treated like holidays. Mrs Davies, for one, was very active in the Labour party, being secretary of the Withington DLP for four years between 1921 and 1924. Furthermore, the mere fact that women were selected as conference delegates at all is an interesting feature of Manchester Labour. Pamela Graves has claimed that 'no more than a handful' of women were chosen as conference delegates at this time.[104] In Manchester, men were overwhelmingly selected as delegates: between 1918 and 1929, 88 per cent of conference delegates sent by local parties in this city were male.[105] Nevertheless, the twelve per cent of female delegates represented more than a handful. Again, it is perhaps significant that the parties which most often sent women delegates to the conference were Blackley, Rusholme and Withington: predominantly middle-class, non-industrial, constituencies. Certainly, divisional parties in the most trade unionised constituencies, such as Ardwick, Clayton and Platting, did not send any women delegates in this period but then they rarely sent delegates at all. Labour activists in those parties were simply unable to secure time away from work.

Nevertheless, the men who figured in those industrial constituencies were possibly less favourable to the involvement of women in senior party roles than in the smaller and more middle-class DLPs. This again raises the question of how important personalities were in Labour organisation. Graves has identified this as a crucial aspect in determining the nature of gender relations in local parties and claims that the arrival or departure of leading figures could have a dramatic effect on women's role in the party.[106] One example of this in Manchester was the attempt by the local LWAC to change the system for representation of women at the national party level. In late 1921, the MLWAC circulated a resolution to all women's sections and local Labour parties which recommended that women politically organised within the Labour party ought to have 'their own National Council, representative of the women's sections with direct representation on the National Executive of the Party'. This would replace the Standing

Joint Committee of Women's Industrial Organisations which had previously been acting as advisory committee on woman's questions.[107] Knowing that such a change would be unpopular with the trade unions and disapproving of the idea themselves, the national Labour leadership moved to counteract the actions of the MLWAC. In a letter to Miss A. Wilkinson, secretary of the MLWAC, Arthur Henderson outlined the virtues of the Standing Joint Committee, noting that the advisory committee of women in Manchester and Salford also represented trade union women, in addition to those who were politically organised. He ended by suggesting to Miss Wilkinson that 'what you have felt is a good step locally is not to be set aside in our national development'.[108]

Despite this, the MLWAC would not allow the matter to drop. At the Labour conference held earlier that year, Annot Robinson had put forward an amendment similar in nature to the MLWAC resolution. However, as a delegate of the Blackley Labour party, Robinson was told that she could not move the amendment without the support of Alderman Jackson, delegate of the Manchester Borough Labour party. He would not move the amendment and it fell.[109] But at the following year's conference a different delegate of the MBLP, Tom Larrad, took the opposite stance and moved the resolution - which was then defeated.[110] Nevertheless, in moving the resolution, Larrad stressed the esteem in which women were held by the MBLP.

However, despite these warm words, there were few concrete signs that the party appreciated its female workers. Although Labour put forward more female candidates than any of its rivals and in 1919 became the first party to run women candidates in local elections, men continued to dominate lists of municipal candidatures. Between 1918 and 1929 only eleven per cent of Labour candidates in Manchester's local elections were women, while only one women stood for Labour in a parliamentary contest during the same period. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that there was little sign of that number increasing substantially in the near-future. Between 1919 and 1923, twelve women stood for Labour in municipal elections in the city, a figure that increased by just one over the following five year period.[111] Lack of information prevents us from knowing how many women actually attempted to become Labour candidates in this period, and it is possible that the low number of female candidates simply reflected a general reluctance to put themselves forward for selection; a factor highlighted in recent investigations into candidate selection.[112] However, while there may be some truth in that, other evidence suggests that discrimination by senior male members was at least partly responsible for the lack of women candidates. In 1932, a meeting of the cross-party Manchester Women's Advisory Committee (MWAC) recorded that 'delegates were unanimously of the opinion that women candidates are not welcomed by the Party officials'.[113] Clearly, then, though the organisation of women was well underway in Manchester by the end of the 1920s, men continued to dominate the Labour party. Nevertheless, despite discrimination on the grounds of sex, especially in regard to the selection of municipal and parliamentary candidatures, women were gaining in influence, gradually acquiring senior party positions and, as the next chapter will show, playing a crucial role in keeping local parties solvent and active.

4.6 Leagues of Youth

Another aspect of Labour organisation that developed in this period was the League of Youth, formed in 1926. In fact, the first encouragement given to the formation of junior and youth sections within the party came in a circular issued by the national agent, Edgerton Wake, towards the end of 1924. However, local parties were slow to develop this aspect of their organisation, and throughout the rest of the period party journals such as *Labour Organiser* worked to reinforce the concept of organising young people.

Salford Labour made rapid strides in this regard and by 1925 Young Labour Leagues (YLL) were active in all three divisions; indeed, two members from each YLL were allowed to attend monthly meetings of the SCLP as fraternal delegates.[114] In Manchester, on the other hand, divisional parties showed little enthusiasm for this feature of Labour organisation and at the end of 1925 only three DLPs had reportedly formed a youth section of any description. A junior section started in Blackley was said to be 'flourishing', whilst in Rusholme the secretary claimed that a youth movement was in the process of being organised. The Exchange DLP, which enjoyed a period of rapid growth around this time, boasted the most advanced youth section in Manchester. Three months after its formation the Exchange Young Labour League sported a membership of nearly 100 members and at the end of the following year the secretary reported further 'remarkable growth.'[115] However, the impact of the General Strike and the trade depression appear to have distracted most local parties from addressing such matters. Indeed, the general correspondence reported in *Labour Woman* suggests that many local parties were more concerned with holding the adult membership together than with organising youth sections.[116]

Instead, the organisation of young people was addressed more forcefully by the ILP, with its Guild of Youth, and the CPGB through the Young Communist League (YCL). Although these organisations were distinct from the Labour party, in the sphere of youth organisation there appears to have been greater incidences of overlapping membership. ILP Guilds, in particular, established close links with some local Labour parties. The Cheetham ILP, for instance, held its children's sportsday at West Salford's 'Ashfield' home, while the Newton Heath ILP, on forming a guild in 1926, encouraged local Labour members to send along their 'young folk.'[117]

4.7 Summary

Labour's organisation in Manchester was apparently far more developed than party machinery in places like Liverpool or Leicester and attempts to recruit members certainly met with more success than Howard's pessimistic account of Labour development would lead us to expect.[118] Recruitment of individual members was strongly pursued and local parties were not all controlled by trade unions. In Rusholme, Withington, and South and West Salford, DLPs reported financing their own candidates at general elections in both 1924 and 1929. Moreover, the candidates adopted by these parties were not the *eminence grise* seen in areas like Birmingham, where Sir Oswald Mosley dominated several constituency organisations.[119] Far from buying their way into the Labour party, candidates financed by DLPs in Manchester during the 1920s included A. A. Purcell, Joe Toole, A. W. Haycock and Edgar Whiteley, all long standing activists in the local Labour movement.[120]

Throughout the city, local parties made attempts to enrol individual members, although the success of these efforts varied from area to area and often depended on the commitment or skill of a small number of local party activists. Still more important was the social composition of a division. Ironically, it was in middle-class suburban areas, where local parties were most reliant on individual members, that they proved hardest to attract. In these parties, as in most non-working-class constituencies, party membership struggled to reach the hundred-mark, generally not totalling more than fifty. Conversely, in the industrial and semi-industrial divisions, where trade unions frequently helped to kick-start Labour organisation, local parties enjoyed much larger individual memberships. Though accurate figures are difficult to obtain, it seems that in Ardwick, Blackley and Platting, and by the end of the decade, Clayton, Gorton and Hulme, levels of individual membership ran into hundreds, in one or two cases perhaps even thousands.

These figures are in line with those reported by divisional parties in neighbouring Salford, as well as in urban areas of Leeds and Huddersfield. Nationally, it would seem, Labour was a predominantly working-class organisation.[121]

However, that description masks certain complexities. In Manchester, party membership was highest in those constituencies and wards containing large numbers of skilled, trade-unionised workers. In districts composed largely of unskilled, unorganised workers, it was notable that Labour found it harder to win adherents. J. Boughton found a similar pattern of Labour support in his study of working-class politics in Birmingham and Sheffield.[122] In the former city, which had a weak trade union base and a large unskilled workforce, Labour organisation was very weak. Sheffield, on the other hand, boasted a high percentage of skilled workers in its population and had a strong union tradition. Though Labour organisation was far from perfect in the city, it was significantly better than in Birmingham. It would seem that Labour's special appeal to skilled, unionised workers was not peculiar to Manchester.

Likewise, the nature of women's and youth organisation in Manchester matched a broader national pattern.[123] In the largest parties, generally found in industrial districts, female individual members often formed themselves into separate women's sections. As with men, however, female party membership was higher in wards dominated by the skilled working class. In the more middle-class districts, where fewer female members were recruited, local parties preferred to integrate the sexes. Notably, these parties saw greater numbers of women holding senior positions. This could be because middle-class male members were more open towards women than their working-class comrades, or that the women's sections in working-class parties had the unwelcome side-effect of distancing their members from the mainstream party. But the most likely explanation appears to be the simplest: party membership in middle-class divisions was just too small to allow for divisions along sex lines. Inevitably, with fewer volunteers to choose from, more women were given senior posts. Class-composition may have had a greater effect on youth organisation. Leagues of Youth were regarded with some suspicion by many Labour members and national organisers had to reassure local activists that it was not a measure aimed exclusively at recruiting middle-class youths. Nevertheless, the formation of Youth Leagues appears to have been confined to mainly suburban areas.

Youth sections apart, by the end of the decade Labour had established a reasonably sound organisation in Manchester, at least in the city's working-class districts. Yet, even here, one must be careful not to over-estimate the strength of party machinery, particularly in relation to individual members' sections. Though the development of this aspect of the organisation was scarcely the absolute failure that some have suggested, the number of individuals enrolled as Labour members did not reach the sort of levels usually associated with a 'mass' party. It is important to add here that the failure to create a mass individual membership did not stem, as is often claimed, from union opposition. Despite one or two examples of trade unions obstructing the development of party machinery, most unions did not wish for total domination of local parties and were happy for the various sections to be developed. Indeed, it was ultimately the case that the best organised parties in Manchester were those that enjoyed a large degree of union patronage.

Nor did the failure to construct a mass individual membership owe to a lack of enthusiasm on the part of Labour officials. In Manchester, the party hierarchy reacted positively to the calls of national organisers for machine-building. Strenuous efforts were put into recruiting individual members, to the extent that, when the party found it could not win adherents among the middle classes, it attempted to enrol the existing affiliated membership as individuals. The basic problem was that the majority of electors – of all social backgrounds - could not be persuaded to become politically active. It should be stressed that this problem was peculiar neither to Manchester nor indeed to Britain. Even the SPD, prince of 'mass' parties, complained of the German public's lack of interest in political affairs.[124] Nevertheless, the SPD had overcome such apathy and succeeded in constructing a mass membership, partly through its impressive network of cultural organisations. Inspired by this achivement, many Labour activists sought to ape the SPD and create in Britain the same 'communities of solidarity' held to have existed in Germany. What follows next is an assessment of how successful Labour was in this regard, by exploring the nature and extent of party activity in Manchester during the 1920s.

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[1] NEC Minutes, 11 November 1919.

[2] Berger, *British Labour*, p.85.

[3] The Labour Party, *Study Courses on Electoral Law and Organisation*, (1929), p.2.

[4] *Labour Organiser*, 'The Constitution of the Labour Party', (6) February 1921, pp.7-8.

[5] McKibbin, *Evolution*, p.95.

[6] *Labour Organiser*, (6) February 1921, p.8.

[7] Ibid.

[8] *Labour Organiser*, cited in McKibbin, *Evolution*, p.140.

[9] McKibbin, *Evolution*, p.240; 141.

[10] Howard, 'Expectations born to death', pp.73-78.

[11] Scarrow, *Parties and Their Members*, p.125.

[12] Berger, *British Labour*, p.95.

[13] M. Savage, 'Urban history and social class: two paradigms', *Urban History*, (20) 1993, p.76.

[14] Savage, *Dynamics*, pp.194-195.

[15] Rose, 'Imagining Polar in the 1920s', pp.431-433.

[16] Ibid., p.432.

[17] A. Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, (Hampshire, 2001), p.55; Riddell, *Labour in Crisis*, p.31; Laybourn, *Rise of Labour*, p.55.

[18] Davies, *Liverpool Labour*.

[19] Ibid., p.65, 224.

[20] Bealey, Blondel & McCann, *Constituency Politics*, p.104.

[21] Ibid., p.85.

[22] J. Boughton, 'Working Class Politics in Birmingham and Sheffield, 1918-31', (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1985), p.179; J. Marriott, *The Culture of Labourism. The East End between the Wars*, (Edinburgh, 1991), p.183; J. White, *The Worst Street in North London: Campbell Bunk, Islington, between the Wars*, (1986), pp.107-112.

[23] Cox, 'Labour Party in Leicester', p.210.

[24] Carr, 'Municipal Socialism', *Life and Labour*, p.186, 197.

[25] J. Hill, 'Manchester and Salford politics and the early development of the Independent Labour Party', *International Review of Social History*, (26) 1981, pp.192-197.

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[26] E. & R. Frow, *Radical Salford*, (Salford 1984), p.18; E. Morrison, 'South Salford Branch of the Social Democratic Federation', (BA Dissertation, Manchester Polytechnic, 1978), p.40 & appendix.

[27] G. C. Goldberg, 'The Socialist and Political Labour Movement in Manchester and Salford 1884-1914', (unpublished thesis, University of Manchester, 1975), p.107.

[28] Manchester Reference Library Archives (hereafter M.R.L.A.), ILP Minute Book, Manchester Central Branch, Quarterly Report, Jan-March 1903.

[29] Before 1914, Manchester consisted of six parliamentary constituencies: North, North-West, North-East, East, South and South-West. In addition, three seats outside the city's boundaries may also be regarded as part of the Manchester area. Though not officially part of the city, Stretford, Prestwich and Gorton contained municipal wards that fell inside Manchester's boundaries, and elected members to the council chamber.

[30] McKibbin, *Evolution*, p.5.

[31] Despite their geographical closeness, Salford and Manchester were politically different, a feature explored in D. McHugh, 'The Labour Party in Manchester and Salford Before the First World War: A Case of Unequal Development', *Manchester Region History Review*, (14) 2000.

[32] Salford Central Labour Party Minutes (hereafter SCLP Minutes), 2 June 1920.

[33] Wood, 'Hope deferred', p.38.

[34] Manchester Borough Labour Party *Annual Report* (hereafter MBLP *AR*), 1919.

[35] MBLP *AR*, 1920.

[36] MBLP *AR*, 1919.

[37] MG, 3 December 1923.

[38] MBLP *AR*, 1920.

[39] See appendix for Table 5A.

[40] See appendix for Table 6A; Thorpe, *History of the British Labour Party*, p.45. In 1922, only 133 of the 527 DLPs in Britain employed a full time agent.

[41] MBLP *AR*, 1922.

[42] MG, 13 October 1924.

[43] See appendix for Table 5A.

[44] MG, 2 November 1928.

[45] MBLP *AR*, 1920.

[46] MG, 2 May 1921.

[47] MBLP *AR*, 1921.

[48] MBLP *AR*, 1919; 1920.

[49] MBLP *AR*, 1925.

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[50] MBLP *AR*, 1921.

[51] MBLP *AR*, 1921.

[52] MBLP *AR*, 1924.

[53] MBLP *AR*, 1926.

[54] MBLP *AR*, 1925.

[55] MG, 17 May 1918.

[56] MBLP *AR*, 1921.

[57] MG, 28 February 1923.

[58] *Workers' Weekly*, 24 March 1923.

[59] MBLP *AR*, 1922.

[60] MBLP *AR*, 1924.

[61] Cf. Berger, *British Labour*, p.124.

[62] MBLP *AR*, 1918.

[63] MBLP *AR*, 1919.

[64] Ibid.

[65] MBLP *AR*, 1922.

[66] *Labour Organiser*, 'Individual Membership - The Right Sort To Get', (7) March 1921, p.16.

[67] MG, 7 November 1919; MBLP *AR*, 1925.

[68] M.R.L.A., Wright Robinson Diary, 3 November 1923.

[69] Stefan Berger, *British Labour*, p.64, cites local studies of inter-war politics in Preston, Birmingham and Sheffield which found few middle class members in Labour's ranks.

[70] MBLP *AR*, 1921.

[71] *Labour Organiser*, (51) March 1925, p.14.

[72] MBLP *AR*, 1924; 1925.

[73] See appendix for Table 7A.

[74] MG, 28 September 1925.

[75] MBLP *AR*, 1926.

[76] MBLP *AR*, 1923.

[77] LPCR, 1925, p.185.

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[78] MBLP *AR*, 1918; 1921; 1922.

[79] MBLP *AR* 1923; 1924.

[80] MBLP *AR*, 1921; Nothing was offered for the amount of pals caught, the secretary noted, 'except a feeling of contentment that will ensue'.

[81] MBLP *AR*s, 1922-1926.

[82] Cox, 'Labour Party in Leicester', p.210; Carr, 'Municipal Socialism', *Life and Labour*, p.168.

[83] ILPCR, 1921.

[84] Figures calculated on the basis of affiliation fees paid by ILP branches.

[85] Tanner, *Political Change*, pp.200-201.

[86] MBLP *AR*, 1925; 1926.

[87] MBLP *AR*, 1924.

[88] A. O'Donnell, *The Failure and Salvation of the Labour Party*, (Manchester, 1938), p.9.

[89] See appendix for Table 8A.

[90] B. Barker, 'The Politics of Propaganda: A Study in the Theory of Educational Socialism and its Roles in the Development of a National Labour Party in London and the West Riding in Yorkshire, 1914-24', (unpub. M.Phil. thesis, University of York, 1972-73), pp.113-114.

[91] Savage, *Dynamics*, pp.172-173.

[92] *Labour Woman*, May 1920.

[93] MBLP *AR*, 1920.

[94] Ibid.

[95] NEC Minutes, June 1922.

[96] MBLP *AR*, 1921; 1922.

[97] MBLP *AR*, 1921.

[98] D. Geary, *European Labour Politics from 1900 to the Depression*, (1991), p.27.

[99] MBLP *AR*, 1921.

[100] NEC Minutes, April 1922.

[101] MBLP *AR*, 1926.

[102] K. Hunt, *Equivocal Feminists. The SDF and the woman question, 1884-1911*, (Cambridge, 1996), pp.205-206, shows that many women in the SDF and other Second International parties were related to male members.

[103] See appendix for Table 11A.

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[104] P. Graves, *Labour Women: Women in British Working Class Politics, 1918-39*, (Cambridge, 1994), p.3.

[105] Figures calculated on the basis of information in Table 11A.

[106] Ibid., p.157.

[107] NEC Minutes, December 1921.

[108] NEC Minutes, 13 December 1921.

[109] LPCR, 1921, p.154.

[110] LPCR, 1922, p.220.

[111] Figures calculated on the basis of information in Table 12A.

[112] J. Bochel & D. Denver, 'Candidate Selection in the Labour Party: What the Selectors Seek', *British Journal of Political Studies*, (13) 1983, p.55; P. Norris & J. Lovenduski, *Political Recruitment. Gender, Race and Class in British Politics*, (Cambridge, 1995), pp.115-116.

[113] Graves, *Labour Women*, p.160.

[114] SCLP Minutes, March 1925.

[115] MBLP *AR*, 1926.

[116] *Labour Woman*, June 1925.

[117] *Labour's Northern Voice*, 1 October 1926.

[118] Davies, *Liverpool*, p.358; Howard, 'Expectations', pp.66-81.

[119] Boughton, 'Working Class Politics', p.156, shows that Oswald Mosley funded both the Ladywood and Smethwick DLPs.

[120] See appendix for Who's Who entries.

[121] Cf. Laybourn, *Rise of Labour*, p.55. Ardwick's claim of 4000 paying individual members in 1924 would put it in the same bracket as Woolwich, the strongest local party in the country. However, it is not clear that Ardwick DLP was able to maintain that membership for long.

[122] Boughton, 'Working Class Politics'.

[123] See Graves, *Labour Women*, pp.157-158 for evidence of the different nature of women's organisation depending on local environment.

[124] Berger, *British Labour*, pp.88-90.

Chapter Five

Labour's Golden Age? Local Party Activity in 1920s Manchester

The reconstruction of the Labour party in 1918 reopened old questions in the movement about the purpose of political organisation. Since its formation, Labour had maintained a narrow organisational focus on the business of winning elections, but there were some in the party who harked back to an earlier time when political organisation held an altogether different meaning. Rather than simply a vehicle for winning elections, socialists in the 1880s and 1890s viewed party machinery as a means to bring individuals together, 'to be and become better socialists, to strengthen belief and commitment'.[1] Suspicious of mainstream popular culture, such individuals sought to offer workers a 'new life' through alternative, and in their terms, morally and intellectually superior forms of leisure.[2] Even practical tasks such as fundraising were seen to have a social objective. Thus, while socialist groups organised bazaars in order to generate money, the 'real success' of such events was seen to be the 'new bond of comradeship' that was created. Rather than seeing the party as the mechanism for taking charge of the vehicle of social change - the State apparatus – many Labour Socialists regarded the party itself as the vehicle.[3] But, by the start of the twentieth century, this form of organisation had allegedly disappeared as British socialists, in partnership with the trade unions, completed their 'journey from fantasy to politics'.[4] The earlier interest in spreading socialist ethics was now replaced by a pragmatic concern to secure immediate improvements in workers' conditions. Instead of focussing on the moral improvement of the workers, the unions wanted to achieve results at the ballot box. Consequently, the ethos of the earlier socialist movement was diluted or even lost. Although events such as bazaars were still held, their success was now measured in terms of the amount of money collected, not the spirit engendered. Energy was directed towards the acquisition of power, while notions of comradeship and moral improvement were relegated to a secondary role.[5]

For activists who lamented this predominant emphasis on electoral success, and wished to reawaken the ethical concerns and aspirations of the 1880s and 1890s, Labour's 1918 constitution held great promise. While the party reorganisation was clearly designed to boost Labour's electoral prospects, the reconstruction offered the chance to recreate that earlier sense of 'socialist community'. In addition to being the units that would conduct Labour's election campaigns, some activists saw local parties as the arena in which an 'alternative culture' could be created. Thus, Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones have advanced the view that, after 1918, 'the Labour Party...aspired to organise the total environment of its active members in a way reminiscent of the pre-1914 German Social Democratic Party'. Moreover, they suggested that this aspiration was partly realised through the existence of Labour theatre groups, Sunday schools, a symphony orchestra, a local and national press, and a range of educational institutions, contributing to a specific 'labour culture'.[6] This representation of a vibrant Labour 'culture' has been taken up by a number of writers, including Barry Hindess, who saw the interwar period as a 'golden age' of local Labour politics. During that time, he claims, the party established a firm bond with the working class, and through its structures was able to exercise 'social control' over a 'large section of the population'.[7]

Such opinions are not universally shared. Ralph Miliband, for one, had earlier warned against mythologising a 'golden past' when things were somehow 'better'.[8] His warning was echoed by Tom Forester, who argued that assumptions of a lost golden age amounted to a 'mis-reading of history' and 'a misunderstanding of what the Labour Party is, and what it has always been'.[9] On the basis of several local studies of the party, and notably Robert Roberts' autobiographical account of life in early twentieth century Salford, Forester claimed that Labour membership was comparatively low in the 1920s and 1930s, and that, contrary to popular belief, constituency parties had only a limited impact on the lives of local communities. Christopher Howard also questioned the extent of Labour's wider cultural role after 1918, arguing that while the party may have aspired to create a 'world' for its members, its attempts failed: 'expectations were born to death'. He asserts that ventures to mix 'people with politics' turned sour as Labour clubs became drinking dens, local newspapers failed and efforts to cater for working class recreational habits - football, darts, and tennis - proved beyond the ability of the party.[10] According to Ross McKibbin, structural factors were the root cause of this failure, as by 1918, the British Labour party faced a uniquely difficult task if it wanted to replicate the kind of 'socialist culture' associated with the SPD in Germany.[11] The relative absence of commercial leisure in that country before 1914 had enabled the SPD to develop an impressive array of cultural organisations, which attracted huge numbers of people. Indeed, according to Dick Geary, by the mid-1920s, membership of these bodies had reached 2,260,000.[12] Labour, on the other hand, was trying to develop its organisation at a time when the British commercial leisure industry was already well entrenched. McKibbin and Geary claim that this prevented Labour from constructing a significant cultural organisation, and thus for them, the party remained essentially an electoral machine.

However, this discussion has been based on relatively limited empirical evidence. In most cases, general conclusions have been reached on the basis of observing politics at the national level, by superficial reference to a wide variety of variable local records, or by reading, backwards, inferences drawn from findings on the state of the party after 1945. Consequently, a clear picture of the scale and effects of Labour party activity in local communities between the wars has been lacking, and is only slowly being filled. Moreover, the publication of several in-depth local studies of the party in this period has only served to reveal a more complicated picture of local Labour politics. While in some areas, notably Preston, Poplar and Woolwich, Labour apparently built a vibrant party organisation which connected to the everyday lives of local people, elsewhere, particularly in Liverpool and Leicester, the opposite appears to be true.[13] In these two cities, it has been argued that the weakness of Labour organisation was responsible for a dearth of party activity. Yet, in Sheffield and Birmingham, where party machinery was also rather weak, J. Boughton nonetheless detected a 'rich Labour sub-culture'.[14] The varying degrees of party activism found in these studies suggests that no universal description of Labour's grass roots politics in the interwar period will suffice at present. Levels of party activity differed between, and even within, cities. Nevertheless, on the basis of evidence so far produced, it is clear that Labour was unable to match the achievements of the SPD. Even in areas where the party was particularly active, it could not be said to have placed itself at the centre of even a majority of its own members' lives. Suggestions that it exercised 'social control' over a large section of the population appear unsubstantiated. On the other hand, though the scale of party activity may have been on a smaller magnitude than that of the SPD in Germany, in some areas Labour played an important role in the life of local communities. This chapter aims to examine the scale and nature of such activity, exploring the extent to which members in Manchester sought to create an 'alternative culture' and assessing the various factors that helped or hindered their efforts.

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As noted earlier, the strength of the British leisure industry made it very difficult for organisations, like political parties, to develop their own, separate, cultural structures. Manchester was certainly no exception in this regard, with a wealth of recreational providers operating in the city by 1914, many targeting the working class. The Manchester and Salford Playing Fields Society, for example, was in possession of more than one hundred football and cricket pitches across the two cities by 1915. These it let out to working lads' teams and estimated that on every Saturday afternoon throughout the year there were 2000 young men and boys on the fields, providing the society with annual rent returns of £550.[15] In addition, Manchester Corporation provided a wealth of open spaces that catered for a wide variety of sporting activity. By 1938, municipal provision extended to 35 swimming baths, 398 tennis courts, 201 football and hockey pitches, 76 cricket pitches and 79 bowling greens. While much of the activity that took place on these facilities was informally organised, the inter-war years saw the construction of a number of amateur sports leagues run by various bodies including the Sunday School Union and the Catholic Church.[16]

Apart from participatory sport, this period also witnessed the growth of spectator sport, which in turn fuelled Manchester's obsession with betting.[17] Speedway and greyhound racing became very popular amongst both men and women, and in 1926 the Belle Vue track was opened in Gorton, boasting 28,000 covered seats. In addition, horse racing grew in popularity during the 1920s. While these sports drew large crowds, football received the greatest public interest, evidenced both by the enormous popularity of the pools and the growth of attendances at First Division grounds.[18] City and United, the two biggest Manchester clubs, were more popular than most, and attracted large numbers of male, working-class supporters.[19] However, according to Andrew Davies, many working men could not afford to attend these grounds, especially those who lived a significant distance away from Old Trafford and Moss Side. Instead, many people followed local sides such as the Miles Platting Swifts and Manchester North End, while pub sides competing on waste ground could also attract significant crowds.[20]

Indeed, public houses proliferated in Manchester and were a central part of male working-class life.[21] If anything, they became more popular after 1918, when increasing numbers of young people began frequenting pubs. In contrast, music halls began to decline in popularity, chiefly due to the arrival of cinema.[22] Watching films proved an immensely popular attraction, and unlike pubs, attracted men and women in equal numbers. Consequently, with a wealth of activities on offer, some commercially organised, some informal, the Manchester Labour party faced stiff competition if it wished to cater for such aspects of working people's lives as their leisure and sporting pursuits. However, if structural constraints threatened to prevent Labour from branching into social and recreational activities, internal obstacles were possibly an even greater obstacle.

While some in the party wished to create an 'alternative culture', others were deeply suspicious of any attempts to organise ostensibly non-political pursuits that risked distracting members from their central task - which was to get Labour candidates elected. This diversity in outlook was exhibited in several local parties, where a conflict arose between those who wished to direct the party towards strictly political work and others who desired to develop the 'social side'. This tension was vividly displayed in the remarks of W. A. Spofforth, secretary of the Blackley DLP between 1919 and 1922, who warned members that '...those who estimate their strength by the success of their dances might have a rude awakening when the time for fight arrives. It is not Labour's mission to fiddle whilst Europe is aflame - ancient Rome is insignificant compared with today.'[23] For Spofforth, local parties were electoral machines, and it was on such a basis that they ought to attract new members. His was not an isolated view; the Clayton DLP, for instance, listed the following five, decidedly uninspiring, practical benefits of party membership:[24]

(i) the chance to take an active part in electioneering.
(ii) to assist in keeping voters lists up-to-date.
(iii) to participate in open-air propaganda between May and September.
(iv) to attend National Council of Labour College classes.
(v) to have the opportunity to nominate candidates for various offices.

Unfortunately, despite the importance of such work to the effective operation of a political party, only a minority of members were willing to undertake these tasks. In 1920, the secretary of Rusholme DLP complained that a series of lectures on 'electoral organisation', delivered to the party by Alf James, agent of the Platting party, 'deserve[d] better support from all the membership'.[25] Two years later the same party bemoaned members 'who talk glibly month after month, year in and year out, about "canvassing" and "getting at the people on the doorsteps," etc., yet studiously avoid work of that character whenever it happens to be needed. A little practical demonstration now and again might encourage others to act more and talk less.'[26] The secretary of the Exchange DLP echoed these sentiments, warning that elections 'cannot be won by people who are not prepared to do the drudgery of election canvassing'.[27]

In addition to registration work and canvassing, local parties were also concerned to propagate Labour's message through public meetings: by the mid-1920s, almost all divisional parties were involved in this activity. Among the most active were the Ardwick and Platting DLPs, which sometimes held as many as 100 meetings in a year: in 1925, Platting reported that its meetings drew an average attendance of around 50 people. In the less promising Hulme division, Labour was also extremely active, holding 200 public meetings in 1925 and a remarkable 300 in 1926. In addition to these regular propaganda meetings, parties were also interested in large-scale demonstrations, often focusing on particular issues such as 'Peace with Russia' or local concerns about rising unemployment.[28] Despite the copious amount of publicity work undertaken by divisional parties - in 1924 the MBLP praised them as 'a really active force' in the locality - the suspicion is that most of the work was carried out by a handful of committed individuals.[29]

Moreover, although crowds might turn out to hear Labour speakers, their lack of interest often dismayed activists. Describing the 1922 May Day celebrations, the *Manchester Guardian's* political correspondent reported the following scene:

> the majority [of the crowd] was out to enjoy the first day of summer, to notice the trees at last visibly green, to sprawl on the grass, to scramble across the little bricked-in stream, and generally to make the most of the amenities of a fine Sunday. It must have been rather a disheartening business for the speakers; but they could comfort themselves with the thought that no other shade of opinion would have gained a keener hearing. Blue skies and soft, warm breezes are less often encountered, and more compelling than politics or economics...[E]verything, from the heckling to the singing of the Red Flag (performed with the decorous unction of an evensong anthem), had passed under the influence of the first sunshine of the year. Perhaps it was our 'miserable respectability', as the young lady in cornflower blue asserted, that made us weak enough to succumb to the mellowing influence of this sunshine. At any rate we did.

Nevertheless, while this apparent indifference to political issues understandably annoyed activists, it is possible that their distress prevented them from seeing the positive outcome of such events. As the correspondent concluded, '...even the most dilettante wanderers in Platt Fields must have noticed that there was a sane determination about the orators and a well-balanced sense in many of their arguments. The May Day celebrations were in fact no less effective for being restrained.'[30] Thus, the journalist understood - if some Labour activists did not - that popular interest in social pursuits did not necessarily prevent the party from imparting its message or indeed pose a threat to its organisation. The view held by some members, that their party was a machine designed for the sole purpose of electing representatives to public office and that all efforts must be directed to this end, at times hindered Labour's development and highlighted the gulf that existed between some activists and the wider electorate.

In fact, more far-sighted members were aware of this. Wright Robinson lamented in his diary around this time that 'Socialism has remained too much of an economic creed, and too little of a human symposium...can we not conceive of propaganda and expression except in terms of the spouter...'. Labour Colleges and the WEA were alright, he felt, 'but where is the colour, rhythm, emotion?'. Analysing why so few people were active in politics, he concluded that 'People do not want to attend meetings in the main, or wish to wage any prolonged struggle, class or otherwise, and the public house, the theatre, race course, football ground, cinema, music hall, sport, flourish without teaching us that the emotions and interests these represent, are older, deeper, and more enduring than government's or forms of government.'[31] Consequently, he urged that the party needed to investigate new means of attracting and involving local people.

This point was at least appreciated by the founders of the Bradford Labour Club & Institute, located in the Clayton division. Explaining the decision to open a club they observed that, while many of them were teetotallers, they nevertheless 'accepted the principle of those inside the Socialist and Labour organisations who were willing to make the experiment of club life, catering for that section of the Labour movement, or whose sympathies leaned towards the Socialist ideal, but who, from habit or perhaps environment, patronised establishments which existed solely in the interest of that fraternity which battened and prospered on the sale of excisable commodities'.[32] In other words, if working men were going to drink, better that they do it in a Labour club than in a pub where the landlord would hand the money over to the Tories.

This was not quite what Robinson had in mind when he urged for more creative means to organise and direct the activity of party members. Indeed, he labelled the above establishment and another in the same constituency, 'boozing clubs where young men and women who would probably not go to an ordinary public house learn to drink under the folds of the Red Flag'. In a way reminiscent of early socialists, he wished to develop more sober, uplifting activities, and was involved in efforts to create a Worker's Art Circle.[33] Nevertheless, while activists may have argued about the varying merits of the new activities being undertaken by local parties, their efforts at least illustrated a willingness to try and broaden the party's role and appeal.

Indeed, even within the bounds of those parties primarily concerned with fighting elections, some degree of activity beyond strictly political work was evident. In Blackley, even Spofforth, the killjoy secretary, admitted that dances and social functions helped relieve 'the drabness that too much committee and business work gives'.[34] Moreover, in 1925 he reluctantly accepted that 'new members are not going to be made warm, enthusiastic and hard working, by plunging them into business meetings full of reports, minutes, references back, correspondence from Actors' Associations, W.I.R. Relief Committees, resolutions on the freedom of Georgia, Zionism and the like. No! *Whether we like it or not* members come to know and like each other and like the party, by creating a social spirit amongst them'.[35] This realisation was shared by other secretaries: divisional reports illustrate that by the early 1920s more time was being devoted to events such as dances and whist drives.[36] Moreover, as local parties began to establish their own Labour clubs, new and more ambitious activities were undertaken. Blackley and Rusholme DLPs successfully formed their own choral societies, while West Salford, which had acquired sizeable grounds, devoted a great deal of attention to sporting interests and established football, cricket and tennis teams. In addition, the ILP - which, as noted earlier, worked closely with local Labour parties and enjoyed a significant overlap in membership - offered a wide range of activities. Every ILP branch in Manchester and Salford ran at least two of the following: a rambling club, cricket club, cycling club, choir, drama society, swimming club, or guild of youth.

While stress was placed on largely 'non-political' social and sports-orientated pursuits, Labour and the ILP continued to involve themselves in more traditional welfare and educational work. In particular, during the housing crisis in the years which immediately followed 1918, when Manchester saw a dramatic rise in the number of evictions, the local labour movement devoted much energy to protecting and advising local residents. In 1920, the Manchester and Salford Trades Council delivered a leaflet to trade unionists and their families providing a step-by-step guide on how they were affected by the new Rent Restriction Act. Co-written by William Mellor, secretary of the trades council, and Joe Toole, a local Labour councillor and later South Salford MP, the pamphlet set out in simple question-and-answer form the position of tenants under the new Act. It also provided advice about immediate action which tenants ought to take; urging them to apply for Certificates of Disrepair to avoid being charged costs.[37] An indication of the important role that the labour movement played during this crisis can be seen in 1923, when poor people threatened with eviction queued to see Mellor in the building which the trades council shared with the Borough Labour party in Clarence Street.[38] In addition, several Labour activists were involved in local housing protest groups. Elijah Hart, for instance, was among several party figures to work with the Moss Side Tenants Defence League, which conducted 'squats' and organised a legal defence fund for tenants threatened with eviction, largely out of trade union contributions.[39]

Local Labour organisations also concerned themselves with adding some colour to the lives of the disadvantaged. In 1925, the women's section of the Hulme DLP held a

Christmas party for 160 poor children, expanded the following year to feed 1,100.[40] In Gorton, the local ILP organised a tea party for 650 children in 1927, while the Labour party women's section in that division regularly organised Christmas parties for poor children.[41] Beyond the routine work of maintaining Labour's political organisation, then, party activity often took on the form of welfare work. Although this sort of activity was carried on throughout the year it was most visible during times of particular hardship, notably during the General Strike and its aftermath. During this time Labour parties throughout Manchester and Salford organised demonstrations, processions, open-air meetings, concerts, theatre performances and fund-raisers in an effort to ease the miners' plight. The Exchange DLP raised over £100, Platting over £500 and the Gorton Trades Council £773; in addition, the Manchester Borough Labour party conducted its own fundraising campaign.[42]

The work of activists was not merely restricted to the collection and distribution of money. In West Salford, members distributed milk to mothers while the women's group of the ILP was heavily involved with the local lodge of the Miners Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) in organising feeding stations.[43] Similarly, throughout the dispute, Platting DLP provided a Saturday morning breakfast and Sunday dinner for each miners' child in the division; in addition to this, the 129 miners in Platting received a weekly parcel of grocery. 'It was trying work,' wrote the secretary, 'nobly done, done by men and women, many of whom were suffering too'.[44]

The fact that poor people were prepared to carry out such welfare work on behalf of other poor people tells us something about the character of many Labour activists in this period. On the one hand, it points to the existence of a strong tradition of working-class solidarity and self-help - slogans which were embroidered across trade union banners in this period.[45] At the same time, however, it highlights the centrality of the notion of 'service' in the outlook of many activists - a motivation rather different to self-help. As the next chapter explains in more detail, many activists - and not just those from the more affluent sections of the working class - considered themselves to be 'civic ambassadors', a role and a belief which often set them apart from the people whom they sought to help. This separation was reinforced by their interest in education, which, as Adrian Oldfield noted in a discussion on 'civic republicanism', goes hand in hand with the commitment to 'service'.[46] As discussed in more detail later on, education was seen as an important means for bringing about socialism, and it is significant that local Labour parties and branches of the ILP were involved in moves to distribute literature and extend educational opportunities to their members.

Under the direction of William Prince Telfer, the Manchester Borough Labour party established links with the Reformers' Bookshop, owned by International Bookshops Ltd, the largest wholesale and retail dealers in 'Progressive literature' in the British Isles. This gave the party access to a wide range of literature, political and otherwise, including such titles as *The Coming War With America* by John Maclean and *Black Man's Burden* by E. D. Morel.[47] The annual turnover from this aspect of the organisation usually amounted to over £40, though the economic hardship experienced by many members as the decade progressed meant that sales tended to fluctuate.[48] In addition to the work of the MBLP executive, local parties also appointed propaganda committees and made attempts to circulate their own publications, albeit with varied success. *Our Opinion*, the journal of the ILP in Platting, seems to have flitted in and out of existence, as did the *Moss Side Mercury,* journal of the local Labour party in that division.[49] More successful, it seems, was a monthly Labour party publication in the Exchange division, which prompted Liberals in that area to consider producing a journal of their own.[50] The most notable local production was probably the *Ardwick Pioneer.*

The first edition was produced in May 1924, and one year later the secretary of the Ardwick DLP announced that 10,000 copies had been printed each month since. Through its columns the local Labour MP, Tom Lowth, presented a monthly review of parliamentary business, while the party's work, both local and national, was also recorded. Assessing the usefulness of the paper, the secretary concluded that 'it has proved a useful medium of communication between the party organisation and the individual members, and is a very valuable asset to the party'.[51]

The fact that Ardwick was more successful than other local parties in circulating a party journal probably rested on the large individual membership present in that division. In constituencies with fewer Labour members, readers and distributors were clearly harder to find. As a result, the production and distribution of party literature tended to be organised by the centre. Hence, the Borough party launched a campaign to popularise the *Daily Herald*, the national Labour newspaper, pushing DLPs to buy and distribute copies to members. It also encouraged trade union branches to take copies of *The Labour Magazine*, another national publication, for re-sale among their members.[52] Exactly how many local parties acted on these prompts is impossible to uncover, though only two report having done so. The Moss Side DLP distributed 100 copies of the *Daily Herald*, weekly, over several months in 1924, while the Platting DLP introduced a total of 5000 copies on a free distribution over the same period.[53] Whether or not this action proved effective is unknown, though the lack of any further comment on the matter suggests it was not. Distribution of the *Labour Magazine* appears to have been more successful, though trade union interest was greatest among non-manual unions such as the Railway Clerks' Association.[54] The attention given by the MBLP to the distribution of literature reflected its desire to 'become an Information Bureau for the movement, and a nerve centre for its activities'.[55] With this aim in mind the party launched its own monthly bulletin in January 1928, while a similar journal had been instigated in Salford as early as 1920.[56]

In addition to distributing literature, the Manchester Labour party also encouraged its local branches to set up study classes and organise educational trips. In 1922, the Borough party affiliated to the Manchester Labour College, and the following year the Moss Side DLP affiliated to the college on an individual basis.[57] By 1925 Blackley DLP had established two educational classes and a year later Clayton DLP was running study classes under the auspices of the National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC), reporting good attendances.[58] Rusholme DLP was another which engaged in educational work, whilst the South Salford DLP was by 1926 holding classes in economics.[59] In Gorton, meanwhile, the trades council, under the direction of W. Oldfield, organised educational outings for interested members and in 1924 held trips to Ford Motor Works in Trafford Park, Styal Homes for Children, Withington Hospital, the CWS Flour Mill in Trafford Park and the Manchester Fire Brigade station.[60]

Similarly, a series of meetings were organised in this period by two female members of the party, Annie Lee and Rose Graham, at which lectures 'of a distinctly educational character' were accompanied by musical contributions performed by 'friends of the movement'.[61] The setting for these meetings was the Manchester Clarion Cafe, on Market Street, which was decorated with murals depicting William Morris's *News From Nowhere*. As the lectures became more popular, speakers 'of repute' were enlisted and topics discussed included 'Municipal and National Banking' and 'Human Nature and Socialism.'[62] However, according to one who attended these lectures, talk was not restricted to politics. 'Religion, sex, art, and philosophy "were torn to shreds, reassembled, and torn to shreds again".' Most members appear to have been union officials, many of whom had been educated by the Workers' Educational Association or the Council of Labour Colleges.[63] The majority of members, therefore, were men, though women were also present.[64]

The variety of activities and events outlined above shows that Labour members in Manchester at least had the opportunity to engage in a broad spectrum of pastimes beyond the narrow confines of practical party work. Thus, for active members like Gibbon and Hannah Mitchell, the political labour movement 'created life for them, taking them campaigning to mass rallies in the country, bringing them into contact with national political figures and what was more important, with new stimulating experiences'.[65] Another, Stella Davies, describes how social connections cemented individuals to the party. 'The Socialist movement through its many organisations provided an opportunity for young persons to meet and become attached to each other. Few years passed without a crop of engagements and weddings between the members of the various groups.'[66] Hence, as indicated earlier, Labour politics was often a 'family affair'. In many areas, husband and wife teams often shared an official post over a number of years, while we have already seen how female delegates to the Labour conference were frequently related by marriage to important figures in the party.

It would nonetheless be inaccurate to claim that the Labour party succeeded in organising the total environment of all its members. In truth, it seems that only a small minority was actively involved in the party to any significant degree. In part, this was due to factors beyond Labour's control; the wealth of recreational facilities available in Britain meant that the working class had an established social life long before the arrival of the Labour party. To a greater extent than social democratic parties on the continent, therefore, Labour faced stiff competition from commercial and other providers of leisure for the attention of working men and women. However, while this is part of the explanation, it does not fully account for Labour's failure to make itself central to the lives of more than a minority of party members.

At least to some extent, the failure lay with some of the activists who controlled and dictated party activity. As we have seen, many such individuals were reluctant to organise 'impure' pursuits that they believed threatened to undermine the electoral cause, and instead sought to concentrate members' efforts on practical political work. To be fair, this was not universally true, and many activists devoted tremendous energy to the creation of social pursuits that they hoped would draw people into a wider Labour community; indeed, as later chapters will show, the notion of 'community' was central to their conception of socialism. The problem was that the 'alternative culture' they presented was unappealing to the majority in real communities. They did not share the same interests as many Labour activists, whose vision of the ideal community - with its emphasis on service and education - proved unattractive even to most party members. Indeed, it would seem that the most active element of Labour's ranks, upon whom the party's operation depended, were actually quite unlike the people they sought to represent. In order to develop this point further, the following chapter investigates some of the people prominent in the party during the 1920s, exploring what factors motivated them to become active. Given that they were a crucial strata of the membership, often acting as Labour's publicists and propagandists in the local community, the character of these local activists was likely to have had a crucial bearing on the party's electoral progress in the city.

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[14] Boughton, 'Working Class Politics', p.4.

[15] McKechnie, *Manchester in 1915*, p.110.

[16] Kidd, *Manchester*, p.228.

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[28] See MBLP *Annual Reports, 1920-26.*

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[30] MG, 8 May 1922.

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[33] M.R.L.A., Wright Robinson Diary, 25 January 1925.

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[53] MBLP *AR*, 1924.

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[54] MBLP *AR*, 1923.

[55] MBLP *AR*, 1926.

[56] MBLP *AR*, 1919; MG, 14 January 1928.

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[59] *Labour's Northern Voice*, 15 October 1926.

[60] MBLP *AR*, 1924.

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Chapter Six

'The Cream of Working Class Society': Labour Activists in Manchester

Having looked at the work undertaken by Labour in Manchester during the 1920s, the following section now seeks to explore more closely the character of those members who were most involved in party activities. It should be stated at the outset that participation in political parties is very much a minority activity. A survey of political participation in Britain carried out in 1990, for instance, revealed that only 7.4 per cent of electors were members of a political party and only 2.2 per cent party activists. Three years earlier, an election survey had estimated that less than 1.5 per cent of electors were Labour party members.[1] Although historical data is harder to acquire, it seems that similarly small percentages were active in the party at earlier points in Labour's history. In 1960, when the party's individual membership stood at 790,000, T.E.M. McKitterick asserted that 'only a tiny minority takes a really vigorous part in politics'. The vast majority, he claimed, had 'succumbed to the appeal of a canvasser during a recruiting drive, pay...the collector who comes round on behalf of the local party, never attend a meeting, do no organisational or electoral work, and would hardly notice if the collector stopped coming'.[2] Such a view was not merely the result of idle speculation; evidence from several surveys of local parties undertaken in the period painted a similar picture. A study of Stretford Labour party, in 1954, found that only 19 per cent of members had attended a meeting in the previous six months. In East Salford's Trinity ward, a survey of members between 1958 and 1966 revealed that only six had attended more than half the monthly party meetings. Similarly low levels of participation were seen in other regions. An investigation in Brixton's Stockwell ward revealed that attendances at Labour meetings during the 1950s rarely exceeded three per cent of known members.[3]

Given that this era saw Labour membership reach record levels, the situation during the 1920s and 1930s is likely to have been at least, if not more, disappointing. Although figures for Labour membership are notoriously unreliable, in 1930 the party claimed a total membership of 2,347,000. The overwhelming majority of these 'members' had found their way onto the party's rolls as a result of their membership of an affiliated organisation, usually a trade union, and in reality did little for the party beyond paying an annual political levy and casting their votes at elections. However, a smaller number, estimated to be approximately 277,000, had enrolled as individuals. Given that these members had taken a conscious decision to join the party, unlike the affiliated membership, they might have been expected to play a more active role in the organisation.[4] Yet, as chapter five showed, evidence suggests that even this directly affiliated group exhibited a low level of political activity. Thus, it appears that the day-to-day operation of Labour party machinery depended on the efforts of a small minority of enthusiasts who devoted a significant amount of their time and energy to political work. The following account explores who these people were and what motivated them to become involved in party affairs. In doing so, it is intended to proceed along the lines of enquiry suggested by previous students of political activism, most notably Seyd and Whiteley, who analysed Labour party membership in the 1990s.[5]

Seyd and Whiteley began by looking at Mancur Olson's argument, outlined in his classic study, *The Logic of Collective Action*, that membership of political parties is a minority activity because the costs of membership generally outweigh the benefits.[6] Working from an economist's perspective, Olson claimed that, as people are fundamentally rational actors, they are unwilling to make significant personal sacrifices for a party whose victory would provide a collective good. Indeed, for Olson, the crucial question was not why most people *do not* join and become active in a political party, but why anyone *does*. He concluded that party membership and activism will always be restricted to a minority of people motivated either by personal political ambition - and therefore hoping that the party will provide them with non-collective benefits - or by ideology.[7] While conceding that Olson's thesis helps account for the low-level of public participation in the political process, Seyd and Whiteley argued that his explanation of why some people *are* politically active was simplistic. Focussing on the modern Labour party, they suggested that individuals join and become active in the party because of a variety of 'incentives'. While some of these undoubtedly provide 'private returns', there were other motives based on altruism and 'social norms or the pressures to conform to the opinions of other people'.[8] In addition to this, Seyd and Whiteley also made some general observations about the composition of Labour's active membership in the early 1990s. Although the picture was complicated, they reached three broad conclusions: that middle-class party members were more active than working-class members; that men were more active than women; and that educated members were more active than uneducated members.[9] The results of Seyd and Whiteley's study, the most rigorous investigation into Labour's grass roots membership ever undertaken, mirrored the findings of other investigations into party membership between 1950 and 1980.[10]

In exploring the kind of people active in the party in Manchester during the 1920s, this chapter will attempt to assess whether such claims can be applied to this earlier period. In contrast to the years after 1945, the inter-war period is seen by some as a time when Labour was 'at all levels a working-class organisation...a truly proletarian party'.[11] However, as the following account will show, while the working class may well have dominated Labour's active ranks during the 1920s, middle-class individuals were also evident. Furthermore, of those working-class activists working for the party, most tended to derive from the higher echelons of that group and displayed many of the characteristics noted by Robert Roberts, in his description of early Labour agitators in Salford. As he put it, they were 'Active in their "society" or "trades club", as the union was commonly called, members of choirs, cycling and walking groups, socialist Sunday schools or Methodist chapels, readers of Ruskin, Dickens, Kingsley, Carlyle and Scott, teetotallers often, straightlaced, idealistic, naive'. They were, he stated, 'the "cream of working class society"'.[12] Consequently, this chapter will also compare Manchester Labour activists with the mass of people who were not generally active in politics, investigating the relationship which existed between these two groups and how that shaped Labour's development. It does so on the basis of information gleaned from a variety of sources: newspaper clippings, obituaries, biographies, surviving party records and other documents, which have been collated together to form individual profiles of 200 Manchester Labour activists, which can be found in the 'Who's Who' section in the appendix.[13]

First, however, it is necessary to explain what constitutes 'activism' and legitimates use of the term 'party activist'. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a political activist is a 'person adopting a policy of vigorous action in politics'. Yet, as Seyd and Whiteley point out, 'party activism is not a single homogenous concept which can be accurately measured'.[14] Rather, there are different levels and dimensions of party activism. Some members may be inactive for months at a time before bursting into life during an election campaign; others, meanwhile, are engaged in political work all the time, often holding posts in local parties or as representatives at various levels of administration. Nonetheless, both should be considered, in there own way, as active party members. It is far easier for contemporary studies to detail such varied grades of activity, as information is more readily obtainable: for any historical investigation, such distinctions are harder to uncover. People who delivered leaflets, but did not write them, or heard speeches, but did not make them, generally bequeathed no record of the role which they performed. Thus, those individuals classed as activists in the following account have only been identifiable because they left some trace of their activity. Hence, this is fundamentally a study of the most active element of Labour's rank and file; people who held official positions in local parties, stood as candidates in local or national elections, or worked as publicists and propagandists. Nevertheless, this should not detract from the account that follows, providing as it does a useful insight into the type of people who constituted the most important element of Labour's infantry.

6.1 Who was active in the Manchester Labour party?

The most striking feature about the 200 activists profiled here is the disparity existing between the number of men and women engaged in party work. While men account for some 84.5 per cent - or 169 - of those identified, women comprise only 15.5 per cent of the list. This bears a striking similarity to figures compiled in more recent studies of Labour members and suggests that the party in 1920s Manchester, like its modern successor, was a male-centred institution and party activism a largely male-orientated pursuit.[15] However, while there is some truth to these claims, the statistics probably underestimate female participation due to several factors that require explanation.

Because information about individual members active in the 1920s is scarce, one of the few ways of discovering who was engaged in party work is to sift through lists of municipal candidates, party secretaries and agents. The problem with this method is that it tends to over-represent men; as explained in chapter four, women were generally denied the chance to perform such official roles and so the higher up the party hierarchy one travels, the fewer females are found. However, this does not mean that women were absent from Labour's organisation or did not participate in party affairs. Indeed, according to writers such as Pamela Graves, female recruits were an integral part of local party organisation and played a pivotal role in solidifying working-class support for Labour.[16] Yet, as we might expect, the role of women in the party was generally distinct to that of men.

While public life in inter-war Britain was dominated by men, women 'enjoyed' hegemony in the private, domestic sphere, and this gender division was reflected in the organisation and culture of the Labour party.[17] As Graves notes, the allocation of responsibilities in constituency parties 'bore more than a passing resemblance to the traditional gender roles in the working class family'.[18] While male members dealt with the 'political' business - selecting candidates, acting as delegates to conference and producing resolutions - women were expected to busy themselves with more 'domestic' concerns: fund-raising, routine party administration and the organisation of events such as Christmas parties and garden fetes. Indeed, *Labour Organiser* greeted the accession of women into the party with the claim that this opened up 'great new possibilities of extended social life'.[19] This gender division also shaped the political agenda of male and female members. Women generally interested themselves in questions of education, health and housing, while men were occupied by issues such as unemployment, working conditions and trade union rights.[20] These differences were reinforced by the very structure of local Labour parties which, by virtue of the separate women's sections, institutionalised the segregation of the sexes.

Clearly, women suffered from unequal treatment in the Manchester Labour party. Under-represented in the highest levels of the organisation they struggled to influence party policy and, as already noted, found it difficult to enter public life. Nonetheless, recent studies have shown that women often played an important role in establishing Labour's organisation and this was certainly true in Manchester, where a number of councillors and party officials were female.[21] Many of the women who assumed these roles had long track records in politics and had been active in groups outside the Labour party before 1914. Twelve of the 31 women featured here were members of organisations including the Suffragettes, the Women's Labour League (WLL) and the Women's International League (WIL). Hannah Mitchell and Annot Robinson , for instance, both spent time in jail for Suffragette activities and were each active in the ILP from an early stage.[22] Several other women were involved in peace organisations while a number also boasted connections with health groups. Mrs L. Harrison, for example, who became secretary of the Manchester Labour Women's Advisory Committee, worked for seven years on the Manchester Maternity and Child Welfare Committee.[23] Dr. M. E. May was also heavily engaged in community health-work. During the early 1920s she called for the municipalisation of Manchester's milk supply and helped to form the city's first Family Planning Unit. Similar health and community concerns motivated various other female party members: especially active was Mrs Mackintosh, of the Withington DLP, who worked for the Guild of Social Services, the Civic League of Help and the Police Court Mission to Women.[24] It is difficult to ascertain if involvement in these groups was a precursor to Labour activity or merely a symptom of it. Either way, it would seem that an interest in issues such as suffrage, health, education and housing helped to draw numbers of women into the orbit of Labour politics.

Others progressed through more classically male-orientated channels. Annie Lee and Josephine Shaw, for instance, both became involved in the party through their roles as trade union officials. However, these were exceptional cases and the scarcity of women employed in trade unions actually added to the underepresentation of females in Labour's official ranks. As illustrated in Table 6.1 below, there was a clear correlation between trade union and Co-op officialdom and Labour activity. Indeed, individuals engaged in these roles comprised the single most common occupational category among activists in the Manchester area.

Table 6.1 Occupational Categories of 200 Labour Activists*

Married Woman	TU/Coop Official	Political Official	Unskilled	Semi-skilled	Skilled	Retail	Clerical	Professional	Manager/ Directors
9.5%	27.5%	7%	4.5%	7%	11.5%	10%	7%	10%	5%
19	55	14	9	14	23	20	14	20	10

*In 1% (2) of the cases occupations could not be identified and they have been omitted.

Given the strong institutional links existing between unions and party, this connection is hardly surprising. More unexpected is the large number of activists found to have been employed in occupations outside the 'traditional' working class. As we have seen, circumstantial evidence suggests that the overwhelming majority of Labour's rank-and-file derived from the working classes in this period. In contrast, judging by the failure of most local parties in the city's residential divisions to attract individual members, middle-class supporters were few and far between. Yet, among the party's active ranks, this element features strongly; of the 200 activists identified here, approximately one third were employed in professional, managerial, directorial and clerical jobs.

That said, while a barrister and an accountant are found in Labour's ranks, most of the people who may be described as 'professionals' were of a kind that came to be associated with the Labour Party in later years: artists, a photographer, doctors and nurses, in short, those working in the service sector. Furthermore, of those people listed as managers and directors, a fair proportion were employed by the Co-operative Wholesale and Co-operative Insurance Societies, which had strong links to the Labour party. Nevertheless, although these individuals were not quite the same type of managerial and professional worker that enrolled in the Conservative party, the strength of the black-coated presence among Labour's active ranks is still a notable fact and probably owes much to the nature of local politics in the 1920s. For instance, when it came to finding suitable candidates for local elections, Labour was constrained by the need to attract people who could afford the time off work and the expenses for the election. In addition, once elected, individuals needed a large degree of flexibility in their work if they were to effectively carry out their public duty. As James Openshaw, a Salford Labour pioneer explained, 'the candidates would [generally] be found from Insurance Agents, Post Office Servants, or people whose occupation gave them liberty during the day when the Council, Guardians, and School Board Meetings were held'.[25] Hence also, the significant number of shopkeepers and salesmen active in the Manchester and Salford Labour parties.

Indeed, several Manchester activists actually changed their jobs in order to facilitate party work. William Davy, a Gorton Labour councillor who eventually became Lord Mayor of Manchester, twice gave his social and political work prominence over his occupation. Working as a signalman on the railways, he turned down a stationmaster's post with more money because the job would have compelled him to relinquish his 'work for the world'. Some time later he found that his job as a signalman restricted such work, so he resigned from the railway altogether and became an insurance collector, working on a commission-only basis.[26] In fact, several Manchester Labour activists gained employment as insurance agents for similar motives. As this was a job that required house-to-house calls, it enabled them to simultaneously perform two different functions - political and income generating.

