Construction, conformity and control: the taming of the Daily Herald 1921-30

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Constriction, Conformity and Control: The Taming of the Daily Herald 1921-30

Submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

History Discipline, The Open University

14th July 1992
Constriction, Conformity and Control:
The Taming of the Daily Herald 1921-30
Huw Richards
Ph.D 1993
The Open University

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ABSTRACT

The period from 1921 to 1930 saw the Daily Herald come under the direct control of the organised Labour movement - jointly owned by the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress. It separates an earlier incarnation of independent left radicalism from a subsequent identity as a commercial daily tied to an official political line.

It is a period of commercial and competitive failure - the 500,000 circulation constantly evoked as a target was only attained in times of exceptional political or industrial excitement. Reliant on movement subsidies for capital finance it was unable to match the new features and inducements - notably insurance schemes - that competitors provided in a period of rapid expansion and intense circulation battles.

Editorially it was torn between the radicalism of its staff, the journalistic instinct to avoid predictability and the desire of Labour's moderate leaders for an automatically reliable supporter in the national press. As leadership pressures mounted it increasingly became the voice of the centre lecturing followers, with debate restricted - but independent instincts were never totally curbed.

Failure to attract the desired mass readership cannot be wholly attributed to poverty. Initially developed as the voice of a committed, informed radical political elite it continued to reflect their interests - and would always choose to educate rather than entertain. In the absence of a mass counterculture this left it seeking a popular readership with a serious approach. Realisation that a different approach was needed to win such a readership combined with recognition that this would need capital investment beyond the means of the movement to force the partnership formed with Odhams Press in 1929, ending exclusive movement control.

END
Preface and acknowledgements

Any project lasting twelve years from conception to completion accumulates the obligation of a considerable number of acknowledgements - starting in this case with no fewer than four supervisors and an academic adviser. My chief thanks go to Professor James Curran, my external academic supervisor as an Open University student since February 1982. James has brought to the task of supervision not only unparalleled knowledge and expertise of the subject area, but a generous willingness to share that knowledge and fine judgment, confronted by a student whose early years were made barrenly unproductive by the pressures of freelance journalism, of when to tolerate non-production and when to demand adherence to deadlines. Without his assistance this project would not have been completed. My internal OU supervisor Dr Tony Aldgate has been an invaluable guide through the tortuous maze of OU regulations and requirements - not least those relating to the submission of theses.

When this project began, at Nuffield College, Oxford, in the autumn of 1980 Dr David Butler's enthusiasm, commitment to research and unfailing support for an erratic and troublesome student were a vital contribution to its initial impetus while Dr Martin Ceadel provided sympathetic assistance in unravelling the initial mysteries of academic research.

That the project should finally have been completed owes a great deal to the term I spent as a member of the Oxford Journalism Fellowship Programme at Queen Elizabeth House. My chief academic thanks for this period go to Dr John Rowett, whose knowledge of the Labour movement in the 1920s was the perfect complement to Professor Curran's expertise on the press, and whose willingness to read and criticise in detail vast screeds of manuscript were above and beyond the call of his role as an academic adviser.

Thanks are also due to Neville Maxwell, inventor and director of the programme, to the Leverhulme Foundation for funding my place and to my colleagues on the programme - particularly Ken Guggenheim, John Nicol, Connie Sage and Aura Triana - for creating the pleasurable and productive working environment in which the project was largely completed.
Thanks are also due to my employers Times Supplements Ltd for granting me three months paid leave of absence to go to Oxford, to my editor Peter Scott for granting the leave and 
extracting the full pay from company management and my news editor David Jobbins for 
accepting uncomplainingly both the absence of his political writer during the 1992 General 
Election and the presence on other occasions of a reporter whose mind was focussed more on the 
1920s than the 1990s.

Several archives, libraries and their staff also provided invaluable assistance. Rosie Stone 
and the staff of the filing department at the Trades Union Congress and Stephen Bird, archivist at 
the Labour Party, facilitated access to the main institutional archives. Dr Richard Storey and 
the staff of the Modern Records Centre, Warwick University, Harry Cox, formerly librarian of 
Mirror Group Newspapers and the staffs of the manuscript room at the London School of 
Economics, the South Wales Miners' Library, the Public Record Office and the John Rylands 
Library, Manchester also helped with important archives. The Daily Herald and other 
newspapers consulted were read at the National Newspaper Library, Colindale, the map room of 
the Bodleian Library, Oxford, in the library of Nuffield College, Oxford and in the research 
department at the National Union of Journalists.

Others have played significant roles in this project. Dr Gary McCulloch first planted the idea 
with a chance remark over a drink, Dr Brian Harrison provided initial encouragement to apply 
for postgraduate work and Dr Deian Hopkin advised me that the Open University would be the 
best place to continue post-Nuffield as a part-time student. Lord Jay and Lord Leatherland both 
talked about their experiences as members of the Herald staff and at different times a number of 
academics - notably Professor David Howell, Professor Ben Pimlott, Dr Philip Williams, Dr 
John Sheppard, Dr Ged Martin and Dr John Ritchie have given advice and reassurance. The 
Society for the Study of Labour History and the Institute of Historical Research Media History 
both provided the opportunity to clarify and test ideas inherent in the delivery of conference and 
seminar papers. Over the past three years regular attendance at the Institute of Historical 
Research's Wednesday afternoon seminar on Twentieth Century British History has greatly 
improved the quality of my life as a researcher - not least in counter-acting the feeling of 
mental and physical isolation that goes with part-time research.
Any doctoral student will confirm that the difficulties of research and writing are likely to be matched by those of physical production. If the spirit of the Herald lives on anywhere in modern British journalism, it is in the pages and among the staff and contributors of Tribune - so it is appropriate that the final edit and printing of this thesis should have been carried out at the Tribune offices. Thanks here are due to the editor Paul Anderson for offering the facilities and to his staff - particularly Jeff Lovi.t,.Caroline Rees and Sheila Noble, for their assistance with the practicalities of their system and tolerance of my monopolising a computer and printer. Jeff's generosity in spending two hours transferring files between machines was particularly vital to completing the project. Thanks for assistance with photocopying are also due to Catherine Hastings and the London Business School. At earlier stages of the project help with printing and editing was provided by the Institute of Contemporary British History - thanks here to Peter Catterall, Brian Brivati and Virginia Preston - Tim Greenhalgh, Bernadine Corrigan, Tim Greenhalgh, Martin Ince, Claire Sanders and Kate Green. A different form of practical assistance came from friends who provided accommodation close to archives - in London Peter Raikes and Bridget Osborne and Mark MacDonald and in Oxford Stephen Howe and Daphna Vardi. Jane Matthews lived with the project for several years.

Finally I should like to thank journalistic colleagues from student training at the Centre for Journalism Studies, University College, Cardiff through a range of other publications to the present day at the Times Higher Education Supplement for a decade of insights into the way journalists and newspapers work, or do not work. ENDS
Key to Footnotes

DH: Daily Herald

NW: Newspaper World

WPN: World's Press News

DLB: Dictionary of Labour Biography

EBDH: Ernest Bevin Papers, Daily Herald File. Number refers to no of item.

JRMPRO: Ramsay MacDonald Papers, Public Record Office. UP: University Press

n.d: no date given for document.

Ed rep: Editor's report

GM rep: General Manager's report

AM rep: Advertising Manager's report

CM rep: Circulation Manager's report

DH dir: Daily Herald directors

VHPCo dir: Victoria House Printing Company directors

Labour Party.

LPDH: Labour Party Daily Herald Files. Number refers to no of item

LPRAC: Report of the Annual Conference

LPEC: Minutes of Executive Committee

Trades Union Congress

TUC: Trades Union Congress Daily Herald Files. Number refers to file


TUCGC: Minutes of General Council.

TUCFC: Minutes of General Council Finance and General Purposes Committee

(Finance Committee 1923-4, 1925-6. Finance and Office Committee 1924-5).
"Labour, still a cumbrous movement that enveloped a party, backed into custody of a daily journal, with results that remain to be investigated". This thesis attempts to fill the gap in the historiography of the press and the Labour movement identified eight years ago by Stephen Koss. (1)

It examines the career of the Daily Herald between the end of August 1921 - when editor-proprietor George Lansbury was imprisoned as de facto leader of the protesting Poplar councillors - to April 1930 when a remodelled and expanded paper declared its first one million net sales certificate.

The Herald's 52 year history incorporated three broad incarnations. In 1921 it was still an independent paper of the radical left, its purposes entirely political - in essence its role since its foundation on 15th April 1912, a birthdate it shared with the North Korean dictator Kim Il-Sung. By 1930 it had become a fully-fledged popular daily, its political purposes now firmly mixed with the commercial ones predominant elsewhere in the national press - fundamentally the model that was to survive until its closure in 1964.

So the years studied are a bridging period, linking two widely differing incarnations of the paper by a third as the journalistic property of the organised Labour movement. The fact of being a Labour paper was fundamental to its identity throughout its history, but it was only between the Trades Union Congresses of 1922 and 1929 that it came under the direct and exclusive control of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress.
The Daily Herald 1921-30 : Introduction

Previous accounts of the Herald have concentrated largely on the first and third incarnations. Lansbury's "The Miracle of Fleet Street" (1925), the one substantial work specifically on the Herald, has some material on the period of official control but deals predominantly with the political and commercial vicissitudes of the earlier period. His "My Life" (1928) and Raymond Postgate's "Life of George Lansbury" also contain lengthy sections on his involvement with the paper while other material on the first period is contained in the memoirs of staff members Rowland Kenney (1939), George Slocombe (1936) and Francis Meynell (1971). Its relationship with its official Labour competitor, the Daily Citizen, attracted serious academic attention in an article by Robert Holton in the International Review of Social History (1974),(2)

There is nothing as substantial as "The Miracle of Fleet Street" on the third stage. Wilfred Fienberg's 25th anniversary history of the commercial Herald has little to say about the paper itself. Accounts have concentrated on the 1930s - where the memoirs of editor Francis Williams (1970) and of staff member Douglas Jay (1980) and a hagiographic biography of proprietor Lord Southwood by RJ Minney (1954) are of value - and on its decline and demise in the 1960s. Hugh Oudlipp's "At You, Paul!" and "Walking on the Water" provide a first-hand insider view of its final years while subsequent media analysts, notably James Curran, have analysed the underlying reasons for its failure and the extent to which a paper of the left was hamstrung by dependance on advertising income,(3)
The paper also has a frequent bit-part as a source or minor player in histories of the Labour movement - most significantly in Ross McKibbin's "The Evolution of the Labour Party 1910-24" (1974), which contains a brief and lucid account of the movement takeover in 1921-2. (4)

The historian of the Herald in the 1920s starts with very little in the way of previous accounts, and these are almost entirely confined to the first half of the decade. McKibbin and Lansbury's "Miracle" are supplemented only by the acidic memoirs of Henry Hamilton Fyfe, editor from 1922 to 1926, contained in "My Seven Selves" (1935) and "Sixty Years of Fleet Street" (1949). (5)

This relative neglect of the 1920s is surprising insofar as this is the only period for which a primary Herald archive exists. This is a significant factor in the choice of period of study - to have attempted to extend it before 1921 or after 1930 would have created a serious discontinuity in the sources used.

There are limitations to these archives, which are contained in the records of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress. Consisting largely of the records of the board members nominated by the two national bodies and papers and correspondence circulated by and to them as they pursued their role, they contain little concerning the day to day running of the paper or the people who worked on it. Where historians with access to comprehensive institutional archives like David Kynaston, David Ayerst and successive contributors to the Times' series of tombstones have made staff records and anecdotes a cornerstone of their studies, it is possible to say very little about Herald journalists - a frustration for any chronicler, but particularly so for a working journalist. (6)
Some historians of the press - notably Koss in his "The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain" (vol 2:1984) and Keith Wilson in his recent work on the Morning Post have leaned heavily on archives to the extent of almost excluding the content of the papers themselves. Limited archives make such an approach impossible in this case, but even were it possible this would leave an inadequate history of the Herald or any other paper. This is not to deny the value of, in particular, Koss. But his book might better have been called "The Rise and Fall of Political Press Proprietorship". But to attempt to write the history of a newspaper without using the contents of the paper as a fundamental element is to miss the point of the exercise, generating a product akin to that most bizarre of philatelic errors - the 1965 Post Office Tower stamp minus tower.(7)

The defining element in any newspaper's existence is the daily or weekly deadline. As well as dictating an emphasis on the contents of the paper, it makes a chronological approach desirable. All life is by definition lived chronologically, but in few activities is this as important as journalism - dominated by the daily or weekly routine of producing a product whose built-in obsolescence is summed up by the phrase "next week's fish and chip wrapping". Not all good press history is written that way. Patricia Hollis showed the potential benefits of a thematic approach in her study of the unstamped press - the sheer mass of of papers involved would have made a chronological approach almost impossible to organise. But for the simpler task of examining a single paper and the way in which it changed over a decade in response to external commercial and political pressures, chronology provides the most effective means of matching content to those pressures.(8)MF
The Daily Herald 1921-30: Introduction

Analysis of content raises considerable difficulties. The historian of public policy may, subject to the weeding process, have copious files in the Public Record Office to explain the gestation, organisation and presentation of a single decision - a mass of input in relationship to output. The press historian, particularly when dealing with archives as limited as those of the Herald, faces a mass of output in the form of the papers compared to very limited input in explanation.

The sheer bulk of the material is daunting. As Joel Wiener says "Everything in a newspaper, however insignificant it may seem, is potentially of interest, which complicates the matter". A loose, conservative estimate of the word-count in the Herald in the eight and a half years under study suggests that it is around 300 times the number recommended in university regulations for a doctoral thesis.(9)

Therefore selection is vital. Quantitative analysis provides one means of assessing content, and Virginia Berridge's work on Reynolds's Newspaper and other popular Victorian papers shows the potential value of such analysis to a press historian. The difficulty with any quantitative approach is, as Herald editor William Mellor pointed out when confronted by the figures produced by a member of his own staff, is that categorisation of particular stories is an uncertain and imprecise process. It is also less effective in charting changing ideas than the more straightforwardly literary style of analysis used by Hollis. Such an approach is by definition more subjective and reliant on the judgment and interpretation of the individual historian - but given the emphasis in this study on the changing world view of the Herald it has been adopted as the more likely to generate interesting and revealing insights. MF
Personal judgment and interpretation also dictate what amid the mass of available material is emphasised. Any newspaper is a complex and sensitive mechanism subject to an immense range of influences and pressures. Editors are important, but they cannot write or edit every item that appears in the paper. Much depends on decisions taken by other members of staff - writers, sub-editors, picture editors and others - under the pressure of deadlines.

Because of these pressures and the dependence of newspapers on unpredictable external events for their material, much of what appears is fortuitous. It would be rash for any analyst to make much of a particular run of the mill news story appearing at the bottom of page five. It may reflect some crucial political subtext. Far more likely though is that it was selected at the last moment from a mass of agency news copy by a sub-editor desperate for something of the right length to slot into a hole on the page.

But some elements are not fortuitous. The lead news story will not have been chosen without forethought. Its selection in preference to other stories will represent the considered view of the editor and other senior staff that this is the most important item available to the paper and its readers on a particular day. Similarly the choice and content of leader articles - particularly in a paper of explicitly political purpose such as the Herald - and of the main features, most of which will have been commissioned or selected in advance, will reflect forethought rather than reflex. The emphasis in this study is therefore on these elements within the paper.

MF
But this does mean dismissing the fortuitous elements. Reflex the selection is likely to have been, but it will have been a conditioned reflex - conditioned by journalists' assumptions about the sort of story the Herald wanted. Conditioned reflex under the pressure of deadlines will, if the conditioning is strong enough, lead to consistency of decision-making. News coverage has been examined on the principle that once is coincidence, twice is suspicious and three times is enemy action.

Once is also occasionally worthy of note along 'exception proving the rule' lines. Incongruities such as the Herald's cricket correspondent disparaging the ability of professionals to lead the England team at a time when the paper was pressing the parallel political case for a government composed of players rather than gentlemen or the printing of a public school headmaster's smug witticisms about the General Strike are so striking in the context of the rest of the paper as to demand comment. (10)

The heavy emphasis on political content reflects the Herald's self-perception as a political paper. It can be argued that seeing itself purely in these rather than in cultural terms was a fundamental weakness, but that the people running the Herald saw it that way is indisputable. Just as sources dictated a concentration at board rather than news room level in analysing the institution, so they force an emphasis on how the Herald saw its readers rather than vice versa. How fruitful a search for evidence would have been is questionable. Alan Lee, writing on the Victorian and Edwardian press, said: "There are serious methodological problems involved in getting to know how communicated ideas and information affect their recipients, particularly if the problem is given an historical dimension." This applies as strongly to the 1920s as to earlier periods. (11)
Those earlier periods also had their own radical working-class press. Herald rhetoric would consistently portray it as a lone force acting against the overwhelming power of the capitalist press combines. In the context of the national daily press this was true in the 1920s, but the Herald had both contemporaries in other sections of the press and forerunners in its national radical role.

James Curran has argued that the press was considerably more radical in 1860 than it was at the time of the Herald's foundation half a century later. The first half of the nineteenth century saw the explosion in the 1830s of the working-class unstamped press and Feargus O'Connor's attempt to run a national Chartist paper, the Northern Star. JA Epstein's account points to a diversity of viewpoint and toleration of debate in its columns that anticipated by three quarters of a century George Lansbury's open forum approach in the Herald.(12)

The middle of the century saw the rise of rumbustious mass-circulation Sunday newspapers such as Reynolds's Newspaper, whose vigorous relish of scandal had a political edge. Virginia Berridge noted that "Sensationalism was part of the papers' political commentary and a continuation of it". But it also saw what Curran isolates as the decisive factor in the marginalization of the radical press - the replacement of stamps, licensing and other forms of government control with a far more effective form of market control imposed by advertisers' refusal to support the radical press and constantly growing market entry costs. It has been estimated that a London daily cost £2-5,000 to launch in 1818. By the 1870s this figure had risen to £100,000 and Edward Lloyd had to spend £180,000 to buy the Clerkenwell News and transform it into the Daily Chronicle.(13)
Curran argued that 'advertising licensing' drove Reynolds's upmarket in pursuit of wealthier readerships, progressively blunting its political edge - although Berridge rejected this analysis. (14)

What is not in dispute is that the main attempt at a trade union paper, the Beehive of 1861 - 1876 was to anticipate the Herald's career in several respects. Its initial roots were in a strike, of building workers. Growing from London roots - it was run at first by the London Trades Council - into a national role it was ultimately forced into conformity with the views of the dominant moderate leaders of the day and sold to a proprietor outside the union movement, a Liberal MP. (15)

But a distinct Labour press had developed by the early years of the twentieth century. Deian Hopkin estimated that to 1914 the Independent Labour Party could muster around 100 papers, the Social Democratic Federation 15, Labour and the unions 30 and syndicalist and anarchist groups 20. And not only in English. Paralleling the Herald in its roots in a 1911 printers strike Y Dinesydd Cymreig provided North Wales with a powerful Labour weekly exclusively in Welsh until 1926. (16)

The majority were small, local and short-lived. But there were significant exceptions - notably Robert Blatchford's weekly Clarion, selling 74,000 copies by 1906 with its mix of sharp editorial comment, humour and non-political features like short stories and cycling columns and Keir Hardie's more explicitly political Labour Leader, spiced with exposé articles. Hopkin argued: "The exposé was a means to an end, the target chosen because of its political significance; the arguments deployed were political more than moral, although it is difficult to disentangle the two". (17)
Providing a powerful extension of the public platform, the Labour press was an important element in the apprenticeship of the political generation who would take decisions about the Herald in the 1920s. Robert Williams was a major contributor to the Labour press in Swansea while Ben Turner said of "Yorkshire Factory Times" that "it made our union proper". Skills initially honed in Labour papers could also be deployed more profitably elsewhere. Alan Lee noted: "It is doubtful whether either the Irish Nationalists or the Labour Party could have provided any MPs had it not been for the opportunity which journalism provided for them to support themselves." (18)

Those decision makers were also aware that overseas Labour movements could point to more impressive press support. Ramsay MacDonald complained in 1900 that "The newspaper so characteristic of the democratic movements on the Continent and not unknown in this country, which depends altogether on its opinions for its circulation, is being crushed out of existence" - on Hopkin's evidence an unduly pessimistic assessment of the British scene, but one displaying sharp awareness of greater promise elsewhere. A regular feature of Herald debates at the TUC in the early 1920s was Ben Tillett's lecture on the glories of the continental Labour press - although on one occasion Ben Turner was to dismiss them en masse as "not a patch on the Daily Herald". (19)

In the United States the Appeal to Reason could claim a 200,000 national sale in 1902 and commanded a national audience for the first decade of the century while rivals such as The Challenge could also point to impressive sales figures. In France the Socialist Party had four daily papers in 1914 including L'Humanite with a readership estimated at 200,000. (20)
Postwar French experience was also to provide some parallels for followers of the Herald. When the Communists split off in 1920 L'Humanite, under the editorship of Marcel Cachin, went with it and the Socialists attempted to fill the gap with Le Populaire. Substitute "Lansbury" for "Blum" and Raymond Maney's description of its tribulations might describe those of the Herald in the same period: "Sa pauvreté ne lui permit pas pendant plusieurs années de rivaliser sur le plan de l'information avec les grands quotidiens, ni même avec la plupart de ses confrères politiques. Les militants avaient pris l'habitude de le considérer comme un journal de complément. Ils l'achetaient pour l'article de Leon Blum, qui ouvrait la première page, et pour les vocations des groupes et sections qui bouclaient la dernière". Suspended in 1924, to the ill-concealed glee of the firmly anti-Labour Newspaper Press Directory, which concluded from its fate and the Herald's difficulties that "Labour and Socialist organs are not able to command the financial support of those they profess to represent", it was restarted in 1927 but continued as a consistent loss-maker, in Theodore Zeldin's words "Much more a doctrinal than a newspaper"(21)

Much more encouraging and more frequently cited, particularly by Tillett, was the example of the Social Democratic press in Germany. In 1914 there were 90 SPD papers, almost all dailies, with a total sale of 1.465 million. The most important - Vorwärts - had a daily sale of 175,000 and an annual income of two million marks while the weekly cultural and entertainment paper Neue Welt sold 550,000. But there were also features recognisable on the British scene - complaints that sales were well below the votes polled in elections, low-paid journalists and disaffection between the moderates who staffed Vorwärts and the radicals of the Leipziger Volkszeitung.(22)
By the 1920s the SPD daily press had been diminished by the schism with Communism. But what Tillett and other British enthusiasts saw was the extent of the SPD press operation compared to their own single struggling paper. A full comparative explanation might occupy an entire doctoral thesis in its own right. Two points are worth making. First is Alex Hall's observation that the SPD papers had realised as early as the 1890s that they would have to provide a full general news service as well as political information in order to win readers—a service facilitated by the creation of a central party press bureau in 1908. (22)

Second are the observations of Egon Wertheimer, Vorwarts correspondent in Britain, whose background in the SPD provided the means for a penetratingly perceptive study of its British equivalent in "Portrait of the Labour Party" (1929). Wertheimer pointed out that SPD membership involved a major personal commitment, and also admitted the member to a whole countercultural network of leisure, cultural and sporting bodies linked to the party: "Continental party membership was the outcome of a personal decision. From the moment of registration the party organisation surrounded him with a whole series of duties and obligations, demanded certain services from him and, to a certain extent, determined his mode of life". (23)

By contrast most Labour members joined through union membership: "The party does not make any extra-political demands upon its members". In the absence outside the ILP of "inner party life" along the European pattern Labour was, compared to the SPD, "a mere voting machine". (24)
Wertheimer argued that "Separated by no class barriers from the mental and spiritual concepts of capitalism, which would otherwise have given birth to an exclusively proletarian way of life and morality, and deep-rooted in national religious tradition, the Labour Party had never been able to make a clean breakaway from capitalist culture. The disinclination during the 1920s of the mass of Labour members and supporters to make a clean breakaway from capitalist newspapers adds force to his insight. (25)

One possible explanation for this 'relative absence of counterculture was that British labour had no solidifying experience equivalent to Bismarck's campaign against socialists between 1878 and 1890. Though Koss's description of a "cumbersome movement" is not unfair, British Labour had good reason for optimism at the start of the 1920s. The TUC was undoubtedly the senior partner in the political-industrial partnership, established since 1868, and membership was at record levels following the First World War. The left, boosted by the fashion for direct action espoused by the Herald in the immediate postwar period, had a strong presence within the leadership but moderates such as general secretary Bowerman, Will Thorne and John Clynes retained a dominant position.

The Labour Party was evolving under the impetus of Arthur Henderson's reforms - permitting individual membership and creating local parties - from being a union representation group to a national party. Its leadership was firmly in the hands of the right - with the alliance of trade unionists Clynes, JH Thomas and Henderson with Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden in control throughout.
The dominant intellectual fashions were ethical, ameliorative, reformist and pragmatic. An element in that pragmatism was the belief, common across the political spectrum, that a press presence was essential to political success. Quite how much notice people took of their newspapers was as questionable then as now, but as Koss noted "Mistaken or not, this conviction created its own reality" (26).

That conviction informed the movement's decision to take over the Herald when the only alternative on offer was its closure. Its period of proprietorship cannot be termed successful, except insofar as a paper which seemed unlikely to survive contrived to do so. One measure of failure is that the Trades Union Congress should at the end of the period have been forced to accept a commercial publisher as dominant partner in the running of the paper. Such an act of privatisation would hardly have been contemplated had the direct-owning status quo been seen as a success.

Seeking explanations for this failure is the main purpose of this thesis. There can be little doubt that it experienced a difficult and complicated existence and was subject to an immense range of political and commercial pressures.

Most important of the commercial pressures was the constricting effect of poverty. This was nothing new for the left-wing press - James Curran's analysis of the impact of advertisers' prejudices has already been noted. The rising entry cost trend of the second half of the nineteenth century had continued and accentuated in the first two decades of the twentieth. Tribune had failed in 1908, in spite of £300,000 expenditure over two years in the attempt to turn it into an effective Liberal daily (27).
The Daily Herald 1921-30: Introduction

The Daily Citizen's fate in 1915 was a recent reminder of the mismatch between the resources the organised left could devote to a newspaper and those needed to make it competitive. Deian Hopkin has noted: "By socialist standards the Daily Citizen raised a fortune in investment - much more than £150,000 in all. By Fleet Street standards it was not enough". (28)

And the stakes were to raise further in the 1920s - a period of expansion and ferocious competition. The Herald's competitors poured ever-increasing resources not only into expanded news coverage but into special features, pictures and, most expensively, sales promotion. The extraordinary rise of newspaper insurance schemes and of the foot-soldier of the circulation wars, the door-to-door canvasser, and arguably the keynote of the national press between the two world wars.

Demands on the Herald were accentuated by its political purpose. As director Ethel Bentham put it in 1925: "The difficulty of the Herald is that a small paper with limited resources has to fulfil two different functions - that of the ordinary daily newspaper and that of the organ of the movement". It was not a new problem for the left-wing press - the pressures on SPD newspapers have already been noted, while the Beehive sixty years earlier had promised "All the features of a popular weekly newspaper with the more specialised features of a trade union and working class journal". (29)

This uncertainty over the extent and ambitions of coverage was linked inextricably to the pursuit of higher sales. This was dictated both by the commercial objective of converting a chronic loss-maker into a viable proposition and the political desire to spread the message as widely as possible.
Recurrent notes throughout the period are the belief that a 500,000 circulation and a Northern Edition will solve most of the Herald's problems - a classic chicken and egg proposition as the Northern Edition was felt to be essential to attaining the sales target, but increased sales were indispensable to raising the money necessary to start up in Manchester.

The Herald's poverty conditioned its responses to these problems. But so too did the moral and ethical make-up of the people who ran the Herald. The eternal conundrum confronting socialist parties in capitalist democracies is that however much they dislike the status quo, they have to operate and try to win within it. Their constant dilemma is deciding how far they should adopt the methods of their adversaries in order to defeat them.

Similar pressures operate on a socialist newspaper in a capitalist market. Insurance was discussed when the Herald was first taken over, but rejected. Cost was certainly a factor but Arthur Henderson, whose disposition to opt for morality over commercial imperatives in the newspaper business had been demonstrated by his resignation from the board of the Daily Citizen when it introduced racing tips in 1914, argued: "It was an extremely doubtful method of trying to get their rank and file to take the paper which ought first of all - should he not say first and last? - be taken because it was the finest weapon that the workers could hope for in giving publicity to its own principles and ideals". The dialectic between morality and pragmatism in this respect is an important running theme.
The debate had its journalistic counterpart. Philip Snowden, who was to be conspicuously uninvolved in the Herald, wrote in the 1919 edition of Sell's World Press: "A Labour Newspaper is at a disadvantage from the point of view of establishing a circulation by feeling under an obligation to maintain a higher moral standard than that observed by ordinary newspapers. The directors of a Labour newspaper regard it as inconsistent with their principles to give prominence to sensational news.

"The success of a daily newspaper depends upon the diversity of its topics and features. It must contain in every issue features which will appeal to a large number of different people. The directors of a Labour newspaper have a mission to carry out. They have a gospel to preach. To them the newspaper is primarily a medium for propagating their ideas. The ordinary newspaper is conducted on entirely different lines. It is primarily a commercial venture. It has no scruples which are allowed to interfere with the success of its appeal for popular support." (31)

The dominant commercial model of the time was provided by the Mail and Express — with a broader human-interest driven conception of news and serious political commentary present but subsumed to other elements: "Features rather than editorial commentary set the popular tone of the paper", JD Startt has argued. (32)

Popular journalism could be given a political twist as Reynolds's in the late nineteenth century, WJ Stead and the Pall Mall Gazette in the 1880s and Clarion contemporaneously had shown. Hopkin describes Clarion as the "first mass-circulation socialist paper". (33)
A formidable literary tradition had also emerged — Hopkin notes that Labour Leader and William Morris's Commonweal were arguably more distinguished in this area than in political commentary. This tradition would be continued by the Herald, particularly in Lansbury's last years and was undoubtedly important in appealing to the coalition of left-wing intellectuals and self-educated worker activists who would appear to have been the bulk of its readership. But whether it helped in getting a wider readership is more questionable. The extent to which the Herald's difficulties could be attributed to journalistic failings of the sort outlined by Turner and the basic error of pursuing a mass popular audience with a serious, heavily political paper as well as to its resource limitations is a debate that runs through the entire period. The most comprehensive critique along these lines was developed in 1925 and after by director Clifford Allen with Ben Turner, chairman of the paper over the same period, as his main opponent. (34)

The complications of the Herald's existence did not end here, but could also be seen in a long drawn-out and complex battle for its editorial soul. It was clear in 1922 what the official Herald would not be — the freewheeling radicalism of the Lansbury days was not an option once the paper was answerable to a board of directors composed of the movement's parliamentary and industrial leaders. But quite what would replace it was less clear — not least because the new editor and directors had to implement the new style with the politically-motivated, leftist staff assembled by Lansbury, NF
The precise form an official line would take had also to be defined. As director RB Walker pointed out in a debate on editorial policy in 1925, the Herald could not "Be expected to speak with any more authority, or any more consistently, on any one issue than the movement itself does". (35)

Even where there was little doubt what the official line was, the Herald had to decide where to position itself in relation to leaders and led, and this was to make issues of conformity and control fundamental throughout this period. One view of an official paper would have it acting as a top-down conduit - handing down the official viewpoint, expounding it and rejecting all criticism. The appeal of this for party leaders and officialdom is self-evident.

An alternative view would expect it to give editorial support to the official line while permitting debate and dissent in features and letters. A third would give the Herald an active role within debate, free to express its own line on any policy even if it conflicted with official viewpoints. The greater appeal of either of these to journalists - constitutionally opposed to monotony and predictability - and to party activists, particularly those on the left in this period, is equally clear.

Much depended on the editor's conception of his own role and his willingness to subordinate personal and journalistic instincts to a role as servant of the movement - Henry Hamilton Fyfe and William Mellor were to display differing conceptions of their role, MF.
The formidible difficulty and complexity of the role taken on by the TUC, the Labour Party and the Herald staff in 1922 is clear. But any estimate of their performance has to take into account the sharply realistic view of political life - one that might have been applied to journalism - expressed by one of the left's most vivid personalities in this period, Glasgow ILPer James Maxton who said "If you cannot ride two horses at once you have no right in the bloody circus". (35)

ENDS
Footnotes One


10. DH 9, 7, 24, 26, 7, 26.

THE DAILY HERALD 1921-30

Footnotes One a


14. Berridge - Content Analysis loc cit p 217

15. Stanley Harrison - Poor Men's Guardians Lawrence and Wishart 1974 p141-9


17. Ibid p 227-30


23. Egon Wertheimer - Portrait of the Labour Party Putnam 1929 p 113

24. Ibid p 11,113 MF


27. Curran - Capitalism loc cit p 219


29. Harrison op cit p 143, Dr Ethel Bentham - Memorandum 17,9,25 LPOH 464 TUC 789.1


32. Startt - Good Journalism loc cit p 279

33. Hopkin loc cit p 236-7

34. Ibid p 232, See for example Allen memo 11,5,27, Turner ditto 13,5,27 TUC 788.5

35. ed) Alan McKinlay and RJ Morris - The ILP on Clydeside 1893-1932: From foundation to disintegration Manchester UP 1991 p 1
Its coverage reveals several of the defining features of the Herald's style under Lansbury. Its news values were almost exclusively political - what was felt to be the most significant political event of the day would always receive exhaustive coverage. Poplar received consistent attention throughout 1921 - notably 23rd March (Poplar's refusal to pay), 8th July (divisional court order to pay) and 5th August (order to go to jail) (4).

The arrests in the first week in September brought attention to a new crescendo, and by occupying a full week gave it ample scope for self-expression. Poplar occupied prime news space - the left-hand columns of the front page - for eight consecutive issues from Tuesday 30th August to Thursday 8th September. This was supplemented by a series of leaders and articles by Lansbury - the one regular by-lined contributor. These elements were combined to striking effect in the issue of September 1st 1921, leaving the reader in no doubt that the revolt was dignified, determined, united and firmly backed by the people of the borough.

A front page news story provided a vivid account of the scenes at Poplar Town Hall as the councillors held their final public meeting. Lansbury was to suggest that the whole saga could be seen as "A screamingly funny farce...if only we could put it on at the movies", and the Herald was to seize on the moments of humour in the following week.

The late arrival of the men intending to arrest John Scurr was reported with a barely suppressed chuckle that he "Had been awaiting arrest all day, and having got rather tired had gone out to take the air", while Lansbury's arrest was accompanied by the family parrot's continuous interjections of "Chuck, chuck, pretty, pretty!" (6)

But this pre-arrest evening in Poplar was more Eisenstein than Keystone Cops. Hamilton Fyfe was acridly critical of the abilities of the staff he inherited a year later, saying most had been chosen for reasons other than journalistic ability. But this report is evidence that at least one member of that staff was capable of generating vivid and powerful reporting, done with sufficient skill that support for the cause was conveyed without the interjection of outright comment.
"The men and women of Poplar gathered in imposing force to prove to the Councillors, whose last night of liberty they generally believed it to be, that they recognised to the full the sacrifice which these 30 men and women were making on their behalf and that the community as a whole was solidly behind its representatives.... The big building was crowded, until it was literally impossible for another person to gain admission... Impressive as was the crowd within the hall, it dwindled into insignificance when compared with the huge overflow concourse outside".

Estimating that the crowd was between 6,000 and 7,000 - and limited to that only by the hearing range of the human ear, the report recorded that "There was nothing pessimistic about the huge gathering, no note of misgiving in the fighting speeches of the councillors. Every speaker was greeted with loud applause, and at times, speakers could not continue until the tumult of enthusiasm subsided". (7)

The supporting leader reinforced in polemical style the news story's images of determined resolution, backing it with a critique of the system Poplar was attacking. This critique was rooted firmly in a concept of justice and the belief that the current system was unfair, had one rule for the poor and another for the rich, and was inhumane. That it was inefficient and wasteful was an important sub-element, particularly in the context of attacks made on these grounds, but came second to the shout for moral justice. While the Herald had its contingent of Marxists, its analysis was firmly within the ethical, humanitarian British Labour Socialism tradition - an underpinning betrayed by the reference to the "wickedness" of capitalism. (8)

It said of the councillors: "They are going, not with any display of martyrdom or in any mood except that of the simple resolve to see justice done. They are going because it is the only way left open to them of making an effective protest against injustice..... To keep children at an insufficient standard of life because their parents - through no fault of either parents or children - are out of work is, anyway, the act of a blackguardly system. But it is also the most monstrous form of squandermania because it foments disease, it lowers the morale and physique of the nation, it retards trade recovery, it increases every sort of economic burden, it adds to the rates and taxes which it is supposed to save. It is the philosophy not merely of criminals, but of lunatics"
It concluded with a vigorous ethical flourish: "The difference between the two classes of unemployed is this: that the rich unemployed do not want work, but insist on getting money out of the pockets of the workers for no refund at all, whereas the unemployed men and women of the working class do want work, ask nothing better than work at a reasonable wage, and are denied it by the folly and wickedness of capitalist society and a capitalist government". (9)

Such a viewpoint was to be expected of any paper edited by Lansbury---whose socialism was underpinned by Christian convictions. Fyfe questioned how far Lansbury was really in control of the paper at this time. But whatever the day to day set-up, there is little doubt that his was the dominant voice in setting the tone of the paper. If leader column rhetoric was the Herald's official voice, then Lansbury's articles were the personal voice. He was a politician rather than a journalist, with his writings lacking the polish and finish of the professional journalist. But in their sermon-like quality, with a tone more of the spoken than the written word, they spoke directly to the reader as a fellow-participant in the struggle. (10)

His front-page article on September 1st, Headlined "A Fight For the Poor", is typical: "Poplar is not asking for universal lawlessness. Poplar is only arguing that the boroughs of London afflicted with an overwhelming mass of human suffering and misery should refuse to add to this by landing upon the shoulders of the poor financial burdens they are unable to carry".

The conclusion accentuated the personal element with a typically direct button-holing appeal to the reader: "Today with my colleagues I await arrest. Putting us in prison may suit Sir Alfred Mond and the Government. They are drawing dragon's teeth. When the prison door closes its clang with resound throughout England, bringing a note of good cheer to the poor, the sick and the unemployed. For in prison by our very silence we shall be smashing down the theory that the beastly system which dooms the workless to poverty must continue. I repeat: our call, comrade, will be to you, and you must organise to ensure that victory shall see the end of our imprisonment". (11)
Lansbury's style of direct address contained the implied assumption that his reader was, like himself, a political activist. This assumption also pervaded the front-page article on 3rd September, which followed the decision to place the Poplar councillors in the Second division rather than the less unpleasant First at Brixton Prison. It illustrates several other Herald characteristics. It was on a news page, but was unashamedly a mix of reporting and propaganda. Its tone was angry - while Lansbury had placed an anathema on the "good old gospel of hate" as practised by editor Charles Lapworth and cartoonist Will Dyson before the First World War, there was no prohibition on anger. (12)

Nor was there any restriction on comment in headlines - this article was headlined "Workers and Workless, Back Up Poplar!", with sub-heads including "Treated as Common Debtors". The conclusion was a ferociously angry polemic against the decision - which among other things denied Lansbury the right to edit the Herald from jail. It was directed to readers as individual activists but the style - unlike Lansbury's - was hardly conversational.

"It is therefore on the Home Secretary that pressure should be brought. Pass resolutions! Flood the Home Office! ORGANISE! Demonstrate!"

"But don't stop at demanding first class treatment. DEMAND RELEASE!"

(Cross-Head) Agitate Now!

"What agitation has done, agitation can do. If Stead could edit the "Pall Mall Gazette" from prison, why should not George Lansbury edit the Daily Herald from prison?"

"The imprisonment has been deliberately delayed until Parliament is not sitting. But there are other ways of approaching and influencing the Government."

"Already demonstrations and protest meetings are being organised."

ROLL UP AND KEEP IT UP!"

When news stories have this tone and approach, the simultaneous printing of a leader on the issue appears somewhat superfluous. (13)
Poplar’s cause may have been local, but among the Herald’s objects - and, Gillespie has argued, the councillors’ achievements - was recognition that the issues had national implications. It was seen in campaigning mode, under the slogan “Go to the Guardians”, inciting groups of the unemployed to besiege meetings of their local Guardians of the poor with demands for work or adequate maintenance. It reported that “The Daily Herald slogan "Go to the Guardians" is acting as a fiery cross”. A demonstration of 8,000 to 10,000 was reported from Shoreditch where local leaders included Wal Hannington, subsequently leader of the National Unemployed Workers Movement. Other demonstrations were reported in Woolwich, St Pancras, Hackney and, mildly improbably, Bromley. (14)

While gaining a cause the Herald was, temporarily at least, losing an editor. Lansbury’s arrest on 5th September was marked by a characteristically loaded front page banner headline extended across six columns “Our Editor in Gaol for Justice”. His signed article conveyed the same message as Saturday’s front page polemic, but couched in the familiar conversational terms: “But now we are in. YOUR work becomes more and more intensified. We shall all be content to leave you to decide whether a no-rent strike is the best way to help, or whatever efforts you should adopt. We are only anxious that the agitation should be kept going”. He linked his own plight to the tradition represented by John Wilkes - an unexplained reference to an eighteenth century radical indicating Herald assumptions about the depth of readers’ historical and political knowledge. (15)

Lansbury was never allowed to be a prison editor. But on 7th September the Herald reported that he had been allowed a daily meeting with a representative from the paper. The next month saw both a steady stream of reports on the councillors’ progress in Brixton and Holloway and Lansbury continuing his regular contributions. They stayed in prison for six weeks. Their release by court order on 12th October was greeted with another front page six-column headline, three front-page news columns and a prominently-displayed message of thanks to the paper from Mayor Sam March. (16)
The enthusiasm had considerable justification. The councillors had held out against prison conditions, government and their Labour critics. They had forced the Minister of Health, Coalition Liberal Sir Alfred Mond, whose wealth and role in the Poplar affair earned him a prominent place in Herald demonology, to implement an equalisation scheme. The Herald concluded triumphantly: “They have fought a great fight, not only for Poplar, but for all the poor and all the unemployed of the country. They have forced things to a crisis”. (17).

They had also provided the Herald with the last great campaign of a tradition extending back to 1912 as the next few months were to see the inexorable logic of the paper’s anarchic finances and Labour’s desperate need for an assured voice in the press drive it into the unenthusiastic arms of the organised movement. But to see how it got to that point it is necessary to go back into the Herald’s earlier history.

ENDS
CHAPTER ONE


2. Noreen Branson - *Poplarism 1919-25*, George Lansbury and the Councillors'.

> Revolt - Lawrence and Wishart 1979 p 9-52

3. Ibid p 55-6. Bill Schwarz and Martin Durham - A Safe and Sane Labourism,


5. DH 1, 2, 5, 9, 21


7. DH 1, 2, 9.21

8. For the most effective analysis of Labour Socialism vis a vis Marxism see Angus Macintyre - *A Proletarian Science* - Cambridge UP 1980 particularly p 46-55.

9. DH 1.9.21


11. DH 1.9.21

12. George Lansbury - *The Miracle of Fleet Street* - Victoria House 1925 p 33

13. DH 3.9.21

14. Gillespie loc cit p 179. DH 1, 2, 3.9.21

15. DH 5.9.21

16. DH 7.9, 13.10.21

17. Branson op cit 83-103. DH 13.10.21
The Daily Herald's outstanding characteristics were established from the moment of its first issue on 15th April 1912 - it was financially, organisationally and politically anarchic. Debates on the creation of a national Labour daily to supplement the mass of local papers - 66 were published by the Independent Labour Party alone between 1893 and 1910 - dated back to the ILP's foundation in 1893. In 1907 the Trades Union Congress had passed a resolution to start a daily paper and a special conference in February 1908 backed the creation of a paper called the Morning Herald.(1)

But the new paper was unlike the official organ visualized in debates over the previous two decades. The Herald's earliest origins were, appropriately, in a strike - the lockout and walkout of London printers in January 1911. Setting up a paper to present their case and reply to the attacks of employers, the print unions called it the Daily Herald. Within days, encouraged by their initial success and a sale of 27,000, the printers broadened coverage to include general as well as strike news and began to talk seriously of keeping the paper permanently. Its closure on 28th April was accompanied by a commitment to relaunch as a permanent paper as soon as practicable - in other words when sufficient capital had been raised.(2)

Its backers, a committee dominated by London trade unionists such as Tommy Naylor of the Compositors and dockers leader Ben Tillett, appealed for £10,000 - then, disappointed at the response, for £5,000. Finally they settled for £300. All logic suggested that the Herald was doomed before it started. Even arch-optimist George Lansbury, recruited to the committee by Ben Tillett, admitted that the failure to raise capital "knocked all optimism and faith out of me and left me speechless".(3)

Its survival was to be a triumph of optimism and faith over financial logic. In spite of backing from wealthy sympathisers like HD Harben, former Liberal candidate and the suffragist and pacifist Baroness de la Warr, it teetered consistently on the brink of closure. Raymond Postgate, in his analysis of the Herald's early years, points to crises in June, August and October 1912. On 23rd October 1912 it announced "We may come out again or we may not". They did because a man turned up in the office at the last moment with £150.
On another occasion the decision was taken to close the paper and Lansbury left to address meetings in Hanley and Crewe - where on the following morning he was able to buy a Herald at Crewe station. The printing staff had begged some part reels of paper and old outsize reels from Drew, the manager of the Victoria House Printing Company, and improvised a paper that was "all sorts of shapes and sizes". Three issues were produced with brokers men on the premises - on the third day Lansbury, Tillett and transport unionist Bob Williams delayed the brokers men by standing in the doorway while money was found to buy back the tables, desks and chairs. (4)

Early organisation matched the finances. Founder staff member Rowland Kenney recalled arriving for his first day at work: "That one room was the Editorial Department. It contained either two or three tables, two chairs and telephone on the floor in one corner and the day's newspapers. There was not a piece of copy paper or a pencil, blue or otherwise; nothing. So on my suggestion Seed slipped out and bought a parcel of scribbling pads and other material. Then we began to discuss our 'news service'!" (5)

Staff lived an uncertain existence. Kenney recalled: "When pay-day came the staff had an apprehensive time. Sometimes there were funds, sometimes there were not". One Friday they were offered the choice of being paid or the paper coming out on the following day. They chose to continue. (6)

There was no more certainty over editors. The Herald went through four - WH Seed, Sheridan Jones, Kenney and Charles Lapworth - between April 1912 and October 1913 when Lansbury began his nine years in the chair. At one point serious negotiations were conducted with Frank Harris, who would have been appointed if Lansbury and Tillett had had their way, but did not consider his brush with the Herald worth recording in his extensive memoirs. (7)

But in spite of these uncertainties the paper assembled and retained a gifted staff, several of whom would survive into the 1920s and beyond. Predominantly political activists rather than journalists, they gave the paper its distinctive sharp political flavour. Undoubted star was the Australian cartoonist Will Dyson - in Martin Walker's words "One of the angriest and most ferocious cartoonists ever to sketch a line", whose brutal caricatures were a radical break with the genteel pattern of the Victorian political cartoon.
Walker records that a special fund was created to keep him when the Hearst press attempted to lure him away with a massive salary - enabling the payment of #20 per week, a large salary by any standards, let alone those of the impoverished Herald.(8)

Dyson had gone by 1921, but a nucleus of pioneers remained. Among the founders was WP Ryan, poet and veteran Irish radical journalist - "calm as a rock in the midst of our storms" in Kenney's words. He lost narrowly to Kenney for editor in June 1912 but took charge in Lansbury's absences and was assistant editor into the 1920s and libel catcher into the 1930s.(9)

Kenney recruited Charles Langdon Everard and George Siocomb. Everard, brought in to provide a lighter touch, did so to great effect over the next two decades as house humourist "Gadfly" while Siocomb, employed at 18 as Kenney's secretary, was a noted Paris correspondent and chronicler of international conferences in the postwar decade. Immediately after the war Siocomb was news editor and Everard chief sub-editor.(10)

If the Herald had been launched as the organ of radical trade unionism, it rapidly attracted the interest of another key element in the nascent Labour coalition, left-wing intellectuals. University graduates were as yet something of an exception both in the Labour Party and in journalism, but Norman Ewer and William Mellor were to play important roles in both. Ewer joined the Herald management committee as a representative of Liberal MP Baron de Forest, his employer and a significant backer, and was to have an immensely long career as Foreign Editor. Mellor, in Siocomb's words, "a tall, black, grim young man" and in those of Margaret Cole "forceful personality, commanding if not always wise" was with GDH Cole the main intellectual proponent of Guild Socialism and would serve as Industrial Editor, Assistant Editor and from 1926 Editor.(11)

While less pertinent to the Herald's political progress, boxing writer Jimmy Butler was also a long-term survivor. His experiences included refereeing an office punch-up while his contributions as "Pollux" injected expertise and enthusiasm into otherwise perfunctory sports pages.(12)
Consistency was never a strong point in the editorial line of a paper run by such strong, politically committed personalities. In the early days this might be put down to the frequent changes of editor, but with Lansbury providing stability in the chair, little changed. Lansbury recalled: “Our apparent inconsistency was due to the fact that I, as editor and director, insisted on giving the very fullest freedom of expression to all our paid and unpaid contributors, and allowed all sides of our movement to state our case...I... still firmly hold the view that it is always better to allow people to say what they think than to pay them to say what you think”.(13)

But even if the precise policies advocated varied, the Herald achieved a distinct consistency of tone. Raymond Postgate comments: “It printed anything that the libel laws would permit (and at least five times what they would not). To get into its columns a writer had only to be a rebel; he had to be an enemy of the existing capitalist system, and what he was in favour of mattered less”. Ewer recalled: “It lambasted with cheerful impartiality Tory employers, the Liberal Government and the official leaders of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress”.(14)

Women’s suffrage - an issue of such concern to Lansbury that he was to sacrifice his seat in Parliament and go to jail for it, Irish Home Rule and a range of other causes were encouraged. But industrial and political coverage provided the most distinctive features. Lansbury, Postgate and Slocombe all agree that the Herald’s ferocity peaked during the editorship of Charles Lapworth, subsequently the first British director of film concern Metro Goldwyn, when it was said that “The Daily Herald contains the noblest aspirations and the basest adjectives in the English language”.(15)

During this period the Herald’s invective was trained not only on political enemies, but nominal allies. Postgate notes: “Lapworth and his colleagues were not content to attack the system, but denounced everyone who compromised with it”. These included moderate leaders of the Parliamentary Labour Party such as Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden who came under bitter personal attack - one assault drew a public rebuke from Lansbury and left a residue of distrust between him and Lapworth.(16)
Rejection of MacDonald's moderate parliamentarism was summed up in a headline referring to "The House of Pretence". The Herald's priorities were seen in an industrial headline "The war that really matters". Lapworth's editorship saw the famous "Hurrah for the Rebels" issue of 20th September 1913, lauding unofficial strikers, vigorous support for the bitterly-fought Dublin strikes led by James Larkin and advocacy of syndicalism - a theory rejecting parliamentarism and calling for a "social general strike" to bring organised labour to power in place of capitalism. (17)

It carried this rejection of leadership moderation to the extent of forming its own activist organisation, the Herald League, set up as a fundraising, political education and propagandising group which ran unofficial Labour candidates at a number of by-elections where official Labour had declined to stand. (18)

But Lapworth's spell in charge ended when Lansbury, by now the dominant figure in the paper, concluded that his violence of opinion and expression made him too much of a risk as editor. He dismissed Lapworth and took over himself. Slocombe recalled: "The paper lost some of its fighting quality. It became less mordant, less cynical, less irreverent in the famous style of 'the Sydney Bulletin and more sentimental". (19)

But if the "good old gospel of hate" was diluted, the underlying policy remained the same. At any point before 1914 Lansbury's comments that "It could with truth be said of us that wherever a strike took place there we were in the midst" and "The policy of the paper was not merely unofficial, it was avowedly anti-official" held true. This viewpoint had its consequence in the headline "Agreements Made Under Coercion Are Never Morally Binding", run in the aftermath of London builders and busmen's strikes, and a predictable estrangement from many of the moderate trade union leaders who had backed the Herald at the start - when the Board had included CW Bowerman, the ultra-respectable Secretary of the TUC. (20)
The Herald's view was consistently counter-cultural - seeing Labour as an outsider, rebel force opposed to the dominant forces in British society. But this was not the only, or even the dominant, view within the movement. And the insider, conformist, integrationist view found its voice in the official Daily Citizen, started in October 1912. In theory it was the voice of the Independent Labour Party, the Labour Party and the moderate trade union leaders. In practice the ILP, the most radical element in the coalition, was marginalised once Keir Hardie had withdrawn his backing and it was, in the words of its historian "An official organ of the Parliamentary Labour Party financed by the Trade Unions". (21)

As such it offered a model of the Labour daily rather more palatable to moderate officialdom - and a warning of what might happen to the Herald should it ever fall into official hands. It did share some of the Herald's financial problems - while its initial capitalisation was not quite so ludicrously inadequate, the £85,000 it raised was still well short of its £150,000 target and it was always undercapitalised. (22)

But unlike the independent, anarchic Herald it was controlled, conformist and orthodox. As Arthur Marwick has said: "An official paper tends to stolid conformity, the unofficial becomes a freebooter exultantly firing off the fratricidal salvos which are a special joy of the British Left". (23)

Where the Herald was run by activists, the Citizen recruited professional journalists - editor Frank Dilnot and news editor Stanley Bishop both came from the Daily Mail and first issue messages wishing it luck came from press baron Lord Northcliffe and Daily Chronicle editor Robert Donald. Bob Holton points to a desire "to model the Citizen as far as possible upon existing mass-circulation dailies". (24)

While the Herald's voice was that of the militant activist, the Citizen spoke for the moderate centre. Holton says: "In practice the presentation of representative "voices" in the paper was severely restricted to orthodox opinion centred on Labour Party pragmatism...Editorial initiative was narrowly based and came from above. It was geared to the incorporation of Labour unrest into conciliatory forms of protest and pressure, harmonising relations between labour and capital, and re-directing energies towards the Parliamentary area". (25)
This emphasis was reflected in the decision to launch at the start of the parliamentary session, with company secretary Clifford Allen arguing "Interest in politics and everything serious lags during the summer months" - this in spite of unrest involving miners and transport workers in the months up to the launch. And while the Herald was cheering unofficial strikers, Holton records that in the Citizen: "At all times the authority of union leaders was upheld over unofficial or spontaneous outbreaks of rank-and-file discontent". (26)

The difference between the two was epitomised by their networks of supporters' groups in the country. Where the Herald League was a counter-cultural expression of the paper's view of its reader as an activist with a part to play in forming and changing policy - involved in campaigning, discussion and propaganda - the Citizen's circulation committees expressed a passive follower role, run by local Labour organisations purely as a means of increasing sales and with no element of debate. (27)

The Herald cheerfully satirised its staid contemporary as the "Daily Gamp". But competition was short-lived, as the First World War hit both very hard. And the Citizen, founded upon orthodox political, journalistic and business assumptions, was the one that failed to survive, appearing for the last time on June 5th 1915. Labour Party secretary Arthur Henderson pronounced an epitaph horribly recognisable to subsequent Herald fundraisers: "If resolutions could have saved the Daily Citizen, it would have had a long life. So far as the National Committees of the movement are concerned, I think every practical step has been taken to ensure that continuance of the paper. The plain, blunt fact is that the Labour Movement does not want a daily newspaper and is not prepared to regard such a weapon as necessary in the Labour fight". (28)

The Herald, used to living on its wits and enthusiasm, was better adapted to the extraordinary circumstances of war. Recognising that it could not survive as a daily, it went weekly from September 1914 and prospered, first as the main anti-war paper and from 1917 as an enthusiastic proponent of the Russian Revolution. "Financially it was our easiest time. We were very successful as a weekly, and although we did not actually pay our way, the losses were manageable and fairly easy to meet", Lansbury recorded. (29)
A conventional commercial organ might have concluded that it was on to a good thing, and stayed as a weekly when the war ended. But financial considerations were purely a means to an end for the Herald and frequent promises that it would return to daily issue were redeemed on 31st March 1919. Optimism was an essential Herald quality, but it seemed particularly well-founded as it relaunched as a daily. Its sales campaign, identifying it with the intellectual as much as the political avant garde, was based on the "Soaring to Success" poster by the vorticist MacKnight Kauffer. (30)

Sales, reflecting a persistent tendency to rise in times of political or industrial excitement, had been 200,000 at the relaunch but rapidly passed 300,000 and topped 400,000 during the 1919 Rail Strike. Lansbury wrote to Ernest Bevin, currently leader of the Dockers Union and soon to be General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers, that "We were quite unable to cope with the huge demands made upon us and there seems no limit to the power and usefulness of the paper". But to achieve its purposes the Herald, still exclusively London-based, must be able to print in a northern centre. Thus one of the dominant themes of the 1920s was introduced. Bevin was clearly convinced, and wrote in the Herald that a one million circulation was possible within a year if it were given the right machinery - which would include a Northern Edition. (31)

But how was the Herald to raise the sums required - estimated at around £400,000? Lansbury's pre-war backers had been good for a few thousand, but were unlikely to be able to manage sums on this scale. With sales rising it might have been argued that he had a commercial proposition on his hands and that sale to or partnership with a commercial publisher would solve the problem.

