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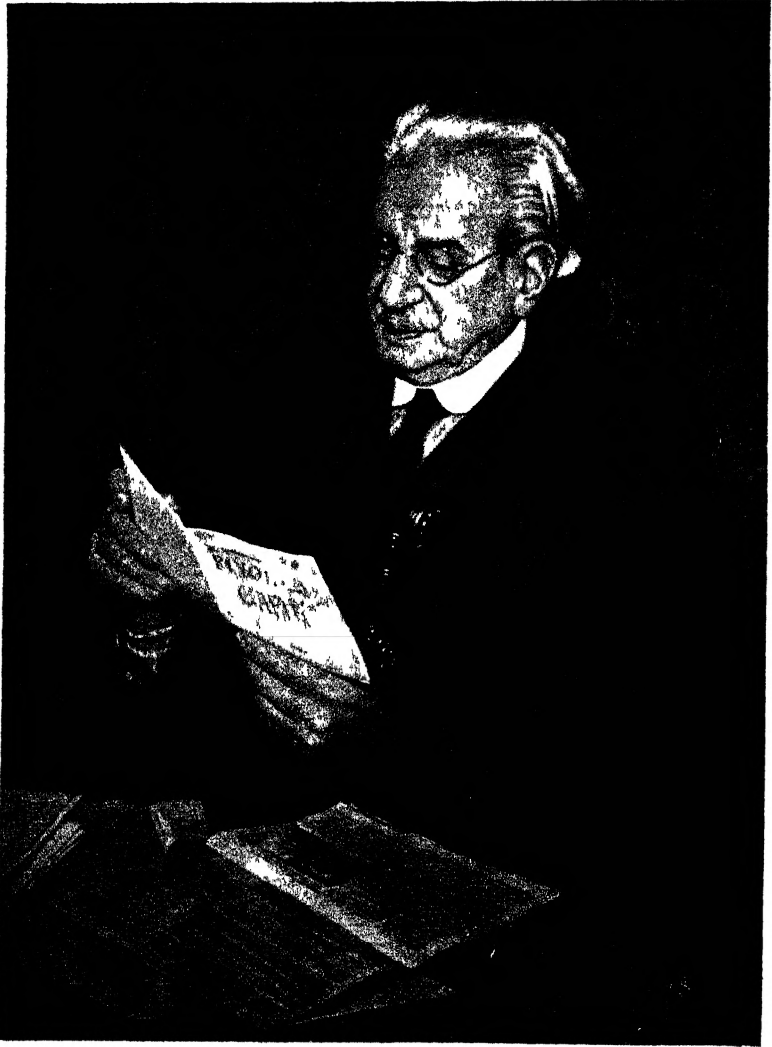




# SOCIALISM OVER SIXTY YEARS

by Fenner Brockway  
LABOUR AND LIBERALISM  
SOCIALISM AND PACIFISM  
THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
ENGLISH PRISONS TO-DAY  
*(with Stephen Hobhouse)*  
A NEW WAY WITH CRIME  
THE INDIAN CRISIS  
HUNGRY ENGLAND  
BLOODY TRAFFIC  
WILL ROOSEVELT SUCCEED ?  
WORKERS' FRONT  
INSIDE THE LEFT  
DEATH PAYS A DIVIDEND  
*(with Frederic Mullally)*  
GERMAN DIARY





THE RIGHT HON. F. W. JOWETT, P.C., J.P.

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# SOCIALISM OVER SIXTY YEARS

THE LIFE OF  
JOWETT OF BRADFORD  
(1864-1944)

by  
FENNER BROCKWAY

Preface by J. B. Priestley

Foreword by  
*The Late F. W. Jowett*

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

THIS book was originally planned as an Autobiography and the author has maintained the spirit of that intention. Wherever possible, the writings of F. W. Jowett have been used to describe events and to express opinions. Sometimes the author has not shared these opinions, but he has striven to convey them as Fred Jowett himself would have done, without attempting to assess them. This has meant some restriction of the usual function of a biographer, but the author will be satisfied if he has succeeded in interpreting to the reader the personality of Jowett of Bradford during the first sixty years of the British Socialist Movement from which his life was inseparable.

sudden glory. And the hungry schoolchildren, not only of Bradford but of a hundred other places, owe him much more than that. It would indeed be hard to assess the magnificent total of this debt.

Again, you will find frequent references in these chapters to the *Bradford Pioneer*, a local Labour weekly to which Jowett contributed for years. Now the first regular writing I ever did, as a youth in my teens, and I had had a few little boyish articles and sketches accepted here and there, was for this same *Bradford Pioneer*. It was edited then by Councillor Alfred Pickles, who also makes an appearance here. I wrote a weekly feature called *Round the Hearth*, in which, as I knew nothing, I wrote about everything. This must have either been late in 1912 or early 1913. I was not paid anything, but occasionally received a free pass to a theatre or a music-hall. I should like to be able to say that I scribbled away every week because I was devoted to the Labour Movement, but the truth is that, although I shared my father's Socialism, I was chiefly influenced by the desire to see myself in print.

Early in my life as these events were, the Bradford years were the formative ones, and I am not going to pretend that I am not a Bradfordian at heart. I was moulded and coloured, so to speak, by the West Riding, and more particularly by Bradford as it was between 1900, when I was six, and 1914. The Bradford of those years, as I recently said in a broadcast talk, was no ordinary city. Perhaps I may repeat here the substance of that talk; it may help the reader to picture the scene in which Jowett grew up and did so much of his work.

\* \* \* \*

Bradford had some unique features. To begin with, mixed with its solid Yorkshire dough, as a kind of leaven, it had a small but influential German-Jewish population, consisting of Liberal refugees from Frankfurt and Leipzig and elsewhere, who came to Bradford to engage in the textile trade. They did us a lot of good, these newcomers with their passion for music and taste for the other arts. I have always believed since that refugees do more good than harm; they enrich the mixture like Latakia in tobacco. Bradford men were themselves great travellers, for ever popping off to the Continent, to Australia and South America. We might seem very provincial, but we had doors and windows open to the wide world.

In those pre-1914 days Bradford was considered the most progressive place in the United Kingdom. The Independent Labour Party was born in Bradford. Our subscription concerts were famous; in addition we had our permanent symphony orchestra and two magnificent choral societies; and we had two theatres, besides the music halls and concert party pavilions; a flourishing arts club; and three daily papers. (The morning one, the *Observer*, published some fine outside stuff then—and it was in its columns I first read H. M. Tomlinson.) I am prepared to bet that Bradford produced more well-known people—musicians, scientists, writers, performers and the like—than any place anything like its size in the whole kingdom.

Bradford, crouching in its smoky valleys, is, of course, a dingy city, but it has the good luck to be quite close to enchanting moorland country, and when I lived there we all took advantage of our good luck, spending much of our free time roaming the dales and camping near the moors. So I grew up with two equally strong tastes; one for what is truly urban—for concerts and theatres and arts clubs and cafés to argue in; and the other for really grand, wild, remote country, for salty winds, vast dark hills, stone walls vanishing into the clouds, springing larks and lonely curlews.

I have always been amused when Americans have pointed out the lack of social equality, real democracy, in England, because in the West Riding I knew there was as much social equality and real democracy as I have ever found anywhere in the United States. In the Bradford of my time, some men might be rich and others poor, but, for all that, they called each other "Sam" and "Joe," and spoke their minds freely. If the wool millionaires decided to found county families, they had to go a long way from Bradford to do it. We knew all about them there, and told them so. "Nay, don't start swanking, Sam," we said, and they had to retreat.

We have our faults in the North, faults that I am now aware of but still share. For instance, we are very conceited, nearly always a bit too pleased with ourselves. "Nah we'll show yer summat," we say to the outsiders. Again, we of the North are fond of saying that we are shy of expressing our feelings. But it's only our good feelings, not our bad ones, that we are shy of expressing. We don't like praising, but we are quick enough to blame and find fault. I have sometimes wondered if our grand womenfolk in the North are a bit depressed and shut-in-to-themselves just because women thrive and blossom on praise, and they have never had enough.

On the other hand, when I was a youngster in the North, just beginning to learn how to write, I was surrounded by people who were completely frank and outspoken and couldn't be taken in by any mere artful nonsense. The result was that I didn't try it. With such critics waiting to pounce upon the smallest evidence of insincerity and affectation, you just had to be honest, to say what you really meant, to give your honest opinion, and not pretend to have fine feelings you really hadn't got.

In the West Riding, as in other parts of the industrial North, you see what the Industrial Revolution did to the country and to the people. You were behind the scenes at the pageant of our national wealth. You knew that most of this wealth had been produced by the people who went clattering to work, so early in the morning, to huge dark mills from those miserable, dingy little streets "back o' t' mill." It was their nimble fingers, tired eyes and aching backs that really produced the mansions and grouse moors and yachts and hot-houses, the silks and peaches and cigars and old brandies, that were enjoyed far from the dingy little streets and the dark mills. Even when I was

a boy at school, asked to write an essay on a "beautiful view," I wrote a savage, ironical, description of Bradford's reeking chimneys and dismal slums. I realised early that whereas you could make a fortune by a lucky gamble or some piece of economic brigandage, successfully holding the community up to ransom, you were lucky to get any more than would keep you barely alive if you toiled day and night at the combing machines or the looms. And I knew then that something was most damnably wrong, that we were not within sight yet of social justice.

I knew something else, too, something that many of my literary colleagues, who still sneer at the industrial workers and contrast them unfavourably with picturesque foreign peasants (though these literary ladies and gentlemen have no intention of being peasants themselves) have apparently never discovered. It was that these industrial workers, exiled from the sun and the fields, condemned to spend their time between houses like barracks and factories like fortresses, people who could never speak quietly because they were so used to screaming and shouting above the din of their machines, were yet among the salt of the earth. They ought to have been sluts and brutes, but they were not—they were decent and kind, humorous and hopeful, often responding eagerly to any faint gleam of beauty—a song, a sunset, a handful of wild flowers—that touched and illuminated their lives. I watched the old folk struggling on during those years before 1914, often coming out on strike, for a principle's sake, when they had no resources but courage. I saw the young men fight and die in the war that followed, chiefly to save an inheritance that had never been theirs, for an England that took so much from them and gave so little.

If I do not live in the North, and have not done for many years, I think I am still happiest up there, whether I am only strolling along Market Street, Bradford (and a mess they have made of it), or have come within sight of Dick Hudson's on the moors. I love the people and the speech that still has to my ears more humour and tenderness in it than any other English speech—"Ay" and "Nay" and "lad" and "lass" and "love"—no robots, only warm, living, striving, hopeful human beings talk like that. I like even the towns, especially the West Riding towns built of a dark stone that makes them look like strange out-croppings of the native rock, as if the Pennines had suddenly pushed out mills and streets and tripe shops and those cindery wastes where the lads still "lake football"—and how we used to cut our knees on them! And I love the North Country itself—the moors, with their twisting stone walls and springy paths, the dark fells, the winding green dales, the old bridges over the trout streams, the whitewashed remote farmhouses.

\* \* \* \*

Bradford had a strong Socialist Movement, even before 1914. I was fairly well acquainted with it, for which I have been thankful since, for it has given me a basis for comparing the earlier with the more recent phases of the Movement. And let me add here that the

pre-1914 Labour Movement seemed to me to have an enthusiasm and breadth of appeal largely missing from the Labour Party between the wars, but of which I caught a welcome and refreshing glimpse again during this last General Election. How I wish Fred Jowett could have witnessed this sudden huge triumph!

Jowett was a figure compact of truth and integrity, utterly without pretence, and with the shining simplicity that belongs to the pure in heart. And if his spirit knows what I am doing, I am sure it is whispering, "Sitha, lad, just say what tha thinks." It would be a grave offence, I think, to his memory to introduce this biography of him with secret reservations, without putting down the plain truth. Therefore I say that although I recommend this book in the warmest terms to any and every kind of sensible reader, I do not agree with everything I find here. Thus, I disagree absolutely with the line adopted by the I.L.P. and Jowett in their relation to the war. I do not believe that the Nazis could have been halted by the passing of resolutions and by appeals to the working-classes. I believe that the war could have been avoided by a prompt and courageous challenging of Hitler and Mussolini, when they were still trying out their technique. But once we had failed to call their earlier bluff, and had allowed Hitler to build up his war machine, then I believe we had to fight for our very lives. And if millions of our young men in the Forces and the industrial services had not disagreed with Jowett and his friends, I am certain that the British people would have been conquered and enslaved, and that Jowett and his friends, among many others, would have been starved, beaten up, tortured or shot.

I cannot help feeling, too, that Jowett and his later I.L.P. group clung far too tenaciously to their old conviction that Socialism would be created solely by a working-class movement, which had to be suspicious of any approach to the growing technical and professional classes. They tended to believe that one class-conscious manual worker (who might easily belong to a rapidly dwindling section of the community) was worth a dozen middle-class converts to Socialism, even though all the evidence pointed the other way. I detect in the later chapters here, following the MacDonald tragi-comedy of 1931, in spite of Jowett's own indomitable spirits, his personal courage and optimism, a sense of frustration and a rather melancholy bewilderment that are the result, in my view, of this neglect of the evidence, this clinging through thick and thin to outworn ideas, this secret sentimentalising of an old and rather vague vision. And I believe that if Jowett, old as he was, could have lived a little longer, to witness the astonishing verdict of this last Election, with its host of Labour Members of a new type, he would have realised that it was the sudden swing of the middle-classes to the Left that made this great victory possible, just as it would be their continued support and essential skill that would help to transform the Labour programme from mere



aspiration into practical politics. It is sad to remember that Jowett's last years showed him little more than a chink of daylight, and that he died just before the door was flung wide open.

But this is the end of all major reservations. The chapters that follow seem to me equally absorbing and rewarding both as the story of one man and as a sketched history of a movement. (The earlier chapters, which give us the beginnings, are especially fascinating and valuable.) Jowett emerges from these pages a much larger and more important figure than even I, who was at least acquainted with him and his work, imagined him to be. He made a much greater contribution to our political and social history than I had imagined. Unlike some of his colleagues, he has been seriously under-rated. Indeed, it would be easy to assemble a glittering array of highly-rewarded politicians and public servants, Honourable Companions of this order and Noble Knights of that order, whose total contribution towards the welfare of our people would look shabby when compared with what this modest, short-sighted, rather frail little Yorkshireman did for us. And from first to last his integrity blazes like a beacon. Some of the things he fought for—notably, the feeding of under-nourished children—are now part of our essential social services. Others, such as a planned security for the whole working community, are now in the forefront of the Government's programme. Others again, particularly that reform of Parliamentary procedure itself at which he hammered for years, have still to be widely discussed before being generally accepted. And apart from his impressive individual contribution, his life itself, with its superb honesty, its decent frugality, its unsparing devotion to its chosen cause, its cheerful and uncomplaining comradeship, offers a valuable pattern. If he was not a "spectacular figure," then so much the worse for spectacular figures and the foolish crowds who applaud their antics. Lord send us more Jowetts! Even when he may have been wrong—and he was right over and over again when scores of more pretentious personages were hopelessly wrong—he was never stupidly and ignobly wrong. Was he a great man? Yes, I think he was a great man of a new kind, which the history books have not caught up with yet. If now we are close to achieving a community that has not a hungry child in it, then let us begin thinking about a noble monument to Fred Jowett. And here, in this welcome biography, is one foundation-stone.

J. B. PRIESTLEY.

## FOREWORD

## BRADFORD SEVENTY YEARS AGO

by F. W. JOWETT

**T**HERE were probably as many people living in the area which is now the central part of Bradford seventy years ago as there are to-day. Yet there were many green fields and intersecting narrow lanes where now there are houses, shops, warehouses and mills. In the less frequented of the lanes, which we called "snickets", men used to train and race their whippet dogs.

In one part of the overcrowded centre of Bradford there was a large Irish population, early generations of Ireland's starved-out peasantry, victims of the wicked system of landowning and legally destroyed Irish industries. Here they had become labourers and millworkers. Large families of them lived in poverty in rows of old Bradford's long and narrow streets.

Not so isolated as the Irish, but no less distinctive in their origin, were other Bradford immigrants of the first half of the last century. From distant parts of England, especially from the south and southwest, came large numbers of children to work in the mills, some with their parents, others in consignments from their Poor Law Guardians. My own mother came from Devonshire with two grown-up brothers, who appear to have obtained employment for her as a half-timer at Fison's mill in Burley-in-Wharfedale. After a very short stay at Fison's she came to work in a Bradford mill.

Of quite a different sort were the immigrants from Germany. They were at first mainly of the merchant and trading class, many of them Jewish. The city's rapid growth as a centre of the textile industry is to a large extent due to these immigrants who settled here to establish export business. Bradford's mills were producing textile goods in ever-increasing quantities, and these enterprising Germans had first-hand knowledge of continental markets. When I was young, in a part of Central Bradford where merchants concentrated there was a distinct section known in the trade as "Little Germany." This section was like a German town, judging by the name-signs on the big warehouses: Schüster, Steinthal, Blumenthal, Edelstein, Heilborn, Rothenstein—you couldn't mistake their origin. They were prosperous and amassed great fortunes, as did their contemporary British merchants.

Jewish immigrants from Germany contributed generously in money and service to charities and public welfare. Hospital accommodation was poor and insufficient, but, such as it was, in the list of contributions to its maintenance the names of the merchants of

Bradford's "Little Germany"—Jew and Gentile alike—were well to the front. They were good givers, but mustard-keen for profit in business. Of one of the most generous of them—a great giver both to Jewish institutions and to local charitable funds—it was said that his merciless deductions from the accounts sent to his firm afforded him more than sufficient to run his carriage and pair. In derision people called one of his splendid and costly horses "shorts" (i.e. deductions for delivery of short lengths) and the other "damages" (deductions for faults in goods delivered)! "There go Shorts and Damages," they would say as he rode past.

Except that their homes were mainly on the west side of the town, the rich employers and merchants of Bradford lived close to the working-class population until the later part of the last century; then, as their Groves, Mounts, Crescents and Terraces (stately rows with trees and small gardens) became closed in by mills, warehouses and small dwellings, the well-to-do folk moved outwards. A few of the wealthiest of Bradford's millocracy and merchant class had built very large houses in private parks enclosed within high walls, not far from the centre; although planned apparently for occupation by their families for generations, with one or two exceptions these mansions have gone. High-powered private cars are taking succeeding generations to even larger houses and finer parks, many miles away in Yorkshire's beautiful dales and elsewhere.

Saltaire, for example, was a model village seventy or eighty years ago in a generation which paid little heed to the conditions under which working people lived. Since then it has been sold over and over again—the whole village as well as the mill, everything included. The heir to the baronetcy and the rest of the family are now far removed from contact with the life in which their famous forefather, Sir Titus Salt, lived. Similarly, descendants of founders of great productive concerns of the late Victorian era, the Illingworths, the Holdens and the Listers of Manningham, are of the County Family class of the present generation: some of them are in the House of Lords. In the heyday of prosperity their ancestors were the aristocracy of Bradford, the mainstay of its charities and of such hospitals as then existed. They were the patrons of music. They formed a company to build St. George's Hall for their subscription concerts, which they made fashionable as well as popular.

Such were Bradford's minor merchant princes in the early years of my life. Public-spirited most of them were according to their lights. They founded a Mechanics' Institute for artisans' evening classes and for lectures, with library and reading-room attached, when the Public Free Library was in a little pokey room of no account—if, indeed, the Mechanics' Institute did not actually precede it. But these well-to-do Bradfordians were at the same time oblivious of the miserable conditions in which the working-class

population of their own town lived. Inheritors of discoveries and developments which had revolutionised industry and established them in great prosperity in the new machine age, they took full advantage of the cheap labour they were able to command. They applied a low standard of labour conditions, including extensive employment of children, at a time when they had the power, if they had had the will, to establish the woollen industry on a decent basis. With the exception of Sir Titus Salt, they lacked that community sense which would have made it impossible for them to bear the sight, every day in their lives, of the vile conditions under which the working people lived. Had they possessed this civic spirit they would have been stirred into corporate action through the Municipal Council which in those days they controlled.

The present generation have not the least idea of the conditions of working-class life seventy, or even as late as fifty, years ago. At least this is true in regard to Bradford, and Bradford conditions were probably then no worse than conditions in other towns. Even people of my age seem to have forgotten them. Yet it is desirable that these things be remembered, if for no other reason than to realise how greatly the lives of masses of people can be improved by changes in their environment through communal action.

Even so recently as fifty-one years ago, when I was first elected to the Bradford Town Council, the houses in which a very large proportion, if not the majority, of the working people lived were like the one in which I was born twenty-eight years before—one room upstairs, one downstairs, and a windowless cellar. Coal was kept in a small bricked-off portion of this dark cellar. The houses were in long streets, intersected by passages, with privy middens for each block of houses in the backyards. All these houses were built back-to-back and therefore they had no through draught for ventilation. Only where an intersecting passage leading to a backyard enabled an extra bedroom to be built over the passage were there two bedroomed houses.

Privy middens, which in those days were the common form of sanitary provision for all sorts of refuse, including human excreta, are a forgotten monstrosity in our day. The best-arranged of them served four households, two families living in houses fronting to the street, and two facing (in some cases actually adjoining) the privy middens in the backyard. All four families used the same ashpit, the large central part of a structure which had two privies at each end of it. In the front wall of the ashpit was a wooden door about two feet square, through which the accumulated refuse and excreta of four households were thrown into the yard when the middens were emptied. There were many larger privy middens serving eight households.

Collection of the refuse was let by contract for a period of years,

and it was not in the interest of the contractor to clear it more often than was absolutely necessary, nor was more frequent collection expected. The contractor employed "night soil men," as they were called, who clambered through ashpit doors, and pitched out the refuse in shovelfuls into the backyard, to be reshovelled into carts later. As carts rumbled into the yards and the reshovelling proceeded, the noise kept the occupants of the house awake for hours, and the stench increased the nuisance. 'Next day there was the swilling to be done, often necessarily after working hours: tired women scrubbing their respective shares of the paved yard, with water carried from the house-tap in bucketsful by husband or grown-up son or daughter, or by neighbours for each other.

These insanitary conditions and low wages made life difficult for working-class parents with young children. They looked forward expectantly to their children reaching working age, for the small weekly additions to the family income which they would bring into the home. Working-class families were much larger on the average than they are now, although many more children died in infancy and in their early years. Whilst children were under working age, food and clothing were insufficient. Yet going to work too early in life stunted growth, weakened constitutions, and therefore was a heavy price to pay for the few extra shillings a week.

Of her eight children, my own mother lost three—two in infancy, and one at four years. Such losses were not unusual; according to my recollection, most working-class parents lost more than one of their young children. Even thirty years later, when I made my first attempt, as Chairman of the Council's Health Committee, to get an insanitary area cleared and new houses built, the average death-rate of children in their first year in three municipal wards was 206 in every 1,000.

There were also other consequences of these insanitary conditions of working-class life. How rarely, for example, do people of this generation see people whose faces are pitted from smallpox—"pock-marked" as we used to say. Yet within my own recollection there were few who had neither relatives nor acquaintances so disfigured. Also children grew up knock-kneed and bow-legged in large numbers, probably due to untreated rickets in childhood—a disease so common at one time in this country that it was often referred to abroad as "English disease." One rarely sees a knock-kneed or bow-legged person nowadays.

Sanitary conditions in the mills, the smoking chimneys of which would be seen by the early owners through the windows of their comfortable homes, were generally bad, and frequently disgraceful. Floors thickly covered with trodden-hard grease, dusty walls and roofs (they were rarely lime-washed or even swept), sanitary conveniences primitive and too few, no separate rooms for meals or

facilities for cooking, not even a hotplate or crude oven to warm up a worker's "ten-to-one pie" (ten bits of potato to one of meat) in its earthenware or tin dish. Mid-day meals were mostly bacon-meat and cheese sandwiches or plain bread and butter eaten in the alleyways between the machinery. Those who lived near enough hurried home for a hasty breakfast in the half-hour allowed, and for dinner in the forty-five minutes mid-day interval.

For a penny a week per can a boy or a girl (with the permission of the gaffer—the overlooker or person in authority) collected the tin cans of tea and carried them to a large shallow iron tank filled with boiling water. In this tank the cans were put to heat and re-heat the tea, first for breakfast and then, the second half of it, for dinner. To prevent them tilting over into the rust-stained boiling water, the tank had an iron cover with round holes in it to hold the cans upright.

In my early factory life most women in the mills continued working after marriage and went on working until they had children of working age to add to the family income. It was a hard life for them. Weavers and other married women factory operatives would work their weekly 56½ hours up to within a week of childbirth, and would return to the mill about a week or ten days after childbirth. Out of their wages of ten or twelve shillings they would pay half-a-crown for "child minding" to some neighbouring old woman, unless the child could be left with a nearby grandmother. Up at six in the morning to start work at six-thirty, contriving if possible to suckle the child and take a hurried breakfast in the half-hour stop at eight, a hurried dinner and child-feeding during the three-quarter-hour stop at twelve-thirty, then working in the mill until five-forty-five, after which there was housework until bedtime. Extra cleaning, clothes-washing, and bread-baking were done at weekends.

Bread was baked at home in those days, and in some homes there was an occasional brewing of beer. I remember my own mother brewing beer in a large earthenware bowl in which at other times she kneaded dough for her weekly bread-baking. Mr. Gladstone killed home brewing when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer by making it necessary in nearly all cases to pay licence charges; the few exceptions were in favour of people living in houses of very low rateable value, only to be found in sparsely populated rural areas. Probably Mr. Gladstone did not foresee that the effect of his practical prohibition of home-brewing would be to give a tremendous impetus to the creation of an industry which has established a vested interest making enormous profits and exercising great political influence. Chemistry has cheapened production, but it seems to me to have depraved the public taste and increased drunkenness in the land. It has always been my contention that one good effect of taking the urge of private profit-making out of the drink trade by

socialising it would be the popular consumption of more wholesome and less intoxicating and thirst-provoking sorts of beer, such as people used to brew within my own recollection.

It is unfortunately the same in regard to the formation of public opinion, as the world has reason to know to-day by the amazing power of mass suggestion through propaganda. Newspapers which used to be family properties, with a tradition to maintain of giving actual news and faithful reporting, are now largely owned by the big money men, who think less of reporting opinion than of moulding it, and less of legitimate prestige than of gaining wealth and power. I do not mean to say that editorial comment was less partisan in the old pre-Harmsworth days or less influential, but rather that news was presented fairly with little or no partisan sub-editing, and without cunningly-devised and attractive but deceptive headlines.

My father was a Radical. His paper was the *Manchester Examiner and Times*. He read the leaders and no doubt was influenced by them, but I do not think what happened to another man I knew could have happened to him. As a half-timer, at eight years of age, I worked for some years nearby this man. I was a "warp-slayer." He was a "warp-dresser." It was my work to divide warp threads (which came from the cotton-spinners like big balls of rope) first into sections over a "raddle" (a wooden cross-bar pegged like a farmer's hay-rake) and then arrange the threads into twos, fours or sixes through a reed or "slay," a comb-like instrument four or six feet long, with flat wire teeth about six inches long. In the same room was the warp-dresser, putting the slay through the sectionalised warp as it was wound on the weaver's beam, which turned round and round in a machine-driven dressing frame.

The warp-dresser was a funny little man, not much over five feet tall. He would have been considerably taller if his legs had been straight, but he was so bow-legged that his workmates used to tell him in chaff that he "couldn't stop a pig in a passage." He didn't resent the chaffing, but rather enjoyed a laugh with the rest of them, whether at his own or anyone else's expense. He was not only a funny looking man, with a stiff brush of whiskers at the end of his chin, but he had a funny name—Ike Parkin. He lived near the mill in a small two-roomed house, approached by some half-dozen stone steps from the public road. Warp-dresser in the daytime, he was a barber at nights. "Toby up t'steps" the boys used to call him; he "polled" them for a penny and men for twopence, and shaved for a penny. He was a bachelor and lived with his old father, who lathered the men for their shaves, kept the house clean, and cooked meals for the two.

They read one newspaper daily, a London paper long since defunct, *The Standard*, according to my recollection. How "Toby up t'steps" managed to read it every day is a marvel, for his last cus-

toner would be at a late hour every night. *The Standard*, if that was the name of the paper, was Gladstonian Liberal before the Russo-Turkish war, but at the beginning of that war it became a Tory paper and supported Disraeli's pro-Turkish policy. Ike Parkin through his long habit of accepting his paper's views and arguments, went on repeating its politics without knowing they had changed. His Radical workmates were amazed.

In my memory this funny little man lives yet, Ike Parkin, "Toby up t'steps" of my boyhood, who "polled" me and who argued and cracked jokes with his mates while he worked and sang in his deep bass voice, "Rule, Britannia," "'Twas in Trafalgar Bay," "Tom Bowling" and "The Anchor's Weighed."

I was fortunate as a boy in being employed among dressers and twisters in a department where warps were beamed and prepared for the looms in the weaving shed, instead of working in a spinning room where most boys and girls were employed. The work was cleaner and not so physically exhausting. Although men's influence on young boys can be and sometimes is perverting, the men I worked among were a fair type of ordinary working-class folk. A few of them used swear-words more or less freely, but not filthy swear-words. They swore if things went wrong, but not at each other.

The walking some of the men had to do to and from their work was remarkable. Bradford is in the valley where the old ford runs from which the town derived its name, and there is only one way out without going up. From the heights of all its outlying suburbs—small isolated villages they were in my early life—men came to work in the mills. In these villages combing, spinning and weaving were formerly home industries; there remain yet many three-storeyed dwellings which afforded an extra room for the hand-loom or other necessary apparatus. Some of the descendants of the first handicraft workers still lived in these homes, and had to walk to Bradford to reach the mills. There were no trains or trams, although I remember seeing a three- or four-horse omnibus which made the three-mile journey to Thornton village once or twice a day for a while. I remember also seeing the first forerunner of the modern bicycle—the velocipede, a weirdly wonderful rather than a useful thing. It had neither rubber tyres nor steel springs, a perfect boneshaker, more primitive in its construction even than its successor, the penny-farthing bicycle, which came into service later for daring riders on pleasure excursions. Farmers bringing milk to town also carried a few passengers to and from outlying villages, country people coming occasionally into town, and townspeople making visits to relatives or friends in the country. These were the only facilities for travel between Bradford and the outlying villages up to about seventy years ago.

For our entertainment there was a theatre and a music-hall. The



music-hall was a large wooden building. Of my limited acquaintances, it was mainly the young people who visited the music-hall; older people were more interested in the legitimate stage. I knew several men who could recite long passages from Shakespeare's plays impromptu at any time. One man, a workmate of mine who could neither read nor write, never missed seeing a good play and could appraise the actors with sound judgment. I used to read socialist literature to this workmate for our mutual benefit. I remember reading two of Edward Carpenter's long-forgotten pamphlets, "England's Ideal," and "Desirable Mansions." I also read to him William Morris's "Dream of John Ball," when it was published as a serial in *The Commonweal*, the organ of the Socialist League, and the articles of "Nunquam" (Robert Blatchford) on Manchester slums in the *Sunday Chronicle*, and later, the articles of "Nunquam" and "The Bounder" (E. F. Fay) and "Dangle" (A. M. Thompson) in the early issues of *The Clarion*. I found in this unschooled but very intelligent workshop friend an appreciative listener. His name was Jim Sharp and he was my first convert to Socialism. He emigrated afterwards to the United States, where wages in the newly established textile mills were very much higher—as did other Bradford textile workers after the failure of the famous Manningham strike against drastic wage reductions. I have never since heard from him, but I know that wherever he has travelled or settled there has been one more witness for Socialism.

Music-hall songs were in my opinion generally better than they are now. There were no music hall stars equal to Chevalier or Eugene Stratton, but there were no wailing crooners such as get to the microphone these days, all too often for some of us. The songs were mainly sentimental, and small selections of them were sold on cheaply printed sheets not much larger than handbills—words without music. In old age one remembers snatches of these songs; they come back to you unthinkingly—tunes as from the far-distant past.

I ceased to be a half-timer when I reached the legal minimum age for full-time labour, which was then thirteen, and a year or two later became a "whitening-licker" or "twister," to give the job its correct name. A twister joins the threads of a nearly finished warp to those of a new warp. He twists about half an inch of each thread to half an inch or so of the thread of a new warp. Sitting on his stool in the twisting frame and dipping occasionally finger and thumb of one hand into whitening mixed with water, he can twist the two ends of threads together at the rate of thirty or forty threads a minute. The twister uses wet whitening or dry whitening and licks his fingers for the double purpose of easing the friction on his skin and binding the twisted threads more closely together.

To remain a warp twister, however, was not attractive to me. I wanted to be an overlooker, a "tackler" as he is called in Lancashire.

I wanted to have in my sole charge the more interesting job of fixing the gadgets and apparatus of an overlooker's "share" of looms—the adjustment and timing in their correct relations of all movements of the looms, so that the shuttles would lay the weft threads evenly and never "fly-out" (shuttle guards were not in use then) and the looms never "bang off" or produce faulty cloth. But my father objected. Overlookers had to carry warps on beams down flights of stairs and in between rows of looms. And they were heavy. I was too light for such heavy work, my father said, and it certainly seemed so at the time, for even four years later, when I married at the age of twenty, I weighed only seven stone eleven (109 lbs.) and the fully-warped beams would often weigh at least 150 lbs.—a big load to carry on one shoulder.

But being determined, and also confident that physical strength is not the only necessary attribute for carrying heavy weights, I began to train myself for the job. In a large room not used for other purposes there was always a number of warps on beams ready for the weavers' looms. So I snatched five or ten minutes at meal times for practice, upending the heavy full beams as dexterously as I could and then carrying them on my shoulder across the floor to give myself confidence. Circumstances afterwards favoured me, and at the age of nineteen I was in full charge of a "share" of looms. Two years later I was accepted as a fully-qualified member of the Power Loom Overlookers' Trade Union, of which now I am one of the oldest members.

About nine years later I became joint manager and designer at the same firm, but this was after a short interval (less than twelve months) as partner in a small wool and waste business, which was as little successful as it was to my liking. I lost the legacy of £50 which I took into the business, though I left it free of debt or of any other unfulfilled obligation. I never regretted this short experience, for it gave me inside knowledge of the parasitic character of this un-economic, unregulated, supply-and-demand method of dealing with the raw, semi-manufactured and waste materials of the textile industry. The mills of Dewsbury, Batley and Ossett and other centres of the heavy woollen industry draw a large proportion of the material they spin and weave from Bradford's wool, noils and waste dealers, whose warehouses are thick under the shadow of the tower of Bradford's Town Hall. Many of these warehouses were originally blocks of cottages, later slum dwellings. Others are the many-storeyed warehouses of prosperous firms, firms which mostly sprang from the small beginnings which laid the foundations of very large fortunes in Bradford's more prosperous times, when it was far easier than it is now to start a business with small capital and then extend. Many more businesses were started on an overdraft at the bank (bankers' paper credit) in those days than in these times, when the policy of

the Big Five banking companies, and the few remaining independent banking concerns, are insistent on more than ample security for overdrafts allowed to beginners.

Changed circumstances, which brought my brother-in-law as partner into the firm for which I had previously worked, gave me the opportunity to return to it, this time in a managerial capacity. Fortunately I had attended evening classes for weaving and designing for some years whilst in the mill, and I was therefore fully qualified in practice and theory for a managerial post. This post I held with full liberty for public work until I was induced by the local I.L.P. members to give my whole time to municipal administration and socialist propaganda, for which service a small maintenance allowance of £2 a week was guaranteed by subscribers. This arrangement continued until I was elected to Parliament five years later in 1906. My election to the House of Commons brought to an end my long and active association with the municipal government of the town I was born in. I realised soon after I became Member for West Bradford that I could not take my full share of work and responsibility as municipal councillor and at the same time attend faithfully to my newly-accepted duties, and I did not stand for re-election to the Council at the end of my term of office in 1907. I had then served for 15 years, including eight years as chairman of the Health Committee.

On Monday morning every week during Parliamentary sessions I travelled to London, returning just as regularly every Friday night when the House adjourned for the week-end. On one occasion this habit brought me an unexpected compliment on the performance of my duty to the public and especially to the people of my own class. On my way to the station by tram, as a number of workers came clamping down the steps from the top deck, I heard one man say to his mate, "sitha, there's Jowett going to his wark." This workman's spontaneous testimonial, when there was no State payment of Members and when Labour M.P.'s (except Trade Union nominees, paid and financed by their Unions) had to pay their own railway fares and living expenses in London out of their meagre party allowances, which amounted to £200 a year in the case of I.L.P. Members, so gratified me that I still find pleasure in thinking of it.

Some fifteen years later, when I was called as a member of the first Labour Cabinet to Buckingham Palace for a personal talk with the King (the present King's father), this habit of Monday and Friday journeys was again the subject of remark. In reply to one of the King's friendly enquiries I told him that my home was in Bradford, where I went every week-end. "But do you not find the weekly journeys rather a trial?" he asked. Sure that, as a family man, he would understand, I said, "but there is nothing like peace at home, is there?"—a remark which for some reason or other greatly amused

him. Lest this reference to the priceless blessing of peace at home may be misunderstood, I had better say here and now that for over 47 years it was my good fortune to have a wife as helpmate, and, although for more than 40 of those years my engagements as socialist propagandist, municipal councillor and M.P. took me away from home far more than pleased either of us, she never complained or made things difficult for me. The last time I saw her was one Monday morning in September 1931 as she stood at the door smiling and waving her weekly farewell as I turned the corner on my way to my parliamentary duties. This is a picture I shall always see when I think of her.

My fifteen years on the Bradford Town Council began fifty-one years ago, when sanitary conditions were not substantially different from those described earlier. All working-class people still lived (as a very large proportion do yet) in back-to-back houses. A few houses with small side-scelleries, rather more commodious and slightly less insanitary, had been built and occupied; there was a passage through to the backyard after every second house, and the yard was shared by only four houses—two back and two front. But the privy midden system still prevailed, except that here and there an enterprising builder had provided "tippler closets" which were supposed to be flushed and cleansed automatically by waste water from the household sink. (These freak substitutes for water closets were a failure and not many were built). There were still slum and cellar dwellings, occupied and rented by many thousands of working-class families. There were no municipal houses.

Women still worked up to within a week of childbirth and returned to work a week or ten days after. Bradford was largely a one-industry town, employing mostly women, children and young persons; apart from the mills, the workplaces were limited to a fairly large engineering shop, two or three loom makers, the relics of a once prosperous iron foundry and the derelict remains of another. In the mills men's occupations were few; only at night was wool combing an occupation for men. These night combers were often treated as casual labourers, to be given work if and when a night turn was necessary, at wage rates of eighteen shillings, or at most a pound a week. For this miserable pittance they worked in hot, gas-lighted combing and wool-washing sheds, which were almost a tropical heat after operatives had been employed in them on the day shifts. One of the newly-established illustrated monthly magazines ran a series of descriptive articles on the night combers of Bradford under the title, "The White Slaves of England."

Men were also employed in sorting and classifying wool ready for washing and combing and in the dyeing industry (dyeing and finishing of yarn and woven fabrics), but here again the wages were scandalously low and work irregular, although profits for the employers

were fabulously high. In general, unemployment was for men a common experience.

Such were the social and industrial conditions in Bradford when I first entered the Town Council. Employment mostly for women and children at low wages. Men's work scarce and irregular and unemployment among them chronic. No old age pensions or unemployment insurance. No school meals for half-starved children; no school clinics. The dreaded workhouse, still commonly referred to by people of the working class as "the bastille," and regarded as such. The terrible disease of anthrax, a "woolsorters' disease," well-known by that name. Slums and cellar dwellings. Poverty and poverty diseases rampant.

Then came Keir Hardie—Member for the Unemployed—and the I.L.P. Like many another young man I was caught up into the surging tide of battle against all the evils which were the common lot of working folk. It carried me through fifty eventful years of public life—sometimes successful, sometimes temporarily defeated, but never intimidated or dismayed.

JUNE, 1943

FREDK. W. JOWETT

## CHAPTER I

## THE BIRTH OF BRITISH SOCIALISM

Bradford has been called the largest village in Britain, and with some truth. Its population and industry, its contribution to music, drama and literature, make Yorkshire's textile capital more than a thousand villages, but there is one feature of its life which remains village-like despite its expanding streets and mills and schools; its people have a local patriotism rarely found beyond hamlets and small market towns.

If a Bradford lad win distinction, every citizen takes pride in him, and, however famed he become, his first thought is to share the honour with the city of his birth.

It was this impulse which led the subject of this book to suggest shyly (for his personal modesty was struggling with his local pride) that its title might describe him as "Jowett of Bradford."

He had been Member of Parliament for sixteen years, had become a Cabinet Minister and presided over a Department of State, had won the affection of thousands of people throughout the British Isles, and had travelled to foreign lands on important missions; but to this his thought came back: "My home has never been more than a mile from my birthplace. Nor have the schools I have attended or the mills I have worked in been further away."

There were other famed Jowetts. Jowett of Balliol probably influenced the intellectual life of Oxford more than any other man, and one cannot think of him except in association with the College of which he was Master. Jowett of Birmingham achieved the reputation of one of the greatest preachers of Nonconformity, but his name will always be associated with Carr's Lane, Birmingham. In the same way Frederick William Jowett will be remembered as Jowett of Bradford, not only because of his devotion to the city, but because no man honoured it more in his life or did more for its welfare.

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In his Foreword, Fred Jowett (as all his friends call him) has given us some picture of the home into which he was born, on January 31, 1864, eighty-two years ago. One can see the insanitary two-roomed back-to-back house in which his mother struggled against cruel poverty to bring up her family of eight, two of the children dying in infancy, one at four years of age, despite all her care. One can see her groping her way down the stairs in the early morning to build the fire and make tea for her man and older children before they left for the woollen mill at six o'clock. Fred's father was a foreman, but even the wages of "gaffers" were small in those days, and it was not until the three eldest children (Fred among them) had gone to work that money "became easier." He was a frail child and

his mother often used to persuade the second girl, two years older than he, to take the early turn to save him going out into the damp, wintry air; one week half-timers worked in the mornings, the next in the afternoons. The two youngest children were more fortunate. By the time they were eight years of age the family income had become large enough to make it unnecessary for them to go out to work as half-timers; indeed, they stayed at school until they were fifteen.

Jowett used to say that he owed his "love of common folk" more to his mother than to anyone. His memory of her appearance was chiefly of her hair, "coal black, almost blue-black, as is sometimes to be found among Celts."

"On my father's side I was rooted in the West Riding, but my mother came from Devonshire when she was not more than seven years of age. Like many other children in those days, she had been deposited for exploitation, fatherless and motherless, alone among strange people and regardless of consequences. Occasionally she would reveal incidents of her early life in my hearing, and they sank deeply into my mind, although she was quite unaware of the fact. It seemed natural that she should tell also of Chartist meetings, although she was so young at the time and so little that for safety against the crowd she crept under the wagon from which the speeches were delivered. Early impressions of this sort must surely have made me a potential democrat in my very early years."\*

To his father, also, Fred owed his democratic principles. He was a Radical in politics, a great admirer of Ernest Jones, the Chartist, and often talked politics to his boy as they walked the moors on Sundays.

These walks evidently made a deep impression on young Fred not only by the companionship of his father, but by the beauty and grandeur of the Yorkshire moors and vales. Sixty-seven years later the memory of the earliest of these excursions remained with him even in detail.

"A day that I shall never forget is the first long Sunday walk I had with my father," he wrote. "I had not started work then, so I was certainly under eight years old. We walked from Saltaire or Shipley over the moors to Ilkley. After the moorland walk, which seemed to me as if it would never end, there came suddenly into view the most wonderful picture I had ever seen. The beautiful Wharfe Valley and neighbouring hills spread beneath and before us. Ilkley was little more than a village; its charm as part of the landscape was unaffected then, as it is to-day, by an extensive built area, where once Middleton Hall and park were part of the picture."†

Neither of his parents could be called religious, though if they had been asked they would have described themselves as Chapel Folk; everyone then was either Chapel or Church. In appearance, Fred's

\*"What Made Me a Socialist," I.L.P. Pamphlet, 1925, 2d.

†"Bradford I.L.P. News," January 27, 1939.

father was a typical self-respecting working man. Weekday or Sunday he was neatly dressed; his short red beard was well trimmed. Jowett sometimes remarked that Keir Hardie must have been very like his father in appearance before Hardie adopted the picturesque style of his later years.

### *Starting Work in the Mill*

To the story already given of his experiences as a half-timer one need add little. The week following his eighth birthday (when other lads were entering their Preparatory Schools) he went to the textile factory as a wage-earner. He was one of the smallest of the children lined up to be certified by the doctor as fit for work in the mill. All the doctor did to satisfy himself that they had reached the age of eight was to look at their teeth; a copy of the registration of birth was not demanded or expected. When he was thirteen Fred became a full-timer.

At first existence seemed to have at least a minimum of security. Father and three children were working, and their joint wages, whilst allowing few comforts, met the modest needs of the home. Then, when Fred was about fourteen, came trade depression, and he learned from the anxiety of his parents the meaning of insecurity to working folk. Workers were put on short-time, mills closed, neighbours were short of food. His father, though not more than a sectional foreman, felt a responsibility for the workers who served under him. For three years this uncertainty continued, and then the blow fell; the firm dissolved. Fortunately, the dissolution was followed by reconstruction and trade improved, but the haunting fear in his home during these years made a deep impression on the boy, still in his teens.

As Fred grew into adolescence his mind began to protest against the conditions of existence to which mill-workers were condemned. He marvelled at the skill of the women weavers who worked about him. Keen eyesight, quickly moving fingers, light touch and habits of neatness were required; these became almost an instinct and were most developed among girls who were the daughters of weavers. To find one broken thread in a mass of tightly stretched threads, and to replace it through its empty eyelet (of which there may be sixty or seventy to every inch) without breaking or fraying more threads is an extremely delicate operation.\*

Yet the average wage for full-time work, ten hours for five days and six and a half on Saturday, was not more than twelve shillings. A few weavers of exceptional skill would earn fourteen or fifteen shillings; the slow and inexperienced ones would earn ten or eleven shillings.

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\*The warp on the beam is in various lengths and when each length has been completed (that is, crossed by the weft in the shuttle and made into cloth) the woven cloth is cut off, folded, and called a piece. Probably this is the origin of the term "piece-work."



Fred was angered specially by the mean tricks used to reduce these wages still further. When the weaver began on a new warp she was required to receive a ticket stating the wage per piece; employers throughout the West Riding circumvented this by adopting a secret code of letters to represent the length of the pieces. They were thus able to conceal unauthorised wage reductions. Jowett told how under cover of this subterfuge he had seen the pieces lengthened by a couple of yards without any adjustment of the rate. This practice was not ended until a law was passed compelling employers to use the actual figures.

There was no thought among the textile workers at that time of increasing their wages by united action; there were but a few small, weak and non-aggressive sectional Trades Unions.\* Only the Factory Acts, limiting the hours of work for women, young persons and children, gave any protection to the textile workers. Some employers were worse than others; the one way the workers knew of improving their position was to get a job in a firm paying higher rates. The idea of collective action had hardly broken through to workers' minds.

But it had been born, and Jowett was one of the first to respond to it. He had been prepared by his reading from an early age. At fourteen he read Carlyle's "Heroes and Hero Worship," and whilst "the gospel of hero-worship, the laudation of the idea of government by wise, strong men" did not appeal to him, the idea of a new social order entered his mind. Fred afterwards asked himself why as a mere lad he rejected Carlyle's gospel of salvation through heroes. His answer was characteristic.

"There must have been something in me," he wrote, "that could not respond to his powerful and eloquent glorification of the supermen—including the captains of industry who would organise production not for profit but for use—for in all things else he made a deep impression on my young mind. What could it be? What other experience had woven itself into me? The more I read of Carlyle's heroes, the less attraction they had. I did not like his Luther, his Frederick the Great, nor his Cromwell. In some way, at some time, I must have imbibed a repugnance to personal domination which rests on force. I had in me the feeling that the common people should not be driven, and the more Carlyle crowned and canonised a ruling class, the more I felt I was on the side of the common people. I was at heart a democrat."†

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\*The Pressers' Union deserves a note. Jowett said that it more closely approached a Guild than any other Union he had known. The Pressers did heavy and specialised work. Their function was to place sheets within the folds of the dyed fabric so as to give finish to the face of the cloth. The pressers' foreman was handed the payment for the work done and it was then shared among the men. The Union was responsible for discipline, levying fines for lateness or for defective work. The employers had practically no control over the conditions and rules under which pressers did their job.

†"What Made Me a Socialist."

*Becoming A Socialist*

During the next few years this young lad, despite long hours of work in the mill, technical classes which occupied his evenings, and few hours of leisure in a cramped and crowded home, continued to read and to think. In the meal-time intervals at the mill he turned at once to his reading. "When the other lads used to play football in the mill yard or sing pantomime songs, Fred Jowett stole away into some quiet corner and got his head down in a book. Queer habits, his mates thought."\* Thus he read Ruskin, William Morris, Edward Carpenter, Robert Blatchford. Ruskin's "Unto This Last" made him a Socialist in all but name. Morris's "Dream of John Ball" and "News from Nowhere" (appearing as serials in *The Commonwealth*), Carpenter's pamphlets, "England's Ideal" and "Useful Work Against Useless Toil," and Blatchford's articles in the *Sunday Chronicle*—all these he read and he knew he was a Socialist.

The first socialist organisation which Fred joined was William Morris's Socialist League. This was when he was twenty-two.† The author has seen a photograph of a group of members of the Bradford and Leeds Branches of the League taken at an outing during that year. Their bowler hats, stiff collars, and high-necked jackets are an amusing contrast to the bare heads, open-necked shirts and shorts of to-day. In the midst of them is a slight figure, pale and frail, a mop of black hair falling over his forehead, a long narrow face, cheeks pouching forward about a mouth not yet formed to strength, thoughtful eyes considering some object of his imagination, papers bulging from a pocket—the student even on an outing. That young man was Fred Jowett. One lingered on other figures in the group, which included three German Socialists, members of the Bradford "immigration" described in Jowett's Foreword. But one's eyes returned to young Fred; the photograph showed him as he was in those pioneering days.‡

The Bradford Branch of the Socialist League had less than a dozen members. Its main activity was a forum held in an upper room of Laycock's Temperance Hotel. The room was full of the stale odour of cooking, but so keen was the interest in political discussion that this was forgotten. The League leadership in London was literary, artistic and Utopian, but the Bradford Branch appears to have been a cross-section of the thinking working class of that time. There was H. Jesse Mitchell, a typical woollen worker, stunted by his years in the mill as a child, the father of a large family, his most prized

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\*Quoted from one of Jowett's workmates in "Men of the Moment" series in *Yorkshire Observer Budget*, June 10, 1932.

†About the same time—on February 19, 1887—Jowett joined the Bradford and District Power-Loom Overlookers' Society. He remained a member of this Trade Union until his death.

‡Tom Maguire, Socialist poet of the early years, took the photograph. (See page 30.) It included many of those mentioned in the succeeding paragraph.

*possessions some engravings of Turner's paintings which no money could tempt from him, a Marxist who delivered heavy lectures with a nasal accent due to snuff-taking.* There was Fred Pickles, the precise secretary—afterwards he served Keir Hardie in this capacity for a time—who so loved Carlyle and Ruskin that he printed quotations from them on the leaflets announcing meetings. There was Paul Bland, concerned with the next step in reform rather than economics or art under Socialism, and Carl Henze, a German anti-militarist refugee, a skilled craftsman, widely read and tolerant, who became blind in middle-age and devoted the rest of his life to brightening the lot of his fellow sufferers. There was George Minty, nearest to the William Morris type, "with the heart of a child and the feeling of a poet." Of Mitchell, Pickles, Bland and Minty, Jowett wrote later: "All four of them of blessed memory to me—they were really the earliest Bradfordian advocates of modern Socialism."\*

Laycock's Hotel became an almost non-stop forum, because it was the resort of serious-minded men, mostly Radicals, who discussed continuously as they drank their tea and coffee brought in half-pint mugs as though it were beer. Political discussion at this period seems to have gone on wherever working men met; it was not limited to temperance hotels. A Radical named Waddington kept the Exchange Inn, City Road; he worked in the day-time as a bricklayer, and in the evenings was as keenly interested in debating politics as in selling beer. There was the Royal Oak at Shipley where ceaseless discussions were led by Alexander George, manager of a Co-operative tailoring department, and Frank Bamford, a miner who taught himself chemistry so successfully that he leapt from a labouring job at Lister's Manningham mill to become head of the dyeing department.

This was the period of the birth of British Socialism as a Movement. The progressives of the older generation among working men were Radicals, the Left Wing of the Liberal Party but intensely loyal to it. Socialism arose as a challenge, and Fred Jowett was in the thick of this ideological struggle. History was being made in these hotly debated discussions in the eating places and public houses where workers gathered.

The fact is, however, that Jowett and his associates made little impression on their Radical protagonists, who were tied by tradition to old ideas and their old party. Nevertheless, it was the Sunday Society, run by Radicals, Frank Bamford and Alexander George (of the Royal Oak) along with W. P. Byles, the broad-minded Editor of the *Bradford Observer* (afterwards Sir William Byles, Liberal M.P.), which first gave prominent Socialists the opportunity to address large audiences in Bradford. Sunday by Sunday the Temperance Hall was crowded and the lecturers included William Morris ("he looked like a jolly sailor in his blue suit with reefer jacket"); Edward Carpenter, gentle mystic

\*"Bradford I.L.P. News," February 19, 1937.



ONE OF THE EARLIEST GROUPS OF BRITISH SOCIALISTS

*A ramble of Members of the Leeds and Bradford Branches of the Socialist League, 1886*

*Back row :* 1, — ; 2, Wood (Bradford); 3, Karl Heuze (Bradford); 4, Jesse Mitchell (Bradford); 5, Barracrough (Bradford); 6, Paul Bland (Bradford); 7, Arthur Spencer (Bradford); 8, Fred Pickles (Bradford); 9, — ; 10, Geo. Minty (Bradford); 11, G. A. Gaskell (Bradford); 12, Walter Foster (Bradford).  
*Second row :* 13, Thackray (Leeds); 14, — ; 15, Wm. Allworthy (Leeds); 16, Karl Buslauf (Bradford); 17, F. W. Jowett (Bradford); 18, D. Wormald (Leeds).  
*Bottom row :* 19, Wm. Hill (Leeds, afterwards Australia); 20, F. Chapman (Leeds); 21, — ; 22, F. Corkwell (Leeds)



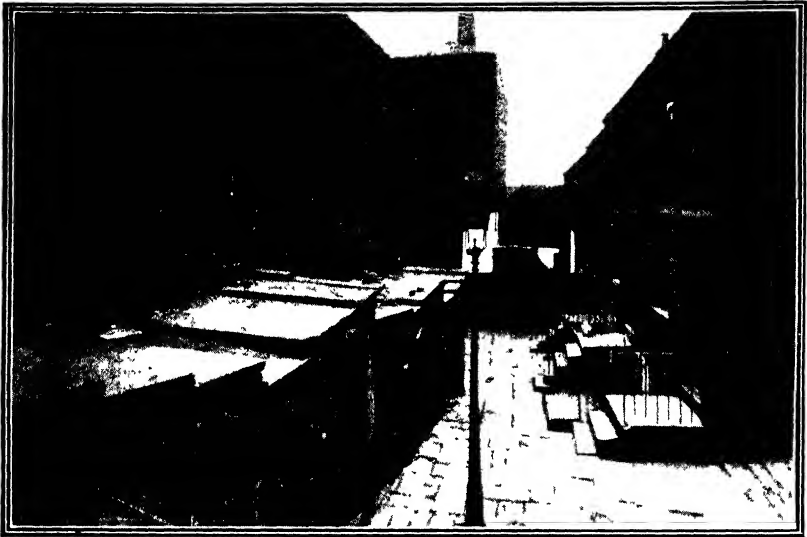
J. KEIR HARDIE

*As he was when Jowett first met him at the Bradford T.U.C., 1888*



W. H. DREW

*Led the famous Manningham Strike in Bradford in 1892*



BRADFORD HOUSES FIFTY YEARS AGO

*Back-to-back houses with waterless privy middens in the yard. The death-rate in the Longlands slum area in 1895 was 45.6 per thousand, compared with 19.8 for the whole city*



THE BEGINNING OF MUNICIPAL HOUSING

*The Longland Tenements, built in 1901, after a three years' struggle with the Property Owners on the City Council*

and poet; George Jacob Holyoake, pioneer Co-operator ("who would have been as popular an orator as Charles Bradlaugh but for the lack of a good voice"); Kropotkin ("a short burly man with a big bushy head") and Stepniak. Kropotkin, known first as a scientist among Russian nobles, famed later as revolutionary and anarchist author, was a refugee from the Czarist régime. Stepniak was also an escaped prisoner from Czarist tyranny, the author of "Underground Russia." It may be that Fred's enduring sympathy with the people of Russia dates from his hearing of these lectures fifty-nine years ago.

There was another socialist influence in Bradford which was not untypical of the beginnings of the Movement in Britain. At Horton Lane Congregational Church there was a minister, a deep philosopher and thinker, a Scotsman by birth, named Dr. K. C. Anderson.† He startled his congregation of Liberal Nonconformists by saying "the socialist indictment against modern society is a true bill; we cannot answer the charge." Most of the Bradford Socialists were Secularists and had no tolerance for ministers of religion, not even socialist ministers, but Fred retained some connection with chapel folk and helped to bring in converts who later counted a good deal in the Movement.

Jowett was in his early twenties when he came under the personal influence of Keir Hardie. The Trades Union Congress met in Bradford in 1888. Hardie was a delegate, the "stormy petrel" of the Congress. Fred met him in one of the coffee taverns where his comrades used to gather, and retained a mental picture of this brown and bearded figure in rough tweed suit and famous deer-stalker cap, a scarf about his neck and canvas shoes, such as are commonly worn at the seaside, on his feet. Fred remembered the topic of conversation in that tavern: Hardie's strong warning against the tactics of Champion, a strange figure in Left politics at this time, who ran a small paper, the *Labour Elector*. Champion was prepared to take money from anywhere to run Labour Candidates and there was a suspicion that he was an agent of the Tories. Hardie would not hear of touching "soiled money." Little did the young Bradford mill-worker of 23 imagine as he listened to these forthright words how closely he would be associated with Hardie in later years.

### *Beginning Of Labour Politics*

The Socialist League was too "precious" to last: the inspiration of beauty is a part of Socialism, but first comes the necessity for bread. The Bradford Branch closed down in 1889, to be followed by the Labour Electoral Association, of which Jowett was one of the founders and secretary. He and James Bartley, a prominent member of the Typographical Association, had the idea of making the new organis-

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\*This was Philip Snowden's description. The others were Jowett's.

†Dr. Anderson was associated twenty years later with the New Theology and Socialist campaign of the Rev. R. J. Campbell, of the City Temple.

ation into an "independent political party for Labour," but leading Radicals joined it and resisted every move to realise this. They were craftsmen who regarded themselves as socially above the mass of semi-skilled or unskilled workers; indeed, says Jowett, "their thought and feeling about the social and industrial relationship between employers and workers were not essentially different from the thought and feeling of the small tradesmen and newly rich millionaires who gave life and energy to the Liberal Party." It was characteristic of them that, when a proposal was made to amend the title of the Bradford Trades Council to the Trades and Labour Council, they thought the word "Labour" would lower its prestige.

The inescapable test came with the Dockers' Strike in London in 1889 and the birth of the New Unionism, not limited to "tradesmen" but sweeping in the "unskilled" workers. The Socialist members of the Labour Electoral Association carried a resolution supporting the Dockers' Strike, and open-air meetings and street collections were organised. More than that, they introduced the New Unionism to Bradford. When a strike occurred among the gasworkers employed by the Bradford Corporation, Jowett with two of his colleagues organised them on behalf of the Association; the strike was successful, and it ended in the formation of a Branch of the National Gasworkers' Union, of which even then Will Thorne was General Secretary. In protest the Radicals gave notice that at the next monthly meeting they would raise the question "as to whether this Association is acting in accordance with its constitution in interfering between Labour and Capital." The next monthly meeting never took place. In the meantime a special meeting decided to support three Liberal candidates for the Town Council—and Jowett, the secretary, came to the conclusion that the Association had outlived its usefulness. He called no more meetings.

The decease of the Electoral Association did not mean, however, any slackening of Jowett's socialist activities. Nothing could quench his young enthusiasm. He was drawn into Trade Union agitation by W. H. Drew, one of the pioneers in organising the textile workers, and early mornings Fred would be up in time to join Drew and one or two other stalwarts at the mill gates by 6 a.m. in order to catch the night shifts of wool combers as they finished work. One can picture him in these drab scenes at dawn distributing leaflets to the men as they hurried away to breakfast, or mounting the box to urge the need for organisation upon the few who gathered round. At many mills these night-workers were treated as casuals, expected to attend at the mill gates when the day shift of women workers finished, but without guaranteed work. Their wage was only a pound or 22s. a week. The conditions of woolcombing are still bad, but they have been lifted far above the insecurity and slavery of fifty years ago, and to Drew and Jowett and their comrades much of the credit is due.

*Marriage and Promotion at the Mill*

But before we proceed with the story of his political struggle let us look at the personal fortunes of Fred Jowett himself. At twenty-two he had married Emily Foster, the daughter of a wool waste dealer. She was one of a large family in comfortable circumstances, and when she left school remained at home for household duties until she joined Fred at eighteen. That there was deep and enduring affection is proved by the long and close comradeship to which Fred has already paid his simple but moving tribute. Their home in Telford Street became well-known as a centre of political discussion which often continued long into the night hours between Radicals like Frank Bamford and Fred and his fellow Socialists. Among the members of their discussion group was a young University lecturer, who afterwards, as Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, gained distinction in the Civil Service.\*

Mrs. Bruce Glasier has written a colourful description of the Jowett home. She had been advised at the London office of the Fabian Society to look up Fred Jowett, "an old Socialist Leaguer," when she visited Bradford. She had visions of a William Morris house and a Morris-like man, "shaggy hair, blue shirt, red tie, serge suit." This is what she found:

"I had been brought to Fred Jowett's house and found it, with a certain dismayed disappointment, just one in a row of a score or so of others exactly like it, in a side street in the better-off working-class district of the town. There were trim lace curtains in the window, and the doorstep was immaculately whitened. I believe in these days I would have preferred it mossgrown!

"My guide suggested the back way and my hopes rose again, only to sink the more completely as—in one of the kindest and most deftly kept living-rooms I have ever seen—Fred Jowett rose from his chair to greet me. This—this quiet-voiced, slightly-built, demurely-dressed (parson's grey and black tie, starched collar even), pale *young* man, with smooth black hair, correctly parted, daring even to look shy on his own hearthstone—this was 'the old Socialist Leaguer'!

"Why—I told to my own young and rawly-prejudiced self—he might have been a douce college student preparing for the Nonconformist ministry!

"Then I was introduced to Mrs. Jowett—a gravely beautiful woman, in whose quiet smile I thought I read recognition of her guest's temporary discomfiture. And then to two healthy, happy-looking, but perfectly mannered youngsters—a boy and a girl. It was a memorable tea-time that followed."†

By this time Jowett had become a proficient craftsman and more. He had not only mastered his jobs in the mill, but had set aside two evenings a week for study. First he had attended classes and lectures at the Mechanics' Institute. Then he had gone on to the Bradford

\*Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith was described by Mr. Lloyd George in his War Memoirs as "the most resourceful and suggestive mind in the whole of our Civil Service." Socialists will remember him most for his joint authorship with Vaughan Nash, of "The Story of the Dockers' Strike." He died in September, 1945, at the age of 81.

†"Labour Leader," May, 1906.



*Technical College. As a consequence he had become familiar with the processes, technique and economics of the woollen and worsted industry in most of its phases. His working prospects, after a short set-back, improved noticeably. The set-back followed an ill-fated venture. Left a small legacy, he became a partner in a little wool and waste business; he lost his money within a year, though he was able to meet all debts and obligations. Then a crisis occurred in the firm where Fred had worked previously: the owner died leaving his money to a second wife, and his son had not the capital to carry on. Fred came to the rescue by persuading his brother-in-law to put in money, and by his own application and studies he had now fitted himself to become associated in the management of the reconstructed business. His salary was small but enough, and he had, most important for his new home, the assurance of security.*

Improved economic circumstances did not lessen Jowett's socialist zeal. One finds letters from him in the Bradford press during this period calling for the abolition of the half-time system, followed by a controversy which was a great contribution to the development of public opinion on this issue at the very heart of the textile industry. The cruelty of child labour was not ended for another forty years, but here was one of the beginnings of that achievement.

Directly linked with Jowett's new position in the mill was a personal association which was to become significant. The son whom Fred assisted was William Leach, afterwards Labour Councillor, Labour M.P., and Labour Minister. Fred has told of his first convert to Socialism: William Leach was the second. Fred had helped to teach him the technicalities of weaving when he entered the mill, and they made a practice of walking home together, discussing Socialism as they went. Thus began an association which lasted through many years.

Another close and long friendship began in these days—Jowett's association with Harry Wilson, afterwards City Councillor and treasurer of the Bradford I.L.P. Wilson, who was a hairdresser by trade, first met Fred at a Fabian Society meeting in 1891. Their back doors were opposite each other, and their children came to be as much at home in one house as in the other. Fred and Harry became inseparable, attending the same meetings, nearly always finding their minds in accord. The two families developed the habit of going on their holidays together, to Morecambe, the Isle of Man and other places. Once they went for an eight-day walk in the Dales, the four parents, the three Jowett children, ten, eight and five, the two Wilson children, eight and five. They set off with a child's go-cart, their luggage packed on a shelf under the seats. For an hour the younger children pushed the cart; then the older children pushed them; in the afternoons the fathers were called upon. They stayed at inns and farms, walking about ten miles a day.

Each Whitsun the Jowetts and Wilsons used to go to the Lake

District, accompanied by the family of Mr. H. B. Knowles, formerly headmaster of Salford Grammar School. They did a lot of climbing, setting out early in the morning, taking sandwiches, returning for a big evening meal followed by a "sing-song" to which Fred contributed "Cockles and Mussels" (forty years later this was still a famous song of his), "Annie Laurie," and, for the younger members of the party, "Lucinda Mops." Jowett was an enthusiastic climber in these days; one Whitsun the three families went to North Wales instead of the Lake District, especially to ascend Snowdon. This love of mountaineering took Fred into a new circle and added a Lake District Easter trip to his Whitsun visit. He joined the "Straddlebugs," a party of men, mostly Bradford business men, who went there each Easter to walk and climb. He undertook these expeditions for several years, until he had to forego them to attend the I.L.P. annual conferences. One of Jowett's prized mementos was an alpenstock presented to him on the summit of Helvellyn. The alpenstock is surrounded by a silver serpent with the inscription: "*To F. W. Jowett, from the Straddlebugs, on entering the Town Council, November, 1892—Sunrise on Helvellyn.*" But it was to the Whitsun outings of the three families Fred looked back most warmly. Both Jowett and Harry Wilson have described their close association in these earlier years as the happiest comradeship of their lives.\*

#### *Pioneering in the Co-operative Movement*

Jowett's parents were Co-operators, and when he and his young wife set up housekeeping in 1884, both tradition and conviction led them to join the City of Bradford Co-operative Society. Jowett threw himself into the Movement with characteristic enthusiasm, bringing to it the idealism of the Pioneers, and he soon became the leader of a movement for improved conditions which achieved results serving as a model throughout Britain. Working hours in shops were a scandal, and the Co-op. Stores, compelled to compete with private traders, were not an exception. It was a common thing for the assistants to work until 10 p.m. on Friday nights and often as late on Saturdays; and, although the Co-op had instituted a half-day closing long before this was a general rule, Fred felt that these long hours were a blot on the good name of the movement. At a half-yearly meeting in 1889 he tabled a resolution to reduce the hours drastically. He had the help of an engine tender named Wilson, who was a director, but the latter's official position meant that the speaking had to be done by Fred. The meeting was in the Temperance Hall, and young Jowett took up a position in the middle seat on the front row of the gallery. One can imagine his dark, slight figure, looking little

\*Harry Wilson tells a good story of their family rambles across the Moors. Mrs. Jowett could not climb the high walls, so Fred escorted her through the low arches made for sheep, both of them crawling on hands and knees. Ever since they have been called "Jowett Holes" by Bradford Socialists.

more than a boy, rising to address this audience of the heads of families which filled the greater part of the hall, facing the directors who sat on the platform. Co-operators, despite their working-class origin, tend to be hard-headed at these half-yearly business meetings, but the fire and force of Jowett's speech swept the gathering and he carried his resolution by a large majority. More than that, the effect of his speech was so great that this lad of twenty-four was elected a director. Thus Bradford, as in many other things, became the pioneer of shorter hours for the whole Co-operative Movement and Jowett, as we shall so often find in this story, was the initiator of the reform. When that young man rose from the middle of the gallery in the Temperance Hall, he started an agitation which spread so that it brought relief not only to the thousands of distributive workers in the co-operative stores, but to the hundreds of thousands of shop assistants in private industry and multiple shops, who benefited later from the Shop Hours Acts.

#### *The Manningham Lock-Out*

The Bradford Labour Electoral Association died in October 1889, only nine months after its birth, but there was no stopping the idea of independent Labour representation or of militant Trade Unionism. Towards the end of the year 1890 the historic lock-out at the Manningham Mills began. The owner, Mr. S. C. Lister (later Lord Masham) insisted on reductions, although wages were already very low. The Unions had no resources to fall back on and as the weeks went by the street collections were not only for money, but for bones and scraps of any eatable kind. The fact that public sympathy was with the workers appeared only to increase the stubbornness of the millowner and the backing given him by the authorities. On Sunday, April 12, 1891, a meeting on behalf of the locked-out employees took place in the St. George's Hall, which was crowded by 3,000 people, with large numbers unable to get in. An overflow gathering was arranged for the Town Hall Square, where meetings were frequently held. On this occasion, however, the crowd was driven away by the police, acting under orders from the Mayor and the Chairman of the Watch Committee.

During the next few evenings people assembled near the Square in expectation that the right of holding meetings there would be asserted. One evening the police charged with batons. A mounted policeman who enraged the crowd by using his horse recklessly was struck and almost pulled to the ground. The Riot Act was read and soldiers, already assembled in preparation, were ordered to join the police in clearing the streets.\* The following Sunday a great meeting

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\*The authorities were evidently scared. The forces mobilised included 50 Carabiniers from Leeds, 200 Durham Light Infantry, 200 Bradford police, 50 West Riding police, 100 Leeds police, 20 Huddersfield police and 20 Fire Brigade men. A large searchlight was fixed on top of the Town Hall tower in case the gas lamps in the square were extinguished by the people.

of protest was held on Peckover Walks, a large vacant space near the centre of the City. Fred Jowett was one of the speakers.

"The meeting was the biggest surprise gathering Bradford has ever known," he told. "It had not been advertised in the ordinary way. A very small placard and a bare advertisement in the newspapers were the only printed announcements. As one of the speakers, I went in time to be in my place a few minutes before the meeting commenced. To my amazement all Bradford seemed to be going there as well as myself. From the Town Hall on to Peckover Street and from all other directions streams of people were moving, and I was lucky in getting to my place at all."\*

#### *Birth of Independent Labour Politics*

The local newspapers estimated that there were between 30,000 and 40,000 people present, the *Bradford Observer* adding that many thousands could not get near the platform and that probably 80,000 to 90,000 people were congregated on the Walks and in the streets in the vicinity. From three platforms the speakers denounced the Tories and Liberals who controlled the Watch Committee, the Tories and Liberals who owned the mills. Even Radicals among the spokesmen urged that independent Labour candidates must be nominated for the Town Council. This was the birth of *independent* labour politics in Bradford.

When the November elections came, two seats on the Council were contested by candidates nominated on an independent Labour ticket, though neither was a Socialist. One had been a life-long Tory, the other a life-long Liberal; their break from the traditional Parties was hailed as a symbol of workers' unity and self-reliance, and they were elected. But disillusion came immediately. The former went straight to the Tory Club to give thanks after he had addressed his Labour supporters. The latter remained a Labour man for a few weeks and then dutifully rejoined the Liberal Party.

Nevertheless, the influence of the Manningham lock-out (it continued for 19 weeks) and of the police charges on the crowd in Town Hall Square went deep and had a lasting effect. It was actually on the evening of the alleged rioting that an informal conversation in the street led to the birth of the Bradford Labour Union. Three men stood on the pavement of Darley Street, at the junction with Upper Duke Street, and discussed what step should be taken to challenge the use of the City police. One of these was W. H. Drew, the Manningham strike leader, and it was he who urged that Labour must take political action to gain control of the police force and much else. A small meeting of stalwarts was called and the first independent political working-class organisation in Bradford, and certainly one of the first in the country, was established. Fred Jowett was among the original members of the new organisation, which, learning from the ill-fated Electoral Association, made independence of the old

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\**Bradford I.L.P. News*, February 10, 1929.

political parties a condition of membership. W. H. Drew was chairman and of course Fred Pickles was the immediate choice for secretary.

W. H. Drew deserves greater recognition as a pioneer. How he looked in these days has been portrayed in a colourful memorial notice contributed to the *Yorkshire Observer*\* by Charles Ogden. Nobody who knew Drew at the time of the Manningham strike, wrote Ogden, believed he would live to the age of 81. "He was, so long ago as that, a thin, narrow-chested, weakly-looking man, with bent shoulders and a chronic hacking cough. But he was a born fighter who could be relied upon to hold on with the last ounce of his strength for any cause that he expounded."

Ogden remarked that Drew was regarded as the evil genius of the Manningham strike and the Town Hall Square riots. "He was not responsible for either event. In my presence he urged the thousands of disaffected workpeople not to strike, warning them that they had no funds of their own and were not in membership of any Union upon which they could call for support. But when they determined that they would strike, he agreed to organise the effort." As to the riots, Ogden was present as a reporter and says unhesitatingly that the authorities were to blame. Drew was not even present until the rioting was over. Ogden claims that Drew was not only the founder of the Bradford Labour Union (which became the Bradford I.L.P., May, 1891†), but of the national I.L.P. itself, arguing that, despite the claims to priority of certain other centres, it was because Bradford had led the way that the city was selected for the inaugural conference in 1893. But to this event we have still to come.

Fred devoted himself to the Labour Union with an enthusiasm that was boundless. It embodied the two things in which he most believed—*independent political action* by the workers with *Socialism* as its goal. Although still far from robust, he was speaking at meetings night after night. A vivid picture of him at this time, and of a gathering typical of the first days of independent Labour politics, has been given us by a veteran Bradford journalist. The meeting was at the Lister Hills Liberal Club. "Fred Jowett was then slim and frail-looking, and he had to apologise for the weakness of sight which made it difficult for him to read his manuscript by the light of an old-fashioned gas-jet some yards distant. He was vigorously attacked in the discussion by a portly middle-aged Radical in a 'checker brat' who denounced Socialism as a 'chimaera' (with a soft 'ch') and its advocate as a visionary. Mr. Jowett seemed in these days altogether too slight

\*January 30, 1933.

†The first meeting of the I.L.P. was called by W. H. Drew, James Bartley, and Edwin Halford, who became president, treasurer and secretary respectively. Edwin Halford lived to 85, dying shortly after Jowett. Fred conveyed to him in St. Luke's Hospital, Bradford, at the time of the Jubilee Conference of the I.L.P. in 1943, the Party's recognition of his early work.

and frail for the work of a pioneer, but the spirit was strong though the flesh was weak.”\*

The new organisation grew rapidly, and before long startled the political world by announcing that it intended to contest the East Bradford Parliamentary Division, with Robert Blatchford as its standard-bearer. Blatchford was, at this time, perhaps the most popular figure in the Socialist movement after Keir Hardie. His articles over the pen-name “Nunquam” in the *Sunday Chronicle* had a tremendous following, particularly in the North of England. When he was invited to become Independent Labour candidate for East Bradford, he said he would consent if requested by one thousand electors. The members of the Labour Union set out to get the thousand signatures and succeeded. Jowett was one of the canvassers.

Jowett had a great admiration for Blatchford’s writings and looked forward eagerly to meeting him. When he did so he was surprised. “The man I had known as ‘Nunquam,’ the writer, did not coincide with the Robert Blatchford speaking to me,” he wrote afterwards. “A dark soldier-like man with fiery eyes and an outside in thick black military moustache which contrasted so queerly with his low-toned speaking voice. It was difficult to think of him as the great writer I knew.” On one of his visits to Bradford, Blatchford stayed in the Jowett home and shared with Fred his thought of writing “Merrie England,” that million-circulated classic of simple socialist propaganda.

“It may have been when he came to Bradford to see his opera, ‘In Summer Days,’ played for the first time, that Blatchford stayed with me, but I am not sure. What I am sure of is that, sitting before the fire in the early hours of the morning, he described in some detail his ideas for a new book describing Socialism in simple and clear terms for ordinary people. When his book, ‘Merrie England,’ was published a few years later, I recalled to my mind that early morning conversation with interest and pleasure.”†

Blatchford did not stand for East Bradford, despite the thousand signatures. When the owner of the *Sunday Chronicle* ordered him to stop writing about Socialism, he refused and left the paper. Four of his colleagues resigned with him—“The Bounder” (E. F. Fay), “Dangle” (A. M. Thompson), “Mont Blong” (Montague Blatchford) and “Whiffly Puncto” (William Palmer, the artist). This remarkable team established the *Clarion* with “Nunquam” as Editor. It was a big adventure to start a Socialist paper in those days, and Blatchford felt the responsibility too great to share with the cares and duties of a Parliamentary candidature. Besides, he had sacrificed a salary of £1,000 a year in leaving the *Chronicle* and was burdened with a debt of £400 through loss on his opera.

\*“*Yorkshire Observer*,” April 15, 1914.

†“*Bradford I.L.P. News*,” May 21, 1937.

*Bradford's First Socialist Contest*

Blatchford's withdrawal from the East Division did not mean that the city was without a Labour candidate. The Labour Union selected Ben Tillett to fight West Bradford.

Tillett was popular in Bradford. His successful leadership of the strike of London dockers for sixpence an hour, the "dockers' tanner," had of course given him a national reputation, and he had won the affection of Bradford's new Labour enthusiasts by coming from London to take part in the agitation which followed the Town Hall Square baton charges. Ben had a magnetic personality. In appearance he might have been mistaken for a parson; he wore a broad-brimmed black hat, a loose black coat, and his features had the idealism of an evangelist. He had a wonderful gift of speech, which, says Jowett, "he used with great effect for sympathetic appeal, for exhortation, or for scathing, scorching denunciation."

The announcement that Ben Tillett was to stand as Labour candidate for West Bradford caused consternation in the Liberal Party which, with Mr. Alfred Illingworth as its representative, had held the seat since 1880. Mr. Illingworth, in addition to being a large employer of labour, particularly child labour, was a Nonconformist of national standing, and the Liberal Nonconformists of Bradford staged a large meeting in his support. At this gathering Fred Jowett became, at a moment's notice, the storm-centre of a controversy which made him a hero among Bradford Socialists.

He had not intended to attend; he was on the way to a Board meeting of the Co-operative Society when he was accosted by W. H. Drew and Fred Pickles, chairman and secretary of the Tillett Election Committee, with the shout: "You are just the man we want." He was persuaded by them to exercise his right as a "chapel man" to move an amendment in favour of Tillett's candidature. He sat in the body of the hall and saw a procession of twelve Nonconformist ministers troop to the platform, led, to his great satisfaction, by Mr. Briggs Priestley, M.P., who presided. Mr. Priestley had recently moved in Parliament a wrecking amendment to a Factory Bill, and had done his utmost to preserve the right of employers to withhold from weavers particulars of the piece-work rates to which they were entitled (to this earlier reference has been made). When Jowett rose to move his amendment, the chairman would not allow it. Jowett remained on his feet and quietly persisted. The chairman again tried to put him off. This was too much for the Labour folk in the audience. They protested loudly, led from the gallery by big Tom Keighley, an engineer whose thunderous voice was customarily used as voluntary Town Crier for the Socialist Movement in the city, and declined to listen to any other speaker. Still the chairman stood adamant. Finally the Labour supporters took matters into their own hands,

almost carrying Jowett bodily on to the platform. The chairman gave way.

The *Bradford Observer* of June 14, 1892, heads its report of this occasion "Extraordinary Public Meeting." Jowett was a young man of twenty-eight, he had left school at thirteen and for five years before that had been at school only half-time. To the ministers of religion on the platform, many of them University men, to the industrialist and Member of Parliament who presided, he must have appeared impudent, uncouth, uneducated. Yet Mrs. Bruce Glasier, who was present, tells us that after Jowett had uttered a few sentences she had never seen "a platform of men look so abjectly wretched." The chairman had opened by remarking that he was at a loss to understand why the labouring classes should be dissatisfied with the Liberal Party. Jowett told him that his own conduct in moving his "diabolical amendment" to the Factory Bill was sufficient answer. "*Thou art the man,*" he exclaimed, pointing with accusing finger. Then he addressed the parsons. "If you persist in opposing the Labour Movement," he said, "there will soon be more reason than ever to complain of the absence of working men from your chapels. We shall establish our own Labour Church." The amendment was defeated, but from this moment the seriousness of the challenge which the new young Labour Movement was making to the long-established Liberal Party was understood, and Fred Jowett was recognised as a power in the politics of the city.

Jowett's forecast of a Labour Church was fulfilled. It was established in October, 1891, meeting first in the Dyers' Rooms, afterwards in the Temperance Hall, and finally in the Labour Institute in Peck-over Street, opened in January, 1893. The Labour Church Movement became a great power in the North of England, presenting Socialism as an ethical gospel and supplementing the spoken words with Labour hymns sung to old chapel tunes. Socialism was a religion to these first converts and to express it they adapted the practices of the chapels to which they were accustomed.

When the General election came in 1892, Tillett polled in a three-cornered fight only 557 votes less than the successful Liberal candidate. The figures were: Illingworth (Liberal) 3306, Flower (Conservative) 3053, Tillett (Independent Labour) 2749. Independent Labour candidates went to the poll in various parts of Britain. Keir Hardie was alone successful at West Ham.

#### *Elected to the City Council*

The Labour Unions also challenged the old parties in municipal politics and this took Jowett on to the City Council in November, 1892, as the representative of the Manningham Ward. He was the first Socialist Councillor to win a seat in a contested election in Bradford, but five months earlier his friend Leonard Robinson had



been elected unopposed for the same ward by a rather fortunate chance. There was also an element of good luck in Fred's election. Between nomination and election day some irregularity in monetary matters on the part of the Conservative candidate came to light and he polled only eight votes, a large number of those who usually supported the Tories voting Socialist in reaction to this revelation. Fred's majority was outstanding, however, and there is little doubt that he would have won in any case. He polled 1,201, the Liberal receiving 751. Jowett held the seat for fifteen years.

This success came to Fred when he was only 28 years old, a stripling among the City fathers. On the same day he was defeated when standing for re-election as a director of the Co-operative Society, a rebuff which he felt keenly. Indeed, he was unable to attend the count for the municipal contest because the meeting of the Co-operative Society was in progress at the same time. This is his own description of the contrast.

"On November 1st, 1892, I passed out of one of the most disturbed and hostile half-yearly meetings of the Bradford Co-operative Society I have ever attended, a defeated retiring director of the Society, and was met in the street with news of my election that day to be a Councillor for the Manningham Ward.

"I was carried on the shoulders of enthusiastic political supporters up the stairs into the Dyers' Hall in Barry Street, where a crowded and wildly excited gathering of Labour workers and supporters was waiting for me. A more remarkable change of atmosphere from hostility to fellowship, passing immediately from one meeting to another, I never experienced."\*

#### *National I.L.P. Established*

The events which we have described in Bradford were typical of what was happening in other parts of Britain. There was no national Independent Labour Party, but in Manchester, London and many more centres Socialists were forming themselves into groups to secure independent Labour representation in Town Councils and in Parliament. Keir Hardie was addressing large meetings urging the need for the workers to form their own Party and using his weekly paper *The Miner*, to popularise the new idea. Joseph Burgess was spreading the same message in the *Workmen's Times*. In 1892 the Scottish Labour Party was formed in Glasgow, and by this time local Independent Labour Parties had sprung up in many places. It was the Bradford Trades Council which forwarded to the Glasgow Trade Union Congress in November, 1892, the famous resolution, carried by a snatched majority, declaring that the time had come to form a new political party, independent and pledged to make the conditions

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\*"Bradford I.L.P. News," February 10, 1939. The "hostile" meeting of the Bradford Co-operative Society arose from a proposal made by Jowett that the Society should make a loan to members who were on strike.

of labour the paramount question in British politics. It was Bradford, appropriately, which was the scene on January 13 and 14, 1893, of the inaugural conference of the national Independent Labour Party.

The conference met in the newly-opened Labour Institute in Peck-over Street. Many descriptions have been written. The author likes best the combination of homely touch and political principle which Mrs. Bruce Glasier has woven into the following account:

"It was the selfless service of literally hundreds of skilled Yorkshire housewives that prepared the glowing welcome which awaited the 115 delegates in the freshly decorated Labour Institute.

"The scrubbing of the floors had gone on long into the night. The covering of the long rows of trestle tables with scarlet cotton cloth to match the platform's more substantial scheme of decoration was literally a twelfth-hour decision.

"At the last moment an awful discovery was made. The pencils provided with the white sheets of paper invitingly set out before each carefully numbered seat had been produced by a non-Trade Union firm! A hasty searching of pockets provided a new supply, but the salutary change was only just effected as the doors were opened to admit the first arrivals among the delegates.

"The visitors' gallery was soon full to overflow. The press table had to be lengthened. The great London dailies and weeklies, as well as many important provincial newspapers, had all sent special correspondents to deal with 'The Impudent Little Party,' as we heard ourselves described, not without youthful delight....

"The circular of invitation had asked that delegates should come empowered to vote on the principles, policy and name of the new Party.

"The principles of International Socialism (modelled closely on those of the Scottish Labour Party) were adopted by large majorities, but the policy of democratic persuasion as opposed to all forms of revolutionary violence soon ruled out the delegates of the Social Democratic Federation, as surely as did that of 'Independence' the two delegates sent down from London by the Fabian Society, George Bernard Shaw and De Mattos.

"By the evening of January 14th the Independent Labour Party was well and truly born."\*

Fred Jowett was one of the delegates at this conference. In his own city he saw national expression given to the principles for which he had done so much to win acceptance. From that day to his last he lived to serve Socialism through the organisation then established.

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\*"The New Leader," April 24, 1943.

## CHAPTER II

## SOCIALISM ENTERS THE COUNCILS

On his election to the Bradford City Council, Fred Jowett had to make a choice which was to decide his whole future. He was still only twenty-eight, but, as we have told, had already become associated in the management of the mill where he worked. The prospect of a commercial career was open to him, and concern for his growing family must have inclined him towards this course in life.

On the other side was the call to devote his life to the service of Socialism. It had become his dominating interest, his one enthusiasm and passion. At first he compromised, continuing his post at the mill, but giving his interest and attention more and more to his duties on the City Council. The time came, however, when it proved impossible to reconcile these double loyalties. The owner of the mill, readers will remember, was his friend William Leach, a Socialist like himself, but naturally anxious about the success of the business. They talked over the position. Leach offered to double Jowett's salary if he would give full time to the mill. Fred was grateful but the call of public activity pulled. He had been elected as a Socialist to the City Council and he felt the responsibility deeply.

The difficulty was solved by the members of the Bradford I.L.P. clubbing together to raise a fund to enable Jowett to give himself entirely to his Council work. Although it provided him with only £2 a week, Fred was happy to have the opportunity. William Leach was one of the regular contributors and Harry Wilson was the treasurer of the fund. Bradford has reason to be grateful to those who, by their collective gifts of a few shillings a week, made it possible for Jowett to give his first thought and energy to municipal activities during the next fifteen years. Few will challenge the view that in his time Fred Jowett did more for the well-being and progress of the people of the city than any other man who has sat on its Council.

What was this youthful Councillor like? Fortunately a vivid picture was written of him. It appeared in an "Open Letter," printed in a local paper, addressed to Alderman F. W. Jowett:

"I well remember, Brother Jowett, the first occasion on which I had the pleasure of seeing and hearing you in the Council. It was soon after your triumphant return for Manningham. I occupied my usual seat in the far corner of the gallery. The debate? I have forgotten what it was all about, but I know I listened to satiation.... I pined for something breezy and Yorkshire and redolent of the soil.

"Suddenly.... up bobbed a little man dressed in black—a pale, sallow complexioned man with black up-standing hair, side whiskers of the attenuated monumental-scroll type, a faint lighter-coloured moustache, and furtive and wandering eyes, whose watchful unsteadiness bespoke the nervousness within.\*

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\*This impression may have been given partly by a hereditary weakness of the muscle of the right eye from which Jowett suffered.

"A little thrill of anticipation ran round the Council, and one and all sat back to enjoy the fun. I turned to my Supercilious Neighbour. 'Who is he?' 'Oh, him! He's one of them Labour chaps. Got in for Manningham by a fluke!'

"After this I listened intently. In a smooth 'light-coloured' tenor voice you were speaking, and I must confess to surprise at the grammatical, even polished, style of your sentences, no less than the careful thought and argument of your speech.

"'This is a Labour chap!' I mused. 'He looks more like the good young University student, the Sandford and Merton young man who sits up o' nights studying till his countenance is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought'—and indigestion. I could understand him construing Virgil and Homer, and modelling his speeches at the debating class, amidst tumultuous applause, upon the orations of Demosthenes.\*"

The author of that Open Letter says, nevertheless, that this maiden speech was not an entire success. It was too stilted, "smacked too much of the precociously-clever-young-man order of cleverness." Earlier the letter made other criticisms of Jowett: he did not appreciate the plain facts of commonsense, he spoke too long, he indulged in sledge-hammer invective, he made lamentable mistakes. No doubt there was some truth in these criticisms; it would be surprising if young Jowett did not make mistakes; but those who knew Fred's unassuming character in later years will be surprised if even in youth he had any thought of being "clever."

Jowett certainly had reason to indulge in sledge-hammer invective. The City Council was then largely composed of property owners, who used their position shamelessly to protect their interests. In opposition to them Jowett and Leonard Robinson put forward on every occasion the claims of life. The two I.L.P. Councillors were good friends; indeed their families were closely associated, Leonard's sister having married Fred's uncle. At the home of this uncle, a Tory schoolmaster, Fred used as a boy to meet Robinson frequently, listening eagerly to their political discussions. Robinson was then a Radical and Fred was far from anticipating that they would have the honour of becoming Bradford's first Socialist Councillors.

A cabinet maker by trade, Robinson was proud of his craft, which he had learned before machine-made furniture was thought of. He was of striking appearance: tall, ascetic-looking, with hair and beard so black that his skin seemed unearthly white.

### *Pioneering Against the Means Test*

Keir Hardie, it will be remembered, was elected to the House of Commons the same year as Jowett to the City Council. At Westminster Hardie came to be known as Member for the Unemployed: at Bradford Jowett won a similar reputation. In the early 'nineties there was a

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\*A cutting of this "Open Letter" was left among Fred Jowett's papers, but the author, despite much seeking, has not been able to find its source. The date was March 7, 1896.

severe depression and unemployment was rife. Jowett co-operated with Charlie Glyde and Edward Hartley, both afterwards to gain wide reputations as fearless socialist propagandists, in a continuous agitation with and for the workless in Bradford. Similar campaigns were being conducted throughout the country; they became so strong that, on Hardie's initiative, the Government appointed in 1894 a Royal Commission on Unemployment, of which the Prince of Wales (afterwards Edward VII) and Tom Mann, the Secretary of the I.L.P., were both members. Fred Jowett got himself into trouble over this Commission.

Local authorities throughout the country were asked to provide it with reports on unemployment in their areas; this was the only way to get the facts because there was then no national registration of the unemployed. The Bradford Town Clerk, Mr. W. T. McGowan,\* submitted a draft report to the Finance Committee, declaring that trade depression was the chief cause of local unemployment and referring to stoppages of outdoor work by bad weather as a minor cause. The Finance Committee, consisting almost entirely of mill owners, merchants and tradesmen who thought it would be damaging to admit that Bradford trade was depressed, and who opposed anything but charitable and Poor Law assistance for the unemployed, wanted to minimise the seriousness of the situation. Accordingly they instructed the Town Clerk to delete the reference to trade depression and reduce the scope of unemployment to the temporary difficulty of the weather. Jowett objected, but his protest was contemptuously brushed aside.

On the following Sunday Jowett presided at a demonstration addressed by Keir Hardie, and he took the opportunity to expose the manoeuvre of the Finance Committee. The Jollity Theatre, a large wooden structure in Canal Road, was crowded and Jowett's denunciation of the report of the Finance Committee as "diabolically untrue" caused a sensation, which spread throughout Bradford when the press reported his speech next day. To the following meeting of the Town Council the Liberal and Tory members came in furious mood, and amongst the most angry were the two Party leaders. Alderman John Hill, the Liberal leader, was typical of the wealthier elements in his Party at this time. He was a sixty-year-old textile manufacturer, a strong Nonconformist, self-righteous, and an extreme individualist. He had done well by hard work and moral living: why could not everyone else do so? He considered that nothing beyond charity was necessary to assist the "failures" in life. Alderman H. B. Ratcliffe, the Tory leader, was of a different type, a butcher, bulky in build, big-boned and big-featured, a man of the world, not claiming high principles, openly the defender of the property owners. But on most social issues there was no difference in attitude between the two

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\*McGowan was an enlightened progressive. He advocated the purchase of land by the City when it was cheap, so that the town might benefit. This became known as "the McGowan policy."

men, and certainly there was none on this occasion. Their parties made a joint demand that Jowett should withdraw his statement, Alderman Ratcliffe opening the debate and two Liberal Councillors, H. Lister and J. W. Jarrett, moving and seconding a motion of censure. Fred offered to withdraw "diabolically," but maintained "untrue." When he endeavoured to give facts in justification he was refused a hearing; angrily, the Council censured him. An hour after this vote was carried, Jowett quietly intervened on an appropriate minute to make the justification which the Council had refused to hear. He told how a voluntary committee had taken a census of nearly 10,000 totally unemployed workers in the city, which showed that approximately 80 per cent. were mill workers unaffected by outdoor weather and undeniably the victims of the depression. The Council of property owners and merchants were not concerned with inconvenient facts. They maintained their report to the Unemployment Commission. The vote of censure on Jowett remains on the records of the Council to this day. He used to say he was "proudly unashamed of it."

To serve the needs of the unemployed and destitute, Jowett stood as a candidate for the Board of Guardians in 1901 and was elected with five I.L.P. colleagues: Edwin Halford, Mrs. Arthur Priestman, Dr. Munro, J. H. Palin and Julia Varley. On the Guardians he was a pioneer in a fight which has a curiously modern ring, the fight against the household means test. In recent years the means test controversy has centred on unemployment relief through the Public Assistance Boards, but its origin is to be found in the policy adopted by certain Boards of Guardians, of which Bradford was one, about forty years ago. The Whitechapel Guardians in East London initiated the policy.

The Poor Law did not authorise a household means test. The Guardians had never had the power to enquire as to the whole income of a household and curtail relief for one member of it accordingly. Legally only the incomes of certain close relatives—for example, parents in relation to children and children in relation to parents—could be taken into account.\* Early in the present century, however, the Whitechapel Guardians found a method of applying a household means test despite the absence of legal authority. The Board said in effect that the whole household must either contribute to the maintenance of any destitute member or *relief would be offered only in the Workhouse*. The Workhouse was so hated that this threat was usually sufficient.

Whitechapel's example was rapidly followed by other Boards. The Chairman of the Bradford Board was Mr. F. H. Bentham, a Liberal.

\*Fred Jowett argued in later years that, so far as he could ascertain, it was not until 1930 that the household means test was approved by a Minister of Health—Mr. Arthur Greenwood was the culprit—in an official circular to Public Assistance Committees. This circular, dated January 3, 1930, stated that "the general principle is that income and means from every source available to the household must be taken into account."

Bentham afterwards became well known in Poor Law matters and served on the Royal Commission in 1909. Jowett described him in these days as a plump little man with a schoolboy complexion, cheery but capable of incisive speech. Unfortunately, he was among those impressed by the East London device, and Bradford families were suddenly faced by the ultimatum—either levy yourselves for the maintenance of that relative who is a victim of unemployment, sickness or old age, or into the Workhouse he must go. Jowett and his colleagues fought this policy with indignation and persistence. They knew how the Workhouse was regarded by the poor folk as a place of shame rather than enter which most respectable people would suffer starvation. It was universally referred to as "the Bastille" (always pronounced by the Bradford folk "Bastyle"), a prison, a horror and disgrace. Whilst Jowett was carrying on this struggle in Bradford, George Lansbury was leading a similar campaign in Poplar.

Temporarily the fight was lost. The Liberals brought their full electoral machine into operation to defeat the six Bradford I.L.P. Guardians when they faced the voters in 1904, and even Lansbury's sustained opposition in the East End of London did not prevent the Whitechapel practice from becoming generally followed by Boards of Guardians and the Public Assistance Committees which succeeded them. This struggle of more than forty years ago aroused little response in the Labour Movement then, but when in 1931 the household means test was extended specifically to unemployment relief its importance was realised. No practice has been more hated. When finally this outrage on the poor is ended, let us remember the first resistance made by George Lansbury in Poplar and Fred Jowett in Bradford nearly half a century ago.

#### *Pioneering for Municipal Housing*

The blackest blot on Bradford at this time was its housing conditions. It was enough to see those rows of soot-covered back-to-back houses, separated only by brick yards and middens, unrelieved by a flower or a tree, to be outraged by the thought that human beings existed in such drabness, that children grew up knowing only such ugliness. But these black areas were not only a prison to the spirit; they were a slaughterhouse for their bodies. Over two hundred of every thousand children born here died before they were one year old, a proportion twice as high as in the better housed districts of Bradford. Herod, in the form of slum landlords and building speculators, massacred more infants in Bradford than he did in Bethlehem.

It was in June, 1894, that Jowett first moved in the Council for action on housing—the date deserves to be historic. When he rose to speak a number of members ostentatiously walked out of the Chamber in order that the absence of a quorum should prevent discussion; in this they failed, but his motion that the Sanitary Committee

should take action under the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890, received only five votes, one Liberal and one Tory-Labour member siding with the I.L.P. Councillors, who now numbered three.\* Jowett was a member of the Committee and his detailed interest led to his election as vice-chairman. In 1899, on the death of the chairman, this key post became Jowett's, and he at once began a campaign to wipe out the disease and death spreading areas of the city. He was fortunate in having a Medical Officer, Dr. Arnold Evans, who co-operated wholeheartedly.†

There was a smallpox epidemic at the time. Once a week Jowett put on his hospital coat and went through the wards with the doctor; indeed, he probably saw more smallpox cases than any other non-medical man, more even than most medical men. During three epidemics he visited between 1,300 and 1,500 cases. A previous chairman had died from smallpox contracted in the course of his duties, and during epidemics there was not much competition for the job.

But Jowett was not content with treatment for smallpox and similar epidemics; he realised that they were the result of bad housing, overcrowding, primitive sanitary methods and malnutrition, and his mind was given to finding ways and means of getting rid of these. He turned his attention first to the abolition of privy middens, of which his boyhood memories were still unpleasantly vivid. When he proposed that they should be swept away, his Committee, instigated by the Tory leader, Alderman H. B. Ratcliffe, who was regarded as a clever tactician, adopted delaying tactics, passing a resolution that no privy midden should be converted into a water-closet until the Committee had inspected it. Jowett defeated this obstruction by the simple device of tiring them out with summonses to carry out inspections. Before long, only he and the Medical Officer turned up, and the transformation of the middens into modern sanitary conveniences proceeded uninterruptedly.‡

The bigger problem of the destruction of the slums remained. Jowett persuaded Dr. Evans in August 1898 to make an official representation that one of the worst slum areas, Longlands, occupied mostly by wretchedly poor Irish folk with large families of children, was an insanitary area. Under the Housing Act of 1890 there was then no

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\*George Minty was elected in 1893. Minty was the driver of a confectioner's van. We have already told how he was one of the earliest members of the Socialist League, in which he was famed for his recitation of William Morris's poems. He was popular as a speaker because of his gift of humour.

†Dr. Evans was able, courageous and human, but he had a weakness which grew on him and, after Jowett's time as Health Committee chairman, led to his resignation by request. Jowett paid him the tribute of saying that he knew his job and did it fearlessly, "which is more than can be said of Medical Officers whose reports contain no incitements to necessary action likely to antagonise property owners, however personally abstemious the authors may be."

‡When Alderman Ratcliffe saw how much Jowett meant business he incited the Council to flood the Housing Committee with reliable reactionaries, so that its membership swelled to forty-one.



alternative for the Council; they were compelled to submit an improvement scheme. But for three years action was delayed by the Council—the property owners and builders on the one side, putting up every obstacle, Jowett backed by his few supporters, on the other, countering every move persistently and ingeniously until their end was gained. It is a story symbolising what was happening at this period in many British cities in the struggle between property and life.

Following the declaration that Longlands was an insanitary area, the Medical Officer brought before the Committee a scheme sufficiently moderate in scope not to arouse the antagonism of any except reactionaries opposed to all communal activity. The clearance area was limited to less than 23,000 square yards and involved only 284 houses and shops and less than 1,500 people. The Housing Committee endorsed the proposal. When the recommendation came before the full Council on October 11, 1898, Jowett was able to show how urgent the clearance was in the interests of health and life. The population was nearly fifteen times as dense as that of the rest of the city—301 persons were crowded to the acre compared with 21 persons to the acre in the whole city. The death rate was more than twice as high as in the city generally.\* Longlands Street, the main thoroughfare, was only fifteen feet ten inches in width, not much more than an alley.

It is difficult to understand how any public representatives could oppose such a scheme, but the property owners did so. They would not have objected if the Housing Committee had proposed a Street Improvement Scheme on the old lines; then the Council would have been required to pay the owners dearly for their property. The compensation under Street Improvement Schemes was a sum equal to the total rent for fifteen or twenty years, plus ten per cent. for compulsory sale, a most desirable proposition. Under the 1890 Act, however, this additional ten per cent. was not paid, and the compensation for rent was limited by deductions on account of overcrowding and for repairs necessary to make the houses habitable. In practice this meant that the owners of houses which could not be made habitable could claim nothing more than the value of the land on which they stood and of the building materials after demolition. In the light of this, perhaps the opposition of the property owners to Jowett's proposal can be understood. ✓

The 1890 Act also made it compulsory for the Council to provide dwellings for the population so displaced. To this the property owners also objected. "If private owners cannot build houses to pay, how can the Council do it?" asked one councillor. A worthy alderman remarked that whilst the Longlands area was bad, it was possible to say too much about it! Evidently the majority thought that it was

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\*These were the damning figures: Longlands, 1895, 45.6; 1896, 42.7; 1897, 41.2. The whole city, 1895, 19.8; 1896, 16.77; 1897, 17.39.

also possible to do too much about it: the Health Committee's proposals were referred back by 33 votes to 19.

Such a defeat would have deterred most men, but not Jowett. He and the Medical Officer got to work on a revised scheme, and within a year all the details had been worked out, the estimates checked, the architect's plans completed, and the Housing Committee's endorsement secured by 14 votes to 6. The scheme maintained the proposal to abolish the slum area; 93 "through" houses (that is, not back-to-back) were to be erected on the site, and additional houses were to be built in other parts of the city to accommodate the rest of the displaced population.\* A trifling scheme compared with modern municipal housing estates, but remember that this was forty-seven years ago.

The Council discussion on October 27, 1899, showed how bitterly the reactionaries of two generations ago resisted even such modest schemes. Jowett's speech presenting it was a model of human appeal and practical argument. He justified his reference to the area as a "plague spot" by telling how the Medical Officer's report gave instances of dwelling rooms directly adjoining privies of the worst type, and of cases of percolation into houses from a graveyard.

Despite the urgency of the need and the practicability of the scheme, it was adopted by a majority of only *one* vote, 25—24. Nevertheless it had gone through. One can see Jowett's satisfaction, his socialist comrades crowding round to congratulate, his return home content and happy. But the victory was short-lived. Before the next Council meeting, the November elections had taken place, and the Tories, who had strengthened their representation, returned to the attack, moving that the decision be rescinded. They complained of the cost, condemned the insanitation as due to the people rather than to their conditions, and urged that the "ordinary law" was sufficient. Jowett was evidently aroused. Referring to proposals for the extension of the Town Hall, he remarked that he would be ashamed to spend a single farthing upon this project whilst the Longlands slum remained. He told the Tories that "not even a member of the Council would be able to keep such hovels in a habitable condition," and pointed out that under the "ordinary law," whilst people could be turned out of insanitary houses, no alternative accommodation could be provided and a landlord could merely employ a paperhanger at a few shillings and let his property afresh. It was a devastating reply, but the Tories rallied to the cause of the property owners and carried their motion by 43 votes to 23. Jowett had been defeated a second time.

Three months later, on February 13, 1900, Jowett renewed his

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\*The cost would be met by a rate of less than three-eighths of a penny in the £ over forty years. ("Surely," said Jowett, "there is no one in Bradford who will not willingly pay such an infinitesimal sum to secure the extinction of such a dark plague spot from the city.")

effort. He introduced a resolution on behalf of the Health Committee which in effect sought to reverse the October decision. Once more he was defeated. An amendment was moved asking the Health Committee to report on how far private enterprise met the needs of working class housing, and "whether the Council may by its building regulations or otherwise encourage the erection by private enterprise of suitable dwellings for the working-class within the city." So completely was the Council fulfilling the functions of a Property Owners' Association that this amendment was carried by 34 votes to 26.

But even now Jowett did not give up. With a majority of the Health Committee behind him he re-opened the attack in the City Council at the August meeting, 1901, moving the adoption of yet another plan for the demolition of the slum, the erection of tenements to accommodate 432 persons on part of the site, and the building of small "through" houses in Faxeet Street (a penny fare by tram from the centre of the city) for most of the remaining 925 persons displaced. The portion of the area not used for tenements would be sold as sites for warehouses; the cost to the city would be £980 a year for forty years—"an annual cost little more than the salaries of certain officials."

The usual obstructionist amendment that the scheme be referred back to the Health Committee for further consideration was moved, but it was defeated by 36 votes to 24 and the recommendation of the Health Committee adopted. Jowett had won. His three years' fight was concluded.

The Longlands slum was cleared, Bradford's worst area of disease cleansed, the population accommodated under healthy conditions in Faxeet Street and the new tenements. Jowett watched the progress of the work and its completion with pride. When the time came for the people to occupy their new quarters, he found them concerned about furnishing. He could not meet the cost, but at least he could get the best advice. He had a catalogue printed with illustrated designs of how the rooms could be laid out economically, usefully and attractively, and distributed copies to those who were to be the City's first tenants. The information proved useful and was appreciated; but it was twenty years before other municipalities adopted the idea. In small things, as well as large, Jowett was a pioneer.

After hearing from Fred Jowett one afternoon in May, 1943, the story of his housing struggle, the author paid a visit to the scene of the controversy. He climbed steeply up Westgate from the centre of the city, walked for about half a mile along the busy street, and there, sloping down the hillside, was Longlands, still drab and black with the workers' houses and warehouses, but no longer a breeding ground of disease, destroying children in their infancy, denying health to others all their lives. On the edge of Westgate itself are the tenements which Jowett had erected. They are not comparable architec-

turally with the blocks of modern flats constructed by municipalities to-day, but they are well-built, clean, healthy and must have seemed palatial to those Irish families removed from cellars and attics and vermin-infested rooms more than forty years ago. To housing reformers they symbolise victory in one of the earliest of their conflicts between property and life.\*

### *Pioneering for School Feeding*

On the day of this visit to Bradford (the exact date was May 18, 1943), the press contained a report of a speech by Mr. R. A. Butler, Conservative President of the Board of Education in the National Government. It was dramatically related to the second great pioneering effort of Fred Jowett on the City Council—the feeding of hungry school children. Mr. Butler stated that the immediate objective of the Board was to see that school meals were available for 75 per cent. of the children and that its aim was to secure that at the earliest possible moment a school meal should be available for practically every child. Fred Jowett smiled with satisfaction as he read the report and had every right to do so, because he was the first public representative in Britain to advocate school-feeding. Fred little dreamed forty years ago that he would live to see a Conservative Minister proudly announce national acceptance of a principle then regarded as revolutionary.

In the winter of 1903-1904, following the Boer War, there was a severe depression in Bradford, and destitution was widespread. Fred was concerned about the children. The needs of the hungry were being met only by charity or the Poor Law, and neither was providing what the children required. The Guardians were giving inadequate meals and demanding that hard-pressed parents should meet the cost, whilst the charitable societies, principally the Cinderella Clubs, established throughout the North ten years earlier following Robert Blatchford's exposure of the hunger in the slums of Manchester, acknowledged that they could deal with only about a third of the children in need. In its report for the year 1902-1903, the Bradford Club stated that, whilst it had been able to provide meals for 1,350 children each day, the estimated number of underfed children in the city was between 6,000 and 7,000, of whom from 3,000 to 4,000 were seriously underfed. Since then destitution had deepened and the Club put the number of Bradford's underfed children in the winter of 1903-1904 at the appalling figure of 10,000.

The school teachers in the poorer districts were in despair as they

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\*Jowett's experience during this housing struggle convinced him of the necessity of another reform—the taxation of land values. In January, 1899, he succeeded in getting the Council to adopt a resolution instructing the Finance Committee to seek powers, with the next Bill promoted in Parliament, to levy rates on ground values. Jowett continued to demand the taxation of land values all through his life.

faced children pinched and emaciated through want of food. They asked the Education Committee to receive a deputation, and one after another told of the sorrowful condition of those in their charge. Moved by these stories, it was agreed, on the initiative of Jowett, to appoint a Poor Children's special sub-committee with power to investigate and act. This committee found great reluctance on the part of the children to acknowledge that they were in want, a reflection of the "self-respect" of parents who were still inclined to regard poverty as a disgrace. Their investigation revealed, however, 2,574 cases of underfed children in the schools. Of these, 329 were stated to attend school without breakfasts, and in 249 cases this was verified by the parents.

Meanwhile, the Bradford I.L.P., with Jowett at its head, had been conducting a public campaign for the feeding of children at school. In its programme for the City Council elections of 1904 it demanded "the provision of at least one free meal a day at each school." Jowett had been made an alderman, which allowed him to remain on the Council for six years without re-election, but his democratic convictions were so strong that he resigned in order that the electors should have an opportunity of judging his programme.\* He placed first the demand that the city should end the scandal that in its poorer districts "25 per cent. of the children should be insufficiently fed, insufficiently clothed, and insufficiently shod."

The Poor Children's sub-committee, impressed by the evidence of hunger, decided to provide school meals, and negotiated with the Cinderella Clubs and school teachers to staff the arrangements. When, however, its report came before the full Education Committee its plans were rejected. Jowett was disappointed, but not dismayed. He took the issue to the full Council as soon as the November elections of 1904 were over—and won! This was the first decision by any local authority in Britain to assume public responsibility for feeding school children. It preceded any Parliamentary decision: in fact, it was not until 1906 that the first Provision of Meals Act was passed. Though he probably did not realise it at the time, this young Bradford Councillor was starting a movement destined to give food and health to millions of children. His action was hailed by Socialists throughout the country as a precedent and triumph. Keir Hardie sent him a prophetic message of congratulation, expressing the opinion that the Bradford decision would be historic, foreshadowing a time when the provision of school meals would pass into the common life of the people.

In reading the speech which Jowett made on this occasion one feels its moving appeal even at this distance of time. "Let the scales

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\*Jowett's honesty makes it necessary to add that there was also an element of tactics in this. The most serious division between the Tories and Liberals was the scramble for honours. Jowett wanted to throw another Aldermanic seat into the scramble.

fall from the eyes of the Council," he urged. "The section of the community which is the despair of the reformer is the section which does not know where the bread is to come from to-morrow. It is not until the hunger-pangs are removed that people are able to think of something higher and to respond to the best impulses and appeals. Education on an empty stomach is a waste of money."

The bogey that parental responsibility would be undermined was the main opposing argument. Jowett answered by showing that the parents were denied the wherewithal by society to fulfil their responsibility. He gave the facts about the home conditions of 166 children who went to school without breakfasts. In 68 cases the father had no work or wage; in 52 cases he was working short time and the wage was not enough to provide three meals a day; and in 46 cases there was no male breadwinner in the home. Jowett argued so effectively that his amendment rejecting the Education Committee minute and confirming the proposals of the Poor Children's sub-committee was carried by 35 votes to 14.

But the congratulations had hardly been received when it became clear that the reactionaries on the Council were not going to accept their defeat. The Liberals especially felt that a moral principle was at stake: the principle of parental responsibility, the very bedrock of family life, religion and respectability. The Liberal Councillors assembled at their club and decided that the decision of the Council must be rescinded. They proposed instead that the Poor Law Guardians should provide meals for underfed children on application by their parents, from whom the cost should be recovered when possible. It was not the duty of the Council to seek out hungry children and feed them. Perhaps some would be left unfed as a consequence, but moral principles would be upheld.

The Liberal Councillors appeared in full force at the next meeting to support their leader, Mr. H. B. Priestman, who moved a resolution affirming "the ability of voluntary agencies to fulfil all the needs in the direction of feeding starving children," all the needs, that is, not met by the Board of Guardians. Knowing he was up against a strong combination, Jowett met objections as fully as he could. His amendment began by laying down three principles:

"That it is the duty of the community to see that all children are sufficiently fed.

"That voluntary effort is not able to feed children who are regularly or temporarily in need of food.

"That when children attend school insufficiently fed, it shall be the duty of the Education Committee, acting on information supplied by the teachers, to feed these children."

His amendment then detailed a procedure whereby parents would be prosecuted in cases of culpable negligence and the cost of the meals would be recovered from parents who could reasonably be called on to pay.

The debate which followed was memorable. The Council sat for nearly twelve hours, from three in the afternoon to 2.35 next morning, and the discussion was concluded only by a closure vote. Jowett's speech was again characteristically thorough, the human emotion behind his flow of quiet, factual argument only breaking through occasionally. To prove that voluntary effort was inadequate, it was enough to refer to the experience of the Cinderella Club, which found that it could not provide meals for two-thirds of the children requiring them. Any voluntary agency had to ask "how much money can we get?" not "how much need is there to meet?" He was scathing in dismissing the moral argument. "I did not hear anything of these moral consequences when we voted £3,000 as a salary to the Mayor in order to hang bunting in the streets!" he exclaimed. "And yet we are told of the moral consequences of voting £5,000 to feed hungry children!" It was all very well to say "Go to the Guardians," but there was a large section of the community who would never do so. What was to happen to their children? Starve? "I will vote no money for the purchase of pictures, I will vote no money for any decorative purpose, until the needs of the children have been met."