Although some activists sacrificed their occupations in order to pursue their political interests, this was a level of devotion to which few aspired. Individuals engaged in hard, physical, jobs with long working days were, moreover, often unable to take part even in basic party activities. Quite simply, they did not have the time or the energy to attend evening meetings of the local party or to canvass the neighbourhood. Even the most diligent of Labour's active members, whose occupations were more conducive to such work, complained at the burden which political activity put on their lives. Wright Robinson, who was active in the ILP and the Labour party and was employed as an official for the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers (NUDAW), confided in his diary that 'this life as an agitator irks me, and after a week of office and branch work, meetings at weekend become insufferable'.[27] Especially revealing was Robinson's reaction to news that an ILP Summer School, at which he was due to speak, had been cancelled: 'Even whilst I was commiserating with Abbott [the organiser] about his disappointment, my heart danced a jig with relief. It would mean a day or two at home, and save me at least three pounds, which I could ill afford, for it was out of the question to charge the ILP for any service.'[28] Indeed, as Robinson's diary shows, money was often tight, and he frequently required loans from friends.

Notwithstanding his complaints, Robinson still relentlessly pursued his political work. Indeed, in many ways it is the active nature of such individuals in all aspects of their lives that constitutes their most outstanding and distinctive feature. Yet, while personality traits may help explain why some people are more 'active' than others, it does not tell us why they channel their activism in one direction as opposed to another.

Thus, it is the object of the following section to ascertain why these particular individuals chose to put their energy into politics, and specifically, into the Labour party.

6.2 What made people become active in the Manchester Labour party?

Using oral history, Dan Weinbren discovered that work-based contacts and trade union activity encouraged individuals to participate in party politics.[29] Perhaps it is significant, then, that a large number of activists in Manchester and Salford were engaged in some form of trade union or Co-operative Society work. Quite apart from the fifty-five individuals who were full-time functionaries of a union or Co-operative Society, at least fifty more worked for such organisations in a voluntary capacity, as unpaid officials, conference delegates or representatives sitting on political or industrial bodies. These roles would have brought them into contact with people already active in the party, and it is possible that they were drawn into Labour activism by the influence of these personal contacts. In addition, though it is again speculation, it is likely that involvement in work-based groups such as trade unions increased their political consciousness, which in turn may have encouraged Labour activism. Skilled and semi-skilled workers were more liable to have been trade unionised than unskilled manual workers, and it is notable that the former group provided Manchester Labour with more activists than the latter. This was also the case in Labour parties elsewhere in Britain and indeed throughout Europe at this time.[30] In fact, skilled workers had long been at the forefront of working-class politics. Geoffrey Crossick has shown that in the late nineteenth century politically conscious artisans led moves to establish an independent Labour politics in Kentish London, and the same was also true in Manchester.[31] Indeed, they were still the most politically aware element of Manchester's working class in the inter-war period.[32] Significantly, *Labour's Northern Voice*, the ILP organ in this time, encouraged businesses to buy advertising space in the paper with the claim that it went 'straight into the homes of the best paid artisans'.

In contrast, unskilled workers were felt to be much less politically active and it is significant that less than five per cent of Labour activists were engaged in manual unskilled work. Of course, as already noted, it is possible that this was not the result of a lower level of political awareness but merely reflected the fact that unskilled workers had less scope for political activity. Quite simply, the nature of their jobs often gave unskilled workers less autonomy and left them with less energy than their more skilled counterparts. That said, it is notable that of those unskilled workers who *were* active in the Labour party, railwaymen predominated. This seems important, as railwaymen were considered a 'respectable' and uniformed element of the working class.[33] Moreover, unlike many other unskilled workers, they had fought a long struggle before 1914 to gain recognition for their unions and were at the forefront of several legal battles crucial in Labour's development.[34] As early as 1897, the Manchester-Newton Heath branch of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) had voiced its support for independent labour politics, dismissing the Liberals as 'a Party composed of capitalists, and enemies to the advancement and well-being of workers generally'.[35] Following the Taff Vale and Osborne Judgements in the early years of the twentieth century, both involving railway unions, support for Labour politics among workers in the industry grew even stronger.[36]

The influence of association was not necessarily restricted to the effect of occupation and union membership; links with other groups could be equally influential. Justinian Cossey, for instance, joined Labour following earlier membership of the Salvation Army, a group, according to Engels, which revived the propaganda of early Christianity, appealed to the poor as the elect, fought capitalism in a religious way and fostered an element of early Christian class antagonism.[37] Several other individuals were drawn into party work in response to religious connections. Annie Lee, for instance, declared she became a socialist through her faith; being a member of the Oldham Road Independent Chapel Sunday School, 'it seemed to me that Christian teaching was opposed to poverty. I studied Socialist doctrine and I believed, as I still do, that Socialism is the best means of abolishing poverty.'[38] Moreover, as was the case in other areas, she was one of several Manchester Labour members boasting a Nonconformist background. William Davy, an ardent church-goer, was on the preacher's list at his local Methodist Chapel in Gorton, while Charles E. Wood was a member of the Wesleyan Chapel in Platting. Hannah Mitchell and Stella Davies both came from strong Nonconformist families, and though they drifted away from religion in later life, it is perhaps significant that Mitchell's first association with the Labour party came through her membership of a Labour Church.[39] It is worth pointing out that Nonconformity was not especially strong in Manchester; rather, it seems that adherents of that particular faith found a powerful attraction in the ethical appeal of the Labour party - especially its ILP wing.[40]

Although people of other religious faiths, notably Catholics and Jews, can be identified in the Manchester Labour party, the connection between faith and politics appears to have been less strong for them than for Nonconformists. Rather, in their cases, ethnicity seems to have been a more important factor in promoting political involvement. In particular, the Irish background of most Catholic activists seems to have acted as a strong influence on their politics. In Platting, especially, a number of prominent individuals found their way into the party thanks to prior involvement in Irish political groupings, and they in turn brought further recruits. The key figure in this process was James Reilly, a leather merchant who represented St. Michael's ward between 1913 and 1930, first as an Irish Nationalist and later for the Labour party. Before 1916, Reilly had been President of the Manchester branch of the United Ireland League (UIL), a Nationalist organisation which drew strong support from the city's large Irish community. Following the collapse of the UIL in the wake of major political upheavals in Ireland between 1918 and 1921, the Manchester branch resolved to form a new organisation, the Irish Democratic League (IDL). This group, of which Reilly became president, had strong Labour sympathies and as the decade progressed a number of IDL members became leading lights in the Platting DLP.[41]

However, the most common form of association that eventually promoted activity in Labour in this period was membership of a separate, sometimes rival, socialist group. Of the 200 Labour members profiled here, 73 had confirmed links with another socialist organisation, usually the ILP but occasionally the Communist party, suggesting that a large number of Labour activists were on the left of the party. Indeed, as early as 1906, the Liberal C. F. Masterman noted that while Labour's 'money and its votes have been largely provided by the trade unions...its energy and driving force have been given by the little group who call themselves the "Independent Labour Party", whose aim is not so much the welfare of trade unionism, as the advancement of a definite policy of social reform leading in the direction of collectivism'.[42] The construction of a network of local Labour branches in the 1920s was partly intended to replace this reliance on ILP dynamism, yet, as we can see, ILP influence in the new local organisation remained strong.

Furthermore, of the 73 Labour activists sporting links with outside political groupings, 23 were full time Co-op or union officials, indicating that individual trade unionists were often driven by political beliefs more advanced than the 'labourist' principles which dominated trade unionism. Joseph Hallsworth, for instance, the

Audenshaw typist who rose to become general secretary of NUDAW, claimed the union movement had a 'revolutionary objective', to supplant capitalism 'by an economic and social order which will distribute equitably the results of human toil and endeavour and satisfy the workers' desire for complete control of those conditions that determine their happiness'.[43]

Thus, ideological belief could also be a key factor in motivating individuals to become politically active. Harry Thorneycroft, a Labour councillor and eventually MP for Clayton, was one of several activists whose early political views were formulated by Robert Blatchford. When an apprentice in a barber shop, he allegedly spent odd moments with an 'eager nose' buried in the *Clarion*.[44] Another of Blatchford's publications, *Merrie England*, proved equally influential in shaping the political outlook of several Manchester Labour members. Tom Larrad was among many inspired to join the ILP after reading it.[45] However, as Stephen Yeo points out, the influence of books such as *Merrie England* and *News from Nowhere*, or the words of an evangelist, was often only part of the equation. It was when such tracts mixed with real-life images of poverty and degradation that they encouraged an individual into political activity.[46] William Jackson, for instance, described as 'a friend of the "bottom dog"', was among several activists who listed the sight of Manchester's slums as a motivating factor in becoming politically active. Likewise, Wright Robinson recalled that while various polemics by H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw had an impact on him,

> the book which had a decisive influence was the Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health...[By] showing the heavy incidence of death through various diseases in one part of a town as compared with the incidence in another part of the same town, it became akin to blasphemy to repeat the meaningless phrase at death "that the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away". The Medical Officer's Report made it abundantly clear that Town Councils could do something about it, that death rates, particularly infantile death rates could be reduced by the action of Town Councils.[47]

Such formative experiences often influenced the type of activity that these members later pursued. Jackson, for instance, became the longstanding chairman of the council's public health committee, and went on to play a leading role in the construction of the Abergele sanatorium and the Wythenshawe council estate.[48]

Of course, while Jackson and Robinson were by no means wealthy men, neither had actually experienced life *in* the slums. Rather, their political outlook was derived from what they saw from outside. In contrast, activists such as Ellen Wilkinson and Joe Toole developed their views through first-hand experience of squalor. Nevertheless, despite their differing backgrounds, both groups displayed a similar sense of *noblesse oblige*. As Raphael Samuel has noted, 'the obligation of the strong to help the weak [was present] in the very heart of the labour movement...It was not only the well-born and well-educated, like Attlee and Tawney, who set out to help the underdog, but also...the working-class activists, moved at the plight of people more downtrodden than themselves'.[49] All this highlights the powerful altruism which motivated many activists. We have earlier seen the example of William Davy, who sacrificed his career for his political work. Similarly, Thomas Walker, a railwayman and also a Gorton councillor, gave his political activity precedence over his job, refusing promotion and turning down an offer to become an Inspector in order to continue working on behalf of his colleagues as a union representative.[50] Likewise, Arthur O'Donnell, a trade union official busy in the Hulme DLP, was described by George Williams, central secretary of the Manchester Post Office Union, as 'impervious to the attractions offered by promotion...[preferring] to remain a super-efficient, unorthodox, wholehearted protagonist on behalf of Post Office workers of all grades covered by the union'.[51]

While some activists sacrificed career advancement in the course of their social and political work, a minority actually damaged their health. Mrs L. Harrison was forced to resign from the Manchester Maternity and Child Welfare Committee when she became too ill to continue, while James Openshaw, secretary of the Salford Labour party, almost died from overwork.[52] Trying to juggle the demands of being a trade union official in the Postman's Federation with his political activities in the Labour party and the ILP, Openshaw suffered a breakdown and was given only months to live. However, surprising doctors with his recovery, he took up a less demanding job as a caretaker which left him with enough energy to keep up his Labour activity.[53] Given the exhausting nature of party activism, and the sacrifices it demanded, it is worth asking what sustained such people in their political work beyond ideological belief and the selfless desire to help the wider community.

In answering this question, it is worth pointing out that altruistic efforts are not necessarily the disinterested actions they might initially seem. As Seyd and Whiteley observe, while individuals necessarily do not undertake altruistic actions based on a calculus of costs and benefits, they nevertheless enjoy the emotional returns gained from involvement in such measures.[54] This is evident in the account given by Stella Davies of her reaction to the sight of long-unemployed miners of the South-East Lancashire coalfield during family forays to the Lake District. 'As year followed year', she recalled, 'they and their families grew shabbier and their houses more dilapidated'. In response, Davies and her family 'eased our social consciences by active support of the Labour Party'.[55] In a similar vein, Rusholme DLP sent out the following new year's message: 'To establish Socialism, the new Social System, is our great task. To end the terrible tragedies of human suffering and replace them by happiness and contentment is too inspiring and great a job for us to be idle or tired. The Socialist Movement is the greatest movement of all times, *and to be of service in such a movement is one of the joys of a Socialist's life*.'[56] As indicated already, the notion of service was central to Labour activists' notions of community and citizenship. As Weinbren notes, they saw their political work as 'an aid to the party politics on which parliamentary democracy rests'.[57] In effect, these individuals regarded themselves as 'civic ambassadors' performing 'work for the world', a concept which permeated late nineteenth and early twentieth century politics.[58]

Yet, despite striving to improve the wider community on school committees, the Board of Guardians and Manchester City Council, the party workers outlined here were often quite uncharacteristic of the people they purported to represent. In part, the very fact that they were politically and socially active set them apart from the majority of the population, as few people shared their energy or sense of duty. More than that, however, it was the greater level of ambition and drive displayed by these activists, notably those from a working-class background, that really marked them out as different. At least 17 of the individuals profiled here had links to working-class educative institutions such as the Workers Educational Association (WEA), Ruskin College or the NCLC, while numerous others were self-educated. As the testimony of more than one member shows, this interest in education often served to alienate these activists from their peers. That process of detachment is described in the novel, *The Master of Ransley*, written by Labour activist and eventual Manchester councillor, Elijah Hart. Set in the late nineteenth century, its central character, William Oldroyd, is a pit engineer who rises to become a Liberal MP and is eventually knighted. Tellingly, in a revealing description of Oldroyd's early experiences at the coal mine, we are told that he was 'definitely unpopular with his workmates. They looked upon him as surly and unsociable...an opinion not altogether dissociated from his curt refusal to join them in spending time and money in their favourite "pub".'[59] Later, we learn that his landlady considered him 'the victim of some form of harmless insanity. Only that would make a man sit indoors night after night, and most of Sunday, reading books or writing words and figures on endless sheets of paper; sometimes sitting up till the small hours burning good candles. All of which meant Oldroyd was acquiring by concentrated effort the kind of knowledge which was rare among workmen'.[60]

Although this is an extract from a fictional novel, it seems to carry an autobiographical edge, as it closely resembles the published memoirs of several pioneer Labour politicians, including Joe Toole. He described how his visits to the local library in Salford drew scorn from former friends: 'They now referred to me as a snob, who was learning more than was good for him.' However, despite the attacks, Toole remained unrepentant. 'A new world had opened up for me which was quite unknown to them. If money was hard to get, or even if we had to live in the odour of the effluent from a tripe factory when either sleeping or walking, at least there was no excuse for lack of knowledge. It was there for the asking. I decided the matter for myself, and was soon among the best economists and philosophers...all made their impression and assisted to divorce me from the "corner of the street".'[61]

Crucially, once divorced from the street corner, these individuals were free to pursue new interests and aspire to higher goals. But, in a society that could scarcely be described as meritocratic, few avenues existed to enable talented working-class men and women to escape their lowly position. Trade union work and political activity was one exception, and it is clear that numbers of Labour activists viewed such a course as a means to climb the social ladder. Rhys Davies, for instance, while still a Manchester councillor, informed Wright Robinson that 'his wife's people were above him socially...He had therefore set his heart on raising himself to Parliament to show himself the equal, aye, or the superior to these people'.[62] Moreover, he was not alone in having personal ambition as an additional and, it would seem, increasingly common motivation for involvement in party affairs. According to several Manchester activists, the development of the Labour party in the early 1920s brought with it the arrival of the working-class 'career politician'.[63] Clearly, active involvement in party politics helped lift a number of individuals, especially those from the working class, out of the community they sought to represent by providing them with jobs that gave them a new prestige and a larger income. However, this process not only applied to those elected to public office. More generally, Labour politics opened up an entirely new social network for many members which was both a stimulus to, and a result of, active involvement in the party.

Autobiographies of early Labour activists make positive reference to the attractions of comradeship. John Paton, an important member of the ILP in Scotland during the 1920s, described his feelings on joining the local branch of the Clarion Club. 'In the warm glow of the fire', he said, 'there was a sort of hearty intimacy among the members that greatly attracted me. I was ready for friendship and I found it...For the first time I was being allowed to share the "Fellowship" about which I'd read so much in *The Clarion*: I found it good.'[64] Manchester Labour activists had similar experiences. A member of Clayton DLP described Sunday evening concerts at the Bradford Labour Club, with its 'personality of comradeship', while Stella Davies recalled days out with the Manchester Clarion Club, 'warmed by good fellowship, tea, ham, and salad'.[65] However, not everyone in the local community was considered compatible with such good fellowship. In 1925, the Labour agent in Hulme, Leo Corcoran, announced that there had been a 'wholesale clearing out of undesirables' from the party.[66] The interesting point here is that the people being cleared out were presumably the sort whom Labour was most pledged to help. Sue Goss records a similar process of exclusion underway in the Bermondsey Labour party at this time. When Communist members of the Labour party in that area attempted to mobilise 'less respectable' elements of the local community, the *Bermondsey Labour Magazine* referred to them as 'some the worst rogues, thieves, jail-birds, scroungers and hooligans ever collected together in the borough,' and insisted that 'they must purge themselves of the crooks and parasites who at present encumber their ranks if they are to win the respect of decent people'.[67]

As these words serve to testify, the desire to help the downtrodden was not necessarily reflected in a desire to commune with them. The very characteristics that drew certain individuals into active party service: ambition, energy and education, tended to colour their notions about Labour's respectability and who belonged in the party. More than that, it also led to assumptions about the kind of people most likely to vote Labour. Wright Robinson, for instance, claimed that 'if you saw a well favoured child' in his Beswick ward, 'you could almost invariably mark a canvass card as Labour'. His wife, Francis, made a similar observation, saying she could identify Labour women by 'the brighter children, the cleaner houses, the more robust hope and determination to give the youngsters a better chance'.[68]

On another occasion, Francis Robinson again articulated this elitist streak that characterised many activists. Working alongside her husband in NUDAW, in 1922 she was forced to resign her post due to internal opposition in the union to husband and wife teams. In his diary, Wright Robinson notes that his wife 'was frightfully upset'. However, it is notable that when he 'asked her to remember with what fortitude so many people who had not had her chances bore dismissal and poverty, she retorted "that was why they were called upon to bear it: because they so meekly suffered injustice"'.[69] Raphael Samuel believes that this kind of elitism was actually reinforced by the whole character of Labour party life, which 'was of a kind to set the activist apart from fellow-workers, even though it was still dedicated to their cause'.[70]

According to Samuel, the kind of welfare work undertaken by party workers during this period, detailed in the last chapter, embedded in Labour activists the belief that they occupied a higher social - and crucially - moral strata than the people around them. In addition, many activists were infected by a certain puritanism - a significant number were teetotal or came from Nonconformist backgrounds - which further divorced them from the mass of working people. As Stella Davies observed of the Manchester Clarion Cyclists, 'Blackpool, the mecca of many working class people, was not to their taste'.[71] Consequently, though 'community' featured strongly in Labour activists' conceptions of the ideal society, and acted as a powerful incentive for involvement in party work, it was in many ways an exclusive vision of a utopian world which many people were not yet fit to join. One particular development in this period - Burnage Garden Village - is worthy of special mention in this regard, both as an example of how some Labour members attempted to build their ideal 'community' and also because it reveals the character of their relationship to the wider community.

6.3 Burnage Garden Village and the peculiarity of Labour activists

Burnage Garden Village had its roots in an address given by Ebenezer Howard to a group of Manchester clerks in 1901. Howard was a reforming town planner who had come to prominence in 1898 with the publication of *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, later revised and reprinted as *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, in which he advocated the construction of garden suburbs as the solution to problems of overcrowding in Britain's urban slums. Following Howard's talk, a group of CWS employees formed a committee to investigate the possibility of building a garden suburb in Manchester. This resulted, in 1906, in the formation of Manchester Tenants Limited, which affiliated a year later to Co-Partnership Tenants Limited, a central body which provided advice on how to form housing co-operatives and helped raise money for member societies. Manchester Tenants Limited raised capital for the purchase of land and the construction of houses by the issue of shares and loan stock; shares cost £10 and residents were required to hold at least two, though not more than ten.[72] Work began on the eleven acre Burnage site in 1907 and eventually saw the construction of 136 dwellings housing around 500 people. These homes were mostly semi-detached and boasted bathrooms, hot and cold running water, and electric lighting. Recreational facilities in the village, located in the centre, included a bowling green, tennis courts, allotments, a children's playground and a central Hall.[73]

With rents fixed between 5s. 3d. to 11s. 6. per week *exclusive* of rates - the Tenants, significantly enough, held that the separate collection of rates stimulated an interest in municipal affairs among village residents - the cost of living in Burnage was beyond the means of most manual workers in Manchester, who generally did not pay more than seven shillings per week *inclusive* of rates.[74] Consequently, although Burnage Village was later characterised as a working-class estate, the most common occupational groups in the village were actually clerks, salesmen and commercial travellers. Thus, according to Martin Harrison, who has examined the occupations of household heads in the village, apart from 'artisans and craftsmen, most of whom could be characterised as "labour aristocrats", the residents can safely be described as being middle or lower middle class...We are...left with a picture of an estate of white collar workers and artisans'.[75]

As we have seen, this class of people were conspicuous in Labour's active ranks, and although Manchester Tenants Limited was an independent body with no direct formal political affiliations, Labour members featured heavily in the construction and, later, life of the village.[76] Thomas Marr, a housing reformer and party member, was prominent in the formation of Manchester Tenants Limited and subsequently lived in the village. Moreover, it is possible to identify a further eight Labour activists living there at some time during the 1920s.[77] Of these nine, six became Labour councillors during the period, and one, Richard Wallhead, became Labour MP for Merthyr Tydfil. Given that political activism was extremely uncommon, this represents an unusual concentration of such individuals. Furthermore, evidence suggests a significant number of other village residents were at least paid-up members of the party. In 1920, the secretary of Withington DLP - which then numbered approximately fifty members - noted that the party drew most of these from Withington ward, and Burnage Garden Village in particular.[78]

Why did so many Labour supporters live in the village? It would seem that many were impressed by the co-operative ethos and spirit of the Garden Village movement.[79] Significantly, the leading light in that movement, Ebenezer Howard, derived many of his ideas from the works of William Morris.[80] Indeed, it has been suggested that Howard 'wanted nothing less than to create a new kind of society, a co-operative alternative to Victorian industrial capitalism'.[81] Judging by accounts of life in Burnage Garden Village, residents there were motivated by a similar desire. It should be noted that, geographically and administratively, this was a very well defined community. All tenants were shareholders, and had places reserved for their representatives on a Board of Control. The social life of the village was organised by a Village Association, which collectively hired the tennis courts and bowling greens located in the centre of the settlement. The Village Association was also responsible for organising lectures in the Village Hall, as well as classes in handicrafts, physical culture, and singing.[82] Furthermore, P. C. Sampson, who grew up in the village, recalls that 'each year the large white gate across the main avenue was secured against public entrance, ensuring the privacy of the estate.

On this day the Village Sports were held uninterruptedly in the avenues.'[83] According to Sampson, such communal events were 'conducive to more than a warm and friendly neighbourliness': they fostered 'a true spirit of being one family'. This was demonstrated even more clearly in the years immediately after the First World War, when food was scarce and rationed. During this time, Sampson recounts, the Village Hall was turned into a communal kitchen in which female residents volunteered on a rota basis to prepare one main meal each day. Payment was made with small metal discs stamped "BGV Kitchen" which were purchased the previous Saturday in denominations of 3s. 6d. and 1s. Customers were also required to leave a docket saying how many meals would be required, so that 'the cooks might plan accordingly'. Although this seems to have been only a temporary phase, the hall continued to be turned into a kitchen at Christmas time, when the village gathered for a communal Christmas dinner.[84]

Sampson paints a picture of an almost utopian community, which produced its own currency and felt it had the power to shut out the outside world with a large white gate. While his recollections may have been distorted by nostalgia, they are echoed by the account of another resident, a member of the Village Dramatic Society. She explained that villagers aimed 'never to leave the village for anything if we could obtain it therein..."Everything within our own little empire" was our motto'.[85] Fond memories of Burnage life were also expressed by Kath Steele, daughter of the Labour activist, Richard Wallhead, who recalled her childhood in Burnage as 'idyllic'.[86] It is easy to see why such an environment would have appealed to Labour sympathisers motivated by utopian ideals of social fellowship, as the 'village' image had long featured strongly in visions of socialism. Indeed, garden cities elsewhere proved similar magnets for Labour activists. Significantly, when he left Burnage in 1923, following his election to Parliament, Richard Wallhead moved to Welwyn Garden City. There, he found four other Labour MPs among his neighbours.[87] In fact, a popular joke about Welwyn at that time, which could also have been applied to Burnage, 'was of a town of 200 people made up of socialists, idealists, utopians, vegetarians and cranks of all varieties'.[88] As in Burnage, it was the social aspect of life in Welwyn that appealed to these people. Yet, for everything that these garden villages offered, one thing was missing - the cut and thrust of party politics and the opportunity to advance political careers.

Located in the Withington constituency, Burnage Garden Village might have provided a pleasant home environment, but for the aspiring Labour politician it was barren ground. Consequently, many party members who lived in Burnage daily left their paradise in an effort to evangelise the world outside. Tom Larrad, for instance, worked as secretary and agent of Ardwick DLP, while Richard Wallhead for a time represented Ardwick as a councillor and acted as the secretary of the Levenshulme ILP. Annie Lee, meanwhile, was a Gorton councillor, member of the trades council, and secretary of Openshaw ILP. Other Burnage residents with outside party interests included Thomas Marr, who represented New Cross ward, and William Johnston, who was a councillor for Collyhurst.

Unsurprisingly, their lack of involvement in the Withington Party aroused some ill-feeling among local activists. In 1926, Stella Etter, secretary of the DLP, recorded that 'it is a matter of deep regret that the leading lights of the Labour world who live in the Withington Parliamentary area cannot or will not help a Party which is certainly confronted with a task greater than that of any other Divisional Party' in Manchester.[89] Four years later, the *Manchester Guardian* noted that the party was still hamstrung by the presence of socialists 'who have come into the area quite recently...and still keep up their connection with their old divisional association'.[90] The fact that these individuals knew they would be conducting their party work outside Withington, yet chose to move to the area anyway, once again suggests that many activists were of a different character than the mass of society. Obviously, a prime motive for moving to Burnage was to enjoy the social experience. Yet, the interesting thing is that these individuals felt they could not gain such an experience living alongside the people whose interests and conditions they worked hard to improve. As a result, they physically removed themselves from these environments and set about building a new community in line with their utopian social vision. But, as Chris Waters points out, by retreating into their own narrow world they risked marginalising themselves from the wider population and ultimately undermining their cause.[91] Of course, it should be emphasised that only a handful of Labour activists in Manchester lived in Burnage; the majority of party workers continued to live in the areas where they were politically involved. Yet, as we have seen, there is evidence that they, too, were somewhat alienated from their neighbours.

However, while accepting that Labour activists were often 'untypical' members of a neighbourhood, *it is important not to over-emphasise their 'peculiarity'. It is likely* that any investigation into a particular club or group would find evidence of how the membership differed from the 'community at large'. The simple fact of their being 'active' would be enough to set them apart. To be fair, in the case of those Labour members identified here, there were other characteristics that marked them out from most ordinary working people, notably their greater level of ambition and their interest in education. Nevertheless, while these men and women displayed characteristics that placed them outside the mainstream of society, their common desire to change the world for the better ensured they were never entirely cut off from the wider community, who generally viewed them as a force for good. One instructive example of this was the reception Wright Robinson received following his election as a councillor, in Beswick, in 1923. According to his own account, 'The pandemonium at Clayton Club was indescribable. Some of my best friends had been doubtful. I was seized, hustled through a surging gesticulating cheering roaring crowd. Women seized my hand and kissed it....'.[92] Similar scenes would be unusual, to the say the least, following municipal elections today, and serve to highlight the important position which Labour representatives occupied in many local communities. Indeed, in their capacity as social workers, electioneers, propagandists and representatives, these individuals emerged as an important voice in the community, becoming key opinion-formers in their local neighbourhoods and thereby helping to set the political agenda. In a revealing passage in the biography of her father, Kath Steele recalled arriving at school in Burnage, 'only to find her bag stuffed full of ILP pamphlets for her to give away to her young friends'.[93]

According to Seyd and Whiteley, 'at its most general level, the local Labour party gives voice to opinions and interests which would otherwise be crowded out of the political process'.[94] If that is true of the modern party, then it was even more the case during the inter-war years, when Labour was a much more visible local force than it is today. Thus, the next chapter will explore the opinions expressed by those individuals active in local parties in Manchester after 1918, and investigates whether their views corresponded with the overarching ideology espoused by the Labour leadership in that period.

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[1] Cf. P. Seyd & P. Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots: The Politics of Party Membership*, (Oxford, 1992), p.56.

[2] K. Laybourn, *A Century of Labour*, (Stroud, 2000), p.158; T.E.M. McKitterick, 'The Membership of the Party', *Political Quarterly*, (31) 1960, p.312.

[3] Cf. S. Fielding, 'Activists Against "Affluence": Labour Party Culture During the "Golden Age", 1950-70', *Journal of British Studies*, (40) 2001, pp.249-250.

[4] Membership figures taken from Laybourn, *Century*, p.158.

[5] Ibid.

[6] M. Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action. Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, (1971), pp.162-165.

[7] Ibid., pp.162-164.

[8] Seyd & Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots*, p.7.

[9] Ibid., p.8.

[10] Fielding, 'Activists Against "Affluence"', pp.253-256; T. Forester, 'Labour's Local Parties', *New Society*, 25 September 1975, p.696; 'The Labour Activists', *New Society*, 13 October 1977, p.75; P. Whiteley, 'Who are the Labour Activists?', *Political Quarterly*, vol.52 1981, pp.162-163.

[11] McKibbin, *Evolution*, p.xiii.

[12] Roberts, *Classic Slum*, p.178.

[13] The complete list of this 'Who's Who' of activists is found in the appendix and, as can be seen, varies in detail. While some entries provide detailed information of a members' personal background and political beliefs, others offer little more than an individuals' name, occupation, and role in the party.

[14] Seyd & Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots*, p.7.

[15] Tom Forester's superficial study of one hundred Labour delegates at the 1977 party conference found 81 men as against 19 women. Another survey of the 1980 conference, by Paul Whiteley, had women comprising only 14% of the sample. Steve Fielding found women similarly under-represented in local parties during the 1950s and 1960s.

[16] Graves, *Labour Women*, (1994).

[17] R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918-39*, (Oxford, 1998), pp.518-519.

[18] Ibid., p.157.

[19] *Labour Organiser*, (16) January 1922, p.8.

[20] Graves, *Labour Women*, p.158.

[21] Savage, *Dynamics*.

[22] C. Collette, *For Labour and for Women. The Women's Labour League, 1906-18*, (Manchester, 1989), pp.88-89.

[23] *Manchester and Salford Woman Citizen*, 23 October 1926.

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[24] Thanks to Joanne Smith, a PhD student at Manchester Metropolitan University, for this information.

[25] J. Openshaw, *Memoirs of the Salford Labour Movement*, (Salford, 1954), p.17.

[26] *Daily Express* 3 April 1935; See also appendix entry.

[27] M.R.L.A., Wright Robinson Diary, 27 May 1922.

[28] Ibid., 3 June 1922.

[29] D. Weinbren, *Generating Socialism. Recollections of Life in the Labour Party*, (Sutton, 1997), pp.25-27.

[30] Davies, *Liverpool Labour*, pp.68-69, shows that skilled unions dominated the Liverpool Trades and Labour Council; Carr, 'Municipal Socialism', *Life and Labour*, reveals the central role of engineers in the Coventry Labour Party; Geary, *European Labour Politics*, pp.23-29, repeatedly stresses the centrality of skilled men in the organisations of working class parties across Europe.

[31] G. Crossick, *An Artisan Elite in Victorian Society. Kentish London, 1840-1880*, (1978), pp.244-245.

[32] Cf. J. Paton, *Proletarian Pilgrimage*, (1935), p.200. J. Boughton made a similar discovery in his thesis on working class politics in Birmingham and Sheffield.

[33] D. Howell, *Respectable Rebels. Studies in the politics of railway trade unionism*, (Aldershot, 1999).

[34] Ibid., pp.1-10.

[35] Cited in D. Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, 1888-1906*, (Manchester, 1983), p.273.

[36] Howell, *Respectable Rebels*, Chapter 6.

[37] *Daily Despatch*, 4 March 1937; Engels quoted in Yeo, 'A New Life', p.8.

[38] *Manchester Evening News*, 3 June 1936.

[39] Mitchell, *Hard Way Up*, p.26.

[40] R. Moore, *Pit-men, Preachers and Politics. The Effects of Methodism in a Durham Mining Community*, (Cambridge, 1974), notes that many Methodists in this area joined the ILP.

[41] MG, 4 November 1932.

[42] C. F. Masterman, 'Liberalism and Labour', *Nineteenth Century*, November 1906, p.708.

[43] J. Hallsworth, *The Legal Minimum*, (1926), p.88.

[44] *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, 14 September 1949.

[45] MG, 23 December 1955.

[46] Yeo, 'A New Life', p.19.

[47] M.R.L.A., Wright Robinson papers, note dated 14 July 1954.

[48] *Daily Despatch*, 16 August 1945; See also appendix entry.

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[49] R. Samuel, 'The Middle Class Between the Wars, part two', in *New Socialist*, (10) March/April 1983, p.32.

[50] *Gorton and Openshaw Reporter*, 19 May 1961; See also appendix entry.

[51] MG, 1 February 1957; See also appendix entry.

[52] *Manchester and Salford Woman Citizen*, 23 October 1926; See appendix entry.

[53] *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, 2 July 1957; See also appendix entry.

[54] Seyd & Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots*, p.107.

[55] Davies, *North Country Bred*, p.234.

[56] W.C.M.L., Rusholme DLP, New Year's Message, (no date). My italics.

[57] D. Weinbren, 'Labour's root and branches', *Oral History*, (24) 1996, p.29.

[58] Cf. E. Biagini, 'Citizenship, Liberty and Community', Introduction, and Jose Harris, 'Platonism, Positivism and Progressivism: Aspects of British Sociological Thought in the Early Twentieth Century', Chapter 14, both in Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community. Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identities in the British Isles, 1865-1931*, (Cambridge, 1996).

[59] E. J. Hart, *The Master of Ransley*, (Manchester, 1937), p.11. This passage is very similar to one in Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist*, (1965), p.18, which describes the experiences of Frank Owen, the socialist hero of the novel.

[60] Ibid., p.12.

[61] J. Toole, *Fighting Through Life*, (1935), p.48.

[62] M.R.L.A., Wright Robinson Diary, 21 December 1924.

[63] Davies, *North Country*, p.193, claims that Ellen Wilkinson was a professional politician while Wright Robinson, Diary, 1 December 1923, lamented the rise of 'career politicians and the primacy of money' and recalled the 'honour' of early ILP days, when 'poor men were selected by poor men....with no vehicles except faith and enthusiasm'.

[64] Paton; *Proletarian*, p.110.

[65] Memorial Souvenir to the late Charles Priestly, Clayton Divisional Labour Party, 1927, p.51; Davies, *North Country*, p.196.

[66] MBLP *AR*, 1925.

[67] S. Goss, *Local Labour and Local Government: A study of changing interests, politics, and policy in Southwark 1919-82*, (Essex, 1988), pp.21-22.

[68] M.R.L.A., Wright Robinson Diary, 20, 27 October 1923.

[69] Ibid., 23 April 1922.

[70] Samuel, 'The Middle Class', p.32.

[71] Davies, *North Country*, p.121.

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[72] M. Harrison, 'Burnage Garden Village: An Ideal for Life in Manchester', *Town and Planning Review*, (47) 1976, pp.256-260.

[73] G. Sussex, P. Helm & A. Brown, *Looking Back at Levenshulme and Burnage*, (1987), p.41.

[74] Harrison, 'Burnage Garden Village', p.264.

[75] Ibid., p.265.

[76] Ibid., p.259.

[77] In addition to Marr, Edgar Whiteley, Thomas Larrad, Richard Wallhead, Maud Dean, Thomas Crowther, William Johnston, Annie Lee, and J. Hopkinson can be identified as Labour activists residing in the Village. All these individuals have entries in the appendix.

[78] MBLP *AR*, 1920.

[79] *Manchester Evening News*, 11 December 1944.

[80] F. Boos, 'An Aesthetic Ecocommunist: Morris the Red and Morris the Green', Chapter 1 in P. Faulkner & P. Preston (eds.), *William Morris - Centenary Essays*, (Exeter, 1999), p.31.

[81] P. Hall, 'The Garden City Utopia', *Journal of Historical Geography*, (16) (3) 1990, p.343.

[82] Manchester TUC Official Souvenir, (1913), p.91; At least one Labour activist, William Johnston, was on the management committee of this Association.

[83] P. C. Sampson, 'Ebenezer's Vision', *Lancashire Life*, May 1978, p.71.

[84] Ibid., p.71.

[85] Quoted in Harrison, 'Burnage Garden Village', p.264.

[86] K. Steele, *Richard 'Dick' Wallhead 1869-1934. A Memoir*, unpublished biography, p.11.

[87] These were: George Dallas, John Muir, Bob Nicholl and Rennie Smith.

[88] Ibid., p.21.

[89] MBLP *AR*, 1926.

[90] MG, 6 June 1930.

[91] Waters, *British Socialists*, p.192.

[92] M.R.L.A., Wright Robinson Diary, 3 November 1923.

[93] Steele, *Richard Wallhead*, p.11.

[94] Seyd & Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots*, p.220.

Chapter Seven

The Political Outlook of the Manchester Labour Party

Having looked at Labour activists operating in Manchester during the 1920s, highlighting what motivated their involvement and shaped their activism, this chapter seeks to examine the political outlook of party members more closely. In doing so, it will assess the extent to which the political beliefs of party members cohered into a distinct 'ideology', and how far this corresponded to the views and opinions expressed by the national leadership. As a result, it will begin by looking at the question of Labour's ideology in general terms, before concentrating on the political outlook of members at the local level. The chapter is therefore split into three main sections. The first begins with a discussion of 'Labourism', the mode of thought traditionally associated with the Labour party. While accepting that many members were of a Labourist orientation, it is argued that this term is an inadequate description of Labour's ideology in this period, as it fails to take account of the views expressed by the party's ideological guides, most notably Ramsay MacDonald, who headed a Labour government in both 1924 and 1929-31. Under his leadership, the party is held to have pursued a 'Labour Socialist' ideology, distinct from Marxism but more comprehensive and visionary than the narrow Labourist creed. In the second section, the basic tenets of Labour Socialism are outlined, together with examples of how the ideology was increasingly criticised by disgruntled members as the decade progressed. The third section examines the political beliefs and attitudes of party members in Manchester, and assesses how far the views of Labour's national leadership found an echo in the pronouncements of grass roots supporters. To illustrate this, several debates and divisions in the Manchester area are considered, before a general conclusion is reached about the political outlook of party members.

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7.1 Labourism

Historians and political scientists discussing the ideology of the British Labour party have generally agreed that while it never advocated socialism, nor did it properly embrace social democracy. Consequently, Labour has often been portrayed as unique among European social democratic parties in its apparent lack of a political philosophy. Devoid of any clear-cut doctrine or policy programme, and seemingly dominated by the trade unions, Labour was seen to have been imbued with a pragmatic, workerist ideology termed 'Labourism'.[1] This analysis of Labour politics followed the work of Communist revolutionaries, such as Lenin and Theodore Rothstein, who sought to explain why a highly developed capitalist country like Britain produced a proletariat displaying little more than a 'trade union' consciousness.

Although the concept of Labourism which flowed from their ideas has since acquired different meanings for different writers, and been employed in various political contexts to explain contrasting sets of problems, there is a general consensus regarding the basic elements of Labourism.[2] According to Saville, primarily it was 'the theory and practice of class collaboration; it was a tradition which in theory (always) and in practice (mostly) emphasised the unity of Capital and Labour, and the importance of conciliation and arbitration in industrial disputes.'[3] For most writers, the essence of Labourism was encapsulated in the slogan 'A Fair Day's Wage for a Fair Day's Work'. Through the agency of their trade unions, workers sought fair treatment within the existing socio-economic framework, and restricted their concerns mainly to issues of wages and conditions. However, as was to become clear, this strategy suffered from a central contradiction. Although class collaboration could be maintained while the Fair Day's Wage was forthcoming, it could swiftly give way to class conflict during periods of depression when economic demands were not met.

Thus, towards the end of the nineteenth century, when economic circumstances began to deteriorate, a rise in the number of industrial disputes strained the relationship between the working class and the established political parties. This came under even greater pressure between 1899 and 1901, when a series of legal decisions curtailing the right to strike effectively removed trade union bargaining rights. This struck at the very heart of Labourism, as it questioned the central premise that justice for the working class was obtainable within the existing system. Consequently, earlier established ties between the trade unions and the Liberal party were weakened, and in 1900 demands for independent Labour representation, which had emerged during the late 1880s, resulted in the formation of the LRC. However, dominated by the trade unions and containing many members still close to the Liberals, the new political grouping pursued an essentially Labourist course; the party committed itself to working within the traditional political system and was prepared to co-operate with the older parties in the Commons. Furthermore, despite its entrance into the national political arena, the aims of the new group did not go far beyond traditional trade union concerns, its chief goal being the reacquisition of industrial bargaining rights lost in the Taff Vale Case of 1901. Indeed, Labour's lack of any substantial political programme prompted at least one contemporary commentator to question the party's long-term prospects.[4]

Whilst Labour prospered, the charge remained that the party never really developed a more substantial ideology than the rather limited and vague Labourism. Even the adoption of a political programme and a socialist objective (clause IV) in the party's 1918 constitution failed to convince many historians and political scientists that the party articulated anything more than Labourism. Rodney Barker was not alone in arguing that the adoption of socialism in 1918 was an illusion, clause IV and the subsequent party programme being 'cast at such a level of generality that it committed the party to virtually nothing'.[5] Moreover, even after the constitutional changes in 1918, the unions continued to dominate Labour's organisation, convincing most observers that the party could not liberate itself from Labourism even if it wanted to. In 1923, an American commentator said that the trade unions were 'in such control [of the British Labour party]...they could not stomach any political leaders who were not in complete sympathy with their views', while a year later, Fred Bramley, secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), declared that 'the political progress of the Labour Party...is mainly trade union political progress...The political organisation is kept running by trade union funds, and the political Labour Party in this country can be referred to as a Trade Union Labour Party, if we wish to use that term.'[6] Ross McKibbin seized on such claims to argue, in his study of Labour between 1910 and 1924, that the preponderance of trade unions within the party meant class loyalty drove out socialist doctrine.[7] Thus, the constitutional reconstruction after the war, 'far from representing a general move to the left, was responsible for a confident and aggressive attack from the right'.[8]

Although the trade unions continued to occupy a central position inside the machinery of the party even after 1918, it would be a mistake to see Labour as merely a trade union party pursuing the politics of Labourism. For one thing, not all trade unionists were of a Labourist orientation. Secondly, despite its shortcomings, the constitution introduced by Arthur Henderson and Sidney Webb effected fundamental changes in the party's structure. The national organisation of constituency parties gradually became the basic units of Labour party activity, and although trade unions remained influential within these local bodies, it would be wrong to classify them, as

McKibbin has, as simply union branches or trades councils by another name. Furthermore, in parallel with the growing role of the local parties, individual membership of the Labour party increased consistently throughout the interwar period, bringing people from a range of classes and occupations into the organisation. This prompted at least one historian to argue that, far from representing the triumph of Labourism, the changes enacted in 1918 set loose powerful 'Labour Socialist' forces.[9]

Stuart Macintyre believes that while Labourism continued to have a powerful hold on sections of the Labour movement after 1918, it was gradually usurped by an ideology which eschewed class consciousness for community consciousness, provided a more comprehensive critique of nineteenth century capitalism than ever before, and sought to turn the working class into the builders of a new social and economic order.[10] Defining this mode of political thought as 'Labour Socialism', Macintyre claims that it only cohered into a systematic ideology after the war, when its chief exponents were Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden. Yet, as Macintyre acknowledges, the transformation of Labour's ideology from working-class Labourism to class-corporate Labour Socialism did not begin with the party reorganisation in 1918 and was not the product of a few individuals; rather, it was a complex process of ideological development which had been underway for some time.[11]

7.2 Labour Socialism

In examining Labour Socialism in greater detail it is necessary to trace the lineage of this complex concept. At the outset, it is important to emphasise that Labour Socialism was not socialism in a Marxist sense. Whereas Marxian Socialism was 'scientific', critical, materialist, oppositional, and revolutionary, Labour Socialism was ethical, constructive, educative, corporate, and reformist.[12] Significantly, however, Labour Socialism shared

Marxism's belief that capitalism was historically specific, representing a crucial progression from Labourism's unconscious acceptance of the capitalist system.

Labour Socialist understanding of historical development was rooted in the positivist conception of social progress expounded by evolutionists such as Isidore Comte, Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer. This gained enormous popularity towards the end of the nineteenth century and coloured a wide range of thought. In a number of works on the history of religion, for instance, which flooded onto the scene between 1880 and 1910, evolutionism formed a central element of the discussion, as primitive superstitions were shown to have gradually given way to progressively more sophisticated stages of religious belief in the form of monotheism, Judaism, and Christianity.[13] Labour Socialists believed that society similarly developed gradually more sophisticated forms of organisation and that a new stage in social progress - the transition from capitalism to socialism - was already underway.

Labour Socialists viewed capitalism as a form of social organisation, based on private ownership of the means of production, which divided society into antagonistic classes.[14] The root evil of the capitalist system was seen to be the 'motive of individual profit', which meant that goods were produced without concern for the needs of the community.[15] However, while Labour Socialists were aware of the centrality of profit-making in the functioning of capitalism, their critique of the system tended to focus on the social effects of wealth distribution.[16] Unlike Marxism, the Labour Socialist critique of capitalism rested on a moral as much as a material argument, reflecting the strong ethical streak apparent in the early Labour party.

This was illustrated in an article in the *Review of Reviews*, in 1906, which asked the newly elected 'Labour' Members of Parliament to reveal the literature that had done most to influence their political outlook. The twenty-five Labour and twenty Lib-Lab

MPs who replied gave pride of place to the Bible, the works of Charles Dickens and the ideas of Henry George. Ruskin and Carlyle received several mentions, while *Pilgrims' Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe* and the works of Shakespeare were also very popular.[17] However, a striking feature of the replies, highlighted by W. H. Mallock, was 'the fact that of all the books [listed] *no single one has any bearing whatsoever on the practical processes of production*'.[18] In fact, that was not entirely true, as two of the respondents, James O'Grady and Will Thorne, claimed to have read Marx. Nevertheless, the fact remained that most of the Labour men eschewed scientific analysis of the economic system, preferring the spirit and reasoning of writers such as Ruskin, whose opposition to capitalism was rooted in its unjust treatment of the poor and the consequent threat to civilisation which that presented. In *Unto This Last*, Ruskin concluded that '...in order to do justice to the poor, and to place modern society on a just and stable basis, the rich must surrender some portion of their present riches, and content themselves with a smaller influence than that which they at present exercise'.[19]

Such sentiments were entirely in keeping with Labourism's cautious demands for fairer treatment within the existing social arrangement, and it is easy to see why so many of the early Labour and Lib-Lab MPs were drawn to such works. However, while Labour Socialists, too, were attracted by the moral force of writers such as Ruskin, ethical and utopian appeals did not represent the limits of their ideological horizon. Thus, while Ramsay MacDonald could write of Carlyle that, his 'insistence upon the community and his positive views of the State link him up to our own Socialism', it is clear he did not regard Carlyle's ideas as representing socialism in themselves.[20] Rather, Labour Socialists took the works of Ruskin and Carlyle, and assimilated them with other moral critiques of capitalism, in particular theories of social evolution, Fabian ideas of collectivism, the socialist vision of William Morris, the ILP, *Merrie England* and the

Clarion, to produce an eclectic political ideology more universal and 'scientific' than Labourism.

Labour Socialism challenged capitalism by providing a conception of change which viewed society as a living organism inevitably evolving into the ultimate form of human organisation: socialism. Under capitalism, it was held, the natural bonds of society had become unhinged as producers and non-producers were divided on moral and economic lines. This led to the creation of rival classes, each seeking to further its own interests. However, whereas Marxism saw the solution to this problem in the triumph of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, Labour Socialists believed that class struggle would only worsen matters. Instead, they held that the transition to socialism required the reparation of class divisions through an emphasis on co-operation in place of competition. Ramsay MacDonald wrote that 'the Socialist...looks with some misgivings upon some recent developments in the conflicts between Capital and Labour. They are contrary to his spirit; he believes they are both immoral and uneconomic and will lead to disaster.' Indeed, Labour Socialists considered trade unions to be just as much a menace to the community as capitalists. Accordingly, the Labour leader declared 'that public doles, Poplarism, strikes for increased wages, limitation of output, not only are not Socialism, but may mislead the spirit and the policy of the Socialist movement'.[21] As MacDonald saw it, such actions were driven by selfish material interests when the driving force ought to have been the interests of society as a whole. Hence, during the course of the first minority Labour government, the leadership was prepared to use the Emergency Powers Act to deal with industrial disputes.

Labour Socialists baulked at the idea of taking sides in economic disputes and sought to foster in society a community consciousness which would overhaul existing divisions along lines of social class. As part of its strategy to achieve this, Labour

Socialism sought to move away from materialist arguments, which only stirred up antagonism between the social classes. This did not mean that inequality and poverty would be scrapped from the vocabulary of socialism, but that 'sound economic criticisms of the classes must be used as logs by which the fires of moral enthusiasm are kept blazing; [Socialism] takes no part in a purely horizontal tug of war between the working and the capitalist class, but is a Plutonic force beneath both heaving them upwards.'[22] Labour Socialism, therefore, saw itself as a classless ideology. Accordingly, rather than an appeal to class, Labour Socialists such as MacDonald defined it as

> a magnificent appeal to the divine sense of reason, justice, and righteousness which is in the heart of anybody that breathes the breath of the human soul. So when people say "How absurd that Lady This or the Duchess of That is a member of the Labour Party," I say "Not at all. It is the most natural thing in the world. Lady This or the Duchess of That is as naturally in the Labour Party because she has a mind as the working man's wife is in the Labour Party because she has a pocket."
>
> "Both the working man's wife and "her Ladyship" had the same inspiring vision of the city of God set upon a hill. The vision filled them both, and looking together on the great horizon they found insensibly that in their souls there was the strange subtle, marching music that they stepped out to exactly in the same steps. They saw the same road, and they rose and were lifted together to the same aim of the journey."[23]

In fact, since socialism rested on an appeal to reason, it was in some ways easier for the Duchess to succumb to the message than it was for the working man and his wife. Instead of minds, the latter had pockets, and as a consequence possessed a rather different motive for marching out to the music - one that did not always lead them down the right road. The problem, according to Labour Socialists, was that the poor's obsession with material interests, a result of their poverty, prevented them from seeing the moral need for socialism, which was paramount. Consequently, in spite of his positivist view of humanity, MacDonald feared that socialism would not come from the slums. 'The masses retain the love of primitive man for gaudy ornament and sparkling plaything...slowly, very slowly, do intelligence and reflection permeate the mass.'[24]

This posed a serious problem for Labour Socialists, who were convinced that socialism could only truly be achieved when the mass of people willed it. Believing that this 'will' could only be generated through enlightenment, Labour Socialists decided that their job - the Labour party's job - was to educate people in the matter of socialism. Thus, whereas Labourism's relationship with the working class was passive and reflective, Labour Socialism required interaction; as MacDonald said, 'the Parliamentary work of Socialism must be supplemented by educational propaganda'.[25] However, this conception of socialism ensured that such a social transformation would be slow. Sudden, revolutionary upheaval was not on the agenda; rather, in keeping with the evolutionary theme, the change would be peaceful and gradual. The 'Socialist transforms by the well-defined processes which a living social organisation allows. He does not stop the life of Society in order to try new experiments or to put a brand-new system into operation...He is an evolutionist *par excellence*'.[26] In practice, this meant a commitment to parliamentarism.

Unlike Marxists, Labour Socialists did not view the State as the representative of the capitalist system, but as a device currently used for perverted ends. Labour's job was to gain control of that instrument and direct it to its proper ends - repairing the social fabric which had been damaged by a system founded on greed and competition. However, this attitude could at times blind Labour leaders to political reality. Thus, after three months as Prime Minister in 1924, MacDonald addressed the ILP conference and assured delegates that 'The Civil Service is absolutely non-party. It is not Labour, it is not Liberal, it is not Conservative; it is for no party, it is for the State.' Indeed, MacDonald went on to heap special praise on civil servants in the Foreign Office, where he was Minister, for the sound independent advice they had provided. Yet, six months later, officials in that office leaked the "Zinoviev letter" which sparked his administration's downfall.[27]

The unswerving commitment to parliamentarism also posed other problems for the construction of socialism. Pledged to work within the electoral process, Labour Socialists were desperate not to alienate public opinion by implementing reforms too quickly. 'We can never have more Socialism at any given time than human nature will stand'.[28] The problem with this line of thought was that it could be used as an excuse for inaction in government. As MacDonald famously remarked in a speech in Dundee, Labour could only 'reap the harvest once the corn had ripened'. Somewhat depressingly, however, he lamented that even if he were Prime Minister for fifty years the pledges he had given would still be unfulfilled, not as a result of his own failings, but because the corn 'would still be green'.[29] For many contemporaries, such a statement exposed Labour Socialists as frauds. Socialist rhetoric may still have been employed in their speeches, but the truth was that socialism, even of an evolutionary variety, had been abandoned. To wait for the corn to ripen would be to wait indefinitely. As Joseph Clayton put it, 'The working class, in this matter not different from the non-working class, simply would not give the necessary time to the study of politics and economics; it had other interests - family affairs, football, cricket, betting and gambling; above all the business of earning a living'.[30] It had no time to become 'class conscious', let alone 'community conscious'. According to Clayton, Ramsay MacDonald and his colleagues realised as much, and had quietly decided that 'the Socialist movement in Great Britain had run its course and was finished'.[31] Thereafter, under the cover of 'the inevitability of gradualness', they remodelled Labour as a social reformist party.

Whether one accepts this analysis depends on how far one accepts the pronouncements of Labour leaders, like MacDonald, at face value. For, although many commentators accused the leadership of not being socialist, the fact remains that they claimed to be socialists and produced copious amounts of material outlining their vision. The problem was such definitions often lacked clarity. As John Scanlon said of MacDonald, 'had he been asked he would not have denied being a Socialist, although his answer would have left you wondering whether he had or not'.[32] In part, this stemmed from the aimless reformism of Labour Socialism, which often characterised all forms of collectivism as socialism and failed to provide a clear timetable for change.[33] This, in turn, probably resulted from the ideology's cautious, evolutionary character, which was wedded to the notion of the 'inevitability of gradualness'. Convinced that socialism was inevitable, Labour Socialists often preferred to adopt a laissez-faire approach to government, fearing that the wrong kind of reforms might delay its arrival. Hence MacDonald's declaration that though, in a crisis, 'our humanitarianism will compel us to resort to palliatives and give temporary relief, our action at such times should not be a willing and proud thing, but one which is hesitating and temporary'.[34]

By the mid-1920s, however, debates over the speed at which the socialist transformation should take place, and what palliatives should be offered in the meantime, were creating serious divisions in the constitutional Labour movement. While MacDonald insisted that the path forward would remain gradual, sometimes requiring a step to the side or even a slight retreat, a growing body of opinion - notably in the ILP - urged more haste and stressed the need to show the country that, as one delegate put it, 'Socialism was a practical proposition, and that a living wage was a practical proposition. They were not going to leave it till they got to another world.'[35] As opinions over the future strategy of socialist progress became increasingly polarised, two distinct wings emerged inside the Labour party. John Strachey, who edited the ILP journal *Socialist Review* at this time, summed up these opposing tendencies thus:

> The "right wing" sees...the necessity of "going slow" in the matter of promises and pledges to the electorate. It sees a Labour Government not as an executive instrument by which Socialism can be achieved, but rather as the establishment of a condition of things in which Socialism can grow and develop far more easily and rapidly than under a Tory Government. The "left wing" sees in it rather the necessity of finding some new method by which economic betterment can be universally speeded up - no matter what opposition may be asserted.[36]

The 'new method' sought by the left wing was outlined at the 1926 ILP conference in a draft resolution entitled 'Socialism in Our Time'. This included the idea of a 'living wage', the nationalisation of the banks, railways, mines, land, electricity and imports, and also the redistribution of incomes.[37] James Maxton, a left-winger who was soon to become leader of the ILP, explained that the 'Socialism in Our Time' programme was 'especially necessary to combat the theory that the rules governing social progress were analogous to those operating in the realm of biology...The Labour Movement should leave the Liberal and Tory Parties to scrap with one another for the ownership of evolution. It has nothing whatever to do with Socialism and the political problems to be tackled at this date, and any social philosophy based upon it is necessarily false.'[38]

Leading the counter-offensive against the ILP proposals, MacDonald condemned 'Socialism in Our Time' as 'misleading' and labelled its policy items 'millstones for mere show round the neck of the movement'.[39] However, fearing that the increasingly militant ILP was undermining Labour Socialism, and his own leadership, he instituted plans for the composition of an alternative electoral programme. Eventually published in 1928, *Labour and the Nation* declared that the establishment of a 'Socialist Commonwealth' was the Labour party's ultimate objective. However, in keeping with the gradualist conception of political progress, the document fought shy of detailing specific policy commitments and did not impose any timetable on a future Labour government. Indeed, *Labour and the Nation* was not intended as the plan for one Labour government, 'but something for the years to come - full, not only of one programme, but pregnant with programme after programme that will carry out the full socialist idea and make society respond to the Socialist conception of it'.[40] Although the document was passed at the Labour conference, vociferous opposition came from the leading ILPers, James Maxton and John Wheatley, who complained about the lack of definite policy items. Maxton claimed *Labour and the Nation* was more of a thesis than a programme and went on to question the whole premise of reaching socialism via a slow process of gradualistic, peaceful parliamentary change.[41] Wheatley developed this point, speculating that a future Labour government dependent on Liberal support might be tempted to delay those socialist proposals in the manifesto which would encounter the greatest parliamentary resistance.[42]

However, the ILP's programme also came in for criticism during these debates. In a veiled attack on 'Socialism in Our Time', MacDonald expressed his view that it would be a mistake to clutter a manifesto with lots of items of policy, akin to filling a room with too much furniture. He reasserted his belief that, provided the guiding principle was right, Labour could be relied upon to pursue the correct policies once in government. A further attack came from Rhys Davies, MP for Westhoughton and president of the Withington DLP, who criticised the ILP proposals for not being socialist, saying they represented merely an 'extension of our social services'.[43] In fact, such criticism was not without foundation and hinted at the central weakness of the Labour Left's attack. As Macintyre points out, for all its strictures on particular aspects of Labour Socialism, the Labour Left basically inhabited the same ideological orbit as Labour Socialists, displaying a strong ethical condemnation of capitalism, holding the same faith in reason and education, and retaining the same commitment to parliamentarism.[44] As a result, the Left failed to seriously challenge the primacy of

Labour Socialism which, at least until 1931, remained the dominant political creed of Labour's national leadership. Whether or not the party rank and file shared this ideology is more uncertain. Macintyre believes Labour Socialist ideas were well entrenched among ordinary party members, emerging particularly clearly in the local organisation of the Labour movement after 1918.[45] However, such claims are largely untested. Thus, in the discussion below, it is intended to explore the political opinions of ordinary members by reference to those individuals who were active in the Manchester Labour party during the 1920s.