There were undoubtedly offers - Williams and Bevin told the TUC Parliamentary committee of several, but Lansbury recalled "Our one answer to everybody was that the Daily Herald would never pass voluntarily from our control except as it now passed to the Labour Movement. We would prefer the paper die a glorious death rather than see it become the property of the Liberal Party, masquerading as friends of Labour". (32)
The only remaining means by which such sums of the money could be raised was mobilising the organised movement. Lansbury said: "We knew that our fate as an independent paper was settled". One option would have been to go to the TUC and the Labour Party and ask them to become officially responsible for the paper. Lansbury subsequently conceded that it was a mistake not to do so, but argued that there was no guarantee that they would have been willing to take on the responsibility in 1920 - although the Labour conference of that year passed unopposed a resolution from Chorley divisional party calling for a movement takeover. (33)

Instead they accepted a partial loss of independence by mobilising a trade union committee - among whom Bevin, Williams, Henderson and textile workers leader Ben Turner would have important Herald roles throughout the 1920s and JH Thomas of the Railwaymen was choosing to forget a libel action in 1914 - to spearhead the appeal for a debenture issue. This was aimed only at institutions, with the debentures offered in minimum blocks of #500. They hoped for #400,000 - and got around #100,000 of which more than #42,000 was subscribed by the Miners Federation of Great Britain. This was not enough to fund any real development, but the principle of movement-wide involvement in the Herald had been established. (34)

Lansbury continued as editor, with man of letters and former academic Gerald Gould - a financial backer and contributor before the war - installed as Associate Editor. Decision-making structures remained as before. Lansbury recorded: "We decided to continue on the same lines as before: editing and management should be co-operative, always leaving me, as editor, the last word in case of disagreement. We were a very lively band indeed. Our discussions, which at times were prolonged and heated, were, I think, viewed with dismay by experienced newspaper friends like Norman Angell, who occasionally came along to see us". (35)

There are indications that whatever formal titles said, Gould was in charge from day to day. Literary staff member SK Ratcliffe's recall a decade later of having been recruited by "editor Gerald Gould" might be dismissed as a slip of the memory were it not for the fact that in reply to a complaint Miners Federation secretary (and Herald director) Frank Hodges about a leaked document in March 1921 Lansbury explained: "It just happens that I personally made the decision in the matter, as Gould has been away for the last week". The implication that Gould had the responsibilities if not the title of editor is a strong one. (36)
A fresh influx of recruits, several of whom remained through the 1920s, reinforced the veterans of the prewar days. Parliamentary correspondent SV Bracher, literary sub-editor Arnold Dawson and industrial correspondent Vivian Brodsky were to be mainstays of the Herald for the next decade. With European events demanding greater attention than before 1914 a strong team of foreign correspondents was assembled - Vernon Bartlett wrote from Paris, former Manchester Guardian correspondent Morgan Phillips Price from Berlin and the gifted Noel Brailsford from Central and Eastern Europe. (37)

Gould's literary connections reinforced the Herald's relationship with the intellectual and literary left. Siegfried Sassoon was literary editor for a while. Other writers and reviewers included Havelock Ellis, Israel Zangwill, Alec Waugh, Rebecca West, EM Forster, Robert Graves and Osbert Sitwell - who contributed a memorable leader in verse when War Minister Winston Churchill ordered the burning of copies of the Herald. (38)

The spirit of Lapworth and Dyson had to some extent departed from the Herald. It was still trenchant in criticisms of the existing order, but given its new sources of funding it was hardly in a position, even had it been so inclined, to continue as the scourge of moderate officialdom. Lansbury said: "Both the policy and expression of policy was much more moderate than in the daye preceding August 1914....The Movement during the war had been very largely divided as to support of the Government in the stormy years from 1914 to 1918 and it was felt that if both sides sat down and indulged in recriminations, only the possessing classes would triumph". (39)

Even so it was enough, in the rather fevered political atmosphere that followed the war and the Russian Revolution, to strike fear into many of Britain's rulers. Herald reporter Evelyn Sharp recalled that "These were the days when universal revolution seemed more imminent events than subsequent events proved it to be in this country". Christopher Andrew, historian of Britain's secret services, records the government view that "Men who would subsidize the Daily Herald were in their view men who would stop at nothing" and points to considerable surveillance of the paper. (40)
And, even if it lacked its pre-1914 savagery, the Herald was still unequivocally of the left. Where syndicalism had spearheaded the Herald's intellectual challenge before the war, the doctrine of "direct action" - the use of union power for political ends, dominated after 1919. Miners leader Robert Smillie said the moderate Labour Party executive "feared more than anything else what had come to be seen as direct action", while Maurice Cowling has said that it "Would have left little mark without the part played by the Daily Herald in systematising its insights and publicising its intentions. Under Lansbury, Ewer, Brailsford, Meynell, Williams and Mellor...it presented a fundamental challenge". (41)

One consequence was Herald enthusiasm for the police strikes of 1918 and 1919, with Lansbury was the one major Labour politician to give support. But the historians of the strikes call the misleadingly bullish reporting of the 1919 dispute "The least admirable chapter in the long and often gallant story of the Daily Herald". And in spite of a high-point when the dockers blocked the loading of arms intended for use against Russia in May 1920 - some historians suggest even this was more to do with war-weariness than class solidarity - direct action fizzled out in 1921 with the failure of the "Triple Alliance" of miners, railwaymen and transport workers. (42)

"Black Friday", the day in April 1921 when the miners allies refused to support them, also marked a turning point for the Herald. Raymond Postgate argues that it marks the effective end of independent policy in the paper, defeat depriving it of the distinctive element in its political and industrial analysis. On Cowling's reading its ultimate political achievement was essentially negative - that of frightening Britain's rulers so much that they were galvanised into effective anti-Labour action. (43)

Gerald Gould's leader on Black Friday supports Postgate's analysis by reading like a valediction on the Herald's days of rebellion: "Yesterday was the heaviest defeat that has befallen the Labour Movement within the memory of man. It is no use trying to minimise it. It is no use pretending that it is other than it is. We on this paper have said throughout that if the organised workers stood together they would win. They have not stood together and they have reaped the reward". The leader went on to state "What we need is a new machinery and a new spirit. The old machinery has frankly, in the hour of emergency, failed". (44)
Gould's tone may also have owed something to knowledge of the Herald's finances, where it was fast becoming a victim of its own circulation success. Sales were certified at 329,869 in October 1920. This was well above any level recorded before 1914, and respectable by national daily standards - in 1921 the Daily News was selling 300,000, the Express 579,000 and the Daily Chronicle 661,000. Lansbury recorded: "By the calculations of 1918 330,000 sales should have established it comfortably".(45)

But unlike the News, Chronicle or Express the Herald could not make the standard newspaper calculation that increased sales will lead to increased advertising income. Take away that assumption and the only commercial consequence of higher sales is increased production costs - a serious consideration in the immediate postwar years with the price of newsprint in 1920-1 six times what it had been in 1914 and distribution costs, on Lord Beaverbrook's reckoning, three to four times what they had been before the war.(46)

There is little doubt that the Herald's inability to attract advertising had political roots. Postgate records that in October 1920 Advertising World admitted that there was a political boycott of the paper and advertising manager Poyser had no doubt: "The only reason that the Daily Herald has not received its share of advertisement business is because advertisers have allowed political prejudice to influence their judgment". His view was supported by a letter to Newspaper World quoting "a well-known man of business" saying:"If you can prove to me that the Daily Herald would produce more orders than any other paper, and at a lower cost even, I would not give them an advertisement,because they support a policy intended to bring about the downfall of independent businessmen such as myself".(47)

Thus the higher the Herald's sales went, the closer financial disaster came. Extra sales may have meant increased political influence, but they posed a fresh threat to the paper's independence as losses reached unprecedented levels - running at #1,400 to #2,400 per week by November 1919 and amounting to #113,661 in 1920.(48)
With fresh financial assistance desperately needed Herald director Francis Meynell, acting on his own initiative, met Soviet representative Maxim Litvinov and secured a $75,000 subsidy which he carried to Britain in the form of uncut diamonds. There were, both Meynell and Postgate said, no strings attached. The Bolsheviks merely wished to support a rare friendly voice in the overseas press. But the offer came when the Herald was already under ferocious fire from other papers for alleged secret foreign funding - assaults which led Lansbury to publish a complete list of debenture and shareholders in August. (49)

Realising that news was leaking, the Herald led its issue of 10th September 1920 with the question "Shall we accept $75,000 of Russian money". Appended was the comment that there were no objections as internationalists to accepting the offer, but the propriety of taking money from so devastated a country was in doubt. Postgate reports that the readers were in favour of acceptance - but the directors, debenture holders and staff against. Meynell points in particular to the unanimous opposition of his fellow-directors. The offer was rejected, Meynell left the board, and the rest of the British press - happy to see their accusations given weighty supporting evidence, enjoyed themselves hugely at the expense of the Herald's apparent complicity in a red plot. (50)

There was now no escape from the financial necessity of increasing the Herald's price from 1d to 2d, a decision that was made in October 1920. It was this, Ewer recalled a quarter of a century later, that led Lord Northcliffe to call the Herald "The Miracle of Fleet Street" for retaining its circulation after the price rise. Northcliffe did say: "I thought I knew everything there was to know about the newspaper business, but these fellows have something I do not understand", but the Herald's circulation did not remain intact - instead it dropped by more than a third in eleven months to 210,512 in early September 1921. Northcliffe's reasoning may have been, as Ewer concluded, that "If he had raised the price of the Mail to twopence, it would have died in a week", but with losses at around $1,000 per week and sales dropping rapidly the Herald's fate looked likely to differ only in speed. (51)
The trade paper Newspaper World commented: "At twopence per issue the Daily Herald, suffers naturally by comparison with some of its contemporaries - I might add almost all of them. The other dailies so priced give a larger sheet and more pages and it is a difficult proposition for the industrial classes who buy the Herald to pay to double the price asked by contemporaries. This, in effect, is what has happened since the time when, owing to financial crisis, the Herald raised the charge from a penny to twopence" (52)

The loss in sales - which continued to 185,889 in November 1921 - was not acceptable to a paper whose basic purpose was political proselytisation. A return to a penny was essential. But the financially-straitened Herald would have to find extra income to bridge the gap until sales rose to cut losses - it was reckoned that £100,000 would be needed to bring the paper to a self-sustaining circulation of 500,000 - an aspiration that was to echo unattainably throughout the 1920s. (53)

There was only one place left to go - to its loyal supporters. On 6th September the Board voted to go back to a penny, with the move financed by a new debenture issue at £5 and £1 to attract individual supporters. The campaign was launched by RB Walker of the Agricultural Workers, chairman of the TUC, striking a note of exasperation with the reading preferences of trade unionists that was to recur as often as the cry for a half million sale. He said: "I am amazed when I reflect on the success of Labour papers abroad and watch the struggles of our own. Is it that Labour people in other countries have grit, enthusiasm and loyalty which we lack? If so, the sooner we get some 'vim' among the Daily Herald readers the better" (54)

This hardly seems fair to the Herald's readers - the problem was not with them, but with the several million trade unionists who opted for alternative newspapers. But the belief that the workers owed them a living was a standard theme in Herald propaganda - expressed again by Lansbury in November: "People often say to me 'You are always begging for the Daily Herald'. That is true, but the trouble is you never give what we asked for in the first place. We asked for £400,000 in order to develop the paper, and you gave us less than £200,000. Had we got what we asked for at the start we would not be begging today" (55).
He was to be disappointed again. For all his celebration of the Herald's relationship with its readership, saying - "Since we made our appeal you have sent in, mainly in sums of #1, a total of #8,000. What capitalist newspaper could raise that amount from its readers, not one!" - in the first issue of 1922 the brutal fact remained that #8,000 was not remotely enough to achieve the Herald's objectives. (56)

Lansbury wanted to keep the Herald independent, arguing that "Movements such as this need the stimulus which independent thought and expression alone can give. Officialdom always dries up initiative and expression". But independence was reliant on commercial viability, and its loss the price of commercial failure. Lansbury was to say: "It is the money question, and the money question alone which had placed the Daily Herald under the control of the Labour movement", and the scale of losses in the years immediately after the First World War meant that movement control was now the only conceivable hope of survival. (57) END
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ENDS
Construction, conformity and control: the taming of the Daily Herald 1921-30

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The Herald may have been a new paper with spectacular modernist posters, but in its competitive context it was rather old-fashioned. Examining the national press during the interwar years Colin Seymour-Ure points to a change from the late Victorian set-up "highly political and linked financially to the party system" to the twentieth century popular press "broader in its range and based on the market economy". The Economist could say in 1928 "With a few notable exceptions the British press no longer consists of "organs of opinion". (1)

Priorities had changed. Where the old style of paper pursued influence among the political elite, the new aimed for financial success through sales and advertising. The difference was epitomised in an exchange between JA Spender - editor of the Westminster Gazette, the archetypal small-scale political paper - and a mass-circulation proprietor. When Spender asked the press baron to justify his policy he replied by pointing to increased sales since it had been introduced. Spender recalled "I found it impossible to persuade him that there was any gap in his reasoning". (2)

The catalyst for the new style was the Daily Mail, founded in 1896 by Lord Northcliffe. Its content reflected its pursuit of a wider audience. Historian Collingwood noted with distaste that it Mail was "the first English newspaper for which the word 'news' lost its old meaning of facts which a reader ought to know if he was to vote intelligently". Success won it imitators, and in Le Mahieu's words: "Journalism divorced itself from prevailing notions of historical significance. News no longer concentrated exclusively on the public lives of powerful elites. The everyday life of the common man acquired more importance". (3)

The old style retained its adherents - Garvin of the Observer commented that "I mean to give the public what they don't want", and found a new centre of power in the BBC under director-general John Reith who believed that "The best way to give the public what it wants is to reject the explicit policy of giving the public what it wants" and employed senior officials who said: "Every man wants in his heart to be a highbrow". These assumptions were shared by Labour leader Ramsay MacDonald who told Reith: "Keep up the standard of your service. Do not play down. Remember that the great mass of our people really want good things". (4)
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Chapter Three: Competition - The Press in the 1920s Page Twenty Nine

The Herald found itself uneasily suspended between the two types. Its content was much more of Reith or Spender's world than Northcliffe's. But in pursuing a mass circulation its competition came from the practitioners of the new formula - the Mail, Express, Chronicle and News. None was apolitical - the Chronicle was controlled by Lloyd George from 1918 to 1928 - but their priorities were commercial rather than political. (5)

With rare exceptions like Snowden and Clifford Allen Labour observers failed to understand these priorities and continued to see the Herald's rivals in a purely political context. References to the "Dope Press" dot the Herald throughout the 1920s and a briefing compiled for Ernest Bevin in 1920 spoke of "largely a subsidised press, prefers to lose money on its newspapers in order to fight the Labour Movement". (6)

This incomprehension was signalled by the contemptuous anger with which movement leaders regarded working people who chose such papers. Carpenters and Joiners leader Alex Cameron, chairman of the Labour Executive spoke for this tendency in 1920 in a debate on the Herald.

He said:"If the Daily Herald was being offered to the Harmsworth Brothers tomorrow they would jump at it and they would run the Daily Herald and they would make money out of it, and I am afraid it matters not what kind of stuff they issue, the working class of the country would buy it so long as it was issued by the Harmsworth Brothers". (7)

They were right to be worried - Michael Kinnear comments that the papers controlled by Rothermere (Mail, Mirror) and Beaverbrook (Express) were "especially influential as they blended political information with slickness to a remarkable degree". But in their concentration on politics, Labour analysts missed the essential appeal of the new style of paper. Le Mahieu notes that the Mail and Express were "rarely speaking from on high", but communicated at their readers' levels. "What does the public want?..As a rule it wants emotions", mused former Times editor Wickham Steed. Le Mahieu says: "The hyperbolic, the emotive and the 'sensational' - all were elements of private conversation which the popular press adopted as a means to engage a wider public in familiar, personal terms". (8)
The crucial weapon in their armoury was the human interest story, which says Le Mahieu "engaged their readers because they drew upon the emotions of private life". The success of this was demonstrated by research in the 1930s showing that where political stories appealed to only a section of the national audience, heavily skewed to men and the higher social classes, human interest stories had uniformly high appeal across the entire population. Subsequent studies have produced similar results, and there is no reason to suppose that findings in the 1920s, had such research been conducted then, would have been any different. (9)

Accompanying the shift away from concentration on high politics was a diversification in coverage. Looking at developments over a decade, the Newspaper Press Directory for 1929 declared: "A large part of the paper is devoted to every form of sport, space is given to the affairs of the Empire, to news from other countries, finance, literature and art, to travel and discovery, science, medicine, hygiene and religion. The gradual introduction of the serial, the short story, the Puzzle Page, the Gossip Page and the Women's Page has greatly extended the range of the newspaper public; and now practically every page has its daily or weekly "Children's Corner", devoted to the interests of the smallest readers of all". (10)

But Labour views continued to be suffused with improving Reithian assumptions, regarding a human interest-driven agenda at best as trivial and at worst a deliberate diversion from more important issues. Hamilton Fyfe commented acidly that the 1930s Express "never bored its readers by assuming that they had minds" while Bevin in 1919 provided a magnificent exposition of Reithianism: "We may be certain that there is such a growing working-class consciousness that a large clientele is awaiting serious literature. Labour's press must be a real educational factor, provoking thought and stimulating ideas. In addition it must not be full of the caprices of princes, the lubricities of courts and the sensationalism produced by display of the sordid. All these things are but passing phases and are the products of an evil system which is rotten at the base". (11)
And this disdain was reflected in the balance of Herald coverage, where it attempted to
capture a mass readership content more characteristic of a serious newspaper. In 1927 73 per
cent of its news space was devoted to home news - compared to 55 per cent in the Express, 45
per cent in the Mail and 49 per cent in the News. The total of 31 per cent devoted to
political, social and economic news was higher not only than the Express, News (both 20 per
cent) or Mail (12 per cent) but the heavies - the Times (25 per cent) and Telegraph (23 per
cent).(12)

Technique as well as content changed. RD Blumenfeld, editor of the Express from 1904 to
1932 called for "Simplicity, accuracy, conciseness and purity of style", expressed in sentences
that were "short, sharp and clear-cut", using "short words in preference to long ones" and
"emphatic words like must and will". Headlines were equally important. Blumenfeld introduced
the streamer - running across more than one column, but less than a full page - and encouraged
headlines that ran for five or six lines, telling much of the story in a series of crisp, telegraphic
messages.(13)

Le Mahieu says: "Headlines functioned in the popular press as both a summary and an
invitation to what lay below... The headlines of the Daily Express sought to draw the reader into
the drama of these events whereas the Times self-consciously distanced itself from any emotive
reactions. Moreover, by conveying the story in the suggestive shorthand of a telegram, the Daily
Express allowed the reader to grasp the story in a few seconds".(14)

The pursuit of sales took on a snowball quality in the 1920s - one estimate puts the increase
in the sale of London morning papers between 1920 and 1925 at around 40 per cent - from 5.3
million to 7.4 million. Raymond Williams argued that this was the period in which national
dailies first penetrated the mass of the working class (15).
This growth was accompanied by increasing sophisticated and expensive sales promotion. Ernest Bevin told the 1928 TUC: "No one, I think... could have foreseen the tremendous development of the publicity side of the press that has taken place in the last eight years".

Central to this development was the reader insurance scheme, backed by intensive canvassing. Accident insurance had a ready appeal for working-class readers before comprehensive national insurance, and was initially introduced as a means of stabilising sales by tying readers to a single paper. Seymour-Ure credits the idea to the Daily Chronicle, in 1915 offering readers insurance against spectacular and frightening, but largely innocuous German Zeppelin raids.

But by the early 1920s insurance was being aggressively as a means of increasing sales. P.G. Wodehouse was indulging only mildly in humourist's licence in 1924 when he wrote of: "Every daily paper in London competing madly against its rivals in the matter of insurance and offering princely bribes to the citizens to make a fortune by breaking their necks" (17).

It was not invariably popular. Journalists like to believe that sales can be attributed to their own efforts and prefer that extra expenditure should be on editorial budgets - a speaker at the 1923 Annual Delegate Meeting of the National Union of Journalists satirised gory coverage of accidents leading to insurance payouts by suggesting the creation of a paper called the Death's Head Gazette to cover such news.

The columns of Newspaper World were full of expressions of scepticism - one report saying: "The almost frenzied pace at which insurance claims are being paid by London newspapers gives rise to the query as to how long this form of attraction for readers will last", while another looked forward to their abolition under the heading "Insurance - who will be the first to cry "Halt"?". But the amateur seers were wrong. The £100,000 paid out by the end of August 1922 by the Mail inaugurated a decade of ever-mounting insurance competition - by 1928 it had paid out around £1 million.
Chapter Three: Competition - The Press in the 1920s Page Thirty Three

The success of insurance was confirmed by sales figures. The Daily News rose from 336,609 in October 1921 to 635,934 in November 1922. The Mail, selling 1,295,807 in February 1921, reached 1,532,709 by the end of the following January and was brandishing a sales certificate for 1,817,947 by mid-July. The Express, entering on a decade of steady progress that would make it the first serious challenger to the Mail's generation-old sales primacy, was up 200,000 to 825,000 in the four months to June 1922 and topped a million in August, shortly after the Chronicle.(20)

The financially-limited Herald's disadvantage in promotions paled into insignificance compared to its advertising problems. Difficulties of overt political bias were compounded by implicit political and social bias in the conventional wisdom of the advertising industry. It was not listed in Newspaper World's monthly "space barometer" and subjective analysis still held sway in the industry. A standard text asserted "You cannot afford to place your advertisement in a paper which is solely read by the down at heels who buy it to scan the 'Situations Vacant' column. Just in case it wasn't clear who was meant, it added: "The Socialist press has a following of people who cannot persuade the world to share its wealth with them"(21)

Industry leader Thomas Russell commented that the sobriety of the Times induced readers to order goods through tradesman, while the Daily Mail's vivacity was good for direct mail order: "When he reads the Daily Mail he is in a "Daily Mail" frame of mind - rather eager, rather excitable, rather energetic, not so dignified and formal". The Mail's promotional material stressed "fearless advocacy of every measure and movement likely to be of benefit to British common enterprise". (22)

Russell's psychological nostrums were typical of a world where where conventional advertising analysis was dominated by such subjective elements as 'atmosphere', 'force of impression', 'pulling power', 'Confidence factor'. A paper that encouraged readers to besiege local Boards of Guardians could hardly be regarded as a promising medium. (23)
Chapter Three: Competition - The Press in the 1920s Page Thirty Four

More objective criteria arrived on the scene in the mid 1920s with more sophisticated research and the replacement of 'wealth' by 'disposable income' as the key concept and a 1928 survey was to show that the Herald had a previously unsuspected lower middle-class readership. Until then, for all Poyser's efforts and protestations that the remarkable loyalty of Herald readers "Has been extended to advertisers using its columns, as many unsolicited testimonials received from them in the past have shown", conventional wisdom would continue to reinforce rather than question prejudice.(24)

How to deal with these problems was an issue that would now fall to the lot of the organised Labour movement.

ENDS
1. The Economist 3.11.28. Seymour-Ure - Press and Party loc cit p 232
2. Seymour-Ure - Press and Party loc cit p 232
3. Le Mahieu op cit p 23,111
4. Ibid p 18,145-50
5. Seymour-Ure - Press and Party loc cit p 240-1
6. Briefing for Bevin for 1920 TUC loc cit
8. Le Mahieu op cit p 32-33,111
13. Le Mahieu op cit p 27,69
17. PG Wodehouse - Ukridge - Herbert Jenkins 1924, Penguin p/back 1964 p 31
18. NW 23.4.22
19. NW 25.3,13.5,22.7,2.9.22. Economist 17.11.28
20. NW 13.8,12.11.21.4.3,24.6,29.7,5.8,16.9,23.12.22
22. Ibid p 75
23. Ibid p 75.
24. Ibid p 76-81. NW 23.9.22
One of the questions the organised Labour Movement had to consider as it contemplated the possibility of taking over the Herald was why it should want a vastly unprofitable newspaper staffed by combative left-wingers. The answer is contained very largely in Ross McKibbin’s comment: “The Herald had one indispensable quality - it was the only paper Labour had got”.

This was underlined by Stephen Walsh MP, leader of the Lancashire Miners, at the Miners Federation of Great Britain annual conference in 1922. Walsh was not a natural Herald supporter - he had held office in the wartime coalition while the paper was campaigning against the war, and would be Ramsay MacDonald’s Minister for War in 1924. But as a union leader he recognised its importance: “During the last twelve or eighteen months, a period flooded with probably greater industrial strife than any other period, the Daily Herald has been the only paper that has given anything like a faithful account of the situation. Well, in the near future, we shall want the help of the daily paper in a greater degree than ever before. The political situation, as we all know, is very closely related to the industrial situation and we have no paper at all, except the Daily Herald, that purports to take the side of the workers”.

Every time the Herald teetered on the verge of destruction it was to revive this appeal - with a representative, if not definitive plea, appearing on 18th March 1922 when the paper appeared in danger of closing a few months short of achieving the apparent safe haven of official ownership.

The death of the DAILY HERALD would not mean merely the silencing of Labour’s one voice in the press. It would mean the immediate reverting of the whole of the capitalist Press to an attitude even more hostile to Labour than that which it takes up to-day. God knows, in every dispute the poison gas of lies and false suggestion sent out by the capitalist Press is bad enough: but at any rate the existence of the DAILY HERALD has made this difference to the other newspapers - that now they cannot ignore the facts as they used to.
Chapter Four: The Movement: Labour in the 1920s

Such Labour beliefs were the subject of periodic complaint in the trade journal Newspaper World, while the Newspaper Press Directory for 1921 asserted: "The charge that the great newspapers invariably support the capitalist cause is quite unjust; on the contrary more than one recent strike would have failed ignominiously had it not been for the support of the much-reviled journals". Whether or not Labour complaints were justified is secondary to the fact that conviction that other papers were irretrievably and automatically hostile was decisive in the movement's disposition to support the Herald. (4)

Though the Herald had no rival as the voice of Labour the battle to determine which of many possible Labour voices it should adopt would be the contested fiercely through the 1920s. At the time of its takeover it was the voice of the left-wing activist. But the takeover placed it in the hands of the official leadership of the Labour Party and TUC, dominated by the right. Both bodies developed more sophisticated central organisation and control during the 1920s, and the right used its organisational dominance to marginalise left-wing critics. Control of the Herald, the movement's official voice, would be an important weapon in this battle.

Two partnerships dominated the period. On the political side, David Howell has written, the 1920s were "The decade of the dedicated centralist and rationaliser Arthur Henderson, loyally backed by the National Agent, Egerton Wake". Henderson's organisational talents complemented the charismatic parliamentary leadership of Ramsay MacDonald - his importance summarised in 1929 by Wertheimer: "In the imagination and consciousness of hundreds of thousands his position is beyond party politics...the personification of all thousands of downtrodden men and women hope and dream and desire...he is the focus of the mute hopes of a whole class" (5)

On the industrial side their partnership was replicated after 1925 by the alliance between the brilliant bureaucrat Walter Citrine, TUC General Secretary from 1925, and Ernest Bevin, the immensely forceful creator and general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union.
While disagreements over the war had damaged the Labour Party, war conditions had been good for the unions. Membership rose from 4.145 million (2.682m TUC affiliated) in 1914 to 6.533 million (5.283m TUC) in 1918 and a peak, not to be surpassed until 1946, of 8.438 million (6.418m in TUC unions) in 1920. Disputes also peaked in 1918-20 as unions used their favourable position to push for higher wages, shorter hours and national rather than local agreements. But postwar prosperity ended abruptly in mid 1920, with unemployment rising from 2.7% to 17.9% in the year to June 1921. Disputes were increasingly defensive rather than aimed at higher wages and the collapse of the "Triple Alliance" on "Black Friday" was a shattering blow to confidence.

From then on the unions were on the defensive, their negotiating power limited by mass unemployment, falling wages and deteriorating conditions of work. Membership dropped sharply back to 6.633m (5.128m TUC affiliated) in 1921, and the decline was not to be arrested until 1933. The General Workers lost 54% of its membership between 1920 and 1923 and was forced into merger with the even harder hit National Amalgamated Union of Labour and the Municipal Employees as the General and Municipal Workers Union.

But as individual unions declined, stronger and more sophisticated central organisation grew. The General Council of the TUC was created as a central body in place of the old Parliamentary Committee in 1920 - whether or not it should be turned into a "General Staff" with wider co-ordinating powers was one of the running debates of the 1920s. Patrick Renshaw has written that the General Council moved into a vacuum left by the Triple Alliance - its purpose "to control militancy rather than lead it".

"Black Friday" shattered faith in the power of direct action as a practical policy. Although "Red Friday" and the government's tactical withdrawal in the face of the miners in 1925 would encourage the illusion, not least in the Herald, that ground lost had been regained, the shattering defeat of the General Strike firmly entrenched a moderate, consensual approach espoused by Citrine and Bevin.
During the same period the Labour Party was in transition from political wing of the unions to a more equal partner with a national constituency. The new party constitution, drafted by the Fabian Sydney Webb, adopted in 1918, gave it a nominally socialist ideology and was accompanied by the introduction of individual parties and divisional parties, both fostered sedulously by Henderson and Wake. (9)

But in the 1918-22 period this development was overshadowed by the weakness of a Parliamentary party shorn of much of its talent - including MacDonald, Snowden and Lansbury - by the massacre of anti-war figures at the 1918 General Election. It was a virtual union monopoly - 50 of 60 MPs were union nominees, 25 from the miners. The leadership consisted of moderate union leaders - Adamson of the Scottish miners led for four years until 1921 and the succession of Clynes of the General Workers, who like many MPs combined parliament with office in his union. Historians such as Michael Kinnear argue that, while numerically stronger than Asquith's Liberals in the opposition to Lloyd George's coalition, Labour were too ineffective to be seen as an alternative government. Kinnear sees Clynes as a "mouthpiece for the unions rather than leader of an independent party". (11)

But by 1929 the acute German analyst Egon Wertheimer could argue that the PLP had an autonomous standing and influence of its own, independent from that of the supporting movement and its electoral machinery. This transformation can be dated from the 1922 election. A much larger non-union group was returned - 54 out of 142 including 19 sponsored by the new local parties. The new party included MacDonald and Snowden, the vocally left-wing Clydesiders and the first significant group of middle-class MPs including Clement Attlee, Sydney Webb and the former Liberal Charles Trevelyan. (12)

MacDonald's defeat of Clynes for the leadership may have depended on Clydesider support, but it consolidated rather than weakening right-wing control of the PLP. Snowden and MacDonald had differed from Thomas, Clynes and Henderson over the war, but in peacetime they had far more in common with each other than they had with the Clydesiders or even less abrasive left-wingers such as Lansbury and Jowett. (13)
The taming of the Herald and other centres for alternative strategies such as the Labour Research Department were a consequence of the consolidation of their control. Richard Price wrote: “By 1923 the debate over alternative policies and strategies was effectively closed off...the hegemony of political labourism within the party had effectively marginalized those elements which represented a broader political line than that countenanced by the political and trade union leadership” and echoes McKibbin in noting the taming of centres for alternative strategies such as the Labour Research Department and the Herald.(14)

This dominant philosophy was pragmatic, moderate and constitutionalist. Wertheimer, brought up on the Marxist intellectual disciplines of the German Social Democrats, noted that "Its main warp and woof are purely ethical. The place which economic determinism holds in the Continental parties is filled by the demand for "justice for all mankind" in the British Labour Party”. Labour, he wrote, was free from the Talmudic theoretical debates which bedevilled the continental parties: "Crises in English Socialism arise always from tactics and never from theory".(15)

It was not automatically conservative. Lansbury, described by Harold Laski as "not a very clear head, but with a heart that reaches beyond the stars", was a classical exponent of the radical ethical tradition. But its dominant exponent in this period was MacDonald who drew from his early experience as a research scientist a biologically-based determinism that led him to believe that socialism was the inevitable outcome of economic progress. He was no class warrior. His roots lay in the ILP rather than the unions, and as early as 1905 was arguing that socialism was an ideal above and beyond class.(16)

His desire to broaden Labour’s appeal beyond the trade unions was shown in a speech in the Commons in 1912: “We are too fond of imagining that there are two sides only to a dispute...there is the side of capital, there is the side of labour, and there is the side of the general community: and the general community has no business to allow capital and labour, fighting their battles themselves, to elbow them out of contention”.(17)
MacDonald's aim was to displace the Liberals as the main alternative to the Conservatives. Strategy was gradualist, ameliorative and ostentatiously non-revolutionary - the acceptance of court dress when he took office in 1924 symbolic of determination to show that Labour was safe - integrated within existing British society rather than a disruptive external threat.

As a style it was, in McKibbin's words, the logical outcome of "a politically independent working-class following the rules of a game learned from their social superiors". Schwarz too points to a strategy of "creating Labour in the image of the Liberals before them and a focussing of energy on "demands for state reforms which limited struggle to a particular and narrow conception of legality".(18)

His strict parliamentarism, eschewing other forms of struggle, followed the integrationist Labour tradition. McKibbin has stated :"Only the most sectarian working man denied that parliament was the repository of the liberties of the people". McGurk of the Miners, speaking as party chairman at the height of direct action's vogue in 1919, had said :"We are either constitutionalist or we are not constitutionalist... it is both unwise and undemocratic because we fail to get a majority at the polls to turn round and demand that we should substitute industrial action".(19)

But integration was not complete. MacIntyre notes that belief in a capitalist conspiracy against Labour spread across the whole movement. Cowling points to Lansbury's postwar Herald's role in building up a view of Liberal and Conservative politicians, the capitalist press and industrialists "agents of Big Business whose business it was to ensure that Cabinet,Parliament and press consecrated capitalism's robbery of the market", but this viewpoint was not confined to the left. Equally strong was the TUC General Council's belief that the Federation of British Industry was conspiring to cut wages and increase the working week.(20)
Nor was the entire movement prepared to accept the world view that dictated the leadership's tactics. The most fundamental challenge came from the Communists. How serious a challenge this really was is a matter of debate - Schwarz and Durham have argued that in the division between Labourism and Communism that emerged between 1918 and 1924 there was no guarantee from the start that Labourism would emerge dominant, while McKibbin's view is that "The Labour Party was not free to choose between Marxism and reformism, but only between varieties of reformism". (21)

But again what is not in doubt is that the Communist challenge was taken seriously. Eric Shaw has demonstrated that it was the driving force behind the development of central managerial and disciplinary powers by the Labour Party during the 1920s. And attitudes to relations with Communists were to be a crucial defining factor in left-right debates during the 1920s - with the Herald's shifting attitudes on the issue a key indicator of the extent of leadership control and its movement along the left-right axis. (22)

Many Communists maintained Labour membership after the foundation of the CPGB in 1920, but were progressively excluded by a series of leadership-sponsored annual conference resolutions. But this was a contentious process. Wertheimer noted that Communist speakers continued to be warmly received at party conferences at the same time as they were voted down heavily. Much of the Labour left, including Lansbury at the 1926 Party Conference, continued to argue that as fellow-supporters of class struggle against capitalism - differentiated from Labour by methods rather than fundamental philosophy - Communists should be tolerated. (23)

The place of Communism within the movement was always equivocal. But nobody could doubt the legitimacy of the Independent Labour Party, focus for the main in-party challenge to the ruling orthodoxy. The introduction of individual Labour Party membership in 1918 left the ILP in an equivocal position, challenging its role as the section for individual socialists within the Labour federation. (24)

As Wertheimer noted, the influence of the ILP during the 1920s, when it could claim sizeable sections of both the parliamentary party and Labour cabinets, was more apparent than real: "In practice it proved that ILP membership was always subservient to Labour Party allegiance whenever the two came into conflict". (25)
Chapter Four: The Movement: Labour in the 1920s

The main impetus behind the ILP's critique came from the Scottish members led by James Maxton and John Wheatley, who drew from an underconsumptionist economic analysis based on the ideas of JA Hobson and, in an echo of Poplarism, took from their own experience as interventionists in local government the lesson that socialism could be achieved much more rapidly than the leadership believed. (26)

But they lost rather than gained ground as criticism of the leadership line developed in the years following the fall of MacDonald's 1924 administration. As criticism grew more uncompromising following Maxton's election as ILP chair in 1925, the detachment of the party from Labour's mainstream left and centre grew. The proof of this was not so much in decisions by MacDonald and Snowden, both lifelong members, resign as in the career of former Herald journalist and Poplar councillor John Scurr, MP for Mile End from 1923 to 1932. In 1925 his comment on the first Labour administration was "I do not care a brass farthing if we have a Labour Government or not, if the game is to be played under the present rules". But by 1928 he had joined the exodus from the ILP, and under the 1929-31 administration was to be described as "one of the most loyal of the 'loyalist' MPs". (27)

It could be argued that Scurr's political progress from Poplar rebel to faithful MacDonald backer was a reasonably faithful reflection of that undergone by his former newspaper over the same period.

ENDS
CHAPTER FOUR (p35-42)


3. DH 18.3.22


6. Henry Pelling - A History of British Trade Unionism - Pelican 1963 p 262

7. Clegg op cit p 266,274,301,312

8. Clegg op cit p 347-51,460-1. Pelling - op cit p 262


10. McKibbin - Evolution op cit p 91-105,137-150

11. Kinnear - Fall of Lloyd George op cit p 199


15. Wertheimer op cit p 110,134.


17. Schwarz op cit p 26


21. McKibbin - Ideologies op cit p 41. Schwarz and Durham - Safe and Sane loc cit p 141


24. Wertheimer op cit p 13

25. Wertheimer op cit p 15. William Knox - 'Ours is not an ordinary Parliamentary movement!' in McKinlay and Morris - ILP op cit p 162

26. RJ Morris - The ILP 1893-1932 in McKinlay and Morris op cit p 14

The physical conditions in which Scurr and his fellow journalists worked for the Herald in the early 1920s were as cramped as their financial circumstances. Francis Williams, subsequently editor from 1937 to 1940, but then an aspirant freelance, remembered: "Its offices were up a flight of stairs in Carmelite Street, not many yards away from the great mass of the Daily Mail building and its reporters room a tiny den hardly enough for half a dozen people". Francis Meynell recorded that female staff worked separately in a room known as "The Convent" (1)

Precise details of the staff are not available for the 1921-2 period - but in late 1923, when some small expansion may have taken place, there was an editorial pay-roll of 35 including a news editor, five reporters and a dozen sub-editors. (2)

The paper they produced, like all publications, was subject to a gap between aspiration and practice. The production of newspapers is a complex process carried out under consistent pressure from deadlines - their composition the consequence of dozens of marginal decisions made in haste.

In consequence any collective image has ragged edges. Modern tabloid techniques may allow production by a handful of staff, allowing in theory for the imposition of a common outlook and style. But this was impossible in the 1920s, even for a paper whose outlook was as definite as the Herald's, crammed as it was with news items and comment from a range of sources including the news agencies who served the entire British press.

Any image is further clouded by Lansbury's desire to encourage debate and the expression of opinion - one which a staff with strong political motivation and in many cases powerful intellect would inevitably use to express personal opinions.

Even so a strong and reasonably consistent voice is discernible in its last year of independence. If one of the preconditions for a successful newspaper is a strong editorial identity the Herald certainly fulfilled the requirement. It can be debated whether it was the right strong editorial identity - but that there was one is unquestionable.
i. Presentation and Structure

The Herald was a small, crowded paper that regarded content as more important than presentation and aimed to cram as much news as possible into its limited space. It was an eight page broadsheet, with six columns per page - a single-column news story with a typical four-decker headline could run to 170 lines of print. (3)

Layout was conservative with the vast majority of items set in single column, drawing the readers’ eye up and down rather than across the page. Wider columns were used only in exceptional circumstances, such as the directors appeal to the readers to keep the Herald alive on 18th March 1922. (4)

Headlines were normally set the width of the story, reinforcing the “up and down” feel of pages. But they did reflect other modern trends in style - their detailed descriptiveness, telling the reader the gist of the story in seconds before they had read it, echoed Blumenfeld’s Daily Express methods. A typical front page headline read:

EXPLOSION
SEQUEL

-----
TIPTON OWNER AND
MANAGER CHARGED

-----
DEATH ROLL 18

-----
MANSlaughter CHARGE:

HEAVY BAIL (5)

Several techniques were used to make the pages more approachable - standfirsts, often italicised, were used to explain the context of stories, important points were emphasised in bold type and major long stories were broken up into two or three sections, each with its introductory headline.
Photographs were used sparingly. Some news reports were accompanied by half-column library mugshots while other carried larger pictures - such as Lansbury addressing a Poplar demonstration on the day of his arrest. But their main, limited, use was to accompany "colour" stories such as a feature on Barnet Horse Fair carried in September 1922 or in sports coverage.

When every other popular daily except the Express carried advertisements on the front page, the Herald, which would in any case have struggled to muster a page of advertisements on many days, ran news with the main story normally appearing in the lefthand two or three columns.

The main inside general news pages were pages two, three and five. These would often contain 25 or more stories to a page - the bulk of it clearly newsagency copy reworked by the Herald's sub-editors. The pattern of distribution of stories varied - the mix incorporated political items, human interest, crime and court reports.

The regular foreign coverage had no settled place in the pattern, but movement news - as crowded as the other news pages with 20 or more stories on disputes, conferences and speeches by leader - was always on page six together with the Herald's gesture in the direction of its role as the movement's noticeboard - "Things That Count" - a column of announcements, notices of meetings and brief factual notes related to Labour and union affairs. By-lines of news pages were rare, except for Lansbury's contributions - more commentary than news - and Paris correspondent George Slocombe's stories from Europe. Main correspondents were by-lined by title - Diplomatic (Ewer), Industrial (Brodzky) and Parliamentary (Bracher).

Named writers were more frequently found on the leader page - dominated on Saturday by Lansbury's weekly sermon and during the week by political and diplomatic sketches and commentaries, notably from Noel Brailsford and Slocombe. These were supplemented by a literary, highbrow mix of philosophical and descriptive pieces or short stories - with Evelyn Sharp, Brodzky and Ivor Brown among the regulars - whimsically humourous verse by "Tomfool" (Eleanor Farjeon) and the "Way of the World" diary column which together with the daily page five column by "Gadfly" (Everard) made up the paper's quota of light relief. Leaders normally occupied most of two columns.
Chapter Five: Content and Style 1921-2

Page seven broke up the visual monotony with "Home Rulings", a women's section including dress tips, normally illustrated by a picture, cookery and advice plus the cartoon strip Bobby Bear - anticipating the Express's better-known Rupert by anthropomorphic adventures retailed in verse.

This page was subject to incursions from page six on heavy movement news days, Herald League notes covering the activities of the paper's residual propaganda organisation and, once a week, by-lined book reviews. Sport often spilled over from the back page, either in the form of racecards or of football reports in the Monday edition.

ii. Content: Priorities

Any newspaper is shaped by its conception of the identity and interests of its readers. Arthur Christiansen of the Daily Express was to build his winning formula of the 1930s round the perceptions of the family from the backstreets of Derby. The Herald's identikit reader was clearly a serious-minded, well-informed trade unionist and political activist, probably London-based and with more interest in the latest news from the Genoa conference or a major strike than in the goriest murder or most titillating court case.(7)

Rarely if ever were political items displaced from their position at the core of the paper. The standard human interest or crime story beloved of commercial papers might get on to the front page. The 1921-2 period saw the trial, conviction and execution of Hay on Wye solicitor Herbert Armstrong, memorable enough to be cited by George Orwell in "The Decline of the English Murder" and the trial of Ronald True. But both played second-fiddle to political stories.(8)

There were non-party political issues that became the lead story. But these normally had a political implication - heavy coverage of the trial and conviction of fraudster Horatio Bottomley reflected his genuine political significance during the First World war and immediately after, while serious accidents like the Tipton disaster could be used to illustrate the brutality, carelessness and incompetence of capitalism.(9)

Assumptions about reader activism were seen in the headline "Your Summer Holiday" on a news story about the TUC summer school - although with a maximum of 45 places a substantial take-up of the suggestion by Herald readers might have caused some difficulties. (10)
Assumptions about readers knowledge led the Herald to neglect the signposting seen in most journalism. This was demonstrated in October 1921 when a journalist was dispatched to look at the state of Cornish tin-mining communities ten months into a shutdown of the mines. He explained that on his way back: “I interviewed Dan Hillman to see if he could suggest a remedy from the Labour point of view.

“Yes”, said Dan. “The remedy is the one I have been advocating for months. The nation must take over the mines”.(11)

Dan Hillman was in fact the local district secretary of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers Union. But the Herald felt no need to explain who he was - he appears in the guise of an old friend of the family who needs no introduction.(12)

This is not an isolated incident. In the same issue a story about the London conference on Economic Recovery and World Peace quotes Krassin - at the time the Soviet representative in London - and Nansen, the former explorer, without feeling any need to explain who they are. (13)

Similarly a whole column is devoted to a speech on the Labour Party by "Arthur Henderson MP" without any explanation of who he is. Similarly with JH Thomas in an account of the budget debates. Lansbury on occasion is known simply as "G.L". The effect is of a small world where everybody knows everyone else, so no introductions are needed.(14).

If the Herald were to be seen as a family there is little doubt that Lansbury was its head and Poplar its headquarters. His Saturday column's gently conversational style, confiding in the reader and speaking, as on 7th January 1922 of "all that matters to you and me", reinforced this effect.(15)

The most striking example, a "family" occasion in the literal as well as the metaphorical sense, was the heavy coverage of the death of Minnie Lansbury less than three months after coming out of Holloway. The early death of a Labour councillor imprisoned for opposing government policy would be covered in any Labour newspaper, but devoting almost the whole of a front page news column plus announcements about funeral arrangements on the following two days showed the importance of the Lansbury-Poplar axis.(16)
Heavy Poplar coverage - half a column on a dinner for 10,000 children in Bow and Bromley and a warm obituary notice for borough clerk Charles Skeggs - reflected a general London-centricity in news. This may in part reflect the fact that the papers preserved in the National Newspaper Library, Colindale are final editions. Even so a front page story headlined “Smallpox in London” - reporting that the disease had moved from Nottingham - implied clearly that disease striking in London gave the outbreak a whole new level of newsworthiness. A series of local issues such as government attempts to restrain London street markets and the London County Council’s debates on Sunday opening for parks received attention worthy of national issues. (17)

The Herald’s faith in its relationship with its readers is indicated by the extensive use of irony in the news, diary and humorous columns. Irony is a journalistic boomerang - if it misfires through the reader’s failure to understand, its effect can be precisely the opposite of what is intended. For this reason trainers of journalists often counsel students against it as a technique, particularly in news writing. (18)

Faith that the Herald’s readers shared its underlying assumptions and would recognise the tone of voice underpinned the dry observation of a comment in the report on the 1922 New Year’s Honours List that: “A whole host of Mr Lloyd George’s political friends will in future be able to point with pride to their names in Debrett” (19).

A fundamental element in the paper’s world view was that there was one rule for the poor and another for the rich. As such claims of improverishment from the wealthy were always a tempting target. The conjunction of two news items in March 1922 - the fifth massive will in recent years from the Wills tobacco family and Lord Tredegar’s announcement that he had been forced by financial pressures to give up foxhunting - prompted a story that, taken strictly at face value without knowledge of the ironic intent, might have come from the diehard Morning Post: “The world is full of oddities, as everybody knows. While some have made millions out of puffs of smoke, the exercise of that truly Christian virtue - the self-sacrifice of a pack of fox-hounds - is harshly imposed on a wealthy Welsh peer who owns land by the thousand acres”. (20)
This approach extended to the Way of the World column, which was to be condemned in 1925 by director Clifford Allen - formerly general manager of the Daily Citizen as "Much too highbrow and clever", but was nevertheless to survive fundamentally unchanged until 1930. It mixed an appropriate quote of the day with observations of quirks and oddities, but irony was its stock in trade, as in the New Year issue of 1922.

"An appalling picture of the morale and conditions of the rising generation in Russia", I read in a Sunday paper, "is drawn by Professor Alexander Amfiteatroff, a well-known Russian writer living in Prague. Under the Bolshevist principles of equality all classes mingle in the schools and boys and girls study together". I got no farther. It was too dreadful. I don't think the newspapers ought to tell us these horrors, do you? Not at this time of year.

Much of its most lethal weaponry was plucked from the pages of other newspapers - the Morning Post being a particular butt. It seized with joy on an item in a gossip column about the advantages of "coming out": "To begin with the debutante comes in for all the hunt balls, and by the time the real season begins in May, knows practically everyone there is to know".

As Way of the World observed: "You and I, Henry, simply don't exist. And yet if we all went to sleep with the gas on I believe even the debutantes would notice the difference quite soon".

Dry contemplation of the follies of political opponents was also the hallmark of humorist "Gadfly" - C Langdon Everard - who delighted in examining the wilder fringes of the right and undermining them with the ironic pretence that he really rather sympathised with them.

"Gadfly" was similarly unloved by Allen, who argued in 1929 that his contributions should be reduced and be made from outside the office. But both his pay - with Ewer second only to that of the editor throughout the 1920s, and the normally acidulous Hamilton Fyfe's comment that "He knew - no one knew better - how much better the paper ought to be in every way - except perhaps "Gadfly". He did not think they could improve on "Gadfly" - underlined his status as the Herald's star.
A characteristic sketch examined the Conservative candidate at the Motherwell by-election, Bailie Hugh Ferguson: "Some Tory candidates are content to take their inspiration from Conservative Central office, with particularly ghastly results. Not so Bailie Ferguson of Motherwell. The bible is good enough for him. 'It is', he says conservatively, the Old Book that has taught one the menace of the Irish Romanists and Socialists.....It is a pity considering how dull Westminster is nowadays that 15,000 of his neighbours turned him down with a thud in 1918". (25)

iii. Content - Politics and Industry

In defining the Herald's political line among the contesting factions of the Labour movement, Lansbury had protested in early 1921 that "This paper belongs not to the right or the left, but to the whole of the Labour Movement". (26)

It was, as he was to explain in launching the Back To A Penny campaign in the autumn of 1921, a difficult position guaranteed to maximise external criticism:"We welcome any reform within the present system if we think it will contribute towards the end of the system; we work for a peaceful but complete revolution by which the system shall be overthrown and a better one instituted. So we steer a middle course between what some call "reformism" and some call "extremism".

"It is a difficult job. Often we please nobody. The rank and file, if we don't print the divisive letter he has written, tells us we have sold ourselves to the officials. The officials, whom some branch curses by a resolution which it insists on our printing, tells us that we have sold ourselves to the extremists. And all because we try to do what is fair by both !"(27)

Lansbury had already explained the paper's credo :"With only one daily paper devoted to the interests of Labour, it is obvious that such a paper must be, and ought to be, as catholic as possible in its views, and should constitute an open platform for the expression of opinion by all sections of the movement. At the same time the one and only Labour daily newspaper should at all times be a pioneer that should lead the movement rather than lag behind". (28)
But as an open platform it had the odd characteristic that it made little use of readers' letters, in the early part of 1921-2 at least. Without many by-lines or a record of contributors it is impossible to establish how far the 'open platform' function was fulfilled by direct contributions rather than letters to the paper. Many issues carried only a single letter - often from an organisation rather than an individual - which was more of a news story than a contribution to debate. Typical of those printed were a protest from the secretary of the St Pancras Unemployed Committee against the unfair conviction of a demonstrator for allegedly hitting a policeman and a letter with a string of leadership names including Margaret Bondfield of the General Workers, Clynes, Henderson and Labour National Women's Officer Marion Phillips arguing for improved rights for working women. More letters appeared as 1922 went on, but this remained an underdeveloped area of the paper. (29)

And for all the protestations, the Herald remained decisively lodged on the left - Lansbury's reference to leading the movement rather than lagging behind it a giveaway in this respect. Abuse of gradualist leaders no longer appeared, but the agenda was on the left.

This could be seen in the language of a leader on Lloyd George's plans for a reformed House of Lords, which would in the Herald's view have entrenched an anti-Labour bulwark. It had already displayed a clear conviction that bad laws were meant to be broken - as against the determined constitutionalism of Labour moderates - in the dispute of Poplar. Now, in calling for Labour to refuse recognition to a reformed Lords, it again showed contempt for approaches that stressed constitutionalism at all costs: "Such action would be technically "unconstitutional". What of it? In such an issue there could be no place for pedantries. The future of the country is more than the niceties of the "constitution". Labour would turn from the quibblings of lawyers to the bold commonsense of the men who created the constitution itself by breaking through the meshes of legalism. The precedents of 1640 and 1688 would become valid". (30)

A further indication of the tendency to the left was an emphasis on industrial rather than parliamentary matters - an expression of old Herald traditions reinforced by the uninspiring Labour performance in Parliament. Parliamentary sessions were less interesting than union conferences, by-elections less newsworthy than strikes or hunger marches.
Official trade union attitudes to the National Unemployed Workers Movement, formed in April 1921, were warmer at this stage than they were to be in the later 1920s when the NUWM was regarded as a Communist front. Even so the Herald's enthusiasm went well beyond the leadership's, with NUWM leader Wal Hannington recalling that its coverage was crucial in the early stages: "The paper gave sympathetic and favourable publicity to the unemployed struggles", he wrote.(31)

Labour candidates at by-elections could count on noisily partisan support. But the Herald's continuing preference for a good industrial story was shown at the end of March 1921 when Labour overturned a Conservative majority of more than 11,000 at Leicester, winning the by-election by more than 5,000. An impressive result at any time, it had nevertheless to play second front-page fiddle to a dispute in the chemical industry, headlined "Industrial Warfare Spreading". (32)

Coverage of the Leicester victory demonstrated a continuing characteristic - the larding of news stories with comment to the extent that some resembled leaders. The result was greeted as: "A clear indication that the workers, sick of the Capitalist Coalition and the Capitalist Liberals alike, realise that the Labour Party is the one hope of the nation. It is too, a vote of no-confidence in Lloyd George's Genoa juggle and will strengthen the Labour MPs in their frontal attack on the Government in the House of Commons on Monday". (33).

Headlines were similarly loaded - making up in bite what they lacked in size. There was little doubt of their view of London transport employers in the story headlined "Men Who Sleep in The Bus: Hardships of London's Busmen: Heartless Combine" - even less of that of the Asquithian Liberals in the headline: "Wee Frees in Labour: Ridiculous Mouse Produced". (34)

A partisan spin might be put on apparently innocuous stories. A brief and unexceptionably orthodox report of the cricket match between the Lords and Commons Cricket Club and Westminster School acquired a new dimension of ironic contempt from the headline: "NOVEL SPECTACLE: Coalition Members Try to Play Cricket: Low Scores. The report shows that the parliamentarians scored nearly 200 and appear to have had the better of a drawn game. (35)
Anger and hyperbole were frequently in evidence. The leader welcoming 1922 makes extraordinary reading in the context of having been written little more than three years after the end of the First World War: "In your first issue last year we wrote that the year then past was probably the blackest in human history. The year that was then beginning has been far blacker". (36)

The Herald's critique of politics and industry continued to be underpinned by a conspiratorial analysis. Its language was always derived from the ethical tradition - protesting angrily at inequity and injustice. But it is possible to detect the influence of the Herald's small group of Marxists - Mellor and Postgate were still Communist Party members at this time - in a view of the state as an instrument of the capitalist class and the assumption that capitalism would always try to drive living standards down to a minimum. (37)

A clearcut version was presented in a major leader at the start of 1922: "A year ago we prophesied a co-ordinated development of the attack on wages. We do not claim to have foreseen - no one could have foreseen - how rapid that development would be, or how successful.

*The government has worked in with the employers. Unemployment has been their weapon.

*The Government's part was definite. It was to break its promises, reverse its own Acts, repudiate its responsibilities, and throw industry - suddenly, violently, at a carefully chosen time of trade depression - back into the cockpit of competition. The employers were to cut wages to a point at which it was reckoned that the spirit of the men would be broken by sheer starvation. If the men refused such wages, the Government was to declare that this was "War on the community" and place all its strike-breaking resources at the service of the employers.

*At the same time, the unemployed were to be refused adequate maintenance, and were to be thus coerced by starvation into becoming blacklegs and being willing to do any work at any stage".

It went on to state: "Few people no doubt (though many profess to doubt) that the plot was a plot". (38)
The centre of this attack was not in parliament or cabinet, but Big Business (the Herald habitually emphasised the description by capitalising the offending words) and specifically the Federation of British Industry, which had been founded in 1916 as a representative body for business.(39)

As has already been noted members of the TUC General Council believed that the FBI was co-ordinating an attack on wages and conditions. This viewpoint was given considerable space when George Hicks, secretary of the Amalgamated Building Workers and a leading General Council left-winger, told his annual conference that the FBI was “The most ruthless combination of capitalist interests the war of classes has yet produced” - adding that it controlled 360 MPs.

A small space at the bottom of the column was found for a reply by the FBI, who retorted that only 59 MPs were connected with Federation members and that it had no control over the selection or actions of Parliamentary candidates.

The Herald’s response to this exchange endorsed Hicks’ attack and claimed it as its own - pointing to “The power and influence of massed capital, as shown by their open activities, open and secret, of the FBI...

“Many months ago we warned Labour that this organisation was scheming and planning for a wholesale reduction of wages in many trades and callings”(40).

Proof positive, in the Herald’s view, of the FBI’s ability to dictate government policy was the Geddes report, which called in February for #75m of cuts in public spending. While allotting the government its share of the blame for giving the committee too negative a brief, it blamed business influence for the attack on the public services, including #18m proposed cuts in education headlined as “Starving the Minds of the Young”.

Noting the preponderance of businessmen on the committee, it argued: "All this part of the report which deals with the life of the people should be considered in conjunction with the recommendations, which we published yesterday, made by the Federation of British Industries - an organisation representing the same class as do the members of the Geddes Committee. The Federation of British Industries is quite definite in its demand for a still further decrease in wages. We think even the most sceptical will require no further illustration of the truth of what we have for long past alleged: that there is a definite and concerted move to beat down the whole standard of living of the working-class in this country to far below the pre-war level" (41)

Belief that government policy was determined by manipulation from big business - on Price's reading evidence of a rather more developed analysis of the relationship between economic and political power than that possessed by MacDonald and other moderate leaders, whose viewpoint assumed that winning power in parliament was a sufficient aim - accounts in part for their choice of Health Minister Sir Alfred Mond, rather than Premier David Lloyd George, as the Herald's Public Enemy Number One. (42)

This is not to say that Lloyd George got off without criticism. Lansbury's ferocious assault in February 1922 showed a bitter dislike of his deviousness: "The chicanery and humbug of Lloyd George are being revealed more clearly every day.. has climbed steadily to place and power by the use of every artifice known to the demagogue...fooled women fighting for freedom..."Jack on both sides" deceiving each in order to secure kudos for himself..He is the greatest failure of all time, and this because of his constitutional ability to either see or speak straight" (43)

But the conspiratorial reading inevitably rated the Premier as much monkey as organ-grinder. Mond was different. A considerable factor in the Herald's broadside was undoubtedly personal - as Minister of Health he was responsible for poor relief and Poplar's direct political adversary: "That grotesque and sinister creature in whose hands has been placed the care of the national health", in the furious view of one leader column. (44).

He was also a leading capitalist who could be portrayed as the personification of the conspiracy, and whose role as a wealthy man in setting maximum rates of poor relief for the destitute could be attacked as a symbol of inequity in British society.
A ferocious assault by Lansbury, whose powers of invective were clearly in excellent order in February as it came in the same Saturday feature as his broadside on Lloyd George, incorporated the whole range of attacks on Mond, and by implication the conspiracy, and as such merits quotation at some length.

"Sir A Mond, well fed, and with a bank balance supplied from the sweat and toil of thousands of workers, asks, with a sneer: "Is anyone starving?"

"What a question, coming from the Minister of Health, whose idea of sufficiency is found in the miserable standard of life he has set up for the unemployed of 25s, plus 3s for coal per week, for a man and wife, while he himself accepts a salary of #96 a week from the pockets of the poor, in addition to his enormous private income, also derived from the labour of the workers....

"This rich, contented, happy Sir Alfred Mond... has commenced to practice economy, not of course in connection with his own salary or income, but vicariously by robbing little children of the milk they need, and nursing and expectant mothers of food and nourishment. He has also taken in hand the task of cutting down the provision of clinics for the treatment of consumption and bad teeth....