The Labour Group on the Council had now grown to nine and Jowett was strongly supported in the debate by his colleagues Hayhurst, Robinson, Hartley, Palin and Minty. Finally came the closure and the vote. Jowett's amendment was defeated by only four votes, but those four votes were enough to destroy the effect of the historic decision reached at the preceding meeting, and to deny meals to the children. The majority was composed mainly of Liberals, the largest Party; most of the Conservatives actually voted for Jowett's motion. The leading Liberal opponent was a remarkable figure: a tall, strong featured man, heavy moustached, hair almost platinum blonde, the reincarnation of a Viking king. He fought school-feeding (as he had previously fought municipal housing) as though he were in battle. *Note his name because we shall return to it.* It was E. J. Smith.\*

Jowett and his comrades in the I.L.P. did not drop their agitation; they maintained a continuous exposure of the inadequacy and inhumanity of the Guardians' contribution towards child-feeding. The meal the Guardians provided consisted of a bun, a banana and a glass of milk. As chairman of the Health Committee of the City Council, Jowett had the milk analysed by a Food Inspector *and it proved to be mostly water.* The chairman of the Guardians thereupon explained that the liquid given with the bun and banana was not supplied as milk, but as a beverage! Jowett immediately popularised the description of the meals as "bun, banana and beverage." From hundreds

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\*The beginning of the destruction of the Liberal Party in Bradford—it is now mostly "National Liberal" and indistinguishable from the Tories—dates from this opposition to school-feeding. Ironically, it was a Liberal Government which, under Labour pressure, enacted school-feeding a few years later.

of meetings the phrase rang out, always to be received with scornful laughter.

Niggardly as these meals were, the Guardians did not miss any opportunity of extracting money from the parents of the unfortunate children, and Jowett lost no opportunity of exposing their callous behaviour. The *Bradford Daily Telegraph* of October 13, 1905, reported that the local socialist leader had "got hold of his first case," one where the Guardians demanded that a large family with a total income of 25s. a week should pay for the "bun, banana and beverage" supplied to the children. The *Telegraph* ridiculed any suggestion that the man would be proceeded against without further investigation, but in fact the Guardians took many cases into court. On one occasion they summoned twenty-six parents, and obtained judgment against them for the recovery of the cost of the meals. In every case the total income of the family was proved in evidence to be considerably less than was necessary to provide bare maintenance.\*

Bradford's socialist lead on school-feeding was followed by the Labour Movement throughout the country. It became the foremost immediate demand in the programme of the newly-formed Labour Party in the 1906 general election. That story is told later, but it is appropriate to note here the historic justice which allowed Jowett to make his first speech in the House of Commons in support of a Labour motion on this subject (followed as it was by the passage of the Provision of Meals Act) and to introduce and pass through Parliament the Bill which permitted school-feeding during holidays.

Bradford was one of the first towns to operate the Provision of Meals Act, and it did so in a way which won recognition throughout the country.† Education authorities north, south, east and west, sent deputations to the city to report on its model scheme; educational and social reformers, from other countries as well as Britain, travelled in large numbers to Bradford to see it; newspapers and magazines sent writers to describe it. One of the author's earliest journalistic commissions outside London was to write up Bradford's school meals. He remembers the clean and efficient central kitchen, the heat-retaining

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\*Fred Jowett left among his papers a table prepared by W. Leach, giving details of 49 cases where the Guardians sued parents. The Rowntree minimum for physical needs would have required an average of 4s. 2¼d. per head per week in these families. *The actual average was 2s. 7¼d.* When charges for rent, gas, coal, insurance, etc., had been met, the average per head per week for food, clothing, etc., was 1s. 4½d. We reproduce some typical instances: (a) Family of ten. Total weekly income 24s. 9d. Net income after payment of rent, etc., 16s. 3d. The father was a Washer at Lister's. The Guardians sued him for 3s. 6d. (b) Family of eight. Weekly income 19s. Net income 6s. Labourer. Guardians sued for 2s. (c) Family of six. Income £1. Net income 12s. 11d. Woolcomber. Wife died after ten months' illness. Paid 3s. weekly for assistance in home. Owed £7 10s. for rent and groceries. Had to pawn boots for food. Guardians sued for 9d. (d) Family of seven. Income 17s. Net income 10s. Labourer. Delicate with pneumonia. *Guardians sued for 3d.*

†Jowett's old colleague, Fred Pickles, had a great part in this.



cans and vans in which the food was distributed to the various schools, the delightful meals, attractive, tasty and scientifically balanced to give the maximum nutrition. The social value of the meals was great. The children learned to wash and make themselves tidy before they sat at the tables. They learned to respect the white cloths and to appreciate the vases of brightly coloured flowers which adorned them. They learned to understand the need for co-operative service, waiting on each other in turn, and it was not long before their manners became less uncouth and their voices more gentle; the meal became more and more a communal opportunity for fellowship, and less and less an occasion for merely satisfying physical hunger.\*

As a postscript to this achievement let us return to Councillor E. J. Smith, the Viking-like Liberal who had opposed Jowett's reforms so powerfully and persistently. Later he became chairman of the Health Committee and, faced by realities, he turned a complete circle, becoming almost fanatical in his eagerness to complete the work which Jowett had begun. "It was a veritable Saul of Tarsus conversion," Fred afterwards remarked. Modern Bradfordians need not be told how much their city owes to Alderman E. J. Smith in its child welfare and housing schemes; civic social improvement became the passion of his life and he contributed to it both vision and constructive skill. Prominent on Fred's bookshelves was an elaborate volume by Alderman Smith, written in the spirit of a social crusader, illustrated every few pages by photographs of Bradford's civic enterprise. It is a monument of his own work for the city.†

Scholarships from elementary to secondary schools—then very exclusive institutions—was another educational reform pioneered by Jowett. Year after year, when proposals came before the City Council for large grants to the privately conducted schools for higher education, Jowett opposed any contribution *unless the institution would provide scholarships to the value of the grant*. His persistence told in time. Bradford now has a large number of scholarships enjoyed by working-class children. They owe them in no small part to Fred Jowett.

### *The First Municipal Milk Supply*

Jowett of course played a part in many issues in addition to those we have mentioned. One is of historic interest: Bradford on his initiative established the first municipal milk supply in the country.

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\*The author is informed that the standard of cleanliness in the arrangements and good social habits among the children do not now apply to the majority of the 70 school canteen centres. In fact, our informant writes, instead of being in the forefront of the movement, Bradford is definitely lagging behind.

†E. J. Smith became one of Jowett's greatest admirers. During Fred's long membership of Parliament, Alderman Smith never visited London without seeing him, outlining his plans, describing the obstruction he had to face from his Liberal colleagues, getting his advice.

Fred had been shocked by the conditions under which milk was distributed—the insanitary cowsheds, the casual methods of transport, the sale in open pint measures in the streets, dirt and dust gathered at every stage. He got the Council to provide a municipal supply for the city's fever hospital and this was extended to a shop which sold to the public. The milk was pasteurised and distributed in bottles, then a very rare precaution. Those who remember the original shop in Manchester Road will always associate with it a Bradford Socialist named Hird Lord, who was such an enthusiast that he threw up a good business to become a voluntary salesman. He painted a milk cart red, labelled it "Bradford's Municipal Milk," and hawked the bottles in the street, content to receive only a trifling commission without a wage. Bradford's municipal milk supply no longer continues, but it deserves to be remembered.

From the many incidental changes for which Jowett was responsible, a reform in school administration must be mentioned. The conditions of the caretakers were appalling. Because they were provided with house, coal and lighting free, their wage was only a few shillings a week, and in many cases they were compelled to supplement it by other work during the day. After school hours they turned to the task of cleaning the premises; there were no set hours of labour, but the list of specified duties was, to use Jowett's phrase, as long as a man's arm—a vast floor space of class rooms, passages, halls, cloak-rooms, lavatories to be swept and scrubbed, rows of windows to be cleaned, fire-grates to be blacklead, coal to be brought in, playgrounds to be tidied. Jowett found that not only the caretaker but the whole family, wife and three or four children, would be engaged on this sweated "spare-time" job late into the night, and that incidentally, the caretaker himself had to meet the cost of brushes, cloths and cleaning materials. He was scandalised, and took up their case so vigorously that, with the help of Arthur Priestman, he wiped out the system within a year. The work was paid for on a time basis; if the caretaker could not do it all, those who helped him were placed on the pay roll, the cost of brushes and cleaning materials was borne by the Council. At one stroke, the lives of the caretakers and their families were lifted from sweated drudgery to reasonable comfort and leisure.\*

#### *Bradford's Team of Pioneers*

We must not forget Fred Jowett's Labour colleagues on the City Council, who grew in numbers from two to ten during the fifteen years

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\*One result of this agitation was the formation of the National Federation of Caretakers. Their gratitude to Fred Jowett is reflected in an incident which is surely unique. In 1911 the Bradford branch of the Federation wished to make a presentation of an inscribed portrait to their secretary, Thomas Brown. Brown agreed to the presentation, but he insisted that the portrait should be of Fred Jowett. Before Tom Brown died he asked that the portrait should be passed on to Jowett, and it was transferred to Fred's sitting-room wall.

of his service. They were an able and spirited team. Of Leonard Robinson and George Minty, Jowett's earliest colleagues, we have already written; one would like to pause to mention many others—there were three who must certainly be mentioned. Perhaps Fred's heart warmed most in memory to Arthur Priestman, a Quaker Socialist who had a remarkable influence on all his associates. "He was so transparently good that others could not help being good in his presence," remarked Fred. There was nothing in Arthur Priestman's religion which was self-righteous or forbidding; he was tolerant and companionable, and it was his human sympathy which led him to Socialism. His brother, H. B. Priestman, was the Liberal leader on the Council; his religious views, held with the same conviction, were expressed in the puritanical individualism of the old Liberal school.

Joseph Hayhurst was a sharp contrast to Arthur Priestman. He represented the hard-headed working-class type, which joined with the idealists to form the I.L.P. in 1893. He was a ruthless fighter, prepared to adopt any means to improve the lot of the workers he represented as secretary of the Dyers' Union.\* His toughness was often of value to Jowett in the many conflicts with the equally ruthless property owners and industrialists.

Another Trade Union colleague was J. H. Palin, who fought side by side with Jowett on the Board of Guardians as well as on the City Council, particularly on the Means Test issue. Palin had a country background, and there was in his bearing the simple honesty of the rural worker. He became a signalman, found he was too tied by the job to take his part in Labour politics, earned a living for a time as a clothier's agent, and then became secretary of the Tramway Men's Union. Palin was mainly responsible for extending Jowett's pioneer work on housing in later years.†

#### *Margaret McMillan*

Before concluding this chapter reference must be made to Margaret McMillan, a figure associated with Bradford's pioneering contribution to child welfare and education, with whom Jowett worked closely and whom he revered. Margaret was almost the perfect harmony of idealist and practical reformer. There was a mysticism in her thought which made her writing and speech difficult to grasp at times, but it found expression in a character of rare beauty and service and in a contribution to child nurture which has made a deep mark on educational progress. Her coming to Bradford was characteristic. Accompanied by her sister Rachel, she travelled from London to lecture at the Labour Church in 1893, and they found themselves among men and women whom they recognised at once as their natural comrades.

\*Joseph Hayhurst died during the first World War, when Lord Mayor of Bradford.

†Palin subsequently became Labour M.P. for Newcastle West. He died in May, 1934.

"They were a new order of people to us from the first," Margaret wrote afterwards. "It seemed as though we had been looking for them all the years—and here they were! This was home! These were as kindred, not friends only. They had been here all this time and we had not known it. Now one wakened as in one's own house on a sunny morning."\*

Margaret McMillan remained in Bradford, devoting her whole time to the I.L.P., addressing meetings tirelessly in schoolrooms and at street corners, travelling all over the North to spread the socialist gospel.

"She was an eloquent and attractive speaker," wrote Jowett afterwards, "in great demand not only for Bradford meetings, but for meetings in other towns. It was a hard life, relieved only by the friendly gatherings around firesides in the ordinary homes of ordinary working people. In spite of the inconveniences of travel, often including dreary waits in cold weather on wind-swept station platforms, Margaret felt it as a new and creative experience giving purpose to her life."†

The work was unpaid, and Fred Jowett and the Bradford comrades thought that she must have a private income which made it possible. Only when Margaret wrote the life of Rachel forty-five years later did they learn that the two sisters had deliberately planned that Rachel should return to London to earn a salary for both of them so that Margaret could continue the work for which they both felt she was destined.

A year after coming to Bradford Margaret was elected to the School Board and began the educational work for which she is famed. The city had expensive school buildings, but there was no real child nurture. "The half-timers slept exhausted at their desks, and still from streets and alleys children attended school in every stage of physical misery."‡ Margaret saw that it was her task to concentrate on work concerning the health of the children, and so great was her personal influence that she was able to say later that within three years she had converted even her political opponents to her view. The Board then began the series of reforms, "of which the children, not the buildings, were the real centre and object," which made Bradford the vanguard of educational progress in all Britain. Among other things, school baths and medical treatment were introduced, a physical care unknown in schools at that time, and for which, indeed, no legal provision existed. In 1904, when Margaret asked Sir Robert Morant, Director of Education, for permission to start medical inspection and school clinics in London, he informed her that there was no Act on the Statute Book which gave the necessary powers. "You did it in

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\*"The Life of Rachel McMillan."

†"Bradford I.L.P. News," June 3, 1938.

‡"The Life of Rachel McMillan."

Bradford, you know, but you didn't know the law," he said, and then added, "didn't want to know it, I think."

Writing of Margaret McMillan in later years, Jowett said: "How I wish there was something to show that Bradford recognised and honoured her service, even if it had been nothing more than the gesture of offering to give her name a place on the roll of the City's Freedom."\* That was not done, but by those who value progress Margaret McMillan's name will always be associated with the city scarcely less than the name of Jowett himself.†

### *First Association with Philip Snowden*

Another lasting friendship developed during this period. Stories began to reach Bradford of a brilliant young speaker who had emerged at Keighley. Philip Snowden was an Excise Officer and a Liberal. He undertook to debate Socialism, but when he read the socialist case in preparation for the debate he became converted. He was the type of enthusiast who wanted to take to everyone the vision which he had seen. He preached Socialism as a new evangel for the salvation of mankind and soon his magnetic fervour began to draw crowds wherever he went. It was in 1894 that Fred first met Philip and he was immediately captivated by the sincere idealism of this frail and ascetic-looking young man, so clear and certain in his convictions, so ready to go anywhere and everywhere to win others to them.

The comradeship became so close that when in March, 1905, Philip married Ethel Annakin, a Leeds school teacher, Fred was one of the four friends invited to attend. The wedding was kept quiet because, said Snowden, "it had come to our knowledge that the West Riding Socialists were preparing to turn it into a socialist demonstration." The other witnesses were Isabella and Bessie Ford and John Whittaker of Bradford, a cousin of Philip. The wedding invitation was a delightful example of the whimsical and almost mischievous humour which was one of Snowden's characteristics. It read:

Dear Fred,—Miss Annakin is going to be married on Monday at Otley, and she wants you to come over and see the performance. I join very heartily in the request. I am going to be there and shall be going by the 11.18 train from Bradford Midland. Meet me there. Do come. I must demand that you don't breathe a word of this to a living soul. Write to Cowling  
Leeds, March 9th, 1905. PHILIP SNOWDEN.

Down the left-hand side of this note Philip added: "Miss Annakin wishes me to add that it depends on the weather." But, to leave no

\*"Bradford I.L.P. News," July 7, 1938.

†Bradford's later advance in educational facilities was due in large measure to two of Fred Jowett's associates—William Leach and Michael Conway.



JOWETT, THE COUNCILLOR.



KATHARINE BRUCE GLASIER  
*She and her husband were among  
the first Socialist Crusaders*



MARGARET McMULLAN  
*Began her pioneer work for the physical  
care of school children in Bradford*



THE FIRST SCHOOL-FEEDING

*Meals for school children were first served in White Abbey Dining Room, Bradford, in October, 1907. Mr Jonathan Priestley (father of J B Priestley), Headmaster of the Green Lane School was in charge and is shown serving out the food*

doubts, she pencilled in herself in the top left-hand corner, "Do come.—E.A."\*

*Jowett Enters New Spheres of Work*

This chapter has been devoted mostly to Jowett's work on the City Council, which was his main public interest during these years.† But it was not his only interest. He was secretary of the Bradford I.L.P., a director of the Airedale Co-operative Manufacturing Society, and a delegate from the Weaving Overlookers' Union (on whose committee he served) to the Bradford Trades' Council, becoming its secretary when George Cowgill fell ill in 1893. He was one of the Trades Council representatives on the Bradford Chamber of Commerce. In the Open Letter to Jowett, already quoted, there is a tribute to his contribution to this august assembly. "It has improved the latter body vastly to hear, direct and unfiltered, from you the voice of Labour on questions of commerce," the writer said. Jowett also served as secretary of a committee set up by the Trades Council to investigate wages and working conditions in the wool combing establishments. His Saturday afternoons during a whole summer were spent in hearing witnesses who gave evidence from every important workplace in Bradford. He was a member of the Joint Committee of the Employers and Employed, and was one of the authors of the standard wage list for weavers which greatly improved their livelihood.

During these years Jowett also began to assume responsibilities in the national and international spheres of the Socialist Movement. He was elected to the National Administrative Council of the I.L.P. in 1897 on Keir Hardie's suggestion. "We want a larger infusion of the Trade Union element in next year's N.A.C.," he wrote to Fred urging him to accept nomination.‡ He attended the historic International Socialist conference held in London in the same year. More than forty years later he recalled the debate, Social Democracy *versus* Anarchism, which took place between the elder Liebknecht and August Bebel, on the one side, and Malatesta, on the other. The tempestuous character of the controversies of European Socialists surprised him. He gained an impression, which lived with him during the long series of international conferences which followed, that "for self-possession, patience, and tenacity of purpose, the British and German delegations were most alike."§

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\*See reproduction of this card, page 319.

†Jowett remained throughout his life a recognised authority on municipal subjects. He was selected to write "Socialism and the City" in the "Labour Ideal" series of books on Socialism, published by George Allen in 1907.

‡Letter dated April 4, 1897.

§Bradford I.L.P. News, May 30, 1941.



## CHAPTER III.

## SOCIALISM ENTERS PARLIAMENT

During the later years described in the last chapter, Britain was at war. The Boer War began in 1899 and continued until 1903. Fred Jowett never hesitated as to his attitude. He regarded the war as an imperialist adventure, fought mainly in the interest of capitalist exploiters with eyes on the gold mines within the Boer territory. In the Bradford press there was a report of one of his speeches which reflects his uncompromising views. He declared that it was the duty of Socialists to repudiate the war and everything belonging to it. Whenever precious stones and metals were discovered, he remarked, the British Government found an excuse for annexing the territory. In 1871 the portion of the Orange Free State where diamonds were found was annexed. Gold was discovered in the Transvaal and in 1877 it was annexed. In 1881 Mr. Gladstone restored independence with reservations, but capitalists and financiers were now determined to recover possession. Quoting Cecil Rhodes, he declared that for the capitalist "the British flag is the finest commercial asset in the world." Replying to the allegation of Boer ill-treatment of the native populations, he asked whether Britain had a clean slate in this matter, and denounced the "compounds" at Kimberley and the "concentration camps" in Rhodesia as equivalent to slavery.

Jowett took an active part in the anti-war campaign which the I.L.P. was conducting. Despite the fact that the Radical section of the Liberal Party, led by Campbell Bannerman and Lloyd George, was also opposing the war, any criticism was fiercely resented by the public. Speakers were often howled down and sometimes they were in danger of physical assault. At Birmingham, Lloyd George escaped from a raging mob in the Town Hall only by donning the uniform of a policeman. Keir Hardie faced angry crowds in Glasgow and other cities. Jowett did not escape these experiences. At street corner meetings in Bradford, at meetings in other Yorkshire and Lancashire towns, he had to meet violent opposition from audiences which were intoxicated by war fever.

The worst experience was at a meeting held on Peckover Walks, Bradford, which Edward Hartley and Jowett attempted to address. Fred said that it was the biggest hostile crowd he had ever seen and for an hour and a half the two speakers were refused a hearing. Popularity had changed since the meeting on the same spot at the time of the Manningham strike, when forty thousand people came to cheer Jowett and his fellow speakers.

*First Parliamentary Contest*

Shortly after this angry meeting, the Parliamentary general election of 1900 took place. The Boer War was not yet concluded, but

the Conservative Government, with Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister, wished to take full advantage of the enthusiasm which military victories had aroused. It was the first khaki election, with President Kruger the object of national hatred.

By now Bradford Socialists were coming to be quite old hands at elections. We have already told how Ben Tillet stood in 1892 for West Bradford, being defeated by only 557 votes. Tillet also contested the same division at the general election of 1895, but his vote dropped by nearly 500. The following year Keir Hardie stood as I.L.P. candidate in a by-election in East Bradford. It was during this contest that the close association of Hardie and Jowett as political colleagues began. Fred was Hardie's adviser on all local issues and fed him with material for his speeches. During this contest Hardie learned to have a great respect for Jowett's shrewdness and reliability, and from it grew the personal friendship which was never broken throughout Hardie's life.

The manner in which East Bradford was fought in 1896 was characteristic of the early contests of the I.L.P. Hardie, who was then chairman of the Party, unexpectedly appeared at the home of Dr. Munro, one of the few professional men in the Bradford branch, and a meeting of the local Executive was hurriedly called. Hardie urged that they should contest the by-election, and offered to be the candidate. The little group of comrades were eager for the fray, but they were nonplussed by the fact that they were completely without funds. Hardie pointed to a remarkable-looking man who had accompanied him—tall, hair rising in waves over his ears, pointed beard, dramatic in gesture. "Frank Smith will collect the money," he said confidently, and Frank Smith did. He had been a colleague of General Booth in the Salvation Army, and applied the methods of popular evangelism to politics, including the Army methods of money raising. At every meeting he appealed for a collection and proved a genius at it. He introduced the "bidding" system into public collections—"Who will give a pound? Who ten shillings?"—a technique which the Communists have made into an art in recent years. Meetings were held everywhere and at all times—at street corners, factory gates, wherever a dozen people could be got together. Fears as to funds disappeared. The contest paid for itself as it went along. There were three candidates, Captain Greville standing for the Conservatives, and Alfred Billson, a lawyer, for the Liberals. The Conservatives won, with Hardie at the bottom of the poll, but work was begun which afterwards took Jowett to the House for the same constituency.\*

A strange incident occurred at the meeting of supporters in Peckover Institute after the result was announced. Hardie told of an old Scottish belief that at inspired moments certain people had a gift of second sight, and remarked that his mother was credited with

\*The figures were: Greville, 4,921; Billson, 4,526; Hardie, 1,953.

this prophetic power. "I have a feeling that this gift is with me now," said Hardie, "and I am urged to make the prediction that Socialism will come in the year which bears the figures of my poll." Hardie's vote was 1953. "There is yet time for his prophecy to be fulfilled," commented Jowett when he recounted the story to the author in his home in the summer of 1943.

Before the general election of 1900 Jowett himself had been adopted as candidate for West Bradford. Circumstances were both more and less favourable than in previous Bradford elections. I.L.P. opposition to the Boer War was thought to be a heavy handicap, but on the other hand, the case for independent Labour representation had made great headway, and had at last begun to shake the loyalty of working-class Radicals to the Liberal Party. The Liberals were also in the mood to compromise. They had suffered a setback at the previous general election of 1895, when they lost West Bradford to the Conservatives. They made the suggestion that the I.L.P. should support their candidate in the East Division and that in return they should support the I.L.P. candidate in the West Division.

There were elements in the Labour Movement who were prepared to enter into such an arrangement, and Ben Tillett, the previous candidate for West Bradford, was inclined to back it.\* Jowett, however, would not hear of a compromise. He remembered Liberal opposition to factory legislation and particularly to measures to safeguard the conditions and wages of worsted workers; Liberal responsibility for the police batoning of workers gathered to support the Manningham strike; Liberal defence of the Poor Law Means Test; Liberal resistance to slum clearance, and municipal housing. Moreover his own experience had taught him that Liberal mill owners were as ruthless as any Tory. He held that the Liberal Party was a capitalist party with which Socialists had nothing fundamentally in common.

Before his departure for Australia, Tillett spoke at the meeting when Jowett was adopted as prospective candidate, and, though he had been described in the Liberal Press as "irresponsible and irreclaimable,"† he took the opportunity to urge the course of compromise. A Socialist, he argued, could play the game of the politician without any detriment to his Socialism, and he said openly that if he were fighting West Bradford he would endeavour to obtain from the Liberal Party a promise of support, with the threat that the I.L.P. would otherwise destroy the chances of the Liberal candidates in the other Divisions. Tillett advocated a ballot within the I.L.P. on the issue.

Jowett, who followed, was clear-cut in his rejection of any arrangement. A working men's representative, he said, should be quite independent of both capitalist parties. He should watch both and not be

\*Tillett relinquished his candidature because of ill-health and a projected visit to Australia.

†"*Bradford Observer*," July 15, 1907.

at the beck and call of either. There was no doubt that Jowett expressed the view of the I.L.P. membership in Bradford, and the same view was reached by the Party nationally. The Liberals retorted by adopting Mr. J. W. Jarratt as their candidate, but he found so much dissension within the Party that he withdrew, dissension due to conflict between pro-war Liberals and pro-Boer Liberals, between those who wished to oppose Jowett at all costs and those who wished to accept him as a "Progressive," or thought that his unpopularity on the war issue would lead to such a farcically small vote that the way would be left open for a Liberal candidate at the succeeding election.

When the contest came, in 1900, the Liberals were undecided how to vote. The pro-Boer Radicals, a minority, supported Jowett, but the imperialist Liberals found it difficult to forgive his anti-war record. A group of influential Liberals met at the Manningham Club and their inclination was to support Jowett if he would refrain from expressing his opposition to the war. That evening Mr. C. E. Mallett, chief reporter of the *Bradford Observer*, came to Jowett, told him of the Liberal gathering, and gave him the friendly advice to "go easy" on the war. Jowett responded by attacking the war "hell for leather" (to use his own phrase) at his meeting that night. The disappointed but well-intentioned Mr. Mallett had the duty of reporting the speech.

Polling day came and when the booths closed it was evident that Jowett had done much better than was anticipated. The count was exciting, the packs of ballot papers keeping almost abreast. Before the papers on the last table were totted up, Jowett was ahead and Sir Ernest Flower, who had held the seat for five years, came over to congratulate him. "Well, I suppose you've won," the Conservative candidate remarked. "No," said the cautious I.L.P. candidate, "look at the last table." Fred proved right; he was defeated by 41 votes. Sir Ernest came over again, and still to congratulate. "I've won," he commented, "but I'm not proud of my victory. I've nursed the constituency for twelve years, spent large sums of money on it. And then you run me so close!" There is no doubt that Jowett's refusal to water down his anti-war views cost him the seat.

#### *Elected to Parliament*

Meanwhile, the Labour Representation Committee, the forerunner of the Labour Party, had been established nationally. Ever since the formation of the I.L.P. in 1893, its spokesmen had concentrated on the task of winning the Trade Unions to acceptance of the need for Labour to organise politically on an independent basis. This propaganda was assisted in 1898 by the Taff Vale Judgment that picketing in strikes was illegal. Under the influence of this Court decision, the Trade Union Congress of 1899 hesitated no longer; it accepted a proposal that a Committee should be set up composed of delegates from itself and the three existing socialist organisations—the I.L.P., the Fabian

Society and the Social Democratic Federation—to nominate independent Labour candidates for Parliament. The last withdrew from the Committee on the ground that it was not committed to Marxian Socialism, but by the time the general election came in 1906, the Trade Union-Socialist federal alliance had become a power in the land. In Bradford a selection conference of Trade Union and I.L.P. delegates adopted Fred Jowett as candidate for West Bradford and in the East Division the Social Democratic Federation adopted E. R. Hartley.

The Liberal Party renewed its feelers for an arrangement about the Bradford constituencies. Neither Jowett nor Hartley would hear of it. The Liberals then suggested to the Trades Council the adoption of a more accommodating Labour candidate than Jowett. They proposed Mr. Richard Bell, secretary of the Railway Servants' Society,\* or Mr. F. Maddison, formerly Member for the Brightside Division of Sheffield, both of whom remained Liberals and refused to associate with the Labour Representation Committee. When the Trades Council scornfully scouted the idea, the Liberals proceeded to adopt a candidate themselves, in the person of Mr. W. Claridge, a master at the Grammar School, chairman of the School Board, and a recognised educationalist of progressive views, but they continued their manoeuvres to compromise Jowett. They compared his rigid political rectitude with the behaviour of other Labour candidates—Mr. David Shackleton, who had compromised about child labour; Mr. Arthur Henderson, who had compromised about the eight-hour day; Mr. John Hodge, who had arranged for the withdrawal of a Labour candidate in Manchester so that he could have a free run against the Tory at Gorton; and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald who had asked the Liberals at Leicester to refrain from adopting a second candidate against him in a double-barrelled seat. The Bradford Liberals explained that they would be satisfied if Jowett did something "infinitely smaller": all they wanted him to do was to ask the Liberal Party for support! This pathetic appeal was not so innocent as it appeared. The Liberals hoped for the withdrawal of Edward Hartley from the East Division in return for their withdrawal from the West; the plan was scotched not only by Jowett's recalcitrance, but by Hartley's announcement that he would maintain his candidature in any event.

So the election of 1906 came with Fred Jowett opposing both the Conservative and Liberal Parties. As the contest proceeded, the distinction between the programmes of Jowett and his opponents became increasingly evident. The older parties argued mostly about Free Trade, Welsh Disestablishment and Tariff Reform, with references to Home Rule for Ireland, religious teaching in schools, licensing reform and "Chinese slavery" in South Africa. Jowett gave first attention to the poverty question, and particularly to unemployment and

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\*The predecessor of the National Union of Railwaymen.

school-feeding, and showed that on these issues there was little difference between the Conservatives and Liberals. One also finds in at least two of his speeches references to the need to recast the procedure of Parliament so that it should become a place of work rather than of talk, a subject which Jowett was to make peculiarly his own.

This electoral fight is still talked about by veteran Socialists in Bradford. Nationally the election was historic because it saw the emergence of the Labour Party as a political force in the country. But in many constituencies the kind of deal with the Liberals which had been rejected in Bradford was put through,\* with the result that Labour candidates were almost indistinguishable from Liberals, and the crusading spirit of the new force of Socialism was lost. In Bradford the contrary was true. Labour humanism inspired by the socialist ideal swept the constituency. Leading I.L.P. propagandists like Keir Hardie, Pete Curran, Bruce and Katharine Glasier and others addressed crowded meetings and fiery Michael Davitt came to round up the Irish electors. The new Socialist-Trade Union alliance proved effective; Jowett reported whilst the contest was still proceeding that, whereas in 1900 he could not get into three trade union clubs, on this occasion he had already spoken in thirty-five. By the time polling day was reached the older parties were forced on the defensive, the Labour Party was challenging and confident. This time at the count Jowett's packs of ballot papers led, and the final figures gave him a majority of 810. The result was: F. W. Jowett (Labour), 4,957; Sir Ernest Flower (Conservative), 4,147; W. Claridge (Liberal), 3,580.†

#### *Before M.P.s Were Paid*

Jowett's election to Parliament meant a revolution in his life. Until now his home, work and public service (except for a few meetings in other northern towns) had been centred in Bradford; now the scene of his main political activities was transferred to London and he spent five days of the week there. The immediate problem was to find lodgings. Jowett knew no one in London, so approached someone he did not know, Mr. W. T. Stead, whose writings he had found human and kindly, and therefore encouraging. Mrs. Stead obtained a room for him in Burton Street, off Dean's Yard attached to Westminster Abbey, not much further than a stone's throw from the Houses of Parliament.

\*G. N. Barnes at Gorbals, Glasgow, and F. W. Jowett were the only M.P.s elected in three-cornered contests.

†The General Election of 1906 resulted in the return of twenty-nine independent Labour Members (there had been only three in the previous Parliament). It was evident that a new Party had arisen and that the Labour Representation Committee, under whose auspices they had been nominated, was no longer an adequate designation of it. To Fred Jowett belongs the historic distinction of suggesting that the name "The Labour Party" should be adopted. "What shall we call ourselves?" someone asked at the first meeting of the Executive after the election. "Why, 'The Labour Party'," proposed Jowett immediately. It was recognised as the obvious name and straight away the new Party was so christened.

It was only an attic room, of which Jowett's memory is chiefly a smoking chimney, but the amount he could afford for rent did not go beyond this. Later, when finances became a little easier, Jowett took a better room on a lower floor of the same house. The man who let the rooms was a mysterious individual, spreading an atmosphere of gloom about him; he distressed Mrs. Jowett greatly when she came up to London on a visit at Easter, and she heard with relief that he had refused to hold the room for Fred during the recess. When Parliament resumed, Jowett entered into a partnership with James Parker, Member for Halifax, and Thomas Summerbell, Member for Sunderland, both I.L.P. representatives. They took rooms in a small hotel in York Road, just across Westminster Bridge, and became inseparable companions, exploring London together, hunting out restaurants with cheap prices, and finding congenial entertainments. After 1910, Jowett took rooms in Cartwright Gardens, a crescent facing a park-like garden, shared by all the houses, not far from King's Cross.\* Seabrook House was a favourite resort of Socialists and Labour folk when in London. Robert Smillie, the miners' president, and William Straker, the Northumberland miners' leader, were regular visitors, and Edward Carpenter made it his London centre. Jowett found friendly companionship there for many years.

In 1906, when Jowett was elected, existence for I.L.P. M.P.s was a problem. Members were not given salaries by the State and there were no free railway passes; they had to depend on what payments their organisation could afford, supplemented by such fees as they could get for writing and speaking. The Trade Union representatives were relatively comfortable because most of the Unions were able to make far more liberal contributions than the £210 a year allowed by the I.L.P. Jowett was also voted an annual £50 by the Bradford Party,† but even so he found the total amount of £260 a year inadequate to meet the cost of his Bradford home and his growing family, his London lodgings and meals, his weekly fares from and to Bradford, and his heavy correspondence. "Labour Members who entered Parliament after State salaries were paid and free railway coupons were provided have little idea of what it meant to be an I.L.P. M.P. during the first four years of my Parliamentary life," Jowett afterwards remarked.

His financial problem was solved for a time by the help of Keir Hardie, who was elected chairman of the new Labour Group, and to whom Jowett became Parliamentary Secretary. The duties consisted of receiving the green cards signed by Hardie's visitors, and going

\*He remained loyal to Cartwright Gardens for thirty years, occupying similar rooms when he was a Cabinet Minister as in his impecunious days, and staying there whenever he was in London, until his lodgings were heavily "blitzed" in 1940.

†Jowett relinquished this local contribution when he began to feel the relief of journalistic earnings.

to the Central Lobby to sift those on trivial errands; running about the House with messages for Members or officials; tidying up Hardie's locker periodically, and so on. Jowett found this last duty most baffling. "What shall I do with all these papers?" he asked his chief, bewildered by their number and disorderliness. "Oh, destroy them and I shall never know," answered Hardie.

This post was honorary, but Hardie's appointment as Group chairman necessitated his giving up certain journalistic work, which he passed on to Jowett, and this brought financial relief. Hardie had contributed Labour Notes regularly to the *Glasgow Herald*, and these Jowett took over until a professional hitch occurred. The gallery correspondent of the *Glasgow Herald* was Robert Bruce (later to become Sir Robert and Editor of the paper), and he objected to a non-journalist doing the work. The proposal was made to Jowett that he should hand the notes to Bruce for incorporation in his Parliamentary contribution, but Jowett in turn objected to writing "under cover" and his work for the *Glasgow Herald* ended. Jowett's difficulty confronted other M.P.s. Philip Snowden solved it by joining the National Union of Journalists.

Then began a newspaper association which became famous. Jowett's old friend, Robert Blatchford, invited him to contribute a weekly Parliamentary article to the *Clarion*. Jowett was taken aback. The *Clarion* and its notable team of writers were at the height of their reputation and, much as he wanted the payment, he didn't feel he had the ability to do the work requested and declined.\* Blatchford insisted, and the result more than justified him. Jowett's articles rapidly became popular among Socialists because of their forthright exposure of Parliamentary procedure. The author was a reader of the *Clarion* at that time, and well recollects the sensational effect which these contributions had. There was a general conviction among Socialists that the procedure of Parliament was obsolete, but before Jowett's exposure appeared the practices of Parliament were not understood. The interest aroused was so great that Blatchford asked Jowett to put his case into a pamphlet, and tens of thousands of "What is the Use of Parliament?" were sold.

Jowett made a name for himself by these *Clarion* contributions, but he was never facile with his pen. He worked on them into the small hours after his Parliamentary duties were finished at 11 p.m., and it cost him, to use his own words, "sweat and blood." He was extraordinarily careful to get his exact meaning on paper, struggling with qualifying sentences and parentheses, in order that he should be accurate beyond a peradventure. The result was a style of writing which was sometimes laborious, but which nevertheless was weighty, clear and convincing.

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\*Jowett had already contributed some notes on municipal affairs to the "*Clarion*."



*Parliament Did Not Impress Him*

Jowett didn't fit easily into Parliament. He was in it, but not of it. The world he knew was of the back-to-back houses, cobbled yards, grimy mills; the politics he knew were of the street corner and school room meetings of workers and their wives; the public life he knew was of the Council Chamber and the Committee room, where there was no ceremony and where one spoke to the point and got on with the job. Parliament, with its imposing Gothic architecture, its corridors lined with paintings, its comfortable smoking rooms, restaurants and library; its strangely attired officials, messengers in dress suits crossed by heavy gold chains, the Sergeant-at-Arms looking like a black beetle with a sword, the Speaker in long black gown and wig; its weird ceremonies; three bows as one was inducted, bowing always as one entered and left; its formalities of language, Right Honourable Gentleman when addressing a Minister, Honourable and Gallant Friend when addressing a General or Admiral, Honourable and Learned Friend when addressing a lawyer; its dominant la-di-da speech, Eton, Harrow, Oxford, Cambridge, its "society" manners and courtesies—all these were a foreign and fantastic world to the plain-speaking and plain-living Yorkshireman. He was interested in historical traditions and ceremonies, he had an appreciation of beauty and culture, but he had come to Westminster to do a job, to bring some happiness and hope to the folk in Bradford whose existence was so starved and limited, and he was impatient with all these trappings and trimmings which seemed to him to make Parliament a place of play-acting rather than of political action. Only a sense of humour prevented him from rebellious outburst.

Sometimes Jowett's comments were bitter. One can sense the frustration which must have been gnawing at him when he wrote his *Clarion* articles. For example, when he wrote this:

"The nation will go to great lengths in providing for the convenience and comfort of private members, but it gives very little assistance to the working member. As many as wish to play chess or draughts can be accommodated. In addition to the ordinary members' dining rooms, for instance, a large dining hall and a number of smaller ones opening on to the Terrace are set apart for swell dinner parties, and they are in daily use while Parliament is sitting. Dressing rooms are also provided for the convenience of members who 'dress for dinner.' Here the valets attend and assist their masters to get into their boiled shirts. If your own valet is not at hand, or you do not happen to employ one, the dressing-room attendant, paid by the State, will hand you your clean things and put the discarded ones away for you. But if you require any assistance in drafting an amendment to a Bill which is under consideration, or in drafting a new Bill, there is not a single person to whom you can go for guidance. The Statute Book has been strewed by generations of lawyer members of Parliament

with pitfalls for the unwary plain man, and unless you can afford to pay for expert assistance you must flounder as best you can.”\*

Jowett would have forgiven the façade of Parliamentary life if he had found behind it efficient methods of legislation and administration. Even before he entered the House he had been critical of its procedure as he had learned it from Hardie and from his reading of the Press and Hansard; but actual experience strengthened his criticism tenfold. He saw Parliament just as a stage for the Party game. The King made the leader of the largest party Prime Minister, the Prime Minister selected his Government, and loyal members of his Party were expected to support it on every issue. They were not expected to contribute ideas for the improvement of any measure, because that would prolong discussion and delay Government business; they were not even expected to be present in the Chamber unless the quorum of forty out of 670 members was in danger; it was only necessary to be on the premises to vote when a division was called. It was not necessary for them to know what the voting was about. The Whip would be standing at the entrance to the division lobbies to indicate through which the good Party member should parade.

The duty of a member of the Opposition was different. His task was to obstruct the passage of legislation. The more he spoke the better; that would delay the progress of Government business. But, like his colleagues on the Government side, he had very few opportunities to contribute effectively either to legislation or administration. He could put questions to Ministers during the first 45 minutes of each sitting, he could make general criticisms of a Bill during its Second Reading stage, he could propose amendments during its Committee stage. But in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it made no difference. When the vote was taken the Party Whips were at their posts and herded the members into their respective lobbies. Automata could have served almost as well.

Jowett applied his City Council experience in putting forward an alternative method of government. He proposed that the six hundred and seventy members of Parliament should be allocated to Committees responsible for the administration of the various Departments of State, just as members of the local authorities are distributed among committees responsible for Health, Transport, Finance and so on. He proposed that each Minister should preside over his Departmental Committee and that all legislative and administrative matters relating to that Department should come before the Committee before being presented to Parliament as a whole. He proposed that all Departmental documents and information should be available to the Committee, that nothing should be withheld. In this way every Member of Parliament could, if he desired, make an informed and

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\*“Clarion,” July 24, 1908.

constructive contribution, and the full light of democracy would be thrown on everything done.

This is an inadequate summary of the case which Jowett developed in his *Clarion* articles, illustrating it week after week by topical happenings with a cumulative effect which was impressive. Our summary is in some ways unfair to Jowett because his conscientious concern to present his argument with absolute truthfulness led him to acknowledge many considerations here omitted; this must be put right when we tell the story of the controversy which arose later with Ramsay MacDonald, Harold Laski and others on this issue. But there is one important implication of the general case which must be added immediately. Jowett supplemented his proposals by urging that M.P.s should be encouraged to vote according to their view of the merits of each question rather than on the instructions of the Party Whip. The rigid Party system meant that if the Government were defeated on any proposal it would normally resign office. The consequence was that M.P.s voted not on the issue before them, but on their view of the Government. Jowett proposed that a Government should be expected to resign only if defeated on a major issue or a definite motion of censure.

To many of Jowett's Labour colleagues these issues appeared abstract during the earlier months of the Parliament of 1906. The Labour Party was not involved in the Party game of "ins" and "outs"; it was against both capitalist parties, the Liberal Government and the Tory Opposition. During the chairmanship of Keir Hardie it pursued a firm line of independence, introducing its own motions and Bills, voting for them against both Parties. Hardie took this line of independence to the extreme of refusing to enter into arrangements with the officials of the other Parties even about the time-table of business to come before the House. "You bring your proposals to the House publicly," he used to say, "and we'll tell you quick enough whether we like them or not."

#### *Impressions Of Leading Politicians*

It would be doing Jowett an injustice if our description of his reaction to the House of Commons suggested that he became an Ishmael, an intolerant alien among his Parliamentary colleagues. He was too practical for that. He contributed to the House the same constructive qualities he had given to the Bradford City Council; if he regarded Parliament as an inefficient, lumbering machine, that did not mean he refrained from extracting all he could from it; indeed, as our next chapter will show, he succeeded in wringing important reforms from it. His humanity also saved him from the futility of isolation. He loved to study human character; he responded to sincerity and generosity whether revealed by opponents or friends. Reading his descriptions of Parliament, one is impressed by his ready recognition

of personal virtues in opponents. An example was his estimate of the characters of the two famous sons of the Earl of Salisbury, Lords Hugh and Robert Cecil, who were in this Parliament. He was bored by the debates on Welsh Disestablishment, but Lord Hugh's speech moved him deeply. "There was not the slightest shadow of doubt in anybody's mind about his sincerity," he wrote. In the case of Lord Robert, he was even led to offer him playfully a membership card of the I.L.P.! "Lord Robert thinks that we are the only Party in the House that states boldly what it is after and goes for it openly," he reported. "Much as I am opposed to him in politics, I would rather have his testimony as to straightforward dealings than that of almost any other member of the House of Commons."\* Yet, even when recognising sincerity in his opponents, Jowett's working-class consciousness held him to realities. Listening to Lord Hugh's idealism, he remembered "the days of the transport strike, when Lord Hugh Cecil shared with his aristocratic neighbour, Lord Castlereagh, in giving unbounded sympathy to *hired strikebreakers*." Jowett concluded the article with the sentence: "Lord Hugh can preach, but for him also the story of Joseph in Egypt has been told in vain."†

The humanity which led Jowett to pierce prejudice and find the good in political opponents was shown notably in his response to Arthur Lyttleton. In the general election of 1906 no member of the Conservative administration was more denounced by the Radicals and Socialists than the Colonial Secretary, the author of "Chinese slavery" in South Africa. Jowett had attacked his policy as much as anyone, yet this is what he wrote of him:

"A tall, thin, beetle-browed man, clean shaven, black looking. I listened to him with curiosity not unmixed at first with prejudice... But the more I listened to him and watched him the more I liked him. He was fair to his opponents, there was nothing mean about him in any shape or form."‡

He liked Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the Prime Minister, 'a nice old boy, with a pawky humour much to the point.'\* The Tories objected to some Government scheme as the thin end of the wedge. "Whoever heard of anyone putting the thick end in first?" commented C.-B. Augustine Birrell, Minister for Education, also proved attractive; he was kindly, genial, witty. Jowett was a severe critic of the administration of John Burns as Minister for Local Government, but he remarked that Burns never showed ill-will.

The politician who fascinated most as a study was Arthur Balfour, leader of the Opposition. Balfour was interesting because he was so interested himself in what he was saying and doing. He was moved

\* "Bradford Pioneer," January 31, 1913.

† "Clarion," July 17, 1908.

‡ When references are not given, Jowett's statements were made to the author.

intensely by personal prejudices or sympathies. A Minister whom Balfour could not stand was Walter Runciman, a lofty and distant personality whom he loved to ridicule. Lloyd George, on the other hand, was a favourite of Balfour. The Opposition leader would begin by listening critically to the clever young Welshman, protesting in every feature against the wiles he employed to dodge difficult points, but as L-G proceeded with his getaway, making the members overlook the weakness of his argument in their surrender to his fun, Balfour would shake his head as though acknowledging that the "clever rogue" had beaten him and give himself over to the enjoyment of the performance.

To Jowett, Lloyd George appeared to be an adventurous parliamentary salesman. "In political warfare," he wrote, though this was somewhat later, "Lloyd George is like a youngster at play, laughing, pretending, haggling with persons and projects big and little, for the sheer joy, emotion and excitement he finds in an eventful and ever-changing experience."\*

Sir Austen Chamberlain was emphatically not one of Jowett's favourites. "Never did dutiful son more faithfully endeavour to follow in his father's footsteps," he wrote.

"Even the gestures of the old man are reproduced. The flick of the hands, the tap on the brass-bound box, and other like ways of emphasising his points all suggest the father. But it is woefully ineffective. The mechanism is there but the mainspring is wanting. He tries his best, but he only succeeds in inviting comparisons which are to his own disadvantage. He works hard. He has been well trained, and he has a good knowledge of Parliamentary procedure . . . . He tries to maintain a courteous and dignified attitude towards his opponents, but as he habitually overestimates his own importance, he is by no means impressive. He always thinks it his duty to make a long speech on a big occasion, but . . . what he says in an hour could always be said more effectively in ten minutes; doubtless he has more in him than he can find words to express, but then, what use is the remainder to his hearers? On his own merits he would never have been selected for any Ministerial post."†

An Irishman who won Jowett was Swift MacNeill, an intellectual and rebel. This is a later note, but it reflects an impression made during the early days of the 1906 Parliament:

"I am fond of the effervescent old Irishman. As for his attitude towards me, I am a puzzle to him, although he is always cheerfully polite when we meet. The other day he overtook me in one of the corridors, and, recognising me as a witness who had appeared to give evidence before the Procedure Commission of which he is a member, he beamed and chuckled in friendly recollection of the

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\*"Bradford Pioneer," March 21, 1913.

†"Clarion," May 29, 1908.

event. Taking my arm, he said 'You revolutionary! To sit there in that witness chair and, all calm and unconcerned, to say that you saw no necessity for a King's Speech to open Parliament, or a Prime Minister!' After which he confessed that, extreme as he was thought to be, his views were mild compared to mine."\*

Jowett's appreciation extended to at least one member of the House of Lords. Of Lord Loreburn ("Bobby" Reid) he had the warmest memory. The Lord Chancellor was helping the Trade Unions greatly at this time on legal matters connected with the Taff Vale Judgment, and when Jowett wanted to see him on some technical point he had no difficulty in getting an interview. At the end of the talk the Lord Chancellor begged Jowett to stay ten minutes for the opening of the sitting of the House of Lords, and said: "You will see the most curious sight in your life." Jowett stayed, and agreed that the Lord Chancellor had not exaggerated: it was the inauguration of a new peer. He had been amused by the induction ceremony of the Commons, but it was dull compared with this grotesque ritual. The Lord Chancellor sat on the Woolsack, a low divan, in a shovel hat of the Georgian period, with peers in cocked hats on either side of him. For minutes the bowing and doffing of hats went on, not merely between the new peer and the Lord Chancellor, but between him and many other peers, to whom his sponsors led him solemnly in turn. It was like a children's dance in costume.†

Jowett always saw the comic side of these occasions. Here, for example, is a delightful description of the ceremony with which the daily Prayers in the House of Commons are concluded:

"The chaplain prays officially, and I am sure sincerely, for the nation at the beginning of each day's proceedings. He, the reader may like to know, always walks out backwards to the 'bar' after he has prayed for us, stopping thrice on his way to make low graceful bows to the Chair. He is a fairly good shot at this retreating backwards business, for although I have known him to 'cannon' with an incoming member, I have never known him to miss the door. It is the member's fault generally when there is a bump with the parson, it being the custom of members to rush in hurriedly when the message 'Prayers are over' is cried all over the premises."‡

Such were some of the impressions which Parliament and its personalities made on the new Member for West Bradford. What impression did he make on Parliament and its work?§

\*"Bradford Pioneer," August 22, 1913.

†This ceremony is still maintained. The Duke of Bedford is, so far as we know, the only peer who has dispensed with it.

‡"Bradford Pioneer," June 20, 1913.

§As a postscript to Jowett's pen pictures of his fellow Members, it is fair to quote a reference to Jowett himself in Viscount Snowden's Autobiography. Snowden remarked that Fred's head, bushy-haired, domed, and bespectacled, "always attracted attention in the Strangers' Gallery, where they thought he was some German professor who had wandered into the House of Commons."

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE PERIOD OF SOCIAL REFORM

The Liberal Party governed Britain from 1906 until the National Government was formed in the first World War. This was the final period of Liberal rule; it was also the period of the Parliamentary apprenticeship of Labour.

During its first years the Labour Party made a profound impression on public opinion and even on legislation. It was self-reliant and aggressive, striking a new note in politics, subordinating every question to the poverty issue. Week after week the Labour members pressed for legislation to relieve the want in the homes of the people—Right to Work or Maintenance, Old Age Pensions, Housing, School Feeding. The imperialist section of the Liberal Party, led by Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey, resisted this pressure towards social legislation, but a series of by-elections, in which Labour polled sensationally, made even the more reactionary Liberals realise that without social reform their Party was dead.

The turning point, Fred Jowett used to say, was a by-election in the Liberal stronghold of Huddersfield towards the end of 1906, when reports reached London that Mr. Russell Williams, the I.L.P. candidate, was likely to win. This was the "writing on the wall." Mr. Winston Churchill, then embarking on his Left Liberal phase, was sent post haste to the constituency to announce the Government's intention to introduce Old Age Pensions. The Labour Party had won an important demand, but the Liberals won the election by the margin of 340 votes and regained the initiative. From this point onwards Mr. Lloyd George dominated Liberal policy, cleverly manœuvring Labour into a junior partnership in a half-hearted struggle against the House of Lords

*Jowett Carries His School Feeding Bill*

Opportunity was kind and just—Jowett's maiden speech was on school feeding, the proposal which he had pioneered in Bradford and which now occupied a foremost place in Labour's programme. Mr. Tyson Wilson, a Lancashire Labour member, winning a place in the ballot for Private Members' Bills, introduced a measure for the provision of meals for necessitous school children and Jowett supported him in a speech which was straightforward, factual and appealing, the first step in winning in the House of Commons the respect he had won in the Bradford City Council. The Government was sympathetic, but regretfully could not find time for the measure.

Later, in 1908, under the by-election pressure we have described, the Government introduced a Bill permitting local authorities to feed hungry school-children, but the expenditure was limited to a half-

penny rate and the meals were stopped during holidays. Still later, in 1911 (this was Fred's third Parliament, but let us complete the story) Jowett himself introduced the Bill which ended this limitation and this wrong. It took three years to get it through Parliament, but finally Jowett's persistence triumphed. Let us turn to newspapers of the time to record what happened: the drama of it can be put in three acts.

ACT I: This is from the Parliamentary sketch of P.W.W.\* in the *Daily News* of April 20, 1911:

"Mr. Jowett, the Labour Member, in a delightful little speech, very simple and human, introduced a Bill to enable local authorities to provide feeding for school children during holidays. Mr. Jowett showed a chart which illustrated how the weight of children at Bradford increases during term, but dwindles during holidays—a pathetic comment upon home life, when the wage fund only furnishes 1s. 9d. a week for food per child."

ACT II: Next a comment entitled "Relative Values" by Jowett himself from his weekly "Diary of Parliament" in the *Bradford Pioneer* of August, 1913:

"The Prime Minister expressed great sympathy for the Bill standing in my name.... But he could find no room for it this session. And yet he could find room for the Bill to indemnify Sir Stuart Samuel against the payment of possible fines for voting as a member of the House of Commons after his firm had accepted a Government contract.

"Sir Stuart Samuel is enormously rich, and, to say the least, precedence might have been given to a Bill to feed children who otherwise will go short of food as against a Bill to relieve a rich man from penalties which the law has inflicted upon him for an offence which has been proved against him."

ACT III: Finally, a tribute from the *Young Liberal* (May, 1914) when Jowett had carried the Second Reading of his Bill:

"Mr. F. W. Jowett, M.P., secured a notable success in the House of Commons in getting the Second Reading of his Bill carried without a division. It was certainly a biting thrust he made that, while the House of Commons had legislated on horse breeding, plumage wearing, and bee disease, the lot of the hungry children of parents whose wages are literally starvation wages should have been neglected.

"Mr. Pease, as Minister for Education, gave his official blessing to the Bill as marking another step in the direction of the object for which Mr. Jowett had so long worked.... The 'human' note was touched by Colonel Lockwood, who is Chairman of the Kitchen Committee of the House of Commons, when he said he confessed he would many a time like to feed some of the hungry children with the scraps rejected with turned up noses by the Members of the House."

In October, 1914, Jowett's Bill became law.

### *Houses—But Not for the Workers*

A second issue pioneered by Jowett at Bradford which he took to the floor of Parliament was Housing. He did not succeed with it as he did with school feeding; for any substantial achievement he had to wait until he occupied Cabinet rank, sixteen years later, when at length

\*P. W. Wilson was himself elected to Parliament for South St. Pancras in 1910. He was sufficiently sympathetic to Labour to introduce the Party's Right to Work Bill when he won a place in the ballot.



his colleague John Wheatley carried a Housing Measure of real value to the working class. At this stage his contribution was limited to constructive criticism of a Bill which Mr. John Burns introduced in 1908. "An engine without petrol," Fred described it.

When Jowett got his copy of the Bill he was bewildered. It was a typical instance of "legislation by reference"; instead of precise statements of intention, he found repeated references to previous Acts. There was a clause, for example, which described how compensation was to be paid for land. He read that this was "subject to the same provisions" as the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890. He looked up the Act of 1890 in the Commons Library only to be referred to the Public Health Act of 1875. He went to the bookshelves in the Corridors where the older Acts were stored and searched among the musty tomes, to discover that the 1875 Act referred in turn to the Land Clauses Consolidation Acts of 1869, 1860 and 1845! Coming finally to the Act of 1845, he waded through 153 sections to obtain the particular references which he wanted—and even then the meaning was so obscure that he was driven to consult a legal friend, who acknowledged that he, too, was uncertain about its interpretation. Jowett's comment was thorough.

"I have long felt that laws are made needlessly difficult to understand and their meaning obscured by the experts who draft them," he wrote. "Nor need we marvel if such is the case, seeing that the said experts, otherwise known as Government draughtsmen, have to frame their Bills to please a Parliament in which the legal profession is not only numerically strong, but is so overwhelmingly powerful in point of influence that it is a menace to the public welfare and has been so for many a generation."\*

At the end of his research Jowett came to the conclusion that the Bill would not provide houses for the workers and he said so in a speech which added to his reputation in the House. He welcomed provisions making the ownership of insanitary accommodation a little more risky, but he pointed out that this would probably have the effect of diminishing the number of houses available for workers' families and that the Bill gave no encouragement to local authorities to build more. The crux of the matter was the cost. If the local authorities were to build they must, he argued, have loans at low rates of interest. Why couldn't Parliament do for England what it had done for Ireland in authorising loans at  $3\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. to build labourers' cottages? He made the novel suggestion that the 175 millions in the Post Office Savings Bank should be used for this purpose. It was largely deposited by the workers, who were given interest of only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.; why shouldn't it be used for workers' houses by loaning it to local authorities at the same rate of interest? This suggestion was received with Labour cheers, but, as we

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\*"Clarion," March 16, 1908.

shall see, the principle at issue became a matter of controversy within the Labour Party.

Jowett's estimate of Burns's Bill proved right. Five years later he was able to point to the fact that "local authorities are closing two or three houses for every one they build, and private enterprise is not supplying the deficiency and cannot do so." The one contribution which the Burns Bill made to housing was to stimulate Public Utility Companies to lay out Garden Cities for the middle class.

One of the earliest splits in the Labour Party arose from Jowett's insistence on State assistance for housing. When in 1913 a group of Tories introduced a Bill applying to England the principle of cheap State loans which had been successful in Ireland, five Labour members voted against and the majority abstained. A controversy immediately flared up between G. N. Barnes, M.P., a prominent member of the Engineering Union, and Fred Jowett—the former writing in *Forward* and the latter in the *Clarion*. Barnes's argument was that State grants for housing would perpetuate low rents and low wages; the way to tackle the problem was to demand higher wages.

"I have no objection to rents being kept low and I deny the assertion that better houses provided and owned by local authorities and let cheaply with the assistance of State grants will perpetuate low wages," Jowett replied. "Give a man a decent home and he will usually fight harder for other things because his wants increase. This is the experience of Ireland. Everywhere the wages of labourers have increased. In County Cork where houses have been built most freely, wages have gone up from 30 to 50 per cent. I do not say that this is all because of the better houses they live in, but undoubtedly the move upwards has been influenced to some extent by the higher standard of home life."\*

As in the case of school feeding, history has proved Jowett right. State assistance is now a recognised principle in all housing schemes.

#### *Conflict with John Burns on Poor Relief*

Jowett also came into conflict with John Burns over his mean administration of the Poor Law. Twenty-four years earlier Burns had been co-leader with Tillett of the dockers' strike, regarded by the public as a revolutionary, but now he had become the most orthodox President of the Local Government Board, encouraging Poor Law Guardians to refuse outdoor relief to the destitute and to drive them into the workhouse. The *Sunday Chronicle* of March 7, 1912, contained an entertaining description of a debate on the L.G.B. Vote, when Jowett led the attack. The writer made the most of the division between former colleagues:

"The House this week has feasted its eyes on the spectacle of John Burns defending his salary from ravening red-tie Socialists—the sort of fellows who spout eloquently by the hour in Battersea Park on Sundays, call one

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\*"Clarion," May 16, 1913.

another 'Comrade,' and tell you that no man's service is worth more than £500 a year . . . 'Alone, alone, all, all alone' on the wide Treasury Bench sat ex-Comrade Burns, hugging metaphorically, his £5,000 a year, and thinking of the ingratitude of man."

Jowett's speech hardly bore out the reference to "ravening red-tie Socialists" and Battersea Park spouters. Its tone, the same writer tells us, was more of sorrow than of anger, recalling the days when Burns was "a kindred spirit," quoting from his speeches of the 'eighties, contrasting with these his present treatment of the unemployed and their families. Burns gave no sign of an uneasy conscience, but, like other Members of Parliament, he had a great respect for the Member for West Bradford and he cannot have been unmoved by the earnest, regretful and weighty indictment. From this day onwards Burns lost his reputation among the public as a "Socialist," or even as a "Labour man." He had clearly gone over to the other side.

#### *Campaign Against A Dread Disease*

West Bradford's Member did not restrict himself to his old subjects. He broke new ground by taking up one of the worst evils in the woollen industry—the disease of anthrax, then commonly known as "wool-sorters' disease." It is not too much to say that his activity played a major part in ending a scourge which woollen workers dreaded as the plague and which brought hundreds of them to their deaths. The *Yorkshire Observer*\* described the range and effect of the disease thus:

"The public can be horrified about the awful effects of 'phossy jaw' among matchmakers, and of lead glazing in the Potteries, where the death-rate ranges between three and six per cent. of the cases reported, but public opinion has not yet been aroused to take any interest in a disease which is worse than the plague in the awful rapidity with which it runs its course, the relentless grip it lays on its victims, and its tremendous mortality of at least one in every four attacked."

The poison germ which caused the disease was traceable to blood-clotted "fallen" fleece (that is, gathered from the ground rather than sheared). The danger came mostly from Persian wools, Van mohair, and low wools imported from the East, though instances were known of infection from colonial wools and, in rare cases, from Scottish black-face fleeces.† The germ was evidently persistent, because, among Fred Jowett's large file of papers on the subject, there was a letter from the Medical Officer of Health of Glasgow reporting the case of a worker at a paint and colour merchants, who had contracted the disease by touching linseed oil pressed in moulds of wool bagging which had come from Bradford.

The germs either infected cuts and sores on face, neck, hands, arms, or were inhaled from wool and hair dust. In the former case, a spot would develop surrounded by redness, spreading and suppurating until the germs, breeding rapidly, choked the glands, bringing virulent

\*May 13, 1906.

†It was alleged that cases had also originated from human hair imported from China.

bronchitis, blood-stained sputum and asphyxiation. In the latter case, the lungs and throat were first affected, the blood vessels and glands became choked, blood-stained diarrhoea developed, and collapse followed through asphyxiation. Death occurred quickly after the first symptoms, sometimes within twelve hours, rarely beyond twelve days. Almost every week one worker would be infected, and sometimes the cases were more frequent. During 1905, for example, there were 59 cases, of which 18 were fatal.

As far back as 1860 "woolsorters' disease" had engaged the attention of medical men, but it was not then identified with anthrax. The Bradford Medico-Chirurgical Society appointed a special commission which, after taking evidence for eighteen months, was equally divided as to whether or not the mischief was due to the *bacillus anthracis*. The real pioneer in remedial measures, however, was an ordinary practitioner, Dr. Bell by name, with a surgery in Hallfield Road. His patients were mostly woollen workers, and he was appalled by the deaths which "woolsorters' disease" caused. As a result of his agitation the Home Office issued regulations compelling the employers who used wool and hair scheduled as dangerous to instal dust extractors under the boards on which the wool was sorted.

"Woolsorters' disease" largely disappeared, *but woolcombers' disease began*. In order to avoid the expense of introducing fans and other apparatus to extract the infected dust at the sorting boards, a number of employers decided to dispense with sorting altogether. They adopted the expedient of sending the dangerous wools unsorted to the woolcombing employers, who dispersed the dust by emptying the fleece out of bales over a chute which dropped it to a lower floor. The consequence was that the woolcombers and woolwashers contracted the disease instead of the woolsorters.

A report of an inquest on October 29, 1909, on the body of Patrick Joyce (56), woolworker, of King's Court, Wilsden, near Bradford, illustrates what happened. He was employed by Woolcombers, Limited, at their Cottingley mill. The manager, Walter Ramsden Kay, explained that Joyce's work was to feed the washing bowl, lifting the wool from a pile on the floor to the machine. The wool was unpacked from bales on the landing above and dropped through a trap on to the floor of the washhouse.

The Coroner asked if it would not be better to drop the wool through the trap when the men were not working, as the dust was dangerous he supposed.

The witness said this was a point worth considering, and the work could be arranged to avoid danger from this operation.

The coroner said it seemed to him that when a bale was dropped down within a few yards of where a man was working there was a danger that he might inhale the dust which was caused.\*

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\*"Yorkshire Observer," October 30, 1909. Jowett raised this case in Parliament and as a consequence an enquiry was opened into methods of protecting the woolcombers against dust.

Evidence at other inquests showed that the disease could be contracted from dust on woolworkers' clothes. There was one case where a man died after a brawl and it was thought at first that he had received a fatal blow. The medical report proved, however, that the effect of the blow was superficial: the real cause of death was anthrax, contracted from dust on the garments of his antagonist, who happened to be a woolcomber. Despite the danger from dust, we read this evidence at another inquest:

"The Coroner: 'Where do the workpeople hang their clothing and keep their food?'—Witness: 'In the place where they work.'

The Coroner: 'There is not a separate dining-room where food and clothing can be kept?'—Witness: 'No, sir.'"

A year before Jowett was elected to Parliament an Anthrax Investigation Board was formed in Bradford, representing medical men, employers in the woollen industry and the Trades Council. Jowett was critical of it. He was chairman of the City Council Health Committee at the time and was insisting on the total exclusion of the dangerous wools from this country or their complete disinfection at the port of entry. In this view he was strongly supported by Dr. Bell, the general practitioner who first exposed the disease. The Board, however, gave its attention to research about the nature of the germ and to chemical and mechanical means to lessen the risks. When after three years little had resulted, Mr. Jowett remarked at a meeting of the National Union of Woolsorters that the Board was very pertinacious "in hunting for the particular make-up of the microbe," but there were more practical questions than that.

This speech led to a sharp exchange of letters with Mr. W. Dale Shaw, chairman of the Board (and also chairman of Woolcombers, Limited), in which he angered Jowett still more by emphasising the carelessness of the workpeople in not making more use of preventatives or reporting the first signs of the disease. The controversy was carried to the Trades Council (which decided to withdraw from the Board) where Jowett spoke with unusual bitterness.

"Let me remind Mr. Dale Shaw," he said, "that it is not I who am on trial, but those who traffic in the foul refuse and abominations taken from the diseased carcasses of animals in countries where the people are too ignorant to know the risks they run. And when he talks of bloodstains on the wool, let him also think of the bloodstains, not on animals, but on human beings, his neighbours—on the dividends he draws, which, whatever else they will do for him, will not enable him to talk down to me."

Jowett's indignation was intensified by his conviction that the disease and deaths were unnecessary and occurred because the particular employers concerned in this side of the trade, a "nefarious business" he called it, placed their profits before the lives of their workers.

\*"Bradford Telegraph," October 13, 1908.

He was fortified in this conviction by a remarkably outspoken editorial in the *Yorkshire Observer*:\*

"The evil will probably be only entirely stamped out by international effort. *But in the meantime the British question is only one of £ s. d.* It is but a small proportion of the imports of wool and mohair that are dangerous. The origin of these is pretty well known. If it were a criminal offence for these wools to be imported, we should not lose a great deal in the way of raw material. Indeed, we should probably lose none. The shippers, realising that their market was closed, would at once take effective measures to prevent fallen fleeces getting into clip, and would guarantee their shipments as 'clean.' *The whole sacrifice of life, which is so appalling, is simply an offering to Ruskin's Goddess of Wealth, and human sacrifices to Moloch have gone out of fashion long since.*" (Italics ours.)

#### *Question to Minister About Every Case*

Jowett got his teeth into this question as soon as he entered Parliament and never let go until a remedy was found. Whenever a fatality from anthrax occurred he placed a question on the Order Paper, giving the name of the firm, the verdict, and any evidence of special significance. He had two purposes in view. The first was ameliorative: to stimulate the officials of the Government Department to a more careful inspection of the mills where woolsorting and woolcombing were done, and to encourage firms to be more careful about the wools they purchased ("They know there is somebody always in Parliament who may ask awkward questions and attach the name of the firms concerned, so I do not think they like it very much."†). The second was preventive: to exert constant pressure towards the solution which he always had in view—the entire exclusion of the dangerous fleece or its satisfactory disinfection. For four years he maintained this deadly questioning almost every week, supplementing it by direct approach to the Home Office, at first in company with Alderman Grundy and other officials of the Woolsorters' Union, and afterwards with R. F. Smith, the secretary of the Woolcombers' Union. At last, in 1910, he won. The Home Office ordered that dangerous wools must be disinfected at the Liverpool Wool Disinfecting Station before being sent to the mills. The original process of disinfection harmed somewhat the wool when it reached the stages of spinning and dyeing, but Jowett was not greatly concerned about that: his thought was of the woollen workers who would be saved from disease and death. Later, the disinfection was made harmless to the material by the discovery of a new process by the research of Dr. Eurich, the Home Office bacteriologist, in co-operation with Mr. Duckering, of the Government's Wool Disinfecting Station.

Writing in later years, Jowett paid a warm tribute to Dr. Eurich, whose name is most often associated with the conquest of the anthrax

\*May 12, 1906.

†Speech to National Union of Woolsorters. "*Bradford Daily Telegraph*," December 19, 1910.

disease in the woollen industry. But he was eager that the contribution of Dr. Bell, the Hallfield Road practitioner, should not be forgotten. "He really was the first to recognise and expose the terrible disease as an industrial disease, and he succeeded so well in protecting the wool-sorters (who were, and had been for many years, almost exclusively its victims) that it ceased altogether to be a woolsorters' disease."\* With Dr. Bell and Dr. Eurich, one other name deserves to be remembered when we think of those who helped to end anthrax in the woollen industry—the name of Jowett himself.

### *The Raising of the Load Line*

This period of Parliament is remembered mostly for the controversies which centred on the Education and Licensing Acts, Mr. Lloyd George's social legislation (culminating with the Land Taxes and the struggle with the House of Lords), and Irish Home Rule and Woman Suffrage. As we shall see, Jowett took a full share in these struggles, never failing to put a working class point of view which was distinctive; but he also gave attention to many issues which appeared to be of minor importance. He was a watchdog of the common people, looking at every legislative and administrative proposal, asking himself "How will this affect the folk in those mean streets whom I represent?" Let us look at some of these incidental issues before turning to the bigger controversies.

The raising of the Load Line on ships was one of them, for Bradford, as other towns, had its quota of boys and men who had gone to sea. As far back as 1876, as the result of the agitation of Samuel Plimsoll, the "sailors' friend," an Act of Parliament had been passed empowering the Board of Trade to detain any vessel deemed unsafe, and compelling the owners to paint a mark on every ship indicating the maximum load line. Shipping interests were powerful in the Liberal Party, and in 1907 Mr. Lloyd George and the Government obliged them by raising the load line, so as to enable more cargo to be carried. Mr. H. M. Hyndman, a leader of the Social Democratic Federation, began an agitation on this subject in the country, declaring that profits were being placed above sailors' lives, and Jowett took the attack into Parliament. A week before the Board of Trade Vote in 1913, a ship, the "North Briton," was sunk and twenty-one men and boys were drowned; at the inquiry the judge remarked that in his opinion these lives had been lost for the sake of carrying 120 tons of extra cargo. Jowett immediately drew attention to this justification of his case. "I wonder how the President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Sydney Buxton, who had succeeded Mr. Lloyd George) can sleep easily in his bed after that until the Plimsoll mark has been restored," he exclaimed.†

\*"Bradford I.L.P. News," March 3, 1939.

†"Bradford Pioneer," July 25, 1913.

It was in connection with the Load Line that Jowett introduced to Parliament for the first time the word "profiteer." In drafting a question the word came naturally to his pen, but he was doubtful about its validity. He referred to the dictionary in the Library, but the word was not there. He consulted Hardie and Snowden, and they were both of the opinion that it would not pass the Speaker's Clerk and find its way on to the Order Paper. "It did, however, to the surprise of most Members who noticed the strange word," wrote Jowett, "at which I am glad, for it is a good expressive word and I intend to use it again."\*

Largely as a result of Jowett's persistent pressure, Mr. Sydney Buxton agreed to appoint a committee to consider the regulations for loading ships, but it was manned by company representatives and Board of Trade officials, and little came of it. Jowett boiled over with anger when Mr. Buxton, in answer to his question, suggested that seamen were not fitted to deal with such questions as the safe loading of ships. "If seafaring men will stand this kind of impertinence they will stand anything," he commented sharply. "Who in the name of heaven does understand what load a ship will carry if not the man who has to navigate her in a storm? According to my information there is hardly ever a ship comes into port nowadays in rough weather, the captains and officers of which do not complain bitterly of the loss of the Plimsoll load line."†

#### *Lloyd George as the "Welsh Wizard"*

This was the period when Mr. Lloyd George was making the reputation which gained for him the title "Welsh Wizard." Industrial unrest was sweeping the country but no dispute appeared to be beyond settlement by L.G. Jowett had no high opinion of these achievements, and took the opportunity to say so frankly when a Railways Bill was introduced in 1913 to increase charges on the public in fulfilment of promises made to the companies at the conclusion of the railwaymen's strike of 1912.

"Mr. Lloyd George," Jowett told the House, "has done more to strengthen the vested interests than any Minister within my experience," and then added a characterisation which had all Parliament laughing and which was repeated with gusto in the political clubs: "He is a born hucksterer," he said. "He cannot help it, and if he ever gets to the gates of Heaven he will bargain with Peter. If he goes to the other place he will have a deal with his Satanic Majesty. It is in his nature to have a deal."‡

To do justice to both Jowett and Mr. Lloyd George, one must add a postscript illustrating the fairness of the one and the tolerance of the

\*"Bradford Pioneer," March 3, 1913.

†"Bradford Pioneer," March 28, 1913.

‡Hansard, February 14, 1913.



other. Some time later Fred was walking through the corridors of the House when he met the Minister.

"One Minister with whom I am on friendly speaking terms," he wrote, "would have sulked with me for two or three weeks after a speech like that. Not so Lloyd George. He just gave me to understand, by the merriest twinkle in his eye and an extra friendly nod, that he had read what I said of him, and passed on. It is this absence of personal bitterness from Lloyd George's temper which enables him to escape the intense hostility he would otherwise have to meet."\*

One is tempted to delay by referring to Jowett's activities on many of the secondary issues which arose during this Parliament—for example, the Children's Bill, the Prevention of Crime Bill, Town Planning, the Miners' Eight-Hour Day, the Osborne Judgment against the political levy in the Trade Unions. On all his comments were incisive, with a touch of originality which enlivened their socialist soundness. But we must pass to the major issues.

#### *Socialist View of Education Controversy*

The centre of the stage in the education controversy was occupied by the rivalry between the Church and Nonconformity to determine what type of religious teaching the children should receive and how far the State should subsidise denominational schools. Jowett had no interest in this quarrel. When he read in the newspapers that the "education question" was in a fair way to being settled, because the representatives of religious organisations were reaching agreement, he exclaimed impatiently, "What a state of mind this reveals!"

"A certain number of Churchmen have met in conference with a certain number of Nonconformists to patch up a compromise on the subject of their rival claims to instruct working men's children in their particular religious beliefs," he commented. "The vast majority of working-class parents are quite indifferent on the subject; and as for the children, they cannot understand. The most important of all questions, that which concerns the bodily and mental development of child life (without which the capacity to feel and the desire to live in the truly religious sense is stunted, if not destroyed) is lost in the faction fight between rival sects. And they have the impudence to say that their fight is for education!"

Jowett's view of education had been influenced in his youthful days by John Ruskin's "Unto This Last," and later by his close association with Margaret McMillan in Bradford. He challenged not only the emphasis given to the religious question by the churches but the emphasis on higher education given by Liberal reformers. He wanted to proceed "*from the bottom up*"; he could not become enthusiastic about Lord Haldane's plans for wider University or even Secondary education until the elementary schools, through which *all* children

\*"Bradford Pioneer," March 21, 1913.

passed, became attractive and efficient, until, above all, every child had good food, good clothes, and physical care. He repeated Margaret McMillan's suggestion that the Government grants should depend on the provision made for physical care rather than for "book-learning." By 1913 only 101 of the 317 local education authorities were feeding necessitous children under the Provision of Meals Act and a mere 56 had established school clinics. These numbers, he urged, would soon be transformed if State grants depended on the physical welfare of the pupils.

He was scathing in his criticism of the kind of education given in the elementary schools, the automatic drilling of facts and theories (both often useless) into the minds of the children, but he saw that this was inevitable so long as large classes continued. He pleaded, therefore, for classes where individual attention could be given and for the provision of more accommodation and trained teaching staff. "When the foundations of a school system have been laid and the thirst for knowledge has been implanted, higher education will be demanded," he wrote. "Then, and not until then, will it be useful or possible to deal with higher education."\*

#### *The Licensing Bill and the Socialist Alternative*

A fierce political controversy raged round the Licensing Bill of 1908, which was introduced to satisfy the strong temperance vote behind the Liberal Party. It had two main objects, the first to reduce the number of licensed houses by about one-third and to set a limit of 14 years to the period when compensation should be paid for withdrawing licenses; the second to restrict drinking facilities on Sundays, election days and so on. The Liquor Trade put up a violent opposition to the Bill; its real concern was the threat to the value of licenses, but it made its appeal to popular opposition to "pussyfoot" restrictions.

Jowett was all in favour of the State assuming the monopoly value of licenses, but held that the Government had made a mistake in associating this proposal with the second section of the Bill. His solution was the public ownership of the drink traffic and the manufacture of "pure" beer from malt and hops instead of the chemical product by which the brewery companies, in their search for profit, had corrupted the taste of the public. The Licensing Bill was rejected by the House of Lords and was made one of the counts, though not the most popular of them, in the subsequent campaign against the Peers.

#### *Beginning of Old Age Pensions*

The real significance of this Parliament, however was its inauguration of the modern social reforms with which the name of Mr. Lloyd George is associated. The first of these was the Old Age Pensions measure which was enacted in 1908, and to which reference has already

\*"Clarion," November 3, 1908.

been made. Jowett, with other Labour pioneers, had advocated pensions for the old folk for nearly twenty years, but he was shocked by the meagre provision made. The amount was 5s., and even this sum was graded by a Means Test. In the original Bill a man and wife together, if over 70, were to receive only 7s. 6d., but a Labour amendment to give each 5s. obtained so much support from back-bench Liberals that Mr. Lloyd George made one of his inevitable bargains—"I'll give you this if you won't support any more of these inconvenient Labour amendments" (the paraphrase is Jowett's).

The Means Test was severe. The full 5s. was paid only if the old people's income from other sources was not more than 8s. a week. Contributions from sons or daughters, even the cost of accommodation when living with a family, were made grounds for reducing the pension. Jowett joined his Labour colleagues in vigorously attacking the Means Test, but they got no further concession. The Tories did not like the Bill, but as a Party they dared not attack pensions in principle. One of the few Tories who had the courage to speak his mind was Mr. Chaplin, never so famous as his film-star namesake, but in some ways as picturesque and funny.

"Whilst the schedule was under consideration, Chaplin repeated a little homily on thrift to which he has treated us before on several occasions," wrote Jowett. "Chaplin on thrift is great. He is a general favourite, of course, partly because of his grand manner and his unflinching courtesy, but more than anything else he is well-known for his reckless disregard of the teachings of the thrift professors in the management of his own personal affairs. In the effort to prove that he possessed a faster racehorse than anybody else, he is said to have spent many a fortune. Yet he is now receiving a pension of £1,200 a year from the State and nobody lectures him on thrift."\*

#### *Beginning of Social Insurance*

The Unemployment and Health Insurance Act followed in 1911. When the Bill was introduced, a controversy arose in the Labour Movement regarding the contributory principle, Ramsay MacDonald leading for support and Philip Snowden for opposition. Jowett took the Snowden view, arguing that the community as a whole was responsible for unemployment and that its victims should not be required to pay a "poll tax" to make provisions against its effects.

Jowett also opposed a compulsory deduction from wages for health insurance. He had other grounds for opposing the Bill, too. He believed the administration through the Approved Societies, Insurance Committees, and hosts of officials would be wasteful. Why not direct payment of State funds for maternity homes, T.B. hospitals and other necessary services, why not direct payment of maternity expenses without inquisitorial investigations at great cost, why not a State Medical

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\*"Clarion," July 17, 1908.

Service? It is interesting that the Beveridge Report, thirty-two years later, should in many respects repeat the criticisms which Jowett voiced. Snowden, Will Thorne, James O'Grady, and George Lansbury voted with him in the "No" lobby.

### *The Marconi Scandal*

The course of the Government's social legislation was interrupted and almost brought to an end by the sensations associated with what came to be known as the Marconi Scandal. Two Ministers—Sir Rufus Isaacs and Mr. Lloyd George—had bought shares in the American Marconi Company prior to the conclusion of a Government contract with the British Company, and the Master of Elibank, the Liberal Chief Whip, had also invested Party funds. The Tories alleged not only unseemly conduct but corruption. Jowett's description of the speeches of Sir Rufus Isaacs and Mr. Lloyd George during this critical debate was vivid:

"Sir Rufus Isaacs was distinctly and obviously distressed," he wrote. "The most successful advocate in all England was pleading in his own defence—and it hurt him. His pale face was drawn and careworn. No person who was not blind with party prejudice or personal malice could look on him that day without feeling deep sympathy for him . . .

"There was, on the part of some of the attacking party, a wolfish eagerness to destroy the two Ministers. Indeed, an occasional interruption by Major Archer Shee seemed like nothing so much as the deep bay of an eager wolf in a hungry pack . . .

"There was a world of difference in the attitude of the two men towards their opponents. Sir Rufus Isaacs worked up repeatedly to certain conclusions which he put in the form of questions, to which he seemed to expect a sympathetic cheer from the other side in proof of their agreement in his point of view. But no cheer came.

"His practised eye fell on the stony stare of Lord Winterton and others equally unsympathetic and not on Jurymen under the spell of his attractive personality and matchless skill as an advocate.

"Lloyd George proceeded on other lines. He stood in the white sheet of repentance, but he took care to clank the sword of retaliation which he wore beneath."\*

Jowett's attitude was that the two Ministers had been guilty of indefensible transactions, but that the charge of corruption had been disproved. Accordingly, he abstained from voting on the Tory motion which did not acknowledge this.

### *Mr. Lloyd George's Land Taxes*

Mr. Lloyd George's land taxes of 1909 aroused opposition out of all proportion to their material value. They amounted to 4/- in the £

\*"*Bradford Pioneer*," June 2, 1913. In the biography of Viscount Reading by his son it is pointed out that the American company was not affected by the contract, that Sir Rufus Isaacs acted openly throughout, and that he actually lost £1,300 on the deal.

on the *increased* value of land resulting from public activity or the existence of minerals under the land, and ½d. in the £ on the capital value of undeveloped land. They did not, of course, satisfy Fred Jowett. He wanted not merely the "receivership of a fraction of the rent" by the public, but the public ownership of land and the "receivership of the whole rent." He advocated the purchase of land in use by a fund raised by the taxation of rent and interest, and the assumption of public ownership of land not in use without any compensation whatever. He realised, however, the propaganda value of the land taxes. "Whatever else may be said of the Lloyd George Budget, this much is clear," he wrote. "It is doing the work of Socialists."

"Both Liberals and Tories have been assisting us. The Liberals are making precedents for us. They are using our arguments in defence of these precedents. They are even adopting the socialist indictment of existing social conditions. How will this do, for instance, from the lips of the Chancellor of the Exchequer? 'Who made ten thousand people owners of the soil and the rest of us trespassers in the land of our birth? Who is it—who is responsible—for the scheme of things whereby one man is engaged through life in grinding labour to win a bare and precarious subsistence for himself.... and another man who does not toil receives more every hour of the day, every hour of the night whilst he slumbers, more than his poor neighbour receives in a whole year of toil? Where did the table of the law come from? Whose finger inscribed it?' Those are important questions, but the answer to them involves far more than Lloyd George is prepared to bring into the reckoning...."

"The Tories no less than the Liberals are rendering assistance to the cause of Socialism, for they are pointing out with merciless logic that there is no real difference between incomes derived from land and incomes derived from invested capital, which can be held generally to justify the taxation of one and not of the other."\*

Jowett listened in the House of Lords when the peers had their historic debate on the Conservative motion that the Budget should be rejected. He was in glittering company.

"I need hardly say that Lord Curzon and Lord Cawdor had a crowded and brilliant audience. All the galleries were full to overflowing. Titled ladies thronged the side galleries, some clad in ermine or other expensive skins. After dinner many of them appeared in their diamonds and plumes. Downstairs the Benches were crowded. Even the chubby-faced Lord Chancellor on the Woolsack would have looked merely as one of the crowd, if his big, full-bottomed wig had not distinguished him from those around him."†

An extremist wing of Socialists (including Victor Grayson and some of Jowett's colleagues on the *Clarion*) took the view that this was a sham

\*"Clarion," December 3, 1909.

†"Clarion," December 3, 1909.

fight. Jowett did not think so. "No one could be present without feeling that the business in hand was real. . . . It is not the Liberals the Lords are fighting. It is the growing tendency on the part of the people to force the pace that angers them, and the Lords are out to meet it. All through the debates, both in the Commons and the Lords, the burden of the complaint against the Budget has been that it is socialistic."\*

Lord Curzon gave the impression of a very superior person. "He carries his nose in the air and he struts like a pouter pigeon," wrote Jowett. "He has no fancy, this Lord Curzon, for sitting like a puppet without power." He wanted the Lords to seize the opportunity not only to claim the right to stop taxation to which they objected, but to demand an increase of powers all round. The speech of the day was that of Lord Cawdor, "steeped to the lips in aristocratic arrogance."

"His greatest score, in the estimation of his supporters, was made possible by an I.L.P. pamphlet, entitled 'A Few Hints to Mr. Lloyd George,' written by Philip Snowden. Lord Cawdor went through the contents of this pamphlet with great care, and showed that each of the main taxes included in the Budget were there recommended. . . . 'Line by line and clause by clause,' said Lord Cawdor, 'Your Lordships will find the Budget of to-day dictated and demanded, not by the Government, but of the Government by Mr. Snowden and his Party.'"

Jowett commented that Lord Cawdor knew very well that, whilst the Government had adopted the principles of some of Snowden's proposals, it had not used them as thoroughly as he wanted. The rejection of the Budget was carried by 350 votes to 75. One would like the history books of the future to include the description which Jowett gave of the scene.

"When the division was called shortly after midnight, there were many members of the House of Lords on the premises who have not seen Westminster for years. The Lord Chancellor put the question, and requested those who wished the Bill to pass to say 'Content' and the rest to say 'Not Content,' whereupon he ordered the 'Contents' to pass out 'to the right by the Throne,' the 'Non-Contents' to pass 'to the left by the Bar,' the four tellers each received from the Clerk a little ivory wand, and with these they tapped each Peer on the back as he passed and numbered him. Some there were among them who leaned heavily on sticks, others on crutches. Westminster will see them no more until some similar call is made on them. One apparently paralysed Peer was almost borne through the Lobby, and then gently placed on the Woolsack to rest awhile before being taken away."†

#### *"Down With the House of Lords"*

The rejection of the Budget by the Lords led to a Constitutional crisis followed by two general elections in 1910—the first on the issue

\*"Clarion," December 3, 1909.

†"Clarion," December 3, 1909.

of the Budget and the second on the Government's proposals to limit the powers of the House of Lords. Under these the peers could in two successive sessions reject legislation passed by the Commons, but if the popular Chamber carried the measure again in a third session it became law, irrespective of the attitude of the Lords. The Liberals won both elections and in both Fred Jowett was returned triumphantly in West Bradford. The figures on the two occasions were: January, 1910, F. W. Jowett, 8,880; Sir Ernest Flower (Con.), 4,461. December, 1910, F. W. Jowett, 7,729; Sir Ernest Flower, 4,339.

Jowett's attitude on the House of Lords issue went further than the usual Labour attitude. He shared the view of his colleagues that the Upper House should be abolished entirely and that a single chamber elected democratically was enough, but he held that the case against a second revising House would be immeasurably stronger if the procedure of the Commons were amended to allow a proper consideration of legislation and if the referendum were introduced on important issues.

"Two admissions of great importance must be made by any close observer of our present Parliamentary system," he wrote. "One is that no important Bill passed by the House of Commons can be said to be the work of the House of Commons, or to represent the opinion of its members. The House of Commons has become little more than a register of the Government of the day, which, with the assistance of the closure, and certain rules which govern House of Commons procedure, forces important decisions through without deliberation and without opportunity for amendment. So long as this state of affairs continues, there will always be an excuse for the existence of a Second Chamber.

"The second admission which must be made is that some protection is necessary against laws being passed against the wishes of the people by a House of Commons which legislates under prejudice or misapprehension. No form of Second Chamber will meet this necessity, because, whether it is based on the hereditary principle or on any method of selection, it will but aggravate present defects. Only a system of referendum, which, for general convenience, might be confined to the more important legislative proposals, will meet the necessities of the case. But the time for that is not yet. The first thing to be done is to reform the House of Commons."\*

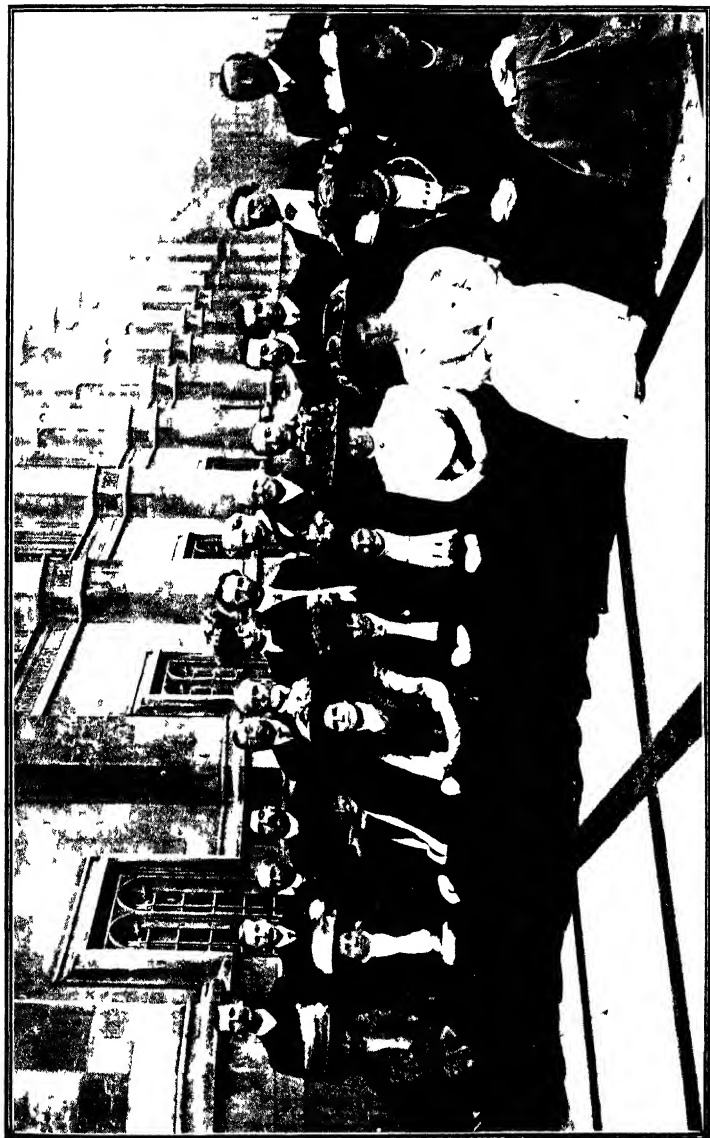
Jowett's proposal for the reform of the Commons was, as described in our last chapter, the division of its members into Committees watching the administration and initiating, examining and revising the legislation of each Department of State.

#### *Home Rule for Ireland*

All through this Parliament the issue of Home Rule for Ireland loomed big in the background. The Nationalists were eighty strong

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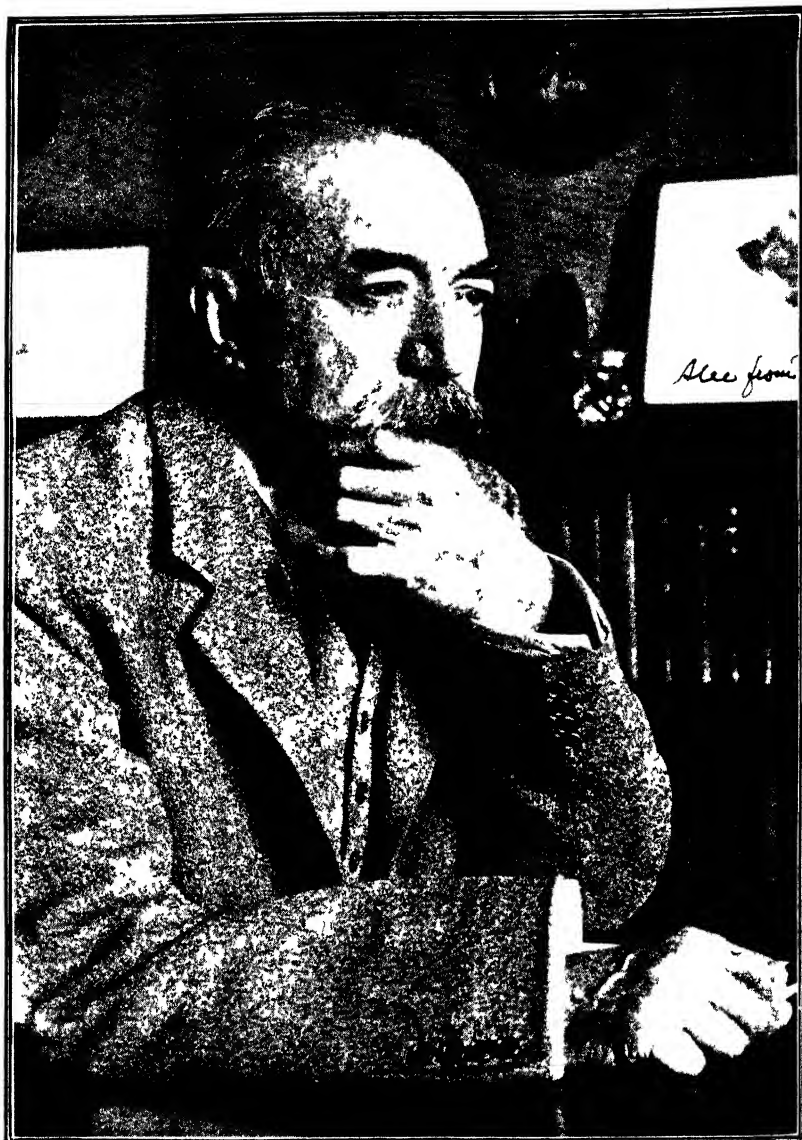
\*"Clarion," December 4, 1908.



MEMBERS OF THE FIRST PARLIAMENTARY LABOUR PARTY AND THEIR WIVES

*This photograph, taken on the terrace of the House of Commons, - as of a group which visited Germany in 1909*  
*Upper row* A. Peter J. S. Middelton G. J. Wardle M.P. W. Crooks M.P. J. Hodge M.P. I. H. Stead Mr. Appleton  
 W. A. Appleton J. Ramsay MacDonald M.P. A. H. Gill M.P. C. H. Roberts M.P. J. W. I. wear M.P. Mr. Wardle junr  
*Lower row* Mrs. Peters Mrs. Dawney Mrs. Crooks Mrs. Middelton Mrs. MacDonald Mrs. Henderson Mrs. Lowett  
 Miss Hodge Mrs. Mosses Mrs. Duncan





ROBERT BLATCHFORD, EDITOR OF THE "CLARION"

*Fred Jowett was a member of the team of writers who made the "Clarion" famous. He regarded Blatchford as one of the six great men he knew.*

and their vote was important. It was given consistently to the Government because the Liberal Party was pledged to enact Home Rule, but, pending the introduction of the Bill, the Nationalists used their strong position to wring repeated monetary concessions for various Irish interests, particularly the landlords. An incidental reason why Jowett supported Home Rule was his conviction that "the landlords of Ireland could not have been so richly endowed with public money by an Irish Parliament."\* The electors would have been too alert.

The Irish had able representatives in the House, men of strong and sometimes picturesque personality—John Redmond, John Dillon, Swift McNeill, Tim Healy, and others. Tim Healy, a critic of Redmond's servility to the Government, particularly interested Jowett. Healy took no interest in anything which came before Parliament unless it was related to Ireland or the Catholic religion. He would be absent for months, but whenever he appeared he was the centre of attention, and whenever he spoke his lashing tongue filled the Chamber. In the old Parnellite Land League days, Jowett remarked, Healy was said to crack jokes and enjoy a good laugh with his friends.

"But it is difficult in these days to believe that he ever did laugh, as one sees him with his silk hat tilted almost over his eyes, looking with a stony stare across at the Treasury Bench, ready to utter a gruff but pointed interjection if need be, or listening with almost stolid indifference to other men's speeches. He never laughs now."

When the Home Rule Bill was introduced it created a Constitutional crisis which went further even than the issue of the House of Lords. It was met by the threat of civil war in Ireland. Lord Carson and Sir F. E. Smith called on Ulster to resist and General Gough even attempted to incite mutiny among the military forces stationed at The Curragh. Jowett was scathing in his denunciation of the Tories, "the gentlemanly party, who worship at the shrine of the Constitution and whose ritual is Law and Order," for their encouragement of rebellion.†

#### *Votes for Women*

Into the midst of all these controversies an issue burst which ousted them all from public attention. Despite a divided Government and a divided Opposition, Woman Suffrage came to occupy the centre of the political stage.

"Votes for Women!" wrote Jowett in January, 1913. "What is there in the political proposition embodied in these words to account for their astonishing effect? Home Rule and every other subject of party strife is, so far as public interest is concerned, pushed into the background. The House of Lords, where the

\*"Clarion," December 4, 1908.

†This crisis was ended abruptly by the declaration of war in August, 1914, when the rebels and the Nationalists united in defence of Britain.

Home Rule Bill is this week being cursed by bell, book and candle, is attracting little attention at the moment.”\*

How did this come about? Jowett had no doubt. “One regrets to have to say it,” he wrote on the same occasion, “but it is the fact that the attacks on property by militant suffragettes and the breakdown of prison discipline by the hunger strike have driven Ministers and ex-Ministers to find a way of giving the women a clear field for their Bill. . . . Defiance of the law has done what reason and argument would have failed to accomplish.” Fred Jowett, like nearly all Members of Parliament, including even Keir Hardie, who defended their campaign to the very end, was attacked by the militants because he refused to vote against the Government on every occasion until their claim was enacted; but he supported their demand whenever opportunity arose and was among the M.P.s who protested vigorously against their treatment and who opposed the “Cat-and-Mouse” Bill.

The militant agitation began as early as 1908. In April of that year a Private Member’s Bill, introduced by Mr. Dickinson, had been carried by a large majority, but the Premier, Mr. Asquith, was opposed to woman suffrage and the Government refused to give the measure facilities. The women decided in October to march to the House with a petition, despite the law prohibiting this. Let Jowett describe what happened.

“After listening to more discussion about cigarettes, etc. (the Children’s Bill was being debated) the centre of interest for me moved in the streets outside, where angry crowds were surging against an army of police such as I have never seen drawn up for action before.

“Twice I moved beyond the police outposts, and each time found some difficulty in returning. Not wearing the recognised tile of respectability (top hat or other attributes commonly associated with membership of the House of Commons) the policeman required proof of my identity at each stage.

“I followed close on the mounted men as they cleared the streets, and marvelled greatly at the intelligence of the horses as they trod heavily in the midst of the people and yet, so far as I could see, hurt none.

“The crowd itself was a strange mixture. There were elements in it of every conceivable kind. To a very large number the object was not in any way connected with votes for women or the right to work.† A novel variety of fun or the prospect of mischief was plainly the attraction for many, whilst others were there in angry protest against the established order of things without knowing why or wherefor.

“The angry roar of this last-named section when the police showed signs of objectionable activity thrilled me, and I could not

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\*“Clarion,” January 31, 1913.

†There was a simultaneous unemployed demonstration.

think of leaving such a scene of life and motion to return to the small talk of Sir Frederick Banbury and his friends . . .

"Before me the crowd and the police at bay, a huge cleared space, a cordon of police—then another cleared space around the big building within which the Speaker, in wig and gown, presided over a respectable assembly engaged in devising new punishments for the small affairs of life."\*

Large numbers of women were imprisoned for such demonstrations outside the House, for breaking the windows of 10, Downing Street, and Government offices, and, later, for burning down whole buildings. The prison authorities were faced with a problem when the women refused to eat food. Jowett saw their difficulty—if the hunger strike became a key to open prison doors, other prisoners might adopt it. Nevertheless, he was horrified by the treatment the women received, and shocked perhaps still more by the manner in which Members of Parliament heard of their sufferings. This is what he wrote when Keir Hardie raised the question in June, 1912:

"He described the horrible process of forcible feeding, and there were many present who jeered and laughed. His reminder that one suffragist prisoner, a man, had gone mad whilst undergoing the treatment was also met with laughter . . .

"A description of the attempt by the prison medical officer to feed through the nostrils a woman whose fractured nose made the process impossible, was met with the cry of 'Blackleg!'—a fatuous remark . . . Three times on one day, and four times the following day, was this degrading process forced on the woman before its uselessness was admitted . . .

"What is difficult—indeed, to most of us impossible—is to understand the frame of mind of men who pretend to be well educated and in full possession of their senses, who can laugh, or treat lightly, the awful and brutal process of feeding women by force when it is described to them in all its repulsive nakedness."†

To meet the problem, Mr. McKenna, the Home Secretary, introduced the "Cat-and-Mouse" Bill, under which he was empowered to release a woman from prison when she became weak through hunger striking and forcible feeding and to imprison her again when she had recovered. As soon as it became clear that forcible feeding would be renewed when the hunger-striker was re-imprisoned, Jowett had no doubt what he should do. "That settles my attitude," he exclaimed. "Henceforward I shall have no hesitation in voting against the Bill at every stage."‡

So strong was the pressure of the woman suffrage agitation that the Government was compelled to concede that there should be a "free vote" on a woman suffrage amendment to a Bill it had introduced

\*"Clarion," October 23, 1908.

†"Clarion," June 28, 1912.

‡"Bradford Pioneer," May 2, 1913.

to extend the franchise to more men and, when the Speaker ruled the amendment out of order, to agree to provide facilities for a separate Bill should it be carried on Second Reading. Fred Jowett regarded this as a great victory not only for the women but for his own principle that votes should be given in the House on the strict merits of the issue and that the fate of a Government should depend only on votes of censure.

"I affirm with the utmost confidence," he wrote, "that the women by removing the dead hand of the Cabinet vote in this one case, have set a precedent which, if it were followed up and became the practice regarding all-important questions on which Cabinets refused to act, would revolutionise Parliamentary procedure."

Alas, the women did not get their vote nor was a new Parliamentary practice established by this Bill. When it came before the House in May, 1913, it was defeated by a larger majority than was expected and, this difficult issue temporarily out of the way, Parliament and the Cabinet returned to its customary procedure. The women's agitation went on, but it was realised that the hope of success had gone until the general election gave an opportunity to change the representation in the House of Commons. Recognising this the non-militant suffragists decided to support Labour Party candidatures because Labour was the only party which unitedly supported votes for women.

These calculations, however, were overwhelmed by the outbreak of the war in August, 1914. Often the claims of women had been advocated on the ground that their votes would make for peace. History has the habit of irony, and it was women's service to the war which led finally to their enfranchisement in 1918.

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Such was Parliament during Fred Jowett's first period of membership, but it was only a part of his life. He was actively concerned in the development of the Labour Party and the I.L.P., and was at the centre of the controversies about policy which raged within these Parties during these formative years. Much of his thought was given to his journalistic work for the *Clarion*, from which arose a difference with his Editor, Robert Blatchford, on issues which still occupy the centre of the political stage. To these we must turn before embarking on the stormy period of the First World War.

## CHAPTER V

## POLICY DIFFERENCES EMERGE

THE emergence of the Labour Party as a Parliamentary force inevitably raised controversies about policy. Before 1906 the Socialist Movement had been largely missionary, preaching Socialism as a new way of life and as a new hope for poverty-stricken workers. After 1906 the Movement had to adapt itself to immediate issues, administrative and legislative, and to tactical considerations in relation to other Parties. The reconciliation of this new task with its idealistic purpose was not an easy adjustment.

A number of Socialists, including Robert Blatchford, were not prepared to accept the restrictions involved in the alliance with non-socialist Trade Unionists in the Labour Party, holding that the supreme necessity was still socialist education and that all possible occasions, and not least by-elections, should be seized for propaganda irrespective of their reaction on the Parliamentary situation. This difference of view came to a head when the Labour Party Executive, with the support of the National Council of the I.L.P., declined to endorse candidatures at Colne Valley, Pudsey, Dundee and Newcastle.

The Colne Valley difficulty was partly political, partly personal. The local Socialist Clubs, which were affiliated to the I.L.P., nominated Victor Grayson, then a young theological student, as their candidate, and ran him as a "straight Socialist" uncommitted to the Labour Party. Despite absence of endorsement by I.L.P. and Labour Party headquarters, Grayson won.\* At Pudsey, Dundee and Newcastle endorsements were not given because it was held that the effect of contests would be bad on the fortunes of the Labour Party. Pudsey was regarded as an unfavourable constituency; the main consideration at Dundee and Newcastle was the fact that they were two-membered constituencies, where the Labour Party already had one member. To claim both seats would have invited retaliation and the probable defeat at the General Election of twelve Labour Members who shared constituencies with Liberals.

Although Jowett had taken a strong line against any compromise with the Liberal Party at Bradford, he supported the attitude of the Labour Executive as a matter of common-sense strategy in the developing situation of the Party.

"Is there to be any attention paid to fighting tactics?" he asked. "If not, then there is no option but to make it known that at the next General Election two candidates will be run in every two-member constituency contested by Labour, and, in the opinion

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\*At the I.L.P. Conference, Huddersfield, 1908. Grayson agreed to join the Parliamentary Labour Party.

of almost every old campaigner, in the whole of the twelve constituencies where we now have one member, there will be none after the next General Election.

"But that is not all, for the result will be so overwhelmingly adverse—once more expressing the opinion of the old campaigner—that in each constituency a feeling of hopelessness will result, which will continue for years, and out of the slough of which it will be wellnigh impossible to raise the necessary enthusiasm to ensure success for a long time to come. Big Trade Unions who are now beginning to put their trust in the ballot box will lose their representatives, and they, too, will lose hope."\*

*Blatchford and Jowett Debate Socialist Tactics*

Robert Blatchford, editor, and Fred Jowett, contributor, debated this issue in the *Clarion*. Blatchford wrote with his usual simple directness: he was a socialist evangelist rather than a politician. Their controversy arose from the Newcastle contest, where E. R. Hartley, who had figured earlier on the Bradford scene, stood as a Socialist. Wrote Blatchford:

"From Jowett's point of view Hartley's candidature was a blunder. Of course. We did not get our man in; and when a General Election takes place it may show that we have pushed a Labour man out. But from our point of view Hartley's candidature was fully justified.

"We want elections fought on socialist issues, and we have made it clear to the Labour Party that they must not expect to include us in any compromise they deem it expedient to make. We want to force a fight with the Liberals and Tories on one side and the Socialists on the other.... We want the message of Socialism carried to the people....

The *Clarion* Editor attacked the principle of the Socialist-Trade Union alliance:

"Jowett has a shrewd and level head. He is clever, honest, modest; and he believes the Labour Alliance to be the best thing possible for democracy. I do not agree with him. I grudge him and other good men to that policy. I feel that these men have weakened the cause by the Alliance. I feel that they have lowered the ideal and hauled down the Socialist Flag. I believe that if the best of them came out and threw themselves into the straight and glorious fight for Socialism, and against all our enemies, Liberal as well as Tory, they would do more for the uplifting of the masses than the Labour Alliance can ever do."

In a characteristic passage Blatchford appealed personally to Jowett:

"Do you know what is the matter with the Labour Party, friend Jowett? It has lost its enthusiasm. It has grown too polite. The men who used to go about feverishly preaching the new crusade have been disciplined and sophisticated until the fire has died out of their hearts and the light out of their eyes. The canker of Parliament has affected them.

"In the old days they loved their friends and attacked their enemies and never counted costs or chances. Now they are diplomatic and dull. They study expediency. Imagine Jesus acting expediently between the Pharisees and the Publicans! Oh, Fred, old friend, less politics and more

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\*"Clarion," October 2, 1908.

purpose! Think less of mere elections and more of the unhappy and the poor. You cannot save John Smith by being like John Smith, but only by making him like you.\*\*

This appeal to Jowett followed an article in which he had set out painstakingly the case for the Socialist-Trade Union alliance. The issue is one of controversy to this day and Jowett's case is worth quoting at some length. In essence he was pleading for political organisation on the basis of the class struggle:

"The one main problem is to find how we may organise *all those who work* in deadly opposition to *those who live by letting them work*," he began. "It is the problem of getting the main army thus organised to march together and the entire forces to act effectively. This does not mean that there may not be scouting parties or that there is to be no advance guard. It only means that the whole of the forces must act in concert . . .

"In a word, we must manoeuvre the forces into position. Our army is still a motley one. Some of the rank and file wish to get on at the double; others to march slowly; many have scarcely yet acquired the goose step. Yet all are needed. The impetuous ones cannot conquer alone. But if they could it would be impossible for them to retain the fruits of their conquest. It must be a general movement. Concerted action is an absolute necessity . . .

"Let us cast our eye over the forces which must co-operate if we are to be successful. We wish to fight the capitalist system—with votes. Where are we to get them? Of the total number of votes in use, probably not less than one-third may be reckoned as hostile because they are possessed by the master class, its hangers-on, and its dependents. Some few of the members of these generally hostile sections of the community have become possessed of the socialist mind . . . but our strength must come from the labouring and artisan sections of the people—the workers in mine, field, and factory. The votes with which we hope to smite our oppressors must be drawn from the two-thirds . . .

"How are we to get them? . . . At present we hold in alliance the bulk of the members of Trade Unions, and the unknown but growing body of convinced Socialists attached and unattached. These are augmented from time to time during election contests by discontented but unconvinced wage workers, but the remainder of the population from which we must gain our fighting strength is still slavishly indifferent, or in a state of active or passive opposition . . .

"Simple, practical issues alone can touch this mass of men and women. It is a mass composed of individuals who have not read Marx's 'Theory of Values,' or Gronlund's 'Co-operative Commonwealth,' and to whom the very name of Kautsky looks forbidding. Association, fellowship for the more immediately obtainable things, they can understand, but the more remote objective of Socialism scarcely affects them.

"The give-and-take methods of the present Socialist and Trade

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\*\* "Clarion," October 9, 1908.



Union alliance are admirably suited for bringing this element of the population into the fighting line on our side, and those who jeopardise it take a serious responsibility upon themselves.”\*

This view was generally accepted in the I.L.P., but not so much by *Clarion* readers, who, except for organisation in the Cycle Scouts, tended to be free-lance Socialists.

### *The Victor Grayson Controversy*

Victor Grayson was a difficulty to the Labour and I.L.P. leadership, not only in his election to Parliament but in his conduct there. Not long after his election he startled his colleagues (though, one must in honesty say, thrilled the younger membership of the I.L.P.) by making a scene in the House on the subject of unemployment, carrying it to the point of suspension by the Speaker. The author remembers turning eagerly to Jowett's article in the *Clarion* that week and how disappointed he was to find a forthright criticism of Grayson. But even then one had to admit that Fred had built up a strong case. Let us see what it was.

When Parliament adjourned in July, 1908, the Government intimated that it would require the full time of the House on resumption for the remaining stages of the Licensing Bill. For the official Opposition Mr. Balfour gained the concession that, if it desired to challenge the Government on any issue, a day would be provided. Jowett attempted to gain the same concession for the Labour Party, but failed. By the time the House met again in October unemployment had become worse and the Labour Party pressed for an indication of the Government's proposals. Mr. Asquith promised a statement within a few days, and the Labour Party agreed to await it before taking further action. Jowett complained that Grayson took no part in this pressure and that he failed to inform the Party of his intention to protest.

“I do not believe that Grayson had sought information from any member of the Party as to what was being done,” wrote Jowett. “He took nobody into confidence, so far as I am aware, as to his own intentions. He decided for himself and carried out his own decision, yet he pretended to expect that others would act with him, and when his pretended expectations were not realised he turned and abused men whose judgment he had never consulted.

“As to this course of action I desire to say calmly and deliberately that . . . it is studiously offensive to men who are as honest as he is. Men are now described as traitors by Victor Grayson who undertook the task of founding a Socialist Movement at a time when the chilling frost of almost universal indifference was far harder to bear than are the violent alternations between the excitement of hostility and the enthusiasm of fellowship in which Victor Grayson now lives and moves.”

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\**Clarion*, October 2, 1908.

Jowett's own characteristics of loyalty to colleagues and quiet thoroughness clashed sharply with Grayson's spectacular individualism. In all Fred's writing the author has not found severer criticism of a fellow-Socialist than this:

"We must recognise that the man who can make a crowd shout is not necessarily an organiser of men. The gift of platform oratory, skill in making striking phrases, is a dangerous one. It is the man behind that matters. If his skill is employed in setting, not class against class, but men of the same class against their kith and kin, sewing seeds of distrust and hatred where the love of a common cause should produce the fellowship of kindred spirits, it were better if he had no such skill.

"In my long experience of public bodies . . . I have never met a public representative who refused to co-operate with colleagues elected under the same flag who did not prove to be a dangerous and useless instrument in democratic warfare. I have met many such who could play upon public meetings, apparently with great success, but beyond making a personal following of their own there has been nothing left but bickering and animosity."

Jowett emphasised that he had no objection to scenes; he had made many himself and, "notwithstanding the editor's expressed opinion that we have changed our tempers in recent years," had no doubt that he would help to make many more. But he had a contempt for pre-meditated and staged scenes. He dismissed the incident with this final phrase: "To neglect one's duty and then expect to make up for lost time by theatrical display carefully announced beforehand may be magnificent, but it is not war."\*

#### *Labour Becomes a Junior Partner of the Liberals*

It must not be assumed from Jowett's championship of the Socialist-Trade Union alliance, his defence of the electoral policy of the Labour Executive, and his denunciation of Victor Grayson that he had become a "yes-man" to the leadership. On the contrary, he was a continuous critic of the official policy from the moment when its guiding purpose became the maintenance of the Liberal Government in power. The core of his case against Parliamentary procedure was involved here and he was outspoken in voicing it.