7.3 The political outlook of Labour members in Manchester

It is clear from articles such as that which appeared in the *Review of Reviews*, in 1906, that the pre-1914 Labour party drew strongly on ethical, moral and religious traditions for inspiration. Evidence suggests that this continued to be the case during the 1920s. C.F.G. Masterman, observing the House of Commons following the election of the first Labour government, recorded that 'Christianity somehow keeps "creeping in" to this new, strange Assembly. On Monday the whole House assembled to make a mockery of the fifteen Labour members who had put down their names to a motion for the abolition of the army. They came to laugh; but they remained - if not to pray, at least to listen to argument which evoked respect. Idealism challenged the hard and pitiful realities of things as they are. The Sermon on the Mount was hurled about like a tennis ball from one side to the other.'[46]

Such language was not confined to Westminster. That same year, J. W. Kneeshaw, a Manchester-based ILP administrator and later Labour's north-west organiser, described socialism as 'the application of the Sermon on the Mount to business. It is the substitution of the Golden Rule for the "rule of gold". It is the exaltation of Human Life above every other thing, even above property and profits. It is the establishment of the Kingdom of God in London, Manchester, Birmingham, South Wales, the Ruhr Valley and wherever else men choose to live. It is the source of life - "the more abundant". It is Mankind "grown up".'[47] As indicated in the previous chapter, a number of Labour activists, especially in the north of England, had been drawn into the party through their religion, often as Nonconformists. They were attracted by the ethical appeal of the party - especially its ILP wing - which viewed Socialism as the practical application of Christian hope for a just society.[48] Religious beliefs clearly coloured the political opinions of these individuals. In 1929, for instance, a speaker at a meeting of the Withington Labour party told his audience that socialism was 'the economic expression of Christianity'.[49]

Of course, religion did not form the backbone of every Labourite's politics. In Manchester, as elsewhere, there were many members who described themselves as atheists or agnostics, while some were actively opposed to religion.[50] Yet, even the less pious members of the party were moved by ethical appeals and viewed socialism as a source of moral, as well as economic, uplift. As Leonard Smith observed in his study of the pre-1914 Labour party in Lancashire and the West Riding, even the most secular socialist meetings 'had the character of religious gatherings, with "socialist" hymns, some of which were common to Nonconformity, and readings taken from such books as William Morris' *News from Nowhere*'.[51] Indeed, it is significant that the works of writers such as Morris, Ruskin and Blatchford figured so prominently in the reading of Labour activists in Manchester and Salford. As explained earlier, the appeal of these writers was rooted in their ethical critique of the capitalist system and emphasis on the humanising aspect of socialism. The influence of such ideals can be seen in the pronouncements of Labour activists during this period.[52]

A. W. Haycock, MP for West Salford during the 1920s, claimed that in a socialist society 'Life would become a real advantage. Personality and genius would find elbow room.' Another local figure, Rhys Davies, expressed similar sentiments, describing socialism as 'the foundation upon which the superior tendencies of human nature may begin to build', while Richard Wallhead, briefly a Manchester Labour councillor, believed 'socialism was about creating the conditions necessary to release the natural instincts for beauty and fellowship, the very things that capitalism in all its meanness destroyed'.[53] Thus, while wages and working conditions were important, even greater stress was put on the finer, more sensitive side of life. This was in keeping with the Labour Socialism of the party's national leaders; as Ramsay MacDonald stated, 'the Labour movement is one that wants to produce not merely economic qualities, but human qualities'.[54] However, this moral improvement would not occur suddenly, at the moment socialism was established. Rather, the two things were interdependent - socialism would emerge in tandem with the moral improvement of the people, just as human qualities would flow from the gradual establishment of socialism. Hence, J. R. Clynes, Labour MP for Platting, stated in 1924 that 'the main task of present-day Socialists...is to make the people good enough for Socialism'.[55]

The emphasis placed by Labour Socialists on the moral uplift of the people dictated that education was crucial. As noted earlier, this belief was rooted in the Platonic civic republican tradition which, as Oldfield notes, held that 'the moral character which is appropriate for genuine citizenship does not generate itself; it has to be authoritatively inculcated...minds have to be manipulated'.[56] Thus, Manchester Labour councillor, George Titt, encouraged an audience of pupils at Fallowfield Girls' School to stay on at 14, stating that, 'If an extended education has any assets at all it is to make you better men and women. It is the cultural side which develops the finest characteristics of the boy and girl which is the most important factor in raising the school age.'[57] Education was not merely seen in terms of formal schooling and the development of rudimentary skills. For Labour activists, it meant educating the opinions and outlook of the public, and much of the educational work done by local parties, through classes in association with the WEA and the NCLC, was performed with this in mind. Even the propaganda work of local parties was undertaken with moral improvement in mind, not just as an attempt to 'get the vote out'. As the secretary of Clayton DLP noted in 1925, following the distribution of 20,000 leaflets to homes in the district, 'we believe in Education all year round and not waiting until an Election Campaign'.[58]

Such actions followed the warning of W. T. Jackson, secretary of the MBLP, who echoed MacDonald's belief that 'Progress is not born of mere discontent with existing things, unless enlightened by the vision of something better and a belief in its attainment. Labour has more to gain from knowledge than blind discontent, and the most encouraging sign at present is that Labour, as distinct from any other party, stands for progress in education.'[59] Labour sought to extend its appeal beyond the pocket and into the mind as well. As H. Ponsonby told a meeting in Gorton, he 'was not content with a large Labour vote who voted for Labour in sheer disgust at the Tories. He wanted an educated socialist vote that understood what socialism stands for'.[60] Unfortunately, however, the public often seemed unwilling to be educated - much to the indignation of many Labour activists.[61] In 1921, the *Annual Report* of the MBLP concluded that 'it is not poverty, oppression, the denial of political rights, or the absence of opportunity of any kind that blocks the progress of Labour. It is political stupidity, and the greater the degree of material, mental, and moral degradation, the more are the workers the dupes of Liberal and Conservative politicians, or the creatures of indifference.'[62] Joe Toole expressed similar feelings in his autobiography, saying he was appalled at the apathy of those who most suffered.[63]

Yet, like the party's national leadership, despite their dismay at the political indifference of the working class, activists in Manchester and Salford retained a deep faith in the inevitability of Labour's success. Reviewing the 1922 general election, the MBLP executive conceded that although public misconceptions about the Capital Levy - a proposed windfall tax on savings over five thousand pounds - may have cost the party support, it would remain loyal to a principle 'which, with patient propaganda, will bring support to us in the future and triumph in the end'. Such certainty in the party's eventual victory was strengthened by what it prematurely saw as 'the passing of the Liberal Party'. This was not, the party made clear, an immediate result of the election, 'but the culmination of a persistent and conscious policy on the part of Labour, and, at the same time, a vindication of the correct interpretation of the political history of its time'.[64]

Reflecting the mood of the period, many activists in Manchester viewed the establishment of socialism as the inevitable consequence of an evolutionary process. Tom Swan, for instance, vice-president of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council and a member of the MBLP executive during the 1920s, published a book, *Fraternity and Evolution*, which claimed that socialism was inevitably emerging as the next stage in human development.[65] The acceptance of this evolutionary view of social change, and the belief that history was on Labour's side, placed Swan firmly in line with the ideology espoused by MacDonald and other Labour Socialists. Moreover, he was not an isolated case. In 1925, the MBLP borrowed the words of Philip Snowden when it declared that 'The fundamental object of the British Labour movement is the gradual supercession of individual by collective ownership of land and capital, and the democratic administration of the general services of the community.'[66] Aspiring to such a goal, the Manchester

Labour party was clearly committing itself to an object much more advanced than the narrow targets of Labourism. Furthermore, the party was in line with the constitutional emphasis of the national Labour leadership. The MBLP declared that 'The means by which [socialism] is to be accomplished is the assumption of the control of the machinery of government - local and national. The political method is the simplest, the easiest, and the most effective means of realising working class emancipation...A country whose common people hold political power need not imitate the methods of a nation in a more primitive stage of economic development.'[67]

Although the MBLP was firmly committed to parliamentarism, there were occasions when the constitutional line seemed to be transgressed. This was illustrated most clearly in the years after 1918 when a policy of 'Direct Action' was used to protest at Allied intervention in the Russo-Polish war. In Manchester, as throughout the country, the local trades council and Labour party came together to form a Council of Action, which was to play a kind of 'watchdog' role, prepared to organise strikes if the government engaged in any military intervention. During this period, even moderate Labour MPs could be heard using confrontational language. Rhys Davies, who for most of his career was a very moderate Labour politician, told the 1919 Labour conference that 'this was the first war that had been declared by the ruling classes against the working classes of another country and they protested against it...He had still to learn that because a movement was unconstitutional it was wrong. Nearly every movement in favour of the working class had been unconstitutional'.[68] J. R. Clynes tried to counter these calls, saying that Direct Action was a blow against democracy which contradicted the socialist teaching of Keir Hardie that people must be converted to principles by persuasion, 'not by means of blood and tears, but by the peaceful instrument of Parliamentary power which they had acquired'.[69] However, once the Council's of Action had been given the go-ahead, Clynes rather changed his tune, and declared that Labour was 'entitled to use every form of power it has to prevent military or other intervention which would be an act of war against Russia'.[70] Nevertheless, despite the use of such colourful language, the period of Direct Action was an aberration and stemmed from the deep impact made by the Bolshevik Revolution. Even the anti-Communist Irish Nationalist MP, T. P. O'Connor, noted that 'in spite of its follies and hideous crimes...[Bolshevism was] an inspiration'.[71]

Direct Action did not, therefore, initiate a general conversion of the Labour movement to extra-parliamentary methods. As one of the promoters of the Manchester Council of Action told a meeting in 1920, although Labour had determined not to let the country be thrown into war with Russia, 'We wish to avoid revolution. At the moment, the Soviet idea would not hold the Labour Party together for five minutes; we are all at sixes and sevens with regard to Bolshevism and the bulk of us want our country to develop on constitutional lines.'[72] Keen to guide the labour movement away from notions of revolutionary change the MBLP sought to encourage, amongst trade unionists especially, a greater interest in the possibility of progress through political action. Following the miners' lock-out in 1921, the MBLP executive stated that the stoppage, 'whilst presenting a fine manifestation of solidarity and discipline, was an added proof of the pathetically crude and antiquated methods of the strike policy, as an attempt to achieve, with such disastrous results, what could be so easily and satisfactorily secured by political action'.[73]

In fact, industrial action in Britain diminished substantially after 1921. Having peaked at 85,872,000 working days lost through strikes that year, the number fell to 19,850,000 in 1922. Within two years, that figure had halved to just 8,424,000.[74] According to Miliband, the decline was due to the effects of slump, falling wages and rising unemployment, forcing the unions to look to the Labour party to achieve their goals.[75] The rejection of militant methods was highlighted at the 1921 Labour conference where an application from the recently formed CPGB to affiliate to the party was defeated by an overwhelming majority, the trade union block voting decisively against such a move.[76] Nevertheless, at least until the position was clarified by a decisive conference resolution in 1924, many Labour candidates standing in local and national elections continued to boast connections with the Communist party.[77] In Manchester, the Rusholme Labour party, in particular, gained a reputation as being on the left. In 1919, at a by-election in the division, the party nominated as its candidate Dr. Robert Dunstan, who having begun his political life in the Liberal party was making a journey through the ILP that would eventually lead him into the CPGB. Furthermore, in general elections in 1923 and 1924, the party selected an even more notable left-winger in the form of William Paul, a foundation member of the CPGB who had edited the *Communist Review* in 1921 and later became editor of the Communist newspaper *The Sunday Worker*.[78]

While several other local parties, notably in Moss Side and Exchange, also gained reputations for having close ties with the Communist party, the Gorton Trades Council, which conducted Labour affairs in that constituency, was probably the most renowned in this regard. During the 1920s, it selected several Communist members to stand as Labour candidates in local elections, as well as sending others as delegates to the MBLP executive and even to the Labour conference. Yet, despite its record of adopting Communists as conference delegates and municipal candidates, Gorton was neither controlled by Communists nor even sympathetic to Communist ideals. Rather, along with many other local Labour parties, the trades council tolerated individual Communists and even gave them minor official positions in recognition of the fact that they were frequently the most energetic and useful members of the party. Significantly, however, such individuals were closely monitored and the scale of their involvement deliberately limited. This was demonstrated during the selection process to find a Labour candidate for Gorton in the run up to the 1924 general election. Among those who put their names forward was Ellen Wilkinson, at that time a Gorton Labour councillor and a CPGB member. Although allowed to participate in the selection process, Wilkinson was overwhelmingly defeated at the final meeting, where the views expressed by Councillor Davy, a member of the trades council, probably reflected the majority opinion of those present: 'she was alright for a municipal election, but a Communist MP was up another street'.[79]

Thus, although many Labour members harboured sympathetic attitudes to left-wing and Communist individuals, and even admired events such as the Bolshevik victory in Russia, they generally remained loyal to the constitutional policy of the Labour party and its leadership. Support for the party hierarchy was illustrated in Manchester in the aftermath of the first minority Labour government in 1924, when the MBLP and its divisional parties defended the leadership in spite of the administration's modest achievements. The report of the Borough executive concluded that 'we are compelled to recognise the courage and wisdom of its policy in assuming the responsibility of Government...it has demonstrated beyond all question Labour's fitness to govern by the remarkable administrative ability displayed by members holding the most important positions in the Cabinet'.[80]

Despite the shortcomings of the first Labour government, and its fall from office after only nine months, morale in the party remained relatively high. The administration's moderation could be excused by its minority status and the subsequent electoral defeat could be blamed on the hostile press, which attacked Labour as a Bolshevist organisation on the basis of the forged Zinoviev Letter. In these circumstances, Labour's defeat was generally viewed as a temporary setback in what overall remained an upward curve. Although the party had lost office following the 1924 general election, it had seen its vote improve once more and in many areas - such as Salford - the loss of seats stemmed from the absence of Liberal candidates rather than a fall in Labour's poll. Furthermore, the party was progressing well in municipal elections at this time; in Manchester its vote had steadily increased since 1920. Hence, although it was still some years away from gaining a majority on the council, the general feeling was that the party was edging closer. While the Labour group could not achieve all it wanted, bit by bit improvements were being made. As one Labour councillor observed, 'we fight and get a few pensions the more, and cheer up here and there a veteran of industry. We get a playground the more asphalted, a bowling green extra opened, a school handicap lifted, a few workmen a reduction staved off, a few houses built, here a public health disaster averted, there a few more unemployed set on some public works scheme.'[81]

These palliatives scarcely amounted to a socialist revolution and did not satisfy everyone in the movement. Nevertheless, it is clear that for many activists the evolutionary strategy was still credible. Indeed, for some members, these small advances represented what the party - and socialism - was all about. Recalling his pre-1914 days on Manchester City Council, W. T. Jackson evoked a conception of socialism reminiscent of Sir William Harcourt ("We are all socialists now!") when he claimed that 'even then the City Council were practising some form of Socialism in public ownership, though they would not admit it. I have seen the progress to the days when Socialist measures can be supported as enthusiastically by the Tories as by the Labour members.'[82] A similarly vague socialist vision was expressed by the West Salford MP, A. W. Haycock, who told the Commons that he believed 'this House is a Socialist experiment. The Post Office is a Socialist experiment, and even the maligned telephones, the parks and commons, and the roads.'[83] Such definitions drew scorn from those on the left of the party who, like John Strachey, complained that the movement was not designed 'merely to raise the lower strata from the gutter. It was designed to build a new Britain, to make one instead of two nations...It was not merely a question of bread - we had also asked for roses'. It was in response to such criticisms that MacDonald's socialist vision was so important, for although he did not claim that every instance of municipal enterprise or every collective action amounted to 'socialism', he nevertheless claimed that it was 'the earnest of Socialism...the genesis of the Socialist movement'. Gradually, in the guise of municipal trams and public libraries, socialism was emerging.

One of the problems with this view was that it required immense patience on the part of those Labour supporters endeavouring to bring forward the new society. During the early 1920s, when the party seemed to be making great strides - increasing its vote in parliament and playing a greater role in municipal councils - impatience with the slow pace of progress could be sated by the reassurance that at least things were moving in the right direction. However, in the latter half of the decade, when the wider labour movement was beset by a series of heavy defeats, the old reassurance that things were progressing smoothly was suddenly challenged. The crucial development in this period was the General Strike, in 1926. The immediate cause of the strike was sparked by the findings of the Samuel Commission, set up to investigate long standing problems in the coal industry, which recommended an immediate cut in miners' wages. On hearing this the miners went on strike, supported by the TUC, and for nine days the country was thrown into turmoil as vast sections of the workforce stayed at home, although despite its name the strike was not actually general.[84]

While the Labour party leadership in Westminster kept a low profile during the strike, local parties in Manchester and Salford were heavily engaged in strike-related activity, often performed in association with local trade union and ILP branches. In West Salford, the Labour Party opened its Ashfield Club as headquarters for several local trade union branches, whilst in Clayton, the DLP ran the strikers' relief fund.[85] The East Manchester branch of the ILP gave its branch premises over to the Associated Electricians' and Steel Smelters' Unions, while the Newton Heath ILP reported placing the branch and its rooms at the disposal of the local Railway Union. It also recorded that the ward committee of the local Labour party was 'willing to join with us in all our efforts and also in organising a distress fund'.[86]

The abrupt conclusion of the strike seemed to signal the end of such activity as various groups attacked what they saw as the capitulation of the Trades Union Congress. The Manchester Borough Labour party was moved to write to the NEC to complain of the 'unsatisfactory nature' of the strike's conclusion, warning that it had created 'a steadily growing feeling of distrust and despair of political as well as industrial action'. Consequently, it urged the national leadership to lead a campaign to counteract this defeatism, built around a demand for a 'living wage' for the miners.[87] The NEC replied that this opinion was contrary to the reports it had received and urged the sale of the *Daily Herald* as the best means for propagating the miners' cause.[88] Undeterred by this lukewarm response, local parties across Manchester soon embarked on a flurry of activity designed to highlight the miners' plight. The General Strike had finished too soon and been too uncertain to allow for any systematic programme of activity, but the miners' dispute was to last much longer, six months in all. Labour parties throughout the Manchester area organised demonstrations, processions, open-air meetings, concerts, theatre performances, fund raisers and undertook various kinds of social work in an effort to ease the miners' plight. Such activity helped the movement to build on the unifying experience of the General Strike and allowed the various sections - trade union branches, ILP branches, and DLPs - to establish closer and improved relations. Furthermore, the strike and its aftermath created a heightened sense of public political awareness. An ILP branch in Longsight & Rusholme reported in July 1926 that their regular Sunday meeting in Platt Fields had attracted over 1000 people, adding that *Labour's Northern Voice* had sold out for the first time.[89] Similarly, the Miles Platting ILP, which attracted an average of 20 people at its open-air meetings, drew a crowd of 200 in the wake of the strike.[90] Significantly, following the MBLP's demands for a 'living wage' for the miners, these meetings heard calls for 'Socialism in Our Time'.[91]

Thus, for the first time in Manchester, widespread dissent was voiced by Labour supporters at the lack progress being made towards improvements in the living standards of working people. However, while the MBLP expressed concern that the public was growing disillusioned with political action, there is no evidence that revolutionary alternatives were receiving any serious consideration. Following the collapse of the General Strike, the Communist party virulently attacked the TUC for its capitulation, yet failed to stir the working class into adopting a more militant course of action. Indeed, the CPGB actually alienated support through its criticism of union leaders. In Salford, James Openshaw, the secretary of the West Salford DLP, remembers trade union officials asking him to remove Communists from the party's premises because they were distributing material denouncing the TUC General Council's actions as a 'Great Betrayal'.[92] Similar reactions were reported in other areas and several major unions stopped electing Communist delegates after 1926.[93] The Labour party used this moment as the opportunity to purge its ranks of Communist infiltrators and in Manchester the Borough party called on the NEC for help in this process. During the course of 1927 three divisional parties - Ardwick, Exchange and Rusholme - were temporarily suspended while national officials put matters in order. The following year, J. W.

Kneeshaw, Labour's north-west organiser, was called in to reorganise the South Salford DLP, which was riven with Communist party members. In the cases of Rusholme and South Salford, the problems took over a year to resolve and revealed that the Labour party was prepared to go to great lengths to purge the infidels, at times breaking its own constitutional rules.[94]

These difficulties aside, Labour in Manchester and Salford dealt with Communist intruders swiftly and generally encountered little resistance, most members demonstrating their loyalty to the party. Nevertheless, while few party members abandoned Labour in favour of an alternative vehicle of social and political progress, their mood does seem to have changed by the late 1920s. Growing unhappiness with the limited achievements of the PLP was reflected by negative reactions to senior figures. Thus, at a Manchester Labour rally in Belle Vue, in May 1928, the *Guardian* noted 'considerable' vocal opposition to the views of the platform, with J. R. Clynes receiving a 'very mixed reception'.[95]

However, with a general election approaching the party managed to keep a lid on internal differences, and as the campaign got underway in May 1929 most candidates in Manchester and Salford stuck to the MacDonaldite line. A. W. Haycock told electors in West Salford that Labour 'must proceed gradually. We do not propose to nationalise every industry immediately. We must be given the opportunity to demonstrate what we can do in a small way, and we will leave the rest to public opinion.'[96] Clynes made similar remarks, stressing the constitutional nature of Labour's path to socialism and remarking that Labour was a national organisation, not a class party; it demanded the votes of working class electors for their own sakes, he said, but was not solely reliant on that support.[97] Interspersed among these Labour Socialist appeals, however, could be heard the authentic voice of Labourism. In North Salford, Ben Tillett told constituents that

Labour 'was a bread and butter party, a home defence party, one that sought to protect all who had hitherto been regarded as of no account'. To such individuals, Labour was exclusively the political representative of the working class.[98] Nevertheless, despite their different emphases, all the Labour candidates in Manchester and Salford were happy to appear on one another's platforms, united by their common aim of improving the conditions of ordinary people. But while the different voices inside the party could maintain broad harmony during the course of an election campaign, once elected to office and faced with the duty of fulfilling their pledges, this unity became much harder to sustain.

Almost from the day of its formation, the second minority Labour government was under attack for its moderation. John Wheatley, the Clydeside MP and shining light of the 1924 administration, berated MacDonald for the timidity of the government's programme, as set out in the King's Speech:

> This is the day of the government's power. Today the government could do anything. Today the government are not showing the courage that their supporters on these benches expect. If they displayed that courage and went on with their own policy, the parties opposite would not dare to wound them, however willing they might be to strike; but, after the government have disappointed their friends, by twelve months of this halting, half-way legislation, as one of my friends described it, and have been discredited in the country, then twelve months from now, there will be no party in this House poor enough to do them honour.[99]

In fact, the government disappointed its friends long before the first twelve months had passed. The first major bone of contention arose over the proposed Unemployment Insurance Bill in November 1929. The Bill's failure to replace the despised 'Not Genuinely Seeking Work' clause - which put the onus on the unemployed to prove they were seeking work in order to qualify for benefit - led to considerable unrest in the PLP, and prompted James Maxton to put forward an amendment. Two Salford MPs, Haycock and Toole, initially put their names to this amendment (which was eventually defeated), though they were later induced to withdraw their support by PLP whips.[100] In fact, reflecting the wider differences of opinion apparent in the PLP, the group of Manchester and Salford MPs were themselves divided in attitude to the government. While individuals such as Haycock and Toole wanted bolder measures, and were prepared to voice publicly their disappointment with the way things were going, the Gorton MP, J. Compton, defended the government's record and called for an end to 'back-bench sniping'.[101] He might have extended his calls to party members back in Manchester, where clear signs of discontent were emerging, especially over the issue of unemployment. As Neil Riddell observes, during the 1929 general election campaign, local parties across Britain had continually raised this question and felt sure Labour would be able to improve the situation.[102] However, with unemployment showing no signs of declining even after six months of Labour's term, local activists began to grumble. In Manchester, the *Guardian* noted that in arranging speakers for forthcoming rallies in November, the MBLP had pointedly refused to entertain J. H. Thomas, the Lord Privy Seal, who was head of the department responsible for reducing unemployment.[103]

Thomas's job was soon to get even harder, as the effects of the Wall Street Crash in November 1929 swept across the Atlantic and plunged European economies into recession, leading to a rapid rise in unemployment. At the start of 1930, there were 1,491,519 unemployed people in Britain; six months later, that figure had increased by 19.3%, with 1,815,342 people out of work. Debating the problem in the House of Commons, Joe Toole declared that there was no hope of any government solving unemployment, as the problem was inherent in capitalism.[104] Responding to these remarks, the Conservative MP, R. J. Boothby, pointed out that 'the honourable Member for South Salford was guilty of a little hypocrisy...If those are his beliefs he really ought not be supporting this government, because they are trying, though I agree very feebly and half-heartedly, to bolster up the capitalist system. If he really believes that we shall never solve the unemployment problem under a capitalist system, he ought not to support any administration which is not prepared to accept the responsibility of abolishing the capitalist system altogether. He is on the horns of a dilemma.'[105]

It was precisely this dilemma that party members, assembled in Llandudno for the Labour conference that October, wished to debate. The leadership braced itself for criticism and, predictably, the flashpoint of the 1930 conference centred around the debate on unemployment. In this, James Maxton proposed an amendment blaming rising joblessness on the 'Government's timidity and vacillation in refusing to apply Socialist remedies to a Capitalist basis'. The amendment went on to instruct the government 'to use all its powers towards increasing the purchasing power of the workers, reducing workers' hours, initiating a national housing programme, extending credits to Russia and other countries, and, above all, socialising the basic industries and services, using the provision of work or adequate maintenance as its first basic principle and, if necessary, to make an appeal to the people'.[106] Seconding the amendment, 'in sledgehammer style', was Harold Weate, of the Manchester Borough Labour party.[107] He began by repudiating MacDonald's suggestion that discontent with the policy of the government was confined to a small section of the ILP. Rather, 'it was felt throughout the Labour and Socialist Movement that "Labour and the Nation" had been forgotten in the application of remedies for solving the problem of unemployment'.[108] Consequently, Weate called for the six guiding principles of the 1928 programme - a living wage; socialisation of industry; the extension of social services; the transference of wealth; emigration; and the control of finance - to be put into immediate action.[109] Continuing his attack on MacDonald, Weate recalled the leader's remarks to an earlier conference - that as they built socialism they must see that every brick laid was a brick that would ultimately bring about the type of building they desired. Weate 'asked whether the Prime Minister suggested that in assisting industry under Capitalism...they were assisting the industries of the nation and progressing towards the goal of removing, lock, stock and barrel, the Capitalist system? The Prime Minister had said that whilst the Cabinet was doing the sound work there were others who were trumpeters, and that it was regrettable that it was not possible that those people should be in full possession of the facts...[Mr Weate] wanted to ask the Prime Minister what sort of tune did he think the trumpeters could play when they had no music? They played in discord; that might be so, but the trouble was not with the trumpeters; the trouble was with the conductors.'[110]

Weate was attending the conference in his capacity as a delegate of the MBLP, of which he was vice-president, and his remarks reflected not merely his own opinion but expressed the feelings of the Borough party. Previously strong supporters of the MacDonaldite line, the Manchester Labour party had since the mid-1920s grown anxious with the lack of progress. This had first been apparent following the collapse of the General Strike, when support was indicated for the ILP-inspired policy of a living wage. Although these demands reduced in the run-up to the 1929 election, the failure of the Labour government to fulfil its pre-election pledges prompted the party to publicly endorse the authors of the 'Socialism in Our Time' programme. However, while Weate's speech to conference demonstrated the Manchester Labour party's disaffection with the performance of the second Labour government, it was not a repudiation of Labour Socialism. Rather, it was a demand that the political programme borne of that ideology, *Labour and the Nation*, be put into practice. This call was reiterated by local parties in Manchester, who began to voice their own concerns with MacDonald's administration.

In April 1931 a monthly meeting of the Manchester Labour party passed a resolution from the Moss Side DLP which declared:

> That this party expresses indignation at the present attack on the workers' standard of living and at their increasing unemployment and insecurity, and decides to convene at the earliest possible moment a conference of the whole Manchester Labour movement, *to urge the government to introduce such proposals from "Labour and the Nation"* as are necessary to national reconstruction and the absorption of the unemployed; and that in the likely event of defeat on such a programme by the capitalist parties the government be called upon to resign at once and appeal to the country for power.[111]

Nevertheless, while the bulk of the party in Manchester maintained its faith in Labour Socialist strategy, discontent with the failings of the government saw some local activists in Manchester adopt much more aggressive apparently class-conscious language and reappraise their earlier representations of the party. In March 1931, Councillor Walter Hallows, a railway worker, told an audience in Ardwick that 'the Labour Party must prepare itself for a great class struggle. We were nearer revolution today than we had ever been. The party would have to choose between freedom and dictatorship. For his part he was willing to take his share as a revolutionary. If the Labour Party could get what it wanted in no other way they would have to incorporate a Workers' Defence Force (hear hear).'[112] While few activists shared Councillor Hallows' revolutionary views, the issue of class conflict provoked some comment. At the annual NUDAW Conference in April 1931, two Manchester Labour activists clashed over the issue of who belonged in the party. Referring to the influx of rich men in the PLP, Rhys Davies told the conference that 'I shall never be satisfied with the Labour Party in the House of Commons until it is predominantly composed of men who come from the working class...lawyers, architects, surveyors, doctors, and other professional men [cannot] represent the psychology of the miner, factory worker, and the shop assistant in the House of Commons.'[113]

Such remarks were in stark contrast to Davies' comments four years earlier, when he had contested the claim of Manchester Liberal MP, E. D. Simon, that Labour was a class party. On that occasion, Davies had celebrated the diversity of the 1924 Labour government, which he boasted had been the most representative administration ever. In time, he concluded, Labour would become 'a truly national party, with the definite object of eliminating class war altogether'.[114] Clearly, the events of the intervening years had led him to recast his position, and by 1931 Davies was voicing a defensive, Labourist conception of the party. This attitude was by no means universal, and replying to Davies at the NUDAW conference, Wright Robinson warned that the party had 'got to win new seats all over the country' and should not interfere with the present method of selection.[115]

Although the Manchester party maintained its professed belief in socialism and could not be said to have adopted a narrow Labourist mentality, the perceived attack on working-class living standards carried out by the MacDonald administration led to the use of overtly class-conscious language. This was most apparent in the party's reaction to MacDonald's decision to form a National government in August 1931. On hearing the news, the officials of the MBLP, Larrad, Weate, Adshead, Telfer and Gower, issued a statement dissenting 'emphatically' from any Labour participation in a National government, and also from proposed cuts in social services. Moreover, echoing the views of the TUC General Council, they stated that

> the function of the Labour Party, as of a Labour Government, is to work in the interests of the working class, which constitute nine-tenths of the citizens of the country...if there is any need to balance the Budget it can be done by giving the wealthy the medicine they have prepared for the working class. Let us have economy by all means, and start with the wealthy unemployed. A Spartan regime which would put an end to the costly pleasures of grouse-shooting and gambling and sun-bathing on the Riviera would be excellent. When the rich man has set the example by

> giving all he has to the State the working class may consider further sacrifices, but not before.[116]

Such remarks were far removed from the community consciousness espoused by MacDonald and other Labour Socialists, and had never before been uttered so publicly by senior officials of the Manchester party. Yet, despite the emotive tone, the phraseology did not amount to any change in ideology. The reference to the working class being 'nine-tenths' of the population was entirely in keeping with Labour Socialist notions of workers 'by hand or brain', while the threat to curtail sun-bathing on the Riviera would have caused alarm to only a very small number of people in 1931. Such comments amounted to little more than an assault on the idle rich, a safe enough target for Labour. Nevertheless, while it is hard to detect any clear deviance from the Labour Socialist line, the tone of these remarks does suggest that community consciousness had not entirely overcome the fundamental class sentiment inherent in the majority of party members. It is notable that during the period 1918-31, the events and issues that aroused most interest and excitement among Labour members were all in some sense 'class issues': attacks on the Soviet Union; rising unemployment; the General Strike and its aftermath; proposed cuts in unemployment benefits. In each case, MacDonald found himself at odds with majority opinion in the party. While most Labour members enthusiastically joined their fellows in demonstrations, industrial protests and direct action, he railed against measures that threatened to stir up class feeling, claiming they were injurious to the spirit of socialism. Instead, MacDonald stressed the importance of democracy and emphasised the moral virtue of socialism, arguing that it was an ideology which would enrich all sections of the community. However, while many activists in Manchester and elsewhere shared and approved these ethical sentiments, they nonetheless viewed socialism as an ideology that would go a long way to improving the material standards of the working class. For all the emphasis placed on the appeal to reason and ethics, the influence of the pocket was still crucial. Consequently, when their own government began to contemplate measures which would actually penalise the working class, Labour supporters reacted against it.

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[2] See Ibid., pp.2-12.

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[4] L. A. Atherley-Jones, 'The Story of the Labour Party', *Nineteenth Century*, (60), October 1906.

[5] Barker, *Education and Politics*, p.35.

[6] Blanshard and Bramley quoted in D. McHenry, *The Labour Party in Transition 1931-38*, (1938), p.304.

[7] McKibbin, *Evolution*, p.241; p.244.

[8] Ibid., p.244.

[9] S. Macintyre, *A Proletarian Science. Marxism in Britain 1917-33*, (Cambridge, 1983), Chapter 2.

[10] Macintyre, 'Socialism', p.110.

[11] Ibid., p.110.

[12] Macintyre, *Proletarian Science*, p.49.

[13] M. Goldie, 'Ideology', Chapter 13 in T. Ball, J. Farr & R. L. Hanson (eds.), *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, (Cambridge, 1989), p.288.

[14] Macintyre, 'Socialism', p.107.

[15] Philip Snowden, quoted in D. Griffiths (ed.), *What is Socialism?*, (1924).

[16] Macintyre, *Proletarian Science*, p.162.

[17] W. T. Stead, 'The Labour Party and the books that helped to make it', *Review of Reviews*, (33) 1906.

[18] W. H. Mallock, writing in *Nineteenth Century*, quoted in *Review of Reviews*, (34) 1906, p.183.

[19] For more on this, see W. H. Mallock, 'The Intellectual Conditions of the Labour Party', a series of articles published in *Monthly Review*, October-December 1906.

[20] R. MacDonald, 'The Outlook', *Socialist Review*, January 1927, p.8.

[21] Ibid., p.xiii.

[22] R. MacDonald, *Socialism. Critical and Constructive*, p.306.

[23] MG, 30 September 1925.

[24] MacDonald, quoted in S. Macintyre, 'British Labour, Marxism and working class apathy in the 1920s', *Historical Journal*, (20) 1977, p.484.

[25] R. MacDonald, *Socialism*, (1907), p.117.

[26] MacDonald, *Socialism: Critical and Constructive*, p.xii.

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[27] ILPCR, 1924, p.115.

[28] MacDonald, *Socialism*, p.108.

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[30] J. Clayton, *The Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain 1884-1924*, (1926), p.214.

[31] Ibid., p.214.

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[33] Macintyre, *Proletarian Science*, p.60.

[34] MacDonald, *Socialism*, p.119.

[35] Campbell Stephens, delegate for Camlachie, quoted in ILPCR, 1925, p.126.

[36] J. Strachey, 'What Labour might do', *Socialist Review*, March 1927, p.4.

[37] A. Morgan, *Ramsay MacDonald*, (Manchester, 1987), p.137.

[38] ILPCR, 1928, p.56.

[39] MacDonald, quoted in Morgan, *Ramsay MacDonald*, p.137.

[40] MacDonald, quoted in LPCR, 1928, p.197.

[41] LPCR, 1928, p.202.

[42] LPCR, 1928, p.212.

[43] LPCR, 1928, p.204.

[44] Macintyre, *Proletarian Science*, p.64.

[45] Macintyre, *Proletarian Science*, p.65.

[46] L. Masterman, *C. F. Masterman*, (1939), pp.341-2.

[47] Griffiths (ed.), *What is Socialism?*, p.46.

[48] Cf. Moore, *Pit-men, Preachers and Politics*.

[49] MG, 15 May 1929.

[50] See, for example, appendix entries for Edmund Barlow, George Hall, Elijah Hart.

[51] L. Smith, *Religion and the Rise of Labour: Nonconformity and the Independent Labour Movement in Lancashire and the West Riding 1880-1914*, (Keele, 1993), p.25.

[52] See, for example, appendix entries for Tom Fox, Elijah Hart, W. T. Jackson, Tom Larrad, William Mellor, Hannah Mitchell, Harry Thorneycroft, Joe Toole and Richard Wallhead.

[53] Griffiths (ed.), *What is Socialism?*, p.40; 26. Steele, *Richard 'Dick' Wallhead*, p.5.

[54] MG, 30 January 1928.

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[55] Griffiths (ed.), *What is Socialism?*, p.23.

[56] Oldfield, *Citizenship and Community*, p.164.

[57] *Manchester City News*, 23 July 1937.

[58] MBLP *AR*, 1925.

[59] MBLP *AR*, 1922.

[60] *Labour's Northern Voice*, 24 September 1926.

[61] A feeling not unique to Labour activists in Manchester. See Boughton, "Working Class Politics', p.256, for evidence of similar attitudes in Sheffield and Birmingham.

[62] MBLP *AR*, 1921.

[63] Toole, *Fighting Through Life*, p.49.

[64] MBLP *AR*, 1922.

[65] T. Swan, *Fraternity and Evolution: A Study in Social Dynamics*, (1926), p.37.

[66] MBLP *AR*, 1925. Snowden had used these words to open the debate on socialism in the House of Commons in 1923.

[67] MBLP *AR*, 1925.

[68] LPCR, 1919, p.157.

[69] LPCR, 1919, p.161.

[70] MG, 16 August 1920.

[71] H. Fyfe, *T. P. O'Connor*, (1934), p.306.

[72] MG, 16 August 1920.

[73] MBLP *AR*, 1921.

[74] C. L. Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars, 1918-40*, (1955), p.124.

[75] Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*, p.92.

[76] LPCR, 1921, p.167. The ruling against admitting the CPGB into the Party was endorsed by 4,115,000 votes to 224,000.

[77] E. & R. Frow, *The Communist Party in Manchester and Salford, 1920-26*, (Salford n.d.), pp.49-73.

[78] Ibid., p.66.

[79] Davy quoted in B. Vernon, *Ellen Wilkinson*, (1982), p.69.

[80] MBLP *AR*, 1924.

[81] MBLP *AR*, 1923.

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[82] *Manchester Evening News*, 8 February 1937.

[83] House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, vol.170, col.1333, 4 March 1924.

[84] Cf. J. Symons, *The General Strike*, (1987).

[85] J. Openshaw, *Memories of the Salford Labour Movement*, p.32; *Labour's Northern Voice*, 21 May 1926.

[86] *Labour's Northern Voice*, 21 May 1926.

[87] N.M.L.H., Letter from E. Gower, Secretary of the Manchester Borough Labour Party, to A. Henderson, Secretary of the National Labour Party, 22 May 1926, (JSM/STR/109i).

[88] N.M.L.H., Letter from J. S. Middleton, Assistant Secretary of the Labour Party, to E. GOWER, 29 June 1926, (JSM/STR/112).

[89] *Labour's Northern Voice*, 23, 30 July 1926.

[90] *Labour's Northern Voice*, 11 June 1926.

[91] *Labour's Northern Voice*, 18 June 1926.

[92] Openshaw, *Memories*, p.32.

[93] L. J. Macfarlane, *The British Communist Party*, (1966), pp.185-186.

[94] MG, 31 July 1928. See letter from two expelled members of the Rusholme DLP concerning what they claim were unconstitutional actions of party officials.

[95] MG, 7 May 1928.

[96] MG, 23 May 1929.

[97] MG, 27 May 1929; 16 May 1929.

[98] MG, 27, 30 May 1929.

[99] R. Skidelsky, *Politicians and the Slump: The Labour Government of 1929-31*, (1967), p.87.

[100] MG, 25 November 1929.

[101] MG, 30 December 1929.

[102] Riddell, *Labour in Crisis*, p.115.

[103] MG, 16 November 1929.

[104] House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, vol.240, col.494, 18 June 1930.

[105] House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, vol.240, col.499-500, 18 June 1930.

[106] LPCR 1930, p.188.

[107] MG, 8 October 1930.

[108] LPCR, 1930, p.190.

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[109] Ibid., p.191.

[110] Ibid.

[111] MG, 9 April 1931. My italics.

[112] MG, 2 March 1931.

[113] MG, 6 April 1931.

[114] MG, 4 January 1927.

[115] MG, 6 April 1931.

[116] MG, 25 August 1931.

Chapter Eight

Labour's Electoral Development in Manchester 1909-31

The years immediately before and after the First World War witnessed the most important period of electoral realignment in British political history, seeing Labour overtake the Liberals as the main political alternative to the Conservative party. As outlined in the introduction, interpretations of Labour's rise have changed and developed over time. Initial accounts focussed on such issues as the Liberals' wartime split, the apparent emergence of 'class politics' before 1914, and the impact of franchise reform in 1918, in order to explain the electoral realignment. At the heart of these discussions lay the debate over whether Labour's expansion was a natural product of changes in social relations or whether this central development in British politics was contingent upon Labour's construction of political images and strategies.[1] Recent accounts have tended to support the latter claim and this has led to greater attention being directed to politics at the grass roots level, particularly in respect of political organisation. These accounts have benefitted from modern investigations into political change, which have frequently found that party organisation exercises a significant bearing on electoral outcomes.[2] Given that national campaigning was far less advanced in the inter-war period and new media such as television barely developed, party organisation was at least as important a factor in the electoral process then as it is now. Thus, it is legitimate to incorporate contemporary insights on the influence of party organisation on voting behaviour into this study of electoral change in Manchester between 1909 and 1931. Similarly, contemporary findings on the mechanics of party will also be helpful in explaining the electoral realignment which took place at the start of the twentieth century.

In attempting to account for change, this study will examine Labour's electoral progress at both the parliamentary and municipal level. Although parliamentary contests were of greater importance and grabbed more headlines, they tended to take place at irregular intervals, making political trends harder to discern. Moreover, organised on a constituency level, parliamentary elections took place over a larger geographical area than local contests, which were fought in smaller municipal wards, and thus offer less scope for measuring patterns of voting. Also, in Manchester especially, the influence of the Free Trade issue in the early 1920s tended to have a distorting effect on parliamentary contests, helping to keep the Liberal party alive. Municipal contests, on the other hand, were often dominated by issues such as religious schooling, which proved more helpful to the Conservatives. Consequently, an analysis of elections at both the national and local level promises to provide a more complete picture of the multifarious problems which faced Labour. However, before investigating political developments in Manchester further, it is first necessary to provide a brief recap of the city's social geography, which complements the broader survey found in chapter two.

8.1 The social dimension

In his analysis of electoral performance in Manchester between 1919 and 1928, Chris Cook sought to measure the correlation between class and voting behaviour.[3] To that end, he arranged the city's 35 municipal electoral wards into three broad categories based on housing conditions, ranging from the most residential to the most overcrowded, and used this as the context in which to study electoral performance. Although Cook's investigation provided a useful insight into political developments in inter-war Manchester, his categorisation of wards was based solely on levels of overcrowding calculated from the 1921 Census. Consequently, his social divisions were too simplistic, failing to take account of differences in housing quality and not distinguishing between areas of commercial and residential property.

By utilising additional information, in particular Thomas Marr's 1904 housing survey, it is possible to create a more nuanced picture of the city's social landscape that can be used as a framework in which election results may be analysed.[4]

Table 8.1 Different categories of Manchester municipal wards.

Group A (Business)	Group B (Suburban Residential)	Group C (Socially Mixed)	Group D (Working class - 'bye law' housing)	Group E (Slum Districts)
Exchange	Chorlton	Blackley	All Saints	Beswick
Oxford	Crumpsall	Cheetham	Ardwick	Collegiate
St. Ann's	Didsbury	Longsight	Bradford	Collyhurst
	Levenshulme	Moss Side East	Gorton North	Medlock Street
	Rusholme	Moss Side West	Gorton South	Miles Platting
	Withington	Moston	Harpurhey	New Cross
		Newton Heath	Openshaw	St. Clement's
		St. Luke's	St. Mark's	St. George's
				St. John's
				St. Michael's

Table 8.1, above, places Manchester's electoral wards into five social categories, according to overcrowding, housing quality and property types. Group A refers to 'business' wards located in the commercial centre of the city, consisting mainly of shops, warehouses, offices and a few residential properties. These wards contained only

a small number of electors, many of whom were small shopkeepers. Although exact figures are hard to come by, it is likely that the 'plural' votes of businessmen who lived outside the area, but owned premises in these wards, were important at elections. In Group B are listed the six most residential, effectively middle-class wards, which formed the suburban fringes of the city. Group C contains wards of a socially mixed character; largely middle-class in complexion, they nevertheless contained pockets of overcrowding and saw increasing numbers of workers move in during the inter-war period. In Group D are listed eight wards dominated by working-class residents. Most housing here was of a decent quality, much of it having been constructed after 1875 in accordance with Corporation 'bye-law' regulations. Consequently, housing rents were generally higher than in the slum areas, with the result that most of their occupants were likely to have been engaged in regular, highly unionised, industrial work. In contrast, residents of Group E wards, which contained swathes of 'slum' housing built prior to council bye-law regulations, were largely inhabited by people engaged in casual, unskilled and often ill-regulated work with a much lower level of trade unionism.

It should be pointed out that the breakdown of electoral wards presented here is open to criticism, not least on the grounds that Marr's survey was conducted in 1904. Unfortunately, following the publication of Marr's investigation into housing conditions, no similar work was conducted again until the early 1930s and so it is difficult to provide a more precise analysis. That said, it should be stressed that despite the time-gap the fundamental findings of Marr's report appear from other evidence to have remained valid for the post-war period. Very little work had been done to improve housing conditions in Manchester in the first quarter of the century.[5] While some reforms had been introduced before 1914, mainly in regard to slum housing, these were primarily designed to patch-up and extend the life of existing buildings, rather than to clear areas and start afresh. Although greater attention was devoted to house-building programmes after 1918, when the city experienced a severe housing shortage, such work took a long time to take effect. In 1919 the council estimated that 52,191 new homes were required, with an immediate need for 20,017, but after a year only 90 had been erected.[6] It was not until the later 1920s and 1930s, when increasing numbers of council houses finally began to alter Manchester's social geography, that Marr's findings began to look dated. Even then, housing developments only altered the character of wards in Group B, which nevertheless retained their largely middle-class complexion, and Group C, where certain wards, notably Moss Side East, were felt to be acquiring a more proletarian character. In wards in Groups D and E, slum clearance helped to reduce levels of overcrowding, but had little effect on their overall social composition. As a result, by integrating Marr's findings with more contemporary evidence it is possible to present a reasonably accurate picture of the social geography of inter-war Manchester.

It is still possible to argue that these categorisations are too general and simplistic, and that housing type is an unreliable factor on which to base a social portrait. As David Cannadine notes, 'historians of housing have found patterns of residential segregation and social zoning in towns and cities which were often far less clear than the conventional tripartite division into upper-class enclaves, middle class suburbs and working class slums'.[7] While the description of Manchester outlined above hopefully offers a more intricate social portrait than this, Cannadine nevertheless makes an important point: inevitably the division of wards into the five categories used here does not allow for all the social variations that existed within them. Indeed, Martin Hewitt, in his study of mid-nineteenth century Manchester, found that 'even within narrowly defined geographical precincts, rates of rental varied considerably', with the result that local communities could contain a varied social structure.[8] According to

Robert Roberts, who lived in neighbouring Salford, the same social diversity existed in the early twentieth century.[9] Yet, for all these local variations, the existence of areas of broadly differing character and condition was an accepted fact. Given that such differences are important in influencing political development, the following section analyses the social dimension of Manchester politics on the basis of the divisions outlined above.

8.2 The social pattern of electoral change in Manchester 1909-38: an overview

Tables I-V, which set out municipal election results in relation to these five social categories, indicate that amongst the organised, industrial, working class, Labour had established itself as the dominant political force even before 1914. In the mining district of Bradford and the engineering wards of Gorton and Openshaw, Labour won almost all the seats on offer in municipal elections between 1909 and the outbreak of war. In a handful of other wards, such as Ardwick, Blackley & Moston and Harpurhey, Labour also enjoyed further - albeit more limited - electoral success. However, despite these achievements, it would be difficult to argue that Labour's continued expansion had become inevitable before the war: the party remained rooted in a narrow section of the electorate within the working class.

It had not cultivated support in the business wards or the suburbs and gained only fleeting victories in socially mixed areas. In addition, the party had yet to build up significant support in the poorest wards in Manchester. In these areas, represented in Group E in Table I, the Conservative party was by far the most successful, winning 65 per cent of seats on offer between 1909 and 1913. The Liberals gained 27 per cent of the seats while Labour won just eight per cent. Yet, by 1923 this situation had changed significantly. As Table II shows, in municipal elections held between 1919 and 1923

Labour made considerable progress among electors in the poorest districts of Manchester, winning 30 per cent of seats on offer. Yet, whilst the Tories lost support, they remained the most popular party in slum wards, winning one out of every two seats; the Liberals, however, had now slipped into third place, taking just 18 per cent of seats. This pattern continued throughout the twenties and by the end of the decade Labour had surpassed the Tories as the most popular party in Manchester's slum districts, though both the older parties retained a presence in these wards which was not fully extinguished until after 1945.

During this period, Labour also extended its grip on industrial working-class wards. Having won approximately half the seats in these wards in elections between 1909 and 1913, the party increased its share to 70 per cent in the period 1919-23 (See Table II). During the second half of the 1920s, Labour further eroded the Tory presence, whilst simultaneously wiping out what remained of the Liberals. In fact, from 1924 until the outbreak of the Second World War, the Liberal party failed to win a single council seat in any of the wards dominated by organised, industrial workers (See Tables III-V). In contrast, in those wards which may be classified as predominantly 'business' or 'middle class', Labour failed to register any victories before 1939. In socially mixed areas, the party fared a little better, enjoying limited success during the 1920s. From the figures, it is clear that Labour's rise in Manchester was concentrated in the working-class districts of the city. Yet, such a statement does not reveal the complex nature of Labour's support *within* the working class. While the party's popularity among the organised, industrial, working class was cemented before 1914, its rise in the slum districts of Manchester was a slower process which only really began after 1918. The task now is to account for this disparity in Labour support before 1914 and then to explain how the party sought to remedy the problem in the decade following the war.

8.3 Reasons for Labour strengths and weaknesses before 1914

As stated earlier, Labour's post-war success in the industrialised areas of Manchester was founded on the progress the party had made before 1914. In industrial districts containing newer working-class housing - generally found in the east of the city - a high degree of trade union membership and regular employment offered an environment in which Labour's appeals to working-class solidarity, often interlinked with references to trade unionism, enjoyed a powerful purchase. In 1910, for instance, Councillor Joe Billam told a Labour meeting in Harpurhey that 'Only Labour men could adequately represent the opinions and the ideas of the working class; in trade union organisation the workers had shown great aptitude for the management of their own efforts, and they now contended that in working-class districts like Harpurhey and Bradford the affairs of the City Council were no less their own.'[10] By the use of such language, Labour activists aimed to foster a working-class collective identity, and in so doing, sought to break the traditional link which existed between the working class and the older political parties. Labour candidates told their audiences that 'if they voted for Labour they voted for themselves, not for any individual...they had sent federated employers to misrepresent them long enough, and...it was time they took into their own hands the affairs of both the State and of the municipality.'[11]

The decision to attack opponents from a class perspective was clear from the outset. In 1902, in one of the earliest municipal contests fought by a Labour candidate, Tom Fox told electors in Bradford that his Conservative opponent, Dr Dreyfus, 'might know something of Latin or Greek and something of chemistry, but he [Fox] was absolutely certain he [Dreyfus] knew nothing of social science, and it was that with which they were primarily concerned at the present moment.' At a later meeting, Fox told his audience that 'Dreyfus had said "any man who wanted work and was a steady man could find work in Manchester. It was only the loafers who could not find work". A man who was capable of making a statement like that, to put the most charitable construction on it, must know absolutely nothing of the conditions of life of the working classes of this city'.[12]

Seeking to encourage this sense of 'them' and 'us', and playing on the notion of working-class respectability, Councillor Jack Sutton, later the Labour MP for Clayton, told working men at an election meeting in Harpurhey in 1906 not 'to be patronised by motor cars and carriages on polling day. Go to the poll on your own legs'.[13] Labour activists used such rhetoric to create a sense of working-class exclusivity and pressed the need for class solidarity in politics by painting its opponents as unable to serve the working community, either because of ignorance or malice.[14]

Yet, whereas Labour's image as a working-class party closely identified with the trade unions served it well in the industrialised wards of Manchester, it had less appeal in those areas where inhabitants were mostly engaged in unorganised, often ephemeral, unskilled work. Indeed, Jerry White, in his study of a slum community in Campbell Bunk, Islington, concluded that the Labour party's association with large local bureaucracies, such as trade unions, affronted the anti-authoritarianism characteristic of this slum community.[15] At the same time, he believes that Labour, dominated by 'the uniformed working class', reciprocated this animosity, looking unfavourably at the casual workers of Campbell Bunk whom it regarded as a reserve army of cheap labour and therefore a threat.[16] White's account of Campbell Bunk bears certain similarities to Labour politics in Manchester. For one thing, Labour candidates contested the city's slum wards only eight times between 1909-13, indicating both a lack of organisation in these areas, due to the absence of trade unions, and perhaps also a reluctance to branch out into these wards. As in Islington, the majority of Labour members in Manchester derived from the skilled working class or held positions as trade union officials. Many had been members of the local trades council, a fairly narrow, craft orientated body, susceptible to snobbery. As late as 1879, the trades council had opposed a reduction in prices at Town Hall organ recitals on the grounds that 'certain classes of people whose company is distasteful might find their way into the hall'.[17] Although there were signs that attitudes among this group were beginning to change at the start of the twentieth century, the prominence of so many 'labour aristocrats' in Manchester Labour politics meant that the party often focussed on the concerns of organised, skilled, workers to the detriment of others. In 1905, for instance, local activists protested against a council scheme to deal with unemployment on the grounds that it would result in skilled workmen being paid at the rate of the unskilled.[18]

Such demonstrations did little to help broaden the party's appeal amongst the unskilled working class. Instead, it was the Conservative party's brand of xenophobic politics that gained the greatest support in the slum districts of Manchester. Tory politics celebrated Britain and the 'British way of life' and portrayed the Conservative party as the guardian of the family, Empire, the monarchy and the established Church.[19] As White points out, while no party could hope to become the 'natural home' for the contradictory ideological elements that made up a slum constituency, certain characteristics of Toryism tapped into popular sentiment at crucial points. Notably, Conservative appeals as the 'Party of Empire' mixed well with the chauvinism of the lumpen working class.[20]

From this vantage point, the Tories attacked political opponents and social groups who fell outside their definition of Britishness. A particular target of this tactic were Irish immigrants, who had arrived in Britain - and Manchester - during the nineteenth century. Local Conservatives denounced these new arrivals as alien intruders who would take British jobs, and whipped up anti-Catholic sentiment.[21] Such claims had a particular purchase amongst the poorest, unskilled members of the native Protestant working class, as they were engaged in those occupations most vulnerable to competition from the unskilled Irish. In fact, these fears were not without foundation; by 1851, 84 per cent of the labourers in a sample area of Ancoats were Irish.[22] Although the tide of Irish immigrants had reduced to a trickle by the turn of the century, native hostility was slow to subside, and the Tories continued to profit from anti-Irish sentiment. In New Cross ward, in 1906, a local Conservative candidate told a public meeting that:

> It is a disgrace to have Irishmen coming into your own town and filling your berths - (laughter and continued disorder). If I thought I was going in on an Irish vote I would not go. I am an Englishman, an Imperialist, and a Conservative.[23]

Despite such xenophobia the Conservatives had also been able to attract Irish support, which before the First World War was strong in several slum wards, such as New Cross, Miles Platting, St. George's and St. Michael's. The Irish vote was generally thought to benefit the Liberals on account of their support for Home Rule, but in a number of elections before 1914 the question of religious education became a topical issue, with the Tories pledging to uphold the principle of denominational schools. In these circumstances, the Catholic Church mobilised Irish votes in support of Conservative candidates which, combined with the votes of Protestants, transformed these wards temporarily into Tory strongholds.[24]

A further factor aiding Conservative dominance of the slum wards was the influence of the drink trade. The threat of the Liberal government to restrict the sale of liquor before the war prompted the Licensed Victuallers' Association (LVA) to increase its involvement in municipal elections, standing several members either as Conservative candidates or as LVA candidates with the backing of the Conservative party. In Manchester, as elsewhere, the relationship between publicans and the Tories was well known. Indeed, it is worth quoting Salford Labour MP, Joe Toole - widely known to be fond of a drink - in a speech he delivered in the House of Commons during 1924. Responding to Viscount Astor's assertion, during discussion of a Temperance Bill, that Labour had 'joined forces with the trade', Toole proclaimed that 'We on this side have built up this great party, and become the Government of this country in spite and in opposition of the trade, and thrusts of that description come very badly...from people sitting on the side of the House which represents the trade, and which, for the last fifty years, has used every public house in Great Britain as a committee room against the Labour Party of this country.'[25] In fact, Tory mobilisation of the drink question also damaged the Liberal party, which was strongly associated with the Temperance movement. Nevertheless, the issue was probably more harmful to Labour. The teetotal nature of a number of the party's candidates, exposed at such times, showed them to be quite unrepresentative of the local community, and in slum districts characterised by a proliferation of public houses this puritan streak undermined the ability of Labour candidates to connect with electors on a social level.[26]

Exploiting this, Conservative candidates argued that it was they who were the 'thorough labour working candidate[s]'.[27] Labour candidates were portrayed as selfish, 'not in touch with all parts of the community, but only with one small section - the Socialists'. Conservative candidates, on the other hand, stressed their universality, while still pledging to uplift the poorest. One Conservative told electors in 1908 that he promised 'to do his best to further every social reform that was brought forward, always provided that this reform would be a reform that would not be for one class against another'. All the same, he continued, 'his chief interest would be for the poorest of the poor'.[28] While these words had a diminishing appeal in the industrial wards of Manchester, they continued to win support in the poorest districts. In fact, on the eve of war it was the strength of Conservatism, rather than the respective positions of the Liberal or Labour parties, which was the most striking feature of Manchester politics.[29] Moreover, this was not a local anomaly. As Chris Cook points out, 'by 1913, the Conservatives had rarely been stronger in the councils of the land, or indeed more poised for success in a forthcoming general election'.[30] Ultimately, that poise was never tested, as the assassination of an Austrian Archduke in August 1914 plunged Europe into a ferocious conflict which lasted four years and froze normal political activity. By the time Allied armies forced a German surrender in November 1918, the map of Europe had been significantly changed. A month later, so, too, had the political map of Britain.