"Sir Alfred Mond, representing the school of employers known as the Federation of British Industries, is endeavouring to drive the workers down to the wretched level which existed from the inception of the "New Poor Law" in 1834. I beg every reader of the Daily Herald to watch Mond and all his works. He is in one of the key positions for beating down the workers' standard of life" (45).

This view of the state as the prop and perpetuator of inequity was a consistent element in analysis. News of the current Lord Nelson's continuing receipt of a #5,000 annual state pension prompted the reflection that "It is degrading to accept doles, unless you are an Earl. The nation cannot afford houses, health or education. But it manages to find space on its back for a five-thousand pound earl." (46)
Chapter Five: Content and Style 1921-2

It was seen also in treatment of a story on entertainment tax. The headline "Taxing Amusement: Poor Have To Pay Most Heavily - As Usual", took in a characteristic aside, reinforced by the comment-laden story:

"As usual it falls heaviest on the poor. Rich people who can afford higher-priced seats pay a tax of about 10 per cent. The man who can only afford the cheapest seat in the house is taxed 25 per cent" (47)

The Herald's estimate of industry's influence had its impact on at least two significant areas of policy. The first was consistent support for wider powers for the TUC General Council as a counter to the co-ordinating power apparently wielded on the other side of industry by the FBI.

A leader in the first issue of 1922 summed up the argument: "It is clear that, at a time when the whole energies of the rich and the powerful enemies of Labour are concentrated on breaking down the main rights and safeguards which generations of Trade Unionists have so painfully and heroically won, Trade Unionists cannot hope to stand up to the attack save by equal co-ordination within itself. It needs a central authoritative fighting body" (48).

The second was a refusal to differentiate between the capitalist parties - the Liberals were portrayed as as much as enemies as the Conservatives, in some respects more dangerous because they might be mistaken for friends. Cowling has noted this as an element in Herald rhetoric during the "direct action" period, and it was maintained in March 1922 in a leader asserting that there was no difference between the two older parties. The only battle that mattered was "Between the old Gang, who oppose the people in the interests of their own class, and Labour, whose cause is the people's" (49).
iv.Content: Foreign

Nor was the capitalist conspiracy seen as an exclusively British concern. It was similarly pervasive in its influence on the Herald’s analysis of foreign affairs, which saw much of the diplomatic manoeuvring of the period as a conspiracy against the Soviet Union.

Andrew Williams, in the most comprehensive examination of the subject, has pointed to "a very complex love-hate relationship between the British Labour movement and the Soviet Union". Sympathy for the Soviet Union was not confined to the left. Williams notes widespread support for "fair play" - a powerful concept in the ethical tradition - for Russia and the way in which moderate pragmatists like MacDonald and Snowden argued consistently against isolating the Soviet Union.(50)

But in any plotting of the Labour movement along a love-hate axis, the Herald unquestionably tended towards the affectionate end. Lansbury was to write of his meeting with Lenin in the awe-struck manner of a middle-class patriot recalling a meeting with royalty: "I shall always esteem it the greatest event in my life that I was privileged to see this fine, simple, wise man and speak with him".(51)

Diplomatic editor Ewer’s Communist sympathies were the subject of anxious scrutiny from the Labour leadership throughout the 1920s - although Fyfe was to defend him vigorously against any charge that he showed his views in his writing. (52)

Having run "Hands off Russia!" as one of its most persistent slogans during the period of postwar allied intervention, the Herald continued to attack international conspiracies against the new state. This viewpoint was epitomised by the leader greeting a #20m consortium aimed at opening up European trade. It concluded: "Infinitely greater sums than that will be involved before the thing can get very far, and they will be employed for that purpose, not merely of getting the ordinary return on capital, but of getting the claws of Capitalism firmly fixed into the quivering carcass of Europe. The one country of any size where these claws have been un-fixed is of course, the one specially marked down for destruction. This is a new move against the Socialist Republic of Russia, and its main motive is to prevent the spread of Socialism."(53)
Far from seeing Russia as the fount of revolution, the Herald argued:

"They demand for themselves the toleration and peace they extend for others". (54)

Russia's place in the international Socialist brotherhood was underlined in the May Day issue when messages from Henderson, Adler of the Socialist International and American socialist Eugene Debs were accompanied by one from Zinoviev - Lenin's contribution having arrived too late for publication - and Communist International Secretary Arthur MacManus. (55)

The first traces of doubt about Russian internal policy surfaced in June 1922 when the leaders of the Social Revolutionary party went on trial. The reporting of both sides was straight and even-handed, always a sure sign of discomfort in a paper given to comment. (56)

But coverage of international conferences left little doubt that the Herald's sympathies were with Russia rather than Britain and other western powers. A comment, reflecting the influence of the Union for Democratic Control's attacks on secret diplomacy across the Labour movement on the "tradition of privacy, trickery and greed which have constituted the foreign policy of all capitalist nations in the past", followed by a week the headline on deadlock at the Genoa conference of the major powers: "Soviet Delegation Refuses To Betray Workers". (57)

Attitudes to the succession of international conferences were slightly confused. It gave them intensive coverage, but this was suffused with world-weary cynicism. French Premier Aristide Briand's visit to London in late 1921 drew the comment: "Time was when people watched these conferences of premiers intently, expecting big decisions and a settlement of world questions....Today nobody expects anything in particular" (58)

But the abrasive Raymond Poincare's succession as French Premier in January 1922 added bite to Herald reporting as an fear that his aggression might trigger a new war became a dominant factor. His new administration was welcomed with the headline "Poincare's plans for war”. By April he was being labelled simply "Kaiser Poincar—". And when he threatened to occupy the Ruhr industrial region in May 1922, the leader warned ""Once again the choice is between peace and M Poincare". (59)
His villainy was finally sealed when he insisted at the Genoa conference that restoration of the rights of property be built into Allied demands on the Russians. The Herald greeted Lloyd George’s concession of the issue to him by saying: “The British Premier has kept his peace with France, but has made peace with Russia impossible”. (60)

If justice for Russia was one old Herald cry, then Home Rule for Ireland was an even longerstanding cause - one whose consistent coverage led one not unfriendly critic to say the paper was “Too much of an Irish political pamphlet for my taste” (61)

So it seized on the opportunity offered by violence in Belfast in late summer 1921 to contrast the independence-seeking Nationalist communities favourably with the Unionists of Ulster. It reported: “Unionist mobs disregarded the curfew....in self-defence the Nationalists retaliated”. Headlines a day later told the tale of “Orange Savagery in Belfast : Men and Women Shot at, Beaten and Kicked: Dead 14 : Wounded 100”. (62)

A leader in mid-September reinforced the picture, contrasting Ulster with “Sinn Fein Ireland...at the moment peaceful and progressive, and asks only to remain so”. (63)

Irish Nationalist leaders were sure of favourable treatment with Michael Collins drawn in terms that readers could hardly fail to contrast with images of the devious British rulers and the murderous Orangemen “The most friendly and obliging of men....he has all an Irishman's quick-wittedness, ...a charm which is quite impossible to get into print” (64)

The outbreak of civil war between Nationalist factions in 1922 was a serious blow to the Herald’s view of peacable Sinn Fein Ireland - leading it to resort to that clear sign of distress, straight, factual reporting.

v. Content: Books and Sport

Two other areas of coverage are worth noting - books and sport. McKibbin has pointed out that self-educated Labour activists, the Herald’s core audience, assumed “a body of culture that people ought to know...The culture was very largely grounded on the classic texts of British literature, and it is suprising the extent to which they were known” (65)
The Herald’s books pages reflected this outlook in a positively Reithian highbrow seriousness - mixing politics with demanding literature. Thus the five columns of reviews on 8th March 1922 included the latest books on China - under the caption “China- Captive or Free”, Ivor Brown's full column account of the life of Tom Paine in the page’s "Great Names" series and a full column by Middleton Murray on new poets.(66).

The "classic text" tendency was seen a month later in an article on John Milton, while the lead feature was Wyndham Lewis' review of "Since Cezanne" by Clive Bell and Ewer lacerated a volume on "Europe in Convalescence" with the statement "Mr Zimmer's is a pathetic book".(67)

That mix, and the weighty quality of reviewer, was no exception. Three weeks on from that GDH Cole was reviewing Harold Laski’s weighty tome on the Foundations of Sovereignty while RH Tawney discussed Marion Phillips study of the education needs of industrial workers and a Labour Party publication on secondary education policy.(68)

If literary coverage made few concessions to populism, sport had been forced into compromise when the Herald returned as a daily in 1919. Lansbury, who had dropped racing tips when he became editor in 1913, was forced by his colleagues to recognise their importance as a circulation builder among working-class readers and reluctantly restored them.(69)

Postgate has left a picture of Lansbury in conversation with Taylor, the racing journalist who would still be on the Herald staff in 1930, and whose Templegate by-line was to outlive the paper itself,saying "Well,G.L.,we had five winners yesterday’ and being answered 'That's fine brother: I'm very glad' in a tone of great dejection ; and these two excellent men looking at each other in distress, each respecting the other, anxious to avoid hurting the other's feelings, desiring nothing so much as the success of the paper, and yet aware of the high fence of misunderstanding between them that nothing could overlap".(70)

But this was in line with the extreme conventionality of sports coverage, giving readers the normal fare of match reports and previews, heavily factual rather than imaginatively written. There were few hints of the character of the rest of the paper - the occasional NUR Football League result apart - until the start of the 1922-3 football season and the launch of a campaign to cut the price of admission to league matches.
Admission charges had risen sharply from the prewar norm of 6d - the Herald reported that the lowest price was now 1/-.

On 5th September a frontpage headline reported "Make Football Cheaper: Workers With Cut Wages Can't Pay: Growing Protest: Sixpenny Soccer of Boycott".

The accompanying report explained "Without question resentment against the present high figures is quickening everywhere". Trades Councils were passing resolutions of protest - although it was reported that the clubs, characteristically, were unworried.(71)

But in the same week as sports coverage was taking an unusual turn, the Herald was undergoing compromise with external values far more fundamental than printing racing tips - the acceptance of official movement control.
CHAPTER FIVE (P43-62)

   Meynell op cit p 112
2. Lansbury to Bramley 3.10.23 LPDH 245
3. DH 16.6.22.
4. DH 18.3.22
5. DH 18.3.22, Le Mahieu op cit p 29
6. DH 5.9.21, 5.9.22
   Robert Allen - *Voice of Britain: The Inside Story of the Daily Express*
   Patrick Stephens, Cambridge 1983 p 39
9. DH 18.3.22 (Tipton) 27.5.22 (Bottomley)
10. DH 16.6.22
11. DH 13.10.21
12. Labour Who's Who 1927 p 101
13. DH 13.10.21
14. DH 3.9.21, 3.5, 16.6, 7.9.22
15. DH 7.1.22
16. DH 2.3.4.1.22
17. DH 31.8.21 (smallpox) 19, 21.11.21 (street markets) 2.1.22 (children),
   12.4.22 (Skeggs) 10.7.22 (parks)
18. Writer's personal recollection of training at Centre for Journalism
   Studies, University College, Cardiff 1981-2
19. DH 2.1.22
20. DH 8.3.22
21. Allen memo on editorial policy 11.5.27 TUC 788.5
22. DH 2.1.22
23. DH 5.9.22
24. Allen memo on Daily Herald Staff Reorganisation 11.3.29 TUC 789.8
   Lansbury to Bramley 3.10.23 loc cit. LPRAC 1924 p 178
25. DH 8.3.22
26. DH 19.2.21
27. DH 11.9.21
28. DH 22.10.21
29. DH 28.9, 13.10.21
30. DH 19.12.21

32. DH 31.3.22
33. DH 19.12.21
34. DH 1.9.21, 31.3.22
35. DH 16.6.22
36. DH 2.1.22
37. MacIntyre op cit p 28
38. DH 2.1.22
39. Clegg op cit p 252
40. DH 17.8.22
41. DH 11.2.22
42. Price op cit p 155
43. DH 11.2.22
44. DH 16.6.22
45. DH 11.2.22
46. DH 31.3.22
47. DH 19.1.22
48. DH 2.1.22
49. DH 8.3.22. Cowling op cit p 91


MacDonald fears and Fyfe defence in Fyfe - Seven Selves op cit p 254

53. DH 3.1.22
54. DH 12.4, 25.4.22
55. DH 1.5.22
56. DH 16.6.22
57. DH 25.4, 3.5.22
58. DH 19.12.21
59. DH 4.22
60. DH 3.5.22

61. The Journalist October 1922

62. DH 31.8, 1.9.21
63. DH 1, 7.9.21
64. DH 13.10.21

65. McKibbin - Ideologies op cit p 34
66. DH 8.3.22
67. DH 12.4.22
68. DH 3.5.22


70. Postgate - Lansbury op cit p 143

71. DH 5.9.22

Ends
While Poplar, Russia and the Capitalist Plot had all given the Herald ample opportunities to express its distinctive world view during 1921-21, there is little doubt that its best running story in this year, and up to the end of 1923, was itself. As a story it contained all those qualities of political commitment and battling against the odds that the Herald looked for in its front-page features.

The last year of independence was to live up to the traditions of uncertainty, chronic insolvency and commitment overcoming financial logic that the Herald had established from the first.

As has been noted the failure of the Second Debenture Issue ended the last hope of the independent Herald beyond question. Lansbury was to be quoted as late as the end of January saying that he hoped to maintain the paper as an independent concern. He was either misquoted or whistling to keep his spirits up. Its fate had been settled by the end of 1921.(1)

The Herald and its putative new owners, the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress, had four major issues of which three were essentially strategic to settle as they defined a new relationship.

Issue number one was that of principle - did the two national bodies wish to take over the Herald? If they decided that they did, the next issue was financial - how did they propose to fund it? And finally came the editorial decision - what sort of paper did they want and how did they propose as proprietors to control its policy? Making and implementing these decisions was to take the best part of a year. This might seem to imply a leisurely, relaxed process with decisions taken on the basis of thought-out strategic considerations

But this was not to be the case. Ross McKibbin has noted that the official movement's involvement in the Herald was essentially reluctant, but that "Each step taken to assist the Herald made it more difficult for the movement to extricate itself"(2)

The reasons for that are rooted in issue number four - the short-term imperative of keeping the Herald alive when massive losses were threatening its existence. This imperative defined the atmosphere in which all other decisions were taken, giving the process an urgency and momentum that it would otherwise have lacked.
The first steps in the takeover process took place in November when the Herald Board appealed to the debenture holders. A meeting of the holders, together with Labour Party and TUC representatives, was called for 7th December 1921 at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Road. At this delegates were informed that "the directors were unable to keep the paper in existence in the present state of finance". The debenture holders declared themselves equally unable to raise the necessary finance, leaving the meeting's call for the Labour Party and the TUC to take over joint responsibility as the only practical alternative to recommending closure. (4)

The two national bodies reacted in the time-honoured manner of Labour institutions confronted by a proposal that they are disposed to accept, but which has wideranging implications. At the suggestion of the General Council, they set up a joint sub-committee to explore the issue. (5)

The membership of the group showed both bodies were taking it seriously. Henderson, elected chair, represented the party with MacDonald and textile workers leader Tom Shaw while TUC Chairman and Agricultural Workers leader RB Walker, who became secretary, was joined by Arthur Pugh of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation and Findlay of the Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades Federation. (6)

Newspaper World reported on Christmas Eve that the Herald directors had offered the organised movement control: "It is highly probable that the offer will be accepted, and this will, of course, involve at least partial direction of policy by the officials at Eccleston Square." (7)

But the immediate concern was finance rather than policy. If anything might have deterred the organised movement from taking on the Herald it was an examination of its finances - which even Frank Hodgdes, deputy chair of the Board, admitted confused him. (8)

A report from chartered accountants WA Scott and Co revealed the Herald's chronic insolvency - liabilities exceeding assets by £159,741, and the need for a further £50,000 to carry it through the next year should the price be restored to 1d. At current sales of 185,889 the price cut would produce weekly losses of £2,200. The one bright patch was the solvency of the Victoria House Printing Company, whose amalgamation with the Herald had been set as a condition of any takeover and agreed by Lansbury, who owned more than 95 per cent of the shares. (9)
Not all the movement's leadership were keen to acquire the Herald. There was, Cameron was to note later in the year, a marked lack of enthusiasm among many General Council members. Yet all opposition was outweighed by the logic of the position expounded during this period by Henderson: "It would be nothing short of a disaster were the Movement without a daily paper to express a definitely working-class point of view on questions affecting the workers as customers, citizens and producers. As you are aware, in consequence of the extensive employment, many of the Unions are not in a position to do what they would gladly have done had their funds been more favourably situated, but we feel we must make the effort". (10)

So the sub-committee backed a takeover, and were in turn endorsed by a joint meeting of the two national committees, which declared: "The time has now arrived when the Labour Movement should take over the Daily Herald and the Victoria House Printing Company, so as to provide the Movement with a daily Labour paper". The decision was endorsed in turn by the debenture holders - and the question from now on was not whether the Herald would pass out of the hands of Lansbury and the paper's current directors into those of the Movement, but when and how.(11)

Thus committed the sub-committee began to examine the mechanics of a takeover and interim arrangements for policy supervision - deputing Henderson and Walker to be consulted by the directors when issues arose.

But there were also, as ever, short-term worries. Sales were still falling and the Herald had been banging the drum for a return to 1d throughout the final months of 1921. But cutting the price would, in the short-term at least, increase already formidable losses.

Financial assistance was needed - and in a further step towards full commitment the sub-committee recommended a return to 1d from January 23rd supported by £5,000 from each of the national committees, which with £5,000 already held by the Herald was estimated enough to see them through three months at the lower price. The national committees, balloted by post, accepted the plan(12)
At the same time a circular to affiliated organisations appealing for support showed the official movement’s easy optimism about the efficacy of appeals from the leadership - a constant factor in Herald publicity. A circulation of a million, recipients were told, could be achieved “Easily if each one of your members will go at once to the newsagent in his district and place an order for the paper”.

This belief that the rank and file would readily recognise the Herald as their paper now it was officially backed was however tempered by recognition of the efficacy of modern circulation methods. Readers were promised, in place of “free insurance schemes of doubtful validity...” A real insurance scheme, one that aims at the prevention of evil and disease, because Labour stands four square for a social order within which the care of each will be the duty of all, and within which preventible sickness, accidents and poverty will find no place”. (13)

The reduction was trailed every day until the 23rd by a front-page feature, while the first penny issue gave pride of place to messages of good wishes from an assortment of movement leaders. The following day’s headlines were triumphant: “Unanimous Cry of “Sold Out” : Big Demand for Penny DH : Now for the Million”. (14)

But triumph was wildly premature. A sale of 290,000 was up 127,000 on the previous week, but represented a peak rather than the first stage of an advance. By February 15th the Herald was back to 213,345 - a welcome 50,000 advance but hardly what had been hoped for - and hard evidence that leadership exhortation would not work by itself. Losses on the first fortnight at a penny were #421719s6d. At this rate the movement subsidy would be used up in much less than three months. Advertising had risen, but only marginally.

The directors estimated that #50,000 would have to be spent on improvements for the paper to reach the break even sale of 375,000 or a self-supporting 500,000. They added that day to day money worries were a major problem - and proposed a way out in the form of a movement levy to provide financial breathing space and the funds for development. (15)
Their reasoning impressed the sub-committee, who asked the General Council to appeal to affiliates for a levy of a halfpenny per member per quarter, saying: "The matter has now become pressing if the continuation of the "Daily Herald" is desired. If the levy cannot be made, we can see no alternative to the immediate stoppage of the paper". The General Council agreed, and unions were asked to reply by March 31st (16).

At the same time as wrestling with the finances, the sub-committee had devised a means of transferring the Herald and Victoria House to the national committees. Lansbury, desperate to get the Herald's problems off his hands and had been appealing since January for the appointment of movement trustees - drawing rebuffs summarised by Ethel Snowden's opinion that "Questions of policy should be decided before the Labour Movement takes any step towards adopting the Daily Herald." (17)

Now in early March Lansbury opted for more direct action. On March 2nd the Victoria House resigned en bloc, electing in their place a new board of Lansbury, Henderson, Bowerman and staff representatives. (18)

It was an imaginative but doomed gambit. The national committees were well on the road to takeover, but would do it by the book at a time of their own choosing. Henderson, clearly feeling railroaded, told Lansbury that the election was premature. His executive agreed. Ethel Snowden, pointed as ever, said: "Lansbury is trying to prejudice the decision of the trade unions and to get the General Council committed to accepting the responsibility for the Victoria House Printing Co. and the Daily Herald so that they will be saddled with the liabilities for these, even if the two movements do not agree." (19)

Sub-committee member Tom Shaw said uncontested movement control of the paper, its policy and directorate was a precondition of takeover and warned against "Any method of a hybrid character which will entail the danger of the Labour Movement finding the money and a few individuals directing the policy of the paper, possibly in a spirit contrary to that of the decisions of the Party itself". (20)

The General Council also rejected the proposal, noting that they had yet to appoint directors, accept formal responsibility, prepare a takeover scheme or offer affiliates the chance to comment. (21)
Chapter Six: Takeover 1921-2

Lansbury's anxiety, and the national committees' reluctance, were understandable. On March 18th the Herald launched its latest distress signal in a massive front page story covering three columns width with only two columns of type, headlined "KEEP THE WORKERS' ONLY DAILY ALIVE! Fight for the Paper That Fights and Will Always Fight for You and Yours! IT'S UP TO YOU!". (22)

The appeal, promised like many to be the paper's last, was for £25,000. On April 12th it stood at £4,786. Lansbury recorded that a crisis early in 1922 was averted by a loan from the London Compositors Society - and it seems likely that this was the means by which the Herald survived into May. (23)

Certainly the levy disappointed any hopes that it would be either a short or long-term saviour. It had proved a flawed, cumbersome weapon - relying, when the Herald needed instant action, on individual decisions from unions whose rulebooks often required complex procedures. By 12th May - six weeks after the date by which unions had been requested to reply - only 107 out of 194 had answered. Of these only 27, including the Miners, ASLEF, the Railway Clerks and the Transport and General, had agreed to pay - raising £4,970 7s 6d from a membership of 2.385 million. This was a lot to the unions but the Herald's losses would total £80,485 for the whole of 1922.

Fifty-three unions with 1.034 million members refused to contribute. Even more telling were were the 27, membership 2.007 million, who had not completed consultation. These included the National Union of Railwayman, whose leader JH Thomas had been on the committee that recommended the levy. (24)

Appealing to individual unions had failed. Now only decisive, united central action would save the Herald - a fact recognised on May 3rd in the headline "Shall "DH" Go on? To-day Our Day of Fate". Lansbury explained "The General Council will decide its future action regarding the proposal to take over responsibility and control of the paper". Closure, he said, was days away unless "the Council decides to take its courage in both hands and go boldly to the movement for cash and circulation". (25)
In fact the day of reckoning was to be postponed as the General Council agreed to pay $1,000 to keep the paper going for another week and allow a special meeting of the national committees.(26)

Thirty nine members - 16 for the Labour executive and 23 of the General Council, met six days later with RB Walker in the chair. They received a deputation of four Herald staff members who appealed for the paper to continue as a daily and offered to pay $8,000 over the next six months - around $1 per week for each of the 170 employees - provided the national committees funded the balance.

Hodges, for the Herald directors, outlined the alternatives. These were to continue as a 1d daily, to revert to 2d or to become a Sunday paper. A penny daily would lose $2000 per week - $1700 with the staff contribution. Reversion to 2d would cut losses to $800, $500 with the staff money, but benefits would take a month to arrive. Publishing on Sunday only would forfeit staff support. The subsequent three hour debate recognised the levy's failure and at Henderson's suggestion reached a decision with long-term implications for reasons dictated by short-term survival needs.

The only way out, he said, was for the national bodies to accept full responsibility for the paper's losses and make a subsidy part of their annual expenditure from affiliation fees. The Herald should be regarded as part of the movement's propaganda operation. This view was not held unanimously - the decisive resolution proposed by Pugh and seconded by Clynes was passed by 18 votes to 9, hardly overwhelming in a meeting attended by 39. This called for reversion to 2d, backed by a joint guarantee of up to $500 a week for the next six months to cover losses. The issue would be put before Labour's Annual Conference and that year's TUC.(27)

This was the decisive step in the takeover. There is no more fundamental assumption of responsibility than agreement to sign the cheques. Whatever the official date of takeover, May 9th 1922 was for practical purposes the day on which the movement took charge. The next four months up to the 1922 TUC were essentially a mopping-up process.
The Herald was predictably exultant - devoting half of its front page to a report headed "DAILY HERALD'S FUTURE NOW ASSURED: Decision of the General Council of the T.U.C and Executive Committee of the N.L.P : IMMEDIATE GUARANTEE FOR SIX MONTHS : Full Scheme for Ownership by the Labour Movement to be Submitted to Constituants of Both Bodies". The return to 2d was explained as essential to save the movement as much money as possible over the next few months - the readers share in supporting the paper, which would now become "the mouthpiece of organised Labour" - part of "A great publicity department owned, financed and controlled by the joint movement". (28)

Newspaper World reckoned that the return to 2d on 15th May "could scarcely fail to be prejudicial" in the highly competitive London daily market. The increase reversed the gains from the reduction to 1d in January - sales, stabilised between 215,000 and 230,000 in early May, fell to 180,000 by the end of the month and 160,000 a month later.(29) Outstanding management and finance issues were settled before the end of May, with a joint meeting on the 21st organising the new Board and a movement levy. An eleven-man board would consist of five TUC representatives - initially Thomas, Turner, Bowerman, Walker and Harry Gosling of the Transport and General Workers - plus three from Labour: Henderson, Hodges and Shaw and the Chairman of the Parliamentary Party (Clynes) ex-officio. Lansbury would continue as a director, and the 1919 debenture holders would have a seat once the "Daily Herald Ltd" was wound up in June and its shares sold to Victoria House. The party leader's ex-officio post would soon lapse, and Lansbury become the debenture-holders representative, but the broad pattern established when the new Board took over at the start of August with Henderson in the chair and Bowerman vice-chair was to survive through the 1920s.(30)

The levy system foreshadowed by Henderson on 9th May was also agreed on the 21st. Under this each TUC union's annual affiliation fee would be increased from 1d to 3d while the Labour Party made an annual block grant of #10,000. If backed by Congress the levy, unlike the scheme proposed in March, would be binding on all unions who could only avoid payment by disaffiliation.(31)
This was expensive for unions - Hodges noted that it would take half of the annual income of the ever-supportive Miners Federation. Some inevitably disliked the plan - the National Union of Journalists would disaffiliate, arguing that members on other papers should not be required to fund the Herald. But for most dislike of funding a newspaper was insufficient reason to withdraw from their national organisation. (32)

Attempts continued to find other funding. Throughout the 1920s the Herald saw the Co-operative movement much as an angler sees a giant fish. Frequent plays were made for its support, but to no avail. In June Henderson, Lansbury and Hodges tried again, but the Co-operators voted by a majority of two to one at their annual conference to develop their own independent daily paper instead. (33)

Labour's annual conference, in Edinburgh at the end of the month, proved more tractable. Following addresses by Lansbury and Henderson the conference endorsed their leaders' role in the de-facto takeover and pledged itself: "To use its best efforts, individual and corporate, to bring the circulation promptly up to half a million". On the last day of the conference the Herald's daily sale was below 160,000. (34)

Next issue in line was policy. A Policy Committee consisting of the chairman and the secretary of the General Council, the chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, the secretary of the Labour Party and the secretary of the joint Publicity Committee as secretary was mooted, but sank without trace. The logical explanation is that the individuals concerned, Walker, Bowerman, Henderson and Clynes, were already directors and it was easier to leave policy issues to the board as a whole. (35)

The choice of editor was a vital element in policy. Lansbury wanted to go - his determined radicalism hardly fitted the editor of an official paper, as he himself recognised: "I always said that it would be impossible for me to edit a paper acting under the orders from a committee or congress. I told Lenin that the Bolshevik doctrine of discipline was abhorrent to me, and that I could never put my mind into someone else's keeping. Therefore, now the paper was to be owned and controlled as a party organ it was time for me to hand over to someone else" (36)
This was just as well for the new proprietors. To have had to sack Lansbury would have been the worst possible start for the official paper, alienating the existing readership. His deputy Gerald Gould was also out of the running, having resigned due to ill-health. (37)

Lansbury was urging the national committees to appoint a new editor from mid July, and announced his own departure in the Herald on July 29th in terms calculated to help the new owners: "my resignation is a perfectly voluntary one and has not been suggested either directly or indirectly by anybody. I have resigned because I desire the new owners to be perfectly free to appoint who they please to take editorial charge of the paper.....and this I also want to emphasize - I do not think anybody has the least right to complain because the policy of the paper, from being unofficial, is now to become official. If the I.L.P, the Communist Party or the Fabian Society owned the paper any of these bodies would insist on control of policy". (38)

Chosen instrument of that control was Henry Hamilton Fyfe, a 53 year old Scotsman. Fyfe was a party member, but his appointment clearly shifted the Herald in the direction of the Citizen professional journalist model. Previous Herald editors had been political in their motivation, with their journalism a consequence of political purpose. Fyfe was a professional journalist of considerable fame whose politics were a consequence rather than a cause of his journalism.

Formerly editor of the Morning Advertiser and the Daily Mirror, he had spent years as special correspondent for the Daily Mail. His conversion to socialism from previously conventional views, heavily influenced by his experience as a War Correspondent, had been documented in his book "The Making Of An Optimist". (39)

The initial approach was made by Henderson, with both Lansbury and MacDonald given a say in the appointment. It was clearly settled, if not formally completed, at the end of July when Fyfe wrote to Lansbury saying that he saw the job as a call and challenge he could not ignore, although he could earn more for less effort as a freelance. He was confident the paper would succeed provided the TUC fulfilled its promises of money - but there was a warning of future problems in his comment: "I was a little amused by the attitude of several of the Directors, and a little puzzled, but not discouraged". Journalists and trade union officials are unlikely bedfellows and this relationship was to be particularly fraught. (40)
Given Fyfe's renown and Fleet Street's appetite for gossip, the secret was remarkably well kept. Not until the end of August did Newspaper World get wind of the appointment, and even then it could say nothing more definite than "Rumour is busy in Fleet Street" (41).

The final hurdle was the Trades Union Congress, meeting in Southport. As it opened on Monday 4th September, the Herald announced its return to 1d, a move pushed by Lansbury since mid July. Four months of 'temporary increase' to 2d had cost 80,000 daily sales. In September 1921 210,000 had been low enough to convince Lansbury that a return to a penny was essential. A year later he was bequeathing Fyfe a paper that had dropped in just over two years from 330,000 to a little more than 140,000. (42)

The Herald debate, disguised as a General Council resolution to amend Standing Orders and increase the levy, took place on Tuesday with Turner as proposer. Noting the advantages of acquiring a going concern he concluded "There is one big thing to remember, that it is your property now, that it was taken over by the General Council and the Labour Party some months ago after the Conference declared it should be done. It is your property now, and it is up to you to keep the only Labour paper going".

In an uneventful debate support from Turner and Hodges on the left and Sexton and Clynes from the right demonstrated the leadership consensus. But Brownlie, a left-wing Engineer, argued that the levy was unenforceable while Weston of the Shipwrights complained that an important issue was being concealed behind the standing orders device.

But the most effective display of scepticism came from the seconder of the resolution, JH Thomas. Clynes was to argue that the cost of the Herald should be weighed against its propaganda effectiveness. But Thomas, in an exposition of the "Yes, but" position demonstrated the continuing doubts about the Herald among the movement's most influential leaders: "If on the other hand we find we cannot make the "Herald" a paying proposition on its own basis, then I would not hesitate to come along and say, so far as my union is concerned "You had better stop providing the workers with something they do not want". It would be far more honest to face the fact, to say "No they do not want this, and the evidence is that we can not even get 10 per cent of them to buy their own paper". If, as I say, you could not get a circulation after twelve months, and the paper put on a self-supporting basis, I would not be a party to continuing to subsidise it."
But even with so sceptical a seconder the resolution was certain to get through. Voting just before ten to one the Congress backed the levy by 4.057 million to 916,000, following the decision by a vote of appreciation proposed by Ernest Bevin report) for Lansbury’s work for the Herald. This was carried by acclamation. (43)

Meeting after the vote the Victoria House Board formally appointed Fyfe editor in succession to Lansbury, to take over from the issue of Monday 11th September. (44)

The appointment and the debate were, unsurprisingly, front page news for the following day’s Herald, which hailed the decision with a bank of two column headlines: “Labour Plumps for the Daily Herald: Big Plans for Paper Now Owned and Controlled by the Workers: New Editor Appointed: Price Down To One Penny Next Monday: Plan for 500,000 Readers.”

The accompanying report declared“.Our immediate aim is the securing of 500,000 readers of Labour’s Own and Only Daily - We Look To You!”, while an inside page feature on the paper’s history struck a similarly robust note of optimism:”Now that the paper is placed, for the first time in its tempestuous career, on a firm financial basis as the property of the organised Labour Movement”.(45)

The main business had been done but the 1922 TUC had not done with the Herald. On the following day Fyfe was asked to address the congress, and reaffirmed the “We look to you” note struck by the paper:”We have to produce, and I think we can produce a good newspaper which will stand along with all the rest and be better than the rest, but it is no use producing the best newspaper in the world if people will not buy it. It is your pennies we want. We do not want a subsidised newspaper, but one which will pay; one which will not deplete the funds of the movement, but add to them. This is quite a possibility if everyone realises that possibility and drives it home so far as lies in their power, and if necessary make themselves a positive nuisance by talking about it. If this is done we shall go ahead. I have been the fortunate recipient of very many good wishes this morning, which have touched me deeply, but do not think I say it ungraciously when I say that good wishes are not enough”.(46)
Delegates felt that Fyfe by himself was not enough and Lansbury was summoned by acclamation to drive home the same message, concluding with an exuberant assessment of the Herald's sales potential: "There is, however, only one thing that will make this thing successful and that is if you are going to be co-operators, if you are going to stand with him, if you are going to join yourselves to us on the paper in seeing that it is bought, and that people get it day by day in their homes, to begin the day with and to talk about. In this way you may have the biggest readership in the world! Six or seven million Trade Unionists! You ought to have a circulation of 5,000,000 not 500,000." (47)

Lansbury's exuberance and his paper's enthusiasm were understandable - he had finally been relieved of the main burdens after a decade and the Herald appeared to have a guaranteed future. But, as ever, life was not to prove that simple. Past experience should have told its new owners that appeals to movement solidarity were an unreliable means of boosting circulation - and that official status was unlikely to change this. Nor would it automatically end the Herald's awesome capacity for losing money. If anyone seriously thought the paper's troubles were over, the next year was to prove them spectacularly wrong.

ENDS.
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CHAPTER SIX (p63-75)

1. NW 28.1.22
   LPEC 7.12.21, TUCGC 7.12.21. Miners Federation Proceedings 1921 op cit
   Executive 8-9.12.21 Item 9 p 529
6. Joint meeting 14.12.21 loc cit
7. NW 24.12.21
9. Report of joint sub-committee LPDH 24 loc cit
10. Henderson to Whitehead 17.1.22 LPDH 35. Cameron to Henderson 6.3.22 LPDH 68
11. Report of joint sub-committee LPDH 24 op cit. Memo from Herald GM on
    Financial Relationship TUC 789.01 loc cit
12. DH sub-committee to NEC and GC members 10.1.22 + marginal handwritten
    note re ballot LPDH 26
13. Circular to affiliated bodies 14.1.22 LPDH 32
14. DH 23, 24.1.22
15. DH directors report 17.2.22 LPDH 53
16. Report of joint sub-committee n.d LPDH 97, TUCGC 1.3.22
17. Joint sub-committee LPDH 97 op cit, Lansbury to Henderson 11.1.22 LPDH 28
    Henderson to Lansbury 12.1.22 LPDH 29. Ethel Snowden to Henderson 13.1.22
    LPDH 30
18. Lansbury to Henderson 2.3.22 LPDH 63
19. Henderson to Lansbury 3.3.22 LPDH 59. Ethel Snowden to Henderson 4.3.22
    LPDH 65
20. Tom Shaw to Henderson 7.3.22 LPDH 72.
21. TUCGC 6.3.22
22. DH 18.3.22
23. DH 12.4.22. Lansbury - Miracle op cit p 162
24. Summary of levy results to 12.5.22 LPDH 98
25. DH 3.5.22
26. TUCGC 3.5.22
27. Minutes of joint meeting 9.5.22 LPDH 90. NW 13.5.22
28. DH 10.5.22
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29. Ibid. NW 13.5.22. Herald financial history 2.6.27 loc cit.

30. TUCGC 31.5.22. Millwood and Henderson memo re winding up of DH Ltd

4.7.22 LPDH 121. Circular from Herald directors n.d (summer 1922) LPDH

119. NW 5.8.22

31. Joint Committee, LPEC, TUCGC all 21.5.22

32. Miners Federation Proceedings 1922 Annual Conference 18.7.22

p 474. NW 2.9.22. The Journalist 1922-3 seriatim

33. NW 10.6.22

34. LPRAC 1922 p 225. Financial history 2.6.27 loc cit

35. TUCGC 31.5.22

36. Lansbury - Miracle op cit p 41

37. LPEC 15.7.22

38. DH 29.7.22


41. NW 2.9.22

42. DH 4.5.9.22. LPEC 19.7.22. Herald financial history 2.6.27 loc cit

43. RPTUC 1922 p 91-7

44. DH 6.9.22

45. Ibid

46. RPTUC 1922 op cit p 316-7

47. Ibid p 317

ENDS
Construction, conformity and control: the taming of the Daily Herald 1921-30

Thesis

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For the Herald's new owners there were three priorities - survival, development and policy. For all the enthusiasm at conference, its existence over the next 15 months was to be clouded by incessant threats of closure, and as during the takeover process these short-term worries continued to exert a significant effect on longer-term strategy.

From these failures was to emerge the second priority of development - and the realisation that it was not mere political wrong-headedness that led millions of trade unionists to opt for the Express or Chronicle in preference to the paper they collectively owned. A half-million sale became the Herald's Holy Grail from the time of takeover - a larger requiring the addition of 350,000 to the rump bequeathed by Lansbury. Finding the means to get there became a significant long-term preoccupation.

Priority number three - the transformation of Lansbury's radical sheet, albeit more decorous than it had been a decade earlier - into a staider official journal - is dealt with in this chapter's section on content.

i. Crisis Renewed

Reducing the Herald's price to 1d had the same disastrous effect on its finances as it had earlier in the year. Losses in the 11 weeks to 25th November were £24,542 - an average of £2,231 a week with the paper covering only 55 per cent of expenditure. (1)

When the General Election was called in late October, Beatrice Webb recorded Lansbury's belief that the paper "could only go on to the election day". Sales, 170,000 when the election was called, reached 270,000 for the results issues but immediately dropped back to 200,000 - and the increased costs of larger election issues cancelled out the financial benefits of higher sales. (2)

The distress signal, hoisted in the issue of November 23rd, lacked the Lansbury touch. The words are not very different to those he would have used, but it lacks the personal touches with which he leavened exhortation, leaving a mix of union circulars and conference rhetoric: "The moment is critical. Only by a united and determined effort can the great and growing party of the Workers keep its one daily organ in existence to put its point of view and give news of its MPs doings; this preventing the rest of the Press misrepresenting and ignoring them. We cannot believe that our appeal will be disregarded, seeing how vital is our need". (3)
The General Council agreed to plug the financial gap while a final emergency appeal was made to the rank and file. A circular to party branches promised "All the news that papers which are insurance policies first and newspapers afterwards do not print" together with an eventual half-million sale and a Northern Edition. (4)

Lansbury and Henderson, appealing for a further 150,000 readers, gave the strong impression that the movement owed the Herald a living - a recurrent, exasperated tone in the paper's publicity: "Surely you will add your voice and energy to ours and together by word and deed declare the DAILY HERALD SHALL LIVE or Five Million Trade Unionists and Labour men and women will hang their heads in shame and declare before the world their unfitness to stand in the shoes of the heroes and prophets who made the Movement possible". (5)

They did not get the extra 150,000. But they did survive. Progress was sufficient to persuade the national committees that persistence would pay as circulation rose to 236,000 by 20th December and 260,000 at the new year. (6)

But losses stayed at £1,700 to £2,000 per week - impossibly high if the paper were to survive. A fresh sub-committee chaired by Pugh was deputed to examine the state of the paper and its future options. Reporting to a joint meeting on 24th January the committee concluded that higher circulation was the only way out of the Herald's impasse. Massive losses had already consumed most of the 1923 affiliation fees - only £6,800 remained - enough for four weeks at most. And any savings made by cutting costs would be marginal.

They estimated 350,000 as the Herald's break-even point. But getting there would be expensive. On the highly optimistic assumption that it could put on 1,000 fresh sales every day, it would still cost £60,000 to keep the Herald going to the end of August, exhausting the 1924 and most of the 1925 levies. Surviving to the end of 1924 would swallow the 1926 levy as well.

Even on these highly optimistic projections, the movement would have to "Face the proposition that to satisfactorily establish a national daily Labour paper must involve a subsidy for some few years at least". Unions should be asked to pledge their 1924-5 levy now, where possible backed by loans, and the movement's machiney should be deployed in pursuit of 150,000 extra sales in the next four months. (7)
Chapter Seven: Fight for Survival : Sep 1922 to Nov 1923 Page Seventy Eight

The national committees mulled over these conclusions for several hours on 25th January :
"determined that the thought of letting the paper close could not be entertained", in the Herald's words. And the consequence was yet another joint committee, but this time with two significant differences.

Previous Herald sub-committees had been concerned with short-term issues of survival. But this one met in a context formed by the Pugh report's indication that the status quo was not an option. It would attempt to address the short-term problem through a longer-term strategy aimed at breaking the cycle of struggle and crisis management. The second difference was in its membership. The normal leadership repertory company was assembled under Pugh's chairmanship - including Lansbury, Tillett, Williams, Henderson, Cameron, Smillie and Bowerman. But they were supplemented by two members of the movement with extensive newspaper experience. Norman Angell, best known for his antiwar polemic The Great Illusion was formerly manager of the Continental Daily Mail. Clifford Allen, treasurer and soon-to-be chairman of the Independent Labour Party, had been general manager of the Daily Citizen and, briefly in 1920, secretary of the Herald. Angell was to be a significant influence on the sub-committee, Allen on the Herald for the remainder of the 1920s.(8)

And their expertise introduced new elements into analysis of the Herald's problems. The professional activists who ran the paper had found the phenomenon of trade unionists buying other papers inexplicable. Allen and Angell recognised this as a natural response to those papers superior news and features service plus insurance. If the Herald could match their competitors, the argument ran, then it would win the readers.

They argued for a twelve page paper comparable to their competitors possibly backed by a "simple and not very extravagant" insurance scheme. Insurance was turned down unanimously by the Board. But the increased size was accepted alongside Norman Angell's revolutionary Pledge Scheme, which aimed to mobilise the Labour movement's mass following.
Under this readers would "Pledge to Take the Labour Daily First" - not a promise necessarily to take the Herald or to eschew capitalist papers, but simply promising that when they took a paper they would buy the Herald before any other. Angell and his colleagues on the circulation sub-group believed that by distributing pledge cards to every trade unionist they could, given the other improvements proposed, secure two million promises and a self-supporting daily sale of a quarter that. They argued: "It is of course a method and a field of advertising which is closed to competitors. This is the one point at which the "Herald" can not be met: which competitors can not follow".

A sub-committee on costs endorsed Lansbury's view that editorial savings could only be made at the expense of the paper's quality - a self-defeating option in view of the circulation plans. Allen and Smillie, working on capital development, devised a plan for unions to pay their affiliation fees five years in advance, providing a £150,000 capital fund and freeing the paper from its recurrent crises. The joint committee's plans involved the expenditure of just under £120,000 over the next year, and a target of taking circulation to around 450,000 - where advertising rates could be raised high enough to wipe out the operating deficit (9).

The Herald headlined the national committees' acceptance of these plans "Labour's Own Newspaper: Great Forward Step". Five-year promises had already been received from the NUR and the Railway Clerks. By the end of March the joint committee felt sufficiently confident that their aims had been accomplished to adjourn sine die. (10)

But Angell, Allen and Lansbury found themselves in mid April having to argue against a school of thought who argued that circulation had reached 275,000 with the existing paper - making further expenditure possibly superfluous. Their argument was that the pledge scheme sold the paper to trade unionists as equal to competitors "As a mere organ of news and entertainment apart from its politics" - an eight page paper could not do this. A six month postponement would mean spending £30-40,000 of the money raised simply to maintain the old Herald and, they warned "Once expectations like these now raised have been let down, even by postponement, it is extremely difficult again to rise to the previous plans". (11)
They won the argument, and on 18th April the Herald announced the increase to 12 pages from May Day. On the 19th readers were promised, in a reflection of the Allen-Angell strategy: “It will appeal to everybody, whether they are interested in the politics of the Labour Movement or not: and while it will deal very fully with politics its first cause will be to see that the Herald is a complete newspaper, giving each day fully the history of yesterday”. (12)

The new expanded paper duly appeared on May 1st. The following day's issue headlined “Instant Success of Twelve Pages” over a story opening “The Herald offers its apologies this morning for those who yesterday found themselves unable to buy the 12 page paper”.

Demand, it claimed, had been close to 400,000. The Herald boasted: “Yesterday will be looked back upon as a milestone in the history of Labour organisation - the May Day on which it became evident that the Trade Unions and Labour Party successfully run a fully-equipped modern newspaper”. (13)

As has already been noted, the Herald had something of a history of hailing false dawns - and this was to be yet another in a growing list.

Any strategy for the Herald would depend to a large extent on the success or failure of Fyfe as editor in broadening its appeal compared to the Lansbury model and to examine this it is necessary to go back to his appointment on 11th September 1922.

How Fyfe was received by the staff depends on who you believe. His own account suggests an enthusiastic reception, with the News Editor saying: “We're sick and tired and having people over us who don't know their own minds. We want somebody who will say yes, and stick to it.” (14)

Within three months Newspaper World was recording: “Mr Fyfe's editorship has brought the happiest results among the staff, and he is regarded by them with full confidence and loyalty”. (15)
Chapter Seven: Fight for Survival: Sep 1922 to Nov 1923 Page Eighty One

But the memories of Raymond Postgate, Lansbury's son-in-law, Herald sub-editor and archetypal activist Labour journalist - at this time "a thorough-going Communist" - are very different. He recalled: "The changes in tone, in make-up and in policy introduced by Mr Fyfe were not to the liking of the staff that Lansbury had trained. Discontent was particularly bitter in the journalists' chapel and though Lansbury, with strict loyalty, refused to be brought in, in his heart he endorsed the criticisms" (16)

Neither is exactly a detached witness. But it is likely that there would have been tension between Lansbury-schooled activists and the politicised professional journalist brought in to reform them. And even if his staff held Fyfe in high regard, we have his own word that this was not reciprocated: "Except for three or four it was a poor staff Lansbury handed me. He had employed men, I was assured, out of pity for them, because they could not get employment anywhere else! Yet that staff did wonders." (17)

The wonder he was attempting to accomplish was the transformation of a daily newspaper - a formidable task. He could insist on and supervise alterations to copy where he felt it necessary. But daily newspapers are by their nature put together in a rush by people at full stretch. This has two implications for the Herald in this period. First that Lansbury-ingrained routine and habit were likely to reassert themselves under pressure and secondly that any wholesale orders to rewrite or recast would have meant late editions and missed trains to Wales, the Midlands, the North and Scotland. Change was inevitably gradual.

The most important area over which he could exert immediate control was the leader column. In a paper that was avowedly an organ of opinion, this was of particular importance as its authorised, official voice. Fyfe demonstrated rapidly that he would treat it in a different way to the Lansbury/Gould regime.

The column was moved from page four to the left-hand side of the front page and labelled "From the Worker's Point of View" - in line with the class identity chosen by the new Herald, where the "Things That Matter" column was retitled "With the Workers" and publicity material said "You want the point of view of the worker? The Daily Herald voices it". (18)
The incontestably middle class Fyfe was an unlikely conduit for any worker’s point of view and the new title was to last only until the May 1st relaunch. But the change in subject matter was more lasting and reflected the belief that the paper’s appeal must be broadened away from the purely political. (19)

Lansbury’s subjects had almost invariably been political, and Fyfe continued a heavy political emphasis, but with a leavening of lighter subjects. A pattern of one serious political leader balanced by one on a lighter theme became a regular feature.

On 23rd November - when the choice of second lead might in the past have been comment on either the Irish Civil War, the Lausanne conference or the march of the unemployed reaching London - Fyfe opted instead to protest at a 10/- fine imposed on a boy for shouting “Beaver” in the street. (20)

Four days later he was noting that a barber had arranged for wireless concerts for his customers to listen to and was speculating that soon they would want to dictate letters and eat and drink while being shaved. (21)

Leaders were not only lighter, but shorter - a tendency noted censoriously by Newspaper World critic Scrutator who argued “There were much better leaders in the old days....altogether inadequate in length and outlook for a paper like the Herald, which should carry the utmost possible weight in this department”. (22)

Style also changed. In place of Lansbury’s excitably exhortatory rhetoric Fyfe’s leaders were measured, detached and a trifle didactic in approach - arguably reflecting a personality that once led an exasperated Walter Citrine to remark, to Fyfe’s apparent amusement: “You’re not advanced, you’re remote”. (23)

A characteristic effort was a leader attacking France’s hard-line policy on German war reperations - its mannered conclusion, speaking at rather than to the reader in sharp contrast to Lansbury’s style. The joke at the expense of the pro-French Daily Mail might have occurred to Lansbury, but the old internationalist would hardly have used the epithet ‘anti-British’ or quoted undeniably capitalist authorities in support of his arguments.
"All efforts to prove that Germany has really plenty of money, and the French are right to go in and get it, collapse as soon as they are examined. All serious financial and economic authorities now know that Germany has not the power to pay. The Association of British Chambers of Commerce said so plainly last week. Lloyds Bank, in its current monthly circular, rubs it in. Yet many credulous people are still deluded by the anti-British propaganda of the London edition of the Paris Daily Mail.

"Ha! You begin to see the light?".(24)

Policy was much more deferential to the Labour leadership. The former policy of steering between extremism and reformism was wrenched sharply towards one of backing for reformism when a leader defended the party programme against Communist Robin Page Arnot - describing his criticisms as "hasty" and arguing that Labour need not be "Anxious about its moderation. There is little chance of that happening as long as the present spirit of our Parliament keeps up".(25)

Party leaders, in particular Ramsay MacDonald, were flattered and complimented - a January comment on the Ruhr crisis including the line "As our leader Ramsay MacDonald said so admirably at yesterday's ILP demonstration in Glasgow".(26)

Postgate noted acidly that another leader in praise of MacDonald was accompanied by a second comment on the craving of actors for applause "without apparent irony".(27)

iii. Content - Politics

Publicity for the Herald emphasised that the paper would offer both a political and a general appeal to its readers - and there was no question that the political element remained central. Too central in the eye of one distinguished critic - AG Gardiner, whose 17 years as editor of the Liberal Daily News gave him some authority when commenting on the problems of combining a political line with a pitch for the mass-market :"The carpenter, the cotton operative and the shipwright buy a daily newspaper to be interested and entertained and not primarily for the purposes of propaganda...this elementary consideration has, I think been ignored".(28)
An emphasis on propaganda was inevitable during the 1922 General Election, which happened only two months after the takeover. But elements in coverage showed the Herald shifting from previous traditions. The paper showed itself as an enthusiastic follower of the party leadership, prepared to bestow its praise on a wider range of Labour figures than previously. Its blanket endorsement of the party leadership encompassed not only established favourites like Lansbury and the Bradford IL Per Jowett, but old adversaries like Clynes, Snowden, Thomas and MacDonald - emphasising the claim to be the paper of the whole of the movement and not just of the left.

They were described as "Known in every part of the country, men who have justified the right to lead. They have been through the difficulties and dangers with which the mass of workers have been faced in their homes and at their work. They understand what it means to be out of work, to be badly housed, to be uncertain about keeping a job and about bringing home enough money every week to feed and clothe children". (29)

Labour policies received similarly warm endorsement - with a particular focus on the "Capital Levy" on personal fortunes, whose purpose was to pay off the war debt. It devoted considerable space and ingenuity to explaining the concept - fulfilling both a propagandist role and that of provider of ammunition to the canvasser and party speaker. A leader on the subject clearly fitted in with the party strategy for the 1920s of proving that it was a fit, safe choice for government - distanced from wild-eyed Bolshevism and, by implication, from the Herald's old affiliations. The strategy of seeking to reassure the middle-classes is unlikely to have been used by the old Herald: "Only those will be affected who earn more than #5,000. Up to #20,000 the contribution will be small and the gain from lowered income tax will be considerable. It is those who boast a vast superfluity of wealth, a great deal of it land wealth, who will bear the burden of the Capital Levy". (30)

After the election it provided further evidence of the shift towards the right - in the leader columns at least - when the new parliamentary party gathered to elect its leader. The Herald leader called for a unanimous election to the leadership: "Any contest, any pressure of competing claims, would not only give the enemy cause to exult: it might lead to an unfortunate fissure in the party itself". (31)
This of course named no names - but could only be taken as an endorsement of the status quo, represented by JR Clynes. A front-page story on Labour's recognition as the official opposition, linked with Clynes' name, provided reinforcement. But the Herald must have known that Ramsay MacDonald, restored to Parliament after a four-year absence, was planning to run as, in effect, the candidate of the left. (32)

MacDonald won by 64 votes to 57. This was no simple case of backing the wrong horse. MacDonald, David Marquand records, saw the leader as an attempt to block his leadership bid and never forgave the paper. Relations with the party's dominant figure for the rest of the 1920s were to be characterised by unease, tetchiness and distrust. (33)

But the party leader could hardly complain about either the extent or the tone of the paper's parliamentary coverage. As has been noted the Herald quoted its reporting of Labour MPs as one of its most important activities - and this emphasis, much more a reflection of former Citizen priorities than those of the old Herald, was among most striking manifestations of the new regime. Postgate, ever the upholder of the old verities, commented that parliamentary coverage now ran at two to three times previous levels - a notable surge even allowing for the much greater size and effectiveness of the Parliamentary Party after the 1922 election. On occasions such as the opening of the new session in February 1923 Parliament led the front and took the whole of page two. (34)

A heavy parliamentary emphasis also reflected the reporting priorities of the local Labour press. The extent to which the Herald continued to perceive its readership as primarily interested in politics was reflected in a clear belief that the weight of coverage was a winner. (35)

Readers, it was clearly believed, wanted heavy parliamentary coverage. That this level of attention might be a drawback rather than an asset in circulation-pulling does not appear to have occurred to the Herald. This was illustrated as it reported the February opening session in massive detail, with particular attention to the main Labour speeches. In the following day's issue it drew attention to the less extensive coverage provided by other papers - arguing "The capitalist press itself provided an effective illustration of the importance of the "DAILY HERALD".
Here are the numbers of words given by the London penny morning papers to Labour MPs who took part in the House of Commons debate on Tuesday -

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<td>232</td>
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<td>Tom Shaw</td>
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<td>G Lansbury</td>
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<td>J Wheatley</td>
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<td>Wm Adamson</td>
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<td>J Jones</td>
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Other papers made no reference at all to speeches by David Kirkwood, James Maxton, Buchanan, Neil Maclean, Campbell Stephen, Muir and Johnston.(36)

It is also worth noting that old loyalties among some reporters were still visible in the length accorded individual Labour figures - with Lansbury and another left-winger Wheatley given more space than anyone other than MacDonald and a handful of the radical Clydesiders not touched by any other paper also getting coverage.

But most of the Herald's parliamentary coverage was in tone as well as bulk the part of the paper, leaders excepted, most clearly affected by the official role. Parliamentary reporter SV Bracher in particular struck a note of loyal followership, ever-anxious to portray Labour and its leaders as masters of the House - one characteristic comment was that "No previous opposition so short in numbers has in so short a time attained so great an influence".(37)

His long-running series of profiles of MPs painted glowing pictures of the capabilities and dedication of the parliamentary party under headlines such as "A Teacher Who Has Suffered For His Principles" (Morgan Jones - Caerphilly), "A Great Trade Union Administrator" (John Hodge - Gorton) and "A Humourist Who Is Profoundly Serious At Heart" (Jack Jones - Silvertown)(38)
MacDonald's efforts were described in prose that was little short of idolatrous: "The House is his true sphere... was Mr MacDonald made for Parliament, I asked, or was Parliament for Mr MacDonald?". His first speech on returning to the House earned the description: "In that hour, the dull hard-faced House of the preceding four years was forgotten - the very air was laden with the high traditions of the past and buoyed with the higher hopes of the future. (39)

Philip Snowden, like MacDonald a target of the Herald's in its rampaging pre-war style, was now seen delivering "One of the most powerful speeches that even he has delivered to the house... his marshalling of facts and presentation of argument were the work of a master mind, and he revealed also his great gift of touching human hearts to pity for the dispossessed common people". (40)

The Herald reader was left in no doubt that Labour had the best of all possible leaderships. J.R. Clynes, with other notables, was asked by Strand magazine to name the seven wonders of Britain. Other respondents produced a predictable list of architectural and scenic marvels - Clynes opted for sights illustrating the condition of Britain such as the East End, the Mansion and grounds of an industrial magnate and the Woolwich Arsenal.

The Herald commented: "He is not by any means insensitive to the charm of landscapes, he has a keen appreciation of noble buildings. But he sees too clearly into the state of his country and fellow countrymen to be satisfied to say "The most wonderful things are castles or cathedrals".