As indicated earlier, Jowett urged that Members of Parliament should vote on the merits of issues and not confuse them with the fate of the Government. He wanted the Labour Party to do this openly, believing it would undermine the bureaucratic power of the Cabinet and contribute to the democratisation of Parliament.

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\*"Clarion," October 23, 1908. Jowett told a story of Grayson which is revealing. Grayson had wanted to raise some matter in the House. At eleven o'clock Jowett, sitting next to him, urged "Now's your chance to get in, Victor." "Look up there," replied Grayson, pointing to the empty Press gallery. "Tim Healy didn't make his reputation that way," commented Jowett. "He said what he had to say—and the Press came to report him."

When Mr. Lloyd George succeeded in manœuvring the Labour Party into a junior partnership with the Liberal Party, making the Land Taxes, the Lords' Veto and the retention of the Liberal Government in office more important in the minds of Labour Members than the Right to Work or the abolition of the taxes on food, compromise became inevitable. During the Budget debate in 1909 the Party tabled an amendment to reduce the Tea Duty, but the leaders withdrew it when they found it was likely to be carried with the aid of the Conservatives! Similarly, the Party refrained in 1910 from proposing an Unemployment Amendment to the Address because it was feared the Conservatives would vote for it. Jowett opposed this policy within the Parliamentary Party and criticised it in speeches and articles on every possible occasion.

Keir Hardie and Philip Snowden were also critics of the Parliamentary Party's policy. As early as 1909 Snowden remarked that "it would be difficult for the observer to find from the attitude of the Parliamentary Labour Party wherein its position on questions of taxation differs from that of the Liberal Party."\* At the I.L.P. Annual Conference in 1910 Hardie was scathing. "At the present time the Labour Party has almost ceased to count," he said. "The press ignores it. Cabinet Ministers make concessions to the Tory Party and the Irish, seemingly oblivious to the fact that there is a Labour Party in the House." But neither Hardie nor Snowden maintained the criticism with the persistence of Jowett or pressed it to his logical conclusions. From this time onwards the issue of "voting on merits" became his dominant concern within the Movement.

Jowett was elected to the chairmanship of the I.L.P. in 1909 and he devoted his presidential address the following year to the subject of Parliamentary procedure and policy. He saw the issue in the terms, not merely of socialist independence, but of democratic government:

"I believe that the Party which sets itself to establish the authority of the elected representatives of the people as against the successive Juntas of which Cabinets are composed," he said, "will do a great service to the country and increase the respect of the public for Parliamentary government.

"The ordinary wayfaring man cannot understand why a Member of Parliament should not vote for the things he has advocated merely because such a vote would be considered as a vote of censure on the Government of the day.

"Moreover, the present system lends itself to the perpetuation of miserable frauds on the public by succeeding parties in turn, as they each become the recognised official Opposition.

*"All this jiggery pokery of Party Government, played like a game for ascendancy and power, is no use to us.*

"It is, I respectfully submit, for us to state in the clearest possible manner what we stand for and vote steadily on the merits of the

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\*"Christian Commonwealth," November 3, 1909.

questions before us, regardless of consequences, rather than barter our support for some promised measure, which may or may not realise our expectations when it is produced."

Jowett's main opponent on this issue was Ramsay MacDonald, who devoted part of his book, "Socialism and Government," to a defence of the Cabinet system, arguing that it must have directing and determining authority and that Members of Parliament should give it support on its major policy rather than emphasise incidental differences. MacDonald also defended the policy of the Labour Party as a matter of expediency. He argued that if the Government were defeated through pressing amendments to the vote, the Party would not be able to raise the money to fight the subsequent general election. This argument was negatived by experience. A second general election came in 1910, despite all the caution of the Labour leadership, and the Party proved itself capable of raising the necessary money.

The relationship of the Labour Party to the Government was raised sharply immediately after the election. The Liberals had gone to the country on the issue of the Lords' Veto and their claim that the Peers had no right to reject Finance Bills was emphatically endorsed by the electorate. It was generally expected that the Government would immediately introduce legislation limiting the Lords' powers, but, instead, it reintroduced the Budget. At this time George Barnes was the chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party. He was a moderate, but he protested publicly against the Government's tactics towards the Lords, announcing that the Labour Party would not accept the Premier's procedure. The effect was electrical: for the first time Labour gained the initiative in the struggle against the Upper House. Then came an anti-climax. Let Keir Hardie describe what happened:

"When it became evident that the Government was funkng the issue with the Peers, Mr. Barnes issued a manifesto which rivetted the attention of the country on the Party and made it a factor of prime importance in the situation. But all the good effect of this was more than lost—first by disclaimers in the Press from Mr. Barnes's colleagues and then by the Party throwing over the policy of the Chairman."\*

#### *The "Green Manifesto" Controversy*

As can be imagined, these developments gave rise to fierce criticism within the I.L.P. The dissentients included supporters of Victor Grayson, but beyond them there was bitter opposition to the sacrifice of the independence of the Party. At the Edinburgh I.L.P. Conference in 1909 the Graysonites carried a resolution leading to the temporary resignation of the "Big Five"—Hardie, MacDonald, Snowden, Bruce Glasier and T. D. Benson (the treasurer). At this conference Jowett was elected chairman of the Party, and it was during his year of office

\*Speech at 1910 I.L.P. Conference.

that the anger against the Labour Party's subservience to the Government burst into flame. This time the revolt came from not the rank and file but a rebel quartet on the National Council. They published a pamphlet under the title "Let Us Reform the Labour Party," a somewhat crude production, with old-fashioned type and a flaring green cover; but its contents were dynamite. The "Green Manifesto," as it was everywhere called, became the centre of a storm of controversy.

The body of the pamphlet was written by J. M. McLachlan, the Lancashire representative on the National Council, a Manchester Councillor, a master of cold, logical statement in speech and writing. The introduction was by Leonard Hall, the Midlands representative, a hatchet-faced fighter whose speech and writing were far from cold. C. T. Douthwaite, from Cheshire, and the Rev. J. H. Belcher, from the South-Western Counties, added brief notes of endorsement.

The pamphlet caused heated feeling, not only by its contents but by its method of publication. Members of the Council were outraged that four of their colleagues should have fired this broadside without consultation; Hardie and Snowden, who must have agreed with a part of its contents at least, were as indignant as MacDonald. The position of Jowett, as Chairman, was difficult. He had nothing to do with the publication, but it stated his case, quoting extensively from him and urging as a solution his constructive proposals for "voting on merits" and a committee system of government. However much Jowett might dissociate himself from many of the expressions used (and the writing, particularly of Leonard Hall, was at times vicious), it was inevitable that the attack on the authors should extend in its reactions to him.

Jowett must have felt himself isolated on the Council, which was manned by strong personalities. Ramsay MacDonald was supported in his political opposition by T. D. Benson, the Party treasurer, a Manchester estate agent, quiet but influential, and by W. C. Anderson, the rising star of the Party, a brilliant orator, engaging, level-headed and cautious. Hardie and Snowden were opposed to MacDonald's tenderness towards the Government but they were not adherents of Jowett's alternative and were as denunciatory of the behaviour of the "rebels" as their more moderate colleagues. Bruce Glasier, poet and philosopher rather than politician, was loyal both to MacDonald and Hardie and was shocked ethically by the conduct of the pamphleteers. Jowett could identify himself with neither of the camps into which the Council divided and was conscious of some estrangement from old comrades.

It was the custom for the chairmen of the I.L.P. to remain in office for three years, but Jowett made way for W. C. Anderson after the 1910 conference. There is no doubt that the "Green Manifesto" controversy contributed to this change, but the immediate reason was on a minor point. When Jowett transferred his Parliamentary article from the *Clarion* to the *Labour Leader* (for reasons yet to be described),

T. D. Benson and W. C. Anderson objected to regular contributions appearing from the Chairman in the Party organ on the ground that the views expressed were not necessarily those of the Party. Jowett was concerned to retain his liberty to write what he thought, and he resigned the chairmanship rather than forego the opportunity which the weekly article gave.

This year, 1911, cannot have begun encouragingly for Jowett. He had lost his far-reaching platform in the *Clarion* and the warm companionship of its staff; he had lost his chairmanship of the I.L.P. and had become somewhat isolated from his colleagues; the Labour Party, which he had done so much to build, was compromising its independence, the first reason for its existence, and, as we shall see, the fear of impending war was clouding his mind. Yet he did not falter or flag; he had confidence in his views and he continued to advocate them with unremitting zeal.

Jowett's refusal to toe the official Party line brought him into sharp conflict with Ramsay MacDonald in Parliament as well as on the I.L.P. National Council. MacDonald had succeeded George Barnes as leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party in 1911\* and he found Jowett's practice of voting according to the merits of every issue difficult to tolerate. MacDonald threatened disciplinary action and took the unusual course of writing a personal letter to two of Fred's leading supporters in Bradford—William Leach and Fred Pickles. This letter charged Jowett with going behind the Whips to get instructions from other members of the Party (George Lansbury was named), and even from outside the Party. It suggested that there were occasions when Jowett was relieved that the Party had decided to back the Government, but, nevertheless, courted popularity by voting the other way. He concluded by saying that Jowett and one or two others would either have to mend their ways or their position in the Party, or his own, as chairman, would have to be reconsidered.

MacDonald showed the letter to Jowett; his indignation about the charges can be imagined. When he went to his lodgings that night he wrote MacDonald an angry protest, but next morning he thought better of it and the letter was never posted, though it remained with his papers. Jowett told MacDonald that he would have no objection to representations officially made to the Bradford Party, but he resented the sending of private letters which misrepresented his conduct and impugned his motives. Fortunately, MacDonald entirely failed to shake Bradford confidence in Fred. Leach was then an enthusiastic supporter of the policy of "voting on merits" and conveyed to MacDonald Jowett's repudiation of the charges made. As for Fred Pickles, he told MacDonald bluntly that he thought the writing of private letters on such matters was manifestly unfair and that he

\*Arthur Henderson succeeded Keir Hardie as leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party in 1908. G. N. Barnes was elected leader in 1910.

wanted to receive no more of them. The personal controversy blew over, but Fred had been shocked and hurt. The wound did not heal easily.

### *Jowett's Victory on the "Bradford Resolution"*

Fred concentrated his efforts within the I.L.P. to win support for his proposals for changing Parliamentary procedure. It was at the 1912 conference at Merthyr that the famous "Bradford Resolution" first appeared on the agenda: to be strictly accurate, two Bradford resolutions, both moved by Jowett, were discussed—the first requesting the Labour Party "to vote steadfastly on the merits of the questions brought before them," the second declaring for the appointment of Standing Committees representing all Parties to control the various Departments of State. Philip Snowden described the major debate on the first of these resolutions as the best he had ever heard at a conference. Jowett had the support of George Lansbury, McLachlan and the veteran Joe Burgess, but Hardie and Snowden were in the strong team which opposed, and the resolution was defeated by 195 votes to 73. Hardie argued that the real trouble was not the principle on which votes were given, but the retention of Liberal beliefs by some of the Trade Union members who had joined the Labour Party. Snowden said that his fighting instinct inclined him to support the resolution, but he argued that the merits on which a vote was given could not always be confined to the particular question before the House.

Somewhat surprisingly, after the heavy defeat of the first resolution, the resolution favourable to the Committee System was carried by an overwhelming majority, despite a plea for further consideration by Mary Macarthur, the respected pioneer of the women's Trade Union Movement and wife of W. C. Anderson.

The next contest of strength on the "merits" issue came at the Coming-of-Age Conference of the Party in 1914, which, appropriately, was held at Bradford. The circumstances were favourable. Previous to the debate on the "Bradford Resolution" there was a secret session at which a very frank discussion of Labour Party policy took place, including a breathtaking speech by Philip Snowden, who described how on a number of occasions the Executive of the Parliamentary Party had decided not to table or vote on issues of importance because they feared the consequences upon the Government. A proposal for an electoral alliance with the Liberal Party was being canvassed, and, despite denials, the debate gave the impression that Ramsay MacDonald was favourable to it. These revelations left the delegates in the mood to endorse a policy which would be a safeguard against any desertion of working-class demands and of the independence of the Party.

The debate and decision of this conference certainly represented a

milestone in Jowett's life and we, therefore, reproduce the resolution in full:

"That Cabinet rule, which involves the suppression of the rights of the private Member to any adequate voice in the policy of his Party, and which implies the resignation of the Ministry and the dissolution of Parliament when proposals of the Cabinet are negatived, besides making almost impossible the free consideration of proposals which have not received the Cabinet hall-mark, is inimical to the good government of the country; that, with a view to the ultimate break-up of this system, the Parliamentary Labour Party be asked to take no account of any such considerations and to vote on all issues only in accordance with the principles for which the Party stands."

The mover on this occasion was William Leach and the seconder Councillor J. H. Palin. The leading opponents were W. C. Anderson and R. C. Wallhead, the most popular propagandist in the Party. Jowett concluded the debate with a speech so earnest, so reasoned, and so moving in its conclusion that the delegates, both supporters and opponents, gave him an ovation. "Are we to be deprived of the right to register a solemn censure on one question because of a bigger question for which the Government stands?" he asked. "If so, in my judgment neither in your day nor in mine shall we be free of some great political question which will keep us bond-slaves. I, for one, refuse to be a bond-slave. I will be free."

The resolution was carried by a three to one majority—233 to 78. It is probably true that many of the delegates voted not so much for the full content of the resolution as to demonstrate that in their view working-class issues were of greater merit than the fate of the Government; but, even so, the adoption of the resolution, and by so large a majority, was a great triumph for Fred Jowett and a just reward for the long years he had spent in patiently stating his case and in meeting the objections of his influential opponents.

At this same conference Jowett was re-elected Chairman of the Party. He had recovered completely from the set-back of 1910.



## CHAPTER VI

## MOVING TOWARDS WAR

FRED JOWETT'S association with the *Clarion* ended because of differences of view between him and Robert Blatchford on the policy which should be pursued in view of the threatening war. Jowett and Blatchford were among the first to warn the people of the danger of war but they urged diametrically opposite policies. Blatchford demanded larger armies and navies. Jowett demanded an end of secret diplomacy so that the people should have the opportunity to avert the disaster.

Jowett's membership of the *Clarion* staff was one of the happiest experiences of his life. One would not expect this cautious, reserved Yorkshireman to fit naturally into the light-hearted, adventurous fellowship of the remarkable group of journalists who ran the *Clarion*, but they had simple human qualities, belief in the goodness of ordinary men and women, generosity, tolerance, a genuine enthusiasm for Socialism, and Jowett responded warmly to them. It is clear that they also had an affection for Fred, understanding his selfless devotion to the cause of the people, his kindness, his honesty. So we see them grouped in one of the famous old inns of Fleet Street, exchanging opinions and stories over their drinks. So we see Fred making his way every Tuesday morning to the *Clarion* printers in Worship Street to deliver his weekly article, and lingering for a chat with the acting editor, A. M. Thompson. He has given us a picture of both.

"About fifty years ago," he wrote in 1943, "after a call at the *Clarion* office, then located in a small upper room in Fleet Street, I walked with three of the most companionable and likeable men I have ever known to a nearby hostelry of their choice and there foregathered in fellowship with the three of them together." The three men were Robert Blatchford (Nunquam), E. F. Fay (The Bounder) and A. M. Thompson (Dangle).

"It was the first year of the *Clarion* and it was struggling through under many adverse circumstances with 'Nunquam' as editor and 'Dangle' and 'The Bounder' as his leading colleagues. All three had thrown up well-paid staff appointments on the *Sunday Chronicle* when the proprietor of the paper told 'Nunquam,' the *Chronicle's* leading columnist, that he must not write socialist articles any more in his paper.

"Despite their heavy sacrifice ('Nunquam's' salary was said to have been £1,000 a year) and their uncertain future, they were three happy warriors, and brightest and liveliest of the three was Fay, the big Irishman, six feet two and broad-beamed in proportion, with a big thick stick, who, looking down his nose at you through half-closed eyes and without even a smile on his face,

kept you laughing. He lived to see the *Clarion* firmly established, although not to the peak of its power and popularity.”\*

*Robert Blatchford as Editor*

Fred came to know A. M. Thompson, “broadminded and tolerant, humorous and kindly,” most intimately through their regular Tuesday morning meetings, but Blatchford was, of course, the dominating and inspiring personality of the group. Indeed, his personality, lighting and warming his written words, probably inspired and won the devotion of more men and women than any other journalist has ever succeeded in doing. Jowett’s memories of this unique figure are of permanent interest and value.

“I think it would be towards the end of the year 1888 that I first read anything written by Robert Blatchford. It was part of an article torn from a copy of the *Sunday Chronicle*. I was, at that time, what is known in Lancashire as a ‘tackler’ and in Yorkshire as a ‘weaving overlooker.’ A man I worked with had wrapped his ‘jock’ (food) in a torn sheet of newspaper, which displayed a big headline that attracted my attention . . . I read all that remained of the article. It was the most merciless and effective exposure of slum life I had ever seen.

“Somebody, it appears, had likened Manchester to a Modern Athens. The writer, ‘Nunquam,’ however, had examined large parts of Manchester and come away furiously indignant to tell the truth about it. He had seen no ‘Modern Athens.’

“I was 24 years of age when I read that torn sheet of newspaper. ‘Nunquam’ would then be about 42. I had read Ruskin, Carlyle, and, to a more limited extent, Cobbett. There was something in the ‘Nunquam’ article that seemed to belong to all these, my favourite writers, yet was expressed altogether differently . . .

“Carlyle’s fiery denunciation expressed in long paragraphs studded with hyphens; Ruskin’s discursive brilliance, his even-flowing but deadly, destructive rhetoric; Cobbett’s whole-hearted, thorough-going abuse of the oppressors of the poor in lengthy but perfectly correct sentences—all three of these struck hard and made the sparks fly as ‘Nunquam’ did.

“But ‘Nunquam’s’ sentences were short. The toil-worn craftsman, the busy housewife, and the woman wage-earner—everybody could read and understand him. I was already a Socialist. I began to look forward eagerly to ‘Nunquam’s’ weekly Sunday articles and to read them on Mondays to one or more of my workmates.”†

We have already told how Blatchford’s description of the hungry and cheerless lives of the children in Manchester’s slums led to the establishment of the famous Cinderella Club Movement in the industrial North. We have told, too, how Blatchford was adopted as Parliamentary candidate for East Bradford in 1891, of how he stayed in

\*This memory of Fay was earlier than the period of which we are writing. He died in 1896.

†“*New Leader*,” January 23, 1931.

Fred's home, of how he had to withdraw from the candidature because of his new responsibilities with the *Clarion*. But there is one further incident associated with these events which should be recorded.

It had become a legend that Blatchford was too shy to speak in public. He would talk freely to a few listeners in a small room, but acknowledged that in the presence of large audiences he felt "as a man feels in that disconcerting dream when he meets people coming out of church and finds he has forgotten to put his trousers on."\* In illustration of this reluctance Jowett described Blatchford's first platform appearance in Bradford, when he faced a crowded hall.

"The people expected a speech from the prospective Parliamentary candidate. He had a great reception, but, to the surprise of the audience, when the cheering was finished he made a few quite wise observations, spoken carelessly as if he were speaking to a friend he had met in the street, and then he sat down."

Jowett went on to tell, however, that on another Bradford occasion Blatchford spoke easily, confidently, and at length. It was at the Labour Church.

"For nearly an hour he delighted a large audience with the assistance of a blackboard and a piece of chalk. I was in the chair on that occasion. He drew men on the blackboard in single line strokes, as children draw them, to represent the landlord, the capitalist, and the labourer (one of them, I forget which, he said was I!) and he drew rough sketches of sacks of corn to show how the landlord and capitalist got hold of the produce of labour. His running comment, humorous and instructive, together with the humour of the drawings, mightily pleased us all."

So died the legend that Blatchford could not speak in public.

One achievement of Blatchford as an evangelist of Socialism rivalled his editorship of the *Clarion*: his "Tracts for the People" (precursors of the mass sale Penguins) and particularly his "Merrie England." "Blatchford confesses his inability to understand the success of 'Merrie England,'" wrote Jowett. "But active Socialists in the factory, mine, or workshop understand... My own opinion is that 'Merrie England' made more Socialists in Great Britain than all the other books put together."†

#### *Letters from Robert Blatchford*

Jowett's papers included a tidy packet of letters from Robert Blatchford which reveal his character and his genius as writer and editor. They are gems of good writing, they express the great human sympathy of the man, they reflect the struggle within him between his urge to enjoy beauty and his urge to serve his fellows, they illustrate how he got the best out of his fellowship of *Clarion* writers. Who,

\*"My Eighty Years," by Robert Blatchford.

†This quotation and those preceding it are from the "New Leader," January 23, 1931.

for example, would not feel encouraged to receive from his editor a letter like this?

(Undated.)\*

Dear Fred,

You are doing grand. It is just what we want, lad. Hold 'em tight. Tha has thi teeth in 'em. Shake 'em.

Also, it is well-written. I must heartily congratulate you on your improvement in style. I told you you could do it.

Hit 'em again. Don't let the rascals dodge. You can do more good in that *Clarion* letter, Fred, than in a thousand splendid speeches. And as soon as I have done being an orator I will come home and serve out some brimstone.

The other chaps are good also—Beswick, Rose, Stewart, Julia—are all good. But you can take it from me that you are making history and have found a place to rest your guns on.

Good luck, old chap. I am awfully glad to be able to congratulate you.

Yours,

BOB.

Blatchford did not just throw bouquets. There is a wealth of wisdom in this letter, written when he was engaged in some controversy with Jowett, probably on the Socialist-Trade Union alliance.

(Undated.)

My dear Fred,

Will you allow me to point out to you that your letter—flattering as it is—shows you to be labouring under a misapprehension. Clearness of statement is not due to a trick of style; but implies clearness of thought in the writer. You can say very well what you mean, when you thoroughly understand what you mean *and want to say it*. But when one has not fully mastered his thought, or is afraid to speak it all—even to his own mind—he cannot expect to be forcible and clear. Now I am one of those men who *must* master the idea before he expresses it; and *must* say what he believes, and then people talk unwisely about my clarity of style, and mastery of the pen.

Now in this case I know exactly what I mean; and I think I am right. But I am not sure that I am right; because I am not sure of the facts. And I do not feel sure that you are wrong, because I am not quite sure what you mean.

This week I have answered your article in an indirect way. Next week I will try to explain what I understand to be the difference between your opinion and mine; and what I suppose to be the cause of the difference.

Do not be so severe upon the seclusion of the study. Study and thought are valuable. Of course, experience is valuable also. But while your experience has taught you much it has not taught you all. Your view may be more practical; but it may be more narrow than mine. Remember I have seen a good deal and read a good deal. You know a great deal more than I; inside your own lines. But these lines are not very wide. The looker-on does sometimes see most of the game.

However, I congratulate you on your wisdom in going to look for rest and quiet. I cannot understand your going to the lakes; when there is the sea. But in these things tastes differ. When you come back you will see the *Clarion* and can answer at your leisure.

Good wishes and good times.

Yours,

R. BLATCHFORD.

\*Like most of Blatchford's communications, this letter was undated, but it was probably written early in Jowett's association with the *Clarion*.

That letter was a little formal and signed "R. Blatchford," but political differences, though deep, could not hurt the personal friendship between the two men. Here are three further letters, written whilst they were still arguing in the columns of the *Clarion*. They show how Blatchford's greatest concern was not policy but the condition of the people:

## I

Friday, 30th Oct., 08.

Dear Fred,

About the dispute in the Party. I have not mentioned it in the next issue of the *Clarion* for two reasons.

(1) It is well to give time for cool reflection.

(2) I cannot give my mind to it, because of my deep distress about the sufferings of the poor, and my growing anxiety at the brutal bearing of the authorities.

I am very troubled. I cannot rest. The situation is one of danger. I shall have to do all I can do; or I shall die of grief and shame. It is horrible: damnable.

Well, I mean to try to right things. Meanwhile, I am thinking how to act. The other matter will keep.

Look you, Fred, I don't want a split. I don't want a new party. But I may speak my mind—if I am not too much involved in bigger matters.

And perhaps it may not be needful to speak at all. It may not matter.

The children shall not starve without a scandal and a row. The cowardly brutes who govern us shall not shoot hungry men if I can stop them.

My God, Fred, old friend, is England mad, or rotten, or what?

Yours,

Bob.

## II

(Undated.)

Dear Fred,

I have written a short reply to your Open Letter, and left it at that. But don't you say again that you cannot write, because you can.

And now I perceive that the enemy are coming out into the open, horse and foot. And I am going on the war-path.

As this war is likely to be a long one, I shall probably never come back out of the stricken field, and all the pretty things I wanted to write will remain unwritten.

This is fate. I wished to be an author and I shall have to be a socialist and agnostic pressman. Well: my little books and artistic fancies matter to no living soul but me; but Socialism matters to the whole race.

Now a word in your ear. This great crusade against Socialism is serious. The enemy mean business, and will stick at nothing. I know what I am saying: I have already had proofs. It behoves all Socialists to walk warily.

As for me, I don't care. I shall go for the whole pack: fire into the brawn. And I shall enjoy myself.

Bye-bye. Good luck.

Yours,

Bob.

There is a reference in Blatchford's third letter to his hobby of painting:

## III

(Undated.)

Dear Fred,

I am sorry you expected me at the House last Wednesday. I did not think you would expect me as I had not written to say I was coming. I wish you would come and see me. I am very hard to drag out of the house. Even good music will not fetch me once in years; and I get worse. But come along here any time: we shall be always glad to see you.

And you need not be disturbed in your mind as to my piratical intentions. I am become the mildest and easiest of old fogies, and the battle-axe is rusting on the hooks for many moons. But what I have to say I suppose I shall say; and it will do no harm. I don't propose to go forth into the shires and preach a holy war: I'm too lazy. But I have views and think it right to utter them (can one utter views?) and, having spoken my piece, I suppose I shall go to sleep again.

Yours,

R.B.

P.S. I return the letter of the demented and expurgatable single-taxer. I daresay it is a brilliant and profound epistle; but I prefer the Greek Anthology. Tell the gifted author to eat coke and throw things at his grandmother. Life is too short to parley with bean-fed and contumacious reformists.

I had painted a quite pleasing and conducive sky, and I have spoilt the sea! What a hollow farce is life! Oh grave, where is thy victory?

But perhaps the most revealing of all the Blatchford letters is the one which follows. Fred had urged him to join a socialist campaign:

(Undated.)

Dear Fred,

You think I should come out of my den and strike hands with them that haggle in the market-place, or gossip at the fountain. Perhaps that would be good for me. The worst of it is we seem to have nothing to say to each other these days. I suppose the fact is I am getting older. I feel that I want quiet.

And if I have to mix again with my fellow sinners I should like them to be foreign sinners. For it seems to me, Fred, that as I grow older the foreign blood comes more to the top. It is that in some measure which makes me feel an alien in my own city. I believe a good deal of my desire for the social revolution arises from my distress at the ugliness and vulgarity of modern England.

I feel that the Italians and the French would be nearer of kin. They love more of the things I love and feel more as I feel. I like the swarthy eager faces of the French; and the beautiful Italian eyes, and the soft ripe bloom of Southern women; and the liquid melody of the Latin languages. Also I love sunshine, and olives, and red wine, and music, and cigars, and art, and the blue sea and sky. Well: my friend, if I go to China, Peru or to Plumstead? . . .

And, you know, the comrades do not understand me. Look at the women in Bradford streets; they fill me with despair. But the Bradford comrades see nothing amiss. The Bradford boys were really annoyed when I said Bradford was ugly. They don't know, then, what it is. Ugly! It's a compliment to call such a town ugly.

Then fellows speak to me of the happiness and high spirits of a Cockney crowd. Consider the East End girls and women. Think of their faces; recall their type. Merry! Yes, they are merry and witty in a horrible way, but it gives me the heartache to look at them.

Besides, old chap; I have, to all intents and purposes, done with the matters in which you ask me to take fresh interest. I want to see my wife and children comfortable and safe: that is my only care now. If that were done I would go into the Latin countries, where the sun shines, and the smiles of the people shine through their skins. You speak of Scotland as more materialistic than England. Now I was fortunate in Scotland. I feel more at home there. I feel more akin to the people. And the Scottish women are divine—no, that is a vile word—but they're lovely and delightful: the sweetest women I have met.

Well, I'm rambling about and talking nonsense. Where do you want me to go, Fred? And whom or what do you want me to see? I am going into the Colne Valley!!! Ye gods!

By the way your Parliamentary stuff is really capital, and you are a very fine chap; but you are English: I have only tried to be English. I never suspected this till I went to Madeira. Then I knew. I want to go home, dear boy . . . to Italy.\*

Yours,

Bob.

"It was a great experience, this association with the *Clarion* which I shall always remember with pleasure," remarked Jowett, and so it must have been. Before we tell how it came to be broken on the issue of the impending war, let us look at the gathering of the clouds and Jowett's part in the darkening scene.

### *Jowett Probes the War Danger*

How came it that Fred Jowett, woolworker, expert in municipal affairs, Bradfordian before everything else, developed such an intense interest in international affairs? How was it that among six hundred Members of Parliament he was one of the small group who from as early as 1908 saw the danger of war? Jowett shared with other Socialists, of course, his sense of human brotherhood and his hatred of war, but many Socialists in the years which preceded the first World War had these sentiments without the concern and knowledge which Fred developed. What were the influences which made him probe the mysteries of secret diplomacy related to peoples in far distant places?†

Probably the first influence was his association with the *Clarion*. It was his duty to write a weekly Parliamentary article and no writer

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\*Winifrid Blatchford, who was herself a member of the "Clarion" team, contributing a delightful commentary on books, informs the author, that in fact there was little foreign blood in her father, and that little ran thin as he advanced in years. "He still loved Italian blues and the sun and music; but he loved England more than any other country, and the English people. He was himself very English. As regards the Italian in him, his grandmother was English, his grandfather Italian. He always said, when he had his rare fits of wanting to be idle, that the 'Italian is on board.' Far back on the Blatchford side of the family there was a Dutchman. He, according to my father's version, was 'the industrious, determined chap,' and, in my experience, it was usually the Dutchman who was 'on board' up to the very last days."

†In 1909, Jowett's interest in foreign affairs led him, accompanied by Mrs. Jowett, to become one of a Labour group which visited Germany. See illustration page 94.

so conscientious as Fred could fail to make himself informed upon the international issues which from time to time came before the House. His journalistic work inevitably extended his political horizons.

There was a second influence. As we have already seen, Jowett was profoundly dissatisfied with the methods of Parliamentary government which gave all real power to the Executive and made rank and file Members little more than ciphers. This autocratic power was exemplified supremely in foreign affairs. We shall see later that a majority in the Cabinet were unacquainted with the commitments which were made during these years under the cloak of secret diplomacy; still less did Members of Parliament unassociated with the Government or the Front Opposition Bench know what was happening. Jowett regarded this as a powerful illustration of the urgent need for representative Committees of Members to control the administration of State Departments, and was, therefore, led to investigate and expose the operations of secret diplomacy with special pertinacity.

### *India, China and Japan*

Before turning to the European scene let us throw a glance or two to the East, where problems now very close to us were emerging. In India the demand for self-government was taking a militant form. The Viceroy was Lord Curzon, imperious and autocratic; the Secretary of State was Lord Morley, of Liberal tradition but compelled by the inadequacy of his reforms to embark on the course of suppression. Lord Curzon partitioned Bengal against the will of the people and there was revolt. Jowett was in the Members' Gallery of the House of Lords when Lord Morley made his defence of coercion.

"Lord Morley is said by some of his friends to be engaged in a fierce struggle with his officials," he wrote. "He wants, so his friends say, to inaugurate a new policy with the object of extending self-government to the native races.

"I can only say that I fail to gather any impression of that kind from his speeches or his actions. To me he appears to be gradually falling under the influence of officialdom into a mere apologist for despotism.

"There is not a single argument contained in that part of his speech dealing with the repressive measures recently adopted in India that could not be urged with equal force in support of any known despotic ruler. Men held in great respect in India among the masses of their fellow-countrymen are being deported without trial for offences which are not stated. Freedom of the Press has been practically abolished, the right of free speech is gone."\*

Lord Morley gave Indians a few places on the Viceroy's Council, but this trifling concession could not hold back the rising tide of

\*"Clarion," December 25, 1909.



democracy among the Indian people. "Lord Morley and his successors may think they can govern this great mass against its will," remarked Jowett, "but sooner or later the position will be found untenable." Before many months have passed history is likely to vindicate the conclusion which Fred Jowett voiced thirty-six years ago.

History has already vindicated Jowett in the protests he made during these years against British policy towards China and Japan. The Chinese, now acclaimed as "equals and allies," were then treated as an inferior race to be exploited. Jowett opposed every phase of this policy.

"A series of questions were asked about the conspiracy between six powerful nations (including Great Britain) to force China to place itself in pawn in return for a loan," he wrote in 1913. "The proposed terms are so discreditable that the United States, originally one of the six, has withdrawn from the compact. Two of the nations, Russia and Japan, have no money to lend, but, being near neighbours to China, and therefore in a position to make things awkward for more distant Powers, they have been allowed to come into the international thieves' kitchen and share in the spoil if China is at a future date carved up to satisfy bondholders.

"Acland, speaking for Sir Edward Grey, who was absent, refused to furnish information as to the terms which the Six Power Group had arranged between themselves, or, to speak more correctly, between the bankers behind the Six Power Group. This is secret diplomacy, and secret diplomacy is at the bottom of most international differences."\*

More remarkable to read to-day are Jowett's exposures, written in 1908 and 1909, of the British alliance with Japan, in the course of which British shipyards built the Japanese navy and Japanese naval officers were trained at British naval colleges and on British warships. The danger was evidently very much in Jowett's mind for he returned to it again and again. In March, 1908, for example, he pointed out that Japan was becoming rapidly industrialised and that the eyes of its rulers were fixed on possible new markets for its products and on fruitful parts of the earth for its superfluous population.

"And now I read," he added, "that the eldest son of Prince Frishimo arrived in London last Saturday, and that the object of his visit, which is to extend over two years, is 'to gain general information regarding this country, especially that which concerns naval affairs.' An English Admiral,† authorised by special permission, founded and organised a naval college in Japan. The picked students who have gone through a course of college training in Japan are permitted to go through the full course of instruction at the Greenwich Naval College. They pass through every department—the Naval School, the Gunnery School, and the Torpedo School. Afterwards they are sent abroad and placed under the

\*"Bradford Pioneer," April 11, 1913.

†Jowett afterwards gave the name—Admiral Douglas.

care of the most capable officers in the British Navy, where they display one characteristic which is said to distinguish Yorkshire men, for they 'hear all, see all, but say nowt.' Which reminds me that English capital has provided the funds necessary for the creation of a powerful Japanese Navy."\*

"I have a foreboding," he wrote a little later, "that questions affecting Japanese emigration may, in a few years time (and at some future time inevitably) force a quarrel between Great Britain and Japan.

"In the event of such a quarrel we should have reason to regret that we had encouraged the Japanese to build battleships, and also train them in the use of modern weapons. We should have been better employed in teaching them the arts of peace and persuading them to avoid the mistaken folly and wicked waste from which European nations have suffered so much in the past, folly and waste which the best citizens among all nations desire to bring to a speedy close."†

A year after his first warning Jowett drew attention to the fact that Japan had been permitted to take over two submarines which were being built under contract for the British Government.

"The time is not far distant," he commented, "when Japan will have nothing more to learn regarding naval warfare from our own Navy or its commanders; at which time it will remain to be seen whether an alliance with Great Britain will be any longer welcome to Japan."

Japan's common front with Britain in the war of 1914 was held by those who created the new naval Power in the East as justification of their policy; but who now will not regard Fred Jowett as possessing the greater foresight?

### *The King's Intervention in Foreign Affairs*

British foreign policy was completely reversed during the first fourteen years of this century. In the later years of the nineteenth century France, which was challenging British ambitions in Africa, was regarded as the potential enemy, but by the turn of the century Germany's industrial development had made her the most serious rival to Britain's world trade and imperial strength. The Kaiser's telegram of sympathy to President Kruger during the Boer War helped to antagonise public opinion and by 1905 the time had come for Britain's traditional policy of the Balance of Power to seek new allies. The *entente cordiale* was concluded with France to meet the growing menace of German economic and military strength.

King Edward VII was a leading influence in this changed policy, gaining for himself the title (surely never less deserved) of "King

\*"Clarion," March 13, 1908.

†"Clarion," July 31, 1908.

Edward the Peacemaker." The King's part in foreign affairs became so prominent that it challenged the constitutional rôle of the monarchy as above and apart from politics.

This became clear when in 1908 the King visited the Tsar of Russia without the company of a Minister (although Foreign Office officials went with him) and discussed with him a project for joining the Anglo-French circle in return for concessions in the Balkans and Persia. The visit was vigorously attacked by Labour Members and even by Liberals, with the result that Keir Hardie, Victor Grayson and Arthur Ponsonby (although he was the son of Queen Victoria's Private Secretary and had been brought up at Court) were not invited to the King's Garden Party. How Jowett escaped this treatment we do not know. He certainly protested against the King's excursion into international politics with the utmost outspokenness. Perhaps King Edward did not read the *Clarion*.

Jowett took the view that the growth of the influence of the Crown was deliberately favoured "as a counterpoise to the democracy which shows signs of wanting to know too much."\* He wrote in courageous protest:

"The growing practice among Ministers of State of deferring to the King's desire to play an important part in the direction of public affairs is especially dangerous because there is an unwritten, but none the less inexorable, rule among the leaders of both political Parties that where Royalty is concerned there is to be no public discussion between them.

"Moreover, the social influence exercised by the King practically precludes any contention among leading politicians when his wishes are known.

"But the mischief does not end there. From the Court at the centre, to the outer edge of the circle in which what is called Society moves, the same kind of influence is at work.

"The House of Commons itself, every day while Parliament is sitting, is the gay scene of its activities. No one who, having eyes to see with, has spent an hour in St. Stephen's Hall or the central lobby of the House of Commons can possibly misunderstand what is going on. The swell mob swarms all over the place. It flaunts its finery with swaggering impudence and mocks at the world and its problems. It is a ghastly fraud."

Labour criticism in Parliament of the approach to Russia was based mainly on the cruel and despotic régime of the Tsar. Jowett, of course, endorsed this, but he gave increasing emphasis to the secrecy in which understandings and alliances were being concluded.

"For the last five years the King has been going from one European capital to another, forming alliances and promoting understandings," he wrote. "The inevitable result of such methods is misunderstanding. He has allied us with a cruel despotism

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\*"Clarion," June 12, 1908.

which is abhorrent to all thinking men. His action has changed the policy of Great Britain among European States. The full significance of the change we do not know. Though entered upon in the name of peace, these tortuous methods generally end in international complications and wars. It is time they were put a stop to in the interests of public safety. Democracy has nothing to gain and much to lose by secrecy, and as a public representative I want to know what is being done in the name of the British nation. I say: 'Let us have light.'\*\*

*Jowett's Campaign Against Secret Diplomacy*

"Let us have light" became the dominant theme of Fred Jowett's speeches, writings and Parliamentary activities in these years before the first World War. A noteworthy article which he contributed to the *Bradford Daily Telegraph*† summed up his case. He began by denouncing the activity of the Crown, beyond the reach of public questioning and, generally speaking, even of criticism. But equally important he regarded the secrecy of the Executive, the members of the Cabinet, and their unwillingness to inform Parliament as to what was happening.

"The House of Commons has lost all control over the Executive. Occasionally a well-directed question gives publicity to some action of a Department, and in that way tends to check permanent officials; or comments made when money is being voted may hit some tender spot in the administration of a Department, but as the critic and the heckler have no access to the officials, and Ministers have, the least flaw in the information on which a question or comment is based enables the Executive to score against the attack . . .

"The inevitable outcome of these recent tendencies is to drag the people at the heels of diplomatists, experts and permanent officials, into whatever course of conduct, wise or unwise, they choose to indulge.

"People may desire peace, but secret diplomacy, inspired nobody knows how, intriguing nobody knows where, often working in close touch with great financial magnates, whose interest it is to cause States to incur debts and pay them tribute in a hundred and one different forms, weaves its net of intrigue and keeps nations in mortal dread of each other . . . On the other hand, one rarely sees the slightest indication that the people of Great Britain cherish any feeling of antagonism towards Germany or the German nation towards ourselves, yet the two Governments are openly arming themselves against each other . . .

"Secret diplomacy begets international jealousy, and on international jealousy the demand for more and ever more armaments is fed, and rival nations, looking on each other's growing armaments, are ever apprehensive for fear of being overreached. A false

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\*\* "*Clarion*," August 14, 1908.

† August 14, 1908.

step on the part of one of the parties concerned may act like a spark in a powder magazine, and that fatal step may be taken without the knowledge of Parliaments or peoples."

Jowett's solution was a Committee of Members of the House of Commons, representative proportionately of the three Parties, who should have access to all information.

"I want to know why we should build more Dreadnoughts," he declared. "I want to know what takes place at these secret conclaves. It is not sufficient for Ministers and ex-Ministers to monopolise official information. There are other Members who represent the people besides Ministers and ex-Ministers, and there are other Parties in the State besides Liberals and Tories.

"For the sake of public safety, all sections of public thought should be brought face to face with those who have information to give and State duties to perform, and when discussions take place regarding the doings of the Executive, others besides Ministers and ex-Ministers should know the facts.

"Let the pigeon-holes at the Foreign Office be emptied and their contents exposed to the eyes of representative men holding different political opinions. In a word, let them have committees to satisfy, whose members never entirely change, and not merely a new greenhorn to act as a gramophone for them every two or three years. Let us have all the cards on the table—the diplomatic cards as well—and then none will have reason to fear that the trumps are up the diplomatic sleeve."

When the proposal for a Foreign Affairs Committee was put to Sir Edward Grey, he dismissed it on the ground that Britain would be at a disadvantage compared with nations working under the old and less democratic method. Jowett was not impressed by the Foreign Secretary's argument. "It amounts to this," he said, "that if a nation favours intrigue rather than candour and honesty in the conduct of its foreign relations, it may score against its rivals for a while. By the same method of reasoning we may argue in favour of a system of absolute government such as that of Russia, for no system is so favourable to secret, consistent and persistent foreign policy. The fewer persons there are who must be consulted in the matter the less likelihood there is of swerving one way or the other. But what Sir Edward Grey and others cannot prove, nowadays, is that the secret tortuous ways of the old-fashioned diplomatists really succeed in the long run."\*

#### *The Debate Between Jowett and Blatchford*

The crisis in the opposing opinions of Jowett and Blatchford came on the issue of more Dreadnoughts. They argued it out in the columns of the *Clarion*. Robert Blatchford put his case with his usual simple directness.

\*"Bradford Pioneer," July 10, 1914.

"We believe that Germany is preparing for war with Great Britain. We believe that Germany means to dominate Europe; and that, as a necessary step to that domination, she is determined to challenge our power on the sea. . . .

"Germany is the greatest military Power in the world. She has made it evident—so evident that even the Liberal Cabinet have seen it—that she means to be the greatest Naval Power in the world. . . .

"I am speaking now with a full sense of the responsibility I incur. I know that I am doing an unpopular thing. I know that I shall meet with hostility from my own Party. I know that I shall be called a Jingo and a firebrand and, perhaps, a traitor. But I have never yet been silent because the truth was dangerous or did not pay.

"I believe that this German crisis is the most momentous crisis since the beginning of the Nineteenth Century. I believe that it cannot be avoided or met without a great national effort.

"I hold that we should act at once, and act as we should act if war were certain within a year. . . .

Jowett replied in an Open Letter: "What do we want our Navy for?" he asked. "Is it to play the statesman's game, or is it for the safety of the Englishman's home, such as it is?"

"In this matter of war, with all its attendant misery, are we to be dragged at the heels of those who think only of force, of aristocracy, and of the rights of monarchs? In short, do we want a Navy for statesmen to stake on a contest for the balance of power, or one to patrol the seas for home protection?"

"If we consent to the demand of our rulers for a big Navy to enable them to take a leading part in the international chess game of statecraft, the size of our fleet will not avert disaster.

"In my view, and in the view of many others, every battleship added to the fleet over and above the number required for defensive purposes tends to increase the risk of war, because a big Navy influences the general policy of diplomatists, leads them to be aggressive and to take risks over issues which do not really concern us. . . .

"It is over these diplomatic intrigues alone that there can be any possible cause of quarrel."

As an instance of the diplomatic issues likely to bring war, Jowett cited the dispute over Bosnia and Herzegovina which had just concluded. This dispute was, in fact, an extraordinarily close anticipation of the series of events which were so soon to bring the war of 1914. Austria claimed the right to annex these two States. Britain said it would uphold the sanctity of the Treaty of Berlin which gave them nominally to Turkey but, without the knowledge of Britain, Russia indicated to Austria that it would not regard the annexation as a cause of war. Serbia then threatened to fight Austria; whereupon Russia double-crossed and promised support. The next move was by Germany, who intimated to Russia and Serbia that they must climb down. They did so—and, deserted by her Russian ally, Britain also climbed down. Turkey was bought off by compensation of

twenty shillings a head for each subject transferred to Austrian rule! War was averted—for five years.

Jowett commented that neither Germany, Russia, Austria, nor Britain ever considered the wishes of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. None of the Powers sought to make the terms of the transference favourable to the people or to preserve their existing rights. "The whole contest," he remarked, "has been over the rival claims of different monarchs to the over-lordship of some two million people.

"Now, Robert, may I submit to you that the British public is not called upon to prepare for war on such issues as these? At bottom it is a struggle for the Balance of Power by means of which monarchs and diplomatists seek to over-reach each other, and the more ready the different peoples are to back their rulers with liberal supplies of armaments, the deeper in the mess of complications will they be plunged."

In his reply Blatchford admitted a great part of Jowett's case. "Jowett thinks that our diplomacy exposes us to risks," he wrote. "So do I. But we did not make the secret bargains, and are not responsible. Let us kick up a row by all means, and demand that we shall be consulted and that dangerous alliances shall not be forced upon us." But he insisted that the point was: Is the Navy strong enough to defend Britain? "I do not ask Jowett to vote blindly for the building of battleships. I have never said that we ought to have eight or eighty 'Dreadnoughts'. I have only said that we ought to make quite sure, and *must* make quite sure, that we can hold our own against any invader on the sea."\*

Jowett concluded the debate with another Open Letter, in which he argued that it was Germany's sense of growing isolation in Europe by the British-French-Russian alliance which had led to the strengthening of her navy.

"Apparently the point on which we disagree is as to whether our Army and our Navy should be designed to make war wherever—and on whatever scale—these dangerous alliances lead us, or whether we are to think only of defending our country and its colonies against attack. As a citizen I refuse to consent to cover the larger risk.

"The immense Armies and Navies, without which even the most daring and reckless of diplomatists would not dare to take such risks, I refuse to provide.

"You, as I understand, whilst objecting to the dangerous alliances, will accept the risks attaching to them, under protest, and provide Armies and Navies big enough to back our rulers in the event of consequential war.

"I think that, if the country will refuse to provide men and arms except for purely defensive purposes, our rulers will make

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\*"Clarion," May 14, 1909

their international policy correspond with the material strength behind them.

"You think our rulers will play the international chess game in any case, and you, reluctantly, agree to equip them for it."\*

Despite the courtesy and reason with which this controversy was conducted, it became impossible for Jowett to continue to contribute the Parliamentary feature to a newspaper whose Editor took an opposite point of view on the most critical issue of the time. Reluctantly the partnership was ended, but it remained one of the most cherished memories of Fred's life and to his last day there was a special warmth in his voice when he spoke of Robert Blatchford and his *Clarion* colleagues.

### *The Secret Commitments to France*

It must remain a matter of doubt whether the British people would have compelled a change in foreign policy if they had known what was happening during the years 1904 to 1914. That they were ignorant of what was happening there cannot be a shadow of doubt. Parliament did not know; even the Cabinet did not know. Only four men knew—the Premier, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman; the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey; the War Minister, Lord Haldane; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Asquith. When C-B. died, his three colleagues kept the knowledge to themselves until the Agadir crisis of 1911 required that the rest of the Cabinet should be brought into their confidence.

The public and Members of Parliament did not know, but some of those who were watching foreign affairs were suspicious, and first among these was Fred Jowett. As far back as 1908 he raised the question in one of his *Clarion* articles whether the Anglo-French Treaty of 1904 committed Britain to more than was publicly known. More than any man in public life he tried during the succeeding years to bring into the light of day the secret agreements which finally brought Britain into the war of 1914. The Minister from whom the Member for West Bradford endeavoured to extract the truth was regarded as "the strong man" of the Government. "No Minister in our day," Jowett wrote, "has been more defiant of Parliament than Sir Edward Grey. When he is pressed for information at question time he frequently snaps out his refusal as if it were nobody's business but his own."† Our story from this point becomes a record of Jowett's efforts to break open the closed door of which Sir Edward held the key. As we read we can see him through Fred's eyes.

"Tall, thin, with raven black hair and hawk-like features, a voice

\*"*Clarion*," May 28, 1909.

†"*Labour Leader*," July 7, 1911.



deep of tone and pleasant to the ear," he described the Foreign Secretary. "His speeches are devoid of rhetoric, and his movements while he is speaking are not the studied mannerisms of the orator, but the awkward actions of a man who is careless of appearances. Throughout his speeches he alternately scratches his head with his right hand and dives both his hands into his pockets so regularly that you find yourself looking expectantly for each movement in turn."\*

Such was the principal. Now let us turn to the story.

In the Treaty of 1904 France solemnly declared that she had "no intention of altering the political status of Morocco," and Britain made a similar declaration regarding Egypt. Germany had doubts, however, whether the *entente cordiale* was as innocent as it seemed and indicated that she was interested in the future of Morocco. A conference of the European Powers followed at Algeciras in 1906, when a treaty was signed providing for the independence of Morocco and the protection of the trading rights of all nations.

This seemed to be fair and above board and public opinion was reassured. *But, unknown to the other Powers and to the peoples, there were secret clauses attached to the British-French Treaty of 1904 which visualised a situation in which its public clauses would be repudiated.* In these secret clauses Britain and France stated that in the event of constraint "by the force of circumstances" the Treaty would be set aside and they would assume to themselves the right to partition Morocco between France and Spain and support each other in maintaining their decisions.

The realistic French Government was not satisfied with phrases. It asked Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, whether Britain would give France armed support if the Moroccan situation led to a war between France and Germany.† Sir Edward replied diplomatically that he could promise nothing unless it subsequently had the wholehearted support of public opinion, but he added that in his view if war were forced on France public opinion would rally to the material support of France.

M. Cambon, the French Foreign Secretary, wanted something more definite. He remarked that if it were likely that public opinion would support armed aid to France "you will not be able to give that support, even if you wish to give it, when the time comes, unless some conversations have taken place between the naval and military experts." Sir Edward Grey was in a difficulty. The General Election was in progress and he could not consult the whole Cabinet. He consulted Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Lord Haldane, and Mr. Asquith. *With their knowledge, and their knowledge only, the*

\*"Bradford Pioneer," July 10, 1914.

†The story of these and subsequent negotiations with France was revealed publicly for the first time by Sir Edward Grey on August 3, 1914.

*fateful conversations for combined military and naval action by Britain and France against Germany were begun.*

Even after the General Election, however, the Cabinet was not informed. "The military and naval conversations with France were continued," an anonymous but authoritative contributor to the *Candid Review* wrote subsequently, "the detailed arrangements for actual operations of warfare were all the time being ripened and completed; and yet, during the whole of those five and a half years, the prospect held out to France of England rallying to her material support, and the continued elaboration of a plan of operation to be pursued in that event, were completely concealed from the Cabinet and from everybody else. All this time the Three Mystery Men knew. Mr. Haldane, Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey knew. But nobody else knew anything: their own colleagues in the Cabinet knew nothing."\*

Fred Jowett's doubts remained however. Early in 1911 Lord Rosebery delivered a speech at Edinburgh hinting that Britain had entered into obligations "which might lead to an Armageddon such as was not dreamed of by Napoleon." Fred saw in this confirmation of his fears, and he placed a question on the Order Paper of the House asking whether any commitment had been made to France. Sir Edward Grey replied that there was no undertaking of any kind beyond the terms of the Anglo-French Convention. Fred went through the Treaty of 1904 clause by clause and found, of course, that the public terms contained no commitment. His suspicions nevertheless persisted.

He drafted a further question to Sir Edward Grey which seemed to him to allow no loophole for equivocation. He took great care with it because he knew the habit of Ministers, and particularly of Foreign Secretaries, to evade direct answers, and he was aware of Sir Edward's attitude of resentment towards anyone who pried closely into foreign affairs. So Fred made his question both as comprehensive and concrete as possible. "To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs," it read, "if, during his term of office, any undertaking, promise or understanding had been given to France that in certain eventualities British troops would be sent to assist the operations of the French Army." There could be no getting round that.

Jowett regarded the question of such importance that he decided to ask a Member of Parliament with greater reputation to put it: he wanted Parliament, the Press, and the public to pay attention to it. "I dare not ask it," the Member replied; "it would probably cause complications with Germany." This excuse made Jowett more determined to probe the matter: he held that if secret commitments had brought Britain and Germany so near "complications" the public

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\*"Candid Review," September, 1915.

were emphatically entitled to know what was afoot. In March, 1911, he put the question himself—and received a flat denial. “The answer is in the negative,” replied Mr. McKinnon Wood, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the Minister. One need not pause to comment on the morality of this answer. After all, how can diplomacy be secret if its commitments are publicly revealed?

Within a few weeks of this question the second Moroccan crisis developed. Native disturbances led France to send a military expedition. Spain did the same. In face of this defiance of the Treaty of Algeciras, Germany also intervened—sending a cruiser to Agadir.

“First France, the ally of Great Britain, on a mean and paltry excuse and in defiance of the Treaty of Algeciras, sends its armed forces to secure a footing in Morocco,” commented Jowett. “Spain follows and does likewise. Now Germany, not to be outdone, prepares to stake out its claim. Undoubtedly British diplomacy, jealously apprehensive lest Germany should secure a port of call on the Atlantic, is at work trying to undo the mischief caused by its ally, France. *It may even prove that Great Britain is under joint obligation with France to oust a third party, for all Parliament knows to the contrary.*”

Jowett evidently remained suspicious despite the definite assurance of “no commitments” which Sir Edward Grey had given him only four months previously. A little later his suspicions were confirmed. The Agadir crisis passed\*, with France and Spain safely in occupation of Morocco. There was no need to keep the secret clauses of the Treaty of 1904 from the public any longer, and they were announced. But the knowledge that the military and naval experts of Britain and France were completing their combined operations for war was still withheld from the public even at this stage: the Big Three in the Cabinet shared their secret with their colleagues only.

Certain Cabinet Ministers were evidently disturbed, as well they might be. Sir Edward Grey was instructed to write an unofficial letter to the French Foreign Secretary saying that the conversations were not binding upon the freedom of either Government—a salve to their consciences, perhaps, but so meaningless in practice that it was afterwards called “The Offensive and Defensive Alliance on half a sheet of note-paper!”

The whole Cabinet now knew, but still Ministers blandly denied in the Commons that any secret understanding with France existed. Jowett had been the first to interrogate the Foreign Office as far back as 1911. In March, 1913, Lord Hugh Cecil, Sir William Byles and Mr. Joseph King raised the matter. The Prime Minister, Mr.

\*Ostensibly because the French Government conceded Germany part of the Congo in return for concessions in the Cameroons, but really because neither of the opposing groups of Powers, particularly Germany and Britain, was yet prepared for war.

Asquith, replied that if war arose between European Powers, there were no unpublished agreements which would restrict or hamper the freedom of the Government or of Parliament to decide whether or not Great Britain should participate in a war.

Sixteen months later the inescapable test of these assurances came. Servia and Austria were at war and they had dragged in Russia and Germany. France was pledged to support Russia. What should Britain do? On August 3, 1914, Sir Edward Grey addressed Parliament and he said frankly, almost in so many words, that the course pursued in secret from 1906 onwards, *including the military and naval arrangements with France which he revealed publicly for the first time, and whose existence he had repeatedly denied*, made any course other than war impossible. These were his words:—

“There is but one way in which the Government could make certain at the present moment of keeping outside this war, and that would be that it should immediately issue a proclamation of unconditional neutrality. *We cannot do that. We have made the commitments to France that I have read to the House, which prevents us from doing that.*”

So came the war of 1914. Jowett had no doubt about the calamity which had overwhelmed the world. His last public speech before the beginning of hostilities was delivered to an audience of Bradford citizens gathered on Manningham Tide fair ground, on Sunday August 3:

“It will be the greatest war the world has ever seen, a crime against civilisation, a disaster compared with which the Napoleonic wars were a mere skirmish. It is the people who will have to suffer. Those who make their money by producing armaments—the gang who make profit by creating jealousies and bad blood between nations—may gain. But the people, the common men and women of all lands who have no cause to quarrel, they will have to pay in millions of lives and in anguish and sorrow. Let us who are Socialists keep our minds calm, our hearts free from hate, and one purpose always before us—to bring peace as soon as possible on a basis that will endure.”

Jowett certainly lived in the spirit of his own words during the four dark years which followed.

## CHAPTER VII

## SOCIALISM FACES THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Fred Jowett, now in his fiftieth year, was chairman of the Independent Labour Party at the outbreak of the first World War and remained its chairman for the greater part of the war. He must have felt the responsibility of the post, for the I.L.P. was a large and influential organisation. In the case of the Second World War, we had long anticipated its coming, and our knowledge of the years 1914 to 1918 helped us to know something of what to expect. But for most people the First World War was a surprise and no-one had a precedent for guidance. To be the head of the leading anti-war organisation required both courage and wisdom. Fred showed he had these qualities.

The author was present at the first meeting of the National Council of the Party after the declaration of war. Its members assembled in the scrubby sitting-room of a little hotel in Blackfriars Street, Manchester. They met under the weight of depressing events.

They were depressed not only by the war, but by the realisation that its first casualty, dismembered if not destroyed, was the International Socialist Movement. The first personal victim of the war was a famous Socialist—"the most powerful influence for peace in the world" Jowett described him—Jean Jaurès, the French leader. He had been shot, even before war was declared, by some mad "patriot" who feared his knowledge of the intrigues of the diplomats. Jaurès had been known and revered by many of those who met in that Manchester hotel—by Hardie, Bruce Glasier, Anderson, Jowett himself. Not long since he had come to Britain as the guest of the Party and addressed Peace meetings under its auspices.

We felt the death of Jaurès more than as a personal loss. We felt he symbolised the international movement. A week before its leaders had addressed great demonstrations of tens of thousands of workers in all the capitals of Europe, extolling international solidarity, declaring their determination to resist the threatening war. Now the same leaders, with few exceptions, had lined up with their Governments on both sides; and not only the leaders — in most countries majorities in the Parties had deserted their international faith in the same way.

We had the same sense of disillusionment about the Labour Party here in Britain. It had declined to endorse Ramsay MacDonald's criticism of the diplomacy of Sir Edward Grey and he had resigned his chairmanship of the Parliamentary Party. MacDonald had not delivered an anti-war speech by any means—he had promised support to the Government if it could be proved that the country was in

danger—but the violence with which he was attacked rallied all of us behind him. Jowett, as we have seen, had been a consistent critic of MacDonald's Parliamentary policy, but that was forgotten now. "His action gave us a new confidence," Fred said later. "He sacrificed his career and faced unpopularity because he would not become a jingo 'yes-man' and that determined our support."\*

In spite of the mood of depression in which it met, the Party's National Council issued an inspiring manifesto, denouncing the war as a crime of Capitalism engendered in the dark dishonesties of secret diplomacy and affirming its solidarity with the workers of all lands, including the German Socialists. "In forcing this appalling crime upon the nations," the declaration concluded, "it is the rulers, the diplomats, the militarists who have sealed their doom. In tears and blood and bitterness the greater Democracy will be born." We knew when we heard W. C. Anderson, the author of the manifesto, read its stirring words that they would receive the endorsement of the membership because, except for a fraction which followed two dissident M.P.s—J. R. Clynes and James Parker—there was no division of opinion as to the capitalist nature of the war or the continued validity of international Socialism; nor were we greatly concerned about differences on other issues. Imperialism behind the veil of secret diplomacy had flung the peoples into mutual slaughter; workers who had no quarrel were murdering each other at the command of capitalist Governments. That was the great tragedy, and we regarded all as comrades who refused to be a party to it and who sought to end it at the earliest moment.

#### *Jowett's Reason for Opposing the War*

Nevertheless, as we look back on these years, we see that the anti-war view of the I.L.P. had many interpretations. A large section of the Party had not defined its policy beyond the sentiments of the manifesto; another section, whilst opposed to imperialist aggression, believed in national defence; a large section was pacifist; a smaller section, centred on the Clyde, whilst opposed to war when conducted by capitalist States, was prepared to defend a Socialist State by war or, if necessary, even to wage social revolution by violence. Fred Jowett belonged to the National Defence section. He put his view in clear terms: "When I entered the House of Commons I had to choose between three policies: (1) British interference in the politics of the world and consequent preparation to take the aggressive, (2) National Defence and (3) Non-resistance. I chose the second." He described how Sir Edward Grey had secretly pledged Britain to support French Imperialism against German Imperialism in Africa and had, unknown to Parliament and people, committed the country

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\*Statement to the author, October, 1943.

to use its navy and army on the side of France. He proceeded: "Now the question presented to my mind was: 'What should any conscientious person do in circumstances such as I have described?' Obviously I could not say it was a just war."\*

He acknowledged that the Government, having made its secret understandings with France, was bound to intervene in the war, but argued that that did not require acquiescence from those who had opposed this policy.

"Those of us who for many years have been warning the public against secret diplomacy," he said, "telling the public of the sinister influence of capitalist profiteering Imperialism which secret diplomacy hides from the public view, and of the risk of this country being involved in Continental warfare if secret diplomacy were allowed to continue—we are not under any obligation to hold our tongues. Now is the time to speak and ensure that never again shall the witches' cauldron of secret diplomacy brew the war broth of Hell for mankind."†

He recognised that it was useless to attempt to stop the war immediately, but "I feel it is our duty to be ready to seize the first opportunity which the temper of the combatants will permit to be used for that purpose." Meanwhile, the I.L.P. should do its utmost "to press the necessity of using the whole resources of the State to protect the workers from the perils which confront them."‡

Jowett's first duty as chairman of the I.L.P. was to consolidate the organisation of the Party. With Bruce Glasier he travelled the length and breadth of the country, addressing private gatherings of members; sometimes he addressed public meetings as well, though in the first uncertain months of the war there was a tendency to go slow with such propaganda. As they journeyed from branch to branch Jowett and Glasier found an extraordinary degree of unity. It is doubtful whether more than ten per cent. of the members departed from the international socialist attitude.

The first annual Conference of the Party during the war—Jowett, as the national chairman, presided—met in Norwich at Easter, 1915. No one who attended can have forgotten it. "Up to the last moment we were not sure that we should be able to hold it," wrote Jowett. "We were refused admission to the hall we had engaged and, when the National Council arrived, there was no place for the Conference to meet. Some Methodist folk had the courage and goodwill to

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\*Speech at Letchworth, July 3, 1915.

†Chairman's speech, I.L.P. Conference, Norwich, 1915. Jowett put secret diplomacy in the forefront of all his anti-war propaganda, so much so that his old friend, Robert Blatchford, described it as his "obsession." Sometimes he met the same criticism from members of the Party, to whom he replied that, whilst Capitalism was the deeper cause of war, the first need was to end the secret diplomacy which obscured its operations.

‡"Bradford Pioneer," August 14, 1914.

offer us the use of their chapel, and there we met." \* From the chair Jowett gave the conference a bold lead and by 118 votes to 3 the delegates endorsed the anti-war attitude of the National Council. A feature of Jowett's speech was his expression of solidarity with the German people.

"We hold no brief for German militarism," he said, "or the militarism of any other country; but we defend the German people. We hold in profound respect that section of the German Socialist Party which has stood true to the International, as we are trying to do. We send our thanks to Liebknecht and his comrades who are trying to stem the tide of hatred against the British people, and to *Vorwärts* and the other Socialist papers likewise engaged."

A memorable event of the Conference was the speech of Keir Hardie to the public meeting on the Sunday evening. In the Conference itself Hardie took little part. The war struck him a terrible blow spiritually and physically; he was distressed to the very core of his being by the thought that Socialists of different countries were slaughtering each other; and at that first August National Council, to which he came with the appearance of a broken man, he had told us that he felt unequal to the strain of heading the campaign against it; although, in fact, he took a lion's share in the struggle whilst strength remained. At Norwich he seemed to be under the weight of a great weariness and he was content that others should take the leadership. Jowett referred to this in a pen-picture he gave of the Conference:

"The gallery accommodating visitors ran round three sides, and the delegates were on the floor. The National Council occupied a sort of platform-pulpit and a singing-pew just beneath. Hardie took less part in the conference debates than usual. He sat beneath me in the singing-pew, with every sign of weakness on him. Now and again he dozed. The fire of life was burning low." †

But at the public meeting, which in default of a hall crowded the I.L.P. Institute, Hardie spoke with inspired vigour, his grand old head flung back, his voice ringing out with emotional power, his words pouring out in denunciation of war as organised murder and in confidence of the coming time when the workers of all countries will so understand their solidarity that it will be made impossible. This was one of the few occasions during the war when Hardie spoke with hope. It was the last time many of us heard him speak.

### *Facing War-Mad Crowds*

The Norwich Conference decided that the Party should resume its full propaganda. The decision required some courage because war feeling ran high, much more impassioned and intolerant than it has

\**Labour Leader*, April 8, 1915.

†*New Leader*, September 26, 1924.



been during the second World War. Public prejudice was still turned mainly against Ramsay MacDonald, and in his company Fred Jowett had more than one exciting experience.

There was the occasion when MacDonald spoke in Bradford. The I.L.P. took the St. George's Hall, the largest meeting place in the City, accommodating three thousand people, but there was such a heavy press barrage against it, including almost open incitement to violence, that the letting was cancelled. Drummond Road School, with large standing accommodation, was then booked. The Chief Constable took the most elaborate precautions to prevent a disturbance. He insisted that admission should be by ticket only; the road was entirely closed to the public; two cordons of police encircled the school and soldiers were instructed by their officers to keep away from the district and warned of the consequences of any breach of the peace. In Carlisle Road, the nearest approach open to the public, there was a huge crowd, and an Indian Mutiny veteran paraded the thoroughfare calling on the people to condemn Jowett "for his efforts to disturb the feelings of the country." MacDonald and Fred walked to the meeting without incident and, despite the restrictions, the hall was crowded and everything passed off successfully. Afterwards it was learned that a steeple-jack, a notorious "dare-devil," was waiting beyond the cordon with a hand grenade to throw at MacDonald and Jowett when they left. Fortunately his friends persuaded him to go to a nearby hotel and there disarmed him.

A London meeting organised by the Union of Democratic Control, an association of Socialist and Liberal opponents of secret diplomacy of which MacDonald was chairman and E. D. Morel secretary, did not pass off so well. Jowett was invited to be on the platform, but when he arrived at the Memorial Hall it was impossible to get in. Describing the incident at the time, he told how the *Daily Express* "practically invited the public to make the meeting impossible." Tickets were forged in great numbers and the hall was packed with opponents. Not desiring to provoke violence, the advertised speakers left the platform and the opposition proceeded to pass a resolution declaring that it was not admissible to talk about peace terms until the British army was in Berlin. A number of soldiers took part in the disturbance, but there were also soldiers present who supported the original object of the meeting. "Judging by the terms of the resolution which was carried," commented Jowett, "it is not likely that the uniformed disturbers of the meeting had been to the war, for one does not hear of soldiers returning from the front talking of the Allies dictating the terms of peace in Berlin."\*

The worst scene of violence, however, was at the Cory Hall, Cardiff, where MacDonald and Jowett were to speak. Havelock

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, December 3, 1915.

Wilson, secretary of the Seamen's Union, had stirred up opposition, and his henchman, "Captain" Tupper, was in command.\* Hordes of toughs stormed the gathering, cracking the glass partition between the entrance and the hall and rushing *en masse* at the platform. MacDonald and Jowett escaped through a side door and were glad to reach the home of their host, Mr. J. D. Morgan, at Rhiwbina Garden Village, sound in limb if not in wind.† The following day they addressed a vast meeting of many thousands in the Rink at Merthyr Tydfil. It was as enthusiastic as the Cardiff meeting had been unruly; during the war Merthyr became famous for its successful I.L.P. demonstrations.

Throughout this period the Bradford I.L.P. was continuing to hold large open-air meetings. Jowett was always ready to speak and at most he had a friendly reception, despite the continual attacks made on him in the local press. At a demonstration addressed by Philip Snowden and himself at Lidgett Green, however, it was almost impossible at times for the speakers to make their voices heard. Jowett stood up to the opposition in great spirit. "If there is one illusion greater than another," he declared, "it is that I am afraid of stating my opinion on the war frankly and fearlessly before my fellow citizens. So long as I am able to stand, and so long as I have a voice, I shall continue to voice those opinions, be the consequences what they may."‡ This was not bravado. The jingo elements in Bradford, and not least the woollen employers (Jowett, as we shall see, was ruthless in exposing their wartime profits) continuously attempted to stir up hostility and day by day the local press sought to ridicule him. Fred was true to his word; at no period of the war did he hesitate to face his fellow-citizens or to speak out what was in his mind.

The group which opposed the war in Bradford were sustained by close comradeship. Every weekend when Jowett returned from his Parliamentary duties they would foregather after supper on Saturday or Sunday and talk over the week's events. Sometimes they met in the homes of Fred's old associates, Willie Leach or Harry Wilson, sometimes at Francis Newbould's. Newbould, quiet, intellectual, was leader writer on the *Yorkshire Observer*; he was not a member of the Party, but endorsed its point of view and was regarded as one of the political family. The speaker at the I.L.P. Sunday meeting would be the guest of the evening, Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden or his wife, Ethel, Bruce Glasier or Katharine, W. C. Anderson, Dick Wallhead, E. D. Morel, Charles Trevelyan, H.

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\*"Captain" Tupper took a train-load of toughs from Birmingham to Cardiff for the occasion.

†When Mr. MacDonald became Prime Minister he recognised Mr. Morgan's public services by bestowing a Knighthood on him.

‡*Bradford Observer*, August 9, 1915.

N. Brailsford, Arthur Ponsonby or another. One Sunday the author was the speaker and he remembers well the gathering at Willie Leach's, with Mrs. Leach distributing cake with cups of tea and coffee amongst twelve or fifteen of us, whilst we passed from stories and news to more serious political discussion. Among those present were Councillor Sutton, the burly, round and red-faced I.L.P. Secretary, and Tom Stamford, slim, with thoughtful face, afterwards M.P. for West Leeds. There was also a German, Robert Pohl, for whom Jowett had high regard. Harry Wilson described him as the most "internationally-minded man" he had ever met. Pohl was a teacher at Bradford Technical College and a designer of dynamos for the English Electrical Company. When the authorities threatened to intern him, the company reported that there would be no dynamos for the navy, so the Home Office were content to place him on a "seven miles' string," not allowing him to journey further than that from Bradford. When, however, others had learned the craft from him, Robert was interned in the Isle of Man.\*

### *The Death of Keir Hardie*

In September, 1915, came the blow of Keir Hardie's death. He had been ailing through the summer months; one autumn evening he caught a chill and he had not the strength to master it. To all of us the news of the death of our leader meant that one of the biggest things in life had gone; to Fred Jowett, who had been associated with Hardie so closely from the earliest years, the loss was as though a part of his own being had been struck off. He had difficulty in expressing his tribute. "Hardie has lived and died for the people," he wrote. "His heart was big. It embraced the downtrodden and disinherited of every land. His courage in time of adversity was undaunted. Children still unborn will learn to be steadfast and faithful in the afterglow of his memory."†

Later, Jowett wrote an estimation of Hardie's life which enabled us to see its public service in true perspective. He reminded us of those distant pioneer days when Hardie's contribution was to make the nation "unemployed conscious." Before then no social responsibility was felt for the unemployed; the out-of-work man was regarded as a waster. Hardie more than any man in Britain changed this public attitude. Jowett told how he did it:

"A period of acute depression in trade had begun in the early nineties, which reached its climax in the winter of 1894-5. It was

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\*After the war Pohl was deported to Germany, where he established a War Resisters' League in imitation of the No-Conscription Fellowship which he had learned to admire in Bradford. When Hitler came to power in Germany, Pohl had to flee the country. He is now lecturer in technical engineering at Birmingham University.

†*Labour Leader*, September 30, 1915.

a severe winter with long-continued frost, so that the ranks of the unemployed were swelled by the outdoor workers, and there were only charity and the Poor Law for the unemployed then.

"In fact, it is hard to realise in these days the extraordinary apathy and neglect with which this problem was treated. The poverty and despair of a whole class was hardly regarded as a public problem, and Hardie shouldered the task of arousing the public conscience. From town to town he rushed, agitating and organising.

"His agitation led to the appointment of a Royal Commission, and to his own unofficial title, 'The Member for the Unemployed.'

"The Commission did nothing in particular except set up local committees, but for all that Hardie's achievement was enormous. His agitation put an end to the irresponsible attitude, and Parliament has never since been able to ignore the question."

Whence came Hardie's extraordinary influence over the common people? Jowett explained it by his complete identification with the poor and his faith in them:

"His power over a crowd, indoor or outdoor, was amazing. In what did it lie? Not in eloquence, nor voice, nor gesture, for his voice was harsh with much speaking and his gestures were few—an outstretched hand and a pointing finger and little else. Nor was he eloquent after the manner of orators. It was his sincerity and simplicity of statement that carried his audience, and his invariable habit of associating himself with the poor man.

"In those days that was a new attitude. The common people were accustomed to being propitiated with promises now and again, ignored a great deal, and patronised a little; but Keir Hardie loved them, championed them, was proud of them and expected great things of them. No wonder he moved them! And every political topic that he touched led to his challenge of the system which cut his people off from the chance of making their lives splendid."

Jowett told how the day came when at last national recognition and honour seemed to be at hand for Hardie. The Labour Party emerged suddenly, after the 1906 election, into a Parliamentary force. He was inevitably elected its chairman. Was he to become a distinguished Parliamentarian?

"He could not: he was not allowed to. Another unpopular cause struggled to its birth and cried out to him for the help which it was not in his nature to deny . . .

"The early woman suffragists were few, and they struggled against a dead-weight of indifference and a torrent of bitter opposition. Hardie became their champion. An unpopular cause, a hard battle such as this, drew him more strongly than Parliamentary leadership . . .

"Just before the war the woman suffrage agitation entered on the stage of violence, and this violence did not spare Hardie's meetings. From this extraordinary test of his loyalty and forbearance he came out well: never uttering a word of reproach which could

be quoted against the women. But we knew that in his heart he was deeply grieved and hurt. Then came the war and a double wound.

"All the things he most cared for were submerged. Worse than that, the Socialist International, on which he had been teaching the people to rely as a solid barrier against the war, was broken and helpless. The Labour Party, in which he had led millions of people to place their confidence, had failed. Comrades with whom he had been closely associated in all his undertakings, and from whom he had never before differed on any material thing, were parted from him. It seemed as if his whole life work was in ruins, and he had lived and worked in vain.

"He stood up to it all; he wrote his articles to his local Labour paper; he took his share of meetings and did not shirk the violent ones; he addressed conferences. But his heart was fit to break, and soon his body showed the sign."

"Like Jaurès, he was a war casualty," Jowett ended. Those of us who were near to Hardie in these days know that this is true. He was only fifty-nine when he died; in a few months the tragedy and disappointment of the war had made him old. He was killed by it as surely as any soldier in battle.

*The I.L.P. and the Labour Party—Sir John Simon and D.O.R.A.*

True to the Hardie tradition of solidarity with the working class, the I.L.P. remained affiliated to the Labour Party\* despite the opposite views which they took on the war. The difference was debated at the Labour Party conference held at Bristol in 1915. A pro-war resolution was adopted by 1,502,000 votes to 602,000, Ramsay MacDonald delivering a moderate speech and R. C. Wallhead a challenging one in opposition. Jowett moved a resolution on his favourite topic of secret diplomacy. The wording was eminently reasonable, urging that no treaty, arrangement or understanding should be entered into without the sanction of Parliament, but the delegates sat uneasily through Fred's forceful recital of the duplicity of pre-war diplomacy and squirmed under the biting phrases of Philip Snowden, who lashed the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, mercilessly. The resolution was defeated by almost the same majority as had been given to the war resolution—1,345,000 votes to 688,000.

The war brought, of course, limitations of the freedom of writing and speech. They were embodied in the Defence of the Realm Act (popularly known as "DORA"). When he read the terms of the proposed Act, Jowett held that they could be used to suppress not only the spreading of untrue statements, but of opinions not to the liking of the authorities, and he tabled an amendment with a view to the

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\*This was made easier by the toleration shown by the Labour Party. The executive actually elected a leading I.L.P. member, W. C. Anderson, to the chair in 1914.

restriction of censorship and punishment to the former. Sir John Simon, the Home Secretary, assured him, however, that there was no intention to suppress opinion, and Fred withdrew the amendment. Later, Jowett's interpretation of the Act rather than Sir John's statement of its intention proved to be valid.

"Sir John Simon gave me a definite assurance that under the Bill, when it had passed into law, there would be no power to penalise anybody for the publication of honest expression of opinion," wrote Jowett afterwards. "In spite of this assurance, Regulations were issued that did involve such power and they were repeatedly enforced. In one case, a man in a common lodging house, who was seen by one of the other lodgers writing objectionable opinions, was prosecuted and convicted, although what he had written was never published, and was only seen by the fellow lodger who turned informer. There were many cases of persons prosecuted for merely expressing personal opinions in conversations overheard or listened to by hostile persons. Even if Sir John Simon had not, in my opinion, been guilty of many far more serious breaches of faith, I could never forgive him for that one *by which he obtained the withdrawal of my amendment*, the sole object of which was to protect people from prosecution for expressions of honest opinion."\*

#### *Recruiting Campaign and Conscription*

The test of opposition to the war came when the Government invited the political parties to co-operate in a recruiting campaign. The Labour Party agreed; the I.L.P. refused. The National Council of the Party declared that if advice had to be given to the workers it should be from their own platforms and not in the company of militarists and enemies of Labour "with whose outlook and aim we are in sharpest conflict and who will assuredly seize this opportunity to justify the policy leading up to the war." This reflected Jowett's personal attitude.

"How can I go on the platform along with men who think the war is right and appeal for recruits?" he asked. "It is impossible. My position is clear. I cannot ask for recruits for a war shapen in iniquity, into which the country has been led blindfolded, the result of imperialist aggression."†

He put the same point dramatically in reply to a Labour Party critic at a public demonstration at Leicester:

"The obligation to fight is one to which I, though a Member of Parliament, am not a party. The war has been entered into after Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Asquith had stated definitely that the obligation was not in existence. Therefore I ask myself if it is my business to go recruiting, and I come to the conclusion that those who believe in it should do the recruiting.

\*Bradford I.L.P. News, September 15, 1939.

†Speech at Letchworth, July 3, 1915.

"When the war is over questions will have to be faced. Suppose I had been recruiting and had been the means of some poor mother's son being shot. She may come to me and say—'My boy went, but you did not tell him it was an unjust war. He is dead. What have you to say?'"\*

The refusal of the I.L.P. Members of Parliament to take part in recruiting aroused vicious criticism throughout the country and particularly in their constituencies.† In Bradford Jowett had to meet almost daily rebuke in the press, where he was denounced as "pro-German," an "enemy of the country," and a "national blackleg." This campaign of abuse was followed by a fierce correspondence which occupied columns and lasted for days. Jowett took no part in it. Instead, he went out to face the public at meetings, not ticket meetings which could be restricted to supporters, but open-air meetings where critics could come freely. Thousands attended them and, though he had some heckling, he was generally heard with sympathy. Some of the Bradford Labour Party leaders, including Fred's old colleagues, Aldermen Hayhurst, Brown and Palin, took part in the recruiting campaign, but there was never any suggestion that the local Labour Movement should repudiate him. At the height of this agitation the Trades Council invited him to attend a special meeting to explain his views "in regard to the position of the workers in relationship to the war." He did so with the utmost frankness, and at the end a resolution expressing "high appreciation for the splendid service he has rendered on behalf of the workers of Bradford" was carried unanimously.‡

The recruiting campaign was interpreted by Jowett and his I.L.P. colleagues as a plan to prepare the public for Conscription and to compromise the Labour Movement so that its hands would be tied. "You have co-operated in the national effort to get volunteers," the Government would say, "and share responsibility for the failure to get sufficient men—you cannot now oppose compulsion." The Government did say this, but nevertheless, when the threat became serious, the whole Labour Movement rallied in opposition. The Trades Union Congress of 1915 unanimously rejected Conscription. In one of the preliminary debates in the Commons Mr. J. H. Thomas gave warning that Conscription might be met by a

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\**Leicester Pioneer*, August 1, 1915.

†There was a small group of Liberal M.P.s who also opposed the war and declined to go on the recruiting platform. They included Mr. Arthur Ponsonby, Mr. C. P. Trevelyan, Mr. Joseph King, and Sir. W. P. Byles, the Bradford Liberal, to whose breadth of view Jowett had paid tribute from his earliest days.

‡"There is room for differences of opinion in the Labour Movement," Alderman Hayhurst said at this meeting, "and there is the need for the greatest toleration. Above all things we have to remember that, however we may differ now, there will be a labour question after the war is over." Bradford Labour was fortunate in the breadth of mind shown on both sides of this controversy.

national strike of railwaymen. The I.L.P. National Council, in terms unusual for a political party, pledged resistance:

"If, in spite of our efforts, the system is imposed, the members of the National Council pledge themselves to resist its operations and, while recognising the right of every individual member of the Party to act as his or her conscience dictates, the National Council will do all in its power to defend those members who individually refuse to submit to such compulsion."

Jowett himself, as chairman of the Party, supplemented this by an outspoken statement. He attacked the attempts which were being made to drive men into the army "under the threat of dismissal by employers and by moral press-gang methods exercised by people too old to enlist or who belong to the sex who cannot enlist," and urged both Trade Union and individual resistance to these methods. He called on the workers "to do their best to destroy any Government which attempts to fasten the hateful thing upon the British people." Finally, he referred to the underlying moral issue:—

"No outside power, no human authority, is entitled to compel a man to do that against which his soul revolts. A man had better lose his life than his soul, and many men in this country will, if they are forced by the madness of their rulers to face the alternative, choose the better part."\*

When Jowett was challenged on what grounds he could oppose compulsion since he believed in national defence, he replied that Conscription was necessary only to invade Europe, not to defend Britain. He had argued on these lines before the war when Earl Roberts had led an agitation for Conscription. "If we do not take the risk of meddling with European quarrels which might lead to war on the Continent of Europe," he had written, "there will be no necessity for the Conscription that is being preached so freely. It is not to repel invasion we are asked to sacrifice our liberty, but to enable our rulers to adventure in a risky foreign policy, which might commit Great Britain to sending an army against a Continental Power."† Now that this "risky foreign policy" had brought Britain into war, he was not prepared to support Conscription to give it effect.

When Conscription was introduced in 1916, the opposition of the Labour Party withered away. Only 36 M.P.s, including the five members of the I.L.P. Group, voted against it. The personal resisters to Conscription, of whom a large number were attached to the I.L.P., organised themselves in the No-Conscription Fellowship, twelve thousand of whose members were imprisoned. Although not a pacifist, Fred Jowett had a high regard for what he termed the "moral courage" of these young men and never hid his sympathy with them.

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, June 18, 1915.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, April 25, 1913.



*Jowett Pioneers Taxation of War Profits*

Against the conscription of life Jowett put the demand for the conscription of wealth. In particular, he called for the taxation of increased war-time profits. This was a new proposition at the time and was vigorously denounced by the business interests, particularly by the *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, the organ of the wool owners. Before long, however, it began to attract support. Endorsement came from Mr. Chiozza Money (then held in high esteem as a statistician, afterwards a Minister, and still later a Knight). "Some time in the last session of Parliament my friend Mr. F. W. Jowett," he wrote, "suggested to the Chancellor of the Exchequer that an extra income tax should be levied upon those whose profits during the war exceed their profits before the war. Surely this is a very sensible and a very practical suggestion, and I heartily hope that Mr. Lloyd George has not lost sight of it."\* Mr. Gordon Harvey, another Liberal M.P., also backed Jowett, and then came commendation from the *Economist*, which remarked that in principle "the proposal is quite reasonable and fair." In his Budget speech Mr. Lloyd George responded to these appeals by saying he had no doubt it "would be perfectly just . . . perfectly legitimate to resort to those who had made exceptional incomes out of the war," but he did nothing about it.

Then Mr. Lloyd George had to make a bargain with the Trade Unions engaged in the key war industries. He asked for no strikes and the acceptance of compulsory arbitration. The Trade Union representatives, with the exception of the miners' leaders, agreed, but only on a promise that profits would be limited. Some weeks went by without the fulfilment of the promise, leading to the bitter remark by Jowett that "alas the Trade Unionists and the public made the mistake that employers would be dealt with by the Government as if they were only workmen."† Eventually a clause was included in the Munitions Act placing some limit on the profits of "controlled" establishments. The limit was the average of the previous two years—plus one fifth! Jowett pointed out that Armstrongs would be able to increase their profits by £31,000 and Vickers by £47,000!‡

In the autumn of 1915 Mr. McKenna, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, adopted the principle of the taxation of war profits. He proposed to take half of the excess profits beyond the first £100 in businesses making more than 6 per cent.. The Member for West Bradford was justifiably pleased that his proposal had been accepted even in part. "I wait with interest," he wrote, "for the comment of the Editor of the *Bradford Daily Telegraph* and those indignant Brad-

\**Sunday Chronicle* (quoted in *Bradford Pioneer*, February 26, 1915).

†*Bradford Pioneer*, April 30, 1915.

‡Armstrongs profits stood at £801,000, and Vickers at £1,019,000.

ford spinners, wool merchants, manufacturers and others who have poured out their splenetic wrath on me for having advocated the proposal in question when nobody else was doing so.”\*

### *Proposals for the Conscription of Wealth*

Jowett's proposals for the conscription of wealth, however, went much further. He urged that the Government should take command of the whole economy of the nation, estimating its potential output, deciding what was necessary to produce and utilising all the necessary personnel on a properly paid basis without profit to any non-producer.

“This war has been the means of throwing considerable light on questions affecting the production and exchange of goods and services,” he wrote. “The nation's requirements are clearly ascertainable, and the short and effective way of supplying them is for the Government to take the machinery, plant, and raw materials available and apply the whole of it to the service of the nation. By neglecting to do this at the very beginning and persisting in its mistaken course, the Government has allowed the profiteer and the moneylender to take advantage of the nation's need for their own private profit.”†

In his usual concrete way, Jowett applied this principle in detail to the industry he knew best, the woollen and worsted industry. The Government, he counselled, should take control of all mills and limit production to plain cloths in different weights for outer and under wear. Production of short lengths, wasteful in labour and machine-power, should be stopped. No confined cloths should be allowed to occupy the machinery—“cloths for the exclusive pride of rich people, who are prepared to pay any price to ensure that others do not buy and wear similar clothes.” The Government should purchase all available stocks from wool-growing countries under an arrangement similar to that made with the Australian Government for meat. “There is not the slightest reason to doubt that, systematically applied to the purpose in this way,” he wrote, “the mills of the West Riding alone could clothe with the greatest ease the whole of the military and civil population and, in addition, supply large quantities for the armies of France, Russia and Belgium.”‡

The demand for the State acquisition of the woollen industry aroused fierce opposition from the owners, particularly when Jowett began to ask questions in Parliament about the prices paid for soldiers' clothing. “The honourable member appears to be just a wee bit too inquisitive,” remarked the Bradford Conservative paper.§ Jowett responded by plunging into an exposure of the profits of the wool

\**Bradford Pioneer*, September 24, 1915.

†*Land and Water*, October 2, 1915.

‡*Bradford Pioneer*, March 9, 1915.

§*Bradford Daily Telegraph*, February 11, 1915.

magnates. "I have heard of one firm in Bradford which has made £10,000 out of the war," he said. He cited particulars incomprehensible to anyone outside the industry, but as familiar to his listeners as their own names. "Forties cross-bred tops," he pointed out, had risen by fivepence per lb. in six months. A pack of wool contained 240lb. and firms often had 1,000 packs in stock. To such a firm the advance in price would mean an extra profit of £5,000.\*

### *Profiteers Slander the Workers*

Readers will remember that Jowett introduced the word "profiteers" to Parliament. He never left the subject alone. Later he was to become known as the most ruthless critic of the profit-making devices of the financiers and bankers; he was already starting out on this course.

"Instead of requiring the shareholders in the banks to pay up their uncalled capital so as to make the payment of their customers possible," he remarked, "the Government said to the banks, 'We will allow you to pay with paper based on the credit of the nation to the extent of 20 per cent. of your liabilities,' and that was done. The Government had 38 million pounds worth of currency notes printed, and these notes were used by the banks largely to pay their creditors."

He did not restrict his attack to the banks; he hit out all round, particularly at the shipowners. Within six months of the outbreak of war prices had risen 23 per cent., largely because of increased freightage rates, which had gone up by 300 and, sometimes, 700 per cent. A Workers' National Committee was formed to demand, among other things, that the Government should take over all shipping, bringing wheat at cost price from Argentina and Canada, and that coal should be commandeered and distributed at a fixed price through municipalities and Co-operative Societies.† Conferences attended by delegates from all kinds of organisations were held throughout the country (Jowett addressed the Bradford Conference), but the agitation made only a temporary impression. To become effective it required the full backing of the Labour Movement and the official leaders were too much concerned about "national unity" to throw their weight into it.

Jowett's anger about profit-making was partly a reaction to the vicious attacks which were being made in Parliament and in the press on the working class. The shipowners began it by charging their workers with drunkenness, slacking, shirking and selfishness, and Mr. Lloyd George gave the charges his authority: "I am convinced what you have told me simply represents the truth." It was characteristic

\*Speech at opening of Socialist Institute, Heaton, Bradford, January 31, 1915.

†The cost of carrying coal from Newcastle to London went up from 3s. a ton to 13s.

of Jowett that he reacted to these attacks as though they were made on himself. All the time he thought instinctively through the minds of the workers, saw through their eyes, felt through their emotions. He belonged to the folk in the back-to-back houses among whom he had been born and grown up, to the men and women with whom he had worked in the mill, to the comrades with whom he had exchanged ideas over mugs of tea in working-class eating-houses. In this case the brunt of the attack fell on other sections of workers, but that did not matter. The shipbuilders were essentially the same as the woollen workers: they had the same struggle for existence, they suffered the same exploitation. The attack on them was an attack on all workers; Fred made it an attack on himself.

The owners alleged that 80 per cent. of the time lost in shipbuilding yards was due to overdrinking, but Jowett demonstrated that their figures did not allow for sickness, for lost time through lack of materials, and for the substitution of aged and disabled men for the able-bodied men taken into the Forces.\*

#### *Labour Enters the Government*

This combined attack on the workers by the owning class and the Government threatened seriously to disturb the maintenance of national unity. The Government attempted to heal the breach by a bold gesture—it invited the Labour Party, together with the Conservatives, to join a Coalition Government, and the Party agreed that Mr. Arthur Henderson should join the Cabinet. Jowett was scathing in his comment.

“Weakened, as it was, by its double failure to justify its wholesale charges of slacking against working men or to carry the necessary measures for dealing with the evil if it believed in these charges . . . only two courses were open to the Prime Minister. He was driven to decide whether (1) he would appeal to the people, or (2) he would share the offices which are the prizes of political warfare between his own and other parties in the hope, thereby, of making hostages of the new men . . .

“It is not for the sake of Mr. Henderson’s beautiful eyes (or for the love of the Labour Party) that Mr. F. E. Smith and Mr. Bonar Law are ready to welcome him among the elect of the governing classes. Neither of these gladiators of the political prize ring has ever neglected an opportunity of expressing his contempt and loathing for Mr. Henderson’s Party and everything it stands for, and the first-mentioned of the pair has never failed to use his choicest mouthfuls of Billingsgate language on these occasions. It may also be taken for granted that Lord Lansdowne and Lord Curzon have not been born again since the war and become, at last, as other men.”

Jowett argued that *more* freedom of action, and not less, would be

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, October 1, 1915.

required by Labour if conditions during and after the war were to be freed from preventable suffering. "I regard a Coalition Government as a most mischievous development of the hateful system of government by Party leaders," he commented. "It is a conspiracy between different sets of Party leaders to divide the administrative posts between them."\*

He did not object to a Coalition between Tories and Liberals, but he argued that, in the case of the Labour Party, there was, or should be, a fundamental difference.

### *The Conscription of Labour*

During the First World War industrial conscription was not applied to anything like the same extent as in the Second World War. There was no general direction of labour to this industry or that; it was only under the Munitions Act that men were tied to the job. Jowett opposed the Act on the ground that, "whilst it fixes men to the service of one employer as firmly as if they had been branded as serfs, it specially allows the profits of the employer to be increased in this time of war to the amount of 20 per cent. on his pre-war profits." He was challenged that socialisation would also involve the "direction" of labour. He replied that it would bring a new psychology:

"If a few adjustments are required to which the workers affected are averse, the knowledge that they are necessary in the public interest and not for the profit of individuals, will secure compliance without the intervention of the drill sergeant or the court-martial. On this footing, I believe men may, and I believe they will, consent to have their labour directed, but they will never consent to become a conscript army of labour under the direction of profiteers in pursuit of private fortunes."†

Reading Jowett's utterances during this war period one realises that for him there was another war—a war against social injustice and class exploitation. It angered him to see the luxury and ease of the possessing class when thousands of men who had never known even comfort were going to death and mutilation, and his attacks on class inequalities sharpened; they became of piercing directness. There was one occasion when he suggested in the House of Commons that the rich should be compelled to make a record of the number of servants they kept "to minister to their whims and caprices." The wealthy Members were indignant, and Mr. Leif Jones, a Liberal, reproved him for "raising class distinctions." Jowett seized on special instances of profiteering associated with war contracts, denouncing both Govern-

\**Labour Leader*, May 27, 1915.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, June 8, 1915. Jowett distinguished between "war-time collectivism" and socialisation. "If the powers of the Government to take over industry were put into force," he wrote, "that would not bring into existence a socialist system of industry, because Socialism involves democratic control." (*Bradford Pioneer*, March 9, 1915.)

ment officials and contractors with scorching phrases. He was particularly hard on "the insufferably pompous persons who compose His Majesty's Office of Works" for giving a certain Mr. Meyer a timber-purchasing contract on which he made £15,000 in commission in three months. "The simplicity of the gentlemen at H.M. Office of Works is abnormal," he commented. Jowett was himself to become head of this Department in the Labour Government of 1924.

### *Jowett Wins Concession for Service Men*

During the war years no Member of Parliament worked more continuously and conscientiously to relieve the injustices from which the poorer section of the community, and particularly the dependents of the men in the Forces, suffered. Every week-end, from Saturday morning to late on Sunday night, his home at 10, Grantham Terrace was besieged by disabled soldiers, the wives of soldiers, the mothers of lads in the Forces, old-age pensioners, and workers who were in difficulties due to war circumstances. Fred converted the attic of the house into an office to receive them, and there he would sit at his desk all day, noting particulars, filing records, giving advice, promising to take up grievances with Ministers. Those who wished to see him would queue in the hall and up the staircase awaiting their turn. How many thousands came cannot be calculated, but Jowett's files show that he dealt with over 2,000 cases of soldiers and their dependents, and each case usually involved several visits. Tribute must be paid to Mrs. Jowett as well as to Fred. It cannot have been easy for her to have people crowding the passages and stairs of her home each week-end, spoiling her carpets with mud and wear and tear.

When Jowett returned to Westminster he would spend hours each day at a table in the Map Room of the Commons Library drafting letters or questions to Ministers. He would go to the War Office and the Ministry of Pensions and submit the most urgent or difficult cases to the chief officials. Failing to get satisfaction by correspondence or interviews he would raise the cases in the House itself; Hansard shows that he did this on no fewer than 166 occasions. He had his defeats and his victories. One week-end's record shows that he got (1) an Army Form amended (it had been so misleading that hundreds of boys unwittingly signed away their parents' right to allowances), (2) the allowance of the widowed mother of a soldier increased from 3s. 6d. to 7s., (3) a boy of seventeen brought home from overseas and discharged from the army, (4) a soldier's pound note lost in the post refunded, and (5) £600 paid to a professional man for services to the War Office which had gone unrecognised. "Big or little, they all come to me," commented Jowett. He was touched by the expressions of gratitude he received. A disabled soldier, for whom Jowett obtained the renewal of his pension eight years after he had been turned down by the War Pensions Tribunal, held that Fred should be "canonised"

for his help to Servicemen. One of Jowett's most cherished possessions was a fountain pen, sent to him anonymously during the first World War. It bore a gold band with this inscription: "F. W. Jowett, Esq., M.P. A worthy Member and a soldier's true friend. From a soldier, September 5, 1917." He used this pen until his last days.

In addition to his successes with individual cases, Jowett had the satisfaction of a Parliamentary triumph on the issue of soldiers' pensions. Early in 1916 the luck of the ballot gave him the opportunity to introduce a motion on any subject he desired. He chose servicemen's pensions and, on March 14, 1916, he moved:

"The State should accept responsibility for the payment of pensions and allowances to all soldiers discharged from the Army on account of diseases contracted or developed during service with the Colours, and, in the case of death, pensions and allowances to dependents, if any."

Jowett's speech cited an impressive series of cases where pensions had not been given and he was supported by pleas from all sides of the House. At the conclusion of the debate the Financial Secretary to the War Office announced that when disease had been *aggravated by war service* pensions would be given. Thousands of servicemen and their dependents benefited from this concession.

Another injustice which stirred Jowett was the hardship suffered by small debtors who, because of the increased cost of living, decrease in income through the menfolk of the family being called to the services, and other war circumstances, were unable to meet their obligations. He learned of many cases in Bradford where families were threatened (often the father or son was away fighting in France) with the loss of insurance policies or of articles purchased on the instalment plan when payments could not be maintained. When the banks and business men were in difficulties at the beginning of the war, he pointed out, the Government granted them a moratorium on their debts, but it had left the poor debtors to their fate. He raised this injustice in the House and succeeded, despite the opposition of propertied interests and their lawyers, in getting provisions included in the Courts (Emergency Powers) Bill, introduced to protect commercial debtors, to safeguard the poorer debtors as well. Anxiety was removed from thousands of homes by this simple act of justice.

### *Beginning of the Chemical Monopoly*

An instance of the foresight of Jowett was his warning, as far back as 1915, that the establishment of British Dyes, Ltd., might lead to the creation of a monopoly which would be dangerous both as a vested interest in Britain and as a partner with similar monopolies in other countries. Jowett's comments might have been written to-day.

"The sinister influence of the profiteering capitalist in shaping the policy of the Government's emergency measures is shown in the scheme for producing aniline dyes," he wrote. "*The impend-*

*ing famine in dye-wares is partly the result of arrangements between German and British chemical manufacturers concerning the sale of chemical substances.* Capitalism knows no country and, whenever it suits the purpose of well-organised capitalist groups to encourage a monopoly in one department of an industry in one country to the exclusion of other countries, on conditions of mutual advantage to themselves, the public interest is never considered. So it has happened with regard to the production and sale of chemical substances and we now see the results.”\*

To meet the shortage of aniline dyes, so essential for war purposes, the Government set up the British Dyes, Ltd. The Government subscribed half the capital, but provision was made that, if the Company proved successful, it could buy out the Government shares and become a private monopoly. Despite the fact that the shortage which led to the establishment of British Dyes, Ltd., was in part due to the way in which production had been allocated in the interests of profit-makers in Britain and Germany before the war, Jowett pointed out that there were no safeguards to prevent the new monopoly from making arrangements with German or other foreign firms in the future.

Jowett's fears were completely realised. It was one of the conditions of the settlement at the end of the war that all the secret processes of the German chemical industry should be revealed to the British Government. The Government passed them on to the British Dyestuffs, Ltd., which later became one of the most powerful of British monopolies, the Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd. The I.C.I. followed exactly the course which Jowett foresaw, entering into producing and marketing arrangements not only with Du Ponts in America but with the Nazi-controlled I.G. Farben-Industrie in Germany. The American authorities took such a serious view of the terms of the agreement between Du Ponts and the I.G.F. that they commenced legal proceedings. The full story will not be known until the case goes to trial.

#### *A Prophecy About Winston Churchill*

A still more remarkable instance of foresight was Jowett's prediction at this time of the future of Mr. Winston Churchill. In 1915, after the failure of the Dardanelles campaign, Churchill resigned office and joined his old regiment in France. Jowett, writing, let us remember, nearly thirty years ago, saw the significance of this incident.

“The departure of Winston Churchill for France marks the

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, March 19, 1915.



close of the present era of Liberalism. I feel sure he will never work in harness with his colleagues of the last ten years again.

"He is, as everybody knows, a pushful person and means to do big things and be a big figure in the world. It is a master stroke of his to rejoin his regiment. In doing so he will free himself of his old ties and associations, which would otherwise have impeded his political movements, and, moreover, he can watch from the outside, as things settle down and new political forces emerge from the wreckage left of the present political parties."

Jowett's prophecy proved correct. It was not until 1924 that Winston Churchill formally severed his connection with the Liberal Party, but this was the really decisive moment of change. Still more interesting was Jowett's estimate of Churchill's personality.

"What of this irrepressible Winston? . . . Alas I fear I can say little good . . . Good, I mean, in the public sense and in the light of such powers of judgment as I possess. Winston Churchill is a great man, in my opinion. I have always said so. His mind comprehends big things and he loves power and delights in action. To hear him speak yesterday of the 'grim game' of war and of the Dardanelles campaign as a 'gamble' with Constantinople as the prize (although he forgot to mention that Russia expected to possess the prize as her share of the spoil) was thrilling. It made one's nerves tingle, fearfully or joyfully according to one's faith in the man and belief in his mission.

"'Get to Constantinople!' was his cry, 'get there by any and every means and at any cost!' In other words, let the 'grim game' go on. Increase the stakes and 'gamble' with the last man and the last shilling.

"With this mad spirit Winston Churchill desires to conduct the affairs of the British nation. With this mad spirit he and the others have, to some extent, and for the moment, infected the people already.

"To give Winston Churchill his due," Jowett concluded, "he is adventurous enough to throw his own life into the 'gamble,' which is more than can be said for most of the gamblers. When he returns he will, I expect, fight once more in the political arena, with the Minister of Munitions (Mr. Lloyd George) as his chief antagonist, and the Premiership as the final glory to be fought for and won if possible."\*

The only thing Jowett did not foresee was that the Premiership would fall to Churchill in recognition of his prowess to conduct the still grimmer gamble of the Second World War when all had seemed lost at Dunkirk.

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, November 19, 1915.

## CHAPTER VIII

## SOCIALISM STRIVES FOR A PEOPLE'S PEACE

FROM an early stage in the war the I.L.P., and no one more persistently than Fred Jowett, asked the Government to state its Peace Terms in clear and precise language. It is due to the men in the Forces to know what they are fighting and dying for, the Party urged. It is due to the people of the country to know what their sacrifices are for. It is due to the peoples of the "enemy" countries to know on what terms peace is possible.

Jowett put his first question down on February 11, 1915. He asked Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, "whether, with a view to putting an end to the terrific loss of life in the European war, the British Government would be prepared to declare publicly the basis upon which Great Britain and her Allies are willing to discuss terms of peace with Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey." He received a negative reply.

The following month the National Council of the Party supplemented the preliminary question of its chairman by issuing a manifesto making the same demand. Hundreds of thousands of copies were distributed in leaflet form and Socialist Parties in all countries were asked to endorse the demand. It was the voice of reason when most people were giving way to blind emotion.

"In no case has a Government stated in a practical and concrete way the terms on which it would be willing to make peace," the manifesto pointed out. "In each of the countries at war the militarist Jingo declares they will not rest content short of smashing and dismembering enemy countries . . . So long as this fear of dismemberment and crushing humiliation holds a nation in thrall, it will go on fighting to the last ounce of resistance and the last drop of blood . . ."

"The Labour and Socialist forces in all the belligerent countries should press their Governments to disclose, not in vague, meaningless generalities, but in clear and specific terms, what they are fighting for, and on this information it would be possible to take national and international action, with a view to reaching a settlement with the largest possible measure of equity and the least possible loss of life."

It was some time before replies came from the Socialist Parties abroad. Meanwhile, the I.L.P. carried its propaganda throughout the country by literature distribution, through the *Labour Leader* (whose circulation rose to 60,000), at hundreds of meetings, and by Parliamentary activity. Of the last, Jowett's questions to Ministers became a famous feature. "Mr. F. W. Jowett, the Labour M.P. for West Bradford, has won for himself quite an individual position in the House of Commons," remarked the Parliamentary correspondent of the *Standard*.\*

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\*March 13, 1915.

"His fad is the democratic control of foreign affairs. Whoever of his colleagues may be slack, Mr. Jowett never misses at least one question a day addressed to Sir Edward Grey."

A question which aroused considerable speculation enquired about a missing letter in the White Paper recording the official correspondence which had preceded the war. Going through the White Paper carefully Jowett found that one communication had been withheld. Speculation was increased when the Foreign Secretary asked Jowett not to press his question. Sir Edward informed Jowett confidentially that the letter recorded an important conversation between him and an Ambassador (country not stated), in which the latter expressed a personal view not afterwards confirmed by his Government. The Foreign Secretary stated that the Ambassador was neither German nor Austrian, "so that it is no case of our having suppressed anything put forward by the representatives of the enemy Powers."\*

Czarist Russia, repressing her own people and asserting aggressively imperialist aims, was distrusted by Jowett as much as Soviet Russia was subsequently championed by him. One of his Parliamentary questions at this time enquired whether the Government approved of a statement of M. Sazanoff in the Duma that Russia intended permanently to occupy Constantinople. Sir Edward Grey avoided a direct answer, although later, when Lenin published the secret treaties which he had found in the archives at Moscow, it was revealed that, in fact, Britain had been committed to support this Russian ambition.

Jowett maintained his quest for truth about peace terms by repeatedly returning to the subject in his articles. "The power of the German Government to carry on the war effectively depends on the attitude of the German people," he wrote, "and they have been led to believe that Great Britain and her Allies mean to carve up Germany. A declaration of a different object by the Allies would tend to disabuse the German people of this belief and consequently weaken the position of the German Government."†

#### *Refused Passports to Zimmerwald*

In the autumn of 1915 a response came from the Italian and Swiss Socialist Parties to the I.L.P. proposal that international action should be commenced for an equitable peace. They issued a call to a conference of anti-war Socialist Parties to be held near Berne, and the Italian Party sent a member of its Executive, Deputy Morgari, to London to urge British Socialists to participate. The I.L.P. Parliamentary Committee met Morgari, enthusiastically acclaimed the initiative of their brother Parties, appointed Jowett and Bruce Glasier to attend as delegates and applied for passports the following day. They were refused without any explanation, as was a request by the British

\*Letter from Foreign Office, dated February 5, 1915.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, June 11, 1915.

Socialist Party\* for a passport for its delegate, E. C. Fairchild. Jowett immediately put down one of his questions to Sir Edward Grey, who declined to say more than that "His Majesty's Government considered it would be contrary to the public interest to issue the passports." When Mr. Joseph King, the Liberal M.P., put the supplementary question: "Is the House to conclude that the Member for West Bradford is not dangerous at home, but is dangerous abroad?" the Foreign Secretary replied that he was not aware that Jowett was one of the three persons who had asked for passports!

So the conference met without representatives of British anti-war Socialists. Delegates gathered at Berne from the Italian, Swiss and Spanish Parties, from minority sections of the French and German Parties, and from the exiled Party of Russia. They hid themselves from the attention of the authorities by retreating to the little mountain village of Zimmerwald. Lenin was among the delegates, and here the nucleus of the Third International was formed by a group of those who supported his view that the socialist way to end the war was not by negotiation between imperialist Governments but by revolution against the Governments. It was the Russian revolution which opened the way for further international action by Socialists.

#### *Leeds Congress for Workers' and Soldiers' Councils*

The Kerensky revolution occurred in March, 1917. In June the I.L.P. and B.S.P. took the initiative in calling a Congress at Leeds to express solidarity with the workmen and soldiers of Russia and to urge the formation of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in this country. Fred Jowett was among those who signed the invitation to the Congress; "Russia has called us to follow her," it read. To the end of his life Fred used to refer to the Leeds Congress as the highest point of revolutionary fervour he had seen in this country. Prominent in his memory was a fiery speech by Ernest Bevin, who vigorously attacked the "pacifist" attitude of the I.L.P. "I believe the future will see, even in this country, that there will have to be shedding of blood to retain the freedom we have won," Bevin declared.

The main resolution centred on the slogan, "Hail, the Russian Revolution!" The famous clause which declared for the formation of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils read as follows:

"This conference calls upon the constituent bodies at once to establish in every town, urban and rural district, Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' delegates for initiating and co-ordinating working-class activity . . . and to work strenuously for a peace made by the peoples of the various countries, and for the complete political and economic emancipation of international Labour. Such Councils shall also

Watch diligently for and resist every encroachment upon industrial and civil liberty;

Give special attention to the position of women employed in industry and generally support the work of the Trade Unions;

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\*Predecessor of the Communist Party.

Take active steps to stop the exploitation of food and all other necessities of life, and shall concern themselves with questions affecting the pensions of wounded and disabled soldiers and the dependents of men serving with the Army and Navy, and the making of adequate provision for the training of disabled soldiers and for suitable and remunerative work for the men on their return to civil life..

And, further, the conveners of this Conference be appointed a Provisional Committee, whose duty shall be to assist the formation of local Workers' and Soldiers' Councils and generally to give effect to the policy determined by this Conference."

One incident occurred at the Congress which was afterwards to assume some importance. The notorious "Captain" Tupper, of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union, who had been responsible for breaking up more than one I.L.P. meeting, including the Cardiff demonstration where MacDonald and Jowett were to have spoken, demanded that Germany should be required to pay an indemnity in order to compensate the widows and orphans of the victims of her submarines. His manner was offensive and the delegates, remembering his hooligan record, listened to him impatiently. They had every sympathy with the sailors but none with the shipowners, who were making vast profits out of the shortage of ships. "Let them pay!" they cried.

#### *Seamen Refuse to Take MacDonald and Jowett to Russia*

Immediately following the Leeds Congress the Petrograd Workers' and Soldiers' Council, supported by the Russian Government, invited the Labour Party, the I.L.P. and the B.S.P. to send delegations to Petrograd to exchange views on how international action could be taken to end the war by a Peoples' Peace. All three British Parties accepted the invitation, and the British Government, on the advice of Sir George Buchanan, British Ambassador to Russia, and Mr. Arthur Henderson, Labour Member of the Cabinet, then on a visit to Russia, decided to issue passports. The Labour Party selected Mr. G. H. Roberts, M.P., and Mr. W. Carter, a railwaymen's leader, as their representatives, the I.L.P. chose Ramsay MacDonald and Fred Jowett, and the B.S.P. appointed E. C. Fairchild.

Some Tory die-hards in Parliament, supported by one Labour Member, Mr. Will Crooks, attempted to get the passports of MacDonald and Jowett withdrawn, but they failed. Philip Snowden made this comment at the time:

"Instead of the debate discrediting Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Jowett, it ended in a great triumph for them, and proved that the Government, in granting these passports, was taking a course strongly recommended to them by the British Ministers in Petrograd. The presence of the delegates of the I.L.P. and B.S.P. in Russia is demanded by the Russian Government, and both Sir George Buchanan and Mr. Henderson have informed the British Government that it will be disastrous if our representatives are not permitted to go.

"The Russian Government, as well as the Workers' and Soldiers' Council, are anxious to get the advice of all sections of the International

Socialist movement, and as the I.L.P. and the B.S.P. represent in Great Britain that view of the war and peace policy which is held by the Russian democracy, it is considered by the latter to be specially important that the two organisations should send their representatives to Petrograd.\*

When MacDonald and Jowett joined the train at Euston for Aberdeen, the port from which their ship was sailing, they found among their fellow-passengers Mrs. Pankhurst, militant suffragist turned militant patriot, and "Captain" Tupper, of the Seamen's Union. Mrs. Pankhurst was going to Petrograd to expose the I.L.P. delegates; "Captain" Tupper was going to Aberdeen to stop the ship sailing if MacDonald, Jowett and Fairchild boarded it! "Captain" Tupper called the skipper and seamen together and got them to agree not to take the boat out of port if the "anti-war" delegates were passengers. The delegates themselves were not permitted to address the seamen, but Jowett made contact with them outside the docks and found that their chief reason for concurring in the advice of "Captain" Tupper was not so much political as a feeling that they must stand by their officials, who, according to the "Captain," had been grossly insulted at the Leeds Congress.

Mr. G. H. Roberts, M.P., and Jowett's old friend "Dangle" (A. M. Thompson, of the *Clarion*), who was accompanying the delegation as a journalist, tried to reason with "Captain" Tupper, and at one point it seemed that a basis of agreement had been reached. MacDonald and Jowett agreed to express regret about the treatment which the "Captain" had received at Leeds and to accept the seamen's policy to the point of saying that Germany should pay compensation in all cases where ships were attacked contrary to international law. But at the last moment "Captain" Tupper declined to hold to this compromise.

Meanwhile, the delegates stayed on at their hotel in the hope that the crew would change their minds. "Captain" Tupper was taking no chances. He stationed pickets at the hotel door and told them to keep a watch on the movements of MacDonald and Jowett night and day lest they should slip on board, win over the crew, and get away. The pickets became a bore; the delegates could not go down the street to buy a newspaper without their company. MacDonald decided to throw them off. He was a great walker, accustomed to mountain climbing—the author remembers in later years how, when a party set out from the I.L.P. Summer School at Keswick to climb Scaw Fell, MacDonald got back an hour before anyone else. One morning, at Aberdeen, he set out for a twelve miles' walk in the nearby mountains—two pickets, large, heavy men, following him. He paced the steep paths that day in record time, the pickets, sweating, swearing, lumbering behind. Long before MacDonald got back to the hotel they were lost from view and for once he walked in peace without being

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\**Labour Leader*, June 14, 1917.

shadowed. Jowett used to tell how Mac, flung himself into a large chair on his return, tired but beaming with satisfaction, his laughter rolling out like thunder, unable for a long time to tell his story because he could not subdue the tempest of merriment which gripped him.