8.4 The aftermath of war - the immediate political situation

The 1918 general election produced a dramatic reversal of parliamentary fortunes in Britain. From its pre-eminent position before the war, the divided Liberal party was swept from the board in a sea of Conservative blue. In Manchester, the Liberals lost all their seats, whilst only John Hodge and J. R. Clynes, the Labour MPs who had served in the wartime coalition and were therefore unopposed by the Conservatives, prevented a clean sweep for the Tories. Although 1918 later became famous as the 'Coupon Election', in Manchester Lloyd George's endorsement was of secondary importance and did little to affect the result. The simple explanation was that neither the Liberals nor Labour could match the nationalistic sentiment which poured freely from the mouths of Conservative candidates, one of whom took to the hustings dressed in khaki and with his arm in a sling.[31] Towards the end of the campaign the *Manchester Guardian* noted that 'projects of reconstruction have rather fallen into the background and are replaced by demands for violent handling of the Kaiser and for making the Germans pay.'[32]

When the results were announced, the Manchester Borough Labour party lamented that working-class voters had failed to be radicalised by their wartime experience and had reverted to old ways.[33] However, in this instance disappointment clouded reality. Although the Tories had been stunningly successful at the polls, conditions had been unusually favourable to their brand of patriotic politics. In addition, the election had been fought at short notice, on an old register, with the result that large numbers of returning soldiers and newly enfranchised electors had been unable to vote. Despite immediate appearances, attitudes *had* changed as a result of the war, as was to become clear four years later in the 1922 general election. These contests saw Labour installed as the main opposition to the Conservatives, who had abandoned Lloyd George's coalition to form a government on their own. This was the first election in which the millions of new, mostly young, electors - including ex-servicemen - had voted, and the *Manchester Guardian* was not alone in believing that they were crucial to Labour's success. Reflecting on the wartime experience, the paper wrote that:

> Careful observers noted at the time that...Labour politics were the only ones which seemed to have any interest for private soldiers on the field and that a period of drastic self-assertion on the part of themselves and their class was the only post-war event which most of them discussed among themselves with any relish. It will be no surprise to the observant if the first great upheaval of British labour in this century should be found to date from the great struggle in which, for the first time, the "common people" of this country felt distinctly that the country had been extricated from the consequences of that failure by the exertions of labour under arms.[34]

The importance of these new voters in Labour's rise is a factor worthy of special mention, as the dispute over the 'franchise factor' has periodically been at the centre of the debate on the transformation of British politics. Traditionally, this debate has centred on the question of whether there existed a 'class bias' in the pre-war franchise. Writers such as McKibbin, Matthew and Kay, argued that the 1884 Reform Act had discriminated against the working class, with the result that Labour was hindered at the polls before 1914 by the under-representation of its core constituency in the registered electorate.[35] However, the general consensus in more recent times has been that this class-discrimination theory is inaccurate. Although a greater number of working-class men may have been denied the vote compared to other classes, the nature of the franchise meant that discrimination actually overlapped across social boundaries.[36]

Yet, while class discrimination was limited, the 1884 Reform Act, or at least its operation, did discriminate heavily against youth. Men aged between 21-30 were substantially under-represented on the electoral rolls.[37] This is an important point, particularly in view of psephological studies which point out that party identification, once established, is very hard to break.[38] Party ties among young electors who had never previously voted would presumably have been relatively weak, making it easier for Labour to win their support than to convert voters who had already established a connection with one of the older parties. Indeed, as electoral studies also show that younger people are more 'progressive' in their politics than older voters, it might be argued that Labour was better placed to attract the support of these new voters than either the Liberal or Conservative parties.

This was certainly the belief of activists at the time. In 1911, Liberal officials warned party leaders considering constitutional change that extending the franchise to include younger men was a risky manoeuvre which would probably benefit the Labour party.[39] The fact that groups such as the SDF and the ILP were founded largely by young men and women is not without significance. Available evidence certainly suggests that younger voters favoured Labour. Michael Childs' analysis of parliamentary results in 41 working-class constituencies between 1918 and 1929 suggests that the Liberals were not being abandoned by their supporters; 'rather, they were failing to appeal to a larger electorate which every year contained more recently enfranchised voters'.[40] In the long-run, the failure to attract these new supporters had dire consequences for the Liberals, causing membership to fall and organisation to collapse - a process examined in more detail later in this chapter.

However, while the support of younger voters may well have been important to Labour's rise, it scarcely explains the whole story. For one thing, it does not account for Labour's huge success in municipal elections held in 1919. As Tanner points out, the landslide victories achieved that year were won despite the fact that many of the new electors were unable to vote, suggesting 'that there was no simple and inevitable Labour advance as a result of the extension of the franchise to men'.[41] Historians must look to additional factors to explain the political transformation. In 1919, the primary factor in Labour's electoral success in Manchester was widespread discontent with the council's failure to tackle the housing shortage in the city. As the *Manchester Guardian* noted, 'rarely have municipal elections in Manchester turned on so narrow and single a point.'[42] Significantly, in contrast to the Conservative party's lukewarm support for measures to alleviate the crisis, Labour vociferously advocated a range of actions designed to relieve the shortage of homes in the city and fought for laws to halt evictions while the crisis lasted. In the longer-term, the party advocated slum clearance and a large-scale programme of municipal house-building. The campaign caught the public mood and Labour made unprecedented gains across the city, though mostly in predominantly working-class wards.

But despite recording its best ever performance in municipal elections in Manchester, Labour won only four of the city's ten 'slum' wards. In these areas, despite the appalling standard of living conditions, the party's housing policy was less popular. So far as slum dwellers were concerned, Labour's housing policy had several weaknesses. First, it required relocation of inhabitants to districts far removed from their present environment. Aside from the trauma likely to result from the break-up of established communities, this policy also presented straightforward difficulties with regard to increase costs of travel to and from work. Moreover, the fact that rents for new houses were generally too expensive for unskilled workers was an additional negative factor. Arguably, Labour's housing policy was better suited to workers in regular, better paid, employment.[43] This example highlights the fact that Labour's expansion was not a foregone conclusion; the party had to find ways to broaden its appeal, not merely across classes, but within them. These poor districts of the city had been fairly inhospitable territory for Labour before the war and so the party's failure to make immediate gains after 1918 was not wholly surprising. Nevertheless, if Labour was to advance electorally, it was vital that the party made progress in the slum wards of Manchester.

8.5 Chasing the slum vote 1919-23

Ostensibly, election results in the period 1919-23 suggest that Labour made rapid progress in Manchester's slum wards. In the five years after the war Labour won a total of 17 seats in these districts, compared to only 4 in the same time-period before 1914. However, the statistics mask the uneven nature of the party's progress. Table 8.2, below, reveals that its main support was rooted in just three wards: Beswick, Miles Platting and St. Michael's. With the exception of some early successes in Collyhurst, Labour candidates failed to secure victories in the remaining seven slum wards. In these areas, the Conservative party remained the dominant force, although the Liberals retained a degree of popularity, especially in St. Clement's.

Table 8.2 Successful Parties in Municipal Elections in Group E Wards 1919-23

Ward	Division	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923
Beswick	Clayton	Lab3	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab
Collegiate	Exchange	Con	Con	Ind	Con	Con
Collyhurst	Platting	Lab2/Prog	Coop	Con	Con	Con
Medlock St	Hulme	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con
Miles Platting	Platting	Lab	Lab	Con	Lab	Lab
New Cross	Ardwick	Con2/Prog	Con	Prog	Lib	Con
St. Clement's	Exchange	Lib	MPU	Prog	Lib	Lib
St. George's	Hulme	Lib	Con	Con	Lib	Con
St. John's	Exchange	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con
St. Michael's	Exchange / Platting	Nat & Lab	Lab	Lab	Con	Lab

*Note that in 1919 several wards contested all three seats at once.

The early, and fairly constant, level of support for Labour in Beswick, Miles Platting and St. Michael's would appear to owe something to the strong Labour tradition which existed in these wards before the war. Beswick, for instance, was originally part of Bradford, and was only created as a municipal ward in its own right following boundary changes in 1917. Heavily populated by miners and engineers, this area had been among the strongest Labour districts in Manchester before 1914. The election of Labour councillors in Beswick after the war was therefore merely the continuation of a long tradition. Unusually for a ward containing a sizeable amount of overcrowded slum housing, Beswick contained a large amount of residents engaged in occupations which encouraged trade union membership. Significantly, when Wright Robinson stood for Labour in Beswick in the early 1920s, one of the main features of his election literature were letters of support from local trade union branches.[44]

As part of the Platting constituency, Miles Platting and St. Michael's wards also benefitted from a powerful pre-war Labour tradition. J. R. Clynes had been MP for the constituency since 1906, when it was known as the Manchester North-East seat, and so Labour had long been a visible force in the area with a well-developed organisation in place before 1918. In 1912, Alf James arrived from Poplar, where he had worked as Labour's chief whip in the council, to act as full time agent in the division, and over the next twenty years he occupied additional roles as a Labour guardian and Labour councillor. By 1935, the *Daily Despatch* could write that 'there are few parallels in politics to the affection between Mr Clynes and his agent [James]. To thousands of electors one is almost as well known as the other.'[45] The existence of a strong ILP branch in the Platting area also aided Labour's fight within the constituency. Affiliation fees suggest that the Miles Platting ILP had over 50 members in 1919 and that this figure rose throughout the following decade, reaching around 250 by 1928.[46] Along with the Platting DLP, one of the best organised parties in Manchester, these two organisations undertook a significant amount of propaganda work in the constituency, holding numerous open-air meetings, running a Labour enquiry bureau, delivering party literature, carrying out registration work and collecting door-to-door subscriptions. In addition, Platting DLP was active socially, holding dances, whist drives and educational classes.

Furthermore, building on the neighbourhood basis of its organisation, the DLP was probably the most sophisticated practitioner of election campaigning in Manchester.

In addition to the large-scale rallies favoured by most local parties in this period, Platting also employed more localised forms of propaganda, holding meetings in sidestreets and bye ways. 'By these means', its secretary noted in 1925, 'we touch people who do not ordinarily go to meetings. We take the Labour Gospel to them. To this kind of propaganda we attach the success of winning two Municipal Seats in October and November.'[47]

Another key factor enabling Labour's success in Miles Platting and St. Michael's after 1918 was the realignment of Irish support. This community was concentrated in Platting, especially in the Miles Platting and St. Michael wards. Although the Irish vote had traditionally favoured the Liberals, even before the war there were signs that influential figures in this community were moving towards Labour. That process was confirmed after 1918 when several prominent Irish figures joined Labour. For example, following his election as a 'Nationalist & Labour' candidate in St. Michael's ward in 1919, Thomas Ronan opted to join the Labour group on the council.[48] Of greater long-term significance was the creation a year earlier of the Irish Democratic League (IDL), formed out of the disintegrating Manchester branch of the United Ireland League (UIL). As mentioned earlier, the key figure in this departure was James Reilly. In 1913 he had been elected on a Liberal/Nationalist ticket as the councillor in St. Michael's ward, but now switched allegiance to Labour, bringing numbers of fellow converts with him.[49]

Such institutional ties helped connect Labour with the Irish community, whose votes clearly contributed to the party's electoral advance, especially in Platting. Yet, while the Irish connection was generally beneficial to Labour, it could also work to undermine party support. Significantly, the Collyhurst ward, which also fell inside the Platting boundary, elected Conservative representatives five times in seven years after the war. The difficulties experienced by Labour in Collyhurst were possibly due to the presence in this ward of the bulk of Manchester's Ulster Protestant community. Although this group had declined significantly since the start of the nineteenth century, its continued presence in Collyhurst was evidenced by the city's largest and most active Orange Lodge in the ward. With numbers of Irish Catholics residing in or nearby this district, the close proximity of these two ethnic groups gave rise to a certain degree of sectarian tension and fights in the district occurred every July 12th.[50] Moreover, certain developments in the early twenties led to an upsurge in Orange-Green clashes. In 1920, following the death of the Mayor of Cork while on hunger strike in Brixton Jail, Manchester's Irish community organised widespread demonstrations in opposition to the British Government's policy in Ireland. Representatives from organisations such as the Catholic Church and Sinn Fein marched together through the city. However, when the marchers reached Collyhurst, small gangs of local Protestants waved Union Jacks and sang *Rule Britannia*, provoking violent clashes. Further sectarian attacks in the district occurred five years later, when Protestant residents fought to prevent the proposed construction of a Catholic Church in the neighbourhood. To make their point, they firebombed a temporary chapel three times, twice whilst mass was in progress. Later on, the Protestant community were roused to fight proposals for the building of a parish school; local residents signed a petition in protest and sent it to the Board of Education.[51]

In these circumstances, a divisional party so obviously connected with Irish Nationalists was always going to struggle to attract votes from the native Protestant working class. This was especially the case during the early twenties, when Black and Tan atrocities in Ireland, followed by Treaty with Britain and an ensuing civil war, made the Irish issue a live political topic in Manchester. Similar factors may also account for

Labour's poor performance in the New Cross and St. George's wards. As explained earlier, these districts contained a substantial Irish presence, and before the war witnessed Conservative attempts to stir up ethnic hostility in municipal elections.

Outside Collyhurst, sectarianism was fading from Manchester politics, and it is significant that Liberal candidates enjoyed some success in the New Cross and St. George's seats during the period 1919-23, somewhat qualifying the theory that Tory-inspired anti-Irish sentiment was to blame for Labour's failure. Furthermore, Irish influence could not be said to have had a significant impact on the politics of Medlock Street, St. John's or St. Clement's wards, while the ethnic concerns in Collegiate related primarily to the local Jewish community. Labour's failure to breakthrough in these remaining slum wards seems to have resulted from a combination of other factors, including an association with high rates - a factor which dented Labour support across Manchester in 1920-21 - strong opponents, plural votes and, most importantly, poor organisation. It is significant that, with the exception of New Cross, which fell within the Ardwick division, the remaining slum wards were located in constituencies where the divisional Labour party was financially weak and often poorly organised, corresponding with various findings about the link between levels of local party activity and electoral success.

Medlock Street and St. George's wards were both under the jurisdiction of Hulme DLP, which was in a fairly precarious state until the involvement of the Associated Society of Woodworkers (ASW) in 1924. No ward committees were set up until 1926, and the absence of any substantial trade union funding in the early half of the decade, compounded by a small individual membership, placed severe financial restraints on local election activity. Indeed, in the period 1919-23, Labour ran only two candidates in each ward. In addition to funding and organisational problems, this also reflected the local party's possibly self-confirming pessimistic appraisal of its electoral chances.[52]

Lack of organisation was similarly responsible for the absence of Labour candidates in the Collegiate, St. John's and St. Clement's wards. These were located in the Exchange constituency of Manchester, where the DLP was also very weak. Again, a lack of trade union support and a dearth of individual paying members denied the party access to the funds required to contest municipal elections, and between 1919 and 1923 Labour only managed to stand a single candidate in Collegiate. As in Hulme, ward organisation in the Exchange division was almost non-existent, no steps being taken to organise Collegiate until 1925, and none in St. John's and St. Clement's until the following year. In addition, St. John's and St. Clement's, located in Manchester's commercial centre, housed relatively small numbers of people and were subject to an influential 'plural' vote executed by businessmen who owned premises in the area. Faced with a traditionally hostile slum population and largely devoid of trade union presence, local activists lacked the energy or desire to undertake a seemingly hopeless task.

Inevitably, the weakness of party machinery in divisions like Hulme and Exchange, which contained the majority of Manchester's slum wards, had a detrimental impact on Labour's electoral fortunes when candidates were eventually put forward. The party's absence from local politics meant the initiative was handed over to political opponents, and the national and local press, which was overwhelmingly hostile to Labour. Significantly, the Exchange constituency was one of the only divisions in Manchester in the inter-war period in which the Liberal party managed to maintain its organisation. As with the Withington division, where Ernest and Shena Simon were the driving force, Liberal organisation in Exchange was kept alive by another dynamic husband and wife team, Mr and Mrs Lee. Significantly, Mrs Lee played a key role in recruiting women in the St. John's, St. Clement's, Collegiate and Cheetham wards.[53] In 1921, Liberal women carried out a canvass of over 1300 women in these four wards and it is noteworthy that by 1923 the Exchange Liberal association regarded them as being the best organised in the division.[54] In addition, a prominent local Jewish business family was closely connected to the Liberal party in the division and attracted a good deal of Jewish working-class support on account of their years of local social work.[55] Interestingly, Collegiate and St. John's were the only wards with a significant working-class population in which Labour failed to win any seats in the inter-war period, suggesting that, had the party been confronted both with a strong Conservative *and* Liberal opposition, its progress may have been thwarted. Such evidence may prove warming to those who believe the Liberals still had the ability to attract working-class support in the post-war world. Had the party not split as a result of the pressures created by the prosecution of the conflict, they argue, it could have staved off the Labour challenge. To this, some rejoinders have to be made.

8.6 The nature and extent of the Liberal decline in Manchester

It is important to note that, in Manchester, the Liberal split which emerged out of the war was much less severe than elsewhere. Only in the Withington division, where the party was relatively successful, were Coalition Liberals at all numerous; on the whole, the party held together fairly well. By the time of the 1922 general election the local and national press announced that Liberalism in the city was united - a year earlier than in most areas.[56] This is, however, not to suggest that splits among the national leadership were of no consequence in Manchester. Aside from the negative image that divisions projected to the electorate, national problems undoubtedly undermined the morale of rank and file Liberals in the city, evidenced by the falling membership and shortage of candidates reported during the early 1920s.[57]

The Liberals' post-war decline was not, moreover, merely the result of divisions caused by the war. As Brendan Jones points out, the party's decline had its roots in political developments before the conflict; in 'those areas which had yielded Labour success before 1914, the newly created parliamentary divisions of Ardwick, Clayton, Gorton and Platting, Labour hegemony was established. Having already lost the initiative to Labour in those areas, owing to pre-war agreements, the Liberal Party did not contest these seats in 1918.'[58] The pre-war agreements to which Jones refers were formulated under the terms of the covert 'progressive' alliance, established in 1903, which effectively allowed Labour a free run in two of Manchester's constituencies: in 1906 these were the North-East and South-West seats, and in 1910 the North-East and East seats. In Gorton, outside Manchester's boundaries before 1914, Labour defeated the Conservatives in straight fights at every general election after 1900.

There is no doubt that the Liberals' lack of involvement in parliamentary contests in these areas before 1914 undermined the party's progress in the post-war period. Local Liberal associations in the East and North-East divisions regularly warned their leadership about the adverse affect which electoral abstention was having on their organisations.[59] By 1912, one Liberal councillor noted that 'Liberalism is weakest in those parts of Manchester where Socialism is strongest. In East and North-East Manchester it has ceased to count'.[60] However, to put the Liberal party's post-war collapse entirely down to pre-war electoral agreements is to gloss over the true nature of its decline. One has to ask why such agreements were formulated in the first place. The fact was, the Liberals had lost significant working-class support to the Conservatives in Manchester even before Labour had emerged. It was on account of the strength of working-class Toryism in the city that a 'progressive' alliance had been so appealing in the first place. For the Liberals it was a means to challenge the Conservatives, who in 1900 had won all but one of the city's parliamentary seats, while for Labour it offered the best chance of getting parliamentary representatives elected. In the event, the plan worked well; Tory hegemony was broken and Liberal and Labour MPs were elected.

However, the alliance's successful operation at the parliamentary level hid the fundamental weakness of the Liberal party in working-class areas. This was apparent in municipal elections held in 1911, when Labour made impressive gains from the Tories. These victories were achieved, the *Manchester Courier* noted, in districts 'essentially of a working class character, where conditions of life are commonly hard'. Significantly, the paper pointed out that these were seats in which the Liberal party had previously been 'unable to secure a definite advantage'.[61] Thus, the decision to stand aside in these districts before 1914 was more a case of the Liberals facing up to political failure than abdicating power voluntarily. The party had grown weak in working-class areas before the war; with the collapse of the 'progressive' alliance, the extent of Liberal frailty became fully apparent. The most immediate indicator of the party's weakness was the absence of Liberal candidates in the Ardwick, Clayton, Gorton and Platting constituencies at the 1918 general election. In fact, with the exception of Platting, the Liberals failed to contest these seats in most subsequent general elections. Furthermore, the dearth of Liberal candidates in these four constituencies was not confined to parliamentary elections. As Chris Cook has shown, the Liberal party was similarly absent from working-class areas in municipal politics. In the entire Gorton constituency, only one Liberal ever contested a council seat after 1919. In Clayton, no Liberal contested Beswick or Bradford in the decade after 1919, while the party contested the Newton Heath ward just three times during the 1920s. In Platting, none of the four wards that made up the division was contested on more than one occasion in the twenties, whilst in the Ardwick division, New Cross and St. Mark's were the only wards to witness any Liberal involvement.[62]

Whilst the lack of candidates was obviously detrimental to the party's immediate prospects, it also had serious long-term consequences. Studies have shown that the very activity of voting is closely connected to the construction of party identification, helping to build and then reinforce the bond between person and party.[63] Thus, the absence of Liberal candidates in working-class seats, particularly during a period when the franchise had just been enlarged, was catastrophic to the party's future prospects. Significantly, when the Liberals contested Platting in the 1922 general election, effectively their first involvement in the constituency since 1900, the candidate polled under five per cent of the vote. Moreover, this abject failure was in spite of a concerted campaign during which the Liberal candidate had personally canvassed 25,000 of the constituency's 39,559 voters and the Manchester Liberal Federation (MLF) had distributed around 50,000 election addresses.[64] The fact that the Liberal party could lose its deposit despite these efforts was evidence of the extent to which it had lost working-class support.

Seen in this light, the political situation in the Exchange division may be regarded as somewhat exceptional. The composition of the constituency thwarted Labour's attempts to organise an efficient local party machinery, handing the initiative to an energetic Liberal party with a strong tradition in the area. Its continued success in this constituency underlines the importance of organisation to electoral progress. Crucially, the Exchange Liberal party mobilised newly enfranchised women, who were often a vital element in the successful operation of local parties. In most other seats, especially in predominantly working-class constituencies, Labour was the most effective practitioner of this aspect of party organisation by virtue of its women's sections.

The upshot of the Liberal party's organisational collapse was, as Cook highlighted earlier, its effective retreat from the working-class districts of Manchester into the more middle class residential areas. This was illustrated at the 1923 general election, when the five Liberal victories in Manchester - described in *The Times* as 'phenomena in the realm of miraculous' - were all secured in what maybe called middle-class and commercial seats: Blackley, Moss Side, Rusholme, Withington and Exchange.[65] In contrast, in industrial constituencies where working-class electors predominated, Labour topped the poll. The Conservatives, meanwhile, were reduced to just one parliamentary representative in the city, elected in slum-ridden Hulme. Ominously, however, the Tories had polled the highest total vote of any party in the city.

In any case, although the 1923 general election had boosted Liberal fortunes, the results were exceptional because the contest had turned on the issue of Free Trade, which had a powerful appeal to electors across the country but enjoyed a special resonance in Manchester on account of the important local export trade. In a throw-back to pre-war politics, the Conservative party saw support drain away as a result of its backing for Protectionism. Indeed, such was the extent of local opposition to Tory policy that the aftermath of the election produced the rare sight of Conservative politicians complaining about a hostile press. Sir Alfred Hopkinson bemoaned that 'in Manchester...there was no paper at all which represented [the Conservative candidates'] views, while no one can deny the ability of the paper which consistently opposed them [the *Manchester Guardian*]'.[66] The unpopularity of the Conservative's trade policy was underlined by the Liberal victory in the Exchange division, widely regarded as a barometer of commercial sentiment in the city.[67]

A further factor in the Liberal success was the absence of Labour candidates in the seats where the Liberals had been most successful. In Blackley, Moss Side and Withington, Liberal victories were secured in straight fights with Conservative candidates. This was not, it should be emphasised, any indication of a progressive alliance. Divisional Labour parties in Manchester had demonstrated considerable hostility to the Liberals throughout the early twenties and tried strenuously to find candidates in 1923.[68] Rusholme DLP eventually succeeded in running a candidate, the Communist, William Paul, although his intervention did not prevent the Liberals from winning that seat.

Nationally, a Labour government assumed office for the first time, despite the fact that the party was numerically smaller than the Tories in Westminster and was only able to take office by virtue of Liberal support in the Commons. In the event, Labour's term in office was fleeting, nine months in all, and marked neither by failure nor success. Nevertheless, as Maurice Cowling argues, Asquith's decision to allow Ramsay MacDonald to assume office was a disastrous error.[69] In that short space of time, Labour proved itself 'fit to govern'. Furthermore, given its enhanced national status, it was almost obliged to broaden its electoral scope. Consequently, with the approach of a general election following the fall of MacDonald's administration in September 1924, the Manchester Labour party committed itself to a wider electoral attack than ever before, taking the fight beyond its industrial heartlands into some of the Liberal-held suburbs such as Blackley, Rusholme and Withington - a worrying prospect for the Liberals.[70]

8.7 The 1924 general election - a 'critical' moment?

Contemporary observers of the 1924 general election believed that it marked a crucial turning point in British politics. Hugh Dalton, later a Labour Chancellor, declared that 'we have returned, sharply and decisively, to the two-party system in Great Britain'.[71] Conservative observers agreed: Sir Evelyn Cecil thought the election had seen 'the virtual elimination of the Liberal Party', while Sir Alfred Hopkinson was even more definite, hailing a 'complete defeat' of the Liberals.[72] In addition to installing the Conservative party in power with a substantial majority, the 1924 general election polarised politics in Britain to a greater extent than at any time since before the war. In parliament, the Liberals were reduced from 158 members to a rump of just 42. Although this was not an accurate reflection of their total vote, which numbered just under three million, the British electoral system punishes parties without a strong, coherent geographical and social base: the loss of 116 seats and over one million votes confirmed Liberal fears that their party was being squeezed out of existence by its two rivals.[73]

The scale of the Liberal defeat has encouraged more recent analysts of elections to proclaim that the 1924 result ranks alongside the 1945 Labour landslide as one of the two elections in British history which can be regarded as marking a true watershed.[74] This assertion, made by Pippa Norris and Geoff Evans, is based on the concept of 'critical elections' developed by V. O. Key in the 1950s. Key believed that there are certain elections in a liberal democracy 'in which there occurs a sharp and durable electoral realignment between parties'.[75] He thus characterised a 'critical' election as one in which there is a high level of public involvement and a profound realignment of existing cleavages within the electorate which persists for several succeeding elections.

Key was primarily concerned with American elections and it has been suggested that his realignment theory is unsuited to British politics.[76] Certainly, it is doubtful that the 1924 general election meets his strict guidelines as to what constitutes a critical election. Although, at 77 per cent, turnout was above average for the inter-war period, in the context of British elections throughout the entire twentieth century it was not extraordinary. More importantly, the election did not see an enduring realignment in which the Liberal party was decisively destroyed. Such sentiments had been expressed about the 1922 election, only for the Liberals to perform spectacularly better at the polls in 1923. Similarly, the Liberals survived the 1924 debacle to poll five million votes at the 1929 general election - its greatest ever total. Thus, although the election represented a major defeat for the Liberals, it may be argued that to describe the result as a watershed is to overstate its significance. It would be more accurate to view the 1924 election as just one stage in what A. Campbell and colleagues might refer to as a 'realigning electoral era'.[77]

The decline of the Liberals and the simultaneous rise of Labour was not a sudden, explosive, phenomena, but the result of a gradual transformation caused by developments before, during and after the war. However, where the 1924 general election may perhaps be viewed as a critical stage in the process, is in the way politics and party identification became polarised around certain opposing views of society. The election was fought against a background of controversial issues, including the bungled trial of J. R. Campbell, an assistant editor of *Workers' Worker* arrested and charged with incitement to mutiny, a disputed loan to the Soviet Union and the infamous Zinoviev letter, which suggested that the Communist party was using the Labour party to achieve its own revolutionary purposes.[78] Amidst such scenes, voters were asked to choose between the Red Flag and the Union Jack, the ruling class and 'the people'. This polarisation was not necessarily rooted in differences over specific policy programmes, indeed, it has been suggested that most voters do not generally have a firm grasp of political programmes or philosophies. More important, it seems, are the general and often vague political ideals and expressions that parties use, which allow people to develop likes and dislikes of various groupings and provide them with the clues they need in order to make political choices.[79]

Such imagery was particularly prominent in the 1924 election, characterised as it was by a large amount of rowdyism.[80] Although rowdyism on the hustings was scarcely a new phenomena, the 1924 contest appears to have been one of the last seriously unruly elections. In Manchester, the campaign was marked by theatrical scenes at Conservative and Labour meetings and throughout the city. In Platting, for instance, a group of children roaming the streets banging dustbin lids and wearing Labour colours became known as 'Clynes's band'. Rival chanting of *Rule Britannia* and the *Internationale* was much in evidence, while tempers often ran high. On one occasion, a Conservative meeting in Clayton had to be abandoned amidst scenes of chaos, the Tory candidate, Captain Thorpe, removing his jacket and offering to meet several members of the audience outside.[81]

Curiously, however, Liberal meetings never provoked this kind of drama. Although this may seem unimportant, in actual fact it was probably an indication of the party's difficulties and a warning of future failure. According to J. Schumpeter, 'the psycho-technics of party management and party advertising, slogans, marching tunes, are not accessories. They are the essence of politics'.[82] Particularly in working-class areas, politics had long exhibited a carnivalesque nature. Political meetings in the nineteenth century had been marked by singing and flag waving, and this was still the case in the 1920s.[83] However, by this time the Liberals no longer had a flag to wave or a tune to play; when the party subsequently tried to revive the 'Land song', it discovered that even its own supporters had forgotten the words.[84] In contrast, the Tories had commandeered the Union Jack and *God Save the King*, emphasising their claim to be the party of Britain, the monarchy and the Empire, while Labour supporters, though their leaders disapproved, sang 'our flag is deepest red', cementing the party's working-class image. Thus, when the Zinoviev letter broke, 'weak kneed and wavering Liberals more than ever afraid of the "Socialist menace"' were said to have voted for the Conservatives in their droves.[85]

According to one Liberal correspondent, who wrote to C. P. Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, the election was responsible for extending the political polarisation already occurring along class lines. 'The election' they suggested, 'has shown the Labour Party firmly establishing itself in place of the Liberals in a number of industrial areas. There are now many seats which can be called "Labour seats" with the same confidence as "Tory seats" are spoken of in the Home Counties. In these places Labour's hold is now, apparently, unshakeable.'[86] This certainly chimed with the electoral outcome in Manchester. While the Conservative party won in Blackley, Moss Side, Rusholme and Withington, along with the commercial Exchange division, Labour had again topped the poll in Ardwick, Clayton, Gorton and Platting, where the Liberals once more lost their deposit. The increased Labour vote in these areas, the *Manchester Guardian* concluded, indicated 'a definite strengthening of [its] hold in the industrial constituencies'.[87] This was, however, far from being a complete process; in Manchester, as elsewhere, the Conservatives continued to gain from a substantial number of working-class votes. Nevertheless, the broad concentration of Labour support in the industrial seats and Conservative strength in the suburbs, at the expense of the Liberals, confirms the onset of an electoral demarcation - broadly along lines of class - that became the essence of British politics for the next forty or fifty years.[88] It should be stressed that this electoral alignment did not occur automatically; in large part, it was the product of the political parties' attempts to create a viable social and political identity in the eyes of the electorate.[89] Nor, it may be said, did this electoral division on broadly social lines necessarily reflect the wishes of the two main parties.

While Labour support at the 1924 election derived overwhelmingly from its industrial heartlands, many in the party had hoped to win adherents beyond this restricted base. The central architect and master practitioner of this strategy was Ramsay MacDonald. He demonstrated his skill at a packed-out meeting in Manchester's biggest public venue, King's Hall, halfway through the 1924 campaign:

> I appeal to you, my Manchester friends. Help us to go on with our work. To whom do I appeal? Working men only? Not at all. Man requires to be fed and sustained in three vital aspects. All those who contribute to that sustenance must be included as the co-operators in the Labour movement.
>
> There are those who minister to our bodies, who feed us and clothe us, workers, the muscle labourers, the men who give service mainly by their arms. To them I appeal, for the burden of life lies heavily upon their shoulders, and especially upon the shoulders of their womenfolk.
>
> Then there are those who sustain our minds, our teachers, men who think, men who tell us what is the right road ahead. Hand in Hand and shoulder to shoulder with those are the great spiritual teachers, the men who nourish our souls as well as those who nourish our minds (Cheers).
>
> That divine human trinity of service - the man who clothes and feeds, the man who educates, the man who inspires - that is the trinity I wish to see in operation through the medium of the Labour Party. To those classes, to those sections, to those service givers I make my appeal tonight.[90]

To be sure, few shared MacDonald's capacity for flowery prose or boasted the 'organ voice and handsome figure' that exercised a 'peculiar power' over Labour audiences.[91] Nevertheless, MacDonald was not alone in appealing to as broad a spectrum of the population as possible. Senior Labour figures in Manchester, in particular Clynes, declared that the party aimed to attract the 'best elements in the other two parties, because there are many men and women outside the working classes who [a]re dismayed at existing social conditions'.[92] On another occasion, Clynes told an audience in Platting that 'Labour had looked after the interest of the middle classes (A Voice:

"Shame"). He did not think it was a shame. The class that needed most relief, however, was the working class, and the Labour Party would give them the greatest assistance possible'.[93]

This last intervention illustrated the tricky task Labour faced in appealing to a broader section of society without alienating what were established 'core' supporters, an electoral dilemma facing left-wing parties across Europe at this time and one which continues to exercise the minds of party strategists.[94] To maintain integrity amongst its core voters, Labour candidates had to identify a sector of society against whom they were ranged; at the same time, the party had to be careful not to alienate potential non-working class support and so denunciations were limited to a fairly narrow band of individuals. For example, Andrew McElwee, the Labour candidate in Hulme, said he 'certainly did not represent the people who lived on rent, interest and profit', while other Labour candidates in Manchester hailed Snowden's budget as an attack on the 'idle rich'. [95] This small category was a fairly safe target, as were the 'belted earls', Curzon, Birkenhead and Carson, who were regularly denounced by Labour candidates as titled parasites, 'at the service of amalgamated money interests like the Federation of British Industries'. In contrast, Labour was presented as a 'popular party' ranged against these vested interests.[96] Thus, while the party still adopted the established 'them' and 'us' tactic, 'they' were now being portrayed as a much smaller and more compact group in comparison with the larger 'us'.

The Liberal party was condemned by Labour speakers as indivisible from the Conservative party, and frequent allusions were made to an electoral pact having been determined by the two parties. In fact, while Tory-Liberal co-operation was indeed evident in many parts of the country, it was not the case in Manchester. As both *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* noted, in this city relations between the two parties were very bitter and the lack of three-party contests was merely coincidental.[97] Nevertheless, this did not stop Labour candidates from making play with the idea of a new alliance. Edgar Whiteley, in Withington, claimed that there had been 'a parting of the ways' between Labour, with its principle of collective control illustrated by such innocent developments as municipal trams, and all those who opposed it. J. R. Clynes expressed similar sentiments, saying he had long believed the day would come 'when there would be aligned a great democratic party against a great reactionary party. The moment had come when honest men could choose.'[98]

However, despite the attempts to portray itself as a 'people's party', Manchester Labour had ultimately failed to extend much beyond its industrial heartlands and was nowhere near winning any of the few middle-class constituencies which it contested. There were several reasons for this: first, although Labour fielded candidates in several suburban seats, they were not really seriously contested. While, in Platting, Clynes had the backing of a full-time agent, an army of supporters, trade union money and visits from other Cabinet ministers, the Labour candidate in Blackley, William Burke, fought the election with a temporary agent and two-pounds-worth of election literature.[99] A similarly makeshift campaign was waged by Edgar Whiteley in Withington, and although the party was better organised in Rusholme, a candidate like William Paul never had a realistic chance of victory.

Furthermore, it should be stressed that for all the attempts to appeal to a wider section of the electorate, Labour candidates seemed happiest when making 'traditional' appeals. In particular, older trade unionists, such as Tom Lowth in Ardwick and Jack Sutton in Clayton, stuck to the line that the working classes 'were the backbone' of the Labour party. Moreover, it is likely that their conception of the 'working class' was rather more specific than Ramsay MacDonald's. It should be emphasised that this strategy did no harm to the eventual outcome of their contests; both were re-elected on an increased vote. Such pronouncements gave added weight to opposition claims that Labour was a sectional party. In particular, the Conservatives fought a powerful counter-offensive which held that Labour was the party of vested interests, intent on waging 'class war'. At its most extreme, this led to claims that Labour was under the direction of violent Russian Bolsheviks. Throughout the campaign and especially following the publication of the Zinoviev letter, Conservative candidates portrayed the election as a contest between 'socialism and constitutionalism'. The Conservative candidate in Platting, following the lead of the *Sunday Pictorial*, told electors that the choice before them was between the Red Flag and the Union Jack: 'Let our headquarters be in Platting and not in Moscow'. A similar campaign was waged in Clayton, where the Tory candidate, Captain Thorpe, gripped a Union Jack and caused uproar at meetings by denouncing Ramsay MacDonald as a 'traitor'. In Hulme, the Conservative party distributed election literature which detailed alleged Bolshevik 'atrocities', prompting Labour to respond that at least their material could be read to children at bedtime.[100]

However, in concentrating its attack in this manner, the Conservative party effectively connived with Labour in portraying the Liberals as being irrelevant, somehow out of date. The Tories warned that in the new world of polarised politics, where the fight was between socialism and constitutionalism, the Red Flag and the Union Jack, there was no room for a Liberal rump.[101] Labour had to be opposed and a Conservative vote was the safest, most effective, means of opposition. While Liberal candidates disputed this appraisal and claimed that they were the safest bulwark against class war and revolution, their appeals generally fell on deaf ears. The fundamental weakness of the Liberal position was epitomised by comments made by Ernest Simon on the housing question. He claimed that the parties' positions in regard to this issue could be summed up in three ways: Labour was on the side of the tenants and wanted to reduce rates; the Tories were on the side landlords and wanted an end to tenant protection; finally, his own party, the Liberals, were 'determined to secure the fairest possible treatment for all classes'.[102] Yet, in an election where voters were being told that the choice was between black and white (or red and blue), consensual appeals to all sides lacked bite.

Ultimately, the rhetoric and propaganda employed by the various parties helped to make class and social division an important factor in electoral choice, not just in the way that they characterised themselves but in the way they portrayed each other. All sides painted a picture of a divided society, though each version was different. It was up to the voter to decide which they most favoured and where they perceived themselves to be in the picture. The majority of working-class voters favoured Labour's portrayal of society and voted for them as the party that would represent their concerns against the vested interests of capital. Middle-class voters, on the other hand, overwhelmingly supported the Tories, seeing them as the best bulwark against the unconstitutional and potentially violent Bolshevik tendency that preached class war from within the Labour party. In addition, the Tories were able to attract a substantial minority of working-class votes, especially in the poorest districts, by patriotic appeals to protect the British nation from sinister foreign actors. In this atmosphere there was no room for a Liberal party which acknowledged society was divided without committing itself to any one section.

Across Manchester, the Liberal vote collapsed in 1924. The decline was greatest in Blackley and Withington, where Labour candidates forced three-corner contests.[103] However, even in Exchange, Moss Side and Rusholme, where the number of candidates had remained the same between 1923 and 1924, the slumps were significant.[104] The process of political polarisation was perhaps most acute in Hulme, the most deprived constituency in Manchester and in 1923 witness to an extremely closely fought contest between the three parties. At the final poll the Conservatives emerged victorious, narrowly ahead of the Liberals, with Labour trailing a close third. However, within a year Liberal support collapsed to just ten percent, its deserters dividing fairly evenly between Labour and the Conservatives:

1923 Hulme result:

Con	10,035	(35.8%)
Lib	9,603	(34.2%)
Lab	8,433	(30%)

1924 Hulme result:

Con	15,374	(48.5%)	(+12.7%)
Lab	13,080	(41.2%)	(+11.2%)
Lib	3,277	(10.3%)	(-23.9%)

While the successful Tory candidate on both occasions, Colonel Nall, celebrated Hulme's true blue colour, the most notable feature of the two elections was the emergence of a new hue. Before 1923, Labour had never contested the seat at a general election; party machinery in the constituency was fairly ephemeral and Labour had rarely run candidates in municipal or Board of Guardians elections. Yet, within a year, the party had become the main opposition to the Conservatives. This transformation dated from the arrival of Andrew McElwee in the constituency. A high-ranking official of the ASW, McElwee had arrived from Glasgow as an eleventh hour Labour candidate in 1923, after the DLP had earlier failed to find a candidate with the necessary financial backing. Interestingly, the *Manchester Guardian* was initially dismissive of McElwee's chances on account of the nature of the Hulme constituency:

> It is a difficult division in which to discuss serious politics. Its people are perhaps the poorest, most miserable, and least cared for in the city. Life in its mean streets is not conducive to high thinking, so it is hardly surprising that *bravura* methods of political appeal are most successful there...Even the local Labour party, which does not often abandon hopes

> of areas like this, regards it as very unprofitable soil to cultivate. It is hard even to make many of its inhabitants into trade unionists, because their occupations are so casual and curious; and to make men trade unionists is often, in these days, the first step towards attaching them to the Labour Party. Mr McElwee's candidature can only be regarded as another attempt to test the possibilities.[105]

By the end of the campaign, however, McElwee was being widely praised, especially by members of Hulme DLP who believed he had made an excellent impression in the constituency and had shown himself to be a fine public speaker. Polling 30 per cent of the vote had astonished local activists and the positive performance encouraged the ASW to persevere with the division, paying for Leo Corcoran to act as the agent and secretary of the local party. In subsequent months, the DLP embarked on a concerted propaganda campaign and in 1924 contested several local elections, managing to get two Hulme Labour representatives elected to the Board of Guardians for the first time in over twenty years. During the next four years, under Corcoran's direction, the Labour party enjoyed eight out of twelve council victories in the division, won all but one of the available Board of Guardians' seats and in 1929 had McElwee elected as the local MP.

However, although good organisation was crucial to Labour's subsequent advance in Hulme, it is worth mentioning that the impressive poll secured in 1923 was achieved before these improvements had been made. McElwee's first campaign was waged with a makeshift organisation and on the basis of minimal preparation, and though he was praised for his good performance on the platform, he could only have had direct contact with a minority of local voters. Furthermore, this was an area devoid of trade unionists, widely regarded as the shock troops of Labour's electoral advance. Consequently, the immediately strong showing of McElwee in Hulme suggests that, contrary to much contemporary opinion, a potential pool of Labour support existed even amongst unorganised workers. As indicated earlier, this often went unnoticed due to the absence of Labour candidates as a result of weak or non-existent party organisation. Thus, while the connection between trade union membership and Labour voting may not be as precise or direct as is sometimes suggested, the connection between trade union support and the effective operation of a local machinery - which was a prerequisite to electoral progress - is certainly evident.[106] As noted in chapter four, trade union finance and personnel was crucial to the effective operation of local parties, which were in turn crucial to Labour's electoral prospects. Significantly, when financial problems experienced by the ASW in 1929 prompted the union to warn that it would have to sacrifice Corcoran, the MBLP stressed that his loss would be a 'disaster' to Labour fortunes in Hulme.

8.8 Labour's forward march 1924-28

By 1924, the Labour party was well-placed to build on the progress it had achieved in the working-class districts of Manchester. In Ardwick, Clayton, Gorton, Hulme and Platting, divisional parties were on a sure footing, receiving vital financial support from trade unions and making reasonable progress in recruiting members. Ward organisations were by this time either established or under construction, and a number of Labour clubs had been set up. In the wards where this organisation had been in place the longest, primarily industrial areas dominated by terraced housing, Labour's electoral progress was most advanced. As Tables II and III illustrate, between 1919 and 1923 the party won 70 per cent of seats in the industrial wards (Group D), a level of success that increased to 85 per cent in the subsequent five-year period. Following this progress in the 'bye-law' wards, after 1924 Labour began to improve its machinery in the city's slum districts, a process evidenced by the increasing number of candidates fielded by the party in the second half of the decade (see Table 8.3 below). Having contested only 54 per cent of slum wards in the period 1919-23, between 1924 and 1928 it increased that level of involvement to 93 per cent. In contrast, the increasing absence of Liberal candidates in slum wards reflected the collapse of that party's machinery in this part of Manchester. In the period 1919-23, the Liberals contested 42 per cent of slum wards, a figure that fell to just 24 per cent for the following five-year period. These developments occurred in tandem with Labour's electoral advance in the slum districts after 1924 and were probably both causes and effects of the political change. Between 1919 and 1923, Labour had won just over 30 per cent of the slum seats, a figure that increased to 46 per cent for the period 1924-28.[107] Obviously, increased candidatures and improved organisation did not, by themselves, lead to electoral progress. However, an organisational presence was essential if the party was to arouse popular interest and attract electoral support.

As a recent study into the contemporary problem of 'depoliticisation' has noted, political parties at the local level can occupy a key place in the ecology of civil society, 'helping to link political groupings and concerns, and providing a channel of communication between the local and the national arenas'. As well as providing the infrastructure needed to win elections, local parties provide the basis for articulating coherent policy platforms for the voting public and respond to public concerns by formulating new policy.[108] During the 1920s, the main focus of local politics in Manchester concerned the question of low rates versus public expenditure. In the early part of the period, the dearth of Labour and Liberal candidates in the slum wards meant that the Tory cry for low rates went largely unchallenged. However, by the latter half of the decade this began to change, with Labour fielding substantially more candidates as its organisation improved. As a result, alternative arguments were presented to the electorate, and broad ideological and policy differences between the parties were advertised. A particularly divisive issue in this period was the debate over the purchase of the Wythenshawe estate, a large body of land just outside Manchester Corporation's boundaries, which had been put forward as a possible site for the construction of much needed new housing.

At municipal elections in 1925 Labour made the immediate purchase of the estate the main plank of its campaign. In contrast, the Conservatives came out in opposition to the scheme, claiming it would lead to rate rises, while the Liberals offered qualified support for the proposal.[109] A notable development during this election campaign was the action of the Bishop of Manchester, who, in his capacity as chairman of the Local Councils of Christian Congregations, sent a letter to affiliated churches calling on municipal voters to support candidates pledged to hasten the provision of housing. This plea, which ought to have favoured Labour candidates, was read out in the pulpits of a number of Manchester churches on the Sunday preceding the election.[110]

However, the Bishop's message seems to have had little influence on voters in residential areas, as Conservatives ousted Liberal councillors in Chorlton, Didsbury and Withington. Although it is impossible to establish with certainty the reasons why people vote the way they do, it would seem that electors in districts largely untouched by the housing crisis voted in their own self-interest and supported Tory promises to restrict public spending. On the other hand, inhabitants in the poorest districts of the city, where the housing crisis was most acute, were clearly less enamoured by the Tory policy of inaction. In the early twenties, the Conservative party's cry of 'economy' had been successful in these areas, despite the fact that this was where public expenditure was most required. However, by 1925, the Tories had enjoyed a majority on the council for several years, yet rates had still risen. Consequently, their appeals lacked integrity, and growing numbers of Manchester's poorest residents began to look upon Labour as the party which offered them the best deal; in Miles Platting and New Cross, two of the most deprived wards in the city, council seats changed hands from the Tories to Labour.[111]

In fact, elections in 1925 proved to be a precursor to more dramatic developments the following year, when stunning municipal victories marked a turning point in Manchester politics and established Labour as the dominant party in the majority of working-class wards. In New Cross, the Labour candidate defeated J. C. Grime, a senior figure in the Manchester Conservative party, by the substantial majority of 318. In All Saints, Labour polled its greatest ever vote in the ward and in the process defeated A. O'Loughlin, a Liberal who had recently switched his allegiance to the Tories. In Collyhurst, a Labour candidate was elected for the first time in six years, and in Medlock Street and St. George's wards the party had representatives elected for the first time ever. The victory in Medlock Street was received with particular amazement, the *Manchester Guardian* noting that this 'inveterately' Conservative ward 'could usually be expected to elect any kind of Tory'.[112]

Accounting for Labour's 1926 success, the *Guardian* claimed the results were due to the party's 'policy of all-year-round propaganda and attack on a wide front on election day'.[113] Energetic campaigning was undoubtedly a major factor in the party's success, yet what the *Guardian* failed to report was what Labour had actually been campaigning about. While the party did not neglect local concerns about housing and unemployment, the major preoccupation in 1926 was the General Strike, which had taken place in May in response to the miners' stoppage. The latter strike was still ongoing as municipal voters went to the polls in November. Indeed, it was on the issues arising out of the General Strike that Labour in Manchester based most of its campaigning.[114]

Although historians have correctly played down the revolutionary aspects of the strike and the extent to which class antagonism featured in the public psyche, evidence suggests that the industrial action that year did have some impact on popular political attitudes. While the MBLP initially complained that the strike's depressing conclusion had created a mood of apathy and disillusion, in the months after the strike's end local ILP branches noted greater public interest in politics than ever before. In July 1926, Miles Platting ILP reported that its regular open-air meeting attracted ten times the usual number of listeners, whilst the Longsight and Rusholme branch revealed with some astonishment that a Sunday meeting in Platt Fields had drawn a crowd of over a thousand.[115]

The General Strike was a national event at a time when politics was becoming increasingly nationalised, and it is significant that the sweeping gains made by Labour in Manchester were reproduced across the country. In several big cities, the party made great strides, notably in Sheffield, where Labour took control of the city council for the first time.[116] In effect, these victories represented a vote of protest against the record of the Baldwin administration, an outcome encouraged by Labour speakers. Ellen Wilkinson, for instance, who spoke several times on behalf of Mary Welch in Moston, used the municipal campaign as a platform to attack the Conservative government. Urging voters to demonstrate their displeasure with the Conservatives, she proclaimed that the Tories had failed to safeguard the interests of 'the people' and had governed instead in the interests 'of that small financial ring in London who are their real masters and whose orders they obey'.[117] These opinions clearly struck a chord with working-class voters.

However, it is interesting to note that while the Conservatives lost seven seats to Labour in working-class wards, they gained two seats from the Liberals in Moss Side

East and Withington. Clearly, not everyone protested against the government. Rather, a process of political polarisation was continuing to take shape along class lines; the following year, despite fielding a reduced number of candidates owing to financial strictures arising from the Trades Dispute Act, Labour wrested four more seats from the Conservatives, in Harpurhey, Medlock Street, Miles Platting and St. George's. As noted earlier, this polarisation was never complete, and in Manchester the Tories continued to draw strong support from a large proportion of the working class. This was recognised by local party activists; in 1926, Joe Toole confided to Wright Robinson his belief that 'if the Tories set about us and put their backs into it, they could shift any of us'.[118] In reality, Toole was probably overestimating the strength of Conservatism amongst the working class, which had certainly lessened during the decade. Nevertheless, Toryism was far from buried in the working-class districts of Manchester, and though Labour had established a strong bond with this section of the electorate, the defeat of Labour candidates in New Cross and Ardwick in 1928 - following internal disagreements over the future of a local Catholic school - illustrated that factors such as religion and ethnicity could still trump social class as the key determinant of voting intentions.[119] Even as senior a figure as J. R. Clynes, in Platting, had to take account of such sectional interests. During the 1929 election he went to considerable lengths to secure Irish votes, disobeying MacDonald's orders by pledging publicly to protect Catholic educational interests.[120]

Nevertheless, while class was not 'everything' in this period, it is safe to say that by the end of the decade an electoral division on broadly social lines had seen Labour become the primary party of the working class in Manchester. The same could not be said for the party in relation to the wider electorate, where Labour remained a marginal force. In part, Labour's inability to move beyond its working-class base resulted from its failure to get involved in politics outside these areas.

Table 8.3 Percentage of seats contested by parties in Manchester municipal elections.

1919-23			1924-28		
Group A			Group A		
Lab	Lib	Con	Lab	Lib	Con
0	40	80	0	40	86.6
Group B			Group B		
Lab	Lib	Con	Lab	Lib	Con
33.3	63.3	70	23.3	73.3	70
Group C			Group C		
Lab	Lib	Con	Lab	Lib	Con
57.5	45	77.5	62.5	50	77.5
Group D			Group D		
Lab	Lib	Con	Lab	Lib	Con
100	15	72.5	100	7.5	67.5
Group E			Group E		
Lab	Lib	Con	Lab	Lib	Con
54	42	84	93.3	24	93.3

As illustrated in Table 8.3, below, there was a clear disparity between the level of Labour's electoral participation in working-class wards as compared to its role in the city's business wards and more middle-class districts. While the party was well organised in the industrial, 'bye-law', wards (Group D), and by the latter half of the decade in the slum wards (Group E), the party was much less involved elsewhere. In

Manchester's business districts (Group A), the party failed to run a candidate at any election during the 1920s, while in the suburbs (Group B) Labour's involvement actually declined as the period wore on. Only in the socially mixed areas (Group C) did Labour show signs of expanding its role, fielding 25 candidates in the period between 1924-28 compared to 23 in the previous five years.

Although the absence of Labour candidates in more middle-class districts could in part have stemmed from the self-fulfilling pessimism that had afflicted the party in slum areas in earlier years, the fundamental problem was that in these less industrial areas the absence of union branches and trade unionists deprived divisional parties of the vital funds and personnel necessary to begin the construction of efficient machinery. Without this, it was almost impossible to contest elections, which was essential if Labour was ever to establish itself in these communities. That said, towards the end of the decade, particularly in the approach to the 1929 general election, there were signs that Labour was beginning to make some tentative progress in Manchester's residential areas. In its annual review for 1927, the MBLP reported that it had intervened to improve the organisation of Moss Side DLP and helped the party run candidates in all three wards of the division in municipal elections in 1928.[121] Although the DLP was hampered in these fights by severe financial stringency, the experience encouraged it to make arrangements to contest the forthcoming parliamentary election in the constituency. In Rusholme, meanwhile, where the NEC had been forced to help clear the local party of Communist infiltrators, the divisional machinery had been reconstituted and the party approached the general election in a healthy state of organisation.[122] In addition, Exchange DLP, which had also been cleansed of Communist members, ran three candidates in 1928 as a precursor to contesting the forthcoming general election.

8.9 The 1929 general election - a breakthrough?

Although there existed a considerable disparity in the strength of Labour organisation across Manchester, the party approached the 1929 general election in its best-ever state of health. What was more, the political mood of the country appeared to be moving in its favour. The Conservative government had steadily lost support after 1926 as high levels of unemployment, the continuing coal strike and the vindictive Trades Disputes and Trade Union Act alienated large numbers of working-class voters. This alienation was illustrated by Tory losses in municipal elections after 1925, during which time Labour made sweeping gains, culminating in 1928 when the party won 212 council seats nationwide.[123] In addition, the Liberal party enjoyed something of a revival. Following Asquith's retirement in 1926, the party eventually united behind Lloyd George's leadership and in the summer of 1927 won three out of five parliamentary by-elections. Subsequently, Lloyd George offered to finance the party at the forthcoming general election and the Liberals announced they intended to run 500 candidates.[124]

In such circumstances the Conservatives looked likely to lose seats and although the party began the campaign in confident mood, as polling day approached even its most loyal supporters feared the worst. Reporting on the situation in Manchester, *The Times* conceded that Labour seats in the industrial divisions of the city were effectively secure, but warned that Conservative seats in Hulme, Blackley, Exchange and Withington were all at risk.[125] In the event, the Tories were defeated by Labour in Hulme and by the Liberals in Blackley and Withington. Yet, the scale of the Conservative collapse could have been much worse, as candidates in Exchange, Moss Side and Rusholme were only re-elected on minority votes.[126] While the Liberals had finished second in these areas, a feature of the results had been Labour's strong showing in the residential divisions, most of which it was contesting for the first or second time.

Nationally, Labour was returned to Westminster as the largest party, with 288 seats, enabling MacDonald to form his second administration. The Conservatives had actually out-polled Labour - emphasising their strong connection with a large section of the electorate - but were reduced to 261 seats due to the vagaries of the electoral system. However, this was nothing compared to the constitutional distortion suffered by the Liberals, whose five million votes were converted into just 59 seats.[127] Reviewing Labour's success, Duncan Tanner has claimed that while some progress at the expense of the Tories was almost inevitable in the circumstances of 1929, the triumph represented much more than a consolidation of the party's hold over its core support. Rather, Tanner believes the 1929 election saw a change in the pattern of Labour support. He points out that 73 of Labour's 288 seats had been won for the first time and that many of these contained large numbers of lower-middle-class voters and new council and private housing estates; 'Something had expanded the party's appeal'.[128]

As we have seen, the claim that 1929 saw Labour attract a wider spectrum of support than ever before is at least partially borne out by results in Manchester. In the case of Hulme, which Labour won for the first time, success can be seen as the culmination of a process in which trade union resources had enabled the local party to play a more active role in the local community, organising demonstrations and meetings, undertaking social work and contesting elections. Performing these functions enabled Labour to publicise its message and identify itself as the party most determined to further the interests of those poor electors who made up the division. Yet, while these factors can explain Labour's success in Hulme, and perhaps its strong showing in Exchange - both deprived areas which might have favoured the party sooner if it had been better organised - they are less helpful in explaining the strong polls achieved in Blackley, Moss Side, Rusholme and Withington. These divisions were much wealthier than the inner-city constituencies and, with the exception of Blackley, were largely devoid of industry. That said, the social composition of these areas was far from uniform and became increasingly diverse as new housing estates were constructed in the latter years of the decade. Indeed, in common with a number of suburban constituencies across the country, housing developments seem to have been important in boosting Labour support in several of these residential divisions in 1929.[129]

In Blackley and Withington, where new estates had been constructed in the second half of the 1920s, political commentators felt that inhabitants of the new homes favoured the Liberal and Labour parties over the Tories.[130] Unfortunately, these observers made little effort to explain why this was the case. It may be that many of those moving into these estates came from areas where Labour or the Liberals had been strong, and maintained their former political affiliation. Certainly, most inhabitants of the new estates in Blackley were young married couples who had migrated from Ardwick, Clayton and Platting - solid Labour areas.[131] While new housing developments may have been a factor in the increased Labour vote, the connection was not straightforward. Notably, it was felt that there was a clear division in political affiliation depending on the type of estate in question. In Blackley, the new houses were of two kinds: those built under the 1923 Act were for the most part owned by their occupiers, while others built after 1924 were rented corporation houses. According to the *Manchester Guardian*, in neither area could the Conservatives make much headway. Instead, it found that 'The Labour Party makes a strong appeal to the corporation tenants, the Liberals to the owner occupiers; indeed the secretary of the Subsidy Houseowners' Association (Mr J. R. Booth) sits on the City Council as a Liberal representative of Crumpsall ward'.[132]

Presumably, those who could afford to own their homes were better paid than residents who rented, so a difference in social status may account for the division in support between Labour and the Liberals. That said, by no means all of those who moved into the new corporation housing were manual workers. Rents in these estates were still beyond the means of most inner-city workers, and once travel costs were taken into consideration the cost of living precluded all but the best paid working-class residents from migrating into these areas. However, as Boughton noted in his study of 1920s politics in Sheffield and Birmingham, these were precisely the kind of people most likely to vote Labour.[133] In that respect, 'it was not the nature of the new estates themselves but the nature of the working class population from which they drew that is the chief explanation of their Labour voting'.[134] While that may be true, it is significant that on some Manchester Corporation estates, clerks and other members of the lower middle class predominated.[135] The fact that these residents apparently voted Labour in 1929 suggests that the party did broaden its base at this election, for although clerks and other white collar workers had long been visible in Labour's ranks, significant electoral support among this social strata had previously eluded the party. It seems possible, therefore, that as corporation tenants they were more exposed to Labour rhetoric and perhaps more amenable to Labour's message.

A final factor worthy of mention is the role which new women voters played in the outcome of the 1929 election. In 1928, the Conservative government passed the Equal Franchise Act, which gave votes to all women at the age of 21. The 1918 Act had only entitled women over 30 to vote: the new measure placed them on the same footing as men for the first time. This change increased the electorate from approximately 22 million to nearly 29 million and gave women a majority of around two million.[136] Although this change was introduced by the Baldwin administration, the strongest opposition to its introduction had come from the government's own benches, where several old Tories warned that the move was a threat to democracy. Subsequent historical and psephological studies suggest that their anxiety was unnecessary. An analysis of elections in 1918 and 1922 concluded that the female electorate was an advantage to the Tories and a handicap to Labour.[137] This was reinforced by electoral investigations after 1945 which also found women disproportionately favouring the Conservative party.[138] Initial explanations for this gender gap tended to be rather crude or casual, including suggestions that females were innately conservative. More sophisticated accounts highlighted the Tories' careful nursing of the female vote or focussed on the apparent failings of the Labour party, which was accused of alienating women by its association with the masculine world of trade unionism..[139] A general consensus emerged which held that women were not innately conservative; if Labour had taken a more thoughtful approach, the gender gap could have been closed.

The problem with such accounts is that they assume the existence of a 'women's vote' distinct from men, when in fact the evidence for such a phenomenon hardly exists. The lack of poll books, electoral surveys and detailed census records means that the voting behaviour of females can only be inferred, and it is by no means certain that the right inferences have been drawn. John Turner, who claimed to have uncovered a gender gap favouring the Tories in his study of the 1918 and 1922 elections, now believes that although a majority of women voted Conservative in the inter-war period, the explanation for this disparity is not rooted in gender differences or party strategies but has a socio-economic basis. Analysing the 1929 general election, he found that women were more numerous and more likely to be enfranchised in middle-class areas, where the Tories were already popular, than in working-class divisions dominated by Labour.