"No doubt Mr Clynes will be accused, as we often are, of calling attention to matters that require mending instead of passing round the soothing syrup of self-satisfaction. But if it is important, as we believe it is, to make people think, then he has done a great service by forcing reflection upon the prosperous, comfortable and mostly self-centred folk who read the shilling magazines. That is the work of a real leader, boldly to keep the end he seeks always fully in the national view". (41)
iv Content - Industrial

Just as much innovations for the Herald as fulsome praise for moderate leaders who had supported the war were aspects of its industrial coverage. This continued to be extensive. Surveys later in the 1920s were to show clearly that the balance of Herald coverage was different to that of the other papers, and nowhere was this disparity greater than on industrial news which continued to fill page six and regularly spill over on to the general news pages. (42)

As with political reporting there are clear indications that reporters still had some opportunities to go their own way - Fyfe could not dictate any word in the paper. Thus coverage of unemployed marchers to London not only displayed an enthusiasm that went rather beyond the TUCs wariness of the NUWM under the headline "Stirring Scene at Hyde Park Demonstration", but drew particular attention to the part played by their Communist leader "Cheer followed cheer as the marchers turned from Edgware Road into the Park and congratulations and good wishes were shouted to Mr Wal Hannington, who headed the contingent" (43)

But the influence of official status could be clearly seen in the weekly column on matters written by Vivian Brodzky - singled out by Postgate as "Examples of the results of being confined to innocuous platitudes" - and above all in coverage of the unofficial Dockers Strike in the summer of 1923." (44)

There can be little doubt that the old Herald would have backed the strikers without reservation as low-paid workers - many from Lansbury's own district where son Edgar as chair of the local Guardians would point proudly to his role in ensuring that strikers and their families were properly fed during the dispute - contesting a wage-cut. That the strike was unofficial and in breach of a union agreement would not have concerned them - the slogan "Agreements Made Under Coercion Are Morally Binding" continued to have resonance and the essential justice of the strikers cause would have overridden other considerations. Cowling noted that Lansbury argued from a moral position in which "The claims of flesh and blood came before those of money". (45)
But as the part-property of the TUC the new Herald's position was different. The cut was being made under an agreement concluded by the Transport and General Workers Union - and such agreements were, for pragmatic reasons, regarded as sacrosanct by the leaders of organised Labour who now controlled the Herald. There were also close connections with the Transport and General - Bevin was general secretary, director Harry Gosling president and Tillett was also among the leadership.(46)

The consequence was to be a clear struggle between the paper's heart and head. Emotionally it was drawn to the dockers' side - reporting throughout was to stress their courage and determination as in Vivian Brodzky's description of "The solemn ceremony of 1,500 dock strikers stand(ing) beneath the hot sun with bared heads, in respect for Tid Marsh, a picket who had been killed by a motor lorry.

"It was impressive too, as each man said "and the miners too", referring to the recent mine disasters at Maltby and in Scotland".(47)

This was seen not only in reporting, but in leaders. The outbreak of the strike was greeted by a leader juxtaposing the dockers' lives with pictures from Henley Regatta: "What a fuss about a shilling!" was depicted as the cry of the Thoroughly Comfortable - a significant abstract figure in the Herald's demonology of the time. The same leader was sceptical about the Board of Trade figures on which the cut had been based.(48)

As the breach grew between the T and G and the strikers, following Bevin's warning that they were playing the employers' game, the Herald resorted to BBC-style even-handedness. The scrupulously equal length of the front-page columns in which Gosling and the strikers stated their cases on 7th July initiated a formula followed wherever possible over the next eight weeks.(49)

But if the Herald's heart was with the rank and file, its head increasingly followed the officials. It could not yet fairly be said, as Holton said of the Citizen, that it automatically upheld the authority of union leaders against spontaneous action by the rank-and-file. It was still clearly torn in the other direction. But the move towards the Citizen position is still clear. (50)
A warning of this was seen in the same leader that made the Henley comparison and complained about the Board of Trade figures: "We do not claim that the dockers are acting wisely. They would do better to face the situation calmly and follow men whom they have chosen to negotiate for them". (51)

Two days later a leader titled "Don't Sell The Pass" followed through the argument started on 5th July to its logical conclusion. With its accusations of "selling the pass" and the statement that "to understand all is not to excuse all", it marks a decisive step in the remaking of the Herald - effectively burying the paper's reputation as the organ of the militants, and as such merits quotation at length.

It started "What would be said of members of a Trade Union who refused to down tools when their union proclaimed a strike?"

"They would be called renegades, traitors to the workers cause, short-sighted and stiff-necked obstacles in the struggle for better conditions of life.

"What the union decides is held in such a case to be binding upon all its members..."

"But now let us put the position the other way around. When a Union executive decides there shall be no strike, when it calls for work as usual, are not all the members equally bound to show a united front?"

"It is all very well to shout, as a strike sheet does "To hell with all agreements!" But what does that really mean?"

It really means:

To hell with Trade Unions!
To hell with the Labour Movement!
To hell with the workers chance of better wages, more leisure,
decent homes, decent opportunities for children!
To hell with the Co-operative Commonwealth which is so nearly within our reach!

"At this moment to break up the united front would be to sell the pass and let the enemy overwhelm us to our utter confusion and defeat".
Chapter Seven: Fight for Survival: Sep 1922 to Nov 1923 Page Ninety One

The leader concluded: "We have said that we have the greatest sympathy with the dockers. We can understand their behaviour. But to understand all is not to pardon all when the interests of millions of other people are liable to be very grievously injured". (52)

As might have been expected the leader's impact on its readers was profound - and "a large number of letters" were received. Some supported the leader, but these were a small minority. Where serious controversy blew up over items in the Herald Fyfe's clear policy was to withdraw correspondence from the letters column and instead run collections letters on the news pages as news in their own right. In this particular exchange of opinions the overwhelming majority of opinions were hostile to the paper.

C Abbott of Walworth - described waspishly by the Herald as " A worker who promises to help reduce by one the circulation of the workers' only daily spokesman" argued:"The history of capitalism is a history of blood and murder and that your duty in the class struggle is the battle cry "The workers are right", no matter what agreement is made. I have been a reader of the Daily Herald since its inception but can now see that it stands for Capitalism and not for Socialism". (53)

GH Richards, from that unlikely centre of revolutionary fervour Bridgnorth, Shropshire, stated that he gloried in the dockers revolt, accusing union officials of being reactionary and the Herald of being "more and more the mouthpiece of reactionary officialdom". (54)

AJ Horton of Kings Heath echoed the Herald's prewar spirit when he argued that argued that all agreements were slavery under economic pressure, while G Shidle, Secretary of Stafford Trades Council and Labour Party denounced ineffective leaders and called for the attitude of mind adopted by Labour's opponents: "My class right or wrong". (55)

These reactions can hardly have come as a surprise. The Herald position was restated in a leader. But Fyfe was angered when a striker, A Gartley of Bow, wrote deriding the new circulation drive, and claiming that the Herald had failed to report the strikers' case. "I thought we would get every assistance from our own daily paper, but find I am most mistaken. We are only handed our "Dope" and have to appeal to the capitalist press to publish our cause. And then you appeal for a larger circulation! How can you expect to get this when you are not fair to my class, that supports the paper. In future I shall not take the Herald as I have lost faith in it".
Chapter Seven: Fight for Survival: Sep 1922 to Nov 1923 Page Ninety Two

There was justice in the paper’s retort: “What Mr Gartley says about our reports is simply not true. The Daily Herald has made every endeavour to get the news and give it fairly; and it has given more real news about the dispute than has any other paper”. (56)

The Herald was on strong ground. It chronicled every twist - the TGWU conference vote sympathising with the dockers but reaffirming agreements on 9th July, the election of a new unofficial London committee when the men rejected a recommended return to work on 11th July and the drift back elsewhere leaving London on its own by the start of August. (57)

In the last weeks of the dispute one of Brodzky’s reports from the London docks showed the extent of many strikers anger with a paper on whose support they had clearly counted. An earlier reference to Lansbury’s name being received with cheers reinforced the point: “I was quickly recognised as a Daily Herald representative and a strong attack on the policy of the paper in connection with the strike was made, and received with applause”, he reported on one occasion” (58)

The decision to return on 21st August, accompanied by the creation of a new union outside the TGWU for the lightermen and stevedores, must have come as a considerable relief to all at the Herald. As a signal to the movement’s rank and file of their new relationship with the paper, the dispute could hardly have been bettered. (59)

v. Content: Foreign

Foreign coverage also provided a considerable surprise in relatively favourable coverage of Mussolini’s successful coup in Italy. This took the form of a signed article by Fyfe. Rather than evidence of Fascist sympathies - this piece represented a brief aberration rather than long-term policy - it indicated that Fyfe saw himself as an independent operator with a right to his own views rather than as a passive servant of the movement. Coming within two months of his appointment, it was a warning to the leadership that he would not automatically be amenable to movement discipline.

The Herald had spent the immediate postwar years denouncing Mussolini’s tactics as “White Terror”. It had given extensive coverage to Italy and compared the Fascists with the Black and Tans in Ireland - a potent criticism given the paper’s Irish policy. (60)
Fyfe acknowledged their roots in the terrorising of Socialists and Communists. Yet he could still say: "They have lately shown a disposition to combine with some sections of the Italian workers, and it is possible that they may show themselves in the future to be more open-minded and forward-looking than they have seemed to be hitherto.

Of Mussolini he said: "It is impossible not to feel a certain amount of admiration for this man who has organised what he calls a bloodless revolution, even though the aims of it appear to be entirely opposed to those which the workers of this country set before them". As a final shock he equated Fascism with Bolshevism: "Unfortunately they have so far relied upon exactly the same weapons as those whose doctrines they came into being to oppose. The Bolsheviks tried to create a new world by violence, and the Fascisti have relied just as much upon that broken reed which always pierces the hand of him who attempts to use it. Nothing lasting, nothing useful, is achieved by violence". (61)

The Herald readership either treated this as an elaborate hoax or were distracted by the General Election as there were no critical letters - or at least none were published. When Mussolini visited Britain in December his apparent dynamism was contrasted with Prime Minister Bonar Law's somnolence. The headline reported "Signor Mussolini Disturbs Mr Law's Tranquillity: Getting Down To Realities", while the report noted that Mussolini "Believes in and practices Direct Action. He brought the conference at once down to realities". (62)

But Fyfe's line clearly wasn't supported by Ewer who produced an end of year front-page feature talking of the spread of Mussolini-like tactics to Hungary under the headline "Europe in Danger of Armed White Terror". (63)

And some movement was clear in January when a leader laid into the Times for supporting Fascism at the same time as it condemned Bolshevism - the Herald continuing to equate the two as equally undesirable creeds. It appears to have taken the Italian occupation of Corfu in the late summer of 1923 to persuade Fyfe that no good was to be expected of Fascism. (64)

The main theme in the rest of international coverage was reflected in the punning observation made by Way of the World in August 1923 "Whatever other news there may be, the Ruhr we have with us always". (65)
The Franco-Belgian occupation dominated the front page in the first two months of 1923. The French were denounced consistently as aggressive militarists, and a significant theme that would run through the 1920s was introduced in a leader calling for League of Nations sanctions: "Now or Never". Support for the League of Nations was conditional - it would have to prove itself a force in its own right rather than the sum of its capitalist government parts: "Now is the time for the League of Nations to show whether it has any life of its own or is merely an instrument in the hands of men who are either: like M Poincare, driving Britain to ruin, or like Mr Bonar Law, tranquilly looking on....

"There are articles in the Covenant which contemplate the arising of just such circumstances as those with which we are faced now. Let the League act now upon these, or be forever regarded as a sham" (66)

Almost as great a break with Herald traditions as the Mussolini article - and much more far-reaching - was Fyfe’s intended approach to news. The previous news style had been a mix of reporting and commentary, with stories interspersed with comment. The new owners were naturally keen to see the flow of leftist opinion which had characterised the Herald’s news columns stemmed, and on his first day of office the new editor issued an order that comment should be excluded from news stories and headlines. (67)

An event such as the Dockers Strike showed the paper’s ability to fulfil this requirement in news reporting. But Fyfe could not check every story in the paper, and as he was to concede in answer to directors’ criticisms in 1925: "Habits are difficult to break and this was the habit of the Herald for a long time". (68)

The old ironic tone broke through on occasion. When Lloyd George incautiously said he was a "poor man" subsisting on #40 per week the front page story headlined "Ex-Premier’s Pitiful Flight" referred to a "truly pitiful cry" and a "heartrending yet dignified protest". (69)
It is easier for an editor to have an impact on story selection than on style - a decision on which should be run, and how great their prominence should be is less time-consuming than checking or writing them. Fyfe's impact on story selection was less dramatic than might have been expected - the criterion for lead item on the front page continued to be political importance rather than any commercial human interest-led conception of newsworthiness, the main shift in emphasis from the industrial-political to the party-political rather than from the political to the general.

But there was a small shift away from the exclusively political emphasis of the Lansbury years. Where the spectacular murder trials of the old regime's last years failed to make the lead slot, Fyfe devoted a series of splashes to the trial of Edith Thompson and her lover Frederick Bywater, tried and executed for the murder in Ilford of Edith's husband - a heavy emphasis which clearly irritated Postgate. (70)

Fyfe was still however some way from imitating the news values of his commercial competitors. The story was not carried as pure human interest, but as one with a clear political implication - that capital punishment was a barbarous punishment and should be abolished. The trial merited several front-page leads, but it was the execution of Mrs Thompson on 9th January that drew the heaviest and most pointed coverage. A huge front-page banner headline both told the story and emphasised a strong editorial line:

"Shall Not This End Capital Punishment?"

Scenes of Horror and Shame

Woman Carried
To Scaffold
Pitiful Condition Of
Mrs Thompson
Report of Screams"
A leader drove home the political message: "The whole case for capital punishment rests upon bad psychology and false assumptions. A Bill will be introduced next session to abolish it. We hope the Labour Party will give it vigorous support"(71)

A letter from MacDonald criticising the executions had already been carried, and a "heavy postbag" over the next few days confirmed that the readers agreed with the Herald's standpoint.(72)

But resistance to more conventional news values remained strong even under Fyfe. In the early months of 1923 the salacious details of the Russell divorce were heavily covered most commercial dailies. The Herald did not simply diverge from their judgment. It made a virtue of divergence, showing that it still regarded itself as very different from the rest of the press.

When the presiding judge criticised the detail with which other papers had covered the case, it gave his comments front page prominence and added as a footnote "The Daily Herald has not printed, and will not print, the sordid details of such cases".(73)

If Fyfe did relatively little to encourage the conventional human interest story, he was more interested in scientific and technological progress. This also had a political dimension. To the Herald Labour was a force for modernisation against the "old parties". This self-image linked with traditional liberal rationalist views - an important element in British Socialism's inheritance from its liberal roots - in supporting scientific progress as a means of improving man and his lot, though with a sharp eye to the potential destructive and warlike uses of any advance.

Advances in flight were to be a particular focus for these interests throughout the 1920s - and the tempering of enthusiasm with wariness was seen in February 1923 when director of Civil Aviation Sir Sefton Brancker talked of the possibility of flights to New York in 12 hours at the same time as Air Minister Sir Samuel Hoare asserted the need to strengthen Britain's air defences; "Shall our Conquest of the Air Bring War and Doom or Peace and Friendship", asked the lower bank of headlines.(74)

More straightforward enthusiasm was on display exactly six months later when LL Carter's new British air speed record of 220 mph was the dominant story, complete with a large picture, at a time when the Docks Strike was still going strongly.(75)
By contrast changes in the book pages were more of presentation than content, with the introduction of several regular features making the page slightly more approachable. Like science and technology news Herald arts coverage drew on the high-minded liberal enlightenment tradition - high arts as much as science was emphasised in the belief that they represented progress towards the perfectibility of man. The sole glance in the direction of populism was a half-column feature called "The Pick of the Shelf", carrying five or six one or two paragraph reviews each week. (76)

The other new features were both aimed at the serious self-educated reader, with the Herald literary staff reflecting HG Wells' belief that: "No other public is in such urgent need of a good account of books published and of the current discussion of ideas. The readers of the Daily Herald are the intellectual cream of our population, a bookbuying public". (77)

The "For the Workers Bookshelf" series carried serious political works such as a reissue of Fabian Essays and Political Finance by Emile Burns. A second regular feature "Books We All Pretend To Have Read" had some reasonably predictable entries - David Copperfield and The Bible - where the description "A free translation by Jacobean clergymen of a Greek text of doubtful authenticity and of multiple authorship. The Bible is as divinely inspired as Shakespeare, or Milton or Anatole France" - raised fierce controversy and a heavy mailbag. But it has to be questioned how many Daily Herald readers were really given to claiming that they had read Plato's Republic. (78)

Wells complained that the page produced: "Review after review of the work of little poetlets of whom nobody wants to hear" - and both poetry and literary criticism were heavily represented. On consecutive weeks in February former deputy editor Gerald Gould reviewed: "English Critical Essays of the Sixteenth, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" and new volumes of literary criticism by Edward Shanks, "One of the best of the younger critics" and novelist Maurice Hewlett. (79)
While the traditions of high literacy established in the Lansbury period were maintained, another could not be - that of having a high-class cartoonist. While Lance Mattison provided a regular sporting cartoon and on occasion joined Gadfly to illustrate one of his satirical forays into the idiosyncracies of British life, the political cartoons used in the late Lansbury period were mostly taken from the continental left-wing press.

Exactly why this should have been is not clear - although one possibility is that the Herald could not afford a first-class cartoonist as they were becoming distinctly expensive. By 1928 Low of the Evening Standard would be on a reported £4,500 per year - four and a half times the pay of the Herald editor. (80)

This gap was to be filled to some extent from early 1923 by the arrival of the Henry Dubb strip-cartoon. The central character was not original to the Herald, but the creation of the Call, a New York Socialist paper, and in Angus MacIntyre's words the most forceful expression of "The realisation that rationality alone would not convert workers into Socialists". (81)

Henry was the visual doppelganger to the hapless painters of The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, a realisation of the passive consumers of Harmsworth rubbish derided by Cameron in 1920. Eden and Cedar Paul termed him "the good working man" of capitalist imagination, one with no thought of his own rights, always willing to create surplus value for the exploiter, the unclassconscious proletarian". It would be fairer to see him as the frustrated activists' image of his apolitical workmate. It would be easy to see him as the Herald's view of his readership - in fact he is its view of the people who didn't read it, but should have done. (82)

He was an established stock figure in the 1920s - when Gadfly and Way of the World invoked him as an imagined listener to their comments they were reflecting the usage of figures such as Bernard Shaw and RH Tawney. (83)

His appearance was established even before he had a name in the Herald - a first anonymous appearance on 26th January 1923 showed him with cloth-cap, droopy moustache, check jacket, painful thinness and the unease of the perpetual supplicant. (84)
The original American version frequently showed "a neatly dressed socialist haranguing the slovenly Henry Dubb in terms of strictest orthodoxy" - the Ragged Trousered Philanthropists in visual form. The Herald's version's interlocutor was more often a stock capitalist figure or a politician and Henry appears as a hapless everyman, trusting, honest, decent and powerless in the face of mistreatment by rulers, employers and betters. Not inevitably submissive - in his first named appearance on 20th January he flattened an MP complaining about the "excessive" demands of hunger marchers - but more often than not outmanoevred through his own naive good nature.(85)

Thus he is bilked by "George and Law" of his savings to invest in the war in Mesopotamia, returning with his son - also clad in cloth cap and check jacket - to find that the only return on his money is a few coins marked "Dole" while his son says: "Come Along Daddy, I'm Hungry".(86)

On budget day he is seen wearing a barrel as Chancellor Stanley Baldwin runs away down "Budget Street" to give his ill-gotten gains to deserving cases like industrialists and landowners. Attempting to celebrate the Royal Wedding he finds the celebrations either ticket-only or too expensive and ends up sitting at home with a cup of tea and candle on the table.(87)

Happy to be taken into his employer's confidence as the magnate - typically fat and complacent - outlines plans for a better future he suddenly discovers that his part will be longer hours and lower wages.(88)

The argument that he is an activist's image of passivity rather than the Paul's creation of capitalist imagination is shown in the way that the Herald used him as a symbol for frustration at working class refusal to take the paper - as MacIntyre puts it he "Consoled the elect in their conviction that they were right and the audience manifestly dim-witted".(89)

This was expressed in a pledge campaign advertisement using an imagined, extremely stilted, conversation at a union branch meeting concluding with the words: "I notice our brother Henry Dubb is not present - We will pay him a special visit. He is injuring us all by giving preference to the newspapers run by our opponents."(90)
In August Henry was shown enjoying his capitalist paper in times of prosperity, then in harder times having his wages cut and hours increased and finding out that his paper backed his employer. Remembering the Herald he writes to the editor asking what the paper proposes to do about it - arriving to deliver it in person he finds there is a notice on the front door saying "Closing Down Owing To The Indifference of Henry Dubb". (91)

The message was rubbed in five days later as Dubb reads in his "Tory dope" that "Henry Dubb's paper" is to close and concludes it must be some other Henry Dubb even when he meets a capitalist who says "So You Can't Make Your Paper Pay Mr Dubb Ha! Ha!". It concludes with Henry, rocked back on his heels and his cap flying off his head, confronting a poster with his own picture and reading "Read The Daily Herald: Owned By Henry Dubb". (92)

Opinions of Dubb varied widely. A reader told of a previously anti-Labour friend: "I have offered him the loan of several of my books on socialism, but he always declined. He appreciated the Dubb cartoons and said it was quite true. I saw him today and he said that he reads the Daily Herald every day, and said what a mug he has been. The Dubb cartoons may not reach the high artistic standard desired by our highbrow friends, yet they get home". (93)

The alternative point of view came from director Clifford Allen, who said the Herald should "Give up insulting the worker" with it. In reacting this way to a cartoon that apparently left the Herald's working-class readers and trade union directors cheerfully uninsulted Allen, the archetypal middle-class intellectual activist, was anticipating the manner in which academics would become the main critics of The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists. (94)

Henry Dubb was to some extent the visible symbol of the Herald's implicit belief that the workers owed it a living - a viewpoint that became explicit whenever the paper's existence was imperilled, which was frequently in the early 1920s. The Herald's career during this period recalls that of a weekly-serial heroine, left tied to the rails or hanging by her fingertips at the end of each episode. None of these near-misses was more hair-raising than the last, that of September 1923, when the General Council went to the TUC with a recommendation to close down.
Unlike followers of serial heroines, readers of the Herald showed a marked disinclination to tune in for the next episode - rapidly chilling the euphoria after the May Day relaunch. The last eight-pager had a circulation of 278,300 and the much-hailed 12 page May Day issue 351,400. But within a week the daily print was back below 300,000 - providing minimal financial return on the extra expenditure.(95)

Losses had doubled to #2,800 per week - a rate which would exhaust the planned #120,000 development fund in ten months. In four months liabilities of #81,000 would be accumulated. Nor did either of the twin pillars of the relaunch - the pledge scheme and levy capitalisation, work anything like as well as hoped for. Nearly four million pledge cards were dispatched - only 83,316 had been returned by August.(96)

A "Candid Friend of the Movement", presumably Angell, commented in the Herald that "The pledge was the acid test of the interest of the millions in a Labour press. It represented the very minimum which might be asked of a worker on behalf of something absolutely indispensable to the achievement of his political power and social regeneration".(97)

While hardly as spectacular, the failure of capitalisation was equally decisive - confirming the pessimism of a union secretary who told Fyfe "The unions will promise anything, but they won't pay up". It was in truth a bad time to be asking - membership had fallen by a third in two years and huge demand for unemployment and dispute benefit meant the average union ran an eight per cent budget deficit each year from 1919 to 1926. In late May 26 unions had still to pay their 1923 levy, let alone any for future years.(98)

The appeal fell nearly #50,000 short, bringing in little over #70,000 by late August. The Herald recorded: "We have had this provided in small sums week by week, instead of finding ourselves with a large sum in the bank for development purposes, and there is no prospect of the full sum being raised".(99)
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Henderson warned the Labour Party conference in late June that closure could be only weeks away, and with no improvement visible during the next month, late July saw the appointment of yet another joint sub-committee to examine the paper's finances. On 9th August the directors met the TUC Finance Committee and after "very prolonged discussion" of a report prepared by Pugh, Lansbury and Allen it was agreed that following the failure of the development scheme, closure should be recommended to the TUC, meeting at Plymouth in the first week in September. Lansbury and Pugh were asked to prepare a report for the next joint meeting on the 23rd. (100)

In January Pugh had argued from the basic premise that, however desperate its finances, it was politically inconceivable that the Herald be allowed to die. Now his and Lansbury's report showed a weary acceptance of the inevitable - whatever the political costs, the financial ones had become insupportable.

On current affiliation levels, it could look forward to £125,638 over the next five years - but in the context of a paper that would cost £20,000 to run to the end of 1923 at eight pages this was wholly inadequate. Fee capitalization had depleted money available in future years, and had also reached the limits of its potential as a support for the paper.

While Lansbury argued for giving an eight page paper a one year trial, even this would cost around £60,000, pledging the General Council's Publicity Fund to the end of September 1926. Alternative options were a daily with eight half-size pages and an editorial staff of 12, a midweek 16 pager or creation of weeklies in Manchester, Cardiff and Newcastle as an extension of the Labour Press Service.

They argued "We must be certain there is no alternative before we advise the cutting down of our daily paper, involving the sacrifice of all the money and labour which the enthusiasts of the Movement have bestowed upon us". And, in spite of the increase in sales over the year, there was no likelihood of finding the funds needed to make the paper self-supporting. (101)
Their logic was accepted by the national committees - which rejected the midweek and daily options. Lansbury told Herald readers: "The decision came to us in a quiet uneventful sort of fashion which told, as no words can ever tell, that parleying, reasoning was of no avail, because, in the judgment of the joint meeting...circumstances were such that no talking could change, and in the judgment of those responsible drastic action was the only course left open for them to follow". Votes by 20 to 2 and 27 to 1 apparently sealed the Herald's fate.(102)

But the decision still had to be confirmed by the Plymouth Congress - and whatever the Herald's defects as an all-round newspaper it still knew how to campaign. The closure announcement under the headline "Will The Workers Let the "D.H" Die?" opened a ferocious week-long barrage aimed at the movement's decision-makers and delegates: "We shall write again tomorrow and continue to do so, and day by day fight against the sentence of death being carried out. We shall not stand idly by and see the sweat, toil and sacrifice of years thrown away".(103)

Every technique learnt over years of campaigning was deployed - Lansbury talking of "this most loved and cherished child our movement has produced", multiple messages of support from MPs and union leaders and constant exhortation to readers to recruit friends and workmates - all aimed to illustrate enthusiasm for the paper's survival.(104)

News items such as reports on the British Fascists "All such movements the DAILY HERALD regards it as a duty to watch and expose. If it did not do this nobody would" and the endurance of the shipwrecked crew of the Trevessa: "The Trevessa crew teach a useful lesson at this moment to those of us of the HERALD" were used to support the paper's right to live.(105)

Even Bobby Bear was mobilised - with the normal cartoon supplemented on the 30th by an item under the headline "If the Daily Herald Dies; Bobby Bear In An Orphanage: Brief Description by a Visitor". This shameless attempt at manipulation was clearly aimed at Plymouth delegates with young children.
"It was not a cruel place, that Orphanage, and those who were in charge of it were not unkind. I must not be mistaken upon that point....

"There was no room for pranks there, no scope for jolly naughtiness. And what do you think our Bobby would be without his pranks, without any scope for those exasperating lovable tricks and fun to which he is always up, and for which poor Aunt Kitsie has educated us all to look every day when we open our paper?

"Bobby Bear's home was Bear Villa and his playground was the Children's Corner of the HERALD, but now Bear Villa is let to Henry Dubb and the Children's Corner is gone. Bobby, and with him of course Maisie and Ruby are in an Orphanage for friendless children.

"It would have broken your heart if you could have seen them standing in a corner of the yard so disconsolate. I hardly recognised Bobby at first, so changed was he."(106)

x. The Plymouth Congress

Bobby's chances of escaping the orphanage would depend on the decisions of the Plymouth TUC, whose 702 delegates assembled, in Brodzky's words, considering the Herald "the most important business they have to deal with".(107)

It had been agreed that a report on the recommendation would be presented on the opening day, but that any debate would be postponed until later in the week to allow proper discussion - a clear indication both that the most important action of the week would take place in the back rooms and that the General Council were keen to find a way out of the Herald's troubles if possible.(108)

Pugh opened for the General Council, outlining the Herald's situation and pointing out that the takeover was made on the assumption that it would command rank-and-file support. He reminded delegates of Thomas' statement at the 1922 TUC that the paper should either be self-supporting or close. After a brief question and answer session debate was adjourned until Thursday, and the real action began backstage.(109)
The major direct losers from the closure of the Herald would have been the 396 staff. They and their unions, represented by the Printing and Kindred Trades Federation, provided the main conference impetus for a rescue. While a series of reports had shown the Herald's main problem was insufficient sales and advertising income rather than overspending, their view was, not unnaturally, that unpleasant economies were preferable to outright closure.

Both groups were retailing economy plans - the staff had an audience with the General Council in the week before Congress and a leaflet with their plans was circulating at Plymouth. The PKTF had offered to set up a specialist inquiry committee during the summer, and as the affiliated body at Congress led the fight there - proposing a #12,500 TUC subsidy to keep the paper going for three months while a Committee of Investigation looked into its finances.(110) This plan became the focus of the Herald's hopes, which rose when the Finance Committee accepted the plan on Tuesday evening, but were dashed again after dinner when, at a meeting that lasted until 11.30, the General Council overruled the committee on the grounds that the "situation had not been essentially changed" by the PKTF plan.(111)

The only chance left, reported Thursday's Herald, was that "Delegates may take the matter into their own hands and show how many can be found to carry it on, either in its present or in some other form. That is the possibility. Let all those who have any influence use it today to pull off this last eleventh-hour chance".(112)

That was the route the PKTF now took. They put their plans into resolution form and had it accepted by the conference arrangements committee. Moving the resolution on Thursday FO Roberts of the Typographical Association said: "Here you have in front of you, the work of twelve months or a little more, one of the finest instruments that it is possible to forge. You are going to destroy it wilfully because you do not understand, or because the country is apathetic". Closure, he said, made no economic or political sense, and would waste a commercial asset - better to keep the Herald's goodwill even if by producing a four-sheet paper.

Thomas, in his role as the General Council's pragmatic scold, said that the motion by itself could do nothing: "We will welcome the carrying of this resolution, but on one condition, and that condition is that you give us the money to do it. You have no right to vote unless you give us the brass. Give us the brass and we will carry on.....".(113)
His contribution set the agenda for the rest of the debate, in which the Herald reporter noted a spirit "strongly in favour of making an eleventh-hour effort to keep the Herald in existence. But in spite of immediate support from the print union NATSOPA and the Workers Union, most unions could not commit themselves. Stephen Walsh, speaking for the miners, pointed out that a delegation of 130 plus could hardly be consulted informally on the floor of the conference.(114)

Only one speaker proposed an alternative to close or pay up. WJ Brown of the Civil Service Clerical Association said: "I suggest that the paper is within a short distance of becoming a paying proposition, and that it may be possible to find a capitalist, or a group of capitalists, who are prepared to regard the "Herald" as a speculative proposition, and to make such arrangements as may, or would, enable the Trade Union movement to retain a truly Labour policy editorially".(115)

Nobody appears to have taken this seriously. But Brown was simply ahead of his time - his heresy a strikingly prescient prophesy of the arrangement to be reached with Odhams Press in 1929. But the movement had several stages of disillusionment with the role of press proprietor to go before it accepted partnership with a capitalist.

Successful appeals for an adjournment extended the Herald's agony for an extra day - but to the effect it desired. Meeting after the adjournment the Miners voted to switch their support from closure to keeping the paper open until Christmas at least. Prime mover appears to have been the mercurial general secretary AJ Cook - who had signalled his support very clearly in the debate, earning a public rebuke from Walsh for conflating his own viewpoint with union policy. In his memoirs Fyfe credits Cook with saving the Herald.(116)

The extent of the miners shift was underlined the following morning when Walsh moved the resolution to provide the Herald with £12,500 to keep it in being to the end of the year, pending a committee of inquiry and a movement conference to settle policy in relation to the paper. It was passed by 3.06 million voted to 808,000. The Miracle of Fleet Street had won yet another stay of execution.(117)
The Herald's erratic career made it appropriate that a later editor Francis Williams should call his autobiography "Nothing So Strange". And there was nothing so strange in even the Herald's history as the period after the 1923 TUC as attempts were made to implement the resolution that had saved it at Plymouth, and management found itself fiercely resisting staff cuts pressed upon them with equal vigour by members of staff and their trade unions. The role of a Conservative Prime Minister as effective saviour of the Herald appears almost natural in such a context.(118)

Because it had to wait for the #12,500 to be raised before it started operations, the committee of inquiry was not set up until almost the end of September - and by this time the Herald management were well ahead with their own economy drive. Although the paper was saved, quite a few jobs were not. By 19th September #600 per week had been saved. Of this #240 had come from editorial, a 40 per cent saving in costs sacrificing foreign correspondents and leaving 34 staff journalists. The travelling circulation staff were cut from 16 to 7 over the protestations of manager Le Good who argued that a small paper would need more selling than before.(119)

With advertising reviving after its fall to around #300 per week during the crisis, the economies made by the time the committee was set up had brought losses down to #960 per week - inside the #12,500 limit.(120)

Reductions had been made unwillingly, when given no alternative, by managers who had argued consistently that their staff were at minimum levels and had seen their arguments accepted by people sent in to inquire into their activities. Their extent ensured that any further economy advice was arguably academic, and would unquestionably be resented and resisted.

The Herald staff and PKTF proposals were made in this context. The staff plan for an 8 page paper with 38 staff was hardly controversial - cuts have already gone deeper than this. But the plan to abolish the day staff predictably induced violent indignation from that group at having to defend their jobs from fellow trade-unionists, even before printing manager Barrow demolished the budgetary calculations on which they were based.(121)
The chapel plans served as a warmup for the battle over the PKTF plans - completed on 8th October and discussed at a series of inquiry meetings throughout the month. A systematic department by department assault on the Herald and the way in which it was run began with an analysis of the reporting and editing process by HM Richardson, general secretary of the National Union of Journalists. It said "The Herald has been and is still very overstaffed... greater economies than those contemplated by the Management could be effected without injury to the paper". He proposed a cut to 24 staff, axing all the full-time correspondents, who would work on linage. There would be no Foreign Editor as the post was needed only on "very big papers such as the Times or Telegraph". It was also critical of the political emphasis of the paper, arguing that this was counterproductive in winning readers.(122)

Fyfe was impressed neither by the inquiry's methods of operation - it appeared to have relied solely on Richardson's brother, a Herald journalist clearly not in editorial favour - or by its recommendations. The reasoning about the Foreign Editor was "antiquated" - the Herald had always emphasised overseas coverage. To rely solely on Reuters would be unwise. Why provide a paper at all if we only give what the capitalist papers give?".

Proposals to cut sub-editors showed a "surprising ignorance of actual conditions". A similar story was seen throughout the other sections as department head after department head demolished the plans as unworkable and ill-conceived. Poyser for instance argued that far from being overstaffed advertising was run well and efficiently. Running costs were currently six per cent of revenue against 15 per cent in most papers.(123).

Most of the cuts had in any case been pre-empted by the management's actions in September. But it was still not certain that it would be enough.

The eventual target was a cut in losses to #500 per week - and the economy process reached its limit in late October with a sale of around 300,000 and losses of around #600. Fresh economies were sought from Fyfe and Lansbury, who replied that none were available.(124)

So the ball returned to the court of the inquiry committee, which decided on 7th November that there was no point in asking the movement for more than #550 per week. A new clash over costs loomed, with Lansbury and Fyfe convinced further reductions would seriously damage the paper but their paymasters unable to see any alternative. (125)
It was at this point that Conservative Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin took the action that made him - more than Cook, Fyfe, Lansbury or anyone from the PKTF - the true saviour of the Herald in late 1923. With a comfortable parliamentary majority and four years of his term to go, he called a General Election to pursue his belief in Tariff Reform.

The Herald's survival into 1924 was at best have been a struggling, straitened existence - battling away on limited resources. But elections were always good for the Herald, boosting sales by making politics the priority of a large group of potential readers and providing a sharp reminder to the leadership of the reasons for maintaining the paper in the first place. The Herald inquiry adjourned for the duration of the election. By the time they might have returned to their duties the political landscape, and the immediate prospects of the Herald, had been transformed almost out of recognition (126).

Conclusion.

The fourteen months from September 1922 were a period of disillusionment for organised Labour after the optimism of the Southport TUC - with problems in policy, development, sales and finance.

In policy terms the shift was towards the Citizen model rather than the outright commercial style of the Herald's competitors. In the nature of the complexity of newspapers this emerged gradually rather than as soon as takeover was accomplished. The broad officialism of the policy line was undercut both by the left-wing sympathies of the staff and Fyfe's independence of disposition. A reflection of the Citizen model was that politics remained the focus and purpose of the paper, with the main shift from industry to Parliament rather than towards more general news. But the views expressed by Clifford Allen were the beginning of a developing critique within the movement of this emphasis, and its propagandist style of expression.

This critique would be stimulated in time by the development failures of 1922-3. Every attempt to break out of the paper's difficulties by spending to make it more competitive - whether by reducing the price or increasing its size - instead produced limited circulation returns and massive financial losses, exhausting the movement's limited resources. The Pledge Scheme failure ended any illusions that simple loyalty to the movement was sufficient to switch readers from other papers.
The consequence of this was that the Herald's existence continued to be dominated and constrained by the imminent fear of going out of business. The purchase price of its survival at the end of 1923 was a series of economies that ended any ambitions of genuine competitiveness with commercial rivals.

ENDS.
CHAPTER SEVEN (p.76-110)

1. Herald Accountant to Joint Bodies 4.12.22 TUC 789.01
3. DH 23.11.22
4. Wake and Henderson to affiliated bodies 8.12.22 LPDH 154
5. Lansbury and Henderson appeal n.d. (Nov 1922) LPDH 159
6. DH 22.1.23
7. Pugh report on position of Daily Herald Newspaper 24.1.23 TUC 788
10. DH 2.3.23. Joint committee minutes 29.3.23 LPDH 213 TUC 788
11. Report to Finance Committee 16.4.23 loc cit
12. DH 18, 19, 4.23
13. DH 2.5.23
14. Fyfe - Sixty Years op cit p 193
15. NW 16.12.22
16. Lansbury to Henderson 13.10.23, quoted in McKibbin - Evolution op cit p 229. Postgate - Lansbury op cit p 221
17. Fyfe - Seven Selves op cit p 252
18. DH 23.10.22. Wake and Henderson 8.12.22 loc cit
19. DH 1.5.23
20. DH 23.11.22
21. DH 27.11.22
22. NW 4.8.23
23. Lord Citrine - Two Careers - Hutchinson 1967 p 349
24. DH 26.1.23
25. DH 7.12.22
26. DH 22.1.23
27. DH 15.2.23 Postgate analysis op cit 1923 p 8
28. NW 22.9.23
29. DH 25.10.22
30. DH 9.11.22
31. DH 21.11.22
32. Ibid
33. David Marquand - Ramsay MacDonald - Jonathan Cape, 1977 p 282
34. DH 23.11.22, 14.2.23. Postgate - Analysis op cit 1923 p 8
35. Thanks are due to Dr John Rowett for his insights into the local Labour press.
36. DH 15.2.23
37. DH 10.3.23
38. DH 17, 23, 24.2.23
39. DH 10.3.23
40. DH 21.3.23
41. DH 29.8.23
42. Ed rep 19.1.28 TUC 788.24
43. DH 14.2.23
44. Postgate - Analysis op cit 1919-23 p 6
46. DH 2.1.22
47. DH 10.8.23
48. DH 5.7.23
49. DH 5, 7.7.23
50. Holton loc cit p 362.
51. DH 5, 5.23
52. DH 7.5.23
53. DH 10.7.23
54. DH 16.7.23
55. DH 10.7.23
56. DH 11, 19.7.23.
57. DH 10, 12, 31.7.23
58. DH 10.8.23
59. DH 20.8.23
60. Postgate - Analysis op cit 1919-23 p 14
61. DH 31.10.22
62. DH 11.12.22
63. DH 13.12.22
64. DH 20.12.22
65. DH 16.8.23
66. DH 12.1.23
67. Postgate - Analysis op cit 1919-23 p 7
68. Fyfe reply to directors memos 19.11.25 LPDH 481 TUC 789.1
69. DH 19.12.23
70. DH 9.12.22 Postgate - Analysis op cit 1919-23 p 7
Footnotes Fifteen

71. DH 10.1.23
72. DH 9,12.1.23
73. DH 10.3.23
74. DH 7.2.23
75. DH 7.8.23
76. DH 7,14.2.23
77. DH 9.4.23
78. DH 7,14.2,29.8.23
79. DH 7,14.2,9.4.23
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Ends
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Thesis

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Constriction, Conformity and Control:  
The Taming of the Daily Herald 1921–30  
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Section Four
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Section Five
The year following Baldwin's intervention was to see the Herald breaking with two of the deep-rooted traditions that had defined its previous existence. The first discontinuity was summed up by Lansbury's simple statement at the 1924 TUC: "The Daily Herald for the first time in its history has for the past six months paid its way". (1)

The profits were not large, and were to be fairly short-lived. But they halted the attrition of finance and morale brought about by endless heavy losses and constant fears of closure. There is relatively little about 1924 in the Herald archives, suggesting that this was a mercifully uneventful year in which the leadership gratefully seized the chance to concentrate on other things - above all the first-ever Labour Government, which took office under the leadership of MacDonald late in January 1924.

Discontinuity number two was summarised in Fyfe's leader welcoming the new government to office. While it referred to the movement as a whole, it could as easily and aptly be applied to the Herald: "Up to now its political representatives have been critics; they have attacked Tory and Liberal governments for sins of omission and commission; they have told what they would do and what they would avoid if they had the opportunity of governing.

"Now they have it; now they are critics no longer; they become marks for criticism; now the great Movement which they have behind them waits for its leaders to justify the confidence and loyalty that have placed them where they are". (2)

Opposition was deeply rooted in the Herald's culture - it had until recently been an opposition force within the movement. It is also fundamental to journalistic culture - most journalists are by definition happier in the roles of critic and sceptic than those of the loyal follower or cheerleader.

Fyfe faced a considerable challenge on the day Labour took office - that of coping within the confines of a six-column front page with three stories that would normally have been deemed worthy of splash treatment: the first Labour Government, a national railway strike and the death of Lenin. (3)
But this pales beside the challenge of bending the Herald to the task of reporting a government it was officially bound to support without reducing all coverage to predictable propagandist tedium. With the threat of extinction temporarily lifted, this would be the dominating theme of the Herald's life for the next twelve months.

I. In Profit

The 1923 General Election and its aftermath might have been designed with the Herald's needs in mind - not only the excitement of a poll in which Labour made significant advances, but an inconclusive outcome and subsequent hiatus sustaining interest in the paper's primary political agenda for a further seven weeks - which also included first the threat and then the reality of a national rail strike. And all these natural circulation-pullers had fallen to a paper that had already cut its costs severely to ensure survival.

The Herald had started the election campaign with a circulation of just under 300,000. It rose to 364,900 on December 1st and topped 400,000 when the results were declared. Newspaper World reported: "On the morning of December 7 it was almost impossible to pick up a spare copy in small newsagents shops or at the station bookstall. A Teddington reader tried three local newsagents and the bookstalls at Teddington and Waterloo stations - not one of which had a copy of the Herald". Circulation was still more than 370,000 at the end of the year. The installation of the new government and the railway strike pushes the daily print back above 400,000 again.

Advertising had followed a similar trend. In December the Herald had been making a virtue of necessity, arguing that the lack of advertisements meant there was more content for the reader. But by 9th February Lansbury was reckoning that income was up by 75 per cent. By mid April Poyser was reporting an average of £1067 per week for the first 15 weeks of the year, up more than 100 per cent on 1923. Current advertising income was running at more than £1,300 per week - more than 20 per cent of the paper's overall income - against between 10 and 12 per cent six months earlier.
On 12th December the threat of closure was formally lifted as Pugh told the General Council that increased circulation and reduced losses meant it would survive at least until the next TUC. As the year ended TUC president Margaret Bondfield and general secretary Fred Bramley, appealing for a further boost in sales, said: "The Daily Herald is now just on the borderline of permanent security. Another united push and we are on the right side", they said. (6)

On 9th February Lansbury again took the state of the Herald as the subject for his Saturday sermon. But where readers had previously been used to him deploying his eloquent optimism against all the odds in pursuit of survival, the tone this time was bright, chipper and slightly ironic.

Under the headline "How We Stand and What We May Yet Do", Lansbury explained: "If we are not very careful we shall within a very short time find ourselves in the same position as our worthy competitors - the Rothermeres, Beaverbrooks, Burnhams and Riddells. We shall actually be making money. When this happens you may all look out for shocks.

"Unless we are all very severely held in check you may find us launching a 12 page paper again. As it is we are often obliged to give you ten pages because of the success of our advertisement staff" (7)

This was to a great extent yet another false dawn. Far from rising to the 500,000 Lansbury appealed for, sales were to start draining slowly as the year went on. But the freedom from short-term fear resulting from the election boost meant that for a while the Herald's harassed management could regard the front page as more important than the balance sheet.

ii. Content: The 1923 General Election

Elections are periods of heightened purpose for political newspapers, exaggerating their characteristics and concentrating their efforts on a single purpose. Always pronounced, the Herald's political emphasis became overwhelming. Every day from the calling of the election on 13th November until French Socialist leader Leon Blum's attack on the occupation of the Ruhr on 15th December, nine days after polling day, the front page lead was devoted to a domestic political story. In the neverending dialectic between news and propaganda the Herald swung inevitably back to propaganda.(8)
Chapter Eight: Profits and Power : Nov 1923 to Nov 1924

All other priorities were subordinated to winning the election, with coverage in bulk. As early as 20th November, sixteen days before the poll, the front six pages were dominated by the campaign. (9)

Its tone was well described, rather unwittingly, by Way of the World, in a satirical view of press coverage of the first week of the election that applied as well to the Herald as to any of its intended targets:

"Every party leader gets an enthusiastic reception everywhere
All our trade statistics go to prove that every party policy is right
Every party is even more absolutely united than it was last week
All parties are going to come out on top." (10)

Three basic purposes can be seen in. The first was that of acting as a conduit from the central leadership to candidates and other organisers in the country. The second was that of driving home Labour's campaign agenda, and the third that of describing the progress of the election in a manner that enthused the activists and emphasised Labour advances.

The conduit approach was most explicit three days before the poll when a frontpage bold print box bore the distinct marks of an official directive: "WHAT LABOUR SPEAKERS MUST DRIVE HOME. Only three days are left in which to win votes for Labour. Speakers must now concentrate on the strongest arguments. There must be no waste of effort; no dwelling on secondary issues." (11)

Agenda-setting expressed itself in part in expository articles on the capital levy, but in the main in fierce assaults on the other parties. Here the lash was particularly applied to the Liberals - an approach in line with MacDonald's plan of displacing them as the main left-centre party and reflecting rivalry for the free trade vote.

The Herald argued that free trade was not the issue, and that in fundamentals the other parties had little between them. This approach had been made explicit even before the election was called: "Very well. Labour will challenge. Labour does challenge.

"But it challenges on a wider field than Mr Baldwin proposes. Not in the old artificial issue between tariffs and free trade, but on the real issue between Capitalism and Socialism the conflict will come". (12)
From mid-campaign this was supplemented by claims that reactionary elements in the older parties were colluded. This struck directly at the Liberals and had the virtue of containing an element of truth provided by meetings at Lord Beaverbrook’s Leatherhead home. The Herald report drew the moral: “The issue is not between Free Trade and Protection.

“It is between Labour and a Coalition of which the figureheads would be Lloyd George and Chamberlain, Churchill and Birkenhead, but of which the real masters would be the Press-Gang peers - Lords Rothermere and Beaverbrook”.

Like many Herald news stories it concluded with a punchline explaining the purpose of the whole report: “Every vote given for a Liberal, every vote given for a Tory is a vote given for the Old Gang which has brought disaster after disaster on Britain during these unhappy years”.(13)

The attack on the Liberals was stepped up in the last week, signalled by a front-page banner on 2nd December “A vote for the Liberals is a vote for Tories” and driven home through a virulent series of profiles ‘Records of the Liberal “Statesmen’. These started with Churchill, headlined as “Strike Breaker, War Maker and Political Intriguer” and running on to delineate Lloyd George, Asquith and Grey in scarcely more complementary terms.(14)

Labour’s alternative to this had expressed during Leatherhead coverage by a leader expressing the strong millenarian element in the movement’s appeal and motivation. Fyfe, an ethical convert, cast his rhetoric in terms that saw the Labour plea as a crusade above mere politics. The heightened purposefulness of election injected an extra element of purple into his prose: “The only party which has a real programme, the only one which understands how to remedy unemployment, the only one which is inspired by the noble ideals of Justice, Freedom, Generosity and Comradeship; the only one which looks beyond the petty war of politics and marches forward with its eyes fixed firmly on the City of God, a city in which there shall be no workless, no wage-slavery, no hungry children and no slums”.(15)

That vision of Labour as a crusading force was also expressed in news coverage focusing on Ramsay MacDonald’s tour of the country: “The success of Mr Ramsay MacDonald’s tour has exceeded every expectation and beggars description.

“Everywhere Mr MacDonald is greeted by loyal workers whose zeal is heightened by personal affection”.(16)
The report of his arrival in Northampton on 20th November, a picture of the great popular leader being greeted by his people, was all the more vivid for the contrast with Stanley Baldwin on the same page speaking to an audience described in a favourite Herald term of denigration as "Thoroughly Comfortable".

"Magnificent' is the only word which can fittingly describe the reception accorded Mr Ramsay MacDonald on his arrival here tonight.

"All the way from the station to the cinema, where the meeting was being held, the brilliantly lighted car which local friends had provided, and in which Mr MacDonald sat beside Miss Margaret Bondfield, passed beneath cheering supporters who eventually 'fell in' and followed it.

"Towards the door the crowd was so closely packed that the police had a stiff task in keeping the way cleared.

"The hall itself was already packed to the last inch, quite a third of the audience being obliged to stand, and the cheering was tremendous when Mr MacDonald entered". (17)

Herald readers were also left in little doubt that the crusade was going well. As early as 21st November the main headline read "Why Labour is winning the Great Campaign" while the final week saw "Fighting Like A Winning Party: Evidence of Amazing Enthusiasm: Labour Hopes Rise, while Opponents' Anxiety Grows". (18)

The optimism was justified - even if the Herald's post-poll claim of 197 Labour members was a clear sub-editing error. An increase from 144 members to 192 consolidated Labour's second-party role, with the Conservatives losing their overall majority and dropping to 252 while the Liberals took 149. The Herald naturally enough hailed the result as "Labour's Magnificent Progress at the Polls". (19)

But the implications of the result appear for a moment to have been lost on it. With his protectionist appeal denied a majority Baldwin could hardly claim a mandate. But if not him, who? The uncertainty of the following weeks, with the prospect of Labour taking office for the first time, was exactly the sort of political excitement in which the Herald both revelled editorially and prospered in sales terms.
Chapter Eight: Profits and Power: Nov 1923 to Nov 1924

ii. Content: Taking Office

It was also a time of fierce debate, with the issue of whether Labour should grasp office if it were offered by no means clear cut. Sydney Webb reported that Arthur Henderson was the only major leader wholeheartedly in favour of taking office although Snowden's biographer Colin Cross argues that he and MacDonald also felt taking office was inevitable.(20)

On the left James Maxton was opposed, but found himself in a minority among the Clydesiders and the ILP, where most opinion favoured taking office, putting forward a boldly radical programme and daring other parties to turn them out.(21)

The Herald aligned itself firmly with the centre against the left, and reached this position before the decision to take office was made by the national committees. Not taking office, it argued on 10th December, would fail the unemployed and the activists - allowing opponents to argue that while Labour asked for the job of government, it would not take it when offered.

"We are only putting an imaginary case. We are asking ourselves whether it would be possible for Labour to do something for the workless at once. They are our most pressing problem. Their condition is bound up closely with foreign policy. To help them and all of us - for their wretchedness hurts us all - is the mandate with which 192 Labour members have been returned.

"No bargaining with any other party can be thought of. No working arrangement can be considered. But if Labour took a bold and vigorous line, the other parties might be frightened into letting it go through.

"There are objections. They leap to the eyes. There are objections to every course. Is it worth thinking about? What do our leaders say?".(22)

While waiting for their answer the Herald outlined a possible Labour programme, again aligning itself with the centre by excluding the Capital Levy as impossible until a majority was attained. Debate among the leadership was paralleled in the correspondence columns: "We give an equal show to the "Noes" and "Ayes", but it should be pointed out that, taking the letters that reach us as a whole, the vast majority are in favour".(23)
And when the national committees opted for a course of action roughly paralleling its own recommendations, the Herald was not slow to take credit and treat this as in part tribute to its own influence: "The suggestion made in our issue of Monday last has been very quickly taken up by the leaders of the Labour Movement". (24)

But it was to be another six weeks before Labour actually took office. On one hand the Herald muttered darkly about plots to keep Labour from power and delays between the return of parliament and the crucial vote. On the other it noted, in a leader notable both for the absence of any belief or hope that a Labour government would represent any form of radical change and for an apparent conflation of the metropolitan chattering classes with the nation, that the hiatus was toning down public reaction to the political novelty: "It is instructive to notice how quickly people have got used to the idea of a Labour government. At first they were most of them incredulous. They felt alarmed - a few went so far as to put their money into American securities, losing half-a-crown in the pound on the transaction. Now they have become accustomed to the prospect they are sensible enough to see that there is nothing to be alarmed at, they are discussing what Labour will do with a great deal of interest and without excitement or panic" (25).

This was a clear endorsement of MacDonald's determination to prove that Labour was safe and respectable. The premier-designate remained the centrepiece of political coverage as tension was maintained - a photograph of him on holiday was captioned wistfully "What Are His Thoughts?" while an article on cabinet-making was headlined "Secrets that only Mr MacDonald knows". (26)

There was clear excitement too as the new Parliament assembled in London and Fyfe attended an Albert Hall rally his signed report said was the most remarkable he had seen in a lifetime of political meetings - flattering his readers by implication in his description of the audience: "There was in their faces a light of idealism, in their eyes a shining of intelligence which you certainly could not find in any mass meeting of Liberal or Conservative supporters. "And it was this which raised the speeches to so high a level. All who addressed them felt they must rise to the level of the occasion. Every speech was worthy of it, and of those who listened so eagerly, and with such enlightened interest". (27)
He said: "This appears to me to be the business of the Council and consisting as it does, in the main, of experienced Trade Union officials, and men of national standing with qualifications which justify their position, I think that you ought to leave all questions of policy to be dealt with by the national body elected for the purpose..."

"I think it would be much better for the writers on the Herald to limit their attention to giving publicity to the policies laid down by the people responsible and popularising the objects we have in view as they are made clear and definite from time to time in our circulars and publications". (32)

But in line with his previous policy, Fyfe refused to be restricted to this role. The Herald's attitude to the Labour government was that of the "Candid friend" - supportive and defending it from attacks by outsiders, but reserving the right to offer dissenting advice and opinions in the best interests of government and movement.

The supportive role was seen at its strongest in parliamentary coverage, where attacks on government came from the other parties. Thus Bracher's summary of "What Labour Has Achieved" might have gone straight into electoral addresses: "The record of the first Labour Government during its first session is one that reflects the greatest credit upon it, when the circumstances in which it holds office are taken into account.

"It has passed a budget which is the most popular in living memory, and which reduces the cost of living for all, most appreciably for the very poorest... a Housing Act... an Agricultural Wages Act... recognised the Soviet Government... brought a new atmosphere into foreign affairs which will help to promote a settlement of Europe". (33)

Having argued the centrist line for taking power on a cautious programme, it rejected left criticisms of the government for being insufficiently radical. As Labour took office it implied some sympathy with the frustrations of the left: "A great many among us might have preferred a different kind of ministry, other things being equal. But other things were not equal". But the same leader concluded by saying of MacDonald: "Had he acted as some people in the Movement would have had him act. He would have started with a rope, not only around his ankles, but round his neck". (34)
When an unambitious programme was unveiled, Fyfe examined it from the point of view of the unemployed: "A Government", they would say, "which deliberately tried to do things at present impossible, in preference to improving the condition of the people, would betray its supporters... If we were all prosperous, if no misery and hardship called for redress, it would be a fine dramatic effect to challenge Parliament on the Capital Levy or on nationalisation. To do so at the expense of Millions who are in sore need and distress would be callously cruel". (35)

This pragmatic line was followed when the government, rejecting its own declared policy and the Herald’s past editorial line, accepted higher air force estimates on the grounds of public opinion. Its argument was a classic exposition of the "realist" as opposed to the ethical view of power: "No man ought to hold office", some people argue, "unless he acts in every particular exactly as his conscience dictates.

"If that rule were in operation, nobody would take office, nobody that is, with a conscience. The affairs of the nation would then be managed by men without consciences. We should go from bad to worse. As it is, we are going from bad to better, but we cannot do it in one great leap". (36)

Critics of government moderation thus received short shrift. In May GDH Cole and HG Wells attacked it from the left, and were in turn criticised by Railway Servants president Gill. The Herald, its pro-government stance accentuated by a rare burst of populist anti-intellectualism, had no hesitation in backing the mainstream view of the trade unionist - who had led the debenture holders move for the takeover of the paper back in 1921: "Of course it has not done all that the most eager of Labour men and women would have liked it to do. No government ever does please those who were keenest about seeing it in office. But is the best way to help it to satisfy the eager ones to attack it and say it is a contemptible failure? No the best way, as Mr Gill says, is to line up behind it and show that there is a demand for greater energy and bolder initiative. However these "intellectuals" need not be taken too seriously. They are both novelists, and novelists get into the way of looking for "sensation"." (37)
Direct criticism of government policy was ruled out, in the early stages at least. But among the most effective means by which candid political friends convey discontent without outright dissent is criticism of presentation. Labour policy might have been moderate, but the Herald held that it should be prosecuted with conviction and vigour. Thus the Clydesider Minister of Health John Wheatley rapidly became a favourite.

"Be bold, be bold again, be ever bold" urged the leader comparing his success in the Commons with an unhappy display by India secretary Lord Olivier - described as cold and bureaucratic.

Wheatley, it was said, showed "The irresistible value of judiciously bold and vigorous leadership". In the Commons, the leader argued: "The men who win respect and confidence are those who have the courage of their convictions, the leaders who boldly lead". (38)

And not only men. Margaret Bondfield's front bench debut was commended as showing her "The best man of the lot" among the Employment team, with the vigour of her approach favourably contrasted with the caution of Minister of Labour Tom Shaw, put on the defensive when he might have been attacking opposition parties' past records. (39)

The Premier was always excepted from such criticisms. A defeat in early April was blamed on the deputising Clynes: "The bold front was dropped. A conciliatory, almost apologetic tone was taken". When the government ran into difficulties the Herald said this would bring into play "His exceptional genius for Parliamentary leadership". (40)

Just as exceptional was his personal sensitivity, and relations between MacDonald and the paper that praised him so fulsomely deteriorated rapidly during his first administration. The initial problem appears to have been the Herald's attitude to the Labour cabinet ministers wearing court dress.