Jowett and MacDonald were now good friends; their political conflicts of the past, their differences about the present, seemed slight compared with the dominating purpose which they both shared to bring the war to an end by international socialist action which would give hope of enduring peace. "MacDonald never hesitated to identify himself with us on platforms all over the country," Jowett said later, "and more than once he was threatened with physical danger in consequence. That, after all, is the test of a man's sincerity. He never compromised in opposition to Conscription, the Munitions Act, and DORA (Defence Regulations) and other war-time attacks on liberty. Despite some shocks, such as his letter to the Leicester recruiting meeting, we took pride in his courageous attitude and counted him as one of ourselves."\* This tribute from Jowett, who was perhaps in more frequent political conflict with MacDonald than anyone in the Labour Movement, deserves to be remembered before a final assessment is made of the latter's record.

The delegation stayed on at Aberdeen whilst there seemed any hope that the boat would carry them. Its captain claimed to be impartial in the dispute and expressed the hope that he would be able to "arrange things." But, finally, further delay was recognised to be futile. It says a great deal for the feeling of solidarity which animated the Labour Party delegates that they declined to board the ship when it became clear that the I.L.P. and B.S.P. representatives would be left behind.

When they returned to London MacDonald and Jowett issued a statement which is of such lasting interest that we reproduce it at some length:

"A section of opinion in this country, far greater than voting at conferences or newspaper opinion reveals, has been demanding international conferences and conversations so as to define with accuracy the issues of the war, and lay down the general principles and conditions which will afford satisfaction and security to democracy when peace comes.

"Within recent months, thanks mainly to the Revolution in Russia and to the military position, that feeling has been greatly augmented from sections which, while refusing to bear the brunt of the epithet 'pacifist,' have nevertheless come to see (1) that the aims for which pacifists† have been striving must now be accepted, (2) that the preliminaries to official negotiations ought to be undertaken at once, (3) that no further lives should be sacrificed for objects which can be obtained otherwise, and which, owing to the hatred and blindness begotten of war, seem to be receding further from the nations, and (4) that, in the interests of this country and

\*Statement to the author, October, 1943.

†The term was used to denote all anti-war elements.

of its future relations to European democracy, we should get into the most sympathetic touch with the New Russia.

"When the Russian Government and the Petrograd Workers' and Soldiers' Council invited us officially to go to Russia, when the British Ambassador at Petrograd, with a full knowledge of what was happening there, supported the invitation, and when our own Government granted passports, in spite of the opposition from the usual quarters, our duty admitted of no doubt, and we agreed to go.

"Our decision was welcomed by all sections of opinion entitled to be regarded as Liberal, Socialist, or International, and communications from the fighting forces showed an expectation there that at last the war was entering upon a stage which promised not only a peace of the nature of a truce, but one such as the soldier has been fighting and dying for . . .

"The fight, in which this untoward event is but an incident, will not be slackened; rather will it gather a new determination and impetus, in consequence of what has happened . . .

"The International will meet. That is sure. The International alone will show the way to emancipation from the madness and the futility of this slaughter. That, too, is sure. The International alone can bring the peace for which the heart of the world is now aching and wearying, and which has never yet followed any war and can never be found on any battlefield. That also is sure . . ."

The visit to Russia was to have been followed by an international conference at Stockholm in which, for the first time, the pro-war Socialist Parties on both sides of the battlefield were to be represented. So far the majority Socialist Parties of the Allied countries had refused to meet "enemy" Socialists; now, however, under the influence of the Russian Revolution and the impetus it had given everywhere to faith in action independent of governments, and also of the wide feeling of war-futility which had arisen from the long continuation of stalemate at the front, the barrier between the two sections of the International was tottering before a common determination to realise a peace that would be just to all peoples. Jowett and MacDonald had intended to proceed to Stockholm from Russia.

There were some doubts as to whether the arrangements for the Stockholm Conference should proceed following the breakdown of the Russian talks, but both Camille Huysmans, the secretary of the International, who commendably strove to remain "above the battle," and the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in Russia insisted that they should. In July delegates from Russia arrived in London to urge the importance of international conference and action. They were welcomed at the station by MacDonald and Jowett.

### *Labour Leaves the Government*

But, meanwhile, the Governments were beginning to fear the consequences of a meeting of Socialists from both sides of the war frontiers. They were beginning to fear the consequences of agreement about the desired terms of a Peoples' Peace and of international action to secure it. Communications passed between the British, American and French Governments, and, according to the Bolsheviks,



even the Kerensky Government, despite the favourable attitude of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, secretly entered into an agreement with the Allied Governments to sabotage the Conference. The British War Cabinet held a special meeting to consider the matter—and locked the door on Mr. Arthur Henderson, the one Labour member, because he was supporting the efforts to convene the conference.

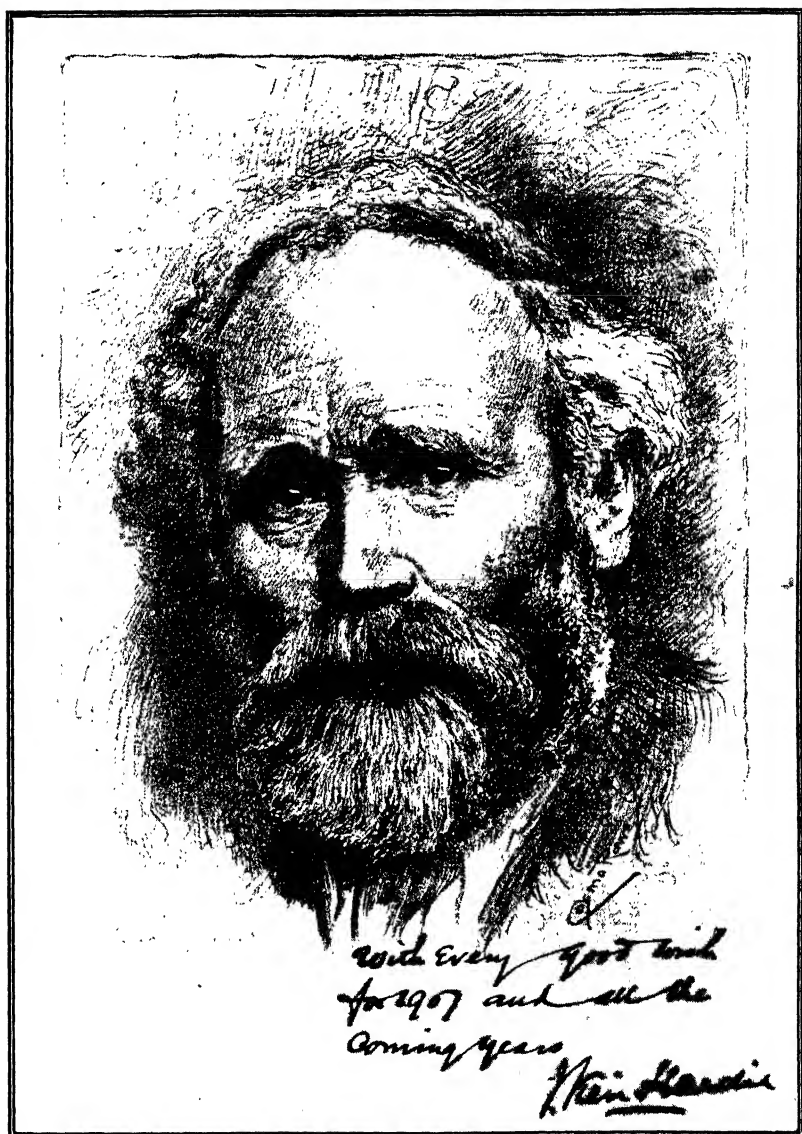
Henderson bitterly resented the insult of "being left on the mat" and resigned. Jowett has described how immediately after this incident he attended a committee meeting in Room 40 at the House of Commons at which both MacDonal and Henderson were present; documents were under consideration and MacDonal was discussing them with detailed interest. Henderson, however, was "whacked." His arm lay along the table, his head hung dispiritedly, he seemed broken by the blow.

The Governments of the Allies decided to refuse passports for the Stockholm Conference and it was never held; international socialist action across the frontiers to end the war by a Peoples' Peace was killed. But at least one good thing resulted. Labour in Britain recovered its independence. A national Labour Conference endorsed the Stockholm Conference by 1,846,000 votes to 550,000, the Party decided to withdraw from the Coalition Government, Mr. Henderson threw off his despair and began to prepare boldly for a Labour challenge to the Government whenever an election came and for the extension of the Party on bigger lines than ever before. When the Cabinet left Mr. Henderson on the mat it placed Labour on the map.

In October the Soviet economic revolution followed Russia's political revolution of March. The Councils of Workers and Soldiers took complete control under Lenin's leadership. There was some criticism of the Soviet revolution by members of the I.L.P., including Philip Snowden, who were wedded to the idea of change through Parliamentary institutions, but Jowett championed and defended it from the very start. "The excesses in the revolution were distasteful," he said afterwards, "and I regretted even the assassination of the Tsar and his family. But some excesses were inevitable and they were few until the counter-revolution began. The loss of life was far less than in the French Revolution, far less than might have been expected considering the tremendous change which was effected—the sweeping away of the entire capitalist system."\* Jowett particularly acclaimed Lenin's revolutionary wisdom in standing for "First Things First." The Russian leader called for a revolution under the banner not of complete socialisation, but of "Bread, Land and Peace." It was always Jowett's policy to work for the final object through the immediate demands of the people, and he held that the Soviet triumph proved the correctness of this view.

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\*Statement to author, October, 1943.



KEIR HARDIE IN HIS FIFTIETH YEAR

Jowett acted as Parliamentary Secretary to Keir Hardie when he was leader of the first Labour Group in the House of Commons. Hardie presented him with this portrait by Cosmo Rowe, signed both by the artist and his subject



EXAMPLE OF BLACK AND TAN TERRORISM

*This photograph has the appearance of bomb destruction in the Second World War. Actually it is of destruction by Black and Tans at Balbriggan, Ireland in 1920*



BURNED-OUT COTTAGES AT BALBRIGGAN

*Another example of the terrorism of the "Black and Tans"*

It goes without saying that Jowett welcomed the withdrawal of Russia from the war and particularly the appeal which Lenin made to the German masses to end hostilities in Western Europe by revolting against their Government. He welcomed the beginning of that revolt in Austria and Germany, and again appealed for a declaration of peace terms which would encourage its completion by removing from the minds of Germans the fear of a vindictive peace. He welcomed the development within the Labour Party of sanity regarding the kind of settlement necessary after the war, particularly the demands for "no indemnities and no annexations." When at last, on November 11, 1918, the Armistice was announced, he began to live as though a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

### *The "Victory" Election*

Mr. Lloyd George rushed a Victory Election in December, 1918, distributing coupons to those who were "loyal" to him, including among Labour M.P.s the mere handful who stood by the Coalition. The I.L.P. Parliamentary Group was practically wiped out; MacDonald, Snowden and Jowett himself were thrust into the political wilderness for a time. But Jowett did remarkably well at East Bradford and he lost as he had lost in 1900, only because he would not compromise on principles.

Word was brought that a question would be put at a meeting on which a large vote would turn and which the press had been warned to expect so that full publicity would be given to his answer. The question was this: *Was he in favour of making Germany pay the whole cost of the war, as promised by Mr. Lloyd George?* "How can Germany pay?" he replied. "There is not gold enough in the world, let alone in Germany. Is Germany to pay by coal? What will be the effect on the British miners, in Yorkshire, in South Wales, when German coal is poured into this country? By textiles? What will be the effect on the Bradford woollen industry? Germany cannot pay, and those who claim that she can, those who attempt to make her pay, will prove themselves the enemies of the British workers, who will, in fact, be the victims who will pay by unemployment and low wages."

Jowett lost the election by 753 votes, but never was a defeat more honourable.\* He regarded it as an unforgivable crime for a candidate to mislead the electorate. "Discretion is justified," he used to say, "but never to delude the voters."

Among the papers which Jowett left is a note in his handwriting headed "War and Peace." It records the answer history gave to the question "Can Germany Pay?" Here it is reproduced in full:

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\*The figures were: Capt. G. E. Loseby ("National Democratic Party"), 9,390; F. W. Jowett (I.L.P.), 8,637; Sir W. E. Priestley (Lib.), 4,782.

"The war has cost the Allies £24,000 millions . . . We propose to demand the whole cost of the war . . . The Committee appointed by the British Cabinet believe that it can be done."—Lloyd George, Bristol, "Times" report, December 12, 1918.

Claims actually made:			
	Pensions	... ..	£4,750,000,000
	Reparations	... ..	£6,500,000,000
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	British share	... ..	£2,557,000,000
Reparations	Commission afterwards	reduced the	total amount to
£6,600,000,000.			
	British share	... ..	£1,540,000,000
	British war costs were		£12,000,000,000.

Mr. Lloyd George won his election by promising to make Germany pay the whole costs of the war. Fred Jowett lost his election because he said this was impossible; in fact, the maximum that could be extracted from Germany was less than 13 per cent. of the cost of the war.

## CHAPTER IX

### SOCIALISM CHALLENGES THE POST-WAR TERROR

Jowett was out of Parliament, but he was by no means out of politics; indeed, during his four years of exile from Westminster his activity widened to spheres he had not before entered. Some of the I.L.P. leaders who lost their seats had a sense of frustration until the 1922 election took them back to the House. Not so Jowett. He has described his work at this time as a happy mingling of local, national and international experience.

Locally, he renewed with zest the activity in Bradford which his membership of the Commons had somewhat interrupted. The I.L.P. Branch appointed him their secretary and the disappointment of his election defeat was soon forgotten in the great progress which these years brought to the Party. In addition to his work in the city, he was away at week-ends addressing meetings in other towns of Yorkshire and at more distant places.

Nationally, he had taken on a new responsibility in 1916 when, following Keir Hardie's death, he became the representative of the I.L.P. on the Labour Party Executive. Freed from his Parliamentary duties, he gave detailed attention to this work and his colleagues showed their appreciation by including him in several important missions abroad and electing him, in 1921, to be their chairman. Thus within four years Jowett held the chairmanship of both the I.L.P. and the Labour Party.

During the war Jowett's experience on the Labour Party Executive had been disappointing. The Party was pro-war and in the Government. But after the war there was a great reaction in its policy and Fred rejoiced to find it denouncing the Peace Treaties and particularly the transference of German-populated territories to Poland and Czechoslovakia. Internationally, he broke new ground by political visits abroad, accepting with eagerness opportunities to visit Hungary, Poland, Geneva (already becoming a world political centre), and that distressed scene nearer home, Ireland, so that he could learn at first hand what was happening.

### *Investigating the Terror in Hungary*

The Labour delegation which went to Hungary to investigate the "White Terror" had an unusual origin—it went on the invitation of the "Terror" government.

Early in 1920 press reports of the persecution under the Horthy régime began to appear and terrible stories arrived through Vienna from Socialists who had succeeded in escaping from Hungary. With these in their hands, the Labour Party Executive and the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress sent in March a telegram of protest to M. Samadam, Hungarian Prime Minister. The Premier replied in hurt terms. "How malevolently certain factions endeavour to influence opinion in foreign countries concerning the present Government of this country!" he complained—and invited British Trade Unions to send a delegation to "convince themselves of the utter baselessness of tendentious rumours concerning the persecution of Hungarian workmen."

Before accompanying the Labour delegation to Hungary let us remind ourselves of the background there. When the imperial régime of the Hapsburgs collapsed at the end of the war, Count Karolyi, a Liberal, democratic and honest, became head of a government in which the Social Democrats were the strongest force. This Government attempted to rule in a moderate and humanitarian way, but its continuance in office was made impossible by the Peace Terms imposed by the Allies. In March, 1919, after considerable territories Magyar in race had been conceded to Rumania and Czechoslovakia, Colonel Vix, head of the Armistice Commission, called for another large evacuation, including the city of Debreczen, Hungary's second town. This was impossible. Karolyi rejected the demand, but his administration had not the strength to resist, and a Communist-Socialist Government took over under Bela Kun, who rapidly instituted a Red dictatorship. The Reds resisted the Rumanian and Czech forces, and General Smuts was sent by the Allies to effect a compromise.

If Bela Kun had had the wisdom of Lenin he would have made peace with Smuts, but he interpreted the Allied approach as a sign

of weakness and would yield nothing. In another direction Kun's unbending attitude was also fatal. He refused "on Marxist principles" to conciliate the peasants by distributing land to them; nothing but nationalisation and collectivisation was permissible. Finally, hunger broke the régime. A government of Trade Unionists took office for a brief period, intending to negotiate peace and to conduct a democratic election for the choice of a permanent government; but the Whites, militarists serving the old ruling class, backed by large sections of the peasants, effected a *coup d'état* and Admiral Horthy became Governor. The terror against the Reds and the Jews began. It was this terror the Labour delegation set out to investigate.

The delegation was composed of four members in addition to Jowett—William Harris, a miners' representative, G. H. Stuart Bunning, secretary of the Postal Workers' Federation, J. B. Williams, of the Musicians' Union, and Josiah C. Wedgwood, M.P., recent convert from the Liberal to the Labour Party. They fulfilled their duties thoroughly, staying some days in Vienna *en route* to take evidence from refugees who could speak there without the fear of victimisation; proceeding to Budapest where they interviewed Admiral Horthy, the Governor of Hungary, Premier Samadam, a Judge of the High Court, the British High Commissioner, representatives of the Social Democratic Party and of Trades Unions, and a large number of private individuals; visiting two military detention barracks and two prisons; and, finally, enquiring as to the conditions in a typical town and village in the provinces. Their report, "The White Terror in Hungary," published in May, 1920, was one of the most outspoken exposures of tyranny and cruelty a responsible political organisation has ever issued.

The journey must have been a great experience for Fred Jowett. He had been abroad before on short trips but this was the first time he had penetrated so far into Central Europe, and the war had left behind it a trail of disaster, tyrannies, hunger and disease, which made the scene very different. The delegation stayed a day at Cologne, then under British military occupation. "British soldiers, mostly young—many of them apparently little more than boys—are everywhere to be seen," wrote Jowett.

"Their presence is not resented. Indeed, Cologne regards itself as fortunate in being occupied by British troops instead of by French or Belgians. Motor cars pass you in the streets, but always the occupants are British officers. No Germans ride in them. They have no cars.

"We talked with a few British soldiers and collected their opinions on the German folk, whose acquaintance they have made. They all said they liked them. For a while during the early period of the occupation most of them were billeted in German houses, but only a few are now billeted. More than one expressed the view that the

British authorities had moved them into barracks because they feared they were getting too friendly with the Germans.

"We enquired whether the reason might not be that the British authorities were merely wishful to avoid complications that might arise through intimate friendships made with the female members of German families. The reply was interesting. We were told that, although the British soldier was well received in German homes and treated with much respect—was even invited freely to join in social gatherings—it was not considered 'good form' for the German girls to walk out alone with soldiers of the Army of Occupation. Only those who are ill-mannered, or worse than that, so we were informed, would do so."\*

The peoples of Central Europe were suffering bitterly from the inflation which followed the war. Stuart Bunning tells how, during the stay of the delegation in Vienna, Jowett was appointed the paymaster of tips because he was the only one who had small Austrian currency. He was bewildered by the innumerable strange coins and the bulging packets of paper money, and distributed it wholesale. On the quay his fellow-delegates found him handing out fistfuls of notes to people who had rendered no service to them whatsoever, and they began to feel nervous, as did Jowett himself, about the fortune he had given away on their behalf. At the end of the five days they made an anxious calculation. The total value of tips Fred had distributed was 7s.—less than 1s. 5d. from each delegate!

With her usual wifely care, Mrs. Jowett, made anxious by the newspaper stories of the hunger in Europe, packed a supply of food with her husband's luggage. At his Vienna hotel Jowett gave a tin of condensed milk to the woman who tended his room. She regarded him speechlessly for a moment, and then burst into tears. When she could speak she poured out her gratitude—and told how her child had not had milk for six months.

Among the Hungarian refugees whom Jowett met in Vienna was Bela Kun. He had been interned in a convalescent home by the Austrian Government, and there Jowett, in the company of Harris, the South Wales miner, visited him. Fred was impressed. The "Red Dictator," against whom the ghastliest brutalities were alleged, described quietly and objectively what had happened in Budapest. "He argued reasonably," commented Jowett afterwards; "there was nothing extravagant in the presentation of his case." Bela Kun proved himself well-informed about British affairs. He asked about the position of the miners and Harris told him of the campaign which the Labour Party and the miners were conducting for mines nationalisation and of the Government promise to implement the findings of the Sankey Commission. Nothing would come of it, prophesied Kun. "Harris was more optimistic," commented

\**Bradford Pioneer*, June 4, 1920.



Jowett, "but the Hungarian Communist leader was right. Nothing did come of it."\*

What Jowett heard and saw in Hungary was a revelation. Only once before had he come to realise how low men can sink in viciousness; that was when he served on a Parliamentary Committee to inquire into the treatment of the natives on the British rubber plantations of Putamayo. He had known the decency of the common folk, and had a great faith in the goodness of ordinary men and women. He now heard tales of cruelty which challenged his belief in human nature, tales of vicious acts which were not the sudden outcome of passion and vengeance, but which were calculated and in which the perpetrators evidently took delight. He realised that if mankind as a whole is capable of kindness and beauty, there are some in every community who are restrained only by the discipline of normal social relationships from descending to a depravity which is lower than anything in the animal kingdom, and that in times of violence there is the danger that this group will gain power.

The stories which the delegation told on their return were of a kind which have now become familiar to us under subsequent dictatorships. Jowett rarely spoke of them; his nature shrank from the mere thought of beatings and torture and murder and rape. But the author was one of a small circle of friends to whom he opened out in a late night discussion when the subject turned to human nature and violence. He told us of things which had so shocked him that he had done his best to forget them. Here one can only hint at what he described.

There was the case of Mrs. H., whose brother-in-law was a Communist Commissar during the Bela Kun régime in Hungary (Fred did not claim that it was free from outrages). This brother-in-law and her husband escaped to Vienna and sent letters to her by a youth who was journeying to Budapest. The youth fell into the hands of the military (there was no trace of him afterwards), and an officer brought the letter to Mrs. H., pretending to be the messenger himself. At his request she summoned four friends so that he could give them details of how they too could escape. Then the military appeared and they were all rushed away to the Kalenford Barracks.

Here the woman was taken to a room occupied by officers, whipped, ordered to strip, whipped again when she refused, stripped, and then beaten again. One of her fellow-prisoners was brought in and ordered to violate her. When he refused, he was whipped and his teeth dragged from his jaws by pincers. Outrages followed on the man and the woman which are not repeatable.

This was only the first of such incidents. Mrs. H. remained in the barracks five weeks — two weeks were spent with twelve other

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\*Statement to author, October, 1943.

prisoners in a cellar fifteen feet square with only straw to lie upon; there was no washing, no change of clothes, no medical attention. During the third week she became so ill that she was placed in a cell by herself. Finally, she was discharged; her offence was described as "Bolshevik activities."

Jowett described this woman as quiet and unassuming and told of the testimony of all who knew her that she was of irreproachable moral character. The delegation saw her twice, questioning her for four hours, and were entirely convinced of the truth of her story.

There was the case of I.J., a Hungarian Jew aged 22, a clerk. He was imprisoned at Kochida, escaped to Budapest, arrested again whilst hiding at Moson-Magyarovar, placed in the military barracks. When he denied that he was a "Red Terrorist," he was given twenty-five strokes with a whip of leather thongs, strengthened by wire. Whilst tied to the whipping bench he was struck with a rifle butt; members of the delegation saw the wound which was only partly healed. Every other day he was beaten, but he made no confession and after five weeks was taken to Sopron (Odenburg) for trial. On the way he escaped. His father was asked where his son was hiding. The father didn't know, but to extract the information the police beat him so that two ribs and his right leg were broken. I.J.s' twin brothers, aged six, were even thrashed by the police in the endeavour to find out where he was.

Jowett remarked at the end of his recital of these and other outrages that the similar stories he heard of Putamayo showed that descent to such inhuman practices was not limited to any one race. This degradation of conduct occurred when men were placed in unrestricted power over others.

When they took statements from witnesses the delegation heard certain names frequently repeated, names of military officers of the old Hapsburg army. They reported these offenders to the British High Commissioner, Mr. Hohler. He replied that the Hungarian Government could not be held responsible for their misdeeds, as they had been demobilised and were acting as "irregular bands under no control." The British Commissioner went on to pay high tribute to Admiral Horthy. He was an admirable and honourable man, who was doing his best and succeeding well.

Later the same day the delegation interviewed Admiral Horthy in the Royal Palace, the British High Commissioner being present. They described the foul outrages of which they had evidence and asked why the criminals who committed them had not been punished. "At the mention of the first of the names, Lieut. Hajjas, Horthy immediately exclaimed that he was one of his very best officers," recounted Jowett. "Of the other criminals mentioned to him he spoke in terms of warmest admiration. He did not deny that outrages had taken place, but pleaded provocation in defence of the perpetra-

tors. *But let it be noted that he made no pretence that the chief criminals were not in his army, and on the army pay list, although the British High Commissioner was not aware of the fact.*"\*

Jowett's description of the delegation's visit to the High Commissioner included a comment on British representation in foreign countries which is still apt. He told how Mr. Hohler lived "as near to the Royal Palace as possible" in a mansion at the top of the hill in the old city of Buda, across the river from the more modern Pesth. "It seems to be the practice of British representatives in foreign countries to make access to themselves as difficult as possible," he remarked. "The notion seems to prevail among them that the nation bears the expense of their salaries and the upkeep of their establishments for the sole purpose of enabling them to enjoy social amenities, and that only such countrymen of theirs are expected to call on them as have motor cars at their service and unlimited time at their disposal. Some day it may come to pass that things will be different and British people travelling in foreign lands may be afforded convenient and ready access to their country's representative if they should have need of his assistance . . . ."†

Jowett was bitter about the rôle the British authorities had filled in Hungary. The short-lived Trade Union Government which succeeded Bela Kun was set up under the influence of Sir Thomas Cunningham, who then represented Britain in Budapest and who gave guarantees of "safe conduct" to its members. When Horthy triumphed, they had been let down. Among the Socialists Jowett saw in prison, for instance, was Agoston, who had been a moderate-minded civil servant in the time of Bela Kun and who afterwards joined the Trade Union Government. On the fall of that Government Agoston was arrested, but was liberated on the representation of General Gorton, the head of the British Military Mission, who wrote to Madame Agoston that he had "the promise of the Government and of the military commander that no harm shall come to your husband." Nevertheless, when new charges were brought against Agoston, the General declined to intervene on the ground that they were of a "civil" character, and the ex-Minister was again arrested. The Labour delegation examined these charges, found that they were all of a political nature and anterior to the guarantees given by Sir Thomas Cunningham, and expressed their "great regret" at the inaction of General Gorton. Jowett himself used much stronger language than that.

The "terror" went far beyond personal outrages and atrocities. All who were suspected of supporting the Bela Kun dictatorship were arrested, until the prisons and detention barracks became so crowded

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\**Labour Leader*, June 17, 1920.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, May 28, 1920.

that it was usual for four persons to be confined in a small and windowless cell previously occupied by one. Raids on Socialist and Trade Union offices were frequent; for example, the Legal Department of the Social Democratic Party was raided and the papers relating to the defence of some hundreds of prisoners were taken away. All Trade Unions formed since the Karolyi Government of 1918 were dissolved, officials were arrested, the Brachialgewalt (a combination of Storm Troopers and Gestapo) took possession of the meeting rooms, and the premises and papers were handed over to new "Christian" Unions initiated by the Government. In January, 1920, a decree was drafted to dissolve, also, the pre-1918 Unions, but so great was the popular feeling aroused a month later by the murders of the editor and assistant editor of the Socialist daily (they were shot by a group of officers and their bodies thrown into the Danube), that the Government refrained from operating the decree in Budapest. Outside the capital, however, Trade Union branches were almost entirely closed down, and if an official from Budapest attempted to visit the members he was usually arrested. Well might the Labour delegation report: "We believe that there is a 'Terror' in Hungary, that the Hungarian Government is unable to control it, and that many of its own acts are of so rigorous a character as to merit the name of 'Terror'."

Nevertheless, the British representatives at Budapest excused the Horthy régime at every turn. As a result of criticism in the Commons the Government at home published a White Paper, entitled "Alleged Existence of 'White Terror' in Hungary,"\* of which Mr. Hohler was the author. He described Admiral Horthy as a "broad-minded, tolerant and humane man, who is doing his best to stop all illegal persecution and is succeeding very well." The White Paper included despatches from Admiral Troubridge. He praised the Horthy administration as "a Christian Government in a Christian country" (we were later to hear the same phrase about General Franco and Spain) and assured the Foreign Office that "life is as secure here as in England." The Labour delegation remarked in restrained language that they were "at a loss to know why the Admiral penned this sentence" and that it was a matter for regret that the White Paper "should have created an impression that the British Government is supporting a policy of oppression of industrial and religious freedom."†

To Jowett the most significant thing was the support given by "democratic Allies to the brutal reaction in Hungary." Horthy, he declared, was in a favourable position to drive "Hungary through Terror into rank reaction" because of the help he received from the

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\*Cd. 673.

†Report of the Delegation.

Allies. "The Allies encouraged and assisted the most desperate supporters of the old military caste to mobilise outside the frontier after the fall of the Monarchy. The Allies supplied arms and equipment for this force, for the purpose of enabling it to re-enter Hungary and overthrow the Soviet Government. This force remains, armed and militant, in Hungary now . . . The rulers of Britain share with the rulers of France and America the chief responsibility for letting loose this horde of armed military hirelings of the aristocratic thugs in Hungary."

He pointed the moral: "These rulers were not sincere when they forced their countrymen to give their lives 'to end militarism,' for they have now shown themselves quite ready to establish worse forms of militarism to prevent experiments being made in methods of government and of dealing with social problems of which they disapprove . . . The Allies, by letting loose seven devils of militarism where there was one before (just because they feared that Communism might prove acceptable and afterwards spread), have exposed the whole of Central Europe to the risk of Terrorist methods for the suppression of all forms of liberty and freedom." \*

There is a personal note to be added. Jowett returned with his mind weighed down by the thought of the suffering of the families of the persecuted Socialists of Budapest. Armstrong Smith, of the Friends' Mission, was arranging for children to come to England. "I have the names and addresses of fourteen children, now in Budapest, who should be specially invited to come," wrote Jowett. "They are children whose fathers are on the staff of the Socialist paper, the *Népszava*. Their fathers have been running the risk of being arrested and tortured for the last ten months. The children have lived in fear of impending calamity, and it would do them good to be taken out of their present surroundings for a while. I will send the list to anyone who is willing to invite one or more of them." †

Sixteen years later Fred Jowett was taken ill at the Summer School of the I.L.P. held in the beautiful house and grounds of St. Christopher's School, Letchworth. One sunny afternoon he was led in easy steps to a deck-chair by a slim dark-haired girl with the olive skin and brown eyes of the Balkans. She arranged cushions for Fred and tucked a rug about him. That girl was the daughter of one of the shot editors of *Népszava*.

#### *Investigating the Terror in Ireland*

Before the end of the year Jowett went on another tour of investigation with a Labour delegation. This time it was to Ireland. Once more he found a people living under a Terror with the armed forces of the Government running riot in destruction and death.

\**Bradford Pioneer*, May 28, 1920.

†*Labour Leader*, June 17, 1920.

During the war a New Ireland had been born. The movement for the constitutional achievement of Dominion Home Rule faded away before the movement of Sinn Fein, which called on the Irish people to assert their independence in action. At the general election of 1919 Ireland voted overwhelmingly for Sinn Fein. Their M.P.s boycotted Westminster and regarded themselves as the Government of Ireland. The British reply was an attempt to crush the people into subservience through a specially-recruited police force (known as the Black-and-Tans, because their uniform was partly policemen's "blue" and partly khaki) and a military force of Auxiliaries recruited from ex-servicemen, paid £1 a day.

The excesses of these two forces were excused on the ground that they acted in self-defence or in retaliation to murders for which Sinn Fein was responsible. "The truth is," answered Jowett, "that during the first two years of the present conflict between Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Army on the one hand, and the Crown forces on the other, only one policeman was killed, and this happened in a riot during the dispersal of a prohibited meeting." On the other side there was the record of British suppression: "During those two years—1917 and 1918—1,244 persons were sentenced for political offences; there were 115 deportations without trial; 99 suppressions of gatherings of unarmed men, women and children by military authorities; 32 suppressions of fairs and markets; and no less than 12 national newspapers were suppressed." How did the Irish reply? "The most forcible reply made by the Irish Republican forces to all this provocation was the burning of barracks, but in every instance the occupants were allowed to get away without harm being done to them. A number of military officers were also taken prisoners and held for a while, but in all cases they were well treated."

Why, then, the British expedition, the Black-and-Tans and Auxiliaries? "The mortal offence of Sinn Fein and the Irish Volunteers," held Jowett, "is that gradually but surely they were building up, peacefully and orderly, an Irish State, independent of the machinery of government controlled from Dublin Castle" (the residence of the British Viceroy).

"A peaceful revolution was in progress, political and economic," Jowett proceeded. "Over a large area of Ireland, Irish Volunteer Police maintained proper order, and left the Royal Irish Constabulary (the British serving force) nothing to do. The ordinary courts of justice were deserted, for the people sought redress at voluntary courts and obeyed their decisions. The people of Ireland met the refusal of their independence by the British Parliament by proving they had no need for any government from outside."

A parallel movement developed in industry and agriculture: "In economics the British method of carrying on commerce and industry by means of trusts and Big Business was being steadily

undermined. Small co-operative states were being established round the creameries of the Irish Agricultural Societies. Irish Labour and Sinn Fein had come together, and a new and valuable social and industrial experiment was in progress. It was the policy of self-reliance applied to Irish economics."

In 1917 the Irish people defeated an attempt by the British Government to impose conscription upon them by a "demonstration strike" throughout the twenty-four counties. Not a stroke of work was done in factory, shop or transport. Even in the hotels the waiters stopped work, and the first story which the visiting journalists from London cabled back was that they had had themselves to cook their meals and make their beds. By similar methods the Irish met a threat to their internal economy.

"Under the control of the British authorities Ireland was supplying food to the belligerents of Europe and leaving her own people to starve," told Jowett. "English dealers in Irish produce and Irish farmers were willing to sell unlimited quantities of food at high prices for export, whatever became of the Irish people.

"In this emergency Sinn Fein and Irish Labour took immediate action. An unofficial food census of Ireland was obtained, and the Irish workers in the country, on the railways, and at the ports refused to assist in the exportation of food until the exporters had agreed, by negotiation with Sinn Fein and Irish Labour, to retain the amount of food required for home consumption."\*

The Labour delegation to Ireland was imposing. Its chairman was Arthur Henderson and its secretary Arthur Greenwood. Four M.P.s served on it, led by W. Adamson, the chairman of the Parliamentary Party. Brigadier-General C. B. Thomson accompanied it as military adviser, and Captain C. W. Kendall as legal adviser.

Jowett kept a diary of this remarkable visit to Ireland, from which one is tempted to quote at length. The first thing the delegation did was to exchange views with representatives of the Irish Labour Party and T.U.C. Fred was impressed by Tom Johnson, the Irish Labour leader—"a man worth knowing . . . weighs his words carefully . . . a strange combination of idealist and man of affairs . . . a Scotsman by birth but, notwithstanding his unlikeness to the Irish folk around him, he holds their affection and their trust." They discussed ways and means of encouraging a truce between the Government and the Republican Army, as suggested by a Sinn Fein M.P. in a letter to the press that morning. Then the delegation met representatives of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, including Mr. George Russell, the poet and essayist who wrote as *Æ*. (One is disappointed that in this instance Jowett did not include in his diary one of those little pen-sketches at which he was so adept). The Irish agriculturists described how the British forces were system-

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, December 31, 1920.

atically destroying the co-operative creameries on which the industry so largely depended.

The first visit was to Balbriggan, a small town of 2,300 people, sixteen miles from Dublin. The description might have been that of a village blitzed in the Second World War.

"I counted seventeen houses burned down," wrote Jowett. "Nothing remained of them or of the furniture that had been in them, save portions of the walls and heaps of rubbish. Many more houses were wrecked. In the long main street not a single pane of glass, so far as I could find, had been left. The Black-and-Tans had smashed all the windows, some by rifle firing and others with the butt-end of their rifles. Two large shops and a public-house were also completely burned down. At the end of the village there is a small bay, and on the further side there is a hosiery factory . . . It was in ruins. Only a portion of the walls was standing, and inside there was little but rubbish, twisted metal, fragments, rusted frames of knitting machines and crooked shafting hanging from an iron framework of what had once been a roof.

"There is no suggestion that the owners of the factory were Sinn Feiners. Neither is it suggested that any of the inhabitants of the houses that were burned down or wrecked had any connection with the shooting of two policemen, one of whom died, for which the destruction of life and property at Balbriggan is alleged to be a reprisal. The only possible motive for the burning down of this factory is that Balbriggan people earned their living there. One hundred and nine were employed there, in addition to about 120 out-workers."

There is a description of a visit next day to the Irish Women Workers' Club in Dublin which had been raided: "The club occupies a fine old Georgian house, large and roomy. Although the old lady who is caretaker of the club offered the keys of all drawers and cupboards, the raiders preferred to break them open, smash all the glass, and tear everything loose."

In the afternoon the delegation went to Croke Park football ground, where on the previous Saturday the Black-and-Tans had shot into a stampeding crowd, killing thirteen on the spot and wounding two others fatally. One of the victims was a boy who was watching the play from the branch of a tree. Another of the delegation's visits was to Skerriss, a small holiday resort of Dublin folk. It had been raided at night by Black-and-Tans. When the man they wanted was away, they burned the house and its contents. When he was at home, they shot him then and there.

After what they had heard and seen, the delegates were probably not in a mood to concede much to the official British representatives when they visited Dublin Castle next morning. Sir Hamar Greenwood, Chief Secretary for Ireland in the British Government, sat at the head of the table. At his side, ready to prompt him as required,



was General Tudor, head of the Royal Irish Constabulary, including the Black-and-Tans and the Auxiliaries. At their backs stood high administrative and military officials. It is time we quoted Jowett's diary again.

"General Tudor organised Carson's Ulster rebel army before the war," wrote Fred. "He is now in charge of the forces which should be preserving order in Ireland. Sir Hamar Greenwood talked of murders and thumped the table vigorously to emphasise his determination to track them down. Not a word could be got from him to promise that the murders for which he is responsible should cease."

Jowett had a theory that the "master-mind" behind the mobilisation of the Black-and-Tans and Auxiliaries may have been that of Sir Edward Carson, "the evil genius of Ireland, of whom the Prime Minister seems to be in fear." "All that is known of the master mind," he wrote later, "is that it appears to act through Dublin Castle, where there has been installed a sinister figure with a clear head and eyes like a bird of prey, who acts independently of the chief of either the military or police force, and is responsible to nobody who appears in the picture."\*

The delegation travelled on to Cork. They were received by the City Council and given a room in the City Hall for their interviews. The city offices had many windows boarded: the frames and glass had been blown out by the explosion of a bomb. The Black-and-Tans who operated here appeared to be devoid of all human feeling. In other places they had at least taken their man out of his home before they shot him. Here they shot men in their own dwellings in the presence of their wives. Jowett's diary told of a mere boy who was shot repeatedly as he knelt behind the bedstead.

Jowett went to a village near Cork named Bandon. As at Balbriggan, the hosiery mill was blackened ruins and heaps of rubbish. Forty dwellings were more or less wrecked and shops burned out. Sir Hamar Greenwood had excused the Black-and-Tans on the ground that they got "out of hand" after provocation. In Bandon they were "out of hand" for five weeks, during which the destruction was again and again repeated.

Day after day the entries in Jowett's diary read as though they were the stories of a war correspondent. In the Cork hotel, both before and after curfew, "the noise of Black-and-Tans and Auxiliaries rushing through the streets became almost constant." They sang the refrain:

*"For we are as happy as can be,  
We are the men of the R.I.C."*

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, December 31, 1920.

From Cork the delegation travelled eighty miles by road to Tralee. It was a risky journey because they were obviously British and at any time Sinn Fein snipers might fire at them. The cars bumped several times over filled-in trenches and could not go further than Killarney by the main road because three bridges had been destroyed. At Tralee they found that a printing establishment, where two papers were printed, had been destroyed because the editor had dared to comment on the doings of the Black-and-Tans. One day at Ballymacelligott four of the five employees at the co-operative creamery had been shot; the following day the raiders returned and burned out the building.

Then on to Limerick, occupied by armed forces "and they are truculent." Because two policemen had been seized and disarmed, a row of workmen's cottages and a public house were burned down. On to Tipperary, where the damage done by the Black-and-Tans and Auxiliaries amounted to £200,000. The City was informed by Dublin Castle that the ratepayers must meet the cost!

From Tipperary the delegation returned to Limerick Junction to take train to Dublin *en route* home. On the way they passed the ruins of a farmhouse and left the road to make enquiries. Let Fred's diary speak finally of the tragedy of Ireland.

"The farm had been occupied by Mrs. Ryan, an aged, bedridden woman, now in the workhouse," he wrote. "Black-and-Tans appeared one night, asked if Mrs. Ryan's son was at home, and, on being told he was absent, ordered the old woman, her two daughters and a small boy of twelve years (a grandson) out of the house. They left hurriedly, partially attired. Petrol was poured on the beds and furniture, on the floors, over the fowls and the pigs. The house and the remainder of the farm buildings were burned to ruins. Only a small shed was left. The pigs escaped, but about forty fowls were burned up. When we called, the two sisters and their nephew of twelve were living in the shed."

This Irish story will appear incredible to many British people who read it. How could the British Government do such things? Jowett's theory of "the invasion of terror" was that the Government, unable by any civilised means to prevent the people of southern Ireland governing themselves, had to fall back upon uncivilised methods: organised terrorism and the destruction of the economic life of the country. The ordinary police force could not be trusted to do this because it was composed mostly of Irishmen who, although isolated from the Irish people, could not be expected to go beyond their normal duties of dispersing meetings, arresting persons by warrant, and acting in accordance with regular orders. So for the purpose of the Terror the Black-and-Tans and Auxiliaries were recruited from across the English Channel.

As we now know, the Terror failed to break the spirit of the

Irish people. Their resistance continued. A year later Mr. Lloyd George had to negotiate with the representatives of Sinn Fein and in December, 1921, Eire, the Irish Free State, was born.

British Labour, and particularly the Labour delegates to Ireland, can take considerable credit for speeding this result. The delegation reported in favour of the withdrawal of all British troops, the release of the political prisoners, and the recognition of Ireland's right to self-determination, including the right to withdraw from the Empire if the Irish people so desired. The report was made the subject of a vigorous and nationally-planned campaign, initiated by a delegate conference in London. General Thomson reported what the delegation had seen; he was remarkably cool and objective, but allowed himself to refer to some of the Black-and-Tans as "drunken, swaggering bullies." Arthur Greenwood emphasised that the Auxiliaries were recruited almost exclusively from ex-officers in the British army and called them "a white guard composed of ex-gentlemen and military adventurers." There can be no doubt that this Labour campaign, which included great demonstrations in all the chief centres of population, supported by continued protests in the House of Commons from the Labour Opposition, had a considerable effect in making the Lloyd George Government turn from the hopeless path of suppression to that of negotiation.

#### *A Visit to Poland*

The following year Jowett went to Poland — he was certainly getting opportunities to see at first hand the kind of world the war had left in its wake. The Polish Socialist Party invited the Labour Party to send a fraternal delegate and Jowett, who had now become its national chairman, was selected to go. He travelled alone, something of an adventure for a man who knew nothing of continental languages.

He expected to be met at Lodz station by the friend of a Polish acquaintance in Bradford, but there was no-one there! He said afterwards that he was undisturbed because he had money, and he had learned that with money one could surmount any difficulties; but he acknowledged that the people about him seemed stranger than any he had ever seen. Half the population appeared to be Jews, with flowing black beards, dressed in long robes and pill-box caps with pointed peaks. He tried to get a conveyance, but no driver would go to the address he showed them—he found afterwards that the distance was too short. He handed the address to a gendarme who pointed to a street car. Fred clambered on with his baggage, crowded and jostled on the back platform. Then a voice spoke English words: "Are you American?" The man at his side was addressing him. "No, English." "I've lived in America—can I be

of any help to you?" With the aid of his new friend Jowett found the address—to learn that his host was out! He left his bag, and made his way back to the centre of the town to get a meal. Suddenly English words again, and English spoken with a Yorkshire accent: "What are you doing here, Mr. Jowett?" He turned and saw the business representative of a Bradford firm, whom he had met several times at home. They had a meal together. Jowett returned to his "host," but there was no spare bed and he stayed at a nearby hotel. During the night the key of a narrow cupboard encased in the door turned, and to his bedside stalked a huge man. In telling the story, Jowett admitted that he was frozen with fear. The man bent down, grabbed Fred's boots from under the bed, and disappeared with them through the wardrobe. The next morning Fred found them polished like a mirror.

Poland was going through its period of maximum inflation. A Jewish tailor in Bradford had asked Fred to deliver £10 to some relatives personally because postage was risky. When he presented a Bank of England note at the bank, it caused a sensation. He seemed to be handed out millions in exchange.

Lodz is a woollen town, and when Jowett found that a strike of 150,000 mill operatives was in progress he felt at home. Wages were infamously low—8s. 2d. a week, which might go up to 10s. by piece-work—and the workers were demanding that they should be doubled. Processions and demonstrations were prohibited, but the strikers got around this. The leaders would take a walk—the strikers would accompany them. Outside the big hotels the leaders would stop, and so would the strikers. This was as near to a demonstration as they dared go, but it certainly made the city aware that a mass strike was in progress. Gendarmes watched from the pavements, ready to break up the "procession" if ranks were formed.

Jowett investigated the strike and he discovered facts which set all Bradford talking when he returned. The first thing that struck him was that the employers were using exactly the same argument against the workers as was used in reverse by Bradford employers: "If you are paid increases, we cannot compete against the British." The significance of this was increased immensely by the next discovery he made. It was that the Polish woollen and worsted industry was in effect owned by three Bradford magnates!

His exposure of these facts when he returned to Bradford gave the employers an uncomfortable time. Both the *Yorkshire Observer* and the *Daily Herald* printed full column reports, the *Herald* running four headings: "Wool—Startling Disclosures — Bradford Bosses' Mills Abroad — 10s. a Week Wages — Capitalists Kill British Trade." Jowett reported that one British firm had bought up Polish mills with between forty and fifty thousand spindles. Another had bought mills with twenty-two thousand spindles. With the Polish

mark at 7,000 to the pound, the cost of purchasing the mills would be a mere song. With labour at 10s. a week, the running costs would be very low and the prospects of capturing markets very high. "The British workers," Fred remarked, "will have to sit up and take notice."

The matter was raised in Parliament, and from the evasive replies Jowett got the impression that British capitalists operating in Poland had brought influence to bear through the Government to prevent a reversal of inflation in Poland. "The British capitalists," he wrote, "know that if their shares, mortgages, and investments in Polish marks were reduced to the terms of a new currency, they could not possibly reduce wage rates in proportion. Hence they and French capitalists, who also have similar interests in Polish industries, resist deflation." \*

Jowett's exposure made a tremendous impression in Bradford. It is probably true to say that it did more than any other single incident to undermine the faith of the workers in the employing class of the woollen and worsted industry.

#### *A Visit to Geneva*

Jowett was also sent by the Labour Party Executive as one of its delegates to the international socialist conference held at Geneva in 1920, to consider the post-war situation. The conference was called by the "majority parties" in the Second International (that is, by the parties which had supported the war on both sides)—the "social-patriots" as Lenin called them. The anti-war parties did not participate directly, but the I.L.P. had strong representation in the Labour Party delegation. Among others, Ramsay MacDonald, Mary Macarthur (Mrs. W. C. Anderson), Mrs. Snowden, Herbert Morrison and Neil Maclean were present. Jowett was not impressed by the conference . . . but let us first record his impression of the city and the scene.

"Geneva is a beautiful city, but an unsuitable one at this time of the year for a Congress to meet in. It is too hot there. One melts in the streets under the burning sun, and in the large room of the Communal Hall, where the Congress met, we sat under a glass roof and continued to melt as we listened to the speeches and the translations. Possibly these enervating atmospheric conditions contributed partially to the listlessness of the Congress, but the gathering would have been deadly dull in any case because the fire of enthusiasm could not be kindled from the spent, battered and visionless delegates—representative only of fractions of the respective countries of which it was composed."

He was unusually ironical in his reference to the delegations. The French representatives, who were admitted contrary to the advice

\*August 26th, 1921.

of the Credentials Commission, had "served their Government so well as to earn their expulsion from the French Socialist Party." The Belgian delegates belonged to their Coalition Government "which stands boldly and heroically for as much mild reform as the most exclusive aristocracy in Europe will permit." The Swedish delegates included the Minister of Finance, "who is opposed to the nationalisation of banks." To the Dutch delegates Socialism probably meant "little more than opposition to Conservatism."

The first item on the agenda was "War Responsibility"—the Socialists of the Allied countries could not be expected to consider other questions with their German comrades until the latter had acknowledged the guilt of their country. Jowett described how the appropriate Commission "graciously consented to accept from the German delegation their humble admission of sins committed by the German Government (which the said delegates had supported), and to accept also the delegation's further admission that 'the immediate cause of the war was to be found, if not exclusively at least principally, in the waywardness and unscrupulousness of the past rulers of Germany and Austria'.

"Having condescended to accept this humble admission," added Jowett, "the Commission recommended the Conference to give over the authors of the war (whom with magnificent self-denial it presumed to belong exclusively to the German and Austrian Governments, now overthrown) 'to the execration of peoples.'

"At this point Bernstein wept, Scheideman heaved a sigh of relief, and the British Chairman, Mr. Tom Shaw, beaming with divine forgiveness, smiled approvingly on the delegates through his spectacles."\*

On the subject of the Peace Treaties, however, the conference was better. "In the name of all humanity" it protested against their one-sided character. Nevertheless, reparations were endorsed (their full effect on employment had not yet been experienced) and even the German delegates recognised the "obligation" to pay them. The attitude of the British delegation on these issues was on the whole progressive.

After this experience of an international conference, Jowett held emphatically that "the rump which met at Geneva" should not meet again. He declared himself in favour of bringing together the Labour and Socialist organisations of *all* countries in one International, but urged that in addition the genuinely Socialist Parties should form within the larger body their own Socialist International. He proposed an international structure similar to the British pattern, with its federal Labour Party incorporating all working-class organisations and the I.L.P. acting as a socialist nucleus within it.

The following year the I.L.P. and the other anti-war parties

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\*Bradford Pioneer, August 20, 1920.

(except those which had joined the Third International) associated themselves in the Vienna Union, and shortly afterwards an effort was made to unify the three organisations—the Second and Third Internationals and the Vienna Union. The negotiations with the Third failed, however, and the Labour and Socialist International established at Hamburg in 1923 included only the “social-patriots” and the Vienna Union. Theoretically, the parties attached to the latter adopted Jowett’s idea, deciding to remain a group; but in practice the group never functioned. As time went on, wartime differences ceased to be the dividing line. New issues arose, and they had a disintegrating effect upon all international associations.

## CHAPTER X

### SOCIALISM BECOMES A POWER IN THE LAND

The Geneva Conference had a marked effect on Jowett’s political thinking, or, at least, on the clarification of his thought. In addition to its consideration of War Guilt and the Peace Treaties, it devoted a large part of its time to the preparation of a blue-print of Socialism. Indeed, this was its major task. Jowett served on the Commission dealing with socialisation and he had a feeling of irrelevance and futility. What was the value of these interminable discussions on the niceties of administration—how much control the State should have, how much the producers, how much the consumers? These were matters for the technicians and for experience. The essential thing was to get the wealth for the workers; the machinery by which it was done was secondary. On some of the technicalities the Commission could not agree. In ironical mood, Jowett remarked that “two dauntless innovators in complex forms of Government—Sidney Webb and Troelstra (Holland)—failed to make their meaning plain to each other and the contention was still raging when the report was due for delivery.” Jowett intervened with an impatient speech, urging that the first need was “to deprive the non-producing classes of their ever-growing share of the productions of the community.” The Soviet Government, he urged, had gone to the root of the matter by deciding that the right of able-bodied persons to share in the products of labour should depend on service to the community. Which was it to be—the Russian attitude or “the Socialism of the leisured theorists?”

“It is the acid test to discover whether the Commission is prepared to declare war here and now on the parasites who live on rent and interest,” he declared, “or whether it is content that Socialism shall amble on through many weary years debating the precise method of socialisation which we should recommend ‘step-by-step’ to a

puzzled and weary electorate, and the kind of machinery of government by which Socialism should be administered, the nice balancing of geographical and vocational representation, or of both combined."

Jowett had some support from Walter Nash, representing the New Zealand Labour Party, who urged the extension of social services from State funds raised by the taxation of unearned incomes.\* The majority of the Commission, however, took the view that his point was irrelevant to their subject, which they interpreted as being the structure of a socialised community rather than the method of bringing it about. Unconvinced, Jowett pressed his amendment: "*It is the function of the community as a whole to establish a priority of claim on all commodities for children, for aged and ailing persons, and for all those engaged in the production and distribution of essential utilities.*" Neil Maclean was the only other member of the Commission who voted for the amendment.

Jowett had been thinking on these lines for some time. On his return from Geneva he developed his ideas more explicitly. He argued that two things were "driving the workers into a new way of reaching the Socialist Commonwealth." The first was the war-time revelation of the power of the millionaire press to distort. The second was the economic effect of the war. The ability of the press to distort necessitated proposals so simple that misrepresentation would be difficult. The shortage of essential goods resulting from the war's destruction required that none be wasted and that what was available should immediately be distributed equally. Jowett came to the conclusion that elaborate proposals for nationalisation gave the press the maximum opportunities for misrepresentation and that the needs of the people must be met more directly before nationalisation could be put through.

"If the workers and the community are doomed to carry the whole horde of parasites who live on rent, interest and profit (along with the still greater hordes of workers employed on non-essential work for their use and pleasure) until complicated schemes of socialising industry have been agreed upon by the majority of the people, it will be ages, and not a few short years, before the workers shake off the parasites . . . .

"Labour propoganda in favour of nationalisation has been extensively carried on. But it does not reach far. The masses in the main do not understand it.

"Much less do they understand the complicated structure of schemes devised for balancing the claim of the workers and the consumers to control and to dispose of the products of nationalised industries.

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\*Walter Nash is now Finance Minister in New Zealand's Labour Government, which, more than any other outside Russia, has applied the theory which he advocated at Geneva in 1920.



"I think that any Socialist who carefully considers the position will come to the conclusion that the old reformist method of reaching the Socialist Commonwealth is closed . . . .

"The attacks on the old order must now be open and direct, and the plan of it must be easy for ordinary people to understand. Let us boldly demand, here and now, that the right to consume commodities, howsoever produced . . . . should be based on service . . . . ."

Jowett's personal experiences in Bradford, where unemployment was rife and low wages general during these years, strengthened his conviction that the socialist appeal must be directed towards an *immediate* lifting of the conditions of life. He came into daily contact with the distress among the unemployed, the aged, and ill-paid workers, and he felt acutely the anguish of mothers who could not feed and clothe their children properly. It was little consolation to tell them that they must wait until the economic system was socialised before there was hope of escaping from destitution. Even after a Labour Government was returned to office their day of hope would remain distant because the process of nationalisation would be gradual, and at the outset, at least, the industries concerned would have to bear the cost of compensation to the previous owners. *He developed, therefore, the theory of the socialisation of the national income as complementary to the socialisation of the economic system.* Without waiting for the completion of common ownership, the State should guarantee a living income to the working population, the aged, the incapacitated, and the children by the extension of social services and the redistribution of the national income.

#### *Jowett's Chairman's Speech to Labour Party*

Jowett soon had an opportunity to throw the subject into the forefront of political controversy and he seized it with both hands. He put forward his proposals so challengingly in the course of his chairman's speech to the Labour Party Conference at Edinburgh in 1922 that the capitalist press and politicians were stirred to vicious comment. It is doubtful whether any presidential address to a Labour Party Conference has ever aroused such intense feeling among the vested interests.

Jowett himself regarded this speech as one of his most important contributions to Labour policy—not so much in what he said in detail as in its approach. In 1918, the Labour Party had been reconstructed. Before then only members of Socialist organisations, like the I.L.P., and of Trades Unions could be affiliated members. After 1918 anyone who accepted its constitution could join the Labour Party through direct membership. This change was not merely organisational. The leadership set out to make it a "national" rather than a "class" party.

\**Bradford Pioneer*, December 31, 1920.

It was becoming respectable and moderate; the "best" people in the "best" circles were joining it; political careerists were beginning to flood it. Jowett was determined in his presidential address to sound again the clarion call of Hardie and that, to the dismay of the moderates, he certainly succeeded in doing.

The speech covered, of course, wider ground than the socialisation of incomes. It began with a graphic description of the conditions accompanying the peace, a description terrible in its vividness. The war had changed in form, Jowett said, but still continued; it had been transferred from the military to the economic front—to blockades, tariffs and collapsed exchanges. The loss of life and suffering were no less, *and they fell almost exclusively on the common people*. Millions had perished from famine and disease; millions more had been stunted, deformed and disabled for life through privations in early childhood. "They mock at the people who call this peace," exclaimed Jowett.

All the Peace Conferences from Versailles to Genoa had failed because they had been dominated by rival groups of capitalists and political adventurers competing for spheres of influence and possession of raw materials. He spoke out boldly and directly about the Versailles Treaty.

"It is founded on a lie," he said—"the most deadly destructive lie in the history of the world—the lie that Germany alone was responsible for the war.

"The whole policy of punishment embodied and elaborated in the Versailles Treaty, a policy which has condemned millions of workers to toil like slaves for a beggar's supply of food, clothing and shelter, and millions of others to unemployment and poverty—*this is the spawn of that lie . . .*"\*

But what hope was there for a world in ruins whilst its destinies were in the hands of men who thought and acted in the interests of Capitalism? The world needed men who would bring nations together to arrange the best means whereby food, clothing and shelter would be assured for all workers, for the children, and for all who by reason of age and infirmity could not work. Then came the first of the passages which angered the capitalist press.

"Meanwhile, we pay a terrible tribute to Rent, Interest and Profit. The staggering sum of nearly £400,000,000 a year is paid out in interest on the national debt, swollen to colossal proportions by fabricated credit; contracted at a time when the pound was worth

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\*Jowett received many letters of congratulation on this outspoken condemnation of the "war guilt" basis of the Versailles Treaty. E. D. Morel's letter deserves quotation: "You have, indeed, struck a great blow for truth and justice, and for the emancipation of us all from the effects of the chief ingredient in the poison which is destroying the European body. I won't say I am grateful to you, for that would savour of impertinence; but you know what I feel about your brave stand."

about eight shillings, but payable at a time when the pound will be worth a good deal nearer its pre-war value.

"This high rate of interest and the consequential rise in the rate of interest on all municipal loans and industrial investments—these, together with increased rent charges, enrich mainly the class which has already more to spend than it can usefully spend.

*"It is this class which gives us the spectacles of senseless and wasteful display at race meetings, royal levees and royal weddings, hunting and shooting parties, and the gatherings of the swell mob at continental pleasure resorts.*

*"For the Royal homecoming it is 'roses all the way.' For the miner's wife, trudging to the guardians for relief, it is tears all the way."*

Not since the days of Keir Hardie had a chairman of the Labour Party spoken in such forthright terms. Jowett had not finished yet. A twofold injury, he said, was done to the workers through "this idle class." By the extortion of rent, interest and profit the workers paid for "the disgusting, vulgar orgies of the well-to-do," whilst by the transference of spending power to the owning class the effective demand for necessary goods was reduced.

"Fine ladies pay a thousand pounds for a fur cloak, where the workers would use the same sum in buying food and clothing or in building houses, thereby calling for the useful labour of the working-class. Two hundred millions a year is spent in pleasure-motoring; more than enough in three years to build the 'million homes for heroes' promised in 1918."

What shall we do? asked Jowett. Continue merely to repeat the evidence against Capitalism and point out the advantages of public ownership? No. *The first thing to do was to challenge the Government to meet human needs.* "It is for us to thrust the unemployed man in their midst; if they won't employ him they must keep him. The onus is on them." In like manner, the Government must not be allowed to forget "that hundreds of thousands have not where to lay their heads, whilst others who keep them in that condition have town houses, country houses and mansions." A description had recently appeared in the press of the spacious marble bathroom in one of the residences of Sir Alfred Mond, Minister for Health. "Mond's bathroom would, indeed, seem a mansion to not a small proportion of the families in the land," commented Jowett. "If Mond were confronted with a mass demand for requisitioning the mansions for hospitals and spare houses for the homeless, he would get a move on." Jowett insisted that if "the slow-moving mass mind" was to be stirred it must be by making ordinary men and women feel their everyday wrongs and demand redress for them. Their thoughts were too full of their daily bread to see far-off visions of nationalisation.

The theme of this downright speech—that the first charge on the national income should be the provision of a human level of security

for the people—was afterwards to become important in the development of the Living Income policy of the I.L.P. and in the controversies which raged twenty-three years later about Sir William Beveridge's Reports on Social Services and Full Employment. At the time of its deliverance, however, Jowett's proposals were regarded as revolutionary. The speech was met with a torrent of abuse from the reactionaries. "We have never read a speech more saturated with class hatred," remarked the *Daily Telegraph*.

"Why does the Labour Party put up such a man to speak in its name, and thus reduce for the time being to a nullity its claim that it is worthy of serious attention as the possible source of a Government? An orange-box at a street corner was the only befitting platform for that fanatical tirade."\*

In his home city of Bradford the *Daily Argus* described the speech as "wild, whirling words," "typical street-corner oratory—'sound and fury signifying nothing'." In the Upper House, Lord Birkenhead referred to Jowett's "inflammatory speech," but comforted the earls and dukes about him by the assurance that it did not represent the delegates at the conference. Had they not by an overwhelming majority expelled the Communists, of whom Lord Sydenham appeared to be so unduly apprehensive?† Jowett was amused when he read the reports of this debate. Who more than Lord Birkenhead, in the days when he was still plain F. E. Smith, had given extreme examples of "inflammatory speech"?

#### *Views on Violent Revolution*

Jowett's Edinburgh speech showed he believed that any effective appeal for Labour representation and Socialism must be directed to the immediate and acutely-felt grievances of the workers, and that their sense of injustice must be aroused by contrasting their deprivations with the luxuries of the possessing class. In this sense he advocated a "class" appeal and endorsed the Marxist analysis of a class struggle or, to use the Continental term, a "class war." At the same time, in the circumstances of Britain, he was strongly against anything which savoured of a revolution by violence. This was due partly to his conviction that once violence is let loose it is impossible to control persons and events sufficiently to prevent brutalities, tyrannies and atrocities: what he had seen in Hungary had strengthened this view. It was also due partly to his conviction that British conditions made the advocacy of violent revolution unnecessary.

In certain countries, such as Russia, where no democratic expression had existed, Jowett admitted that recourse to violent revolution might be necessary; he acknowledged that even in Britain the possessing class might finally resist democratic change and produce a violent clash; but he argued that if such resistance followed the achievement

\*June 28, 1922.

†July 6, 1922.

of democratic power, the possessing class would be at a great disadvantage. Public opinion would be against reactionary *saboteurs*; the workers who manned the factories, railways and pits would be against them; and the tradition of the armed forces and the civil service (except for a minority of reactionaries) would be to support the democratically-elected Government. He was confident that if socialist education and organisation were done thoroughly before the winning of governmental power, any resistance by the possessing class to democratic decisions could be successfully overcome. The one supplement to parliamentary (and, of course, municipal) action he would accept for political purposes was the use in exceptional circumstances of a "demonstration" strike—such as the threat of a general strike to prevent war with Russia in 1920.

This issue came to the fore in these years because the Russian revolution and the revolutionary struggles on the Continent inclined certain sections of the Socialist Movement in Britain to declare that a violent conflict was inevitable and that the workers should prepare for it. This view gained some hold of the I.L.P. membership, and in Scotland the Socialist Labour Party was energetic in advocating it. Philip Snowden, whilst chairman of the I.L.P., felt the danger to be sufficiently serious to draft a memorandum for circulation within the Party and sent a copy to Jowett and MacDonald for their endorsement. Snowden made reference to a "united action" conference between representatives of the I.L.P., the British Socialist Party, and the Socialist Labour Party which had broken down because the S.L.P. stated that "it was their object to work for the overthrow of the Parliamentary institution and the existing forms of local government and to devote their efforts to the organisation of the working classes for a revolution of force, to be followed, if successful, by the dictatorship of the proletariat." Jowett, replying to Snowden, took the opportunity to press home his view that parliamentary procedure must be changed.

"The attitude of Parliament and the Labour Group in Parliament has discouraged belief in political action and parliamentary government," he wrote. "The present discontent with parliamentary government, so far as our own people are concerned in it, is less due to a desire to support novel and untried theories and experiments than it is to the fact that they have not had placed before them definite proposals for the reform of the admitted defects of the present parliamentary system."

But he endorsed wholeheartedly Snowden's condemnation of violent revolution. He believed that in Britain it was stupid and criminal to propagate the use of force. He held this view so strongly that when at the general election of 1922 the Bradford branch of the Communist Party offered its services in his Parliamentary campaign he declined it on this very ground. "The Communist Party," he replied, "hold the view that, without waiting to convince the majority of people to

give them power by consent, they will be justified in seizing power by force. I cannot give any encouragement to that view and, to avoid all appearance of doing so, I must decline to invite the help of those who hold it." This had always been Jowett's view of revolution by violence and it remained his view through his later life. Not even the subsequent emergence of Fascism changed it.

### *Death of Bruce Glasier*

Jowett's membership of the Labour Party Executive and his chairmanship of that Party in 1921 did not lessen his interest in the I.L.P. His work in the wider organisation was always done consciously as a representative of the I.L.P., and he continued to give thorough service to its National Council as well as to the Bradford Branch, where his secretaryship continued to coincide with encouraging progress.

During these after-war years the Party lost two leading figures, and Jowett two good friends, in the deaths of W. C. Anderson and J. Bruce Glasier. Anderson died in the influenza epidemic of 1919. He belonged to a younger generation than Jowett and was not so close to him as Glasier, but Fred had a high respect for him and expected great things of him. "Anderson was not a Hardie, a Smillie or a Maxton," Jowett remarked, "but he had the practical ability and the popular personality which would have made him MacDonald's successor as Labour's leader if he had lived."\* Glasier was one of Jowett's intimate circle of comrades from the early years. He wrote a glowing tribute to him:

"It is more than 25 years since I first met Bruce Glasier. He was then newly married to the young and attractive I.L.P. crusader who was so well-known to us as Katharine St. John Conway that we had difficulty in calling her by her new name. With as little care or mistrust of the future, so far as one could judge, as if they had been a pair of newly-mated birds, they were both crusading for the I.L.P. when they came to our home at the time of which I speak . . . .

"I do not know whether Bruce and Katharine entered into a covenant with each other to make it the chief work of their lives to preach Socialism. It has been so said of them. Be this as it may, they both did so in fact. For many years when branches of the I.L.P. were small and far removed from each other, Bruce went from village to village and town to town, speaking for branches and forming new ones . . . .

"I have recalled vividly to my recollection a few occasions on which I met Bruce accidentally on his crusading expeditions. A satchell, hung loosely on his back by means of a strap over one shoulder, contained a few books, pamphlets and indispensable things. He was clothed and shod in manner suitable for long walks and brief sojourns with ordinary working people. He looked a little

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\*In statement to author, October, 1943.

like a wandering minstrel and a little like a workman on tramp, but not quite like one or the other . . ."

Glasier was elected to the National Council of the I.L.P. in 1897 and, except for a short interval in 1909, held office until 1919, when illness prevented further attendance at the Council meetings. He was chairman of the Party for three years and for a time edited the *Labour Leader*. Jowett described his membership of the Council as a great source of strength, "for he combined to a degree rarely known in one individual the idealism of the preacher and poet with the experience of the agitator and organiser." During his last illness, although at intervals he suffered great bodily pain, he wrote his best known work, "The Meaning of Socialism," compiled an anthology of poems on the subject of war and militarism and concluded a book on William Morris. "His impending death did not disturb him," wrote Jowett. "Many months ago he took leave of such of his friends and colleagues as were not likely to be near him when the time of his death would come. Snowden and I went together. He talked cheerfully with us of past events and future prospects, as if death were not in his mind but merely a journey of little or no account."\*

#### *Bradford I.L.P. Becomes a Power*

The years between Jowett's Parliamentary defeat in 1918 and the general election of 1922 is regarded by older members of the Bradford I.L.P. as one of its great periods. The membership rose to 1,600, with eight affiliated clubs. The Party had its own hall and paper and controlled a cinema and printing works. Jowett's work as secretary was heavy. He went down to the office at 9.30 a.m., worked through until 4.30 p.m.,† took a meal at the cinema café, worked until 8.30 p.m., and then spent an hour with Harry Wilson, the Party treasurer, in his house in Ash Grove before returning home to Grantham Terrace.‡

The war had split the old I.L.P. team in Bradford somewhat, but not seriously. J. H. Palin and Michael Conway were among those who transferred their main activities to the Labour Party, but, largely due to the influence of William Leach, there was no personal feud. Leach had been the life and soul of the Movement locally during the war, always cheerful, challenging and uncompromising. His "gossip" column in the *Pioneer* rivalled Tom Johnston's "Socialist War Points" in the *Glasgow Forward* for their audacity, and he added an impish tone of his own. After the war Leach became chairman of the City Council Finance Committee, showing great administrative ability, but

\**Bradford Pioneer*, June 10, 1920.

†Jowett maintained until the end of his life this practice of omitting lunch. He took the view that two good meals a day were enough.

‡Mention should be made of the secretarial service which Jowett received during this and other periods of his life from three devoted workers—Miss Margaret Newbould, Miss Eva M. Sutton and Miss Edith Isherwood.

the cheekily provocative speech which he delivered when the year's accounts came under review, caused a considerable controversy not only among the public but in the Party. It was at a time when the press was emphasising the need for economy, but Leach went all out for expenditure on novel projects, such as the hiring of ships to enable Bradford children to learn geography, as well as to gain in health, by cruises over the sea. This was a great propagandist gesture, but it had a good deal to do with the loss of every contested seat in the municipal election of 1920, fought by the Tories and Liberals on the "squandermania" slogan. Jowett did not criticise Leach publicly, but he felt that his friend had given a handle to the enemy and Leach probably sensed this. It was the beginning of their later divergence.

Despite the municipal defeats of 1920, the Party went from strength to strength. On Sunday evenings the Morley Street Cinema was crowded for public meetings, with Lansbury, Shinwell, Maxton and other speakers. The I.L.P. was so active that, although the Labour Party had invited individual members since 1918, this resulted in no serious competition. The Party included some outstanding personalities. Tom Stamford was chairman. There was Charles Hunt, the bellman, a little wisp of a man, so dark as to appear Iberian, a clog-maker. He used to cry the announcement of meetings through the streets, reciting in a voice of thunder a verse of rebel poetry as he did it. Manager of the cinema was stocky A. T. Sutton. Margaret Newbould, whose devoted service to Jowett began during the war, was assistant secretary. Alfred Pickles became Lord Mayor a few years later. The Prince of Wales visited the city and was twenty minutes late for the ceremony. The Prince wanted a further postponement because his equerry had the manuscript of his speech, but the Mayor would brook no delay and opened the proceedings. "Who is this man?" asked the Prince of the Lord Lieutenant. The Mayor overheard. "One of the Pickles of Pudsey," replied Alfred.

### *The Government Becomes Unpopular*

Unemployment in the woollen and worsted industry, as in many other industries, grew alarmingly in the 'twenties. By the middle of July, 1921, there were sixty thousand wool textile workers unemployed in Bradford and its environs. Jowett, as always, put forward basically socialist remedies. He pointed out that during the war the Government had employed from 60 to 80 per cent. of the producing power of the mills. It had bought the raw wool, costed every process, clothed five million men in the army, and exchanged the surplus produce for goods needed from abroad. Why not do the same during peace? There were millions of men, women and children in Britain who still needed the clothing Bradford's mills could produce. Let the Government provide it. At the end of the war the Government had wool in its possession to the value of £60 millions. It should have retained it,



rationalised it out to the mills, supplied the people of Britain with clothes at cost price and exchanged any surplus for needed imports (such as Russian timber for housing purposes). This should be done on a barter basis, ignoring the barriers of rates of exchange. "In that way," he said, "there would have been no plunder for the profiteer. The mills would have been kept going, the workers would have had wages, production would have continued, and the needs of the people would have been met."\*

Meanwhile, the policy of the Coalition Government, despite its Liberal Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, became more and more reactionary. The Peace Treaties were proving disastrous, not only ruining Germany but threatening to ruin France and Britain by the effect of reparations on employment. India had had its Amritsar massacre. Oppression was harsh in Egypt. Wages at home were falling below pre-war standards. Unemployment was growing, destitution spreading.

Though the Government had a large majority in the House it felt insecure. In 1920 it had been thwarted by a threat of industrial action by organised Labour when suspicion grew that hostile action against Soviet Russia was being planned. Industrial disputes were occurring on a large scale. When the employers reduced their wages, the workers in the engineering and shipbuilding industry maintained a lock-out for three months. The miners, transport workers and railwaymen planned to strike together: great must have been the relief in Whitehall when on "Black Friday" the miners were deserted by their partners in the "Triple Alliance." Most disturbing of all problems for the Government was national finance. The war had left a colossal debt and with industry in a bad way the difficulty of meeting interest charges was perplexing the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Sir Eric Geddes was asked to report on how State expenditure could be cut down.† He proposed a reduction of £45 millions in military expenditure, £18 millions in educational costs, and nearly £6 million in health costs. The education cuts included the closing of all nursery schools and of all provision for children under six years of age. The saving in health expenditure meant increased insurance contributions from workers and employers, a reduction in health services and the sale of houses built with State subsidies. Jowett described these latter cuts as "class war with a vengeance and high treason against the future." He pointed out that the local authorities would be compelled to shoulder part of the expenditure on education which the State proposed to

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\**Daily Herald*, July 1, 1921.

†Labour criticism of this appointment was severe because Sir Eric had personally been taking quite a big slice of the national income. The North Eastern Railway Co. made him a present of £50,000 on his retirement from its management, as well as £5,000 a year superannuation. He was also receiving £5,000 a year from the Dunlop Rubber Co., plus £10,000 for overtime during one year.

throw off: "the part which will not be transferred to the ratepayer will be taken out of the children of the working class, impoverishing their health of body and mind."\*

At the same time, the Federation of British Industries issued a report. This authoritative voice of Big Business had by now come to realise that the impoverishment of Europe meant the impoverishment of Britain and it recommended credits for distressed countries, the removal of trade restrictions, and the modification of reparation demands. But it also recommended a reduction of Government expenditure and declared that "the cost of production in Britain must come down to the level prevailing on the Continent of Europe"—*a polite way of saying that the wages of the workers and the standard of life of the people must be reduced drastically*. Jowett's comment was sharp.

"If the Allied Governments have succeeded in making slaves of German and Austrian industrial workers to pay war debts in cheap manufactured goods," he wrote, "the Federation of British Industries will not, by pointing to this discreditable fact, persuade British workers also to be slaves. Nor, if slavish wages and hours were accepted, would prices fall sufficiently to restore the pre-war demand for goods."†

Labour proposed a drastic capital levy to reduce the national debt, but by the Tories and Liberals this cure was regarded as worse than the disease. The Tories would have liked to raise revenue by tariffs, but this was not possible with Mr. Lloyd George as Prime Minister. The Government dragged on with no positive policy.

#### *Jowett Rejects a Liberal-Labour Alliance*

In this situation a proposal came from a group of Independent Liberals (led by Mr. Asquith, who had refused to follow Mr. Lloyd George into his pact with the Tories) for a Liberal-Labour united front to defeat the Coalition. The proposal was made by Lieutenant-Commander Kenworthy (now Lord Strabolgi, a Labour peer) and it was Jowett, then vice-chairman of the Labour Party, who rejected it. Commander Kenworthy went very far, offering to accept nationalisation of mines, railways, canals and electricity, with democratic control on "Guild" lines (rather than State bureaucratic control) as a basis for a "temporary accommodation" between the two Parties. In return he asked the Labour Party to forego "any attempt to nationalise private trade or industry while the arrangement, or accommodation, continued."

When Jowett asked for whom Commander Kenworthy was speaking, the latter replied for twelve or fifteen M.P.s and a large number of Radicals throughout the country. Fred ridiculed the value of this.

\**Bradford Pioneer*, February 17, 1922.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, February 17, 1922.

Speaking from his Bradford experience, he declared that in the absence of a Liberal candidate most Liberals voted Tory rather than Socialist, whilst, so far as the Parliamentary Party was concerned, it was not the twelve or fifteen "young political careerists who harass the Government when their Party is in Opposition" who would determine policy, but the Liberal leadership and the capitalists who provided the Party funds. The nation would be no better off if Mr. Lloyd George were exchanged for Mr. Asquith, "the chief author of the country's disaster."

"Who but Mr. Asquith and his imperialist colleagues," asked Jowett, "forged the secret chain which bound this country to France and Russia and dragged it into war at the cost of a million lives, and deliberately hoodwinked Parliament and the people regarding their proceedings? Who was responsible for the secret treaties made during the war, which determined the iniquitous character of the peace that is starving and enslaving the workers of Central Europe and is dragging our own workers along with them? He it is who is Commander Kenworthy's leader."\*

Nothing more was heard of a Liberal-Labour alliance. Instead, the Labour Party, with the I.L.P. in the van, went forward confidently on its own programme and in its own strength, sure in its growing hold on the people. At last, in November, 1922, the Coalition fell. War had broken out on the European-Asiatic border between Greece and Turkey and Mr. Lloyd George was giving British support to Greece. Mr. Bonar Law and the Tories saw their chance of cutting their association with him on an issue which would make them popular, for they realised that the British people were not in the mood for further war. They threw over Lloyd George. A general election followed.

#### *Re-Elected to Parliament*

Jowett fought East Bradford. He had two opponents—Captain Loseby, who had defeated him in 1918 as a "National Democrat" but now stood as a "National Liberal" with the goodwill of the Tories, and Mr. H. M. Dawson, an independent Liberal. Captain Loseby was thought to be a strong candidate because he was an experienced "working class" politician. He was, indeed. In five years he had been a member of the British Workers' League, the British Empire Workers' League, the National Democratic and Labour Party, the National Democratic Party, and the National Liberal Party.

The Labour campaign in East Bradford was as aggressively socialist as ever. Jowett gave prominence, of course, to the war danger. Great "No More War" demonstrations had been held in all large centres of population during the summer. "While the demonstrations were going on," commented Jowett, "our own Government was giving support to a war between Greece and Turkey. France was doing likewise,

\**Labour Leader*, May 13, 1921.

but it supported Turkey whilst we supported Greece." He did not regard the danger as over.

"The trouble is not over yet, for victorious Turkey is claiming the return of Mosul, where the oil wells are, and the clearance from the Dardanelles of British and Allied military forces.

"Demonstrations notwithstanding, the money kings behind our Government will risk a war to keep control of the passage-way for oil-tank vessels from the lands where their money is invested . . .

"Without directly having any say in the foreign policy of the Government, capitalist adventurers—the money kings—can poison international relations and keep nations at variance and in a state of discord with each other."

He gave the warning that even a Labour Government "would toil in vain to maintain friendly relations" if capitalists were allowed to continue "to use their money power to corner the supply of the world's raw materials and to exploit cheap foreign labour for their dividends."\*

Of course, Jowett stressed the policy which he had urged in his Edinburgh speech—the prior right of the workers to enjoy the good things of life. "The great world struggle is at hand," he declared, with a rhetorical optimism which was unusual in him. "The forces which fight for property are on the one side and the common people, fighting for the right to enjoy those healthy and pleasurable things which are the common heritage of all, are on the other."†

Jowett won the election with the comfortable majority of 3,647, although he was considerably short of a clear majority over both his opponents. The figures were: F. W. Jowett, 13,573; Captain Loseby, 9,926; H. M. Dawson, 6,411.

In the country generally there was a big swing over to Labour. The Party in Parliament grew from 76 to 138. Socialism was becoming a power in the land.

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, November 10, 1922.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, Election Special, November, 1922.

## CHAPTER XI

## SOCIALISM ASSUMES THE OFFENSIVE

The Conservative Government only lasted a year and even this short Administration had two Premiers, Mr. Bonar Law and Mr. Stanley Baldwin. It had an inglorious record both in home and foreign affairs, and the strengthened Labour Opposition made the most of the opportunities to criticise. MacDonald, Snowden and Jowett led a contingent of 32 Members nominated by the I.L.P. It included a militant group from Glasgow, among them John Wheatley, James Maxton, Emanuel Shinwell, David Kirkwood, George Buchanan and Campbell Stephen. The chairman of the Party, R. C. Wallhead, was elected for Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales.

The strong I.L.P. representation led to the election of Ramsay MacDonald as leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party, an appointment which, in effect, made him Premier-designate. Since 1918 J. R. Clynes had been the Parliamentary leader, fulfilling his duties with marked ability though without the vigour of personality which is looked for in a leader. In later years many of the I.L.P. members who voted for MacDonald came to regret their choice. Fred Jowett had a great respect for Clynes and expressed admiration for the big-spirited manner in which he took second place.

Unemployment was widespread and the Labour Party placed the need for legislation on this subject first in its challenge to the Government, emphasising in its work schemes the need for a national housing plan to meet the shortage which had remained acute ever since the war. Wage conditions, particularly among the miners, were also desperate. The cost of living was up by 77 per cent. over the 1914 level, but miners' wages were up by only 22 per cent. Mr. Bonar Law received a deputation of their leaders, but he could promise them nothing. The miners were feeling the effect of the reparations coal which was pouring into France.

The French Government was not satisfied with the reparations which it was receiving. When Germany failed to maintain the payments imposed by the Versailles Treaty, French armies marched into the Ruhr. The Labour Opposition called on the British Government to repudiate France's action, but Mr. Bonar Law was content to adopt an attitude of "benevolent neutrality." Fred Jowett was among those who took the strongest line on this issue, and he specially welcomed the decision of the I.L.P. to send Charles Roden Buxton to the Ruhr to consult with the Socialists there and to convey assurances of solidarity. The Party opened a fund to help meet the distress in the Ruhr.

A second international issue of grave importance arose. In the spring of 1923 Lord Curzon sent an ultimatum to Russia. The grounds of complaint were two—a Russian decision to prevent British trawlers fishing within a twelve-mile limit of their coast and the suppression of religious liberty. Labour opposition to any break with Russia was so strong that the Government had to climb down. Memories of 1920 were still keen.

### *Neville Chamberlain Fails*

Jowett had never been a frequent speaker in Parliament and he spoke less often than usual in this Parliament because he wanted to give the new and younger Members, many of whom were in great fighting trim, an opportunity to make their mark. A speech which he delivered on Mr. Neville Chamberlain's Housing Bill, however, made an impression both on Parliament and the press. He argued—and events proved him right—that the provisions of the Bill were so meagre that the problem would hardly be touched. He emphasised the size of the problem. Reports from the Local Authorities in 1919 showed that 800,000 houses were required, and since then an additional 161,000 had become necessary to meet the growth of population, making a total need of 961,000. Towards this 215,000 houses had been built, leaving a deficit of 746,000. What did the Bill propose to meet this need? A total of 120,000 houses, *less than one-sixth of those required!*

Jowett asked what kind of people would get the houses. He illustrated his answer from Bradford, where the Medical Officer stated that twenty per cent. of the *better* class of workers' houses were occupied by two or more families. The cost of erecting the houses would be £500 each. At 5 per cent. that would mean a rent of £25 a year. Rates would add £17 and another £5 would be required for repairs. Deduct the Government subsidy of £6 and a local subsidy of £6 and the final rent would be £35 a year, or 13s. 6d. a week. Bradford workers could not pay that. Moreover, the houses would be too small to share. The recognised minimum space for a non-parlour house was 950 superficial feet and for a parlour house 1,050 superficial feet. Mr. Neville Chamberlain proposed 850 superficial feet for a parlour house.

"This scheme will not work," exclaimed Jowett. "Many municipal authorities will refuse to build houses under these conditions and will realise that those for whom they are intended cannot pay the rents." He was particularly biting about a provision in the Bill which made the Government subsidy to local authorities depend upon the satisfaction of the Minister that "private speculators had not been interfered with."

It was a speaking trick of Jowett to build up his case quietly with solid arguments and facts and then to conclude with a short, sharp sentence uttered with dramatic emphasis and a thump of fist on hand.

He did so on this occasion. "Scrap the Bill entirely and bring in a better," he demanded.

This was the first time Jowett had observed Neville Chamberlain on the Parliamentary scene. Earlier we have given his impression of Austen Chamberlain. It was Austen whom their father chose for a political career, but Jowett, estimating the ability of the two brothers, was all in favour of Neville.

"Neville had not been selected by his famous father for politics. He had been put into business to follow up his father's earlier career. But, just as his father had done before him, Neville took up municipal work, and finally entered Parliament with a reputation of ability as an administrator. And the new Prime Minister (Mr. Bonar Law), in want of such men, first made him Postmaster General and then Minister of Health in succession to the luckless Boscawen.

"Compared with Austen, Neville Chamberlain is quick-witted and free of speech. He is not eloquent, however, as his father was. Biting satire and moving perorations are not among his gifts. But he is competent and sure of his ground, and one wonders if the brothers will become political rivals. If they do, Neville surely is the better man. Joseph Chamberlain selected badly when he chose Austen in preference to Neville to wear his mantle."\*

From the point of view of a political career Jowett once more proved right. It was Neville Chamberlain who became Prime Minister.

#### *Tom Johnston Outrages the House*

The Labour Party in this Parliament was in aggressive, confident spirit. This was due partly to the incursion of new, militant Members, partly to the feebleness of the Government and partly to the realisation that Labour was on the flowing tide and the Government on the ebbing tide of public opinion. "A big change is coming over the Labour Party and its relations with other Parties in Parliament," wrote Jowett. "In the last Parliament the Party was on the defensive on the issue which at bottom divides Labour from the two capitalist Parties. The Party now, however, is taking the offensive against Capitalism. It is unmasking the operations of Capitalism and showing how it uses the State for private interests and increasing the profits of Big Business. . . . The Liberals and Tories have been having a new experience. Their clay-footed idol, Private Enterprise, has been attacked at every turn. It has been proved that under a variety of excuses Capitalism has raided the public treasury whilst pretending that Private Enterprise could save the world."†

\**Bradford Pioneer*, April 27, 1923.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, December 15, 1922. The reaction of the Tory M.P.s to the new mood in the Labour Party was expressed by the Hon. F. S. Jackson, M.P. (more famous as cricketer than as politician): "It was not long ago that I used to say I did not fear the Labour Party, because, knowing the class of Labour men who used to stand for Parliament, I believed they would play the game. I have changed my view." (*Yorkshire Observer*, April 25, 1923.)

The occasion which led Jowett to make this comment was remarkable. It arose from a courageous challenge thrown out to Mr. Asquith by one of the new Scottish group, Tom Johnston. Johnston had been the adventurous editor of *Forward*, the Glasgow Socialist weekly, and had made a reputation for unearthing political scandals. When this "cub" in Parliamentary experience dared to question the conduct of such a respected pillar of the House as the Liberal leader the old guard were shocked beyond expression. "The Liberals and Tories were more angry than they have ever been since the days when Keir Hardie made them furious," remarked Jowett.

The circumstances were these. The Government had guaranteed to the Sudan Government a loan of £2½ millions to enable cotton fields owned by the Sudan Plantation Syndicate Ltd. to be irrigated. After he had made some researches at Somerset House, Johnston placed this question on the Order Paper: "*Is it the case that the Sudan Plantation Syndicate Ltd. has as one of its directors Brigadier-General Asquith? Is it the case that the company in the years 1916-17 was so prosperous that it paid 10 per cent., that in 1918-19 it paid 25 per cent., in 1919-20 again 25 per cent. and with a bonus of 10 per cent. in addition, and in the year 1920-21 15 per cent.? Is it the case that the directors are to get 10 per cent. of the net profits accruing after a dividend of 25 per cent. has been paid?*" The director, Brig.-Gen. Asquith, was the Liberal leader's son. Rarely has so much dynamite been crammed into a Parliamentary question. If anything, the Government's reply added spice to the allegations. It was to the effect that the loan had been granted after Mr. J. R. Clynes and Mr. Asquith had gone to the Ministry to request it. (Mr. Clynes had done so as a Lancashire M.P. concerned with getting cotton for its mills.)

The same afternoon Mr. Asquith made a personal statement. He did not challenge Johnston's facts, but stated that he had no financial interest in the Syndicate and that like Mr. J. R. Clynes he had gone on the deputation in the interest of his constituents employed in the cotton industry. Johnston's only mistake had been that he had not acquainted Mr. Asquith of his intention to put the question; when he replied, the young Scot expressed regret that he had not done this—and proceeded to cite more facts. In a final sentence he said he was personally gratified that the Liberal leader had no direct financial interest in the Sudan Syndicate. "This was amid the savage yells of the battalions of Liberals and Tories," reported Jowett.

Sir John Simon rose. He asked Johnston to withdraw his "allegations of corruption" and challenged Ramsay MacDonald either to defend his supporter or to repudiate him. Johnston had not made any allegation of corruption and MacDonald asked him to make this clear. Let Jowett continue his story.

"Johnston rose in response to his leader's appeal, but what he



was about to say was not made known to the House of Commons, for the massed Liberals and Tories were noisy and turbulent, so he left it there and said no more. Mr. Asquith, with true dramatic instinct, walked out at this point, whereupon the massed battalions cheered loud and long."

In the case of Mr. Asquith, Jowett did not allege corruption any more than Johnston had done. His concern was to place all Parliamentary conduct beyond suspicion by applying to it the rules which operated in local government. He was particularly angered by Sir John Simon's part in this incident—Sir John remained to Fred's last days his political *bête noir*. "Here was a man newly elected to the House of Commons," he remarked, "who ventured to suggest that it was an improper thing for a Parliamentary leader to use his influence to get a Government guarantee for a loan of millions expected to be relaned to a syndicate of which his son is a director. Such ideas as to what a public man ought not to do might be the fashion on local government bodies, but they are not observed by Ministers and ex-Ministers. Somebody had to strike hard at this heresy at once. It was Sir John Simon who struck."\*

#### *Tories Angered by "Class Desertions"*

The Tories were aware that Labour was in the ascendant, that their own fortunes were declining. This was the first time in British history that Labour had seriously challenged the old governing class and the "Gentlemen of England" were frustrated, irritable, apprehensive. Indeed, they were not behaving like gentlemen at all. Jowett remarked on how they were specially annoyed with men of the "upper" classes who identified themselves with Labour. An incident arose which led them to turn their wrath on Sir Patrick Hastings.

One morning in March, 1923, it was announced that the Government had arrested 100 Irishmen resident in England and, without charge or trial, had deported them to Ireland and interned them in prison. When Parliament assembled that day MacDonald moved the adjournment in protest. "I have never known my Parliamentary leader more effective for the purpose in hand than MacDonald was on this occasion," said Jowett. In contrast, Mr. Bridgeman, the Home Secretary, was ineffective.

"The Tories on their crowded benches were in bad temper, for the Home Secretary had failed to express their feelings or to make a decent defence," told Jowett. "The intervention of Patrick Hastings at this point aggravated them. To look across at the Labour benches and see this man to whom they pay big fees in the law courts was more than they could endure. They jeered and laughed at him, and when he told them that they hadn't the faintest notion of the importance of the question as bearing on the liberty of the subject under the British Constitution, they shouted 'rot' and jeered again. Outwardly quite cool, Hastings tried again and again to

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, December 15, 1922.

get the ear of the swell mob, but it was no good. Then he lashed out at them, told them that he was 'accustomed to speaking for a considerable time,' and 'in a place where one has courtesy or else the usher turns them out.' He was rattled. It spoiled his speech as a reasoned argument in support of the Labour Party's case. But I liked him all the better for the resentment that moved him. He made the swell mob feel to the last fibre of them what they were to him. Keir Hardie used to do that when 'England's gentlemen' howled at him."\*

"Why did the Tory nabobs jeer and shout at Hastings to the delight of the Liberal nabobs who approvingly looked on?" asked Jowett. 'I know . . . They think he is 'blazing the trail' by which others will follow into the ranks of Labour. To the nabobs of both Parties, Tory and Liberal, he is a renegade. The sinuous, wriggling Sir John Simon, blowing hot and cold on his way to the expectant Premiership, the Tory nabobs can tolerate. The Liberal nabobs have no rooted dislike for the keen-witted, smooth-tongued, clear-speaking lawyer, their political 'enemy,' Sir Douglas Hogg. The two wear different political labels, but both serve the same class. But Patrick Hastings in the Labour Party! To the swell mob he is 'no class,' a deserter. Down with him!'"†

The Tories even resented the association of Sidney Webb with the Labour Party. It was all right when he wrote academic books, when through the Fabian Society he sought to persuade the older Parties to adopt new ideas; but that he should sit with the Socialists in Parliament, using his brain to expose the weaknesses and stupidities of the governing class—which, after all, was his own class—was too much for them. This is how Jowett describes the way in which the "gentlemen of England" behaved—and the way in which the men of the Clyde responded:

"They treat Sidney Webb in the same way (as Patrick Hastings). Whenever he speaks they do their best to hamper and irritate him. Yet he has always something to say that is material and to the point. He says it clearly and attractively. This of course, adds to his offence in the eyes of the swell mob that cannot forgive him for not placing his ability at their service.

"Last week Mr. Webb made a most excellent speech on the Housing Bill. The swell mob talked loudly to each other and at intervals howled across the floor to Webb to 'speak up.' The men on the Labour benches became restive and angry. At last one of the ill-mannered Tory crew was heard to say 'Sit down, Nanny.' (The Attorney-General was replying to Webb at the time, and Webb had risen to make a correction by leave of the Attorney-General, who had given way to him). This schoolboy insult was too much for Kirkwood and others around him. David appealed to the Speaker and refused to be pacified. It was then seven minutes to

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\*The Judges afterwards justified Labour's protest. The Court of Appeal decided that the arrest and deportation of the Irishmen were illegal.

†Bradford Pioneer, March 16, 1923.

eleven, at which hour the division had to be taken—and the Attorney-General had more to say. But the Attorney-General's speech was left unfinished. He could say no more that night. David Kirkwood saw to that.”\*

### *Maxton Uses the Word "Murder"*

With such an atmosphere in the House it was inevitable that an explosion should occur. It did. Sir Frederick Banbury exposed the gunpowder and James Maxton threw in the lighted match.

“The bother began when Joe Sullivan, a white-haired, clean-shaven Scottish miner, was speaking,” Jowett wrote, describing the incident. “He was directing the attention of the Committee (on Scottish estimates) to the connection between the grants in aid of child welfare centres and the overcrowding of houses and the death rate among children. The death rate among children had gone up, but the Government had saved money. ‘Hear, hear,’ said Sir Frederick Banbury, who is deady opposed to spending money out of public funds for purposes such as housing families or feeding or doctoring children. That did it.

“Sullivan let Banbury off lightly, but Maxton was enraged. Touched to the quick by the callous attitude of this wealthy old cynic, he prepared to spring to his feet at the first opportunity. His opportunity came soon after, when Banbury's approval of economy at the expense of the lives of little children was fresh in his mind. Maxton quoted from a report issued by the Scottish Board of Health, which, after acknowledging a shortage of houses in Scotland of no less than 100,000, goes on to state that the Board had carried out ‘a policy of rigorous economy because we must save money.’ He accused Sir Frederick Banbury of having approved this policy by his interjection when Sullivan was speaking. Sir Frederick responded to the accusation in terms of defiance.

“Maxton then gave the facts and figures relating to the mortality of children in Scotland. He proceeded to show that the death rate among children in Scotland was so much higher than in England that in his own district alone ‘1,035 infants died who would have survived in English conditions.’ This number could have been saved in five years in his district. ‘I call it murder,’ said Maxton. ‘It is a fearful thing,’ he went on to say, ‘for any man to have on his soul—a cold, callous, deliberate crime to save money.’

“At this point Sir Frederick Banbury could contain himself no longer. Repeatedly he demanded withdrawal, and every time he met with a refusal. The only result of Sir Frederick's intervention was to draw from Maxton a definite admission that he particularly applied his accusation to Sir Frederick Banbury himself, because Sir Frederick had, by his interjection when Sullivan was speaking, definitely approved the policy of saving money at the expense of children's lives.”

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, May 4, 1923.

The Speaker called on Maxton to withdraw his implication that Sir Frederick Banbury was a "murderer." Maxton stood by what he had said. Amidst a scene of intense excitement he was suspended. Three of his Clyde colleagues—Wheatley, Buchanan and Campbell Stephen—repeated Maxton's charge. They were suspended. The press was agog. It suggested that MacDonald had threatened to resign his leadership of the Labour Party if the suspended Members did not apologise, that there was a crisis in the Party, and so on. "The fact is that there are not two opinions in the Party in regard to Maxton's outburst," wrote Jowett. "The feeling is unanimous that his was an expression of righteous indignation." About the succeeding suspensions, Jowett admitted that there was a difference of opinion.\*

The suspensions continued for seven weeks. When friends of the four Clyde "rebels" (as they began to be called) looked up the Standing Orders of Parliament to find out how long their punishment was to continue, they discovered to their astonishment that the relevant Order was incomplete. It read: "If any Member be suspended under this Order, his suspension on the first occasion . . . ." The sentence had no ending; apparently the House had failed to agree what the period of exclusion should be.† On this occasion Parliament agreed to readmit Maxton and his colleagues after seven weeks, Sir Frederick Banbury still protesting. Afterwards, the period of suspension was made five days for a first offence, 20 days for a second, and an unlimited period, ended only by the carrying of a motion in the House, for a third offence.

George Lansbury was not suspended during a Ministry of Pensions debate, but that was only because he chose his words more carefully. He did not call Major Tryon a murderer; he called him a "Minister of Death." The Pensions Minister, remarked Jowett, was not able in this Parliament, as he was in the last, "to gloss over the scandalous treatment of disabled ex-servicemen and war widows and orphans by his chirpy recital of the Ministry's alleged accomplishments." The Back Benches in the Labour Party maintained their protest on this occasion until 4 a.m., heaping their cases of injustice on the floor of the House until they were figuratively a new Cenotaph—"We must not forget these men."‡

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, July 6, 1923.

†Campbell Stephen gives the author the following explanation: "In a previous Parliament the Standing Orders were undergoing revision, and the rule about Suspensions was left unfinished, the Leader of the House, Mr. A. J. Balfour, having given an undertaking that the old rule would apply until the new rule was completed. This undertaking was not carried out, and so we were out until the Prime Minister put down a motion for the removal of our suspension."

‡*Bradford Pioneer*, July 6, 1923.

*Jowett Checks Nation's Accounts*

The Member for East Bradford was appointed to perform an unusually important duty during this Parliament—he was made Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, whose function it is to inspect Government expenditure and to bring to light any irregularities which occur. He undertook the task with his invariable thoroughness and kept the officials of the Treasury busy giving explanations of this and that item in the accounts. A room among the rafters of the House was placed at his disposal.

"Imagine a not very well lighted room, high up in the building, thirty feet square, oak panelled, overlooking the broad river on which lazily moving barges float with the tide," he wrote. "The room is as quiet and secluded as the attic of the immortal Teufelsdröckh, Carlyle's created medium for the expression of his deepest thought and feeling. It is in such a room I have to spend much time nowadays poring over the nation's accounts and holding converse concerning them with the man who knows most about them, the Comptroller and Auditor-General."\*

The Committee's report to Parliament gave many instances of defects—absence of co-ordination between departments, carelessness, neglect, in some instances lax conduct. There was, for example, the story of a tug hired at £60 a week with the option to buy at £9,000. The authorities forgot that they had ever hired the tug until the charges ran up to £15,000. They then bought the craft for £6,000 and handed her over to the Disposals Board for sale! There was the story of farm buildings taken over by the Air Ministry. The farmer claimed from £2,500 to £3,000 for pigsties and other light structures. The Ministry regarded this as extravagant and decided to remove the structures for the farmer at a cost which they estimated would be £1,000. It proved to be £9,000.

Jowett was disconcertingly inquisitive about money paid to industrial and commercial undertakings. Subsidies amounting to £283,418 were paid in six years to the British Italian Corporation. "Why?" enquired Jowett. "The witness who appeared before the Committee was unable to inform them what advantages had accrued to H.M. Government from the payment of the subsidy," the Committee had to report. Following Tom Johnston's exposure of the Government loan to Sudan, Jowett naturally enquired about other transactions in that area. He found that profits amounting to £998,715 resulting from the Egyptian Cotton Control scheme had been handed over to the Empire Cotton-growing Corporation.

This report attracted considerable Press attention. The *Observer* and the *Telegraph* at Bradford, like other papers, quoted long extracts from it. Jowett's friends in Bradford were sore on one point. The two papers omitted to make any reference to the fact that the Member

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, March 30, 1923.

for East Bradford was chairman of the Committee responsible for the report. "Suppose it had been one of the City's Liberal M.P.s who had ferretted out these scandals," they commented. "Why, his name would have been splashed all over the page!"

### *Snowden's Socialist Motion*

The Labour Opposition was not content to voice only the immediate grievances of the workers and ex-servicemen. It put down a motion challenging the Government on a fully-stated Socialist basis. Philip Snowden introduced the motion in one of his most memorable speeches. It was a great Parliamentary occasion.

"The benches on both sides were packed to overflowing," wrote Jowett. "His merciless exposure of the failure of Capitalism to function with regard to the most essential requirements of civilised human beings was listened to by the defenders of the Thoroughly Comfortable Classes. They simply had to bear it.

"Some heard with restrained impatience, others as if they were helplessly dumb in the presence of a deadly enemy, threatening relentlessly disasters to come. On the other hand, Mr. Fisher, the ex-Minister of Education, self-satisfied and superior, looked on with an occasional attempt to smile on his next neighbour and colleague, Sir Alfred Mond. What a pair!

"Nearby them Lady Astor, quite confident—she was looking her best—patronisingly nodded and smiled. Her next neighbour was the Solicitor-General, Sir Somebody Inskip, pompous, affecting an air of aloof indifference. None really was indifferent. The motion and the mover, both are a portent."\*

It was on another occasion that Mr. Amery attempted to reply to the socialist case. As an ex-Fabian he should have known something about it, but Jowett was not impressed.

"Mr. Amery is, like Nicodemus, exceedingly small in stature, although he is at the head of the 'King's Navee.' You can see little more than his head above the table when he is speaking. He solemnly warned the world at large, in dirgelike tones, that there would be no more freedom if the capitalist system were abolished. In addition to the Postmaster General, there would have to be a Baker-General, a Butcher-General, a Fishmonger-General, an Under Secretary for Poultry and Rabbits, and a Clothier-General for Underwear.

"This, according to Mr. Amery, was not the worst of it. Under private enterprise luxuries were invented for the rich, argued Mr. Amery, First Lord of the Admiralty, which afterwards became necessities for the poor. The poor would never have known of them if there had been no private enterprise to provide luxuries for rich people. Whereupon one naturally looked across at Lady Astor,

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, March 23, 1923.

wearing her priceless pearls, and interjected 'pearls for the millions,' and left it at that. Indeed, what more was there to be said?""\*

The Socialist motion was defeated by a combination of Tories and Liberals by 368 votes to 121. "The papers make the most of the vote and talk of a Socialist defeat," remarked Jowett. "When I remember that it is not thirty years since Keir Hardie stood alone, I wish that he could have lived to see how swiftly and surely we are marching on. What will be the voting thirty years from now?"

### *Jowett Initiates Defeat of Government*

In April, 1923, the Government was defeated; a nasty set-back, but the issue was not sufficiently serious to require its resignation. Jowett claimed that he had a special responsibility for this defeat. The subject of debate was the treatment of the Lytton entrants to the civil service. They were mostly ex-servicemen who had been admitted as temporary clerks but, following a report of a Committee of which Lord Lytton was chairman, they had been added to the permanent staff on passing an examination test. So far so good—but the Treasury then decided that they must start their "permanent" status at the same salary as given to 18-year-olds on joining! This meant that a married man with a family, earning £300 a year as a "temporary," would have his salary reduced to £80 a year, *plus* cost-of-living bonus, on getting through his examination. The bonus increased the salary to £144 in London and to £128 in the provinces.

Both the Liberal and Labour Parties put down motions of condemnation. The Speaker called on the Liberals and a Mr. Millar introduced it in a moderate speech. Labour speakers followed in vigorous terms. Major Boyd-Carpenter replied for the Government feebly. Let Jowett continue the story:

"Standing beside the Speaker's Chair I looked for signs of a division. It was for the Liberals to demand it, for the discussion was begun by one of them. Clynes was in charge of the front bench for us . . . I asked him if there was not to be a division. He said no, the Liberals were not going to divide . . . I stated my own opinion in favour of a division . . .

"Then I made straight for Lansbury on the bench behind. On my way I met Wedgwood. I asked him if there was to be a division—he did not expect one and had a private engagement. Whereupon I quoted from the daily prayer—which the Chaplain is paid handsomely to read to us—which exhorts us all to put aside 'private interests and partial affections.' And Wedgwood did so. As for Lansbury, well it is always a case of 'Barkis is willing' on such occasions. A division was what he wanted.

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, July 20, 1923. Lady Astor was not a favourite of Jowett. "She is 'glib with her tongue.' That is about all that can be said for her. What she would have been but for the money spent on her schooling is not difficult to imagine. She is raucous enough, notwithstanding." (*Bradford Pioneer*, December 8, 1922.)

"When the question was put from the Chair the first time, the Liberals were given every chance to challenge a division. There was a hesitating 'No' from our benches just to make sure the chance did not pass. On the question being repeated from the Chair a second time, as it is the custom to do, there was a ringing and decisive 'No' from Labour. It was *our* division, and we defeated the Government. If we had not taken the matter out of the hands of the Liberals there would have been no division, and it would have ended just where Boyd Carpenter's unsatisfactory speech had left it."\*

The vote was close—145 to 138. Colonel Wedgwood did not seem to regret the private engagement which he had missed. From another report one learns that when the figures were announced he "waved his handkerchief and shouted as one does when one's team has scored a particularly fine goal at a football match." †

In May, 1923, Stanley Baldwin succeeded Bonar Law as leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister. The only changed feature of the new Government was the introduction of Mr. Reginald McKenna, the Liberal, as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Despite his Free Trade principles, Mr. McKenna imposed duties on a number of imported articles which were said to be undercutting British trade. Jowett did not think much of Stanley Baldwin. "The fifth Prime Minister I have known and the least gifted of them," was his judgment. ‡

#### *Jowett Presses His Policy in I.L.P.*

The two I.L.P. Conferences of 1922 and 1923 were important for Jowett. At the Nottingham Conference, held in the former year, the Bradford Branch on his initiative attempted to get the Party to adopt a simple "human" constitution in contrast to more elaborate drafts proposed by the National Council and the London Branches. Jowett felt that these drafts repeated to a considerable extent the mistakes which had angered him so much at the Geneva Conference. He was on the National Council of the Party and the duties of moving and seconding the Bradford document fell to Harry Wilson and Willie Leach. "The National Council," remarked Leach, "has moved on the assumption that every new nostrum floating around requires to be spatchcocked into our constitution. Well, we object." The Bradford draft, needless to say, included Jowett's by now famous phrase regarding the prior right of "children, the aged and infirm, and all those engaged in the production and distribution of essential utilities" to all commodities, and added a denial of the "claim of those who live by owning instead of working."

\**Bradford Pioneer*, April 13, 1923.

†*Labour Press Service*, April 10, 1923.

‡*Bradford Pioneer*, August 10, 1923.



Bradford was turned down by 231 votes to 127 and the London draft, which emphasised workers' control, was largely adopted by an unusual combination of "cockneys and Clydesiders." This was rather a blow to Jowett, but in fact the conference had not rejected the principle which he felt so important. London and Glasgow were keen on workers' control and they regarded the Bradford statement as too obvious an implication of Socialism to require stressing. The Party had not yet grasped Jowett's point that considerable socialisation of incomes can precede the socialisation of capital.

At the London Conference in the Queen's Hall the following year, Jowett raised prominently his case for the reform of Parliament. His speech was described by Mary Agnes Hamilton as one of the most outstanding of the Conference, and a decision was reached to appoint a Commission to report on the subject. This Commission proved to be noteworthy, as we shall see later, for the political controversy it aroused, with Harold Laski, Ramsay MacDonald, Fred Jowett and Frank Wise as leading protagonists. The London Conference saw the beginning of Clifford Allen's dynamic I.L.P. chairmanship, which was to end in a crisis with Jowett once more taking over that post.

In August, 1923, the Bradford Socialist Movement lost a famous figure in the death of Charlie Glyde. Glyde was a veteran of the early Jowett period. The enthusiasm aroused by the Keir Hardie Parliamentary election led Glyde and J. H. Palin to organise parties to sell socialist books, including Blatchford's "Merrie England" and Bellamy's "Looking Backward," from door to door. This experience made Glyde aware what the public wanted and he set out to provide it, succeeding as no other pamphleteer of this period did. His "Liberal and Tory Hypocrisy Revealed," "The Misfortune of Being a Working Man," and "If Jesus Christ Applied for Poor Relief," sold in tens of thousands. He was a big, rough man, somewhat crude in his thought, writing and speech and intolerant of all compromises. He had the habit of shutting his eyes when he addressed meetings. Palin used to say that this was characteristic of his mind—he shut it to any other side but that of the workers.

### *Mr. Baldwin Dissolves Parliament*

In November 1923 almost exactly a year after the Conservatives destroyed the Lloyd George Coalition and took office alone Mr. Stanley Baldwin decided on another appeal to the country. He made a typical statement to the House saying merely that he had become convinced that tariffs were necessary to remedy unemployment and proposed to ask the electorate to endorse this view. The Member for East Bradford did not think the issue was as straightforward as that.

"Although the Prime Minister's statement sounded encouragingly frank as he read it," wrote Jowett, "the story of his conversion to the policy of an immediate election on Protection is not so simple as he made it appear. Nor is it so personal to himself as might be inferred by what he said.

"Behind the personality of Mr. Baldwin there are others who are deeply concerned in the present political situation from the point of view of Big Business. They are his associates and advisers, and they are men of great ability who see clearly the way things are tending. They see that vital issues affecting the interests of their class are being raised by the Labour Party, and that a Labour Government is becoming the only possible alternative to a Conservative Government. They want to bring the country back to the old system of Party strife *between two parties who have no quarrel over the fundamental issues of landlordism and capitalism*. In short, they want to reunite the Liberal Party and strengthen it to make the alternative to a Conservative Government a Liberal Government, so that nothing serious will happen to them whichever is in office.

"The protectionist issue is the only issue that seems likely in the near future to unite the Liberal Party. And it has this further merit from the point of view of Mr. Baldwin and his Conservative Government; under the excuse of protective tariffs, indirect taxation, which falls chiefly on people of the working class by reason of their numbers, can be indefinitely extended.

"Mr. Baldwin has been in office long enough to enable him to see clearly that the colossal annual charge on account of interest on the war debt cannot continue to be met without heavier taxation, either of the rich or the poor. He and his associates are unwilling to increase taxation on large incomes either by means of higher rates of income tax or increased rate of super-tax. He has no hope of getting more from sugar, tea and other commodities which are at present taxed to the limit. Yet as the rich will not pay more, the poor must be made to do so, one way or another. A great variety of articles may be taxed under the cloak of protective tariffs.

"These are the real motives that lay behind the decision to hold a rush election on Protection."\*

So within twelve months Fred Jowett faced the electors of East Bradford again. This time the Conservatives had their own uncammouflaged candidate, Mr. J. Clare, and the Liberals united behind Mr. Eckersley Mitchell. Jowett fought as always on an aggressive socialist and working-class programme. He gave great prominence to Housing. He told how in Bradford alone 300 eviction orders had been issued and described an instance in Thornton where the family's furniture had been piled up in the yard, and on top of the pile were—*the tin hats worn by two sons when defending their country!*

The result of the contest gave Jowett a larger majority than

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\*Bradford Pioneer, November 16, 1923.

ever, though his vote was still one thousand below an absolute majority. The figures were: Jowett, 13,579; Mitchell, 8,017; Clare, 6,622. In other parts of the country the Labour Party progressed similarly. When all the results were totted up it was seen that Labour had increased in strength from 143 to 191.\*

## CHAPTER XII

### SOCIALISM IN OFFICE

Despite its increased numbers, Labour was far from possessing a majority in its own strength. The figures were: Labour, 191; Conservative, 258; Liberal, 158; Independents, 8.† Should Labour take office? Mr. Baldwin's Government would certainly be defeated by a combination of Labour and Liberal votes when it met Parliament, and the King would then ask Mr. Ramsay MacDonald to become Premier. Should he agree? If so, what policy should Labour's first Government pursue?

The answer to these questions was effectively decided not by the Labour Party Executive, but by a small meeting of select leaders who gathered at the house of Mr. Sidney Webb in Grosvenor Road on the Thames Embankment the evening before the Executive met. Those present were: Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden, Sidney Webb, J. H. Thomas and Arthur Henderson.

MacDonald was scared of taking office, or gave that impression. The glamour of the Premiership, the historical honour of being Labour's first Prime Minister, appealed to him but, like Wellington at Waterloo, he was frightened by his own army. Snowden told Jowett that at this secret conclave MacDonald bewailed the paucity of his material; he had gone through the list of Labour M.P.s and said he was appalled by the absence of ability. He was full of fear even at this stage that a rebel group would develop composed of M.P.s who would expect too much and who would prove undisciplinable when disappointed. Nevertheless, the inner leadership decided that they had no alternative to taking office.

The next question to be settled was; What should the policy of the Government be? Under the influence of Clifford Allen, the

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\*There was a feature of this election which illustrated Jowett's sensitiveness to all suffering. A group of distinguished men issued an Animals' Charter, listing measures which would lessen their suffering, including the reduction of the pit ponies' working day to one shift, the prohibition of the caging of wild song birds, the protection of performing animals, the ending of traffic in worn-out horses, and the reform of the slaughter-house. Among those who signed this Animals' Charter with Jowett were Bernard Shaw, Robert Smillie, Ramsay MacDonald, George Lansbury, Margaret Bondfield, Clifford Allen, H. W. Massingham and H. Baillie Weaver.

†Of the 191 Labour M.P.s, 129 were members of the I.L.P.