As with men, he concluded, most women voted in accordance with their economic self-interest.[140]

Turner's account lacks substantive sources, yet his argument corroborates anecdotal evidence of the 1920s. This held that 'there is no such thing as the women's vote - that is to say, an electoral influence due to the presence of women on the register that can be separated and detected apart from the influence of men. "As the husband, so the wife is" rules in politics as in other matters'.[141] Such a view seems to have been broadly accepted by the various political actors. Although all three parties took steps to organise and appeal to women voters and produced magazines specifically aimed at a female audience, they scarcely went out of their way to attract the 'women's vote'. Had such an electoral bloc existed, it would have been clear by 1929. Yet, in the election held that year neither the Liberals nor the Tories made any specific appeal to the new influx of female voters in their manifestos, and though Labour made brief reference to single working women, the party in Manchester effectively ignored the change, reflecting that the new cohort of voters 'are obviously as intelligent as those who have voted for the first time in previous elections. They require no special appeal or individual propaganda'.[142]

When the results were announced, some contradictory reports in the press suggested that the new voters had favoured one party ahead of the others. An observer of the contest in Blackley mentioned in passing that Labour 'was the gainer by the enfranchisement of the young women', while *The Times* claimed that the Conservatives had polled well in some of the industrial districts 'where women are largely employed'.[143] Although the lack of substantive evidence makes it impossible to judge these claims one way or the other, analysis of the voting in Manchester tends to favour the view that Labour was the main beneficiary of the franchise extension, as its vote increased the most. However, it seems likely that this reflected a general increase in Labour support, rather than a concentrated young female vote. Most election post-mortems paid little attention to the effect of the 'flapper' vote, preferring more straightforward accounts of the result. Contemporary observers highlighted the Conservatives' inability to find a popular election cry and claimed that the proposed policy of de-rating was viewed suspiciously by many voters as a device which would extract more money from the poor for the benefit of the rich.[144] Historical surveys have done little to dispute this view, arguing that the Tories had overestimated the appeal of Baldwin and the 'Safety First' campaign and underestimated the damage which had been done to the party by years of unemployment and industrial unrest.[145]

Throughout the twenties, Labour had been strengthening its hand amongst the working class, involving itself in social work, keeping up an energetic campaign of propaganda and presenting itself as the party most likely to improve conditions for working people. The success of this campaign had been forewarned by consistent advances in municipal elections and was confirmed by the general election success. Not only did the party mobilise its core support, but also managed to attract former Tory voters. In Platting, the Conservative candidate privately reported 'a substantial transfer of malcontent voters to other parties'. The largest group of these renegades were manual workers, apparently won over by Labour's appeal to their class loyalty.[146]

However, as indicated earlier, Labour had also attracted support from people outside the industrial working class. In Hulme, the party had finally won substantial support in the city's slum community, further reflected by the strong poll in Exchange. At the other end of the scale, positive votes in Manchester's residential districts suggested that the party had secured the backing of a number of electors outside the working class. In both cases, it would appear that the party's emphasis on moderation and constitutionalism was an important factor, as it helped to draw the sting out of Tory attempts to raise the 'Red Bogey'. Consequently, while Labour was still heavily reliant on its working-class base, the party had for the first time shown signs of constructing a cross-class bloc of support which might eventually provide it with an outright parliamentary majority.

This was seemingly confirmed by the results of municipal elections held some four months into MacDonald's new term of office. Going into the contests defending seventeen seats, the Labour party in Manchester not only held its position with ease but also made several important gains. Electing candidates in All Saints', St. George's and Moss Side East, Labour succeeded in placing representatives in all three wards of the Moss Side division. In addition, the party had breached the Exchange division for the first time in its history, returning Labour men in St. Luke's and St. Clement's wards. Similar progress was reported across the country and the press attributed the party's success to the 'good repute' of the government. However, while the results were undoubtedly encouraging, the party's performance was perhaps less impressive than initial impressions suggested. In many ways, Labour's success had been facilitated by an unprecedentedly low turnout; in Manchester, only 38 per cent of registered electors used their vote, compared to 51 per cent the previous year. Nevertheless, that was in some respects an endorsement of the government; people seemingly had little to protest about and in such circumstances Labour's tremendous level of local activity had an influential impact on the electoral outcome. Significantly, the press once more highlighted the party's policy of consistent electioneering as a key factor in its success.[147]

8.10 Drifting to disaster

Unfortunately, despite the initially promising signs, the second Labour government quickly found itself in difficulty. In October 1929, the American stock market crashed, producing an economic fallout which soon impacted on the wider world. As international markets shrunk, British industry began to suffer and between 1929 and 1930 total exports fell from £839 million to £666 million.[148] Unemployment, already a serious problem, began to rise alarmingly and by January 1930 there were 1,520,000 people registered out of work in Britain. Usually, this figure dropped as winter changed to spring; however, in this year, the trend reversed. In April, unemployment rose to 1,761,000, in July to 2,070,000, in October to 2,319,000, before breaking all records by passing the 2.5 million mark in December.[149]

Although the government undoubtedly faced an unprecedented series of structural problems, it appeared to lack imagination and courage in its attempts to tackle the problems.[150] As elsewhere, members of the Labour party in Manchester grew increasingly angry at the government's inactivity, especially its failure to tackle rising unemployment.[151] Although unemployment was less severe in Manchester than in surrounding towns, it was a symbolic failing and served to demoralise party members.[152] By 1930, the *Manchester Guardian* noted that the rank and file were beginning to lose faith: '...the early vision is fading into the light of common day, now that the experience has fallen so far short of the dream'.[153] In Manchester, several resolutions attacking the government's inaction were sent by Ardwick and Rusholme DLPs and subsequently passed by the MBLP.

Furthermore, discontent with the government's performance was not restricted to party members. The electorate in Manchester was similarly disillusioned with Labour's record in office and indicated its displeasure at municipal elections held in late 1930. Although the party suffered only two losses, the seats it held were maintained with substantially reduced majorities. The election results represented Labour's worst performance at the Manchester polls since 1922 and similarly disappointing results were reported in big cities elsewhere. In neighbouring Salford, the party lost five seats, including that of the Mayor-elect.[154] Evidence that this slump in support was hardening came at a by-election in Ardwick, midway through 1931, caused by the resignation of Tom Lowth who had reached his union's retirement age. Ardwick had become a Labour stronghold during the 1920s, won by Lowth on four consecutive occasions after 1922. However, although the party retained the seat at the by-election in June 1931, it found its majority cut from almost seven thousand to just 314.

Significantly, this was despite a concerted campaign headed by the party's national agent, G. R. Shepherd. Senior Labour figures, including Clynes, Compton, J. H. Thomas and Marion Phillips, were enlisted to address meetings in support of the candidate, J. Henderson, who was an official of the NUR - an important factor in the Ardwick division. Henderson held numerous cottage and small open air meetings, and was widely regarded as a strong candidate, possessing the 'common touch'. Moreover, Ardwick DLP was a well organised party, with a large individual membership. During the campaign it published a special election edition of its paper, the *Ardwick Pioneer*, and canvassed the division on more than one occasion, a fact that made the reduced vote even more striking.[155]

In part, the decline in Labour's poll resulted from opposition to the party's policy in regard to funding for Catholic schools, an issue which was exercising much excitement at this time. This was particularly relevant in Ardwick, which contained a large number of Irish voters who had previously been responsible for undermining Labour support in municipal elections in the division in 1928 and 1929. As a result of internal disagreements over education policy on those occasions, several Catholic members of the local party had been expelled and they now returned to haunt Labour.[156] Demonstrations were held by lay Catholics protesting against the Labour candidate, who was further damaged by the Catholic Church's ruling that he had not replied satisfactorily to its questionnaire. On the Sunday before polling, priests in all nine Catholic Churches in Ardwick gave clear encouragement to parishioners to support the Conservative candidate.[157] Subsequently, in his post-mortem on the by-election, G. R. Shepherd informed the NEC that the Catholic schools' question had been the vital issue in the campaign and accounted for the reduced poll.[158] In contrast, while the local press felt the Catholic issue had been a factor in Labour's slump, it reported that the party's problems were broader and more fundamental. Significantly, the Conservative poll had not increased much on the 1929 result: the collapse in Labour's majority was not due to conversions, but resulted from the abstention of its own supporters; only 64 per cent of voters had bothered to turnout, compared to 72 per cent at the general election two years earlier. 'The one great fear of Labour organisers today', remarked the *Manchester Guardian*, 'is that the rank and file will, for the first time in the party's history, refuse to take the trouble to vote'. The paper noted that since 1918 the party's hold on Ardwick had grown steadily firmer and that following Lowth's victory in 1929, on a seven thousand majority, local Labour activists believed 'the process of evolution had been completed'. In fact, 'the conversion ha[d] not been as deep as many assumed...A gilt-edged trade union seat ha[d] been held by the narrowest of margins'.[159] Thus, even before the government collapsed and split, the writing was on the wall.

8.11 The 1931 general election

The departure of MacDonald, Snowden and Thomas, who joined Conservative and Liberal MPs to form a National government, sent shockwaves through the labour movement. Disbelief quickly turned to anger when it became clear that these renegades were prepared to face their old comrades as part of a cross-party coalition in a forthcoming general election. Approaching the contest, Labourites were resigned to losing a number of seats, but even on the eve of the poll most had no inkling of the disaster that awaited.[160] Moreover, even the press, while generally agreeing that a National victory was likely, still expected Labour to pick up over 200 seats.[161] In fact, when the results were finally announced on 29 October 1931, two months after the formation of the National government, it became clear that Labour had been decimated - reduced to just 46 seats. The *Manchester Guardian* recorded that, 'the landslide smote Manchester with devastating, even ruthless effect'.[162] All the sitting Labour MPs were defeated, including Clynes, dislodged from his Platting seat on a swing of around 15 per cent.[163]

In Ardwick, J. Henderson's brief spell as Labour MP was ended by the election of A. G. Fuller, the Conservative candidate. In fact, Henderson polled slightly more votes than four months earlier, but still trailed the Tory who gained a majority of almost six thousand. Turnout had increased by over 14 per cent since the by-election, and the increased Conservative poll indicates that events between then and the general election in October had helped to turn Labour abstentionists into anti-Labour voters. Moreover, there is no doubt that Conservative victories in Clayton and Gorton - where the Tory vote doubled - were the result of voters switching allegiance, many seemingly for the first time. Some accounts asserted that younger women voters had abandoned the party in especially large numbers, but the truth was that Labour had lost support across the board.

Confirmation of the party's unpopularity came a few days later, when the results of the annual round of municipal elections were announced. In Manchester, the loss of such solidly Labour seats as Bradford helped reduce the party's representation on the Council by eight seats. The *Manchester Guardian* described the results as the 'most disastrous defeat that the city Labour Party has ever suffered at a municipal election'. Rhys Davies explained the reversals by claiming that the vast majority of voters had gone 'on the "political booze" for the night'.[164] However, this statement assumed that these voters would later 'come round'. In fact, it was possible that the events of 1931 had done irrevocable damage to the party. Having been on the verge of gaining control of Manchester City Council in 1930, Labour found itself once more firmly subordinate to the Tories. Moreover, for the first time since the election of J. R. Clynes and G.D. Kelley in 1906, the party had been left without any parliamentary representatives in Manchester. Labour thus looked ahead and wondered whether its earlier strength, particularly the high water mark of 1929, could ever be recovered.

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[1] D. Tanner, 'Class Voting and Radical Politics: the Liberal and Labour Parties 1910-31', Lawrence & Taylor (eds.), *Party, State and Society*, p.106.

[2] J. C. Brown, 'Local party efficiency as a factor in the outcome of British elections', *Political Studies*, (6) 1958; J. Bochel & D. Denver, 'Canvassing, Turnout and Party Support: An Experiment', *British Journal of Political Science* (*BJPS*), (1) 1971; 'The impact of the campaign on the results of local government elections', *BJPS*, (2) 1972; B. Pimlott, 'Does local organisation matter?', *BJPS*, (2) 1972; A. Taylor, 'The effect of party organisation: correlation between campaign expenditure and voting in the 1970 election', *Political Studies*, (20) 1972; Seyd & Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots*.

[3] C. Cook, *The Age of Alignment. Electoral Politics in England 1922-29*, (1975), pp.84-85.

[4] Sources: 1921 Census, T. R. Marr, *Housing Conditions in Manchester and Salford*, (Manchester, 1904), *Manchester Guardian*. This table is based largely, though not identically, on a similar one presented in T. Adams, 'Labour Vanguard, Tory Bastion or the Triumph of New Liberalism? Manchester Politics 1900 to 1914 in Comparative Perspective', *Manchester Region History Review*, (14) 2000, pp.29-32.

[5] See: *Under the Arches: Report of Survey in part of St. Clement's Ward*, (Manchester, 1931), *Some Housing Conditions in Chorlton-on-Medlock*, (Manchester, 1931), *Ancoats: Study of a Slum Clearance Area 1937-38*, (Manchester University Settlement, 1938).

[6] Rosamond, 'Social and Economic', p.10.

[7] D. Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, (2000), p.10.

[8] Hewitt, *Emergence of Stability*, p.63.

[9] R. Roberts, *Classic Slum*, p.25.

[10] MG, 20 October 1910.

[11] MG, 1 November 1907.

[12] MG, 25 October; 1 November 1902.

[13] MG, 1 November 1906.

[14] Marriott, *Culture of Labourism*, p.58, shows that similar rhetoric was employed by the Labour Party in London.

[15] White, *Worst Street*, p.108.

[16] Ibid., p.107.

[17] A. Clinton, *The Trade Union Rank and File. Trades Councils in Britain, 1900-40*, (Manchester, 1977), p.29.

[18] MG, 1 November 1905.

[19] See, for example, *Manchester Courier* [hereafter MC], 1 November 1906; Lawrence, 'Class and gender'.

[20] White, *Worst Street*, p.102,106,109.

[21] Kidd, *Manchester*, pp.171-174.

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[22] Hewitt, *Emergence of Stability*, p.46.

[23] Quoted in S. Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England 1880-1939*, (Buckingham, 1993), p.82.

[24] Adams, 'Labour Vanguard', p.33.

[25] House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, 1924, vol.169, col.1243.

[26] See, for example, MG, 2 November 1907, when teetotalism was apparently responsible for the defeat of at least two candidates in local elections.

[27] MC, 1 November 1911.

[28] MG, 30 October 1908.

[29] MC, 2 November 1913.

[30] C. Cook, 'Labour and the downfall of the Liberal Party 1906-14', Chapter 3, A. Sked & C. Cook (eds.) *Crisis and Controversy. Essays in honour of A. J. P. Taylor*, (1977), p.63.

[31] See MG, 9 November 1922 for the case of Col. Nall in Hulme.

[32] MG, 6 December 1918.

[33] MBLP *AR*, 1918.

[34] MG, 17 November 1922.

[35] McKibbin, Matthew & Kay, 'franchise factor'.

[36] D. Tanner, 'The Parliamentary Electoral System, the "Fourth" Reform Act and the Rise of Labour in England and Wales', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, (56) 1983.

[37] M. Childs, 'Labour Grows Up: The Electoral System, Political Generations and British Politics 1890-1929', *Twentieth Century British History*, (6) 1995, p.130.

[38] D. Butler & D. Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, (1974).

[39] Childs, 'Labour Grows Up', p.133.

[40] Ibid., p.136.

[41] D. Tanner, 'Elections, Statistics and the Rise of Labour 1906-31', *Historical Journal*, (34) 1991, p.906.

[42] MG, 24 October 1919.

[43] Cf. J. Henry, 'Salford Labour: A Party in Waiting, 1919-32', *Manchester Region History Review*, (14) 2000, p.52.

[44] M.R.L.A., Election Literature, Wright Robinson Papers.

[45] *Daily Despatch*, 21 February 1935.

[46] ILP Conference Reports, 1919-28.

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[47] MBLP *AR*, 1925.

[48] MG, 7 November 1919.

[49] MG, 4 November 1932.

[50] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity*, pp.34-35.

[51] Ibid., p.35, 102.

[52] M.R.L.A., Annot Robinson letter to Nellie (?), 5 November 1920.

[53] B. Jones, 'Manchester Liberalism 1918-29: The electoral, ideological and organisational experience of the Liberal Party in Manchester with particular reference to the career of Ernest Simon', (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 1997), p.99, 106.

[54] M.R.L.A., North-West (Exchange) Manchester Liberal Association Minutes, 8 May 1923, (M284).

[55] MG, 27 October 1924.

[56] *The Times*, 26 October 1922; MG 27 October 1922.

[57] M.R.L.A., Miles Platting Ward Liberal Association Minutes and St. Luke's Ward Liberal Association Minutes, (M284).

[58] Jones, 'Manchester Liberalism 1918-29', p.33.

[59] M.R.L.A., Manchester Liberal Federation Executive Committee Minutes, 6, 22 June 1912; 9 July 1913.

[60] G. B. Hertz, *The Manchester Politician 1750-1912*, (Manchester, 1912), p.93.

[61] MC, 2 November 1911.

[62] Cook, *Age of Alignment*, p.53.

[63] W. Miller, *Electoral Dynamics in Britain since 1918*, (1977), pp.224-225.

[64] MG, 10 November 1922; *The Times*, 2 November 1922.

[65] *The Times*, 8 December 1923.

[66] A. Hopkinson, 'The General Election', *Contemporary Review*, (125) 1923, p.17.

[67] *The Times*, 27 November 1923.

[68] See, for example, MG, 12 October 1920; 25 October 1922; 21, 23 November 1923.

[69] M. Cowling, *The Impact of Labour: The Beginnings of Modern British Politics*, (Cambridge, 1971).

[70] Jones, 'Manchester Liberalism', p.204.

[71] H. Dalton, 'The General Election', *Contemporary Review*, (126) 1924, p.688.

[72] Ibid., p.683, 694.

[73] Mowat, *Britain*, p.190.

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[74]P. Norris & G. Evans, 'Introduction: Understanding Electoral Change', G. Evans & P. Norris (eds.) *Critical Elections. British Parties and Voters in Long-term Perspective*, (1999), p.xxxii. Confusingly, in their paper to the PSA Conference in 1998, Norris & Evans argued that the 1922 general election was actually the 'critical' election, with the 1924 election merely consolidating the changes that year. See Norris & Evans, 'Did 1997 Represent a Critical Election? Understanding British Voters and Parties in Long-term Perspective', A. Dobson & J. Stanyer (eds.), *Contemporary Political Studies 1998. Volume Two*, (Nottingham, 1998), p.949.

[75]V. O. Key, 'A theory of critical elections', *Journal of Politics*, (17) 1955, p.16.

[76]K. D. Wald, 'Realignment Theory and British Party Development: A Critique', *Political Studies*, (30) 1982.

[77]A. Campbell, P. Converse, W. Miller & D. Stokes, *The American Voter*, (1966), p.535.

[78]Laybourn, *Century*, p.43.

[79]P. Sniderman & P. Tetlock, 'Interrelationship of Political Ideology and Public Opinion', M. Hermann (ed.), *Political Psychology*, (1986), p.89.

[80]*Annual Register*, 1924, p.114.

[81]MG, 17 October 1924.

[82]J. A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, (1992), p.283.

[83]Marriott, *Culture of Labourism*, pp.177-182 shows that this type of political expression was also evident in the east end of London.

[84]MG, 21 November 1933.

[85]*Annual Register*, 1924, p.116.

[86]John Rylands Manchester University Library (J.R.M.U.L.), Letter from L. Vindex to C. P. Scott, 12 November 1924, C. P. Scott Papers, (M2705).

[87]MG, 31 October 1924.

[88]Butler & Stokes, *Political Change*, p.172.

[89]Lawrence & Taylor, 'Introduction', *Party, State and Society*, p.18.

[90]MG, 16 October 1924.

[91]G. D. H. Cole & R. Postgate, *The British Common People 1746-1946*, (1961), p.575.

[92]MG, 16 October 1924.

[93]MG, 22 October 1924.

[94]A. Przeworski & J. Sprague, *Paper Stones. A History of Electoral Socialism*, (1988).

[95]MG, 25 October 1924.

[96]MG, 16, 17, 23, 29 October 1924.

[97]*The Times*, 14 October 1924; MG, 13 October 1924.

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[98] MG, 15, 16 October 1924.

[99] M.R.L.A., Wright Robinson Diary, (date unclear) 1924.

[100] MG, 15, 21, 22, 28 October 1924.

[101] See, for example, MG, 15 October 1924.

[102] MG, 25 October 1924.

[103] In Blackley, the Liberal vote fell by 33.3 per cent. In Withington, it fell by 19.2 per cent.

[104] In Exchange, the Liberal vote fell by 9.2 per cent; in Moss Side, by 15.1 per cent; and in Rusholme, by 14 per cent.

[105] MG, 3 December 1923.

[106] Tanner, 'Class Voting', *Party, State and Society*, p.123, argues that the Labour Party expanded electorally in the 1920s despite a fall in trade union membership. However, other studies have shown that there is a connection between trade union membership and voting Labour, for example, J. Goldthorpe, D. Lockwood, F. Bechhofer & J. Platt, *The Affluent Worker: Political Attitudes and Behaviour*, (Cambridge, 1968), pp.62-72.

[107] See Tables II and III in the appendix.

[108] T. Bentley, B. Jupp & D. Stedman Jones, *Getting to grips with depoliticisation*, (Demos 2000).

[109] MG, 31 October; 3 November 1925.

[110] MG, 3 November 1925. Although the Liberals only lost three official party members, an Independent Councillor defeated in Withington was widely interpreted as a Liberal loss.

[111] MG, 3 November 1925.

[112] MG, 2 November 1926.

[113] Ibid.

[114] See Chapter five on party activism.

[115] *Labour's Northern Voice*, 11 June, 23, 30 July 1926.

[116] Boughton, 'Working Class Politics', p.204, believes the General Strike was a seminal moment in Labour's electoral expansion.

[117] MG, 25 October 1926.

[118] M.R.L.A., Wright Robinson Diary, 8 September 1926.

[119] See Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity*, pp.120-122; See also N.M.L.H., Lundy Case File in the Middleton Papers, (LP/DIS/29/1-146).

[120] Fielding, Ibid., p.122.

[121] MG, 14 January 1928.

[122] MG, 14 May 1929.

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[123] MG, 5 November 1928.

[124] Mowat, *Britain*, pp.346-351.

[125] *The Times*, 29 May 1929.

[126] See appendix for general election results.

[127] Mowat, *Britain*, p.351.

[128] Tanner, 'Class voting', p.120. In fact, the figure was 72, as Labour had already won South Salford in 1923.

[129] Tanner shows, ibid., that Labour gained from council estates in Romford, Sheffield, Penistone, Nuneaton, Harborough, Ormskirk and Carlisle.

[130] MG, 24, 31 May 1929.

[131] MG, 18 May 1929.

[132] MG, 24 May 1929.

[133] Boughton, 'Working Class Politics', p.149.

[134] Ibid., p.150.

[135] Kidd, *Manchester*, p.217.

[136] Mowat, *Britain*, p.343, 351.

[137] J. Turner, 'The Labour Vote and the Franchise after 1918: An Investigation of the English Evidence', P. Denley & D. Hopkin, *History and Computing*, (Manchester, 1987).

[138] Butler & Stokes, *Political Change*.

[139] Ibid., p.100; D. Jarvis, 'Mrs Maggs and Betty. The Conservative Appeal to Women Voters in the 1920s', *Twentieth Century British History*, (5) 1994.

[140] J. Turner, 'Sex, Age and the Labour Vote in the 1920s', P. Denley, S. Fogelvik & S. Harvey (eds.), *History and Computing II*, (Manchester, 1989).

[141] MG, 6 December 1923.

[142] J. Rasmussen, 'Women in Labour: The Flapper Vote and Party System Transformation in Britain', *Electoral Studies*, (3) 1984, pp.52-53; MG, 11 April 1929.

[143] MG, 31 May 1929; *The Times*, 1 June 1929.

[144] *Annual Register* 1929, p.43.

[145] P. Williamson, ' "Safety First": Baldwin, the Conservative Party, and the 1929 General Election', *Historical Journal*, (25) 1982.

[146] Letter from Alan Chorlton to Lord Derby cited in D. H. Close, 'The Realignment of the British Electorate in 1931', *History*, (67) 1982, p.394.

[147] MG, 2 November 1929.

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[148] Mowat, *Britain*, p.358.

[149] Ibid., p.357.

[150] In fact, historians have disputed how much the government could actually have done to combat the economic crisis. While Skidelsky believes that the Cabinet wilfully ignored alternative policies capable of solving the problems, McKibbin has countered that the government did as well as it could in the circumstances: see McKibbin, 'The Economic Policy of the Second Labour Government, 1929-31', *Ideologies*, Chapter 7.

[151] See chapter six.

[152] J. K. Walton, *Lancashire. A Social History, 1558-1939*, (Manchester, 1987), p.341.

[153] MG, 2 November 1930.

[154] Ibid.

[155] MG, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 June 1931.

[156] See previous chapter.

[157] MG, 18, 19, 22 June 1931.

[158] NEC Minutes, 23 June 1931.

[159] MG, 23 June 1931.

[160] B. Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s*, (Cambridge, 1977), p.15.

[161] MG, 27 October 1931.

[162] MG, 28 October 1931.

[163] A. Thorpe, *The British General Election of 1931*, (Oxford, 1991), p.256.

[164] MG, 3 November 1931.

Conclusion

Although, in the immediate aftermath of the 1931 election, Labour appeared to have been smashed, the party's poor return of seats obscured the fact that it had established a strong core of support. Moreover, within twelve months it had recaptured some of the votes it had lost. At the 1932 municipal elections, Labour won 458 seats across the country, over fifty per cent of the total. In Manchester, where the party had only elected seven councillors in 1931, it returned sixteen members, while in nearby Salford, a swing of 14 per cent in Labour's favour helped the party elect eight councillors compared to just one the year before.[1] Significantly, these gains were made at a time when the Liberals had virtually ceased to exist. With their organisation on the verge of collapse, in November 1931 the Manchester Liberal party entered into an electoral pact with the Conservatives at the municipal level. As Cook and Stevenson note, 'it was symbolic of the new era of two-party politics that Liberalism should finally...have surrendered its independence in the spiritual home of radicalism and Free Trade'.[2] Further Labour progress in municipal elections in 1933, when the party made impressive gains across the country - 444 of its 880 candidates being returned - confirmed that Labour had irrevocably replaced the Liberals as the main anti-Conservative force. Crowning evidence of this came in 1934, when the party took control of the flagship London County Council for the first time in its history.[3] Although, in Manchester, the party was still second to the Conservatives, it had also increased its representation on the council and was only denied control because the Tories had more (unelected) aldermen. Labour thus approached the 1935 general election in confident mood, aiming to recover all the seats it had lost four years earlier.

In the event, however, the party failed to regain the Hulme seat and only recaptured those constituencies where it had been strong before the First World War: Ardwick, Clayton, Gorton and Platting. Even then, its majorities were lower than in 1929. In divisions where Labour had only emerged as a significant force by the late twenties - Hulme, Blackley, Moss Side, Rusholme and Withington - the party recovered some votes but remained well short of the totals achieved in 1929; in Exchange, the Labour poll was actually down on the 1931 score. Thus, despite the headway that had been made after 1918, on the eve of the Second World War Labour remained primarily a party of the skilled, trade unionised, working class. In order to establish what had gone wrong, it is necessary to revisit Labour's origins and examine how the party had evolved in the preceding period.

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As noted at the beginning of this work, Labour was formed in 1900 as a federation of trade unions and socialist societies with the express purpose of increasing labour representation in parliament. As such, much of its early progress was trade union progress and before 1914 most of its electoral gains were made in areas containing a large proportion of unionised workers. It should be stressed that a high density of unionised workers did not guarantee Labour's rise and Tanner has shown that before 1918 the party was unable to advance in certain centres of heavy industry, notably in Cardiff, Newport and South Shields.[4] Nevertheless, it remains true that Labour was better placed to progress in industrial areas than in rural, middle-class or slum districts. Indeed, in such places, before 1914 the party was rarely involved in electoral politics at all. This pattern of Labour development was reflected in Manchester, where support for the party was heavily concentrated in the east and north-east of the city - areas dominated by skilled, organised workers. Here, party organisation was at its strongest, predominantly based on local trade unions and ILP branches. In contrast, in Manchester's slum districts and middle-class suburbs, where trade unionism was much weaker or even non-existent, Labour candidates were extremely rare and party machinery largely undeveloped.

Following the First World War, Labour's leaders resolved to instigate a fundamental reorganisation of the party. Developments since 1914 had encouraged them to press ahead with such a reconstruction, as the split in the Liberal party and the promised expansion of the franchise seemingly offered Labour an unprecedented opportunity for electoral advance. The enlargement of the electorate was seen as particularly important and convinced the leadership that if Labour was to take advantage of the changed circumstances it had to reconstruct its federal organisation to one based on the electorate: in other words, it had to adopt a 'mass' party structure. Approved by the party conference in 1918, Arthur Henderson's plan involved the adoption of a comprehensive political programme and the construction of a national network of local parties admitting members on an individual basis. In fact, the party structure that Labour eventually adopted was not exactly in line with the description of 'mass parties' articulated by political scientists like Duverger and Kirchheimer.[5] For one thing, Labour did not intend to base its entire membership on individually enrolled members. Although individual sections were to be formed, they would operate alongside the existing affiliated membership, ensuring that the trade unions remained an integral part of the organisation. Nonetheless, Labour aimed to expand beyond its union base. Whereas the classical 'mass parties' were said to be rooted in a particular segment of society - usually the working class - Labour desired to forge a broad social coalition: it sought to become a mass 'national' party.[6] As the leadership declared, the party could 'only run the country if our men are drawn from ranks as wide as the new constitution, that is, from all classes and occupations'.[7] In effect, as early as 1918 Labour was pursuing something akin to a 'catch-all' electoral strategy.[8]

Work on the new organisation in Manchester got underway fairly quickly, and by 1920 every constituency in the city boasted a divisional Labour party. Inevitably, these were initially strongest in Ardwick, Clayton, Gorton and Platting, areas where the party had already established some form of organisation before 1914. Unsurprisingly, these were also the areas where Labour enjoyed its earliest electoral success; by 1922, it had won all four parliamentary seats and almost all the municipal wards contained therein. It is difficult to assess the extent to which organisational strength was responsible for these victories. In their study of West Yorkshire politics between 1918 and 1939, Keith Laybourn and Jack Reynolds concluded that 'organisation was never a factor in [Labour's] political success. Class politics prevailed whatever the state of local party organisation. It just happened that in West Yorkshire the organisation was sound and the working-class vote for Labour was solid'.[9]

Organisation was also apparently of little importance to Labour's expansion in the industrialised districts of Manchester. Significantly, in Clayton and Gorton, until the mid-1920s party machinery remained pretty basic, barely differing from the structure that existed before 1914. In each case, a single trade union dominated the divisional party, which was primarily, even exclusively, concerned with winning elections. Consequently, little effort was devoted to party activity outside these times. The fact that they were nevertheless Labour heartlands from an early stage supports the view that organised grass roots politics had little to do with electoral success in these districts. Instead, the high level of trade unionism in these areas appears to have been the main reason for popular allegiance to Labour. Ardwick and Platting, on the other hand, while also closely connected to a local union, developed individual memberships and women's' sections from an early stage and exhibited a different, more active style of organisation. They were heavily involved in their local communities, running advice bureaux, holding demonstrations, even producing party newspapers. Nevertheless, it is possible that the strength and vibrance of Labour organisation in those divisions, as in West Yorkshire, was merely coincidental with electoral success. As noted, trade unionism was also strong in Ardwick and Platting and local union branches were an integral part of the divisional organisation. Moreover, it seems likely that trade unionists constituted most of the individual membership in these parties. Labour was thus closely identified with the trade unionised working class, and evidence suggests that before 1914 the party gained support on that basis.[10] That support continued after 1918 and it is conceivable that class allegiance would have guaranteed Labour's electoral growth in these divisions regardless of organisational developments.

However, if class politics and the trade union connection were crucial to Labour's advance in industrial Manchester, the same cannot be said about progress in divisions dominated by non-unionised working-class electors. Indeed, the party's image as a trade union body may have hindered its appeal in such areas, as it identified Labour as an organisation devoted to the interests of skilled workers. Far from being the inevitable product of 'class politics', the expansion of the Labour vote in areas like Hulme owed much to organisational developments in the 1920s. The gradual increase of Labour's vote in that division took considerable time: the party only started to make headway in Hulme's local elections in the mid-twenties and failed to win the parliamentary seat until 1929. Tellingly, its electoral advance coincided with the involvement of the ASW in Hulme DLP, instigating a transformation of Labour machinery in the area. Subsequent electoral success was a direct result of organisational improvement. As the Hulme DLP increased its membership, an active core emerged which set about publicising Labour's policies on housing and unemployment, carried out welfare work, organised demonstrations, canvassed the wards and generally made Labour a visible force in the district. Labour's political appeal could not be divorced from its identity as a working-class party and the electoral support it received owed much to the strength of that working-class appeal. However, class allegiance was not 'instinctive', it had to be nurtured. Thus, class politics would not necessarily have prevailed in Hulme - organisation was crucial to political success in these circumstances, though this invariably required trade union involvement.[11]

This is evident from what was happening elsewhere in Manchester. In Exchange, for instance, a division containing many slum-dwellers similar to those found in Hulme, Labour's political progress was much slower. Containing a large plural business vote, Exchange was unpromising electoral territory and therefore unattractive to potential union backers. Lacking a wealthy trade union to kick-start the organisation, party machinery took time to construct and was weak for most of the 1920s. Correspondingly, Labour's electoral record was poor. Only in 1929, by which time a reasonable apparatus had been constructed in all working-class areas, did Labour make some progress at the polls. Similarly, it was only after the MBLP began to supply money and personnel to Moss Side DLP that Labour made progress in that area. Like Exchange, the social composition of Moss Side meant there were few local trade union branches on which Labour could call for support. Partly as a result, the DLP was among the weakest in the city. However, following the direct intervention of the Manchester Borough Labour party, in the late 1920s, party organisation was improved and in 1928 Moss Side DLP managed to contest local elections throughout the constituency for the first time. Remarkably, the following year the party returned representatives in all three wards. This success indicates that while the trade union connection helped Labour to establish its organisation and attract votes, it was not a prerequisite to electoral success. At times, the efforts of a few active members could also achieve impressive results. By their propagandising, Christmas parties, welfare activities and constant campaigning, these individuals made Labour an active and visible force in local neighbourhoods and contributed to the party's early expansion - especially in those areas where Labour had been absent before 1914.[12] That said, it is important not to overstate the strength and influence of party organisation, or to exaggerate Labour's electoral progress in these areas. While the party appeared to have made an electoral breakthrough in 1929, notably in local contests, its victories were often won in the context of very low turnouts. At general elections before 1939, Labour never came close to winning these seats. Likewise, though party organisation had been vastly improved since 1918, outside the most industrial divisions it remained inherently weak. Only in Hulme, where a trade union paid for a full-time organiser, was a significant individual membership permanently established. Nevertheless, even in that constituency, it took the Second World War to enable Labour to recover its 1929 position.

The speed at which voters in these areas deserted the party after 1929 illustrated the fragile progress that Labour had made. Despite the best intentions of many activists, both locally and nationally, fundamentally the party had been unable to extend far beyond its trade unionised core. Tentative signs that the party had attracted support from a small section of middle-class voters were swept aside by the disastrous record of the 1929-31 administration. Admittedly, Labour had made better progress among the non-unionised working class, emerging as the dominant party in slum wards by the late 1920s. Yet, as was the case in the East End of London, its connection with this group was fragile and vulnerable to the appeal of rival parties.[13] Significantly, when the party suffered its sudden downturn in support in 1930/31, slum seats were among the first to go.

Consequently, Labour support was concentrated in industrial constituencies like Ardwick, Clayton, Gorton and Platting. Even in semi-industrial Blackley, it was significant that support for Labour was strongest in the Moston area, where unionised workers were most numerous. Party membership was also higher in Moston than in neighbouring Blackley and Crumpsall.[14]

Labour had striven to become a mass national party after 1918 but by the 1930s it was clear that its efforts had been frustrated. What is important to stress here is that the failure was not the result of trade union opposition or down to a lack of ambition on the part of the leadership. Even at the local level, party officials were keen to try and expand Labour's organisation and appeal. Moreover, as chapter six showed and as other local studies have noted, many of Labour's most active and politically sophisticated members were themselves trade unionists.[15] It is instructive to note that, by 1930, the divisional parties which most closely resembled the model enshrined in the 1918 constitution were Ardwick, Platting, Clayton and Gorton, where trade unions and trade unionists were heavily involved in Labour organisation. Local parties in industrial areas worked hard to establish large individual memberships and were keen to form separate women's sections. Moreover, by the end of the decade, they were engaged in a variety of activities beyond routine political work, demonstrating that the unions were not a conservative force preventing local parties from flourishing. While it is true that there were some party members who saw Labour as a machine existing for the sole purpose of electing Labour representatives to public bodies, most envisaged the party as having a broader role to play. This attitude was not peculiar to Manchester; as we have seen, it was evident in local parties throughout the country and was also espoused by Labour's national leadership.[16]

This desire to broaden the party's appeal stemmed from a shared vision of socialism - described here as Labour Socialism - which was far more prevalent than is often suggested. While Labour Socialism was more ethical and constitutional than the Marxist variety, it nevertheless looked to the creation of a new social order that would evolve out of capitalism.[17] However, while economic change was seen as an important part of that gradual process, Labour Socialists also believed that individual change had to occur; socialism was a moral, as much as a material, cause. In order to effect change in individual outlook, Labour activists put great effort into educating the community and much of the party's work was concentrated in this direction. In addition, following in the tradition of nineteenth century socialists, some activists urged Labour to create an 'alternative culture' to the dominant commercially based leisure pursuits offered under capitalism.[18] As a result, there were moves to involve local parties in sporting activities, discussion groups, art circles, dances, drama societies, education classes and social events.

Yet, despite the enormous effort put into these activities it seems that relatively few people, indeed few party members, showed much desire to get involved. This was because many were already engaged in activities organised outside the party. As noted in chapter five, like most British cities Manchester offered a wide range of commercial leisure pursuits. But, while this undoubtedly hindered Labour's attempts to become a focal point in the social lives of its members, it does not fully account for the party's failure to create SPD-style 'communities of solidarity'. To a large extent, the problem lay with the type of activities that the party arranged. Organised by activists suspicious of the existing capitalist culture, they often represented an attempt to 'improve' the working class - hence the art circles, educational classes and field trips. Unfortunately, these pursuits did not appeal to the majority of people who preferred the pub, the cinema and the dog track, and were seemingly quite removed from Labour activists. The latter group was fairly untypical of wider society, of whose interests and leisure pursuits they were often quite critical. As a result, they could easily become marginalised from the outside world, sometimes voluntarily so, as the example of Burnage Garden Village served to illustrate. Once again, Manchester was not unique in this regard; garden suburbs in places like Welwyn and Hampstead bore strikingly similar characteristics to Burnage, while studies of party activists in other areas reveal the same sense of moral superiority.[19]

In fact, in a general sense, the nature, composition and outlook of the Labour party in the twenties had a deep and lasting impact on the party's culture.[20] For instance, echoing the problems in Burnage, by the end of the 1930s the NEC drew attention to the constitutional infringements of Manchester party officials living in one ward and working for Labour in another. As one divisional secretary remarked, few local Labour councillors, 'especially in Manchester, represent the wards in which they are living'. Explaining why this was so, he stated that 'Life would not be endurable for them if they did. They are compelled to live in other parts of the city so as to escape the troubles and importunities of their constituents'.[21] Clearly, the same love-hate relationship with the working class that characterised Labour activists in the 1920s continued into the thirties and beyond.

Similarly, membership figures in Manchester for the 1930s show that Labour continued to derive greatest strength in the most industrial, unionised areas of the city.[22] In contrast, the party remained weak in the middle-class districts; in 1938, one local activist appealed for Labour to 'bring the clerk, the administrative worker and the professional classes into active service', suggesting that they were not yet involved in substantial numbers.[23] Similarly, the same organisational deficiencies that thwarted the party in the 1920s remained a bone of contention in later years.[24] Shortly before the Second World War, Arthur O'Donnell, a long-time local Labour activist and well-known trade union official, published *Failure and Salvation of the Labour Party*[25], a pamphlet attacking the inefficiency of party machinery in the city. Claiming that Labour was 'losing, rather than gaining, ground in the regard of the people who should be its strongest supporters', O'Donnell assessed the party's record during the 1930s. Referring to the various membership campaigns which had been launched in a bid to offset the financial losses incurred after the Trade Disputes Act, he claimed that these had 'produced only small and transient gains. Loyalty and solidarity have not been strengthened. There is more division, more doubt, more irresolution, more apathy in the Labour Party today than in the last twenty years. In membership, in solidarity, in finance, in its hold upon the regard of the masses the Labour Party is weak today and growing weaker'.[26] However, O'Donnell did not see this decline as being the result of policy deficiencies: 'There is nothing wrong with the policy of the party so far as its effective "appeal" to the people is concerned...What is wrong with the party is its machinery, its local administration and its methods, and it is here that there is need for investigation and revision'.[27]

While these remarks suggest that party organisation was less than perfect in Manchester, they also indicate that the general political outlook of activists in the 1920s persisted into later years. It has been suggested that the trauma of 1931 caused Labour to move to the left, and in Manchester there were some signs of increased militancy. Local rallies in the next few years drove home the need for socialism and stressed the socialist policy of the party. At party conferences in these years, delegates from Manchester were at the forefront of clashes with the leadership, warning against any future betrayals and pressing for greater local party power. The Manchester Borough party was also a strong campaigner, against the wishes of the national leadership, for united action against fascism. In 1937, several members, including Harry Frankland, were arrested for illegal fundraising in support of Spanish Republicans, and in 1939 the MBLP was reorganised by the national party on account of its campaign for Socialist Unity with Communist and ILP groups.[28] Yet, in general, the MBLP and its divisional branches remained committed to the Labour Socialist ideology so strongly associated with MacDonald. Despite their calls for a United Front, party members retained their faith in the parliamentary system. Furthermore, their vision of socialism still emphasised the need for moral uplift as much as economic and political transformation. Thus, activists continued to investigate new ways of 'educating' the public. Wright Robinson worked particularly hard in this regard and was at the forefront of moves to organise discussion groups and community organisations. Although these were not set up in Labour's name, it is clear that he saw them as part of a broad 'civilising mission' that complimented his political work.[29] Indeed, Robinson even viewed the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as a source of social improvement, describing it in 1949 as 'the real epitome of what is best in our way of life, in our thoughts, the arts, science, politics and culture. It embodies more of the elements out of which a modern moral imperative can emerge than any other social institution'.[30] His was not a lone voice: the BBC was widely praised by Labour members for its educating role, while more generally, the pronouncements of senior party officials in the 1940s and 1950s continued to stress the need for moral transformation. Herbert Morrison, for instance, often cited as the embodiment of pragmatic Labourism, told party members in 1951 that their task was to make Labour 'not only a vote-winning machine, but something great and glorious that stands for a new way of life. Socialism cannot live and prosper by the winning of elections alone. For one of our purposes is to make men and women better than they are, and to promote "sweetness and light"'.[31] However, as in earlier times, the vast majority of people had little desire to be made 'better'. Much to the chagrin of Labour activists, the 'affluent society' of the 1950s appeared to embrace capitalist culture more passionately than ever. Washing-machines, coffee bars, the cinema and commercial television became enormously popular, and for Labour, represented a serious threat to socialist values. Commercial TV was a particular cause for concern, viewed by many in the party as a source of moral degradation - the new opium of the people.[32] The need for an alternative to the dominant culture of commercial capitalism had never seemed more urgent or necessary.

Even among Labour members, however, the desire to create an alternative culture was fairly limited. Although individual membership surpassed the million mark during the 1950s, several surveys of local parties at the time revealed that the party's active core remained very small. Furthermore, of those who were active, few were much interested in investigating new ways of living and most exhibited little interest in politics.[33] A study by the Manchester Fabian Society into party activity in nine of Manchester's 36 wards in 1952 found that attendance at ordinary monthly meetings (of ward committees) varied between five and 35 people, averaging just 18, despite the fact that each ward had several hundred subscribing members.[34] Moreover, the report concluded that ward parties were 'social rather than political organisations, particularly in districts where the party is assured of a majority. Between elections, people attend meetings rather as they would go to a club, to meet their friends and discuss the business of running a club. Their interest turns to politics only when this is forced upon them by local conditions or by a group of more enthusiastic members'.[35]

While the distracting effects of post-war affluence are often held responsible for creating such a disappointing state of affairs, this study of Labour politics indicates that similar attitudes existed in the less opulent 1920s. Although some in the party tried hard to expand Labour's role in that period, the evidence suggests that even in the case of party members relatively few were motivated to become actively involved. Among the wider population, especially those outside the unionised working class, there was even less interest. Few electors could be persuaded to join the party, still less to devote time and energy to it. As a result, despite the earnest efforts of some to broaden its electoral base, Labour's long association with the trade union movement, the composition of its membership and its basic aim to reduce inequalities created by capitalism, ultimately meant that it remained a predominantly proletarian party. Labour thus gained or lost support on the strength of its identity as a working-class party pledged to improve the material conditions of ordinary working people. However, if that was how electors understood the party, it was not necessarily an accurate reflection of what Labour really stood for. As this account has argued, a large proportion of Labour's membership - at least those that made up the party's active ranks - shared a broad vision of socialism rooted in moral, as well as material, change. Rather than a vehicle for achieving piecemeal reform within a capitalist system, they hoped that Labour would eventually transform Britain into a classless socialist society. Ultimately, however, they were confronted with an unchanging problem: namely, how to relate a vision of a 'better world' based on socialist values to a mass electorate more preoccupied with the pleasures of popular culture and the difficulties of everyday life. Thus, while large numbers of voters could identify with the party in class terms and therefore support it at elections, that marked the limit of their participation. Relatively few embraced the wider socialist vision of Labour activists, and still fewer chose to join their ranks.

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[1] J. Stevenson & C. Cook, *Britain in the Depression. Society and Politics, 1929-39*, (1994), p.133, 314.

[2] Ibid., p.138.

[3] Ibid., pp.134-135.

[4] Tanner, *Political Change*, p.398.

[5] Duverger, *Political*, pp.63-70; Kirchheimer, 'Transformation of Party Systems', pp.182-184.

[6] *Fabian News*, (29) 1918, p.6.

[7] Ibid.

[8] This is at odds with the timescale of party evolution presented by Kirchheimer, 'Transformation', pp.184-188.

[9] J. Reynolds & K. Laybourn, *Labour Heartland: A History of the Labour Party in West Yorkshire during the Interwar Years, 1918-39*, (Bradford, 1987), p.50.

[10] Tanner, *Political Change*, p.144-145.

[11] As noted in chapter eight, various political scientists have emphasised the opinion-forming role of party activists.

[12] Seyd & Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots*, p.186, 200, have pointed out the important role that Labour activists can play in garnering electoral support for the party.

[13] Marriott, *Culture of Labourism*, p.183. Davies, *Liverpool Labour*, also highlights the party's weakness among unskilled workers - especially dockers.

[14] See Table 9A in the appendix.

[15] See, for example, Bernard Barker's thesis on Labour in the West Riding.

[16] See, for example, Barker, 'Politics of Propaganda', pp.113-114; Boughton, 'Working Class Politics in Birmingham and Sheffield', pp.256-264.

[17] See Macintyre, *Proletarian Science*, Chapter Two, for the best description of Labour Socialism.

[18] Waters, *British Socialists*, p.187.

[19] For Welwyn, see Steele, *Richard Wallhead*, pp.21-29; for Hampstead, see D. Macintyre, *Mandelson and the making of New Labour*, (2000), pp.1-16. Boughton, 'Working Class Politics', pp.255-258, has a good example of activists' attitudes in Birmingham.

[20] See, for example, S. Fielding, P. Thompson & N. Tiratsoo, *England Arise! The Labour Party and popular politics in 1940s Britain*, (Manchester, 1995); N. Tiratsoo, *Reconstruction, Affluence and Labour Politics: Coventry, 1945-60*, (1990).

[21] MG 10 March 1939.

[22] See appendix for Table 14A.

[23] O'Donnell, *Failure*, pp.4-15; 14; 15.

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[24] MBLP *AR*, 1936-37, highlighted the electoral problems resulting from deficiencies in local ward organisation and complained that only a third of delegates were attending meetings of the Borough party.

[25] O'Donnell, *Failure.*

[26] Ibid., p.1

[27] Ibid.

[28] *Manchester City News*, 9 July 1937; J. Jupp, *The Radical Left in Britain, 1931-41*, (1982), p.229n.

[29] M.R.L.A., Wright Robinson Papers. See papers relating to Burnage Discussion Group and Burnage Community Association.

[30] Robinson quoted in Fielding, Thompson & Tiratsoo, *England Arise!*, (Manchester, 1995), pp.158-159.

[31] Morrison, quoted in S. Fielding, 'Labourism in the 1940s', *Twentieth Century British History*, (3) 1992, p.138.

[32] L. Black, '"Still at the Penny-Farthing Stage in a Jet-Propelled era": Branch Life in 1950s Socialism', *Labour History Review*, (65.2) 2000.

[33] Cf. Fielding, 'Activists Against Affluence', pp.249-257.

[34] 'Put Policy on the Agenda', *Fabian Journal*, February 1952, quoted in R. McKenzie, *British Political Parties*, p.547.

[35] Ibid., p.548.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Table 1A – Census data showing overcrowding, house sharing and population change in Manchester
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Appendix 3

Manchester Labour Who's Who

Appendix 4

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Appendix 1

Table 1A. Census data showing overcrowding, house sharing and population change in Manchester.

Ward	No. of Rooms per Person (1921)	No. of Families per Dwelling (1921)	Population 1921	Population 1931
Withington	1.52	1.04	15,085	44,600
Didsbury	1.49	1.03	15,081	25,581
Chorlton	1.45	1.03	30,118	42,244
Rusholme	1.32	1.04	19,673	21,736
Crumpsall	1.32	1.03	14,601	18,643
Moss Side West	1.31	1.10	21,809	20,513
Longsight	1.29	1.06	20,381	22,269
Exchange	1.21	1.00	620	480
Moss Side East	1.21	1.15	21,621	20,518
Levenshulme	1.21	1.04	20,774	19,869
Cheetham	1.19	1.05	24,967	23,374
St. Ann's	1.19	1.04	259	235
Oxford	1.16	1.08	1678	1408
St. Luke's	1.12	1.12	28,634	27,806
Blackley	1.08	1.02	18,428	20,619
Moston	1.06	1.02	19,372	23,118
All Saints	1.03	1.17	25,265	23,983
Gorton South	1.02	1.02	23,732	27,610
Harpurhey	0.98	1.04	24,459	21,911
Gorton North	0.95	1.03	25,007	22,511
Newton Heath	0.95	1.01	20,270	20,881
Ardwick	0.93	1.06	22,299	25,891
Medlock Street	0.93	1.08	32,520	28,251
Bradford	0.90	1.06	26,316	25,688
St. George's	0.90	1.07	30,505	26,768
Openshaw	0.89	1.04	24,760	23,222
St. Mark's	0.89	1.05	28,053	24,507
Beswick	0.87	1.03	31,398	28,541
Collegiate	0.87	1.14	20,901	18,790
Collyhurst	0.87	1.03	25,379	23,872
St. John's	0.86	1.32	6,286	5,108
Miles Platting	0.85	1.02	26,468	24,564
St. Clement's	0.84	1.03	6,771	6,301
St. Michael's	0.83	1.08	20,488	19,742
New Cross	0.80	1.04	29,464	28,284

Table 2A. Census data showing overcrowding, house sharing, and population in Salford.

Ward	No. of Rooms Per Person (1921)	No. of Families Per Dwelling (1921)	Population (1921)
Kersal	1.37	1.04	18,677
Hope	1.20	1.04	22,566
Weaste	1.10	1.05	13,842
Seedley	1.08	1.05	23,673
Albert Park	1.06	1.05	16,620
Grosvenor	0.98	1.08	14,532
St. Paul's	0.87	1.05	12,826
Charlestown	0.86	1.04	16,555
Regent	0.86	1.06	12,231
St. Thomas's	0.85	1.06	10,956
Trafford	0.85	1.07	11,745
Crescent	0.83	1.12	12,311
Ordsall	0.81	1.06	15,175
St. Matthias's	0.80	1.06	12,685
Islington	0.77	1.23	10,261
Trinity	0.76	1.20	9,390

Source: Census 1921. Due to boundary changes in 1921, it is difficult to produce figures illustrating population change for the period 1921-31, as several wards were scrapped, boundaries altered, and new wards formed.

Table 3A. Distribution of Manchester wards within parliamentary divisions pre-1918.

NORTH	NORTH-WEST	NORTH-EAST	EAST	SOUTH	SOUTH-WEST
Miles Platting	Cheetham	Miles Platting	All Saints'	All Saints'	Medlock St
Harpurhey	Collegiate	New Cross	Ardwick	Longsight	St.George's
Newton Heath	Exchange	Newton Heath	Bradford	Moss Side East	
St. Michael's	Oxford		St. Luke's	Moss Side West	
	St. Ann's			Rusholme	
	St. Clement's			St. Luke's	
	St. John's				
	St. James's				

STRETFORD	PRESTWICH	GORTON
Chorlton-cum-Hardy	Blackley & Moston	Gorton North
Didsbury	Crumpsall	Gorton South
Withington		Openshaw
Levenshulme North		St. Mark's
Levenshulme South		

Table 4A. Distribution of Manchester wards within parliamentary divisions after 1918.

ARDWICK	BLACKLEY	CLAYTON	EXCHANGE	GORTON
Ardwick	Blackley	Beswick	Cheetham	Gorton North
New Cross	Crumpsall	Bradford	Collegiate	Gorton South
St. Mark's	Moston	Newton Heath	Exchange	Openshaw
			Oxford	
			St. Ann's	
			St. Clement's	
			St. John's	
			St. Michael's	

HULME	MOSS SIDE	PLATTING	RUSHOLME	WITHINGTON
Medlock Street	All Saints	Collyhurst	Levenshulme	Chorlton-cum-Hardy
Moss Side West	Moss Side East	Harpurhey	Longsight	Didsbury
St. George's	St. Luke's	Miles Platting	Rusholme	Withington
		St. Michael's		

*Note: St. Michael's ward overlaps across the Exchange-Platting constituency boundary. For details of boundary changes, see overleaf.

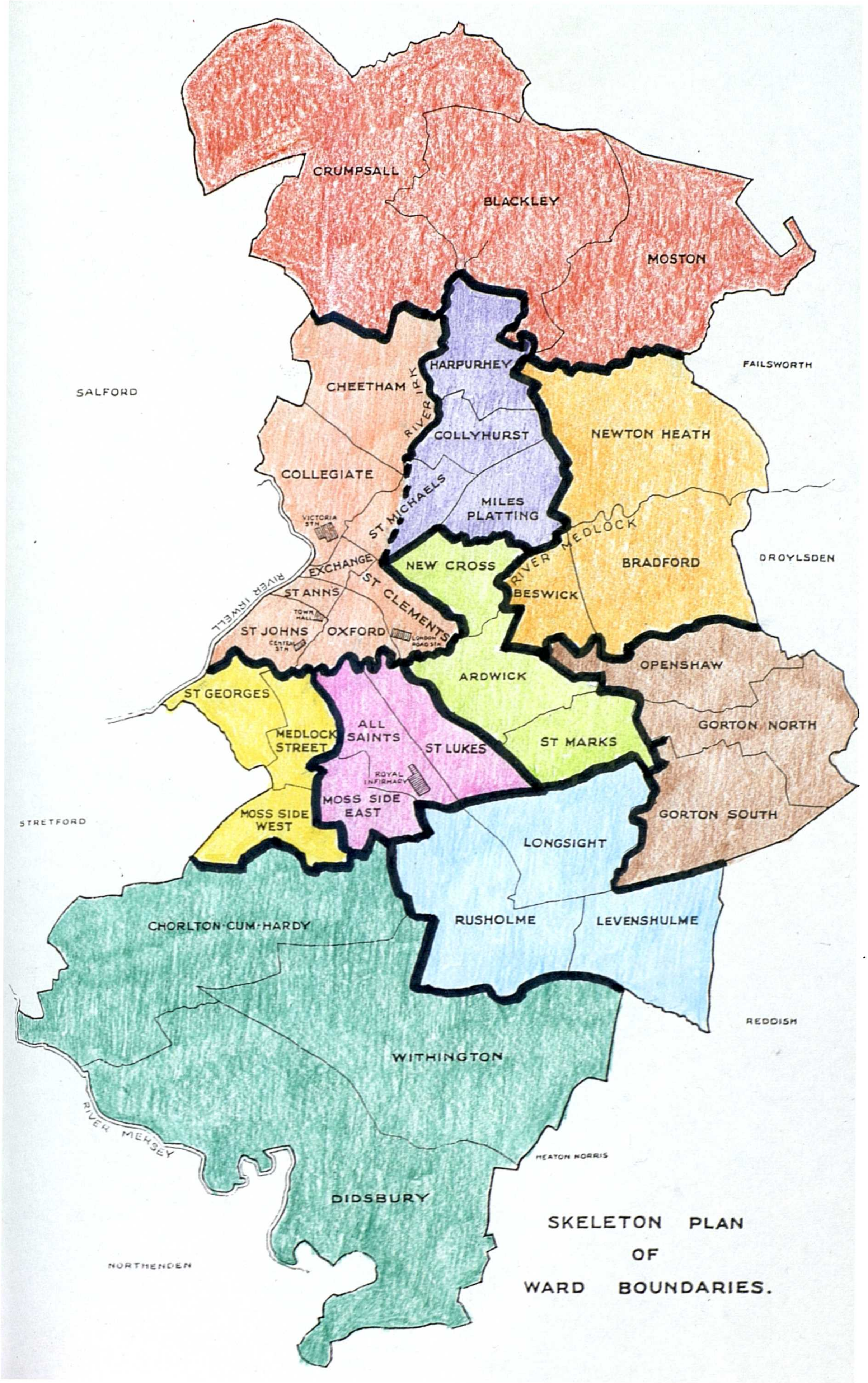
Main municipal ward boundary changes between 1914 and 1918:

- Bradford ward was divided into Bradford and Beswick wards.
- Levenshulme North and Levenshulme South were unified.
- Blackley & Moston ward was split in two.
- Harpurhey was divided into Harpurhey and Collyhurst wards.
- St. James's ward was subsumed into St. John's and Oxford wards.

Key to colour codes on Map 1 of Manchester parliamentary constituencies and municipal wards

Ardwick	🟩
Blackley	🟥
Clayton	🟧
Exchange	🟧
Gorton	🟫
Hulme	🟨
Moss Side	🟪
Platting	🟪
Rusholme	🟦
Withington	🟩

Map 1. Manchester parliamentary constituencies and municipal wards after 1918.