This was a significant symbolic issue for the movement. For MacDonald the decision to wear court dress was a crucial demonstration of Labour's integration within the existing system. Many activists saw this as a form of integration they wanted to avoid - exactly the sort of upperclass flummery that the movement existed to do away with. The Herald line on compromises with the status quo, such as adopting a moderate programme, was that there was nothing wrong with them provided they were for a practical purpose. It could see little practical about court dress.
The initial response was mildly indulgent - Way of the World describing MacDonald's first appearance in the outlandish garb as a "Penalty of Office", and taking his mildly ironic comments, misleadingly, as reluctant acceptance of the dress: "I feel like a Free Church elder", said Mr MacDonald yesterday morning when he appeared in his blacks, a coat with tails instead of his normal jacket. He would much have preferred to wear the latter, but he is a man who holds that it is always better to hurt one's own feelings than other people's. As Buckingham Palace attaches great importance to costume, he decided to fall in with its ideas as to proper dress for the occasion".(41)

There were never any editorial attacks on MacDonald or any other leader for wearing court dress. But the Herald's view was made clear when it sympathised with a minister who refused an invitation to dine with the Speaker because of dress requirements - exactly the sort of gesture which was guaranteed to infuriate MacDonald: "There is no reason, indeed, we can see why politicians should be expected to change their social habits and to attend festivities out of their line just because they have accepted great responsibility as members of the government. This kind of thing belongs to the past - and might as well be left there".(42)

And if the paper chose not to make direct attacks itself, it was prepared to print them in letters columns which resounded to vigorous controversy throughout 1924 as an expression of Fyte's pluralist view of the Herald's role: "It is very important that no section shall feel resentment at not being allowed to express its views in its own newspaper", he was to argue in correspondence with MacDonald later in the year.(43)

Court dress was one of the first issues of serious controversy, with the critics quicker off the mark. JC Dempsey of Rothwell, Northants, asked: "Did we pour our energy and strength at the last election so that our leaders might go riding with Royal Princes and patter about in gold braid and toy swords at King's parties. Oh for a whiff of Keir Hardie".(44)
There was something of a counter-attack by supporters of court dress - a regular pattern in Herald letter-page controversies, was for the right to start writing only after an issue had been pressed by the left, suggesting that left-wingers were still more likely to see it as their paper. But the issue simmered on through the year, with eight local parties choosing to adopt critical resolutions for party conference. The Herald's decision to lead its summary of that year's resolutions with the Court Dress motions - quoting South Kensington's description of it as "Ridiculous and harmful", Scarborough's "Foolish" and Limehouse's call for "Rational and Democratic" attire - was calculated to strike MacDonald as gratuitous.(45)

MacDonald felt entitled to unquestioning support and said so in a long correspondence with Fyfe which has not survived. Fyfe recalled: "He protested against our publishing anything that questioned his wisdom or acts of his Government. To my submissions that it was the duty of a newspaper belonging to the Movement, to all the Trade Unionists and all Labour Party members throughout the country, to allow opinions to be expressed and the words and acts of leaders discussed, he fretfully objected.

"Over and over again, in long letters written by his own hand, he complained not only of what had appeared in our columns, but of my letting correspondents have their way". (46)

That hostility was accentuated in May when a Herald leader was violently critical of the conduct of a Conservative committee chair as the Housing Bill was obstructed. Fyfe was summoned before a committee of privileges, chaired by the Prime Minister who made it clear that he regarded the offence as a serious one. The Herald's persistent use of the term 'antiquated' made it equally clear that it did not.(47)

But the Herald had still yet to directly criticise a government policy. That final sanction of the candid friend was to be invoked during the summer over the government's continuation of the bombing of fractious Iraqi tribesmen. Hostile letters and resolutions mounted during July, prompting the Herald to run an interview with junior air minister William Leech, a former conscientious objector, justifying the policy.

Leech argued there was little alternative: "Six months ago Labour took office and we proceeded at once to re-examine the whole position. Could we clear out? No, because a bond had been made to stay the term of four years."
"Could we drop the use of air methods? Yes, but it meant a dreadful cost of British lives and the lengthening of our stay. It meant a vast increase of ground forces and of cost to the British taxpayer."

Leech said the RAF were "invariably the model of chivalry", and that it was for critics to tell the government what they would do instead. (48)

Fyfe's comment a day later was decidedly double-edged: "Were I in his place I might be behaving exactly as he behaves". It was unrealistic to expect ministers to resist the compulsion to be "practical". But it was equally important that followers keep their principles: "We must always keep ahead of the people who govern. If they are wise they will see that this is useful and necessary". (49)

The Herald had been prepared to argue for "realism" over air force credits. It could in extremis be argued that air credits did not actually kill anybody. The policy in Iraq did - an actual wrong as against the principled wrong represented by the credits. And if MacDonald's tetchiness could be blamed on the pressures of office, it is possible that the considerable pressures of editorship and the stream of complaints for Downing Street were having a comparable effect on Fyfe's temper.

The consequence was a leader of extraordinary ferocity in mid August: "What would be said if they enforced private claims by throwing explosives into their neighbours' homes. How could they defend themselves against national indignation if they justified such an action by saying that their neighbours were imperfectly civilised and that it saved trouble to throw hand grenades among them? Yet that is exactly the attitude of Lord Thomson and Mr Leech, and with them the whole of the Cabinet, in a matter affecting not themselves personally, but the country...."
"This will not do. The Labour Movement did not make General Thomson a peer and put him into an official position in order that he might officially repudiate one of the principles upon which the Movement is founded. As for Mr Leech, his conversion to the Creed of Militarism can only be explained by Shelley's lines:

"Power like a devastating pestilence.
Pollutes whate'er it touches"

"Is he or any of the Cabinet, going to speak at the No-More War meeting this month? If so, what are they going to say?"(50)

Leech struck back with his "What would you do?" line, but found himself under heavy fire from the readers, his few supporters outnumbered.

This row triggered off another. Within days the letters column was dominated by a debate over the Herald's right to criticise the government, with opinion overwhelming on its side.

JW Roberts of Birmingham argued "Criticism is helpful; it enables the government to see itself as others see it". For L Ingham of Brighouse "The day when the editorial columns of the Daily Herald become an official gramophone, it will cease to be a leader of public opinion".(51)

And EM White of West Runton, Norfolk, delved into memories of the Chronicle under Lloyd George's control: "The Daily Chronicle used to be known among us as the 'official boot-licker', because whatever a certain politician said or did was always right in its eyes. Heaven forbid that the Daily Herald should ever descend to that position!"(52)

Within a month a new controversy blew up when Ernest Hunter, a member of MacDonald's staff, claimed the unions lacked an effective political and industrial strategy. While rejecting the criticism, the Herald said this was the sort of issue that should be aired in public to allow open and honest debate. MacDonald, quoted by Hunter as attacking Poplarism, was doubtless in even less agreement than before after being attacked in turn in the Herald by backbencher John Scurr - still at this time on the left. If Poplarism was not socialism, said Scurr: "I have failed to understand what Socialism is after being a member of a Socialist body for 26 years". (53)
By this time MacDonald's discontent with the Herald was coming to wider notice. Beatrice Webb, who recorded his complaints that "The party had behaved badly, the Parliamentary executive regards itself as a court martial and the Daily Herald queering his pitch permanently" (182)

His unhappiness was poured out in a four-page letter to Fyfe complaining that the paper was "Doing us far more harm than service... a dumping-ground for rubbish which would be put in the waste-paper basket by anyone who knew his business or who was not out for mischief". He said it would be better "If the Herald came out honestly in the open as an organ hostile to the Government or, at any rate, to me?"

Fyfe's reply was a statement of his pluralist policy: "The Herald is the organ, not of your Government, not of a Party, but of the Labour Movement. In that Movement there are many currents of opinion... It would be foolish to aim at making the policy of the Herald fit in with all these currents of opinion, but it is very important that no section shall feel resentment at not being allowed to express its views in its own newspaper...

"If I were to say to any section of them" I will not publish your opinions because that would be unpleasant to the Prime Minister", there would be good reason to retort that I was setting the momentary interest of a Ministry above the permanent interest of the Movement, which is beyond question the greater of the two.

"I never publish complaints or criticism of the Government unless I know - from my study of the mass of correspondence which comes in every day - that it represents a fairly large body of opinion. You could not point to any letter, much less to any article - which did not voice the feelings of a great many people in the Movement......

"You tell me I don't know my business as an editor. Assuredly I have much yet to learn, but I have been in training for thirty years. You have been Prime Minister for eight months without any previous experience. Isn't it just possible that you have some things to learn too?" (55)

If Fyfe is to be believed his forthrightness helped restore relations - recording that MacDonald took the rebukes well and, somewhat cryptically, "was soon writing as usual". Since on Fyfe's own account these 'usual' writings were deeply unfriendly it is hard to work out what he means. (56)
Other accounts suggest that any improvement was either temporary or minimal. The account of MacDonald’s state of mind given to CP Scott by New Leader editor HN Brailsford in late November suggests either that there was some error in transmission or that he was, in the wake of a General Election defeat, in the grip of serious paranoia: “He was furious with the ‘Herald’ which perhaps was not wonderful as its editor was a Communist and perhaps hated MacDonald more than any other person in the world”. (57)

Anyone who could see Fyfe as a Communist clearly had serious problems. But MacDonald’s reaction to the Herald’s attempts to act as candid friend to his government had an important message for the paper. While journalistic instincts and assumptions pushed in the direction of pluralism, political pressures applied by the people who funded it would increasingly drive the Herald in the opposite direction - towards an imposed top-down official line. The reactions of MacDonald and Bramley - and there is little to indicate that they were untypical in this respect - show that Labour’s leaders did not want a lively, entertaining paper giving a voice to the full diversity of the movement. They wanted one that would do what it was told, and instruct its readers to do the same.

Further challenges to the government came in a series of industrial disputes - 1924 was to be the busiest year for strikes since 1921, although disputes were shorter, with fewer days lost than in any year since 1918. Industry still ran a close second to party politics among the Herald’s priorities. Strikes were, not least, still good for business - Lansbury reckoned that the rail dispute was the major factor in the rise over 400,000 sales at the end of January. (58)

From the start the Herald, doubtless well briefed by General Council directors, emphasised that having a Labour government would not cramp union options. With both the rail strike and office looming in January it commented: “Such a strike would undoubtedly cause difficulties for any government, but it is a delusion to imagine that Labour’s advent to political power will be allowed to have the effect of crippling Labour’s industrial activity”. (59)
This proved to be the case, with Bevin appearing on the front page almost as often as MacDonald in the first half of the year. The London bus and tram strike provoked the government into threatening the use of Emergency Powers when a tube strike was also called. As confrontation loomed the Herald derided the idea that emergency powers would be used to strike-break - when the government's intention to use them if necessary was announced it chose, not for the first time when confronted with tricky choices, not to comment in its leader columns. The settlement relieved the paper of the unpleasant choice between government and unions. (60)

The Government's main industrial tactic was the Court of Inquiry - an industrial reflection of the Labour taste for Royal Commissions noted by shrewd German observer Egon Wertheimer. TUC secretary Bramley told George Thomas, Industrial Editor that too many inquiries would break down the role of the unions, but the Herald took the government view, arguing that "Prevention is better than cure" in a pro-inquiries leader. (61)

One possible factor in this viewpoint was that inquiries provided classic Herald copy, combining detailed examination of pay and conditions with partisan polemic. The Mines inquiry in May was quoted as showing "A wonderful revelation of the capitalist mind and attitude towards the human needs of people...The miners claim that human values must be taken into account was challenged by the owner advocate Mr Evan Williams. His point of view was clearly that of a businessman with a disregard for values that were not strictly related to the economics of his industry". (62)

Two disputes that did happen placed the Herald in an uncomfortable position. It was always happiest when the movement could be united against an external threat, and correspondingly unhappy when there was an internal clash of interest. In consequence its response to the rail drivers strike, described by JH Thomas of the National Union of Railwaymen as a "fiasco" at the same time as Bromley of ASLEF was claiming an "Amazing response" was deliberately even-handed. Both points of view got exactly equal space - even though news coverage left little doubt that the strike was seen as effective. Readers were told there was insufficient space to print all the letters about the strike, or even all those from railwaymen, but that "Several correspondents bitterly criticised the statements of JH Thomas". (63)
Similarly revealing was its response to the London docks dispute. The basic problems of low pay and casual employment were little different to 1923 but this time the strikers had official Transport and General Workers Union backing. This, to the Herald, made all the difference. In contrast to the previous year it lined itself up firmly behind the strikers: “The men's teeth are set for the struggle. And they will have, in this fight for the elementary decencies of life, the sympathy, and if need be, the active help of the whole working-class movement”. (64)

The dockers had struck for a 2s per hour pay rise. A compromise offer of 1s was rejected in a crosshead as a "Useless Trick", and subsequent headlines proclaimed "Dockers Never So Determined" and "Organised Labour Supports The Dockers". The settlement, offering 1s now and a further shilling later, was headlined "IT IS A GREAT VICTORY - Ernest Bevin". The accompanying leader comment supplemented congratulations to the strikers with a restatement of the Herald commitment to the principle of follow-your-leader in trade unionism: "The dockers have, as Mr Bevin says, won a great victory. By following solidly their leaders, who knew so well when to be prudent and when to be bold, they have established their claim to the rise in wages for which they put forward so irresistible a case". (65)

This argument put the Herald firmly in the camp of the centrist mainstream. But it continued to attract suspicion with its attitudes to Communism. This was the year in which the Communists formed the Minority Movement as a pressure group within the unions with the declared aim of "The overthrow of capitalism, the emancipation of the workers, and the establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth through agitation and propaganda for the revolutionary class struggle". (66)

The Herald regarded this as a development worthy of a full column report - as it had seen "Communism Backs Labour: Solid Support in the Election. Policies and Aims", a contribution from CPGB political secretary Thomas Bell as worthy of two thirds of a column during the 1923 election. (67)

But growing suspicion on the movement right of Communism and sympathy with it was shown by a TUC resolution from the Workers Union condemning the extent of the Herald's Minority Movement coverage - which was withdrawn only following Bramley's personal intervention. (68)
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The mismatch between union tolerance of Communism and the Labour Party's progressive exclusion of it continued, with party conference declaring membership of the two parties incompatible. The importance the Herald attached to this was shown by a four-column news report. Its discomfort, as with the government's intent to use emergency powers, was shown by the absence of a leader.(69)

Closer conformity to the party line was displayed in a front-page report later in September when Clynes attacked Communism: "The Labour Party has once again expressed its enduring hostility to Communist methods which seek to subdue all classes by the military dominion of one class in each country", and a leader on the 60th anniversary of the International showed similar conformism: "It can afford to be calm under the stream of abuse which the 'Third International' created by the Russian Communists, discharges at it. It represents the vast mass of workers everywhere, the other represents only a few".(70)

But apprehension of Communist influence at the paper - not unjustified if Fyfe's picture of his deputy Mellor is to be believed - would be a running problem throughout the 1920s.(71)

Ramsay MacDonald's concerns about Communist influence focussed particularly on foreign coverage and Ewer. During 1924 he was also to express concern about the allegiances of Italian correspondent Giglio, whose expulsion combined with the murder of Matteotti to end any lingering strands of faith in Mussolini. Fyfe did not think that Giglio was a communist and, knowing that Ewer was, had good reason to tolerate him. As he told MacDonald, Ewer was the best journalist on the paper, and one of the best in London. He had never put Communist views in the paper and could be subbed if he did.(72)

This was in any case a year when Communist views might have been hard to discern from others on the left. As Andrew Williams points out the movement concensus on the importance of recognising and concluding a trade treaty with the Soviet Union, the contentious foreign issue of the year, extended to confirmed anti-Communist pragmatists like Snowden and MacDonald.(73)
Even so the Herald's enthusiasm for the treaty looked remarkably like a continuing enthusiasm for Bolshevism. The leader on recognition referred to "The only system which could have held Russia together" and paid warm tribute to Soviet envoys Rakovsky and Krassin: "They have been patient, often under great provocation: they have been tactful: they have been amazingly able: they have shown that it is possible to combine the practice of diplomacy with the firm retention of working-class principles". (74)

A clear identification of Labour's cause with Russia as fellow standard-bearers of the working-class was indicated, and reinforced in April when Ewer described the arrival of the Soviet delegates to negotiate the treaty as "The first negotiation between the two working-class governments". (75)

That worldview had been seen earlier in the year on Lenin's death. The coincidence of MacDonald's accession and the railway strike relegated it to third lead, but direct identification of him and his regime as an ally in the struggle was indicated by Ewer's statement that he was "The greatest spokesman, the greatest leader that the working-class has yet known".

Ewer's two-column obituary "Best-Loved Leader of Russia's People: His Work for the Revolution" was summarised by the cross-heads "Wonderful Career: A Terrible Blow: His Will Was Law: World for Workers". The leader, less ambitious in its claims, still called him "Certainly the greatest Russian since Tsar Peter". (76)

This was followed by an unsourced account of his funeral that recalled Herald descriptions of the Poplar revolt. Headlined "On His Comrades Shoulders: Lenin's Return to Moscow: Weeping Crowds: Workers March Hand in Hand" it started by telling of his four mile journey to the station on friends and workers' shoulders, followed by a procession including: "Hundreds of peasants from the villages around whom had walked, 20 miles and more through a Russian winter night, so that they might follow him a last time".

It went on to describe the arrival in Moscow: "No pageantry, no pomp, but line and after line of workers, in their working clothes, marching hand in hand, an endless column. Such a friend as no man has ever had. By the coffin, day and night, passes by the coffin the endless procession of his people, come to look once more upon his face before they lay him there under the Red Wall, among his fellows". (77)
In April the Herald carried Gorkiy's tribute to Lenin as a series, opening with an article called "Why Lenin was loved as a man".(78)

The other major foreign theme was fear of a recurrence of European war, and twice during the year warnings from within the Labour movement - an illustration of the extent to which the party-political themes pervading the paper consistently influenced foreign coverage - dominated the front page. In July ED Morel, secretary of the Union for Democratic Control and MP for Dundee, warned in an interview of the mass production and marketing of arms in Europe, particularly from Austria and Czechoslovakia. Headlined "Europe A Vast Arsenal: The Facts", it was accompanied by a leader calling for action to halt the drift to war.(79)

This was followed in late August by a lead story drawn from the ILP summer school - Philip Baker's description of "incendiary bombs which can destroy an entire town in a day or two and would make the 1914-18 war seem "child's play" in comparison".(80)

In the circumstances MacDonald's attempts to defuse Europe's diplomatic pressure-points could count on particularly loyal support as propagandist needs coincided happily with the desire to reduce fears of war. The abrasive Poincare was still seen as the main obstacle to his hopes, so his defeat at the polls in May was greeted with undisguised rapture. Herriott, his successor, was more amenable and granted his share of the credit when agreement was reached on the evacuation of the Ruhr and the rescheduling of reperations in August, hailed as the "First Real Peace Treaty Since The War". But there was no doubt about the real hero of the hour "It was Mr MacDonald who began the process. His plain-speaking, his friendly expressions, his readiness to give credit for honesty of purpose, induced M Herriott to take the same line. Between them they have wrought a mighty change.(81)

Mighty changes were less in evidence in general news coverage, subordinated even more than usual to the paper's political agenda. But that agenda lent itself to a developing Herald speciality, the radical human interest story. If the standard human interest story beloved of other papers was intended to evoke a range of emotions, the Herald human interest story aimed to evoke anger at injustice and pity for its victims. And politics were never far away, with interest often following a political cue.
Two stories in 1924 - the Vaquier case and the Empire Exhibition at Wembley - illustrate the genre. Murders are always good copy, and it is instructive to compare the case of Jean Pierre Vaquier, tried for the murder of a Surrey publican named Jones, and the other spectacular case of 1924 - the Crumbles Murder. The Crumbles case provided several days of front-page copy, but there was little distinctive about the reports which were in much the same style as any other paper or press agency. The killer, Patrick Mahon, was executed without causing the Herald much apparent regret. (82)

The Vaquier case appeared little different until the Frenchman was convicted and sentenced to death. But he then became the focus for a fresh assault on capital punishment - his victim status based on having been condemned via an unfamiliar language and legal system. The ten-day assault initiated by Herald director Ben Turner - a characteristic political cue for human interest - was sustained by daily updates in the right-hand front-page column. Readers were told that the paper was "Snowed Under By Appeals", that "All Classes Join in Demand for Reprieve" and that "Public Feeling Grows Daily". (83)

It was reported that 17,000 signatures had been received on a petition and that a feature of the heavy postbag was the number urging the abolition of capital punishment, although some wanted the law to take its course. Unhappily for Vaquier Home Secretary Arthur Henderson was with the minority as the banner headline "No Reprieve for Jean Pierre Vaquier" confirmed on 9th August. The Herald had never forgotten where its main loyalties lay - while Turner's Labour affiliation was played up, it throughout presented the appeal as a Home Office matter rather than personal to Henderson, and conspicuously refrained from direct criticism of the Home Secretary. (84)

The Wembley story fitted the Herald's traditional preoccupations and strengths even better. Concern over the high prices of supposedly popular entertainment had surfaced in their 1922-3 campaign on football prices, their one distinctive sporting campaign. And the attack on poor pay and conditions drew on and renewed a "Teashop Slavery" campaign of September, once again casting caterers Lyons in the role of villain. (85)
The assault started within a fortnight of the exhibition’s opening in late April 1924, signalled by an open letter from a Watford reader to the organisers: “Your management must remember that it is the masses who will either make or mar the whole affair. And the masses cannot afford shilling programmes, fourpenny cups of tea or thrills at a shilling a time”. (86)

This cast working people in general as victims of rapacious capitalists, a familiar Herald theme. But the campaign acquired more specific victims and villains on which to focus in the shape of exhibition waitresses and their catering employers in early May - with the political cue coming from Bramley and a threat to withdraw union cooperation following complaints about poor pay and conditions.

A frontpage full column investigation detailing cases of low pay, long hours and reliance on tips were typified by a description of “One white-faced girl.. on the verge of tears as she told me that up to three o’clock yesterday she had made 2d.

“I don’t know whatever I am going to do”, she added “I am in deby to my landlady for the first time in my life since I came to Wembley, Even if, as they tell us, we make plenty of money when the season really starts, it will take it all to clear our debts”. (87)

Similar stories were to run through the summer, with unexpected pay rises at Lyons in July attributed to the Ministry of Labour’s collection of statistics. Lyons reportedly banned their staff from speaking to the Herald and denied claims that Wembley was “seething with discontent” - leading the paper to flourish a crop of letters from employees and ask why so many felt compelled to write to the press. (88)

Other weapons deployed in the attack were cartoons - a front pager captioned “An Exhibit We Would Rather Not See At Wembley”, showed a caged lion, the pun obvious, chewing on bones marked “waitresses”, “sweated labour” and “low wages” - and the juxtaposition of Lyons profits of #665,377 and a 25 per cent dividend with that of a 15/- a week waitress left with 3/- net pay after two customers left without paying. (89)

A final attack later in the summer arraigned Wembley management as a whole and drew on the paper’s deep-rooted anti-militarism after an official with a military background refused to admit a group of women with babies whose tickets had been left behind: “That sort of stupidity, which we associate with the military mind, appears to be enthroned at Wembley. (90)
The paper's ingrained social attitudes could also be seen where the privileged or famous were in the news - not in the social gossip sense, for Way of the World continued in its vein of literate whimsicality, but like Viscount Curzon appeared in court on his 28th driving charge in 16 years. The report of his six-month ban concluded in a rhetorical manner evocative of the paper's view that there were different rules for them and us: "How many common folk would have been permitted to go on for 16 years breaking the law, without having their licenses taken away altogether?". (91)

A similar vein was struck over post boat-race jollifications: "The usual ridiculous riot...the sons and daughters of the 'gentry' were more or less allowed to run riot without any serious interference from anybody".

"The dears I Look at the letting off their high spirits", exclaimed a fashionably dressed woman in Leicester Square as three young men in evening dress dived headfirst through a taxi window. If the trio had been unemployed demonstrators...But that's a different story". (92)

But the Herald was not without its intermittent versions of society news. Just as the Lansbury paper ran periodic references to events and personalities in Poplar, so the official paper found newsworthiness in the families of Labour leaders - particularly those newly dignified with cabinet office. MacDonald's son Malcolm, a student at Oxford, was the subject of a short article in February and the wedding of Arthur Henderson's daughter in July prompted a quarter-column front page story on the arrangements, followed by a front-page picture and two-thirds of a column account of the wedding itself indicating that most of the Cabinet had been among the guests. (93)

Nor was there any dimming in interest in scientific and technological advance. Early experiments with television were reported under the headline "The Miracle of 1924 : Seeing by Wireless Nearly Possibility". Less benign technology was in the news in late May as rival inventors debated the military and pacific uses of "death rays", and the flight of one to France was deemed worthy of a six-column splash on the day when the Commons approved the Budget. But they were essentially a three-day wonder, chiefly useful to new cartoonist Will Hope who ran several drawings with death-ray related themes - notably MacDonald successfully piloting a plane though attack by "Death Rays, of which we have been hearing so much lately". (94)
This reflected the main running technology-related story - that of the advance of flight. While acknowledging potential military uses, the Herald continued to see long-distance pioneers as bringing mass international travel closer. D'Oisy's flight from Paris to Calcutta was hailed: "It really marks a stage in the progress towards air journeys becoming as common as railway or steamship travel. The progress may to some people seem slow, but recollect how many years it took to make railways safe and regular. That is a useful corrective to impatience". (95)

Flights also furnished drama. Squadron-Leader MacLaren's attempt to fly round the world encompassed disappearance in mid-July - the Herald pictured his waiting wife and daughter - reappearance off Japan to days later and final abandonment after being forced down off Japan. This could be treated as a heroic failure - and that was the tone of the report of his welcoming lunch, where Clynes was among the speakers, and a front-page description of "The full and thrilling story of his ill-fated but great attempt to fly around the world". (96)

But the initial response, only four days after the demolition of a British heavyweight vigorously hyped by the press including the Herald, provoked an extraordinary leader on national sporting failings: "For a while one believed in MacLaren's bad luck, but when a main fails time after time, one is forced to look about for a reason.

"As for Bloomfield he ought to play dominoes.He made the British race look silly. Not by beating beaten, but by being fool enough to stand up only to be knocked down". (97)

This was a rare example of sport impinging on the rest of the paper. It existed in a self-contained world, apparently seen as a necessary evil and presented in perfunctory fashion. The closest-ever finish to a football league season - Cardiff City lost the title on a missed penalty - was dismissed in nine lines. It was also isolated in attitude. The Herald, proponent of the working-man's ability to run the country, might have been expected in 1924 of all years to support the professional cricketer's ability to lead England. Yet columnist Titwillow discussed the issue in conventional-wisdom terms that would have brought down leader-column derision if applied to any political, industrial or artistic issue (98).

"In practice I doubt if it would succeed."First it is a well-known fact that a professional is not so apt to give of his best if he is under the command of a brother professional. There is bound to be an element of sub-conscious rivalry between them.
"And a captain's duties do not end on the field. He has a certain amount of social work to do. An England captain on tours abroad is in the position of being a kind of ambassador, and has to attend all kinds of functions and make speeches".

"I do not mean to suggest that a professional of today could not do this part of the work just as well. But I would wager anything that not a single professional cricketer would like to take the task on!". (99)

It may simply be noted that an argument which needed only minor adaptation to be deployed against the viability of Labour governments appeared shortly before the 1924 Gentlemen v Players match in which the professionals, led by the professional Jack Hobbs, defeated the amateurs by an innings of 231 runs. (100)

By contrast reviews continued to provide a continuation of the paper's political agenda by other means - not least through reviews by members of staff. Ewer was to be found reviewing the final volume of the Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy under the headline "Our Share of War Guilt". Endorsing the radical stance of Herald correspondent Philips Price's Germany in Transition he spoke of "A brilliant piece of analytical economics" describing Social Democrat complicity in "The most brutal and unscrupulous system of capitalist exploitation which modern Europe has seen". (101)

Fyfe extracted a ferocious critique of British rule in India from his review of EM Forster's A Passage To India: "If at the end you do not say to yourself 'Now I understand better than I ever did before the problem we have to solve in India' - well it won't be Mr EM Forster's fault". (102)

The formula continued much as before - serious-minded, highbrow and literary. And if the letters page is any guide it continued to enjoy the approval of readers - with the majority of an admittedly small sample of letters printed on the subject arguing, if anything, for greater austerity.
Under the headline "Who Wants Reviews of Novels?" A Elcott of London SW9 hinted that he found the current books pages heavy going by asking for a weekly article summarising the best books. But J Lydon of Liverpool demanded "definite working-class literature" in place of reviews of best-sellers and "Student" of London N22 spoke for the most austere traditions of the self-educated and politically committed with his claim that "The majority of Daily Herald readers find sufficient reading material to occupy their spare time from the vast field of literature which is in some way connected with the Labour Movement".(103)

"Student" was surely overstating the case. Any group as large as the readership of a national newspaper, even an unsuccessful one, is bound to encompass a much wider range of interests. But that this perception of their character should be possible says something about the Herald's continuing problems - not only of winning new readers, but retaining their current ones. And by mid 1924 it was clear that even the existence of a Labour Government could not arrest the law of gravity as it affected the circulation of the Herald once the immediate political excitement of the election and its aftermath had worn off.

In late 1924 the Herald had every justification for looking back on "the best year in our history". But all such evaluations are relative - and it was clear that the best was still not good enough. Lansbury's optimism in February was a consequence of personal temperament and the belief that the existence of a Labour government would keep political interest constantly at the levels that boosted the Herald readership.

But it did not happen. Indeed if the paper's circulation travellers are to be believed, what political controversy there was cost rather than increased readers. Lansbury's report in July epitomised one of the eternal dilemmas of the political paper :"We also hear from our travellers that we lose circulation because people dissent from our presentation of Labour's case. What are known as the Right Wing disagree because we are said to favour the left, while those who are Left say we favour the Right".(104)
The steady rise to 500,000 circulation foreseen in February did not happen. Instead it fell back - dropping below 400,000 during the same month and falling steadily during the year to a little over 350,000 by mid September. Lansbury, in a standard reversion to the view that the paper was owed a living, called the figures "A disgrace to the movement" (105)

Advertising remained relatively buoyant - income of just over £30,000 to mid July was only £1,600 below that for the whole of 1923 with Stephen's Ink, the Gramophone Company (HMV) and Izal Disinfectant among the new accounts. Poyser talked of increasing the column rate, but by August he was pointing to sales resistance from sceptical space buyers and the paper was slipping back into loss. (106)

A fresh bid for Cooperative support had failed with the CWS refusing the Herald offer of a deal exchanging a daily page of Coop news for £40,000 a year financial support. The paper had its supporters within the Cooperative moment, notably the leaders of the London Society. But the June Cooperative Congress voted by three to two not to back the Herald, and instead to start their own daily. (107)

A new Board had taken charge. Members of the government had to resign directorships - Thomas, Gosling, Henderson, Hodge and Clynes left the Board never to return and were replaced by Robert Smillie, Purcell, Ethel Bentham, WH Hutchinson and Robert Williams while Bramley took over Bowerman's place as TUC general secretary. In May Ben Turner took over as chairman, not a move that enthused Fyle who remembered him as "A figure-head with white whiskers whose method of settling controversy I was told (he never tried it at board meetings where we had no controversy) was to take a bible out of his pocket and read it aloud". (108)

Their inheritance was summed up in a report to the TUC which would have been a reasonable description of the paper's situation at almost any time between 1923 and 1930 : "The 'Herald' is by no means the kind of paper which would be, in every sense of the term, a credit to our movement. The management is restricted in finance, business operations are curtailed and several important developments have been postponed pending the accumulation of the necessary capital for the promotion of new plans and contemplated efforts to secure an improvement in the circulation. (109)
The most ingenious means of breaking out of stagnation was proposed by Fyfe and Lansbury in August. Arguing that "just paying its way is no good", they argued that under current conditions it would take years to reach 500,000 - and even longer to accumulate profits for investment. Rejecting a major capital investment as vulnerable to an advertising boycott he argued for taking the Herald out of the Fleet Street jungle altogether and running it as a controlled circulation paper along the lines of labour papers in Germany, the USA and Australia - provided to trade unionists as an addition to their union benefits in return for a weekly levy.

They urged the appointment of a high-powered committee to consider the idea. But it appears to have met with a hostile reception - there is no surviving record of any further discussion. (110)

In consequence the national conferences were - once Bramley had prevailed upon the Workers Union to withdraw their hostile resolution - uneventfully dominated by the Herald's complaints of poverty and the impossibility of providing the paper the movement wanted unless something were done about it.

The line was typified by Lansbury, responding to Congress calls for a Northern Edition: "The only point is the money. We have first got to pay our way. If you make us much stronger in the building up of our circulation, I think that by this time next year we may perhaps be able to do something in that direction. We are convinced as to the absolute necessity of printing a whole edition in the North as well as in London". (111)

It was echoed by Fyfe, in a Labour conference speech recognising that the Herald could be improved in almost all aspects and stressing the movement's responsibility towards it: "What would they think of anybody who saw a ragged man in the street, with his clothes in tatters, unfit to shelter him from the winds and weather, and who went up to him and said "Have you considered buying yourself a nice new suit and a warm overcoat". Almost every question that had been asked has been as to why they had not done something that would cost a great deal of money". (112)
The General Council decided on 16th October to delegate consideration of development schemes to its Finance Committee. The Ragged Man of Fleet Street had in any case to wait while a shorter-term priority was addressed - the General Election, which was called for October 29th. (113)

ix. Content: The 1924 General Election

Ramsay MacDonald was to tell Ben Turner early in 1925: "When people talk about who is to blame for the General Election I have no hesitation in saying that nothing contributed more to our defeat than the policy of the Herald and the way it handled our case". (114)

This credited the Herald with a level of influence it would have hesitated to have claimed for itself, and can hardly have related to the impeccable display of loyalism provided by the paper during the election campaign. But MacDonald's sensitivity to the candid friend mode was clear - and this was strongly in evidence in the run-up to the election.

Two issues dominated this period. The first was the government's planned Russian Treaty. Here MacDonald can have had little to complain of. The Herald hailed the treaty as "A sure step towards restoring activities to the workshops of Britain and bread to Britain's workless" and gave fulsome coverage to a 12-day campaign of pro-treaty rallies in September culminating in a 110 minute oration by MacDonald in Derby. It was reported that Labour had been "Enormously strengthened by the great speech". (115)

The treaty was an agreed item of policy backed by a movement concensus. Not so the arrest of Communist editor JR Campbell on a charge of Incitement to Mutiny on 5th August, authorised by politically inexperienced Attorney-General Sir Patrick Hastings. The Labour left, notably John Scurr, raised the issue in Parliament while the Herald made its view clear by the simple expedient of noting that the act of 1797 being used was the same one that had condemned the Tolpuddle Martyrs. There was no directly critical leader, but the historical reference was calculated to strike a nerve among a readership assumed to know the history of their movement. (116)
When the charges against Campbell were dropped the Herald pictured him on the front page surrounded by cheering crowds and explained that the government had been under 'severe pressure' from the left - naming Maxton, Lansbury, Purcell and Scurr. This may have been true, but the image of an administration prone to surrender to pressure from the left was hardly one that MacDonald wanted to project.

The knife was twisted by a leader pointing to the difficulty of having MacDonald as Foreign Secretary - it meant there was "No effective Prime Minister" and therefore no supervision of colleagues. It pointed to the deportation of Czech pianist Ulman "An act of spiteful tyranny", the Campbell prosecution and Lord Chancellor Haldane's decision to remove a magistrate opposed to paying rates for church schools as symptoms - although its comment that Haldane's blunder was certain to have more unfortunate consequences than the Attorney-General's was spectacularly wide of the mark.(117)

But once the government had fallen over the Campbell case the Herald, having got its hand in with ferocious abuse of the Liberals once they had decided to vote against the government - "Clynes on Asquith's Political Suicide,"The Liberal Suicide","Liberals Sinking Deeper into the Mire" - committed itself as fully to the battle as it had a year earlier.(118)

By 13th October, three days into the campaign, election news was occupying 27 to 28 columns of a 60-column paper - two thirds of the content apart from sport, the serial and advertisements. By 24th October the election was taking 32 columns out of 60. Coverage was strongly upbeat - full of strong candidates, backed by well-organised campaigns based on devoted party workers, making unprecedented progress.(119)

Ecstatic coverage of MacDonald's campaign was not without objective justification. MacKibbin, not a historian easily swayed into undue enthusiasm, quotes Times accounts in describing a tour which "For dramatic interest seemed to some observers to exceed anything since Joseph Chamberlain's Protection Campaign in 1903".(120)

The Herald captured the enthusiasm as he ended his tour in his Aberavon constituency: "It far exceeds the demonstration which was made when he entered his constituency during the last election."
"For miles the Premier's car threaded its way through the crowds; at times it was held up for several minutes and once or twice it seemed in danger of being overturned by his supporters as they pressed forward to see him.

"Rockets and squibs were fired and the people sang "Ramsay is the Man" to the tune of "Men of Harlech". At last the continual pressure of the crowd around the Premier's motor caused so much damage that it had to be abandoned". (121)

The tour ended immediately before the campaign's bombshell - the Daily Mail publication of the "Zinoviev letter" providing apparent proof that the Russians were fomenting subversion in Britain, political dynamite in an election launched amid the Campbell and Treaty debates.

Fyfe recalled disagreeing with MacDonald's view that it was too blatant a forgery to make any impact. But there was little in the Herald's initial response to suggest serious worry - a low-key three column, page three news story written in straight news style and containing denials from Rakovsky and British Comintern delegate Arthur McManus. (122)

The last two days saw fierce front-page rebuttals of the "Red Plot", but the fact that they were forced on to the defensive at this stage was probably more significant than anything they had to say.

Accentuating the positive to the last, the Herald treated the result, a Conservative majority of over 200, as opening an era of straight Labour-Tory conflict and made much of the demolition of the Liberals. (123)

Freed from the necessities of battle, the Herald reverted once more to candid friend mode in passing its verdict on the government. First came the supportive element: "There is no shred of reason for regretting the decision of the Party to take office. There is every ground for satisfaction that Labour did not run away from responsibility, did not shrink from taking on a very difficult and thankless job. Now even Mr Churchill, with all his contempt for his fellow-countrymen's intelligence is ever likely to repeat that silly phrase "Labour cannot govern".
But the conclusion struck a pointed note of candour: "The chief fault of the Ministry was a tendency to be more official than the politicians of the Old Parties and an anxiety on the part of a good many to prove that a Labour Government was no different to any other. That was certainly a mistake. A Labour Government must be different, or there is no need for it to exist. More individuality in matters of minor importance would have fully made up for Ministerial impotence, imposed by the conditions under which they took office, to do more big things". (124)

Westminster had dominated the Herald as never before over the last two years - a stranglehold it would never entirely lose. But with Labour out of office the balance of the paper's attention would now shift towards industry - above all coal - and its own perennially insoluble difficulties.

Conclusion

Insofar as they saved it, the 1923 general election, the subsequent hiatus and Labour's accession to power were a turning point in the Herald's fortunes. But they provided a substantial breathing space rather than the fundamental change in circumstances Lansbury clearly hoped for in February 1924. With energies naturally concentrated on the new demands of power, little was done during the year to address the constraints enumerated in the TUC report. The paper emerged from 1924 as uncompetitive as ever, and with no general election bonus to look forward to for another five years.

The big issues of 1924 were journalistic, those of coping with power. The role of candid friend was a logical compromise between official status and the journalist's instinct to be critic rather than publicist - as much as anything to avert monotony. During this period Fyfe's independent instincts as a journalist and those of his staff as political critics were almost certainly more in accord than in the periods of opposition.
The critical stance of 1924, contrasted with the complicity of the earlier period in opposition, might be taken as a shift left. But there is little indication of any change in underlying principles. Being in opposition presents few conflicts between principle and practice. Government presents them all the time. Members of the government were unlikely to have argued, when in opposition, in favour of the principle of bombing Iraqis, wearing court dress or prosecuting Communist editors. But they did them in power, and these were the flashpoints for the Herald.

The price of independence was MacDonald's undying enmity. The experience of government would strengthen the hand and motivation of those leaders who wanted a tamed paper that would do what it was told.
1. RPTUC 1924 p 266
2. DH 23.1.24
3. Ibid
4. DH 9.2.23, NW 7.12.23. Lansbury memo to TUC 18.7.24 LPDH 358
5. DH 14.12.23, 9.2.24. GM reps 25.11.23 LPDH 244, 15.4.24 LPDH 311
7. DH 9.2.24
8. DH 13.11.23ff, 15.12.23
9. DH 23.11, 3.12.23
10. DH 26.10.23
11. DH 26.11.23
12. DH 28, 30.11, 1, 3.12.23
13. DH 28, 30.11, 1, 3.12.23
14. DH 28, 30.11, 1, 3.12.23
15. DH 28, 30.11, 1, 3.12.23
16. DH 28, 30.11, 1, 3.12.23
17. DH 28, 30.11, 1, 3.12.23
18. DH 28, 30.11, 1, 3.12.23
19. DH 28, 30.11, 1, 3.12.23
21. William Knox in ILP on Clydeside op cit p 160
22. DH 10.12.23
23. DH 11.12.23 Brand op cit p 96
24. DH 11.12.23
25. DH 19.12.23, 5.1.24
26. DH 8.1.24
27. DH 9.1.24
28. DH 23.1.24
29. NW 2.2.24
30. Ibid
33. DH 8.8.24
34. DH 24.1.24
35. DH 12.2.24
36. DH 8.3.24
37. DH 13.5.24
38. DH 28.2.24
39. DH 12.3.24
40. DH 13, 22.2.4.4.24
41. DH 23.1.24
42. DH 21.2.24
43. Fyfe - Seven Selves op cit p 258-60
44. DH 19.3.24
45. DH 24.3, 1.4, 15.8.24
46. Fyfe - Seven Selves op cit p 258
47. DH 10, 13.5, 3.6.24
48. DH 15.7.24
49. DH 16.7.24
50. DH 11.8.24
51. DH 22, 23.8.24
52. DH 25.8.24
53. DH 14, 15.9.24
55. Fyfe - Seven Selves op cit p 258-60
56. Ibid p 261
58. DH 9.2.24. GS Bain, R Bacon and J Pimlott - The Labour Force in (ed)
59. DH 7.1.24
61. DH 22.2.24 Thomas to Bramley 25.2.24, Bramley to Thomas 5.3.24 TUC 788
Wertheimer - Portrait op cit p 81
62. DH 26.4.24
63. DH 22, 24.1.24
64. DH 16.2.24
65. DH 18, 19, 20, 26.2.24
66. DH 24.8.24
67. DH 29.11.23, 24.8.24
68. DH 24.8.24, 9.9.24 TUCGC 4.9.24
69. DH 26.9.24
70. DH 27.9.24
71. Fyfe - Seven Selves op cit p 254
72. Ibid. Fyfe to MacDonald 5.4.24, JRMPRO File 2 Item 62. DH 2.4, 17.6.24
73. A. Williams op cit p 24
74. DH 30.1.24
75. DH 30.1, 14.4.24
76. DH 23.1.24
77. DH 24.1.24
78. DH 17.1.24ff
79. DH 3.7.24
80. DH 28.8.24
81. DH 13.5, 11, 18.8, 9.9.24
82. DH 5, 7, 8, 16, 18, 21.5.24
83. DH 30.7, 1, 2, 4, 5, 7.8.24
84. DH 9.8.24
85. DH football campaign 5.9.22ff, Teashop slavery 12.9.23ff
86. DH 5.5.24
87. DH 13.5.24
88. DH 19, 20.5, 27.6, 11.7.24
89. DH 20.5, 12, 27.6.24
90. DH 16.7.24
91. DH 3.4.24
92. DH 7.4.24
93. DH MacDonald 6.2.24 Henderson 26.7, 1.8.24
94. DH Television 5.5.24. Death rays 26, 28, 29.5.24 Cartoon 15.4.24
95. DH 6.5.24
96. DH 24.4, 17, 19.7, 6, 8.8, 26.9.24
97. DH 11.8.24
98. DH 5.5.24
99. DH 9.7.24
101. DH 27.2, 2.4.24
102. DH 18.6.24.
103. DH 19.3.24
104. GM rep 14.7.24 LPDH 355
106. AM reps in GM reps 14.7, 19.9.24 locs cit
107. Millwood to Bramley draft letter 4.4.24 TUC 788.NW 14.6.24
Fyfe - Seven Selves op cit p 277
109. RPTUC 1924 p 266
110. Fyfe, Lansbury memo to DH directors, GC, LPEC 8.8.24 TUC 788.12
111. RPTUC 1924 p 459-62
112. LPRAC 1924 p 177
113. TUCGC 16.10.24
114. MacDonald to Turner 3.3.25 JRMPRO File 1170:1 Item 801
115. DH 6, 7, 8, 20, 23, 29.9.24
116. DH 6, 7, 9.8.24
117. DH 14.8.24
118. DH 2, 3, 4.10.24
119. DH 13, 24.10.24
120. McKibbin - Evolution op cit p 130
121. DH 14, 15, 16, 21.10.24
122. DH 25.10.24 Fyfe - Seven Selves op cit p 262
123. DH 27, 28, 30.10.24
124. DH 4.11.24
ENDS
Construction, conformity and control: the taming of the Daily Herald 1921-30

Thesis

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Constriction, Conformity and Control:  
The Taming of the Daily Herald 1921-30  
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Ph.D 1993  
The Open University  

Section Five
"From now on the story becomes, by comparison, dull", Foreign Editor Ewer was to write almost a quarter of a century later. From one point of view he was right. The Herald was free both of the threat of imminent closure and of the stimulus of dramatic political events - after elections in three consecutive years, none was now likely until 1929. (1)

But the 18 months between the fall of the MacDonald government and the outbreak of the general strike were to see the Labour movement, with the Herald playing a central role, puzzling over the implications of its brief period in office and preparing for a major confrontation with the forces of capitalism. These, and its own continuing uncompetitiveness, would be the central themes of the period.

1. Goodbye George

Within the Herald it was to be a fractious time as the movement grew more frustrated with its failings - the time had passed when mere survival was achievement enough. These frustrations were reflected in tension within the paper - leading to the final departure of Lansbury and disputes between Fyfe and his staff and directors.

Little changed on the circulation front. The transient nature of the normal election windfall was summarised by Clifford Allen: "The hard fact is that we can't retain circulation even when we temporarily secure it". Circulation was 353,750 at dissolution, peaked on 537,000 on 31st October and was down to 428,000 on December 1st - an improvement of 74,250 compared to the 63,340 rise over the same period around the 1923 poll. By late May 1925 it had dropped to 384,600, showing a pattern of decline remarkably similar to a year earlier, with 1925 figures running consistently 10,000 higher. (2)

Circulation finally stabilised at around 360,000 in the first half of 1926. At the same time the long-suffering Poyser found himself under pressure from the advertising trade: "I was given a bad half-hour after receiving the other day a request for Chartered Accountants Certificate for our sale for the period ending Dec 31st 1925. This came from the Association of British Advertising Agents Audit Bureau. I was able to entertain their secretary, Mr MacPherson, with a few "chestnuts" and can only trust he will be content for an indefinite period. (3)
Such problems are common to all unsuccessful newspapers. But Poyser had also to contend with difficulties specific to the Herald's political character. Following the General Election he reported "A fresh surge of prejudice" and cancellations including Kruschen Salts - whose hyperactive grandfather had been almost as prominent a component of the front page as Ramsay MacDonald. A list of boycotters compiled a month earlier by Lansbury included Gibbs Dentifrice, Lever Brothers, Lyons, Quaker Oats, Ovaltine, Birds, HP and Huntley and Palmer.

Difficulties were further compounded by an anonymous letter writer, blamed for the loss of the Anglo-American account in December 1925. If advertisers thought so little of the paper as an advertising medium that they dropped business at the behest of anonymous letter writers, it was never going to be a secure business proposition.

Enemy action was compounded by political scruples within the movement - in 1925 the TUC passed a resolution that the Herald should "refuse to accept advertisements from firms whose working conditions are known to be unfair", proposed by the Upholsterers as the latest shot in their campaign to stop the Herald taking adverts from HJ Searle and Co of Bromley, subject since 1918 of a dispute about the introduction of female labour.

Early complaints had been rejected on the grounds that the paper could not check the wages and conditions of every firm before accepting adverts, and business priorities were to win again after the TUC vote when the directors concluded "The Daily Herald is faced with tremendous opposition, and as the General Council realises, has to rely for its maintenance for a subsidy from the Trade Union Movement. It cannot yet afford to pick and choose its advertisers". Walter Citrine, for the TUC, accepted this argument but the Upholsterers continued to press their complaint through 1926 and 1927.
Sometimes problems were even closer to home. An avowedly anti-capitalist editorial policy was bound to create periodic upsets. A critical leader about Boots in the last week of 1925 titled "The Old Spirit in Industry" drew a classic howl of fury from Poyser: "I should be glad if you could discourage editorial attacks on known advertisers. The travellers and myself are absolutely opposed to them, for they only make our task harder and the securing of advertisements for the Daily Herald, even in the best of times, is far from easy. I have in mind the pillorying editorially of Boots the Chemists. Firstly they have spent money with us by using our advertising columns and secondly they stock, as you know, hundreds of well known advertised articles. It would be a very serious thing for us if Boots placed pressure on these advertisers, whose goods they sell, and urged them to cease advertising in the Daily Herald.

"Is there not ample scope for editorial vigour in concentrating on capitalism and its attendant evils, without the necessity of referring to individual advertisers". (7)

Evidently not - Poyser was complaining about further attacks on Boots in April. But his department continued to ride its handicaps and keep revenue rising gently. In 1925 income rose 14 per cent from #55,094 to #63,029 - with the Lever Brothers account, seen as crucial for credibility, secured in July - and progress was maintained into the first half of 1926. (8)

Lansbury argued in early 1925 that the Herald must progress, or else "Lose the opportunity to take its place among the other national daily newspapers; it will remain an exotic probably requiring a subsidy again before long". Losses, renewed in the second half of 1924, grew in 1925 totalling #11,882 for the year. This was hardly life-threatening but an irritating attrition of resources available for development. (9)

At the end of 1924 the Herald directors, after calling for estimates from Lansbury, reaffirmed a Northern Edition as their priority but argued for the creation of a Sunday paper in the belief that it would be easier to raise funds by firing enthusiasm for a new project than appealing simply for the extension of an existing activity. (10)
But their logic had no appeal for either Bramley or Henderson. Bramley noted that all proposals assumed increased General Council funding. But with unemployment increasing pressure on the funds of individual unions and decisions from the 1924 widening the responsibilities of the General Council, such money could not be found. Indispensable the Herald might be, but no more than the General Council and its duties. The Finance and Office Committee concluded that the best policy was one of "Consolidating and strengthening the paper as a daily paper, prior to any further extension of liability". (11)

If the Finance Committee minutes are accurate, the directors defied this advice to the extent of deciding in January or February 1925 in favour of publishing a weekly - although there is no other trace of such a decision. But the idea clearly progressed no further, and the paper continued throughout 1925 in much the same form - although with most issues now running to 10 pages rather than eight. (12)

But not under the same management. Lansbury resigned as General Manager on 3rd January 1925, leaving to start Lansbury’s Labour Weekly - a paper that was originally advertised as the Weekly Herald, a title that was dropped after pressure from the Herald. The Herald’s expressions of regret - a leader said that "As long as the Daily Herald lives its name will be coupled in the thoughts of the workers with the name of the great leader who made it" - were to some extent genuine. Fyfe recorded that he had pleaded with Lansbury to continue his Saturday articles, but had been told that he could not manage it on top of commitments to his own paper. (13)

It is possible that Lansbury’s Labour Weekly was not the only reason for his departure. On the day before his resignation, the TUC Finance and Office committee were told that he had told the Labour executive of a #4,000 General Council payment to guarantee a 10 page paper, but that nothing of the sort had happened. Lansbury was to be asked to justify his statement and the issue would be raised at the next directors’ meeting. (14)
But the only surprise was that he had stayed so long. Lansbury was on his own admission unsuited to the disciplines of reporting to a board, and was constantly at odds with them: "The board of directors acted as if any proposal coming from me was sure to be wrong. All sorts of experts were called in ostensibly to inquire what was wrong with the management, conduct and editing of the paper. The result of all this expert inquiry and management after five years is that all the heads of departments who served so loyally under me are still in the same positions. The only change is a new general manager and a new editor", he wrote in 1928. (15)

Lansbury took with him five members of staff including Postgate - and was followed shortly by another old-guard stalwart in company secretary Philip Millwood. Bevin moved acceptance of his resignation. (16)

Lansbury was ironically to get his way over the appointment of a successor. While Fyfe wanted "a thoroughly competent man with plenty of experience", Lansbury said a professional manager would be too expensive and that a director should take over for a couple of hours a day. (17)

One hundred and twenty-three applications were received. Four candidates were interviewed by the Board, including some who met Fyfe's specifications. But the man appointed to the #650 a year post on 11th March was, in Fyfe's words, "A trade union official who knew nothing about newspaper production" - Robert Williams, General Secretary of the National Transport Workers Federation and a Herald director. (18)

Fyfe's disgust was shared by the Typographical Association, whose president JD French protested against the appointment of a "non-practical manager". The appointment looks to have had more to do with the internal politics of transport trade unionism than the needs of the Herald. (19)

Williams had been a dominating figure in transport before the formation of the Transport and General Workers in 1921 and was arguably Bevin's only serious rival for leadership within the sector. His departure doubtless suited Bevin extremely well, but deepened the editor's conviction that his directors were a liability. (20)
He did little to conceal this view - Bevin complained "If suggestions are made on the Board for the editor or anyone else, instead of the suggestions being received with an open mind and examined as to their workability and usefulness, they are met in an entirely wrong spirit". (21)

Nor was his relationship with his staff all it might be. He had never been happy with their quality, complaining that "It is impossible to replace men of inferior capacity by men who would do better work". Williams was to complain about a indiscipline in the office : "It is assumed that because the paper is run under trade union auspices the staff can behave in a manner entirely different to what is expected in commercial houses". (22)

The extent to which staff-editor relationships had broken down was exposed when Hicks, a reporter since 1922, was sacked in April 1925. Fyfe cited earlier warnings, a careless book review and a poor series of articles on Blackcoated workers. But in appealing to the Board, the National Union of Journalists chapel said "The attitude of the chapel has been more than tolerant than some incidents, over a long period, have warranted". (23)

The Board confirmed the sacking, with an extra month's notice to prevent hardship and criticised the speed with which the NUJ had been prepared to contemplate industrial action. But it also extracted from Fyfe a promise to recognise the NUJ in future disputes of this sort. (24)

The appeals procedure was invoked again in 1926 when a reporter named Fox wrote that new printing machines installed by the ultra-patriotic Daily Mail had been bought abroad. Fyfe recalled that it had been passed by veteran libel-catcher WJ Ryan because "He knew the editor dislike the daily Mail". The Mail threatened to sue, the Herald was forced to apologise and a board sub-committee confirmed Fox's sacking. But the NUJ appealed again and, Fyfe recalled "The directors went back on their promise, arranged an arbitration and allowed the customary compromise to be patched up". (25)
But the editor also found himself on occasion defending staff and contributors - when Labour assistant secretary Middleton passed on a Liverpool local secretary’s complaint that their stringer in the city took no interest in local parties and furthermore also worked for the ultra-reactionary Morning Post, Fyfe’s reply betrayed exasperation with the complainants incomprehension of the way newspapers work, with political pressures and perhaps most of all with the politically-motivated staff he had inherited from Lansbury.

"He is a good correspondent. He serves us well. What his politics are, I do not know.

"It is not the slightest use trying to make it a condition that our correspondents should be keen Labour men. As a rule, when we get a keen Labour men he is no good as a journalist, and as a whole good journalists take very little interest in politics". (26)

He took a similar line when the Labour Party’s strongly anti-Communist International Secretary William Gillies passed on a complaint that Prague stringer Frank Krejci was a known Communist - arguing that provided he was a good reporter it did not matter what his politics were. (27)

Whatever Fyfe’s strictures on the journalistic competence of the politically committed, politics remained the Herald’s raison d’etre. A glimpse of a continuing self-image as the guardian of socialism could be seen in a leader page short story by Francis Williams, to be City Editor then Editor in the 1930s. The leader page mix of short notes, stories and features might be dismissed as inconsequential space-fillers had not Fyfe recorded that they were chosen very carefully. He himself read the 30 to 40 that were sent in each day, and a TUC delegate had said that "Page four alone was worth the money". A piece using the paper’s name as a punchline would not have been chosen unless in accord with its self-image. (28)

Called “What the Public Likes”, the story tells of a pub landlord who whose customers like his beer, not knowing that it is watered, because it gives them the illusion that they can hold their drink. The narrator’s memory goes back to a provincial newsroom, telling a news editor of a strike: “And the News Editor: “Learn! They’re not going to learn. Smooth it down my boy, smooth it down. It’s too strong at the moment - go to folks heads. Smooth it down; they’ll like it all the better".
"Water! Water! Why they likes water - only you mustn't let 'em know".

I sighed. "The true philosophy!" I remembered the DAILY HERALD and smiled "But just wait", I said, "Just wait". (29)

But whatever a party paper serves up, it is doomed to be accused of adulteration. Attacks from readers on left and right were an inescapable concomitant of the Herald's role - rather more significant in its implications for editorial independance was the clear disatisfaction of its main financial backer, the General Council.

This should not be interpreted as an attempt to move the paper to the right - the General Council had shifted left in 1924 and the 1925 TUC has been called "The high-water mark of a 'movement to the left'. But the left, as witness Bramley's comments to Brodzky in 1924, was as keen that the Herald should do what it was told as the right.(30)

In January 1925 the General Council asked directors to report on the means by which the paper was informed of the official line. Turner told the 1925 TUC that the directors were looking into "Making the policy of the paper fit the party more than it has done in the last year or two".(31)

But the line was an elusive concept. Agricultural workers leader RB Walker showed that directors were not quite as uncomprehending of the Herald's problems as Fyfe might suggest,saying it "Cannot be expected to speak with any more authority, or any more consistently, on any one issue than the Movement itself does. It is notorious that there are divided opinions on many important questions; and whether we like it or not, this is bound to affect comment etc., in the paper, and make it seem to blow hot and cold,or from the right and the left alternately".(32)

One response to these uncertainties came in an April 1926 leader calling for an agreed Labour programme on which all sections could unite. This concept showed immense faith in the power of reason and the goodwill of the movement, but its incomprehension of the reasons for division betrayed the ethical tradition's lack of analytical sophistication.
The programme would include: "All the planks necessary for the building of Socialism in the shortest possible time. This would, of course, have to be discussed and disseminated by a Supreme Labour Council. Were that course followed, we should be spared passages of unedifying recrimination between leaders and followers, we should not have authority repudiating methods which had the Movement behind them, and we should know where we were". (33)

Utopian millenarianism, the ethical tradition taken to its logical conclusion, remained a recurrent element in the Herald's language - epitomised by its reaction to a decision to allow the staging of a previously banned play by Eden Philpotts. Remarking on everchanging rules of morality in dress and language, it concluded: "Nothing can ever put fair dealing out of fashion, or generosity or comradeship. If more attention were paid to them and less to the shifting 'morals' of the hour, we should make more progress towards the City of God". (34)

Even though Parliament relinquished the utter news dominance it enjoyed under the MacDonald government it was still taken as read that the route to the City of God ran via Westminster. Major debates still commanded front-page leads, while determination to provide detailed reports produced such phenomena as a four-column page two headline "Sugar Subsidy Bill - 3rd Reading" which can have done little to encourage any passing Daily News readers to switch allegiance. (35)

Bracher continued to cheerlead, his efforts epitomised by his summary of Labour's performance at the end of 1925 "The close of the session finds Labour mobilised, united and determined - the most formidable opposition of our lifetime". (36)

MacDonald, though absent for long periods abroad as he recuperated from the exertions of 1924, remained the central figure. Securing him as a weekly columnist during the Parliamentary session was seen as a coup worthy in itself of a front-page banner headline accompanied by a picture of the party leader at his desk, holding his glasses in his hand and giving the distinct impression that he wished both interviewer and photographer would go away.
The Herald had firmly grasped the technique of portraying a series of competent but predictable commentaries - ghost-written following interviews by Ernest Hunter, a former member of his Downing Street staff - as conferring special intimacy with the great. "The purpose of these articles is to keep touch between the Labour Movement and its leader. Mr MacDonald will here reveal his ideas and purposes: he will express views that would otherwise be confined to the narrow circle which can meet him individually."