I.L.P. was propagating the view that, despite its minority position, Labour should introduce a "whole-hog" programme to meet the immediate needs of the unemployed and of housing, and to nationalise the banks and some of the key industries. Such a programme would bring defeat, but it would place the Party in a strong position at the succeeding election.

This proposal was discussed at the Sidney Webb gathering, but it was decisively rejected. In his autobiography Viscount Snowden put the issue fairly:

"The conversation turned upon what we might be able to do in the first session. There would be two courses open to us. We might use the opportunity for a demonstration and introduce some bold Socialist measures, knowing, of course, that we should be defeated upon them. Then we could go to the country with this illustration of what we would do if we had a Socialist majority. This was a course which had been urged by the extreme wing of the party, but it was not a policy which commended itself to reasonable opinion. I urged very strongly to this meeting that we should not adopt an extreme policy, but should confine our legislative proposals to measures that we were likely to be able to carry"\*

Snowden convinced his colleagues — probably, in view of those present, without any opposition.

The final question to decide was: Who should be in the Government? At the suggestion of Sidney Webb, it was decided to follow constitutional practice and to leave the choice of Ministers to the prospective Premier, a revelation of the degree to which the Party was bound to tradition rather than to the democratic principles which it professed. MacDonald went away to his Scottish retreat at Lossiemouth to make what he could of his "poor material."

Parliament met during the third week of January and the Leader of the Opposition moved the amendment to the Address which was destined to make him Labour's first Premier. It followed tradition for such an occasion, declaring merely that the Government had not the confidence of the House. "I think myself it is unfortunate the amendment should go no further," remarked Jowett. "There are good reasons for throwing the Government out which might have been stated—insufficiency of its efforts to deal with unemployment and housing, for example."† The most devastatingly critical speech during the debate was uttered by a young member who had first been returned to Parliament as a Conservative but who, dissatisfied, had stood at the 1923 election as an Independent.

"One Member who sits as an Independent excelled all the rest who took part in the debates in the matter of destructive criticism," wrote Jowett. "I refer to Mr. Oswald Mosley, the son-in-law of Earl Curzon. Many of the Tories were driven nearly mad by his speech. He ought to be in the I.L.P."‡

\**An Autobiography*, Vol. 2.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, January 18, 1924.

‡*Bradford Pioneer*, January 25, 1924.

For once history has proved Jowett's judgment wrong, but there were few then who were not attracted by Mosley's virile personality. A little later Fred was less impressed. He was repelled by Mosley's evident careerism and "bossy" attitude. He liked Cynthia Mosley, Lord Curzon's daughter, more.

#### *Jowett Becomes a Cabinet Minister*

The Labour amendment was carried, only ten Liberals voting with the Government. Stanley Baldwin resigned. MacDonald moved into 10 Downing Street, and the list of Ministers he had prepared at Lossiemouth was revealed.

The Labour leader appears to have been tactless in the handling of some of his colleagues. In the case of Arthur Henderson, for instance, he proposed first to omit him from the list of appointments altogether; then to make him Chairman of Ways and Means, which is not even a Ministerial post and, that rejected, he suggested that Henderson should become War Minister, an obviously inappropriate post for the President of the International. Henderson had to show indignant resistance before he finally secured the Home Secretaryship. But in the case of Fred Jowett, MacDonald proved to be very reasonable. Jowett did not expect office because, except during the war, he had been a constant critic of MacDonald's policy. When he received the invitation to become First Commissioner of Works he was in a quandary. He had for years opposed what was known as the Cabinet system. How could he, then, become a Minister? In particular, how could he accept an office, like that of First Commissioner, which tied him hand and foot to the Government without even a voice in its decision?—for it was not usual for the holder of this post to be in the Cabinet. He put his difficulty to MacDonald. "I don't relish having no share in formulating the policy of the Government when I am expected automatically to vote for it," he said. The Premier replied frankly that he had not intended to include Jowett in the Cabinet and Fred reconciled himself to being left out of the Ministry; but the following day a note came from 10 Downing Street inviting him to join the "exalted twenty."

#### *Two Ministers Decline to Wear "Court" Dress*

The day arrived for the members of the first Labour Government in history to go to Buckingham Palace to receive their seals of office from the King. It was the custom to attend in morning dress and in top hats; two of the new Ministers felt that it was out of place for them to do so—John Wheatley and Fred Jowett. They had been returned to Parliament as representatives of the workers and they were instinctively repelled by the idea that they should begin their duties by donning the dress of another social class. They turned up at Buckingham Palace in their ordinary suits and in their customary

hats: a bowler in the case of Wheatley and a soft hat in the case of Jowett. This incident caused a press sensation not less than the workman's cap which Keir Hardie wore when he first entered the House of Commons. MacDonalld was visibly shocked, far more so, Jowett afterwards recounted, than the King. Indeed, His Majesty showed no trace of snobbishness at this and subsequent meetings. Jowett was impressed by his simple human attitude.\*

The refusal of Wheatley and Jowett to wear "Court" dress (as this incident was somewhat inaccurately described) evoked an extraordinary response from the rank and file of the Labour Movement. The attitude of the two Ministers was acclaimed as a sign that they remained spiritually true to their class; the attitude of the Premier and the majority of his colleagues was criticised as a sign that they had succumbed to the atmosphere of another class and had spiritually deserted their own. Before long other events diverted attention from this incident, but the immediate shock was widely and deeply felt. Were those wrong who interpreted it as the first outward sign of an inner betrayal?

Later, even Jowett compromised to some extent on this question of clothes. He was required to give many official receptions, particularly as his Ministerial duties included acting as host to foreign delegations coming to London, and it was, of course, the practice for Ministers to wear the dress regarded as appropriate for such occasions. Jowett was at first in the mood to refuse to alter his garments, but after a friendly argument with his First Secretary he went half-way towards conformity. At day-time receptions he declined to make any change—"why should I interrupt my work to doll up?"—but for evening occasions he responded to the persuasion of his colleagues, who argued that a dress suit was as much a uniform of his job as engineers' dungarees. "All right," said Jowett, "let it be a Ministry uniform. It shall be kept in a cupboard here and I'll don it just before going on these official duties and return here and doff it as soon as they are over. I'm not wearing it anywhere else." And so it was arranged.

It was one of the customs of the Office of Works, whose duties included the maintenance of the Royal Palaces, to give receptions to members of the Court who were responsible for their upkeep. They were aristocrats of the aristocrats. "It fell to F.W.," wrote the writer of the Diary Feature of the *Yorkshire Observer*, "to act as host at

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\*When the members of the second Labour Government received their seals of office in 1929, MacDonalld requested them all to wear morning dress and top hats. Wheatley and Jowett were omitted from the list of Ministers, probably for more reasons than this. It is of interest that many of the Ministers of the third Labour Government which took office in August, 1945, did not wear this traditional dress when they visited the King to receive their seals of office. Did this represent a democratic advance—or the difficulty of sparing coupons for new clothes?

parties which were a rich amalgam of Burke's Landed Gentry and Debrett's Peerage. He did so in a sober lounge suit, his manner easy and unforced. He might, in fact, have been taking tea and currant cake with election workers in the murky wilds of Bowling."\*

All the new Ministers gave receptions in their Departments when they assumed office. The author was present at Jowett's reception. It was surely the most informal, democratic occasion ever marking the inauguration of a new chief. The Minister insisted that members of the lower grades on his staff should be present and he mixed with them as much as with the heads of the Department and the more distinguished visitors. One got the impression that day more than at any official gathering that the workers had really taken charge of Whitehall and that a new spirit was animating its offices.

### *Six Thousand Temporary Houses*

Jowett kept until his last days a copy of the official summons to his first Cabinet meeting. Its style and wording intrigued him. It was printed in old-fashioned type and this was the time-honoured formula used: *A Meeting of His Majesty's Servants will be held at 10, Downing Street at . . . o'clock on . . . the . . . which . . . . . is desired to attend.* Usually a week's notice was given of Cabinet meetings, but sometimes, of course, they were summoned urgently.

Jowett's duties as First Commissioner of Works were limited compared with those of some of his colleagues, but he gave himself to them thoroughly and he was able to carry through many reforms and to initiate developments both of utility and of art. He had one little characteristic which is probably unique among Ministers: he never dictated a letter or a memorandum. He explained he was psychologically incapable of doing it; he could never forget that the secretary to whom he was supposed to dictate was a human being like himself and he felt that there was something undignified in expecting another person mechanically to record one's words and to type them out! So the Minister either wrote his memoranda and letters in longhand or discussed what they should contain with one of his chief officials.

The First Commissioner of Works is, in effect, steward for all State property. He is responsible for Government buildings, Royal palaces, parks and forests, the Houses of Parliament, ancient, historical ruins and statues in Central London. During the war Government property had been considerably extended by the "temporary" housing estates established to accommodate munition workers. Jowett found on assuming office that nearly 6,000 of these dwellings were still occupied owing to the housing shortage and he received very distressing

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\*February 2, 1944.

reports about their condition. He made a tour of inspection and was shocked by what he saw. Most of the dwellings were wooden structures, the rest were built of concrete. Because they were regarded as temporary, repairs had not been done, the roads had not been made up, drainage had not been installed. The consequence was that many families lived in structures which let in the rain, conditions were insanitary, and the approaches were heavy with mud. In view of the time which must pass before the colossal national need for housing could be met, Jowett had plans prepared for a thorough reconditioning of these estates, extracting from the Treasury (which even under his friend Philip Snowden was not too free with money) the sum of £57,000 for the improvement of the houses and of £90,000 for improving the roads and drainage.

Jowett challenged tradition by presenting his estimates to the Commons early in April rather than late in July. He did this for two reasons—first, to expedite work so as to make some contribution towards providing employment and, second, to give Parliament an opportunity to discuss his proposals. By the rules of the House, the Opposition is allowed thirty days for the discussion of the expenditure of public money and it had been the practice of the Ministry to delay the presentation of its estimates until it was too late for a discussion to take place. That did not suit Jowett's democratic principles.

An incidental reform initiated by the new Commissioner was the prohibition of the use of paint containing white lead in all Government buildings. White lead was responsible for one of the worst industrial diseases, and we have already seen in the case of anthrax how concerned Jowett was to remove such dangers from labour. Later, a Bill was carried through Parliament totally prohibiting the use of white lead in paints.

Jowett's estate extended to China, where the Government had a perpetual lease of certain land. Part of this area had been leased in turn to British firms and during Jowett's stewardship it became necessary to negotiate new agreements. Jowett succeeded in getting 94 per cent. of the leaseholders to consent to pay more in view of the increased value of the land, but one firm, from whom an additional £40,000 was due, resisted, and it had Tory spokesmen to voice a protest in the House. The Minister was adamant. "Will the First Commissioner receive a deputation?" he was asked finally. "Certainly," said Jowett, "*but there is no question of altering the decision.*" Describing the incident, one of his fellow Yorkshiremen in the House after exclaiming "Bravo, Fred! That was one in the neck for 'em!" added "The House was tickled by the definite reply, accompanied by a thump on the despatch box."\* Those who knew Jowett can see the emphasis on both voice and gesture!

\*W. Mackinder, M.P., *Bradford Pioneer*, July 25, 1924.



Jowett treated his staff as colleagues rather than as subordinates and within a few weeks had imbued the whole Ministry with a remarkable spirit of camaraderie. The one complaint that his assistants were inclined to make was that he insisted on seeing everything himself. An instance of this was recited by the Lord Mayor of Bradford (Alderman W. A. Barraclough) at the time of Fred's death. On one of his visits to London the Alderman was standing outside Westminster Hall, when his attention was drawn to some workmen who were perched precariously on the roof engaged in repairs. As he watched, one of the group stepped on to the top rung of a long ladder and began to descend. It was only when the man had nearly reached the ground that Mr. Barraclough realised to his astonishment that it was the Minister. He asked Jowett, who was then in his sixties, what he had been doing on the roof and why he had taken the risk of going up there. "Because it is my duty to see what requires to be done to repair this historic building," was the reply.

One of the most useful developments with which Jowett was associated was the provision of the public telephone boxes which are now to be found throughout Britain. Even in such a small thing he was anxious that the structures should be beautiful and he suggested to the Postmaster General that the advice of the Royal Fine Arts Commission should be sought. At the request of the Commission, the Royal Institute of British Architects named three architects to submit designs. Of these, the design of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott was accepted.

### *Nurse Cavell and Rima Statues*

Labour's First Commissioner made two noteworthy contributions to art. Perhaps one of them was intended as a service to truth rather than to art, but Mr. James Bone, London editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, described it as "the best piece of art criticism ever given official utterance."\* This was when he heard of Jowett's decision to inscribe at the foot of the Nurse Cavell statue outside the National Portrait Gallery in London her immortal last words, "Patriotism is not enough. I must have no hate or bitterness for anyone." "Cut the words deep," instructed the Minister.

The second action was directly a contribution to art: the authorisation of the Rima statue by Jacob Epstein as a W. H. Hudson Memorial in Hyde Park. When the statue was unveiled in May, 1925, it became a fierce subject of controversy. Critics denounced it as crude, ugly, atrocious, Members of Parliament described it as a scarecrow and demanded its removal, and some fanatical puritan attempted to deface it because the design included the nude figure

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\*Quoted *Glasgow Herald*, February 5, 1944. Apparently Mr. Bone did not like the statue, and regarded the phrase "Patriotism is not enough" as an appropriate comment on its conception and execution. (See illustration page 223.)

of a woman. Jowett was unmoved. The statue had been initiated by a Memorial Committee who wished to commemorate the work of the naturalist by providing a bird sanctuary in Hyde Park, with a panel in the background expressive of his spirit. The subject of Epstein's design was Rima, the girl who appears as the Genius of the Forest in Hudson's "Green Mansions." Jowett submitted Epstein's sketches to experts who reported favourably and, as their views coincided with his own, he sanctioned the Memorial.

When the furore of denunciation broke, Jowett stood by his decision confidently. "I think as time goes on the statue will come to be recognised as a great, a very great work," he said. "It expresses the spirit of Hudson's 'Green Mansions' which inspired the panel. It is an ideal setting. When time has softened it, it will be generally agreed, I think, that it has just the right atmosphere." "What of the opinion, held by some, that the sculpture is downright ugly?" asked an insistent pressman. Jowett's reply revealed an insight which many did not expect him to possess:

"Well," he said, "this panel represents Rima, who lives the wild, free life among the animals of the field and forest. There may be some persons who think that such an individual could be represented by a composition on angelic lines, pretty and perfect in every way. Their idea is not mine."

Jowett added that there had originally been an outcry against the sculpture of Rodin, now an accepted classic, and against the statue of Lincoln at Westminster, now recognised as a great work of art. "So you are entirely unrepentant, Mr. Jowett?" asked the journalist. "Quite," was the emphatic rejoinder.

Time has certainly vindicated Jowett. The Rima panel, with its frame of trees, the carpet of grass and, in the foreground, the runnel of water from which the birds drink, is a gem of beauty. Epstein maintained from the first that his work was "in harmony with the spirit of Hudson's great nature study." Rima's figure in the midst of a flight of large birds reflects the comradeship with nature, the freedom, the strength and the happiness which are hers in "Green Mansions." The Bird Sanctuary in Hyde Park is a memorial first to Hudson; it will live as a token of the genius of Epstein; but those who are grateful for it should also associate with it the name of Jowett.\*

### *The Problem of Minority Government*

Jowett's activities at the Ministry of Works were, of course, only a minor part of the administration of the Labour Government. The law safeguards State secrets and we cannot record what Fred's contri-

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\*Another decision relating to Hyde Park, this time frankly utilitarian, should be recorded. Jowett pleased the Cabmen's Union, which had been making the demand at the T.U.C. for many years, by allowing cabs to be driven through the park.

butions were to the Cabinet discussions or his attitude there towards the legislation which was introduced or the various administrative decisions which occasioned controversy. We know, however, his general attitude of mind and can judge what his views must have been on many of the issues which arose.

On the broad question of policy he did not take either the Snowden or the Clifford Allen view. Snowden, as we have seen, was in favour of a moderate policy which could count on the support of the Liberals, and the Prime Minister and the majority of the Cabinet supported him. Allen and the I.L.P., on the other hand, were in favour of the introduction of a socialist programme, leaving to the Liberals the responsibility of throwing out the Government and causing a further general election.

Jowett's programme certainly would not have been moderate, but at the same time it would not have been fully socialist in the sense of including immediately proposals for public ownership of the banks, the mines, land, transport, and so on. He would have begun with drastic legislation aimed at raising the standard of life of the masses at the expense of the owning class—such as a guaranteed living wage for all workers, children's allowances, extensive work schemes with larger benefits during unemployment, a vast housing scheme with drastic rent restrictions and the prevention of evictions, larger old age pensions, school meals for all children, and so on. The cost of these increased social services he would have met by the heavy taxation of unearned incomes. It was his theory that legislation on these lines, directed towards the socialisation of the national income, would have been so popular that the Liberals would have opposed it at their peril. He foresaw that the House of Lords might reject such measures or that the bankers might sabotage them by creating financial crisis, but this did not discourage him. What an opportunity to rally the people against the Lords and the money-kings! Then would come the time for demanding the entire abolition of the Lords and the entire nationalisation of the banks. Then one could go forward with a full socialist programme, knowing that the people would be behind it.

#### *John Wheatley as Health Minister*

We cannot say whether Jowett had an opportunity to urge his strategy within the Cabinet; it would be unlike him if he did not make an opportunity. Whatever his dissatisfaction with Government policy as a whole, he welcomed enthusiastically the legislation and administration of some of his colleagues, particularly of his friend John Wheatley, for whom he developed immense admiration during their association in office. One of Wheatley's first administrative acts was to withdraw an order against the Poplar Board of Guardians for pursuing the policy which Jowett himself advocated long ago in

Bradford—the exclusion of the wage of a son or daughter (except the cost of their lodging) when assessing the amount of outdoor relief due to an unemployed or aged parent and their dependents. This action of Wheatley's immediately aroused the anger of Mr. Asquith and produced an ultimatum from him. Was the Labour Government to be defeated so soon by the Liberals? It seemed likely, but when the House debated the issue, Wheatley scored a complete triumph. He showed that although his predecessor, Sir Alfred Mond, had issued the Order, it remained a dead letter. Not a single penny had been surcharged under it. Wheatley offered to appoint an All-Party committee to investigate the whole question of Poor Law Reform—and, finally, the Liberals voted with the Government.

Wheatley's housing measure was the major legislative achievement of the Government. He combined strength of socialist principle with practical constructive capacity to an extraordinary degree. He met representatives of the building trades workers and the builders and won their wholehearted co-operation in a spirit of service to meet an urgent human need; not even in the emergency of war has a Minister ever been more successful in gaining the support of an industry with less thought of profit-making or sectional gain. The manufacturers of building materials proved more difficult, but he brought them to heel by threatening legislation to take over their industries. He recognised that finance was the real enemy of an adequate scheme to provide houses at rents within reach of working-class pockets, and stated frankly that he regretted he could not count on a majority in the House to provide interest-free loans. Instead, he had to be satisfied with generous State subsidies. The speech in which Wheatley enunciated his plans was masterly, and again the Liberals supported the Government.

Jowett, the large-scale evictions at Bradford in his mind, also welcomed the way in which Wheatley attempted to prevent the raising of rents. Ben Gardner, old colleague of Keir Hardie and Labour Member for one of the constituencies of West Ham, Hardie's first Parliamentary home, introduced a comprehensive Rent Restrictions Bill. During the Committee Stage, it met with the sternest opposition from the Tories and Liberals and was held up week after week by innumerable amendments and endless talk. Meanwhile, workers' families continued to be evicted. To meet this situation Wheatley introduced a one-clause measure with the object of prohibiting any Eviction Order until a tenant's claim for relief had been before a Local Poor Law authority. This time Wheatley was defeated; a sufficient number of Liberals voted against the Government to place it in a minority of nine. The measure was not regarded as important enough to warrant the resignation of the Government, but the behaviour of the Liberals embittered the Labour Members and contributed to the growing rift which ultimately brought it down.

*Labour's Domestic Legislation*

Measures introduced by Tom Shaw, the burly Textile Unions' representative who was Minister of Labour, must also have pleased Jowett. They reduced the "waiting period" before unemployment benefit was paid from six days to three, doubled the allowances for children, increased the benefits of men from 15s. to 18s. a week and of women from 12s. to 15s., and extended the period of unemployment pay to forty-one weeks. Fred would have liked the allowances increased further, and the "waiting period" abolished entirely.

Jowett wholeheartedly endorsed C. P. Trevelyan's great plan for educational reform which, alas, never had an opportunity to come before Parliament in legislative form. Trevelyan had a genuine enthusiasm for education and he had the kind of personality which inspired others with enthusiasm. His Plan had nine points—reduced size of classes, higher school-leaving age, new schools, removal of ban on nursery schools, closing of unhygienic schools, removal of limitation of expenditure on school meals, increased grants to local authorities, and the removal of restrictions on clinics and medical services. The Liberals, when they finally killed the Government, had the responsibility also of killing this Plan.

An important domestic measure gave Jowett limited satisfaction—Philip Snowden's first budget as Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer. Taking office in January, three months after the Departmental estimates were prepared, Snowden had not had the time, even if he had the will, to prepare a Socialist Budget; but Jowett regretted that no real beginning was made in the redistribution of incomes through taxation. He probably sympathised with the section of the rank and file who wanted Snowden to introduce the capital levy and, when defeated, go to the country on the issue; after all, Labour had fought two general elections on it. On the other hand, he welcomed Snowden's reduction of food taxes by £30 millions and the abolition of the "McKenna duties," tariffs on a number of articles which the Baldwin Government and its Free Trade Chancellor of the Exchequer had introduced. The Tories were furious, and even Liberals were uncertain when they saw the terrific press agitation which the business interests engineered. Snowden stood firm, however, and his confidence put backbone into the timid Free Traders. He got his majority by the comfortable vote of 319 to 254.

*New Note in Foreign Affairs*

There were developments in foreign affairs which Jowett was glad and proud to see. Ramsay MacDonald, who held the office of Foreign Secretary as well as the Premiership, began to create a better atmosphere in Europe by a series of Open Letters which he addressed to M. Poincaré, head of the French Government. This was a bold

experiment in open diplomacy, and it was magnificently successful because of the sure psychological touch which MacDonald possessed. He wrote as to a friend, understanding the fears of a typical Frenchman—the fear arising from the two wars which France had suffered with Germany as its enemy, the fear of a recovery of German power so that this terrible experience would be repeated—yet pleading that the policy of the repression of Germany could never remove this danger, that it could never work, that a people of sixty millions could not be crushed permanently, that the reparation demands were destroying the economic stability of the Allies by causing unemployment and driving down Germany to the despair of violence, that a supreme effort must be made to build a basis of common effort to establish a united Europe which alone could guarantee peace. Whatever criticism can be made of MacDonald's subsequent career, these Open Letters deserve to be remembered as one of the greatest experiments in Open Diplomacy the world has seen. They were addressed nominally to M. Poincaré, but they were read by the whole French population and made a profound effect on them. Indeed, they influenced the entire world.

Jowett had an unusual sense of satisfaction when he heard Arthur Ponsonby, who was Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, make a declaration of Government policy in submitting a Treaty of Peace with Turkey to the House. "The Government," said Ponsonby, "intends to submit to Parliament all treaties, agreements or understandings with other nations." For this Government, at least, secret diplomacy had gone. How rewarded Jowett must have felt for his fifteen years' campaigning on this subject, which his old friend, Robert Blatchford, had once decried as his "obsession"! The Tories and Liberals, aware of the revolution in foreign policy which was being announced, did not hide their resentment. Unfortunately this was an instance where subsequent Tory Governments did not practise the "continuity of foreign policy" which has been declared a bulwark of British strength.

Jowett's heart was warmed, too, by the recognition of Russia and the conclusion of a trade treaty with the Lenin Government. The Tories were bitterly antagonistic and the negotiations for the treaty nearly came to disaster, only being saved at the last moment (after, indeed, Ponsonby, who was acting for the Government, had given up hope) by the intervention of a group of Labour M.P.s, prominent among whom was Jowett's old I.L.P. colleague, Dick Wallhead.

These were among the achievements of the Government which pleased Fred, but there were also things which he regretted and which made him feel uncomfortable and troubled. MacDonald's wooing of France led to a reconsideration of the reparation demands on Germany and to their substantial modification in the Dawes Plan. Jowett welcomed the reduction, because he knew the earlier demands

were impossible, but he agreed with E. D. Morel\* in regretting that the Premier-Foreign Secretary had not wiped out the reparations due to Britain whatever France continued to demand, and that he had not insisted that the military evacuation of the Ruhr should coincide with the operation of the Plan. The I.L.P. Parliamentary Group shared Morel's view and made representations to MacDonald to this effect. This was probably the first occasion on which the I.L.P. took openly an independent line.

There were some incidental measures about which Jowett was doubtful, including a Trade Facilities Bill taken over from the Baldwin Government. It assisted capitalist concerns trading abroad, but the Cabinet persisted with it as a contribution towards the provision of work. He was particularly doubtful about a Bill guaranteeing loans in the Sudan, a measure which came near to repeating the arrangements which Tom Johnston had criticised strongly in the previous Parliament. Jowett was also distressed by the Government's decision to build five new cruisers to replace old ones; the I.L.P. Group in Parliament divided the House against this estimate and rallied sixteen votes.

Jowett did not, of course, vote against the Government on these occasions of disagreement; he had had his opportunity to speak and vote within the Cabinet and he felt he could not press his opposition further unless disagreement reached the point of resignation. But on a few issues he abstained from voting: that he regarded as justifiable in view of his long record in demanding that Members should not vote against their convictions.

### *MacDonald and the Liberals*

Behind these incidental issues was the bigger question of general policy. The Cabinet had decided to pursue a moderate course: it was a Social Reform Government rather than a Socialist Government, a Liberal Government rather than a Labour Government. That general line having been adopted, the logical course was to invite the friendly co-operation of the Liberals; their co-operation secured, there was no reason why the Government should not last the full term of five years. But, although Mr. MacDonald had adopted Liberal policy, he would not make friends with the Liberals. Immediately after the 1923 election, even before taking over the Premiership, he went out of his way to attack the Liberal Party and its leaders, and throughout the period of Labour Government he held them at arm's length and treated them with contempt. This attitude would have been understandable if the Cabinet had decided to introduce socialist measures, but in the circumstances it can have been merely personal vanity or sectarian pride which led the Premier

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\*E. D. Morel died suddenly in November, 1924.

to scorn those upon whose support his continuation of office depended. Philip Snowden was more logical. We know from his biography that he was a constant critic of the Premier's behaviour in this matter.\*

The session ended with the life of the Government very uncertain, the Liberals smarting under the insults from which they had suffered. Then an event happened which harmed MacDonald's reputation seriously. It came out that Sir Alexander Grant, whom MacDonald had knighted, had previously presented the Premier with a costly motor car for his personal use and had presented him with a block of shares in McVitie and Price, the biscuit firm, for its upkeep. Those who knew MacDonald would dismiss the idea that this was vulgar corruption; there was no suggestion of any bargain between the donor and the Premier. But there was all the material here for a scandal and the Tory press and some Tory politicians made the most of it. Even MacDonald's associates felt that he had been guilty of a grave indiscretion.

Early in September the Premier returned to London from Lossiemouth for an informal consultation with some of his colleagues. "We saw at once that he was in a highly nervous condition," wrote Snowden. "He was not in a state to take a calm and isolated view on any subject. Everything seemed black to him . . . He would welcome a general election as a way of escape from his troubles." Parliament met shortly afterwards. Let Philip Snowden continue:

"It was clear to some of us that he had not recovered his nerve and we feared what might happen when he had to face a merciless Tory Opposition and a Liberal Party by now no means friendly. Our fear unfortunately turned out to be fully justified, and ten days after the meeting of Parliament the Government was overthrown and the country plunged into an election by one of the most ill-considered and tactless decisions in Parliamentary history."†

#### *Defeat on the Campbell Case*

The cause of the defeat of the Government and the dissolution was unexpected. J. R. Campbell, a leading member of the Communist Party, had written a revolutionary article in the *Daily Worker* and Sir Patrick Hastings, who was Attorney-General, began proceedings against him for sedition. Immediately there was uproar in the Labour Movement; even those who disliked the Communists most could not stand for persecution of political opinion by a Labour Government. Under the pressure of the protests the prosecution was withdrawn.

Then the protests were transferred to the other side. Both the Tories and Liberals claimed to be shocked that judicial proceedings should be influenced by political considerations. The Tories tabled

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\*The Liberals shared responsibility for the enmity. Mr. Asquith boasted: "The Labour Government must eat out of the Liberal hand."

†"An Autobiography."



a vote of censure and the Liberals demanded a Committee of Enquiry. MacDonald would brook no concession to the Liberals. We quote Philip Snowden again:

"The Prime Minister's speech made a bad impression on the House. It was evasive and strengthened the impression he had made at question time that afternoon that he was not being frank and candid. He had a perfectly good case if he had faced up to it fearlessly and honestly. During his speech John Wheatley, who was sitting next to me, remarked: 'I never knew a man who could succeed so well, even if he is telling the truth, in giving the impression that he is not doing so.' When the Prime Minister sat down the fate of the Government was sealed."\*

The Tories, when they saw MacDonald's unbending attitude, withdrew their motion of out-and-out censure in favour of the Liberal proposal for an enquiry in order to get a maximum vote, and it was carried by a majority of 166 votes. The King dissolved Parliament at MacDonald's request.

Labour could not fight this election with the spirit of 1923. Then it was aggressive, confident; now it was defensive, uneasy. Something had gone wrong. Jowett had his regrets; but he made the best of the situation. He praised MacDonald's work for peace—"is it nothing that the League of Nations, which for five years had doddered on and come to no conclusions, should be revolutionised and have the breath of life put into it by a Labour Prime Minister? . . ." He praised the Russian Treaty and the abolition of secret treaty-making. He defiantly defended the Government's action on the Campbell case and took the war into the enemy's camp:

"In the past Governments have repeatedly exercised their discretion in political cases as to whether it was worth while to carry on a prosecution. The Labour Government claims the same right. Illegalities in Ireland were encouraged by prominent Tories in 1913 and 1914. Was Sir Edward Carson prosecuted? When the Honie Rule Bill passed and 70 out of 73 officers in the North of Ireland sent in their resignations, Mr. Asquith (that 'lath painted to look like iron,' as Bismarck said of Lord Salisbury), instead of accepting their resignations and promoting men from the ranks, bowed his head to them. He failed to prosecute in a case where, if on any occasion in this world, there ought to have been a State impeachment of men who threatened to lead rebellion."†

This was one of the severest election fights of Jowett's career. Tories and Liberals for the first time united against him behind a strong Liberal candidate, Mr. T. D. Fenby. Nevertheless, the fight was going well; Jowett's challenging attitude had inspired his followers with zeal and hope. Then came the bombshell which demoralised the Labour forces from one end of the country to the other. The "Red Letter"!

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\*"An Autobiography."

†*Yorkshire Observer*, October 20, 1924.

*The Zinoviev Letter*

At the height of the election the *Daily Mail* published the text of a letter which was said to have been written by Zinoviev, the secretary of the Communist International. It contained what were alleged to be secret instructions to Communists to conspire against the British Government and the British Empire in all parts of the world. The Letter was a double blow to the Labour Party. It was, in effect, a criticism of the Government for withdrawing the prosecution of a representative British Communist; it was, more directly and shatteringly, a criticism of the Government for having entered into friendly relations with Russia when it appeared that that country was intriguing against British institutions and possessions. The Tories and Liberals leapt to the opportunity which the gods, *via* the *Daily Mail*, had contrived to present to them. The forces of Labour reeled under the blow.

When they had recovered their political breath, most Labour spokesmen denounced the Letter as a forgery, as it almost certainly was. Then they suffered another blow. On the day of the *Daily Mail* revelations, MacDonald was inaccessible; he was speaking in some remote Welsh village. On their own responsibility, Foreign Office officials, instead of repudiating the Letter or casting doubts on its validity, announced only that they were making enquiries. When he did make a pronouncement, the Premier merely said that he would probe into the matter thoroughly when he returned to London after the election. This played right into the hands of the Tories and Liberals. Most Labour candidates went on reiterating their certainty that the Letter was a forgery, but the confidence of the public was shaken beyond recovery.

Despite this, Jowett's fight continued to go well. His meetings and the canvass returns showed that he was receiving more support than ever before. The earlier hours of polling day justified the same confidence; the proportion of Labour votes made it seem certain that when the evening hours came and the workers streamed to the polling stations on leaving the mills, a majority would be assured. Then Providence allied itself with the ingenuity of the *Daily Mail* and the indefiniteness of the Prime Minister. A downpour of rain such as the city had rarely experienced fell on Bradford. Jowett's enthusiastic followers continued their efforts, going from door to door, drenched to the skin, to knock up the voters. But the margin was just against them. Labour polled 1,600 more votes than a year before, but Jowett was out by 66! The figures were: T. D. Fenby, 15,240; F. W. Jowett, 15,174.

Disappointment was at first bitter, but when Jowett's supporters had had time to consider the result, particularly in comparison with other results throughout the country, they realised that their achievement

had been noteworthy. For the first time they had had to face a close combination of their opponents and, despite all the setbacks of the contest, they had come within 100 votes of victory.

*Philip Snowden on MacDonald*

Among the letters of sympathy which Jowett received on his defeat was one from Philip Snowden. This led to an exchange of correspondence which revealed not only the close kinship between Jowett and Snowden, despite their divergence in political attitude, but also the extent of the estrangement which had occurred between Snowden and MacDonald. The letters are of historical importance and, with the permission of Viscountess Snowden, we reproduce them here :

SNOWDEN TO JOWETT\*

Chancellor of the Exchequer,  
Treasury Chambers,  
Whitehall, S.W.

October 31st, 1924.

My dear Frederick,

You were not at the Cabinet meeting to-day, so I am writing to you to say how deeply I regret your defeat. It is terrible to think of this ill-luck which has come to you and how it will so seriously affect you.

I get no satisfaction from contemplating the increased Labour poll. That only makes it more painful. It is a proof of the great opportunities we have wantonly and recklessly thrown away by the most incompetent leadership which ever brought a Government to ruin.

However, I am grieved beyond expression at your fate. It is cruel. We have put the Tories in for five years.

Believe me, dear Fred,

Yours very sincerely,

PHILIP SNOWDEN.

JOWETT TO SNOWDEN

10, Grantham Terrace,  
Bradford.

November 13th, 1924.

My dear Philip,

I did not know you had written me a letter until I returned home last Saturday. Since then I have rested a few days to settle myself.

You can scarcely realise what good your letter did me. When one has had such a misfortune as mine, a note from an old friend who sees and feels what has happened to one is a blessed thing. And I am thankful for it.

I will not say more as to the cause of my misfortune than that the author of it was overworked and must have lost his head at the most critical time. Like yourself I cannot get much comfort out of the increased number of votes. Standing in my position on this stricken field it is not likely I should.

I wish I were able to talk things over with you. I will seek an opportunity when I am in London if you are there. In the meantime think occasionally of me. I shall love to think that you do.

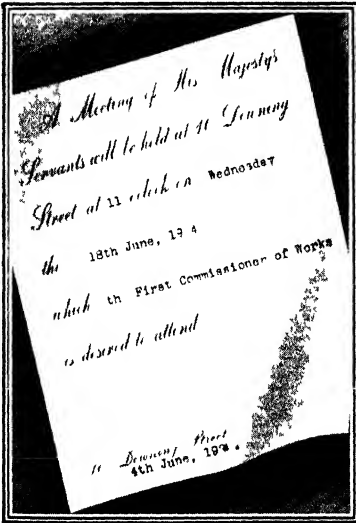
Sincerely,

F. W. JOWETT.

\*This letter is reproduced in facsimile on page 410.



FRID JOWETT AS A CABINET MINISTER, 1924



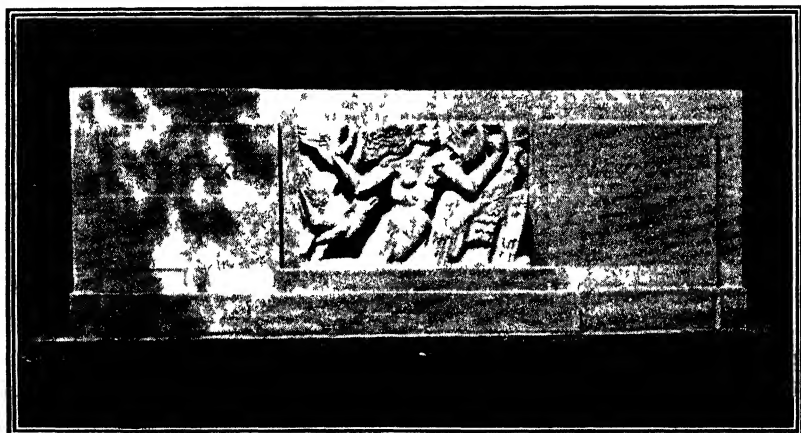
SUMMONS TO A CABINET MEETING  
*The form used to notify a Minister of a Cabinet Meeting*



JOHN WHEATLEY  
*Closest colleague of Jowett in the Cabinet  
 They were both left out of the Second  
 Labour Government*



NURSE CAVELL STATUE  
*Jowett as First Commissioner of Works added the inscription "Patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness for any one."*



EPSTEIN'S STATUE OF RIMA

*Jowett authorised this statue as the central feature of the W H Hudson Memorial in Hyde Park. It was criticised as an "outrage," but Jowett defended it and he has been justified.*

## SNOWDEN TO JOWETT

House of Commons,  
November 18, 1924.

My dear Frederick,

Your letter has touched me very deeply. But since the election you have been in my mind daily. There is something very petty and mean in the combination which defeated you. It seems to me incredible that political passion and prejudice could carry men and women so far as to induce them to vote for a stranger and against a man who has lived among them and served them all his life.

I would like to see you very much for a good long talk. I shall not be up in London except for an hour or two until Parliament meets, but I suppose you will be coming up fairly often for the Labour Party E.C. and the N.A.C. You must let me know in advance when you are coming.

You know that I never trusted J.R., but he has added to the attributes I knew, during the last nine months, an incapacity I never thought him capable of. He has thrown away the greatest opportunity which ever came to a party and has landed us with five years of Tory Government. And his colossal conceit prevents him from being in the remotest measure conscious of what he has done. He is absolutely self-centred. I should not be surprised to hear that he has never remembered that you have been thrown. However, I won't bother you with my views and feelings, which are too strong to be expressed temperately.

Be assured of my heart-felt sympathy. I hope that the gods may have some good things in their lap for you.

Yours ever,  
PHILIP SNOWDEN

*Last Days at the Ministry*

The sense of loss in Fred Jowett's departure from office and in his absence from the new Parliament went much beyond his own Party. "One at least of the Labour Members will leave with the regrets of people of all Parties, and he leaves a record of many notable decisions in the short time of his tenure of office," wrote the London correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*. "Mr. F. W. Jowett, the First Commissioner of Works, who lost his seat at the election, but is sure soon to be back in the House, did many bold and useful things." The writer mentioned particularly the Hudson Memorial in Hyde Park and the inscription at the foot of the Nurse Cavell Memorial. "The staff of the Office of Works, too, will miss this straightforward, courteous and open-minded man."\*

Those who saw Fred's association with his staff had no doubt about their regrets. It was, as we have indicated, a perfect example of leadership and co-operation. Perhaps of all the letters which he received at this time Jowett was most pleased with one which came from Sir Frank Baines, the Director of H.M. Works during his Ministry. "We have never, I think," he wrote, "had a Minister who so—literally—endeared himself to his staff as you were successful in doing nor shall we be likely to have such a one in the future."

\*November 4, 1924

Even after his defeat Fred's work at the Ministry was not entirely over. He performed one last service to the cause of the workers. In the middle of the election came an urgent communication from his officials reporting that a building syndicate had made a good offer for Crown lands at Eltham and urging its immediate acceptance by telegram. Fred was not to be rushed and telegraphed back that consideration of the offer must be held over until he returned. When he visited the Ministry after the election to tidy up any loose threads before handing over to his successor, he found an offer from the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society for the same land—and the sum named was a few hundred pounds more than the offer of the private syndicate. Jowett gave instructions for immediate acceptance. Those Crown lands now accommodate a Co-operative housing estate which is one of the best in the South of England.

Five years of Tory reaction followed. Their parliamentary strength rose from 258 to 415. Labour fell from 191 to 152 and the Liberals dropped even more precipitately, from 158 to 42. The stage was, at least, being cleared for a straight fight between Left and Right.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SOCIALISM RE-EXAMINES ITSELF

The first experience of government and its early end led to discussion, re-examination and controversy within the Labour Movement. The fiercest controversy was on the Zinoviev Letter and MacDonald's inept handling of it: everyone felt that this was mainly responsible for the defeat of Labour.

The mystery of the Letter was never solved. The Parliamentary Labour Party set up a committee of investigation, composed of J. H. Thomas, James Maxton and W. B. Graham, but it had no power to summon witnesses from either the *Daily Mail* or the Foreign Office and reached no conclusions. The whole Labour Movement, however, had no doubt that the Letter was a fake, basing its scepticism partly on instinct and partly on the absence of evidence of its truth. Certainly this was the view of Fred Jowett.

Whilst this issue aroused most heat, the first Labour Government's record raised more serious questions. There was a general appreciation of its contribution to international reconciliation and to social reform, but many Socialists felt that opportunities of fundamental constructive change had been missed. The National Council of the I.L.P., including Fred Jowett, gave this balanced verdict:

"The Party looks back with pride to the masterly manner in which the Labour Government sought to bring a policy of peace and justice into the councils of European statesmen . . . . We believe that the first Labour Govern-

ment, in a position of unprecedented difficulty, established a record of public service—particularly in its housing, educational, agricultural, and pension policies, its Budget, and its recognition of Russia—which will hasten the advent of a Labour Government supported by a majority in the House of Commons and in the country . . . .

"The I.L.P. pleaded that the opportunities of office should be utilised to appoint Commissions to elaborate socialist legislation in detail, and suggests that the Labour Government would have gained by following this method, which was actually adopted by the Swedish Socialist Government during the year."\*

Clifford Allen was responsible for this proposal that the Labour Government should appoint Commissions to elaborate detailed schemes of socialist construction. When MacDonalld declined to respond to his suggestion, Allen stimulated the I.L.P. to set up its own Commissions to prepare proposals which would be available when Labour next came to office. He secured the co-operation of a remarkable team of men and women, economists, experienced administrators, Socialists who combined practical sense with socialist vision. During the Labour Government and the years which immediately followed, seven Commissions worked hard on the problems of: (1) Agriculture, (2) Finance, (3) the Empire, (4) India, (5) Industrial Policy, (6) a Plan for the speedy Abolition of Poverty and the Realisation of Socialism, and (7) the Reform of Parliament.

The first scheme to be completed dealt with agriculture. It was based on a State monopoly of imports and exports, guaranteed prices over a period of years, a transformation in the standard of life of agricultural workers and land nationalisation. The inspirer of this report was Frank Wise, an ex-Civil Servant of distinction and the economic adviser in Britain of the Soviet Government. The I.L.P. took this report to the Labour Party conference, by which it was endorsed, and Wise was invited to serve on the Labour Party's agricultural committee. This was a great success for the new development of I.L.P. policy and encouraged the Party to go ahead with its other schemes.

### *"Socialism in our Time"*

The Commission which was destined to arouse most controversy was the sixth; it was asked to report on how poverty and insecurity could be abolished and a rapid advance made to Socialism without a catastrophic collapse of Capitalism. The members were J. A. Hobson, the well-known economist, H. N. Brailsford, then editor of the *New Leader*, A. Creech Jones, research officer of the Transport and General Workers' Union,† and Frank Wise.

The report of the Commission was alternatively known as "The Living Income" and "Socialism in Our Time." The titles were significant, symbolising the fact that the Commission had produced a plan

\*Report to Annual Conference, 1925.

†Now Under-Secretary for the Colonies.



*resolving the issue of immediate demands and ultimate purposes* which Fred Jowett had raised on his return from the Geneva Conference, particularly in his Edinburgh Labour Conference speech.

It will be remembered that Jowett had argued that the immediate necessity is to redistribute the national income, so that the first claim of the children, the aged, the ill and the workers is recognised. He wanted this done here and now from a fund raised by the taxation of the rich, without awaiting the tedious process of large-scale nationalisation. Socialist "planners" argued against him that only when the economic system was communally owned could wealth be communally distributed. The Commission reached a synthesis of these two views by proposing that Socialists should *begin* by setting out to establish a living income for all citizens, but arguing that to achieve this fully it would be found necessary to socialise the banks, external trade, the key industries and land. In other words, the living income was made the starting point for introducing Socialism. Jowett welcomed the Report enthusiastically, emphasising its proposals for the realisation of a living income, just as the "planners" emphasised its proposals for the common ownership of the sources of economic power.

The general plan began with a public inquiry to decide on a standard of life (that is, "the Living Income") capable of meeting reasonable physical and cultural needs. All the resources of the State would then be used to enable the whole population to reach this target within a limited period. A national minimum wage would be fixed, to be paid immediately by industries which could afford it and through instalments by others. Trade Unions would be encouraged to press for this minimum and, if the employers in any particular industry reported that they could not pay it within the required period, the State would either take hold of the industry and subsidise it (with proportionate control), or, in case of an unnecessary industry, close it down or adapt it to other purposes. This minimum wage would be accompanied by State allowances to cover the needs of children, so that the requirements of varying-sized families would be met. The State would assume the direct responsibility of distributing allowances at the fixed minimum rate to the unemployed, the aged, and the ill. At the same time health and other social services would be extended so as to lift the standard of life of the whole nation towards the target which had been set.

The authors of the Report recognised that these proposals would affect a wide range of economic processes, including prices, credits necessary for the development of particular industries, the competition of sweated goods from abroad and the export trade. They also saw that to reach a really human standard of life it would be necessary not only to distribute the existing national income more equitably, but to increase the total available for distribution. This led logically to proposals for planning the whole economy by controlling prices, taking

over the banks and socialising credit, setting up a National Investment Board to direct the flow of capital, making all foreign trade a State monopoly through a National Import and Export Board, unifying coal mining and electrical power as a public service, co-ordinating and socialising all transport and nationalising land.

Such was the "Living Income" or "Socialism in Our Time" Report. It was, as we shall see, much derided at the time, particularly by Ramsay MacDonald, but it had a great effect on socialist thinking all over the world. Jowett did not consider it important to propagate among the general public the economic details of the plan. He regarded these as the technical machinery for the realisation of Socialism. The first necessity was to get across the intention to return to the workers the wealth which they created, so ending their poverty and insecurity. He welcomed especially the basic idea of the Report that the income of the nation should be regarded *as a whole* to be distributed among the entire population rather than as separate individual incomes to be paid out to shareholders and workers according to the fortunes of a particular industry. He denounced as a "delusion" the common conception that the income of a worker must be based on what his industry could afford "after all the parasitical charges on it have been met."

"The most disastrous effect of this delusion," he wrote, "is that it deflects the mind of the workers from the fundamental wrong which they all share, and against which, when they feel the wrong, they must kick *all together* and become *class conscious*, because it is a wrong inflicted on *the whole working class*."

"This fundamental wrong is that the claim of the workers who produce all—for it is the workers by hand and brain who produce all—to a living income should come last and not first."

"When the mind of the worker comes to be fastened on the workers' right to a living income, on the demand that after the needs of the children, the aged and infirm have been met, the *first* claim on national income is that of the working man, Capitalism will be struck to the heart."

"The justice of the demand will be irresistible. Whoever fights against it will fight a losing battle. The urge direct from the masses for the living income will determine every move of the industrial and political forces, illumine the intention of every move, and add strength to co-ordinated effort in industrial and political action. It will force the pace of nationalisation."\*

### *Children's Allowances*

Jowett gave special attention in his writing and speeches to the proposal to inaugurate children's allowances. This was then a new idea in British politics. A group of women, led by Miss Eleanor

\**Bradford Pioneer*, September 16, 1927.

Rathbone, Mrs. M. D. Stocks and Mrs. Hubback had been advocating it from the point of view of the economic freedom of women. The I.L.P. stood for this principle, but it was definite on one point which the women were then prepared to leave open. Children's allowances could be paid either by employers or by the State; the "Living Income" plan insisted that they be paid by the State and that they should be an integral part of the aim to redistribute the national income by the taxation of the wealthy and the disbursement of the proceeds among the mass of people. The Report recognised also the dangers of placing upon employers the responsibility of paying out children's allowances to their workpeople. They would be regarded as part of the wages bill, resulting either in a reduction of the wages of the childless workers or in increased charges to the public. There was also the probability that workers with large families would stand little chance of getting jobs in competition with single men or men with limited families, and that when workers had to be dismissed they would be the first to go.

Some of the Trade Union leaders opposed children's allowances on the ground that, even if the cost were met by the State, employers would treat them as a subsidy to wages and would have them in mind when negotiating or fixing wage rates. Jowett was clear in his answer to this. "Any attempt on the part of the employers to reduce wages will be less likely to succeed if children's allowances are going into the workers' homes than without them," he replied. "The chief cause of weakness in industrial disputes, whether the disputes lead to stoppages of work or not, is the fact that children are involved. If children were taken out of the conflict by means of allowances, it would immensely strengthen the workers' side."\*

To-day the principle of children's allowances is universally accepted and legislation has been introduced; but twenty years ago the idea was to many minds disturbing. Frequently men objected to the suggestion that their wives should be paid weekly allowances by the State to meet the needs of their children; they felt it undermined their masculine prerogative as the family breadwinner. The I.L.P. conducted a large-scale educational campaign, including conferences in all large centres, attended by Trade Union and Co-operative delegates. Jowett was probably the most frequent speaker at these conferences. The "Living Income" proposals appeared to give him a new enthusiasm and vigour. Despite his sixty-three years, he travelled to all parts of the country, addressing hundreds of delegates. He had one purpose in mind: to create an opinion in the Movement which would demand that the next Labour Government should in truth and in reality lift the burden of poverty from the shoulders of the people.

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\**Yorkshire Observer*, October 22, 1928. It is typical of public opinion at the time that the report of the West Riding conference, at which Jowett made this statement, should open by referring to Children's Allowances as "a remarkable proposal."

*MacDonald Opposes "Living Income" Report*

The publication of the Living Income Report aroused Ramsay MacDonald to a wrath which startled us all by its explosiveness and bitterness. His first attack was made before he had even read the Report; he acknowledged that he had glanced over the shoulder of someone who had been reading the *New Leader* in the train and that the title "Socialism in Our Time" had been enough for him to voice his condemnation. There was no evidence in MacDonald's subsequent declarations that he had ever studied the Report; his attacks were always vague and superficial. What was the basis of his opposition? Judging from its nature, two motives operated: the first, personal prejudice; the second irritation with the I.L.P. because it persisted in urging a bolder policy for the next Labour Government.

MacDonald's personal prejudice arose partly from the fact that the most prominent theoretical advocate of the "Living Income" Report was H. N. Brailsford, whom he could never forgive for criticisms of his Parliamentary leadership. "I suppose it is hard for an editor with no executive responsibility," he wrote, "to refrain from telling us how he would act if he were King, Lords and Commons combined, the head of every Department of State and all the Under-Secretaries as well."\* MacDonald suffered some embarrassment from the fact that one of the signatories of the Report was his friend, neighbour and admirer, J. A. Hobson, but endeavoured to escape from it by suggesting that the famous economist had taken only a minor part in its elaboration.

MacDonald's second objection was to the rôle which the I.L.P. was beginning to fulfil of championing within the Labour Movement a more vigorous and fundamental policy for a future Government. For the Party was not content merely to prepare the "Living Income" plan; it urged that the next Labour Government should operate it. "The I.L.P. considers that the Labour Party should make it clear that it will introduce this programme whenever the opportunity to take office recurs," said its National Council. "Immediate steps should be taken to prepare measures for the necessary economic reorganisation so that Labour may be ready to introduce them without delay." The Council was even urging this course upon a minority Government:

"The fact that it had only a minority behind it should not deter a Labour Government from this purpose. The responsibility should be placed upon Labour's opponents of rejecting the Socialist measures proposed. By this means the issue of the poverty of the people and the proposals of constructive Socialism would be thrust into the forefront of practical politics."

At the top of the list of signatures to this declaration was the name of F. W. Jowett. For reasons we shall describe later, he had become the Acting-Chairman of the I.L.P. during the height of the

\* *Socialist Review*, March, 1926.

controversy with MacDonald. The Parliamentary leader did not mince his words in denouncing the I.L.P.:

"It is a great temptation for conferences and committees to prepare schemes and proposals, pass them in the frame of mind of a public meeting, or a propaganda council, and by the votes of delegates who will never have to explain or defend them . . . pass them and then hand them over to a body of unfortunate Members of Parliament, and especially Ministers, like orders issued to subordinates by military commanders. It will never work, and now is the time to make that plain to all whom it may concern.

"When to this is added the sanctification of phrases of no definite meaning but of fine romantic sweep of expectation, like 'Socialism in Our Time,' as though Socialism were a dose of something or a rigidly outlined erection in social architecture, the Movement is being headed straight to destruction . . .

"It is weakness and not strength to hang millstones for mere show round the neck of the Movement, and no Parliamentary Party worth its salt will allow its work to be settled for it by bodies who will not have to face the Parliamentary attack."\*

As Acting-Chairman, Fred Jowett had the responsibility of answering MacDonald officially on behalf of the Party. He remarked that no one who had studied the reports of the I.L.P. Commissions could doubt their usefulness, and denied that any attempt had been made "to thrust these policies upon the Labour Party from the outside." The Agricultural Report had been referred to the Labour Party Conference, which had acclaimed it enthusiastically, and the I.L.P. would adopt the same course with other Reports. Jowett dealt effectively with MacDonald's criticism of the "Socialism in Our Time" Report.

"The tendency represented by the phrase 'Socialism in Our Time' is the inevitable reaction to the tendency represented by the equally indefinite phrase 'the inevitability of gradualness,'" he wrote. "But if the phrase is indefinite, the policy which it indicates is not. Our statement develops a series of co-ordinated proposals which we believe would lay the foundations of the new social order. . . . It is concrete and definite. Mr. MacDonald may criticise our programme, but he cannot legitimately say that we have simply created a phrase of no substance."

Then Jowett passed to the offensive. "The details of Parliamentary policy must, of course, be decided in Parliament," he conceded, "but if Mr. MacDonald means that the whole method of the approach to Socialism must be decided by the Parliamentary Party, we contest his view completely. That would be an intolerable dictatorship. That would be subjecting the whole Party to the orders issued to subordinates by military commanders." It was the function of the Labour Party Annual Conference, and not of the Parliamentary Party, to decide the broad lines of policy. The I.L.P. was within its rights in considering important issues itself and then submitting them to the Labour Party. "That is all the I.L.P. is doing."†

\**Socialist Review*, March, 1926.

†*Socialist Review*, April, 1926.

By this time the influence of MacDonald over the I.L.P. had largely passed and the 1926 annual conference endorsed the "Socialism in Our Time" Report by an overwhelming majority. Acceptance was moved by H. N. Brailsford in a masterly speech and he had the support, among others, of John Wheatley, who described it as "the wisest and most practical policy which has ever been presented to our people." It is interesting to recall that the three leading voices in the debate in favour of "referring back" the proposals were those of Emanuel Shinwell, Oswald Mosley and Kenneth Lindsay, later a National Labour M.P. Fred Jowett presided over this conference and great was his satisfaction at its decisions.

The "Living Income" plan, as well as the children's allowance proposal, were submitted to the following Labour Party Conference. The I.L.P. delegates agreed to the suggestion that the plan should be referred to the Labour Party Executive and the T.U.C. General Council for enquiry, but pressed the children's allowance resolution to a vote on the ground that it was concrete and simple. The resolution was defeated by 2,242,000 to 1,143,000 in favour of enquiry. Despite strong opposition from certain Trade Union leaders, including Ernest Bevin, the Joint Committee of the Labour Party and the T.U.C. declared in favour of allowances in principle, but it was decided to take the opinion of the Unions before recommending their incorporation in Labour's policy. When the Labour Party Conference met in 1928 Arthur Henderson acknowledged regretfully that very few Unions had submitted their views. All he could do was to hold out the hope that, if agreement with the Unions could be reached before the general election, the principle would be included in the Party's programme "to be applied as circumstances permitted."\* The election came, however, without such agreement, and so the Labour Party missed the opportunity of sharing with the I.L.P. the pioneering of an idea which is now recognised to be one of the pillars of social security.

As for the "Living Income" proposals, the I.L.P. could get no more satisfaction than a vague assurance from MacDonald, on behalf of the Executive, that the Labour Party was in favour of a living wage.

### *The Reform of Parliament*

We must not delay to describe the Reports of the other I.L.P. Commissions, with the exception of that on the Reform of Parliament, in which, of course, Fred Jowett was particularly interested and in which he took the leading part. He regarded the appointment of the Commission as a great step forward in his campaign for a remodelling of Parliamentary procedure. For thirty years he had been drawing atten-

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\*This qualification was to safeguard Labour's next Chancellor of the Exchequer, who would have the responsibility of meeting the cost, estimated, for allowances of 5s. a week, at £135 millions a year.

tion to the cumbrous, inefficient and undemocratic methods of the House of Commons, but he had so far failed to arouse general interest or to convince even his fellow-Socialists that it was a matter of the first importance. The "Reform of Parliament" was often regarded by his colleagues as one of "Fred's obsessions," much as Blatchford had regarded his persistence on the subject of secret diplomacy.\*

The author once asked him how his interest fastened on this subject so early in his career. He replied that as soon as he became a Socialist he naturally began to follow the proceedings in Parliament and was puzzled by the long time it took to get anything done. He heard the promises made by candidates at elections and sometimes they impressed him as sincere; yet how rarely were the promises fulfilled! He began to study Parliamentary procedure in detail—the formal First Reading of a Bill, the much-debated Second Reading, the long-drawn-out Committee Stage (on important measures the whole House of 670 Members acting as a Committee), the Report Stage, when matters raised in Committee could be discussed again, the Third Reading. The Bill had then to go to the House of Lords, where amendments might be adopted demanding reconsideration by the Commons or where the measure might be rejected altogether. The consequence was that it normally took months to get any serious legislation through Parliament.

He also became concerned about the absence of any democratic control of administration. So far as he could see, a Minister had almost absolute power, limited only by inconvenient interrogation during the daily period for questions and by an annual discussion when the estimates of his Department were considered. Unless something occurred which aroused the Opposition to demand a special debate or which stirred forty Members to insist on the adjournment of the normal business on "a matter of urgency," a Minister could get away with anything he cared to do.

When Jowett entered the Bradford City Council he found a much more businesslike procedure. Each department had its permanent committee and every member of the Council sat on one committee or more. These committees supervised the administration in detail and they reported regularly to the full Council through their chairmen, enabling democratic discussion to take place on their work and providing the committee with frequent opportunities to propose that the Council should reach new decisions.

This contrast led Jowett to examine the Cabinet system of government in national affairs. He decided that it was grossly undemocratic. When the leader of a Party was called on to form a Government by

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\*The author apologises if there is some repetition here, but it is due to Jowett that we should co-ordinate and amplify the partial references already made to his proposals.

the King, the choice of Ministers was entirely in his hands.\* Of the sixty or so Ministers, approximately twenty formed the Cabinet (again selected by the Premier) and their decisions were regarded as absolutely binding on their Party. Members voted in the House not on their view of the merits of the issues which came before it, but on rigid Party lines, either to keep the Government in office or to defeat it. Sometimes they might regard the proposal before the House as bad, but, if their Party were in office, they were expected to vote for it because rejection would mean defeat of the Government and might involve its resignation. Sometimes they might regard a proposal as good, but, if their Party were in Opposition, they were expected generally to vote against it. This was the "Party Game."

In his earlier days Jowett had not thought out his criticism in this detail, but in the late 'nineties he read an article by Frederic Harrison in the *Positivist Review* which clarified and fortified his opinion. Before this he had discussed his ideas tentatively over mugs of tea with his friends in Bradford workingmen's eating-houses.. He had not been definite or dogmatic because of his lack of first-hand experience; now, with Frederic Harrison's confirmation, he felt on surer ground. When he entered Parliament in 1906 and saw how it worked, Jowett became convinced "beyond a peradventure." After he had been an M.P. a few years the House appointed a Select Committee on Parliamentary procedure and he had no hesitation in urging his solution in evidence. "Not that I expected any result," he remarked. "The old guard were not likely to abolish the old system."†

Parliamentary procedure was particularly disastrous to the Labour Party during this period because it was a minority group. It wanted to make a place for itself in British politics as a Third Party, and this required that it should press forward proposals in the House of Commons distinctive from the policy not only of the Tory Opposition but of the Liberal Government. Nevertheless, accepting the rules of the Parliamentary game, the leadership had always to keep one eye on the effect of the Labour vote on the fate of the Liberal Government,

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\*As far back as 1901 the I.L.P. published a leaflet on Parliamentary Reform, denouncing the Cabinet System. It gave the following amusing description of Lord Salisbury's formation of a Cabinet after the General Election of 1900: "Acting the part of the good uncle, he first invited his nephew, Mr. Arthur J. Balfour, to be First Lord of the Treasury (salary £5,000 per annum); then another nephew, Mr. Gerald Balfour, was made President of the Board of Trade (£2,000); his eldest son, Lord Cranbourne, was appointed Under Secretary at the Foreign Office (£1,500), and his son-in-law, Lord Selbourne, installed as First Lord of the Admiralty (£4,500). Having to some extent performed his duty to his family, he turned his eyes on Birmingham, and invited Joseph 'to come into the corn,' to the extent of £5,000. Mr. Chamberlain dragged in his son, Austen (£2,000 per annum). Other positions remained to be filled, and it is noteworthy that promotion was accorded to those who, in the public eye, had most signally failed: The Marquis of Lansdowne, for example, going up from the War Office to the Foreign Office. But one thing came out very clearly, viz.: the predominance of the two families—Cecil and Chamberlain—was assured."

†The Committee reported in 1914. Jowett's cynicism was justified.



whom it preferred to the alternative Tory Administration. This led to humiliating compromises. Sometimes the calculation of the effect of votes led to ludicrous situations. The classic illustration was a Labour amendment to the Address in 1914 on the subject of Government action in connection with disturbances which had occurred in a Dublin strike. We quote from a pamphlet of which Fred Jowett was a joint author:

"Before the division on the Labour Party's recent 'Dublin Disturbances' amendment to the King's Speech, a rumour was spread in the House—never mind by whom; just guess—that the Unionists would vote with the Labour Party. This, it was pointed out, might mean putting the Government out. It was hoped that this statement would lead the Labour members to withdraw their amendment. The Labour members did not withdraw their amendment.

"When the division was called, a group of Liberals wishful to please their Trade Unionist constituents, if it were safe to do so, entered the Labour lobby, but were careful not to pass the Tellers until they were sure that the Tories were not also voting for the Labour amendment.

"At the other end of the lobby (also without passing the Tellers) there entered into the Labour lobby a strong squad of Tory members in pretence that they were going to vote and carry the Labour amendment. The purpose of the Tory pretence was to frighten the Labour members into deserting their own amendment."\*

Not without reason was this called "the Party Game"! Before becoming an M.P. Jowett learned to his delight that Bernard Shaw was putting forward views similar to his own; the press gave a good deal of attention to an audacious speech on the subject which the young Fabian had delivered. Like Jowett, Shaw never changed his opinion on this matter, but they reached their conclusions and conducted their propaganda independently.†

We have told how Jowett emphasised this issue in his chairman's address to the I.L.P. in 1909 and how the authors of the "Green Manifesto" used his criticism as ammunition against MacDonald and the Parliamentary leadership. We have seen how MacDonald reported Fred to leading members of the Bradford Labour Party when he insisted on voting in the Commons on the merits of the issue rather

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\*"Parliamentary Labour Policy and the Bradford Resolution," by F. W. Jowett and Robert Jones.

†Whilst preparing this book, the author enquired of Shaw whether there had ever been any collaboration between them. He replied: "I had no personal contacts with Jowett, except possibly in very early days when we were nobodies. I don't remember any. In my new book now in the press ("Everybody's Political What's What") there is a strong chapter on the history of the Party system in Parliament and on the escape of the municipalities from it, the moral being the abolition of the P.S. and the municipalisation of the procedure in the Commons. I never knew that Jowett was on the same trek. That we should have arrived independently at the same conclusion strengthens our case and our credit much more than if we were merely associated in a common program." (February 5, 1944.)

In a letter to the author at the time of the I.L.P. Jubilee Conference in 1943, G.B.S. advised the Party to emphasise the need to democratise Parliament by the introduction of the committee system. Fred was greatly excited by this message. "Shaw is dead right," he exclaimed. "He's a wise old man."

than on the fate of the Government, and how Jowett succeeded in getting the 1914 I.L.P. Conference to endorse this principle.\* More recently we have seen how he was prepared to refuse office as a Minister if he did not share responsibility for deciding policy and how, even when a member of the Cabinet, he declined to vote for Government proposals to which he was opposed. Now we come to the climax of this long campaign.

### *Jowett Wins I.L.P. Support*

A Commission of the Party was appointed to consider the subject in detail. Its composition was impressive. Clifford Allen was chairman and the nine members were: C. R. Attlee, M.P., W. B. Graham, M.P (who had been President of the Board of Trade in the Labour Government), Fred Jowett, H. J. Laski, B. Riley, E. Sandham, J. Scurr, M.P., H. B. Lees-Smith, M.P., and R. C. Wallhead, with the author as secretary. At the first meeting there was general agreement that the House of Commons should be reorganised on the basis of committees, but there was a sharp difference as to the function of these committees. Harold Laski, Lees-Smith and others held that they should be merely advisory and that responsibility should rest with the Minister and the Cabinet. Jowett insisted that they must be responsible committees, with detailed power to survey administration and to consider all legislation relating to the Department. An exciting conflict developed on this issue between Laski and Jowett. Laski impressed the Commission by his erudition and close reasoning, building up his points in a series of "first, secondly, thirdly" until the members felt overwhelmed, but Jowett knew his ground and stuck to his formidable opponent like a bulldog.

Laski cited the Foreign Affairs Committee of Congress as an example of the failure of responsible committees, but Jowett would not accept it as analogous. The American Committee has the power to call a Minister but the Minister is not part and parcel of the committee, he pointed out. The consequence is that the Minister gets out of step with the committee. The President may take a certain line in foreign affairs, but he does not act closely with the Committee. This was illustrated devastatingly in the case of President Wilson and the League of Nations. The President was the architect of the League, but because the Minister responsible for Foreign Affairs had not been required to work in continuous co-operation with the Committee the

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\*Following this decision, Jowett published the pamphlet, "Parliamentary Labour Policy and the Bradford Resolution," written jointly with Robert Jones, B.Sc., to which reference has been made already. He recorded the remarkable progress which the resolution had made within the Party. At the 1911 conference, when the proposal to "vote on merits" was first made, there was not enough support to justify the votes being counted. In 1912 the vote was: For 78, Against 195. In 1913, For 114, Against 150. In 1914, For 233, Against 78.

President was thrown over. Laski's parallel was, therefore, delusive. Jowett was very satisfied with his answer to Laski. "Oh, I had him; had him as clean as a whistle!" he exclaimed afterwards.\*

The Commission produced two Reports. The first, sponsored by Jowett, proposed that responsible committees, reflecting Party strength in the House, should be set up in association with each Department of State. The Minister would serve as chairman. The Committee would have two functions. It would keep in constant touch with all the administration of the Department, surveying it regularly, and would act as the Committee of the House when legislation was introduced concerning the Department. At the same time the authority of the Minister would continue and the Cabinet would remain as a kind of General Purposes Committee composed of the leading Ministers as now. If a Minister came into conflict with his committee he could appeal to the whole House. The Cabinet would not necessarily resign if defeated in the House. It would do so only if a motion of censure were carried against it or on a major issue. The second Report emphasised the view that Cabinet co-ordination and control was the key of representative government. Departmental Committees should, therefore, be purely advisory, leaving the Minister and the Cabinet untrammelled. On the subject of Cabinet resignation, the second Report proposed that a meeting of the Parliamentary Party should decide whether the issue before the House was a "stand or fall" question.

The two Reports were submitted to the 1925 conference of the I.L.P. by Fred Jowett and H. B. Lees-Smith. It was decided to hear their speeches and to refer the Reports to the Branches of the Party for a year's consideration. When the conference assembled a year later at Whitley Bay there was no doubt about the view of the Party. After R. C. Wallhead, M.P., who had in earlier years opposed Jowett's view, had moved a resolution supporting the first Report, it was carried with only two dissentients. When the vote was taken, Wallhead turned to Fred, who was in the chair, and paid tribute "to our comrade Jowett for the fight he has carried on for this idea for eighteen years."† The delegates thundered their endorsement.

Ramsay MacDonald had always been contemptuous of Jowett's proposals. Away back in 1914, when the I.L.P. Conference adopted

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\*The author must in honesty add that there were two views on the committee as to whether Laski or Jowett had the better of this controversy. The author has Laski's permission to quote from a personal letter, dated October 17, 1945, the impression which Jowett left on him: "I thought Jowett wholly and lamentably wrong, but I was deeply impressed by the charm and insistent persuasiveness with which he put his point of view."

†The 1929 I.L.P. Conference went a step further, carrying a resolution in favour of the Parliamentary Party selecting the Cabinet. E. Shinwell opposed, urging that the Party leader should have this power. J. Maxton left the chair to support the resolution.

the "Bradford Resolution" asking that M.P.s should vote on the merits of the issues before them, MacDonald was indignant because Jowett declared in the debate that he would not allow himself to be made a bondsman or to have his allegiance to Home Rule blackmailed. This referred, of course, to occasions when the Labour Party had not pressed its own proposals in order to save the Liberal Government from defeat. "If Mr. Jowett's words were meant to have any reference to actual conditions," commented MacDonald, "they convey absolute untruths or, if they were only meant for vote-catching purposes, were the veriest balderdash."\* Jowett refrained from retorting in kind, but he never allowed an *argument* against his plan to pass without an answer. "Pin them down, my boy, pin them down," he exclaimed to the author one afternoon in 1926. "There's an answer to every point. Never let them get away with a single one." Acting on that principle, he produced a pamphlet, "Parliament or Palaver," which took the objections of his two principal critics—Ramsay MacDonald and Lees-Smith—and answered them *seriatim*. It was one of the most effective polemical pamphlets ever printed.

From a Socialist standpoint the most damaging criticism of the Jowett proposals is that they might tend to make Parliament and the House of Commons a permanent Coalition, destroying the sharpness of the conflict between the working-class and the possessing class, between Capitalism and Socialism. The author has heard it said, for example, that in the circumstances of 1944 it would not have been difficult to get the House of Commons to accept the Committee System, because this would have fitted in with the idea of making Parliament a "Council of State," with all Parties co-operating, rather than a battleground of opposing ideologies. In effect, MacDonald voiced this objection nearly twenty years ago. Let us see what Jowett said in response:

**RAMSAY MACDONALD:** Suppose a Labour Government were to introduce a Bill to nationalise land. Under present conditions that Bill would be left in the hands of a Minister who is a convinced land nationaliser, backed by a Cabinet composed of those pledged to the same principle. The reform proposed is that it should be sent, in the first instance, to a committee representative of all Parties and containing a maximum representation of the financial and propertied interests attacked. Cannot you see that by such a method you lose all driving force and place yourselves entirely at the mercy of people totally antagonistic to the legislative proposals of the Labour Government?†

**F. W. JOWETT:** Let us compare the present with the proposed new system with Mr. MacDonald's objections in mind.

Under the present system the Committee of the whole House of Commons, to which a Land Nationalisation Bill would go, would contain every opponent of the measure—say, 250 of them. This committee of the whole House would consequently contain *all* the M.P.s representing the financial and propertied interests attacked.

\**Leicester Pioneer*, April 17, 1914.

†*Daily Herald*, April 4, 1925.

Under the proposed system of Departmental Committees, a Land Nationalisation Bill would probably be sent to the Finance Committee in charge of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Opposition's share of representation would be, say, 10 or 12.

The proportion of opponents of the Labour Party would be the same under both systems. *But would the measure be more at the mercy of 10 or 12 opponents in a real committee than it would be at the mercy of 250 or more opponents in a committee of the whole House? . . .*

If the House of Commons sat in sections for its committee business as is proposed, there would be less inducement and less opportunity for the deadly form of obstruction at present practised. Departmental Committees would sit when the full House would not be sitting and the business of Parliament would go on uninterrupted by committee business. Hence one of the most mischievous purposes for which committee business is regularly obstructed—the blocking of business and the destruction of the general credit of the Government through its inability to get its measures through—would be defeated. Obstruction for other reasons also would not be so effective if there were only 10 or 12 opponents to repeat their own and each other's speeches. In a committee of limited size long-set speeches of the kind the House of Commons knows too well would appear ridiculous and out of place, and, moreover they could be more easily curtailed if necessary.\*

Jowett, as we have seen, regarded this issue of the Reform of Parliament as touching the very core of democracy. It was to him much more than a matter of procedure. It was a matter of making Parliament a vitalised representative institution. "To sum up," he wrote, "the arguments for the scheme are that it gives real control to Parliament of the whole work for which Parliament is supposed to be responsible. It gives initiative and responsibility to the private Member, whatever his politics; uses his ability, trains him and requires him to consider the subject on which he is voting; it spreads knowledge of the actual work of the public departments among members of the House; it allows a Party which cannot carry its whole programme to do the best it can and keep its faith; it forces the conscience of no one."†

Jowett had won his case in the I.L.P. He was soon to have the opportunity of carrying it to Parliament again.

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\*"Parliament or Palaver?"

†*Manchester Guardian*, January 4, 1924

## CHAPTER XIV

## CAPITALISM RESUMES THE OFFENSIVE

During the years between the two Labour Governments Fred Jowett devoted himself entirely to national work for the I.L.P. The Bradford folk would have liked him back in the city, and he was drawn by inclination to it, but his colleagues in the leadership of the Party insisted that his sphere of activity should be nation-wide, carrying the message of "Socialism in Our Time" to town and village, kindling the enthusiasm of the membership, bringing together groups of recruits to form branches of the Party. Jowett was now in the sixties and the strain of constant travelling and of addressing meetings almost daily (one newspaper report tells of five meetings held in one week-end), of going from house to house for board and bed must have been heavy, but his vigour of body remained and the fire of his spirit was unquenchable. Twice during this period he served temporarily again as chairman of the I.L.P.—from October, 1925, to Easter, 1926, following the resignation of Clifford Allen, and during a long period in 1926 and 1927 when James Maxton was ill. It is a tribute to the respect in which Jowett was held that he should have been the unanimous choice of his colleagues on the National Council on both occasions. In 1927 he was elected by the membership as Treasurer of the Party and he held this post to his death.

*The Mining Crisis*

It was a period of trade depression, attacks on wages and strikes. The main victims were the miners, and they were the centre of the struggle. But Fred's own woollen workers were hit and fought back before the miners; in July, 1925, there was a month's lock-out in their industry. The same year the coal owners issued an ultimatum for reduced wages, amounting in many cases to as much as 10s. a week. The Government set up a Court of Inquiry, but the miners would have nothing to do with it until the owners' demand was withdrawn. They also remembered the betrayal after the Sankey Commission and the rejection of the more recent report of the Buckmaster inquiry, which had declared that "the provision of a minimum wage should have precedence over the distribution of profits."

Much of Jowett's time was spent in the mining areas. In his speeches he drove home the point that the desperate condition of the industry was in large part due to the effect of reparations imposed by the vindictive victors at Versailles. Between September, 1919, and April, 1925, no less than 88 million tons of coal had been expropriated from Germany by France—67 millions in reparations and 21 millions

through the occupation of the Ruhr\* — with the result that the British export trade in coal had been killed. A quarter of a million miners were unemployed. Within competitive capitalism wage reductions loomed inevitable, and the jobless men in every colliery village made the designs of the owners easier of realisation. In nine months wages fell by £20 millions, and by 1925 they had been screwed down below the 1914 level.

The miners had fighting leaders: the chairman, Herbert Smith, of Yorkshire; the secretary, Arthur Cook, of South Wales. They were a great contrast in appearance and temperament. "Erb" was stocky and dour, slow-moving and slow-thinking, a typical Yorkshireman in speech and dress, sparing in his words but plain-spoken, his rugged dialect adding to the impression of hard, unbending strength, softened only by human sympathy and an irrepressible gift of humour, his suit made of rough tweed, a large cloth cap always on his head. Arthur was a Celt, a volcano in continual eruption of fiery words. He was slim, never at rest, his features moving in expression with film-like rapidity, every sentence accompanied by a gesture, an emotional man dominated by one feeling—the suffering of the men he represented and even more of their women and children. Whether he was in conference with representatives of the Government and the owners, or addressing the delegates of the T.U.C., or speaking to vast meetings of the miners in field or market square, this feeling found expression in torrential words. When the Commission which Mr. Baldwin had appointed reported in favour of lower wages and longer working hours, Herbert Smith and Arthur Cook answered with "not a cent less, not a second more." The newspapers suggested that the miners' leaders did not represent the men, but Fred Jowett, travelling the coalfields, living day after day in the homes of the miners, knew differently. "Since a year ago," he wrote in August, 1926, "I have been in every important coalfield in England, Scotland, and Wales, and I know from personal experience that no trade union officials could express more correctly the opinions and intentions of their members than Herbert Smith and A. J. Cook."†

### *The "General Strike"*

During the last week of April, 1926, the miners stopped work rather than accept lower wages. On May 1st, most significant May Day in Britain's Labour history, the T.U.C. General Council called out the workers in all the leading industries in sympathy. The "general strike" lasted ten days and, despite the solidarity of the workers from one end of the country to the other, ended in humiliating defeat. Much has been written about the cause of this failure.

\*Parliamentary Report, June 30, 1925.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, August 27, 1926.

What was Fred Jowett's view? Characteristically, he was not content to shout "traitors" and "betrayal." He tried to make a calm analysis and to reach a fair judgment.

It had at first been proposed that support for the miners should take the form of refusal by the transport workers to move coal, and that all trade unionists should levy themselves to maintain the resistance of the miners and transport workers. But the leaders of the Transport Workers' Union, and particularly Ernest Bevin, would not hear of this tactic. They were tired of being called upon to "take the shock" in every dispute by refusing to handle "black-leg" goods. They demanded that all sections should come directly into the struggle, that every Trade Union should place itself under the direction of the General Council of the T.U.C. and stop work as ordered.

Jowett understood the objection of the transport workers, but held nevertheless that the policy of the embargo would have been a better tactic. He pointed out that the effect of a refusal of the transport men to handle coal would have been the same, because without coal industry could not have continued. But the cost to trade union funds would have been far less: other workers thrown idle by the strike of the miners and transport workers would have been eligible for unemployment benefit and the strain on the workers' resources would have been much less. "The sympathetic strike policy," he wrote, "decanted the funds of the trades unions as freely and disastrously as when water from a reservoir rushes through a broken embankment." He did not regard this, however, as the major cause of the disaster. The fatal error was a change of front by the T.U.C. General Council, which led to a rift with the miners. This contributory cause to the collapse of the "general strike" has received little attention and what Jowett said about it at the time deserves record.

"The General Council abandoned the clear-cut policy of resistance to 'any reduction of wages,' 'any increase in working hours,' and 'any interference with national agreements'," he wrote . . . "This created a division between the objective of the miners, on the one hand, and the objective of the General Council on the other.

"This was not known to the two and a half million workers who so readily responded when the General Council called the national sympathetic strike. They came out to resist lower wages and longer hours for miners; but the General Council were in fact fighting for a compromise settlement, which could only mean acceptance of lower wages or longer hours or both.

"This division of objective between the miners and the General Council was known to the Government before the National Strike began, and from the moment it was known the hands of the Government were strengthened. Knowing that the workers in council were hopelessly divided, the Government lost its greatest fear of the threatened National Strike, and decided to risk it."



Yet the extent of the strike when it came was "a fearful shock" to the Government. "Had there been unity among the leaders in resisting lower wages and longer hours," added Jowett, "the Government would have had to give way and to reorganise the mining industry according to the recommendations of the Commission." As it was, the Government set out to widen the rift and to encourage the inclination of the General Council to compromise. Its declaration that the strike was a challenge to the Constitution and its demand for "unconditional surrender" ruled out direct negotiations, but an approach through an "unauthorised mediator" was not ruled out—and this had the added advantage of allowing the Government to disavow him and his terms. Sir Herbert Samuel, who had acted as chairman of the Government Commission, contacted the T.U.C. General Council and they reached a "gentleman's agreement." Believing that the Government were behind these terms, the Council called off the strike—only to hear the Government repudiate the "agreement" and insist on the complete surrender of the miners. The National Strike was, in Jowett's view, "at once a triumph and a tragedy."

"A tragedy because the Government, acting with and for the mineowners, defeated it by deflecting its purpose. A triumph because for the first time in history two to two-and-a-half million workers left their jobs, lost their wages, and risked their livelihood in defence of the standard of wages and hours of their fellow-workers.

"Unfortunately, in the confusion of the unofficial compromise settlement no safeguards to protect the strikers from the vengeance of rampant employers could be secured . . . . The result of that 'gentleman's agreement' is that some Unions have lost advantages which had been won at great cost and that, in addition, thousands of the most loyal and active defenders of their class have been victimised, many of them thrown out of work with little or no hope of getting work again.

"The Government has been revealed as a 'class' government on the side of the most callous employers in the land."\*

Fred Jowett and his colleagues at Bradford worked night and day in the cause of the strike. They had some difficulty in getting paper for special editions of the *Pioneer* and Fred immediately volunteered to go to Manchester to procure it. When he boarded the bus, however, a business man objected to Jowett travelling because of his association with the strike, and for a time the journey was delayed whilst the irate passenger made representations to the proprietors. The latter overruled the objection and the business man had to suffer the indignity of travelling with an "enemy of the State." Whilst Fred was supporting the miners so thoroughly, the Liberal Member whom the electors of East Bradford had returned in his

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\*Bradford Trades and Labour Council Year Book, 1927.

place was active on the side of the Government and the coalowners. "Mr. Fenby at the moment is prouder of his hands than any other Member of the House of Commons," wrote the Parliamentary correspondent of the *Yorkshire Observer*.\* "Gnarled and corned, with one finger badly bruised, they bear ample testimony that he was engaged on work of national service throughout the strike."

The General Council had called their hosts back to work, but the miners still refused to accept the owners' terms. They remained locked-out until November 19, 1926, that is for seven months. Jowett and his I.L.P. comrades gave them unstinted support all through this period. When the Labour Party Conference met at Margate in October, 1926, the I.L.P. delegation moved the reference back of the official resolution in order to include a levy of the membership of all affiliated organisations to help the miners. The reference back was supported by David Kirkwood, Harry Pollitt, Dick Wallhead, Oswald Mosley, W. J. Brown and "more especially" (wrote Jowett) "a diminutive miners' delegate named Horner," and was defeated by only 2,159,000 votes to 1,368,000. To help the locked-out men the I.L.P. produced a weekly paper, *The Miner*, which reached a circulation of 90,000. With other sections of the Working-class Movement, the Party Branches opened "Miners' Wives' and Children's Funds" all over the country and despatched to the coalfields continuous supplies of food, clothing, boots. In Bradford the fund reached over £1,300.

Despite all these efforts, the miners were defeated by the hunger of their families. They had to go back to the pits and work longer hours for lower wages; their working hours became the longest for miners in the world; their wages were lower, in proportion to 1914 rates, than those of the vanquished miners of the Ruhr. But the owners' promises of more regular work were not fulfilled. Short-time became prevalent and unemployment in the industry grew until it reached 300,000. "To-day in South Wales men and women are starving," acknowledged the *Times* two years after the lock-out had concluded: "not starving outright, but gradually wasting through lack of nourishment."<sup>†</sup> Jowett as he went from district to district was deeply moved. "The standard of life in the mining areas is sinking lower and lower," he wrote. "In very few miners' homes is it possible for the wives to make ends meet on the slender earnings of their husbands. As homes get poorer in furniture and equipment and the debts hang round their necks, both men and women lose heart and become despondent, or they develop a careless disregard of their homes and prospects. It is a tragedy. I have seen it in Durham, in Northumberland, in the Midlands, in Wales, and in some parts of Yorkshire."<sup>‡</sup>

\*May 20, 1926.

<sup>†</sup>Quoted in *Bradford Pioneer*, December 17, 1928.

<sup>‡</sup>Bradford Trades Council Year Book, 1928.

The hunger in the coalfields intensified Jowett's conviction that the *first* duty of the next Labour Government should be to lift the workers from destitution immediately by the socialisation of the national income. He agreed, of course, that the socialisation of the industry was the permanent solution, but the distressed miners could not endure during the long process of getting a Nationalisation Bill through Parliament and the slow accumulation of its results. He put his views concretely.

"To the miners we would say: The Labour Government will nationalise the mines, but we warn you that getting the necessary powers will be a lengthy process. We will help you in the meantime by putting behind you all the power we can exercise in your fight for a Living Income.

"We will make sure the food of the children—yours and those of all other workers—by means of allowances for each child. The allowances shall be paid for out of the incomes of the rich, whose riches are drawn from surplus value produced by labour.

"If the coalowners cannot, or will not, pay the wage necessary for a living income, if, rather than do that, they deprive the community of coal, then the Labour Government will use its power under the Emergency Powers Act, or any other Act, to enable the miners to go on working. If the mineowners will not employ them, the nation must."\*

Jowett was the missionary of this policy among the miners, and wherever he went he helped to keep alive a fighting spirit, in danger of becoming submerged in disillusionment and despair. The I.L.P. was greatly strengthened at this time by the co-operation of Arthur Cook, who was a member of the Party and an enthusiastic supporter of the "Socialism in Our Time" programme. Arthur always wore the Party badge and he was particularly concerned that the young men in the colliery villages should be saved from cynicism by catching the I.L.P. spirit and educating themselves in the study circles which the Party was organising.

Even eighteen years later one cannot write of the crucifixion of the miners without a feeling of anger. They were the real vanquished of the war of 1914-18. They were the worst victims of the capitalist offensive during the years between the two Labour Governments.

#### *The Trades Disputes Act*

The capitalist class and the Government were not satisfied with defeating the miners and the Trade Union movement. They followed up the blow they had struck by a series of measures to destroy the power of the working-class movement and to undermine its independence. The first of these was the Trades Disputes Act of 1927, under which sympathetic and political strikes were made illegal. The Civil Service Trades Unions were compelled to disaffiliate from the

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\**New Leader*, January 28, 1927.

Trades Union Congress, and Trade Unions were not permitted to contribute moneys to political purposes except through a separate fund raised by a voluntary levy. "Parliament has been used to the fullest extent possible to punish the workers," wrote Jowett at the end of 1927. "The Trades Disputes Act was the first fruit of the defeat of the miners. Having got the miners down and incapable at the moment of resistance and knowing, as Mr. Baldwin did, that the fighting funds of the Trades Unions were just then depleted, the attack on the Unions and their political funds was launched immediately and pressed to the utmost limit in severity." \*

But Jowett saw the Trades Disputes Act as only one of a series of attacks in a planned capitalist offensive against the working-class. The second stage was a frontal onslaught on the standard of life of unemployed workers so that reductions in the wages of those in employment would be made easier. Jowett was foremost in emphasizing this:

"Having struck at the Trades Unions through the Trades Disputes Act," he wrote, "the next step in the capitalist offensive against the working class was to cut off supplies to the unemployed and make sure of a reserve supply of impoverished work-seekers who would be forced by threatened starvation to accept low wages.

"First, grants for relief works were reduced almost to nothing. Then the conditions limiting payment of unemployment benefit were made more severe. Single men and unemployed workers with relatives who are not also destitute were ruled out altogether from receipt of extended unemployment benefit. Tests of willingness to work which cannot be complied with by large numbers of unemployed workers were imposed."

#### *Dictators Oust Boards of Guardians*

The inevitable result of this harsher administration of unemployment insurance was to drive large numbers of the unemployed and their dependents to the Poor Law. In districts where there were Labour Boards of Guardians of a courageous type, relief was given on a humane scale. "Whereupon," reported Jowett, "the conditions applying to payment of Poor Law relief were also tightened, lest there should be found in this last resort some slackening in the competition for jobs by unemployed workers." When Boards at West Ham, Chester-le-Street and Bedwelty refused to operate the new "hunger scales," the Government appointed Commissioners to see that they did their duty.

"Where duly elected Guardians in poverty-stricken areas have refused to starve the workless poor, they have been removed from office and replaced by paid agents of the capitalist Government who are willing to do the dirty work," said Jowett.

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\*This and following quotations are from the Bradford Trades and Labour Council Year Book, 1928.

"To make local governing bodies doubly safe for plutocracy, a law has been passed to inflict monstrous fines on public representatives, and to imprison them if so desired, for sanctioning expenditure which a paid official of the Government chooses to declare illegal, even if there is no question of dishonesty involved and the expenditure has the approval of the electors.

"The significance of this last move in the capitalist offensive lies in the fact that it is the first definite step into dictatorship, the system whereby the party in power—which in this country to-day is the capitalist party—openly overrides the will of the people. The next step is threatened and may soon be taken if Mr. Baldwin's 'die-hards' can only agree upon a plan to put the House of Lords in control of the House of Commons."\*

Jowett visited Chester-le-Street, a mining area in Durham, and was particularly interested because it was the scene of a thousand of the six thousand war-time (but still occupied) structures which he had insisted should be put into healthy, habitable condition when he was Commissioner of Works. "They were one-storey wooden dwellings," he wrote, "intersected by unpaved streets. A real shanty-town."

"At the official inspection of Government property at Birtley in Chester-le-Street I had discovered another problem concerning the shanty-town. . . . I could arrange for the houses and streets to be repaired, but I couldn't relieve the poverty of the tenants, who were nearly all out of work. Many of the tenants were not natives of the district. They were brought with their families from far and near, uprooted from their previous homes, to provide labour during the war for a large munition factory which since the war has been derelict and useless. The Government, having dumped them at Birtley to make munitions, took no responsibility for their sad plight when death-dealing weapons were no longer needed. It simply left them for the Chester-le-Street Guardians to deal with as they might think fit."

The depression in the coal industry added hundreds of miners and their families to the thousand householders of ex-munition makers who were in distress. During his second visit Fred stayed with miners.

"I stayed a few days with the people. I ate and slept in the houses of miners. . . . The export trade in coal on which the local miners depend had gone dead. German reparation coal had helped to kill it. The pits were nearly all idle. At the Birtley colliery no miners were working except the safety men and the odd job men employed to prevent the workings in the pit from becoming derelict.

"I talked with the public men of the parish. They were all miners. They are the men who are now accused of breach of their public trust. A finer and more public spirited set of men I never met. I stayed one night in the home of the most active man among

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\*A reference to proposals to re-establish the veto of a "reformed" House of Lords.

them. The following morning he took me to the relief station to see for myself what the Guardians had to contend with. . . .

"The Birtley relief station is a Co-operative Hall, which seats about 400 people. It was full when I arrived, and it remained full whilst I was there, for as cases were disposed of vacant seats were filled by newcomers. . . . There were 3,000 on the relief list for that station alone. . . . It is true, as the papers say, that practically the whole of the inhabitants of Birtley were drawing relief; but what else could they do? The pits were stopped and had been stopped for months. There is no other industry to employ anybody. Mass starvation was the only alternative to public assistance."

The Chester-le-Street Guardians were censured by the Government because they declined to apply a household Means Test before giving relief. "They declined to apply this false method of calculating incomes to give a plausible but dishonest excuse for refusing to relieve poverty," commented Jowett. "They did right."\*

#### *Mond-Turner Talks*

Having driven the working-class to its knees, though sections of it still remained upstanding in spirit, the capitalist class, or rather its monopolist kings, proposed "peace in industry" to the Labour Movement. Although his close old-time friend, Ben Turner, was, as Chairman of the T.U.C., the leading figure in the agreement subsequently reached with Sir Alfred Mond and his Big Business colleagues, Jowett was unsparing in his criticism. "Shackled and hobbled by anti-Trade Union law and weakened in financial resources, the Trade Unions are now invited to 'co-operate' by big boss capitalists," he remarked. "What is the meaning of this?" Had the authors of the misery of the last two years repented? Not likely. If they had, they would have repealed the anti-Trade Union law and the Act to increase miners' hours. The explanation was that they desired the assistance of the Trades Unions in a new development of Capitalism. By the adoption of scientific methods of production, scrapping obsolete plant, closing down uneconomic workplaces and combining competing concerns, they could produce much more with much less labour. They could cheapen production and increase the "surplus value" available for profit.

But what of the surplus workers? A few of the younger and more competent would be moved into new jobs, such as the production of by-products from coal, but these would be a "streamlet" compared with the "waters of the flood." When labour was previously displaced by new processes — by the discovery of steam power, for instance—Britain's market was expanding; she became the workshop of the world. But now the markets could not consume what was produced; according to Sir Alfred Mond, British coal-mining had 15 per cent. *over*-production. Hence the necessity for a smaller *total*

\**Bradford Pioneer*, April 15, 1927.

output at higher prices, and a greater output *per worker* for less cost in wages. "These are the two blades of the scissors which are to cut off the livelihood of great masses of workers."

"The operation has been given a new name which is not yet in the dictionary—Rationalisation. It is the big capitalists' alternative to Nationalisation . . . It cannot be carried out thoroughly unless a few of the more powerful bodies of organised workers agree to make the way easy. To pay for an easy passage to their capitalist El Dorado, Sir Alfred Mond and his big business friends are prepared to make a few concessions, such as compensation for certain workers who are directly displaced and an interest, whatever that may mean, in the general prosperity of the industry for those who are fortunate enough still to be required—after great masses have been cast into the outer darkness of unemployment, along with the great host who are already there."

The capitalist leaders feared, however, that the displacement of labour accompanying rationalisation would drive masses of poverty-stricken unemployed to desperation. "Sir Alfred Mond and his capitalist friends will face whatever consequences this desperation may bring *if they must*. Men responsible for the misery which prevails in the mining areas to-day are not squeamish, and they will have their way whatever it may cost in suffering to the workers concerned." But they naturally preferred "peace in industry" and to safeguard themselves they wanted to make allies of the Trade Union leaders as hostages against revolt. Hence their offer of limited concessions for co-operation. "But beware of the Greeks when they bring gifts," warned Jowett.\*

### *State Aid for Capitalists*

On the part of the Government the capitalist offensive did not consist only of measures to worsen the conditions of the working class. Whilst limiting the "dole" of the unemployed worker, it actually extended doles to the employing class. Under a Local Government Act manufacturers were relieved of three-quarters of their rates. Fred Jowett was indignant when the Government's intention was announced and he utilised a municipal election meeting in Bradford Moor, where J. Shee was the Labour candidate, to protest. As usual, he gave concrete illustrations. The Bradford Dyers' Association, he pointed out, had realised a profit of nearly £4 millions for its ordinary shareholders during the five years ending 1927, and had at the same time given them bonus shares equal to 60 per cent. of its capital. In other words, the shareholders had received in dividends and bonuses 145 per cent. on their investments. "Why, the widow's cruse is nothing to it!" he exclaimed. Another Bradford firm, the Woolcombers Ltd., had given back in bonus shares seven

\*Bradford Trades Council Year Book, 1928.

times the original capital. "Yet these two firms are to be relieved of three-quarters of their rates! Instead of paying 14s. 2d. in the pound, they will be paying 3s. 6½d. It is you, working class folk who live by ill-paid work and not by dividends and bonuses, who will pay the 14s. 2d. That is the sort of thing the Tories stand for!"\*

Those who knew Jowett can hear the scorn in his voice and see the anger in his features as he uttered this indictment. He had the knack of putting a political point so that all the workers of Bradford would be commenting upon it in the mills next day.

Jowett was showing at this time the interest in financial questions which became a dominant theme in his political thought in later years. He denounced the return to the gold standard as one of the causes of the loss of export trade. It had added about 10 per cent. to the cost of British products and had particularly crippled the coal industry. He returned with emphasis to his criticism of the war debt of eight thousand millions.

"When the working man got his £1 or £10 War Savings Bond he paid for it and got scrip for it in exchange. That, however, was not the kind of investment which made up the eight thousand millions. Most of that sum was never lent, but was fabricated credit. A bank which was supposed to lend one million never really lent anything but credit. Not a single investor had a pound less in his investment account. The loans only existed in books."†

This theme, first emerging during the war of 1914-18, became a rising *motif* in the political writing and speech of Fred Jowett until it reached its full development in the Second World War.

### *Reactionary Foreign Policy*

The Baldwin Government was as reactionary in international affairs as in domestic. The Labour Government, whatever its failings, had turned the tendency of Europe from war to peace. Under the Baldwin rule national competitive interests were again placed first. One of the constructive contributions of the Labour Government had been the Protocol, which linked security and disarmament. The signatories of the Protocol would be required to accept League arbitration in any dispute and to disarm according to an agreed scale; if they fulfilled these conditions, the support of all other signatories was pledged in the event of an attack by any Government refusing arbitration; the support would be by economic boycott and blockade, not necessarily of a military character. By 1924 forty-seven nations, including the Dominions, had accepted the Protocol, but the Baldwin Government killed it by withdrawing British support. It refused to sign the Optional Clause which pledged the acceptance of arbitration in all disputes. Instead, Sir Austen Chamberlain, the Foreign

\**Yorkshire Observer*, April 24, 1929.

†Speech reported in *Pudsey Advertiser*, May 28, 1926.



Secretary, negotiated the Locarno Pact, which was sectional, did not include Soviet Russia, retained the basic policy of the Balance of Power, and did not require any obligation of disarmament. Fred Jowett did not unreservedly support the Protocol, fearing that economic sanctions would lead to war, but to the Locarno Pact his opposition was vigorous, particularly because he regarded it as a move to isolate Russia.

The Baldwin Government had earlier in the year brought about a crisis in British-Russian relations by a police raid on Arcos, the headquarters of the Soviet trading enterprises in London. The Russians feared that their business officials would be sent back to Moscow and approached leading members of the I.L.P. to become trustees of their concerns. Fred Jowett was one of those asked to take over these duties. When he objected that he knew nothing of the technicalities of the trading concerns, the Russian officials explained that this was quite unnecessary. They would employ technicians, but they wanted trustworthy heads and they were confident Jowett and his colleagues met that qualification. With his colleagues Jowett was ready to take the responsibility, on the understanding that it should be done as a service to Soviet Russia and without payment; but, in fact, the necessity did not arise. The Arcos Raid aroused such opposition that the Baldwin Government hesitated to go further.

A storm also broke over China. The Nationalist Government was demanding an end to the extra-territorial privileges which British and other foreign nationals enjoyed on Chinese territory, and feeling became so strong that the Government sent troops to Shanghai to protect the British colony there. Jowett had no hesitation in championing the right of China to full independence. He devoted the greater part of his speech at the May Day demonstration at Bradford in 1927 to this subject. He declared that we would not tolerate foreigners holding rights in England such as Englishmen held in China, pointing out that no British national in China was amenable to Chinese law and that the great ports were in the hands of foreign administrators. He stressed the need for solidarity with the Chinese workers. "We should pledge ourselves this May Day to help the Chinese to throw off foreign exploitation. All our interests lie in helping the Chinese workers to gain better conditions. The sweated Oriental worker is a menace to the British worker."\*

Jowett continued to take part in international socialist activities. He was one of the two I.L.P. representatives at the conference on World Migration called jointly by the Socialist and Trade Union Internationals in London in 1926, when the chief subject of debate was an I.L.P. motion that there should be no exclusion "on grounds of race or colour. He was a member of the larger delegation which

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, May 6, 1927.

attended the Marseilles conference of the Second International in 1925 and shared in the opposition to resolutions which condemned Soviet Russia and endorsed reparations from Germany to cover the material damages of the war in all countries. The I.L.P. representatives were so disturbed by the absence of genuine internationalism at this conference that the Party decided to maintain in future a more independent attitude within the International and to take the initiative for the unification of the Second and Third Internationals.

### *Jowett Resumes I.L.P. Chairmanship*

Meanwhile, the I.L.P. itself was feeling the effects of its assertion of greater independence in British politics. Its different approach to Socialism from that of the Labour Party was becoming clearly defined and those who did not accept its policy were dropping away. Strangely enough, one of the first to be affected was Clifford Allen, the chairman, who was the real initiator of the new policy. He had always clung to the hope that Ramsay MacDonald would accept the "Socialism in Our Time" programme and, when Labour's Parliamentary leader maintained his opposition, he hesitated to take the responsibility of challenging the Labour Party. MacDonald's personal position was increasingly attacked within the I.L.P. and when, in October, 1925, the National Council of the Party decided to deprive him of the Editorship of the *Socialist Review*, in whose columns he had persistently criticised the new development of I.L.P. policy, Allen resigned the chairmanship; he was seriously ill and did not feel strong enough to lead a controversy within the Party.\* At the unanimous request of the Council Jowett took over, and he held the post until James Maxton was elected chairman at the following Easter Conference. It was characteristic of Fred's modesty that he proposed that Clifford Allen should write the chairman's address for the conference. The reply to this suggestion deserves to be recorded not only for its tribute to Jowett but as indicative of that rare personal charm which was so much a part of Allen's influence.†

Dorking, Surrey.

January 8, 1926.

My dear Jowett,—

Thank you so much for your exceedingly kind letter. I appreciated it most deeply. I have come to respect and love you more than any other figure in the I.L.P. since Hardie died, and I do hope you will allow me to

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\*Another important factor in Allen's resignation was the endorsement given by the National Council of the I.L.P. to the action of James Maxton in accepting, at the Standing Orders Committee of the Labour Party Conference, a composite amendment, one clause of which declared for the confiscation of land when the policy of the Party was compensation from a fund raised by the taxation of the rich.

†Clifford Allen was made a peer by Ramsay MacDonald during his second period of office and became Lord Allen of Hurtwood. He died in 1939, when, despite a doctor's warning, he insisted on visiting Switzerland on a Peace Mission.

see you sometime in the future. What my wife and I would like is that you would let us know when you have to be in London for a week-end, so that you could come here again for a Saturday and Sunday. It would give us much joy if you invited yourself. Our memories of your last visit are so precious.

It is a great thing for the dear old I.L.P. that you should have been selected as *interim* chairman—I hope you will also agree to be nominated for the Chair at the next conference.

As to my writing the Chairman's address, I fear there is not much chance of that. I leave for Italy on January 21st and shall probably be away for some time. But I will let you know in due course about that. It is kind of you to suggest that I should do this.

Meantime, blessings on you for your great work.

Yours affectionately,

CLIFFORD ALLEN.

Jowett delivered his own chairman's address. He devoted it to a persuasive advocacy of the "Socialism in Our Time" policy. He did not stand for a further period of chairmanship. He welcomed the election of James Maxton.

#### *Snowden Resigns from the I.L.P.*

Ramsay MacDonald remained a member of the Party on the principle that it is better to be expelled than to resign. He wasn't expelled, but his growing divergence from I.L.P. policy was reflected in the decision of the 1927 conference not to include him as a delegate to the Labour Party Conference. It was not until MacDonald again became Premier in 1929, and conflict with the I.L.P. became acute, that he formally left the Party. There was, however, a resignation in 1927 which affected Jowett deeply: his old friend and close political associate Philip Snowden left the Party. Snowden's resignation was due to disagreement not so much with the policy of the Party as with its Parliamentary behaviour. He was temperamentally opposed to the guerilla tactics for which Maxton and his Clydeside comrades were responsible, the "scenes" and the suspensions which sometimes followed; indeed, Snowden was temperamentally unsympathetic to Maxton altogether, regarding him as an irresponsible "rebel" and failing to appreciate his great human qualities and his deep philosophic insight. Snowden justified his resignation on the ground that the opening of the Labour Party to individual membership and its acceptance of a socialist basis made the I.L.P. unnecessary. To this Fred Jowett replied that the Labour Party could not possibly fulfil the purpose for which the I.L.P. was formed. A large part of the Labour Party's membership was not socialist and the I.L.P. was more necessary than ever to keep the socialist purpose intact now that the period of office and opportunity was being approached.\*

These controversies and the sharper definition of the function of the I.L.P. and its "Socialism in Our Time" policy, together with the

\**Bradford Pioneer*, January 6, 1928.

disillusionment which followed the failure of the 1926 strike, inevitably had an effect on the membership of the Party. It has sometimes been held that the decline in its numerical strength dated from its disaffiliation from the Labour Party in 1932. The steep decline began in 1926. In that year the number of branches was 1,075; by 1929 they had fallen to 746.\* Before 1926, anyone who was vaguely a Socialist joined the I.L.P. It was regarded as the active educational wing of the Labour Party; it was the gateway to personal recognition and promotion in the Labour Party. After 1926 its rôle became more strictly defined. It was not satisfied to advocate socialist principles in vacuum; it propounded a plan to realise Socialism, it stood for the policy of going ahead with a socialist programme and standing by it at the first opportunity of government whether Labour had an absolute majority in Parliament or not. This more clear-cut purpose inevitably had the effect of limiting its membership.

Jowett had a large responsibility for this development of I.L.P. purpose. He was not merely treasurer of the Party; he took a foremost part in the proceedings of the National Council and, as we have told, when Maxton became ill in 1927 he was again asked to become chairman.† The Party was deadly in earnest that its "Socialism in Our Time" programme should not be merely a paper scheme or a subject for propaganda only; it was determined that its representatives in Parliament should press it forward within the Labour Party. The 1929 conference adopted regulations for the selection of candidates which afterwards became one of the principal points of controversy with the Labour Party when the question of continued affiliation arose. These regulations asked candidates to give an undertaking that they accepted the policy of the Party, that they were prepared to give effect to it in the House of Commons, and that they had no commitments with other organisations "of such a nature as to militate their effectiveness as I.L.P. M.P.s." The Party had probably not thought out all the consequences of the course upon which it was embarking—it wanted Socialism with speed and was eager that every section of the Party should pull together to get it—but step by step the approaching conflict with the "gradualness" of the Labour Party was being made inevitable.

### *Cook-Maxton Manifesto*

In June, 1928, the Labour Movement was startled by the publica-

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\*The rise and fall of the I.L.P. during these years is shown by the following record of branches: 1922, 614; 1923, 637; 1924, 772; 1925, 1,028; 1926, 1,075; 1927, 949; 1928, 826; 1929, 746.

†Jowett feared that Maxton would not recover in time to resume the chairmanship in 1928, and wrote to John Wheatley urging him to accept nomination. Wheatley's reply typified the respect and affection in which Fred was held by his colleagues. He wrote: "Whatever decision I make I shall always remember my pleasant associations with your dear self. Your character is an inspiration."

tion of a challenging manifesto by James Maxton and Arthur Cook. Jowett read it with complete approval. The main purpose was to call the working-class to return to the ideals of the pioneers of the Labour Movement in unceasing war against poverty and servitude, a war to be conducted by the workers themselves through their own organisations. It announced the intention of the authors to hold a series of conferences and meetings to rally the rank and file. The manifesto was followed by a pamphlet over the same signatures condemning Mond-Turnerism and gradualism and advocating the main proposals of the "Socialism in Our Time" programme. There was some criticism in the I.L.P. because Maxton, its chairman, had not consulted with his colleagues before launching the campaign, but Jowett was among the majority on the National Council of the Party who held that the educational value of the Maxton-Cook gatherings far outweighed other considerations. Large audiences were attracted by the joint appearance of probably the two most popular figures in the Socialist Movement and a spur was given to the militant Left.

A veteran colleague of Jowett passed away during this period—T. D. Benson, who was treasurer of the I.L.P. for twenty years from 1901 onwards. He was a business man, an estate agent, content to supervise the financial affairs of the Party without the limelight of political prominence. He was absolutely dependable, however, at times of crisis. In his tribute to Benson, Jowett told how during the war "T.D." (as his friends knew him) readily accepted responsibility for the Party's publications and printing press when police raids and prosecutions took place. Jowett's reminiscences included this delightful pen-picture:

"As I think of him I see him again with Hardie, with Glasier, with W. C. Anderson, with Mary Macarthur, and with Tom McKerrrell—when the full-day sittings of the Council were over—enjoying the company of his lively and entertaining colleagues. Those were the days of the happy warriors of the I.L.P. All leaders were missionaries, and when the work was done Benson, his jovial countenance glowing with pleasure, joined in hearty laughter at McKerrrell's and Anderson's jokes and called loudly with the rest of us on Keir Hardie to sing 'Bonnie Mary of Argyle' and on Bruce Glasier to sing 'The Battle of Stirling Brig.' Now and again, however, Benson would steal silently away, both in worktime and afterwards, to lay him down and restore his weak heart to action. We realised then how deep was the love for the I.L.P. which kept him working with us notwithstanding his weakness."\*

#### *Jowett Returns to Bradford Politics*

Jowett's national service to the I.L.P. limited his visits to Bradford and his activity in the local movement, but in 1927 he stood again

\**New Leader*, July 2, 1926.

for the City Council. Many of his friends held this to be a mistake. The general election was approaching and they had no doubt that he would be returned to Parliament. Why revert to municipal politics merely for a year or two? The local folk were making a great endeavour to obtain a majority on the City Council, however, and they wanted the strongest list of candidates they could compile. Jowett stood in the Tong Ward, where Labour already held two of the three seats, and was surprisingly defeated by 243 votes; probably this was due to over-confidence and concentration of workers on weaker wards. The defeat was made more bitter by an unworthy attack made on Jowett by a Liberal leader, Alderman Pullan, who asserted that when he took over the chairmanship of the Health Committee from Jowett twenty-five years previously it was "the rottenest and most inefficient committee and some of its officers were both drunken and dishonest in the service of the city." The attack was made too late for effective reply before polling day, but in view of Jowett's great record of municipal service and the thorough competence of his administration, the anger felt by Bradford Socialists can be understood. The defeat must have been a hard blow for Jowett himself.

Socialist progress in Bradford generally was encouraging. In the municipal elections Labour gained five seats in 1926, four in 1927, and three in 1928. These last victories brought the Labour group to within two of an absolute majority.\* A great event in Bradford socialist life was the opening of the Jowett Hall in 1927. The I.L.P. had taken over the old Temperance Hall and, largely under the inspiration of Councillor W. M. Hyman, it had been prepared not only as a scene for political propaganda but as a home for social and cultural activities on the widest scale. It had a beautiful auditorium holding 600, with gallery and a large stage, and plentiful club and committee rooms. It was a club, an educational centre for W.E.A. and N.C.L.C. classes, it had a good library, and it provided the stage for an adventurous and competent dramatic society run by the I.L.P. Arts Guild. It set out to be a "People's University, an instalment in advance of the Co-operative Commonwealth," and in many ways it became that—a place of laughter, study and beauty, tolerant in atmosphere, imbued throughout by the spirit of comradeship. Maxton opened the Jowett Hall, and it started forth in the mood of good fellowship which was its aim. "Two unrehearsed items," we are told, "added to the enjoyment. One was the singing of 'Cockles and Mussels,' by Mr. Jowett, and the other a fine rendering of 'The Pirate King,' by Mr. Maxton."† Both songs and singers were to become famous in the I.L.P., no social gatherings at the Annual Conference or the Party's Summer School being regarded as complete

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\*The figures were: Labour 41, Liberal 22, Conservative 21.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, November 18, 1927. (See illustration of Hall, page 289.)

without them. Few men in public life have had a hall named after them whilst they were still alive; but for Bradford Socialists there was no other name for their home.\*

The Bradford Movement did not escape the internal controversies which affected the national Movement. Until these years the Labour Party and I.L.P. had co-operated in the fullest harmony, the I.L.P. serving as the organisation for individual Socialists (the Labour Clubs were even affiliated to it), whilst the Labour Party was responsible for electoral organisation and the political affiliation of the Trade Unions. But when Philip Snowden, resigning from the I.L.P., declared that the Labour Party filled the bill, Tom Ashworth, the Bradford Labour Party secretary took the same line and some cross currents began to flow. The controversy centring on Ramsay MacDonald also found some local expression, William Leach defending the Parliamentary leader. The Bradford Movement was fortunate in its weekly paper, the *Pioneer*, a remarkably able production which, whilst generally sympathetic to the I.L.P., instilled a broad toleration which prevented discussion from degenerating to antagonism.

#### *General Election — And Victory*

The Labour Party Executive was preparing a new statement of policy in which Jowett took great interest. He was by no means satisfied with "Labour and the Nation," but he regarded it as an advance on any previous statement. He welcomed the distinction made between immediate measures and the long-term programme of the Party. He had always wanted to go to the electors with definite promises rather than with the vague generalities which contented MacDonald, and he was particularly pleased when it was agreed to include concrete figures for increased unemployment benefits and a categorical statement that John Wheatley's housing scheme would be renewed. On such a programme, he felt sure the support of the workers could be rallied.

So the general election approached. The Government's five year period of office was nearing an end and, rather than allow unpopularity to deepen, Mr. Baldwin dissolved Parliament in May. Despite the disillusionment which had followed the defeat of the "general strike" and of the miners, despite the dissensions within the movement, the forces of Labour faced the contest more confidently than ever before. Indeed, the industrial defeats which the workers had suffered led to a swing towards political action and in view of the ruthless policy which the Baldwin Government had pursued towards the working-class and its disastrous record in foreign affairs, there was no hesitation in putting aside internal differences to face the capitalist enemy.

Jowett had a straight fight with the Liberal M.P., Mr. T. D. Fenby,

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\*The Jowett Hall later became the Civic Theatre.

in East Bradford. As one reads the reports of his speeches, one is impressed by his honesty. In giving undertakings he never went beyond proposals to which the Labour Party was pledged. When he advocated I.L.P. proposals which had not been endorsed by the Labour Party he made clear that whilst he would urge them, he could give no pledge that they would be introduced. For example, he gave definite pledges that a Labour Government would give an unemployed man 20s. a week, his wife 10s., and each dependent child 5s., because the Labour Party was committed to these; but when he referred to a general system of children's allowances he did not say more than that he had been working for these for some years and would continue to do so.

This election was the high-water mark of Labour enthusiasm. Jowett said he had not seen such excitement since the earliest days. MacDonald visited Bradford in the course of a national tour of triumph, and four thousand people received him rapturously. Yet there was an incident associated with this visit which disturbed Jowett deeply. In conversation with Willie Hirst, the candidate for South Bradford, MacDonald referred contemptuously to the Glasgow "rebel" group of M.P.s and particularly to John Wheatley. He apparently anticipated their defeat and made it clear that he would not be sorry if they were defeated. When Jowett heard these remarks he began to doubt whether MacDonald intended to carry out a socialist policy.