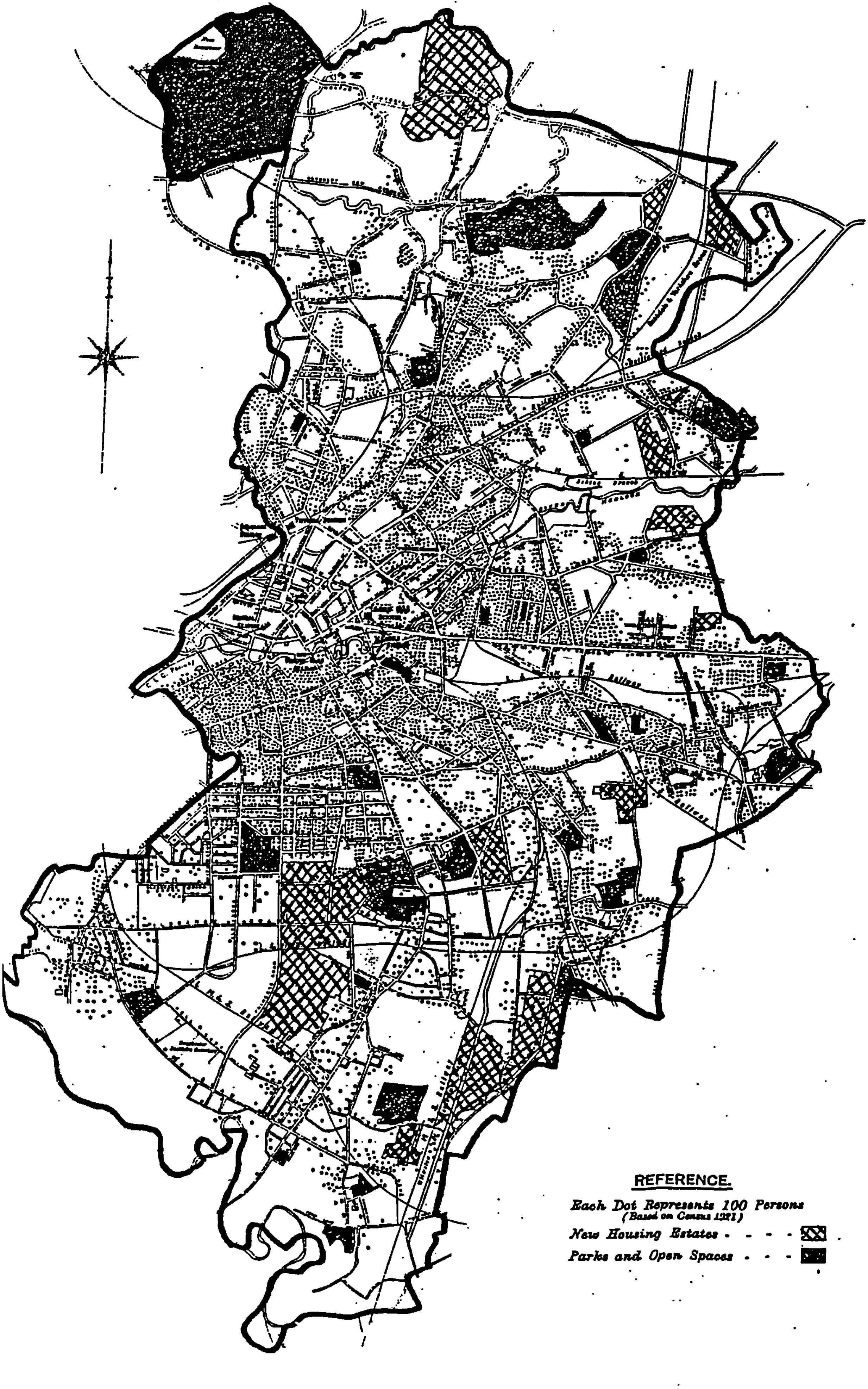


CRUMPSALL
BLACKLEY
MOSTON
FAILSWORTH
SALFORD
HARPURHEY
CHEETHAM
RIVER IRK
COLLYHURST
NEWTON HEATH
COLLEGIATE
ST MICHAELS
MILES PLATTING
VICTORIA STN
RIVER MEDLOCK
EXCHANGE
NEW CROSS
BRADFORD
DROYLSDEN
RIVER IRWELL
ST ANNS
ST CLEMENTS
BESWICK
TOWN HALL
ST JOHNS
OXFORD
LONDON ROAD STN
CENTRAL STN
OPENSHAW
ARDWICK
ST GEORGES
MEDLOCK STREET
ALL SAINTS
ST LUKES
ST MARKS
GORTON NORTH
ROYAL INFIRMARY
MOSS SIDE EAST
MOSS SIDE WEST
STRETFORD
GORTON SOUTH
LONGSIGHT
CHORLTON-CUM-HARDY
RUSHOLME
LEVENSHULME
REDDISH
WITHINGTON
RIVER MERSEY
HEATON NORRIS
DIDSBURY
NORTHENDEN
SKELETON PLAN OF WARD BOUNDARIES.

CITY OF MANCHESTER.

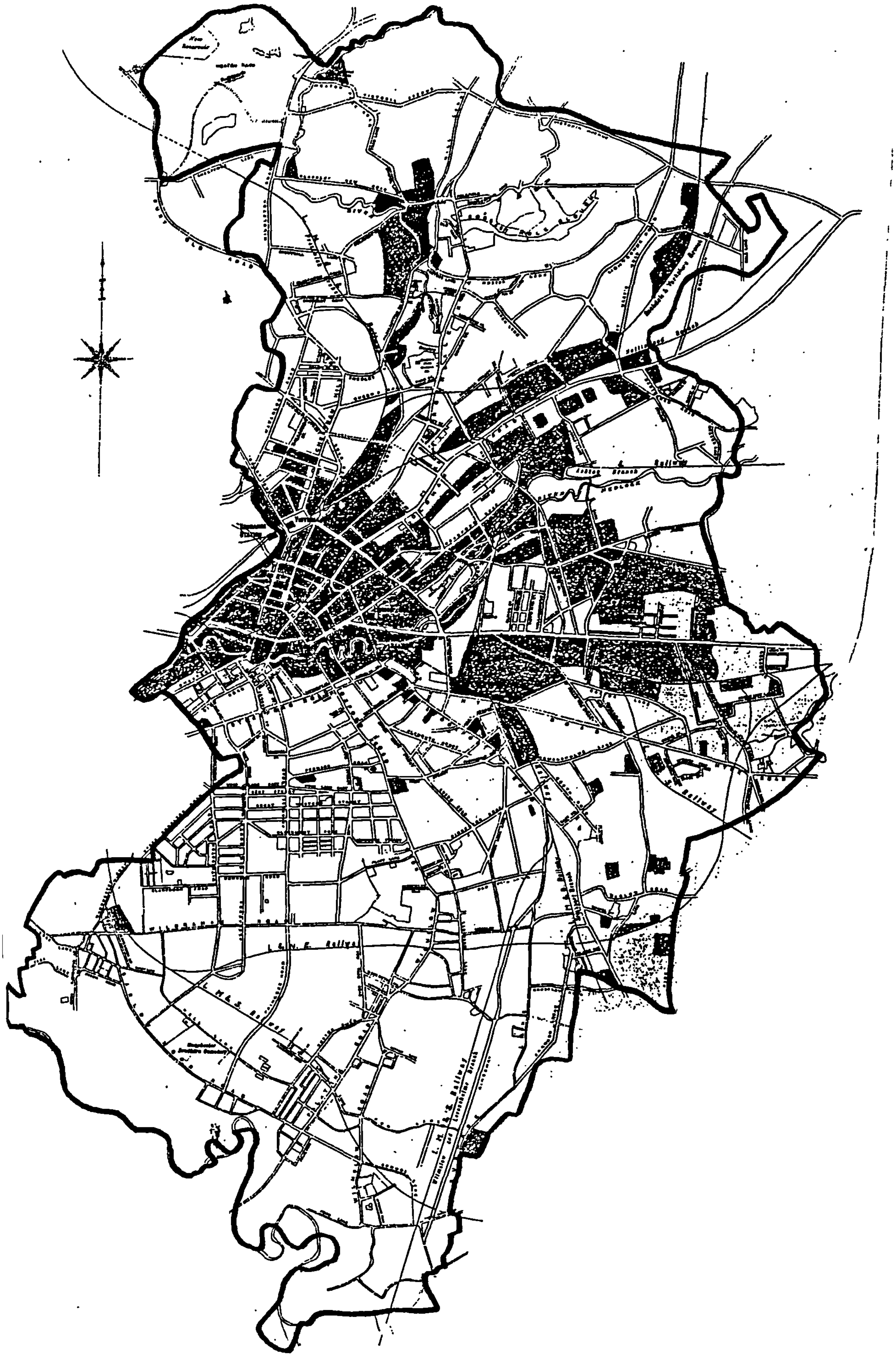
DENSITY OF POPULATION.

APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF RESIDENTS.

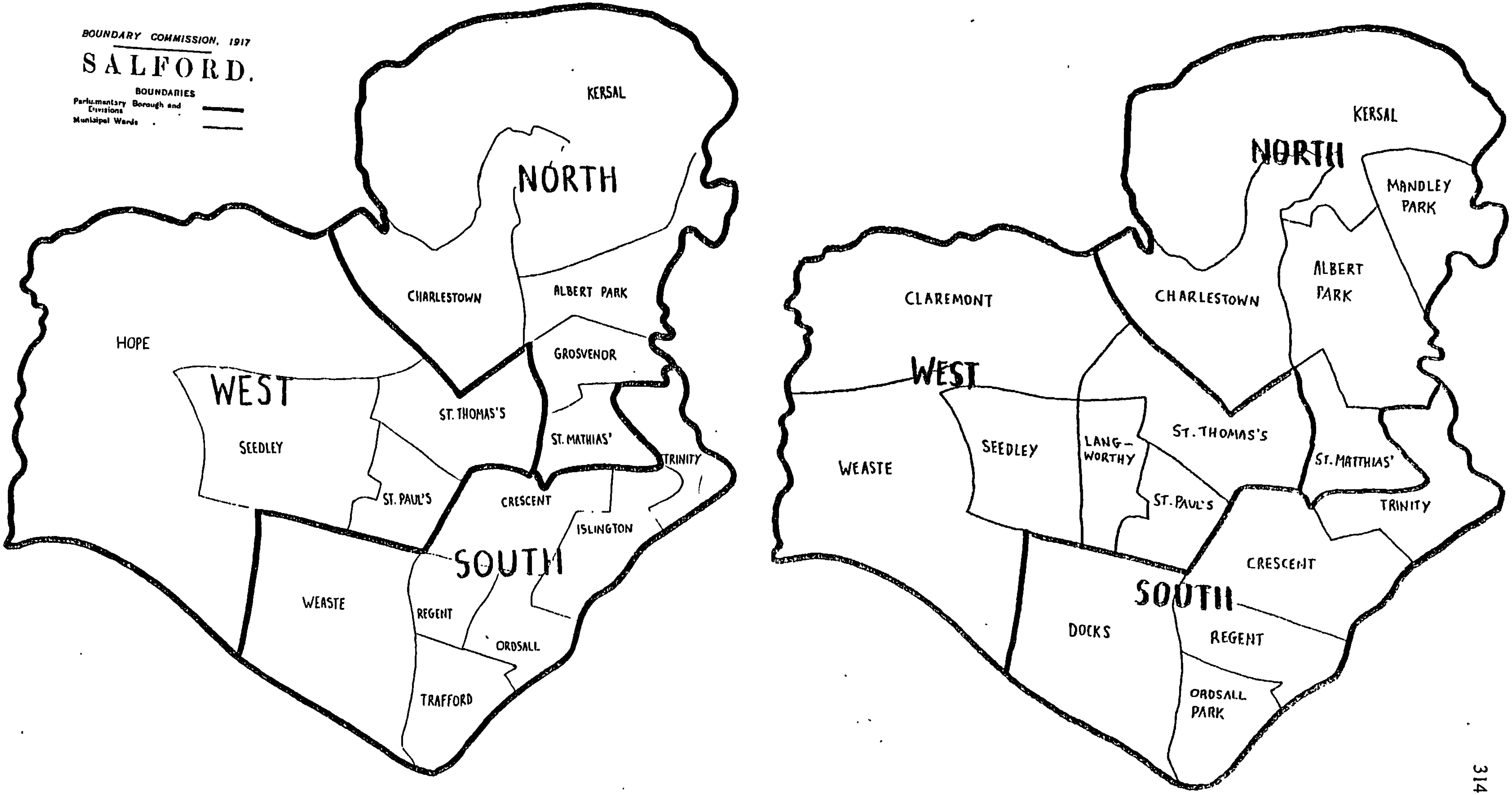

REFERENCE.
Each Dot Represents 100 Persons
(Based on Census 1921)
New Housing Estates - - - - ▨
Parks and Open Spaces - - - ■

CITY OF MANCHESTER.

APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL PREMISES.



Map 4. Salford municipal and parliamentary boundaries, c.1917 and c.1921

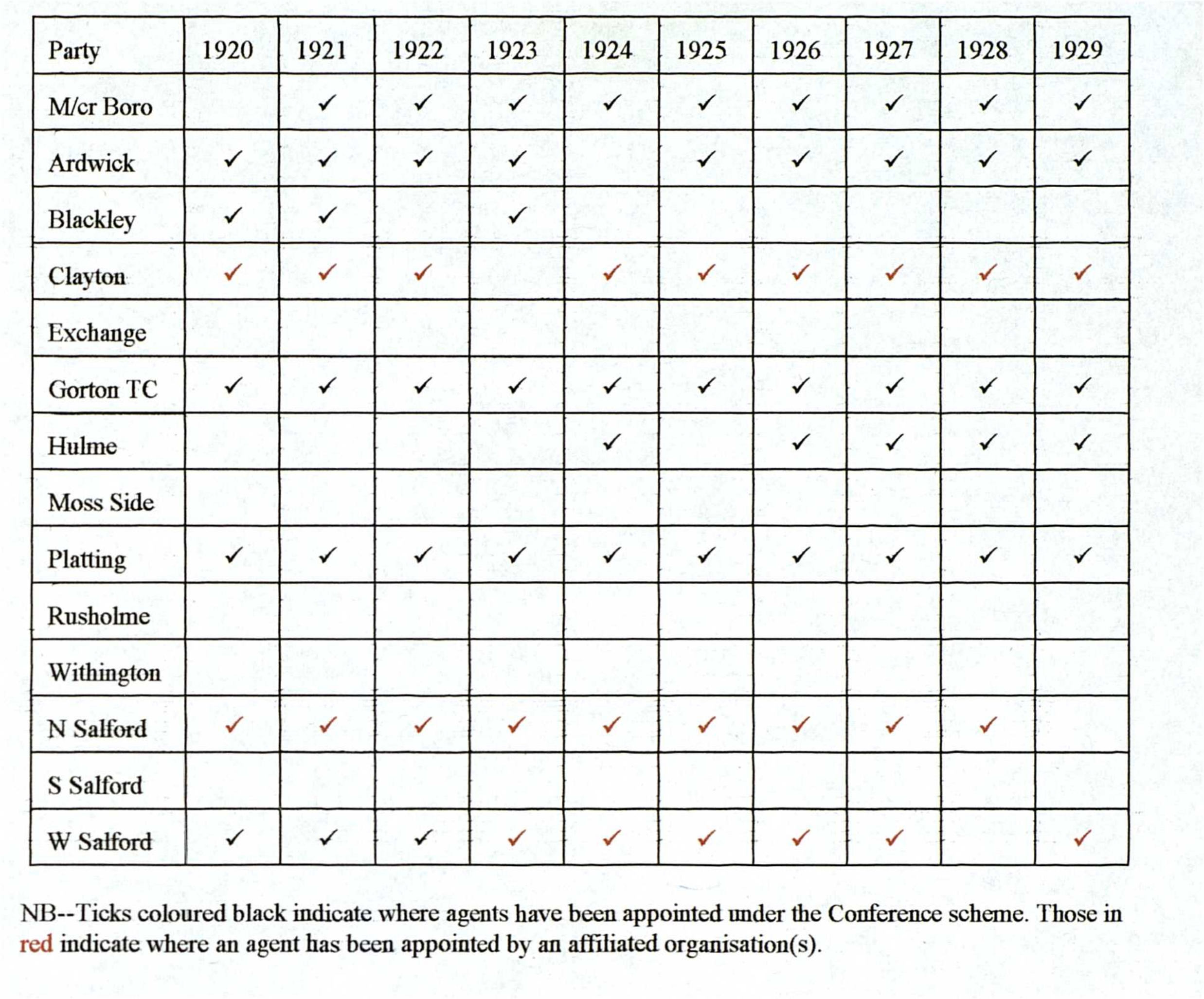

BOUNDARY COMMISSION, 1917
SALFORD.
BOUNDARIES
Parliamentary Borough and Divisions
Municipal Wards
KERSAL
NORTH
CHARLESTOWN
ALBERT PARK
HOPE
GROSVENOR
WEST
ST. THOMAS'S
SEEDLEY
ST. MATHIAS'
TRINITY
ST. PAUL'S
CRESCENT
ISLINGTON
SOUTH
WEASTE
REGENT
ORDSALL
TRAFFORD
KERSAL
NORTH
MANDLEY PARK
ALBERT PARK
CLAREMONT
CHARLESTOWN
WEST
ST. THOMAS'S
WEASTE
SEEDLEY
LANG-WORTHY
ST. MATTHIAS'
ST. PAUL'S
TRINITY
CRESCENT
SOUTH
DOCKS
REGENT
ORDSALL PARK

Appendix 2

Table 5A. Sponsoring bodies of Labour parliamentary candidates in Manchester and Salford 1918-29.

Seats	1918	1922	1923	1924	1929
Ardwick	NUR (T. Lowth)	NUR (T. Lowth)	NUR (T. Lowth)	NUR (T. Lowth)	NUR (T. Lowth)
Blackley	RCA (A. Tonwend)	RCA (A. Townend)		DLP (W. Burke)	DLP (W. Burke)
Clayton	LCMF (J.E. Sutton)	LCMF (J.E. Sutton)	LCMF (J.E. Sutton)	LCMF (J.E. Sutton)	LCMF (J.E. Sutton)
Exchange					DLP A. Moss
Gorton	BSS (J. Hodge)	BIS & KTA (J. Hodge)	NUVW (J. Compton)	NUVW (J. Compton)	NUVB (J. Compton)
Hulme			ASW (A. McElwee)	ASW (A. McElwee)	ASW (A. McElwee)
Moss Side		(Co-op) T. W. Mercer			DLP (A.A. Purcell)
Platting	NUGW (J. Clynes)	NUGW (J. Clynes)	NUGW (J. Clynes)	NUGW (J. Clynes)	NUG & MW (J. Clynes)
Rusholme	DLP (Mrs Pethick-Lawrence)	DLP (A.E. Wood)	DLP (W. Paul)	DLP (W. Paul)	DLP (J. Adshead)
Withington				DLP (E. Whiteley)	DLP (Dr. Robinson)
Salford N.	Dockers (B. Tillett)	Dockers (B. Tillett)	TGWU (B. Tillett)	TGWU (B. Tillett)	TGWU (B. Tillett)
Salford S.	ASE (J. Gorman)		DLP (J. Toole)	DLP (J. Toole)	DLP (J. Toole)
Salford W.	DLP (R. J. Davies)	NUR (A. Law)	DLP (A. Haycock)	DLP (A. Haycock)	ILP (A. Haycock)

Table 6A. Labour parties employing an agent in Manchester and Salford 1920-29.



Party	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929
M/cr Boro		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ardwick	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blackley	✓	✓		✓						
Clayton	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Exchange										
Gorton TC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hulme					✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Moss Side										
Platting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rusholme										
Withington										
N Salford	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
S Salford										
W Salford	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

NB--Ticks coloured black indicate where agents have been appointed under the Conference scheme. Those in red indicate where an agent has been appointed by an affiliated organisation(s).

Table 7A. Growth of individual Labour party membership in Manchester 1918-26.

	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926
Ardwick		membership 'improving'			622	2500	4000		
Blackley	membership 'increasing' 49	up fourfold 197	doubled 394	506	membership rising - party is 'out for 1000'		increase of 200 in twelve months		
Clayton						membership 'on the upgrade'	club opens - membership 'grows considerably'	membership on 'the upgrade'	slight decline due to impact of mining dispute
Exchange			40	60	party 'small in numbers'			'large increase' in membership	
Gorton					individual membership 'not large...but active'			900 recruits after canvass	1900 - made another 1000 recruits after canvass
Hulme		membership 'doubled'						fall in membership due to 'clearout'	increase of 250

	1918	**1919**	**1920**	**1921**	**1922**	**1923**	**1924**	**1925**	**1926**
Moss Side		50	‘steady progress’		‘slender membership’ suffers from decline			membership increases ‘but still small in numbers’	‘slight increase’
Platting				membership increased in all four wards	membership ‘at very high level’		increase of 317	membership ‘more than doubled’	steady increase in all four wards - bigger rooms needed
Rusholme	50	182	232	rise ‘not as sharp as last year’		membership increased	last twelve months seen ‘great influx’ of new members	‘great increase in members’	membership up in all four wards
Withington			50		‘slight increase’		43	150 sharp rise resulting after election in 1924	

Source: Manchester Borough Labour Party *Annual Reports*, 1918-26.

Table 8A. Formation of Labour party ward committees in Manchester 1918-27.

Constituency	Wards	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927
Ardwick	Ardwick			✓							
	New Cross			✓							
	St. Mark's			✓							
Blackley	Blackley		✓								
	Crumpsall		✓								
	Moston		✓								
Clayton	Beswick								✓		
	Bradford								✓		
	Newton Heath								✓		
Exchange	Cheetham								✓		
	Collegiate								✓		
	Exchange										
	Oxford										
	St. Ann's										
	St. Clement's									✓	
	St. John's									✓	
	St. Michael's				✓						
Gorton	Gorton North								✓		
	Gorton South								✓		
	Openshaw								✓		
Hulme	Medlock St									✓	
	Moss Side W										✓
	St. George's									✓	
Moss Side	All Saints									✓	
	Moss Side E									✓	
	St. Luke's									✓	

Constituency	Wards	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927
Platting	Collyhurst				✓						
	Harpurhey				✓						
	Miles Platting				✓						
	St. Michael's				✓						
Rusholme	Levenshulme		✓			✓re					
	Longsight		✓								
	Rusholme		✓								
Withington	Chorlton							✓			
	Didsbury							✓			
	Withington							✓			

Table 9A. Statistical breakdown of the individual membership of Blackley divisional Labour party (DLP) 1921.

1921	Total membership of ward parties	Ward memberships as % of total DLP membership	Number of male members	Male membership as % of total DLP membership	Male membership as % of total male DLP membership	Men as % of total ward party membership	Number of female members	Female memberships as % of total DLP membership	Female membership as % of total female DLP membership	Women as % of total ward party membership
Blackley ward	170	34	99	20	32	58	71	14	36	42
Crumpsall ward	87	17	54	11	17	62	33	7	17	38
Moston ward	249	49	157	31	51	63	92	18	47	37
Divisional total	506	100	310	61			196	39		

Table 10A. Statistical breakdown of the individual membership of Ardwick divisional Labour party (DLP) 1922.

1922	Total membership of ward parties	Ward memberships as % of total DLP membership	Number of male members	Male membership as % of total DLP membership	Male membership as % of total male DLP membership	Men as % of total ward party membership	Number of female members	Female memberships as % of total DLP membership	Female membership as % of total female DLP membership	Women as % of total ward party membership
Ardwick ward	250	40	200	32	42	70	50	7.5	33.3	18
Ardwick W.S.	35	6					35	6	23.3	12
(Total Ardwick)	(285)	(46)	(200)	(32)	(42)	(70)	(85)	(13.5)	(56.6)	(30)
St. Mark's ward	199	32	163	26	35	82	36	6	24	18
New Cross ward	138	22	109	18	23	79	29	4.5	19.3	21
Divisional total	622	100	472	76			150	24		

Table 11A. Manchester & Salford delegates to Labour Conferences 1918-29.

Party / Trades Council	1918	1919	1920	1921
MSTC	Cllr. W. Mellor & A.A. Purcell	Cllr. W. Mellor	Cllr. W. Mellor	Cllr. W. Mellor
MSLRC (split 1920)	R.J. Davies & C. Priestly	R.J. Davies	W.T. Jackson	
MBLP				Ald. W.T. Jackson
Ardwick			T. Cunningham	
Blackley		W.A. Spofforth	W.A. Spofforth	Mrs A.E. Robinson & W. Spofforth
Clayton				
Exchange				
Gorton TC	Cllr. S. Hague	J. Cossey	J. Cossey	
Hulme			W.H. Cawley	
Moss Side				
Platting				
Rusholme		Mr Hubert	E.J. Hookway	
Withington			R.J. Davies	Mrs M.G. Davies
SCLP			A.E. Tilbrook	J. Openshaw
Salford North				
Salford South				
Salford West				

Party / Trades Council	1922	1923	1924	1925
MSTC	Cllr. W. Mellor	Cllr. W. Mellor	Cllr. W. Mellor	Cllr. W. Mellor
MBLP	T.M. Larrad	C. Priestly	C. Priestly	C. Priestly
Ardwick			Thomas Swan	T.M. Larrad
Blackley	W. Spofforth	G.G. Wellings		Miss M. Welch
Clayton				
Exchange			Arthur Mellor	Ellis Singer
Gorton TC	J. Grierson	J. Brotherton	J. Cossey	W. Oldfield
Hulme		C. Beamand	E.J. Alford	
Moss Side			Rose Graham	J.H. Green
Platting				
Rusholme	Mrs C. Compton	Mrs C. Compton	William Paul	Will Crick
Withington	Mrs M.G. Davies	Mrs M.G. Davies	Eveleen Cameron	J. Hopkinson
SCLP		J. Openshaw	J. Openshaw	J. Openshaw
Salford North				H.O. Jones
Salford South				
Salford West				

Party / Trades Council	1926	1927	1928	1929
MSTC	W.J. Munro	W. J. Munro		Not Affiliated
MBLP	Cllr. H. Weate	Cllr. H. Weate	Cllr. H. Weate	T. M. Larrad
Ardwick				
Blackley	Mrs W. Hull	I.E. Cashmore		
Clayton			Ben Clare	
Exchange	Ellis Singer	H. Kershaw		
Gorton TC	W. Oldfield	W. Oldfield	S. Hitchburn	W. Wooley
Hulme				
Moss Side	R.P. Fisher			
Platting				
Rusholme	Will Crick	Will Crick		
Withington		Mrs M.G. Davies	Mrs M.G. Davies	
SCLP*	J. Openshaw	J. Openshaw	J. Openshaw	J. Openshaw
Salford North	H. Ingle	A. Atherton	H. Ingle	Cllr. J. Brentnall
Salford South	Cllr. J. Toole	Cllr. J. Toole		
Salford West			A. Haycock	Mrs A. Openshaw

Table 12A. Labour party municipal candidates (and occupations) in Manchester 1919-23.

	1919[1]	1920	1921	1922	1923
All Saints	J.E. Hutchinson (Sec of Approved Society)	H. Hanaway (TU Secretary)	G. Benson (Estate Agent)	J.E. Hutchinson (Sec of Approved Society)	A.M. Thompson (Grease Manufacturer)
Ardwick	H. Weate (TU Official)	G. Harris (TU Secretary)	R.C. Wallhead (Journalist)	H. Weate (TU Official)	J. Wharton (Shopkeeper)
Beswick	W.Robinson (TU Sec) Mrs E. Smith (Shopkeeper) P.J. Hall (Insurance Manager)	W. Robinson (TU Secretary)	L. Cox (Music Instrument Dealer)	Mary E. Smith (Shopkeeper)	W. Robinson (TU Official)
Blackley	J.D. Canavan (Civil Servant) J. Coppock (TU Official) W. Holden *Coop* (Clerk)	W. Holden *Coop* (Clerk)	Mrs A. Robinson (TU Secretary)		
Bradford	J.W. Sutton (TU Official)	E.J. Hart (Insurance Agent)	J. Binns (Engineer)	J.W. Sutton (TU Official)	E. J. Hart (Insurance Agent)
Cheetham		C. Kean (TU Secretary)	C. Kean (TU Secretary)		
Chorlton					
Collegiate				F. Gregson (TU Secretary)	
Collyhurst	M. Jagger (Engineer ASE) A. Park *Coop* (Manager)	A. Park *Coop* (Manager)		M. Jagger (Engineer ASE)	A. Park (Manager)

	1919[1]	1920	1921	1922	1923
Crumpsall		C. Stott (TU Organiser)			
Didsbury		Mrs Clegg-Claber *Coop* (Married Woman)			
Exchange					
Gorton North	J. Compton (TU Official)	W. Davy (Insurance Agent)	J.P. Greenhall (Herbalist)	J. Compton (TU Official)	W. Davy (Insurance Agent)
Gorton South	Miss Annie Lee (TU Secretary)	R.J. Davies (TU Official)	S. Hague (Labour Party Agent)	Annie Lee (TU Secretary)	Miss E. Wilkinson (TU Official)
Harpurhey	R. Lundy (TU Secretary)	A. Wolstenhome (TU Secretary)	A. Wolstenhome (TU Secretary)	R. Lundy (TU Secretary)	A. Wolstenhome (TU Secretary)
Levenshulme	L. Cox (Kinema Film Renter) Mrs Emma Arundale *Coop* (Director)	L. Cox (Music Instrument Dealer)	W. Depledge (Railwayman)		W. Davies
Longsight	E.J. Hookway (Labour Party Agent)	E. Whiteley (Secretary & Manager)			Mrs E. Beavan *Coop* (Married Woman)
Medlock Street	C. Beamand (Railwayman NUR)	Mrs A. Robinson (TU Secretary)			
Miles Platting	C. E. Wood (Green Grocer)	A. James (Labour Party Agent)	J. Fogarty (Traveller)	C. E. Wood (Green Grocer)	A. James (Labour Party Agent)
Moss Side East		E.J. Hookway (Labour Party Agent)			G. Harris (TU Secretary)
Moss Side West					

	1919[1]	1920	1921	1922	1923
Moston	W. Mellor (Sec of Trades Council) F. Gregson (TU Secretary) T. Horrocks *Coop* (Coop Secretary)	T. Horrocks *Coop* (Asst Coop Secretary)	F. Gregson (TU Secretary)	W. Mellor (Sec of Trades Council)	Miss M. Welch (Shopkeeper)
New Cross		T. Cunningham (Labour Party Agent)		E.J. Hookway (Labour Party Agent)	R. Matthews (Carter)
Newton Heath	P. Lindsay Martin (Retired Postal Servant)	Issac Floyd (TU Official)	H. Thorneycroft (Haidresser)	H. Thorneycroft (Hairdresser)	M. Jagger (Engineer ASE)
Openshaw	J. Toole (Commercial Traveller)	G. Titt (TU Official)	J. Brown (TU Official)	J. Toole (Commercial Traveller)	G. Titt (TU Secretary)
Oxford					
Rusholme		R. Wright (Railway Clerk)			F. Lloyd (TU Gen. Sec.)
St. Ann's					
St. Clement's					
St. George's		C. Beamand (Railwayman NUR)			J.W. O'Neill (TU Official)
St. John's					
St. Luke's		W. Depledge (Railwayman)	J. Alsop *Coop* (Railway Canvasser)	E. Whiteley (Secretary & Manager)	

	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923
St. Mark's	G.Hall (Fruit & Fish Retailer)	W. Watson (TU Organiser)	I. Brassington (TU Secretary)	G. Hall (Fruit & Fish Retailer)	C. Wood (Locomotive Engine Driver)
St. Michael's	T. Ronan (Beer Retailer)	J. Reilly (Leather Merchant)	T. Cassidy (Licensed Victualler)	J. Fogarty (Traveller)	J. Reilly (Leather Merchant)
Withington		J. Williams (TU Official)		Maud Dean (Married Woman)	

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[1] .Beswick, Blackley, Collyhurst, Levenshulme and Moston wards held elections in all three seats in 1919.

Table 13A. Labour Party municipal candidates (and occupations) in Manchester 1924-28.

	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928
All Saints	A.M. Thompson (Motor Oil Blender)	J.E. Hutchinson (Sec of Approved Society)	J. Williams (TU Organiser)		J. Hutchinson (Sec. of Approved Society)
Ardwick	J. Wharton (Shopkeeper)	H. Weate (TU Official)	J. Wharton (Shopkeeper)	Rev. W. McMullan (Clergyman)	Rev. W. McMullan (Clergyman)
Beswick	L. Cox (Dyer & Cleaner)	H. Thorneycroft (Hairdresser)	W. Robinson (TU Official)	L. Cox (Dyer & Cleaner)	H. Thorneycroft (Hairdresser)
Blackley	W. Watson (TU Secretary)	F. Gregson (TU Secretary)	W. Slack		W. Slack
Bradford	J. Binns (Engineer)	J.W. Sutton (TU Official)	E.J. Hart (Insurance Agent)	J. Binns (Engineer)	J.W. Sutton (TU Official)
Cheetham		J.T. Abbott (Org. Sec. Lancs. ILP)	Mrs L. Harrison (Nurse)		
Chorlton					Mrs A. M'Ilwrick
Collegiate	Dr. S. Herbert (Doctor)		J. Leigh		P. Goldstone
Collyhurst	I. Floyd (TU Official)	P. Lindsay Martin (Retired Postal Servant)	William Johnston (Clerk)	I. Floyd (TU Official)	R. Malcolm (Insurance Agent)
Crumpsall		F. Mason (TU Secretary)	G. Grindley		
Didsbury					

	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928
Exchange					
Gorton North	T. Walker (Locomotive Driver)	J. Compton (TU Official)	W. Davy (Insurance Agent)	T. Walker (Locomotive Driver)	T. Regan (Insurance Agent)
Gorton South	J. Brown (TU Secretary)	Annie Lee (TU Secretary)	T. Adams (Engine driver)	J. Brown (TU Official)	Annie Lee (TU Secretary)
Harpurhey	A. Wolstenhome (TU Secretary)	R. Lundy (TU Secretary)	J. Howard (TU Organiser)	W. Onions (Clerk)	R. Lundy (TU Secretary)
Levenshulme					W. Bayes
Longsight		T. Anderson *Coop* (Org. Sec. Co-op)	T. Banville (Accountant)		F. Gregson (TU Secretary)
Medlock Street	T. Regan (Insurance Agent)	Edith Chorlton (Insurance Agent)	Edith Chorlton (Insurance Agent)	Dr. Lloyd Jones (Doctor)	F. Edwards (Iron Moulder)
Miles Platting	Mrs Dors Taylor (Co-op Organiser)	Mrs D. Taylor (Co-op Organiser)	A. James (Labour Party Agent)	C. E. Wood (Green Grocer)	Mrs D. Taylor (Co-op Organiser)
Moss Side East					J. Owen (Traveller)
Moss Side West			W. Munro (TU Secretary)		R. McKeon (Clerk)
Moston	G. Wellings (Shopkeeper)	W. Mellor (Secretary of Trades Council)	Mary Welch (Shopkeeper)	F. Gregson (TU Secretary)	W. Mellor (Sec of Trades Council)
New Cross	R. Matthews (Carter)	T. Larrad (Labour Party Agent)	Walter Hallows (Railwayman)	R. Matthews (Carter)	T. Larrad (Labour Party Agent)

	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928
Newton Heath	H. Frankland (Machinist)	H. Frankland (Machinist)	Hannah Mitchell (TU Organiser)	W. Bayes	A. Dooley
Openshaw	J. Aveson (Engine Driver)	J. Toole (Commercial Traveller)	G. Titt (TU Secretary)	J. Aveson (Engine Driver)	J. Toole (Commercial Traveller)
Oxford					
Rusholme		W. Davis			Mrs E. Beavan (Married Woman)
St. Ann's					
St. Clement's			J. Cossey (Spindle Maker)	G. Harrison	A.E. Jones (Railwayman)
St. George's		J. Clapham (Joiner)	J. Clapham (Joiner)	F. Mason (TU Secretary)	E. Hope (Electrician)
St. John's			F. Edwards (Iron Moulder)		
St. Luke's					L. Clifford Walker
St. Mark's	I. Brassington (TU Secretary)	G. Hall (Fruit & Fish Retailer)	C. Wood (Locomotive Engine Driver)	I. Brassington (TU Official)	G. Hall (Fruit & Fish Retailer)
St. Michael's	T. Cassidy (Licensed Victualler)	E. Downey (TU Official)	Josephine Shaw (TU Official)	T. Cassidy (Licensed Victualler)	A. Cathcart (Licensed Victualler)
Withington		W. Johnson (Clerk)	P.J. Wall (Insurance Manager)		

Table 14A. Individual membership in Manchester DLPs 1934-36.

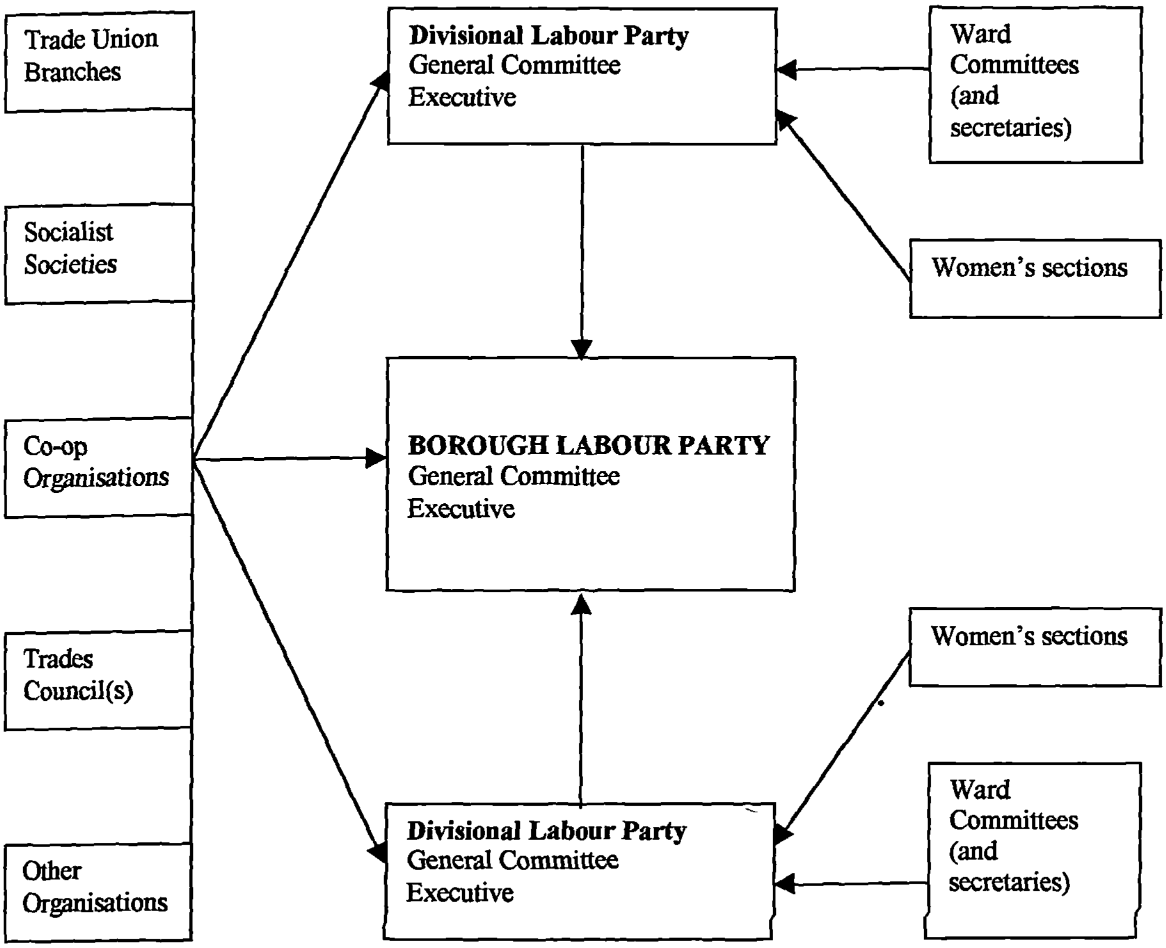
Division	**1934**	**1935**	**1936**
Ardwick	1160	1056	1000
Blackley	682	695	1000
Clayton	1000	1100	1500
Exchange	240	240	350
Gorton	1134	2241	3000
Hulme	1050	1474	1100
Moss Side	270	320	250
Platting	1250	833	1000
Rusholme	376	404	440
Withington	696	792	873

Source and Analysis:

The Manchester Guardian published these figures on 30 May 1936 after the paper obtained them from a delegation of national Labour officials who had travelled from London to assess party machinery in Manchester. They therefore appear slightly more reliable than the figures which may be obtained by calculating membership on the basis of annual affiliation fees paid by local parties. That said, most of the figures for 1936 were based on the number of membership cards distributed, rather than any definite evidence.

The figures are useful in showing the general distribution of Labour support in Manchester. The numerically largest parties were those in the industrial heartlands: Ardwick, Clayton, Gorton and Platting, though the DLP in poverty-stricken Hulme also boasted a large membership. That said, it is notable that Ardwick is well down on the 4000 members it claimed to have enrolled during the mid-twenties. Aside from that, the only significant change from the pattern of membership evident in the 1920s is the growth of Withington DLP. Although the party made good progress in recruiting individuals in that area, the rise in membership would appear to reflect the changing social composition of the constituency in the wake of major housing developments, rather than signalling an expansion of Labour's class appeal.

Diagram 1A. Structure of a Central (Borough) Labour Party and Constituency (Divisional) Labour Parties in a divided borough.


Trade Union Branches
Socialist Societies
Co-op Organisations
Trades Council(s)
Other Organisations
Divisional Labour Party
General Committee
Executive
Ward Committees (and secretaries)
Women's sections
BOROUGH LABOUR PARTY
General Committee
Executive
Women's sections
Divisional Labour Party
General Committee
Executive
Ward Committees (and secretaries)

Appendix 3

Labour Who's Who

The following section contains information relating to 200 Labour party members who were politically active in the Manchester area during the 1920s. The information varies in quality from individual to individual, but in almost every case provides an indication of each person's occupational background and role inside the party. Where possible, further information about political views, family background and/or career highlights has been included.

J.T. Abbott

b.1873, Blackburn. Cotton Weaver.

Member of Blackburn ILP until 1916.

Agent in various constituencies 1915-19.

Organising Secretary of Lancashire ILP.

Moved to Ardwick, M/cr.

Auditor of MBLP during 1920s; also appeared on Borough EC.

1925 - Stood unsuccessfully in Cheetham ward local election.

Political outlook:

"Socialism implies a changed individual motive in and outlook on life; it implies the social ownership of natural monopolies and other material things needed to supply things in common use or for social service; it implies a new and communal motive in industry and in 'government', whether local, national or international."

Supported James Maxton's Socialist policies in late 1920s / early 1930s.

In a revealing character assessment, fellow ILPer, Wright Robinson (see below), said Abbott 'has all the virtues and most of the vices of the saint, a devotion deep and narrow, and a biting contempt for those who falter in the faith, or palter with his truth. His is craggy austerity, and the fires of his faith which never die out, consume the sacrifice on the altar and yet leave the sacred walls of his temple stark and forbidding'.

Thomas Henry Adams

Started work with LNER age 16. Became a fireman and engine driver.

Represented Gorton South 1926-1945.

Became Lord Mayor of Manchester in 1946.

All five of his brothers became Labour councillors in different areas. Three had blocks of flats named after them - two in Manchester.

John Alsop

Railway canvasser.

1920 - Sat on Executive Council of the MBLP as a representative of the Railway Clerks' Association.

Contested St. Luke's ward unsuccessfully in 1921.

Fought the seat again in 1945 and won.

Thomas Anderson

b.1863, York.

First Secretary of the York branch of Gas Workers' Union.

Member of York ILP (since formation) and Labour Party. Was elected to York City Council.

Subsequently moved to Manchester.

1925 - Unsuccessfully fought seat in Longsight ward.

By 1927, he had become Organising Secretary of Manchester Co-operative Party.

J. Armstrong

Warehouseman.

Secretary of the Moss Side DLP in 1930.

Emma Arundale

Director (with Co-op).

Co-operative candidate in Levenshulme ward local election in 1919, but unsuccessful.

Member of the Manchester and Salford WCA.

F. Avery

Tailor.

Secretary of the Withington ILP throughout the 1920s.

John William Aveson

Engine driver.

Labour councillor for Openshaw 1924-30.

T.F. Banville

Accountant.

1926 - Fought Longsight ward unsuccessfully.

1927 - Prospective Labour candidate for Exchange constituency. Resigned shortly before the election due to hostility to his candidature from militant

(Communist) elements in the Exchange DLP.

Edmund Gabriel Barlow
b.1905, M/cr.
Artist.
Held posts on Executive Committee of MBLP, as Propaganda Secretary of Moss Side DLP, Secretary of Moss Side ILP, and as Press and Propaganda Secretary of the Youth Section of No More War Movement (M/cr branch).
Describes himself as an atheist; anarchist; vegetarian.
Member of British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection, Animal Defence and Anti-Vivisection Society, Vegetarian Society, Scottish Socialist Art Circle, Workers' Art Circle (M/cr).

Charles Beamand
Railway Worker.
1919 - Secretary of the Hulme DLP.
Delegate of the NUR to the MBLP EC in 1923.
Hulme DLP delegate to Labour Conference in 1923.
1933-43 - Labour councillor for St. George's ward.

Mrs Emily Beavan
Trade Union and Labour Party Official.
Chairman of the National Women's Co-operative Guild. Prior to that she held positions in the Longsight Women's Co-operative Guild.
Member of MBLP EC during 1920s.
1923 - Fought Longsight ward unsuccessfully as a Coop candidate.
1936-54 - Labour councillor for Bradford ward.
1954 - Alderman.

George Benson
b.1889, M/cr.
Estate Agent.
Educated at Manchester Grammar School.
His father had been an associate of Keir Hardie and J. Bruce Glasier.
A member of the Norman Angell League, he was a conscientious objector during the First World War.
For this, he was put in jail, where he was badly maltreated - his weight fell to below 8 stone. He was finally released into the care of S. Berry, a Manchester Fabian whom he knew from the 'Clarion Table', a group of left-leaning individuals who met for lunch at the Clarion Cafe. Berry got Benson released on the grounds that he could be put to useful work on his family farm.
After the war, Benson received psychiatric treatment from another member of the Clarion Table, Dr. S. Herbert (see below).
1923-24 - Treasurer of the ILP.
1923 - Labour candidate in All Saints' ward - unsuccessful.
1929 - elected Labour MP for Chesterfield.
From 1930s onwards he was active in the Howard League for Penal Reform.
Produced a book on the history of Socialism.

Joseph Binns
1889 - he and six other young men founded Gorton and East Manchester Fabian Society, which subsequently merged with the first Manchester branch of the ILP. Also a Clarion Vanner.
An engineer, in 1913 he became organising district delegate of the ASE.
1918 - Undertook control of the Ministry of Pensions training department for disabled women at Bell Vue.
1915-31 - Labour Councillor for Bradford ward.
1933-34 - Lord Mayor.
His son became the Labour MP for Gillingham.

Mrs J. Binns
Showed reporter her 'Lord Mayor's cuttings book'.
'In the pages are hosts of engagements which will always be looked upon with happy memories. Other treasured possessions are signed portraits of the King and Queen and of the Duchess of York.'
Mrs Binns says, 'First and foremost, I am a home

women.'

J. Blevins
Trade Union Official.
Prominent Openshaw Communist who was selected by the Gorton Trades Council as its delegate to the MBLP EC 1921-23.

J. Bradshaw
Iron Turner.
1920 - Secretary of the South Salford DLP.

Charlie Bramall
b.1884, Salford.
Began work as an Oil Blender.
'A Salford Labour pioneer and key man in the struggle to get Ben Tillett elected Salford's first Labour MP'.
'A regular sergeant in the First World War, Mr Bramall became a clerk and Labour stalwart. Then he became election agent and secretary to Ben Tillett.'
Represented St. Mathias' ward after 1946.

Isaac Brassington
b.1870, Sutton-on-the-Hill.
Trade Union Organiser.
Editor of *Railway Worker* 1908-11.
Organiser for GRWU 1911-13, then later Organising Secretary of NUR, Lancs. area.
Moved to M/cr and joined Ardwick ILP. Was one of those who urged the party to affiliate to the Communist (Third) International in 1920.
Represented St. Mark's ward for Labour 1921-32.
Chairman of the Transport Committee on Manchester City Council, he resigned from the party over a disagreement concerning wage cuts for car workers (he voted to maintain cuts against party instructions).

John Brotherton
Engineer.
During the 1920s he was elected to the Board of Guardians and was made Secretary of the Labour Guardian's Group. Served on the Executive Committee of the Gorton Trades Council.
1923 - Secretary of the Openshaw branch of the Communist Party. In the same year he was Gorton Trades Council's delegate to the Labour Conference.

John Brown
Trade Union Official.
1925 - Secretary of the Gorton ILP.
1928 - Delegate to ILP Annual Conference.
1924-30 - Labour councillor for Gorton.

John David Canavan
Civil Servant.
Labour councillor for Blackley ward 1919-21.

W. Canon
Clerk.
1920-21 - Secretary of the Rusholme ILP.

I.E. Cashmore
Joiner.
1925-30s - Secretary of the Blackley DLP.
1927 - Delegate to Labour Conference.

Thomas Cassidy
Liscensed Victualler.
Secretary of the UDSMP&SD during the twenties.
1920-38 - Labour councillor for St. Michael's ward.
1938-46 - Alderman.

Andrew Cathcart
Liscensed Victualler.
1928-46 - Labour councillor for St. Michael's ward.
1946-49 - Alderman.

Tom Cavanagh
Toolmaker.

A member of the ASE and AEU, he was a member of the South Salford BSP and a foundation member of the Communist Party.
During the 1920s he was secretary of the South Salford CP and also held official posts in the South Salford DLP.
Between 1922-34 he was an AEU delegate to the Manchester and Salford Trades Council.

W.H. Cawley
Window Cleaner.
1920-21 - Secretary of the Hulme DLP.
Hulme delegate to the Labour Conference in 1920.

Mrs Edith Chorlton
Spent all her life in Hulme and for five years worked as an insurance agent in Ancoats.
In 1924 she was elected to the Board of Guardians.
1925-32 - Labour councillor for Medlock Street.

John Clapham
Joiner.
Active in the ASW.
Assisted on the propaganda committee of the Manchester Borough Labour Party in the 1920s.
1926-38 - Labour councillor for St. George's ward.

Ben Clare
b. Mosley Common (n.d.).
Served on Executive Committee of Mosley Common Miners' Association.
Later became election agent to LCMF, and worked for many years on behalf of J. Sutton in Clayton, where he acted as Secretary of the DLP. Member of the East Manchester ILP.

Mrs Clegg-Claber
Married Woman.
1920 - Unsuccessfully contested Didsbury ward as a Co-operative candidate.

John Clynes
b.1869, Oldham.
Worked in a mill, age 10.
At 24, became Lancs. district organiser of National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers (later NUGMW).
Joined ILP soon after its formation but was a trade unionist first and foremost, supporting the First World War.
Held numerous senior posts in the LP and served in two minority Labour Governments as Home Secretary.
Political outlook:
'Socialism contemplates national and individual service on co-operative lines for the supply of the material needs of life...Socialism contemplates the common ownership and control of the agencies required for common well-being...The main task of present-day Socialists, however, is to make the people good enough for Socialism.'

Mrs Clynes
Met husband John in the same Oldham mill.
She organised Oldham's largest and longest running Tipperary Club.
As her husband's career in the Labour Party took off, she became increasingly embroiled in political work.
During the 1920s, the Platting DLP records that she addressed several Labour meetings in the constituency on behalf of her husband. She also spoke in support of other local Labour candidates, featuring prominently in Joe Toole's 1923 campaign in South Salford.
She was also a member of the Half Circle Club and served as its first President.
Yet, despite all these activities, she told one journalist that 'she had never taken any active part in politics and had never studied politics deeply...I would rather sit by the fire and sew'.

Mrs C. Compton

Married to the Labour MP, J. Compton (see below), she was an active member of the Rusholme DLP in the early twenties.

In 1922 and 1923 she was Rusholme's delegate to the Labour Conference.

J. Compton

b. Belfast (n.d.). Coach Body Maker.

Moved to Scotland, working in Clyde Shipyards.

1919 - Moved to Manchester as VBU organiser.

'He took pride in saying that after a first visit to an employers' boardroom he was never refused a second.'

1924-25 - Secretary of the Rusholme DLP.

1924 - Elected Labour MP for Gorton.

Belonged to 'Hearts of Oak' group.

Tom Cook

Architect.

In a pre-1914 newspaper article he was described as: 'a common-sense Socialist. He hasn't any illusions about the millennium coming with tomorrow morning's milk. He knows pretty well that the millennium never will come with the sort of milk we seem likely to get for a good many tomorrows. Although he was treasurer of so revolutionary a society as the Manchester and Salford ILP in the days when it prided itself on being a rod in pickle for capitalism, he is content nowadays, at all events, to preach the little more - better houses, better sanitation and food for the poor, and economy rather than extravagance in the matter of such materially unproductive things as art galleries...'

Left Labour to join the Conservatives after the First World War.

Richard Coppock

b.1885, Manchester.

Began work as a bricklayer.

Became M/cr district secretary of the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives, age 20. At 24, he had become full time district secretary. He became general secretary in 1920.

In 1906 he was literature secretary for the Openshaw Socialist Society and, as a bricklayer, was general foreman on the site during the building of the Socialist Hall.

During the war, he was chairman of the LCC.

1919-21 - Represented Blackley ward for Labour.

Knighted in 1951.

Ernest Corbey

Rose to become General Secretary of National Association of Trade Union Approved Societies.

Served as Vice President and then President of Salford Central Labour Party during 1920s.

'In 1928 he was nominated for the mayoralty and created a stir by telling his colleagues that as "an old fashioned Socialist" he did not hold with the "make-believe" of the office, and consequently if elected he would have no truck with the mace, would not wear the mayoral robes or top hat, would not attend the civic service or Armistice Day Service, and would not stand up for the National Anthem.'

Leo Corcoran

Political agent for the ASW.

1925-30s - Secretary and agent of the Hulme DLP.

Also appeared on MBLP EC in this period.

Justinian Cossey

Spindle Maker.

His parents were in the circus and he was born in a caravan. After working in the circus he joined the Salvation Army as an envoy.

1919 & 20 - Gorton Trades Council's delegate to the Labour Conference.

1921-22 - Secretary of the Gorton ILP.

Represented Gorton Trades Council on MBLP EC in 1920.

1927 - Gorton ILP branch delegate to ILP Conference.

Elected Gorton Councillor in 1935.

J.H. Cox

b.1974, Tipton.

Boilermaker.

He held many posts in the Boilermakers' Union.

Married to M. A. Cox (see below).

1924 - Secretary of the Gorton ILP.

Member of Executive Committee of Gorton Trades Council and MBLP.

Literary Secretary of the Manchester and Salford ILP. (Lists selling literature as his recreation).

Served on Board of Guardians.

1930-33 - Labour councillor for Gorton South.

Resigned from Labour Party in 1932 in compliance with ILP Conference decision to disaffiliate.

Member of the League of Nations Union (a peace organisation).

Leonard Cox

b.1878, Birmingham.

Moved to Sheffield to work on the railways, then had a travelling job selling zithers, then worked in the cinema trade, and later as a valet.

Cox joined the ILP in 1905 and was active in the suffrage movement.

Moved to Manchester in 1911.

1921-39 - Labour councillor for Beswick ward.

1939-52 - Alderman.

1943 - Lord Mayor of Manchester.

Mrs M. A. Cox

Married to J. H. Cox (see above).

Described as the 'very capable' secretary of the Manchester and Salford Labour Women's Advisory Committee 1924-26.

Gorton Trades Council's delegate to the ILP Conference in 1926. Gorton ILP delegate to National ILP Conference in 1928, along with J. H. Cox.

J. Crawshaw

Insurance Agent.

He was long serving secretary of the East Manchester ILP from 1923 onwards.

Will Crick

Journalist.

Worked around the country before joining the staff of the Warrington Guardian in 1914.

Joined the Altrincham branch of the ILP.

1916 - Delegate to the Altrincham Trades Council and active in the No Conscription Fellowship. After imprisonment, he worked as a tram driver in Manchester and became active in the TGWU.

1924 - Worked as election agent for William Paul in Rusholme.

Continued activity in Rusholme DLP, acting as their delegate to the Labour Party Conference 1925-7.

1926 - President of the National Left Wing Movement.

1927 - President of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council and TGWU delegate on MBLP EC.

In late 1927 there was an attempt to make Crick Rusholme's prospective Labour Parliamentary candidature. However, this failed when the National Labour Party ruled that there had been "irregularities" in the selection process. In reality, the National Party disliked Crick's political leanings.

T. P. Crowther

Photographer.

1919-20 - Secretary of the Withington DLP.

Lived in Burnage Garden Village.

J. Cunliffe

Mechanic.

1919 - Secretary of the South Salford DLP.

T. Cunningham

Political Registration Agent.

1920 - Contested New Cross ward for Labour

unsuccessfully.
1920 - Ardwick DLP's delegate to Labour Conference.
Sat on MBLP EC as DLP representative.
1922 - Secretary of the Ardwick DLP.
Died of pneumonia in early 1920s.

Mrs M. G. Davies
Married to Rhys John Davies.
1921-24 - Secretary of the Withington DLP.
Withington DLP's delegate to Labour Conference 1921-23, 1927-28.

Rhys John Davies
Worked for ten years in pits of Rhondda Valley.
Filled virtually every position in his trade union.
Produced pamphlet with J. Hallsworth - "Working life of shop assistants".
Strong pacifist views led to his defeat in West Salford in 1918, but he later became MP for Westhoughton.
Lived in Withington where he worked in local DLP.
According to Wright Robinson (see below), he was disliked by many people in the party, including female members who believed he was sexist. Mary Welch (see below) refused to work for him in 1922 election.
Obituaries:
He 'never neglected an opportunity of expressing with typical Welsh fervour his faith in human brotherhood and his detestation of arms.' He 'often condemned "capitalist imperialism"'.
Political outlook:
'Socialism is that system of society which aims at curbing the incentive to personal gain. It is the foundation upon which the superior tendencies of human nature may begin to build. It assumes that some persons are "wicked" because others have used economic forces to weaken their moral fibre. It therefore demands a new perspective in personal relationships. It declares that all the energy, ingenuity, and organising powers inherent in the state for war and destruction and capable of being used for health, education, and moral advancement. Socialism will embrace all that is good in other theories and eliminates the bad in them also.'

Stella Davies
b.1895.
Began work in a telephone exchange.
At work, a friend gave her pamphlets by Robert Blatchford, *News from Nowhere* by William Morris, Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, 'and other such mind-changing stuff.' Davies gave up her religion and became interested in socialist ideas, joining the Clarion Club and becoming active in the Openshaw Socialist Society. There, she met William Davies (see below), whom she married in 1916.
According to Eddie Frow, she became a foundation member of the CPGB, though there is no mention of this in her autobiography, *North Country Bred.*
She was certainly active in the Labour Party, however: in the early 1920s she held positions in the Cheetham Ward LP, helped organise the first women's section of the LP in Gorton, and later became active in the Withington DLP after she moved to Burnage in the 1930s.

T. Davies
Tailor's Presser.
1919-21 - Secretary of the Ardwick DLP.

William Davies
b.1888, Ancoats.
Worked at Clayton Annaline Works, which manufactured dye.
Beginning as a laboratory assistant, at the age of 27 he passed his finals in organic chemistry and occupied steadily more senior positions at the plant.
Davies came from a socialist family and was a member of the Openshaw Socialist Society and the

East Manchester Clarion Cyclists.

He was also a member of the Clarion Table (see entry for George Benson).

According to Eddie Frow, he became a member of the Socialist Labour Party and urged for Communist Unity during the meetings that established the CPGB. By the 1930s, however, he seems to have become a member of the Labour Party.

Married to Stella Davies (see above).

William Davy

b.1863, Yorkshire.

Signalman on railways.

1892 - Joined ASRS (later NUR).

Helped form a St. John's Ambulance section.

Was offered a station master job with more money but turned it down 'because the job would have compelled him to relinquish his work for the world.'

1900 - Moved to Manchester and elected delegate to the trades council.

Found his job was restricting his social work so he resigned from railway and became an insurance collector - his income was commission only.

1907 - Became manager of Liverpool United Friendly Society and went on national speaking tour (topic was industrial insurance).