"He will chat to the wider movement as he does to his friends around the fireside, answer doubts and difficulties and, by frank, homely methods seek to establish valuable contact between a great party and those whom it has placed at its head". (37)

The alleged frankness of the interviews did not extend to MacDonald confiding his view of the Herald. In the month of the first interview he told Herald chairman Ben Turner that the paper was "sloppy, inaccurate, superficial" and that "For a long time the Herald has been a mischievous influence in the party...Nothing contributed more to our defeat than the policy of the Herald and the way it handled our case...If I did not consider it a duty I should no more think of subscribing to the Herald than I would to the Morning Post". (38)

In spite of Bracher's fulsome commentaries on his Parliamentary performances, it is not hard to see the ultra-sensitive MacDonald should have been irked by the Herald. He, as much as the General Council, wanted a paper that would act as a loyal follower rather than a candid friend.

It is not that the Herald moved markedly to the left in this period, or that it was any more critical than it had been during the 1924 Government. But it maintained the view that its responsibility was to the movement as a whole rather than the leadership, and in consequence continued to insist on its right to criticise, to report critics and facilitate debate in which criticism might be aired. This had little appeal for director Clifford Allen - his loyalty to MacDonald outweighing his own role as a leader of the ILP, the main remaining conduit for criticism, when he argued: "A daily is not a place to carry on domestic controversies...on principle I should rule out the vast majority of the parochial controversies which are constantly being run in the DH". (39)
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The Herald's credo found eloquent expression in a February 1925 leader: "In any movement that is vigorously alive there will always be criticism of leaders - often fierce criticism. Men and women who feel strongly are wont to speak and write fiercely. All active members of the Labour Movement are intensely eager for the New Order which we have in view. Every one of them is quick to resent any act which seems to betoken a slackening of effort in pressing towards the New Order.

"There is consequently a perpetual flow of criticism directed against the leaders, against newspapers, against the organisation, against the officials, entrusted with the task of carrying on the fight - which is a real fight, not a sham one - for a change of system.

It went on in a form hardly squaring with Bevin's account of Fyfe's response to critics:"Criticism is always welcomed by the Daily Herald, no complaint is resented. We know that they come as friends, we know that such keen interest as they take is the lifeblood of the Labour Party.

"The leaders must know that, too. It would help if they sometimes said that they know it. There must be a continuous interchange of views between them and the rank-and-file. If there were not, the Labour Party would soon become like the old parties. Its energies would be sapped. Only when Labour leaders are not keenly criticised will the Labour Party be in a bad way". (40)

But MacDonald could hardly be expected to welcome the leader comment on his re-election to the leadership. Although headlined "A Wise and Indeed Necessary Choice" it contrived to suggest that his detractors were better informed than his supporters: "Whatever criticism there is of Mr MacDonald's leadership is confined to a small circle who follow events closely and know something of what goes on behind the scenes. There has been room for criticism. It has found voice from time to time in these pages. But all who go about the country know that Mr MacDonald has a very firm hold upon the mass of Labour supporters"
It went on to repudiate MacDonald's pursuit of respectability at all costs via the standard tactic of coding its view through unidentified critics: "There are many among the Labour MPs, and many outside the House of Commons, who think that the late Government should have approached its task in a different spirit. That it should have emphasised less its likeness to other Governments and more its unlikeness to the old Party combinations. That it should have stood more stiffly by its principles and undertakings".

The conclusion endorsed the right to criticise in rather more ringing tones than it did the leader: "When all allowances have been made for his critics, who are moved by none but the highest motives and by devotion to the Cause, he remains a great figure and arouses real enthusiasm. He will lead his party all the better now that he has been told openly of certain causes of discontent." (41)

And the critics continued to find a voice in the Herald's columns - sometimes in invited contributions from movement leaders to the news columns, on others an essentially rank-and-file letters column debate arising out of an item in the paper. Debates were not always on party issues - those aired in the year up to the General Strike included the composition of a Socialist Ten Commandments, the wisdom or otherwise of gambling and the essential requirements for happiness. (42)

But politics predominated - within days of the election defeat readers were disputing how far blame could be laid on the Communist Party, and echoes of government were seen in early 1925 when one of Lansbury's final columns catalysed a debate about the reaction of Labour governments to strikes in "essential services". (43)

The decision to facilitate an argument on this issue by inviting contributors from a range of leaders was bound to look unfriendly to MacDonald as it gave the left opportunities to attack his government. Clynes put the government line vigorously - saying that the choice was "govern or go", that he would prefer not to intervene at all in disputes, and that where this was unavoidable the government's role should be neutral." (44)
But the debate had taken its cue from Lansbury's view that government should have taken over the affected industry and payed the wages and conditions demanded pending a public inquiry - and that in failing to do this in the transport strikes it had failed workers aspirations to a better standard of life and missed the chance to break a private monopoly. (45)

It also facilitated TUC chairman Swales' view that if Labour governments did not act differently they were a waste of time, Wheatley's assertion that denial of the right to strike in 'essential industries' was a form of industrial servitude and the Communist Pollitt's demand for the resources of the state to be placed at the disposal of the workers. (46)

But there were limits to the Herald's endorsement of free and frank exchanges within the movement - and they were reached in March 1926 in a vicious spat between JH Thomas and AJ Cook. Having exercised its own freedom of inquiry and expression in printing Thomas' attack on Cook on the front page then despatching a reporter to get Cook's reply, it chose not the print the letters attacking its actions: "The idea in the minds of most of our correspondents is that we should disregard our function as a newspaper and suppress anything with which we do not agree."

"Such intolerance, such intemperance of language, such incomplete conception of the duty of a newspaper, do great harm to the cause which they, and we, have at heart". The leader spoke of "A growing temper of narrow sectarianism in the ranks of Labour which is bound to have a damaging effect". It seems unlikely that the suppressed letters contained anything more vicious and damaging than the ugly exchange between the leaders of two major unions that the Herald chose to air. (47)

If emphasis on debate was calculated to anger the leadership, so was coverage of parliamentary rebellions - among the deepest-rooted of MacDonald's belief was that the Parliamentary Party should conduct itself according to accepted rules and in a disciplined manner.
The Herald leader ducked the party discipline issue when Clydesider Davie Kirkwood protested against a #15,000 grant to finance a trip to South Africa and Argentina by the Prince of Wales, but two columns of front-page coverage plus extensive letters page debate, almost unanimously pro-Kirkwood and critical of leaders who, other than Henderson, refused to back him showed where the paper's heart lay. MacDonald's comment that "If the Socialist and Labour press had given as much attention to the Geneva Protocol as to the Prince of Wales there would be no need for putting conscientious objectors to jail in 1950", betrayed undoubted fury.(48) But the rebuke had little effect. In April 1926 13 Labour members including Lansbury, Scurr and Wheatley occupied the division lobby in protest against a government guillotine. On this occasion front-page reports and back page pictures of all 13 were accompanied by a leader justifying their action.(49)

A more significant challenge to the established order was contained in the ILP's Socialism In Our Time programme. Richard Price points to the ILP as the only group providing a significant intellectual challenge within the party after 1923. David Marquand sees the programme the founding point of Labour's postwar economic management, but at the time its Living Wage proposals, based on the underconsumptionist theories of JA Hobson, were a challenge to the orthodoxy epitomised by Philip Snowden and a symbolic issue used by the left to attack MacDonald. (50)

The Herald endorsement placed it, intentionally or not, in opposition to the leadership. It said in 1925 "What is needed is a new theory of industry based on the idea of service. And it is with that new theory and its operation that the ILP has been concerning itself at its conference".(51) When the programme was issued in 1926 it was welcomed as "A big programme, but one for which we believe the Labour Party is ready. The ILP gives a useful and heartening lead. If a policy of this kind can be agreed upon, the year which begins today will indeed be memorable in history". When the ILP's right to develop alternative policies was questioned, the Herald called them as "a consistent and legitimate development of the party's work and policy" and regretted that neither MacDonald nor the unions had endorsed it.(52)
While the TUC was moving left, Labour was completing the process of excluding Communists. Here the Herald's view of Communists was hardening - arguing that "An energetic Left Wing of a constitutional organisation is a very different thing from a body of people who denounce peacable action as a back number" and that "The cleavage between the Labour Party and the Communist Party is one of principle which expresses itself in the methods to be employed to achieve a New Order of Society". (53)

The subsequent juxtaposition of an advertisement headed "That Flatulence" with the headline "Labour Conference: Closing Debates" was more sub-editorial mishap than editorial comment, but the Herald's post-exclusion leader was unenthusiastic, turning on a bureaucratic appeal to rules and unity rather than vigorous advocacy of the official policy.

The strong implication was that while the head backed exclusion, the heart was divided.

Newspapers are complex organisms, few more so than the Herald, and it is possible to see this leader as a dialogue between different points of view within the paper. The common Herald technique of quoting unidentified but numerous sceptics in order to signal disquiet without outright dissent was put to use: "By many members of the Labour Party this decision, as was made obvious in the debate, will be regretted. They fear heresy hunts: they point to the incessant work of the Communists in the struggle against capitalism as a definite set-off to any differences of principle; they regard it as an obstacle to a united movement. To them we would say that the decision has been made by the governing authority of the Labour Party, that it carries the imprimatur of that authority, and that the primary requisite of the moment is that decisions by that body should be accepted by all who belong to it" (54).

But there were to be no such equivocations shortly afterwards when a dozen leading Communists were prosecuted for Incitement to Mutiny. Coinciding closely with the hijacking of a Herald van by a group of fascists, and the Director of Public Prosecutions decision merely to bind them over, the paper's reaction showed that however far it and the Labour leadership had accepted most institutions of the state as socially neutral, this tolerance did not extend to the courts and the legal system. (55)
The two stories dominated November 1925. Arguments over the van incident were neatly summarised by the writer Arnold Bennett who said “I would like to know what would have happened if a gang of Communists had help up a Morning Post van and treated 8,000 copies of the Morning Post as the 8,000 copies of the Daily Herald were treated”.

Ramsay MacDonald thought the DPP's action “Disgraceful” and “Outrageous” while the Herald management complained of “organised reticence” by the Newspaper Publishers Association - although the circulation department saw the potential benefits, running an advertising campaign suggesting potential readers might like to find out why the paper was worth stealing.

While the Herald ran the story for rather more than it was worth with a succession of front-page splashes reflecting the belief that readers found an essentially internal manner of unlimited interest, it was a ten-day wonder. The Communist story had much wider resonance.

The initial response was in fact ostentatiously careful to avoid comment while the case was before the courts - allowing an attack on Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks, a particular butt for his hardline style, for referring to the “arrest of a certain number of notorious Communists” in a speech to, of all unlikely audiences, the Hounslow Amateur Dramatic Society.

Reports of the hearings were similarly circumspect, though their copiousness, references to the deluge of letters and resolutions of protests and lists of those, such as Lansbury, who were standing bail were a clear indicator of sympathies. But the shackles came off once the defendants had been jailed. The Herald's line was overtly pro-free speech rather than pro-Communist, but it clearly identified the defendants as working-class martyrs in its comment that they "chose prison rather than abandon their faith", and identified with them in their plight in a leader headlined “Whose Turn Next?” that argued “This rusty antiquated weapon can be turned against the Labour Party and the leaders of the Trade Unions. And will be so turned very soon if Mr Baldwin's Masters, Jix and the rest, have their way”.

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It could comment in this mildly overheated manner confident in the knowledge that the 
movement leadership as a whole was backing the campaign for an early release. Underpinning 
the Herald analysis of the entire case was the view that British justice was class-biased - a 
view made explicit in a leader noting the parallels with the Ulster rebels of 1913: "Because Mr 
Asquith was in power and the offenders belonged to the Ruling Class, into which he had managed 
to climb. When the same thing is done by poor men, men of the class which has for so long been 
rulled, the case is altered. Yet there are those who still deny that there is a class war!".(60)

Communism and the possibility of class confrontation were never to be very far away in 
industrial coverage in a period dominated by the coal crisis and its eventual consequence, the 
General Strike. The Herald's attitudes to Communism remained an object of suspicion for the 
right: "Is the Daily Herald to be the property of the Minority Movement", asked Brown of the 
ISTC at the 1925 TUC, implying strongly that it currently was.(61)

This was patently unfair. The Herald did give full coverage of Minority Movement events - in 
January 1925 reporting the dramatic opening of their conference when chairman Tom Mann 
pointed to a portrait of Lenin and said that it was a year since his death: "Immediately the 590 
delegates rose to their feet and remained standing while the funeral march was played".

And it printed the blistering invective of James Larkin: "The hope of the working classes of 
the world lies in Russia. If the Clyneses, the Thomases and the MacDonalds had remained true to 
the revolutionary fervour they used in the old days, it would be a different story today. We 
might have had the working-class in power".(62)

But it was also prepared to give space to attacks on the Minority Movement by Clynes and 
Thomas, and argued that the howling down of Thomas at a railwaymen's meeting was "totally at 
variance with the spirit of the movement" and to criticise advocacy of revolutionary violence, 
arguing that "A rising of the people, if it took place - we do not see any signs of it at present - 
would make things worse instead of better".(63)
Critics also noted the space given to the speeches of miners leader AJ Cook, the MM's most prominent union supporter. He was covered four times in eight days, twice on the front, during March 1925. But as Middlemass has argued "The history of trade unionism in the 1920s resolves around the perpetual crises of the coal miners". The MFGB, around one fifth of the TUC membership, were building up to a dispute that would embroil the whole movement and Cook, charismatic, quotable and an indefatigable speaker at a time when speech reports were the staple of political and industrial coverage, was secretary of the MFGB.(64)

The momentum of the coal crisis built up through the first half of 1925. The Herald argued that either reasonable behaviour by the owners or nationalisation could avert the crisis, but never concealed a belief that all-out conflict was likely. In line with its conviction that government was an instrument of the owners - reinforced by periodic evidence of preparations for a "national emergency" - it argued that "the attack on the miners is plainly part of a concerted new offensive by the employing class". A consistent Herald line had been that the employers' offensive must be met by better Labour co-ordination, so it welcomed the announcement in mid 1925 of an Alliance of railwaymen, engineers, miners and transport workers as "One of the Most Hopeful Events of our Time".(65)

Coverage, once the owners had announced a lock-out from 31st July, stressed the miners' case in terms drawn from the ethical, humanitarian tradition: "No one who thinks of industry not in statistics, but in terms of flesh and blood, can be in doubt as to the rightness of the Miners decision yesterday to reject the owners proposals. Nor can anyone who understands all this may mean underrate the gravity of the situation.

"The men will stand firm. They are lights for life, a life that is worth living, not a mere existence of toil, existence and semi-starvation.

"They have declared their solution to the Coal Problem to be a national system under national control. That solution has been approved by a Royal Commission. Let the government quickly adopt it. There is no other".(66)
The depth of coverage left no doubt of the gravity of the situation. But though the Herald was prepared for a fight, it was not spoiling for one. Headlines as crisis loomed in the last 10 days of July were noticeably short of polemic: "Mineowners Pressed To Withdraw Demands", "Coal Crisis; Labour's General Staff in Command", "Government Meets Mines and Mineowners", "No Coal Imports if Miners are Locked Out" and "Premier Conducts Long-Distance Parleys" - with only the references to "demands" and to the General Council as the "General Staff" betraying its sympathies. (67)

Not until Stanley Baldwin called for all workers to take a pay cut to put industry back on its feet was the semblance of objectivity dropped - the news story running "In a flash this Premier, whose name is associated with one of the big coal and steel companies of Great Britain, thus revealed himself and threw down a challenge to the whole Labour Movement". Baldwin, the accompanying leader asserted, had shown "The mind of an owner. he cannot take any but an owner's point of view". (68) MF

With the lock-out only a day away. The Herald sought to mobilise its readers on the miners' behalf, in two oddly contrasting appeals reflecting diverse elements within the paper as much as the leader on Communist exclusion. One showed hints of the old Lansbury touch in using language that identified readers and paper as a single body: "We all have a duty to the Miners...We can all state their case...We can all plead for sympathy for them". The other, noting a statement by movement leaders, was imperious, impersonal and treated the readers as abstractions rather than individuals in its invocation of the established totems of union solidarity, discipline and trust for leaders: "It is more than an appeal; it is a definite Trade Union instruction for, and on behalf of, powerful and well-established organisations, bearing the signatures of tried and trusted leaders and representatives". The indirect address was accentuated in a conclusion pointing to the Herald as the one paper that would support the miners: "Will our readers therefore constitute themselves a voluntary army of canvassers in order to point out these really self-evident facts to those who have hitherto placed their individual whims and caprices before the duty they owe to themselves and their dependents". (69)
But the government caved in, offering a one-year subsidy to the coal industry to avert the lock-out. Evoking still clear memories of "Black Friday", the Herald hailed "Red Friday" - a label that has gone into the historic record - as the greatest victory in Labour history, won by the Herald's values of trade union discipline and solidarity.

Baldwin and the owners had been "forced to yield by the forces of organised Labour standing solid behind the Miners, prepared to make common cause with them, no matter what sacrifice...That was what won the victory - the Solidarity of Labour, and if it chooses Labour can use this giant's strength to gain everything on which its heart is set.

It concluded "So, successful in the first round of what will be a long tussle, Labour moves forward full of confidence and hope. Black Friday can now be forgotten. Red Friday has washed it out".(70)

But even in the euphoria and relief of victory there was a realisation that the main battles still lay ahead and the government subsidy was a delaying tactic. By 10th August the Herald was warning readers of this, and in its conclusions allying itself with those on the left arguing for an industrial showdown: "For the next nine months, Mr Wheatley has said "The workers must prepare on a new scale and on new lines for the greatest struggle in their history."

"There is the whole thing in a nutshell".(71)

iv.Content;Foreign

Foreign coverage also reflected a significant case - in this case the more recent setback of the loss of the Russian treaty through defeat at the General Election. The circumstances of the defeat served to reinforce still existing instinctive sympathies towards the Russian revolution - and with Ewer in charge such tendencies were not going to be restrained.

Nor was any check likely from the TUC. As Williams notes the left still dominated international debates, with the right concentrating on home pay and conditions. This was reflected by a TUC delegation who reported back from Russia in late 1924 with an enthusiasm in full accord with the Herald line: "Labour's Russia Policy Justified" was the headline followed by massive coverage of the publication of their report in February 1925 under the six-column heading "Where The Workers Are The Ruling Class".(72)
It was greeted as burying "fantastic fictions" of reigns of terror and starvation. The leader commented "Russia has settled down after its upheaval and...the benefits which the change of system has conferred on the workers decidedly outweigh any temporary disadvantages brought by it to them or to other classes of the community". (73)

That self-image as the paper dispelling myths put about with malicious intent by the capitalist press was in evidence again in April when Tomsky led a Russian union delegation to Britain in April. Press attacks on the delegation's credentials as working men were met with a story headlined "Who the Russian TU Delegates Really Are: Reply to Dope Press Attacks". It reported that they were "Workers All" come to make "businesslike efforts to clear away, by direct discussion, the difficulties which hamper the solution of the greatest of working-class problems - international unity". (74)

British Labour had no doubt that this unity should include the Bolsheviks and argued for their inclusion in the International Federation of Trade Unionists. The spectacle of a their expelling communists at home while supporting them internationally was too much for the IFTU which in October 1925 attacked its British affiliates for "Asking other countries to do something that she herself, quite rightly, refuses to do". (75)

But the Herald, more at home with contradictions between party and TUC policy, said the IFTU was suffering from a "strange confusion of mind" and that "To suggest that because we do not want civil war in Britain we ought not to have anything to do with the inhabitants of a country which has been through a revolution by force is, still putting it mildly, illogical." (76)

Purcell, president of IFTU, dismissed his European counterparts as "Far too much under the control of politicians of the Social Democratic Parties" and the Herald happily endorsed his line - approvingly quoting British delegates to the Socialist International as "moderating the fervour" of anti-Bolshevik factions. The vote for a single International at that year's TUC - the decision most symbolic of the leftward lurch - was given front-page coverage: "TUC's Great Shout of Agreed" was splashed across six columns and the plea for a united body reiterated in a leader in December. (77)
This enthusiasm was not purely ideological. One reason why Bolshevism had become so acceptable to the habitually hardheaded TUC was the belief, held even by right-wingers, that increased trade with the largest country in Europe could ease the depression and reduce unemployment. The Herald made the connection explicit in a news story under the headline "Ports That Want Russian Trade: Unemployment In The Humber Towns; Position Becoming Worse", and continued the theme in several subsequent stories. These included the discovery that banks were refusing credit for a #5m machinery order in spite of a Russian official's comment that "If we could get it we would prefer British machinery". True to its tendency to be freer with comment on the foreign pages, the Herald story noted "The bankers give credit freely for dealings with other countries. Their refusal in this instance constitutes a blockade against British trade". (78)

It remained an article of faith that western, and particularly British, governments shared this desire to do Russia down. The Berlin correspondent reported that the British government was leading an anti-Bolshevik campaign more intensively organised than at any time in the last two years. (79)

But assumptions of chicanery in British foreign policy were not confined to Russian stories - when Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain showed apparent sympathy to Italy's colonial ambitions, Slocombe reported from Paris that "It is taken for granted that Britain has now become the father confessor of Italian Fascism in Europe, and so sponsor of Mussolini's ambition of an imperialist colonialism". (80)

Such assumptions naturally served to reinforce the Herald's deep-rooted and longstanding anti-imperialism. Ireland, India and Egypt - battlegrounds and priorities throughout the paper's history, continued to command attention. The fight against British rule in Ireland and India was given a neat new combined turn when Indian journalist St Nihal Singh was commissioned to write a long series of features on Ireland, concluding the first "Youth at the Helm" with a comment that was doubtless intended to apply as much to India as to Ireland: "These young, inexperienced men are managing Irish affairs far better than they were conducted by the wiseacres in Whitehall" (81).
Zaghlul Pasha, Egyptian Nationalist Prime Minister, had been a Herald favourite for his robust anti-imperialism since the period immediately after the war. When he was driven out of office following the assassination of Sir Lee Stack, Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, Ewer's front-page story drew an unambiguous anti-imperial message.

"Egypt has in fact been compelled to exchange a government headed by a great popular leader, and supported by the overwhelming majority of the elected representatives, for a Government headed by a gentleman acceptable to Lord Allenby". Headlines such as "Back To Policy of Persecution; Egypt Now Virtually Governed By Martial Law", drove home the same line. (82)

The Herald continued to be far more at ease with this sort of story than the human interest or scandal story beloved of its commercial rivals. Such stories were seen as not only pointless but downright damaging, diverting the attention of readers from things that matter. This view of the human interest story as an opiate found expression in a leader "Dope - à The Reason Why" explaining its sparse coverage of Lady Cathcart's excuse from the United States for being guilty party in a divorce:" We do not of course, give prominence to the matter. The Capitalist newspapers treat it as the most important news of the day. It is important to them. So long as the British nation can be doped in this way, so long the present system will last. They are getting all the advantages they can from the fact that the Englishman "dearly loves a lord". (83)

Editor Fyfe recognised popular taste for human interest. In early 1926 he told the Postmaster General's committee on broadcasting:"What the mass of newspaper readers required was amusement rather than information of a serious character. They wanted something to occupy their attention, while they were travelling to and from work.

"What they liked were the spicy little bits, attractively displayed, which they got on the principle news pages". (84)

And the paper always contained a mass of short items drawn from court reporting and other agencies - a typical news page on 24th April 1926 carried 26 items including coverage of a slander action between an actress and a producer, of complaints at restrictions on women students at Oxford, a honeymoon couple's double suicide, the imprisonment for fraud of a tax inspector and a bulletin on the baby princess. (85)
But it still appears to have regarded non-political news items as fillers rather than important in their own right. It is hard to know what else could account for the extraordinary front page of March 19th 1926. Potential items included a Commons debate on the sweated trades and the aversion of a national engineers lockout. Maidstone Grammar School's production of Macbeth and Swaffield Road LCC School Wandsworth's Twelfth Night may well have merited the front page of the local weekly - their appearance on the front of a national daily is inexplicably bizarre even by the Herald's standards.

What it continued to do was develop human interest-type stories that fitted its political agenda. While few in this period showed the staying power of Wembley or the Vacquier case in 1924, the Herald made copious use of juxtaposition - contrasting for instance the alleged goodwill of Christmas with evictions on Clydeside and the opening of Royal Ascot with a 43,000 increase in the registered unemployed. Ascot pictures were captioned "Evidence that some people, at any rate, have quite a lot of money to spend" and the statement that "While official figures were revealing the increasing suffering of the working class, "Society" was flaunting its wealth, mostly unearned, at Ascot."

Wembley-type pay and conditions inquiries continued - a particular coup was the discovery that the Junior Constitutional Club, a Conservative institution, was a poor payer. An April 1925 series on blackcoated workers under a succession of headlines such as "The Early Start, the Frugal meal and a Long Day's Work" was tied to a push for union organisation and was said to have attracted "widespread interest", although Hicks, the reporter responsible, was sacked for poor work shortly afterwards.

None of the year's murders inspired the excitement of the Vacquier case, but a campaign in Hull for the repreive of William Smith, rejected by Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks in the face of a 90,000 signature petition, showed that one advantage of being in opposition was the freedom to personalise such campaigns. Henderson's refusal to repreive Vacquier had been treated as a departmental rather than a personal matter. The loss of Smith's appeal was headlined "Home Secretary Refuses a City" and reported "The news of the decision was received in Hull with incredulity which rapidly gave way to bitter indignation."
But there was interest in "new categories of crime" - notably the exploits of motor bandits. It could be argued that 1925 was the year in which the Herald finally awoke to the existence of the motor car, although not yet as something its readers were likely to own. The success of the Motor Show was quoted as proof that "The comfortable classes of this country are doing very well indeed and are provided plentifully with money". With this in mind the Herald reported the car more as a killer than a creator of freedoms - with consistent coverage of inquests and leaders with headlines such as "The Moloch of the Road". (90)

Air travel was still at the level of scientific progress rather than of consumer goods, so the Herald went on enthusing about fresh exploits - its enthusiasm for the technology going so far as to make its response to Cobham's flight to Australia mildly ungenerous to the aviator: "It is the aeroplane rather than the pilot which is the hero...proves that aeroplanes can be relied upon with vastly greater confidence than could be placed in them a few years ago". Even after the Paris Mail crash in late 1924, which killed eight, the paper was convinced flight would "become commonplace". (91)

This was a better prediction than its reaction to the new craze of crossword puzzles. The Herald believed "Cross words will pass. We shall be bored by them and seek out new inventions. But the passion for solving puzzles, for unveiling mysteries, for probing the unknown, is the enduring curse and glory of mankind". (92)

This was a matter of preference rather than an absolute principle, and in a spirit of pragmatism the paper overcome its distaste to the extent of providing a more or less regular puzzle from the start of 1925. The first was called "The Swastika", a symbol which had still to acquire its subsequent connotations, and with a typical Herald touch an Esperanto crossword was carried in February 1925. But it clearly did not love its new feature and was convinced it had found a more palatable alternative in "Labour limericks", carrying a political message, in October - cheerfully reporting on the 21st of the month that "Only a few readers regret the passing of the cross-word". That entertaining puzzles were likely to outlasted political messages in popular appeal was a lesson that the Herald had still to learn. (93)
Sport continued in its hermetic way, but two cricket stories broke into the news pages as lead item. Heavy coverage of Jack Hobbs' record 126th century reflected both Hobbs' status as a national institution and the lack of serious political stories in August, but the outburst by Yorkshire president Lord Hawke against the possibility of a professional ever captaining England became a politically-angled news story in its own right. It ran on the front for three days, with a leader pointing up the wider implications that had been invisible to Titwillow in dismissing the possibility of a professional captain a year earlier, noting that while Hawke had "stone-age views", they were no joke as plenty of people with similar viewpoints were to be found in positions of power and influence. Proof that on occasion sports coverage did reflect the rest of the paper, was the letter congratulating the Herald on becoming the first paper to abolish the amateur-professional distinction in cricket scorecards. (94)

vi. A Chorus of Disapproval.

But congratulations were in limited supply from the movement leaders on whose continuing support the paper depended. By the time of the 1925 TUC the movement had owned it for three years, and put in close to £150,000 since the start of 1922. It was no longer in imminent danger of closure, making supporters less forgiving of perceived defects. In consequence the Herald session at the 1925 TUC was dominated by editorial issues rather than previous financial considerations. (94)

Support was committed until 1928, but if the paper wanted to do better than survive, union finance would be needed for development. The mood at the 1925 TUC indicated that it was unlikely to get it. Doubts were summed up by the resolution from the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation to refer back the Herald section of the General Council report, saying "If that is the best effort in Labour journalism, then the sooner the General Council get out of this business and leave it to the amateurs, the better for us". (95)
Even the ultra-loyal Turner, who had defended the paper in correspondence with MacDonald, conceded that the directors were "Not at all satisfied that we have got as good a paper as we ought to have". Bevin had some sympathy with the critics, but was not prepared to see the paper attacked in open Congress, and said "When you tell me it ought to represent Trade Union opinion, perhaps you will have to have a committee to decide what Trade Union opinion is". He argued that the staff had to be trusted to do their jobs, and only checked if they were not carrying out proper policy. Nobody had yet clarified their criticisms, which showed a "nasty pin-pricking attitudeΩ rather than recognition of the paper's difficulties.(96)

Duly flattened, the resolution was voted down. But the issues it raised were already under consideration at Board level. In July a sub-committee of Turner, Bevin, Allen and Ethel Bentham had been set up with the aim, as Turner put it, of "Seeing if we cannot make the policy of the paper fit the party any more than it has done during the past year or two". In meetings before conference they had questioned the quality of industrial coverage, recommended that news and speeches should be reported without running comment and, in a shot across Ewer's bows, called for international policy to reflect General Council and party executive decisions.(97)

The group were asked to produce memos suggesting editorial improvements in the paper - these were written in September though not put to Fyfe until two months later. Bevin was concerned about sensationalism in industrial reporting, comment-larded news reports and an indistinct political line. He commented "If one went away to a place where the DH was the only procurable paper and returned after a period one would be out of touch".(98)

Turner's disconcerting stream of consciousness consisted largely of suggestions of movement leaders who might contribute while RB Walker wanted a 12 page paper, decent pictures and the maintenance of literary and review coverage. Ethel Bentham shrewdly noted the conflicting demands on the Herald: "A small paper with limited resources has to fulfil two different functions - that of the ordinary daily newspaper and that of the organ of the movement". At the moment it was doing neither well - a problem exemplified by failure to report Sir George Newman's pro-National Health Service speech at the opening of the MacDonald Memorial Clinic, although it had carried Ramsay MacDonald's remarks. She argued that, with other news sources available, it should concentrate on the movement role.(99)
In reply Fyfe argued that most criticisms reflected an undersized and underfunded paper, that comments in reports were an old and intractable problem and in reply to Dr Bentham's complaint revealed one of the constraints on any party editor: "We were bound to report the Leader of the Party and had no room for more, even if the agency had supplied more".(100)

Turner, Bevin, Bentham and Walker all saw the Herald as above all else a Labour paper, and did not question that role. Clifford Allen's seven page diatribe called for an entirely different approach, taking the Herald closer to the style of its commercial rivals.

It is easy to miss the significance of this critique amid Allen's extraordinary vituperativeness. He was close to MacDonald, who considered the memo "excellent" and he had just lost his battle against the Clydesiders for control of the ILP. Both will certainly have fuelled his venom against leftish influences.(101)

He called the paper "a semi-minority movement conspiracy...ungenerous and unBritish...littered with Communist and minority dodges" - still working in the spirit of former proprietors "Who lifted their eyes to heaven with brotherly love on the tips of their tongues and fraternal hate on the tips of their tongues".

MacDonald's influence was evident in his advocacy of a loyal follower role: "It is its duty to hearten, not to warn; to inspire confidence, not watchfulness". The staff should "give up thinking it is the conscience of the Movement" and "remember that the elected leaders must be allowed to know best what the Movement wants". Internal movement controversies, giving too much space to minority points of view, should be minimised.

He called for the removal of Communists or "strategically retired Communists" from important positions on the staff - singling out Ewer, another MacDonald bête noire: "Here has been called on the Movement the biggest bluff I can remember. He should be removed at once".(102)
If the political voice was MacDonald's, the analysis of the paper's main failings echoed Philip Snowden's six-year old critique of Labour press failings - too much overt politics: "We advertise ourselves as a Labour Daily when all the time we want to be considered as an attractive newspaper ...there should actually be less inches of Labour matter and less Labour headlines in the DH than in other papers, simply because the public is especially sensitive in thinking of us as a propaganda paper. Labour propaganda and Labour's point of view should only be introduced into our columns when it is justified on its merits as news...our eyes should always be set on the general reader, who does not want "doing good" but wants a bright general newspaper". (103)

The tone doubtless contributed to the surprise with which Fyfe reacted - saying that Allen had given no previous indication of his views in board meetings or otherwise and casting serious doubt on his day-to-day knowledge of the paper by pointing out that his demand for the removal of the crowing cock masthead had been implemented more than a year ago.

And he rejected Allen's main thesis: "It is quite impossible that a paper exists in order that the Labour point of view may be represented in the Press should serve up its news and comments exactly as the Daily News and Daily Mail do. If it did, what need would there be to keep going?" (104)

But the Allen critique, developed here for the first time, was to exert increasing influence as the Herald continued to struggle through the 1920s. So too would Fyfe's call for an insurance scheme. And even in the short-term this Herald sub-committee would stand out from most such groups by making a difference to the paper, in the form of a picture page funded by an extra #7,000 extracted from the General Council by Bevin. (105)

Launched on 9th February it reflected the Allen critique by being more newsy than political and closer to the traditional style of the popular press than any of the news pages. The first spread included two pictures of the current floods, a fallen pole which had killed a postal worker, the Oxford boat loaded for race trials and a hat from the Paris fashions. The mix of something newsy, something sporty and at least one pretty girl became the norm. Politics obtruded rarely, as when shots of an eroding wall near Lloyd George's Criccieth home provided the opportunity for pointed comparisons between the wall and Lloyd George's party. (106)
It was indeed evidence of the seriousness of the situation in early May 1926, as a General Strike became inevitable, that the picture page should largely have been devoted to pictures related to the crisis. In this it was a reflection of the paper, with only the Home Page and Sport unscathed. Bobby Bear was not on this occasion to be conscripted to the cause. (107)

Blanket coverage was the logical conclusion of the story that dominated 1926 from its opening day - when Durham MP Jack Lawson set the agenda for the year with a letter enquiring "What is to happen next May?". (108)

Then the subsidy granted on Red Friday by Baldwin would run out - and this time there was to be no evading a collision between Labour and Capital. Having rehearsed its lines in the 1925 crisis, the Herald responded to the threat of a renewed crisis in much the same manner as a year earlier - giving unstinted support to the miners, without ever spoiling for a fight.

Indeed it was explicitly to reject its syndicalist heritage in a leader "The War Mind at Work" commenting on the sinister potential of groups like the privately-organised Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies: "No responsible trade union leader has ever proposed a General Strike, which would hurt most of all the people it was intended to help. The suggestion looks very much like a pretext for raising a force which could be used to support a Dictatorship such as exists in Italy and Spain, and is much talked of in France". (109)

Rejection of an aggressive far left line was made even more explicit in the last few days before the strike, when a Minority Movement statement was roundly condemned: "A godsend to the Mineowners Press...nothing but harm can be done by small and unimportant bodies butting in...Mr Cook may well exclaim "Save me from my friends". (110)
Analysis remained the same as before, blaming the intransigence of owners and government and the system of private ownership for the dispute. Nationalization was the preferred solution - expounded in a January leader that placed the dispute in a firmly ethical context as a Manichean struggle between benevolent progress and blind reaction. This classic exposition of the Herald belief that socialism was not only right but modern was accompanied by a heavy dose of the Herald propensity to emphasize important concepts by initial capitals: "A great Movement, inspired by Faith in the Future, by determination to move with the times, and by the spirit of Comradeship which aims at turning our resources to full account for the benefit of everybody, no longer for the advantage of a privileged few".

The vision of coal under public control was again an expression of the ethical rather than the Marxist tradition - a classless, rather managerial appeal assuming that class conflict was a bad thing and private ownership its sole cause in the industry: "There will be no Bureaucracy, no political conflicts over labour conditions. Management will be by experts".

And it concluded with millenarian fervour: "A great occasion has called forth a great design. Nothing more encouraging to those who follow the Labour Movement, nothing more hopeful for the creation of the New Order, has ever seen the light". (111)

Yet, as a year earlier, reporting was restrained and factual - comprehensive, exhaustive and progressively driving other stories from the most prominent slots in the paper, but reflecting an apparent belief that when the stakes were so high an official paper must avoid rash statements that might make a bad situation still worse. In early April the lead story headlined "Great Coal Crisis Threatens" devoted two columns to a strictly factual report of the owners' position combined with comments from the miners. (112)

Not until the last few days, with the dispute apparently inevitable, did the objective stance slip. The TUC decision to strike was greeted with a leader under the title "Trust Your Leaders!", the Herald again appearing as the voice of the centre addressing the rank and file. (113)

The final issue reflected realisation that no restraints could now retrieve the situation. The lead news story demonstrated the conclusive breakdown of factual reporting under the headline "If It Be War So Be IT: Blame Rests on the Government, starting: "A struggle is upon us. Nothing can prevent it but a last minute change of attitude by the Government."
“Up to the last the Trade Union Movement has constantly striven for an honourable peace.

“The Government equally consistently, has persistently itched for war, and Labour has been repeatedly rebuffed.

“If war it be, so be it. The whole movement is ready. If, however, wiser counsels prevail at Downing-street Labour is ready with its sound and reasonable way to peace”.

Headlines conveyed the mix of exhortation and information for strikers contained in the rest of the paper "Stand Firm and We Shall Win", "How to Help","Stand Fast I Be Loyal To Labour And The Miners" and one story "Beware of Wireless! The Government Controls It!" that was to be the pretext of a police raid on the following day.(114)

The leader page, doubtless with an eye to morale as the movement stepped into the unknown territory of a General Strike, featured an article on the Berlin workers strike of 1920 against the right-wing Kapp putsch "When the Workers of Berlin Folded Their Arms - And won".

The main leader reaffirmed the theme of an appeal beyond class:“The Government has considered not national, but class and party interests”. It argued optimistically that the strike would end Toryism as a political force, and, desperate times making for desperate responses, concluded on arguably the highpoint of Herald millenarianism during the 1920s.

“If before victory comes we have to suffer, we must suffer gladly because of our Great Cause. If we must make sacrifices,we shall make them readily, looking to a rich reward.

"Not a reward in personal benefit, but in the knowledge that we have steadfastly borne our part in the eternal conflict between Progress and Stagnation, between the forces which we symbolise as Christ and Satan, between Darkness and Light".(115)

The Herald, temporarily disguised as the British Worker, was indeed to play a steadfast role during the brief drama of the General Strike, but its reward was predictably to be as transitory as ever.
viii. Conclusion

It was inevitable that the Herald would come under greater criticism in the period from late 1924 to mid 1926 than it had previously in its incarnation as a party paper. In the 1922-3 spell mere survival had been achievement enough, while attention and energies were focussed for most of 1924 on the new challenges of government.

In 1925 neither distraction existed, the paper was failing to progress from survival to prosperity and the bitterness of defeat - notably those suffered by MacDonald at the hands of the electorate and Allen in his battle with the Clydesiders - fed into much of the criticism.

The choice of the 'candid friend' identity was a realistic application of journalistic values to the official paper's ever-present risk of predictable monotony. But it was also a role guaranteed to maximise discontent within the movement. Neither the right nor the left wanted a paper to reflect the diversity and debate within the movement - both wanted a loyal follower of their line.

Insofar as the Herald shifted left in this period, it could legitimately argue that it was reflecting a shift within the movement and in particular within its main paymaster, the General Council. The loss of Lansbury removed a significant barrier to the taming of the paper, but in editorial terms was more of symbolic significance - the old editor's feeling that he was already marginalised contributing to his decision to go. The choice of Williams as his successor reflected the paper's true place in the unions order of priorities - important, but not nearly as important as their own activities and political needs. It also clearly contributed to the continuing alienation of editor Fyfe.

The Herald's essential problems remained unchanged during this period. But the emergence in the debates of late 1925 of an alternative model of development - Allen's call for the Herald to cast off pride in its distinctiveness and be more like its rivals combined with Fyfe's advocacy of an insurance scheme - was a significant pointer to debates during the rest of the 1920s. ENDS
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1. Ewer - Miracle op cit


3. GM rep 19.11.25 LPDH 479, 22.4.26 LPDH 497 DH 30.1.25


5. RPTUC 1925 p 496. Wilsdon (Upholsterers) to DH 10.4.25, Williams to Bramley 18.6.25 TUC 788.04


7. AM rep 21.1.26 LPDH 490

8. AM rep 16.7.25 loc cit. GM rep 22.4.26 LPDH 497


11. Bramley to Millwood 7.11.24 TUC 788.01 TUCFC 2.1.25 p 71, item 22

12. TUCFC 9.2.25 p 79, item 38. GM rep 15.10.25 LPDH 472

13. Lansbury to Millwood 3.1.25 LPDH 391. DH 30.1.25. Fyfe to sub-committee 19.11.25 LPDH 481 TUC 789.1 NW 7.2.25

14. TUCFC 2.1.25 p 71 item 22

15. Lansbury - My Life op cit p 195

16. DH special committee 11.2.25 TUC 788, 15.4.25 LPDH 430. Millwood to Turner 31.3.25 LPDH 428 TUC 788

17. Special committee 19, 24.2.25 TUC 789.1 Fyfe - Sixty Years op cit p 193

18. Special committee 11.3.25 LPDH 408. Fyfe - Sixty Years op cit p 193

19. French to Bramley 23.3.35 TUC 788


22. Fyfe to sub-committee 19.11.25 loc cit. GM rep 2.1.26 LPDH 490

23. Fyfe to Hicks 30.4.25, NUJ Chapel to Fyfe 18.5.25, to VHPco Board 18.5.25 TUC 788

24. VHPco sub-committee 3.6.25 TUC 788.11


26. Fyfe to Middleton n.d (May 1925) LPDH 443

27. Gillies to Citrine 23.4, 29.4.25 TUC 788.

28. Fyfe memo 19.11.25 loc cit
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29. DH 26.1.25
   Croom Helm 1976 p 34
31. TUCGC 28.1.25 min no 124, 23.2.25 min no 190. RPTUC 1925 p 493
32. Walker memo 22.9.25 loc cit
33. DH 5.4.26
34. DH 29.4.26
35. DH 19.3.25
36. DH 23.12.25
37. DH 7.3.25. Fyfe to MacDonald 23.3.25 JRMPRO File 1170:1 Item 438
38. MacDonald to Turner 3, 4.3.25 JRMPRO File 1170:1 Items 801, 4.
39. Allen - memo 17.9.25 loc cit
40. DH 21.2.25
41. DH 4.12.24
42. DH 22.8.25 ff, 18.9.25 ff, 3.4.26 ff
43. DH 3.11.24 ff
44. DH 19.1.25
45. DH 17.1.25
46. DH 20, 24, 26.1.25
47. DH 30.1, 12.2.26
48. DH 13, 14, 17.2, 7.3.25
49. DH 16.4.26
   Marquand - MacDonald op cit p 452-5
51. DH 13.4.25
52. DH 1.1, 5.4.26
53. DH 29, 30.9, 3.10.25
54. DH 30.9.25
55. DH Communists 15, 16, 19, 21.10.25 Van 4.11.25
56. DH 11.11.25
57. DH 5, 7, 11.25 Williams to Lord Riddell 4.12.25 TUC 788 GM rep 23.1.26
   LPDH 490
58. DH 16.10.25
59. DH 26.11.25
60. DH 27, 28.11.25
61. RPTUC 1925 p 492
62. DH 26.1.25
63. DH 3, 21.9.25
64. DH 23, 26, 28, 30.9.25 Middlemas op cit p 194
65. DH 10, 12, 13.1, 18.7.25
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66.DH 4.7.25
67.DH 21,24,25,29,31.7.25
68.DH 31.7.25
69.Ibid
70.DH 1.8.25
71.DH 10.8.25
72.DH 22.12.24,28.2.25 A.Williams op cit p 24
73.DH 28.2.25
74.DH 6.4.25
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76.Ibid
77.DH 9.4,9.6,28.8,11.9.2.12.25
78.DH 9.6,19,31.8.25
79.DH 18.5.25
80.DH 4.2.26
81.DH 5.1.25
83.DH 13.2.26
84.DH 4.2.26
85.DH 24.4.26
86.DH 19.3.26
87.DH Evictions 24.12.24, Ascot 17.6.25
88.DH Club 16,17.12.24 Blackcoated workers 16,17,18,21,25.4.25 Fyfe to Hicks 30.4.25 TUC 788
89.DH 9.12.24
90.DH New crimes 9.12.24 Motor Show 12.10.25 Moloch 3.7.25
91.DH 26.1.25
92.DH 3.1,26.2.8,21.10.25
93.DH Hobbs 18.8.25. Hawke 22,23.24.1.25 Scorecards 23.5.25
94.Publication Fund Statement 20.6.25 TUC 789.01
95.RPTUC p 492
96.Ibid p 493-5
97.Ibid p 494. Sub-committee minutes 8,16.7.25 LPDH 451/2
98.Sub-committee minutes 19.8.25 LPDH 456 Bevin memo 15-25.9.25 loc cit
100.Fyfe reply 19.11.25 loc cit
101.MacDonald to Allen 9.11.25 JRMPRO File 1170.1 Item no 18.W Knox in ILP on Clydeside op cit p 169-7
102. Allen memo loc cit
103. Ibid, Sells World Press 1919 op cit p 23-4
104. Fyfe reply loc cit
105. TUCGC 27-28.10.25. Sub-committee 27,29.10.25 LPDH 475/6
106. DH 9,25.2.26
107. DH 4.5.26
108. DH 1.1.26
109. DH 15.1.26
110. DH 29.4.26
111. DH 26.2.26
112. DH 3.4.26
113. DH 3.5.26
115. DH 4.5.26
END
Construction, conformity and control: the taming of the Daily Herald 1921-30

Thesis

How to cite:

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Version: Version of Record
Constriction, Conformity and Control:  
The Taming of the Daily Herald 1921-30  
Huw Richards  
Ph.D 1993  
The Open University  

Section Nine
PAGE NUMBERING AS ORIGINAL
In spite of the TUC vote, the Odhams deal had still to be sold to the wider movement - whose only warning before the Herald announcement had been in a leak to the Mail in early August. The apparent handing over of the Herald to capitalism must have come as a bombshell, yet there was little apparent opposition. Only a few letters in the Labour and TUC archives register protests although Derby Trades Council can hardly have been reassured when Citrine replied to their complaint about secrecy by saying he could not discuss private session deliberations. (1)

A more aggressive resolution from the Birmingham branch of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers, protesting at the transfer of the Herald to "controlling management and interests alien to the principles of the Labour Movement" was suppressed by the City Trades Council executive while Labour deputy secretary Middleton attempted to choke off an animated correspondence with South Marylebone ILP by pointing out that the Labour Party had no say in the running of the Herald, so "It is hardly competent for any ILP branch to pass resolutions of the type you have forwarded". (2)

Both Citrine and Middleton told protesters that the new structures would safeguard policy. If asked to prove the necessity for the Odhams deal they could have quoted the Herald's continuing travails. Under the old set-up it would have been close to disaster in October. Forced to request £8,000 from the Publishing Fund they were greeted by Citrine's comment that of the £8,000 left in the fund £7,000 was earmarked for a paper guarantee. With the Odhams Seventh Cavalry just round the corner the TUC released the cash - without it the Herald would have been at the end of its auxiliary resources barely a month into the TUC year. (3)

The circulation crash had continued through the summer and autumn. More than 15,000 copies were lost over the seven-week holiday period with circulation dropping below 350,000 on August 21st. By 17th October it had fallen to 332,554, a further loss of nearly 8,000 in a month and Williams was airing a last insurance-related lament: "Yesterday, in Bargoed... two men were killed in the colliery, T Jones and J Mason. The first had been a regular daily reader of our paper for nine years... and the other for about five years... Neither of them took an insurance paper. The result is - talk amongst people all over the place pointing out the pecuniary disadvantages now to the dependants". (4)
Planning for the new Herald began in the early autumn. A new company, the Daily Herald (1929) Limited, was registered on 11th November with the nine-man board - chaired by Elias and with Bevin as vice-chair leading a TUC quartet also including Tillett, Citrine and Pugh, met on the following day. The other Odhams directors were Dunbar, Cook, Advertising Director Philip Emanuel and head of insurance Norman Canter.

Mellor, in a foretaste of the eventual change of editorship, was released from day to day responsibilities to concentrate on planning - leaving Stevenson in temporary charge. Staff recruitment went on rapidly: "The new proprietors seem to have cast their net widely and drawn catches from a good many staffs", commented a writer to the NUJ's "Journalist" in January 1930, expressing fear that the old staff would lose out. Several major posts went to new recruits - LM MacBride from the Express became News Editor, Austin of the Sunday Dispatch Features Editor and Webb of the Sporting Life Night Editor.

But the new Chief Sub was an old Herald hand - Leslie Sheridan, described as "returning to his old love, but at a much bigger salary" after five years at the Chronicle. Apart from Mellor and Stevenson the conspicuous survivor was Ewer, who stayed on as foreign editor - his appointment as much as those from capitalist papers showing that Odhams sought journalistic talent before political conformity, although he was to resign from the Communist Party in 1930. His wife Monica Ewer survived as Drama Critic, and celebrated by publishing her third novel, Insecurity. Poyser was subordinated to Advertising Director Emanuel, but continued as Advertising Manager.

It was reported that all but two refuseniks had transferred, most to better-paid jobs, by November. Their identities are unclear. The professional press reported the departure of Brodzky and Parliamentary sub-editor and NUJ Father of Chapel Tom Pearson, but the picture is complicated by a reference in the board minutes to the sacking of Pearson. Williams' was found a role as liaison officer between the Herald and the unions after Bevin had interceded with Elias on his behalf.
The importance given to the circulation campaign was shown by the quality of those in charge. Odhams seconded William Surrey Dane, who would direct the Herald’s 1930s sales surge as publicity director and became chairman of Odhams in the 1950s while the TUC provided Vincent Tewson, who would succeed Citrine as General Secretary in 1946.

The aim was to mobilise the movement’s activists. Inadequate as a circulation figure, they were a different matter as a canvassing force. The top-down recruitment process began on 7th December in Cardiff with the first of 14 regional meetings to which 10,000 union and party officers and officials were invited.

There were General Council and Labour executive speakers at each meeting, but the centrepiece was a comprehensive statement from Bevin - or, in his absence Citrine, followed by questions. Organisation was not the only purpose, as Middleton admitted: “Frankly they have been heard very largely in order to give Bevin an opportunity to make a very full statement to representatives of the Movement regarding the new "Herald" scheme...until these conferences were initiated, the only statements that had been made were those made by Bevin in the private session of the Belfast Trades Union Congress and at our own Brighton conference. Experience has shown that it is wise to give ample opportunity for questions, in order to clear away, as far as possible, the many doubts and suspicions that have been created by the character of the new company”.

Citrine’s notes for a speech probably delivered at Sheffield on 4th January indicate a basically political appeal to a political audience, but with reminders of the importance of wider horizons. Points emphasised in explaining the Odhams deal were control over policy through the A directors - they would rather have let the Herald die than pass its name, goodwill and policy over for cash - and the fact that Daily Herald 1929 Ltd were the owners, with Odhams merely the printers.
The movement were being offered a 20 page daily and free insurance equal to other popular nationals - Minney notes that a Newspaper Publishers Association agreement to limit insurance schemes stopped wilder claims. A Northern edition, rewarding readers who had taken the paper out of loyalty, would be ready in June or July. The conclusion pointed to the importance of national and international industrial news and of a daily paper to defend the Labour Government against the rest of the press. (12)

Suitably inspired, delegates were asked to pass a resolution: "That we, the delegates attending this Conference, pledge our support to the new "Daily Herald" and approve the scheme under which the Movement will undertake to secure new registered readers, we undertake enthusiastically to administer the scheme and to assist to the fullest extent in our power to secure for the new "Daily Herald" a sale which will make its position pre-eminent as a national newspaper.

"Further we agree immediately to commence the work of enrolling helpers, and to forward during the coming weeks the largest possible number of enrolment forms as part evidence of the enthusiasm with which we are sure the scheme will be received in the area covered by this conference" (13)

Working from the Herald offices at 68 Long Acre, the campaign was organised through local coordinating bodies - Trades Councils and Labour Parties in boroughs, divisional parties in the country - with the purpose of ensuring that: "The whole force of the political organisation on the one hand, and the Trade Union organisation on the other, is brought into operation". Union branches were to canvass their workplaces and local parties their districts. At the bottom of the pyramid came the infantry of the operation - the individual Helper operating "as directed by the responsible officer of his or her Trade Union branch or Labour Party". A target of 100,000 Helpers, set by Bevin, was proclaimed in the Herald on 19th December (14)

This was not the first attempt to mobilise the massed rank and file for the Herald. The pledge scheme fiasco remained an unhappy memory, and requests for Herald canvasses had been made throughout the 1920s.
But all previous attempts had relied on activists prepared to work for the greater good.

Birt, circulation traveller for the West Midlands, had put the problem bluntly in June:

"Voluntary canvassing is no good - you must offer some payment", he said, advocating a payment of 1s per new sale. The Herald campaign offered 1/3 - 3d to the co-ordinating body, 3d to the Party or union branch and 9d to the Helper - in return for which the Helper had to return a plethora of coupons to the various bodies. (15)

Driven by the conferences and frequent plugs in the Herald, an enrolment campaign ran through December - too slowly for Middleton's liking, but doing nothing to dampen Herald confidence: "I am not at all discouraged by the comparatively few number of enrolments that we are getting at present", said Dane before Christmas, predicting a January rush. (16)

Inevitably attention was diverted from the day to day running of the Herald: "We are doing all possible to feed the old Herald whilst doing our share to help the new paper", reported Poyser in November. (17)

But, under Stevenson's editorial direction, there was still a government to be supported, and the fortunes of MacDonald's second administration was still inevitably the dominant theme. As in 1924 foreign achievements provided most occasion for unalloyed delight. Domestic policy involved grappling with complex and intractable social problems - with their solutions subject to wide and divisive debate within the movement. In foreign policy a broad Labour concensus centred on the strengthening of international institutions as a means of averting the threat of war.

The Herald saw its official role as not merely reporter but facilitator of Labour foreign policy. It had made much during the Hague conference of reporter Slocombe's role, at a sensitive time, in arranging a meeting between Snowden and Briand. Even now its news values remained heavily movement-oriented.
When the conference concluded it treated a letter from Snowden, Graham and Henderson thanking Slocombe for his work, which "gave us great assistance on the political and financial sides" as a front-page splash, printing a full facsimile of the letter along with Ewer's profile of the reporter. Slocombe's efforts were also singled out by Bevin at the TUC, conveniently forgetting that he had at least acquiesced in Allen's proposal to sack him a mere six months earlier (18)

Henderson's admiration was reciprocated. His recognition, after nine years of British resistance, of the jurisdiction of the international court at The Hague was welcomed as "Another big step forward towards the establishment of the rule of law in international affairs..... the thanks not only of this country, but of the civilised world (sic) are due to Mr Henderson". Two weeks later it hailed "A record of achievement in the sphere of foreign affairs which for a period of less than four months is amazing".

As the new parliamentary session began the Herald commented: "Abroad the government has completely justified the confidence of the nation: it now proceeds to repeat its foreign successes on the domestic front". (19)

This wasn't quite so easy, but the Herald, accepting JH Thomas' view that the government would be judged on its handling of unemployment and expressing confidence that it would not fail, did its loyal best. The ever-willing Bracher was in admiration overdrive as Thomas unveiled a £42m work-creation programme in November. (20)

He enthused: "I have heard many Ministerial statements on work to provide employment, but the speech delivered by Mr JH Thomas this evening far surpassed every one of them, not only in its content, but also in the force, clearness and confidence with which the Minister made every point.

He spoke like "a workman that needeth not be ashamed". His voice was at its best, its manner deliberate, and the crowded audience hung upon his words... Mr Thomas disclaimed all magic powers, but he had some astonishing numbers to disclose". (21)
But unpleasant reality and divisions within the movement meant that the Herald, while less inclined to facilitate critics than in 1924, was unable to maintain the same note of enthusiasm. Mounting unemployment received less publicity than under Baldwin, and reports included efforts to explain figures away - in December a leader "The First Six Months" argued that the other parties were in no position to criticise and noted that, while rising, unemployment was still 47,902 less than at the same time in 1928. (22)

Divisions also sprouted on the "Not Genuinely Seeking Work" provisions of unemployment law, under which thousands of claimants were being refused benefit. The Government's tentative attempts to mitigate the law tested the Herald's loyalty to its limits - with not only the Clydesiders but its co-proprietors, the TUC, calling for greater liberalisation. Committed to following both Labour political policy and TUC industrial policy, it found itself in a situation where the two were close to irreconcilable. The consequence was a muted renewal of the "candid friend" mode - without attacking a measure outright, and accepting the principle that under difficult circumstances half a loaf was better than none, the Herald would point to possible improvements, generally corresponding to the TUC's views.