Not only did Jowett win his contest, but all four seats in Bradford were won.\* The East Bradford figures were; F. W. Jowett, 21,398, T. D. Fenby, 17,701, a noteworthy achievement since this was the first occasion on which the seat had been won in a straight fight. Labour had resounding victories throughout the country and the total strength of the Labour Party in the new House was 289 as against 260 Tories, 59 Liberals and 7 Independents. Labour was still without an independent majority, but it had become for the first time the largest Party in the House of Commons.

Fred Jowett was now sixty-five years of age yet he remained tireless in activity and seemingly more aggressive in spirit than he had ever been. He was soon to prove this by his attitude in the new Parliament.

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\*Jowett's colleagues were: Norman Angell (North), W. Leach (Central), and W. Hirst (South).



## CHAPTER XV

## SOCIALISM ON THE EDGE OF POWER

The personnel of the Labour Cabinet and its policy were determined by the "Big Five." They met this time not at the house of Sidney Webb in Westminster but in the home of Ramsay MacDonald in Hampstead. Indeed, Webb was not present. How Labour would use its second opportunity of office was decided by MacDonald, Snowden, Henderson, Thomas and Clynes.

John Wheatley and Fred Jowett were both left out of the Cabinet. Wheatley had, in fact, invited his exclusion by taking his seat with the Clydeside Back-Benchers rather than with the nabobs on the Front Bench after the 1924 defeat, but Henderson and Snowden took the view that it might be better to have him in the Cabinet than outside. MacDonald, however, was adamant: Wheatley had deserted and insulted the Party leaders and moderate opinion would be shocked if he were included. MacDonald won. Jowett would no doubt have been excluded on similar grounds, but controversy about him did not arise because his previous office was filled to solve another personal issue. George Lansbury had become one of the most popular figures in the Labour Movement. He had been kept out of the first Labour Cabinet, but the "Big Five" agreed that his following was so great that he must be found a place this time. It was Snowden who suggested that he should be First Commissioner of Works.\*

Jowett had no complaint about his exclusion. He recognised that under the Cabinet system the appointment was in the hands of the Party leader and he was extremely doubtful whether he could endorse the policy which the Government would pursue. But he was a little hurt by the casual manner in which MacDonald informed him that he had been dropped and Lansbury's acceptance of the office surprised him. "G.L." had been a bitter critic of MacDonald's policy over many years; he had, indeed, attended a meeting of Labour "rebels" on the eve of the appointment of the new Cabinet. MacDonald did not discuss the change with Fred. He sent him a short note saying that he had tried to fit in those who were with him in 1924 and "who would face with energy the more difficult problems which we have now to face," but that the Commissioner of Works was one of the offices into which he had to fit a new man. Jowett felt there was a suggestion here that he had passed the years of energy and could not help reflecting on the fact that his successor was some years older than himself.

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\*Autobiography, by Viscount Snowden. Vol. 2.

*Problems of Minority Government*

So far as policy was concerned, the "Big Five" decided that they would pursue their own course, make no arrangements with other parties, but depend on "Liberal support on the nature of our measures." \* As we shall see, the third part of this decision soon became the determining factor. Among the M.P.s who wanted a more militant policy there was some divergence of view. Wheatley was opposed to Labour taking the responsibility of Government whilst a minority party. The I.L.P. favoured taking office, but insisted that a programme on "Socialism in Our Time" lines should be applied. Jowett accepted this view, but with his own emphasis on immediate demands rather than on socialisation measures. He also accepted one important limitation: he recognised that it would be unreasonable to press proposals on the Labour Party which had not been endorsed by the Labour Party Conference.

These questions of broad policy were raised by John Wheatley and others at the first meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party, but the mood of the great majority was "to trust MacDonald" and when the warning was given that the inevitable result of attempting to administer Capitalism during a period of depression would be a series of retrogressive compromises deteriorating to measures actually worsening the conditions of the working-class, the criticism was heard with impatience. When the King's speech, outlining the Government's programme, was read, however, and still more when the Prime Minister's speech commending it was heard, uneasy doubts began to spread far beyond the I.L.P. "rebels" and their sympathisers.

"The King's speech has been framed to avoid trouble," commented Jowett. "It is moderate. It is but a statement of intentions. The Prime Minister in his speech on the first day was more than polite to his opponents. He invited their co-operation. He waved the olive branch. He expressed the hope that all parties would act more as a Council of State than as regiments facing each other in battle. No party had a majority, the Prime Minister said, so why couldn't all parties put their ideas in a common pool both for legislation and administration for the benefit of the nation as a whole?"\*

Mr. Churchill rejected the olive branch contemptuously for the Tory Party, but Mr. Lloyd George and Sir Herbert Samuel responded for the Liberals. They would support the Government—so long as it did not introduce socialist measures! The only proposal for nationalisation which they would endorse would be the State acquisition of mining royalties, which was part of the Liberal programme.

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\*Autobiography. Viscount Snowden. Vol. 2.

\**Bradford Pioneer*, July 12, 1929.

Despite feelings of disquiet, the attitude of the majority of Labour Members was to "give the Government a chance" and to withhold criticism; but in the constituencies there was flaming resentment against the treatment of the unemployed, particularly the widespread refusal of benefits to men on the ground that they were "not genuinely seeking work" and the debate on the Address led to heated demands from not only George Buchanan and Campbell Stephen, who led off for the L.L.P., but eight or nine new Members who had come to the House intent on something drastic being done immediately. The Government stalled by appointing a Commission, which led to sharp criticism from those, including Jowett, who wanted immediate action. The only steps taken before Parliament adjourned for the summer recess were the withdrawal of the Poor Law Commissioners, who had taken over the duties of "over-generous" Labour Boards of Guardians, a grant of £3,500,000 to the unemployment insurance funds, and the introduction of a Colonial Development Bill authorising credits of £1 million to private contractors. This Bill led to the first sharp clash between the "rebels" and the Government. Sir Oswald Mosley was in charge of it and he had to meet criticism by agreeing to withhold credit from schemes employing the forced labour of native children.

A second disappointment was on housing, the shortage of which had again become acute. Under the Wheatley scheme 200,000 houses a year had been built, but the Tory Government had reduced the rental subsidy from £9 per annum to £7 10s. od. and the number of houses built had been halved. At the General Election Labour had promised to restore the Wheatley subsidy, but instead the Government was satisfied with announcing that a second reduction, which the Tories had planned for October, would not be made. Wheatley commented pointedly on the "absurdity of voting £1 million for building bridges and constructing roads in tropical countries with more or less slave labour, whilst on building houses the Government is only proposing to spend £150,000 a year." Wheatley's speech was resented not only by the Labour Front Bench but by a considerable number of the "loyalists" on the back benches. Jowett quickly asserted the right to criticise. "I see it is being argued that it should be left to the Opposition to criticise Government measures if they do not go far enough," he wrote. "For myself, I do not agree. It is unfortunate that the present Parliamentary system does not provide for free expression of the views of all parties through regular meetings of Departmental Committees, but, in the absence of such business-like provision, the only means available for expression of unofficial opinions will and must be used."\* The one contribution which the Second Labour Government made to the solution of the housing problem was a Slum Clearance Bill, a limited measure which Jowett bluntly described as a "dud."

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, July 19, 1929.

It would, he said, slow down the progress of building additional houses for workers by devoting available funds to the slow and expensive process of demolition and replacement.

This was not a good beginning, but in international affairs there were compensating features. Diplomatic relations were restored with Soviet Russia. Lord Lloyd was dismissed from his post as High Commissioner in Egypt for intriguing for the suppression of parliamentary government there. Considerable cuts were made in naval expenditure in anticipation of a naval disarmament conference. The Government announced a return to methods of open diplomacy.

During the recess the reputation of the Government rose high by the further initiative of MacDonald, Henderson and Snowden. The Prime Minister visited America to prepare for naval disarmament and had a triumphant reception. Henderson began to plan boldly at Geneva and was acclaimed for giving new hope for peace and disarmament. These developments won the praise of the Labour and Liberal sections of the community; Snowden surprisingly won the praise of the Tories and their press. He went to The Hague and in direct and undiplomatic language issued an ultimatum that, if reparation payments were maintained, Britain would not allow France to grab them all—an attitude of “stern strength” which brought thousands of “patriots” to Liverpool Street station to cheer him on his return. Presiding at a Bradford meeting, Jowett remarked that Labour was scoring heavily on the foreign field, but about the home field he was anxious. “Wages are going down and unemployment is going up. The unemployed are still being harried and chivvied in a way that is discreditable to mankind. That infamous phrase, ‘not genuinely seeking work’ must go, and speedily.”\*

#### *In Difficulties About Unemployment*

When Parliament reassembled, Ministers were on top of the world in their assurance of national prestige, but a large number of Labour Members returned from their contact with the rank and file more apprehensive than ever about the growth of unemployment as winter approached and the harsh administration of Unemployment Insurance. The number of registered unemployed had now reached 1,344,220, and there was every indication that it would continue to mount. At the same time, the Labour Exchanges were ruthlessly withdrawing benefits from unemployed persons. The administration of the insurance scheme appeared to have become stricter rather than more humane since Labour came to power.†

\**Bradford Pioneer*, October 18, 1929.

†This may have been the explanation: When Labour was in opposition, officials were always fearful that harsh treatment would be exposed. Consequently they tended to interpret Regulations generously. When the Tories were in opposition, their fear of exposure was on the contrary ground that Regulations were being applied with laxity and without regard to economy.

There were differences in view between the Opposition Parties and the Labour Government on incidental policies in relation to unemployment—the Tories, for example, demanded tariffs, and both Tories and Liberals demanded relief in taxation for the employing class—but, fundamentally, they were agreed that the problem was one to be approached from the angle of production. Industry must be made more efficient by rationalisation so that it could compete successfully in world markets, and credits must be given to British employers to enable them to expand their industries. To this the Labour and Liberals added national schemes of work, but these were admittedly only “relief” measures: the basic idea was to assist British production to compete for existing markets. The I.L.P. approached the problem at the other end—from the angle of consumption. It wanted to create a new market—or, at least, so to expand the purchasing power of the working population that it would become in effect a new market. “Rationalisation means mass production” I.L.P. spokesmen urged. “Unless you have mass consumption, mass production inevitably means mass unemployment.” The I.L.P. view was put most effectively, perhaps, by John Wheatley.

“Wheatley held very definitely the view that it is no part of the duty of a Labour Government to reorganise the capitalist system,” wrote Jowett.

“A Labour Government would throw a larger number of workers out of employment by rationalising production under Capitalism than it could put into work by means of schemes of work on roads, bridges, and other similar constructional work. . . .

“Proceeding on the line of reorganisation of industry under Capitalism, increasing the capacity to produce goods in ever increasing quantity, *without first increasing the effective demand for goods*—no Government, Labour, Tory or Liberal, could reduce unemployment under to-day’s world conditions. . . .”\*

The first step in order to increase the demand for labour was to increase the power to purchase. That could come only by concentrating policy on raising the income level of the masses of the people. Raise wages, raise unemployment benefits, raise and extend old-age pensions, aim at establishing a national standard of life which would lift the whole population to a level of reasonable comfort, and not only would destitution be abolished but unemployment would be substantially reduced by making the purchasing power of the people more commensurate with their producing power.†

The Labour Government appointed J. H. Thomas, who had no special duties as Lord Privy Seal, to be responsible for Employment Policy, and it named Sir Oswald Mosley, Tom Johnston and George Lansbury to help him in the task. We have already seen the Colonial

\**Bradford Pioneer*, January 2nd, 1931.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, May 16, 1930.

Development Bill as the first outcome of their labours. Meanwhile, the duty of providing for the unemployed was left to Margaret Bondfield, the first woman to enter the Cabinet, as Minister of Labour. When her Bill was introduced early in the autumn session it brought about a crisis.

At the General Election the Labour Party demanded that the benefits of the unemployed should be raised to 20s. a week, with 10s. for a dependent wife and 5s. for each child. These had been the rates urged by the Labour Party and Trade Union spokesmen before the Blanesburgh Commission and had been a prominent feature of propaganda at every election meeting. Miss Bondfield's Bill left the benefit of the unemployed man at 17s. and the allowance for each child at 2s., lifting only the allowance of the wife to 9s. (The benefits for unemployed juvenile workers were also increased slightly.) Even these increases were not to come into operation until March, 1930. The Labour Party election programme demanded the abolition of the "waiting period" of six days. Miss Bondfield's Bill left the period as it was. Worst of all, the amended clause relating to "not genuinely seeking work" left the position almost unchanged.

When the terms of the Bill became known the I.L.P. "rebels" were so indignant that they put down a reasoned amendment for its rejection. Maxton moved it in what Jowett described as "one of the most powerful and impressive speeches" on unemployment he had ever heard in the House.\* Thirty-two Labour Members, including Jowett, voted for this amendment. During the Committee Stage the "rebels" moved amendments to ante-date the increases to January 1st, to lift them to Labour's election figures, to abolish the waiting period, and to remove the "not genuinely seeking work" grievance by making every unemployed person entitled to benefit unless he actually refused a job offered under trade union conditions. On this last issue the "rebels" had the emphatic support of many Trade Union representatives, including Arthur Hayday, chairman of the Committee of Trade Union M.P.s, and Miss Bondfield had to promise to revise the clause. Finally, after much conflict and negotiation, she produced a form of words which met the criticism. This was a great triumph for George Buchanan and Campbell Stephen, who had first raised the issue, and Jowett was among those who voiced a tribute to them.

The activities of the "rebel group" on this measure aroused fierce controversy. Disciplinary measures were threatened. Jowett denounced these intentions vigorously. "If the present Labour Government succeeds in gaining this power to suppress minority action in the House of Commons," he wrote, "then Labour will have established a system of dictatorship over colleagues in Parliament never before known." He quoted an effective precedent for the action of the "rebels":

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, November 8, 1929.

"When the last Labour Government was in office similar motions were moved by unofficial members of the Party and no action was taken then by the Government against dissenting members of the party.

"The present Bill is not the first Unemployment Insurance Bill of a Labour Government. The Labour Government of 1924 also passed an Unemployment Insurance Bill. It was a much better Bill than this one. . . . It reduced the Waiting Period for benefit. Yet, although the scale of benefits was higher in that Bill a motion to increase the benefits was supported in the Division Lobby by *no fewer than six members of the present Government. One of them is now a Cabinet Minister.* They voted against the Government."

The main argument against the "rebels" was that the Government had only a "minority" strength and could not be expected to implement promises at the election made on the assumption that the Party obtained a majority. Against this, Jowett and his colleagues argued that the Government should have introduced the full scale of unemployment benefits to which it was pledged and placed on the Tories and Liberals the responsibility of reducing them.

"The main fact is that the benefits proposed allow only for a workman, his wife and three children the total sum of 32s. a week. This is less than some Poor Law Unions allow in relief. . . .

"The suggestion is that the Liberals would not support the Labour Party on a proposal to insure a family of five against unemployment to the amount of 45s. a week. That is the fear freely expressed here (at Westminster). Well, what about it?

"If the Liberals oppose this modest insurance in return for contributions and are willing to accept the responsibility of registering their opinion in the Division Lists to that effect, there is every reason for allowing them the opportunity of doing so. It would do no harm to the Labour Party, which could then fall back on the compromise scale and *state publicly the reason why.*"\*

The action of the "rebels" caused controversy not only in the Parliamentary Labour Party but in the I.L.P. Group. The Party had been responsible for the nomination of 37 of the M.P.s and, in addition, 160 of the Members nominated by Trades Unions and Divisional Labour Parties belonged to the I.L.P. Of these, 110 had applied for membership of the I.L.P. Group. When the unemployment controversy first flared up the Group prepared a programme of "Minimum Demands," and it was these which the "rebels" embodied in their amendments to the Insurance Bill. Only a minority supported them in the House, however, and the Labour "loyalists" insisted on a special meeting to repudiate Maxton, Wheatley, Jowett and the rest. It was a stormy meeting. Seventy-eight M.P.s attended and the "loyalists," led by Emanuel Shinwell, attempted to put a resolution disowning the "rebels," but Maxton, in the chair, was not having this. He was chair-

\*Bradford Pioneer, November 29, 1929.

man of the Party, as well as of the Parliamentary Group, and pointed out that the I.L.P. Conference had decided to restrict the Group to M.P.s who were prepared to carry out Party policy. It was not in order, therefore, for those who were failing to comply with this condition to repudiate, in the name of the Group, those who were. The meeting adjourned with the controversy still raging, and, a second meeting yielding no settlement, the matter was left over for the next Annual Conference to decide. Needless to say, Fred Jowett was one of Maxton's most stalwart supporters during this conflict.

The same controversy arose in the Movement throughout the country. In Bradford a great meeting was held at Forster Square to hear statements from the city's representatives. Norman Angell, W. Hirst and William Leach supported the Unemployment Insurance Bill; Jowett attacked it. The meeting developed into a debate between the two old associates, Leach and Jowett, both speaking twice. From one end of the country to the other the discussion went on. When the Labour Party Conference met, a "reference back" in protest against the Government's policy, moved by W. T. Kelly, M.P. for Rochdale, seconded by Campbell Stephen, was defeated by the narrow margin of 1,110,000 votes to 1,027,000.

#### *Other Disappointments Follow*

The second major measure of the session was Arthur Greenwood's Bill to bring 500,000 more widows within the pensions' scheme. This was recognised as an advance, but Wheatley was critical on two counts: first, because the contributory principle was maintained; second, because the pensions were not increased. Jowett thought the first criticism a little unreasonable, though he himself was against the contributory system; but, remembering Arthur Henderson's General Election promise of 20s. pensions, considered the second "useful and necessary."\* Then came the Bill to deal with the continuing crisis in the mining industry, where wages remained little above the hunger level and thousands of workers were still unemployed. Conscious of Liberal opposition, the Government did not propose nationalisation. Instead, it introduced a Bill to rationalise the industry by the amalgamation of companies. The only amelioration of working conditions was the reduction of the working day to 7½ hours, and the "rebels" moved amendments to establish a minimum wage and to compensate miners displaced by rationalisation. They received a good deal of support and the Government found it difficult to resist the latter demand because the Bill included compensation for companies which would be closed down; but the Tories, Liberals and Labour "loyalists" rallied in one lobby and won the day.

By this time disillusionment in Labour's second Government had become general among militant Socialists, but optimists still urged

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, November 8th, 1929.



that judgment should be withheld until Snowden introduced his Budget. A pamphlet by Snowden on "Labour's Financial Policy" had been one of the most popular items of propaganda during the election, and it had repeated the drastic proposals for which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had become famed.

"The taxation of the rich for purposes of national reconstruction and for social reforms is a means of redistributing the national income so as to lessen social evils and inequalities," he had written. "The social evils of slums, physical deterioration, diseases, inadequate education, lack of industrial training, industrial inefficiency and the existence of unemployment are things that must be removed, *and the cost of doing that must be paid for by the people who are responsible for the existence of the evils and who are the people who have the financial means to do so.*"

He pointed out that "if the income tax and super-tax were restored to the rates of 1920 the recipients of fixed incomes would still be 50 per cent. better off by reason of the increased purchasing power of money." The Labour "loyalists" argued that the Government's failure to extend social services was due to the absence of finance and that the Budget would put this right; they were confident that Snowden would justify their faith. Even some of the critics, including Jowett, who retained affection and admiration for his old colleague, hoped that the Finance Bill would prove to be the turning point in the Government's record. One could not judge by the 1924 Budget; Snowden had not then had time to give effect to his revolutionary financial theories. But now he had had plenty of time; the Budget would prove whether Snowden did, in fact, know "where to get the money."

Fred Jowett sat on the Labour benches, crowded with excited and eager faces, to hear the Budget speech. It was masterly, but it dashed all hopes that the Government would do anything drastic to "redistribute the national income." True, the national finances were balanced by additional taxes on large incomes and increased death duties to the extent of £32 millions (what a small figure compared with the hopes which Philip had aroused on a thousand platforms!), but *no provision whatsoever was made for adequate pensions for the aged, for decent maintenance for the unemployed, for the restoration of the Wheatley housing subsidy, for the maintenance of children during extra schooling as promised at the General Election.* Jowett's disappointment was so great that he could only shake his head and say "I am not satisfied."\*

#### *Beginning of the Rift with the Labour Party*

The I.L.P. Conference, which met immediately afterwards, was outspoken in denunciation. It carried an emergency resolution deploring Snowden's failure to make additional provision, by drastic taxation of the wealthy, for national expenditure on the wide development of the social services embodied in "Labour and the Nation." It protested

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, April 18, 1930.

particularly against "the indications given by the Chancellor that the next Budget will be framed on similar lines and that there can be no increase in the financial provision for social services in the present circumstances." This Conference determined the fate of the I.L.P. Parliamentary Group. Joseph Southall, intractable Quaker, of Birmingham, moved that the Group be reconstructed "on the basis of acceptance of the policy of the I.L.P.," which was tantamount to excluding six-sevenths of its members—surely the most thorough purge ever put through by a political party! The seconder was W. J. Brown, M.P., and one of its most ardent supporters Jennie Lee, M.P. Jowett spoke for the National Council of the Party and was forthright. The root of the trouble, he said, was that a number of the I.L.P. M.P.s had never accepted the Living Income Policy nor even taken it seriously.

They had not supported in the House even those parts of the policy which, thanks to the propaganda of the I.L.P., had been endorsed by the Labour Party. The Living Income involved the redistribution of the national income through Children's Allowances, Work or Maintenance, Pensions for the Aged, Housing Subsidies, and all the other social services. The Labour Party had not yet endorsed Children's Allowances, but all the other items were in its Election Programme. Unfortunately, the Labour Government was not fulfilling the pledges given.

In view of the threat to discipline the "rebels," Jowett reminded the conference that three of the Cabinet Ministers—Snowden, MacDonald and Lansbury—had frequently voted in the past against the decisions of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Labour M.P.s had criticised Tory M.P.s (and in many cases won their seats) because the latter had refused to do the very things which the "rebels" were now demanding that the Labour Government should do. What right had these Labour M.P.s to vote against these demands now?

The resolution was carried by an overwhelming majority and a motion congratulating the "rebels" was accepted by an equally emphatic majority. A feature of this conference was the absence of the M.P.s who were opposed to the "rebels." Only one of them, a Bradford man, T. W. Stamford (M.P. for West Leeds), attended to put his case. From the chair Maxton paid a tribute to his sincerity and good feeling.

The decisions of this conference led to a joint meeting of the Labour Party Executive and the National Council of the I.L.P. in July, 1930. The discussion was friendly, both sides "agreed that the dispute was capable of amicable settlement," and Arthur Henderson and James Maxton were asked to consult in formulating a basis of agreement. Meanwhile, the reconstruction of the I.L.P. Parliamentary Group proceeded. The Conference decision was forwarded to the 147 members—and only eighteen accepted it. The "rebels" had become the Group.\* Within the Parliamentary Labour Party steps were taken

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\*The new I.L.P. Group consisted of: J. Maxton (Chairman), J. Beckert, F. Brockway, W. J. Brown, R. Forgan, W. Hirst, J. F. Horrabin, F. W. Jowett, David Kirkwood, Jennie Lee, J. Lees, J. McGovern, E. Sandham, Campbell Stephen, E. J. Strachey, R. C. Wallhead, E. F. Wise and J. Kinley (Secretary).

which made the task of Henderson and Maxton in reaching agreement more difficult. The Standing Order was confirmed prohibiting a Member from voting against a decision of the Parliamentary Party and adding a new Order which prohibited Members from tabling amendments or pressing them to a division without the consent of the Party's Consultative Committee.\*

### *Death of John Wheatley*

Before the reconstruction of the I.L.P. Parliamentary Group had been completed it suffered a tragic blow in the death of John Wheatley. It will already be clear from our story how high was Jowett's admiration for Wheatley. They had discovered each other as natural colleagues in the 1924 Cabinet, like-minded on all issues, and from those days a close comradeship had developed. Wheatley was not a picturesque figure—he hadn't the personal glamour of a Maxton or a Lloyd George or a Winston Churchill—nor was he a popular orator; but he had great qualities of leadership. He had the appearance of a professional man—say a doctor or a solicitor: bowler hat, well-cut clothes, clean-shaven face, reddish in complexion, dark hair neatly trimmed, thick glasses hiding the eyes. His personality was also a little hidden behind the thick glasses, but one felt at once that here was a man strong of will and able in affairs. His administrative ability was proved in his own publishing business, his service on the Glasgow City Council, and supremely as head of the Ministry of Health in the first Labour Government; it reached its triumph in his Housing Act, by far the best which has ever reached the Statute Book. But the characteristic which most impressed his political associates was his clear thinking and his gift to express it lucidly in speech, his courage to express it resolutely in action. The logic of his reasoning was remorseless; as sentence followed sentence, clear and clean, it seemed impossible to escape the conclusions towards which he moved. He was equally logical in his political conduct. Convinced by his experience in the 1924 Government that it was a mistake for Labour to take office whilst in a minority, he threw up his career at the moment of greatest success and retired to the back benches. Convinced that the policy of the official Labour leadership was wrong in approaching the problem of poverty and unemployment from the standpoint of production instead of consumption, he tore it to shreds in argument with merciless

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\*The I.L.P. proposed new Standing Orders in an effort to solve the difficulty, but they were heavily defeated. The Party's suggestions were that (1) when a Member voted against a decision of the Parliamentary Party he should be reported to his nominating organisation and constituency party; (2) the Government should report its intentions to the Parliamentary Party for discussion and decision before announcing them; and (3) M.P.s should have liberty to vote in accordance with election pledges when these were within the terms of accepted Labour Party policy.

persistence. "We who worked with him, knew him, and respected him are convinced that he was right," wrote Jowett.\*

### *The I.L.P. "Rebel" Group*

It was inevitable that the division within the Labour forces should lead to intense antagonism; on the one hand, the "rebels" were regarded as traitors sabotaging their own side; on the other, the Government and its supporters were regarded as traitors to the working class and to Socialism. The cleavage became more and more marked. In the House the I.L.P. Group sat together on the two top benches below the gangway—"the Mountain" their perch was called. At the meetings of the Parliamentary Labour Party they sat in a similar position in the Grand Committee Room, a compact Opposition. The different sections separated even in their use of the other accommodation at the House. When the members of the I.L.P. Group were not on duty in the Debating Chamber they clustered in a corner of the Smoke Room opposite the Strangers' Dining Room, discussing tactics, allocating speakers for this clause and that whilst they sipped black tea (a Maxton habit) or coffee.† The group of aggressive Labour "loyalists," Emanuel Shinwell, Will Lawther and others similarly made a practice of foregathering in the "Map Room" of the Library; but there was an "odd man out" in their midst. It was Fred Jowett. Ever since he had first entered the House he had used a corner of the "Map Room" for answering correspondence and saw no reason to change his retreat. "For many of its habitues the 'Map Room' had become a 'call hoyle'—that's Yorkshire for a place of gossip and exchange of scandal," Jowett said afterwards. "Often the scandal was about members of the I.L.P. Group, but I took no notice. Some, I dare say, thought I was a 'chiel' among them taking notes and once, in a fit of horseplay, they threw a bag of flour over me—I've always suspected Will Lawther of that! At other times they would rag me. They didn't vote against the Government, why should I? I was having the best time of my life—a secure salary and an easy job. Why upset it? But the constant theme of all their talk reflected a savage bitterness against the members of our Group. I was sad that political difference should have become so personal."‡

Jowett did not speak often in the House during this Parliament. He was content that the younger I.L.P. members should take the foremost part. He never relaxed, however, in his attendance or attention to duties. He was to be seen in his place at the edge of the

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, May 16, 1930.

†Most of the Group followed the Keir Hardie precedent of not touching intoxicants whilst "on the job" at the House. Jowett accepted this unwritten rule except to maintain his habit of a drink with his evening meal.

‡Told to author, October, 1943.

"Mountain" at question time every day and during important debates, he took an eager part in the discussions and activities of the Group, he sat for hours in the Library answering his correspondence or writing his articles, he rarely left the House during the "all-night" sittings. The long hours began to have an effect on his health. He was in his sixty-seventh year now and the strain told. His colleagues begged him to get away earlier, but he laughed off their concern, assuring them he felt as young as a schoolboy. One evening at this time he invited Maxton to have a meal with him. On the way to the dining room Jowett went to wash his hands, leaving Jimmie to book a table and order food. Maxton gave the order and proceeded with the meal, not concerned when Fred failed to appear because it is a common experience in the House for a Member to be buttonholed by a colleague or visitor who demands attention. When Fred did arrive Jimmie pretended to upbraid him. "You invite me to dinner," he complained, "and then you not only leave me to have the meal alone but to pay for it!" Fred apologised and then explained that he had collapsed on the lavatory floor and lost consciousness; he had no idea what time had passed. "The worst of it is I broke my denture in falling and I don't know how to tell my wife," he lamented. "I daren't tell her what happened, she'd be so worried." "You're going straight home," replied Maxton, sternly. "And if you don't tell your wife all about it and get to bed and stay there for a week I'll write and tell her myself." Maxton got two medical Members of the House to examine Jowett. They packed him off home and ordered him to bed, as Jimmie had prescribed.

#### *Jowett Moves Amendment on the King's Speech*

There was one occasion, however, when his colleagues thrust Jowett into prominence; it was when the Group, shocked by the contents of the King's Speech which opened the session of October, 1930, decided to table a Socialist Amendment to the Address. This was the most open assertion of independence which had yet come from the Group, but Jowett had no doubt it was justified. "Socialism is the official policy of the Labour Party and it was not recognised in the King's Speech," he wrote. "Therefore, there was nothing for it but to move to amend the King's Speech." To those who deprecated the amendment as undermining the authority of the Government his retort was neatly ironic. "What if the Amendment had been carried? What if Jack Hayes\* had been charged by vote of the House of Commons, including Tories and Liberals, to convey a message to the King expressing 'humble regret' that His Speech from the Throne contained 'no proposals making for socialist reorganisation' and 'for the fairer

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\*Jack Hayes, ex-leader of the policeman's strike, was Vice-Chamberlain of the Household and had the duty of reporting Parliamentary events to the King.

distribution of the national income? Why, surely, such an event could not have been unwelcome to a Socialist Government?""\*

Jowett's speech was reasoned and moderately phrased. He repeated his argument that an industrial change was proceeding comparable to the industrial revolution at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Rationalisation had already lifted the figure of unemployment to two and a quarter millions, yet the leading intention of the King's Speech was to encourage further rationalisation. He did not suggest that new methods of scientific and technical production should be resisted, but submitted that it was the duty of a Labour Government to carry through rationalisation *only on terms which made for socialist reorganisation*. Within a socialist economy the problem of rationalisation would be easy "because all we would need to do would be to share out the lessened work and the increased output so that everybody enjoyed the advantages." But under Capitalism, rationalisation meant unemployment and lower wages to capture foreign markets. "We are now facing the most pathetic spectacle that any Hon. Member could possibly contemplate. Men and women who have worked in the same establishment, in skilled employment, for twenty, thirty, aye, and for forty years, are thrown on the unemployment scrap heap with no expectation of ever being employed again at the only craft they have ever worked at in their lives." Jowett pointed out that Britain could not in the long run rely on the recovery of export trade. Machinery was being sent to India, China and Japan, and they would produce their own goods. One could not expect Australia permanently to send its raw wool to be spun and woven in Yorkshire and then take it back in finished form; Australia would make its own woollen goods. The home market was, therefore, all-important.

"That home market depends chiefly on the well-being of the working-class population, on the workers being able to purchase the commodities that we can produce in such profusion. But, since 1920, wages have fallen £700 millions a year. That means so much less in purchasing power for the section of the population which, as a matter of course, spends the bulk of its money on the necessary things which are the product, directly or indirectly, of the staple industries of this country.

"These factors are vital. We should take every measure to re-distribute the national income so that greater purchasing power is in the hands of the workers.

"We are sometimes told by our 'intelligentsia' that in planning for the redistribution of income we are only carrying out a policy of charity, which is not Socialism. Socialism, they say, is nationalisation of the means of production and exchange. That is only a part of Socialism. It is an essential part . . . but it is no less an important part that the product already in existence, and future increases in the product, should be equally distributed among the

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, November 7, 1930.

population. This part of Socialism finds no real expression in the King's Speech. . . .

"The Government know full well that there are 98,000 persons in this country who pay supertax, whose combined income amounts to £536 millions a year. The Government know full well that eight members of one family died within a comparatively short period of years possessing at the time of their death £19 millions, and in another case six persons died possessing £28 millions."

Yet, instead of the national income being redistributed so that the working population received more, it was being redistributed in the opposite direction. Money had been lent to the Government when the pound was worth from 8s. 6d. to 15s. in the terms of gold. Under the direction of the bankers and financiers these pounds had been converted into the equivalent of gold sovereigns. The result had been that huge sums of unearned income had passed to the moneylending class.

Jowett argued, as always, that the nation's income should be redistributed by honouring Labour's election promises to tax the rich in order to extend the social services to the poor. "To put the matter in a homely simile, an accumulation of wealth in a country is like manure," he said. "If it is all heaped up in the wrong place it is a pernicious nuisance, but if it is spread and distributed it is a fruitful source of new and better life." He ended on a sterner note: "It is time that the Government ceased to engage the attention of Parliament in ploughing the sands and enabled it instead to put its hand to really serious far-reaching changes in our social and industrial system."

There was little to be said after such a speech, as the author realised when he rose to second the Amendment. Nevertheless, with five of the I.L.P. Group unavoidably absent, it was supported in the division by only thirteen Members.

#### *Living Income Bill—Service Pensions*

The largest vote the Group commanded was in favour of a Living Wage Bill, introduced by James Maxton. He had the luck to win the ballot for Private Members' Bills and Campbell Stephen got to work to put down in legislative form the I.L.P. proposal to set up a national minimum standard above the poverty line—the introduction to the full plan of socialising credit, controlling prices, and nationalising exports and imports, land, transport and power. The Bill included a Commission to name the monetary figure, a demand on all employers to pay it within a stated period, and the power to take over necessary industries which failed to do so. Margaret Bondfield opposed the Bill on behalf of the Government, but it was carried on Second Reading by 132 to 51. Miss Bondfield then killed the Bill by refusing Parliamentary facilities for its further stages.

On another occasion the Government declined more arbitrarily to carry out a decision of the House. It may be remembered that in

1916, during the war, the I.L.P. members drew attention to the hardships of pre-war Servicemen whose pensions had not been raised to meet the increase in the cost of living. This grievance had never been remedied; they still had a smaller pension than the war-time Servicemen and they had to qualify afresh every twelve months by proving that their income did not exceed a stated sum. When the Liberal, Mr. Hore Belisha, won the ballot for a Private Members' motion, he raised this issue again and it was obvious from the support given that his motion would be carried. Mr. Pethick Lawrence, who was Financial Secretary to the Treasury, then rose and said that the Government would not resist the motion, but it must not be expected to give it effect! There were protests from all sides. "Maxton threatened to move an amendment which would have converted the motion into the form of a definite instruction," wrote Jowett, "and his amendment would probably have been carried, in which case it would have been, in effect, a vote of censure on the Government. He did not want to go so far as that, but the proceedings should give warning to the Government that the House of Commons, composed of representatives of the people, cannot safely be treated with contempt."\*

#### *Religious Controversy Destroys Education Bill*

Then came Sir Charles Trevelyan's Education Bill, one of the best constructive contributions of the Government, embodying, thirteen years ago, most of the progressive provisions of the Act passed in 1944, but destroyed by the claims and sectarian quarrels of the religious denominations. I.L.P. criticism was limited to the proposal to associate a "means test" with the maintenance allowances to be given to school-children from 14 to 15 and to the disproportionate costs laid upon the Local Authorities, but it was not the Group which was responsible for the Parliamentary crisis on this occasion. It was a formidable body of Roman Catholics, who included members of all three Parties. Trevelyan was negotiating with religious denominations and the prospects of a settlement were good, but the Catholics insisted that a clause should be inserted, prior to the conclusion of the negotiations, providing for financial aid to their schools. John Scurr, a Labour Member, moved an amendment to this effect—and it was carried by a majority of 32. The I.L.P. Group was divided, Jowett being among those who supported the amendment on the ground that he did not want to see the two million children in non-provided schools denied the advantages of the Bill.

"On the merits of the question, namely insistence on financial aid being given to non-provided schools, there is a practical question involved of first-rate importance," he wrote.

"It is a question affecting the welfare of about two million child-

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, November 14, 1930.



ren in non-provided schools. These schools cannot be taken over by the public authorities, nor can they be replaced by other schools. It is not a practical proposition, quite apart from any other consideration.

"Therefore, the children in these non-provided schools cannot, unless financial aid is available for the purpose, be given the benefits for which reorganisation and an extra school year are intended. The non-provided schools cannot be properly equipped and staffed, nor can the necessary extra school accommodation be provided to meet the requirements of the new Education Bill, without extra grants for which the Bill made no provision."

Jowett favoured secular education, but, if religious teaching were to be given, he insisted on equality of treatment between the denominations.

"On this question of principle I desire to make it perfectly clear that I cannot support the claim of the Nonconformists to deny the right of other denominations to provide religious instruction in their schools when Nonconformists insist on a system of religious instruction agreeable to themselves being taught in Council Schools."

Jowett did not fail to rub in the point that a large number of Labour "loyalists," who were so bitter in their denunciation of the I.L.P. Group for voting against the Government on "poverty" issues, had voted against the Government in this division to such strength that it had been defeated. "The moral of it all is, to those who have eyes to see and wit to understand, that a democratic party can never be forced into one mould as if the Party were a sausage machine. Only a dictatorship can work that kind of miracle." Then he added a remark which has gained much point since: "and Churchill is the only man I can see in this country who would really fill the part of dictator, and enjoy it."\*

### *"The Rape of the Mace"*

It was not only on domestic issues that the I.L.P. Group clashed with the Government. It appointed Frank Horrabin and the author to watch the interests of the Indian and Colonial peoples, and here, also, conflict arose. The greatest clash came on the issue of India. The Group carried a motion in the House urging that the political prisoners should be released, but sixty thousand remained in gaol. As the summer session of 1930 drew to a conclusion the author, on behalf of the Group, asked for an opportunity for discussion. MacDonald refused. The protest was pressed to the point of suspension, leading to the sensational incident of the "rape of the Mace" (as one newspaper described it). John Beckett was one of the tellers in the division against the motion for suspension. Whilst awaiting the announce-

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, February 6, 1931.

ment of the figures, at the table on which the mace rested, the thought suddenly came to him that if it were removed the House would not be formally in session and the suspension would be inoperative; acting on the spur of the moment, he seized the mace and endeavoured to carry it out of the House. Jowett's comments showed a healthy disregard of totems and ritual.

"Brockway . . . respectfully but nevertheless deliberately invited suspension. In doing so he was following the example of others, who, feeling strongly concerning injustice and injury inflicted on people for which Parliament offered no redress and concerning which the country had no knowledge, took irregular and, in the Parliamentary sense, disorderly action to arrest the attention of the nation and shock it into a sense of responsibility. . . .

"When Beckett seized the mace his action immediately was given the importance of a first-class outrage. But, indeed, it was a trivial thing to do. Why there should be this indignant demand for penalties I cannot understand. He only took from its place an ornament of some historic importance, and then, a few seconds later, handed it back to its official custodian. For this he was suspended for five days."\*

The mace incident proved only a "three days' flash in the pan." Parliament and people were not interested in India: they had pressing problems nearer home, principally unemployment, which continued to mount. J. H. Thomas failed ludicrously to produce any adequate proposals to provide work. With the number of registered unemployed moving towards three millions, he came to the House with trifling schemes such as the use of steel girders, instead of girders made of wood, on the railways; it was only his personal popularity among the influential Tories, who welcomed his resistance of socialist plans, which saved him from being driven from office in humiliation. Even his colleagues on the job—Sir Oswald Mosley, George Lansbury and Tom Johnston—revolted. On the initiative of Mosley they submitted to him a memorandum outlining a comprehensive plan for both short-term and long-term measures. The short-term proposals included the withdrawal of the young and old from the labour market by the lifting of the school age and by retiral pensions, supplemented by work schemes of national value. The long-term proposals advocated the control of imports and raw materials and of banking and credit. When Thomas rejected the memorandum, Mosley resigned. Shortly afterwards, Thomas's failure was recognised by the termination of his task and his transference to the Ministry for the Dominions. The various State Departments were left to their own devices to increase employment.

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\*Jowett, in one respect, underwrote the incident. Beckett surrendered the mace to the Sergeant at Arms without a struggle, but he hardly "handed it back."

*Mosley Forms a New Party*

Mosley was not content to go into the political wilderness. He went to the Labour Party Conference at Llandudno and made a challenging speech for which the delegates accorded him an ovation. From the back benches in the House he made a stirring plea for a positive policy on unemployment. Within the Parliamentary Labour Party he smote the ineptitude of the Government hip and thigh. At first Mosley had only three lieutenants in Parliament, his wife, Lady Cynthia, his faithful henchman, John Strachey, and a young Belfast Tory, Mr. W. E. D. Allen. Then he won the confidence of two members of the I.L.P. Group, W. J. Brown and Dr. Forgan, and through them circulated a manifesto for signature with the idea of building up a following; but they failed to do more than secure two very temporary signatures. Mosley's next step was to form the New Party, but W. J. Brown withdrew before it was announced and John Strachey within a few weeks. The New Party, as we know, was the precursor of the British Union of Fascists.

Jowett, who had welcomed Mosley's avowal of Socialism six years earlier, was very suspicious of his policy and designs during this period. He criticised Mosley's employment programme because it did not approach the problem from the necessity to increase the purchasing power of the people and consumption. "It is based on an assumption which the I.L.P. denies: it assumes that the first thing necessary to be done is to increase production."\* He disliked Mosley's arrogance and egotism. "I had the feeling that he had become a danger and a menace, an ambitious man playing for his own ends, a careerist who would become a dictator if he had the chance."†

*Woollen Industry Wages—and Profits*

We have begun to lose sight of Bradford. Jowett never did. Every Friday night he would return home and a large part of his week-end would be spent in that attic room, where he had his desk and his files, listening to the stories of his people, the working folk of his constituency, telling him of their struggle to exist under conditions of unemployment, low wages, and old age. The woollen industry had suffered like others and the mill operatives were existing little above hunger level. As he heard accounts of their privations Jowett would burn with indignation; as he read of the profits which were being made his anger would become hot. In May, 1930, for example, when the textile employers were demanding lower wages and longer hours, the Bradford Dyers' Association announced a gross profit of just short of £4 millions in five years. It had allowed over £1¼ millions for depreciation and had paid 85 per cent. dividend on ordinary shares. This

\**Bradford Pioneer*, February 27, 1931.

†Remark to author, October, 1943.

followed a 60 per cent. bonus share issue in 1925.\* Well might Jowett insist on a redistribution of the national income!

He seized a rare opportunity in December, 1930, to speak in the House on the plight of Bradford's industry. It was a characteristically thoughtful and realistic contribution, applying to the woollen trade the principles he had advocated in his earlier Socialist Amendment speech. The hope of any great expansion of the export trade was a delusion. Looms, not woollen goods, were being exported, and both foreign countries and the Dominions were preparing to manufacture for themselves. Moreover, the restoration of the gold standard would burden exports to the extent of an anti-British tariff of ten per cent. It was to the home trade they must look — and again came the familiar argument of the need to increase the purchasing power of the vast working-class population. "Until the woollen trade is controlled," he concluded, "particularly through the medium of its raw materials, until the spending of the working-class is increased so that they can buy the things they need, there will be no possibility of the restoration of this great industry to the position it ought to hold."

#### *MacDonald Resigns from the I.L.P.*

Early in 1930 Ramsay MacDonald resigned from the I.L.P. The capitalist press duly played up the story, but his I.L.P. colleagues regarded his severance with relief rather than regret. "Why this long-expected departure should have caused such a stir is not clear," remarked Jowett. "The Living Income policy of the I.L.P. and the opposition of the Party to the present system of Cabinet domination in Parliamentary government Mr. MacDonald has fought all the way." Fred expected others whose association with the I.L.P. was based only on sentimental regard to follow MacDonald, but had no doubt that the Party should continue to stand resolutely for its policies. "They are vital for success in the fight for Socialism and democracy," he declared stoutly, "and the I.L.P. must have liberty to advocate them by action in Parliament—otherwise there is no place for the Party in British politics."†

The first few months of the Labour Government had led to the Prime Minister's break with the Socialist organisation which had raised him to the pinnacle of Labour leadership. Was there anyone who then foresaw that the Government would end with Mr. MacDonald deserting the Labour Movement altogether?

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\*Report of Mr. F. W. Birchenough, president of the Operative Spinners' Amalgamation, May 10, 1930.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, February 21, 1930.

## CHAPTER XVI

## SOCIALISM IS BETRAYED

The second period of Labour Government was proving to be a test not only of the Party's policy, but of the Parliamentary system itself. Never had the inefficiency of the constitution of the House of Commons been so fully exposed. A minority Government, with an Opposition determined to obstruct it, meant that every feature of the obsolete procedure which allowed delay was exploited to the limit. Just as Jowett held that the Government's failing policy proved the soundness of the Living Income approach, so he believed that the breakdown of the Parliamentary machine proved the soundness of the change to the Committee system which he had advocated so long.

There was no doubt about the breakdown. Even in the early months of the Government the Tories had used to the full the opportunities of obstruction provided by the practice of making the whole House a committee for the consideration of the details of a Bill. Jowett recorded that in an "all-night" sitting of 17½ hours during the Committee Stage of the Bill to extend widows' pensions, "all that was done was to delete the word 'war' and insert the words 'naval and military operations'." Later, "all-night" sittings became of frequent occurrence owing to Tory manœuvres to block Government business. Fred described an instance which is a classic illustration of the futility of the Parliamentary procedure he denounced.

*How Time is Wasted in Parliament*

The Finance Bill of 1930 was being discussed, and the Tories were opposing the withdrawal of the Betting Tax. Jowett quoted from the Official report of the proceedings at 3 a.m., when the discussion had already gone on eleven hours:

*Mr. Everard:* On a point of order. Is the hon. Member for Wolverhampton East (Mr. W. J. Brown) in order in lying full length on the bench? (Fred remarked that Will Brown was not sleeping as many M.P.s were).

*The Deputy Chairman:* I do not think that is a point of Order.

*Mr. W. J. Brown:* I was not lying full length.

*Mr. McShane:* Do I understand that lying down is forbidden in this House?

After an interval:

*Mr. W. J. Brown:* I was called to Order for supporting my feet on a bench; is it in Order for right hon. Gentlemen opposite to support their feet on the table?

*The Deputy Chairman:* It is a long-standing custom in this House.

*Mr. McShane:* Would it be in Order for us to begin a custom?

One M.P., Mr. Skelton, padded his speech with comments on Saints' Days. The betting tax, he said, was to cease on Oct. 31 next, which would be Hallowe'en—All Saints' Day. No, it wouldn't be All Saints' Day. All Saints' Day would be on the first of November, and Hallowe'en would be on the evening before, Oct. 31st.

*Mr. Beckett:* On a point of Order. Have the Saints anything to do with the Betting Duty?

*Mr. Skelton:* I am afraid the Hon. Gentleman has not followed the argument.

*Mr. Barr:* May I inform the House that Hallowe'en, the 31st of Oct., was instituted by Druids centuries before Christianity was introduced?

Mr. Skelton managed to drag into his speech references to beer and whisky (as other Tories had done), but this was too much for the Deputy Chairman.

*The Deputy Chairman:* I would remind the Hon. Member that repetition of other people's arguments is equally as much out of Order as a repetition of his own.

At 4 a.m. Mr. Skelton's flow of words having dried up, the Chancellor of the Exchequer effectively wound up the debate as follows:

*Mr. Snowden:* I would say, in reply to right hon. and hon. gentlemen opposite, that when I spoke four hours ago I anticipated and answered all the arguments put forward in this debate. I beg to move "that the question be now put."

So we pass to the *finale* on this particular amendment.

Question put: "That the question be now put." The Committee divided: Ayes 191, Noes 84.\*

Other deliberately time-wasting amendments followed. It was after 8 a.m. when the sitting was adjourned. Certainly here was evidence of the desirability of establishing small Departmental Committees for the consideration of details of Bills rather than a committee of 615 Members, any one of whom could hold up the entire business of Parliament whenever he chose.

Whilst the use of the whole House as a Committee meant endless talk on controversial measures, it meant that other matters which should have been given serious consideration were rushed through without adequate time or thought. As illustrations of inadequate consideration Jowett gave instances in which two outstanding figures were involved, the first with his reputation still to make, the second already honoured by those who valued good thinking devoted to world betterment. Twenty-three year old Frank Owen, afterwards to become the best known of Lord Beaverbrook's "Fleet Street revolutionaries," was the youngest member elected to the House in 1929, ousting Jennie Lee from the distinction by one year. He showed then the independence of thought which later became his recognised characteristic: though a Liberal he frequently voted with the I.L.P. When the House was acting as a Committee of Supply in 1930, Owen inter-

\**Bradford Pioneer*, June 13, 1930.

vened during a 2½ hours' discussion on forestry development to complain that wages were too low. Jowett commended his speech and drew attention to Owen's allegation that "foremen in charge of many thousands of pounds' worth of national property are being paid 50s. a week, and they have to provide some of their own tools," an allegation deserving of serious investigation by any committee responsible for the administration of the Ministry concerned. But this is what actually occurred in the Committee of the whole House:

"Whilst the young member for Hereford was making the interesting speech to which I have referred, I counted the Members present. Of the Liberals, there were 5; of the Tories, 7; and of the Labour Party, 35—47 altogether. When, however, a division was called on the closure, 311 Members voted as instructed by their Party's Whip. Most of them had no knowledge whatever of what had been said concerning the business on which they were voting."\*

The other illustration figured one of Jowett's Bradford colleagues—Norman Angell, whose constructive qualities in international affairs were absolutely smothered in the House.

"Whoever heard Norman Angell speak in the House of Commons on the Optional Clause 'for international arbitration and prevention of war' must surely agree, if they think of the matter, that there is need for Departmental Committees.

"The speech expressed completely the most powerful argument proving the futility of war and the wisdom of the international outlook I have ever heard put so briefly.

"Clearly, Norman Angell's place should be on a Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons, where he could exercise continuous influence."†

The waste of Norman Angell's abilities was a marked example of what was happening in the case of many other Labour members. Among these 250 men and women there were many with knowledge and experience—some who had served on Local Authorities, others who had mastered the intricacies of Unemployment Insurance, others who were experts in particular industries, transport or agriculture, others who had specialised on colonial problems. They were left kicking their heels day after day with no outlet for their capacities. Belonging to a Party in office, their supreme Parliamentary duty was to facilitate business by refraining from speech-making, but to be permanently on the premises to vote as required. It was a criminal misuse of ability. Had there been active committees associated with each Department, fashioning the details of legislation, supervising administration, most Members could have concentrated on the subjects in which they were particularly interested, and could have made their positive contributions to the affairs of the State. The House would

\**Bradford Pioneer*, March 7, 1930.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, January 31, 1930.

have become a workplace for craftsmen instead of a stadium for the Party Game.

### *Proposals Tabled for Reform of Parliament*

The I.L.P. and its Group were giving prominence to Jowett's proposals for a reform in procedure. The National Council appointed a committee to consider how they could best be brought before Parliament, and with the help of Frank Wise, who had at one time served as a Clerk to the House, a series of amendments were drafted to Standing Orders embodying the Jowett Plan in detail. Jowett regarded this as a triumph: it vindicated the view he had always urged that his suggestions could be applied without a constitutional change. The Group also tabled a motion for the establishment of Departmental Committees to consider all appropriate Bills and resolutions and to watch the administration of the various Departments. The Committees would be given power "to send for persons, papers and records." Seventeen Committees were proposed: one for each Department. If the whole membership of the House had been divided between these Committees, it would have meant that each would have had less than forty members.

"Seventeen Committees could not be blocked," urged Jowett, commending the motion. "Seventeen Committees, able to sit as often as necessary, need not fear obstruction. Seventeen Committees, one for each Department, would afford facilities for every point of view to be considered, and for members of all parties to make their proposals, openly and above board, and have their proposals voted on. Without this application of the principles and practice of representative Government, political arrangements between Party leaders are the only alternative to a long period of reaction and also, in the long run, utter and complete loss of faith in Parliamentary government.\*

There was little hope, however, that the Government would accept the I.L.P. proposal. The Prime Minister was as much opposed to the Party's plan for the reform of Parliament as to its plan for "Socialism in Our Time." Nothing was so distasteful to Mr. MacDonald, remarked Jowett, as a suggestion radically to change the machinery of Government.

"He is firmly convinced that control over State Departments by individual Ministers, accompanied and limited only by a system of joint Cabinet responsibility, is the last word in the science and practice of government.

"He sees parliamentary government as the politicians of past generations saw it when there were only two parties, whose rival leaders, Pitt and Fox, Palmerston and Russell, Gladstone and Disraeli, cheered by their followers, fought their political battles."

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, November 28, 1930.



Despite the Premier's prejudice against change, however, something had to be done to rescue Parliamentary business from confusion. Night sittings became such a nuisance that a Committee of the House was appointed to consider how they could be avoided. It reported, in effect, that a drastic change in Parliamentary procedure was necessary. The Government then appointed a Select Committee of fifteen to go into the matter further. When Jowett read its personnel he gave up hope that it would favour reform. Six were Tories "who may be relied upon to oppose any change to enable Parliament to get more work done." Of the seven Labour members, he knew that three were opposed to the Committee System. That would give the old guard a safe majority.\*

#### *MacDonald Establishes a "Council of State"*

But he had one hope. Mr. Lloyd George had declared in favour of the Committee System † and the influence of the Liberals, because they held the fate of the Government in their hands, was great. If the Liberal Party would insist upon the reform of Parliament, it might be achieved despite the Prime Minister's love of government by Party leaders. ‡ Then that hope was dashed. MacDonald outwitted the growing elements in favour of the reform of Parliament by applying Jowett's proposal not to the rank and file Members of the House, but to the Party leaders, by reverting to the idea which he had tentatively suggested in his first speech as Prime Minister—the idea of a Council of State representative of all three parties. It re-emerged on an issue of foreign policy. Mr. Godfrey Locker-Lampson, a die-hard Tory, had asked Mr. Arthur Henderson to promise that the League of Nations undertaking to support a victim of aggression would not be made more explicit by agreement with any other Power without first submitting the proposal to the House. When the Foreign Secretary declined to promise, Mr. Locker-Lampson moved the adjournment and a debate was arranged the same evening. "When the time fixed by the Speaker for debating the motion arrived," reported Jowett, "Godfrey Locker-Lampson, who quite evidently was

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, December 5, 1930. Fred Jowett and Frank Wise gave evidence to the Committee on behalf of the I.L.P. Group.

† "A remarkable article by Lloyd George, which appeared in one of the London papers yesterday, is important. He says that a committee of 615 members is no committee at all... He admits that unless Parliamentary methods are completely changed soon, public confidence in Parliamentary Government cannot be maintained. He wants committee business to be done in committees and the sittings of the full House of Commons to be devoted to consideration of important issues."—F. W. Jowett, *Bradford Pioneer*, March 21, 1930.

‡ Jowett had lost all hope of support from the Parliamentary Labour Party. Although two specially appointed Labour Party Advisory Committees on the "Machinery of Parliament" had reported in favour of the Committee System in 1923 and 1924, the Parliamentary Party had ignored their recommendations.

acting for his leader, made no speech, but merely indicated that the Prime Minister had an announcement to make. The announcement was to the effect that he had arranged to meet the leaders of the other two Parties to report to them and consult with them—a 'Council of State' behind the Speaker's Chair." Jowett saw in this move a return to the secrecy in foreign affairs, the limitation of knowledge of international commitments to a few leaders, which he had denounced before the war and which he thought the Labour Government had ended. "Why should questions so vitally important to the nation be the subject merely of consultation and arrangement between Party Leaders, the newly invented name for which is 'The Council of State'? Why not a Foreign Affairs Committee representing all Parties to share the responsibility?" \*

MacDonald's next move was to extend the "Council of State" to the whole political field. He invited Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Lloyd George to collaborate, to join him "with such friends and helpers as we might choose . . . putting our ideas into a common pool and seeing whether we can come to a measure of agreement which would enable important legislation to go through the House of Commons, not under conditions of being blocked, but under conditions of special facility." Mr. Baldwin rejected the invitation when Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Lloyd George ruled out tariffs, and the "Council of State" became in effect a Coalition of the Labour and Liberal leaderships.

Jowett, needless to say, considered this "a dangerous development." He pointed out that all papers and information would be supplied to the Liberal leaders just as if they were in the Government. "The staff of permanent officials . . . will be at the service of Opposition leaders," he stressed, "whilst ordinary members of the Labour Party must be content with the right to ask questions in the House and with such answers as may be given to them. The Prime Minister and his friends, together with Mr. Lloyd George and his friends, as a Council of State, will agree on legislation to be 'pushed through' and on the administration to be established. These agreed conclusions the respective political parties will be expected to support." †

The Council of State did not work too smoothly, however. At an early meeting, Mr. Lloyd George urged a Liberal proposal that when profits were invested on extensions of plant or premises, they should be exempted from income tax. In accordance with his newly-acquired right to command information, he asked for an estimate of the cost. At the next meeting, he was presented with a memorandum showing that the loss to the Exchequer would be £7 millions a year. He pressed the proposal, and the Prime Minister and Mr. J. H. Thomas gave him the impression that they were favourable. Mr. Snowden was absent, however, and as Chancellor he must be consulted;

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, April 11, 1930.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, June 27, 1930.

the Prime Minister promised to sound him. Let us have Jowett's account of what followed:

"At the next meeting MacDonald admitted he had forgotten to speak to Snowden. Therefore it was suggested that the Chancellor and Lloyd George, being near neighbours at Churt, in the County of Surrey, should talk things over there the following weekend. The secretaries of the distinguished neighbours accordingly arranged that Snowden should ring Lloyd George on Saturday night and, over the phone the two of them should carry on the good work of the Council of State.

"But Snowden did not ring on Saturday night nor on Sunday. Lloyd George spoke to the Prime Minister and Snowden on the Tuesday—the day before the Liberal motion was to come before the House. On the morning of the motion Lloyd George informed the Liberal Shadow Cabinet that the Chancellor would make a 'conciliatory reply,' after which, it may be assumed, the motion would have been withdrawn in the expectation of appropriate amendment of the Finance Bill at a later stage."

Instead of conciliation, however, Snowden said "nasty things about the proposal." He flayed it without mercy. He believed he could do so without fear of defeat because most of the Tories were absent from the House. But Snowden was being tricked by the Tories. "He did not know, when he made his fighting speech, that battalions of Tory Members were secretly gathered in an adjoining Tory Club ready to troop through an underground passage and up back stairs into the division lobby in favour of the Liberal motion." The trick failed by only two votes! Jowett's comment on the whole incident was impatient.

"Council of State, indeed! What a mockery of democracy it all is! And to think that this bastard scheme is preferred to the alternative plan of Departmental Committees which would afford Labour Members the advantage of information which is at present denied them but is freely given to Mr. Lloyd George—Departmental Committees in which Labour Members could bring proposals to the test of orderly examination, instead of trusting to private consultations between Party Leaders in rooms behind the Speaker's Chair and at country houses at Churt, in the County of Surrey or elsewhere. . . .

"To what use these advantages may be put by Mr. Lloyd George, as compared with the use mere Labour Members could make of them, the Liberal motion which came within two votes of destroying the Labour Government quite clearly shows."\*

This tiff between the Labour and Liberal leaderships was soon patched up, however. Although the Labour Movement was kept in complete ignorance of what was going on—not even the Labour M.P.s had a hint of it—MacDonald, Lloyd George and the inner leadership of the two Parties endorsed a plan for a united front on a Free Trade

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, July 18, 1930.

programme, including not only joint action in the House, but joint demonstrations throughout the country. It was agreed to appoint a small sub-committee to draw up the programme and to prepare literature for the new campaign. Nothing came of this because events led to the still wider front of the "National" Government; but that a Labour-Liberal alliance of this complete character should have been plotted in secret shows how far the leadership had departed from the independent basis of the Labour Party and how farcical democracy in the Party had become.

### *An Intrigue with the Liberals*

One of the first outcomes of the Liberal-Labour "Council of State" was an intrigue to change the electoral system to the advantage of the Liberals in return for their continued support of the Government. The deal on this subject was the most brazen example of political bargaining in modern times. The Liberals saw themselves declining as a political force between the Tories and Labour. There was one way, and one way only, by which their fortunes could be restored—by the introduction of the Alternative Vote. Under this system the supporters of the candidate at the bottom of the poll in a three-cornered election could indicate which of the two leading candidates they preferred, and their votes would be added accordingly. Since most Tories would vote Liberal rather than Labour and most Labour supporters would vote Liberal rather than Tory, it was obvious that the Liberal Party would make the most out of this system; indeed, it was calculated that they would double, and perhaps treble, their Parliamentary representation. They indicated to MacDonald that if he wanted to enjoy their further support he would have to make sure that the Alternative Vote was in operation at the next election.

This put the Government in a quandary. Six months earlier the Labour Party Executive had declined to endorse the Alternative Vote. There was some support for Proportional Representation in the Party, but none for the Alternative Vote. This did not deter the Government, however. The members of the Cabinet went without a qualm to the Executive and asked it to reverse its decision and, the Executive having eaten its words, presented its decision to the Parliamentary Labour Party. By now the one thing that mattered to the majority of Labour Members appeared to be the preservation of the life of the Government, and it was left to the I.L.P. Group to make active protest.

Jowett dubbed the Government's new measure as "an auction bid for Liberal support to keep the Party in office to pass measures approved by the Liberals." He had no doubt that the Alternative Vote would work out badly for Socialism:

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†Autobiography, Viscount Snowden. Vol. 2.

"Automatically the Alternative Vote will 'Liberalise' Labour. If the Labour Party gives anything more than lip service to Socialism and puts to the forefront in its activities measures for the overthrow of Capitalism, then most surely the second vote of Liberals will not be given to Labour candidates.

"The Alternative Vote system will also assist the official policy of gradualism in the Labour Party and at the same time hamper its militant minority. . . . Local understandings for the exclusion of the more militant Socialists among Labour candidates are certain to follow."

Maxton opposed the Bill in the House on behalf of the I.L.P. He argued that domestic political issues in their order of importance, were (1) the Poverty Problem, (2) Economic Reconstruction, (3) the Rationalisation of Parliament in order to make it work effectively. He pleased Jowett by saying that "immediately, the question of how we operate when we get here is more urgent than how we are to adjust the machinery which sent us here." An "excellent speech" said Fred.\*

#### *The Bankers Scare the Government*

But the Alternative Vote Bill was never to reach the Statute Book. Before it passed through Parliament, the Liberals made new demands which, though accepted in the preliminary stages by the Government and an unseeing Labour Party, were destined to destroy the Government and throw the Labour Party to humiliating defeat. The Liberals called for national economy, particularly in unemployment relief.

The number of unemployed had now risen to over two and a half million. The Insurance Fund was bankrupt and the State had had to loan it £78,600,000 since 1929. Both the Tories and Liberals, supported by a vicious campaign in the capitalist press, began to spread stories of how insurance benefits were being abused. They told of unemployed who were earning £10 for week-end work and then drawing the "dole." They told of married women who were drawing the "dole" as well as their husbands. They gave the impression that thousands of unemployed were living comfortably and by choice on the "dole" rather than seeking work.

The Government gave way to this campaign by appointing a Royal Commission to investigate the drain on national expenditure. Its personnel guaranteed a report satisfactory to the Tories and Liberals. But the Liberals, hidebound by their traditional belief in "economy," were still not satisfied. Drawing an alarming picture of the State going bankrupt, they demanded a Committee to survey the whole field of national expenditure and to recommend drastic cuts. Once again the Government surrendered. Unfortunately, Snowden, influenced by Treasury officials who reflected the minds of the bankers, perhaps influenced directly by the bankers themselves, sympathised

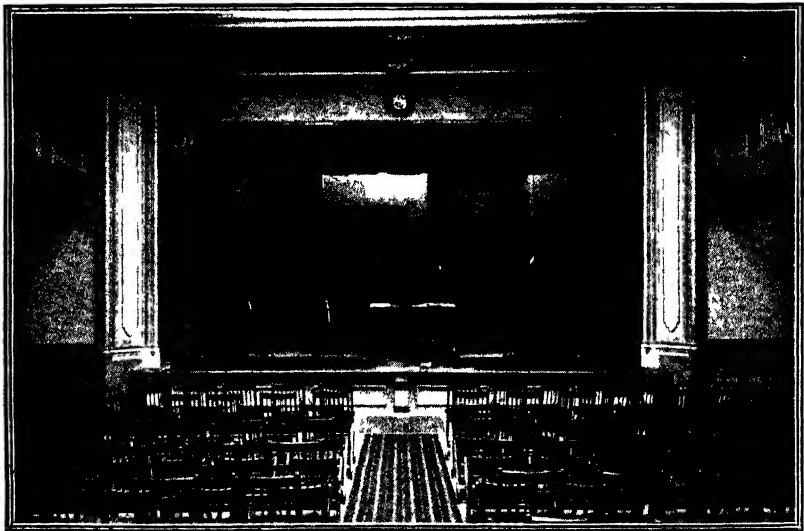
\**Bradford Pioneer*, February 6, 1931.



MRS. F. W. JOWETT



SOME OF JOWETT'S COLLEAGUES DURING THE SECOND LABOUR GOVERNMENT  
*Left to Right* I. W. Jowett M.P., Campbell Stephen M.P., Percy Williams, Francis Johnson, Fenner Brockway M.P., Elijah Sandham M.P., David Karlwood M.P., Frank Wise, M.P., P. J. Dollan



STAGE OF THE JOWETT HALL, BRADFORD  
*The Jowett Hall, headquarters of the I.L.P., was opened in 1927. It afterwards became the Bradford Civic Theatre*

with the Liberal scaremongers. Despite all he had written over a period of twenty years in advocacy of socialist financial policy, he had become subservient to orthodox financial ideas. When the Liberals proposed their motion for an Economy Committee, he outdid them in his black picture of the need to reduce expenditure and stated bluntly that there could be no great schemes of social reform until prosperity returned.

Jowett saw at once that this was a bankers' scare. Writing of the economy debate in the House, he drew attention to the statement of Sir Norman Angell that within the last few years the creditor class had increased its share of the national income *from one quarter to one third*. "This means that industry has to stand interest charges amounting to £300 millions a year instead of £200 millions," he commented. He fastened on the statement of Frank Wise that "there is no less than £100 millions, equal to 10 per cent. of the industrial capital in use, lying on time deposit in the banks *waiting for profitable investment*." He proceeded to lay bare the truth.

"The plain fact is that the banks ever since the war ended have had control of Governments.

"The banks are responsible for the policy which has increased the value of war loan pounds from 155 to somewhere near 255, whereas the French cancelled four-fifths of their war debt by giving their tenpenny francs the value of twopence.

"It is the banks that are pushing the Government into the suicidal policy of increasing production *without at the same time increasing the purchasing power of the working class*. Or, to put the matter in another way, without redistributing the national income so as to consume the additional amount of goods produced.

"How on earth can the capital for greater production of consumable goods result in anything else than gluts and growing unemployment, if the working class, which includes nine-tenths of the nation, have their purchasing power decreased instead of being correspondingly increased?

"Sooner or later the banks will have to be faithfully dealt with. Why not deal faithfully with them now, when the need is so great and everybody who thinks sees it?

"Why should the present generation of workers be denied decent houses, adequate pensions for the aged, the sightless and the infirm, schools and plenty of food for their children, *to pay off small chunks of war debt and keep a parasitic creditor class in luxury on the remainder?*"

In reply to the threat of the financiers to invest their money abroad, Jowett replied in downright fashion—"prohibit foreign investments as you did in war-time or tax them so heartily that they will repent." \*

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\*Bradford Pioneer, February 20, 1931.



Six months later the whole Labour Movement was repeating Jowett's words, but at this time they had not seen the hidden hand of the bankers behind the disastrous policy which the Government was pursuing. The Economy Committee was appointed by 468 votes to 21—the I.L.P. Group alone opposing. It was this Committee whose recommendations brought the crisis which led to the disbanding of the Labour Government, the "betrayal" of MacDonald and Snowden, the formation of the "National" Government, and the crushing defeat of Labour at the General Election. It was this Committee which recommended the Means Test for the unemployed. History has never justified more fully any vote given in Parliament than the vote of the 21 Members who followed the lead of the I.L.P. Group. No political analysis has ever been more fully endorsed by history than Jowett's estimate of the situation when the Economy Committee was appointed.

The Budget came before the Economy Committee reported. It represented another stage in the retreat of the Government before the bankers' offensive. It was preceded by a warning memorandum from the Treasury emphasising the need for economy. "This document is based on the assumption that the nation is poor and that consequently less money must be spent on Unemployment Insurance and similar services," remarked Jowett. "*But the nation is not poor.* Its productive capacity is increasing by leaps and bounds. The pool of national wealth has increased in recent years at the rate of £100 millions a year. During the last few weeks one loan after another, for which the public has been invited to tender, has flooded the banks with offers of more money than was asked for."

Snowden's Budget—"alarmist" Jowett described it—and his speech introducing it went even further than the Treasury memorandum. The Budget not only excluded any extension of social services; it allowed for substantial savings. The one new tax was 1d. in the £ on the capital value of land two years hence. In his speech Snowden called for sacrifices from all classes, foreshadowing that the working-class might have to accept cuts in unemployment benefits.

Jowett sat on the crowded benches listening with grave disquiet. He glanced up to the Distinguished Strangers' Gallery. There in the front row sat "the Uncrowned King of Finance, Mr. Montagu Norman, chairman of the Bank of England." Jowett told how after Snowden's first Budget Mr. Runciman said he knew a man who, directly its terms were known, went out and ordered a new Rolls-Royce. After hearing the terms of the second Budget one could assume he went out and bought a yacht.\*

The Government did not wait for the reports of the two "economy" Commissions before attacking working-class standards of life. It cut

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, May 1, 1931.

the wages of civil servants, thus giving a lead to employers to reduce wages generally. The Commission on Unemployment Insurance was the first to report. It went too far even for the Government. It proposed an increase of 2d. a week in workers' contributions, a decrease of 2s. a week in benefits, and a limitation of benefits to one year. These recommendations the Government rejected; but it accepted a proposal that a series of "anomalies," of which sections of the unemployed were alleged to take advantage, should be removed. (The capitalist press campaign had done its work!)

### *Saving at the Cost of the Unemployed*

When the Anomalies Bill was introduced it was seen how literally had been fulfilled John Wheatley's prophecy that a Labour Government which attempted to administer Capitalism during a period of depression would be driven to an attack on working-class conditions. The ostensible aim of the Bill was to prevent "abuse" of Unemployment Insurance by four categories of workers—casual workers, short-time workers, intermittent workers, and married women. An examination of the Bill showed anyone familiar with what happened at Labour Exchanges that its clauses would create far more abuses, at the expense of needy and genuine unemployed, than it would remove. The I.L.P. Group demonstrated this before the Parliamentary Labour Party, but the mood of panic affecting the Government had spread among Labour Members and the Bill was endorsed. A test issue had arisen for the I.L.P. Was it to place loyalty to the working-class first or loyalty to the Labour Party machine? F. W. Jowett was one of the six members who put his name, on behalf of the Group, to a motion for the rejection of the Bill.

This defiance of the Standing Orders of the Parliamentary Party resulted in Jowett and his five colleagues being summoned to appear before the Disciplinary Committee of the Party. Jowett could not attend, so he submitted a written defence. He made three points: (1) He had done nothing in conflict with the Constitution of the Labour Party or the decisions of its Annual Conference; (2) He had done no more than he had previously done in *co-operation with leading members of the Government* over 25 years; and (3) The amendment was "in complete agreement with the principles and policy of the Labour Party as officially declared for public approval at the last General Election."

"On the understanding that I would act in accordance with the Party's principles and policy," he concluded, "I succeeded in winning the election. I cannot go back on that now. If I had visualised the possibility that I might, if elected, be compelled to act contrary to the Party's election policy, it would have been my duty to say so to the electors. I did not say so. I never contemplated the possibility of any such demand as that I should, on the

instructions of the officials of the Party, act contrary to the principles and policy of the Party as officially declared to the electors to obtain their votes.”\*

The I.L.P. Group not only put down a motion for rejection; it tabled a series of amendments to every clause in an endeavour to save the unemployed from the worst effects of the Bill. The debate lasted from four o'clock in the afternoon to nearly ten o'clock next morning. The members of the Group were thoroughly aroused and they acted together as a compact team, distributing the amendments among a dozen members, backing up each other with supporting speeches throughout the night. During the long hours Jowett sat on the benches watching his younger colleagues with admiration, trooping with them into the division lobby whenever the closure was carried. Margaret Bondfield, as Minister of Labour, was in charge of the Bill and at first she treated the I.L.P. opposition lightly. As, however, Labour Members heard the convincing case stated by the critics they began to realise how serious would be the effects of the Bill. On two clauses the Government was in danger of a revolt from their own supporters. The first related to short-time workers. The officials of the Labour Party had prohibited the I.L.P. Group from putting down its amendment on this clause, but as the critics developed their case dismay spread along the Labour benches. “The Trade Union Group had approved of the clause as it stood, unamended,” wrote Jowett. “When the tabooed amendment was moved, however, long after midnight, the case for it was so strong that it could not be resisted. Even the Trade Union Group was alarmed. D. R. Grenfell, the South Wales miners’ representative, told the Government that if one penny piece of the unemployment pay of short-time workers was to be taken away, not a single miners’ Member would vote for the Bill. The Government at last gave way, and practically all the savings that would have been obtained at the expense of workers on short-time have ‘gone west’. Thank heaven for that much!”†

The second amendment was on the clause dealing with married women. Jennie Lee moved on behalf of the Group that their benefits should not be withheld when their husbands were unemployed or ill. She was supported by other women Members of the House, including Miss Rathbone and Miss Wilkinson, and Miss Bondfield had to accept. These were the only two positive achievements of the night’s resistance, but they in themselves were worth while. The warnings of the I.L.P. on the other clauses proved true: Within one year 300,000 unemployed persons were ruthlessly refused benefit under the Act.

The deterioration of the Labour Government had now gone too

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, July 10, 1931. No separate disciplinary action was taken against Jowett and his colleagues. Their “offence” was merged into the general case against the I.L.P. Group.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, July 24, 1931.

far to be halted. *On the basis of capitalist finance*, there was no way to prevent the economic crisis from going down to collapse except a still further worsening of working-class conditions and, once started on this course, there was no stopping until the financiers were satisfied. During the recess in August, 1931, the May Economy Commission reported. It demanded cuts in the costs of social services, reductions in the pay of public servants, including teachers and police, and a reduction of no less than 20 per cent in unemployment benefits.

The report was so alarmist in character, suggesting that Britain would become bankrupt unless the cuts were put into operation, that the bankers of New York and of Paris became concerned about the security of large loans they had made to the City of London. These were short-term loans and New York threatened to call them in. That created a crisis in the City. Its financiers had loaned a large part of the money received from America and France to Germany on a long-term basis, pocketing for themselves the profit on the rates of interest thus secured. But these loans could not be called in, and they claimed they had no cash or credit available to repay New York and Paris. Mr. Montagu Norman and his most influential colleagues took the night train to Lossiemouth, in the North of Scotland, the Prime Minister's holiday retreat, to convince him of the necessity to accept the May Commission recommendations and to balance the Budget in order to regain the confidence of their American and French creditors. Otherwise the City of London financiers would verily become bankrupt!

MacDonald returned to London and summoned a Cabinet meeting. The Cabinet agreed to economies amounting to £56 millions. Mr. Montagu Norman and the representatives of the Bank of England said these were not enough to restore foreign confidence. The Cabinet met again and a majority agreed to further cuts of £20 millions, *including a 10 per cent. cut in unemployment benefits*. MacDonald and Snowden submitted this amended proposal to the bankers; they thought this would satisfy New York. "On Saturday, August 22, the situation was hectic," wrote Snowden. "The Bank of England submitted to Mr. Harrison, the president of the New York Federal Reserve Bank, the tentative suggestion of a reduction of 10 per cent. cut in unemployment payments and £7 millions from other sources. Mr. Harrison replied by telephone that, while he was not in a position to give the answer until he had consulted his financial associates, his opinion was that it would give satisfactory assurance and the credits would be forthcoming."

Later, Mr. Harrison replied that he had consulted "the financial interests in New York, and they were satisfied." There would be "no further difficulty in raising the required credits in New York and the French market would probably raise an equivalent amount."\*

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\*Autobiography. Viscount Snowden. Vol. 2.

*MacDonald Forms a "National" Government*

The Cabinet met again; but meanwhile a whisper reached the T.U.C. General Council that a 10 per cent. cut in unemployment benefit was contemplated and it issued a strong declaration against any cut whatever. The opposition of the minority in the Cabinet stiffened; although a small majority was still in favour of the reduction, it became clear that there could be no united Cabinet in operating it; nearly half of the Cabinet would have resigned. The Prime Minister asked his colleagues to place their resignations in his hands and went to the King. It was assumed by all that MacDonald would resign the Premiership and that a Tory administration supported by the Liberals would follow. It was assumed that he would go into Opposition with the Labour Party. Early on Monday, August 24, however, MacDonald, Mr. Baldwin, and Sir Herbert Samuel (Mr. Lloyd George was ill) had a joint audience with the King, and Mr. MacDonald returned to the Labour Cabinet to inform them that a National Government would be formed and that he would be its Prime Minister. To most of his colleagues, if not all, the news was a complete shock; they had no idea that this was their leader's intention.

When the dismayed Cabinet broke up, the Prime Minister asked J. H. Thomas, Lord Sankey and Philip Snowden to stay behind and he invited them to join the new Government. Snowden was indignant about MacDonald's behaviour, but he agreed to remain Chancellor of the Exchequer on the understanding that the new Government would deal only with the economic emergency. "I do not think that Mr. MacDonald felt any regret that the break with his Labour colleagues had come to pass," he wrote, "and later developments have amply confirmed this belief. The day after the National Government was formed he came into my room at Downing Street in very high spirits. I remarked to him that he would now find himself very popular in strange quarters. He replied, gleefully rubbing his hands: 'Yes, to-morrow every duchess in London will be wanting to kiss me.'"

When Parliament reassembled, with MacDonald, Snowden, Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain and Sir Herbert Samuel occupying the Government benches together, the feeling in the Labour Party was viciously bitter. Those who had been ready to lick MacDonald's boots during all the surrenders of the Labour Government were now ready to hang him to a lamp-post. To members of the I.L.P. Group what had happened was the logical consequence of all that had gone before: the repeated compromises with the capitalist Parties, the strivings for a Council of State, the anchorage to capitalist finance. Jowett traced the "betrayal" of Labour to the series of concessions made to the Liberal Party's insistence on economy. "The last demand

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\*Autobiography. Viscount Snowden. Vol 2.

of the Liberals is the last straw," he commented; "it has broken the Labour Government. The new Cabinet of the so-called National Government is going to make the poor pay. It is labouring under the delusion that a crisis produced by capitalist finance and capitalist rationalisation of industry can be met, and its recurrence prevented, by decreasing the spending power of the working-class."\*

Despite their readiness when in the Cabinet to impose a 10 per cent. reduction in unemployment benefits, the ex-Labour Ministers declared their determination to resist *every* economy at the expense of the unemployed, the social services, the wages of the workers, the pay of the police, and the salaries of the teachers. Jowett welcomed the recovered militancy of the Labour Party. "If this expectation is realised," he declared, "as there is good reason to believe it will be, the Labour Party will be committed to a complete departure from the policy which it has pursued in Parliament since the last General Election." He looked forward to a solidified Opposition. "For the immediate purpose of fighting this class issue, in and out of Parliament, all sections of the Party will probably be united. This in itself is a blessing, for it will give the Labour Party a fighting policy and end the period in which compromises with the Liberals have damped the enthusiasm and disheartened the Movement for the last two years."† In Bradford the new unity was reflected in a meeting called by the I.L.P. at which Fred Jowett and William Leach both spoke. For more than a year they had been politically estranged, the one criticising the Labour Government, the other praising it. Said Jowett: "We can regain a united front, ignoring the past, facing the present and the future, and go forward to a mass attack on Capitalism and the financiers. We can thank Heaven for that!" He proposed the slogan "Not a Penny off Unemployment Pay, Not a Penny off Social Services, Not a Penny on the Workers' Contributions." Leach endorsed this slogan unreservedly. "Jowett says the I.L.P. is prepared to hold out the hand of friendship on these three points," he said. "I can give a guarantee that my attitude is definitely in line with them."‡

#### *Labour Party Overwhelmed in General Election*

The General Election came with the Tories and Liberals and the two men who had been Labour's most prominent leaders rallying the country behind the National Government. On both sides representative spokesmen broadcast. Snowden's contribution probably influenced more votes than any election speech ever made. He told the workers that if they voted Labour irretrievable ruin for the whole

\**Bradford Pioneer*, August 28, 1931.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, September 11, 1931

‡*Bradford Pioneer*, September 11, 1931.

community would follow with "a collapse in the purchasing power of the pound, the shilling and the penny." Jowett, whose affection for Snowden remained, was more hurt by this utterance than any single incident in his political career. Snowden himself afterwards explained that the "dishonest" and "unscrupulous" line of the Labour Party leadership in opposing all cuts when they had voted in the Cabinet for £56 millions of cuts, including the 10 per cent. unemployment benefit cut, drove him to the decision that he would have to fight them with all the weapons he could command.\* But this was one of the things in his old friend which Jowett could never forgive.

The Labour Party was overwhelmed. Its Parliamentary strength was reduced from 289 to 52. In East Bradford Fred Jowett was defeated by a Conservative, Mr. J. Hepworth (completely supported by the Liberals), by 6,753 votes. The figures were: Hepworth, 22,532; Jowett, 15,779. In the three other Bradford constituencies his colleagues were defeated still more heavily. The majority against Leach was over 9,000, against Hirst 15,000, and in North Bradford, where Norman Angell had retired disillusioned by Parliament, the majority against the Labour nominee was 19,000.

The Labour Party in Parliament was weaker than it had been since the General Election of 1910. Truly the policy of compromise had brought its reward.

#### *Death of Mrs. Jowett*

In September, 1931, Fred suffered the blow of the loss of his wife Emily, who had been his partner for forty-seven years. Their companionship had been complete. She shared his socialist convictions, but she was content to serve the cause through him, happy in her home, devoting herself to the service of her husband and their three children, sharing the ups and downs of his political life, accepting the demands it made on him. In times of success her congratulations meant more to Fred than those of any others; in days of disappointment her sympathy was more understanding than that of all others. James Maxton spoke at the graveside. "In the House of Commons," he said, "when the loss that had befallen Fred Jowett became known, men of all kinds and all parties, knowing that I was coming here, asked me to express to him their sympathy and consolation. The woman who sent him out week after week, day after day, to face a difficult task in a difficult world with such manliness and lack of hesitation was a great woman."

Among the messages of sympathy which Fred received, a letter from Robert Blatchford, then eighty years old, moved him most. It indicated the beginning of his change from atheism to spiritualism.

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\*"How the National Government Was Born." "Sunday Express," June 30, 1935.

"Do you think death is the end?" he wrote. "That would be defeat indeed."

Fred's children had long since left home, but he stayed on alone in the house at Grantham Terrace which he had shared with his wife. A married daughter lived next door. A doorway was made in the wall and she helped to tend to his domestic needs.

## CHAPTER XVII

### SOCIALISM DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF

The Socialist movement was thrown into confusion by the calamitous extent of the defeat and the divisions which accompanied it. The confusion was prolonged by the shattering effect on political conceptions brought about by the triumph of Nazism in Germany. One might have expected that these events would knit together the Movement; in fact, the result was the opposite. The overwhelming defeat at the General Election and the betrayals of the leadership so demoralised the forces of Labour that differences were accentuated rather than healed, whilst all sections of the Left had so failed to foresee the consequences of the emergence of Fascism that they were totally unprepared with a policy, and divergences of view intensified antagonisms. The Socialist Movement entered on a period of disunity and internal conflict which continued for fourteen years.

#### *I.L.P. Break from Labour Party*

At the General Election of 1931 the Labour Party Executive demanded for the first time that all candidates should sign a declaration that they would, if elected, accept the Standing Orders of the Parliamentary Labour Party. "Signing on the dotted line" Fred Jowett called it. It had been the hope of the I.L.P. that the disaster to which the policy of the Labour Government had brought the Movement would lead to a resolve to heal the breach, but this ultimatum had to be met at once. It could only be interpreted as an unchanged determination to discipline the I.L.P. Group, and nineteen of the Party's candidates declined to give their signatures. They were refused endorsement by the Labour Party executive and stood independently. Three of them were elected—James Maxton, R. C. Wallhead and John McGovern.\* Two successful Trade Union candidates, David Kirkwood and George Buchanan, also declined to commit themselves to the Standing Orders. These five M.P.s formed the I.L.P. Group in the new Parliament. They were not admitted to the meetings of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

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\*McGovern was opposed by an official Labour candidate who lost his deposit.



This was not a good beginning, but it was difficult to believe at first that an agreement would not be found. The crushing defeat which the Labour Party had suffered required a new beginning and the united effort of all socialist forces. Only thus could confidence be restored and enthusiasm re-inspired. Yet the opportunity was missed.

The negotiations between the two Parties had begun hopefully. As already recorded, during the life of the Labour Government the executives had had a joint meeting, and Arthur Henderson and James Maxton had been deputed to prepare a formula of agreement. Their negotiations did not reach a conclusion, but when the author, on his election to the chairmanship of the I.L.P. in 1931, took over there seemed to be no ground for anticipating a deadlock. He found, however, that the effect of the electoral defeat had been to harden rather than soften the atmosphere. Both Arthur Henderson, the Labour Party secretary, and George Lansbury, who had become its chairman, declined to contemplate the I.L.P. as a group, an "organised conscience" they called it, within the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Further set-backs followed. The Parliamentary Labour Party had agreed, on the motion of Walter Ayles, to appoint a joint committee with the Labour Party Executive to review the very questions which Fred Jowett insisted had led to the trouble. The terms of reference were to consider (a) the method of choosing the Prime Minister and the members of a Labour Government, (b) the determination of the contents of the King's speech and of the policy of a Government, and (c) the revision of the Standing Orders and the relationship of the Cabinet to the Parliamentary Party. Progressive recommendations from this committee would have altered the whole situation; but it decided that nothing had occurred to justify any change, and Jowett had no other course but to move on the National Council of the I.L.P. the reaffirmation of its decision that the Standing Orders were unacceptable, a motion which was endorsed by 11 votes to one. A second set-back occurred at the Labour Party Conference in 1931. After the chairman, Stanley Hirst, had denounced "uncontrolled and sectional interests" within the Party (obviously intended as a reference to the I.L.P.), the Conference rejected by 2,117,000 votes to 193,000 a motion to refer back a paragraph in the Executive Report which recorded its refusal to endorse the 19 I.L.P. candidates.

The I.L.P. was reluctant to accept a break. It had created the Labour Party. For thirty years it had accepted the Socialist-Trade Union alliance as a basic tactic. In the localities it was working in close comradeship with the Labour Party membership. In many places its representatives were serving harmoniously in the Labour Groups of public authorities. To disaffiliate from the Labour Party meant the repudiation of a long and deep-rooted tradition and the destruction of associations which, in most parts of the country, were proving effective politically and which had developed personal ties

of friendship. True, there was a minority in the Party which was so disillusioned in the policy of the Labour Party that it was impatient to break. Joseph Southall, artist, Quaker and uncompromising Socialist,\* had moved at the 1931 Conference that the I.L.P. should disaffiliate, but he had been defeated by 173 votes to 37. Following that conference a militant group in the Party had formed the Revolutionary Policy Committee to demand disaffiliation. As the 1932 Conference approached, it was realised that a decision could not be deferred for long.

The disaffiliationists in the Party were composed of two groups. The younger members based their demand on policy, and they would have advocated disaffiliation whether the issue of the Standing Orders had been satisfactorily settled or not. There was the second group, of whom Jowett was the leading exponent, who regarded the Standing Orders as the test issue. Let us see this as Fred Jowett saw it.

#### *The Issue of Standing Orders*

His attitude began from his respect for the principles of representative democracy and from his conception of political honesty. "I well remember when, about thirty-two years ago, I first addressed meetings as a Parliamentary candidate," he wrote. "One could watch more clearly than the awakening of political consciousness. To men and women who were doubtful as to other reasons put forward to persuade them to cease voting blindly, Liberal or Tory, the declaration that if I were returned they could judge of my cause and me, not by speeches alone, but by the record of my votes, carried conviction.

"Through all the years it has taken to build up this Labour and Socialist Movement," he went on, "the voting records of our opponents—municipal and parliamentary records—have been used by us for the political education of the public.

"We have told people they had the right to know what their public representatives were doing on the public bodies to which they were elected, and to pass judgment on them according to their records.

"So recently as at the last General Election, the Labour Party officially supplied records of the votes of individual opponents for the purpose of securing their defeat at the poll. We used these records legitimately for all they were worth at election meetings and in our election literature.

"We should have been moved to make scornful comment if our opponents had defended their votes on the ground that it was their Party which had directed them to vote contrary to their speeches and election promises.

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\*Joseph Southall died in 1944. His last painting was a portrait of Fred Jowett, which has been presented by the Jowett Memorial Committee to the City of Bradford and hung in the Art Gallery. A reproduction of the portrait forms the frontispiece to this book.

*"How then can we object if our opponents treat us likewise when we break our election promises?"*

It was Jowett's sense of responsibility to the men and women who elected him to Parliament, his sense of the sacredness of the promises given to them, which made him determined to vote on the merits of the issues which came before Parliament and led him to attach so much importance to his proposals for the reform of Parliament. He recognised, however, that association with the Labour Party meant that his liberty to make promises during elections was restricted. As we have seen, he was careful to limit his pledges to proposals which had been endorsed by the Labour Party conference and which were included in its election programme, and in Parliament he did not claim the right to vote beyond this. The one point where Jowett's logic was challengeable was his claim to vote according to the Party programme whether Labour had a majority or not. We have already indicated his reply to this criticism: Even a minority Labour Government should introduce its pledged proposals, leaving to the Opposition the responsibility for whittling them down.

This was the root of Jowett's case. "If the policy of relieving individual Members of responsibility for their vote as public representatives should finally be accepted by the Labour Party," he declared, "the whole purpose of the system of representative government will have been challenged." But other issues were involved. He stressed that in practice it was not the Parliamentary Party which had decided how Labour Members should vote but the Labour Government—and we have seen how undemocratically the Government was selected. "It is denied," he wrote, "that it should be an obligation on the Government, where its proposals depart from or fall short of the election programme of the Party, to bring its proposals before a meeting of the Parliamentary Party before they are announced to the press or to the House of Commons." He asked that the Government should at least be as subject to the decisions of the Parliamentary Party as the individual Member.\*

The whole relationship of the I.L.P. to the Labour Party was also involved. The bigger organisation had begun as a co-ordinating centre for affiliated bodies; its structure was a federation of units rather than a unit in itself. It called itself the Labour Representation Committee and the societies of which it was composed retained their independence. In 1918 the Labour Representation Committee became the Labour Party and began to enrol individual members, but the I.L.P. retained independent rights. "Without full liberty of its M.P.s in the House of Commons to give effect to its propaganda within the limits permitted by Labour Party Conference decisions, the I.L.P. as a socialist organisation, could not have become affiliated to the Labour Party," insisted Jowett. He held that whatever the future might

\**Bradford Pioneer*, July 11, 1930.

bring, the organisations of which the Labour Party was composed were still too diverse in their political development to justify disciplined uniformity.

"The I.L.P. never held the delusive expectation that a Parliamentary Labour Party, consisting of members drawn from organisations so varied as those contained in the Labour Party, could be relied upon to give effect to socialist principles and policy, even to the extent authorised by Labour Party Conference decisions.

"Many of the organisations that control the selection of candidates, and finance candidates after adoption, have no definite intention of selecting Socialists. Large masses of members are in these organisations for quite other reasons than belief in Socialism, or even interest in political action. It is no reflection on the character and ability of Members of Parliament, who owe their selection to, and derive their support from, these semi-political mass organisations, to admit that their uncertain mandate inclines them more easily to favour political expediency and compromise.

"Always, therefore, the I.L.P. has maintained the right of I.L.P. Members of Parliament, and independently if necessary, to vote in the House of Commons in accordance with the principles and policy of Socialism.

"The I.L.P. cannot consent to share responsibility for a repetition of the failure of the 1929 to 1931 Parliament," concluded Jowett "That is why it cannot agree to obey the present Standing Orders of the Parliamentary Labour Party. The answer to those who demand that it must surrender the freedom of its M.P.s to fulfil their pledges, honestly made in accordance with the principles and policy advocated officially by the Labour Party for election purposes, is—NO, NO, NEVER! !"\*

Jowett's theoretical case was fortified by two factual considerations. The first was the *character* of the issues on which the I.L.P. Group had come into conflict with the Standing Orders. In all instances the Group had championed working-class claims; in many instances it had resisted attacks on the standard of life of the workers. If the Standing Orders prohibited Labour M.P.s from demanding a minimum living wage for the miners, compensation for miners rendered idle by State-imposed rationalisation, unemployment benefits above destitution level, better old age pensions, and maintenance grants for fourteen-year-old school children without a Means Test; if they penalised Labour M.P.s for resisting cuts in wages, the refusal of unemployment benefits to large sections of the workers, and the appointment of an Economy Commission so reactionary in personnel that it recommended the Means Test for the unemployed, then surely something must be wrong with the Standing Orders!

The second factual consideration was that experience showed that

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\*Pamphlet, "The I.L.P. Says No to the Present Standing Orders of the Labour Party."

the Standing Orders could not be operated. It wasn't only the I.L.P. Group which had defied them: Labour Members who had ostensibly accepted them were led again and again to break them. The membership of the I.L.P. Group was eighteen but *no less than 126 of the 287 Labour M.P.s had voted against the Government on one occasion or another!* Jowett regarded it as dishonest to sign an undertaking to obey the Standing Orders unless one meant it sincerely.

Just before the I.L.P. Conference at Blackpool, Easter, 1932, a letter was received from the Labour Party Executive stating that it had endorsed the recommendation of the joint committee representing itself and the Parliamentary Party that "nothing has occurred either in the general conduct of the Party or in the attitude of the I.L.P. to justify any alteration of the Parliamentary Standing Orders." Jowett was still a member of the Labour Party Executive and was consulted about this letter. Needless to say, he declined to endorse it. He made an effective point against the argument that the I.L.P. Group could not be tolerated as an "organised conscience" within the Parliamentary Party. He drew attention to the existence of the Trade Union Group, which guided its members in a way similar to the I.L.P. Group.

The Labour Party's letter appeared to slam the door, but the Conference, despite appeals for immediate disaffiliation by Maxton, McGovern, Buchanan and John Paton, the General Secretary, carried a resolution for renewed negotiations by 250 votes to 53. The resolution endorsed Jowett's view, however, that "affiliation can only be continued if a satisfactory revision of the Standing Orders be obtained."\* Following the Conference the National Council of the Party made a final effort to reach agreement. A deputation, of whom Jowett was one, met representatives of the Labour Party, taking with them proposals for the amendment of the Standing Orders, which went far to meet the Labour Party's view. The new wording did not, of course, prohibit M.P.s from voting independently, but it authorised the Labour Party Executive, if they did so, to report their conduct to their Constituency Parties and to their nominating organisations. In the event of no satisfactory conclusions to these discussions, it would have been open to the Executive to report the matter to the Labour Party Annual Conference.† The I.L.P. hoped that this compromise would be acceptable to the Labour Party Executive and that it would be ready to recommend it to the Parliamentary Party; but the Executive would not move an inch. It

\*The resolution for immediate disaffiliation was defeated by 183 to 144, the resolution for unconditional affiliation by 214 to 98.

†The amendments also proposed that the policy of a Labour Government should be controlled by the Party, but the I.L.P. would not have insisted on this before returning to the Party. It would have been content to raise this subsequently within the Party.

demanded that I.L.P. M.P.s should accept the existing Standing Orders before any consideration were given to the new proposals. In view of this there was nothing for the National Council of the I.L.P. to do but report the failure of the negotiations to a special Conference of the Party and to recommend disaffiliation.

#### *I.L.P. Disaffiliates from the Labour Party*

The Special Conference met in the Jowett Hall at Bradford during the last weekend of July and by a vote of 241 to 142 the motion for disaffiliation was carried. Jowett listened anxiously throughout the debate, but did not take part. As the proceedings neared an end, he passed to the chairman a report of the speech which he had delivered, away back in 1892, when opening the Bradford Labour Church. The chairman seized on a paragraph and concluded the conference by reading it as a parting message to the delegates. It ran: "*We are taking up great responsibilities, and some people outside think we are taking them up with a light heart. However, we are taking them up—and I am sure there is grit enough in the Movement to see that we do not fail in our endeavour.*"

There were expectations among some of the younger enthusiasts in the disaffiliated I.L.P. that the Party with its clear socialist line would sweep the workers behind it. Jowett had no such illusions. Indeed, he faced the possibility that the Party would disappear. The issue to him was not one of expediency or tactics or policy; *it was a compelling issue of principle.* He would rather that the I.L.P. should die than subscribe to Standing Orders which to him meant the violation of honesty in politics and of the first principles of representative democracy. "The I.L.P. may have to go down," he wrote. "There would, however, be no uncertainty as to its fate if it shed the only reason for its continued existence. . . . If the I.L.P. did accept this humiliating and useless position in the Labour Party, *it would surely die.* Indeed, there would, in that event, no longer be any reason why it should live. . . . If the I.L.P. is to die, let it die honourably, fighting, as befits its past, and not perish miserably seeking to live without function, merely to wear a label."\*

#### *Old Friendships Destroyed*

This was an unusually pessimistic note for Jowett to sound. One suspects that it was a reaction to the effects of the break with the Labour Party on his political associations and personal friendships at Bradford. For over forty years he had had no greater happiness than the comradeship of the Bradford Labour Movement. He had no other interests, no other life, than the Cause and the fellowship of men and women who were its servants. Now this fellowship was rent in twain. Men with whom he had grown up, into whose homes

\**Bradford Pioneer*, July 15, 1932.

he had gone daily to discuss projects and prospects of socialist adventure, who had been his ardent colleagues in those early struggles in the Bradford City Council, who had served in his election fights, sharing his disappointments in defeat and his elation in victory, who had taken more pride in his Cabinet office than he had himself—these were no longer his political comrades.\*

The Bradford I.L.P. had endorsed his view on disaffiliation, but there had been a substantial minority—86 against 112—and it had contained some of those who had been nearest to him during the long years, including not only William Leach, with whom differences had been evident earlier, but his intimate associate, Harry Wilson. Jowett faced the future realistically. He faced the fact that the Jowett Hall would have to go. His long association with the *Bradford Pioneer* would end. He saw that many of the prominent figures in the Party, the City Councillors and Trade Union officials, would go.† The results of the work of forty years seemed to be falling about him. At the age of 68 he had deliberately, for the sake of principle, thrown aside any hope of political security.

Disaffiliation meant that Jowett's sixteen years' membership of the Labour Party Executive came to an end. He regretted the break both for political and personal reasons. He had taken his duties seriously, giving detailed consideration to the issues which arose. For Arthur Henderson, the secretary of the Labour Party, Jowett had great respect. He did not regard "Uncle Arthur" as a Socialist, but trusted his honesty, recognised his political shrewdness, and admired his gifts of organisation. Henderson had an open and impartial mind; when he believed a proposal would benefit the Labour Party, he backed it irrespective of its origin or of the influence of those who opposed it. The I.L.P. proposal for children's allowances was an example. Henderson supported it from the first, despite the antagonistic attitude of the leading Trade Union representatives.

Sir Charles Trevelyan was one of Jowett's favourites on the Executive, and for a time he appreciated the fighting qualities of Oswald Mosley. Trevelyan, Mosley and Jowett acted as a team when the policy statement, "Labour and the Nation," was thrashed out, striving to secure the adoption of a short programme of proposals for the immediate lifting of the standard of life of the workers. They had to

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\*In many cases the break in political association meant also a break in personal association. The author asked Harry Wilson how this came about. His explanation was that Fred's limitation as well as strength was that he had no vital interest in life except his socialist activity. Many of his friends were active in other spheres, a football club, a choir, a dramatic society, and if he had shared these enthusiasms a basis of continued association with them would have remained. With Fred there was only one enthusiasm, the I.L.P., and when his friends became severed from the Party, his association with them dropped away.

†In fact only one of the 29 members of the Labour Group in the City Council stayed with the I.L.P.

overcome the persistent obstruction of MacDonald, who did not want to tie down the Party to anything concrete.

Jowett saw some extraordinary transformations on the Executive. Bob Williams was an example. "He changed in my time from a rebel firebrand to a model of orthodoxy," commented Jowett. Will Lawther, now president of the Mineworkers' Union, was another. "When he was first elected to the Labour Party Executive," said Fred, "he was in constant conflict with Henderson. He was thought to be in league with the Communist Party and certainly acted as though he were. Before I resigned from the Executive he had become the most reliable defender of official policies."

Herbert Morrison did not join the Executive until Jowett's later years, and they did not associate closely. "Our temperaments were so different that we never seemed to touch," remarked Fred. "I'm afraid I rather offended him once by referring to him as a budding statesman, but everything he did seemed to aim at that."\*

At the I.L.P. Conference preceding disaffiliation an Address was presented to Jowett to commemorate his long service on the Labour Party Executive as a representative of the I.L.P. He was a little concerned lest the presentation should be interpreted as closing his political career. "I shall go on marching with you to the goal of Socialism for many years yet," he declared.

The disaffiliation decision also brought to an end Fred's association with the Socialist Movement in other countries. As we have seen, the Labour Party Executive had frequently selected him as one of its delegates on missions abroad; he had been appointed to represent it at the international conference at Vienna in 1931, but he felt the political situation in Britain was too acute to go. At this conference the I.L.P. came into sharp conflict with the German Social Democrats (whose main hope of defeating Hitler appeared to be a loan from the City of London and New York!) and with the general policy of the International. Following the conference, the Party broke with the Second International and, together with sections in Germany, Italy, Norway, Poland and Holland, and later in France, Spain and Greece, established an independent International Bureau.† Fred welcomed the endorsement by the Bureau of the "Socialism in our Time" policy of the I.L.P., but he left the new international task to younger men.‡

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\*These comments were made to the author, June, 1943.

†This did not claim to be an International. The Bureau regarded itself only as a co-ordinating link between revolutionary Socialist Parties.

‡Our final footnote to this chapter would have rejoiced Fred Jowett's heart had he lived to know of it. In February, 1946, the Parliamentary Labour Party decided to suspend entirely its Standing Orders for a period of two years.



## CHAPTER XVIII

## SOCIALISM IN CONFUSION

Meanwhile, the National Government, opposed only by a Labour Party one-fifth its former strength and by an I.L.P. Group of five, was imposing its economies with cruel effect on the workers. Unemployment benefits were cut and the Means Test applied carrying destitution and hunger into hundreds of thousands of homes, the Anomalies Act was used to deprive 300,000 workers of benefits, the wages of public employees and the pay of police and teachers were reduced. Despite the fact that the Labour Government before it broke had accepted a considerable part of these economies, the Labour Party in Opposition resisted them all. Before a year had passed it even came out against the Anomalies Act which its own Government had enacted. Its spokesmen went further, demanding the increase in unemployment benefit which the Labour Government had declared to be impossible. The I.L.P. could not have been more fully vindicated.

*The Threat to Democracy*

By the end of 1931 the chief scares which had been used to frighten the voters in the election had been disproved. We find Fred Jowett recording that Mr. Walter Runciman, President of the Board of Trade, had admitted that the Post Office savings had not been in danger.\* By December the gold standard, which the National Government was formed to protect, had gone—the exchange value of the £ had fallen to 13s. 6d.—and Jowett duly noted that the effect on the export trade and employment had been good rather than bad.† Election promises also went west. One of the National Government's leaflets, distributed from door to door in East Bradford, read: "THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT WILL NOT TAX YOUR FOOD," but early in 1932 food was taxed: in fact, duties were levied on flour, rice, butter, margarine, fruits, lard, cheese, eggs, condensed milk and tinned fish.

The Tory who defeated Jowett voted for these taxes in Parliament. Jowett used this to underline his view that democratic Government is imperilled if representatives do not honour their promises to electors. "The vital issue raised by Mr. Hepworth's votes is not whether the taxes are good or bad," he remarked. "It is my conviction that they are bad, of course, but that is another question. *The real issue is one that affects a root principle on which the system*

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, November 20, 1931.

†*Bradford Pioneer*, December 4, 1931.

*of representative government is founded.* It concerns the relations between an elected person and his constituents. . . . It is my firm belief that Parliamentary Government is in danger at the present time because political parties treat this matter of loyalty to electors far too lightly.”\*

It was not an exaggeration to say that democratic institutions were in danger. In Germany Hitler was challenging Parliament and even in Britain Fascism was making its challenge through the movement led by Sir Oswald Mosley. Jowett held that democratic institutions were failing, not because democracy was ineffective as a method, but because democratic parties, and particularly Socialist and Labour Parties, were not honestly applying democratic principles and were failing to use them to meet the real needs of the people. The German Social Democratic Party had been scared by financiers' threats (just as the British Labour Party had been scared); it had been intimidated by the reactionaries into compromising alliances with the Liberals (just as the British Labour Party had been intimidated); it had failed to pursue a socialist policy to meet the urgent needs of the unemployed and the workers (just as the British Labour Party had failed), and as a consequence it had produced “disappointment, discouragement and distrust,” among its own followers.

“It has shed in great numbers supporters who want something done; to the Right to the dictatorship of Hitlerism, and to the Left to the dictatorship of Communism. The black-coated unemployed—a rapidly increasing class in Germany as it is in this country—is mainly for the Hitler dictatorship. This new class of unemployed, if the choice lies between dictatorship of the Hitler and Mussolini type, on the one hand, and Communist dictatorship on the other, will go mainly to the Hitler and Mussolini sort. Socialist and Labour Parties that compromise on present day needs should take note of this fact.”

The growing power of Fascism in Europe and its emergence in Britain were having an effect on the I.L.P. in conflict with the view which Jowett expressed; the conviction was developing that Capitalism was passing into a stage where Parliamentary institutions would prove inadequate. The theory behind this view was that Fascism is an inevitable development of Monopoly Capitalism and that, in Britain as in Germany, the ruling capitalist class would sweep aside democratic assemblies rather than allow them to be used for socialist purposes. Reflecting this view, a section of the I.L.P. was interpreting the break with the Labour Party not on the issue of its misuse of Parliament, but on the issue of whether Parliament could in fact be used as the main instrument for socialist transformation. At the Blackpool conference in March, 1932, the

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\**Bradford Pioneer*, April 8 and 15, 1932.

debate on disaffiliation had ranged round the Standing Orders of the Parliamentary Labour Party, but already by the end of July, when the special conference was held at Bradford, the issue of Labour Party "reformism" or I.L.P. "revolutionism" had become dominant. Jowett viewed this change with considerable disquiet. He did not shy at the word "revolution." Any party which stands for a complete change of a system instead of patching it up is revolutionary, he insisted. He retorted to Labour Party criticism that he had changed his view in becoming a "revolutionist" by quoting the declaration of the William Morris Socialist League which he joined in 1886. "We come before you as a body advocating the principles of Revolutionary Socialism," it read; "that is, we seek a change in the basis of society."\*

### *The "Ultra-Revolutionists"*

Jowett's hope, however, was that the disaffiliated I.L.P. would throw all its energy behind the Living Income and Socialism in Our Time policy. He hoped that the Standing Orders issue would be broadened out into an attack on the Cabinet System of government with the constructive alternative he had so long advocated. Instead, he saw a tendency in the Party to dismiss the Living Income policy as no less "reformist" than Labour Party policy and to dismiss Parliament as an obsolete institution; during the years which followed he saw it react to Labour Party futility by indulging in "ultra-left excesses," under the pressure, first, of pro-Communists and then of pro-Trotskyists. Jowett distrusted both elements politically, deplored what he regarded as the waste of effort which should have been used to build up the Party on realistic lines, and mourned the loss of comrades who, disillusioned by the course which was being followed, either returned to the Labour Party or retreated to a political wilderness.

The ultra-revolutionists attempted at the Derby 1933 conference to get their ideas embodied in a new constitution for the Party. They would have relegated Parliament to a merely incidental position in interest and activity. The House of Commons, they held, could serve as a temporary platform for agitational purposes, but nothing more; the real instrument for social change would be Workers' Councils, leading the proletariat in a deadly struggle with the possessing class. Jowett delivered a lively and vigorous speech in the debate. Even in print something of the spirit of his utterance is discernible.

"We are asked to consider a new policy, a policy which rejects entirely, root and branch, the old theory of representative government, which, it is said, has been tried and failed. *Representative government has never been tried.* What we have is a Cabinet System, a system of antiquated procedure which, if the Labour

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\*I.L.P. News, May 31, 1935.

Party had tackled it, might have shown a very different result from Parliament.

"We are asked now to get power by civil war. You don't say that in your constitution. Why don't you say it, if that is what is meant? Give it its proper name! To that proposal I am irrevocably opposed. I do not believe in war, and least of all in civil war. I believe with my friend Southall that it is wrong fundamentally;\* but, what is probably of more importance in the consideration of this conference, is its prospect of success.

"We are living in a country where you cannot carry a revolver without a licence. What chance would an unarmed mob have against armed authority? You say, 'Well, but then we can prepare, we can drill, we can get ready!' The answer to that argument is Germany. Its far more powerful Communist Party, which under the adverse conditions then prevailing polled five million votes, also failed."

Let us interrupt the speech to refer to another argument against preparation for civil war which Jowett put elsewhere. Writing in the *I.L.P. News* (a stencilled weekly paper which the Bradford branch established when the *Pioneer* was no longer available) he warned that if the workers prepared to seize power by civil war the ruling class would welcome the excuse to forestall them. He remarked that he could give the names of "relentless men of position and influence" who would jump at the excuse to suppress the socialist movement. "I am all against giving the militant capitalists the excuse they want," he exclaimed.†

Rejecting the way of civil war, there was for Jowett no alternative except Parliamentary representation. But the House of Commons must be related to the daily life of the working-class and its procedure must be changed. His Derby Conference speech pointed the way.

"What we are all agreed on is this, that the working class shall acquire power. It is my firm belief that the way to get power is to show that the Party is in fellowship with the working class—to fight the working class battle, to use the parliamentary machine in the first instance to enact measures that will lead the working class to see and realise *beyond the peradventure of a doubt* that our political party is their political party. If that were done, you would have a chance to get power. In a week's time the Cabinet System could be swept away; only the will to sweep it away is needed."

He was ironical about the proposal to establish Socialism through the creation of Workers' Councils.

"We are asked to build Workers' Councils—of producers, consumers, householders, anti-war councils, workers' sports associa-

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\*This phrase may be misunderstood. As we have seen and shall still see, Jowett was not an absolute pacifist.

†*I.L.P. News*, January 20, 1933. This journal has been maintained ever since, and right up to his death Fred Jowett contributed a weekly article. In future when quoting from the *I.L.P. News* we shall give the date only.

tions, co-operative guilds, estate and street committees, and so on. Such an amalgam as never was known! How, from such an amalgam, can it possibly be expected that a national plan can be evolved? . . . And here already we have a representative body, Parliament, which the people have been accustomed to think of as an instrument which could be used for them! *The most direct way is to get our power through that instrument* and then to apply the best plan we can think of to operate our socialist ideals."

Workers' Councils sometimes had a useful function—Jowett recalled the Councils of Action which prevented Britain going to war in 1920\*—but he argued that their function was limited.

"Workers' Councils to expose and redress grievances, to assist industrial organisations for attack and defence, to ensure supplies for the working class if and when a state of emergency arises—for example, during a strike or lockout—and to get a Parliamentary majority for the working class and for Socialism—YES. But to think of a system of Workers' Councils, not yet in existence, much less working, as a speedy and effective means for gaining power to make the change to Socialism, and for administering Socialism afterwards, is to think of something too remote and unreal, so far as this country is concerned."†

#### *United Front with the Communists*

The I.L.P. did not endorse the views of the Revolutionary Policy Committee, but it went much further towards them than Jowett liked. He found it necessary publicly to dissociate himself from a statement adopted by the National Council of the Party in August, 1933. The statement was a compromise, being attacked also by the pro-Communists in the Party, but Jowett held that it conceded too much to them in three directions. First, whilst recognising that a Parliamentary majority "would be important in initiating a revolutionary change," the document declared that it was unlikely that such a majority could be secured in time to meet the dangers of Fascism and War; consequently, an organisation was required to mobilise the working-class for direct action. Jowett interpreted this as meaning that to avoid capitalist dictatorship it was necessary to prepare the working-class "to seize and exercise all the powers of State and Municipal government without first obtaining majority consent." He opposed this on the ground that "the policy of preparing for a working-class dictatorship is the surest way to a capitalist dictatorship." Secondly, the document limited the power of Parliament and municipal bodies to propaganda and to reforms within Capitalism: it accepted the Marxist view that the final transformation to Socialism would be made by organisations evolved from the working-class. Jowett regarded this as discrediting "all existing

\*May 31, 1935.

†June 9, 1933

electoral machinery, together with the principle and practice of government by directly elected representatives." Thirdly the document visualised common action with the Communist Party on many day to day activities, not only in opposition to Fascism and War, but in strikes and unemployed agitations. Jowett feared that this would involve association with the Communists in "mutinous and purely explosive industrial and insurrectional activities," which would lead "with absolute certainty to repeated and discouraging defeats and to a disunited, not a united front." He warned against association with the unprincipled contradictions of Communist policy. "A party cannot claim the liberty of free speech, as the Communist Party does," he remarked, "and at the same time declare its intention to suppress free speech if it gets power. It cannot effectively denounce war and preach civil war. It cannot advocate dictatorship and complain if it gets it."\*

One third of the members of the National Council of the Party, including the General Secretary, John Paton, shared Jowett's views, and Paton subsequently resigned from the Party largely on the ground of his dissent. Three months earlier one of the I.L.P. Parliamentary Group, R. C. Wallhead, had resigned and rejoined the Labour Party because of the direction in which the I.L.P. was moving; "the most regretful decision I think I have ever made," he wrote to Fred.† Fred refused to contemplate resignation. "Why should I resign?" he asked. "Unlike the Labour Party, the I.L.P. is not yet a pledge bound party. Much as I object to the recent statement of I.L.P. policy, I cannot go back to the Labour Party and sign its pledge."‡

The United Front with the Communists which Jowett criticised arose out of an approach made by the Council of the Party to *all* sections of the Working-class Movement for a united campaign to assist the victims of Fascism in Germany and to resist the advance of Fascism in Britain. Invitations were sent to the Labour Party, the Trades Union Congress and the Co-operative Party in addition to the Communist Party; but only the last answered favourably. Jowett was entirely in favour of an all-in united campaign. He pointed out that in Germany two of the most effectively organised socialist parties in the world had polled between them fourteen million votes at the last election; yet they had been unable to prevent the dictatorship. "If the working-class can be held under dictatorship in the interests of the owning class in Germany, where is there in the wide world a working-class that is safe?" He anticipated

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\*August 18, 1933.