1908 - Joined ILP, became delegate to Gorton Trades Council and elected chairman of Gorton Workers' Election Committee.

1910 - Elected a Labour councillor in Gorton.

1911 - Railway strike - returned to aid his former colleagues as chief negotiator, later being acclaimed for his diplomacy.

1912 - Secretary of Labour Group on the Council.

1916-18 - Chairman of local military service tribunal. Appointed J.P.

1927 - Lord Mayor of Manchester.

Davy played the key role in establishing Manchester Airport and also in the construction of Manchester Central Library.

For many years connected with Wellington Street Primitive Methodist Chapel, Gorton, Davy was also associated with the Gore Street Mission. 'He is on the local preacher's list, and is an ardent church-goer, a teetotaller, and an advocate of temperance.'

Despite protests from MBLP he continued to associate himself with social service centres for the unemployed.

1931 - Knighted.

Maud Dean

Married Woman (husband as an engineer).

Unsuccessfully fought Withington ward in a local election in 1923.

Lived in Burnage Garden Village.

W. Depledge

Railwayman.

Fought St. Luke's ward in 1920 but was defeated.

NUR representative on MBLP EC in 1920.

J. Dewhirst

Railwayman.

Trade Union Official with the NUR.

Member of the MBLP EC during the 1920s.

Killed working on the railway.

E. Downey

Trade Union Official in NUR.

Briefly on Borough EC in 1923 but resigned due to pressure of work.

Fought St. Michael's ward unsuccessfully in 1925.

Mary Earnshaw

b.1870, Blackburn.

1923 - Vice-President of Blackley Women's Co-operative Guild.

1924-26 - Executive member of MBLP.

Lists recreation as 'socials' with Blackley DLP.

Frank Edwards

Iron Moulder.

Delegate of National Union of Foundry Workers on MBLP EC in late 1920s.
1928-31 - Labour councillor for Medlock Street.

Isaac Floyd
b. Newton Heath (n.d.).
Began work as an apprentice builder at the Lancs. & Yorks. Railway Works. Spent seven years working around the country then returned to Newton Heath and was elected chairman of the Works Committee.
1919 - Appointed secretary and organiser for the Manchester District Branch of the NUVB.
1925-40 - Elected Labour councillor for Collyhurst ward. Served on Transport Committee.

Joseph Fogarty
Secretary of the Waterproof Garment Workers' Union.
1911-21 - Labour councillor for Miles Platting ward.
Represented his union at the Labour Conference throughout 1920s.

Tom Fox
Rose from being a half timer in a cotton mill to become first Labour Lord Mayor of Manchester.
1881 - Joined Liverpool Regiment and served as a soldier for eight years. Saw active service in Burma where he helped escort King Thibaw and his 40 wives up the Irrawady to Madras. Was shot and wounded three times (for which he received three medals). In 1889 he left the army.
'He found work in a moulder's shop as a general labourer, and soon became attracted to the problems of Labour by reading the works of Robert Blatchford.'
Fox became an 'early, persistent, and powerful supporter of the women's suffrage movement.'
1893 - Joined the ILP and helped organise unskilled labourers in the Lancs. and Adjoining Counties Labour Amalgamation (later NUGMW). Became secretary of that body and held the post for twenty years.
1904 - Elected Labour councillor for Bradford ward in 1904 and helped to get minimum wage for Corporation employees. Later elected to Labour Party NEC.
1916 - Became a director of the Manchester Ship Canal.
During the war, he was active in recruiting men - won praise from Lloyd George.
1919-20 - Lord Mayor of Manchester.
During 1920, he played a key role in resolving the mining dispute.

Harry Frankland
Woodcutting Machinist.
President of the Clayton DLP during the 1920s.
Labour councillor for Bradford ward after 1934, he had stood unsuccessfully in Newton Heath in the mid-1920s.
Arrested in 1937 under the Betting and Lotteries Act after a scheme was uncovered which had aimed to run a lottery on the Royal Hunt Cup with all proceeds to go to the East Manchester Spanish Aid Committee.

James Gorman
b.1874, Manchester. Engineer.
Active in the Labour movement since he was 18 years old, joining the South Salford SDF in 1893.
Involved in the ASE and AEU, he was also a member of the ILP.
Was a delegate to Manchester and Salford Trades Council 1911-25.
Became a leading figure in Salford Labour politics.

David Gouldman
Managing Director of Premier Drug Company.
1920 - Elected a Labour councillor for Collegiate ward.
However, by the late 1920s he had become an Independent.

Eric C. Gower
b. Scotland (1903)
Trade Union Official.
Active in the Edinburgh Labour Party, working with William Graham. Also worked as an officer in the local ILP.
1926 - Arrived in Manchester from Sunderland, where he had been an organiser on the Trades Council, to take up position as Secretary of the MBLP.
1927-30s - President of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council.

Alex Graham
Engineer.
Member of the ASE and an early member of the ILP.
Before the war he fought a forlorn fight in St. Luke's ward.
Was married to Mrs M. E. Smith.

Miss Rose Graham
Active in the Rusholme and Moss Side DLPs during the 1920s.
She was often a DLP representative on MBLP Executive.
Co-organised Clarion Cafe lectures with Annie Lee.
1924 - Moss Side DLP delegate to Labour Conference.

Mr & Mrs J. H. Green
1925 - Mrs Green worked as Secretary of the Moss Side DLP; Mr Green delegate to Labour Conference.
1926 - Mr Green, a warehouseman, took over from his wife as local party secretary.

James Greenhall
Herbalist.
1909-21 - Labour councillor for Gorton North ward.

Frank Gregson
Trade Union Official.
1919-21, 1929-46 - Labour councillor for Moston ward.
1946-55 - Alderman.

Arthur Gwilliam
Member of Manchester Central Branch of NUDAW.
Member of the ILP. In 1920 he signed the declaration of the Left Wing group of the ILP urging affiliation to the Third International.
1921-26 - NUDAW delegate to Manchester and Salford Trades Council.
1926 - Vice President of the Manchester Borough Labour Party.
Described by Wright Robinson as a 'semi-communist'.

Sam Hague
Political Agent working for the Iron & Steel Trades Confederation.
1909-24 - Labour councillor for Gorton.
Following on his pre-war work on the Gorton Trades Council, between 1919-20 Hague worked as Secretary of the TC.
The ISTC moved him from Gorton following John Hodge's retirement as MP in the constituency in 1923.

George Hall
b.1873, Wales, but grew up in rural Rusholme.
Began work at age 8 on a dairy farm. Left school at 12 to become a page boy for a M/cr shipping merchant but returned to studies a year later at Deansgate Central School.
In his mid-twenties, Hall got a job as a school attendance officer for Manchester Education Committee, but was sacked for not wearing uniform.
He then built up a trade as a retailer in fruit and fish.
1919 - Elected Labour councillor for St. Mark's ward.
For several years, Hall chaired the M/cr branch of

the National Secular Society.
Also worked for West Gorton Adult School.
A champion of 'Sunday Games', in 1930 he was arrested for breaching the law prohibiting such activity.
'Always a strong campaigner with the Labour and Socialist cause, Mr Hall always found party ties and disciplines irksome, and his refusal to act in accordance with group discussions brought about his expulsion from the Borough Labour Party and the party group on the City Council.'
But he still held his seat as an Independent until his death in 1936.
He had long been a member of the ILP but left the Gorton branch in 1934, saying it had been "nobbled" by the Communist Party.
The 'Red Flag' was sung at his secular funeral.

P. J. Hall
Insurance Manager.
Stood unsuccessfully for Labour in Beswick ward in 1919.

Walter Hallows
Railway Worker.
Represented NUR on MBLP EC in late 1920s.
1926-38 - Labour councillor for New Cross ward.
October 1939 - expelled from the Labour Party after he became embroiled in a row with New Cross LP over housing policy. Expulsion came after he threatened to stand as an Independent.

Joseph Hallsworth
b.1884, Audenshaw. High speed short hand typer & teacher.
Assistant and general secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Cooperative Employees 1902-22 (later amalgamated with Warehouse Workers' Union).
Jt. General Secretary of NUDAW after 1921.
Wright Robinson, his fellow NUDAW official, described him as an 'arrogant egotist unfit for any high office'.
Produced numerous publications including 'Labour during and after the war' and 'Labour and public health laws'.
Originally a member of the ILP, he was later knighted.

Mrs G. Hamnett
Married to James Henry (see below)
Represented Clayton Division on the Board of Guardians for Labour in 1924.

James Henry Hamnett
b.1877, Manchester. Engineer.
1896 - took part in Boggart Hole Clough Free Speech agitation.
1902-05 - Served on M/cr district committee of ASE.
1906-23 - Chairman of the Bradford (M/cr) branch.
Later a member of the M/cr district committee of the AEU.
1914-19 - Munitions tribunal assessor for Manchester.
Chairman of East Manchester ILP.
Served on the Executive Committee of the Clayton DLP in the 1920s.
Representative of AEU on MBLP EC in late 1920s.

H. Hanaway
Trade Union Secretary.
Stood unsuccessfully for Labour in All Saints' ward, 1920.

G. Harris
Trade Union Secretary.
Stood unsuccessfully for Labour in Ardwick in 1920 and in Moss Side West in 1923.

Mrs L. Harrison
A trained nurse, Swedish remedial gymnast, medical electrician, and masseuse, before marriage she spent over four years in Europe. Then, from 1917-24, she

worked under the Manchester Maternity and Child Welfare Committee until her health broke down. Following this she became secretary of the Manchester Women's Advisory Committee of the Labour Group in 1926. That same year she stood unsuccessfully for Labour in Cheetham ward.

Elijah John Hart

b.India (n.d.).

Father was a soldier (posted in India), Mother a schoolmistress.

Father recalled to England when Hart was aged 5.

Age 13, apprenticed to leather trade.

Age 20 he moved to Liverpool and in 1891 arrived in Manchester.

'It was about this time that he interested himself in Socialism and became a disciple of Robert Blatchford'.

Was among the first members of the Manchester branch of the ILP and Fabian Society.

1902 - Elected to city council for Labour.

1908 - Lost his seat for advocating Sunday bowls.

Writes a farcical comedy, "Mrs Swallow", performed at the Gaiety Theatre. Disappointing reviews.

1914 - Swapped leather trade for insurance.

1917 - Becomes President of the Co-operative Insurance Agents' Union.

1919 - Took part in squat on behalf of homeless ex-servicemen.

1919-35 - Labour councillor for Bradford ward.

1937 - Writes novel, "The Master of Ransley". Receives decent reviews.

1937-38 - Lord Mayor of Manchester. Refused to wear Mayoral robes.

A.W. Haycock

b.1882, Ontario, Canada.

Commercial Traveller.

Educated at Kingston College Institute & Queen's University.

Arrived in Britain (?).

Initially a supporter of the Liberal Party, he joined the ILP pre-1914 and becomes President of the Manchester and Salford Federation.

Ex-organising secretary of the Manchester Norman Angell League (peace group)

Served in an ambulance unit in France during the war, but was later imprisoned for his anti-militarist views. Wrote ammunition column for *Labour Leader* 1915, 1916 etc.

Member of the 1917 Club, the Clarion Club and the National Union of Commercial Travellers.

Became Labour MP for West Salford during 1920s.

Political outlook:

'Socialism means the co-operative exploitation to the utmost of the resources of the world for the benefit of the peoples of the world. Every advantage would be taken from science, and waste in production and distribution would be eliminated. Then, with relatively little effort, all would enjoy abundance. Life would become a real advantage. Personality and genius would find elbow room.'

Dr. Solomon Herbert

Medical Doctor/Psychoanalyst.

An Austrian Jew, he arrived in England aged 26.

He was an occasional speaker at Labour meetings and stood unsuccessfully for the party in a local election in Collegiate ward in 1927.

A member of the Clarion Table (see entry for George Benson).

John Hodge

b.1855, Ayrshire.

Elementary education at Motherwell Iron Work School, followed by a few years at a Glasgow Grammar School.

Went to work at Motherwell Blast Furnaces.

Was at the forefront of moves to create the Steel Smelters' Union, which grew into BSSA, later ISTC.

He was a delegate at the foundation conference of

the LRC.
1906 - Elected Labour MP for Gorton.
1915 - Became Vice-Chairman of the Labour Party. Served in wartime coalition government as Minister of Labour. Reluctantly left the coalition at the end of war and relations with Gorton activists became strained thereafter.
'Throughout his career he was an earnest advocate of conciliation in industrial disputes, and displayed a keen interest in religious and ethical movements that touched at any point his social and political sympathies.'
His Conservative parliamentary secretary at the Pensions Ministry concluded that 'Hodge was really a rampaging and most patriotic Tory working man, who would have delighted the heart of Disraeli.'
1926 - Opposed General Strike as unconstitutional.

W. Holden
Clerk.
Defeated twice as the Co-operative candidate in Blackley at local elections in 1919 and 1920.

Ernest Hookway
b.1878, Cardiff.
Moved to Manchester in 1911.
Assistant General Secretary of the WEA 1909-11.
1911-18 - Secretary of the Jt. Committee for Tutorial Classes in Universities of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Sheffield.
Worked for a while as registration agent for Heywood and Radcliffe DLP.
1919 - Secretary of the Rusholme DLP.
President of MBLP for much of the 1920s.
Director of Manchester and Salford Co-op after 1918.

Ernest Hope
Electrician.
1927-31 - Labour councillor for St. George's ward.

J. Hopkinson
Clerk.
1926 - Secretary of the Withington DLP.

Thomas Horrocks
Coop Secretary.
Fought and won a seat in Moston ward as a Co-op candidate in 1919.

Joseph Howard
Trade Union Organiser.
1926-38 - Labour councillor for Harpurhey ward.

E.J. Howarth
b.1869.
Secretary of Miles Platting ILP throughout the 1920s.
'Earlier in life Councillor Howarth, a retired working engineer, was an active member of the ILP in Manchester, but later joined the Labour Party and was secretary for many years of the Platting DLP, subsequently becoming treasurer.'
1930 - Became a J.P.
1935 - Elected for Labour in Miles Platting ward.
Described by a colleague as 'just a friendly fellow who tried to make life decent.'

Mrs W. J. Hull
Married Woman.
Active in the Blackley DLP.
DLP representative on the MBLP EC in the twenties and a member of the propaganda committee.
1926 - Blackley DLP delegate to the Labour Conference.

J. E. Hutchinson
Secretary of an Approved Society.
1919-31 - Labour councillor for All Saints' ward.

Harry Ingle
b.1892.

Engineer.

Joined the ASE in 1912 and became a shop steward three years later.

He joined the Plebs League and was one of the founders of the Manchester Labour College.

In 1926 and 1928 he was a delegate to the Labour Conference.

W.T. Jackson

b.1864, Nottingham.

Age 14 he became a junior railway clerk.

Age 15 moved to Manchester and became business manager to a firm of plasterers.

Was shocked in his youth by the sight of Manchester slums - a fact which gave him the impetus to be a housing reformer.

Before joining the city council in 1903, 'this young railway clerk had spent his Saturday nights listening to County Forum debates, then given in a market-street cellar. The little band of ardent young men and women were then looked upon as "dangerous revolutionaries".'

On arrival in Manchester Jackson had joined the YMCA in order to gain education. He later became a student at a Manchester branch of Ruskin College, run by Mr C. Beard.

He joined the North Manchester ILP almost at its inception and was the secretary and organiser of the 'Freedom of Speech' meetings held at Boggart Hole Clough.

1903 - Elected for Labour in Harpurhey.

1918 - Became an alderman.

During the 1920s he was the Secretary of the Manchester Borough Labour Party.

1923 - On becoming Lord Mayor, he was described by a local paper as:

'A Labour stalwart...he in no way resembles the red-hot, ranting fellow whom some persons still imagine typifies those of that political persuasion...he is not content to be merely an idealist. He strives with might and main to give effect to his ideals, and if unable to achieve them in wise enough to travel with those who, unwilling to go the whole journey, will traverse a part of the way.'

'A friend of the "bottom dog", Alderman Jackson is not one of those who thinks that creature faultless. He is alive to the "bottom dog's" frailties as anyone, and is not afraid to say so, but it is his aim to help the "bottom dog" over the many strides which beset his path. That is where he differs from those who would only kick the "bottom dog" instead of helping him.'

In 1937, when he was made a freeman of the city, Jackson recalled the pioneering days of the Labour movement in Manchester, when there were only three Labour councillors:

'Many of the proposals we put forward were regarded as extreme, yet even then the City Council were practising some form of Socialism in public ownership, though they would not admit it. I have seen the progress to the days when Socialist measures can be supported as enthusiastically by the Tories as by the Labour members.'

Jackson was the driving force behind the creation of the Abergele Sanitorium and the Wythenshawe Estate.

Milton Jagger

Engineer.

Active member of the ASE.

1919-22 - Labour councillor for Collyhurst.

1923-24 - Councillor for Netwon Heath.

Alf James

b.1869, Plumstead, London.

Father a home worker making pipe tobacco; as a child, James made match boxes with his mother.

Received elementary school education and later took evening classes at City of London College.

Once aspired to Holy Orders: he preached in workhouses and even in the 1930s was still addressing PSA's and brotherhoods.

'It was his early experience among the inhabitants of lodge houses that first turned his attention to Socialism'.

Became involved in the Bow and Bromley ILP, coming under the influence of George Lansbury, 'my father in the faith'.

Was Labour Party whip on Poplar Council until 1912, when he moved to Manchester to take up position as J. R. Clynes' agent in North-East seat.

Later described as the 'prince of election agents.' 'There are few parallels in politics to the affection between Mr Clynes and his agent. To thousands of electors one is almost as well known as the other.'

Co-founder and treasurer of the National Association of Labour Agents.

1913-22 - Member of Manchester Board of Guardians.

1919-35 - Labour councillor for Miles Platting ward.

Lists 'my work' as his recreation.

Member of Miles Platting ILP.

W. Johnson

Clerk.

Defeated in a local election in Withington in 1925.

James Johnston

b.1846, Jarrow.

Civil Engineer.

1880 - Moved to Manchester as a consultant mechanical and civil engineer.

1884-90 - President of Smoke Abatement League.

1886 - Member of Parliamentary Committee that obtained the M/cr Ship Canal Act.

1892 - Chairman of M/cr & Salford Recreative Evening Club.

Founded first camp for poor girls and carried it on for 27 years.

1894 - Established Macclesfield ILP.

1895 - Became first Labour parliamentary candidate in Manchester, standing in North-East Division.

1898 - First elected to Manchester City Council.

Active in working class education through the M/cr Working Men's Asscoiation.

Member of Manchester and Salford Co-op.

1908 - Produced pamphlet advocating co-operative housing.

1912-16 - Member of British Association for the Advancement of Science.

1916 - Became an alderman.

Devotes 'all his time to the betterment of the "poor and oppressed". No intoxicants, no smokes, no flesh meat.'

Not long before his death, when he attended the Lord Mayor's reception in M/cr Town Hall, he showed 'deference to the conventions by wearing a dress suit; but, as usual even on such occasions, he upheld his old Socialist ardour by wearing a red bow tie'.

William Johnston

b.1881, Tyneside.

1891 - Family moved to Manchester. He sold newspapers outside Town Hall.

Aged 18, he got a job as an office boy at the C.W.S. By 1935 he had become a manager.

1926 - Elected for Labour in Collyhurst ward.

1935 - Became the first Labour Chairman of the Finance Committee.

1944 - Died.

Tom Larrad (see below) wrote his obituary: described how he first met Johnston in the Longsight ILP where he was helping to organise a municipal election.

'Later, I went to live at Burnage Garden Village (one of the early and most successful experiments in co-operative working class housing). There, Will Johnston was an active member of the Management Committee. He was always an idealist who could see the practical possibilities of his ideals. Through the depressing post-war years when many people lost their idealism Will Johnston retained his faith in Socialist principles and endeavoured to transform them into practical working schemes.'

Dr. Lloyd Jones

Medical Doctor.

1927-45 - Labour councillor for Medlock Street.

1945-49 - Alderman.

Charles Kean

Trade Union Secretary.

Opposed the formation of Council's of Action in 1920, arguing that the 'autonomy and the identity of the trade unions must be maintained'.

Fought local elections in Cheetham ward in 1920 and 1921 but defeated on both occasions.

President of the Exchange DLP for much of the 1920s.

J. W. Kneeshaw

Labour Party Agent.

A prominent Socialist in the Midlands, in 1922 he was invited by the NAC of the ILP to take up the post of Lancashire Organising Secretary of the ILP.

By the late 1920s he had become increasingly embroiled in Labour Party work, and was made party organiser for north-west England, with his base in Manchester.

In 1929 he was criticised in the ILP press for his 'witch-finder' attitude towards Maxtonite Labour candidates.

Described Socialism as 'the application of the Sermon on the Mount to business. It is the substitution of the Golden Rule for the "rule of gold". It is the exhaltation of Human Life above every other thing, even above property and profits. It is the establishment of the Kingdom of God in London, Manchester, Birmingham, South Wales, the Ruhr Valley and wherever else men choose to live. It is the source of life - "the more abundant life". It is Mankind "grown up".'

Mary Knight

A member of the Socialist Labour Party and a foundation member of the Communist Party.

During the 1920s she was an active member of the Rusholme DLP.

1938-58 - Labour councillor for New Cross ward.

1958-65 - Alderman.

Mr & Mrs R. L. Lang

In 1920 Mrs Lang worked as Secretary of the Rusholme DLP.

The following year her husband, a Post Office Clerk, took up the position and held it until 1923.

Tom Larrad

b.Leicester (n.d.).

Apprentice on a local newspaper.

Joined the ILP age 15 after reading Blatchford's "Merrie England".

Attended a Working Men's College and also took a correspondance course at Ruskin College.

Pre-1914 was a member of the EC of the Leicester Labour Party and honorary secretary of the ILP. Served on Ramsay MacDonald's election committee.

1911 - Moved to Manchester as a compositor.

1921 - Took part in a newspaper strike and jointly edited an evening 'strike' paper.

1922 - Played a leading role in Labour's parliamentary election victory in Ardwick, a seat the NUR (who were sponsoring the candidate) believed was 'a hopeless fight for Labour'.

1923 - Became a full time LP agent for Ardwick DLP. Meanwhile, he also worked as a secretary for the Manchester Central branch ILP.

1924 - took part in an unemployed march to London.

1925 - first elected to Manchester City Council. During his time he fought for the abolition of the means test and increased benefits.

During the 1930s he was active in the movement to gain greater powers for local parties inside the Labour organisation. Was a member of the Provisional Committee which successfully forced the

NEC to award more places to local party delegates.
1924-37 - President of MBLP.
Finally removed after 13 years in a left-wing coup.

Arthur Law
b.1876, Yorkshire.
Railway engine driver, based in Newton Heath depot.
Railwayman since 1893.
Worked on the NEC of the ASRS 1910-12 and on the NEC of the NUR 1918-20.
In 1910 he spoke at the Manchester foundation conference of the Industrial Syndicalist Education League.
Parliamentary candidate for West Salford 1922.
Became Rossendale's first Labour MP in 1929.
Member of ILP.

Annie Lee
b.1899, Oldham Road district, M/cr.
"My Father was a Liberal and my Mother a Tory. I became a Socialist through my religion. I was a member of the Oldham Rd Independent Chapel Sunday School, and it seemed to me that the Christian teaching was opposed to poverty. I studied Socialist doctrine and I believed, as I still do, that Socialism is the best means of abolishing poverty."
Trade Union activist since the age of 16.
Aged 18 she became secretary of the Openshaw ILP. However, she left that body when it detached from the Labour Party in 1932.
A year later she was elected to the Board of Guardians.
1919 - Elected for Labour in Gorton South ward.
1930 - Appointed a magistrate.
1936 - Became first female alderman in Manchester.
An "avowed feminist", she became a member of the Watch, Public Health and Education Committees where she believed women's services are needed. Aims for creation of a women police force. "But I would have them dressed in a nurse's uniform, which is thoroughly womanly."
A lifelong teetollar.
She died 25 October 1945. There was no headstone on her grave.

Frank Lloyd
b.1883, Manchester.
Educated at Manchester Grammar School.
1907 - Founded Lancashire & Cheshire Young Liberals.
1909 - Left the Liberal Party.
1917 - Began speaking for ILP, specialising in economic and agricultural questions and on the history of the Labour movement.
1919 - Became General Secretary of the Wallpaper Workers' Union.
1920-21 - Secretary of the Central Manchester branch of the ILP.
1923-26 - Treasurer of MBLP.
Chairman of the Rusholme Ward LP.
Suspected to be a communist, by the late 1920s, when the Labour Party was purging its ranks of CP members, he disappeared from the EC of the MBLP.

Tom Lowth
b.1858, Lincolnshire.
Had an elementary education, then went into the railway service in 1875, coming to live in Manchester.
For 23 years he was a railway worker.
1898-1913 - General Secretary of the GRWU (HQ in Manchester).
During this time he was elected for Labour to the city council and also worked on the Manchester and Salford Trades Council.
1913 - Left for London as Asst Sec of the NUR.
1918 - Stood for Labour unsuccessfully in Ardwick division.
'In spite of his six years service as a city councillor for one its wards, he was defeated, largely because his ILP principles accorded ill with the general mood

of the day, and the prevailing determination to "make Germany pay".'

1919 - He had to retire his union position on reaching 60.

1922 - Fought Ardwick again and this time won.

1930 - NUR ordered him to stand down at next general election, a decision he unsuccessfully fights to have overturned.

Was a member of the Rational Association Friendly Society.

Richard Lundy

b.1874, Manchester.

'Mr Lundy was a newspaper worker who in 1909 became branch secretary in Manchester of the National Association of Operative Printers and Assistants.'

1919-31 - Represented Harpurhey ward for Labour.

Vice-President of the Irish Democratic League in M/cr.

Northern District Secretary of the Nat. SOPA.

Member of the Knights of St. Columba (Catholic Society).

Lundy was involved in an internal Labour Party dispute in 1929-30 over issue of Catholic Schools which resulted in his suspension. The row, which created national headlines, was never fully resolved.

Died in 1946.

Mrs Mackintosh

Married Woman.

An active worker in the Withington DLP and an executive member of the Manchester and Salford WCA.

She did much work in connection with police court probationers and was engaged in 'enlightened efforts to protect the unmarried mother.'

Honorary Superintendent of the Manchester and Salford Women's Christian Temperance Association; active member of the Guild of Social Services, the Civic League of Help, the Council of Christian Congregations, the Manchester Free Church Federation and the Police Court Mission to Women.

Robert Malcolm

Insurance Agent.

1927 - Representative of Clayton Divisional Co-operative Party on MBLP EC.

1928 - Chairman of the Manchester Co-operative Party.

1928-31 - Labour councillor for Collyhurst.

1933-52 - Labour councillor for Bradford.

1952 - Alderman.

Patrick Lindsay Martin

Retired Postal Servant.

1906-07 - Labour councillor for Openshaw.

1919-22 - Labour councillor for Newton Heath.

1927-28 - ILP delegate to MBLP Executive and Miles Platting ILP delegate to Annual Conference.

Fred Mason

Secretary of the Manchester Branch of the General Union of Braziers and Sheet Metal Workers.

1927-30 - Labour councillor for St. George's ward.

1935-45 - Labour councillor for Miles Platting.

Robert Matthews

Carter.

1924-32 - Labour councillor for New Cross.

Dr. M. E. May

Medical Doctor.

During the 1920s she was active in the Rusholme DLP.

1926 - NUGW delegate to the Manchester and Salford Trades Council.

Founded the Family Planning Unit.

J. McConville

b.1884, Manchester.

French Polisher.
Member of NAFTA, the ILP and the Exchange Labour Club.

Andrew McElwee
Senior Trade Union Official in the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers.
Arrived in Hulme as an 11th hour Parliamentary Labour Candidate in December 1923.
Despite losing the contest, he remained in Hulme, financially supported by the ASW.
Defeated again in 1924 he eventually won the seat for Labour in 1929.
1930 - ASW runs into financial difficulties and cannot afford to maintain its Hulme agent, Leo Corcoran (see above). McElwee berates this decision and is later taken to court by the Union for slander.
1931 - Hulme DLP pressures McElwee to stand down at next election, but he refuses. However, he is defeated at the polls, and retires from the constituency.

Joseph McGee
Originally a tinsmith, he was active in the Openshaw Socialist Society, being a class tutor in Economics on a course conducted at the Openshaw Socialist Hall.
He also had SDF connections, attending the 1907 Conference as a delegate of the Ashton branch.
He was a member of the Plebs League and one of the founders of Manchester Labour College and its first secretary.
In 1922 he was a Labour College tutor in Economics and Economic Geography.
Throughout the 1920s he was a delegate of the Post Office Workers' Union on the MBLP EC.

J.M. McLachlan
Held a variety of jobs including work as a salesman.
Newspaper article in 1910:
'He was converted to Socialism many years ago by the books of that arch opponent of Socialism, Herbert Spencer, and became a teacher of industrial history, sociology, and ethics.'
Was secretary of the original Central branch of the Manchester ILP.
Early in 1900s was a leading figure on Levenshulme United District Council.
Worked for a time in the Calico Printers' Association before undertaking control of a Socialist cafe in Manchester.
1911 - elected to Manchester City Council for Labour.
Became a nationally prominent Labour figure in immediate pre-war period.
1920 - forced to retire from politics due to a throat problem.

Rev. W. McMullan
Clergyman.
Fought Ardwick ward twice in 1927 and 1928 but was defeated each time.

J. McQueeney
Registration Agent employed by the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners Federation.
1919-23 - Secretary of the Clayton DLP.

William R. Mellor
b.1861, Manchester.
Received his education through the Ancoats Recreation Lectures, winning a scholarship which enabled him to spend a short time in Oxford (Keble College).
On his return he became a bookbinder.
1910-12 - Secretary of the Northern Art Workers' Guild.
1916-34 - Represented the Labour group on the city council (for Moston ward), sitting on the Baths, Housing and Public Health Committees.
He was the first full time secretary of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council retiring in 1929 after 21 years.

After the First World War he founded the Manchester and Salford Tenants Defence League, helping to bring about the Rent Restrictions Acts.

1934 - Died aged 73.

1958 - Auction of illuminated manuscripts at Sotheby's in London includes a depiction of William Morris's "Golden Wings", produced in 1908 by Mellor. The catalogue contained a description:

'Will Mellor had a great reverence for William Morris the writer and had read and studied practically everything Morris wrote. Mellor was a bookbinder and keenly interested in the Kelmscott Press and its influence on book production. Thirdly, Mellor was a Socialist of the Ruskin-Morris school'.

Eric Mendell

b.1903, Manchester.

Ex-Manchester Grammar School boy and product of Clifton College, Bristol.

Became a Director of a firm of Raincoat Manufacturers.

Worked for Exchange DLP in 1920s and 1930s and in 1935 stood as Labour parliamentary candidate in the division.

1947-63 - Labour representative for Collegiate ward.

T.W. Mercer

b.1884, Surrey.

Educated at elementary school, and later on a University extension course and also by private study.

Closely involved in the Co-op and WEA.

Secretary of the Reigate Labour League.

Published "Adult School Movement" in 1910 with E. H. Hobley.

In 1922, he was the Co-operative Party candidate in Moss Side at the general election.

Hannah Mitchell

b.1872, near Sheffield.

A Farmer's daughter from a Nonconformist background - one of her father's barns was used for religious services by local victims of the Act of Uniformity.

Apprenticed as a dressmaker, she ran away and gained work as a maid and then in various clothing jobs.

In her mid-20s she began to read the *Clarion* and attend Labour Church meetings.

Became a member of the ILP

Closely involved in the Suffragette Movement, she was later involved in trade union work.

1908 - Jailed for three days in Strangeways due to suffrage demonstrations.

1924 - Elected Labour councillor for Newton Heath.

1925 - Became a magistrate.

1932 - Resigned from the Labour Party in compliance with ILP Conference decision to disaffiliate.

"Is said to have owed her radical inspiration to a book of poems given to her as a small girl..."

J. Moreton

Labourer.

1928 - Secretary of the South Salford DLP.

Arthur Mostyn

Worked as a sign writer, before later becoming a commercial agent.

In 1920, a Clarion Van emblazoned with the word 'Socialism", painted by Mostyn, was turned away from Stockport by Labour activists fighting a by-election.

In 1929, Mostyn was elected for Labour in St. Luke's ward.

An ILP man, in 1932 he resigned from the Labour Party in compliance with the ILP Conference decision to disaffiliate. In his resignation letter to the leader of the Labour group, he referred to:

'the lack of revolutionary purpose in the Labour group as evidenced by the acceptance of capitalist ritual and outlook. My interest in politics is directed only to fighting the capitalist system on every occasion. The leaders, local and national, of the working class movement should be fomenting revolt against the existing system and building up working class strength to overthrow it. The Labour Party has consistently compromised and retreated, and its revolutionary purpose - the overthrow of capitalist government - has been sold for a mess of pottage.'

Jack Munro
b.1874, Manchester.
Sheet Metal Worker.
Before the war he was a member of the Openshaw Socialist Society and later became a member of the Plebs League and a class tutor for the Manchester Labour College.
During the 1914-18 war he was a leader of the Manchester Engineering Joint Shop Stewards' Committee.
1921-29 - Was a member of the EC of the Sheet Metal Workers' Union.
Throughout the 1920s he held a series of senior posts on the Manchester and Salford Trades Council including President and Secretary. In 1925, he was at the centre of a controversy over the presence of Communists in Labour Party ranks, after the trades council selected him as one of their five delegates to the MBLP.
1926 & 1927 - Manchester and Salford Trades Council delegate to the Labour Conference.
1930-31 - President of his Union.

Arthur O'Donnell
b.1885, Manchester.
Initially worked as a sorting clerk in the Post Office.
Edited "M.R.View", the Newton Street P.O. branch journal and was secretary of the M/cr branch of the P.O. Workers' Union.
1923 - Secretary of the Hulme DLP.
In 1931 he organised resistance to the "Geddes Axe" cuts, which led to his permanent expulsion from P.O. premises. However, his branch maintained him as its full time union secretary and paid him almost his old salary.
1938 - Published pamphlet, *Failure and Salvation of the Labour Party*, attacking disorganisation and corruption in local Labour parties.
George Williams, central secretary of M/cr P.O. Union wrote in 1957:
"A born rebel in almost every view he held, "O'Dee" figured in many a controversy and was often involved in vigorous dispute with P.O. departmental heads and, not infrequently, also with the Headquarters of his own Union."
He "...seemed impervious to the attractions offered by promotion and preferred to remain a super-efficient, unorthodox, and wholehearted protagonist on behalf of P.O. workers of all grades covered by the Union."

J. W. O'Neill
Trade Union Official.
Member of the Amalgamated Union of Tailor & Garment Workers.
1923 - Unsuccessful as Labour candidate in a local election in St. George's ward in 1923.
Sent by his union as delegate to the Labour Conference several times during 1920s.

William Onions
Clerk.
Member of the Manchester Ship Canal Board.
1927-30 - Labour councillor for Harpurhey.
1934-50 - Labour councillor for Moston.
1952 - Alderman.

James Openshaw
b.1876, Salford.
Aged 18 he became secretary of the Salford branch of the Postmen's Federation.
Active in Salford ILP.
1907 - Elected Labour councillor for Seedley ward.

1910 - Organised the first strike.

1918 - Helped to found Salford LP and the three divisional parties. Also worked for local ILP.

Attendants through him out of the Town Hall because he helped conscientious objectors appear before the Salford Tribunal during the First World War.

Acted as election agent in Salford for 50 years.

'In later years his big interest was housing. He became chairman of Salford's housing committee and did invaluable work in the task of rehousing Salford's slums.'

Jack Owen

b.1887, Salford.

Initially worked as an apprentice engineer, but later became a commercial traveller.

1903 - Joined the South Salford SDF.

Became a student at Ruskin College and in 1909 was one of the founders of the Central Labour College.

He was the first organiser of the Lancashire Plebs League.

1911 - Was a delegate to the Manchester Conference on Industrial Syndicalism.

1928 - Stood unsuccessfully for Labour in Moss Side East ward local election.

He later became Vice-Chairman of the MBLP and from 1937-46 served on Manchester City Council as the Labour representative for Medlock Street.

Albert Park

Manager.

1919-23 - Co-operative councillor for Collyhurst.

H. Patchett

Pattern Card Maker.

During the 1920s he was Secretary of the North Salford DLP.

William Paul

b.1884.

Journalist and political activist.

Prominent member of the Glasgow Socialist Labour Party.

1914-18 - Edited *The Socialist.*

In 1920 he was among the founder members of the CPGB and between 1921-23 edited *The Communist Review.*

In the 1923 and 1924 general elections, he fought the Rusholme division for Labour.

Became a member of the EC of the Plebs League and edited *The Sunday Worker.*

Charles Priestly

Trade Union Official.

Throughout the 1920s one of the Vice-Presidents of the MBLP.

Active in the Clayton DLP.

Described in 1924 as 'perhaps the best known and most popular' propagandist in Lancashire.

E. Procter

Clerk.

1921-22 - Secretary of the Exchange DLP.

Alfred Arthur Purcell

b.1872.

Began work as a French Polisher but quickly became involved in trade union work.

At the age of 26 he was made General Secretary of the London French Polishers' Union.

Moving to Salford a few years later, he became a prominent member of the SDF and secured election to Salford City Council in 1907.

He was often a delegate to Manchester and Salford Trades Council and became its President in 1910 and 1917-19.

In 1910 he was the Chairman of the Manchester Conference on Industrial Syndicalism.

After the war he became a member of the General Council of the TUC, participating in the General

Strike.

Around this time he also became an MP, being elected for Coventry and later the Forest of Dean. However, he maintained his links with the Manchester area and in 1929 he was the prospective parliamentary Labour candidate for Moss Side, polling well but without success.

From 1929-35 he worked as Secretary of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council.

F. J. Randall

Trade Union Official with the Post Office Workers' Union.

Treasurer of the MBLP in 1921.

Tom Regan

b.1888, Longsight.

Went to St. Francis's School, Gorton.

Worked as a grocer's boy, then labelled bottles of mineral water in a factory.

1902 - Became an apprentice engineer.

1914-18 – Involved in war munitions work.

1917 - starts political work, joining Gorton Trades Council. Took part in a strike against "dilution" of engineers by unskilled labourers.

1919 - Sacked from his job.

Went to Manchester Labour College.

1921-22 - Won an AEU scholarship to Ruskin College, Oxford, where he studied economics, philosophy, psychology and trade union law.

In 1922 he returned to Manchester and led a hunger march from Gorton to London. The following year he got employment with the Co-operative Insurance Society.

1925 - Elected to Manchester City Council as a Labour representative.

A member of the Manchester branch of the ISDL, he married the secretary.

A teetotaller and non-smoker, he had pronounced views on the monarchy and the mayoral system and refused to stand for the national anthem. During the 1920s he was known as the "stormy petrel" of the Labour group.

Mellowed in later life - by 1955 he was Lord Mayor.

James Reilly

b.1860.

Kept a leather shop on Rochdale Road 'where Irish politicians foregathered to talk about affairs'.

1913-30 - Represented St. Mike's ward as Irish Nationalist and later Labour councillor.

1930 - made an alderman.

Before 1916, Reilly presided over the United Ireland League Manchester HQ in Shamrock Hall.

After 1916, ISDL founded many Sinn Fein branches in England.

The UIL founded the Irish Democratic League, of which Reilly became President. 'This was a body with strong Labour sympathies, and several of its members became prominent Labour leaders in the Platting division.'

B. Reynolds

Portrait Artist.

1922 - Secretary of the Moss Side DLP.

A.W. Roberts

Grocer's Assistant.

1920 and 1921 he was secretary of the North Salford DLP. In 1922, **Mrs Roberts** took over this role.

Annot Robinson

b. Dundee (1874)

Graduate of St. Andrew's University (Lady Literate in Arts, External Degree).

She worked for the ILP in Dundee before moving to Manchester in 1907, working as a trade union organiser.

Became well known in Manchester for her suffragist activities, working with Hannah Mitchell and Ellen Wilkinson.

A member of the Central branch ILP (she married its secretary, Sam Robinson (see below)), she was part of the Left Wing Committee formed by militant Manchester members after the war, which urged the party to affiliate to the Communist (Third) International.

During the 1920s she was active in local Labour party affairs, organising a women's section in Blackley and standing (unsuccessfully) in several local elections.

In 1920 she was Vice-President of the MBLP.

1921 – Worked as an organiser for the Women's International League. The same year she was Blackley DLP's delegate to the Labour Conference.

1925 - Elected to the Board of Guardians, representing Hulme division.

Francis Robinson

Married to Wright Robinson (see below).

Worked with Wright in NUDAW until 1922 when she was forced to give up post due to internal opposition to husband and wife teams. In 1925 she took up a managerial position at the ILP paper, *Labour's Northern Voice.*

Throughout the 1920s she was an active member of the ILP.

By the 1930s, the Robinsons had moved to Burnage, and Francis and Wright became involved in the local Burnage Community Association.

Sam Robinson

Foundation member of the ILP and Secretary of Manchester Central ILP from formation.

1907 - Married Annot (see above).

Served as chairman of Manchester and Salford ILP.

1932 - Expelled from ILP due to his opposition to Bradford decision to disaffiliate from the Labour Party.

Wright Robinson

b.1876, Burnley.

Attended elementary schools until he was 13 and subsequently educated himself: 'books opened up a new world, and offered a new dimension to one's personality'. Robinson was widely read: H.G. Wells, Darwin, Mark Twain, G. B. Shaw, Tolstoy, Swift, Ruskin etc., but said most influential book was Annual Report of Medical Health Officer.

Age 15 he became an apprentice carpenter.

Age 23, he was seriously injured in a fall - then told he had TB - went to Canada.

1908 - Back in England, he joined the ILP and the Fabian Society.

'In Blackburn he was keenly interested in religious and political work', but by the 1920s he had become a humanist.

1911 – Elected to Blackburn Council.

1913 - G. B. Shaw got him a job as an organiser of the Liverpool ILP. He edited *Liverpool Forward.*

1917 - Moved to Manchester as organiser of the Warehouse and General Workers' Union.

Married to Francis (see above), his second wife.

1919-35 - Elected for Labour in Beswick ward. Later became an alderman.

Supported Anglo-Soviet rallies during SWW.

He was rumoured to have turned town a position in the House of Lords in 1945.

Wright Robinson died in 1961. Lady Simon, a convert from the Liberals to Labour in 1935, described him as 'the least conscious of class divisions of anyone I have known...'. His diaries are stored in Manchester Central Library. A keen educationalist, he had a school named after him in Manchester.

T. Ronan

Liscensed Victualler.

Elected to St. Michael's ward as an Irish Nationalist & Labour candidate in 1919.

Soon afterwards he formally joined the Labour Party.

J. Rushton

Salesman.

1927 - Secretary of the Exchange DLP.

T. Savage
b.1877, Scotland.
Fried Fish Dealer (he had earlier been a dockworker).
Trade Union activist in the TGWU. Treasurer of his branch between 1920-30.
He was a member of the CPGB, but was also active in the Labour Party - in 1919 he was Secretary of the North Salford DLP.
Mrs Savage was an active member of the Pendleton Co-op Women's Guild.

Clement Scott
Trade Union Official - Secretary of the Industrial and Political Branch of the NUC.
1920 & 1922 - Stood unsuccessfully for Labour in Crumpsall.

Josephine Shaw
Trade Union Official.
'Her father was an active member of the old Radical party, her mother a quiet supporter of the suffrage movement...'
1926 - While in her thirties, widowed with a six year old daughter, she stood (unsuccessfully) for Labour in St. Michael's ward, where she had grown up.

Mrs Mary E. Smith
Shopkeeper (Bicycles).
Married to Alex Graham (see above).
1919-23 - Labour councillor for Beswick ward.
Died in 1923, received the following tribute from Charles Priestly (with whom she had a relationship):
'It was only late in life that she received the call from her comrades to serve in the public eye, and she brought into her new work the same joy in service, the same unselfish personality that had endeared her to her comrades behind the scenes. Her work on the city council will long be remembered by those who were privileged to serve with her. Never a brilliant speaker, she was seldom heard in the Council Chamber itself, but her administrative work on committee was a revelation of careful thought and wise consideration.'

W. Spofforth
Labour Party Agent.
1919-22 - Secretary and agent of the Blackley DLP and an executive official of the MBLP.
1919-22 - Blackley delegate to Labour Conference.
Spofforth was a senior party agent and wrote regular columns in *Labour Organiser*, an official party journal.
After leaving Blackley he worked in the nearby Westhoughton constituency, helping secure the election of Rhys Davies.
After working as the Labour agent in Westhoughton for ten years, in 1932 Spofforth was forced to resign by local members unhappy with his political stance. Angered by his refusal to resign from Lancashire County Council (which was imposing one of the harshest means tests in the country), party members were further alarmed by rumours that he had private business interests in Bolton. On the day he resigned, Spofforth swiped at his critics and said the Labour Party could 'never attain power or be permanent in this country unless above all it is a national party.'

J.E. Sutton
Miner/Checkweighman.
Trade Union Official in LCMF.
One of the first Labour councillors in Manchester, elected for Bradford ward in 1894.
Refused to become an alderman and chose to go to the polls every three years due to his belief in democracy.
1910 - Labour MP for Manchester East.
1922 - Labour MP for Clayton division.
Obituary described him as
'of that school of Socialists that grew out of Liberal

Nonconformity through the ILP. He was never a revolutionary but a strong co-operator and temperance advocate...a firm advocate of municipal ownership of essential local services and one who did much to advance the municipalising of the transport service. Beliefs of that kind he carried over later into national affairs.'

Member of East Manchester ILP and Clayton Labour Club.

J.W. Sutton

b.1883, Manchester.

Son of "Old Jack" (J.E. Sutton).

1919 - Elected to Manchester City Council as Labour representative for Bradford ward.

President of the Beswick Co-op.

1924 - elected to CWS Board.

1942 - Vice President of CWS.

Governor of Hulme Grammar School.

Came under fire from some in the party because he was a Freemason.

Tom Swan

Vice President of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council during the 1920s.

Also served on the EC of the MBLP.

Branch secretary of the Lancs. district NUGMW.

In 1927, he had been active in the Labour movement for over 30 years, except for war service 1915-19.

Published several books through the ILP:

Edward Carpenter: the Man and his Message

Prince Kropotkin: the Man and his Message

Fraternity and Evolution

Mrs Dora Taylor

First National Women's Organiser for the Co-op Party.

She had previously been district secretary of the Labour Party and district secretary of the Co-op Women's Guild.

Began work as an elementary school teacher.

A member of the ILP and the Manchester and Salford Women's Citizen Association, she was also secretary of the Society for Organising Home Helps.

1925-31 - Labour councillor for Miles Platting.

William Prince Telfer

Worked in the Reformers' Bookshop.

Vegetarian.

1919-20 - Propaganda secretary of the Moss Side ILP.

1920-26 - member of MBLP EC; worked as propaganda secretary and provided the party with literature stalls at events and meetings.

1925-26 - Chairman of Moss Side ILP.

1927 - Chairman of Manchester branch of NUC.

A. M. Thomson

Grease Manufacturer.

DLP delegate to MBLP EC in 1921.

1923 - Secretary of the Moss Side DLP.

1924 - Unsuccessful Labour candidate in All Saints' ward.

Harry Thorneycroft

Hairdresser.

'His early political views were formulated by that great preacher of the Left...Mr Robert Blatchford. At 17 years of age, when an apprentice in a barber shop, he would often spend odd moments...with an eager nose buried in Blatchford's now defunct paper, the "Clarion".'

1914-17 - fought in the war, and joined the ILP on his return home.

In the interwar period he started a hairdressing business and took a correspondence course from Ruskin College.

He became active in the Labour Party and in 1923 was elected councillor for Beswick ward, retaining the position until 1939, when he was made an alderman.

In 1942 he was elected MP for Clayton, holding the seat until 1955.

A. E. Tilbrook
Engineer.
1920 - SCLP delegate to Labour Conference.
1921 - Secretary of the South Salford DLP.

Ben Tillett
Official in Dock Workers' Union.
MG refers to a speech Tillett made at a "Distributionist" meeting to advance the sociological reforms advocated by G.K. Chesterton:
Tillett's 'speech was neither a Distributionist speech nor a Socialist speech. It was a social-reform speech without dogmas but with a torrent of true eloquence and humanitarian passion, without bitterness but with human feeling, by which no heart could fail to be stirred.'

George Titt
b.1879, Gloucestershire.
Left school at 12 to become a saddler.
Apprenticed to Bristol he met James O'Grady (later Governor of Tasmania) and become an ardent supporter of the Socialist doctrine.'
In 1899 he moved to Birmingham and became a paid official of the local ILP. Subsequently jailed for seven days for airing pacifist views during the Boer War. In 1910 he moved to Manchester and was elected Labour councillor for Openshaw ward.
1921 - An official of the TGWU, he was among the leaders of the 1921 strike for an engineers minimum wage.
1927-28 - Vice President of MBLP.
1928 - Became an alderman and in 1931, Lord Mayor.
As chairman of the education committee, he addressed Fallowfield Girls School encouraging pupils to stay on at 14:
'If an extended education has any assets at all it is to make you better men and women. It is the cultural side which develops the finest characteristics of the boy and girl which is the most important factor in raising the school age.'

Joe Toole
b.1887, Salford.
Working in a variety of jobs, he joined the SDF in South Salford and took part in debates at the County Forum.
1914-18 - served in the RAF.
1919 - Elected Labour councillor for Openshaw ward.
During most of the 1920s he worked as a stationer.
1920 - Treasurer of the MBLP.
1923 - Elected MP in South Salford (and again in 1929)
During the 1930s he was on the Labour Party NEC.
1936 - Became an alderman: 'There was a time when he did not believe in it [the aldermanic system], but it was astonishing how, with advancing years, they could get converted to a rational point of view.'
1937 - Lord Mayor of Manchester.

B. Tooze
Clerk.
1928-30s - Secretary of the West Salford DLP.

A. E. Townend
Trade Union Official with the Railway Clerks' Association.
Stood unsuccessfully in Blackley at the 1918 and 1922 general elections.

A. Underwood
Postal Overseer.
Throughout the 1920s he worked as Secretary of the Blackley ILP.

Thomas Walker
b.1876, Salford.

Moved to Gorton as a boy, going to St. James's school till 12.
Began working for a pawnbroker, but later became a railwayman: worked as a furnace lad, cleaner, clerk, then promoted to locomotive fireman.
Refused offer to become an Inspector - chose to continue to work on behalf of his fellow workers as a union representative. Was sent by his trade union as a delegate to several TUC's.
Was one of the leaders of three great railway strikes and was on the central committee (M/cr) during the general strike.
1924-41 - Represented Gorton ward for Labour.
1941-61 - Alderman.
He 'symbolised the idea of political independence.'

Phillip Wall
Insurance Manager.
1919-21 - Labour councillor for Beswick ward.

R. C. Wallhead
Journalist.
1919-21 - Labour councillor for Ardwick ward.
1920-23 - Secretary of the Levenshulme ILP.
Lived in Burnage Garden Village, Withington, in early 1920s but moved south, becoming a senior political figure in labour politics, gaining election to the NAC of the ILP and also becoming a Labour MP.

T. Walsh
Postman.
1925-27 - Secretary of the South Salford DLP.

W. Watson
Trade Union Organiser.
1920 - Fought St. Mark's ward for Labour but failed to gain election.

Harold Weate
b.1894, Ardwick.
Trade Union official with NUDAW.
1919-28 - Represented Ardwick ward for Labour.
Later Vice-President of Manchester Borough LP.
An ILP and LP propagandist since the war.

Harry Webb
b.1889, Ashton.
Textile Worker.
Commenced employment aged 12 in an Ashton cotton mill.
Aged 17 he joined the Socialist Labour Party and in 1910 campaigned in support of William McGee, the SDF candidate for Ashton in the general election.
In 1920 he was a delegate at the Communist Unity Convention, speaking against Parliamentarism and affiliation to the Labour Party. The following year he was elected to the CPGB Executive and became party district organiser in Sheffield.
Between 1923-24 he came to Salford and became Secretary of the South Salford DLP, which gained a reputation as home to numbers of Communist members.
In 1928 he moved to Liverpool to organise the Communist Party there, though he returned to Manchester during the Second World War.

Mary Welch
b. Manchester (n.d.).
District organiser of NUDAW.
Member of Manchester and Salford Trades Council and delegate to the MBLP EC during 1920s.
1923-29 - Labour representative for Moston ward.
'Throughout her adult life she was prominently associated with most of the movements in the Manchester district which fought for the political, social, and economic freedom of women, and she was particularly interested in the struggle for the vote and in the Women's International Federation.'

G. Wellings
Shopkeeper.
Wesleyan Sunday School preacher.

A Liberal before 1914, in the early 1920s he became active in the Labour Party, becoming Secretary of the Blackley DLP in 1923. The following year he gained election to Manchester Council as a Labour candidate for Moston ward.

In 1927 he left the Labour Party, saying he could not go on preaching the 'gospel of hate' heard at every street corner. Returned to the Liberal Party.

J. M. Wharton

Shopkeeper.

Secretary of the Ardwick DLP for much of the 1920s.

1926-38 - Represented Ardwick for Labour.

Abraham Whitehead

Official with the NUR.

Elected first President of the Platting DLP in 1918, he retired in 1924 to make way for a younger man and died in 1926.

Edgar Whiteley

Secretary and Manager.

1913-20 - Labour councillor for Longsight ward.

In 1924 he came forward as Parliamentary Labour candidate in Withington. Unsurprisingly defeated.

Lived in Burnage Garden Village.

Ellen Wilkinson

b.1891; Chorlton-on-Medlock.

Her father was a Liberal, her mother a Tory. She became a socialist because of her early living conditions.

Went to Ardwick School and later to Manchester University, where she gained an M.A. in History.

She then worked for the Amalgamated Union of Co-operative Employees (later NUDAW), becoming the National Organiser in 1915.

She was an executive member of the National Guild League and a foundation member of the CPGB.

1923-26 - Labour representative for Gorton ward.

1924 - Elected Labour MP for Middlesborough East.

1935-47 - Labour MP for Jarrow and Minister for Education 1945-47.

During her career she belonged to a number of political groups including the 1917 Club, Women's International League, Plebs League and the University Socialist Federation.

Wright Robinson, who worked with her in NUDAW during 1920s, described her as 'a little vulgar clever and unscrupulous woman'. He believed she was a careerist.

She died in 1947 from a suspected drug overdose.

John Williams

b.1873.

Was an Out-Student with Ruskin College.

1917 - Organisation of the Lancashire district NUGMW – he had close links with J.R. Clynes on Union Executive.

Pre-1914 had been on Crewe Council.

1926-32 - Labour representative for All Saints' ward.

President of Ladybarn Bowling Club, 1929-37.

Member of the ILP, League of Nations Union and Oddfellows.

F. Winstanley

Belt Maker.

Involved in the Leather Workers' Union.

1919-30 - Secretary of the Platting DLP.

A. Wolstenhome

Branch Secretary of the United Vehicle Workers' Union.

Represented his union on MBLP EC in 1920.

Defeated in four consecutive elections in Harpurhey ward between 1920 and 1924.

A. E. Wood

Dublin-born Barrister, he became a K.C.

Fought as Rusholme Labour candidate in the 1922 general election. Unsuccessful.

C. Wood

Locomotive Engine Driver.
1923-40 - Labour councillor for St. Mark's ward.
1940-46 - Alderman.

Charles E. Wood

b.1877
Wholesale grocer.
1898 - Secretary of Education, Statistics and Publications Department of the Co-op.
1919 - Elected unopposed for Labour in Miles Platting.
During the 1920s he was treasurer of the Platting DLP.
1922 - Defeated in a three-corner contest, but regained the seat in 1927.
Died in 1937, remembered as 'an unobtrusive but valuable public worker'.
Funeral held at Wesleyan Chapel, Oldham Road, Platting.

W. Wooley

Railway Engine Driver.
1927-30s - Secretary of the Gorton Trades Council.

R. Wright

Railway Clerk.
1920 - Defeated in local election in Rusholme.