Debate centred on the Morris committee, appointed by Minister of Labour Margaret Bondfield to look into the issue. The TUC took the view that the only proper test of "Genuinely Seeking Work" was the offer of suitable employment, a view that the Herald strongly endorsed. But the committee devised a second test, accepted by Bondfield in legislation launched in November, based on evidence that work was available and the claimant had failed to try to secure it. (23)

The Herald's reactions are in marked contrast to those it accorded Trevelyan's school leaving age plans or the extension in October of widow's pensions - greeted with headlines on "Millions of Pounds for Purpose of Extending Human Happiness" and a leader baldly titled "A Great Bill". (24)
Accepting the constraints under which government was acting and that the bill was "Essentially a stop-gap measure, designed to tide over a state of affairs which is temporary", it nevertheless argued that the wording was too loose - placing too much burden of proof on the claimant rather than the Labour Exchange - again noted the TUC line and suggested that an amendment along these lines would strengthen the bill. (25)

A similarly 'supportive with helpful suggested improvements' attitude was shown when the government brought forward its Mines Bill in December. The leader said those who wanted immediate fulfilment of Labour's full policy were "just crying for the moon", but went on "The Coal Mines Bill is not in its final form. It can still be improved in committee. On the wages side there will undoubtedly be a desire to tighten up the provisions and to give the National Industrial Board greater powers. On other points it is also susceptible of amendment. But it remains an honest and straightforward attempt to unravel the tangled skein of coal difficulties." (26)

Scepticism on detail gave way to Bracher's habitual cheerleading when Bondfield's Insurance Bill was introduced. Her speech : "Revealed a mind equal to every demand of exposition, of defence, of rational controversy, a mind not moulded by, but moulding, as Whitehall knows, a great Department of State, a mind which has earned for her the title of "Masterly Maggie". (27)

In the parliamentary ranks, vigorous criticism came from the left - with WJ Brown, Maxton and Wheatley the most vigorous. Brown had been seen in the role of candid friend in October - quoted as being in "a friendly, critical mood" and arguing that treatment of the unemployed was the one blot on a good record. While a minority government could not launch fundamental attacks on capitalism : "The very least that it can do, however, is to use its power to see that the victims of Capitalism are properly treated...the treatment of the unemployed calls for immediate and drastic amendment". He argued that Bondfield was making insufficient use of existing powers. (28)
The Herald had consistently drawn a distinction between the constructive critic - not only legitimate but necessary - and the destructive critic. Brown's classification in the first category was shown when Mellor gave him feature space to put the case for the "Left-Wing Critic". He couched his justification in terms little different to those used at times by the Herald: "The most serious danger in all popular movements is their tendency, as power is approached, to accommodate themselves to the standards of the existing order, which they began by wishing to destroy - the danger that they will cease to be revolutionary in any way at all...

"The justification of the Left-Wing critic is that he opposes a barrier to the drift towards acquiescence. He is, so far from being the enemy of democracy, its surest bulwark".(29)

Right of reply was exercised in pungent terms two days later by fellow MP John Clarke who argued that "Left wingers exhibit a woeful lack of balance and an exaggerated idea of their own virtue...The traditions of our Socialist Movement spring from the spirit of self-sacrifice and the subordination of the individual...Not one single member of the Party in the House likes the Unemployment Bill before us at present before the House. Conditions determined it as a purely interim Bill to give us a little more time to do bigger things".

Clarke added that both the party and the ILP had accepted this view by majority vote, yet a group of members had staged "a mutiny which is as indefensible as it is dangerous. The hopes of millions are centred upon this popular Government, and any indiscretion, any unwise action on the part of any section calculated to weaken it, is reprehensible to the highest degree".(30)

With the TUC arguing the same lines and its own views clearly declared, the Herald could hardly treat Maxton's amendment to the Bill as indefensible. Nor could it endorse such direct opposition. A news report said: "It is not a revolt. It is a pious expression of opinion that the Bill really ought not to have included provisions enacting the objects specified in the motion". And the leader columns remained silent while the amendment and the Brown and Clarke articles prompted vigorous exchanges in the letters columns - the unemployed Gwyn Richards of Burry Port arguing that "no-one outside a lunatic asylum" could expect a minority Labour government to carry out its full programme and that more team-work and less suspicion of leaders were needed.(31)
By contrast St Pancras councillor T Moore complimented Brown: "If the spirit of the Movement is to be kept alive and active, room must be found for those who hold similar views. Our opponents are making full use of the contrast between promise and fulfilment. It is left to men like WJ Brown to keep first things first". (32)

Less legitimate in the Herald's view was Wheatley's behaviour a week later. Angered by Bondfield's refusal of a concession that would have cost £50,000 he attacked the Chairman of Ways and Means and denounced government policy. The row recalled Buchanan's row with Bondfield in the early days of the government - pitting the demands of the poor against administrative and financial constraints. The Herald again came down against the protester - not immediately in its leader columns but later in the week when its comments on MacDonald's speech to the 1917 Club demonstrate how far the paper had moved since the early 1920s, rebuking rebels in terms extraordinarily reminiscent of those used against Poplar: "Mr MacDonald did well to bring his listeners back to fundamentals... If it is true, and it surely is true, that the mere distribution of money is not Socialism, then it is entirely wrong to turn it into a test of Socialist faith. No greater disservice could be done than to create in the public mind a picture of Socialism as one huge national workhouse and the reckless pouring in of public or private charity. That is only a caricature of the real thing, with which the enemy can do untold harm to the Socialist cause". (33)

In defending the government from its critics, the Herald consistently invoked the limitations imposed by minority status and financial circumstances. A firm rebuke of those dissatisfied with Trevelyan's education grant plans was a typical exposition of half-a-loaf theory.

It asked: "Do some Labour members of Parliament take the view that circumstances must never be taken into account when Ministers are formulating their legislative proposals? What sense is there in passing an adverse verdict on every proposal that is not all that everybody could wish for? Under the exceptional circumstances which exist, few things can be ideal, and the sooner that is frankly faced the better.....Labour MPs have a duty to support it, and equally a duty to put forward constructive criticism. A tiny minority seem to take nagging for criticism, and self-righteousness for virtue". (34)
A key motivation here was fear that the government might be portrayed as split - it furiously lectured the Express for the "perversion of the truth" in reports that a PLP meeting had heard a resolution for the expulsion of the five leading Clydesiders. Stevenson was on strong ground, but in a much weaker position in February over "venomous press attacks" on Thomas claiming that Mosley, Lansbury and Johnson - the rest of the employment team - had resigned.

"Political journalism in this country is certain to discredit itself if every time a controversial memorandum is before a Cabinet the occasion is represented as a crisis of the first magnitude"(35)

Here the Herald was acting as an official advocate rather than a newspaper. With their privileged access, Herald reporters must have known of the extent of the division within the government over the "Mosley Memorandum". It would precipitate an offer of resignation from Thomas and lead ultimately to the departure of Mosley, Labour's rising star, from Cabinet and party - by any measure "a crisis of the first magnitude".(36)

But the Herald was prepared to criticise the government over its relationship with the Liberals in the Commons when the Coal Bill majority fell to eight. This criticism was not direct - but the use of the indirect "many thought" and "others felt" in comments advocating a tougher line with the Liberals is a clear indication of belief that the government was failing to impose itself : "Ever since it became known that Cabinet Ministers had taken counsel with the Liberal leaders on the mining problem there has been an uneasy feeling in the Party. Many thought that the conversations should never have taken place. Others felt deep concern at too-generous conciliatory gestures by the Government".

The Herald's solution to irritating dependence on the Liberals was simple : "We speak for local Labour Parties when we ask the Government to stand no nonsense from Mr Lloyd George but to go to the country and ask for a majority at the earliest moment that that becomes imperative" (37)
A day later it could quote Clynes and Thomas as backing its "No More Nonsense" argument for an early election. The uneasy relationship with the Liberals was patched up in January - though the Herald greeted Lloyd George's olive branch rather sourly : "The real question is whether or not the Liberal minority intends to help in carrying out much-needed social reform. Its record to date is not encouraging". (38)

Herald enthusiasm for an election was doubtless aided by the havoc in Conservative ranks, with Baldwin besieged by Beaverbrook and Rothermere's Empire Free Traders. The Herald affected not to take them too seriously - dismissing a "Crazy Crusade" and Beaverbrook as "Amiable and well-intentioned but hopelessly wrongheaded" - a note of personal affection, reflecting correspondence with Mellor, never extended to Rothermere. (39)

But it took it seriously enough to devote three two column-features by "An Eminent Economist", a front-page splash and a leader to the campaign in October. With unemployment rising a campaign promising economic revival backed by two major press barons was a potential threat to the Labour vote, and even as it piled on derision the Herald took wary notice. (40)

On the industrial front it went on giving dutiful support to the continuing Mond-Turner process. Agreement in December to create consultation and co-operation machinery was welcomed as "An Historic Experiment" with all the normal caveats about neither expecting too much nor superseding existing machinery, and "an undoubted hope that it may serve to create an informed and constructive power which shall promote the well-being of all engaged in British industry and commerce". Similar state-corporatist enthusiasm greeted the creation of a economists' Council of Experts - it was never likely to be anything other than enthusiastic when it was explained as a long-cherished MacDonald project also backed by the TUC. It was again able to advertise its excellent sources of information by confidently nominating Hubert Henderson as a likely member. (41)
Faith in the inquiry as an instrument of good government was demonstrated in October 1929 following the Bank of England's decision to raise the bank rate - seen by the Herald as a "staggering blow to hopes of successfully accomplishing any of the tasks to which the Government and the nation have set their hands". The decision to up rates was, the Herald conceded, inevitable given Bank policy: "But the real issue is the policy of the Bank of England. Is it the right policy? Are the principles on which it is based sacrosanct?" (42)

An inquiry was, the Herald argued, a logical consequence of the Mond-Turner decleration, and was granted by Snowden on 3rd October during "a brilliant review of the situation". It is characteristic of the Herald and the movement that it should be certain something is wrong, but lack any concrete ideas of how to right it and instead reach for the device of committees of wise men. (43)

Rather less publicity was given to the Wall Street crash in late October 1929 - although the Herald regarded it seriously enough to grant a single front-page lead story and a leader showing some grasp of the potential international implications: "It would all be as unimportant as the Monte Carlo gaming tables were it not that, on this gigantic scale, it affects credit the world over...So inter-connected is the world economy today that a miner in Durham or a cotton operative in Saxony may go hungry because of the follies of gamblers in New York". But the consequences of bankers' priorities and international financial collapse were not to be visited on the movement until 1931, so it is hardly fair to criticise the Herald for its relatively dim perception of the threat. (44)

A rather more recognisable danger appeared to be on the loose again when drivers at Barking Bus Garage came out on strike in early October. The Herald reported that "It affected nine routes and 106 buses, causing much inconvenience to the working-class districts of Dagenham, Becontree and Barking" - a mildly censorious note about the impact of public service strikes not normally associated with Herald industrial reporting - not that is, unless it could be "proved by literature that has been issued to be a Minority Movement stunt". (45)
The strike was rapidly settled, and soon afterwards an embarrassed Bevin admitted that he had been mistaken in issuing a statement that "Literature now issued proves that the stoppage is a Minority Movement Stunt". The striking similarity in wording between Bevin's statement and the Herald's suggests strongly that the paper was prepared to reprint comments from some union leaders, without attribution, as matters of uncontested fact. It does not appear to have felt the need to replicate Bevin's apology. (46)

Attitudes to Communism had in any case continued to harden. Criticism within the CPGB of Pollitt as a "right-winger" prompted a cheerful leader stating that it was "inevitable that the mania for destruction which possessed the Communists should turn inwards". Russian Communism continued to be regarded more generously than the British variant. But it too was less popular than previously - because of continued Russian dictation of the CPGB's line and possibly also due to the tricky negotiations over the resumption of diplomatic relations. For the first time since Fyfe's day the anniversary of the 1917 revolution passed without a leader. Current attitudes were expressed when a delegation of Kent miners returned from Russia with less than glowing impressions: "The natural reaction of men fed on silly Communist propaganda designed to prove that the Soviet has established a new heaven on earth. Russia's achievements, not least survival, were not in doubt, but: "The tragedy is that by their mischievous interference in the affairs of other countries the members of the Third International are doing so much to nullify the efforts of those who are willing and eager to help Russia". (47)

Indian coverage maintained the anti-boycott line, lecturing those who supported them: "surely the last word in futility". When Congress voted for a boycott in pursuit of complete independence it said: "Mr Gandhi and his colleagues have made, not indeed so far a Himalayan blunder, but a singularly foolish one. Their policy to which they have succeeded in definitely committing Congress is...a futile one of mere negation". The self-designated official paper of the Labour government unsurprisingly felt they might have done better to cooperate "with a Government the sincerity of which he has frankly acknowledged". (48)
The greater volume of serious political news inevitably reduced the prominence given to
general and human interest stories. Recognition than an unleavened diet was far from ideal was
signalled by Stevenson in a feature on "Letters to the Editor", when he said: "Do not complain
that your letter on Marx and the Great Contradiction was overlooked in favour of one describing
a queerly-shaped potato dug out of an Ilford allotment. Too many of us Socialists try to make man
in our own image. We forget that the average worker, good Labour man and trade unionist though
he be, demands diversity in his daily news diet. Man does not live by politics alone."(49)

The Herald reader's diet in autumn and winter 1929-30 took in a mix of trials and
disasters. Trials included those of discredited financier Clarence Hatry, the inquest at Reading in
which actor Yale Drew found himself in effect on trial for murder, and of the R101 Airship.
Disasters took place on land (Enfield bus and tram), sea (off Pembrokeshire), air (Imperial
Airways in the Gulf of Genoa) and in a Paisley cinema in the last nine weeks of 1929.(50)

And in the absence of society gossip, the Herald continued to take lighter items from the lives
of Labour leadership families - a half-column news page report plus picture devoted to the
Oxford v Cambridge University women's hockey match owed everything to the presence of Sheila
MacDonald, daughter of Ramsay, at inside-right for Oxford.(51)

Eleven years after the end of the Great War, memories were still raw and charged. The
Herald, which had run extracts from All Quiet on the Western Front during the election
campaign, would always support writers who demythologised war, and gave firm backing to
Robert Graves' Goodbye To All That - greeted as "A fearless and graphic book about the war - a
book which will give rise to sharp and bitter controversy".(52)

When the controversy started, a leader noted that the fiercest critics of All Quiet... had been
non-combatants and that Graves memories tallied with those of actual fighters. While "Ex-lance
corporal" from Hampstead described it as "A travesty of the facts", German journalist Egon
Wertheimer's view "Never Has The War Myth Been More Fearlessly Exploded", if a
disconcerting choice of verb, expressed the majority of an extremely heavy postbag.(53)
A critic in World's Press News commented that "All highbrowism should be carefully excised. The present paper is not altogether free from this defect". The Herald role as junction box between the tastes of the left intelligentsia and the self-improving worker was seen again when an exhibition of Italian masterpieces was staged at the Royal Academy in the first months of 1930. It gave the exhibition heavy coverage and offered a series of reproductions of the paintings - described as a mix of two favourite themes, "Modern science and the art of the world's greatest painters", for which it received 70,000 orders.

Delighted to see that readers were responsive to its own high-culture values, the Herald reported: "By far the largest number of orders came from industrial areas, clearly revealing the fact that the workers of today are determined that they should not live by bread alone, and they are as keenly interested in art as are the workers of any other country in the world." (54)

With the exhibition due to close on March 8th, the Herald campaigned for an extension: "For too long the great masterpieces of the past, and even of the present, have been enjoyed only by a very few people. Now at last the masses are being awakened to a new beauty by the joy and colour of the artist. Ugly as life may be, the painters, the poets and the musicians can bring light and happiness to many minds that have only lived in dark places. That this is being so widely understood is a great achievement and one for which the Italian exhibition is largely responsible". (55)

And when its demands were partially met, the Herald for once confessed itself "Not satisfied with the half-loaf", but made sure of taking credit for what had been achieved. (56)

A final major story was the Herald itself and its relaunch, announced in full to readers on 12th November in a signed front-page story by Mellor, outlining the Odhams deal and promising "The Labour outlook and policy of the "Daily Herald" cannot be changed, for its policy and outlook must be that of the Labour and Trade Union Movement". Reader response was reported as overwhelmingly favourable: "A thrill of joyous expectation". The critical minority were told that they had lost sight of the policy guarantees outlined by Mellor. (57)
There is little extant information on the week to week progress of the Herald registration campaign, but there are hints of a slow start. While the organisers had called for 100,000 helpers, the number enrolled fell well short - 32,803. The campaign started on 9th January, intended to run until 3rd March, a fortnight before the launch of the new paper. (58)

Expenditure had already been considerable. Each new reader was offered a choice of a camera or fountain pen plus membership of "#10,000 Free Family Insurance" - advertised in a leaflet tastefully illustrated with train smashes, injured footballers, crashing motorbikes and other mishaps. Vast numbers of leaflets were issued - 450,000 with messages from MacDonald and Snowden and a further 200,000 with details of the incentives offered to Helpers and readers and messages from the chair and secretary of the Labour Party and the TUC. Added to the deluge of paper were the seven sections of the order form, to be filled in by the Helper - who kept No 1 and sent off 2 and 3 to the local secretary and the co-ordinating body, 4, 5 and 6 to the Herald to give them the reader and newsagents name plus registration for insurance and the free gift and 7 to the reader as a receipt. (59)

Their efforts were encouraged and directed by The Helper, an eight-page weekly intended both to inform and to inspire canvassers with a feeling of crusading excitement as part of a great army fighting for the future of the paper and the movement. Appeals from the leadership were the staple item - with Labour leaders more prominent than those of the TUC co-proprietors, Bevin apart. MacDonald, inevitably was first with a message reading "Go Full Steam Ahead". (60)

MacDonald and Bevin were pictured in every issue while Snowden, Henderson and Clynes followed their leader on the cover. Lansbury, incongruously clutching a cricket bat, appeared in issue three while other appeals included one from the Movement's 13 leading women and what was termed "An inspiring message to Daily Herald Helpers" from Walter Citrine. (61)
Rhetoric was supplemented by practical instruction. Pictures of the free gifts on offer appeared in every issue. Early issues featured hints on canvassing, succeeded by suggestions and anecdotes from Helpers which as well as serving a practical purpose - some hints would have been genuinely useful - aimed to accentuating the sense of belonging. The same mix of practical assistance and collective involvement was seen in competitions to find the most difficult order secured and the best argument used. (62)

Its language was conversational - recognising the canvassers as a group of movement insiders. A message in the fourth issue caught the flavour, while betraying unconscious belief that all Helpers were male: "You are now an experienced Helper. A valuable man in the service of the cause". Later issues aimed to set targets for emulation, quoting for instance a Norwich man named Goldsmith who said he had recruited 400 new readers and was aiming for 1,000, and numerous letters recounting successes. (63)

Both the Herald and The Helper were consistently bullish about the campaign's progress. But there were to be two extensions of the campaign, first to the 17th March launch date, and then to 21st March - with the second extension accompanied by a 3d per reader increase for Helpers, taking their reward to 1/- and the total cost of each new reader to 1/6. (64)

This may have been, as The Helper claimed on the second occasion, to allow for demand to be satisfied. But it is also possible that things were not going well enough. The Helper termed itself the "Great last two weeks rally issue" and the term "rally", implying recovery from adversity, may be significant. On March 3rd, the intended end of the campaign, the total number of pledges received was 400,566 - clearly nowhere near enough. (65)

Whether inspired by the extra 3d or more selfless motives the Helpers redoubled their efforts in the next fortnight. An extra 219,188 readers were enrolled - taking their contribution to 619,854. It is a reasonable assumption that this period saw the week with a daily average of 36,202 new orders and the day with 51,836 quoted in May by Bevin. Add in the 210,000 enrolled by a press campaign and adverts in other papers plus just under 100,000 old readers who registered and by the night of March 17th the Herald had a registered readership of 929,000. (66)
All these efforts were aimed at the new Herald, but the sheer volume of publicity evidently eased the last days of the old paper. Sales increased from the moment Odhams took over production from Victoria House on February 17th. The last Victoria House issue on February 15th had a circulation of 323,900. The first Odhams issue ran to 327,915 and by the time the last old-style Herald hit the streets on the morning of Saturday March 15th the figure was 348,030, recovering the losses made since August. (67)

The old Herald bowed out on 15th March with the headline "Success assured on Monday" reporting a valedictory visit to the paper by Lansbury - while the new proprietors were effectively repudiating many of his traditions they also recognised the immense importance of his endorsement, linking the new paper to the Herald's distinctive heritage.

A leader, headed "Invincible", similarly linked the old and the new. Implicit in it was the promise that in future the Herald would depend on the financial and professional resources of a commercial publisher rather than the movement's goodwill.

"The paper began in a fighting spirit; in a fighting spirit it has lived. And from Monday it will carry on the fight with a power never before possible...

"Behind it was the Socialist spirit, the Socialist ideal and these are invincible...No paper has ever had such splendid supporters. They gave themselves unstintingly to the "Daily Herald". Never will it be fully known what sacrifices they made in time and money.

"That is why the paper lived. That is why, despite its meagre equipment, it grew in power and influence". (68)
iv. The New Herald

It is as well that the first issue of the new paper covered a relatively uneventful weekend, as there was only ever going to be one lead story - itself and premier MacDonald's visit to the premises to start the presses. The Herald reported: "The Prime Minister's visit was the outcome of a keen willingness to identify himself with the new enterprise". This has to be doubted. During the First World War Odhams and Elias, as publishers of John Bull, had been responsible for printing his birth certificate, displaying his illegitimacy beyond doubt to the public.

Bullock records that MacDonald blocked Elias' elevation to the peerage - he had to wait until 1936 with Baldwin again premier. Years later Elias would still quote bitterly MacDonald's greeting on arrival at Long Acre: "You're a very courageous man. You're taking a great risk you know - running a daily paper." (69)

But MacDonald and the Herald knew that each needed the other's public endorsement. After a dutiful hour-long visit, during which, it was proudly reported: "Never before had a British Premier mingled so freely with the staff of a great journal", the premier sat at Mellor's desk to be photographed penning a ten-paragraph message: "I hope that all supporters of Labour, and all those, whatever their views, who wish to have the Labour case put fairly before them, will buy it and read it. There never was a time when it was more necessary for the Labour Party to have a national newspaper devoted to its support; or for the public to have the Labour point of view continuously put before it". The front also carried a picture of Elias, although a passport-size portrait near the bottom of the second column was hardly a Maxwellian gesture. (70)
The new paper was visually dramatically different to low-cost, low-key conservative predecessor, using pictures on every page. After years of aspiring to political innovation, the Herald found itself a design innovator. Design expert Allen Hutt said: "Fleet Street's backwardness in make-up, text and machinery was put to shame by a "popular paper"...with a consistently planned typography in the bold variants of one type family only (Cheltenham), with a strong-contoured text in American Ionic...and with rotary presswork of a quality comparable only with that of the Times". Le Mahieu sees it as a revolutionary step in the British popular press, using layout to create a unique visual identity for a paper, and notes that during the 1930s: "Virtually every major newspaper in Britain significantly reformed its layout and typography". (71)

Content was also very different. Mellor, writing in the Labour Magazine had pointed to the essential difference between the old and the new: "This does not mean that political news must be submerged, but it must take its proper place as news and not sprawl over the paper colouring every page and obtruding its way into every nook and cranny. We shall try to avoid that mistake". Political and industrial news continued to occupy a page each in the new paper, but were two pages out of 20, rather out of 10 or 12. (72)

Promised the full range of popular features, new readers got them - including a leader page article on peace by HG Wells and a specially-written serial story by Edgar Wallace, the biggest selling thriller writer of the day. A front-page plug for insurance was supplemented by a three-column inside description of the scheme. Full pages covered music and arts, radio and business and finance - the last signalling the new Herald's changed view of its readership with the headline "Your Investments" - and a general diary column edited by "Chanticleer". Tomfool and Gadfly survived, but Way of the World was relegated in truncated form to the arts page. A special feature "The Truth Behind the Dope Peril" referred to the drugs trade, not, as might have been assumed in past, to capitalist competitors.
Advertisements were complemented by a page seven comment assuming an ignorance of the purposing of advertising surprising even in readers of the anti-capitalist press: "These advertisements are invitations specifically directed to you. They ask you to buy the goods of the firm who insert them in our pages" and betrayed over-anxiety to please advertisers: "You can have as much faith in the advertisements carried in this paper as you have in the integrity of the paper and the principles for which it stands. Remember: Good advertisements in the "Daily Herald" mean good goods".

This embrace of commercial values was epitomised by two advertisements. Wincarnis, the one company to have complained consistently about birth-control adverts, took front-page space while the once-controversial H and J Seale Berkeley Chair was also advertised heavily, either fortuitously or pointedly, on the industrial news page.

Further change was to be evident in subsequent issues in the crisply clipped style of leaders and the straight factual parliamentary reporting of Ernest Hunter, previously editor of the New Leader, replacing Bracher's lyrical partisanship in the Commons gallery. If any readers still doubted that the Herald's priorities had changed, proof came in the issue of 1st April. On the previous day the government had been defeated in the House of Commons. The Herald's view that the defeat in itself made little difference to the government echoed its reaction to a similar setback three weeks earlier. But where defeat in the second week of March had been given six-column banner treatment by the old Herald, its successor denied the later reverse any front page coverage - treating Kaye Don's bid for the world land speed record as the day's main story. Mellor's brief was being well fulfilled.

The Herald was not slow to proclaim its own success at the relaunch. The second relaunch issue enthused "At one bound yesterday the 'Daily Herald' leaped into the front rank of national daily newspapers. Never before has nay daily made such a great stride in one day". Within three days it was advertising the first insurance pay-outs on the front page, and within five proudly brandishing congratulations from Charles Higham, doyen of the advertising industry.
But formal confirmation of its success had to wait for three weeks until the issue of the first post-relaunch net sales certificate. When it came the Herald again gave itself top front-page billing. Banner headlines hailed a net sales certificate showing a figure of 1,058,588 "Net Sales Over A Million A Day: Daily Herald Breaks the Record: Amazing Feat in 14 Days: Third Biggest Daily Before North Office Opens".

The accompanying article hailing the "Most spectacular feat in the history of journalism" again showed the Herald determined to flatter both readers and advertisers with an analysis on the place of advertising in modern capitalism that even the most enthusiastic proponent of the publicity industry might have found overplayed: "The Daily Herald public is essentially a thinking public and one which spends with discrimination .... Advertisers have been quick to realise that the new and enlarged 'Daily Herald' has enabled them to display their products before an army of readers who have been largely neglected in the past. Readers in their turn have not been slow to appreciate that the firms which advertise most freely are those whose products are the best". (76)

Even more significant for the paper's immediate future was the comment: "Labour's newspaper should have pride of place among the daily journals and should not be contented with having leaped into third place". As early as 9th April Williams was writing to Middleton saying it was essential to keep the sales pressure on - fearing that many readers who had signed on for 10 weeks in order to get the free gifts offered might drop out unless the sales drive was maintained. (77)

The Northern sales campaign, centred on the issue of a Northern Edition from July 7th and featuring a rally in late June that in spite of Ramsay MacDonald's refusal to attend, pleading prior business, attracted such crowds that Manchester Tramways takings record was broken, ran on the slogan "Now for the Second Million". A second series of The Helper appeared, along the lines of the first, carrying the incantation "2,000,000 : Think It: Dream It: Talk It : and Get It!". (78)
The Herald had in effect exchanged the old treadmill of battling for survival for the new one of desperately pushing for extra sales. In the past it had relied on the political commitment of the movement, now it was to run on fundamentally commercial lines and to be judged a success or failure on that basis.

v. Conclusion

The final months of the old Herald saw its loyal follower role qualified by disagreement between the Labour Government and its TUC co-proprietors. Forced to choose it inevitably backed the TUC, but using the language of its candid friend mode - always accentuating the positive rather than being directly critical. This had the effect of legitimating other dissent, providing that it was expressed in moderate language - but the Herald was still far from the independent-minded facilitator of debate that it had been in 1924. To the end of its life its competitiveness was constricted by lack of money, but also by the balance of its coverage - a point admitted by Mellor in his Labour Magazine article.

The new Odhams Herald was a practical exposition of the critique expressed by Clifford Allen - in Margaret Hamilton's view, the "major architect of the reconstituted Daily Herald", carrying the features the old paper lacked and with a professional journalist's rather than activists' value structure. Its initial success did much to confirm many of his arguments.(79)

The registration campaign of early 1930 is like much of the Herald's history a unique event in the life of the British press. It might be argued that it is ironic that the one occasion on which the human resources of the Labour movement were effectively deployed on behalf of the Herald was after it had passed irrevocably out of exclusive movement control. But the crucial factor in this deployment was Odhams financial muscle, enabling payments to canvassers. Just as Leventhal argues that reliance on voluntary effort was the achilles heel of Henderson's attempts to build a strong Labour organisation, so had volunteers and their freely-given time been inadequate in winning readers for the Herald. The reason why the Labour and Trade union machine could be mobilised so successfully in 1930 after so many failed previous efforts was precisely that commercial muscle was also applied for the first time. Each was essential to the other.(80)
1. DH 4.9.29. TUC General Council circular no 7 (1929-30) 26.9.29. Derby and District Trades Council to Citrine 22.9.29, Citrine reply 25.9.29. TUC 788.51

2. Rudland (Birmingham TC) to Citrine 26.9.29. E Parker (Putney DLP) to Citrine 4.10.29, Elisabeth Williamson (S Marylebone ILP) to Citrine 8.10.29. TUC 788.51. Williamson to Middleton 7, 24.10.29. Middleton replies 8, 25.10.29. LPDH 570-3.

3. Middleton replies loc cit, Citrine to Rudland 27.9.29. TUC 788.51. AM reps 19.9, 17.10, 20.11.29. TUC 788.23. VHPCo Board min 22.10.29. TUC 788.11. Williams to Citrine 7.10.29. Bevin to Citrine 7, 14.10.29. Citrine to Bevin 8, 9, 22.10.29. TUC 789.2

4. GM rep 19.9, 17.10.29. TUC 788.22

5. DH 12.11.29. Herald headed notepaper used for letter 20.12.29. LPDH 661

6. The Journalist Jan 1930. VHPCo Board min 24.9.26. TUC 789.2


8. WPN 28.11.29, 4.4.32. NW 23.11.29. VHPCo Board min 7.8, 26.11.29, 21.1.30. TUC 789.2


11. Middleton to Joseph Jones (Yorkshire Miners) 8.1.30. LPDH 705


13. Draft resolution in TUC 788.89


15. GM rep 1.7.29. TUC 788.22. "How the Scheme Works" loc cit

16. Daily Herald official (signature illegible - probably Dane) to Middleton 20.12.29. LPDH 661

17. AM rep 20.11.29. TUC 788.23

18. DH 21.8, 14.9.29. 1929. TUC Private Session transcript loc cit

19. DH 20.9.3.29, 10.29

20. DH 2.10.29

21. DH 5.11.29

22. DH 12.12.29
23. DH 19,25.10.29
24. DH 17.10.29
25. DH 16.11.29
26. DH 13.12.29
27. DH 22.11.29
28. DH 25.10.29
29. DH 20.11.29
30. DH 22.11.29
31. DH 21,26.11.29
32. DH 22.11.29
33. DH 26.11,3,6.12.29
34. DH 20.12.29
35. DH 30.11.29,10.2.30
37. DH 21.12.29
38. DH 22.12,21.1.30.
40. DH 18,19,20.10.29
41. DH 20.12.29,23,30.1.30
42. DH 28.9,3.10.29
43. DH 4.10.29
44. DH 25,26.10.29
45. DH 7.10.29
46. DH 8,11.10.29
47. Ibid 21,24.9.29
48. DH 2.1.30
49. DH 30.11.29
50. DH 21,23,24.9.29,25.1.30 (Hatry),9,10,11.10.29 (Reading inquest), 14,19.10.29 (R101).28.10.29 (air crash),27.11.29 (ship),12.12.29 (bus and tram),1.1.30 (cinema)
51. DH 4.3.30
52. DH 18.11.29
53. DH 19,21.11.29
54. DH 6.1.30. WPN 28.11.29
55. DH 22.2.30
56. DH 25.2.30
57. DH 12,14,15.11.29
58. Herald official (signature illegible - probably Dane) to Middleton 20.12
   29 LPDH 661. Helper kit LPDH 643-4. TUC files ref 790.
59. Helper kit loc cit
60. The Helper no 1 23.1.30
61. Ibid nos 1,2,3,4.
62. Ibid no 7
63. Ibid nos 4,5
64. Ibid no 6. Middleton to Labour Party Secretaries 20.2.30 LPDH 748,
   Middleton and Shepherd (National Agent) to local parties 26.2.30 LPDH
   770.
65. Ibid. Daily Herald "A" directors report 12.5.30 TUC 790.01
66. Middleton to local parties 11.3.30 LPDH 774
67. DH "A" dir 12.5.30 loc cit
68. DH 15.3.30
70. DH 17.3.30
71. Le Mahieu - A Culture for Democracy op cit p 252-9
72. Labour Magazine April 1930 p 550
73. DH 17.3.30. Reports to VHPCo dir 24.5.28 LPDH 544
74. DH 12.3,1.4.30
75. Ibid 18,20,22.3.30
76. Ibid 8.4.30
77. Williams to Middleton 9.4.30 LPDH 793
78. TUCGC 23.4.30 min no 231. Middleton draft circular 26.5.30 LPDH 806, to
   MacDonald 14.5.30 LPDH 816. Gower to Middleton 28.5.30 LPDH 830.
   Middleton and Shepherd to branch and DLP secretaries, agents in Durham
   and Northumberland 9.5.30 LPDH 804. Helper 2nd series nos 2 and 3.
   Kneeshaw to Middleton n.d (July 1930) LPDH 902
79. Marwick - Clifford Allen op cit p 193
80. Leventhal - Arthur Henderson op cit p 110

ENDS
In concluding this study it is worth glancing briefly at the Herald's career after the Odhams takeover, in particular at the 1930s. The tone for this decade was set by Williams, otherwise a marginal figure in the new commercial set-up, in the forebodings expressed within days of March 17th. As he predicted, unrelenting pursuit of ever-higher sales became the overwhelming priority. Its base established by the registration campaign, the Herald set out to catch and overhaul its rivals.

The consequence was a fresh Herald irony. The daily paper theoretically dedicated to replacing capitalism with socialism was the catalyst for the most ferocious capitalist circulation battle yet seen. The Daily Chronicle, expensively relaunched only weeks before the Herald was an early victim - in the argot of Fleet Street "torpedoed flat" by Herald competition and forced into amalgamation with the Daily News to form the News Chronicle. Odhams tactics were simple - to outbid their rivals in the inducements offered to potential readers. One characteristic move was their circumvention of a moratorium on free gifts by using their printing capacity to produce a low-cost edition of Dickens for Herald readers. It was extremely expensive - Odhams are estimated to have spent £1.325 million, about one pound for each new reader, by 1932, and £3 million in the decade to 1939. But in purely circulation terms it worked.(1)

In July 1933 the Herald just beat the Express to the first two million audited net sale - a distinction narrowly denied to the Mail in late 1923. That was the zenith of the Herald's fortunes - it stuck at around two million while the Express continued an inexorable rise, but was still firmly established in second place when the war broke out.(2)
The political line continued to be one of loyal moderation. George Orwell in 1940 testified to the victory of journalistic over political values in the Herald's priorities: "The one Socialist paper in England which could last a week on its merits as a paper is the Daily Herald, and how much Socialism is there in the Daily Herald?". One critic joked that the only way to get a political statement into the paper was to print it on the back of a bathing beauty. (3)

The American political scientist Dean McHenry noted its character in greater detail: "The Herald is little, if any, superior to its competition; it is popularly written, with a considerable tendency to the spectacular. Neither the foreign news nor the domestic news is reported as well as in the Times or Guardian, or the better American papers. Its parliamentary reporting is fair, although there are some justified complaints that the debates are not given in sufficient detail. The Daily Herald's pages contain a great deal of advertising of patent medicines and cheap merchandise. Excellent features and editorial pages compensate for the weaker sections. The Herald outdoes its competitors offering gifts and prizes of enormous size, its free insurance policy pays benefits up to £10,000 for certain accidents". (4)

This overstated the extent to which the Herald had come to resemble its rivals. Until its demise in 1964 content studies would show that it devoted considerably more attention to serious political and industrial news than any other popular paper. But it describes the formula on which the successes of the 1930s were built - and began to fail in the 1940s when the transformed Daily Mirror initiated a fresh revolution in popular newspaper technique. (5) MF
The failures of the period after 1945 replicated those of the years before 1930. The political-commercial model that had been so successful in the 1930s looked as dated and unattractive to a postwar audience as the earlier political model had been to their parents in the 1920s.

The postwar Herald proved incapable of winning its target audience of Labour-voting working-class readers against the competition of the racy demotic, irreverent Mirror. Shielded from the worst consequences of its weakness by newsprint rationing in the decade after the war, it slid inexorably after the mid 1950s. Its doom was arguably sealed in 1961 when, as a by-product of a deal centred on the Mirror's desire to control Odhams' lucrative magazine empire, it became part of the Mirror group. Unsurprisingly unable to accomplish a revival that could only be at the expense of their main paper, the Mirror closed the Herald in 1964, transforming it on the basis of exhaustive market research into the Sun.(6)

In seeking evidence for the proposition that the Herald failed in the 1920s and the 1960s one need look no further than its fate in those decades. Successful newspapers are not sold to new proprietors as the Herald was in 1929, or closed and transformed into a new product as it was in 1964. This definition is purely commercial - the one area in which conclusions about success or failure can be more than tentative.
While the Herald's purposes were political, it is extremely difficult to reach any conclusions as to its success or failure in these purposes. The Herald's political masters undoubtedly believed that it had influence on occasion - when Ramsay MacDonald formed the National Government in 1931 Henderson and Bevin devoted considerable, successful effort to ensuring that the paper did not endorse his desertion of Labour. Observers like Hugh Dalton argued that the debacle of 1931 would have been still worse without the Herald as an influence on party and public opinion. (7)

But Alan Lee's warnings about the great difficulty of assessing the influence of newspapers in historical terms have to be heeded. So too must Lord Beaverbrook's statement to the 1947-9 Royal Commission on the Press that politically effective newspapers must first of all be commercially succesful. The Herald's political fortunes were inextricably linked to its commercial record. That record, contained in its sales, advertising and profit and loss figures, was one of failure - and the measure of its failure is the sale to Odhams. It is inconceivable that the leaders of the Trade Union movement would have consented to the privatisation of a movement asset had they seen any alternative. (8)

The predominant theme of its commercial career between 1922 and 1930 is the progressive elimination of all such alternatives. Yet there is little in the institutional history to hint at decline - in this respect it was a model of stability and continuity. It was throughout the period a penny daily paper subsidised by payments from the organised Labour movement. Changes came only in the form of reductions in the TUC payment in 1926 and 1929 and the Labour Party's inability to pay after 1926, followed by formal withdrawal in 1929.
Personalities remained relatively stable. The paper had only two editors and two general managers during this period. Department heads like Poyser, Barrow and Le Good survived throughout, as did significant journalists such as Ewer, "Gadfly", Slocombe and Brodzky. At Board level key figures of the late 1920s like Bevin, Allen, Williams and Turner had connections with the paper extending back to the Lansbury period.

But the stable facade concealed a succession of commercial setbacks. At any time in the 1920s, except periods of exceptional political or industrial excitement, it was a safe assumption that the Herald's circulation was on a downward trend. This continuous attrition and the accompanying losses progressively eliminated the options open to its management until only sale to an external financier remained.

This progression had six stages. Immediately after the movement takeover its new owners relied on movement loyalty to bring in new sales. By the middle of 1923 it was realised that this was insufficient and that a paper equal editorially to its competitors and buttressed by the pledge scheme was seen as the answer — insurance still being rejected as a dubious gimmick. The failure of this stage, with the increased costs of the larger paper and the failure of the pledge scheme pushing the paper close to death at the 1923 TUC, led on to the belt-tightening of stage three.

The cuts necessary to keep the paper open combined with the stimulus provided by the 1923 and 1924 General Elections and the intervening period of government kept the paper's finances relatively stable through the mid 1920s, but at the price of ending any prospect of competing on equal terms — it was in Lansbury's words "An exotic probably requiring a subsidy". (9)
But by the 1926-7 period it was realised that, with competitors redoubling their promotional efforts, this was a recipe for inexorable decline. Key figures such as Williams concluded that without an improved paper and an insurance scheme the Herald was doomed and initiated stage four in which the paper put up a series of development plans to its owners in an attempt to secure the finance needed.

The General Council's refusal to find extra money initiated stage five - the attempt to find external finance for development while retaining movement control of the paper. When the Prudential loan collapsed, so did the chances of keeping the paper within the movement. Stage six - the sale to Odhams - was the only possible outcome.

The driving force in this progression was poverty. The Herald Board consistently believed that their salvation was to be found in a 500,000 daily sale and a Northern Edition. But each was an essential prerequisite of the other, and they had money for neither. It may have been a third of a century before Robert Heller wrote Catch 22, but the Herald Board would have recognised the concept on sight.

Poverty was felt most deeply in the area of sales promotion. While competitors spent millions on their insurance schemes, the Herald was unable to follow suit - the £20,000 spent by the Mail on a single family following the Sevenoaks rail disaster in April 1928 was equivalent to the Herald's total movement subsidy for the year. The consequences of this for competitiveness were epitomised by the Welsh railwayman's comment: "We vote Labour all right, but we are railwaymen. I am married with children. The Daily Express covers me with insurance, so you cannot blame me for taking it". (10)
But it had consequences for production - in 1926 some of the machines being used were more than 20 years old, and for the product. Selling at the same price as its competitors the Herald was in 1927 half the size of the News and little more than a third the size of the Mail and Express.

Both Fyfe and Mellor complained that their staff was smaller, worse paid and harder worked than that of their competitors and, wanting extra resources, found themselves instead under pressure to make further economies. The career of sub-editor Leslie Sheridan is instructive. He left for the Daily Chronicle in 1925, but returned to his "first love" in the words of the trade press, Journalists of course change jobs for many reasons. But the strong implication of the report, aided circumstantially by the fact that his return came as soon as the Odhams takeover ensured that it was possible to both work for the Daily Herald and enjoy competitive pay and conditions, is that with such conditions all along he would never have left. (11)

Sheridan's career underlines the wider point about the impact of the Herald's poverty. When it was given money to match its rivals in the 1930s, it was extremely competitive. Whether or not problems can be solved by the expenditure of throwing money at them - and the Herald's performance in the 1930s suggests that some can - the evidence of the 1920s is a reminder of the undoubted truth that having none to throw can guarantee failure.

Fyfe's analogy with the ragged man criticised for failing to buy himself a new suit of clothing was thus an apt one, but left out the second question generally asked of ragged men: how far is he responsible for his own predicament?
And it is hard to escape the verdict that, however handicapped by poverty, the Herald also contributed something to its own downfall. The most successful British national dailies this century have been run by proprietors and managements whose first priority is maximising the success of their paper. For the Herald's owners, the paper was merely a means to a political end and its fortunes subordinate to political and industrial objectives.

This contributed to impoverishment through decisions such as the successive reductions in the TUC subsidy, and had a more direct impact when Robert Williams was appointed General Manager. From the evidence we have, Williams appears to have done the job adequately - but it is hard to resist the conclusion that his appointment had far more to do with political convenience than the belief that he was an ideal General Manager.

The manner in which political needs compounded the effect of poverty is summed up by Ethel Bentham's comment in 1925: "A small paper with limited resources has to fulfil two different functions - that of the ordinary daily newspaper and that of the organ of the movement". (12)

Will Stevenson may have informed readers in 1929 that "Man cannot live by politics alone", but the Herald came very close to attempting to do exactly that during this period. It is hard to disagree with AG Gardiner, whose 17 year tenure of the Daily News had demonstrated the ability to combine political purpose and popular appeal, who said: "The carpenter, the cotton operative and the shipwright buy a daily newspaper to be interested and entertained and not primarily for the purposes of propaganda... this elementary consideration has, I think, been ignored". (13)
The Herald's owners, and those journalists we know about, were politically motivated and made this area of activity the overwhelming priority of their lives. They believed that these priorities were shared by rival proprietors – a belief exposed by the exclusively political construction placed upon Lord Rothermere's decision to expand his regional newspaper chain in 1928. In extenuation it should be pointed out that the antics of Lords Rothermere and Beaverbrook in the 1920s lent themselves to such an assumption. But this led to a misreading of the competition - completely ignoring their commercial agenda.

But the assumption that others were as they were did not only apply to other press proprietors. They assumed the same about their own potential readers. Their own tastes were those of the Labour elite's autodidact high culture - the culture that produced MacDonald's endorsement of Reith and Ellen Wilkinson's aspiration to turn Britain into a Third Programme country. These were reflected in the Herald. Given the choice between educating and entertaining, the Herald would always choose to educate. The question it asked of a news story was not "Will this story help to sell the paper?", but "Is this politically significant?". (14)

These attitudes led to a dismissal of the human interest stories used as a staple element by other popular dailies as "dope". But it is hard to resist the conclusion that Lords Rothermere and Beaverbrook, or at least the editors and journalists employed by them, showed a stronger grasp of mass reading tastes than the duly constituted readership of the organised working class. Ever since the 1930s readership surveys have shown that the human interest story has an appeal, exceeding other categories of story, that cuts across divisions of age, class, gender and region.
There is no reason to assume that the 1920s were any different. And after 1922 there was a gradual acceptance of the fact that the Herald needed to broaden its appeal away from the purely political agenda offered by the Lansbury paper. Thus Ethel Thompson's trial and execution and the ordeal of Vacquier were given full front-page lead coverage where True and Armstrong had been overshadowed by political news. The radical human interest story, such as the Wembley exposes, was developed in a manner that recalled Keir Hardie's exploits for the Labour Leader. In the second half of the decade stories such as the King's illness were heavily covered and leader-column comments on channel swimmers and the Prayer Book controversies showed that a conception of stories being newsworthy even if intrinsically unimportant was emerging.

But it would be misleading to see this as a fundamental shift in the paper's priorities. The Herald remained different, and for all of Clifford Allen's critiques, proud of it. The self-righteous disdain with which it reported its refusal to cover the Cathcart and Russell cases was seen in its subsequent ignoring of Pola Negri's romance and downplaying of "Colonel Barker". In 1927 Howard found that the Herald devoted nearly one fifth of its space to parliament, politics and industry against two per cent in the News, one per cent in the Express and three per cent in the Chronicle. Routine interviews with leaders commanded the lead front page slot, third readings of Sugar Bills could occupy four columns of an eight page paper and a relatively parochial matter like the Herald van hi-jacking might monopolise the front page for days. It was typical that where the Westminster Gazette's mystery man handed money out to readers, the Herald's 'Traveller' interrogated them about their political beliefs.
The Herald was itself interrogated about its beliefs as the movement's leadership attempted to control it throughout this period. The battle for the paper's soul was protracted and hard-fought - in any struggle for control of the movement the Herald, exerting influence over the terms and limits of internal debate, was a significant prize.

The introduction to this thesis defined three broad models for a party paper - the 'independent actor' going its own way, the 'candid friend' giving consistent support to the leadership but retaining the right to dissent and debate and the 'top down' model acting purely as the voice of the controlling group. The broad tendency of the Herald in this period was a movement from an 'independent actor' role under Lansbury before 1922 through a long 'candid friend' stage in the mid 1920s to something very close to the 'top down' model by the time of the takeover.

Several qualifying points should be made. The three categories are not mutually exclusive, nor are their boundaries hermetic. The Herald was always a mix of the three - the change is one of balance. The process was uneven and was not a straightforward left-right progression. Again the broad tendency was to move it from left to right, but this incorporates a sharp lurch to the left in 1925. That this lurch should have taken place shows the extent to which the Herald's line was influenced by guidance from the top, coinciding as it did with the corresponding sharp turn in the General Council in particular following the General Election defeat in 1924.
Among historians of the movement MacKibbin and Shaw have shown how the centre developed and controlled national organisation during the 1920s, while Price and Schwarz have pointed to the intellectual consequences, with challenges to the moderate, ethical reformism espoused by the leadership marginalised. Those at the centre were not interested in tolerating dissent. Ernest Bevin may at the 1928 TUC have proclaimed the importance of the Herald dissenting at the 1928 TUC, but the private views of leaders show a dislike of criticism - with Bramley's comments to Brodzky on the role of journalists, MacDonald's letters to Fyfe and Turner and Allen, in his role as a directorial surrogate for MacDonald, consistently demanding conformity to orthodox centre viewpoints.

Lansbury recognised that the movement takeover doomed his freewheeling style and his successor editors adopted different approaches to their political masters. It is one of the numerous ironies attending the Herald in this period that Mellor, whose politics were far more left-wing and dissenting than Fyfe's, should nevertheless have been much more amenable to leadership pressures to conform. There are two likely reasons for this - the first the simple fact that conformity was to some extent a cumulative process and Mellor followed Fyfe. But second and more fundamental was a difference in outlook. Left-winger he may have been, but Mellor was first and foremost a product of the Labour movement and accepted the disciplines imposed by its leadership. Where he saw himself as a servant of the movement, Fyfe, a late and somewhat paternalistic convert to socialism, saw himself as an independent actor and acted accordingly.
There was considerable movement away from the Lansbury approach under Fyfe's editorship - a notable landmark in the taming of the paper was its leader-column criticism of the 1923 Docks Strike, firmly foreshewing its previous rank and file allegiances to come down reluctantly but firmly on the side of trade union officialdom. The paper tacitly accepted the Labour Party's exclusion of Communists and, under the first MacDonald administration, the threat to use special powers during a transport strike.

But the 'candid friend' approach remained uppermost - an approach epitomised by Fyfe's response to MacDonald's complaints about the paper's refusal to offer uncritical support: "It is very important that no section shall feel resentment at not being allowed to express its views in its own newspaper" and a 1925 leader on the importance of "A continuous interchange of views between (leaders) and the rank and file".(17)

Mellor also espoused the right of dissent, but in practice moved towards the top-down model - in his first few months accepting the self-denying ordinance ruling out debate about the fate of the General Strike when more conventional journalistic demands might have called for the debate to occur while memories were still fresh. These tendencies were seen ever more firmly expressed in 1928 when the Mond-Turner process was supported and the Cook-Maxton manifesto was ferociously attacked. The explicit request in 1929 that the paper should be seen as the official organ of the Labour Government shows, in contrast to its attitude in 1924, how far the process had gone - and the headlining of government praise for Slocomb shows the paper as loyal follower rather than independent actor or candid friend. Significantly it was only seen in candid friend mode when dissent was licensed by TUC disagreement with the government line, MF.
The Herald's shift from left to right - one paralleling not only power within the movement, but the general trend of politics through the 1920s, can be tracked through its attitude to Communism and its place within the Labour movement. This was a live issue where attitudes taken defined the position of those taking them on the movement's left-right spectrum.

Support under Lansbury for Communists as comrades with similar anti-capitalist views but a different strategic approach gave way after the official takeover to acquiescence in expulsion but sympathetic reporting for Communist affiliates like the Minority Movement.

Fyfe's parting broadside at the Minority Movement in 1926 may have been deplored as divisive at the time, but anticipated the move to outright hostility in the late 1920s - moving through savage assaults on the Movement in 1928 to outright equation with fascism in 1929.

So the Herald can be seen through this period moving from diversity to uniformity, from dissent to conformism, and from rank and file left to official right. Its shift was paralleled on the political stage by a former member of staff, John Scurr who moved from Poplar rebel in 1921 through left MP so disillusioned by the first Labour government that he questioned the value of the exercise to a position where he has described as "among the loyallest of the loyal" among the backbenchers in the 1929-31 parliament.

It can be questioned whether this did the Herald's journalism any good.

A later editor, Francis Williams spoke feelingly of the "priceless journalist gift of surprise". This was something that the paper increasingly lacked as the 1920s progressed.
Predictability can also be leavened with passion. When former Times editor Wickham Steed declared "What does the public want.. as a rule it wants emotions" he was thinking of human interest stories, but his views also have implications for political coverage. The Herald's Poplar coverage abounds in excitement, engagement and commitment - in short in emotions - that can reach and exhilarate the reader of microfilm copies 70 years later. That spirit is rarely recaptured after the movement takeover. If the Herald responded to leadership strictures, it did so by becoming a duller paper. (19)

The temptation in commenting on the Herald's fortunes in this period is to adopt the apocryphal traffic direction "I wouldn't start from here if I was you". It might be argued that it was ill-advised that the Labour movement to devote part of its resources to trying to run a mass-circulation daily and that the Lansbury Herald only found itself in that market at all through unplanned circulation growth in the wake of the Russian Revolution.

But however ill-equipped the Herald was, that is the aspiration against which it and its journalism must be judged. To succeed the Herald needed to attract at least half a million readers. It is not axiomatic that the style defined by the commercial press was the only way to a mass sale in the 1920s. But if there was an alternative, nobody found it.

The Herald's heavy political approach could only have captured a mass sale if a large enough section of the British population had been prepared not only to define themselves as socialist anti-capitalists, but prepared to make that definition the decisive factor in their choice of newspaper. Or, in other words, a mass anti-capitalist counterculture.
That there was a fair-sized counterculture is shown by the Herald's sales in the immediate postwar period. But Wertheimer, an important witness because of his knowledge of the countercultural German movement, argues convincingly that the bulk of the Labour movement was linked to capitalist culture. Working-class acceptance of capitalist newspapers followed from this - and the Herald, unprotected by cultural barriers, had to match competitors' offerings to win readers.

But it remained deeply serious. This made for some good, well-informed journalism, but not for commercial success in the mass market. It was pitching for popular sales with a serious agenda - the hope Lansbury once expressed of making it "The Manchester Guardian of the working classes". This was a fine aspiration - but the Manchester Guardian's circulation in 1921 was around 50,000. In practice the Herald catered to a political elite much as clubland papers like the Pall Mall and Westminster Gazettes had done. But the difference was that their elite had also been a socio-economic elite attractive to advertisers and, confined to a small area, not demanding the trouble and expense of national distribution.

Growing awareness of the flaws in its strategy served only to increase the Herald's discomfort as the 1920s went on - a discomfort defined by Ethel Bentham's perceptive comments. The Herald was confined by poverty and a movement culture that made adoption of its competitors' style and priorities unlikely. But there was a choice that it might have made before one was forced upon them in 1929.
It could have tailored its serious-minded, improving outlook to serve the movement's activist elite - accepting in the process that a mass circulation was unobtainable. Or it could have accepted that, in the absence of a mass counter-culture, it would have to make the compromise with dominant commercial values and the commitment from its own resources necessary to secure a large popular circulation. It refused to make the choice and persisted in pursuing popular targets with elite values. In its confusion of journalistic purpose the Herald contrived the worst possible outcome - that of being neither one thing nor the other.

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Footnotes


2. F Williams - Dangerous Estate op cit p 176-7, NW 12.1.29.


8. Taylor - Beaverbrook op cit p 748.


10. RPTUC 1928 p 495, GM rep 29.8, 29 TUC 788, 21, CM rep 21.6, 28 TUC 788, 22.

11. WPN 12, 12.29.

12. Dr Ethel Bentham - Memorandum 17.9.25, LPOH 462 TUC 789, 1.


15. CM rep 15, 12, 27 loc cit.


17. Fyfe - Seven Selves op cit p 258-60, OH 21.1.25.

18. F Williams - Dangerous Estate op cit p 182.

19. Le Mahieu op cit p 111.

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Construction, conformity and control: the taming of the Daily Herald 1921-30

Thesis

How to cite:

For guidance on citations see FAQs.

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Version: Version of Record
Constriction, Conformity and Control: The Taming of the Daily Herald 1921-30
Huw Richards
Ph. D 1993
The Open University

Section Eight
i Still Sinking

The gloom of 1928 persisted into its final months. Circulation, inevitably fell below 300,000 on October 27th and rising returns took sales below 250,000. Williams gloomily noted the trade-off between cutting supplies to 50,000 outlets to cut returns and the loss of casual sales. Two per cent of northern sales were lost in a month - Williams, visiting Manchester, noted the profusion of posters for the insurance press and at his hotel was given publisher-supplied copies of the Mail, Express and Manchester Guardian. (1)

Advertising held up, but Poyser argued that a slump was inevitable once it was clear the Herald dare not issue a 1928 net sales certificate. He anticipated trouble from February 1929, but it started in December: "Three very important advertisement agencies - CF Higham and Co, FE Potter Ltd and Saward, Baker and Co - have recently very much embarrassed me by a direct questioning regarding our net sale. In all three instances they sent for me with that purpose solely in view and gave me an uncomfortable time. It is a portent of what we must expect next year. The advertisement agencies, from whom newspapers receive about 75 per cent of their business, have a powerful organisation with a bureau and a paid secretary, and the principal work of this secretary is to obtain information regarding the sale of the newspapers, which information is passed around the members. Any hesitation on the part of a newspaper in supplying a net sales certificate is soon recorded by the members of that organisation and a silent, though deadly, pressure in the shape of diminution of business results. No paper, with the exception of one or two very influential ones such as the Times, can afford to ignore them." (2)

The mood communicated itself to the directors. Bevin wrote to Allen in November: "I know that you sometimes feel almost driven to despair about the Herald, but I think I have already got there". This was the background that the Victoria House finance committee resumed their search for salvation. A variety of initiatives were touted - Morrison argued for contract printing while Bevin floated moving out of Fleet Street into a new building which would provide a better investment for the unions than a shaky newspaper by itself. Mellor, argued sceptically that combined with solutions to the size and insurance problems Bevin's plan might make even £400,000 an inadequate investment. (3)
Allen confirmed this when asked for a new development plan. His report, delivered in early
November, emphasised the size issue. With competitors running 1400 column inches of news
daily the Herald, currently running 800 inches plus 260 of advertisements, had to go up to at
least 1100. Allen's two and a half year plan, including insurance and new plant, for a self-
supporting 500,000 sale paper was costed at £980,000 - plus a subsequent £200,000 a
year on insurance and £150,000 capital investment and £2,000 a week costs for a Northern
Edition. (4)

Though Mellor and Allen could use their newspaper expertise to suggest developments, they
were in the hands of the movement paymasters on the sub-committee. They chose to evade the
issue, saying they were unable to comment on long-term development schemes - though stating
with tantalising inexplicitness that they were examining "several complicated schemes of
development". Also ducking the insurance issue on cost grounds, they called simply for a larger
paper for the first nine months of 1929, rationalising this as a test for the competitiveness by
itself of a 12-page paper. (5)

The General Council were asked for a statement on the amount available for development by
February 1st and a meeting with its Herald sub-committee, set up on November 5th. Before the
meeting on 12th December the directorate's minds were further concentrated by meeting
MacLaren, secretary of the Retail Newsagents Federation. He argued strongly for insurance : "A
small paper with insurance is better than a big paper without" : better distribution and improved
size and presentation - the Herald should be "primarily a newspaper with news - and with
views spatchcocked in". (6)

The meeting was presented with a series of five options costing from £19,000 for an
unchanged 10 page paper to £170,000 for a 12 page paper with insurance across the whole
nine months. It opted for none of them, save a marginal change in the size and quality of paper
used. Shorter-term issues resolved, or rather evaded, yet another sub-committee was set up to
examine the long-term. It was asked to explore the possibilities of raising a capital sum and
setting up an insurance scheme. (7)
Allen's ambitious scheme had been dropped, presumably on the grounds of cost. The sub-committee voted on 3rd January to seek quotations for an insurance scheme and deputed Thomas, Bevin and Citrine to seek a loan of £300,000 - £400,000. This would extend over the next 15 to 20 years, with interest paid from the union levy and the creation of a sinking fund to repay the capital. (8)

ii. Content: Politics: The Phony Election

Gloom may have attended the Herald's position, but, in a demonstration of Williams' point that political and sales fortunes were not linked, there was much greater optimism over Labour's fortunes as the General Election of 1929 loomed.