†David Kirkwood signed the Parliamentary Labour Party Standing Orders when the I.L.P. disaffiliated. The I.L.P. Group was therefore limited to the "Three Musketeers," James Maxton, John McGovern and George Buchanan.

‡August 25, 1933.

further encroachments on working-class conditions in Britain. "Preparations to resist and overcome these encroachments, to prevent their enforcement by dictatorship and to prevent war is the *immediate duty of all working-class and socialist parties*. They must act together."

But, in addition to his opposition to a comprehensive united front with the Communist Party *only*, he was disturbed by the method of resistance to British Fascism which was being adopted. The anti-Fascist Movement was acting on the principle that Sir Oswald Mosley and his British Union of Fascists had no right to enjoy free speech from the working-class since they would suppress free speech by the workers if they gained power. Scenes of violence were occurring at fascist meetings where, in retaliation to fascist violence, Socialists and Communists were causing disturbances. Mosley had forces of drilled supporters and the tendency towards physical conflict was developing rapidly. Jowett was entirely opposed to departing from democratic methods. At a Bradford anti-Fascist conference John Strachey, who had rebounded from his association with Mosley to close association with the Communist Party, argued that reliance on democratic institutions would prove disastrous, and advocated the organisation of the working-class to "suppress Fascism"—presumably by meeting force with force, commented Jowett.

"Two things I regard as being certain to help the growth of Fascism in this country. One is for anti-Fascists to compete with it otherwise than by methods of reason. Attempts to suppress Fascism by organised disorder or riotous assembly will only afford excuse for more violence and for police intervention, which under present direction will be mainly for protection for Fascism.

"The other is discredit of democratic institutions. What a disastrous thing it is for opponents of Fascism to help Fascism by bringing these institutions into discredit, through failure to use them or by deriding them, may be judged by the need of them in Germany now.

"German Socialists, Left, Right, and Centre—a real united front—would joyfully welcome back their democratic institutions, and would use them if they had them."

On still one more issue Fred Jowett was in conflict with the I.L.P. during this period. By a majority of four votes the Annual Conference of 1933 instructed the National Council of the Party to "ascertain in what way the I.L.P. may assist in the work of the Communist International." Jowett's admiration for Soviet Russia was unbounded, but he was no less critical of the Communist International than of the Communist Party of Great Britain. His democratic principles were outraged by its method of organisation; if one phrase angered him more than another it was "democratic centralism," the theory which the Communist International claimed to apply. "In effect, it means 'when the Party turns we all turn,'" Jowett used to say. He

regarded the theory with contempt when practised by the British Communist Party, but held that it was a hundred per cent. more vicious when extended to international politics since it deprived the parties of the different nations of the right to differ from the central body. Because the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was overwhelmingly dominant in the International, "democratic centralism" meant in effect that it dictated the policy of the Communist Parties in all countries. Hence the quick changes in Communist policy in Germany, Britain, America. Jowett would have felt his mind enslaved under such a system even more than under the Standing Orders of the Parliamentary Labour Party, and he could not have stayed in the I.L.P. if it had decided to associate itself with the International. He was relieved when, after a year's unsatisfactory negotiations, the 1934 Annual Conference turned down "sympathetic affiliation" by 91 votes to 51.\*

### *Jowett's Seventieth Birthday*

Those who appreciate how seriously Jowett took politics, how sensitive he was to mistakes, how intensely he held his convictions—above all, how much he loved the I.L.P., his political home, his one interest for forty years—will realise that this was not a happy period for him. He saw his Party moving away from the policies which alone, in his view, justified disaffiliation; he saw his Party deflected from the principles of democratic Socialism which were the essentials of his inner faith. At the moment of his greatest discouragement an event occurred which must have done him good. In February, 1934, the Bradford I.L.P. celebrated his seventieth birthday and, not only from his comrades in the city, but from all over Britain letters came bringing affection, admiration and assurances of confidence. Maxton was one of those who sent a message to the birthday party. "Two men among my seniors in political life I hold in high regard," he wrote, "—Fred Jowett and Willie Stewart—and, when the history of the working-class movement in Britain is written after success has been achieved, their names will figure prominently in it." A remarkable letter was also read from John Middleton Murry, who had joined the I.L.P. two years earlier, but who was becoming disturbed by the tendencies within the Party. "I will not conceal from you, comrades, that it is the spirit and the faith represented by such men as Fred Jowett that has kept me in the I.L.P.," he wrote. Then he penned this glowing tribute:

"It is on such men—on the faith they hold, on the tradition of absolute unselfishness and devotion which they keep alive—that the achievement of Socialism in this country depends. It is only such men that we can trust when it comes to the pinch. And I am convinced that without such a core of absolute trust as we can have only in such men, our movement must

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\*The opinions given were stated to the author in February, 1943.



decay. But with that core of trust, it is bound to be born again, and to grow to ever-increasing strength.

"Fred Jowett knows far better than I do how hard the struggle for Socialism in this country has been. A great Labour Movement has been built up only to end in failure. Why? Because no one can trust it. And why can no one trust it? Simply because of the lack of men in it like Fred Jowett—faithful, loyal, devoted Socialists who are, by the nature of their faith, absolutely proof against all the temptations of self-interest.

"We have to build up the movement all over again. It can be done; I am sure it will be done. But it can only be done on a foundation of complete honesty and mutual trust—honesty in facing facts, in declaring one's faith, in sticking to it against all odds. There is no short cut to Socialism in this country. We shall get to it only by winning the absolute trust of the working class. Fred Jowett is the kind of man who wins it, and can never betray it. By and on such men as he the I.L.P. has been built, and will be built again."

Messages such as this must have brought reassurance to Fred at this time of uncertainty.

At the annual conference which followed the I.L.P. began to recover from its "ultra-Left" turn. Day-to-day association with the Communist Party, which the Revolutionary Policy Committee had hoped would lead to amalgamation, was ended and common action limited to specific issues. The Party recognised that Works Councils were organisations to be established in times of crisis and that they would then arise spontaneously from the effective organisations of the workers. The Party began to turn its mind again in a realistic way to immediate political tasks and to reject the artificial theoretical proposals of both the pro-Communists and the pro-Trotskyists (the latter had formed their own sect within the I.L.P., the "Marxist Group"). But the return to sanity occurred too late to save a considerable section of the Party in Lancashire, including the veteran organiser, Tom Abbott. The Lancashire dissidents formed a fractional Independent Socialist Party, John Middleton Murry and a few individual members in other parts of the country going with them. Fred Jowett deplored these resignations. He had confidence that the Party would recover fully.

#### *Herbert Morrison and Stafford Cripps*

The confusion and conflict of ideas which we have described were by no means confined to the I.L.P. The effects of the 1931 defeat, the challenge of Fascism, and the danger of war were also disrupting within the Labour Party. Among the leaders something like an inquest took place on the failure of the Labour Government, and three distinct verdicts were given. George Lansbury, who had become chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, expressed a view very similar to Jowett's. He urged that the *first* necessity was to end "poverty in the midst of plenty," to secure work or proper maintenance for everyone, to provide adequate pensions for the aged at sixty, and to wipe out destitution. Herbert Morrison and Stafford Cripps, how-

ever, contested this. "The point of contention is how far a programme of social legislation can be applied without meeting grave budgetary or other financial problems, and whether it is not best to put the major emphasis on the socialisation of industry, with a view to the community becoming master of the financial and economic apparatus of society," argued Morrison.\* "It is no good trying to milk the decrepit old cow of Capitalism," remarked Cripps.†

But Morrison and Cripps were themselves in conflict about the meaning of socialisation. Morrison interpreted it as the transference of industry to Public Utility Corporations. Cripps and his Socialist League (which had been formed by Left Wingers in the Labour Party as a substitute for the I.L.P.) regarded "the Public Corporation method of socialisation as more likely to lead to the fascist Corporate State than to Socialism"‡ and demanded outright nationalisation. There was also a great difference in procedure between Cripps and Morrison. Cripps proposed that as soon as Labour obtained a majority it should pass a Bill giving it general powers to socialise and that Ministers should then go to the King with decrees to take over industries and banking forthwith. Morrison advocated socialisation measures one by one. Both leaders recognised that a second election would be necessary to overthrow the House of Lords before any substantial social change was made.

Jowett was critical of the Cripps and Morrison views alike. Both, he urged, ignored "the only means by which mass support of the working-class to get and hold a Parliamentary majority can be won. That is by giving first place to the immediate pressing needs of the working-class. And neither shows any intention of converting the House of Commons from a talking into a working body"—Jowett always associated his two "obsessions." The capitalist cow had no milk? Why, it was rich with cream! There were 333 millionaires in Britain. "The leaders of the Labour Party suggest it is necessary to wait until one or another of their rival plans for socialist reconstruction has been applied before drastic proposals for socialisation of the national income are pressed. It is not Socialism in our Time—in *this generation*—they want. Socialism hereafter, for posterity, is enough for them." To Morrison he retorted that it would take many years to pass a series of reconstruction Bills through an unreformed House of Commons—"far more years than the patience of the working-class will last." As for the House of Lords, it would be a mistake to fight an election on this issue "without first forcing that body into conflict over the most immediately pressing, and therefore better understood, demands of the working-class."§

\**Daily Herald*, December 1, 1934.

†Quoted by F. W. Jowett, January 19, 1934.

‡January 4, 1935.

§October 13, 1933.

Jowett joined hands with Stafford Cripps in condemning the Morrison conception of "socialisation" through Public Utility Corporations. He took as an example the London Transport Board, a map of whose undertakings Morrison had published proudly as "London's socialised transport."

"The London Transport Act socialises in this manner," he wrote. "It collects all the various transport concerns, companies and municipal undertakings in the London area and it proceeds—as the Port of London plans proceeded in the early days of my Parliamentary life—to exchange for the old shares of the Company new shares of different total value. It gives to each shareholder new stock, and these new shares are in excess of the amount of the shares ceded by the present shareholders.

"I will give as an example the London General Omnibus Company, whose share capital at the market value listed at the time of the transaction amounted to £8,845,000 at 4½%. The shareholders were given in exchange new shares in the London Transport to the value of £11,183,000. And on the eleven millions odd, 5% interest is to be paid at first, and, in course of time, as economy permits, by scrapping or doing away with certain routes which are unremunerative and so on, it is estimated that 6% will be paid."

In other words, each of the 72,000 workers employed would contribute 32s. per week to the profits of the shareholders, "who will run no risk, have no responsibilities, but who will always be sitting tight and drawing their dividends."\* Moreover, the Board would be responsible neither to the public nor to the workers but, and this only indirectly, to the Minister of Transport, and this within narrow limitations. "That is not Socialism," added Jowett.† "It is rationalisation of industry under capitalist ownership, with capitalists as sleeping partners, more secure in possession than before."‡ "It is 'Fascism made easy'."§

Herbert Morrison gained the support of a majority on the Labour Party Executive and its manifesto for the General Election, "Socialism and Peace," embodied his ideas. The definite pledges for improved unemployment benefits, pensions, education maintenance grants, and housing subsidies which had been made in "Labour and the Nation," the manifesto issued before the 1929 election, were omitted, and the extension of social services was advocated only in general terms and placed in the background. "Measures necessary for the immediate needs of the working-class are to be taken up or dropped, wholly or in part, by a Labour Government at its convenience,"|| commented Jowett.

\*October 13, 1933.

†November 24, 1933.

‡December 21, 1934.

§January 26, 1934.

||August 24, 1934.

Fred Jowett was equally disappointed with the Labour Party in relation to the reform of Parliament. As we have seen earlier, two special Labour Party Advisory Committees reported in 1923 and in 1928 in favour of the Committee System which he advocated. To the 1933 Labour Party conference, however, the National Executive submitted proposals which were far short of the previous recommendations. It proposed that three members of the Parliamentary Party should be elected to consult with the Prime Minister regarding the selection of ministers. Jowett remarked that "at least three leading members were called into consultation in 1924 and again in 1929, and they were the same persons who would have been elected by the Party if such sanction had been required." "What," asked Jowett, "has all this finicky attempt to improve and strengthen the system of Cabinet Government to do with getting Parliament to work as a democratic system? How futile it is to talk of saving democracy with machinery of government so old-fashioned and so badly in need of rationalisation."\*

#### *MacDonald is Thrown Over*

The National Government had long since become openly a Tory Government. We have seen how in the first few weeks of this Parliament, Mr. Walter Runciman, who had become Chancellor of the Exchequer (Philip Snowden was Lord Privy Seal and had gone to the House of Lords), pushed through "temporary" protective measures which tore up the promises not to tax food. Some surprise was expressed then that Viscount Snowden and the Liberal Ministers did not resign; but apparently they were not prepared to break the Government at that early stage. When, however, in September, 1933, a majority of the Cabinet endorsed the recommendations of the Ottawa Conference for an elaborate system of Imperial Preference, Viscount Snowden, Sir Herbert Samuel and Sir Archibald Sinclair threw in their hands. MacDonald remained Prime Minister, expressing the hope that the World Economic Conference would establish a basis for international Free Trade, but when the conference failed (as it was bound to fail after Ottawa and in a world of competitive Imperialisms) he became of decreasing value to the Tories and they deposed him from the Premiership, substituting Mr. Baldwin. MacDonald remained in the Government, but he had entirely lost his grip on the country, on Parliament and himself. He was a lonely, pathetic figure.

There is a tendency to acquiesce in injustices after they have been imposed. Jowett never forgot them. The De-rating Act of 1928 was an example. Its ostensible purpose was to reduce the costs on British industry and agriculture in order to facilitate competition against foreign concerns; in practice, the Act made a present of £33 millions a year to the owning class. By 1934, whilst the industrialists of

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\*September 22, 1933.

Bradford were paying only 4s. 4½d. in the pound, householders were paying 16s. 6d.! To this inequity he made a challenging retort: *he demanded that working-class ratepayers should be relieved to exactly the same extent as the wealthy ratepayers!* He did not, of course regard his proposal as a solution; it was "the immediate fighting proposition to overcome the evil effect of Neville Chamberlain's Act until the much larger question of raising all local rates on incomes according to ability to pay can be arranged and put into operation."\* Jowett succeeded in getting the I.L.P. to embody his idea in its municipal programme.

Meanwhile, the international situation steadily deteriorated. Hitler was rearming with the goodwill of the British Government, which regarded a strong Germany as the best protection against the expansion of Russia's Communism to Western Europe. France, on the other hand, fearful of the German armed revival, was insisting on the fulfilment of British commitments under the Locarno Pact, and expenditure on armaments, particularly the Air Force, was rising steeply. Japan was beginning its attack on China, once more with British goodwill because Japanese strength was regarded as a protection against the expansion of Soviet influence in the Far East. Finally, Italy moved to the conquest of Abyssinia, a sharp challenge to British Imperialism in Africa.

#### *General Election of 1935*

We shall treat these questions more fully in our next chapter; but it is necessary to have them in mind now as we approach the General Election of 1935. That election was fought publicly by the Government on a Peace programme, extolling the virtue of Collective Security and repudiating any idea of large-scale rearmament. Peace feeling in the country was powerful—Viscount Cecil and his League of Nations Union had just conducted their Peace Ballot with amazing success. But in reality, as we shall see, it was an election to prepare for war.

Jowett was ill when the dissolution of Parliament was announced in October, 1935, but the I.L.P. did not consider nominating anyone else for East Bradford. Percy Williams, Yorkshire member of the I.L.P. National Council, did the speaking. It was not a pleasant election. The Bradford Labour Party decided to oppose Jowett, nominating W. L. Heywood, member of the Textile Workers' Union, and feeling and speech became bitter. The attack on Jowett was led by his old associate, William Leach, who classed him with Ramsay MacDonald and J. H. Thomas as a "deserter" and declared that Tories were preferable "any time." Jowett's absence handicapped his

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\*October 26, 1934.

contest seriously, but Williams and the members of the Bradford I.L.P. put up a strenuous fight and succeeded in polling more votes than the Labour Party. The figures were: J. Hepworth (Con.), 11,131; F. W. Jowett (I.L.P.), 8,983; W. L. Heywood (Lab.), 7,329; T. D. Fenby (Lib.), 6,312.

This was a sad end to Jowett's association with East Bradford, but at least he had the satisfaction of knowing that a majority of the working people who made up the Labour Movement in the constituency appreciated his services and remained loyal to him.

Mr. Baldwin carried the country with him. The Labour Party increased its strength from 59 to 154, but it had not succeeded during the four years since the great defeat of 1931 in developing a leadership or policy which commanded confidence. The increased Labour vote was probably as much due to anger against the Tories as to belief in Labour, particularly against the Tory treatment of the unemployed. Early in 1935 a furore of resentment had been aroused by new relief scales announced by the Government; the demonstrations of protest were so large that the scales had to be amended. In South Wales practically the whole population of the mining districts turned out in protest, marching from one end of the valleys to the other, gathering in tens of thousands at meetings where fiercely-worded resolutions were carried.

Opposition to the proposed unemployment relief scales was a "specific object" on which the I.L.P. and the Communists again formed a united front. They took a large part in organising the protest demonstrations and in leading Hunger Marches to Edinburgh and London. Common action on this limited object proved more successful than previous efforts and, although he had been denounced as a "wrecker" and "counter-revolutionary" only a year before, James Maxton had a tumultuous reception when he attended the Communist Party Congress as a fraternal delegate in February, 1935.

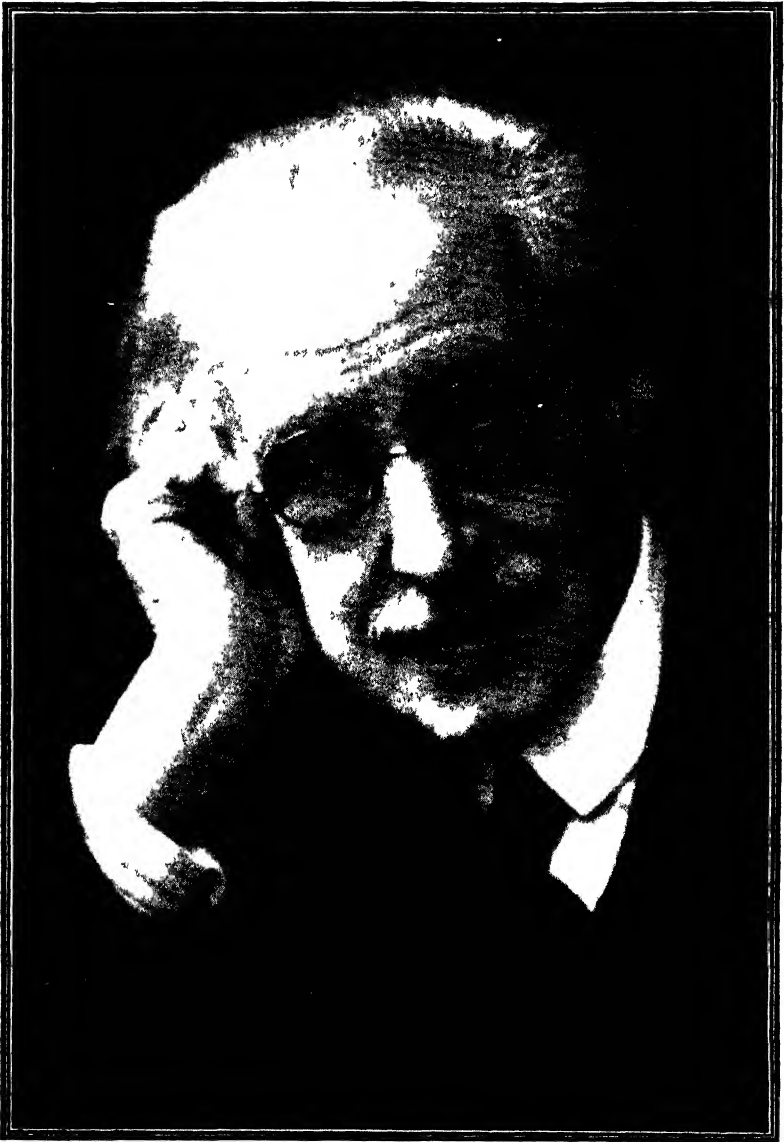
### *The Unity Campaign*

The election of 1935 was followed by a bigger and more comprehensive "united front" effort. On the initiative of Sir Stafford Cripps, representatives of the Socialist League, the I.L.P. and the Communist Party met in 1936 and agreed, after difficult negotiations, to co-operate in a Unity Campaign. By now the Communist Party had changed its line. At the Communist Congress which Maxton had attended in 1935, Harry Pollitt held out hopes for the fusion of the I.L.P. and the Communist Party into a Party "which will represent every revolutionary throughout Great Britain." There was nothing revolutionary, however, in the programme which the Communists submitted to the Unity Campaign negotiations in 1936; indeed there was little that was socialist. Soviet Russia's first aim had

become an alliance between all democratic countries and it was prepared that Socialism should be put in the background to get it. Obediently the Communist Parties of the different countries agreed. The I.L.P. reserved its right to urge the necessity for the establishment of an alliance of *Socialist* Governments, the only basis for a reliable "Peace Front."

The form of organisational unity at which the campaign should aim was also a subject of controversy. The idea was that the I.L.P. and Communist Party should, like the Socialist League, become affiliated to the Labour Party; but on what terms? The I.L.P. was not prepared to enter the Labour Party unless its policy were changed or more freedom were granted (which meant a revision of the Parliamentary Party's Standing Orders); the Communist Party was prepared to enter without conditions. The problem was settled by a far-reaching concession which Maxton made. Whilst personally he did not look with a kindly eye on re-affiliation, he said that, if the Campaign succeeded in convincing the Labour Party that it should open its doors to the Communist Party and the I.L.P., he felt that his colleagues would regard this as evidence that its attitude had changed sufficiently to justify re-affiliation. When this was reported to the Executive of the Party, Jowett was disturbed. He could not contemplate rejoining the Labour Party unless the Standing Orders of the Parliamentary Party were revised. The Executive met his point of view to the extent of qualifying Maxton's declaration: the I.L.P., it said, looked to the Campaign "to create a spirit within the Labour Party which would give reasonable hope of its democratisation and of freedom to express socialist policy, thus enabling the I.L.P. to reaffiliate." This was more vague than Jowett would have liked, but at least it left the interpretation of "reasonable hope" to the future.

The Unity Campaign crashed. It inspired large and enthusiastic audiences, but it made no dent in the determination of the Labour Party Executive not to have anything to do with the Communists at any price and to make friends with the I.L.P. only at the price of acceptance of Standing Orders. With the Socialist League the Executive took a firm line. If Stafford Cripps and his colleagues continued to campaign with the Communists and the I.L.P., it announced, the League would be expelled from the Labour Party. Cripps and his friends retorted by dissolving the Socialist League and continuing as individuals to co-operate with the Pollitts and Maxtons. The Labour Party Executive wasn't having that. If the Cripps-ites persisted in that course they would individually be expelled, it retorted. The ex-Socialist Leaguers, with Communist backing, retreated the final stage. In future they would advocate the objects of the Campaign only from platforms manned exclusively by members of the Labour Party. When the Labour Party Conference came, the resolution in favour of unity was defeated by a larger majority than



*[Photo by Walter Scott*

FRED JOWETT IN HIS SEVENTY-NINTH YEAR





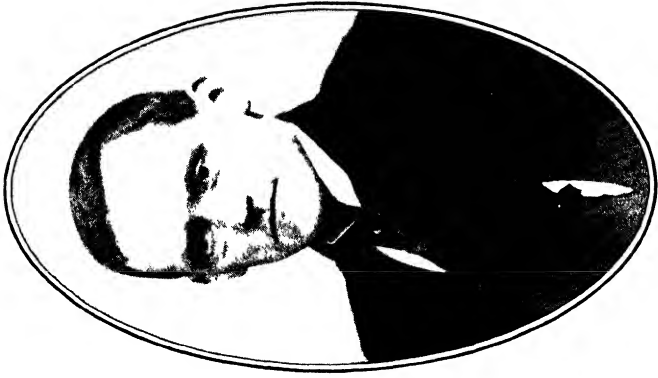
MRS SNOWDEN  
At the time of their marriage

Be some  
Leeds  
Nov 9 03

Dear Fred

Mrs Annakin is going to be married on Monday at Olley and she wants you to come over to see the performance. I join very heartily in the request I am going to be there and shall be going by the 11 18 train from Bradford. Husband meet me there to come. I must demand that you don't breathe a word of this to a living soul. Write to Corning Pleftnowden.

Mrs Annakin wishes me to add that it depends on the weather



PHILIP SNOWDEN  
The Young, Socialist Crusader

Postcard from Philip Snowden on the 11th, 1903, for cell to his wedding

in the previous year.\* The Campaign had to be written off as a failure.

It was with relief on both sides that the I.L.P. and the Communist Party broke company. They were now in serious conflict about the Soviet Union's foreign policy, especially in Spain. On this subject Jowett did not feel as keenly as most of his colleagues, but he, too, was relieved when the Unity Campaign terminated. He distrusted the Communist Party.

### *King Edward, The Miners and Mrs. Simpson*

Slowly the country was dragging itself out of the slough of depression of the early thirties, but even towards the end of 1936 Fred Jowett could write that four millions of people belonged to households supported only by unemployment insurance benefit or Public Assistance. The miners, as always, were in the front trenches of economic suffering and the spotlight of publicity was thrown on their conditions by visits which the King paid to the "distressed" areas—"special areas" as they were described "in official and more soothingly polite language." King Edward visited South Wales, and the country learned there were 128,000 unemployed workers in its valleys. But suddenly the spotlight found a new object of interest. It remained on the King; it was shared, however, not by the South Wales miners but by Mrs. Simpson. "The great problem now before the country is whether the King or Parliament should rule on the King's marriage question and, doubtless to the great delight of the ruling class, and also more especially of the Society ladies of that class, the leader and majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party are deeply interested in the King's marriage problem. They do not think that Parliament should permit the King to marry Mrs. Simpson. But why should the Labour Party take part in any action to prevent the King marrying the woman he wants to marry? It is true that she has two living divorced husbands. But, then, that is no uncommon thing among American women of 'Society' class. Besides, divorce for either the innocent or the guilty party is not a bar against marriage according to the law of the land." Jowett urged that the Labour Party should take office if the King refused to abdicate and go to the country—and make the issue not Mrs. Simpson but "the iniquity of the Means Test, the awful and terrible crime of permitting widespread poverty when, in fact, there is abundance for all."†

### *Death of Philip Snowden*

In May, 1937, Philip Snowden died. Jowett felt a sense of great personal loss. The two Yorkshiremen had been associates for over

\*This set-back was due largely to a reaction against the Communist Party following on the Moscow Trials and their death sentences.

†December 11, 1936.

forty years and not even their political separation after 1929 destroyed their friendship. It was interrupted for a time, but particularly during the last two years of Philip's life it became warm and close again.

Fred regarded Snowden as one of two "great men" he had known. The second was Robert Blatchford.\* In both cases, there came a time when differences on serious public issues divided them; but in both, also, friendship proved stronger than the divergences. None of Jowett's early friends wrote in a more intimate way to him, about political and personal affairs alike, than did Snowden in these last years. Their association commenced shortly after Philip joined the I.L.P. in 1894. They both came from the West Riding and they took to each other in a way which went beyond their common devotion to the Party. They became such personal friends that, as we have already told, Jowett was one of the four persons to whom Philip limited the invitations to his wedding.

Snowden never did anything half-heartedly: having become convinced that Socialism was the way of salvation for mankind, he devoted himself entirely to its service.

"For at least ten years," Jowett wrote, "Philip Snowden went almost unceasingly from village to village and from town to town on Labour and Socialist propaganda, receiving and expecting little in return to provide for his own needs. Wherever he went the common people received him gladly. He stayed with them in their homes and was one of them. Crowded meetings listened to him with rapt attention. Indoor and outdoor meetings were all the same to him. He was not only a missionary for Labour and Socialism: he was an eloquent interpreter and teacher."†

It is doubtful whether any socialist speaker in this country ever had the gift of *carrying conviction* to his audience as Snowden had it. He engaged little in rhetoric, his gestures were few, he reasoned closely; yet there was something in him, the vibration of his voice, perhaps, the intensity of his utterance and expression, which held his audiences spellbound. Of no orator was the description magnetic more true; whilst his words appealed to the mind, his spirit reached the very core of one's being. Jowett kept among his papers an estimate of Snowden written by Emrys Hughes. He hunted it out from his files one afternoon when he was talking to the author about Philip and remarked "there you have his genius described." These were the passages to which Fred referred:

"The visit of Snowden to address a propaganda meeting was a red-letter day in the history of the I.L.P. branch in those days (about 1906). And who will ever forget the sight of Philip Snowden walking slowly on to the platform with the aid of his two sticks and the wave of sympathy that it evoked from the audience, the smile that lit up his face when they applauded

\*Jowett told the author that he placed four other associates in this category: Keir Hardie, Robert Smillie, John Wheatley and James Maxton.

†May 21, 1937.

as he rose to speak, the clear, lucid sentences, the masterly analysis of the causes of poverty, the plea for human brotherhood, the peroration that pleaded for idealism and humanity?

"Everywhere that Snowden went he made converts by the score, he was an orator who compelled men to listen to him and yet he was no demagogue. He was critical and constructive, he marshalled his facts and figures in a way that did not tire people, he had his pawky story which always fitted into the argument, he could appeal to the serious type of working man and show him where Liberalism had failed, he could present the case for Socialism without the harsh dogma of the doctrinaire; he left the impression of a brave and sincere man pleading for a great cause.

"It is difficult to convey to the younger generation of Socialists what Philip Snowden did in the days when the British Labour Party was something new and strange."\*

From 1900 Jowett sat on the National Council of the I.L.P. with Snowden and their attachment became closer than ever. "We were two Yorkshiremen among a majority of Londoners and Scots," said Jowett. "Philip was very much of a Yorkshireman, simple in his tastes and clothes, with a contempt for swagger and finery."†

During their first years in Parliament together, Snowden and Jowett were "rebel" comrades in arms, opposing MacDonald's policy of subordinating Labour's aims to the tactic of keeping the Liberal Government in power. The first World War broke when Mr. and Mrs. Snowden were in Canada. There was a little uncertainty in the minds of some of Philip's colleagues as to whether he would agree with the I.L.P.'s declaration against the war, but Jowett had no fear on this point:

"These doubts were soon removed, for Snowden threw all his energy at once into the fight for peace. In Parliament, and all over the country, he faced hostile audiences fearlessly. He was attacked bitterly. He replied by telling clearly the naked truth, which is, of course, the most hate-provoking of all replies, when the truth is in its effect an accusation.

"Those of us who knew Snowden, as a missionary for Labour and Socialism, and as a valiant and fearless fighter for peace in a war-mad world, cannot forget. Myself, I feel it an honour to have been associated with him during those, the greatest, years of his life."

Jowett's affection and admiration for Snowden made 1931 difficult to bear. "He held the key position for striking at the heart of Capitalism when British finance got itself into a mess," he wrote. "He must have believed the bankers when they threatened dreadful results on the value of people's savings and on the cost of living. I can think of no other explanation for his surrender. If he had taken a firm stand on the policy which he himself stated at the election which preceded the Labour Government, he could have balanced the budget quite well without touching the social services. As for the gold

\**Forward*, May 22, 1937.

†Statement to author, October, 1943.

standard, which the bankers said must be upheld, at whatever cost necessary in economy cuts, the bankers themselves readily abandoned it shortly afterwards, and the cost of living fell instead of rising as the bankers had threatened.”\*

Visiting Snowden in his retirement a year before he died, Jowett asked, “Why didn’t you stand up to the bankers, Philip? It was your great chance.” “It was too big a job,” replied the ex-Chancellor; but, according to Jowett, his tone was wistful as though he regretted the necessity.† Fred was visiting Philip in his home in Surrey, and as they talked the political estrangement of 1931 was forgotten in their community of memories of the years which went before. Perhaps their common isolation from the Labour Party also had its influence in drawing them together.

Snowden wrote many letters to Jowett during this period. They were remarkable both as personal and political documents and we reproduce some of them. The first was written after Ramsay MacDonald had resigned the Premiership but continued to serve in the Baldwin Government. It contained a very frank expression of opinion about this:

Eden Lodge, Tilford,  
Near Farnham,  
January 1st, 1936.

My dear Frederick,—

It was a pleasure to have your letter this morning. I am so glad that you are feeling better. I cannot understand how any man of advanced age can be well this atrocious weather. To-day here the temperature is that of summer and to-morrow it will probably be at freezing point. It troubles me very much. When it is fit for you to get out of doors you will improve more rapidly, especially if you can get away from the smoke-laden atmosphere of Bradford into the Craven dales.

Things are in a pretty mess politically. No Government could have stood the humiliation which this Government has suffered if there had been an alternative Government. But with all the contempt which is felt for “Trust-me Baldwin” the country is not ready to exchange him for Attlee.

What a spectacle the MacDonalds are making! Ramsay’s downfall is greater than even his worst enemy could have wished for him. If he were not lost to all sense of decency, he would seek some obscure retreat where he might hope to be forgotten. Having ruined his own career he seems bent on ruining Malcolm’s, too. I know for a fact that he made it a condition of resigning the Premiership that Malcolm should be given a seat in the Cabinet by displacing Sankey, the most loyal colleague a man ever had. At the Election he said he had had nothing whatever to do with Malcolm’s appointment . . .

I hope you will continue to improve and I should like to hear from you occasionally.

With best wishes in which my wife heartily joins.

I remain,

Yours very sincerely,

PHILIP.

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\*May 21, 1937.

†Statement to author, October, 1943.

Jowett was prevented by illness from replying until the beginning of March. He also expressed himself freely about MacDonald, revealing how disillusioned he had become. "In my opinion," he wrote, "it is absence of sincerity rather than lack of ability in the Party leaders which has led the country into the mess it is in. MacDonald, for example, has ability enough, but he is insincere, he is a snob, loves power and is quite unscrupulous as to what he does or as to who sinks if he swims. I do not think he feels humiliated by the bargain he made to hold a prominent place and get one for his son in a Tory Cabinet when his position as Prime Minister was no longer tenable. He just made the best bargain he could. He would sacrifice Sankey without the slightest feeling of regret or remorse."

Within a week Snowden replied in a letter which combined delightful human and homely touches with political comment, and which showed a deep undercurrent of regret that his old socialist associations had been severed:

Eden Lodge, Tilford,  
Farnham.

My dear Frederick,—

It was a great joy to me to have your letter. I feel self-condemned that I have not written to you for some time, but you are often in my thoughts. I saw Ben Riley recently and he told me about coming to see you on your birthday and found you in a bower of flowers sent by friends who remember and love you.

The great vote you polled\* proved that you are not isolated from your old friends, though some of the younger men in the Labour Party who knew you not in the old days and knew nothing of your great service to the Socialist cause and to the local government of Bradford may not appreciate you. I am much in the same position myself. A few of my former comrades and colleagues keep in touch with me, but the younger generation are strangers. It is in a way sad that we should have been alienated from the movement we have served so long and loved so deeply.

In my last years I would have wished it otherwise, but I have no wish to be associated with the men who are now leading the Labour Party. Neither do I in the least regret my separation from J.R.M. My utter contempt for him cannot be expressed in words. I am surprised that Baldwin and Co. have not found him out before. Probably they have, but for some reason they seem to think he is an asset to them. I hear from all quarters that he is universally regarded in the House of Commons with disgust.

I see the I.L.P. Conference is to be held at Keighley this Easter. I hope you will be well enough to go there. It will be a relief to you to meet old friends and to get into the swim of things.

I am not surprised that you are not improving rapidly. Nobody can be well this weather we have had this winter. I have been kept indoors most of the time. Jimmy Sexton and Ben Turner both write to me to say that they have been much affected by the weather. I hear from both of them quite often, and also from Ben Tillett. We had Margaret Bondfield down for a night last week. She is very well, but is not very satisfied about some things in the Labour Party. Tom Shaw is another old colleague I keep in touch with. Miss Bondfield's opinion of J.R.M. is very much our own.

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\*1935 election.

I hope you will cheer up. Fine weather is coming, and when it does and you can get out of doors you will soon gain strength. We had the first harbinger of spring here to-day. Ever since we came here we have a pair of wagtails come over every spring for the summer. They arrived to-day, and they nest in the ivy on the house and spend their time flitting about the lawn. We are very fond of them and look upon them as an institution. Our first daffodils and crocuses are peeping out.

I will write to you more frequently, and I hope you will write to me as you feel able.

My wife joins me in very best wishes.

Yours ever sincerely,  
PHILIP.

Snowden often expressed views from which he expected Jowett to dissent, "but I am now outside all parties," he wrote, "a mere looking-on individual, and getting more amusement than edification from what I see." Jowett certainly disagreed with much in these paragraphs, particularly the references to Maxton and Cripps, taken from a letter dated January 19, 1937:

"What do you think about this new 'Unity' move? When Maxton was made Chairman of the I.L.P. I had a conviction that he would ruin the Party, and he has succeeded in this better than I expected. You will not agree.

"I cannot understand Stafford Cripps. He is an enigma to me. I can only think he is playing some machiavellian game to destroy the Labour Party to help the Tories. He worked with me on my Land Taxation Bill, and my trouble with him was his proneness to compromise. He was always for giving way and if I had not stood firm at times there would have been nothing left of the Bill. He is extremely able, and if he had worked with the Labour Party there would have been no rival for its leadership.

"The programme of the new 'United Front' (which I see you have signed) is laughable. It is not as advanced as an I.L.P. programme of forty years ago. There is not one word of Socialism in it. And this is the manifesto of a 'revolutionary' party which is going to rally the masses!

"I have no opinion, as you know, of the present Labour Party. It is the essence of incompetence and futility. There are millions of progressively minded electors who will not support it because they have no faith in it. They are reluctantly prepared to support this Tory Government as the lesser of two evils."

Then came a surprising passage about the Spanish Civil War:

"I am quite impartial over this Spanish business. The two parties there are six of one, half a dozen of the other. I have never seen so much lying and misrepresentation from both sides as the newspapers are now feeding us with; no, not even during the war. I hope that our Government will keep us from interfering in the business. It is no business of ours what happens in Spain. We have enough to do at home if our Government would only do it."

There was a final letter written only a few weeks before Snowden died. Its political tit-bit was: "What do you think of this trap of the Tories to subsidise the Labour Party with a £2,000 a year grant from public funds?" a reference to the decision to pay this salary to the leader of the Opposition. Jowett concluded his last tribute to Snowden by a reference to this letter.\* It is a fitting farewell of two

\*May 21, 1937.

friends: "Snowden's last letter is before me now, and I am glad that it is signed — Yours affectionately, Philip."\*

*Move to Re-Affiliate to Labour Party*

It will have been evident from the story told in this chapter that Fred Jowett was often uneasy, in the years which followed disaffiliation, about the course which the I.L.P. followed. A further, and a worse anxiety now depressed him. Feeling within the I.L.P. for re-affiliation to the Labour Party began to grow. Three out of four of the I.L.P. Parliamentary Group—George Buchanan, John McGovern and Campbell Stephen†—supported it, and Maxton, despite his own inclinations, was no longer prepared to oppose it. At the Annual Conference in 1939 a resolution in favour of re-affiliation was debated. Opinion was running high in its favour until Jowett spoke. With a vigour and cogency of argument which swept the conference he warned the delegates of the danger of war and clinched his argument by pointing out that, if war occurred, an affiliated I.L.P. would not be able to maintain an Opposition view and vote in Parliament, as it did in the war of 1914-18. The Standing Orders would not allow the I.L.P. Members to vote against the war.

The Conference turned down the motion for affiliation, but the danger, from Jowett's standpoint, was not over. The National Council was instructed to explore the position further and to report back to a Special Conference. The exploration showed, contrary to the expectations of many, that the Labour Party Executive was ready to welcome back the I.L.P. on the old conditions—that is, the Party could maintain its separate organisation and propaganda, its Members of Parliament could voice the distinctive view of the Party in the House, but the Standing Orders would not be amended. The one essential point in Jowett's mind was not met. By a narrow majority the Council of the Party decided to recommend the Special Conference, planned for September, 1939, to apply to the Labour Party for re-affiliation. Fred Jowett, standing still on principle, prepared for the greatest political fight of his life within the Party Conference. He was distressed to be in conflict with his colleagues, but at no cost could he accept a decision which for him would violate all that he understood by representative democracy and honesty in politics.

Jowett's principle was never put to this final test. In the same

\*Lady Snowden referred to Jowett's last letter when acknowledging his message of sympathy: "A letter of such understanding sympathy from you is valued by me above most. I knew he had been writing to you, for I found your reply on his desk when I came home to a desolate house. He had sent me a radiant letter to London, telling me he had been out in the car to see the villages round here in their Coronation decorations, and that he was feeling grand and liking his new nurse. And before I had read it he had died." Philip's ashes were scattered "on his beloved Yorkshire moor" above Cowling, the village where he was born.

†Re-elected to Parliament in 1935.



month that the Special Conference should have met the British Government declared war on Germany. The very situation which he had foreseen at the Easter Conference of the Party occurred. The Labour Party supported the war; the I.L.P. opposed it. To consider affiliating to the Labour Party whilst these conditions obtained was impossible. The Special Conference was cancelled.

## CHAPTER XIX

### TOWARDS WAR AGAIN

The Labour Government of 1929-31, despite its disastrous failure in domestic affairs, at least did something to bring reconciliation to Europe. The external policy of the National and Baldwin Governments which followed was the most reactionary of any period between the two World Wars. The first reversal of the tendency towards the stabilisation of peace was the collapse of the Disarmament Conference in 1932. Soviet Russia had proposed a plan for total disarmament. It was rejected out of hand by the Great Powers. Britain would not even consider the abolition of bombing from the air: it was necessary to maintain "law and order" on the frontiers of the Empire. Finally, the conference broke up with nothing achieved and the failure was an invitation to a new competition in arms. Jowett was not surprised. "The plain fact is," he wrote, "that general disarmament and abolition of national air forces will not, and never can, come to pass so long as the League of Nations is composed of capitalist governments. Imperialist nations holding subject peoples in subjection for trade—or in the interests of their nationals, their property, and their privileges—cannot disarm without complete abandonment of their imperialist aims and their conquests."\*

The destruction of all hopes of disarmament was succeeded by unparalleled manoeuvring and intriguing among the Great Powers, and not least by Britain. "Never, within my recollection, has the foreign policy of this country been more carefully concealed than at the present time," wrote Jowett in December, 1934. He had no doubt that its real aim was to isolate Soviet Russia. What other explanation was there of British support of German rearmament and of Japanese expansion in the Far East? The Soviet Union was to be hemmed in West and East and the spread of Communism blocked.

#### *Russia and Germany Compared*

Jowett was a fervent and almost uncritical admirer of the Soviet Union. There was a tendency among many British Liberals, and

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\*December 14, 1934.

even among some Labourists, to identify the dictatorships in Germany and Russia. Fred devoted much of his writing at this time to countering this case. He was particularly severe with a Labour M.P. who was reported to have said that the Italian, German and Russian systems were "all of the same ilk." He denounced this as a "wickedly untrue assertion," strong language for Fred. "I have always held the view," he said, "that it was a great mistake to describe the system of government established by Lenin and his Party in Russia as a dictatorship . . . the franchise in Russia probably gives votes to a greater proportion of the population than in any country in Europe, or possibly, in the world.

"The only reason that I can see for describing the Russian system of government as a dictatorship—and I do not think it is a good reason—is that instead of property qualification being necessary to entitle an adult person to vote, that is to say a qualification either as owner or as occupier of property, the qualification in Russia is work or service. Any person of adult age who works by hand or brain, or in service of the State or a public authority, is entitled to vote. This is a much more reasonable condition of entitlement to vote, in my opinion, than one based merely on ownership of property, real or personal."

He pointed out that there had been three limitations of popular control, but these were to be abolished. Molotov, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars had announced that (1) representatives to all public authorities were to be directly elected, (2) constituencies were to be equalised, and (3) voting was to be by ballot. "When these changes take effect, there will be *only one important respect* in which, if the British Parliament were made into an administrative and legislative body working through its committees, the Russian system of government would be different from the British system. That difference would be the place of voting."\* He summed up his view of the differences between Soviet Russia and the Fascist dictatorships sharply.

1. In Russia the object is to establish a working-class Socialist State, whereas in Italy and Germany the object is to enforce upon the workers whatever conditions and servitude may be necessary to maintain the capitalist State.

2. In Russia the power to govern and direct the policy of the nation is derived by means of elections freely conducted on the widest possible franchise based on service . . . In Italy, and in Germany, elections do not matter, for the dictators base their authority on their power to use force, which includes torture and murder."†

It will be seen that Jowett accepted the theoretical basis of the Soviet Constitution, as the Webbs did, and had no doubt that it was

\*May 15, 1935

†May 19, 1933.

being operated in letter and spirit. Some of his I.L.P. colleagues differed with him about this, but they were all agreed about the urgent need to defend the Soviet Union from the designs of British foreign policy. Jowett was foremost in exposing these designs. In December, 1934, he put these pungent questions:

"Why is Sir John Simon (the Foreign Secretary) anxious to get the German claim for equality in armaments met by *increasing Germany's armaments* up to equality with France, instead of by general disarmament or substantial reductions of armaments of all nations, including Germany and France?

"Why did Sir John Simon flatly refuse to join with the United States in its protest against the forcible seizure of Manchuria by Japan?

"Why did Sir John Simon plead excuse for Japan's rape of Manchuria, when the International Commission reported to the League of Nations condemning the conduct of Japan? He pleaded so artfully that the Japanese spokesman who followed him said Sir John had stated the case for Japan more effectively than he could himself state it as the Japanese representative."\*

Jowett drew attention to the efforts of the Foreign Secretary to persuade the United States to agree *in principle* that Japan had the right to build a navy as big as its own† and to the fact that a delegation from the Federation of British Industries, a friendly mission to Japan, had toured Manchuria under Japanese direction with the obvious approval of the British Government, an event which was regarded in China as a "form of recognition" of the puppet State set up in this conquered territory.

What was the explanation of British support of German re-armament and Japanese aggression? "For the explanation we must look to Russia," wrote Jowett. "The progress of Russia as a Socialist Workers' State is a nightmare vision that blots out completely all other dangers from the mind of Sir John Simon and those for whom he speaks and acts." Fred showed that the Foreign Secretary had influential support outside the Cabinet. "Last week there was a touching incident in the House of Commons. Mr. Lloyd George, speaking of the necessity of keeping Hitler's Germany strong, said that only a strong Germany could prevent European nations following Russia into Socialism. Whereupon Sir John showered blessings and soapy compliments on the political enemy he has been denouncing, almost as a political crook, for the last twelve years." Another supporter was Lord Rothermere, who had just written in the *Daily Mail*:

\*This statement was made to pressmen and not to the Assembly of the League, as seems to be indicated here.

†Jowett added that Sir John Simon proposed, once the principle was conceded, that Japan should enter into a "gentleman's agreement" to be satisfied with a smaller navy; but "this lawyer-like suggestion can only be regarded as providing an opening for Japan to get its way later by its customary method."

"If I had my way I would denounce the war-guilt clause in the Treaty of Versailles. I would hand back to Germany all the African colonies specifically under British Government Mandate, and *I would let the German Government know* that Britain was not interested in any policy that Germany may have had in regard to Eastern Europe."

"If there could be a more directly intended declaration in favour of a German attack on Russia without definitely stating it, I could not possibly think of one," commented Jowett. "Simon, Lloyd George, Rothermere—the United Front against Russia!"\*

### *The Rhine Becomes the British Frontier*

The British Government's intentions to recreate Germany as a military power were thwarted by France's fear of her old enemy. Side by side with Sir John Simon's encouragement of Japan and Germany, therefore, pledges to support France in the event of war had to be strengthened and Britain itself had to increase its armed power so that the obligations to France could be fulfilled. In July, 1934, Mr. Baldwin announced that an additional £20 millions would be spent on the Air Force over five years to "carry out the Locarno Pact commitments." "The object of the Locarno Pact," Jowett reminded us, "was to give security to France to disarm herself, as Germany had been compelled to disarm under the terms of the Peace Treaty at the end of the war. France did not disarm, however, and Germany in defiance of the terms of the treaty of peace is arming." Since Germany was most likely to break one or more of the conditions laid down at Locarno, arrangements were being made to assist France. "In effect, therefore, the Locarno Pact is being converted into an Anglo-French alliance against Germany." What more explicit warning of this dangerous development could be given than Mr. Baldwin's declaration: "When you think of the defence of England you no longer think of the chalk cliffs of Dover, you think of the Rhine"?†

But the British Government had not given up its design of isolating Soviet Russia. In the summer of 1935 Sir John Simon went to Berlin. What for? "To see if he can arrange a diplomatic bargain with Germany to give full liberty to Germany, legally and openly, to rearm," answered Jowett, "on condition that Germany will join with other western nations in a joint guarantee of collective security to be enforced by military aircraft." He had no doubt about the ultimate effect.

"Let it be clearly understood that Sir John Simon's job during his visit to Berlin is to get from Hitler some form of agreement, which, whilst seeming to promise Russia and other Eastern nations concerned that Germany will enter into an Eastern agreement for

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\*December 7, 1934.

†August 3, 1934.

collective security, will later, in fact, *leave Germany free in the East to join with Poland against Russia, whenever Japan attacks Russia through Mongolia.*"

Hitler refused, however, a comprehensive collective security pact for Eastern Europe. Instead, he desired separate pacts with the different Governments. Jowett explained why: "The reason why Hitler will consent only to enter into individual non-aggressive agreements with his eastern neighbours, whilst he is willing and anxious to join a combined non-aggressive pact with Britain, France, Italy and Belgium, is not far to seek. The reason is that he will himself be the judge who is the aggressor if he should be in dispute with an individual State. No other State will then have the right to interfere. This is the position Hitler will insist on in his relation to eastern nations. *To this very convenient arrangement for Germany Sir John Simon would readily agree, if France would break her relations with Russia and consent to it.* Sir John's encouragement of Japanese aggression and Germany's rearmament definitely shows he wants Russia to be checkmated by Japan and Germany."\*

The French Government, despite Britain's support for Hitler's proposal, rejected a Western Pact without an Eastern Pact; but Sir John Simon did not return from Berlin empty-handed. His visit to Hitler was followed by an Anglo-Naval Agreement which gave Germany authority to build warships. Eight years later Jowett was to point out that this Agreement, for the first time since 1918, allowed Germany to build submarines: "The British Foreign Office anticipated then that the U-Boats would be used in the Baltic to sink Russian ships, not in the Atlantic to sink British and American ships."† The comment had a barbed sharpness in 1943, but already in 1935 Jowett saw that the object was to provide Germany with sufficient warships "to blockade Russia and the Baltic ports." Later he summed it up neatly in the phrase "The British Government has agreed to allow Germany to have a navy large enough to blockade Russia and the Baltic Ports, on condition that the German Navy is kept too small to interfere with the British Navy in the North Sea or elsewhere."‡ This Agreement was negotiated by Sir John Simon without the consent of France and, when its terms were known, aroused her bitter antagonism. Jowett prophesied that, although the Agreement had the appearance of a pact to limit naval armaments, it would start a new naval armaments race.§ It did. The race ended at the cost of the lives of thousands of British and American seamen and soldiers.

Jowett denounced all this manœuvring on the international field as a "poker-game" with millions of men as its pawns. "Never was

\*April 18, 1935.

†July 5, 1943.

‡May 15, 1936.

§April 18, 1935.

there a time when it was more necessary for the working class to be united in preparation for mass opposition to the danger which threatens us," he appealed. "All Europe has become, as it were, a big powder magazine that may blow up any day. Individual men who think themselves very wise are taking decisions and saying which nations are their friends and allies, just as if the nations were under their own hats. They did the same in the fateful years before 1914."\*

### *Labour for General Strike Against War*

How was the Labour Party reacting to the international poker-game? It began well. At the Hastings Labour Party Conference in 1933, a resolution sponsored by Sir Charles Trevelyan pledging opposition to any war and resistance to threat of war "by organised working class action, including a general strike," was carried with acclamation. Jowett welcomed this decision; but he pointed out that the same conference acclaimed even more enthusiastically a speech by Arthur Henderson which contradicted the resolution. Henderson advocated loyalty to League of Nations commitments and to the Locarno Pact as part of an international scheme for collective security. That, said Jowett, bound Labour to go to war on the orders of capitalist Governments as soon as they had completed weaving their pattern of alliances and counter alliances.

The theory of "collective security" was that all nations should unite against an aggressor and that no nation should have armed forces beyond a limit necessary for such joint action. Jowett insisted that the difference between the "collective security game" and "collective security as its fans see it" was the difference between reality and romance. Nations would coalesce not on abstract principles of international idealism but according to the pressure of their national interests. They would isolate the nation or nations whose interests were opposed to theirs, and harass it or them into the position of becoming aggressors. As for the limitation of armaments to the extent necessary for pooled action, "not a single nation whose Government is talking of 'collective security' has the remotest idea of using its armed forces for 'collective security' alone."†

The Labour Party leaders argued that if "collective security" were associated with the League of Nations it would be lifted above the influence of national interests. Jowett was sceptical. "Except as a romantic illusion, created to get public approval of armament schemes, the theory of collective security," he said, "is and will remain utterly worthless so long as the League of Nations is largely, or mainly, composed of capitalist governments. As such it is a delusion and a snare. It leads not to disarmament, but to increased armed

\*April 18, 1935.

†March 22, 1935

forces—not to peace, but to war. Any attempt through the League of Nations to protect a small and weak nation against a strong aggressor nation is sure to fail because the conflicting interests of the different capitalist governments divide them. All have special interests of their own which they are determined to preserve.” Then what was Jowett’s policy? “The only safe policy for the working class in relation to war is to keep out of it,” he declared bluntly. “Military Alliances, whether disguised as Locarno pacts, Western or Eastern Defence Alliances, or as League of Nations provision for collective security, mean increased armaments and greater war danger. War resistance is the only sound policy for the working class.”\*

### *Mussolini Attacks Abyssinia*

An issue now arose to test Jowett’s theories. For some time it had been known that Italy had designs on Abyssinia, but at first the British authorities did not appear to appreciate the menace to imperial interests in Africa and the East, and were not unduly disturbed. Indeed, the idea occurred to the Foreign Office that Abyssinia might be used as a counter in the diplomatic “poker-game.” In February, 1935, Jowett reported that negotiations were proceeding in Rome for Italian acquiescence in German rearmament in return for British acquiescence in Italian annexation of Abyssinia.† The negotiations came to naught, but the fate of the Abyssinian people continued to be a mere bargaining incident between the Great Powers in the play of European politics. Five months later, Jowett recorded that French anger against the Anglo-German naval agreement was so strong that she was threatening to back Italy on the Abyssinian issue, whatever the effect on British interests.‡ Mussolini tired of negotiations, however, and invaded Abyssinia. Then the British War Office and Foreign Office awoke fully to what was involved. “Italian occupation of Abyssinia would mean control not only of the waters which irrigate the cotton fields of the Sudan, but of the Red Sea route to India.” Thereupon the British Government, which had supported Japan’s rape of Manchuria, demanded League action against Mussolini.

“After being little concerned with the Italian preparations for war against Abyssinia for nine months,” wrote Jowett, “the British Government—probably as the result of urgently pressed representations of its military advisers—realised that, if Italy seized Abyssinia . . . the military road to India could be closed also by Italy . . .

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\*July 5, 1935.

†February 1, 1935.

‡July 5, 1935.

"That the independence of Abyssinia is the object neither of Britain nor of France is proved by the offer to Italy to put practically the whole administration and exploitation of Abyssinia under the direction and control of foreign advisers nominated by the League of Nations. Italy (meaning Mussolini, of course) having rejected the sharing out proposal, the capitalist government of Britain is moving heaven and earth to get League of Nations support to defeat Italy's plans by sanctions if possible, but by war if necessary."

Despite the obviously imperialist motives of the British Government, the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress endorsed its policy. Pacifist though he was, George Lansbury, as leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party, had to "put himself through the terrible ordeal of giving an official assurance to the Government, on behalf of the combined Labour Party and Trade Union movements, that full support will be given to the Government if it calls for sanctions against Italy, even if war is necessary to enforce them."\* Sir Walter Citrine told the Trade Union Congress: "We have to face the fact that there is no real alternative now left to us but sanctions involving, in all possibility, war."† Jowett's opposition to League sanctions and war did not mean that he was indifferent to the fate of Abyssinia.

"Is there no way by which the workers of this and other countries can resist the imperialist aims of Fascist Italy without supporting the rival aims of other imperialist capitalist governments?" he asked. "Yes, there is, and if the leaders of the Labour and Socialist parties in different countries wholeheartedly supported it they could make their anti-war policy increasingly effective.

*"The international working-class boycott of the imperialist aggressor is the real alternative to the present accepted policy of supporting and extending an imperialist war between rival capitalist governments; mass action to hinder and, so far as possible, prevent the movement of troops and the supply of munitions. In that way and no other can the workers of other countries oppose a war waged by an aggressive capitalist government."*‡

A week later he renewed this appeal, directing it to an international conference of Labour representatives which was meeting to consider the crisis: "Anti-war policy for the working class is not the policy of driving millions of workers of different countries into a murderous war to settle the rival claims of their capitalist governments, but to organise international working class opposition to war. *The Cape Town dockers by refusing to load war supplies for Italy have shown the way;* but action must be national and international if it is to succeed in its purpose. For this international anti-war policy a strong lead by the responsible leaders of the working class is neces-

\*Shortly afterwards Lansbury resigned the leadership.

†September 13, 1935.

‡August 30, 1935.



sary. Will the leaders when they meet in the international conference which has been called give that lead?"

The I.L.P. became critically divided on the Abyssinian war, the members of the Parliamentary Group taking the view that the advocacy of "working class sanctions" against Italy would play into the hands of the Government. Jowett, as we have seen, originally took the opposite view, but he held that the boycott of war materials could be effective *only if organised on an international scale* and, since the international Labour conference had declined to do this, it was utopian to continue to advocate it. He therefore supported the line of the M.P.s to oppose the British policy and "to expose and destroy Imperialism in our own country."\*

The policy of League sanctions proved a failure. Many of the Member-States would not operate it and even the British Government shrank from depriving Italy of essential materials when it became clear that the cost would be war with limited support from other countries. The Hoare-Laval pact, sacrificing Abyssinia but safeguarding British and French interests, followed. It was too cynical a betrayal for the British public, and even for the British Parliament, to stomach, but Jowett had justification for saying that the imperialist purposes of the two Governments had been nakedly exposed and that their claim to be supporting "the League of Nations and the collective security idea had been 'blown sky high'."†

The "poker-game" had not finished yet. Mussolini's successful defiance of the League encouraged Hitler to become more aggressive, and the first concern of British and French diplomacy now was to keep Italy from allying herself with Germany. As a consequence Britain became almost tender to Italy's project in Abyssinia. It adopted the policy of "non-intervention"—that is to say, it prohibited the despatch of war materials to either side. Jowett had no difficulty in showing that this policy was, in effect, intervention on the side of Italy.

"When the embargo on the sale of arms was imposed it was well known to the British Government that Italy had accumulated and transported vast stores of arms and had arms factories in Italy for replenishing supplies as required.

"The embargo on the sale of arms to Italy and Abyssinia simply determined that Abyssinia should remain almost completely unarmed and at the mercy of Italy. *'Non-intervention' destroyed all possibility of defence for Abyssinia and inflicted little or no inconvenience on Italy.* It was a policy of chicanery—a deceitful *pretence* of non-intervention."‡

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\*April 24, 1936.

†March 19, 1937.

‡December 20, 1935.

*Hitler Marches into the Rhineland*

Before Italy had completed its military conquest of the African State, Britain and France were negotiating with Mussolini for his support for sanctions against Germany. Hitler had marched troops into the Rhineland in violation of the Treaty of Versailles, and it was proposed that Britain, France, Italy and Belgium should act jointly against him. "What a game!" exclaimed Jowett. Italy, who was at the very moment dropping poison-gas bombs on defenceless Abyssinia in defiance of the League, was now requested to participate in "collective security" against Germany for moving troops on her own territory! Mussolini would not commit himself in a hurry. Jowett quoted Mr. Vernon Bartlett, diplomatic correspondent of the *News Chronicle*, who remarked that Italian acceptance of the plans against Germany was being made the subject of "some very shady bargaining." Wrote Bartlett: "every member of the Committee knows that Italy wants to postpone negotiations for another three weeks or so in the belief that Abyssinia can then be induced to accept any terms that are proposed." Jowett could not understand how the Labour leaders failed to see through this "diplomatic duplicity," how they continued to support this hypocrisy called collective security "instead of mobilising the working class in each of their countries to oppose their Government's war policies."\* "If there should remain a League of Nations after Mussolini has finished with Abyssinia," he wrote later, "it will be little more than a screen for a *military alliance*. It is time to fight the whole policy of preparations for war—any war."†

*Mussolini and Hitler Help Franco*

Then came Spain. In July, 1936, General Franco, supported by the officer class in the army, the few wealthy monopolists, the great landlords and the reactionary clericals, launched his rebellion against the democratically elected Popular Front Government. The British Government again adopted the policy of "non-intervention"—and at first it had the support of the Labour Party. The Party conference met in October, 1936, and somehow performed the feat of at one and the same time endorsing rearmament for "collective security" to protect "countries loyal to the League of Nations" against "potential aggressors" and refusing arms to the Spanish Government (a member of the League) against an actual aggressor, General Franco and his Fascist forces!‡ Indeed, in the early months of the Spanish civil war the I.L.P. was the only Group in Parliament to defend the

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\*April 3, 1936.

†May 8, 1936.

‡The Labour Party revised its policy when Italy and Germany intervened.

right of the Spanish Government to buy arms, a right which had never before been refused to any except "enemy" Governments; not even Willie Gallacher, the Communist, supported James Maxton, for at this stage Soviet Russia also subscribed to "non-intervention." Italy from the first supplied Franco with arms and men and later Germany supplied him with arms and planes. Before long Russia came to the aid of the Republican Government; but the British Government maintained its embargo and even prohibited volunteers going to Spain to fight against the Fascists.\*

Jowett found the explanation of British policy partly in Tory sympathy with Franco and partly in the desire of the Foreign Office not to encourage Germany and Italy to make common cause in European politics. This desire led the British Government to follow a tortuous course: it could not look with a kindly eye on an increase of Italian power in the Mediterranean, but it hesitated to take action which would drive Italy into Germany's arms. It met Italian aid for Franco by tentatively moving the British fleet to Gibraltar, but intimated that it was prepared to negotiate a "re-defined plan of non-intervention." A "gentleman's agreement" followed.† Mussolini announced that "so far as Italy is concerned, the integrity of the present territories in Spain shall in all circumstances remain intact and unmodified" and promised that Italy would use her best endeavours "to discourage all activities liable to impair the good relations which it is the object of the present declaration to consolidate." The outcome of the negotiations was regarded as a triumph for Mr. Anthony Eden (who had followed Sir Samuel Hoare as Foreign Secretary), but Jowett regarded it with contempt. He pointed out that "on the very day on which this 'gentleman's agreement' was published Mussolini landed in Spain 4,000 fully equipped soldiers with their regular officers from an Italian warship." Obviously therefore the agreement did not limit Italian help to Franco. "British Imperialism's only concern in this Spanish business, so far as Italy is concerned, is to make the best bargain possible with Mussolini for the protection of British imperialist interests in the Mediterranean and the Near East." Jowett told how since the Abyssinian dispute, Italian money and propaganda had been stirring up rebellion among the Arabs in Palestine; the British-owned pipe line had been repeat-

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\*Because Jowett opposed the Government's policy of "non-intervention" he was charged with wanting Britain to intervene militarily. In reply, he pointed out that the phrase "non-intervention" entirely misrepresented the conduct of the Government, which was, in fact, "disguised intervention." Jowett did not ask Britain to go to war. He asked only that the Spanish Government should have the right to purchase arms from British firms. (May 17, 1937.)

†Jowett's definition of a "gentleman's agreement" between Governments was "a bargain the full effect of which is not stated in plain terms, because the full effect is not intended to be disclosed at the time the bargain is made." (January 8, 1937.)

edly cut. At a price, Mussolini had now given his promise, for what it was worth, to discourage agitators against British interests in the Near East and to make no attempt to seize Spanish territory on either side of the Mediterranean. At a price these promises had been given—at *what price?* This was Jowett's answer:

"The landing of 4,000 regular Italian troops at the same time as the 'gentleman's agreement' was made, shows clearly that Mussolini's attempt to force Fascism on Spain will not only meet with no objection from, but will tacitly be encouraged by, the British Imperialist Government . . . . At every stage in the development of the struggle it has been made clearer and clearer that British policy has been determined by imperialist interests. The welfare of the Spanish people has not been considered."

The position became still further complicated when Germany sent aid to Franco. If Hitler allied himself with Mussolini, British power in the Mediterranean and the Near East would indeed be seriously threatened. The Foreign Office sought, therefore, not to give offence to Germany either. "An agreement with Germany is desired," wrote Jowett, "not only to give freedom from menace on the English Channel and on the North Sea, but also to avoid the danger of an alliance between Italy and Germany. An agreement with Germany is all the more ardently desired by British Imperialism because it is considered likely that Germany would otherwise get control of the extensive industrial resources of Spain in the event of the Government being defeated. Mr. Anthony Eden, however, is gaining nothing by furtively courting Germany at the expense of the Spanish people, for dog Hitler will not willingly eat dog Mussolini."\*

Then a happening occurred which proved Jowett right, a happening which shattered the illusion that by diplomatic cleverness the Fascist Powers could be checkmated, a happening which Jowett compared with the Agadir incident in 1911, the real beginning of the war of 1914. On the excuse that a German battleship had been fired on in a Spanish port, Hitler ordered the bombardment of Almeria. If the British Government had been ready for war at this moment—"ready to take forcible control of the Mediterranean sea"—the world conflict which was delayed until 1939 would have begun, in Jowett's view, in 1937.

"The real reason for the bombardment of the Spanish town of Almeria is that Hitler's Germany is now openly associated with Mussolini's Italy in the imperialist statesmen's game of Power Politics against the British and French Governments," he wrote. "The British imperialist Government has given the world notice by its decision to spend £1,500 million pounds in this and the next four years on armaments (proportioned heavily for provision of offensive operations by air and sea), that it is Britain's intention

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\*January 8, 1937.

to regain the key power it has lost to Italy over the Mediterranean Sea. Consequently, Hitler's Germany, on the excuse of the bombing of a German battleship in a Spanish Mediterranean port, has joined with Mussolini's Italy to checkmate the British plan. German as well as Italian naval forces are concentrated on the Mediterranean as a challenge to Britain, and to get for Hitler and Mussolini a stranglehold on the mineral and industrial resources of Spain."

Neither Germany nor Britain was yet ready for war, and negotiations resulted in a decision that, in future, if bombs were dropped on German or Italian ships, penalties would be inflicted jointly *after enquiry* by the four Powers, Britain, France, Germany and Italy. But Mr. Eden had to concede, or did concede, that if Germany or Italy were not satisfied with the findings of the enquiry, or with the joint penalties to be inflicted, *it would be free to impose what other penalties it might think necessary*. "This, of course, means," remarked Jowett, "that Hitler and Mussolini are free to do as they like in the matter of penalties or reprisals for whatever reason they think fit, bad, good, or indifferent."\* This agreement was soon put to the test. The alleged Spanish attack on the German battleships was followed by an alleged submarine attack on a German cruiser. Mr. Eden suggested that he and the German Foreign Minister should have a talk. Hitler refused to allow his Minister to see Mr. Eden, unless the British Government would agree in advance that Germany and Italy should have the right of "punishment"; he rejected an enquiry, although the Spanish Government stated that it had proof that "no Spanish submarines were anywhere near the German cruiser;" and he demanded that the British and French navies should join with the German and Italian navies in bombarding Valencia, the seat of the Spanish Government. These demands were beyond even the concessions which Mr. Eden was prepared to make.

The Spanish tragedy moved to its conclusion. The last stage was, in Jowett's view, the most disgraceful and discreditable part of the whole course of the deceitful policy of non-intervention. An international non-intervention committee was set up "as a screen for active intervention by Italy and Germany until it has served its purpose." Its farcical proceedings for control to prevent "the further importation of men and arms" included the allocation of German and Italian ships "to watch and inform their respective Governments if German or Italian men or munitions are landed at those ports of Spain through which German and Italian forces have entered Spain from the first."† "German bombs and bullets fell like rain on open Spanish towns, and Italian armies, fully equipped with tanks and every mechanical device,

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\*June 25, 1937.

†March 19, 1937.

went into action without disguise or excuse.”\* With this aid from the Fascist countries, with aid denied to Spain’s elected Government by the British and French democratic administrations, Franco conquered power. “Honest adherence to a policy of real non-intervention,” commented Jowett, “a policy giving the Spanish Government the ordinary right to obtain arms, in accordance with international usage, and neither assisting nor preventing volunteers going to help in defence of the Spanish people, would have assisted Spain without dishonouring Britain. The diplomatic game of Power Politics for the furtherance of British imperialist interests has dishonoured Britain, inflicted untold misery and suffering on the Spanish people, and ended as disastrously as British imperialist policy did in Manchuria and Abyssinia.”†

### *Popular Front Government in France*

Spain was not the only European country which had a Popular Front Government. In May, 1936, Leon Blum had become the first Socialist Prime Minister of France, supported by a large majority of Deputies composed of Socialists, Communists and Radical-Socialists (Liberals). Jowett was doubtful about the reliability of the “Radical-Socialists.” In his view their motive in continuing to support the Blum coalition was not fear of Fascism, but fear of direct action by the working-class. The election victory of the Popular Front had been accompanied by a remarkable stay-in strike movement on the part of the French workers. It was brought to an end by the promise of immediate legislation to establish the forty-hour working week with paid holidays and other concessions; but it was a menace to Capitalism which struck terror in the hearts of the French Liberals no less than of the French Conservatives. Far better keep the workers quiet by reforms than allow them to sit in possession of factories and shops! Jowett welcomed the new workers’ technique of the stay-in-strike. He doubted whether it could be used, as some thought, to destroy Capitalism, but, as a demonstration of working-class solidarity and a means of attaining immediately realisable objects, he considered it likely to prove “the most effective and powerful non-military action for the working-class.” He urged that the same technique could be adopted to resist war and Fascism. “After what has happened in France, who is there who would now say that the working-class, if it were willing, could not prevent war? Or that, when the time comes, it may not be that the British working-class could by this method defeat any attempt to make them into slaves of a Fascist State for the preservation of Capitalism.”‡

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\*July 18, 1937.

†June 25, 1937.

‡June 12, 1936.

Jowett's doubt about the Radical-Socialists proved justified. Their presence in the coalition was a factor in causing the French Government to follow the example of the British in applying the policy of "non-intervention" to Spain—a tragic betrayal. But more marked was the service the French Liberals rendered the financiers. The same thing happened in France under the Popular Front Government as in Britain under the Labour Government: the bankers and money-lords "mesmerised the Government into impotence and then peacefully extinguished it." They deliberately created a financial crisis by "selling French francs for British pounds, American dollars, and other foreign currencies," thus reducing the value of the franc and causing the purchasing power of French wages to fall. "This disastrous effect on the value of the French workers' wage packet," said Jowett, "is intended by the money-lords to have the two-fold effect of destroying the Popular Front Government and, at the same time, *teaching the workers a lesson*—through the ordeal of punishment into submission." The consequence was the same in France in 1938 as in Britain in 1931: the Popular Front Government gave place to a Government which agreed to "deflate the franc at the expense of the working-class and the social services." Jowett insisted that a courageous Socialist Government could have stood up to the financiers, but not a Government which was a Coalition including Liberals. "A Popular Front Government is an impossible body for fighting the money-lords, *because the money-lords themselves or their representatives are in the Government.*" \*

Jowett was overwhelmed by a sense of the disaster of renewed world war which he saw was approaching. He was oppressed by the tragedies which he saw already about him: the tragedy of Spain where German bombers rained high explosives on crowded cities, and low-flying Italian aircraft machine-gunned defenceless people in the streets; the tragedy of the Moscow Trials and "still another round-up of highly placed and, until recently, trusted and honoured civil and military chiefs, and of their execution on secretly tried charges of being spies and agents of enemy Governments": the tragedy of Germany with its secret trials of Socialists, Communists, and "forty members of a Youth organisation banned by Hitler five years ago" and with its refinement of terrorism, concentration camps, torture and executions, to maintain and extend Nazi power. As Jowett sat in his lonely room at Grantham Terrace, reading the papers, marking news and comments for further reference, as he listened to the B.B.C. News Bulletins, he marvelled that twenty years after the war of 1914-18, that "world-shaking experience which might have been expected to jolt us all into sanity," mankind should not have learned its lessons, should still be living in a world of such tragic inhumanity.

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\*January 21, 1938.

*Japan Extends Attack on China*

Pawns were being moved in the Far Eastern corner of the world chess board. The Japanese attack on Manchuria had been extended to North China. The British Government made no protest—until the British Ambassador was injured. "Scores of thousands of Chinese women and children had already been murdered in precisely the same manner as the British Ambassador was wounded," commented Jowett, "but no protest was made." The chief concern of the British Government, apart from evacuating British women and children from Shanghai, was to protect British imperialist interests and property. These interests were valued at £250 millions, of which £180 millions were centred at Shanghai. The Government followed its protest relating to the injured British Ambassador by declaring its intention to defend British property in Shanghai by force if necessary.\*

Working-class feeling against Japan's assault on China began to rise and the National Council of Labour sent a deputation to the Prime Minister to press the Government to take action "to protect the people of China." Jowett was fearful that the Government would exploit this pressure to go forward with its own imperialist policy—to defend not "the people of China" but the possessions of the British. Our own ruling class, he pointed out, had given Japan an example by a series of wars of aggression against China, "the excuses for which were as fraudulent as the excuses Japan is making now."

"Any excuse was good enough when British Imperialism was on the war-path in China, as, for instance, China's refusal to import opium when the trade in that poisonous drug was exceedingly profitable to the British subjects extensively engaged in it. Successive wars, waged for one excuse after another, with an army of occupation left in possession of Chinese territory to impose indemnities after each, have given British Imperialism territory, property and exclusive privileges in Hongkong, Shanghai and elsewhere in China, which are now threatened by Japan.

"Not all the hundreds of thousands of helpless and innocent Chinese murdered and mutilated—men and women, boys and girls, aged and infants—count in the scale to the weight of a bean when the British Imperialist Government considers whether it will take action against Japan in China. *But loss of British territorial and property interests* may at any time turn the scale in favour of drastic action leading to war—and the Labour delegation's call for action will be useful for the Government in that event."

Are we, then, to do nothing to stop the slaughter and misery Japan is inflicting on the people of China? asked Jowett. His reply was emphatic. As in the case of Abyssinia and Spain, he called on the Labour Movement to take independent action for the defence of the Chinese people. "The reply to this question has been given at the docks of Southampton, Glasgow and Middlesbrough, where the

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\*September 3, 1937.



workers have refused to load cargoes for Japan. This is the only form of action which, independent of Governments and therefore non-committal to them, does not induce them to go to war. On the contrary, if non-violent working-class action on these lines is international, *all governments will be made to feel doubtful of support from their own working-class if they go to war.*"\*

*Britain Has its Own Little War*

Jowett had told the *past* story of British Imperialism. He had an equally keen eye for the *present*. We have described how at Geneva some years earlier the British Government's representatives had opposed a motion to abolish air bombing on the ground that it was necessary to police the frontiers of the Empire. From 1935 onwards the Government showed what it meant. In Waziristan on the North-West frontier of India a "Mad Fakir" began preaching revolt against the British. The result was that tribesmen attacked groups of Army engineers building military roads. The air force was sent to apply the modern method of "policing." A proclamation was issued to the natives in the valleys where the "rebels" were operating, informing them that "it has been decided to attack those found in these territories *by aeroplane* from April 6th, such attack to continue day and night until further orders." Jowett's comment was strong. "Note the fact," he wrote, "that the decision to rain bombs from the air is not limited so as even to pretend to exclude non-combatants. Anybody, even women and children—bombs are promised to fall day and night on all those found in the territories named in the proclamation." Jowett drew attention to a statement by H. N. Brailsford in *Reynolds* that 2,500 bombs had been dropped, but nevertheless the revolt went on. "These terrorist methods having proved insufficient," he proceeded, "an army of 33,000 strong is being sent to subdue the 'Mad Fakir's' rebellion. This army is fully equipped with armoured cars, aeroplanes and all the latest implements of modern warfare. Such is the nature of British Imperialism. It is alike in *character*, if not in degree of ferocity, with all rival Imperialisms."†

"Not until the nations of the white race overthrow their own militarist governments and lead the way into a new social order of economic freedom is it to be expected that militarist Imperialisms can be overthrown in the East," added Jowett. "British Imperialism must be overthrown as well as Japanese, Italian and German Imperialisms. Indeed, 'our own Imperialism is our own nearest enemy and special concern.'"‡ He saw that the threat of war, more menacing every day, was due fundamentally to the conflict of rival Imperialisms.

\*January 28, 1938.

†April 30, 1937.

‡October 8, 1937.

"The war slogan may be 'War for Democracy against Fascist Dictatorship,' but in fact it will be a war to support British Imperialism against rival Imperialisms."\* "It is to hold British imperialist possessions that the British Government is feverishly arming."†

*Did Britain Disarm?*

There is a myth that Britain and France disarmed after the last war. The truth is that neither Britain nor France reduced their arms according to the expectations held out when Germany was compulsorily disarmed in 1919 and that their failure to fulfil the Peace Treaty understanding was used by Hitler to justify the beginning of German rearmament. In the first years of that rearmament the British Government was not seriously disturbed because, as Fred Jowett showed, it regarded Russia rather than Britain as Germany's potential enemy: but from 1936 onwards Britain began (to use his phrase) "to arm feverishly." Sir Thomas Inskip, Minister of Defence, recited the figures in a speech delivered in December, 1937. In a typical post-war year, 1924, British expenditure was £113 millions. By 1937 it had become £278 millions and by 1938 (estimate) £330 millions.‡ Perhaps the myth of disarmament arose because at the last general election before the Second World War, Mr. Baldwin, the Tory Prime Minister, emphasised that there was no intention to arm on a large scale. "I give you my word there will be no great armaments," he said in one speech, and in another: "There has not been, there is not, and there will be no question of huge armaments or materially increased forces." Mr. Baldwin admitted quite frankly at a later date, when his Government announced its plan to spend £1,500 millions in five years on war preparations, that because public opinion was against increased expenditure on armaments at the General Election, he kept his opinion about the necessity of extensive rearmament to himself. "To put the matter plainly," commented Jowett, "Mr. Baldwin confessed that he fought the last election on false pretences."§ Jowett was distressed to find the Labour Party refraining from opposition to rearmament on the ground that it was ready to "play its full part in collective security and to resist the intimidation of the Fascist Powers." We have seen already why he rejected pacts of collective security between capitalist Powers. He rejected equally the view that the British Government was concerned to resist Fascism. "It is not Fascism, as such, the Government opposes," he insisted. "On the contrary, the Government encourages Fascism." He pointed to its record in connection with Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain and China, to its part in strengthening Nazism in

\* August 21, 1936.

† January 15, 1937.

‡ December 24, 1937.

§ March 19, 1937.

Germany against Russian Communism.\* "To think it is possible for the British Labour Party to be stone-blind to the imperialist purposes of the Government's war preparations!" he exclaimed. "Can not they see that the diplomatic moves and counter-moves of the Government on the international chess-board are for *imperialist* objects?"†

### *Jowett's Fourfold Policy Against War*

But, in addition to this fundamental ground of opposition, Jowett put a view which was peculiarly his own. It will be remembered that during the First World War he defined his attitude as, not non-resistance, but passive-defence. That is to say, he was not prepared to support armaments or war for the purpose of attacking other peoples, but he was prepared to accept armaments for the purpose of defence. Applying this principle, he was not ready to endorse weapons offensive in purpose. "Bombing aeroplanes, for example," he argued, "are not for defence, as ex-Prime Minister, Mr. Baldwin,‡ has repeatedly admitted. If defence against attack were the object of the preparations, there would be concentration on a plentiful supply of aircraft *chasers*, anti-aircraft guns, armed convoys for necessary imports, and, of first importance, *storage of food supplies*."§ He drew attention to the fact that of the Government's aircraft 70 per cent. were bombers, "not one of which can be used in this country."|| Jowett's view on this matter was so much his own that it is worth quoting in some detail.

"The preparation of a colossal fleet of long-range heavy bombers, definitely designed to reach Germany, is the surest possible way of bringing rival bombers to this country.... The first duty of the Trade Union and Labour Party leaders should be to demand complete abandonment of production and use of bombing aircraft and all preparations for aggressive warfare.

"It is not to be expected, of course, that this demand would succeed at first, but it would succeed sooner or later, and almost at once it would begin to rally working-class opposition to present war preparations as incapable of affording protection.

"It would begin at once, also, to defeat war propaganda in other countries, and not even Hitler would dare to begin a war unless he were supported by successful propaganda. As it is in this country, so it is in Germany and all other countries. *It is fear of the alleged intentions of other countries that forms the basis of all propaganda for war and preparations for war.*

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\*September 10, 1937.

†July 30, 1937.

‡Mr. Neville Chamberlain succeeded Mr. Baldwin as Prime Minister in May, 1937.

§September 10, 1937

||February 4, 1938.

"Preparations for defence—yes. There is nothing that can be said more surely of public opinion in this country, and especially of working-class opinion, than that it is overwhelmingly in favour of *really protective measures* against the possibility of experience such as Spain and China are suffering. But only *concentration on protective measures* affords the best means of defence."\*

"Passive Defence" was the first and immediate item in Jowett's policy to meet the war danger. The second item was "an obligation to oppose all attempts by a British Government to hold in allegiance, or in obedience, other peoples by armed force." Only thus could we prove ourselves better than Fascists. "If we do not directly and distinctly attack our own Government for bombing villages on the North-West Frontier of India and for smashing to rubble with British dynamite bombs whole streets of Arab homes in search for hidden rifles and ammunition in Palestine, how can we expect Mussolini to neglect the opportunity to scoff and jeer at British expressions of disgust at his own more extensive operations of the same kind? And we must consider, also, that, if we do not directly and distinctly attack our own Government for holding thousands of Indians in jail for years without trial, our case against Nazi political terror is consequently weakened."†

The third item in Jowett's anti-war policy was the demonstration of an alternative to Fascism embodying social justice, freedom and happiness so convincingly that the powers of the Hitlers and Mussolinis would be undermined. "The need of our time, in this and other non-fascist countries under capitalist governments," he said, "is to demand the abolition of poverty, which is no longer to be tolerated or excused when food, raw materials and machinery are being wilfully destroyed."‡ End Imperialism and poverty, urged Jowett, and Fascism cannot persist in the same world. "The non-fascist country that liquidates its own Imperialism, that distributes abundance by feeding, clothing, housing, educating and entertaining its own people—all its people—that country will do more to undermine and destroy Fascist Governments than anything else in this world can do."§

The fourth and final point in Jowett's policy against war was the establishment of a League of Socialist Peoples—"the only sound alternative to the policy of the Labour Party's leaders, who vainly expect capitalist governments to ensure peace by diplomatic jiggery-pokery, with a background of guns and bombs which sooner or later are sure to go off." The way to get this Socialist International was for the workers of each country to concentrate upon overthrowing their own capitalist governments.||

\*September 9, 1938.

†November 5, 1937.

‡November 5, 1937.

§October 9, 1936.

||May 15, 1936.

*Neville Chamberlain and Anthony Eden*

Whilst rearming, the British Government was still making efforts to conclude an "imperialist New Deal" (this was Jowett's phrase) with either Mussolini or Hitler or both. During the negotiations with Mussolini a quarrel developed between Mr. Neville Chamberlain, the new Prime Minister, and Mr. Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, leading to the resignation of the latter. Jowett could not see any real issue of principle in the quarrel. He saw it as a conflict in outlook between the Business Man and the Aristocrat. "Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Eden both agree in preparing to fight in a war to maintain the position of British Imperialism against other imperialist rivals," he said. "The difference between the two men is that *national class dignity and prestige* count for more with Eden than with Chamberlain. Chamberlain is the Big Businessmen's man. Gestures of submission to Great Britain as the greater Power—such as insistence, first, on merely nominal withdrawal of troops from Spain and stoppage of anti-British propaganda in the Near East—are of little importance to Chamberlain. He wants to make sure of a settlement with Mussolini, and with Hitler too, for capitalist exploitation of Spain's only partially developed resources." He endorsed the view of the editor of the *Bradford I.L.P. News* that "Chamberlain's Imperialism is of the Nazi school, whilst Eden's is that of the Junker class." Eden had traditional dignity and honour of sorts, whilst Chamberlain had little or none. "Can any convinced Democrat or Socialist who has read the speech of Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons on foreign policy and war preparations doubt the Nazi trend of his mind and policy? . . . True it is that Mr. Chamberlain proclaimed his belief in individual freedom and in democracy, but open and avowed dictatorships are born of events, which dictators use regardless of past assurances. If occasion arises, Mr. Chamberlain is the most likely of all men in public life today to lead the country into some British adaptation of Hitler's and Mussolini's dictatorship."\*

The attempt to do a deal with Mussolini and Hitler came to naught. The danger of war drew closer and closer, and Jowett was distressed to find Labour Party spokesmen, particularly men like Herbert Morrison and Emanuel Shinwell, who were anti-war in 1914-18, joining in the pledge to support the Government. "The Government has pursued a purely imperialistic policy, quite regardless of the Labour Party. The Labour Party has had no more control or influence over the Government's foreign policy than a fly on a wheel."† Was Labour prepared to give such a Government a blank cheque of war support?

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\*March 11, 1938.

†May 15, 1936.

*Chamberlain Goes to Munich*

The crisis developed through the spring and summer of 1938. Hitler was proceeding step by step to defy the provisions of the Versailles Treaty. He had re-armed, he had marched into the Rhineland, he had recovered the Saar, he had marched into Austria; now he was massing his troops on the frontier of Czechoslovakia to recover the German-populated Sudetenland—and Mr. Neville Chamberlain and Sir John Simon were saying that Britain would “probably find it impossible to stand aside” if the Nazis proceeded. Jowett took an objective view of the crisis. “It cannot be denied that three and a half millions of Germans were included by the victorious Powers in the newly-formed State of Czechoslovakia for imperialist strategic reasons.” He quoted H. N. Brailsford:

“Twenty years ago Mr. Lloyd George and M. Clemenceau made this problem for us. They included in the Czech Republic 3,500,000 unwilling subjects.

“It was not necessary to do so. This is not a scattered minority. It lies in a compact fringe round the frontiers and could easily have been detached to join its kinsmen in Germany and Austria.

“For strategic reasons this obvious solution was avoided. The mountains of the Sudetenland offered an easily defensible frontier. The French General Staff and French heavy industry, largely interested in Czech armaments, meant to erect here a formidable barrier against Germany, then a disarmed and pacific Republic.”\*

But Jowett was not deluded into thinking that Hitler was concerned primarily to rescue the German population. Hitler’s purpose was “not to redress grievances of Sudeten-Germans, for they are treated far better than the German inhabitants of the Tyrol are treated by Italy”; it was “to open the way through Czechoslovakia to the economic riches of the Balkans and the Near East.” On the other hand, it was equally true (in Jowett’s view) that defence of the people of Czechoslovakia was not the object of the British Government in threatening to withstand Germany. The British Government also had its eyes on the riches of the Balkans and the Near East.†

During the last week-end of September when the Czechoslovakian crisis had reached its height, the National Council of the I.L.P. met at the Head Office of the Party in London. Jowett must have been reminded of the similar meeting over which he presided at Manchester at the beginning of the war of 1914. Only three persons who attended the earlier meeting were present, Jowett himself, Francis Johnson (the Party’s Financial Secretary) and the author, but the spirit of the gathering was the same: resolute opposition to capitalist war. As on the previous occasion drafts of proposed manifestoes to go out in the name of the Party were read. Jowett’s draft was accepted as a basis; he read it in a clear strong voice, and its simple

\**Reynolds News*, September 4, 1938.

†September 6, 1938.

directness won instant support, particularly its "unconditional opposition" to any form of support to the Government for war. "The I.L.P. does not believe that the war will be to defend Democracy against Fascism, as the workers are being told. It will be a war for economic power and control over the rich resources of the Balkans and the Near East." That night Jowett heard this forthright statement read over the wireless in the B.B.C. news bulletin. He was proud of his Party.

But the war was not to come yet. Mankind was to have a year's grace. Mr. Chamberlain flew to Germany and made a deal with Hitler. He came back with terms: Czechoslovakia must surrender Sudetenland to Germany and its alliance with Soviet Russia must be ended. The Czech Government hesitated to accept. Hitler announced that his army would move into Czechoslovakia in five days' time. At the eleventh hour a conference was arranged at Munich between Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain and Daladier. Agreement was reached. Let us read what Jowett had to say about these events. First about the preliminary terms arranged between Hitler and Chamberlain: "Chamberlain has, with his French partner, deluded Czechoslovakia with false expectations of support, and shamelessly revoked. The end of this round in the poker-game of power politics is *only a prelude to inevitable war*. War has not been averted. It has only been postponed. Not one of the governments concerned is going to cease its preparations for the war which they all regard as certain to come."\* This was Jowett's subsequent comment on the Munich agreement:

"Hitler's army moved into Czechoslovakia at the end of five days as he said. At the diplomatic game of power politics Hitler has won.

"It is true that, on the suggestion of Chamberlain's mediator, Mussolini, Hitler agreed to a short time-table for the advance of his army. This concession will give to refugees fleeing from Nazi rule a little more time to stampede with their small personal belongings into the part that is to be left to Czechoslovakia, an impoverished State.

"This arrangement, and other minor details of the process of the occupation of Czechoslovakia, are merely face-saving concessions to make it possible for Chamberlain to submit to Hitler's terms with some slender excuse for acceptance . . .

"Chamberlain's peace, arranged with the dictators, Hitler and Mussolini, is made in expectation of a temporary agreement with the Nazi and Fascist Powers to isolate Russia, break the Franco-Russian alliance, and to end the war in Spain by imposing a peace settlement on the Spanish Government satisfactory to the imperialist powers—Britain, France, Germany and Italy.

*"Chamberlain never intended to go to war for Czechoslovakia.*

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\*September 23, 1938.

*He only threatened war for wider British interests.* He has said so. In these wider British interests he is working for a Four-Power Pact consisting of Germany, Italy, France and Britain for a temporary peace over the carved up bodies of Spain and Czechoslovakia."

Jowett recognised that the British people welcomed the fact that Chamberlain had brought back peace from Munich. The unprecedented welcome given to the Prime Minister on his return was a "peace celebration," expressing the overwhelming feeling of relief from the apparent certainty of war. But he had no illusions about Chamberlain's rôle:

"Chamberlain, the most sinister, dangerous and astute British Imperialist in living memory, by making the industrial and political representatives of Labour believe that the war preparations they had approved were to fight for democracy against Nazi or Fascist dictators, when all the time he has been aiming at a temporary imperialist truce with the Nazi and Fascist dictators, *has double-crossed the Labour leaders, and has put them and their Party into the public pillory as the War Party.* He now poses before the world as the man who plucked from danger the flower of peace."\*

#### *Chamberlain and Churchill*

The Prime Minister's policy was attacked at the other extreme by a group of Tories led by Mr. Winston Churchill and including Mr. Anthony Eden and Mr. Duff Cooper. Jowett regarded the divergence between the Chamberlainites and the Churchillites as incidental. "The only real difference between their rival policies," he said, "is that Chamberlain wants to make a temporary deal with the Nazi and Fascist Powers *until more intensive British preparations have been made* for the next clash of rival imperialist interests. Churchill, Eden and Duff Cooper wanted the fight to begin last week. Mr. Duff Cooper, in resigning from the Government, made it perfectly clear that defence of Czechoslovakia would not have been the reason for fighting. "It would not have been for Czechoslovakia we should have been fighting if we had gone to war," he said. "It was not for Serbia or Belgium we fought in 1914, *though it suited some people to say so.*" Jowett commented sadly on the fact that leaders of the Labour Party were identifying themselves with this extreme imperialist group.\*

That Munich would prove to be only a temporary truce, as Jowett foreshadowed, soon became evident to all who followed what was happening in foreign politics and in armament construction, the material reflection of foreign politics. The statesmen on both sides continued their provocative speeches. The British Government expedited its armament programme and Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax pressed the French Government to increase its air force and

\*October 7, 1938.



"to see to it that France has adequate supplies of bombers for counter offensive purposes."\*

*Germany's New Weapon in the Trade War*

In the background of the political and arms rivalry, the trade war for the capture of the markets and raw materials of South Eastern Europe, the core of the dispute, became fiercer and fiercer. Germany immediately began to use the advantage of the "open way" through Czechoslovakia, adopting financial methods the significance of which Jowett was among the first to see. "Germany's industries are organised as units for foreign trade—a sort of collective bargaining through State Departments," he wrote. "One development of this system is proving extremely annoying to the British imperialist Government and its capitalist supporters. Germany is short circuiting orthodox trading methods by *cutting out the financial element where she can.*"

"Rumania has oil and corn, for example," he wrote. "Germany is in a position to trade machinery and guns for oil and corn without creating additional debt to finance the transaction. The method is just simply barter—mutual exchange of surplus goods, which is what all international trade would be if production were for use and not for profit.

"Germany is using this perfectly sound method of conducting foreign trade for the *anti-social purpose* of concentrating her vast internal resources (human and national) specially on war preparations to overawe, and, when she thinks it necessary, to inflict military defeat on rival capitalist imperialist States.

"British Imperialism's method of capturing foreign markets has been to lend bank-created money (guaranteed by the British Treasury) for purchase of British goods... This system is being beaten badly, partly by the accumulation of bad debts, *but more especially at present by Germany's barter system.* Mr. Hudson† has declared openly a trade war to compel Germany to return to orthodox methods of trading."

Mr. Hudson planned to meet the new form of German competition by organising British industries as units capable of issuing the ultimatum to Germany that "unless you are prepared to end this form of competition and agree to sell your goods at market prices representing a reasonable return, then we shall fight you and beat you at your own game." Jowett dismissed the threat as "impotent futility." Its real purpose, in his view, was to retain for a rationalised British industry an agreed share of the markets which were passing to Germany. He described the speech as exposing clearly "the real things for which the big men of the Four Big Imperialist Powers are playing their poker game of Power Politics," and in a powerful passage pointed the moral:

\*November 25, 1938.

†Mr. R. S. Hudson, M.P., Secretary Department Overseas Trade.

"Control of the trade of foreign countries for the disposal of goods which those who made them are not allowed, by *reason of unnecessary poverty*, to consume; control or possession of foreign countries for profitable investment of capital, which is surplus in the home countries *only because consumption is restricted by unnecessary poverty*—these are the real things that lead to war when commercial strategy and the poker game of power politics fail to reconcile opposing claims which cannot be reconciled.

"And the pity of it is that not one of the nations concerned in this devilish imperialist struggle need be involved in it. Neither Britain nor Germany nor France nor Italy need foreign markets such as capitalist imperialist countries seek. In this machine age, not one of these nations need do more than *exchange* their own surplus of goods and services for the surplus goods and services of other nations, *if only they would abolish their own poverty*.

"I would go further and say it is my sincere belief that any one of these nations (by purging itself of its own crime of poverty and by abandoning unconditionally and finally the criminal preparation and use of those arms which can only be used for aggression) can free itself from the awful calamity of taking part in another world war.

*"What is wanted is one nation which, by force of example, will show the better way—the Socialist Way."*\*

#### *Labour Taken into Consultation*

The Labour Movement, though still acclaiming Socialism, did not attempt to lead the British workers on this "better way." Instead, its representatives drew nearer to the Government and its war policies. During the early weeks of 1939 Jowett recorded that Mr. Attlee and Mr. Greenwood, leader and deputy leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party, had been closeted with Mr. Chamberlain at 10 Downing Street to hear a report of his talks with Mussolini in Rome ("the kind of conference usual when war seems an early possibility"), and that the Trade Union leaders had been conferring with Sir John Anderson, who had become Minister of Civilian Defence, regarding the National Service schemes. Almost simultaneously Hitler issued a decree compelling German men to register for training before and after their two years of conscripted military service and Mussolini called up nearly two million reservists in Italy. Chamberlain's hope of realising a temporary partnership with the Nazi and Fascist dictators was wearing thin.† By March Jowett recorded that Chamberlain's hopes were in ruins. Hitler had driven further east into Czechoslovakia, German Imperialism was not only threatening the seizure of Rumanian oil and wheat and British trade in the Balkans, but was approaching the Near East and the valuable oil supply of Iraq and the rich potash deposits of Palestine. This was too severe a challenge

\*December, 9, 1938.

†January 27, 1939.

to British Imperialism to countenance, and the Chamberlain Government reversed its policy. It began to work openly for a military alliance against Hitler and Mussolini.\* A month later Jowett reported that France was demanding that Britain should introduce military conscription,† and by the first week in May immediate compulsory military training was announced. Britain and the world were speeding towards war.

Through all these fast-moving events Jowett was reiterating their imperialist purpose. "This is the trade war stage in the struggle of rival Imperialisms for 'resources and trade,'" commented Jowett, "but armies, navies, and bombing planes are prepared ready to take any excuse for the next stage of the struggle. For this next stage British Imperialism has promised, in addition to its offer of bankers' credit loans, military assistance to defend Poland, Rumania and Greece." The hypocrisy of the slogan "Democracy versus Dictatorship" was proved in Jowett's view, by the military commitments made to these three countries. "In all but name they are Fascist Governments of the most extreme type," he exclaimed. "Two of the three, Poland and Rumania, hold large foreign populations and extensive territory given to them as spoils of victory after the last war. These foreign populations they hold in continual subjection by force. . . . Neither Rumania nor Poland will agree peaceably to release their Hungarian and German minorities. This is the immediately pressing issue affecting British interests for which a British conscripted army is being prepared."‡

Jowett had no doubt that this clash of imperialist interests was driving on to a world war between Britain and France, on the one hand, and Germany and Italy, on the other, with Russia to help on one side and Japan on the other.

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\*March 24, 1939.

†April 28, 1939.

‡May 5, 1939.

## CHAPTER XX

## THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Fred Jowett had hardly turned off the wireless, after listening to Mr. Neville Chamberlain's broadcast declaration of war on Sunday, September 3, 1939, when his friend Arthur Brown, secretary of the Bradford I.L.P., came to consult him as to whether a meeting arranged for that evening should be held. "Of course it will be held," said Jowett. "We will make it an anti-war meeting." So on the very day hostilities began Jowett publicly uttered his opposition. Appropriately his fellow-speaker was Will Ballantine, a Scot from Perth, a locomotive fireman already prominent in the railwaymen's struggle, who has since contested East Bradford\* as I.L.P. candidate. Side by side, the veteran, frail in body but unconquerable in spirit, and his young successor, strong both in body and convictions, voiced their faith in international solidarity whilst in Europe the guns began to boom and the bombs to fall.

Jowett's dominant emotion when he heard that the long-threatened war had begun was of the tragedy of human arrangements which throw peoples into mutual slaughter when they have no desire to kill or be killed. He had been deeply impressed by that fact when the Munich agreement had averted war a year previously. The people of Germany had lined the streets to cheer the visiting statesmen, and on their return to London and Paris the British and French representatives had been acclaimed with the same enthusiasm by their own peoples. This was not because they liked the terms of the agreement; it was because they did not want war. "The peoples of Germany, Italy, France and this country showed unmistakably that they wanted peace," he wrote afterwards, "because they honestly believed that the Munich settlement was real and not a shameful delusion. All peoples want peace."† Yet the armies of Germany were now driving across the Polish frontier and massacring its peoples and German aeroplanes were dropping bombs on the Polish cities. Soon the British and French forces would be engaged.

*Why German Aggression?*

Jowett could not accept the easy view that the war had come because the German nation was inherently aggressive. Hitler's aggression had an explanation in history. The Germans are "folk

\*The figures at the General Election, 1945, were F. McLeary (Lab.), 15,743; W. J. Taylor (Con.), 9,109; W. Ballantine (I.L.P.), 5,105; J. S. Snowden (Lib.), 5,010.

†July 28, 1939.

not unlike ourselves," he said. "If we in this country had been held in bondage, with overhanging penalties falsely imposed by foreign governments after very different terms of armistice had been accepted, *if democratic leaders had failed to stand up to the foreign oppressors as the German leaders failed*, who is there among us who can say that British working folk would not, in their despair, have been so foolish and short-sighted as to surrender liberty to a leader who led them to emancipation from their foreign oppressors?"\* He pointed out how, after the acceptance of President Wilson's Fourteen Points at the Armistice, three and a half million unwilling German-speaking Austrians and 700,000 Hungarians were put into the newly-formed Czechoslovakia and 750,000 Germans into the re-formed Polish State. "For fifteen years after the last war there were democratic governments in Germany trying peacefully and patiently to redress the wrongs inflicted by the Peace Treaties. They all failed. On their failures Hitler, the Nazi tyrant, rose to power." First secretly, then openly and defiantly, Hitler rearmed. When France refused mutual disarmament on the frontiers, he marched his troops into the German Rhineland. At Munich he won consent to march his forces into Czechoslovakia to recover German territory. Now he was marching into Poland. Jowett reminded his readers that the Labour Party had protested in 1919 against the enforced incorporation of the Sudeten areas within Czechoslovakia and against the transference of territory populated by Germans into Poland.† As a member of the Labour Party Executive at that time he had signed these statements, and despite his hatred of Nazism, he could not eat his words; what was true in 1919, when the peace treaties were signed, was true in 1939, when the tragic sequel of these treaties had befallen Europe. He condemned Hitler; he realised that the Nazis would not be content with recovering German territory but would drive on to the conquest of new territories (as they had done already in Czechoslovakia). But he could not forget that Britain and the Allies had turned a deaf ear to the pleas of pre-Hitler democratic Germany; he could not forget that the British ruling class had helped to build up the Nazi regime and to rearm Germany when it had regarded the Hitlerite State as a barrier to the extension of Communism to Western Europe and even as a potential ally against Soviet Russia.

#### *Reply to Archbishop Temple's Broadcast*

Jowett never underestimated the pro-war case. This was evident in his reply to the late Archbishop Temple's broadcast defence at the beginning of October, 1939. "The Archbishop was clear, he was logical, and, providing one accepted all his assumptions and ignored the existence of some very important facts, he was, indeed, convinc-

\*March 31, 1939.

†September 8, 1939.

ing," he admitted and commended the Archbishop for not attempting "to give the war a divine purpose, as some pulpit war propagandists do." He accepted the Archbishop's indictment of Hitler's broken promises and his "crime list" of imprisonments and murders of political opponents. But, asked Jowett, "is the real reason for this war Hitler's crimes and broken promises, and the Nazi system of which they are the outstanding feature?" Whilst mass support had been given in that belief, "what evidence is there that it is the real reason for which the country has been plunged into war?" The record of Mussolini was as black as that of Hitler, yet the British Government was "willing to make common cause with Mussolini's Italy as an ally." What of the crimes of British Imperialism? "Has the Archbishop never heard of the bombing of native villages on the North West Frontier of India? Or the indiscriminate massacre of Indians at Amritsar, or of the hundreds of millions of inhabitants in the British Empire and Crown Colonies who are sunk in poverty, denied the right of free speech, of combination in trade unions, and of any real approach to self-government? No, if it's Nazidom and Fascism we are to destroy, we must begin with that which is of the same evil breed for which we are responsible."

The Archbishop held that the war must go on until Hitler and his government were overthrown, but he proposed that the terms of peace should be drawn up by a Congress of Nations in which a Germany freed from Nazi tyrants would take part. To this Congress all problems of frontiers, colonies, and territories must be brought and Britain must be ready for sacrifices. Jowett described this as "only wishful thinking." The governments would not agree that the peace should be settled by such a congress, and even if they did, they would not act in the high-minded way the Archbishop proposed. "All Governments (with one exception) are capitalist governments with conflicting interests that are inherent in—*that stick fast to*—the capitalist system, and for which capitalist governments must fight or go under. Mandated territories, oil-fields, cheap native labour, rich natural resources, countries for development of profitable trade and investment of capital—*how can these be shared by agreement?*"

Jowett's devotion to Socialism, his belief in democracy and liberty, led him to understand how workers came to support the war because of their enmity to Nazism. He hated its tyranny from the roots of his being. "By cruel persecution and shameless destruction Hitler has suppressed all the free institutions and organisations which the German workers have built up by labour and sacrifice for their common defence and welfare," he wrote. War would have the effect of uniting the German people behind Hitler, particularly if they feared the peace which defeat would bring; the only way the British workers could assist the German people to overthrow Nazism was by giving the example of social justice and liberty and, "now we are

at war, by demanding that our own Government shall state precisely and definitely what it is fighting for... If the terms of peace were simple, clear and honest, it would be difficult, nay it would be impossible, for Hitler to keep the support of the German people for war.”\*

### *Socialist Tasks in War-Time*

The tasks of Socialists in war-time were defined by Jowett under four heads: (1) Championship of justice for soldiers and their dependants, (2) Maintenance of Workers' Rights and Conditions, (3) Exposure of War-time Finance and Profiteering and (4) Rebuttal of propaganda falsehoods and insistence upon just war aims. The maintenance of civil liberties was not included specifically in these tasks, but in the same article Jowett laid emphasis on this need. "At the end of the last war we had less liberty than we had at its beginning," he remarked and this time the Government had begun even more dangerously. It took the 1914 Government two years to get all the powers finally embodied in the Defence of the Realm Acts, known as DORA, but the 1939 Government had taken all these powers and more *before war had been declared*. The Home Secretary could imprison anyone without trial if he considered it "expedient in the interests of public safety or the defence of the realm," and both news and opinion could be put under complete censorship. DORA contained nothing so drastic.†

Fred devoted himself to the task of exposing propaganda falsehoods. Week by week he corrected lies or half-truths. Early in the war he told how the *Daily Herald*‡ carried a heavily displayed announcement that the previous week's haul of *contraband* by the British navy was 70,000 tons, including 2,100 tons of foodstuffs, 1,300 tons of oils and fats, and 1,000 tons of cereals. A few days later the *Herald* reported that four Danish ships carrying cargoes of butter, bacon and timber had been seized by German warships. "None of these cargoes," said the *Herald*, "is contraband." When the British seized foodstuffs they were contraband; when the Germans seized foodstuffs they were not contraband.

The richest story had its scene in Bradford. The Ministry of Information broadcast to Germany that Field-Marshal Goering and the Nazi leaders had prior to the war been receiving regular supplies of butter from England supplied by a Bradford business man of German origin, and they printed leaflets with the story and loaded planes with them to drop over Germany. Jowett said that there was only one thing to do about this story, and that was to join the German

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\*September 29, 1939.

†September 15, 1939.

‡September 28, 1939.

public in derisive laughter. The fact was that a Bradford citizen of German birth ("as have been many others who have lived usefully and honourably among us, including Mayors and many public benefactors"), a man well-behaved and respected and of some forty years' standing, had before the war sent gifts of butter to relatives and friends in Germany who were in need of it. One of his friends was named Goering. Whereupon the British Ministry of Information jumped to the conclusion that the parcels had gone to the Field-Marshal. "*What ho!*" exclaimed Jowett, mocking for once. "*Good war propaganda! Print it on millions of leaflets! Out with the aeroplanes to let the German people know about it!*"\*

### *Russia Hated More Than Germany*

In the early months of the war the capitalist politicians and press were more anti-Russian than they were anti-German. Indeed, Jowett said with truth, when the war had proceeded three months, that the Soviet Union was regarded as "Public Enemy Number One."† Fred could not justify all that Russia did during this period, but he defended the Stalin Government persistently and passionately against misrepresentation, explained Russian policy as he saw it, and never ceased from warning British workers of the danger of the war being re-directed to an attack on the Soviet Union.

The announcement of the German-Soviet pact on the eve of the war and the Russian invasion of Eastern Poland were the first shocks to public opinion. In Jowett's view Mr. Chamberlain, when he pledged support for Poland, knew that Britain could not give effective assistance, but expected that Russia would fight Germany if Hitler's army crossed the frontier. "In which case," he remarked, "British capitalist Imperialism would score a double victory, for nothing has been more dearly wished for by British Imperialism than the downfall of Socialist Russia." But "Hitler countered this last gambler's throw of Chamberlain by making a non-aggressive pact with his most deep-rooted aversion, the Bolshevist Government. To get this pact Hitler has abandoned Germany's interest in all the Baltic States and made Soviet Russia a very great, if not the greatest, military power in Europe."‡ On the other side, Stalin's intention in signing the pact was "to keep Socialist Soviet Russia out of an inevitable war between the British and German rival imperialist States and to prepare Russia for its own defence, with or without allies, whenever Hitler should decide to strike at Russia and its Socialism."§ Jowett understood Stalin's tactic in invading Poland, but could not entirely endorse it. "Even after making full admission of the claim that Russia has

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\*October 13, 1929.

†December 8, 1939.

‡October 27, 1939.

§October 9, 1942.



strengthened its frontiers and has freed millions of the most impoverished and down-trodden peasants in all Europe from their feudal overlords," he wrote, "I believe that in the long run it will be found that it would have been better for the world if Socialist Russia had remained on the defensive."\*

Nevertheless, Jowett championed the Soviet Union against criticism from both capitalist and Labour quarters. He pointed out that the extension of the Soviet frontiers to the territory inhabited by the White Russians and Ukrainians (before the last war a part of Russia) had prevented the incursion of the Nazi war with all its horrors into this territory. Even the "furiously angry" press admitted that Russia's action had also barred the further progress of the Nazi war machine towards Rumania. As for Labour Party criticism of Russia's action, its leaders ought to remember that for years the Soviet Union persistently and patiently tried to achieve Labour's own policy of "collective security," to find at the finish that she was wanted only "as a possible burly 'chucker-out' in case of the failure of Chamberlain's policy of doing a deal with Hitler to British Imperialism's advantage." Fred was particularly angry with the *Daily Herald* for saying "in a frenzy of war mentality" that "the average Russian's two hates are Poles and Jews." Was the *Herald* unaware that "although Jews were barred even from living in great cities in Czarist Russia, they are now free to live, to work, and to worship anywhere in Soviet Russia and are prominent in Government, industrial and intellectual life?"†

Russia's invasion of Finland was the next shock. Once more Jowett could not endorse the action of the Soviet Union, but his love of Russia was so great that it pained him to utter criticism. "I confess," he wrote, "that I hate to have to say what I think . . . I feel very much as a man feels when someone he believes in has done something he cannot defend and which makes him ashamed. I feel, as an anti-war Socialist, that the Russian Soviet Government by deciding to take by force from Finland what it failed to get by agreement has dishonoured its own cause and ours." But once more he leapt to defend Russia against criticism from Right and Left alike. He held that the agreements which the Soviet Union had reached with the other Baltic States were satisfactory and that Russia's demands on Finland were reasonable. "Soviet Russia has a sound case for closing the gateway through the Gulf of Finland and a short neck of Finnish territory," he insisted. "From past experience and present knowledge Russia has good reason to expect concerted attack, if ever and whenever enemy capitalist nations have an opportunity. . . . It is not for the love of Finnish people or their protection that the British and French imperialist Governments train Finnish naval officers. Nor is it for love of and regard for the welfare of the Finnish people

\*October 27, 1939.

†September 22, 1939.

that a British naval officer, Captain N. C. Moore, D.S.O., is attached to Finland's Ministry of Defence as Adviser." He reminded his readers that the most powerful figure in Finland was ex-Czarist officer Mannerheim, "the Butcher" who had overthrown the Communist Government of Finland in 1919 by the most bloody counter-revolution.\*

Jowett was scathing in his exposure of press misrepresentation of Russia's bombing policy. In reply to the "brazen lie" that Russia had threatened to raze to the ground all the large towns of Finland, he cited the Red Army Order warning Russian airmen that they would be severely punished if they bombed civilians† and, when the *Daily Herald* "sneeringly remarked" that the "only country impressed by Russia's 'humanitarian intentions' is Bulgaria," he retorted that he doubted whether any country but Russia would issue an order to prevent indiscriminate bombing.‡ (When in January the papers stated that 400 Russian planes had "swooped down on Finnish towns and villages, shooting down the fleeing inhabitants with their machine-guns," Jowett pointed out that according to the same reports approximately 45 persons were killed, a "fantastically small figure" if the charge were true.§

Jowett regarded "all this hate propaganda" as preparing British public opinion for a "switch-over" of the war, with Russia as the enemy.|| Never before in his memory had the press been so discredibly and disreputably used to foment war.¶ The propaganda was soon supplemented by action. The British and French Governments hurriedly called a meeting of the League of Nations—the League "which couldn't be induced even to condemn Mussolini's Italy for the rape and torture of Abyssinia"—to outlaw Russia. Meanwhile, the papers pointed out that the new forces which were massing in the Near East "could strike at the Soviet oilfields at Baku;"\*\* arms and men were officially recruited as "volunteers" from Britain and France to fight Russia in Finland (following the example of Germany and Italy in the Spanish civil war);†† and the Swedish and Norwegian Governments were asked to allow 100,000 British and French troops to pass through their territories to Finland.‡‡ These plans were upset

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\*December 8, 1939.

†The Order read: "Once again remember that the Red Army is not fighting the Finnish people, is not fighting the peaceful inhabitants. Not a single bomb on dwelling houses, not a single bomb on the population. Anybody violating this Order will be most severely punished."

‡December 8, 1939.

§January 22, 1939.

||December 15, 1939.

¶February 9, 1940.

\*\**Reynolds*, February 11, 1940.

††February 16, 1940.

‡‡March 22, 1940.

by Sweden and Norway refusing permission for the movement of troops and by Finland making peace with Russia.

"It is now quite clear what was the Allied war policy," said Jowett. "The passage of British and French troops through Sweden and Norway to fight Russia in Finland would not only have brought Russia into the war. It would have forced Sweden and Norway also into the war. *The stage would have been set for war against Russia on two fronts: on its north and north-western frontiers, with British and Allied land forces and with the British navy at Murmansk; and on its southern frontier, with French and British forces, estimated at somewhere near a million in the Near and Middle East, ready to strike against Russia at the oil supplies at Baku and Batum.* This was intended to form the lower jaw of the pincer war movement against Russia." Jowett drew attention to the "openly expressed vexation and disappointment of the Government and all its pro-war supporters because Finland had decided for peace" as "clear proof that other objects than the safety and welfare of the Finnish people were in view."\* His interpretation of events was that the Allies, not regarding Russia, after its delayed break-through in Finland as a serious military opponent, wanted not only to strike at the oil wells in the Caucasus, but to open the backdoor to Germany through the Balkans and so relieve the pressure on the Western Front.