Appendix 4

Table I. Manchester Municipal Elections 1909-13

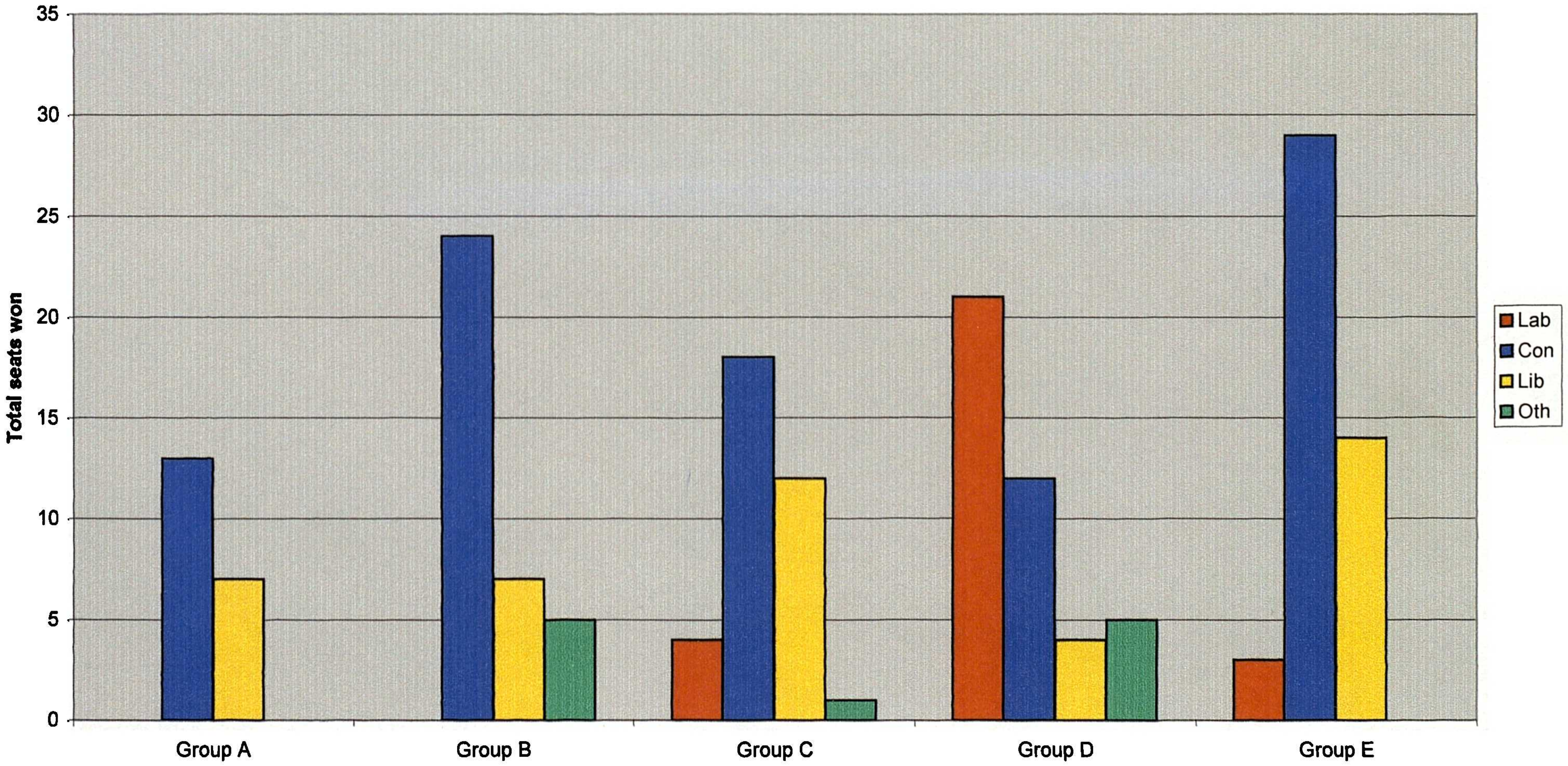


Table II. Manchester Municipal Elections 1919-23

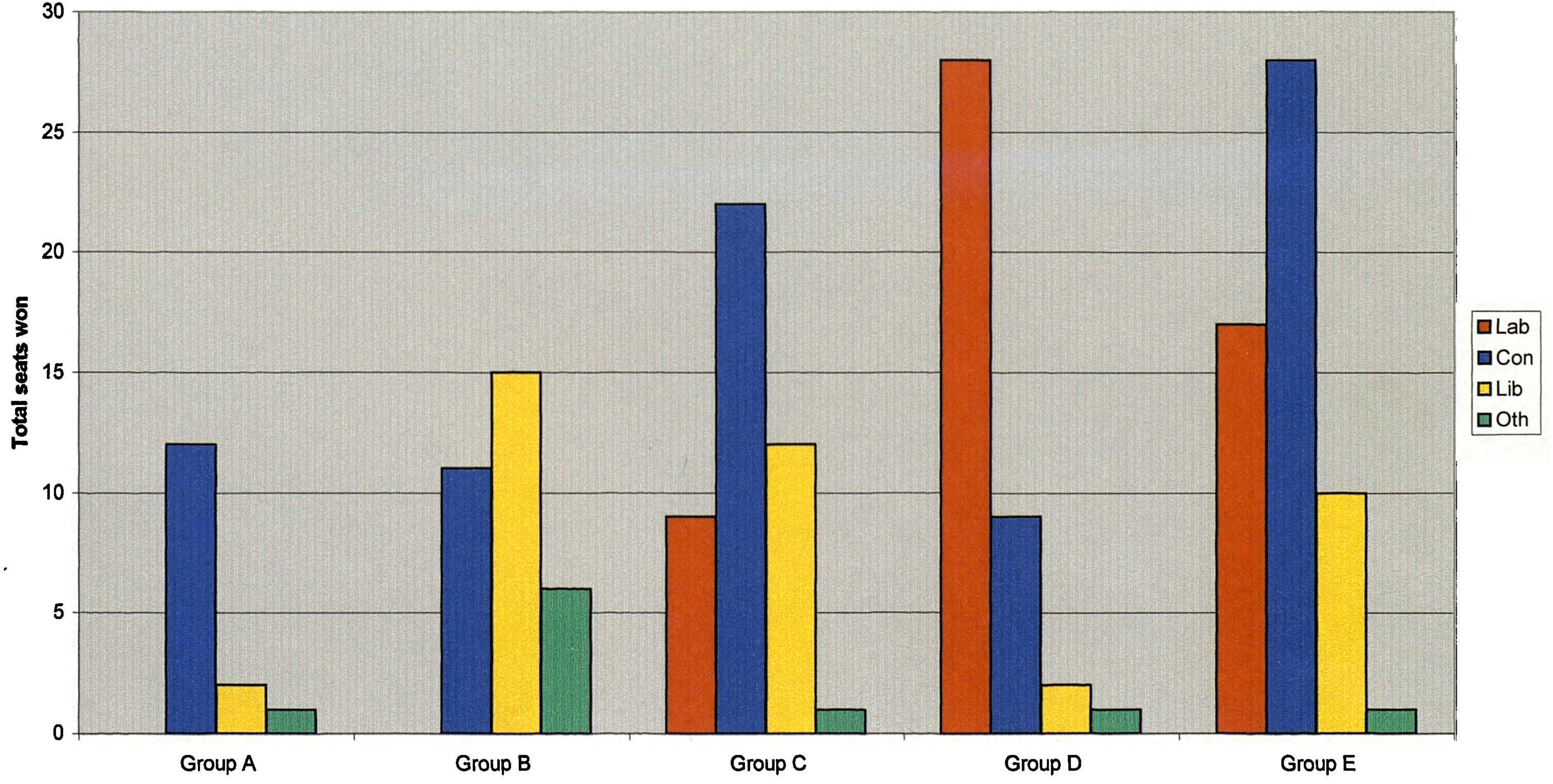


Table III. Manchester Municipal Elections 1924-28

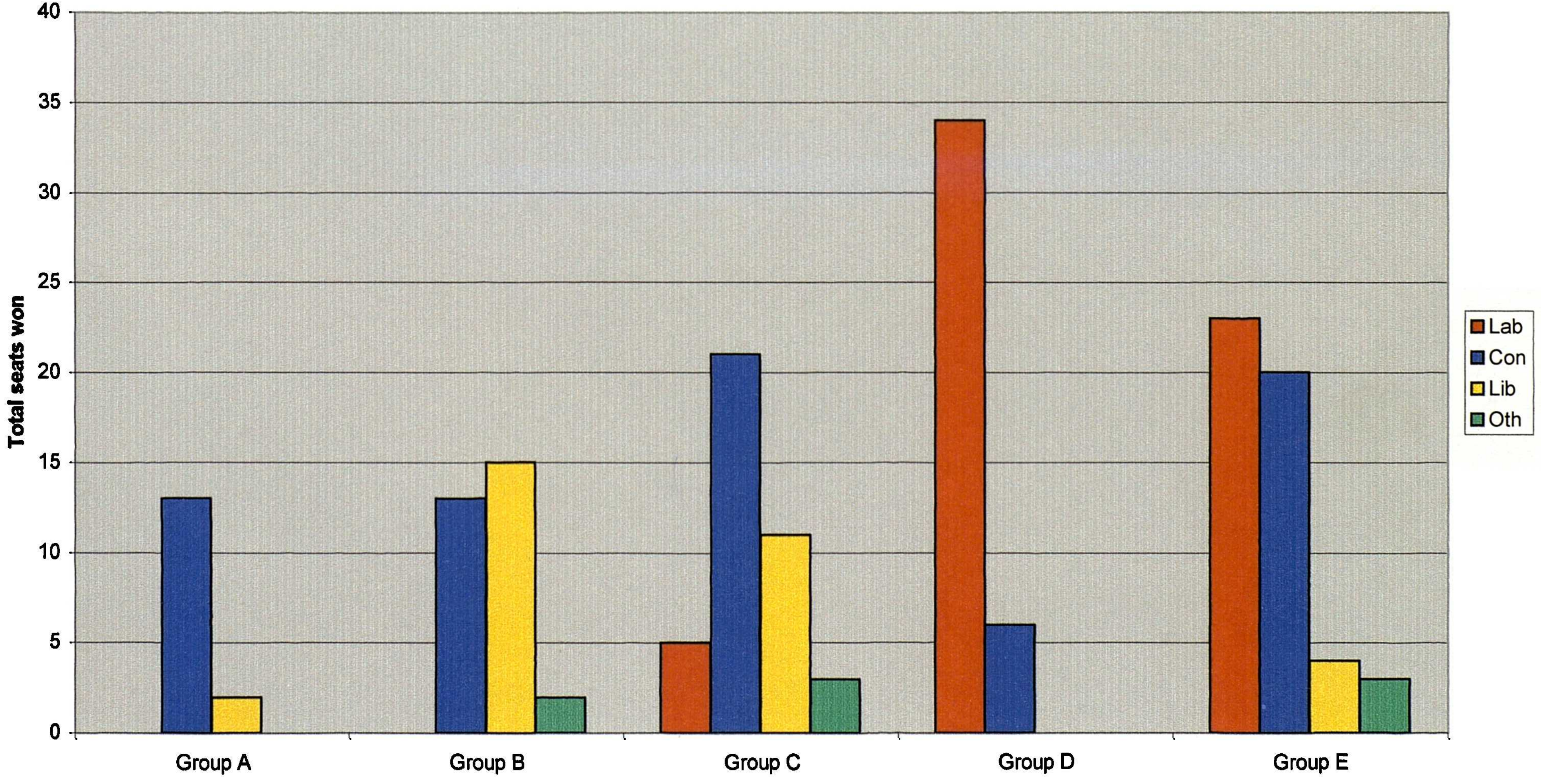


Table IV. Manchester Municipal Elections 1929-33

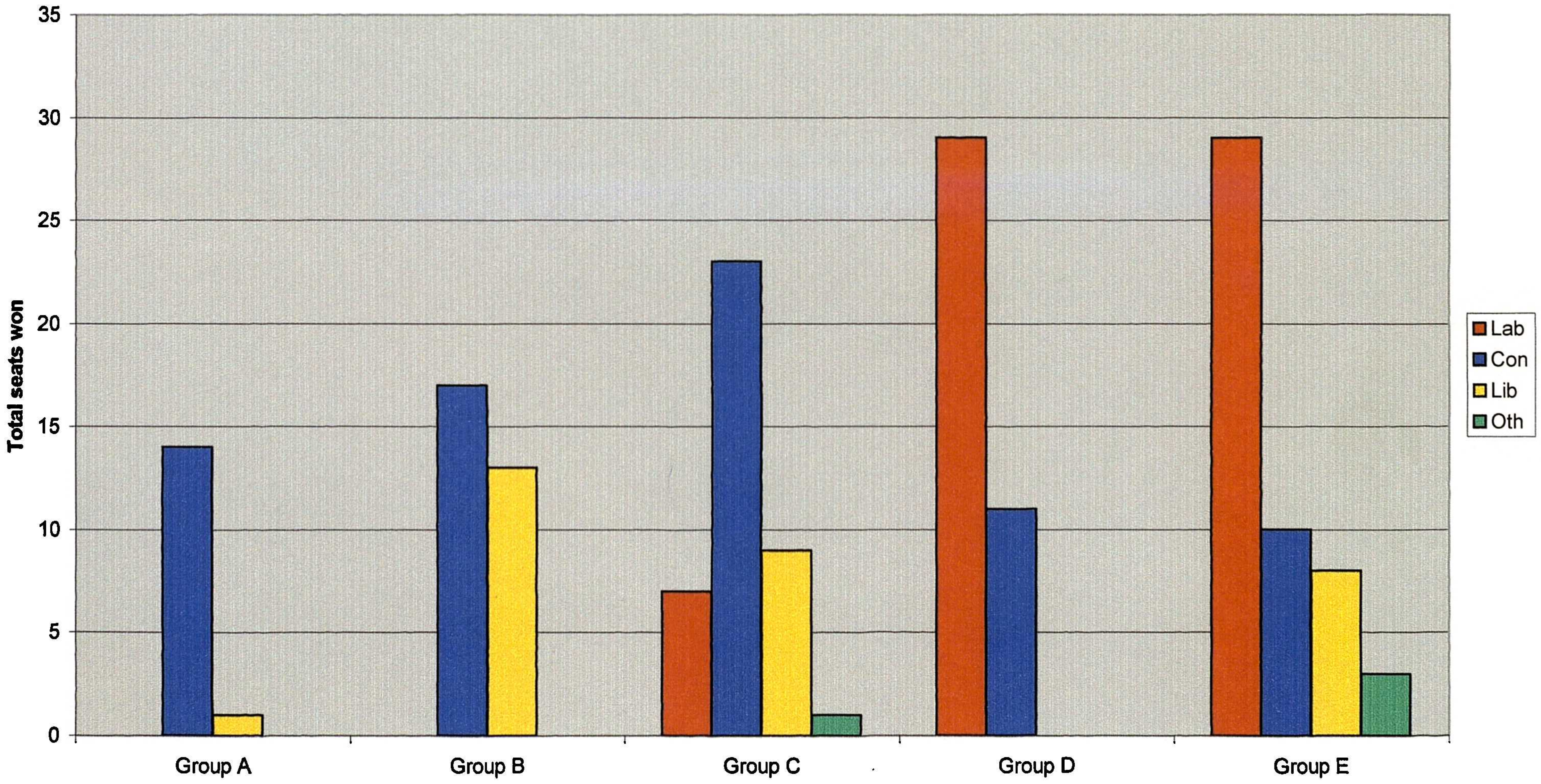


Table V. Manchester Municipal Elections 1934-38

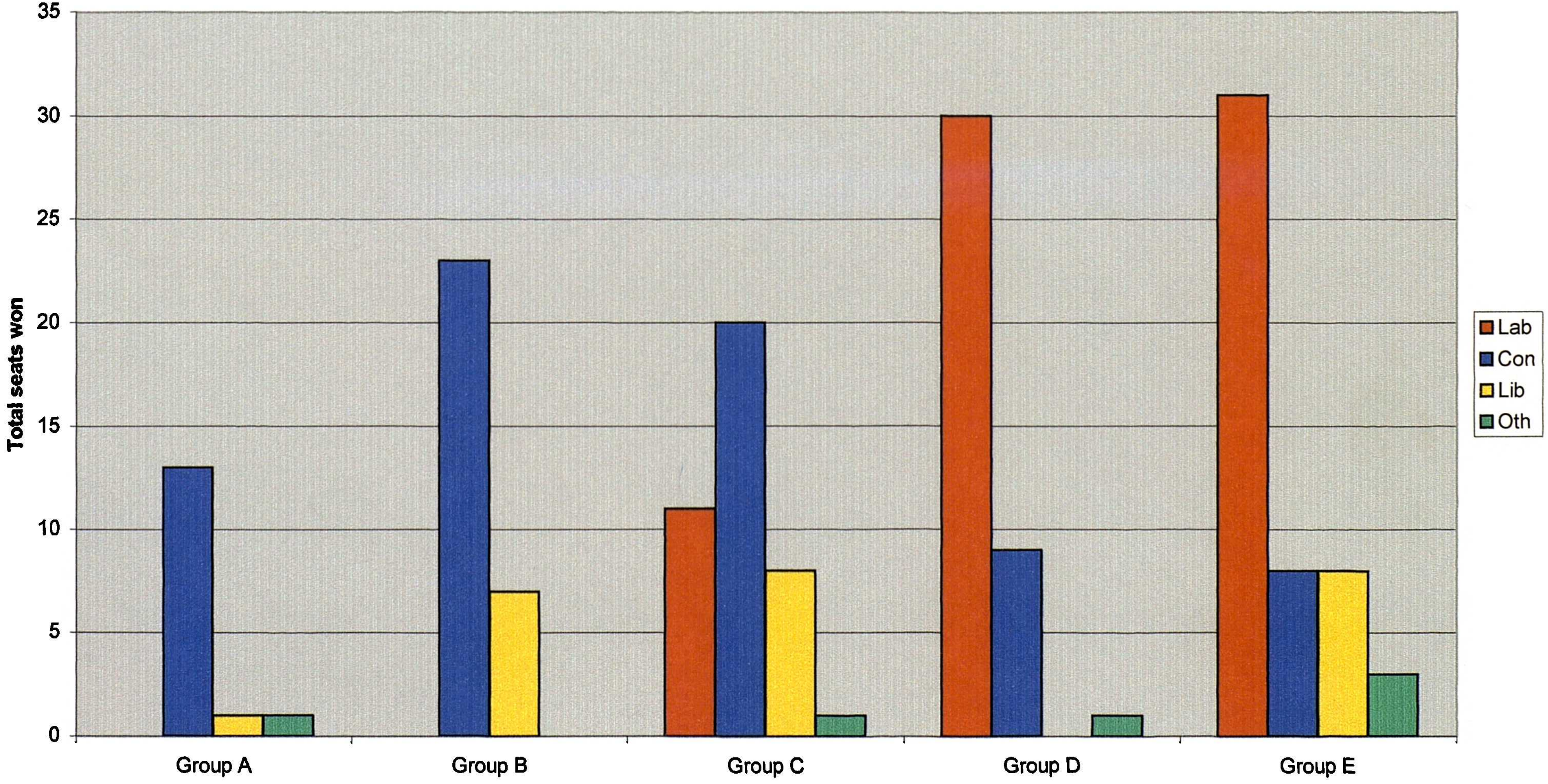


Table VI. Manchester Municipal Elections 1919-31

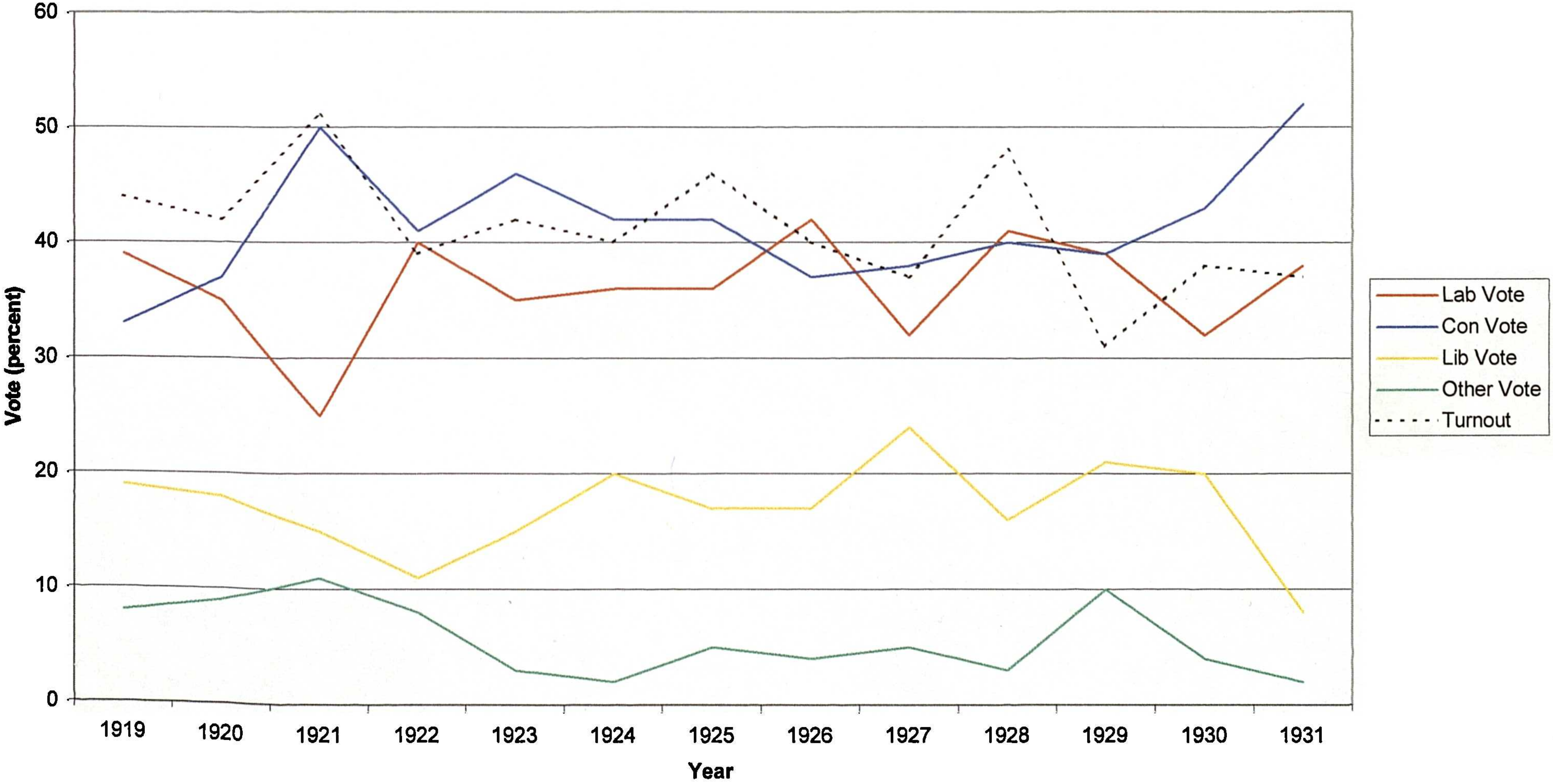


Table VII. Manchester Parliamentary Elections 1918-31

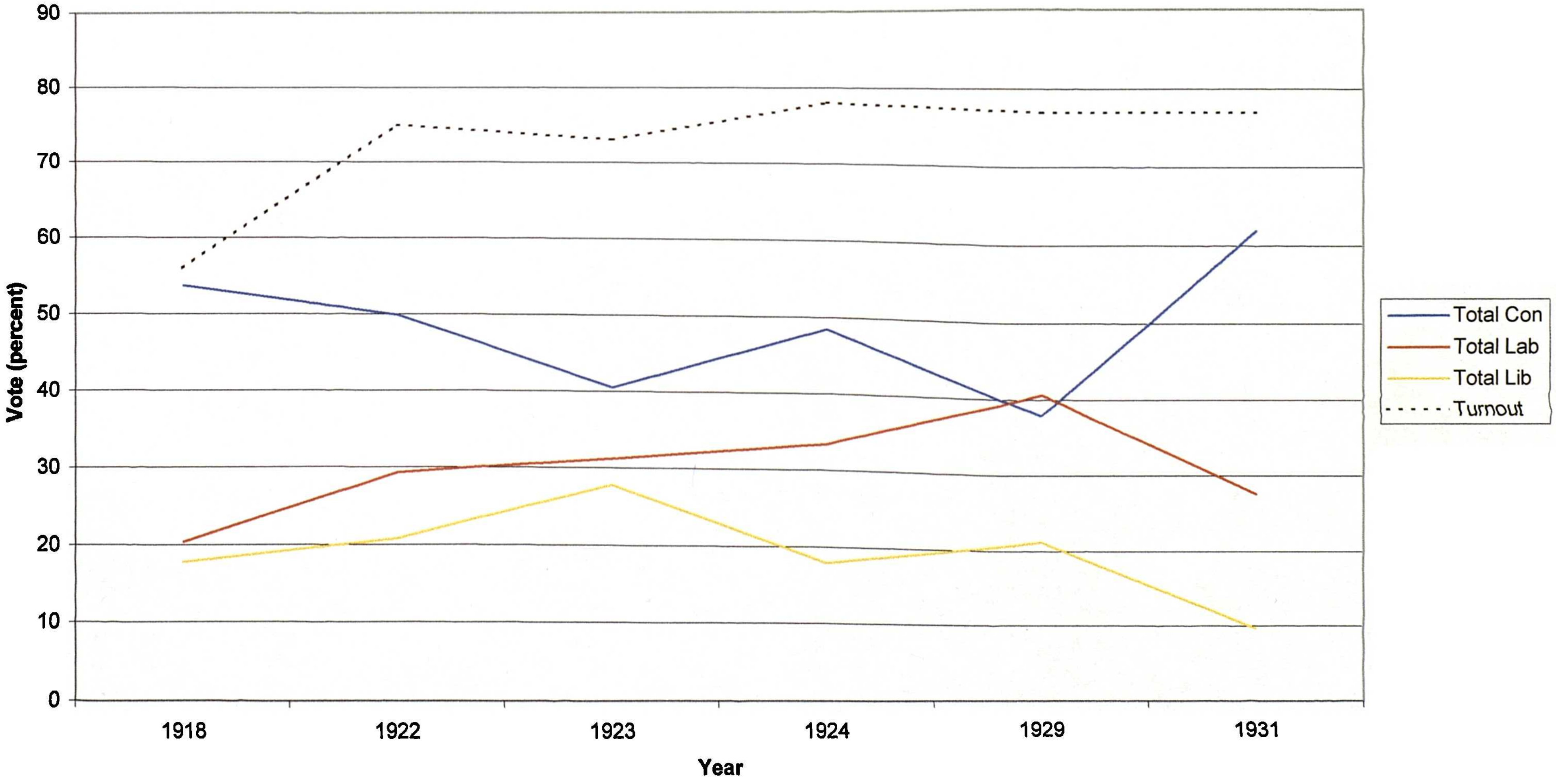
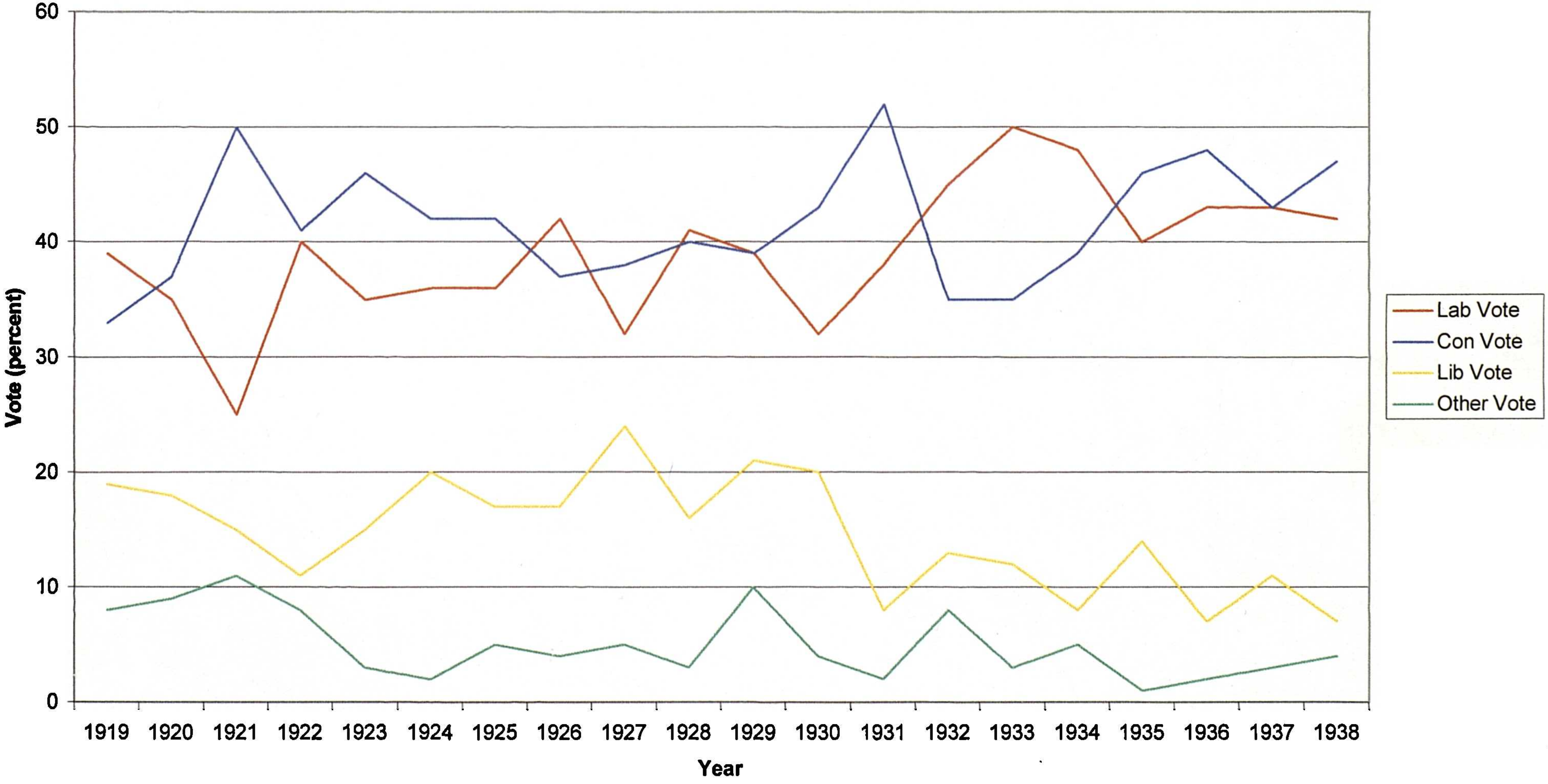


Table VIII. Manchester Municipal Elections 1919-38



Municipal Election Results - List of Abbreviations

Parties/Candidates:

Comm	Communist
Con	Conservative
Coop	Co-operative
ex-serv	Ex-serviceman
Fas	Fascist
ILP	Independent Labour Party
Ind	Independent
Lab	Labour
Lib	Liberal
LV	Land Values
MPU	Municipal Progressive Union
Mun Ten	Municipal Tenants
Nat	Irish Nationalist
PPS	Parents Protection Society
Prog	Progressive
Prohib	Prohibitionist
Soc	Socialist
TDL	Tenants Defence League
Unemp	Unemployed
WCA	Woman Citizen Association
Unopp	Unopposed
*asterisk	denotes retiring member

Classifications:

Total Labour votes include Co-op candidates who were run in conjunction with the Labour Party.

Independent Labour and Independent Conservative candidates are not included in totals for these two parties, as these candidates were usually running in opposition to the main party.

However, total Liberal votes include Independent Liberals, Progressives and MPU candidates, as these were usually all on the same side, but had different titles reflecting the disarray in the Liberal camp in these years.

All the remaining candidates are grouped together as Others in the totals.

	1919		1920		1921		1922		1923	
All Saints	Lab	873	MPU*	1285	Con*	1616	Lab*	1841	Lib	1206
	Ind*	752	Con	1109	Lab	1537	Ind	1164	Con	1203
			Lab	719					Lab	823
									Ind	60
Ardwick	Lab	2355	Con*	2589	Con	2536	Lab*	3421	Con*	2739
	Con*	1264	Lab	1005	Lab*	2363	Con	2650	Lab	2619
Beswick	Lab	2858	Lab*	2796	Lab	3490	Lab*	3636	Lab*	4334
	Lab	2783	Con	2187	Con	2618	Con	3604	Con	3876
	Lab	2772							ex-serv	57
	Con*	1777								
	Con*	1679								
	Con	1647								
Blackley	Lab	1767	MPU	2014	Con	2651	Lib*	Unopp.	Lib*	Unopp.
	Lab	1751	Coop	874	Lab	1333				
	Lib*	1180								
	Coop	1090								
	Con	1082								
	Con	1034								
	Lib*	1000								
	Con	947								
Bradford	Lab	2268	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	2875	Lab*	3336	Lab*	3302
	Con*	1699			Con	2084	Con	2523	Con	3123
Cheetham	Con	Unopp.	Lib/MPU*	2881	Con*	2694	Con*	Unopp.	Lib*	Unopp.
			Lab	1558	Lab	1671				
Chorlton	Prog	3414	Con*	Unopp.	Con	3526	Lib*	3500	Con*	4537
	Con*	1685			Prog*	2742	Con	3086	Lib	4321
Collegiate	Con*	811	Con*	779	Ind	1544	Con*	1074	Con*	976
	Prog	458	Ind	779	Con*	887	Lib	840	Lib	876
	Ind	391	MPU	564			Lab	378		
Collyhurst	Lab	2859	Coop*	1515	Con	3081	Con	2482	Con	2764
	Prog	1693	Ind	309	Prog*	2168	Lab*	2449	Lab*	2286
	Coop	1464	ex-serv	234						
	Con	1011								
	Con	776								
	Con	706								
Crumpsall	Con	Unopp.	Con	1324	Con*	1594	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.
			Lib/MPU	1173	Prog	1215				
			Lab	741						
Didsbury	Prog	Unopp.	Con	2457	Prog*	1620	Lib*	Unopp.	Con*	2104
			Coop	586	Con	1546			Lib	1416
Exchange	Con*	440	Ind*	597	Con*	690	Con*	Unopp.	Con	560
	Prog	162	Ind	208	Lib	343			Lib	395

	1919		1920		1921		1922		1923	
Gorton North	Lab	2201	Lab*	Unopp.	Con	2216	Lab*	3479	Lab*	Unopp.
	Centre	719			Off. Lab	1748	Con	1970		
					Lab*	1210				
					Unemp	839				
Gorton South	Lab	1875	Lab*	2174	Lab*	3372	Lab	3185	Lab	3341
	Ind Prog*	1562	Con	2026	Con	2060	Lib	2617	Con	2501
					Unemp	385				
Harpurhey	Lab	2401	Con	2210	Con*	2575	Lab	2287	Con*	3088
	Con*	904	Lab	1473	Lab	2135	Con	2284	Lab	2369
			MPU	860	Ind	44	Unemp	80		
			ex-serv*	806						
Levenshulme	Lib*	2221	Ind*	3277	Ind*	3728	Lib*	Unopp.	Ind*	3384
	Lib*	2191	Lab	1911	Lab	678			Lab	1899
	Ind*	2104								
	Lab	1854								
	Coop	1432								
	Con*	1381								
	Con*	1333								
Longsight	Con*	1757	Con	3082	Con*	2661	Con*	Unopp.	Con	2737
	Lab	1625	Lab*	1932	Prog	1678			Coop	1772
Medlock Street	Con	2130	Con*	2999	Con*	4090	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	2459
	Lab	1310	Lab	1139	Prog	1654			Ind	415
					Ind	205				
Miles Platting	Lab	Unopp.	Lab*	2992	Con	3281	Con	3041	Lab*	3383
			Con	2050	Lab*	2607	Lab*	2719	Con	2538
							Lib	718		
Moss Side East	Prog	1953	Con	1468	Con	2008	TDL*	2437	Lib	1821
	Con*	895	Lab	1349	Ind	1813	Con	1711	Con	1219
			MPU	499	Ind	120			Lab	877
Moss Side West	Con	unopp.	MPU*	3326	Con	2600	Con	2334	Lib*	Unopp.
			Con	1408	Ind	2523	LV	1825		
Moston	Lab*	2714	Con	2039	Con	2676	Lab*	2868	Lab	2292
	Lab	2233	Coop*	1835	Lab*	2188	Lib	1754	Con*	1980
	Coop	1475							Lib	867
	Con	1122								
	Lib	1027								
	Con	829								
	Con	812								
	Lib	678								

	1919		1920		1921		1922		1923	
New Cross	Con*	2515	Con*	3039	Prog*	2054	Con*	3457	Con*	3372
	Prog	2102	Lab	2017	Con	1886	Lab	2090	Lab	2407
	Con*	2037								
	Con*	1455								
	WCA	1238								
Newton Heath	Lab	2119	Con	3220	Prog*	2743	Con	2083	Lab	2555
	Con	1147	Lab	1847	Lab	1890	Lab	1938	Con	1932
							Ind Lab	763		
Openshaw	Lab	Unopp.	Lab*	2073	Con*	2967	Lab*	2860	Lab*	2894
			Con	1952	Lab	2135	Con	2121	Con	2111
					Comm	666				
Oxford	Lib*	855	Con	613	Con*	Unopp.	Lib*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.
	Ind	331	MPU	477						
Rusholme	Prog*	1893	MPU	1802	Prog	2007	Lib*	2121	Lib*	1852
	Con	1074	Con	1112	Con*	1550	Ind	208	Con	1477
			Lab	927					Lab	1079
St. Ann's	Con	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Con	649	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.
					Ind	542				
St. Clement's	Lib	Unopp.	MPU*	Unopp.	Prog	Unopp.	Lib*	Unopp.	Con	960
									Lib	842
St. George's	Lib*	1657	Con	2209	Con*	3613	Lib*	Unopp.	Con*	2524
	Con	1081	Lab	1535	Ind	1250			Lab	1856
			MPU	1238					Lib	1289
St. John's	Con	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	709	Con	867	Con*	Unopp.
					Lib	692	Lib	847		
St. Luke's	Con*	1854	MPU*	2227	Con*	2432	Con*	3275	Con	2260
	Ind	1845	Lab	1229	Coop	1828	Lab	1620	Lib*	2053
							Ind	1140		
St. Mark's	Lab	2543	Ind	4204	Lab	2652	Lab*	3436	Lab	3309
	Ind*	2401	Lab	2075	Con	2030	Con	3134	Con*	2399
					Lib*	972				
St. Michael's	Nat & Lab	1949	Lab*	2541	Lab*	2311	Con	2515	Lab*	Unopp.
	Con*	1741	Con	1697	Con	2274	Lab	2300		
							Ind	116		
Withington	Ind	Unopp.	MPU*	2079	Con	4490	Ind*	1592	Lib*	1904
			Lab	788	Ind Prog	1153	Con	1325	Con	1540
							Lab	355		
Wythenshawe										

	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923
Total Labour Vote	48571	39631	36275	44198	43397
Lab Vote %	39	35	25	40	35
No. of Lab Candidates	26	27	17	18	20
Number unopposed	2	2	0	0	2
Number opposed	24	25	17	18	18
Avg. vote/opposed cand.	2023.8	1585.2	2133.824	2455.4	2410.9
Total Con Vote	40625	41569	72290	45536	56979
Con Vote %	33	37	50	41	46
No. of Con Candidates	36	24	32	25	29
Number unopposed	5	3	1	6	4
Number opposed	31	21	31	19	25
Avg. vote/opposed cand.	1310.5	1979.5	2331.935	2396.6	2279.2
Total Liberal Vote	23546	20425	21041	12397	18842
Lib Vote %	19	18	15	11	15
No. of Lib Candidates	18	14	14	13	15
Number unopposed	2	1	1	6	3
Number opposed	16	13	13	7	12
Avg. vote/opposed cand.	1471.6	1571.2	1618.538	1771	1570.2
Total Other Vote	10281	10414	15407	9325	3916
Other Vote %	8	9	11	8	3
Total Votes Cast	123023	112039	145013	111456	123134
Total Electorate	277375	267171	282883	287418	294575
Turnout %	44%	42%	51%	39%	42%
	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923
Lab Vote	39	35	25	40	35
Con Vote	33	37	50	41	46
Lib Vote	19	18	15	11	15
Other Vote	8	9	11	8	3

	1924		1925		1926		1927		1928		1929	
All Saints	Con*	2147	Lab*	1837	Lab	1701	Con*	1725	Lab*	1959	Lab*	1257
	Lab	1400	Lib	1824	Con*	1293	Lab	1047	Con	1788	Con	955
							Lib	845	PPS	89	Ind	569
							Ind	40			PPS	18
Ardwick	Con*	3381	Lab*	3401	Lab	2935	Con*	3209	Con*	3495	Lab*	2404
	Lab	2748	Con	2925	Con*	2641	Lab	2600	Lab	2713	Con	1556
									PPS	17		
Beswick	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	4754	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	4549	Lab*	4946	Lab*	Unopp.
			Con	2792			Con	2609	Con	2937		
Blackley	Con*	2918	Lib*	3038	Lib*	2940	Con*	Unopp.	Lib*	2714	Lib*	2255
	Lab	1360	Lab	1570	Lab	1389			Lab	1536	Con	1094
									PPS	175		
Bradford	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	3700	Lab*	3274	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	3901	Lab*	Unopp.
			Con	2482	Con	1826			Con	3181		
									PPS	23		
Cheetham	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	3006	Lib*	2324	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Con	Unopp.
			Lab	1672	Lab	1394						
Chorlton	Lib	5113	Con	4888	Lib	3783	Lib*	5978	Con*	2840	Lib*	3711
			Lib*	4308	Con	3640	Con	3649	Lib	3955	Con	3321
			Mun Ten	224			Ind	130	Lab	1457		
									PPS	51		
Collegiate	Ind*	1328	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	901	Ind*	1659	Con*	1067	Lib	770
	Lab	496			Lab	755	Ind	216	Lab	558	Con*	682
											Lab	312
Collyhurst	Con	2901	Con*	3035	Lab	3139	Lab*	2990	Lab	3078	Lab*	2776
	Lab	2746	Lab	3013	Con*	2504	Con	2274	Con	2839	Con	1280
									Comm	66		
									PPS	16		
Crumpsall	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	2278	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Lib*	2207	Lib	1449
			Lab	925					Con	1488	Con*	1234
											Lab	660
											Ind	149
Didsbury	Lib*	2333	Con	2360	Con*	1968	Con*	1877	Con*	2060	Con*	2071
	Con	1375	Lib	1605	Lib	1727	Lib	1793	Lib	1979	Lib	2019
Exchange	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	570	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	534	Con*	Unopp.
			Lib	327					Lib	474		

	1924		1925		1926		1927		1928		1929	
Gorton North	Lab	3842	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab	Unopp.
	Con	2164										
Gorton South	Lab	3354	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab	3752	Lab*	3365	Lab	3960	Lab*	3237
	Con	2627			Con	2398	Lib	1694	Con	1985	Con	1445
	Unemp	40							PPS	55		
Harpurhey	Con*	3189	Lab*	3040	Lab	2811	Lab	2670	Lab	3230	Lab*	2318
	Lab	2628	Con	2992	Con	2675	Con*	2532	Con	2719	Con	2014
									PPS	91		
Levenshulme	Ind*	Unopp.	Lib*	Unopp.	Ind*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Lib*	2987	Con	2510
									Lab	1272	Lab	1281
									Coop	270		
									PPS	32		
Longsight	Con	2469	Con*	3783	Con*	3475	Con*	2713	Con*	3466	Con*	2718
	Lab	1089	Coop	1536	Lab	2451	Lib	1533	Lab	2069	Lab	1474
	Ind	1089	Ind	280					PPS	24		
	Lib	764										
Medlock Street	Con*	4247	Con*	3181	Lab	2833	Lab	3209	Lab*	2677	Lab*	2274
	Lab	1844	Lab	2306	Con*	1792	Con*	1809	Con	2473	Con	1796
	Unemp	24			Lib	550	Ind	48	PPS	148	PPS	39
					PPS	20						
Miles Platting	Con*	3463	Lab	3939	Lab*	4148	Lab	3667	Lab*	3751	Lab*	3621
	Lab	3459	Con*	3436	Con	2653	Con*	2935	Con	2997	Con	1954
									PPS	34	PPS	18
Moss Side East	Lib	1791	Ind*	2032	Con	1551	Lib*	2203	Ind*	1815	Lab	955
	Con	1647	Con	2009	Lib	1521	Con	1402	Con	1373	Con	950
	Ind	94	Ind	87	Prohib	160	Ind	113	Lab	571	Lib	731
			Ind	17	PPS	86			PPS	36	PPS	17
Moss Side West	Con*	2484	Con*	2511	Lib*	3372	LV	2015	Con*	2502	Lib*	2469
	Lib	2268	LV	1973	Lab	876	Con*	1770	Lab	1100	Lab	793
									PPS	36		
Moston	Lab	2791	Lab*	3028	Lab*	2790	Con	2057	Lab*	3325	Lab	2369
	Con	2041	Lib	2140	Con	2609	Lab	2023	Con	2561	Con	1563
							Lib*	1684	PPS	34	Lib	955

	1924		1925		1926		1927		1928		1929	
New Cross	Lab Lib*	2855 2593	Lab Con*	3223 2975	Lab Con* PPS	3500 3182 51	Lab* Con	3365 2594	Con* Lab	3504 3025	Lab* Con	3157 2353
Newton Heath	Lib* Lab	3358 2091	Con* Lab	2906 2866	Lab* Con	3061 2309	Lib* Lab	3179 2028	Con* Lab PPS	2855 2746 33	Lab* Con	2349 2128
Openshaw	Lab Con*	3005 2474	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab* Con Comm PPS	4081 1389 127 25	Lab Comm	2559 87
Oxford	Con*	Unopp.	Lib*	Unopp.	Con* Lib	636 391	Con*	Unopp.	Lib* PPS	806 22	Con*	Unopp.
Rusholme	Lib*	Unopp.	Lib Lab	3187 740	Lib*	Unopp.	Lib* Con	2403 2222	Lib* Ind Con Lab PPS	2496 977 803 12	Lib* Con PPS	2083 1417 64
St. Ann's	Con*	Unopp.	Con* Lib	736 428	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Con* Lib	694 301
St. Clement's	Lib*	Unopp.	Con Lib	1000 975	Con* Lab Lib	819 753 489	Lib* Con Lab Ind	1012 649 379 8	Con* Lib Lab	794 692 649	Lab Con* Lib Ind	772 662 543 11
St. George's	Con Lab Lib	2309 2294 1211	Lib* Lab	2530 2449	Lab Con*	3137 2276	Lab Con* Lib Ind	2654 1600 854 285	Lab* Con PPS	2676 1813 60	Lab* Con PPS	2000 1178 32
St. John's	Lib Con	867 705	Con*	Unopp.	Con* Lab	1136 371	Ind Lib*	744 689	Con* PPS	931 68	Lib Con	900 740
St. Luke's	Con* Lib	2787 1692	Lib* Con	3111 2522	Con* Lib	1989 1670	Con* Lib Ind Ind	2129 1198 838 20	Lib* Con Lab PPS	2587 1428 499 117	Lab Con Lib PPS	1481 1363 807 46
St. Mark's	Lab* Con Unemp	3142 1549 335	Lab* Con	4056 1925	Lab* Con	3700 1441	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab* Con PPS	4002 1834 64	Lab* Con	3122 973
St. Michael's	Lab* Con	2549 1855	Con* Lab Ind	1772 1747 965	Lab* Con Lab	2456 1371 898	Lab* Con	2368 1393	Lab* Con	2666 1729	Ind*	Unopp.
Withington	Lib Con*	1873 1670	Con Ind* Lab	1813 1734 780	Con Lib* Lab	2282 1997 708	Lib* Con	2654 2060	Lib* Con PPS	3226 3042 77	Con* Lib	3262 3213
Wythenshawe												

	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929
Total Labour Vote	43693	50582	51934	36912	63250	41171
Lab Vote %	36	36	42	32	41	39
No. of Lab Candida	20	23	24	18	27	24
Number unopposed	2	3	3	4	1	3
Number opposed	18	20	21	14	26	21
Avg. vote/opposed	2427.4	2529.1	2473	2636.6	2432.7	1960.5
Total Con Vote	50402	57896	45892	43203	61624	41913
Con Vote %	42	42	37	38	40	39
No. of Con Candida	26	25	27	27	30	29
Number unopposed	4	2	3	7	2	3
Number opposed	22	23	24	20	28	26
Avg. vote/opposed	2291	2517.2	1912.2	2160.2	2200.9	1612
Total Liberal Vote	23663	23473	20764	27719	24125	22206
Lib Vote %	20	17	17	24	16	21
No. of Lib Candidat	13	13	12	14	11	14
Number unopposed	2	2	1	0	0	0
Number opposed	11	11	11	14	11	14
Avg. vote/opposed	2151.2	2133.9	1887.6	1979.9	2193.2	1586.1
Total Other Vote	2910	7312	4490	6121	4592	1050
Other Vote %	2	5	4	5	3	10
Total Votes Cast	120668	139263	123080	113955	153591	106340
Total Electorate	299969	305677	308856	311971	316818	345756
Turnout %	40%	46%	40%	37%	48%	31%

	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929
Lab Vote	36	36	42	32	41	39
Con Vote	42	42	37	38	40	39
Lib Vote	20	17	17	24	16	21
Other Vote	2	5	4	5	3	10

	1930		1931		1932		1933		1934		1935	
All Saints	Con*	1808	Con	2502	Con	1598	Con*	1419	Lab	1300	Con*	1819
	Lab	844	Lab	1160	Lab*	1383	Lab	1395	Con	1280	Lab	1448
	Ind	559										
Ardwick	Con*	3355	Con	3399	Lab*	2468	Con*	2553	Lab	2452	Lab*	2285
	Lab	2003	Lab	2080	Con	1955	Lab	2506	Con*	2028	Con	1782
Beswick	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	3902	Lab*	4258	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	4033	Lab*	Unopp.
			Con	3559	Con	2002			Con	1963		
Blackley	Con*	2674	Lib	3600	Lib*	2163	Con	2202	Lib*	2517	Con	2564
	Lab	1278	Lab	1241	Lab	1287	Lab	1650	Lab	1431	Lab	1611
											Lib	908
Bradford	Lab*	2707	Con	3596	Lab*	3231	Lab	3460	Lab	3422	Lab*	3371
	Con	2436	Lab	2503	Con	1987	Con	2251	Con*	1884	Con	2006
					Comm	137						
Cheetham	Lib	3240	Con*	Unopp.	Con	1928	Lib*	2203	Con*	1349	Con*	1463
	Lab	696			Lib	1638	Lab	460	Ind	545	Lib	1333
					Lab	416						
Chorlton	Lib*	6286	Con	Unopp.	Lib*	4544	Con	5400	Con*	4580	Con	4533
	Lab	840			Lab	1080	Lib*	3273	Lab	1664	Lib*	3003
	PPS	61					Lab	1141			Lab	1686
Collegiate	Ind*	1323	Con*	1027	Lib*	1286	Ind*	1604	Con	1011	Lib*	Unopp.
	Lab	657	Lib	1020	Lab	266	Lab	182	Lib	917		
	Ind	415			Comm	89	Comm	86	Comm	181		
							Ind	38				
Collyhurst	Lab*	2654	Con	3043	Lab*	3729	Lab*	3409	Lab	3059	Lab*	Unopp.
	Con	2624	Lab*	2792	Con	1904	Con	1901	Con*	1560		
			Comm	103	Comm	52	Comm	146				
Crumpsall	Con	1913	Con	2167	Lib*	Unopp.	Con*	1693	Con	1789	Lib*	2250
	Lib	1674	Lib	2082			Lib	1286	Lab	776	Con	1542
	Ind	146					Lab	680			Lab	805
							PPS	16				
Didsbury	Con	2793	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	3027	Con*	4072
	Lib	2308							Lab	1355	Lab	1585
Exchange	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Con	Unopp.	Con	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.

	1930		1931		1932		1933		1934		1935	
Gorton North	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	3623	Lab*	4017	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	3559	Lab*	Unopp.
			Con	2797	Lib	1553			Con	1305		
Gorton South	Lab	2662	Lab*	3683	Lab*	4446	Lab	3769	Lab*	4149	Lab*	Unopp.
	Con	2339	Con	3410	Con	2005	Ind	1090	Con	1862		
Harpurhey	Con	2766	Con	3696	Lab*	2584	Con*	2483	Lab	2691	Lab*	2568
	Lab*	2273	Lab	2042	Con	2568	Lab	2461	Con	2623	Con	2352
Levenshulme	Con	2819	Lib*	Unopp.	Con*	2881	Con*	Unopp.	Lib*	1979	Con*	Unopp.
	Lab	1110			Lab	1280			Lab	1213		
Longsight	Con*	3402	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	2498	Con*	Unopp.	Con	2350	Con*	2793
	Lab	1278			Ind Soc	1093			Lab	1429	Lab	1435
Medlock Street	Lab*	2152	Con	3008	Lab	2132	Lab*	2749	Con*	1623	Lab*	1625
	Con	1732	Lab*	1729	Con	1941	Con	1690	Lab	1565	Con	1610
					Comm	221						
Miles Platting	Lab*	2778	Con	3422	Lab*	4287	Lab*	3639	Lab	3720	Lab	3136
	Con	2371	Lab	3023	Con	2074	Con	1790	Con*	1846	Con	1834
Moss Side East	Con	1825	Con	2734	Con	1500	Con*	1300	Con*	1227	Con	1442
	Lib	1068	PPS	218	Lab	1130	Lab	1186	Lab	1161	Lab	979
	Lab	584			PPS	109	PPS	93	PPS	300	Ind	472
	PPS	14										
Moss Side West	Con	1795	Con*	3427	Lib*	Unopp.	Con	1881	Con	1977	Lib	1887
	Ind*	1272	Lab	632			Lab	951	Lab	1066	Lab	1032
	Lab	614					PPS	23				
	Ind	142										
	PPS	16										
Moston	Con*	3072	Lab*	3075	Lab*	2981	Con*	3001	Lab	2879	Lab*	3198
	Lab	1881	Con	2887	Con	2532	Lab	2694	Con	2439	Con	2863
	Lib	761										

	1930		1931		1932		1933		1934		1935	
New Cross	Lab*	3047	Con*	3750	Lab*	3986	Lab	4033	Lab	3457	Lab*	Unopp.
	Con	2436	Lab	3528	Con	2309	Con	1494	Con*	1936		
Newton Heath	Con	2599	Con*	3293	ILP*	2983	Lab	2940	Lab	2632	Lab	2878
	Lib	2062	Lab	2049	Con	1960	Con*	2202	Con*	2437	Con	2553
Openshaw	Lab	3037	Lab*	3119	Lab*	3759	Lab*	2726	Lab*	3428	Lab*	Unopp.
	Ind	1427	Con	2479	Con	1186	Comm	258	Con	999		
	Comm	98	Comm	158	Comm	174			Comm	108		
									PPS	12		
Oxford	Con*	Unopp.	Lib*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Con	Unopp.	Lib	394	Con	438
									Ind	319	Ind	365
Rusholme	Lib*	2295	Con	3119	Lib*	2235	Lib*	2165	Con*	2419	Lib*	2554
	Con	1906	PPS	150	Lab	933	Lab	895	Lab	1214	Lab	1069
	PPS	84			PPS	43						
St. Ann's	Con	566	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.
	Lib	215										
St. Clement's	Lib	862	Con*	1057	Lib	1049	Lib*	1105	Con	Unopp.	Lib*	Unopp.
	Con	621	Lab	765	Lab*	939	Lab	881				
	Lab	512										
St. George's	Con	2114	Con	2446	Lab*	2144	Lab	2400	Lab	1845	Lab*	1838
	Lab	1447	Ind Lab*	1662	Con	1715	Con	1675	Con*	1239	Con	1700
			Lab	1341	Comm	81	Ind	65				
							PPS	32				
St. John's	Con	1131	Lib	Unopp.	Lib*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Lib*	Unopp.	Lib*	Unopp.
	Lab	190										
St. Luke's	Con*	2504	Lib*	3236	Lib	1789	Con*	1967	Lib*	1873	Lib*	1834
	Lab	1427	Lab	892	Lab	1472	Lab	1727	Lab	1341	Lab	1678
					Comm	100						
St. Mark's	Lab*	2154	Lab*	3177	Lab*	3329	Lab*	2975	Ind Lab*	3079	Lab*	Unopp.
	Con	1517	Con	3102	Con	1611	Con	1242	Con	1361		
St. Michael's	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	2238	Lab	2366	Lab*	2071	Lab	1880	Ind*	Unopp.
			Con	1790	Con	1067	Con	1112	Con	859		
Withington	Lib*	5238	Lib*	Unopp.	Con*	5424	Lib*	3167	Lib*	3119	Con*	5405
	Lab	1711			Lab	2370	Lab	2190	Lab	2584	Lab	3175
					PPS	375						
Wythenshawe					Con	Unopp.	Con	Unopp.	Con	2185	Con*	3902
									Ind	2005	Lab	2652
									Lab	1868		

	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
Total Labour Vote	40536	48594	57984	55170	63173	40054
Lab Vote %	32	38	45	50	48	40
No. of Lab Candida	28	21	26	28	28	27
Number unopposec	3	0	0	2	0	7
Number opposed	25	21	26	26	28	20
Avg. vote/opposed	1621.4	2314	2230.2	2121.9	2256.2	2002.7
Total Con Vote	55118	65730	44645	39256	51158	46673
Con Vote %	43	52	35	35	39	46
No. of Con Candida	27	29	26	27	30	22
Number unopposec	2	6	5	8	3	3
Number opposed	25	23	21	19	27	19
Avg. vote/opposed	2204.7	2857.8	2126	2066.1	1894.7	2456.5
Total Liberal Vote	26007	9938	16257	13199	10799	13769
Lib Vote %	20	8	13	12	8	14
No. of Lib Candidat	11	8	11	6	7	10
Number unopposec	0	4	3	0	1	3
Number opposed	11	4	8	6	6	7
Avg. vote/opposed	2364.3	2484.5	2032.1	2199.8	1799.8	1967
Total Other Vote	5559	2291	9744	3451	6549	837
Other Vote %	4	2	8	3	5	1
Total Votes Cast	127220	126553	128630	111076	131679	101333
Total Electorate	338997	343795				
Turnout %	38%	37%				

	1930	1931
Lab Vote	32	38
Con Vote	43	52
Lib Vote	20	8
Other Vote	4	2

	1936		1937		1938	
All Saints	Con	1608	Con	1818	Con*	1817
	Lab	1263	Lab	1164	Lab	968
					Fas	23
					Ind	3
Ardwick	Con*	3334	Con	2471	Con	2080
	Lab	1994	Lab*	2191	Lab*	1648
					Ind	48
Beswick	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab	Unopp.
Blackley	Con	2340	Lib*	2930	Con*	2628
	Lab	1977	Lab	1739	Lab	1919
Bradford	Lab*	3134	Lab*	2766	Lab	Unopp.
	Con	1522	Con	1546		
Cheetham	Lib*	2328	Con*	1859	Con*	2085
	Lab	873	Lib	1277	Lib	1333
			Lab	990	Lab	998
Chorlton	Con*	6062	Con*	5776	Con	5632
	Lab	1580	Lab	2052	Lab	1889
Collegiate	Ind*	1310	Con*	842	Ind	1337
	Lab	427	Lab	495	Lib*	1091
					Lab	329
Collyhurst	Lab*	2033	Lab*	1624	Lab*	1709
	Con	1208	Con	884	Fas	242
Crumpsall	Con*	2398	Con*	2200	Lib*	2969
	Lab	1216	Lab	1148	Lab	1336
	Ind	194	Ind	130		
Didsbury	Con	3590	Con*	3319	Con*	3529
	Lab	1722	Lab	1214	Lab	1637
Exchange	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Con	Unopp.

	1936		1937		1938	
Gorton North	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	3561	Lab*	Unopp.
			Con	2032		
Gorton South	Lab*	3147	Lab	3400	Lab*	3643
	Con	1895	Ind	1277	Fas	236
Harpurhey	Con*	2692	Lab*	2305	Con	2155
	Lab	2061	Con	2267	Lab*	2125
Levenshulme	Con*	2832	Lib*	2584	Con*	2640
	Lab	1456	Lab	1528	Lab	1602
Longsight	Con*	2990	Con*	2442	Con*	3031
	Lab	1372	Lab	1843	Lab	2084
Medlock Street	Lab*	2350	Lab	1712	Lab*	1742
	Con	1197	Con*	1442	Con	1566
					Ind	60
Miles Platting	Lab	Unopp.	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	2349
					Con	2114
Moss Side East	Con*	1265	Ind	1248	Con*	1240
	Lab	986	Con*	1165	Lab	1164
	Ind	914	Lab	1057	Ind	834
Moss Side West	Con*	1991	Con*	1928	Lib*	1763
	Lab	954	Lab	1138	Lab	925
	Ind	232			Ind	240
Moston	Con*	3754	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	3315
	Lab	3433			Con	2871

	1936		1937		1938	
New Cross	Lab*	3286	Lab	2634	Lab	1462
	Con	1392	Con	1271	Ind*	1418
					Con	1253
Newton Heath	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	2495	Lab*	3086
			Con	1936	Con	2671
Openshaw	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab	Unopp.	Lab*	Unopp.
Oxford	Con*	Unopp.	Ind	405	Con*	Unopp.
			Lib*	351		
Rusholme	Lib*	2383	Con	2452	Con	2590
	Lab	859	Lab	1158	Lab	1357
St. Ann's	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.
St. Clement's	Lib*	Unopp.	Con*	Unopp.	Lib*	Unopp.
St. George's	Lab*	2031	Con	1834	Con	2267
	Con	1808	Lab*	1763	Lab*	1840
					Fas	139
St. John's	Con*	Unopp.	Lib*	Unopp.	Lib*	Unopp.
St. Luke's	Con*	2094	Lib*	2028	Con	1562
	Lab	1805	Lab	1325	Lab	1262
					Lib	719
					Ind	33
St. Mark's	Lab*	2421	Lab	2474	Lab*	Unopp.
	Con	1403	Con	1780		
St. Michael's	Lab*	Unopp.	Lab*	1920	Lab	1362
			Con	1176	Con	1333
					Ind	240
Withington	Con	3922	Con	4083	Con*	5492
	Lib*	3038	Lib	3648	Lab	3552
	Lab	2698	Lab	2732		
Wythenshawe	Lab	2899	Con	3910	Lab	4522
	Con*	2369	Lab	3460	Con*	4354

	1936	1937	1938
Total Labour Vote	47977	51391	49825
Lab Vote %	43	43	42
No. of Lab Candida	31	31	31
Number unopposec	6	4	5
Number opposed	25	27	26
Avg. vote/opposed	1919.1	1903.4	1916.3
Total Con Vote	53666	50413	54910
Con Vote %	48	43	47
No. of Con Candida	26	26	24
Number unopposec	4	3	3
Number opposed	22	23	21
Avg. vote/opposed	2439.4	2191.9	2614.8
Total Liberal Vote	7749	12818	7875
Lib Vote %	7	11	7
No. of Lib Candidat	4	7	7
Number unopposec	1	1	2
Number opposed	3	6	5
Avg. vote/opposed	2583	2136.3	1575
Total Other Vote	2650	3555	4853
Other Vote %	2	3	4
Total Votes Cast	112042	118177	117463
Total Electorate			
Turnout %			

Lab Vote
Con Vote
Lib Vote
Other Vote

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