#### *Churchill's Broadcasts on Russia*

Winston Churchill's broadcasts angered Jowett. He listened to three on the subject of Russia. The first was at the time of the occupation of Eastern Poland by the Red Army. Churchill evidently welcomed the fact that the German forces had been blocked on the way to the Rumanian oil wells and hoped that Germany and Russia would come into conflict. Consequently he was amiably respectful to Russia. Churchill broadcast again when the Soviet Union invaded Finland. His expectation that the German army would be tied down in Prussia had been disappointed; Allied strategy now aimed at pushing Norway and Sweden into the war as allies of Finland against Russia. Churchill's tone accordingly changed. He did not even think it necessary to pretend that he wanted Russia to keep out of the war, remarked Jowett. "He bared his teeth and spat venom." The third Churchill broadcast was when Finland, "in spite of all the efforts of the British and French Governments to keep her at war," made peace with Russia. The Finnish way to open a Northern Front was closed, but Britain and France still wanted to drive on to the oil wells of Baku, still wanted to relieve the Western Front by opening up the Balkans. So Churchill heaped contumely on the Soviet Union. "The Soviet Government, in their onslaught upon the

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\*March 22, 1940.

heroic Finns," he said "have exposed to the whole world the ravages which Communism makes upon the fibre of any nation which falls a victim to that deadly mental and moral disease. This exposure of the Russian army and Russian air force has astonished the world and has heartened all the States that dwell upon the Russian borders." Churchill's real intention, in Jowett's view, was "to provoke the Soviet by insult and pin-pricks into giving some excuse for attacking Russia and extending the war."\*

The next step by the Allies was to lay mines round the coast of Norway to prevent German ships carrying iron ore. The Norwegian Government protested, pointing out that three months earlier Britain had signed an agreement expressly stating that all goods, *including contraband*, could be sent to both sides—for Britain as well as Germany was importing Swedish iron ore from Norwegian ports. Jowett had no doubt that the British and French Governments realised that this "was bound to bring the German army into Norway." Indeed, when this happened Winston Churchill referred in the Commons to "the strategic blunder to which our mortal enemy *has been provoked*." Jowett was doubtful whether Hitler's invasion of Norway would prove to be the blunder upon which Churchill was congratulating himself and the nation. "It is a gamble with the lives of men," he wrote, "British, Norwegian, French and German." In conflict with Churchill's hope that not another German ship would reach Norway and that the invading force would be cut off, Jowett warned that "the campaign in Norway may be a very long one." He had no doubt that Churchill still had in mind the plan to relieve the Western Front by opening up a Northern Front. "Deeply disappointed when the Finnish Government's conclusion of peace deprived him of his dearest wish of spreading the war to Russia through Scandinavia, Churchill joyfully regards war in Norway as the next best thing, as a first step to the All Fronts' War planned to spread to Russia and the Balkans, if Russia also can be provoked into a 'strategic blunder'."†

Churchill had got a start with his Northern Front; would the Caucasian and Balkan Front follow? Jowett was convinced it was being prepared. The British diplomatic representatives of all the Balkan States and of Turkey were meeting in London under the chairmanship of Lord Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary; British, French and Turkish Generals were consulting on military matters. "The immediate point of attack in contemplation is Russia," reiterated Jowett. "If Russia resists seizure of her ships by the British navy, or can be provoked into giving an excuse for war, the plans are all ready for action." He quoted "Scrutator" of the *Sunday Times*: "Air raids on Baku from some advance point in Mosul would, if successful, go near ending the war, and would be a *far* less risky operation than an

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\*April 5, 1940.

†April 19, 1940.

attack on the Siegfried Line." He saw this suggested attack as "the first move in a campaign to approach the Balkans and the Rumanian oil fields through Soviet Russia across the northern coast of the Black Sea."\*

It was in this atmosphere of officially propagated antagonism to Soviet Russia—when, according to Jowett, plans for an attack on Russia were in active preparation—that Rudolf Hess, "parachuted out of the blue," descended on Scotland. Later it was generally accepted that Hess had come with a proposal from Hitler that the war should be transformed into an attack on Russia. Jowett suspected this from the first. He surmised that Hitler was in two minds, "balancing between two courses, and that Hess volunteered to find out for certain whether it were possible to make peace and common cause with the ruling classes of Britain, so that Hitler might double-cross Stalin and attack Russia with the support, active or passive, of Britain and America. The object would be to destroy the Socialist Soviet Government of Russia and throw open its vast resources for exploitation by the capitalist system of finance."†

#### *Labour Enters the Coalition*

Meanwhile, in May, 1940, under the influence of the crisis which followed the retreat from Dunkirk, the Labour Party had decided to join the Government of Winston Churchill, who had replaced Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister. Only three votes were recorded in the Commons against the new Coalition—the votes of the I.L.P. Members, James Maxton, John McGovern and Campbell Stephen. Jowett, as these pages have made clear, had a profound distrust of Churchill. How the leadership of the new Premier could be regarded otherwise than with dismay by the Labour Party he failed to understand. He recalled Churchill's irresponsible adventures. There was the adventure of the "Battle of Sydney Street," in 1911, when Churchill, as Home Secretary, mobilised a regiment of soldiers to dislodge two or three fugitives from justice from an East End dwelling; "any one of London's Fire Brigades could have washed them out." There was the Gallipoli adventure of the last war—a "legitimate gamble" Churchill called it—when armies were landed at Anzac Bay to perish in thousands (the cost was stated to be 100,000 lives) before they were withdrawn—"as many as remained of them." There was

\*April 12, 1940. Later, Jowett was able to quote from a special representative of the *News Chronicle* this remarkable reference to General Weygand: "There can, I think, be no harm in revealing what I saw when I went to Syria to see General Weygand, a short while before the collapse of France last year . . . . In most of the French Army Unit Headquarters I visited there was a large-scale map pinned on the walls. On this map a route was marked in red chalk . . . . In every case the marked route was from Syria to the Turkish-Russian border, and beyond to the oil wells and oil port of Baku. That was Weygand's dream and hope." (Quoted 20/6/41.)

†May 23, 1941.

the Russian adventure at the end of the war, when Churchill expended £100 millions in cash and munitions in a vain effort to overthrow the Soviet Revolution and to restore Capitalism. These were among his failures (unless Sydney Street could be regarded as a triumph). One great success, however, Churchill achieved. He led the capitalist forces in the General Strike and insisted on "unconditional surrender" by the workers. Such was the record of the man with whom the Labour Party had entered into partnership. Of one thing the Party could be certain, said Jowett. All their blue-prints of the peace would be regarded as nothing more than "propaganda eyewash" by the gang of capitalist Imperialists who were behind Churchill and who saw in him a fortress for the preservation of their power.\*

Almost simultaneously with Labour's entry into the War Government the death occurred of George Lansbury, who had spent so much of his life urging that Labour should have nothing to do with war. Jowett quoted from Hannen Swaffer's *Daily Herald* column:

"Fate's ironies had an addition yesterday," wrote Swaffer. "The earthly shell of George Lansbury, the beloved pacifist, went to its last resting place.

"On the same day, Ernest Bevin, whose speech drove Lansbury from the leadership of the Labour Party in 1935, moved into Whitehall as Minister of Labour, determined to win a war against which Lansbury had preached in vain.

"And they were talking of Bevin as M.P. for Bow and Bromley in Lansbury's place."

Even Fate, inartistic and indecent as it sometimes is, could not realise this last irony; Bevin became M.P. for Wandsworth. More than once Fred Jowett had been disappointed because Lansbury accepted the restrictions of Labour Party membership, and even of Labour Party leadership, but he was full of admiration of G.L.'s long struggle against poverty and war and paid a glowing tribute to his memory. "I do not believe he preached in vain, although it may seem so now," he wrote. "As the terrible consequences of war madness fall with increasing horror and tragic suffering on the masses of the common people, *revulsion will come.*"†

Germany's invasion of Holland and Belgium and the retreat from Dunkirk were followed by the collapse of France in June, 1940. "The Two Hundred Families who by their financial control over banks and money have been, and are yet, the real rulers of France," wrote Jowett, "have put in office a *Fascist Government* to make peace *because they feared revolution*. Savage repression by their own government and military disasters brought upon them by blind and incompetent leadership, for which masses of French people were butchered in a war for which they were not responsible, produced in France all the conditions likely to create revolution. The Two Hundred Families—

\*April 12, and May 24, 1940.

†May 24, 1940.

Finance, Banking and Big Business—preferred Hitlerism to Communism. This is what happened in France.”\*

Mussolini's declaration of war on Britain followed—a sure sign that the balance of events was now weighted on the German side.

### *The Ethics of Bombing*

Bradford escaped serious bombing, but Fred Jowett never refrained from travelling to London to attend the National Council of the I.L.P. because of fear of air raids. He used to stay with other colleagues from the provinces at an hotel not far from Euston Station, and more than once was there when London was attacked. These were, perhaps, the only occasions when he was thankful for the deafness of old age. One night, after he had gone to bed, bombs began to fall uncomfortably near. His comrades discussed whether they should waken him and take him down to the shelter. They decided against, but they acknowledged afterwards that they had never before felt the strain of a raid so acutely. How could they have excused themselves if the hotel had been hit?

Jowett was reminded by these experiences of the Zeppelin raids of the last war. “Soon after the declaration of war in 1914,” he told, “I stood on the terrace of the House of Commons and watched a German Zeppelin sail gracefully across the sky on its homeward journey after it had dropped bombs elsewhere. Travelling slowly, compared with the speed of today's bombers, one felt the Zeppelin could have made the Houses of Parliament a target for its bombs with a good chance of a direct hit.” The Houses of Parliament, however, were never in danger: only on the way to their homes did Members of Parliament have reason to be nervous. “On one occasion, going home by underground, I became one of what grew to be a densely packed mass of people in Russell Square Tube Station during an air-raid which kept me there over two hours. As every train arrived the crowd increased until I felt I would rather go out and risk the bombs than stay there. The small private hotel where I used to stay is very near two big railway stations, and on several occasions bombs, probably aimed at them, caused some damage and loss of several lives.”

In this war German night bombing of British towns began on a large scale in June, 1940. “This was a real change of policy,” noted the *News Chronicle* Air Correspondent, “for the German Air Staff has always been in favour of precision bombing by day.”† British night bombing on Germany had begun during the preceding month.‡

\*July 5, 1940.

†“*News Chronicle*,” August 26, 1940.

‡There was considerable controversy as to whether Germany or Britain began night bombing. Jowett gave these interesting dates from Liddell Hart: On the night of May 17, 1940, British R.A.F. bombed Hamburg and Bremen at night. The following night Hanover was attacked, and night bombing over Germany was continued in the succeeding weeks. The first night raid by German planes on England took place on June 17, 1940, and continued nightly. (Quoted on Nov. 7, 1941, from “*New Leader*.”)

"And so the war has moved on to its next stage of frightfulness," said Jowett. "All over the land, night after night, death, mutilation, and destruction are expected always to be near us, with ourselves as possible victims."\*

About the absence of adequate shelters Jowett was bitter. After one of his visits to London he wrote: "Last week thousands of people, old and young, were wandering homeless through the streets to find shelter anywhere. In the tube stations it was the same. Up the stairs and along station platforms, in unprotected schools near to what are regarded as military objectives, anywhere under cover where space could be found, they had taken refuge. There was nowhere else to go. Some slept on bare stone, others had spread newspapers or blankets for their beds. For more than two years the need for suitable shelter accomodation for people living in crowded areas has been pressed upon the attention of the Government. It was too expensive. Not enough money . . . Parliament might in all conscience be goaded into action by the fate of these poor homeless refugees from the East End of London."† He quoted a description from *The Times* by Mrs. Corbett-Ashby:

"There are shelters in East London where, by the sole illumination of a hurricane lantern, the visitor picks his steps among human bodies huddled on mud floors, fearful of treading on a human face, and where the wetness of the walls is easier to feel than to see."‡

In contrast he went to Hannen Swaffer:

"Winston was busy at No. 10. His son-in-law (Vic Oliver) was at home preparing new jokes about Hitler for the midnight cabaret, in which people dance during supper in and out between the steel rods that prop up the ceiling. Nearby, behind curtains, are underground beds."§

"*Nero is said to have looked on the city from above it and fiddled whilst Rome was burning,*" commented Jowett. "*To-day the Lords dance.*"

It is not necessary to say that Jowett's sympathy with the victims of bombing extended across the frontiers: he was an internationalist through and through. When the press reported that one hundred thousand fire bombs had been dropped on Düsseldorf, he thought of it as Bradford. "Düsseldorf, when I was there over thirty years ago, was a town similar to Bradford in many ways. Its population was only slightly larger, and its industries were similar. It has grown since then, but it is probably as clean and attractive as ever. The running water through the centre of the town will still be clear, and the people, old and young, strolling through its handsome tree-lined thoroughfares, will be the same kind and friendly people as they were then."|| "The pity of it is," he wrote on another occasion, ' that

\*August 30, 1940.

†September 21, 1940.

‡Quoted November 29, 1940.

§*Daily Herald*, September 17, 1940.

||September 18, 1942.



though these bombs fall with terrifying sound and horrible consequences, they do not come to us all as a call for repentance and for sympathy for all alike, *foreign folk as well as our own folk*. The response they call forth is so often a cry for revenge and greater ferocity." Jowett instanced the report of a raid on military objectives in working-class areas of Berlin: "Good as is the reputation of British airmen, and well deserved as we believe that reputation to be, it is, nevertheless, quite certain that not all the high explosives they discharged crashed on the objectives aimed at. A bomb from a high-flying swift-moving plane has to be discharged for its target when the plane is four miles away from it. Every bomb, hit or miss, spreads destruction all around wherever it falls, and bombs that are aimed at military objectives in Berlin fall in the middle of vast areas of tenement dwellings where working people live *who have a record of stubborn resistance to Hitlerism and Kaiserism*. They, and others of similar class elsewhere in Germany, are the people without whose help Hitlerism can never be destroyed. This is one of the very important things we should remember when the temptation is strong to think evil of folk who are *no more guilty of the horrors of this war than we are*."\*

One cause of hope for humanity Fred found amidst all the horror of the air raids. "Who is there who is not moved near to tears by the everyday accounts of human sacrifice freely and unbidingly given during these orgies of destruction? The hospital porter, for example, who, under a falling crash of masonry, flung himself over a seventeen years old nurse and whose dead body was found later sprawled across the young nurse, who suffered only slight injuries from which she soon recovered. If German news were coming through to us now, giving us a true picture of the war as it affects the lives and doings of the common people—the ordinary people—of Germany, it is certain it would tell daily of similar unbidden sacrifice by ordinary German people. True stories these would be, as ours are, touching the hearts and bringing tears to the eyes of all, friend and foe alike, and giving renewed hope for the future of humanity to all—here and in Germany."†

### *The Blockade of Europe*

If one feature of the war distressed Fred Jowett more than another it was the effect of the blockade of the Continent. His must have been one of the first voices raised against it, for he protested during the first month of the war. "Let us think of the effect on the German people of the officially declared intention of the British Government, with the full approval of the leaders of 'His Majesty's Opposition' (the Labour Party) to *starve the German people, women*

\*September 6, 1940.

†January 24, 1941.

and children, as we did by the blockade in the last war. Not Hitler and Goering, but the German people, the whole civilian population."\* The following week he was denouncing the propaganda of the blockade by leaflet over Germany. "In millions of leaflets dropped from British aeroplanes all over Germany the Government has declared its intention to blockade Germany and deprive its people of all the means of life. The Government has boasted of British and French resources for that purpose." So far from turning the German people against war and Hitler, he had no doubt the effect of the leaflets would be to spread fear and to lead them reluctantly to support Hitler and his methods in retaliation. "It is fear mainly that excites war passion and drives whole nations into supporting war, however diabolical its practice may become."† When the Nazi forces swept over Holland, Belgium, France and Greece, he pointed out that "only by first starving the peoples of these countries" could there be "the faintest possibility of starving Germany" and stressed what a gift of effective propaganda this would be to Nazi Germany.‡

As reports came of the effects of the blockade, he could hardly bear to think of the tragedy in human suffering. There were tears in his words. "The glorified war lords can only reach their goal over the bodies of stricken humanity," he exclaimed as he quoted this description from a *Daily Herald* correspondent in Greece:

"I saw in Athens children lying stiff with cold on the sidewalks, old men dying while people stepped aside to pass them. I saw an old man I knew. He was pushing a pram. It was covered, and I asked him if he had managed to buy some firewood. He lifted the cover. I saw two little boys and a baby girl. They were dead—starved. He was taking them away to burial.

"I saw men and women begging for food from the windows of prison cells. They had been jailed because they had broken the strict laws imposed by the Germans. The food they were given was watery soup. They had no bread.

"I saw a mother and her four children digging into an overturned rubbish can left on the street, and an old man chewing orange peel for food."

News came that in Athens and Piraeus people were dying from hunger at the rate of 200 a day. It was little better in other countries. The former American Ambassador in Belgium reported that "two million young Belgians are threatened with stunted physique, degenerated brains and embittered characters unless relief comes soon." Fred welcomed the Food Relief Campaign which the P.P.U. began and endorsed their arguments. Said Vera Brittain: "These friends and allies (in the Occupied Countries) who shared the misery and terror of our unsuccessful Western and Eastern campaigns are the first to feel the effects of our continental blockade; *the last to feel it*, as the Minister of Economic Warfare has himself admitted, *will be the German armed forces.*" Limited relief, carried in neutral ships,

\*September 15, 1939.

†September 22, 1939.

‡March 14, 1941.

was afterwards permitted to go to Greece; but the Government resisted to the end the appeal for "controlled relief" (preventing German confiscation of the food) for other starving countries. Jowett regarded this as one of the most cruel and calculated crimes of the war.\*

*Beveridge Report: "Capitalism Without Tears"*

Concern for peoples across the frontiers never dimmed Jowett's concern for the people at his own door. Repeatedly he sounded the warning that the blockade was a double-edged weapon; Germany's U-Boats might bring hunger to Britain. There was a period in the war when it was a real danger, and, though that menace passed, though shortage never became starvation, Fred saw that in this country as in Europe "the weakest and most innocent" suffered first and most. He was particularly anxious about the old folk existing on their pensions of 10s. a week. How angry he was when Parliament decided, in March, 1940, that any increase above this meagre amount should depend on the "infamous" Household Means Test! "What about a Means Test for the bankers?" he asked.† When Sir William Beveridge produced his Social Security Report, Jowett was profoundly disappointed by the inadequate provision for the aged. "Sir William may think 24s. a week for single persons and 40s. for married couples are adequate incomes for maintenance, but they are no such thing. The honest truth is that old age pensioners are to be given a raw deal."‡ He described the Beveridge Report as an attempt to achieve "Capitalism without Tears," but he welcomed it nevertheless on two grounds. The first was that it expressed "the vital principle that a social security income has *first claim* on production before wage rates." Always in the past, he pointed out, it had been the recognised practice to keep any social service payment, such as unemployment benefit, *below the lowest wage rates*. "It will be more difficult to maintain that priority now. Wages will be expected to be, and in practice will have to be, *above* social security rates." The second reason why he welcomed the Report was that "it will finally reveal, for all men to see, the root weakness of Capitalism and its financial masters." Beveridge's plan was framed on the assumption that unemployment would not exceed 10 per cent. Jowett did not believe that Capitalism can permanently yield this result. He held that pre-war export trade could not be recovered and that growing productive capacity, so long as it was operated by the present financial system and without a corresponding increase of consumption, would inevitably bring periods of large-scale unemployment. "It will be proved that 'Capitalism without Tears' is impossible," he concluded. "Make way for Socialism!"§

\*January 30, 1942.

†March 14, 1940.

‡December 18, 1942.

§December 11, 1942.

*America and Japan Join In*

In December, 1941, Japan and the United States joined in the war. It became a World War to a fuller extent than the human race had ever known. Jowett had been watching with interest President Roosevelt's progressive preparations to make the U.S. an ally of Britain. Three living men, in his view, had a propoganda influence "greater than has ever been known in all history" — Roosevelt, Churchill and Goebbels. He put Roosevelt first because his task had been the most difficult. "Step by step he had led a nation of 120 millions of people (including a large proportion of people of different origins, among them many Germans only comparatively recently Americanised) from overwhelming determination to avoid all risk of war to the deliberate determination to take every necessary risk of war for the defeat of Germany." By suggestion more than by direct statement, Roosevelt had spread the assumption that American democratic forms of government were in danger through military invasion. That the President genuinely feared the spread of Nazi influence in the United States and in South America Jowett did not doubt, but he believed this fear was of "internal Nazi penetration" rather than of armed attack. The military defeat of Germany was vital for what Roosevelt called "the American way of life," which in reality was "nothing more or less than American capitalist Imperialism."\*

Even before the military intervention of the U.S. Jowett realised that British Imperialism was doomed to become subservient to American Imperialism. As far back as September, 1940, he wrote that "whatever else may exist after this war, exclusively British Imperialism will be completely dead. In its place, if I see the signs aright, British Imperialism is moving to put itself in the protection of the rapidly increasing power of American Imperialism, under the dominating authority of United States Capitalism through which High Finance reigns supreme."† Seven months before America entered the war, he called attention to the speech delivered to the U.S. Investment Bankers' Association by Mr. Virgil Jordan, President of the National Industrial Conference Board. America hoped to prevent the destruction of the British Empire Mr. Jordan said; "if this should not be possible" its purpose would be "to take England's place as heir and residuary legatee or receiver for whatever economic and political assets of the Empire survive." At the end of the war England would "be so impoverished economically that it is improbable that she will be able to resume her dominant position in world affairs . . . . *At best, England will become a junior partner in a new Anglo-Saxon Imperialism*, in which the military and naval strength of the United States will be the centre of gravity. . . . In modern terms of economic

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\*May 2, 1941.

†September 13, 1940.

power as well as political prestige, the sceptre passes to the United States.\* Jowett noted that the City of London appeared to be reconciled to American domination. "British financial money lords are looking to their United States colleagues to save at least the English-speaking world *for* their money systems and *from* Socialism when the war ends."†

As the Japanese forces moved forward swiftly on land, sea and air, Jowett did not fail to remind Britain's rulers "and the money lords who direct their policy on all vital questions from behind the scenes" that they were being challenged by "the creature of their own creation." With justification he referred to the warnings which he himself had sounded thirty-three years ago,‡ when Japanese army and naval officers were trained in British Service schools and British technicians were sent to Tokyo to develop Japan's navy and her armament production. He reminded the supporters of the Government how its Lord Chancellor, Lord Simon—"slim Simon" he was then nicknamed—had endorsed the beginning of the Japanese attack on China in 1931.§ Jowett also recalled the opinion which the Premier, Mr. Winston Churchill, expressed on February 24, 1933:

"British interests required us to keep out of this quarrel which has broken out in the Far East and not wantonly throw away *our old and valued friendship with Japan*. It was to the interest of the whole world that law and order should be established in the northern part of China . . . The condition of China, plunged in a strange combination of Anarchy and Communism, was the cause of boundless misery to her industrious people. *China was in the same state as India would fall into if the guiding hand of England were withdrawn*"

What was the explanation of this attitude of the British ruling class less than ten years ago? "British Imperialism didn't like the Soviet Government," Jowett explained. "In its view, an equally armed anti-Soviet Power ready to stage an 'incident' over the Soviet frontier was *much to be desired*."||

By April, 1942, the Japanese forces had driven the British out of Hong-Kong, Singapore and Rangoon and were threatening India. The peoples of Malaya and Burma had proved indifferent to the fate of the British or had secretly or openly assisted the Japanese. Jowett found good reason for this attitude in a despatch of the Special Correspondent of *The Times*:

"After nearly 120 years of British rule the vast majority of Asiatics were not sufficiently interested in the continuance of this rule to take any steps to ensure its continuance.

"And if it is true that the Government had no roots in the life of the people, it is equally true that the few thousand British residents who made their living out of the country—practically none of whom looked upon Malaya as being their home—were completely out of touch with the people.

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\*May 2, 1941.

†November 29, 1940.

‡See pages 117-9.

§December 19, 1941.

||December 19, 1941.

"British and Asiatics lived their lives apart. There was never any fusion or even cementing of these two groups. British rule and culture and the small British community formed no more than a thin and brittle veneer."\*

### *Sir Stafford Cripps' Mission to India*

Probably some realisation of how the alienated peoples of Malaya and Burma assisted the Japanese advance, negatively if not positively, was behind the decision of the British Government to send Sir Stafford Cripps to negotiate an agreement with the Indian leaders. He offered India self-government *after the war*—in Mr. Gandhi's words, a "post-dated cheque." "Of course it was impossible for India to agree to this after-war promise," commented Jowett, "so Sir Stafford's mission was a failure, as he might have known it would be before he accepted the hopeless task."†

"Liquidation of the British Colonial Empire in the Far East may be regarded as a foregone conclusion, however many lives may be sacrificed in efforts to retain it. The only doubtful question that remains now, in my view, is as to the manner of its liquidation. Is the liquidation to be (for once) *voluntary . . . or by force?*"‡ "When Keir Hardie returned from India thirty-four years ago, the imperialist press was in an uproar against him, and even those more liberal-minded folk whose social conscience was touched by his account of conditions there dismissed his demand for self-government as impracticable idealism. But, if we had acted with even a little of that idealism thirty—or even ten—years ago, Sir Stafford Cripps would not have failed."§

Sir Stafford Cripps had returned from his Ambassadorship in Moscow the most popular figure in British public life. Churchill took him into the Cabinet and made him Leader of the Commons. Following the abortive visit to India, the Prime Minister, in November, 1942, dismissed him from the Cabinet, substituted Mr. Eden as Commons' Leader, and reduced him to the office of Minister of Aircraft Production. Why? Reluctantly, Jowett took the view that Mr. Churchill had reason to think his services were not worth retaining. "The fact is Sir Stafford Cripps has been trying to accomplish the quite impossible task of faithfully serving two *contradictory loyalties*. On public platform and at Church and Youth Congresses he is loyal to his Christian Socialism. As Minister of the Crown and as Member of the House of Commons he is loyal to a system of government which rests on a method of party relations and discipline which is *furtive, tortuous and inevitably demoralising*. Sir Stafford Cripps has a great record of unselfish service in his public career. He freely rendered

\*Date quoted by *Forward*, February 21, 1942.

†November 27, 1942.

‡February 20, 1942.

§April 17, 1942.

professional service to miners at official enquiries into the causes of colliery disasters. But as a victim of divided loyalties he is undoubtedly, *to his credit as I believe*, a failure. For I personally should esteem him far less highly if he could deceive people into thinking he succeeded."

Whilst Sir Stafford Cripps was demoted by Mr. Churchill, Mr. Herbert Morrison was promoted. "Mr. Morrison has no difficulty about divided loyalties," remarked Jowett. "His Socialism is nothing that even Churchill, Chairman of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister of Great Britain, need be afraid of. Whoever could be afraid of a socialist Big Bad Wolf of the London Passenger Board breed? So with all the smartness of a cockney gamin grown into a full-fledged policeman, Mr. Morrison stands four square for discipline on constitutional party lines, for the attainment of the reconstruction and rationalisation of industry *a la* L.P.T.B., which is to him Socialism and to which even Conservative Chairman *plus* Prime Minister Churchill sees no objection."\*

#### *Hitler Attacks Soviet Russia*

In June, 1941, came Germany's attack on Russia. Jowett was moved with sympathy for the people of the Soviet Union and its leaders in this "tragic reverse" for all they had attempted. "It is a hideous business that the young blood of the Soviet Republic, to which already we owe so much in the fields of medicine, exploration and applied biology, should have to turn its courage to ferocity in this hell-cat war. We don't doubt the ultimate result. Whatever happens, the work of the Soviet Revolution can never be wholly undone. And there is good reason to hope that Moscow may be as fatal to Hitler as it was to Napoleon."†

Jowett interpreted Hitler's action as due to fear of shortage of oil. "Tempting as the fertile Ukraine might be for inclusion in the Nazi scheme for a new European order," he wrote, "it does not make sense that Germany should undertake such a formidable task as the conquest of Russia for anything less than a desperate need of oil for a long war." The same oil as the British and French Generals Wavell and Weygand, with their armies of nearly a million men in the Near and Middle East, had planned to seize in certain "unnamed contingencies!" The wheel had turned full circle.‡ Jowett urged his fellow-Socialists to take advantage of the changed public attitude towards the Soviet Union to win British understanding of Russia and appreciation of its socialist regime. "This is the time when it is possible to remove certain mischievously wrong impressions in an atmosphere favourable to their removal." As Russia's army and air force held the German

\*November 27, 1942.

†July 4, 1941.

‡June 27, 1941.

forces, the contempt of their efficiency expressed by Churchill and others at the time of the invasion of Finland was exposed as abysmally stupid. "It is not long since leading public men spoke of Russia's five year plan for industrialisation as though it were a project for travelling to the moon in a rocket," remarked the *News Chronicle*—"yet theirs is the only mechanised army in Europe which can face Hitler's panzers."\* Jowett was stirred to hope by the growing recognition of Russia's status, but he warned that antagonism to the U.S.S.R. continued in the ruling class. "It would be the greatest of all possible mistakes to ignore the existence of a very large number of people in official and influential positions here and in America who hate Soviet Russia and all it stands for. They are not genuinely supporting Russia against German aggression; during the years immediately preceding the war they aimed to make Russia the victim of German aggression. Russia to deliver hammer-blows on Germany—Yes. But the Russian Federation of Soviet Socialist Republics to utterly defeat Nazi Germany—No, a thousand times No!" He quoted Colonel Frank Knox, United States Navy Secretary, who had declared that a long war between Russia and Germany would be "generally advantageous to the British and ourselves." He believed that Ministers, Government officials, Party leaders and, most important of all, financiers whispered privately "off the record" what Colonel Knox had said publicly. "There they are, and in key positions on both sides of the Atlantic. They will show their hand—and their teeth—when it suits them."†

Jowett gave three instances of this anti-Sovietism in high quarters. The first was the appointment of Mr. R. H. Bruce-Lockhart as Deputy Under-Secretary to Anthony Eden—the same Bruce-Lockhart who was once sentenced to death by the Bolsheviks for espionage and whose name in Moscow, according to A. J. Cummings, "must be mud." The second was the granting of a peerage to General Ironside, who led the British army against Soviet Russia at Archangel in 1918. "This commander of an abortive invasion has chosen, as if to attract special attention in Russia to his anti-Soviet record and apparently without objection by the Government, a Russian title—he is now Baron Ironside of Archangel!" The third instance was the peerage bestowed on Sir Robert Vansittart, the leading British opponent of the view which the Russians were stressing at this stage of the war that there was a distinction between the Nazis and the German people.‡

#### *Stalin Distinguished Between Hitler and Germany*

Stalin and Molotov were both emphasising that Russia's object was to destroy not Germany but "Hitlerite" Germany, and Jowett con-

\*October 21, 1941.

†July 11, 1941.

‡July 25, 1941.



tinually rejoiced. The hope of Europe lies in a Peace Conference which will make the same distinction, he commented.\* In February, 1942, Stalin issued an Order of the Day which Fred described as "a blast of fresh air blown into a foul atmosphere." He quoted it at length:

"To say that the Soviet Army's object is to exterminate the German people is a stupid lie. The army's object is to drive the German invaders from our shores.

"Probably that will result in expelling and destroying Hitler's clique. We should welcome such a result. But it would be ridiculous to identify Hitler's clique with the German people and the German State. History teaches us that Hitlers come and go, but the German people and the German State remain.

"The Red Army has and can have *no racial hatred* for other peoples, *including the German people*. It has been brought up in the spirit of equality of all peoples and races, in the spirit of respect for the rights of other nations."

Jowett remarked that this Order of the Day was probably unique among the declarations of national war leaders in its generosity towards an enemy people.†

The prospect of Russian influence on the Peace was one of the major reasons why Jowett welcomed the growing hold which the Soviet Union gained on the imagination of the British people. He wanted to canalise this enthusiasm, because he was fearful that its Allies would prevent the realisation of Russia's socialist intentions at the Peace Conference. "Soviet Russia will be in danger of losing a Socialist Peace, even for herself, unless she is supported by mass public opinion in this country," he wrote. "This is necessary to stop the American and British capitalist Governments *double-crossing* the Soviet Government and attempting to pull the linchpin out of Russia's socialist organisation. It may be confidently predicted that the financiers behind New York's Wall Street and London's Bank of England will have their plans prepared for sabotaging Russia's Socialism and preserving and, if possible, extending their dominant power over governments and peoples."‡ He believed that Russia's Socialism might be in greater danger at the Peace Conference than it had been since Mr. Churchill's attempt, in league with counter-revolutionary White generals in 1919, to restore anti-socialist rule in Russia.§ He was thrilled when, early in 1941, the British Trade Union delegation in Moscow agreed to an eight point declaration with representatives of the Russian Trade Union Movement. Would these, the two greatest working-class organisations in the world, join in a united Anglo-Russian demand for an international socialist peace? Jowett had no

\*February 6, 1942.

†February 27, 1942.

‡November 14, 1941. In this article Fred Jowett expressed his deep disappointment that his old friend, Mr. Middleton Murry, seemed on the whole "to prefer Hitler's Nazism to Soviet Socialism."

§September 4, 1942.

doubt about the Russians, for they were not merely *members* of socialist organisations, but *active participants* in establishing "The Socialism of a Sixth of the World." He was hopeful about British Trade Unionists—"that there is a mass movement of opinion among them favourable to a joint demand for an international socialist Peace is beyond doubt"—but he was doubtful about the leaders. "This is no time for British leaders of working-class organisations to restrain themselves. It is time for them to call for an international socialist peace. The truth concerning Socialist Russia which its defence has revealed has amazed the world. Now is the opportunity for proving that Socialism can do for the British people and all peoples what Socialism has done for the peoples of the U.S.S.R. Why cannot the official leaders of the British working-class, political as well as industrial, speak the socialist message to which their people will now surely respond?"\*

#### *Policies for Peace*

From this point onwards a development took place in Jowett's Peace policy. In the earlier stages of the war, before mass opinion began to move, before Soviet Russia was involved, he had advocated the stopping of the war by negotiation between the existing Governments. That seemed the only possibility. Now he began to speak in terms of a People's Peace, a Socialist Peace. He realised, of course, that this meant a change of government in Britain. He declared that President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, and "the British Government supported by its three-headed Party Caucus Parliament" neither intended nor desired to apply the Atlantic Charter. Peace aims must be stated in definite terms, and must be *supported by example*, to enable "men of all lands to live out their lives in 'freedom from fear and want.' In short, a Socialist Peace."†

Earlier he had emphasised the need to get the Government to state its Peace Terms, but now, particularly after Mr. Churchill's declaration that the Atlantic Charter would not be applied to the British Empire, he felt that it was hopeless to expect the Government to define aims which would speed peace. "To make known to the German people terms of a Peace they need not fear, and to give firm assurance of the absolute veracity of those terms by example of our own adherence to them, would be the very best war strategy, as well as the very best approach for *peace*," he wrote. "But, alas! the British people are cursed with a Government that will make no such peace offer. Britain's Prime Minister, Churchill, has in effect told the whole world that the Atlantic Charter is not for peoples east of Suez, and that what British Imperialism now owns it means to hold."‡

\*October 31, 1941.

†February 13, 1942.

‡September 20, 1942.

For a time Jowett believed that the realisation of a Socialist Peace was possible. "Russia's defence of its Socialist State and demonstration of the real truth about its achievement after more than twenty years of worldwide circulation of lies and misrepresentation is giving hope and encouragement for the establishment of the Socialist way of life in other lands."\* He advocated an appeal to the German and other peoples "over the heads of Hitler and his Nazi Government" by a Government which spoke for a "New Britain—a Britain that gives freedom to all its dependent peoples, a Britain that has dethroned its Money Kings, a Britain that seeks no foreign trade except in fair exchange of commodities for mutual benefit, a Britain that is abolishing poverty and all evils due to poverty."† Ten months later, however, Jowett became less hopeful. He emphasised the power which was in the hands of capitalist financiers. "There are many signs of shattered belief in the capitalist system and its complete failure to abolish poverty in a world of abundance," he reiterated. "These signs come from hitherto unexpected quarters—religious and secular; they are encouraging." But—all the most important key positions for control of finance, production and distribution were in the hands of Big Business, and they would be there when the war ended and *would take some shifting*.‡ He rejected the view that the war could be ended by the revolt of the continental peoples at the call of a Socialist Britain. Not only was Capitalism too firmly entrenched—Labour was too deeply compromised. Nor did he see the possibility of Peace by a socialist revolution in Germany and other European countries; he did not think the peoples held in the grip of Nazi and Fascist armed force could rise successfully.§ Therefore Jowett was led to fall back on a peace which was less than socialist in its full sense.

"It will not be peace by way of world revolution to establish Socialism," he said, "or a European revolution to establish Socialism. If for no other reason, that cannot be because we cannot hope soon enough to give proof of socialist sincerity by example. *But we can guarantee good faith by getting a government that would voluntarily liquidate its own Empire by giving full right of self-determination to all its own subject peoples, a government that would end the present system of financial domination at home and abroad, a government*

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\*December 5, 1941.

†December 12, 1941. It will be noticed that Jowett always emphasised the importance of example. He welcomed Liddell Hart and J. B. Priestley as allies in this. Commenting on Priestley's famous Sunday Post-Script broadcasts, Jowett said: "News of the sweeping away of evil things in our own homeland would be worth broadcasting. Goebbels would be deprived of his most effective war weapon and Lord Haw-Haw would lose his sting. This, the trumpet-call of real democracy, telling of wrongs righted and inequalities removed, would be effective as peace propaganda. *Nothing else will.*" (January 31, 1941.)

‡October 30, 1942.

§October 2, 1942.

*that would demonstrate its solidarity with the common people everywhere by allowing food to reach them—such a government might rally the peoples of all Europe in support of its peace offer, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. That would get our feet on the better way.*"\* What kind of peace offer would that involve? Jowett insisted that it must include five points: (1) Just territorial provisions, (2) Exclusion of food from contraband, (3) Self-determination by all peoples, including India and subject peoples in the Empire, (4) Pooling of the world's resources for the mutual benefit of all peoples, and (5) Exchange of goods between nations without dependence on bankers' loans.†

### *Jowett Still Had Hope During War*

The one thought which gave Jowett any hope during these war years was the conviction that the common peoples of all countries, of Germany no less than of Britain, desired nothing more deeply than to live in peace, that they hated war, were misled into it by events (coloured by propaganda) outside their immediate control, and were kept in it only by fear (again fostered by propaganda) of the consequences of defeat. He was greatly impressed by a book, "The Last Train from Berlin," written by William Shirer, an American journalist, trained to be objective, immediately after the U.S. declared war on Germany, and often used to quote it. This passage for example:

"They (the German civilians) have detested this war from the moment it broke out, and they, the people, have been willing to end it at any juncture . . . . On the few occasions on which the end appeared to be in sight they have been as gleeful as children."

Best of all Fred liked this passage, because it was on the lines of his own positive policy:

"The mass of the people (of Germany) have realised that the Nazis are not a good thing, but what else is there? They are open to alternatives, but nobody offers any.

"The only alternatives they know are:—Win with the Nazis and save themselves from the horrors of defeat at the hands of a world which hates them, or lose with the Nazis and suffer those horrors.

"A fate apart from the fate of Nazism is contained in none of our promises nor our propaganda—and so the German people fight and offer their lives to save their families—and incidentally the Nazis—from total destruction; and they work their hands to the bone to make the guns the Nazis need. And the war will go on for a needless number of years because the German people are afraid . . . .

"I suggest giving the German people something more important than their lives to lose—namely, a better place in a new and better world—and I will wager anything that the European war will be over within a year after we have adopted and carried out the scheme."‡

\*September 25, 1942.

†August 16, 1940, April 3, 1942, and October 2, 1942.

‡Quoted by Jowett, September 4, 1942.

*The "Poison" of Lord Vansittart*

Instead of this policy being pursued, Jowett saw that British statesmen were increasingly adopting the "hateful and poisonous" view of Lord Vansittart that the German people and their Nazi rulers were indistinguishable. He was disgusted by a speech of Lord Halifax, "the Prime Minister's most trusted overseas Minister," delivered in America in June, 1942, in which the British Ambassador declared for the punishment of the German people as well as the Nazi Government. "Such speeches, given world-wide publicity, make an early ending of the war impossible, and they also make it practically certain that even if we win the war we shall lose the peace."\* Jowett used to picture how Dr. Goebbels would gloat over the propaganda value of the utterances of British spokesmen. He made a collection of them, of which these are a few examples:

*Viscountess Simon*: "I want Germany wiped off the face of the earth"†

*Maj.-Gen. Sir Ernest Swinton*: "The sooner we realise that in a matter like this war there are no 'good Germans' the quicker we shall win the victory.‡

*Winston Churchill*: "There are no less than seventy million malignant Huns, some of whom are curable and some killable."§

"As always when war has once begun," commented Jowett, "the contest grows more bitter both spiritually and materially, and the way to peace becomes more difficult. At first the people were told that it was *not* the German people, but *only Hitler* and his *Nazi Government* that the Allies were fighting. Thus the deceitful first steps were taken to delude well-meaning people into supporting the war. Now the time has arrived when it is necessary to drop the pretence and begin the hate-the-enemy campaign. . . . This is the spirit which is being deliberately fomented to prevent the growth of the natural and human desire for peace." Jowett saw that the hate campaign not only made the prospect of peace more remote, but doomed any hope of a peace that would endure.||

Nevertheless, Fred had hope. The war might go on for years, it might end in a vicious imperialist peace; but underneath were the peoples, masses of common folk, workers and peasants, who normally had no feelings of enmity towards other nations, who were typically friendly, desiring no more than to live happily in return for useful labour. The opponents of war might be swept aside in unpopularity for a time, but their day would come when normal, decent thoughts and feelings returned. "Let me state clearly again my belief that war is not only morally wrong, but it fails in the end to achieve its object,"

\*June 12, 1942.

†Quoted June 12, 1942.

‡Quoted May 10, 1940.

§*The Times*, April 27, 1941.

||May 10, 1940.

he wrote. "*Always within my time it has destroyed the influence of men and parties who have supported it.*"

"Mr. Lloyd George, who had to escape disguised as a policeman through the streets of Birmingham when he opposed the Boer War, was followed and trusted by the majority of his fellow-countrymen for years afterwards.

"He was Prime Minister and on top of the world when the last war was won. He and the Liberal Party he once led are now a mere fragment in Parliament.

"Ramsay MacDonald, the man most hated for his opposition to the last war, became Prime Minister of the first Labour Government with Philip Snowden, who also opposed the war, as his Chancellor of the Exchequer.

"There were 85 Irish Nationalists in the last Parliament before the last great war. They supported the war. At the following election, 71 Sinn Fein Members were elected for Ireland and the old Irish Nationalist Party, of honourable and glorious memory, practically disappeared.

"When this war ends . . . masses of ex-service men and workers, no longer wanted for destructive warfare, *will ask what good the war has done—and who has won it, anyhow.*"\*

So much Fred Jowett wrote in the first days of 1940. In the last days of 1943, two months before he died, he drew the author's attention to this passage and insisted with vigorous gesture and throbbing voice that the opportunity of International Socialists would come again. Deliberately employing his native doric, as was his habit when he wanted to give his words personal emphasis, he added: "*Sitha lad, thou does't better wi't chance nor we did.*"

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\*January 12, 1940

## CHAPTER XXI.

## "THE GUILTY THIEVES OF EUROPE"

Did readers notice the rather unusual final clause in Jowett's Peace Terms given in the last chapter? It called for the freeing of international trade from the bondage of bankers' loans. Jowett traced a direct link between capitalist financial policy and war. "It is because the great outstanding fact of 'starvation in the midst of plenty' is neglected or deliberately evaded by peoples and parties that the world is in such an awful mess to-day," he declared. "*It is to avoid the necessity of distributing the 'plenty' that the capitalists of every industrial nation are desperately striving against each other to sell abroad goods which their own people at home are not allowed to consume.* 'Starvation in the midst of plenty' is the root evil from which come Imperialism and War."\* One of his favourite quotations was from Ruskin's "Fors Clavigera," written as long ago as 1871 :

"Occult theft—theft which hides itself even from itself and is legal, respectable, and cowardly, corrupts the body and soul of man to the last fibre of them. And the guilty Thieves of Europe, the real sources of all deadly war in it, are the capitalists—that is to say, people who live by percentages on the labour of others, instead of by fair wages for their own."

We have seen already how important Jowett regarded the role of finance in social and international affairs. During the war he developed his views on these matters to their furthest point; indeed, it would be hardly too much to say that they occupied first place in his thinking about political and economic matters.

All through his political life Jowett placed primary emphasis on the redistribution of the national income. He regarded the recognition of the first claim of the worker on wealth as the central principle of Socialism. In earlier years he held that the taxation of the incomes of the rich and the redistribution to the poor of the amount so raised through the extension of social services was the method to apply this principle. In later years he urged that the taxation of the rich should be supplemented by the distribution of *State-issued money to the extent of the productive capacity of the nation*. He advanced his theory of the socialisation of the national income to the theory of the socialisation of credit.

It was not until the mid-thirties that Jowett expressed these views in writing, but he had been considering Social Credit ideas for some years. The author remembers a conversation at the House of Commons in 1931 when Fred urged that serious examination should be made of an idea advocated by monetary reformers of a "National

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\*September, 18, 1936.

Dividend," to be distributed to every individual in the State in accordance with the nation's productive ability.

### *How Production was Destroyed*

It was the economic crisis of 1929-32 which led Jowett to think out this subject thoroughly. The capitalist reaction to the crisis was to limit production and to cut down wages and social services because the national income was falling. Jowett argued that the socialist way was to increase the incomes of the masses of the people so that the demand for production would be extended. "The reply of the Labour Government to the bankers' demand for economy cuts should not have been agreement to the Means Test and savage reductions in the spending power of the working-class," he wrote. "The reply should have been to increase the demand for goods and services by giving people the means to spend more."\* He pointed out that the financiers had attempted to solve the problem of the gap between greater productive power and less purchasing power, not by expanding purchasing power to absorb increased production, but by restricting production to the level of purchasing power. Deliberate destruction was practised on a large scale in an effort to maintain profits by limiting supplies instead of increasing demand.

Two million acres of land passed out of ploughed cultivation in Britain between 1918 and 1938, and 250,000 workers passed from agriculture to unemployment or less essential occupation. Shipyards were dismantled, ships broken up, and machinery knocked to bits to be sold as scrap-iron—much of it to Germany and Japan for munitions! Millions of pounds' worth of cotton machinery was destroyed and the remaining machinery was worked only to 50 per cent. of its capacity. In the woollen and worsted industry not more than half the plant was worked. Trawlers were prohibited from fishing on certain days of the week. In one part of the world or another, herrings, pigs, milk, fruit, tea, coffee, wheat and other foodstuffs were destroyed in vast quantities or a limit placed on the quantities allowed to be produced. The World Economic Conference, faced by the "economic blizzard," concluded an agreement between the wheat-growing countries to limit the production of wheat. International agreements were also reached to limit the production of iron, tin and rubber. In Britain import quotas were imposed to limit supplies of bacon, beef and mutton. A law was passed to prevent surplus milk being sold cheaply, except for export or to factories for the manufacture of cheese, chocolate, buttons and umbrella handles. Only medium-sized potatoes could be sold; farmers were fined for selling them if they weighed more than a lb. each!† Thus artificial scarcity was

\*Mr. J. Benstead, General Secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, put the same point neatly at the Trades Union Congress, 1944, when he said that it had been "a major blunder in 1931 to starve the patient instead of feeding it."

†July 16, 1937; November 18, 1938; and September 27, 1940.



created to meet the reduced incomes of the peoples, instead of the incomes of the peoples being increased to enjoy the possible abundance. Thus poverty was aggravated in the midst of plenty.

"The right way to absorb increased production is to increase the spending power of the masses of the people—that is, to pour money into the homes of the people," insisted Jowett. "This policy would clear off surplus goods and create demand for more goods."\*

Jowett argued that the solution of the problem of unemployment was "for the Government itself to issue money as freely and liberally in peace-time for payment of wages as it has done for working on armaments in war-time, issuing the money, not through the banks as debt, but as national money, equated to the value of available goods and services to prevent inflation."†

#### *Distributing Money According to Productive Power*

He was aware of the danger of inflation and did not advocate the limitless distribution of State currency notes. He put the matter clearly. "There is inflation when more money has been issued than represents the previously established value (in terms of money) of goods available for purchase. In other words, if the production of goods has reached its limit, the only effect of increasing the amount of money available for purchase is increased prices, that is inflation. *Inflation is not, and cannot be, caused in any country by issuing money corresponding to the value of labour and materials available for production.* But if more money is issued by any country than there are labour and materials to create value for, then prices must rise."‡ He gave an instance from the First World War. "There came a time during the last Great War when so large a proportion of workers were either on military service or employed in armament industries that all employable labour was absorbed and the maximum production of necessary goods was reached by the remaining available labour. Thereafter, increased Government expenditure *increased prices* because the issue of money *ceased to be related to the production of useful goods and services.*"§

Accordingly, Jowett was always careful to make the qualification that, to keep its value steady, money should be issued and distributed only *according to the increasing power to produce.* The standard of life of the people would then rise with every advance in production.||

He wanted to transfer the function of issuing currency from the

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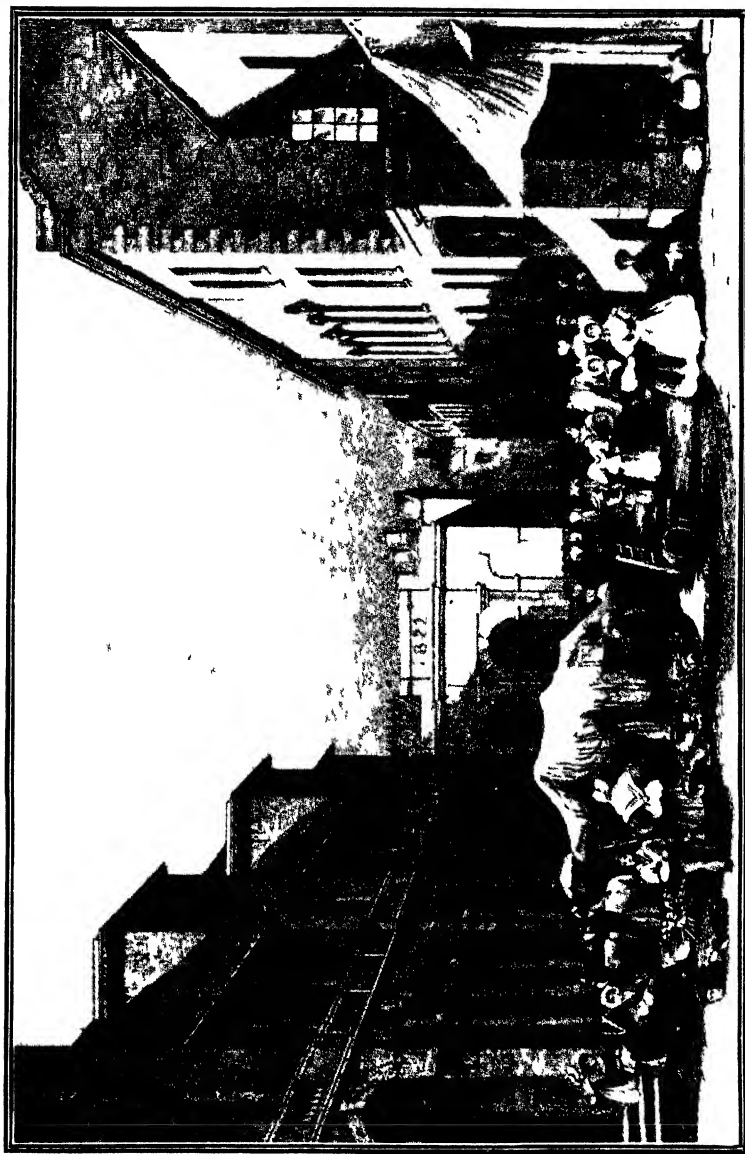
\*Jowett did not live long enough to read the Government's White Paper on full employment published in 1944 or to note how generally his view had become accepted that expansion rather than restriction is the cure for unemployment. He would still have remained critical, however, of the manner in which it is proposed to apply his principle.

†Letter to the Duke of Bedford, October 17, 1941.

‡October 18, 1940.

§July 21, 1939.

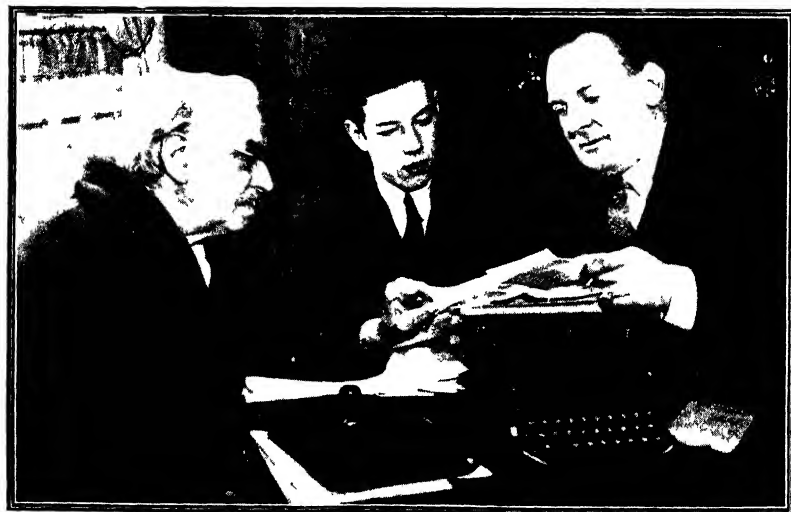
||March 7, 1941.



GUERNSEY MARKET HALL, BUILT "WITHOUT MONEY," IN 1822  
*This is a reproduction of an old print of the Market Hall of St Peter Port, Guernsey  
Jocett quoted it as an example of how indebtedness to banks can be avoided*



JOWETT AT I I P JUBILEE CONFERENCE, 1943  
*The Conference was appropriately held at Bradford, the  
 birth place of the I I P — Y. Maxton greeting Jowett*



ELECTION FOUGHT WITHOUT THE CANDIDATE  
*Jowett was nominated for East Bradford in 1935, although he was temporarily ill  
 Percy Williams, who led the campaign, is consulting with the candidate. Between  
 them is Jowett's grandson*

Bank of England to the State, and to end the dependence of the nation on the joint stock banks and financial houses for loans. He advocated this not only as a means to end “poverty in the midst of plenty” but in order to destroy the evil power of the banks over national policy. “The money lords who control the supply of money through the banking system (at the centre of which stands the Bank of England) also control the purposes for which money can be supplied,” he wrote. He recalled the instances of the destruction of the second Labour Government and the Blum Government in France by the financiers and added others. He instanced New Zealand. The Labour Government had not only vastly enlarged its social services; it had taken steps to prevent the internal value of its money being driven down, among them the limitation of imports of unnecessary goods. This policy upset stock brokers, bankers and Big Business men in Britain, and the bankers set out to sabotage it. They had an early opportunity. The New Zealand Government wished to negotiate the renewal of a loan of £17 millions from the City. Mr. Montagu Norman, Governor of the Bank of England, thereupon informed Mr. Walter Nash, New Zealand’s Finance Minister, that the new loan could not be raised even at a higher rate of interest than was paid on the old loan! “You can only have our money if you pursue a policy to our liking,” he said in effect.

Jowett gave another illustration from the experience of local authorities, “bent almost to breaking point under loads of bank-created debts.” In order to avoid heavy interest charges for overdrafts, a number of authorities gave municipal bills as securities for short term loans. The discount-houses deposited these bills with the banks as security at  $\frac{3}{4}$  per cent. instead of the 3 or 4 per cent. which the banks had charged the local authorities for direct loans. The banks were not having that! Their Clearing Committee announced that in future the banks would not accept municipal bills as security unless they were eligible for discount at the Bank of England.\* “This means that Montagu Norman and the Bank of England are determined to maintain the bankers’ right to get the people in pawn locally as well as nationally,” commented Jowett.†

Taking the view that currency should reflect production, Jowett was of course opposed to the gold standard. A swindle he called it, a “swindle” to enable the bankers to retain their hold on peoples and industry.‡ In 1931 the banks were faced with bankruptcy be-

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\*The Munich crisis was used to impose this decision. According to Douglas Jay, City Editor of the “Daily Herald,” the bankers exploited the urgent needs of the local authorities. The discount houses called in loans from municipalities just at the time when they had to negotiate further loans to meet new expenditure on A.R.P. preparations and similar war activities. (Quoted by Jowett July 21, 1939.)

†June 23, 1939.

‡September 18, 1936.

cause they had not enough gold to meet the withdrawal of foreign deposits. At their command, the Government economised ruthlessly at the expense of the workers and the unemployed; but even this did not save the gold standard. Britain dropped it in October, 1931.\* Nevertheless Mr. Montagu Norman continued to plot for the re-establishment of an international money system based on gold. "As there is not anywhere near enough gold in the world to exchange for all the pounds, dollars, marks, francs and other money units in circulation and recorded in ledgers," remarked Jowett, "and as bankers and financiers control the issue of money and therefore can *make money units scarce or plentiful in relation to gold at their discretion*, it follows that, under the gold standard system, bankers and financiers *control industry* and impose their policies in countries where their money system prevails."†

### *Why Germany Didn't Go Bankrupt*

During the years which preceded the war, and the earlier war years, one question was frequently asked regarding the Nazi regime: How could it spend so many millions on war preparations and war without going bankrupt? Indeed, on the eve of the war Germany appeared to be in a better financial position than Britain. With a population of over eighty millions Germany had a national debt of only a little over £2,000 millions, whilst Britain with approximately half the population had a national debt of over £8,000 millions. *The Times* reflected the perplexity in the public mind:

"The Nazi Government, succeeding to a bankrupt German Treasury, has been able, without any noticeable damage to the internal value of the currency, to set to work millions of unemployed and to build up armaments and reserves of war materials on a colossal scale besides carrying out a grandiose programme of public works. The achievement has been so surprising that for a long time outside critics were inclined to regard it as an optical illusion . . . , which would soon fade away to give place to another collapse even grimmer than that which followed the post-war inflation. As time went on, these expectations, like similar predictions in the case of Russia, obstinately refused to be realised . . . ."‡

What was the explanation? Jowett found it in the fact that Hitler had severely restricted the power of the German financiers. "Hateful as are the militarist methods of Hitlerism, its cruelties and its despotism," he wrote, "it has to be recognised that for the devilish purpose of war Hitler has ruthlessly scrapped much of the bankers' money—and debt-creating system."§ *The Daily Herald* spoke of Dr. Schacht's financial administration of Germany as though it were supernatural:

\*October 2, 1936.

†December 6, 1940.

‡October 12, 1940.

§July 19, 1940.

"He did what everybody said was impossible. He financed tremendous expenditure on armaments with virtually no gold reserve, with no power of raising loans abroad, with Budget revenues almost exhausted, and without inflation. In the cause of militarism and armaments Dr. Schacht turned his financial talents to the performance of financial 'miracles' which—it is significant to note—no banker has ever been willing to attempt in the cause of peace and plenty."\*

Jowett objected to the description of Dr. Schacht's methods as "miracles." "It is no miracle," he said, "to use State credit for the issue of money for public expenditure without getting into debt to bankers and financiers."† Both Germany and Italy, he pointed out, were controlling their currency and were co-ordinating their new money systems. Reich Finance Minister Funk and the Italian Minister for Foreign Trade, Ricardi, met in Berlin and linked their currencies—the mark and the lire—into one system. "This," they reported, "corresponds to the principles of the two closely connected revolutionary movements, *in which values are no longer decided by the percentage of gold cover available, but by the productive capacity contained in the working strength of the nation.*" Jowett had no illusions about Nazi and Fascist use of State money. He deplored not only its direction to the purposes of armaments and war, but the accompanying Gestapo, the suppression of democracy, the repression of working-class organisations and the socialist movement, the concentration camps, the rule by gangsterism. "Hitler is taking no risk of being thwarted of his imperialist militarist plans by interference of international financiers," he summed up. "But think what could be done to bring happiness and content to the people of a nation such as Germany, if all that has been done to build up a military dictatorship had been done for 'peace and plenty' . . . And think what could be done for the people of this country (he was writing early in 1939) if there were in office a Government determined, *for the sake of the commonweal and not for militarist Imperialism*, to deal as faithfully and effectively with bankers and other vested interests as the Nazi and Fascist dictators do to establish and maintain their power over the lives and liberties of the common people!"‡

#### *Nazi Challenge to Bankers in Foreign Trade.*

It was not only in internal affairs that the Nazi regime challenged the bankers and their system; more serious to the bankers of the City of London and New York was its challenge to their profitable practices in international relations. Dr. Schacht and his colleagues eliminated the bankers altogether by introducing the method of barter, of exchange of goods for goods without calling on the costly services of financiers for loans and credits. "It does sometimes happen,"

\*January 21, 1939.

†January 27, 1939.

‡January 27, 1939.

remarked Jowett, "that even imperialist capitalist States are *driven through mixed motives* to adopt methods that are fundamentally sound—Hitler's Germany was so driven when, *with no gold or other securities on which to base its currency to conduct trade with foreign countries through banks*, it started to trade without gold and independent of bankers' loans by means of a modernised system of barter—goods for goods, value for value."\* When the Nazi financial representatives began to offer the peasants of the Balkans manufactured goods in exchange for their grain and agricultural products, the British Government, reflecting the alarm of the City, made the counter-offer of guarantee of large bankers' loans to finance the purchase of British goods; a fierce conflict for the trade of the Balkans followed and soon it began to spread to other parts of the world. American financiers also became alarmed, and Jowett held that it was fear of Germany's new form of competition which led them to swing over from the "cash and carry" policy of assisting Britain to an open "join the war" policy. The subsequent "lend-and-lease" was in part an application of the barter principle, and Canada and the U.S. afterwards began to exchange goods without the use of money. But these were regarded by American financiers as temporary war-time devices: one of the "freedoms" which they entered the war to maintain was the freedom of Finance to boss the world. Jowett quoted Alistair Cook, the American broadcaster: "primarily America vastly prefers to see a post-war Europe dominated by a British Empire *and a gold standard* rather than a world dominated by a German Empire and *the barter standard* its slave labour could enforce."†

The gold standard was of immense importance to American financiers because 75 per cent. of all the previously mined gold in the world was hoarded in the U.S. It was being safely kept for its dominating function in the post-war world *buried in underground* cave strong-rooms in the State of Kentucky! Jowett made this the subject of an outspoken article prior to America entering the war. "For a series of years," he wrote, "the United States has been exchanging real wealth (useful raw materials and manufactured goods) for gold to bury underground. Should the system prevail of *representing values by the productive capacity of nations and not by gold*, and should it be applied at once to 40 per cent. of the trade of the world and later be extended to include trade in South America (as Mr. Hoover and United States financiers fear), then all the gold buried as treasure in the United States would become *practically worthless except for trinkets and ornaments*. The financial system based on bankers' credit loans, which is the keystone of American as well as of British Capitalism, would fall in debt-smothered ruins.

"It may be regarded as certain, therefore, that financial interests

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\*March 28, 1941.

†January 10, 1941.

in the United States are keen for America joining the war. Underlying whatever may be the immediately disclosed object, the real object will be to defend the American and British system of finance and maintain internationally the practice of regarding gold as a measure of value. Seventy-five per cent. of the world's gold, in the vaults of Kentucky, is weight in the scales of this decision."

Jowett foresaw that the declared reason for the U.S. entering the war would be Japanese aggression, but he remarked that Japan had been "carrying on its war of aggression of unrestrained barbarity in China for the last three years without fear of American or British intervention on that account." But, as Mr. Hoover had stressed, Japan was striving for hegemony over China, and Japan's purpose was mainly financial control. "If Japan can get its money system (which, as in Germany and Italy, is regulated according to productive capacity and not in relation to silver or gold) recognised and practised all over China, *then Japan will control China and its trade.* It is a fight for the Japanese Yen against the Chinese Yuan, and if the Japanese Yen becomes the recognised money unit, Chinese silver will cease to count as value for money, and *the barter system of trade will oust all foreign financial interests, British as well as American.*"\* Jowett anticipated a big effort by American and British financiers to restore the gold standard to full operation (as before the financial crisis of 1931) when the war concluded. He drew attention to the secret activities for this purpose credited to Mr. Montagu Norman on behalf of the Bank of England and British financiers.† Even if Britain did not openly return to the gold standard, he expected it to be linked to gold through a tie-up with American finance. "Such a tie-up would mean perpetual poverty in slavery to usury for the British people."‡

#### "Equality of Sacrifice" During War?

One of the features of war-time finance which most angered Jowett was the pretence that it reflected "equality of sacrifice." He protested vigorously when Sir John Simon, then the Chancellor of the Exchequer, used the phrase for the first time early in 1940. "The banks are doing very well, thank you," he remarked in comment. "Sixteen and eighteen per cent. as usual, after all taxes have been allowed. *Getting us into debt as successfully for themselves and as disastrously for us as they did in the last war.* Armament firms are paying as much as 30 to 40 per cent. on their real capital and Woolworth's a glorious 132 per cent. *The cost of living is going up by the lift; wages are plodding after it by the stairs.*"§ He denounced the

\*October 25, 1940.

†December 6, 1940.

‡March 21, 1941.

§January 19, 1940.



attempts of the capitalist press to fasten the cause of the increased cost of living on the increased wages of the workers, drawing attention to the heavy overtime and the seven day week which thousands were working and citing Sir Walter Citrine's reply to Sir John Simon's proposal that wages should be stabilised: "Whilst prices have gone up 30 per cent., wages on the average have increased only 20 per cent."\* He tracked down the increased cost of living, "inflation," not to higher wages but to profiteering and bank debts. He repeated his definition of the cause of inflation—the consequence of the issue of more money than is necessary for goods and services already produced or immediately available. "Who, then, is getting more money than is necessary and for what goods and services, real or imaginary, are they getting it? Newspaper reports of companies' profits, any day of the week, give clear proof of where the answer is to be found." He gave instances of 20, 30 and 60 per cent. "Food, clothing, metal, railways, armaments, tobacco and beer are all getting their 'rake off'—*which means that more money is being issued for them than represents the value of the goods and services they have produced.*" Similarly, the banks were getting payment for fictitious services (what he meant by this we shall soon see). "It is a cock-eyed policy for dealing with inflation to allow the banks to go on issuing money tokens in excess of the real value of their services and at the same time to cut savagely at the spending power of the real earnings of the workers, taxing their wages, their food, their clothing, and nearly everything they need as a matter of bare necessity."†

### *How to Prevent Inflation*

Two proposals Jowett made to prevent inflation. First, stop the provision of excessive money to profiteering individuals or institutions, either by a rigorous costing system or by taking over their services as State concerns. Second, control all prices and ration all goods in short supply.‡ Jowett ridiculed the idea that the so-called Anti-Profiteering Act—the Prices and Goods Act—would achieve its purpose. He took Bradford's worsted industry as an example. The president of the Worsted Spinners' Federation estimated that 27½d. per lb. would allow a reasonable profit for a standard yarn for men's suits. In fact, this yarn was being invoiced at 49d. Fred pictured a customer who bought a suit complaining to the Local Appeal Committee under the Anti-Profiteering Act. The Committee would find that the retailer was selling within the rationed price of 85s. and would record that there had been no profiteering; the profits made by the manufacturers would be ignored. As usual the little man, the small man, acted as a

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\*September 19, 1941.

†February 7, 1941.

‡March 7, 1941.

buffer for the big profiteers!\* The solution was clear. Clothing and textile goods supplied to the civilians should be at least as free from inflationary profits as wool textile goods produced on Government orders for the Forces. These were costed at every stage, allowing a profit which was declared to be reasonable but which was in fact liberal. Price control for civilian articles, on the other hand, ended before the spinning, weaving, dyeing and finishing processes began.† "Why not costing for civilians? There is no reason, except indifference to the needs of ordinary people by the key men of Big Business and the Government, whose policy is to limit consumption by the mass of the people by means of high prices."‡

"War Weapons' Weeks" a "Grand Ballyhoo"

Another feature of war-time finance which angered Jowett was the campaigning for "War Weapons," "Warship," and "Spitfire" Weeks. "Grand ballyhoo" he called it. Not a single extra gun, warship or Spitfire plane would be built as a result of all the savings. "The whole possible output of Spitfire production is requisitioned, and it is the supply of labour and materials, not the supply of money, which sets the only limit to the supply of Spitfires."§ What, then, was the object of these Money-Borrowing Weeks? It was three-fold. The first purpose was to leave the public with less money to spend, to encourage them to consume less—"to do without everything but the barest necessities, so as to make labour and material available for war purposes." He quoted from a surprisingly candid comment in *The Banker*:

"On sober reflection it must be obvious to anybody that the mere collection of a sum of money cannot hope to augment our air force by a single unit. Are we to suppose that if these Spitfire funds had not been raised, the production of Spitfires would have been any less? Clearly not. The factories would have been producing to the limit of their capacity in any case. Money to buy Spitfires has no more connection with the production of Spitfires than have the spring flowers. When the Savings Appeals argue that 'every pound that flows in from the sale of Defence Bonds increases the flow of molten steel from the crucibles of the blast furnaces,' this is a plain mis-statement of fact, which may or may not be justified by results. The true objective of the Savings Movement is to induce the public to cut down its spending."||

Jowett acknowledged that to limit luxury spending was an obvious thing to do in wartime, but why not do it in a straightforward way? "Why not make the sacrifice of luxuries general and compulsory, by stopping their manufacture and by strictly rationing all goods according to need?"¶

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\*January 19, 1940.

†June 13, 1941.

‡March 1, 1940.

§October 4, 1940.

||September 16, 1940.

¶July 10, 1942.

The second purpose was to get as much "real money" as possible to shield the "fictitious" loans of the banks and of great industrial concerns and wealthy people through the banks. Jowett's exposure of these "fake" loans has still to be described; here we note in passing his view that "the reason of immediately practical importance is that bankers, for their money lords and masters, want to get as much *good money*, that is to say money received by its possessors for *work done or services rendered*, to substitute for their bank-created money—in effect counterfeit money—which they are allowed by usage to count as debt owing to them by the Government."

The third purpose was to identify masses of "small investors" with the interests of the financiers and bankers, in anticipation of any move to repudiate loans after the war or to apply a capital levy. Jowett regarded this purpose as by far the most important. "Every hundred thousand investors of small amounts of genuine savings is regarded as another battalion of shock absorbers for the lenders of thousands of millions of bank-created money."\*

Mr. Montagu Norman delivered a broadcast address giving his "pontifical blessing to the small investors." No wonder! exclaimed Fred. "The small investors, 'bless 'em,' are very important people to bankers and financiers who create bubble money, and to Big Business war profiteers. It is considered to be essential to get many hundreds of thousands of lenders of small sums *to give security against drastic treatment of bankers' and financiers' 'bubble money' when the war ends.*"†

### *The Bankers' Ramp of "Counterfeit Money"*

What are these "fictitious debts," these "Bank-created" debts, this "counterfeit money" to which Jowett so constantly referred? Here we come to the core of his criticism of the money system. Fred had voiced it in the last war and frequently between the wars, but never with the passion, pungency and persistence he now gave to the subject. It dominated his political thinking during his last years. Let us see the issue as he saw it.

Jowett recognised that the bankers' ramp during war-time was only an extension of their normal behaviour, a greater scandal in extent because the demand for loans was so much larger, a greater scandal in morality because it occurred at a time of general sacrifice; but nevertheless not essentially different from peace-time conduct. He based his view of this normal procedure on the authoritative explanation given in the Report of the Macmillan Committee appointed by Philip Snowden when Chancellor of the Exchequer in the second Labour Government. Let us see what it said.

\*November 21, 1941.

†July 19, 1940.

"It is not unnatural," stated the Report of the Committee, "to think of the deposits of the bank as being created by the public through the deposit of cash representing either savings or amounts which are not for the time being required to meet expenditure.

"But the bulk of the deposits arise out of the action of the banks themselves, for by granting loans, allowing money to be drawn on overdraft, or purchasing securities, a bank *creates credit* in its books which is the equivalent of a deposit.

"A simple illustration, in which it will be convenient to assume that all banking is concentrated in one bank will make this clear. Let us suppose that a customer has paid into his account £1,000 in cash, and that it is judged from experience that only the equivalent of 10 per cent. of the bank deposit need be held in cash to meet the demands of customers. *Then the £1,000 cash received will obviously support deposits amounting to £10,000.*

"Suppose that the bank then grants a loan of £900 for its customer, and, when that customer draws a cheque for £900 upon the credit so opened, that cheque will be paid into the account of another of the bank's customers.

*"The bank now holds both the original deposit of £1,000 and the £900 paid in by the second customer.*

"Deposits have thus increased to £1,900 and the bank holds, against its liability to pay out this sum, (a) the original £1,000 of cash deposited, and (b) the obligation of the customer to repay the loan of £900.

"The same result follows if the bank, instead of lending £900 to a customer, purchases an investment of that amount. The cheque which it draws upon itself in payment for the investment is paid into the seller's bank account and creates a credit in his name.

"The bank in this latter case holds against its total liability for £1,900 (a) the original £1,000 of cash and (b) the investment which it has purchased.

*"The bank can carry on this process of lending or purchasing investments until such times as the credits created or investments purchased represent nine times the amount of the original £1,000 in cash."*

The important paragraph in this explanation is the last, which says in effect that the banks *can create paper money to the value of nine times the amount of any deposit placed with them in cash.* Let us try to explain the theory of this in simple terms.

Experience has proved correct the assumption of the Macmillan Committee that the bankers can in fact conduct their business safely on the basis of having in hand only *ten per cent.* of the money which is deposited with them. Except in abnormal times, such is a dependable proportion to have "on call." The financial implication of this goes very far. Since they have reason to anticipate that they will never be required to produce more than one-tenth of the money which they have on their books (except on rare occasions, such as the outbreak of war, when the Government can be counted on to rush to their assistance), the banks can act as though they had *nine times* more money than they actually hold and can lend or invest without danger up to that proportion. On a deposit of £1,000 they can issue cheques for loans, over-drafts and investments up to the value of £9,000, making a total of £10,000 composed of the original £1,000 in real cash and £9,000 in bank-created credits. The cheques for this £9,000 cost the banks only paper, ink and book-keeping services; but they

draw interest upon it as though it were real money. In other words, they have to pay to their customer interest only on his £1,000, but they receive interest on £9,000—and at a higher rate.

Jowett regarded this banking procedure as “fraudulent” and the bank-created credits as “counterfeit money.” If a customer issued a cheque not backed by money in the bank he could be proceeded against as a criminal but the banks themselves could issue cheques for nine times the money they held and get away with it without question. Out of paper and ink they made a gold mine.

This scandal reached its climax in wartime. “Banks are pretending now, as they pretended during the last war (and the Government connives at the pretence) that they are lending huge sums—millions and millions of pounds—to the Government for armaments, when in actual fact they are lending nothing at all,” declared Jowett just before the Second World War began. “Neither the real deposits of their customers nor the total amount of the shares standing to the credit of their shareholders are diminished by *one penny piece* by these huge loans the banks pretend to make. The loans are paper credit loans, for the issue of money for which the Government’s own credit—the *nation’s credit*—is the security. All that the banks supply is paper, ink and book-keeping service.”\*

#### “The Greatest Fraud in all History”

Jowett sounded a warning from the experience of the last war. He reminded his readers that the national debt had grown during the war from £700 millions to £7,000 millions, that since then it had gone up to £8,500 millions, and that between the two wars the colossal sum of £5,600 millions had been paid in interest. “Most of the debt is credit money and therefore, in effect, counterfeit money.”† He estimated that three fourths of the amount lent had been bank-created and denounced the whole transaction as “the greatest fraud in all history up to that time.”‡ He quoted from a book on “Post-War Finance” by Mr. Reginald McKenna, chairman of the Midland Bank and Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1914, to the effect that just before the war the banks had only £76 millions in *total deposits* and yet shortly afterwards loaned the Government £1,114 millions without touching the £76 millions! He demonstrated how the banks worked hand in hand with the richer classes. “In 1914-20,” he quoted from the *Daily Herald*, “the banks created over £1,000 millions of new money and lent it to the richer members of the community at a high rate of interest. The borrowers lent it on to the Treasury *at an even higher rate*. So after the war the Government had to hand over

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\*July 21, 1939.

†January 9, 1942.

‡January 21, 1939.

£350 millions a year indefinitely in the interest and sinking fund to the banks and owners of property." He illustrated how the banks manipulated money to the advantage both of themselves and their richer customers by an actual case known to him. "The customer," he said, "related to me that on being appealed to by his bank manager to show a good example to working people by investing a substantial amount in war loan, he replied that his capital was tied up in his business and he had no money to lend. To which his bank manager replied that he need not worry about that, because the bank would let him have an overdraft of the amount required for the investment, on which he would draw a higher rate of interest than would be charged by the bank for the overdraft." Jowett completed the story with his oft-repeated comment: "It was a bank-created loan made at the cost only of book-keeping and paper and ink."\*

"Financing now for the new war is proceeding on exactly similar lines," said Jowett.† He estimated that up to July, 1940, that is for a period of ten months of war, the banks had been creating credit loans "with their paper and ink" to the amount of considerably more than £10 millions a week. It was during this month that Douglas Jay, Financial Editor of the *Daily Herald*, stated that the country had started in earnest "the demoralising system of finance by which the banks create new money and lend it to the State at interest which accrues as profit to them."‡ Douglas Jay was continually returning to the theme and was much appreciated by Jowett for so doing. "The Treasury is now financing about £20 millions a week of our budget deficit through borrowing *interest bearing credit by the banking system*," he wrote in November, 1940. "Since the beginning of the war £415 millions of new Clearing Bank credit *has been created*."§ In December, 1940, Jay was writing: "If the present war lasts four years, the national debt will be £24,000 millions and interest on it £600 millions a year."|| At the beginning of 1941, the *Economist* wrote: "In the past twelve months bank credit has been created to the average rate of £33 millions a month and lent to the Government."¶

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\*November 10, 1939.

†July 21, 1939.

‡July 15, 1941.

§November 18, 1940.

||December 2, 1940.

¶January 21, 1941. It was not only a matter of mounting up a fictitious national debt. Every local authority was strangled by its debt to the banks, and these, Jowett insisted, had no more backing in real money than the national debt. "Why are the people of Bradford and all other towns so heavily burdened with rate-charges for all too-meagre social services?" he asked. "The answer is not far to seek. An amount equal to nearly one-half of all the rates collected goes to pay interest on loans." These loans came through the banks by their customarily "fraudulent" processes.

*The Solution According to Jowett*

What was Jowett's solution? It was that the Government should itself issue money according to productive availability. Why should the banks be allowed to control the nation's credit and the nation's money? "No law has ever been passed to give them this power. They have usurped the power to put the nation, nationally and locally, into their debt *for the nation's own assets*, to keep the supply of money short for their own advantage and profit."\* Note the words "for the nation's own assets." This was the point to which Jowett continually returned. He stressed that when the Government asks the banks for loans it offers as security "the total assets of the nation, actual and potential, including its power to levy taxation."† With that guarantee the banks issue cheques, *new money*, up to the amount required. Why go to the banks at all? Why shouldn't the Government issue the new money on the basis of its own assets, applying the one limitation that, in order to avoid inflation new money must not go beyond the productive capacity of the nation? Jowett was pleased to find Archbishop Temple urging in the autumn of 1942 that banks should only be allowed to lend money actually deposited with them and that money issued on the nation's credit should be issued by the Government. He rejoiced that the Archbishop had forced the press, previously engaged in a "conspiracy of silence," to discuss the issue. Most of the press comments angered him, but he was surprised and delighted to find a Special Correspondent of *The Times*, writing on "The function of Money," endorsing his general view, particularly in this passage:

"When the community needs to make a more intense use of the goods and services it is capable of providing, and when for that purpose it needs to bring into being more claims upon those goods and services, it *certainly seems preposterous that the only way to get this new money should be by allowing private institutions to create it and then borrow it from them and pay interest on this loan.*"‡

*Basic View on the Money Question*

There was no need for the Government to borrow money at all, insisted Jowett. "If all this paper credit money which is being issued through the banks were issued by or for the nation, *the pre-war national debt would not be increased by one penny piece*," he declared. He used to cite an example from the parish of St. Peter in the island of Guernsey in the year 1830. There was need for a public market hall, and a number of citizens approached the Governor, Daniel de Lisle Brock, to secure his assent to the issue of interest

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\*April 15, 1938.

†October 23, 1942.

‡*Times*, September 30, 1942.

bearing bonds to be sold in Paris or London. “Have we the necessary number of workmen to build the Market House?” asked the Governor. He was assured they had. “Have we the materials, stone, bricks, timber, tools necessary to complete the building?” They had. Thereupon said the Governor:

“Here you tell me that we have within ourselves everything needed to build a Market House, yet you desire me to bind you to the bankers of London or Paris for a material which is no manner of use in the construction of the building.

“Strange anomaly! Is it your intention to build a Market House for the bankers? If so, then you are correct in your endeavour to get paid by the bankers, but in such case you should not also pawn yourselves or place yourselves under bondage to the bankers.

“If these bankers pay you for the House and hold you in bondage also, demanding annual tribute in the form of interest, they will soon have both the House and the money they lent you.

“It will be no relief to say that we make the renters of the stalls pay the annual tribute. The renters will be part of ourselves and will be thus forced to charge that tribute or rent in the prices for goods, which the customers (also ourselves) will have to pay in higher prices. So that we all, jointly, will have to pay tribute in perpetuity for an article, which, as I said, is not of any use to us.

“Allow me, gentlemen, to propose a better way of building our Market House than by way of bondage.”

The Governor issued scrip to cover the estimated cost of the Market Hall, £4,000. With this scrip the workmen were paid and the materials bought. The House, when built, contained eighty stalls, which were let to traders at £5 per year each. The annual rent received was £400, and each year scrip notes were redeemed to that amount. At the end of ten years, the whole cost of the Market Hall had been redeemed by the rents.\* Jowett often applied this instance of the use of community credit to war-time borrowing.

“It seems almost incredible,” he wrote, “that in wartime it is possible for nearly everybody to be bluffed into the belief that the materials and labour *we use this year and next year* can be borrowed from *future years*. For that is what we foolishly believe if we believe that any part of the real cost of the war can be met by borrowing *money*. The plain fact is that money does not produce anything, either in wartime or peace time. Money’s *real use* is to be exchanged as a token, conveniently representing actual goods and services in existence, or recording claims to goods and services which

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\*The author has not found any evidence that Governor de Lisle Brock used the actual words which advocates of Social Credit have ascribed to him as quoted above, but the passage as a whole can be accepted as a paraphrase of his argument. State Notes, backed by revenue to be received from the Customs Duty on wines and spirits, were also used to construct a new Court House and Record Office, an enlarged College, a lighthouse, wider streets, a modern sewage system, and repaired harbours and a breakwater. See “Where is the Money to Come From?” by Jeffrey Mark (C. W. Daniel, 1s.).



have not yet been exercised or pressed. The idea that money entered in books has the property of self-increase (although, as everybody knows, the material things it represents waste and perish as time passes) is one of the main unfounded beliefs which has been foisted on Christendom by the modern successors of the money-changers Christ whipped out of the Temple.\* "Why is the country getting further and further into debt?" Jowett asked on another occasion. "As a matter of fact, *all goods and services*, whether wasted on war or devoted to better purposes, such as public provision of houses, roads or pensions or other social services, *are produced and paid for out of currently created wealth*. There is no reason whatever why future generations should be saddled with debt for the wise or unwise direction of the labour and material resources of the present generation, except the one foolish reason that banks have been allowed to control the nation's credit and the nation's money."†

Jowett estimated that the "financiers will have got their debt up to £20,000 millions at least before the war ends."‡ Well, if the debt is so largely a fraud what is the nation to do about it? The question was put to him at Bradford. He answered that he was definitely opposed "to the banks being allowed to retain ownership of the debt," but what could be done must be determined by the circumstances after the war. He had in mind, of course, the need to draw a distinction between the genuine savings of small investors in the War Loan and the fictitious loans from the banks, but he thought it possible that a popular demand would arise to brush aside ruthlessly all questions of finance and ownership, and make way for a fresh start in a Socialist State. "Certainly any real reconstruction of the social and industrial life of the nation would be inconceivable whilst it remained shackled and hamstrung by a debt of twenty thousand millions and whilst the power to issue and control money continued in the hands of a financial oligarchy."§ For Socialists, he insisted, this money question should come first. "It should be made perfectly plain that financiers' money ramps cannot be allowed to sabotage the new Social Order based on common wealth during its transitional stage. This so-called financial question is the Achilles' heel—the vitally weak spot of the capitalist system under present conditions. To strike Capitalism there is to strike true."||

Among financial writers Jowett acknowledged the educative work which Francis Williams and Douglas Jay had done in the *Daily Herald*, but he deplored the fact that the Labour Party leaders appeared to take no notice of the views of the financial experts who wrote for their own organ. "Now is the time—whilst the war is on and

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\*October 4, 1940.

†April 15, 1938.

‡January 9, 1942.

§March 7, 1941.

||January 9, 1942.

when the slaughter of millions of human beings is being prepared—to expose this *huge fraud* of capitalist finance. Its complete exposure would give a terribly heavy blow to Capitalism in its weakest spot. And yet, strange to say, I see no mention of this monstrous system of getting whole peoples into debt in the lengthy Labour Party's Statement on 'Currency, Banking and Finance'." He remarked that the truth must be known to the responsible leaders of the Party because the procedure by which the banks created money was explained in the Report of the Macmillan Committee, of which Mr. Ernest Bevin was a member.\* "However the leaders of the Labour Party can think of putting through any sort of Labour programme, in one or any number of periods of office, without getting power for the nation to issue the nation's own money, I cannot for the life of me imagine."†

To tell the truth, Fred did not think that many of his colleagues in the I.L.P. realised the importance or urgency of the money question. He was pleased with the speeches of Campbell Stephen in the House of Commons on the subject (as he was with the utterances of the Labour Member, R. R. Stokes), but he did not think the Party as a whole gave sufficient prominence to the issue. Whenever programmes were discussed on the National Council of the Party, he would appeal, with a vigour which ignored his years, for the inclusion of an undertaking to transfer the power of money creation from the banks to the State. His friends would argue that the socialisation of the banking system implied that; he was not satisfied. Once more it was the issue of the structure of the mechanism of Socialism *versus* the immediate distribution of wealth among the people; the issue of first things first. The State must assume the power to issue money *before* the long process of taking over the banks is completed, he persisted. Unless this were done the bankers would sabotage everything and there would be no hope of immediately ending poverty. His last fight on this subject was when the programme of the "Socialist Britain" campaign of 1940 was discussed. Jowett did not succeed in getting his point into the short programme, but the clause in the more comprehensive policy pamphlet embodied his ideas and represented his victory. It is a useful summary of his views:

"A Socialist Britain would reserve to the State the power to 'create' money.

"A Socialist Britain would distribute money among the working population according to the number of mouths to be fed and would base distribution on a national estimate of the wealth—that is on the productive capacity of the workers and the industrial equipment and natural resources available. The amounts distributed would be increased as the output of goods responded to the growing demand.

"Money would then be relegated to its rightful function of serving as a

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\*November 10, 1939.

†July 21, 1939.

means of distributing goods and services fairly among the whole population.”\*

The last article from Jowett was written a fortnight before he died. The subject was post-war planning, as outlined by the Tory and Labour Parties. He welcomed the aims of the Labour plan, but was dismayed by the means proposed to realise them. “It is scarcely creditable,” he wrote, “that the leaders of a great political party which proposes these enormous changes should calmly assume continuance of the tax-and-borrow method of pre-war and war finance in its proposals for these changes. With a debt, due to bank-created credit, of more than twenty thousand millions of pounds, they ought surely to know that such a thing is impossible. *No Socialist strategy can come to anything if it does not tackle this primary obstacle of finance.*”†

This was Fred Jowett’s last political utterance.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE LAST DAYS

The preceding chapters have consisted almost entirely of extracts from Jowett’s articles. In truth, his writing was the largest part of his life during these years. He was no longer strong enough to travel the country speaking, but his interest and agility of mind were undiminished, and he expressed them in his weekly contributions to socialist thinking and policy. He kept himself up-to-date by a thorough reading of four daily papers, the weekly political papers, official reports and books, marking them and filing cuttings so that facts and quotations were at hand. He had never written with facility but this was not apparent in what he wrote. His aim was simplicity and freedom from ambiguity; when he had something to say he said it precisely. He would revise and rephrase his paragraphs repeatedly until he found the words exactly to reflect his meaning.

The vigour and logic of the passages we have reproduced demonstrate the vitality and clarity of his mind. He now had more time for thought, for reviewing the political scene without submergence in

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\*“The Way Out.” Jowett also succeeded in getting the following clause added to the National Council’s draft of the “Immediate Programme” of the I.L.P. which was adopted by Annual Conference, after his death, in 1944: “The power to ‘create’ money would be reserved to the State, and its distribution would reflect available materials and labour without the creation of interest-bearing debts.”

†January 21, 1924. During his last years Fred Jowett conducted a considerable correspondence with monetary reformers, particularly with the Duke of Bedford. Jowett persuasively tried to remove some of the Duke’s fears about Socialism. He also had a friendly correspondence with Guy Aldred, in whose paper, *The Word*, many of Fred’s articles were reproduced.

its activities, and he came to conclusions with a conviction and urgency which were almost passionate. He was consumed with a desire to influence the Movement to his views, but his deafness prevented full participation in political discussion. This physical limitation, closing him in like a prison bar, was at times almost unendurable to him. His habitual cheerfulness hid the trial it was to him, but to a few intimate associates he revealed the frustration he felt; tears would come to his eyes as he spoke of his desire to contribute the ideas which were the fruit of his long experience and mental striving. For a time he used an equipment to aid hearing, but it was not a success and he sought others, exhausting the possibilities of every type of appliance to find some means to overcome what was to him the greatest handicap to his usefulness. At last an apparatus was found which was of some assistance, but it was never really satisfactory. Fred's deafness in these years was not only a personal tragedy; the whole Socialist Movement suffered because he was not able to contribute to it the full measure of confident strength, the piercing analysis, the constructive quality, and the unfailing courage of his ideas and his spirit.

Jowett still lived alone in the five-roomed dwelling which he had occupied with his wife—his daughter at hand in the next house, with a doorway convenient in the wall, preparing his meals, tidying his rooms. He would spend the entire day in the back room, seated in a deep chair before the fire, the wireless at his ear, papers on a stool before him, books about him, a writing pad on his knee. One could imagine the large table neatly set for a meal in his wife's time. Now it was spread with odd papers, reports, letters, ink-pots, pens. On shelves were reference books. On the walls were old photos of his family. A few friends would come and visit him here, Arthur Brown, I.L.P. secretary and Councillor, between whom and Fred there was the affection of son and father, Margaret Newbould, daughter of Francis Newbould, his associate of early days, Glyn Thomas, with whom Jowett enjoyed discussing monetary problems, and his favourite niece, Mary Foster, who used to write delightful little poems to Fred on each of his birthdays. Once or twice a year, Jowett would visit his elder daughter at Kettlewell on the Yorkshire Moors for a fortnight or so. He retained his love of the moors, and always looked forward eagerly to these visits.

On Wednesday evenings he would take the tram down the hill to the I.L.P. office to secure an early copy of the *Bradford I.L.P. News*. Woe to the typist if there were an error in his article! He would look in once a month at the headquarters of the Overlookers' Union to pay his subscription.\* Occasionally he would attend an I.L.P. public

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\*Four days before he died, Jowett made his monthly visit and noticed that his name was eleventh in seniority in the list. "I don't want to wish anyone dead," he remarked, "but, eeh I should like to be Number One."

meeting, to preside or to take his turn as a speaker. When he did so it was evident to all that his mind was as strong as ever, and it was wonderful how vigorous his voice and gestures became in response to the fire of earnestness which burned in him undimmed. In the national affairs of the I.L.P. he still fulfilled two important duties. He was its treasurer and attended its National Council meetings regularly, generally visiting Head Office a day in advance to survey the Party fortunes with Francis Johnson, the Financial Secretary. Between Fred and Francis Johnson there was a close friendship, continuing since earlier years when Francis was secretary of the Party; outside the Bradford circle, it was one of the most intimate friendships in Fred's later life. In these last years, Jowett did not often intervene in the discussions of the National Council, because he could not follow the discussions due to his deafness, but he was always ready to read his reports in a loud, clear and firm voice, and whenever a political issue arose in which he was specially interested, as for example, a consideration of the role of Soviet Russia or matters relating to banking and national finance, he would indicate to the chairman in advance his wish to intervene and would state his views with forthrightness, clarity, extraordinary physical emphasis, and at some length.

The other national service which Jowett rendered was the chairmanship of the committee which supervised the Party printing works. He did this with characteristic thoroughness, mastering details and contributing shrewd suggestions. His ability in these matters surprised his colleagues. The manager of the works in his business capacity began by referring matters to him in deference to his post as chairman, but he soon found that Jowett had a grasp, an insight and a judgment which were quite exceptional and before long there was no one to whom he looked for decisions with greater confidence. Jowett was as shrewd in his judgment of men as of affairs. His estimates of character were almost uncanny. After a brief interview, he would assess a man's reliability and capacity with an accuracy that long association only would reveal to others. Had Jowett decided in those early years at Bradford to continue in commerce rather than devote himself to politics, there were no two minds among those associated with him in business affairs in these later years that he would have been an outstanding success.

Frail though he was, right through these war years Jowett faced the difficulties of travelling from Bradford to the south to attend to his duties, often insisting on making the journey despite bad weather. His guide and counsellor on these and many other occasions was his fellow Yorkshireman, Percy Williams, bluff, hearty and seemingly tough, but whose constant care of Fred was that of a younger brother.

Appropriately Percy Williams has succeeded Fred Jowett as I.L.P. Treasurer.\*

Fred Jowett remained an unflinching attender at I.L.P. annual conferences. There are two occasions which stay in one's memory. The first was at the Nelson conference in 1941, when Fred spoke at the social, not the kind of gathering which takes kindly to serious political utterances, but which this time was hushed into attention by the spirit of the man. He stood on the platform, small, frail, shoulders bent, yet his personality shone with a fire that made him great. His features were shrunken, yet they seemed illumined. His soft, white hair glowed like a halo. What surprised us all was that so much strength of voice and feeling and gesture could come from that slender physical frame. His words rang out in the tones of a man in his thirties; his passionate earnestness throbbed through his limbs so that they became vitalised. His theme was one of absolute confidence that International Socialism would have its reward after the war. The I.L.P. had opposed the Boer War, and this had been followed by the first General Election triumph of 1906. The I.L.P. had opposed the Great War and this had been followed by the great victories of 1922 and the Labour Government with an anti-war Premier in 1924. He was as certain as of anything in life that the I.L.P. would again become powerful after its opposition to the Second World War. The speech had an extraordinary effect on the younger delegates present, who had never known this Jowett before. Many will always think of him as they saw and heard him then.

The other occasion was the Jubilee Conference of the I.L.P. in 1943, held by inevitable choice in Bradford, its birthplace. Jowett spoke for the Foundation Members. Arrangements had been made to broadcast part of the speeches, and Fred, frailer than ever, yet still strong in voice and spirit, stood before the microphone, with Maxton, McGovern, National Council representatives and veteran Party members crowded around him, some standing so that they should not miss any of the proceedings. He told the story of the beginnings of the I.L.P., living again through its drama, forgetting time and everything else. He spoke too long for the broadcast planned for the six o'clock news; but none of us cared. We were caught up and transported to the exciting days of the pioneers. Half-way through his

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\*This passage in a letter from Jowett to Percy Williams, written in October, 1942, reflects not only Fred's appreciation of this service, but his own inmost character, the generosity and modesty of his spirit: "Old age can bring blessings which far more than compensate for all its difficulties and unwelcome limitations. To be held in affectionate esteem towards the end of a long and active life by those who know him best is indeed a priceless blessing for any man. As I was reading your letter my heart filled with gratitude, not only for what it said of me, but for all you have done to help me through the difficulties of my recent years. For all this I cannot thank you enough, but I can express the hope that during what remains of my life you shall never have reason to feel me unworthy of all you have said of me and done for me."

talk, Fred turned and saw his colleagues standing about him. "Eeh, lads, can't tha sit dahn?" he exclaimed, slipping into the Yorkshire doric. How good it would have been to hear those homely words over the B.B.C.!

The other national occasion in the life of the Party which Jowett never missed was the annual Summer School. The last time he lectured was at the Caerleon School in 1932, when he reviewed the growth of the Labour Movement from its beginnings, and underlined the lessons of the story; but the School was to him much more than a political event—he entered into its social life with zest, enjoyed meeting comrades, young and old, from all parts of the country, laughed and joked with the best of them. Until Fred was over seventy, an invariable star turn at the socials was his rendering of "Cockles and Mussels," his voice breaking into a sob at the appropriate moment, his handkerchief drawn from his pocket, the corner of his eye dabbed pathetically. This item even rivalled James Maxton's song, "The Pirate King," in popularity. Jowett had a whimsical sense of humour to which justice has probably not been done in this book. When at the Summer Schools he used to observe Maxton striding off with golf clubs, he would recite a favourite verse of his youth:—

*A golf course stands so near the mill,  
That almost every day  
The little children at their work  
Can see the men at play.*

"Och, there's no mill here," Maxton would retort, "and if you'd lift your lazy limbs from that deck chair and make the round of the links with me, it would do you a world of good." Maxton always treated Fred as though he was as young as ever, and Fred liked it.

Jowett's health was giving us cause for anxiety. Each autumn he had bronchial attacks and we wondered whether he would live through the winter. We were fearful in the autumn of 1941, and for five months he was not sufficiently well even to write that weekly article which was almost life to him. He was back on the job in February, however, denouncing the banking system with all his old fire. Ill though he might be, he rarely missed his article; he felt it was his bit for International Socialism during the war, and must be done at all costs. Often his hand was shaky, but his spirit, his reason, his resolution never. He was an inspiration to all of us who were with him in those days.

#### *His Eightieth Birthday—And Death*

On Monday, February 1, 1944, Fred Jowett celebrated his eightieth birthday. He had stayed up late the night before to prepare a statement for a local newspaper man, but he was down at his usual hour to open the large post of congratulatory letters. "Eeh, what a lot!"

he exclaimed. "Folks are too kind to me." The letters came from old friends, from political opponents as well as colleagues, from branches of the I.L.P. in all parts of the country; but the message which pleased him most was from a women's section of the Labour Party in Bradford. It was the first time since 1932 that he had received a personal greeting from those who had remained in the Labour Party in Bradford.

Jowett had more letters by each post, and telegrams, and many visitors, including journalists. He talked to the journalists about the Bradford of his early days, of the struggle to get through reforms, of the changes which he had seen. "You must have satisfaction in seeing the fruits of so much of your labours," said one of the press men. Fred concurred, yet hesitatingly, for his mind was full of all that still had to be done to end the drab poverty of his town. "I want to see Bradford the City Beautiful," he remarked.

He was excited by the events of the day, and tired. The next day he sat in his chair before the fire exhausted. Friends who came to see him were disturbed by his condition; he became weaker and a doctor was called. He spoke with difficulty, breathed with difficulty; it became clear that his life was ebbing. Fred himself realised it. When he was too weak to speak he stretched out a hand for pencil and paper. "Am I much worse?" he wrote for the doctor, and added "No more visitors." Sitting at his fireside in the armchair where he had done so much of his writing over the long years, he passed peacefully away. On the table at his side was his last article, published only a few days earlier.

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The great congregation which gathered for the memorial service in the Horton Lane Congregational Church the following Saturday was in itself a tribute to his work. Fred's family was there, his son and daughters and grandchildren.\* Civic representatives were there, the Lord Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, the Town Clerk, the Chairman of the Education Committee, the Director of Education, City Councillors, the Chief Constable and Magistrates. Fred's old Labour Party colleagues were there, William Leach, Tom Stamford, A. T. Sutton, George Muff. Members of the National Council of his own I.L.P. were there, the chairman, Bob Edwards, the general secretary, John McNair, and representatives from Scotland, the Midlands, Lancashire and London, as well as Yorkshire. Representatives of the Bradford Trades Council, the Textile Unions, the Bradford I.L.P. and many local working-class organisations were there. But most impressive were the unknown men and women who filled the church, woollen workers, bus drivers, labourers, railwaymen, old-age pensioners and

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\*Fred's brother, George Ernest Jowett, resident in Australia, could not be present, but no relative was closer to him in affection and in admiration for his work.



working-class housewives, crowding the seats row after row. These were the common folk of Bradford, whom Jowett had served; in their faces one saw the affection they felt for him and the gratitude for his work.

Two tributes were voiced—a few homely words from Ben Riley, M.P., a colleague from the early pioneering days, and a moving oration from his more recent colleague, James Maxton. Maxton told how, when he was very young and immature, he used to meet Fred with Keir Hardie, Robert Smillie, Bruce Glasier, Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden—"to me, then, an assembly of giants." Political differences had separated him from some of these, "but with our comrade Fred Jowett, from the day I knew him until the last time I met him a few weeks ago, there was never a break, never a quarrel, never a serious difference of opinion." Maxton described how in his latter days Fred took him to task because he thought he was too moderate in his outlook and too doubtful about the possibilities of great socialist achievements.

"It is a happy thought that he left us very confident, in spite of the ugly condition of the world, the sufferings that men and women in all lands were undergoing, the rattle of the guns and the bombs and the shells, the hatreds and antagonisms among the nations, the domination of force in human affairs, that a different kind of world, the world of kindness, humanity and brotherly relationships, the world from which the crude and ugly pains of war have been removed, the world from which the terror and menace of war have departed—that that kind of world was still to be achieved by the devoted, quiet effort of straight, honest men, men of clean character, working towards these good things.

"That was the content of Fred Jowett's mind and spirit on the day he died. That was the vision that came to him sixty years earlier, when he started at his own doors, in his own beloved city of Bradford, to create that kind of world. His ideas and sympathies were world-wide, but Bradford was the centre of them all. It was here he received his inspirations, it was to this city he came back for the renewal of his inspirations, and when he thought of the sufferings and difficulties of the working class, it was of the poor of Bradford that he first thought. It was this city that gave him his first opportunities of public service.

"He left his mark on the administration of the city, on the whole political Labour Movement, on the political journalism of this country. He occupied a high office of State with success and distinction. He was chairman of the great Labour Party and of the I.L.P. He was known throughout the international Labour Movement. Yet never did he lose that fine, modest, unassuming personality. He held positions that have destroyed the character of lesser men—he held them, passed out of them and remained plain Fred Jowett with his hands still on the same plough. Never once did he struggle for the limelight, never once did he ask for anything for himself. Always he underestimated his own abilities, but he never shirked responsibility when responsibility had to be faced.

"I have been associated during an active and interesting life with men of all kinds, of all degrees; I have had an opportunity of seeing close at hand the work of many whose names are household words throughout the world; I have never been associated with anyone who more truly deserved

to be called a great man than my colleague, comrade and friend, Fred Jowett.”\*

The Press, even papers which had so often attacked him and which he had criticised in turn, paid glowing tributes to Jowett. The *Telegraph and Argus*, which had more than once suggested that Bradford should confer upon him the freedom of the city, regretted that he should have died without this honour. Characteristically the most sympathetic memorial article appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*, which, after outlining Jowett's service to Bradford and to the Labour Movement, cited his break from the Labour Party as the supreme test of his loyalty to principle.

“He was nearing seventy . . . He knew that to break with the Labour Party was to make it almost certain that never again would he enter Parliament. As he saw it, he had to choose between faithfully keeping his pledges to his constituents or accepting the Labour Party view . . . It was in keeping with his character that he unhesitatingly chose to be true to the principles by which his life had been guided and by his own deliberate act brought his Parliamentary career to an honourable end.”

#### *Jowett the Man*

So the story of a great life ends. One is inclined to leave it there, for if it has reflected the mind and character and life of Fred Jowett no more is necessary. Yet the author is impelled, in these last words, to break the restraint he has so far accepted. We have allowed the subject of this book to speak for himself. Let us now speak of him.

Are we justified, was James Maxton justified, in saying Fred Jowett was a great man? The answer depends on one's sense of values. If greatness means recognition by the world of to-day, the winning of place and wealth, the attainment of power over men, then Jowett was not among the great. But if worth is to be judged by service to one's fellows, by the extent to which the life of others has been made happier and fuller by one's activities, then Jowett was among the greatest of his generation.

Sometimes whilst the author has been engaged on this book friends have asked him why he selected Fred Jowett as the subject through which to look at the story of Socialism over sixty years. Were there not other men more glamorous, more creative, of more enduring influence? More glamorous—yes. Jowett had not the picturesqueness or personality of a figurehead, of the man who can dominate crowds from Parliament or platform, who can act a great role for the press or the news reel; he was not a man for the stage. But men of more creative and enduring influence—few, if any. Who among Jowett's contemporaries in the Labour Movement can be named as the initiator of so much of value, whose influence has been so lasting? Some of them were greater national figures, but none made such lasting contributions to progress.

\*James Maxton died July 23, 1946. During his illness he read the proofs of this book and expressed his pleasure that the life and work of Fred Jowett should have been so recorded.

He was essentially a practical politician. He was no mere dreamer or theoretician. He had the ability to visualise a social need—school-feeding, for instance—and though derided and discouraged, once having determined his course, he saw it through to its practical application, however formidable the obstacles in his way. No lack of interest among those he was trying to help would deter him from achieving his goal. It is only when one looks back on the achievements of Jowett, and considers the conditions under which he agitated for, and carried into effect, reforms which to-day are accepted as commonplace that one fully realises the stature of the man.

Thousands of children are healthier to-day because of the pioneer work which Jowett did for school-feeding, thousands of families are living in healthier conditions because of the pioneer work he did for housing, hundreds of workers in the woollen industry have been saved from the deadly disease of anthrax because of his activity. These are tangible results from his life which we can, to some degree, assess. But it may be that the intangible results are even greater, the results of his sixty years' work for the creation of a society from which poverty and war have been removed, in which equality and co-operation between men and between nations are the accepted way of life. That contribution we cannot measure, but, as human emancipation extends, the service of the pioneers, and not least the service of Fred Jowett, will be honoured as of more enduring worth than the achievements of many of those whose names now loom large as Empire builders, statesmen and generals.

#### *Jowett's Four Political Contributions*

There are four contributions towards human progress which were specially Jowett's. The first was his pioneer work for the health of the children which we have already mentioned. When forty-one years ago he succeeded in getting the Bradford City Council, the first among all local authorities, to accept in principle the responsibility of ensuring that no child at school should go without at least one good meal a day, he could scarcely have hoped that he would live to see the same principle accepted by a Conservative Minister of Education; yet in 1943 that happened, and school meals are now an undisputed part of national policy.

His second special contribution was the principle of social security for the working community, and that has also progressed to the stage of general acceptance. Jowett wanted the principle to be applied much further, of course, than its embodiment in Sir William Beveridge's plan or even the Labour Government's extension of the plan in 1946, but behind these proposals is in part, at least, the conception which Fred did so much to pioneer, namely that the first claim on wealth belongs to the children, the aged, the sick *and the working population*. The present social security plans do not

recognise this *priority* of claim, but it is something that the responsibility of society to ensure even a minimum of economic security for all should be accepted, and Jowett did as much as anyone to bring this about.

The two further ideas which Jowett made particularly his own have still to be accepted. One was his conception of democracy, his plan for the reform of representative institutions. Democracy, in his view, will be a dead thing until the elected representatives of the people really control the affairs of the nation, becoming actual administrators and legislators instead of mere automatic Yes-men of the Cabinet and Party leaders. His proposal for the appointment of representative committees of Members of Parliament to supervise each Department of State and to initiate legislation has not yet been adopted, and it may not be adopted whilst class divisions in society make politics a conflict rather than a co-operative effort, but in the classless society of the future, whatever the basis of representative institutions, Jowett's plan will be seen to be essential to dynamic democracy.

The fourth distinctive contribution of Jowett to social and economic thought was his monetary policy and his association of the theory of social credit with socialist planning. He was not, of course, the first to urge the idea of the national dividend, but more than any man he linked the idea with the transition from Capitalism to Socialism. In this sphere his ideas are far from acceptance yet, even in the Socialist Movement, but there is nothing more certain than that any Labour Government which seriously sets out to make the change to Socialism will, first, have to destroy the power of the banks and, second, find the means to end poverty whilst the socialisation of industry proceeds.

#### *The Character of Fred Jowett*

Fred Jowett would have desired to be remembered for these contributions to human progress. Particularly he would have desired that this book should convince others of the truth of the principles which meant so much to him. Often he was impatient when the author sought personal particulars. "What do they matter?" he would ask. But it was in his person that Fred Jowett's greatness really lay. Only those who knew his character knew how great he was.

Perhaps his greatest personal quality was his natural humanity. He never thought of himself as different from ordinary men and women. He came from the workers, his life was of the workers, he died a worker. There was never the least desire in him to rise in the social scale, to step into another class. There was no concern for personal prestige or wealth or social recognition. Sometimes identification with the working class becomes a form of snobbery; that was never so with Jowett. Whilst he was aware of social distinctions, he

was never conscious of human distinctions. He seemed as much at home, when a Cabinet Minister, at a reception to the aristocracy responsible for the maintenance of the Royal Palaces, or to distinguished representatives from other countries to whom he acted as host, as he did among the woollen workers, the railwaymen, and the labourers who crowded East Bowling Club on a Saturday night. He was the same man on all occasions and he assumed that men, whatever their circumstances, were essentially the same. He had a natural courtesy which made him at ease among men of any class. Gracious in manner, tidily dressed, he never looked out of place; he was simple, friendly Fred Jowett wherever he was. He was the natural equalitarian.

The second personal quality of Fred Jowett was his sense of honesty. It was a part of his being, his inmost code of conduct; it found expression in every part of his life. He was scrupulously fair to his political opponents, rejecting any temptation to score at their expense by misinterpretation or half truths. He was absolutely truthful in the statement of his own views; as we have seen, he twice lost a Parliamentary election, once in 1900 and again in 1918, because he refused to put his opposition to war in the background. This honesty found extraordinary expression, as we have already seen, in his writing. Literary exactitude was a science to him; something which had to be done as carefully as a conscientious chemist makes up a prescription. This passion for honesty and truth made Fred Jowett respected by his opponents and revered by his colleagues. One knew that in him no meanness or prejudice would ever stand in the way of truth.

The third great personal quality of Fred Jowett was his unconquerable spirit and the unconquerable perseverance which accompanied it. Of this we have had many illustrations in this book; his early struggle for the re-housing of the slum-dwellers of Longlands, his questions in Parliament whenever a case of anthrax occurred, his "obsessions" about secret diplomacy and Parliamentary reform, about the first right of the workers to wealth and about monetary reform. When convinced that he had found a truth, Jowett devoted himself to it utterly, undeterred by ridicule and opposition even from colleagues, working with systematic thoroughness, answering every criticism, going on and on, never knowing defeat. He was tenacious of everything which he believed to be right; nothing could deter him, neither difficulties which appeared insurmountable nor the effects on his own position or popularity.

A fourth quality of Jowett the author is led to mention at the request of some of his younger collaborators in the preparation of this book. They speak of the encouragement which they received from Fred, of the absence in him of any shred of jealousy towards those in the new generation who challenged the leadership of the old,

of his desire to understand new ideas and of his toleration of them even when these ideas struck at traditions he held dear. "To us this was a real mark of greatness," these young friends write. "There was a humility in it which recognised that others might be finding new truths, even though he could not accept them." This humility was characteristic of Fred. He was upstanding to political opponents, he was aggressive when championing the claims of the workers, but among his own comrades he never pressed his personal claims, he never (to repeat Maxtons' words) asked for anything for himself. He did not aspire to position, and, even when his colleagues thrust it on him, accepted it with diffidence.

The simplicity of Fred Jowett—his humanity, his honesty, his doggedness, his humility—sometimes led those who knew him only in his later years to believe that he was just a kindly old man, faithful but ingenuous. He was kindly and faithful, but never ingenuous. That has been proved by the intellectual force and practical achievement recorded in this book. His simplicity was not weakness; it was strength. It came from his singleness of purpose, from the sincerity of his character, the clearness of his vision, his unbending devotion to truth. He had the simplicity not of innocence, but of greatness—the greatness which in disappointment as well as exaltation, in loneliness as well as popularity, remained content in the service of principle, believed still in the inherent goodness of men and women, and had no doubt that justice, freedom and fraternity would triumph ultimately.

But even yet we have not expressed the quality which made Fred Jowett great to those who knew him. It was the beauty of his character, his gentleness, the smile which endeared him because it revealed him. All through the years there was in him the open sincerity of a child; he had nothing to hide in himself and he went straight to the heart of others. Many of us can see him now as he was in his later years, his frail body, his bent shoulders crowned with the domed head and the soft white hair, his face glowing with the spirit of his own personality, the faith that was to him all in life, the affection which embraced not only the comrades about him but all mankind. There was the greatness of Fred Jowett.

Writing of J. B. Anderson, one of the founders of the Bradford Labour Church, who died at the age of 86, in March, 1928, Jowett used these words: "It is well for us to think of the men and women who prepared the way. For as the younger ones think of them and are inspired and encouraged by them, the older ones live on even when they are dead."\*

It is the author's hope that this book may bring to others the inspiration and encouragement which mean that Jowett of Bradford lives on.

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\*March 9, 1928.



General Secretary,  
Labour Party, S.W.

Oct. 30<sup>th</sup> 1924

My dear Frederick

You were not at the ~~for~~ Cabinet meeting to-day so I am writing to you to say how deeply I regret your defeat. It is

terrible to think of this ill-luck which has come to you and how it will so seriously affect you.

I get no satisfaction from contemplating the increased Labour

poll. That only makes it more painful. It is a proof of the great opportunities we have wantonly & recklessly thrown away by the most incompetent leadership which ever brought a ~~for~~ Government to ruin.

However I am

grieved beyond expression at your fate. It is cruel. We have put the Tories in for five years -

Believe me, dear Fred,

Yours very sincerely

Philip Snowden

Rt. Hon. F. W. Jowett

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