The certainty of a General Election by mid 1929 dominated the period after the 1928 party and TUC conferences - in effect a phony election campaign. The proximity of the poll accentuated the Herald's tendency towards the loyal follower role. The political mix was much as before, but retailed with greater intensity and frequency.

The election registered in front page stories as early as November 1928 and Ramsay MacDonald's reaction to more than 100 gains in municipal elections: "And Now For The General Election" underlined the Herald's role as a conduit for messages from the leadership to activists - as three days later did similar emphasis on his speech to an Albert Hall rally: "Labour's 600 Candidates for General Election". The decision in March 1929 to treat MacDonald's everyday feat of seeing off a Communist heckler at Seaham as the day's most important story was a classic official newspaper choice. (9)

Leader column loyalty to the party line was more pronounced - emphasised when Lloyd George launched his employment plans, dismissed as "a crazy-quilt made of pieces snipped out of the Labour programme, but behind the Labour programme lies the unifying conception of Socialism, while behind Mr Lloyd George's ideas are confusions of mind and of purpose". Snowden attacked it in remarkably similar terms in the following issue's lead feature. (10)

The invocation of socialism as a wrap-around unifying factor for a party that had clearly been riven by internal controversy in the previous year fitted both with the standard imagery used by ethical, mainstream Labour supporters and with the impression of unity the party was seeking to project in an election year.
Further evidence of election-consciousness was seen in Gerald Gould’s Saturday column, described as “not meant to be topically political...meant to keep in view broad general Socialist principles”. But these were related very directly to topical political events, mediated through ethical appeal, when he declaimed in April 1929: “There is a plain choice between truth and falsehood, between right and wrong. There is a Crusade - and it is Labour’s”. The ethical appeal had been even more overt in a leader six months earlier: “Capitalism and the ethic of Jesus are incompatible. Therefore those to whom Jesus is leader should enrol in a Movement that is definitely out to replace Capitalism by something higher and nobler. That ‘something’ is socialism.(11)

Claims of unity were made even when they flew in the face of the paper’s own reporting - as when the 1928 party conference debated Labour and the Nation. It commented that “no fundamental differences of opinion” were revealed, even as its news team were reporting Maxton and Wheatley’s trenchant criticisms, and, revealing its own pro-leadership views in the process, it was saying that Clynes “Scored a palpable hit when he asked Mr Wheatley if Liberals would support the Programme proposals for the nationalisation of land, mines, power and transport”. The leader emphasised its full conversion to the gradualist camp, approvingly quoting the miner who told Maxton and the critics that the coming of Socialism was dependent on the number of socialists in the country and that their priority should be conversion rather than criticism. “No power on earth can retard the speedy advent of Socialism if the majority of men and women in this country are firm and committed Socialists. At present the Socialist faith is held only by a minority - an ever growing number, but still a minority.(12)

Critics such as Wheatley and Maxton may have received less attention than in the past, and been victims of this mild partisanship in reporting, but they were still operating within the Herald’s conception of the legitimate Labour Movement. No longer so the Communists, whose passage beyond the pale was driven home firmly and derisively.
Party conference arguments against their exclusion were "not so much defeated as laughed at". The Herald commented that workers saw Communists as "fit subject for mirthful derision", said itself that their ideas were "as confused as their finances" and that "having failed to capture the Labour Party by boring from within they are now boring everybody by the sheer craziness of their attacks upon the Labour Party". The final escalation in condemnation, to direct equation with fascism, came with the issue of the election programme of "the handful of wildcat theorists who call themselves the Communist Party of Great Britain". It said: "Communism and Fascism inevitably play into each others' hands. They are equally a menace to the public peace and safety". (13)

Herald presentation of the Labour case made much of its youthful vigour juxtaposed with the tired old parties. The election of the 25 year old Jennie Lee at the North Lanark by-election helped reinforce this theme, as well as allowing an overt gesture in the direction of the women's vote, greatly increased in importance since the last election: "Which other party in the state provides an outlet for youth like the Labour Party... Labour has always demanded political freedom for women as an act of social justice. Tories and Liberals have only given way to the demand for women's franchise when forced to do so". (14)

By happy coincidence her Commons debut was on the same day as a Lloyd George rally at the Albert Hall - the extent to which the Herald continued to attack the Liberal leader, generally on the grounds of untrustworthiness, shows how seriously Labour still took him as a rival for the centre-left vote. The contrast of fading age and rising youth was rubbed in with reports that "middle-aged and elderly men forming the bulk of the audience". The description of Lloyd George's appearance as the "signal for the outburst of wonderfully contrived applause" was in sharply partisan to the way in which the Herald reported displays of enthusiasm for its own leader - that very week speaking of "Memorable scenes and magnificent expressions of loyalty" to MacDonald in Seaham. (15)
This reporting was in line with the shrilly partisan approach that typified the period. The tone rather than the content changed - the Herald had always been ready to indict the government for inaction, malice and incompetence, but the language became more extravagant - with headlines such as "The Lie Factory" and "Seven Weeks Fight Against Tory Tyranny" leading into heated denunciations. (16)

Together with this was a bullish optimism about Labour's prospects, buoyed by five by-election victories and excellent council election results in the first three months of 1929: "Portent of Power", the headline greeting the Midlothian victory in late January, was the message conveyed in the reporting of each triumph - each given six-column front page treatment. (17)

Content: Industry

Central leadership influence was also evident in industrial coverage. The Herald had moved a long way from the abrasive spirit which had animated it in the days of Larkin, Poplarism or even the General Strike. As the TUC was increasingly dominated by the conciliatory, pragmatic style defined by Citrine, so too was the Herald. Confronted by the struggles of the steel and cotton industries, including obdurate owners, it might well in the past have called for industrial action. Now in both cases it proscribed an inquiry into the sources of the industry's misfortune. (18)

Industrial Correspondent Vivian Brodzky, always a close follower of official lines, displayed the extent of the conversion with an exposition of the new style following the 1929 TUC in Belfast. He argued that Congress was no longer moved by the inspired orator, but those who provided "facts, figures and constructive speeches and criticism".
Exemplars of the new reasoned style were Citrine and the TUC’s research and investigation department: “It ferrets facts, let us say, of amalgamation and industrial unionism, it sorts and analyses them, and thus prepares the raw material for impartial and constructive memorandum upon which well-informed decisions can be taken. A speech by Mr Citrine is the model that will and is being followed by members of the new governing class who each year make their debut at Congress. It is always documented with facts - first those designed to clear up misunderstandings if they exist, or to destroy erroneous ideas and theories, and then again the documented and constructive alternatives to the case he is attacking. With this new type taking the place of the wordy sentimentalist or the acrimonious debater, the future of Trade Unionism is bright with promise” (19).

This different style nevertheless meshed well with an old Herald cause - that of a better organised trade union movement, based on larger, stronger unions. When the Transport and General Workers swallowed the Workers Union, it argued that “To perform its functions Trade Unionism must continually develop and adapt itself to the new evolution of capitalism and to the changing psychology of the workers themselves” (20).

The Mond-Turner process, symbol of the new approach, continued in spite of the rejection of National Industrial Council proposals by the National Confederation of Employers Organisations and the Federation of British Industry. The Herald response was predictably angry, but significantly stopped short of arguing that there was no point in talking to employers like this. The decision, it said, had “shown how strong is the power of reaction and obscurantism in their counsels… an astonishing attitude and it speaks ill for the brain power of those who have assented to it”. It backed TUC acceptance of direct discussions instead of a new body, arguing in support of TUC chairman Ben Tillett that however unsatisfactory: “Their invitation and its meaning had obviously to be explored”. (21)

It was able to justify its support for the Mond-Turner process’ capacity for amelioration when the conference’s report on unemployment was published in March 1929 - calling for state aid for industrial reorganisation, better pensions, the raising of the school leaving age and aid for emigrants.
Hailing a "remarkable interim document" that indicated "a great deal of common ground", the Herald concluded that it was "a vindication of the Socialist diagnosis of the ills of capitalism and in part of the Socialist treatment of these ills" - a view that doubtless surprised Mond, chief anti-socialist protagonist in Snowden's 1923 parliamentary debate.(22)

Discussions and inquiries were in much better supply than serious strikes in this period. So it might be expected, in terms of news interest if no other, that the Herald would echo Maxton's view that 800 workers from the Rego tailoring factory in Edmonton, North London who struck for the last three months of 1928: "deserved the thanks of the working classes of Britain for having broken up the deadly industrial peace which had hung over the country since the National Strike". After the strike organiser Sam Elsbury thanked the Herald: "without your publicity we could never have gained the sympathy and financial support that had been received".(23)

That may have been true, but the Herald coverage, in spite of the London location, absence of other disputes, the convenience of "Rego" as a headline word and the novelty of a largely female strike was less than might have been expected. The strike only once made it on to the front page - as a picture and caption when strikers took collections in Fleet Street and visited the Herald office. Most coverage was on page six - the movement news page. There was no leader devoted to it.(24)

It wasn't going to ignore a major dispute. But one that failed to win head office support and was strongly suspected of Communist inspiration - Elsbury was an admitted Communist and the dispute led subsequently to a Communist-led split in the Garment Workers Union, was not going to get the coverage an official dispute would merit. Coverage declined significantly once the company had alleged Communist influence, even though the Herald reported strikers' rejections of this.(25)
Nor however were Herald reporters even going to be anything but sympathetic in the reporting of the experience of striking, whatever their reservations about the motivation of leaders. Coverage featured the normal sketches of happy and determined workers: "Mostly girls between 16 and 21 years of age, and the determined spirit they are displaying is a pleasing feature of the dispute" and "They were in a cheery mood, singing and dancing as they waited for their money... so catchy was their song that at least two of the policemen caught themselves humming the tune: "The strikers are maintaining exemplary order and discipline". (26)

But this atmosphere was in contrast to conditions in the coalfields, particularly South Wales. These mattered to two aspects of Herald outlook - as a human tragedy afflicting a core group of readers and a political issue used to attack capitalism in general and the government specifically.

There was a hint of deference when the Prince of Wales visited Northumberland and described conditions as "perfectly ghastly". A subsequent leader "Answer Mr Baldwin!", using his comments to restate demands for government action, argued that the "Heir to the Throne" had placed the facts "beyond contravention". Predictable inaction provoked a six column headline that in itself summarised Herald analysis of the interlocking relationship between government and owners: "Attempt To Suppress Report on Prince's Tour: Revelations Alarm The Government: Mineowners Campaign to Whitewash Conditions: Unpalatable Facts: Prince Not To Visit The Coalfield". (27)

Failing the prince's views, the Herald still found substantial mileage in an official report on South Wales: "The situation, we believe, is without parallel in the modern history of this country. The nearest parallel is to be found in the cotton famine of 1862-4, but it is not a close one. Although couched in the cautious language characteristic of reports by public officials, the document is none the less one more terrible revelation of the depths of poverty to which the coalfield population have sunk". (28).
The centre may have established firm control over home political and industrial coverage, but was far from certain of its hold over foreign news. Citrine hammered away at Mellor with complaints about Ewer, saying in October 1928 that "You have heard me repeatedly state on the Board my view that the employment of a member of the Communist Party as the Foreign Editor of the "Daily Herald". He argued that the Russian news had a heavily pro-Soviet slant "Very little of a nature critical to the Soviet Government finds its way into the "Herald".(29)

Citrine's reply is not recorded, but Ewer survived the onslaught. Andrew Williams, writing on Labour-Soviet relations in this period, argues that the Herald "acted throughout this period as the voice of patience" and notes relatively positive portrayals of Stalin, but does little to support Citrine's anger. The main Russian note struck in this period was the familiar one of criticism of government policy, reflecting the emphasis placed by Labour on trade rather than political friendship.

Evidence that trade with Russia had dropped 50 per cent since 1926 was seized on in a leader following the line that Labour's line on the issue was not only morally right, but practical and realistic : "The Tory government bit off the nose of British trade to spite the face of the Bolsheviks...There are, quite literally, thousands of men walking the streets today in search of work as a direct result of the folly and of the obstinate refusal of the Government to rectify it".(30)

Elsewhere there was continuity in scepticism over the League of Nations and associated disarmament talks. "Words not deeds" had become the defining test of Herald analysis, making the underlying point that only socialist governments could be trusted to seek disarmament in good faith. This test was applied in particular to the British government and its responses to American Naval Disarmament Proposals : "Words in plenty and in superfluity. Glib assent to principles, but when it comes to deeds - nothing or worse than nothing. They will do anything in the world for disarmament - except disarm".(31)
But the same test was applied ruthlessly to the League as a whole when Bolivia and Paraguay went to war in December 1928. Both were signatories to the League covenant, but the council contented itself with sending a "Note of pious advice and remonstrance". It was seen as a crucial test for the League: "The greatest disservice that can be done is to flinch from facing it...confronted by a difficulty they have almost literally run away from it". (32)

News coverage was intended as a beneficiary of more regular 12 page editions in 1929. With greater space the leader page moved on occasion from page four to page six, and court stories - normally distributed evenly about the general news pages - were occasionally consolidated on a single page under the heading "Cameos of the Courts". (33)

The phony election had its impact here as well. While the general news story was still likely to get on to the front page, the likelihood of it becoming the lead story declined as political stories were re-emphasised. In March 1929 the Herald reported that the exploits of "Colonel Barker", who had successfully masqueraded as a man for years had been "the talk of the country this week" - a definition of a commercial lead story that would be hard to better. It did appear regularly on the front page of the Herald, but was kept out of the lead by political stories. Not until she was charged with perjury did the Herald grant it six-column treatment, and the straight human interest story continued to be a conspicuous minority in the lead slot. One distinct exception: "Hunchback Shot Dead in Billiard Saloon", run on a day when Neville Chamberlain's Poor Law policy came under fire from rural councils, shows that even the Herald could occasionally be tempted by an irresistible headline. (34)

But there was still evidence of a marginal shift in news values, when the King was seriously ill in 1928. Slocombe recorded in his memoirs that an early editor was fired for leading the paper on a royal wedding, and royal stories had generally in the past received sparse treatment. (35)
While the King's illness was still not rated worthy of a leader, Mellor's estimate of its news value was such that he was prepared to lead on: "The King's Temperature Up", relegating an important parliamentary session on controversial de-rating proposals to page two, and to run the illness as a major story for several days. Further evidence of marginal change - one that the paper's founders would undoubtedly have seen as being in the direction of frivolity - is provided by the occasional appearance of apparently syndicated Hollywood star features such as "Troubles of a Film Comedienne", ostensibly written by actress Marion Davies.(36)

But more established Herald news and comment styles were seen in coverage of a succession of police scandals - drawing social and political morals from the events it reported. When officers were jailed for conspiring in a false charge against a woman it showed itself highly representative of the movement in this period by calling for a Royal Commission "in the interests of the police no less than the public". The astute German journalist, writing at this time, noted the analytical limitations of British Labour confronted with complex issues and that it was "amazing how many times it falls back upon the expedient of a Royal Commission".(37)

When Sergeant Goddard was convicted for taking bribes from night-club keepers its conclusions were a classic Herald mix - replying to the judge's moralising over Goddard by seeking explanations in the corruption of dishonesty inherent in capitalism and blending decent plain-man distrust of opulence with rejection of puritanism.

"The average night club is not half as cheerful as the tap-room of a village inn; nor as merry as a suburban dance hall...."How many have censured the society which makes the Meyricks and tempt the Goddards to their destruction. How many have expressed disapproval of the crowd of rich idlers who, in a country stricken by a plague of poverty, turn its capital into a city of dreadful night clubs? Yet they are the real criminals: for it is they who paid Mrs Meyrick to bribe Goddard to let them break the law.

Or rather, not even they are the criminals; they, wretched, bored creatures are themselves the victim of a social order which has given them a surfeit of "filthy lucre" and the spending of it is their only job. Goddard, the dreary extravagances which corrupted him, and the stricken villages through which the Prince of Wales is touring are all symptoms of that same disease which is capitalism".(38)
Excitement over scientific advance continued as a steady thread - with the link between technological and social progress made explicit in September 1928 when an autogiro flew the channel. "A new era of scientific revolution is developing. By co-operative endeavour it can be made an era of prosperity and progress for all". Nor was all scientific progress airborne - it gave six-column prominence to the first wireless transmission of photographs to the Herald using the Fultograph apparatus, in its enthusiasm hailing a grim and grainy picture of the King as "as clear as any newspaper picture".(39)

Support for innovation and the progressive applied as much to literature and the Herald's ultra-literary art pages as to science or technology. From August 1928 literary editor Arnold Dawson gave vigorous support to Radclyffe Hall's pioneer lesbian novel The Well of Loneliness - reviewed by Dawson as "a profound and moving study of a profound and moving problem" but banned, after press attacks, by Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks.(40)

As ever arguments concentrated on the wider impact of a single case - here the threat to serious literature. Dawson asked provocatively "Should the Bible Be Banned?" and called for a reform of laws which made a single magistrate's opinion the arbiter and produced idiocies such as the Well of Loneliness appeal at which "A policeman's opinion was listened to: that of writers and eminent people was ruled out of order. It is an astonishing situation". Forty-five literary figures wrote to back the Herald position. It argued that "the prevailing tendency is not to attack the definitely pornographic trade in books, but to condemn the serious writer on "border-line" subjects to a silence which is fraught with grave dangers".(41)

vi. Prudential Assistance

At the same time as campaigning for Radclyffe Hall's right to publish, the Herald was working hard on its own continuing ability to do the same, with the search for outside support starting in the New Year 1929. But hopes of a bank loan were rapidly dashed as McClannan, General Manager of the National Provincial, told a delegation on January 21st that no bank could make a loan over such a long period - 12 months was regarded as the extreme. But disappointment was tempered by his suggestion that an Insurance Company might be interested if the unions could give cast-iron undertakings of repayment.(42)
Chapter Thirteen: Rescue September 1928 to September 1929

Thomas, Citrine and Allen cancelled their requests for meetings with the Midland and Barclays, redirecting their efforts towards the Prudential Assurance. Negotiations with the Prudential, taking place in such secrecy that as late as early March many General Council members did not know which company were involved and TUC Finance and General Purposes Committee minutes referred simply to "The Lending Body", started on February 5th and ran through to the end of March. (43)

Prudential secretary Sir George May, destined in 1931 to enter Labour demonology as chairman of the committee whose support for spending cuts helped precipitate the fall of MacDonald's government, proved more accommodating to socialist aspirations on this occasion. He was prepared to offer a £300,000 loan at 5½ or 6 per cent - which would have taken around 20 years to pay off, subject to certain guarantees. These included acceptance of responsibility for the debt by the chief officers of unions, an increase in TUC affiliation fees to up the £16,000 annual income currently available from this source, the full participation of the Herald directors "So that the Prudential may be assured that the paper is not likely to be run by extremists", and the right to recall the loan at three months notice - with assurances that this would not be done unless absolutely necessary. (44)

The committee's search for an insurance scheme took it to the Eagle Star and British Dominion Company, who covered the Mail and Express. But they were unimpressed by the offered £60,000 a year scheme for 300,000 readers, or by a comparable quote from General Accident. Aware of their limited expertise, they asked A Geilinger, who had run the Express scheme for Eagle Star in the early 1920s, to advise them. (45)

Disabusing them of the assumption that the companies were profiteering - they viewed newspaper schemes as advertising loss leaders - he explained that choice was limited. The two companies who had given quotes ran three of the four daily paper schemes, and newcomers to the market were unlikely. Even so he said: "I have reason to believe that, given a reasonable time limit for negotiation, I could effect a closer quotation from each Company".
Clearly an insurer rather than a journalist, he argued that other papers had made too much of big capital sums for death in railway accidents. This view ignored the value papers were getting in having a headline figure to sell their schemes and from payouts in the event of disasters - both the Herald and the NUJ expressed disgust at insurance-inspired coverage of the Darlington rail crash in the previous October. (46)

He said: "As a counterblast, it may be worth considering whether as much popularity or even more cannot be obtained for a scheme which makes more of the Weekly Benefit, the Capital Sums being reduced. The practical and helpful value of the Weekly Benefit for Total Disablement is, in any walk of life, greater by far than fanciful sums for Death or rare events such as loss of limbs etc." (47)

Eagle Star proved unwilling to extend increased weekly benefits, while General Accident changed their minds altogether about extending their newspaper business. But when Geilinger reported again in March he was certain he had secured "bedrock figures" from Eagle Star. Arguing that any Herald scheme must be comparable to other papers to be a realistic attraction, he obtained a £50,000 quote for a scheme matching the Chronicle's and adding a number of special features. (48)

At the same time Allen was examining uses for the loan. He concluded that "Every other alternative is a greater gamble", a view reinforced by Williams' report for February, pointing to "the most disquieting period since I became the General Manager". With sales down to 288,324, advertising down, the Daily News printing in Manchester and indications from by-elections that the General Election would produce nothing like the expected 100,000 increase in sales the paper was, he said, as seriously situated as it had been at the 1923 TUC. (49)

Allen renewed the expansionist vision he had developed in November, arguing that £300,000 was an initial injection that would be exhausted in two years at 12 pages with insurance and a reshaped staff. He called for the initial £400,000 to be followed by an issue of at least £1.2 million, backed a 1d then a 3d levy. The minimum, he said, if the paper were to have a chance of achieving its objectives.
The numbers may have boggled minds already dazzled by the prospect of borrowing $300,000, but Allen's projections were in line with the sums being spent by better-heeled rivals. He argued: "If we see our hopes being fulfilled we can in a year's time either continue on the same lines or launch a bigger scheme with our new progress". (50)

Staff and policy reconstruction would, he said, be as essential as the extra capital. He elaborated on this view in March with a staffing report whose origins can be traced back to the Labour press battle before the First World War - making his hankering for the Citizen model and determination to remove survivors of the Lansbury Herald more explicit than ever before.

He called for the sacking of four Lansbury era survivors - Ewer, Dawson, Brodzky and Slocombe "irrespective of whether we know who shall be appointed in their places". "Gadfly" would contribute twice a week from outside the office, replaced on other days, along with "Way of the World", by a daily "London Letter" while Mellor would be demoted to Assistant or Industrial Editor.

The key role of News Editor would be offered to the crime reporter Stanley Bishop, formerly News Editor of the Citizen. A strong appointment here would allow a "wise political judgment" rather than an experienced jouranlist as editor - Allen nominated former Daily News man George Greenwood, barrister and academic CM Lloyd, Norman Angell or RH Tawney as candidates. A pillaging of Fleet Street for talent, adding $200 a week to the salary bill, would aim to bring in Vernon Bartlett as Foreign Editor, HW Nevinson as Parliamentary Correspondent, one of Tomlinson, Sassoon and Joad as Literary Editor and a powerhouse of radical talent - Hammond, Brailsford, Kingsley Martin, Laski, Mellor, JA Hobson and Arnold Foster among the suggestions, to write leaders. Further additions would include two new reporters, two sub-editors and a $70 a week increase in the budget for lineage and articles. (51).

Allen informed Citrine that the staffing sub-committee unanimously accepted most of his recommendations. But Turner remembered differently: "We never came to the conclusions on all these stuffs (sic) or on personell (sic) in the way it is set forth", he said. In a petulant reply Allen declined to put the proposals to the Board, arguing that Turner's intervention reduced them to the status of purely personal views. (52)
The entire scheme depended on unions agreeing to provide the required security. The Prudential negotiations provided the final push needed to persuade the Labour Party to give up their holding in the Herald, with a formal National Executive resolution passed in late March. (53)

By early March the General Council had agreed to call a special meeting of executives to discuss increasing the annual levy to 4d, the extra penny to guarantee the loan and finance the sinking fund. But otherwise it moved warily - the conference was postponed from 22nd March to 26th April while more information was sought. (54)

It never met. Two events appear to have buried the scheme’s chances. First was an approach to the Cooperative Insurance Society. This a draft memo in the TUC archives indicates, was solely intended to preempt complaints from within the movement that a deal had been done with a capitalist company without seeking a Labour partner. A rejection was expected, and duly issued on the grounds that the CIS rules made it impossible for it to consider such a loan. But Ben Turner concluded that if CIS had refused much the same deal as the Prudential had been offered, he wasn’t too happy about it himself. (55)

Bemused and uncomprehending of much about the Herald as he was, Turner was a substantial figure - chairman of the Herald, immediate past chairman of the TUC and shortly to be Minister of Mines. His scepticism about expensive development plans was probably more representative of the union officials who had to determine the paper’s future, and take financial responsibility for it, than Allen’s visionary expansionism. As the habitual voice of immobilism in development debates when the alternative was spending the movement’s money, he tended to get his way.

The second blow came on March 18th. For legal reasons 10 union leaders would have to have taken personal responsibility for the loan guarantee. Henderson, the TUC’s solicitor, asked if unions would be prepared to indemnify them then followed up with the alarming revelation that he had been examining union rule-books: “Having perused the rules of the Transport Workers, we consider that they are wide enough for the purpose, but at the moment we have not seen any rules which, in our opinion, are wide enough, without amendment”. (56)
The idea that a rule change, often a lengthy and complex operation, would be needed to protect them from personal liability for around £30,000 was calculated to chill any union official's blood. Meeting on 27th March the General Council received Allen's memo on development plans, plus Thomas' presentation of the sub-committee's negotiations and conclusions. They were rejected by 15 votes to 4. (57)

The minutes are disappointingly minimalist, but Citrine's letter of explanation to May tells the essential story: "The General Council decided that they were unable to incur the responsibility of undertaking the loan, particularly having regard to the difficulties which were anticipated in respect of securing the necessary individual guarantors". (58)

The 26th April conference was cancelled, and the Herald informed that in future General Council support would be confined to the 1d per member product of the annual levy. The Herald was back to square one, at a time when all indications were that this was an extremely unhealthy location. (59)

vii Content: The 1929 General Election

Had it survived, the conference of executives would have been peculiarly inconveniently timed, coming two days after the long-awaited calling of the General Election on May 30th. (60)

For the Herald this poll was rather different to those of 1923 and 1924. Where those elections had been called unexpectedly early - making the campaigns genuinely newsworthy - that of 1929 followed a five-year term. Thus most of the themes and issues of the campaign had already been extensively ventilated in the Herald, and there was little to excite or surprise in their coverage. But its essential task remained the same - to act as a central rallying force, enthusing and informing the party worker and monitoring the activities of opponents.

Two major election features intended to enthuse party workers and aid them in debating and canvassing during the campaign were launched before the poll was formally called. A series of bold-print boxes in each issue comparing the Labour, Liberal and Conservative record on issues had started as early as March 4th with a look at low wages. The 50-point series was reprinted in booklet form during the campaign.
And a specially-commissioned feature series of articles by Labour leaders was launched on 22nd April with an appeal from MacDonald that "Every party except Labour has had its chance". Trailed as "New Minds For a Big Job: Brilliant Articles on Labour Policy", the series ran through to polling day, when Lansbury was the writer. A third series "Little Letters" addressed on the front page to specific sections of the population and explaining why they should vote Labour, was introduced on 13th May. (61)

Elections gave the Herald an unparalleled opportunity to justify its existence to its paymasters - and its ability to watch the enemy was always cited as a key element in its case. Responding to a Conservative claim shortly before the election was called, it promised "During the coming campaign the Daily Herald will set itself to explode similar fictions". With the leadership havering over its future any such success was doubly important - and it was able to claim one by exposing a Scottish Conservative leaflet misquoting Cardinal Bourne as saying that Catholics should not vote Labour. When Conservative chairman JCC Davidson called the story a "complete fabrication", the Herald joyfully reproduced the letter which had accompanied the leaflet: "Every statement the Daily Herald has made regarding the Tory attempt to trap Catholic voters by issuing anonymously certain misquotations from a speech by Cardinal Bourne was vindicated yesterday by no less a person than Sir Lewis Shedden, the Tory chair in the West of Scotland", it crowed. (62)

The broad reporting mix continued themes developed over the previous year, neatly encapsulated in a huge front-page cartoon marking the end of the Parliament. Caricatures showed Austen Chamberlain manipulating League of Nations puppets, Neville stealing a milk from a child's pram, Churchill walking a sleeping Baldwin in a wheelchair and Lloyd George attempting to drill a shambolic Liberal "awkward squad" while Big Ben looked on, saying "Goodbye and Good riddance". (63)

MacDonald's national tour was again a major item, though without the breathless novelty of 1923 and 1924. But reports talked of "Triumphant meetings...unforgettable scenes of enthusiasm...smashing attack...reception at Carlisle was notable chiefly for its spontaneity". (64)
Chapter Thirteen: Rescue September 1928 to September 1929

The Herald aimed to enthuse the movement by building up a picture of unstoppable Labour momentum. Headlines during the campaign proclaimed "Labour Sweeping Forward To Victory", "Labour's Whirlwind Campaign For Power", "Sweeping Victory In Sight For Labour" and "Labour Forces Massed For Great Victory". Similar bullishness was seen in constituency reports, heavily regionalised with the late London edition devoting a page a day to the capital and the south-east. Typical was the report on 10th May of "Labour's Great Progress In Tory Strongholds". Hamilton Fyfe, candidate in Sevenoaks, was said to be "winning converts every day". (65)

So great was confidence in the outcome - not to mention its determination to maximise advertising income, that on the Saturday before polling day it cheerfully printed a two column annual meeting notice reporting a deeply partisan political commentary by Sir John Latta, chairman of the Nitrate Producers Steamship Company. His outlook was diametrically opposed to the Herald's. Once his fulminations would have fitted Herald claims that the rise of Labour would panic capitalists - but now the editorial line was epitomised by an October 1928 leader saying "Only rich idlers" need fear a Labour government. (66)

He said: "With the rise of the Socialism and the pseudo-democratic idealism it has engendered, our ability to compete in world markets has steadily diminished...the ill-assorted partnership between party politics and labour in this country operates to our manifest discomfiture", that decline began "When Keir Hardie entered Parliament" and criticising Socialist leaders for their "insularity in outlook". He concluded hoping the British worker would vote "in accordance with the dictates of his own sturdy common sense". (67)

That at least the Herald could agree with - although its analysis led it to a different conclusion. The tone of centre issuing orders to the rank and file could be seen in polling day headlines "Give Labour A Clear Majority Today", "Our Readers Must Work Today: Majority Will Be Won On The Doorstep" and "Why You Must Cast Your Vote For Labour". (68)
After the vibrant optimism of the campaign coverage Herald readers, fed on a diet of demands for a majority, may have been a little disappointed by the final outcome. But the Herald's response showed little sign of this: "Great Landslide Towards Labour Victory" was the headline on the early results. On 1st June, with the full picture clear, giant headlines screamed: "Labour on Top! The Strongest Party! Electors Give Baldwin's Government Emphatic Notice To Quit: Tory Strongholds Stormed by Advancing Might of Workers and "Red Letter" Majority Shattered: Fiasco of "Great Liberal Revival" - so comprehensive an account that reports were almost superfluous.(69)

And just in case anyone had missed the implications for the press the issue of 31st carried a front-page story "Our Good Record: How We Have Roused Public Interest: Signal Service: Beaverbrook Papers on the Tory Trap Exposure" and a leader appealing for readers to go on supporting the Herald as they had supported Labour.(70)

With the results more clearcut than in 1923, Baldwin resigned within a week to make way for MacDonald. The Herald had no doubt of its relationship with the new government. As soon as MacDonald took office the board mandated Williams to write to him asking that "The Prime Minister and Government will regard the Daily Herald as being in effect the official organ not only of the Trade Union and Labour Movement, but of the Labour Government".(71)

MacDonald's precise response is not recorded - but that the Herald should overtly be seeking official status shows the extent to which it had become the loyal follower of the leadership. And there can be little doubt that it received privileged access to the government. In early July Mellor reported: "We have been able, since the Government came to office, to secure a considerable number of exclusive stories and to lead the Press generally, and many favourable comments have been made on paper since the election".(72)
MacDonald was not given to wide consultation on Cabinet appointments, but the Herald's political correspondent was clearly well informed in advance - saying on 6th June that "it may be predicted with confidence" that JH Thomas would be put in charge of unemployment and on the following day speaking of "intelligent anticipation" of a series of major appointments. On the 8th the Herald noted "Every prediction of our Political Correspondent with reference to the appointments has been borne out". The same pattern was seen with the junior appointments and the Herald went on displaying well-founded 'reasons to believe' and 'confident predictions' as government policy took shape. (73)

From the start the tone of coverage was vigorously approving. The well-briefed political correspondent predicted "The new Government will be known as the Government of Peace and Employment". It was, a headline proclaimed "A Cabinet of National Reconstruction : Labour's Brilliant Team of New Ministers" while it was reported that the application of Thomas" "capable and energetic hand" to unemployment would "inspire confidence through the Labour Movement and the country generally". A leader described the Thomas appointment as "a dramatic touch which will stir the public imagination as it has not been stirred throughout the last four dreary years of drift and negation". (74)

But enthusiasm was tempered by awareness of the inherent moderation of the government and the magnitude of the tasks awaiting it. Its voice was that of pragmatic moderation rather than expectation of the millenium. Welcoming the new government, it spoke as the voice of the centre to followers, emphasising the need for loyalty and patience: "It is no light task which it takes in hand to clear up past muddles and to start Britain on a new road of peace and prosperity. It will not all be done at once. There must be patience, faith and loyalty - and these will be repaid in full. The eyes of expectant millions, not only in this country, but throughout the world, are upon the new Ministry. Most certainly Labour will not disappoint them". (75)

This mix was seen following the decision to raise the school leaving age from April 1931 "Another triumph for the Labour Government. After years of neglect there are a mass of items banging at the legislative door. The task of picking and choosing as to which should come first is bound to create differences of opinion". (76)
When controversy emerged within the movement in July and August, the Herald, in contrast to its freethinking role in 1924, expressed support for the government by damping down rather than encouraging debate. In July Home Secretary Clynes excluded Trotsky from Britain on the grounds that "Persons of mischievous intention would unquestionably seek to exploit his presence for their own ends and, if in consequence, he became a source of serious embarrassment, the Government would have no certainty of being able to secure his departure". Three years earlier the Herald had raged at the exclusion of Tomsky, even as it had deplored the message he intended to bring. Now, confronted with a similarly political exclusion, it said nothing. There was no leader even when Trotsky, possibly out of date on the paper's standpoint, wrote to the Herald complaining that secret police activity was to blame for his exclusion and Bernard Shaw, doubtlessly mischievously, wrote to suggest that it live up to its traditions by inviting Trotsky to Britain.

A letter from reader JW Davis of Wimbledon attacked the exclusion, saying "It is quite evident what is the right thing to do in this case. But the Home Secretary prefers to take the attitude "Yes, but what would people think?". The Herald would once have agreed, or at least encouraged readers to debate the issue. But neither happened this time. "Is it right?" was subordinated to "Does it help our government?".

A different technique was adopted when the most persistent party critic, James Maxton, launched a broadside against the government at the ILP conference in August. He was quoted extensively on the way Labour's rise to parliamentary power, far from aiding the object of "Socialism Now" had "put the realisation of that view farther back than ever".

Maxton asked rhetorically whether two months of Labour Government had benefited anybody, complained that promises were not being fulfilled and called for adequate allowances for the unemployed, an exchange of ambassadors with Russia, admission for Trotsky, renewing the Wheatley housing subsidy and immediate raising of the school leaving age.
But in replying the Herald left aside these wider criticisms to concentrate on his advocacy of using the Emergency Powers Act to socialise the crisis-stricken cotton industry. A leader on cotton accusing Maxton of a "totally mistaken view" was supplemented by a categoric article from the political correspondent, placed on a main news page, stating confidently that his view arose from a "misreading or misunderstanding of the act", which could not possibly cover the cotton industry. Debate on the broader issues was left to two letters, one for Maxton and one against, printed two days later.(79)

"Is it right?" again took a back seat to official obligation when Glasgow MP George Buchanan wrote complaining at the way his constituents were being treated by Labour exchanges. Minister of Labour Margaret Bondfield argued that administrative changes were under consideration, but that her powers over the operation of the exchanges were limited. Such administratively-based excuses for inaction in the face of injustice would not have been accepted from a Conservative minister - or in 1924 a Labour one. But, startling with a compliment to Buchanan's sincerity - always an indication that the subject is about to be attacked - it argued "Mr Buchanan, we cannot but think, has allowed his heart to run away with his head", noting that the necessary legislative action had been promised.(80)

And had a Conservative minister single-handedly brought a conference on reperations to the verge of collapse by insistence on renegotiation in Britain's favour, as Snowden did at The Hague in August, it has to be regarded as likely that the Herald would have reproduced a sample of the adjectives - "obstructive" and "wrecking" among them, that it was wont to apply to Lord Cushenden's efforts in Geneva. But the Herald's coverage showed it moving a long way from its traditions of internationalism - supplementing Siocombe's vigorously partisan reports with a leader complementing Snowden for the way in which he "Came straight to the point, getting down immediately to "brass tacks" and treating a business assembly in a business-like way..."The negotiation may prove at times not easy. But if everyone will follow the Chancellor's example...it should be possible for practical men to reach practical conclusions without undue delay".(81)
Snowden's insistence on British rights was explained as national policy following past generosity over repayments: "The time has come when justice for its own people must be put before quixotic generosity to others". Herald headlines treated the conference as a battle "Mr Snowden Winning", it announced in mid-session. Less indulgence was extended to other nations who found themselves out of line - headlines that "Italy Creates New Crisis at The Hague and "Fascist Objections May Be Fatal To Conference" evidence of that. Snowden got what he wanted by late August. The Herald, in a leader headlined "The Hague Triumph", hailed the settlement lavishly: "Astonishing that France and Italy should have fought for so long against a readjustment...Mr Snowden has won a signal triumph for sanity, decency and common sense".(82)

Those attributes, or the lack of them, were the subject of a brief but fierce debate over in-house humourist Gadfly in late June. Clearly pained by his heavy-handed irony Mrs MM Samson from London W11 wrote "I can't stand 'Gadfly'. I should be sorry to think that the daily spewing of vulgar personalities, cheap smears and venomous class-hatred was necessary or even conducive in any way to the sale of your paper" and, admitting that she didn't know who Gadfly was, that she imagined an oldish woman.(83)

Clearly pleased at the opportunity to advertise one of the paper's attractions and appear fair-minded at the same time, Mellor appended a reply that "For every hostile critic of 'Gadfly' there are tens of thousands of admirers. We Print Mrs Samson's letter in accordance with our usual policy of 'hearing all sides'. Two days later a deluge of pro-Gadfly letters was reported, together with a report that "So many letters have come from women admirers that 'Gadfly's Daily Herald colleagues were chaffing him yesterday and dubbing him the Rudolph Valentino of Fleet Street". The letters were typified by A Cove of the South Islington Women's Guild, who said: "Some of us old readers who have a sense of humour can take out daily dose of 'Gadfly' and enjoy his satire", although Mrs Samson had a minority of supporters.(84)
The Herald staff doubtless needed all the amusement they could get, as the paper’s future looked decidedly gloomy. Bevin, who became chairman following Turner’s appointment as Minister of Mines, told the 1929 TUC in September he and his colleagues had expected to report failure in their pursuit of financial assistance for the Herald.

The Herald had again seen circulation rise sharply at election time - passing 300,000 again on May 1st and 314,323 when Parliament was dissolved on the 10th. On 2nd June, the first day after the two results issue, circulation was 392,159. By early July Mellor and Poyser were discussing issuing a new sales certificate to cash in on better sales. Poyser reported an increase of almost £4000 in advertising revenue in the nine weeks immediately after the election more than compensating for the losses in the early part of the year.

This was not as encouraging as it looked. In 1924, starting from a higher base, the Herald had put on 115,923 from dissolution to the day after results - against 77,836 this time. As ever the problem was holding on to them. Circulation traveller WW Stephenson told a sales conference that many people took the Herald as an extra paper at election time and then dropped it. Sales reflected that analysis.

By 1st July circulation was 370,004 - still 25,000 up on polling day, but showing no sign of stabilising. Williams argued: "To adopt a laissez-faire policy while the natural tendency is for the new readers gradually to revert to the insurance dailies would be detrimental in all respects".

But the Herald’s long search for help was to be ended by an unsolicited offer. Odhams Press, having expanded their printworks to cope with the success of their Sunday paper, the People, were looking for another contract to occupy their expensive presses. They might have won the Radio Times contract, but for the presbyterian integrity of BBC director John Reith who had married an Odhams and was determined that there should be no hint of nepotism. Odhams managing director Julius Elias looked at the diehard Morning Post, then the Liberal Daily Chronicle, but neither idea came to anything.
A variety of explanations have been given for their link-up with the Herald. The parties were not complete strangers. Odhams printing manager FJ Cook provided advice to the Herald during the crisis of 1923 and had used Victoria House as overspill printers for the People when Odhams had shortage rather than surplus capacity. RJ Minney, biographer of Elias, and Francis Williams - City Editor the Editor of the Herald in the 1930s - both stress the role of Odhams editor-in-chief John Dunbar, a former left-winger. Williams, whose direct involvement with the Herald gives his account credibility, says that CP Robertson, a former labour correspondent and mutual acquaintance of Dunbar and Bevin, told Odhams of the Herald's difficulties, then acted as intermediary in setting up a meeting. (90)

It is clear that the approach came from Odhams, and more than likely that it was made not, as Williams says, to Bevin, but to editor Mellor and his deputy Stevenson. Bevin told the General Council: "Subsequent to the Board meeting of the "Daily Herald" directorate on (no date given) Mr Stevenson and Mr Mellor spoke to him with regard to a proposal which emanated from Odhams Ltd with regard to the "Daily Herald". (91)

The General Council minute continued: "After Mr Mellor's discussion with them, he discussed the matter with Mr Bevin, while Mellor was to explain that "He first had the intimation from Odhams two days before he spoke to Mr Bevin about it" - all three quotes point strongly to the conclusion that the journalists were approached before the directors in the first half of July.

Happily this does not rule out Minney's colourful image of Bevin coming to see Elias in a "Dark, wide-brimmed hat". Within days of the first approach Bevin was firmly in control of negotiations and making rapid progress. The salient features of the Odhams deal were in place by the time the Victoria House board met on 19th July. The Prudential experience had ended any possibility of a loan saving the Herald - any deal was now certain to involve some form of partnership. Mellor told the General Council that "The men from Odhams were out purely as business men to develop what they believed to be a paying proposition" - implying that they would have insisted on financial control of the company. (92)
Similarly the TUC was mainly concerned to safeguard the political and industrial policy of the paper. Given these concerns the plan outlined by Bevin was a logical outcome. Odhams were to either purchase the Herald or set up a new company in partnership with the General Council to provide a 16 page Herald with a northern edition produced and printed in Manchester and an insurance scheme linked with the highly successful People operation. Shares would be divided 51% Odhams, 49% Herald with a means devised of ensuring that the paper was firmly tied to Labour political policy and TUC industrial policy.

Any lingering hopes of a partnership with the Co-operative Press were ended by Mellor's report that they had no expansion plans. All other alternatives exhausted the directors resolved: "The Board recommends to the General Council of the Trades Union Congress that the council authorises the Board to proceed with negotiations along the lines suggested by Messrs Odhams". (93)

Bevin took this mandate to the General Council meeting on 23rd July. Outlining progress so far he said that three meetings had taken place already - dealing with the outlines of any agreement rather than financial detail. He had proposed a seven man board split four:three in the General Council's favour, but this had been unacceptable to Odhams who wanted the proportions reversed.

His proposal for safeguarding political interests was a Trust Deed incorporating the creation of a seven-strong composed largely of Labour grandees, operated along the lines of Lord Northcliffe's Times Trust for the Herald and participating in the appointment of editors. It was, he said, the best thing that had happened to the Herald since they had been associated with it. The current structure of the Herald was at the end of its resources and all attempts to find alternative funding had failed, but the opportunity of a national press now presented itself: "He could see no alternative way of getting the money, and he believed that the policy of the paper could be safeguarded even more effectively than it was at present."
Support came in similar terms from Mellor and Williams, and the only real opposition from railwaymen's leader Bromley, who said the paper was bleeding the movement dry, should have been wound up ages ago and that the present crisis in which they were "giving it away" was inevitable. He doubted that union directors would be able to control policy and argued that if Odhams saw it as a commercial proposition the movement should be finding out how much they would pay.

After further discussion the General Council passed nem con - Bromley clearly retained his doubts - Pugh's resolution: "That the directors of the Daily Herald have the authority of this Council to explore this proposition explained by Mr Bevin, with the condition attached to it that ultimately the whole of the proposal shall be before the Council for ratification otherwise". (94)

One major change was made over the next five weeks, with the Trust Deed dropped on the advice of both sets of legal advisers. In its place as a safeguard on policy was an ingenious division of the Board and shares into two categories. Odhams 51,000 "B" shares were to give them control of commercial policy. The General Council would hold 49,000 "A" and only their appointed "A" directors appointed by the General Council would be entitled to vote on issues of industrial or political policy. Where disagreements arose the current Labour Lord Chancellor - Lord Sankey - was to arbitrate with Attorney-General FW Jowitt as his deputy.

The definition of policy to be safeguarded had been settled upon as the political policy laid down by Labour at its annual conference and the industrial counterpart decided by the TUC. (95)

The remaining issues of concern were staff-related. Odhams record as employers had been endorsed by both Bevin and Mellor and was supported on the eve of the decisive Trade Union Congress in Belfast when they agreed within hours to a General Council demand that they made exclusive use of union labour as a condition of their 21 year contract to print the Herald. Voting to accept the Odhams deal, the General Council nominated Bevin, Tillett and Citrine as the first "A" directors. (96)
Support came from Victoria House on the same day, but not before the Board had assured themselves that none of the current staff would suffer from the Odhams takeover - although Bevin warned : "The people on that new staff would have to retain their jobs on their ability to do their jobs and the company was perfectly free on the grounds of efficiency to deal with the position... if a man is called something in the Daily Herald, it does not mean he is automatically taken over in that title with the new company. If he was not retained in his present position, he would not suffer in his salary". (97)

The agreements needed to ratify the deal, subject to TUC approval, were concluded by the solicitors on 30th August. The whole Odhams deal had gone through the somewhat complex Herald and TUC machinery in two months - a smooth passage reflecting the view that it was the best offer they were ever likely to get and no alternative existed. (98)

Or did it? True to form the Herald at the last moment attracted an oddball suitor, one HD McIntosh. This was almost certainly Australian entrepreneur Hugh McIntosh, popularly known in his native country as "Huge Deal" for enterprises such as his promotion of the Burns - Johnson heavyweight title fight in 1908. A former president of the Weekly Newspapers Association of New South Wales with high-ranking Australian Labor contacts, he had been active in Britain since the early 1920s and was a Labour candidate at the 1929 General Election. On 26th August, with consumate timing, he offered £200,000 investment and a division of shares and Board similar to the Odhams deal. (99)

It is hard to imagine that the General Council would ever have accepted an individual proprietor for the Herald, although an offer in the period of desperation post Prudential and ante Odhams might have provoked a revealing debate. But with the Odhams deal settled, a polite letter from Citrine explained that the TUC were not in a position to take up his offer - which was just as well, as McIntosh was to be forced into bankruptcy in 1932. (100)

Congress went into private session on 4th September 1929 at 2.15. The resolutions placed before them as part of the General Council report on press and publicity had been settled at a Council meeting two days earlier. All four had been proposed by Bevin and seconded by Pugh:
1. "That the agreement dated the 30th August 1929, between Victoria House Printing Company Limited and Odhams Press Limited providing for the sale of the "Daily Herald" to a new company be approved and ratified".

2. "That the supplemental agreement of dated the 30th August 1929 between the Victoria House Printing Company and Odhams Press Limited dealing with the appointment of referees in case of a dispute as to political or industrial policies to be pursued by the paper be pursued and ratified".

3. "That the Trades Union Congress hereby resolves and undertakes that so long as the New Company which is about to be incorporated for the purpose of purchasing and publishing the "Daily Herald" or any assignee of such New Company continues regularly to publish the said Newspaper in accordance with the stipulations and restrictions regarding the policy to be adopted and pursued by the New Company and its assignees upon the Political and Industrial questions referred to in the schedules to the Agreement dated the 30th August 1929, and made between the Victoria House Printing Company and Odhams Press Limited which has been submitted to this meeting; The Trades Union Congress will not directly or indirectly either alone or in conjunction with any person, persons or corporations or otherwise whatsoever or whosoever be engaged, concerned or interested financially or otherwise in or assist or promote any other daily newspaper whatsoever (whether a morning or evening newspaper" published or circulated in any part of the United Kingdom.

4. "Mr EGH Hicks and Mr A Pugh are hereby appointed and directed to execute on behalf of the Trades Union Congress a Deed of Covenant to be entered into by the Congress with the New Company referred to in the Resolution already passed at this meeting for giving effect to the undertaking embodied in such resolution" (101)

Bevin, opening for the General Council, pointed to a glowing feature with a paper enjoying all the features of size, insurance and publicity of its competitors. The alternative was to continue attempting the impossible on the inadequate resources provided by the 1d levy. In its place was the chance to "Fill a gap in the Labour Movement and embrace an opportunity which has not presented itself in this way before"
Nor need there be fears over editorial policy: "If the Managing Director, or one of the other fellows, tried to put pressure on the Editor to put something into the paper which the Editor thought was not right, the Editor would have the power to hold it up and call upon the "A" directors to decide whether he was right or wrong. I do not think you can have greater control than that, and that will be the position".

Mellor restated his belief, expressed at Swansea, that a million pounds were needed to develop the Herald. The Odhams deal promised commercial and journalistic success: "This agreement is unique in the history of journalism and I see no reason why this experiment in journalism should not be of tremendous value to the Movement, and of tremendous value to journalism. If I am editor, we are not going to produce a "Daily Express" or a "Daily News" or a "Daily Mail", which sacrifices quality to quantity and sensation, but we are going to produce a paper with a million sale".

He concluded with a successful appeal for Congress to make a decision now, rather than postponing it. Nobody attacked the deal. Herbert Smith of the Miners, who commented that "This is the fifth burial sermon on the Daily Herald at which I have been present" asked for the chance to go back and consult his membership.

But he appears to have been won round by MFGB secretary AJ Cook, seconder of a resolution from Charlie Dukes (General and Municipal Workers) that Congress merely adjourn for no more than 15 minutes to allow consultation with delegations. Congress returned to a card vote endorsing Bevin's report by 3,404,000 to 47,000. The four resolutions were carried by acclamation, and the Herald's fate sealed.
The 1928-9 period saw the Herald moving further towards the loyal follower model of behaviour. This owed something to the natural impulse to close ranks in the months before a General Election and the opening stages of a Labour Government, but still reflected a trend that had gathered pace since Mellor replaced Fyfe - and was seen most strongly in the discouraging and downplaying of debate. The extent to which the TUC now had firm control over home news was reflected in Citrine's complaints about Ewer. If anything foreign coverage was less pro-Soviet than it had been a few years earlier, but with less to complain about on the home front greater attention was given to foreign news.

But at the same time as the Herald editorial style moved close to the submissive Citizen model, economic pressures doomed it to obsolescence. Seeking the Prudential deal was the final bid to maintain movement control. Once the rulebooks and doubts of the key union leaders had scuppered this, the active involvement of a commercial partner was the only way forward unless the TUC had been prepared to move away the pursuit of a mass readership, and the Odhams deal the logical outcome of the failures of the previous seven years of undivided movement proprietorship.

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1. CM, PM reps 13.10.28 LPDH 550. CM rep 22.11.28 LPDH 551. GM rep 18.10.28 TUC 788
2. AM reps 18.11, 13.12.28 LPDH 551/4.
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4. Allen to Williams 9.11.28 TUC 788.5
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42. Meeting between Herald deputation and McClannan 21.3.29 TUC 789.8
43. Ibid, Citrine to McKenna (Midland) Goodenough (Barclays', Hone 21.1.29
   C trine to other committee members. Prudential to Citrine 24.1.29,
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44. Firth to May 11.2.29. Shaen, Roscoe to Citrine 8.3.29 TUC 789.821.
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45. GM rep 22.1.29 LPDH 559. Geilinger "Memorandum on Newspaper Insurance"
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46. Geilinger memo loc cit. DH 16.10.28
47. Geilinger memo loc cit
49. GM rep 21.2.29 LPDH 562 Allen memo 25.2.29 TUC 789.8,
50. Allen memo 25.2.29 loc cit.
51. Allen memo re staffing n.d (11 - 19.3.29) TUC 789.821. Biographies -
52. Allen to Citrine 19.3.29, Allan to Turner, Citrine 23.3.29 TUC 789.8.
   Turner to Allen 21.3.29 TUC 789.7
53. Henderson to Citrine 26.3.29 TUC 789.7 MF
54. TUCGC 27.11.28 min no 115, 12.3.29 min no 131. Circular no 49 (1928-9)
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   and VHPCo and DH "History of Case" 6.3.29 locs cit. DH 14.3.29
55. Citrine report of meeting with May 8.3.29. Report of call from Evans
   (CIS) 14.3.29 Turner to Citrinne 17.3.29 TUC 789.821 Handwritten note
   on memo 7.3.29 loc cit
56. Shaen, Roscoe to Citrine 18.3.29, Citrine notes of finance meeting re
   Daily Herald 7.3.29 TUC 789.821 Citrine to Shaen Roscoe 19.3.29 TUC
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57. Allen draft report 24.3.29, GC 27.3.29 min no 142
58. Citrine to May 28.3.29 TUC 789.7
59. TUC circular no 60 (1928-9) to affiliated organisations 28.3.29 TUC 789.8. Citrine to Williams 28.3.29 TUC 789.7

60. DH 25.4.29
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71. DH 5.6.29. Williams to Citrine 8.6.29, Citrine to Williams 10.6.29 TUC 788

72. Ed rep 2.7.29 TUC 788.24
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85. VHPCo Board min 6.6, 5.7.29 TUC 788.11. Bevin speech to 1929 TUC, transcript of secret session TUC 788.51
86. GM rep 3.6.29 TUC 788.22. Ed rep 2.7.29 TUC 788.24. AM reps 3.6, 1.7, 2.8.29 TUC 788.23
87. GM reps 3.6, 1.7.29 TUC 788.22
88. Ibid
   RJ Minney - Viscount Southwood - Odhams 1954 p 184-92, 217-21
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91. TUCGC min 23.7.29. Transcript of discussion on the Daily Herald and Victoria House n.d TUC 788.51

92. Minney op cit p 226

93. TUC GC 23.7.29, Transcript on DH and VHPCo loc cit. VHPCo dir min TUC 788.11

94. TUC GC 23.7.29, Transcript loc cit.

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96. TUCGC min 30.8.29 min 289. VHPCo dir 28.8.29 TUC 788.11. GC 23.7.29 transcript loc cit.

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98. GC min 2.9.29 min 296.


Denzil Batchelor - Jack Johnson and His Times - Sportsmans Book Club 1957 p 61-73. McIntosh to Bevin 26.8.29. TUC 788.51

101. TUCGC 2.9.29 min 296

102. Private session transcript loc cit.

ENDS
Construction, conformity and control: the taming of the Daily Herald 1921-30

Thesis

How to cite:

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Constriction, Conformity and Control: The Taming of the Daily Herald 1921-30
Huw Richards
Ph.D 1993
The Open University

Section Seven
iA decline which is lamentable.

Speaking in the Herald debate at the 1928 TUC, editor Mellor pointed to six reasons why the paper was struggling: "Insurance, size, quality of the paper, editions, staffing and policy". (1)

Little of his analysis could have been disputed. Equally little could not and had not been said more than a year earlier. Mellor was looking back on the grimmest period since the near-extinction of 1922-3. Ben Turner's "six steady months" had extended into fifteen wasted ones as the Herald's fortunes dwindled inexorably.

The Allen-Williams development plan was shelved, Bevin told the 1928 TUC, because "Some of us thought (it) would fail because of its moderation, and that the amount proposed was in the judgment of some of us was too small. But having rejected one course of action there was little sign of the Board developing another. Williams complained in December 1927. "It is almost impossible to learn what the Board requires from time to time. Some members want to keep the paper purely and almost entirely propagandist, entailing heavy subsidies. Others on the other hand, seek to make it a bright and informative newspaper on the way to financial stability". (2)

This was hardly the time for the directors to impersonate the proverbial rabbit caught in car headlights, as competition mounted daily. As Bevin said: "No one, I think, at Southport could foresee the tremendous development of the publicity side of the Press of this country that has taken place in the last eight years". (3)

Circulation manager Le Good portrayed the Herald "assailed on all sides by the extraordinary efforts on the part of the capitalist press in their eagerness to demonstrate, regardless of cost, their enormous sales increases". The squeeze was well co-ordinated: "Increase in sales of the capitalist dailies synchronises with the increased size of the issues, the printing of editions in the north, and the increased insurance benefits offered". (4)

In the period covered by this chapter the Sketch and the Mirror started insurance schemes. The Mail's daily sale rose 140,000 to 1.96 million, the Chronicle stayed around 950,000 but changed hands for £1.45 million, the Express rocketed from 1.1 to 1.5 million and the News, aided by swallowing the Westminster Gazette in February 1928, rose from 650,000 to a million. (5)
The merger was seen as an opportunity by the Herald which issued bills saying "Now buy the Daily Herald", but to little effect. Le Good reported "The insurance bait...proved too strong for us". (6)

The official Herald line, expounded in leaders and by Turner at the 1927 TUC, remained anti-insurance. But its managers had been converted by experiences such as that undergone by Le Good during the Carmarthen by-election, an incident epitomising the appeal of insurance for the Herald's target readership: "I encountered five railwaymen at Llandilo, one of whom takes the Herald. The other four had a spokesman who said "We vote Labour all right, but we are railwaymen. I am married, with children. The Daily Express covers me with the insurance, so you cannot blame me for taking it". It was, Le Good added, "Typical of the attitude of workers towards our paper" (7)

The insurance press made heavy capital out of the Sevenoaks and Darlington railway disasters, with the Mail paying out £20,000 to one family and £10,000 to another after Sevenoaks followed by a reported £50,000 in the aftermath of Darlington - as Williams commented "The kind of argument the average newspaper reader prefers to political propaganda". (8)

In May 1927 Williams had commented "I am more and more convinced that we need an insurance scheme". The next 15 months, during which the Herald lost around one fifth of its circulation - falling from the mid 380 thousands to 310,504 at the end of August 1928. Losses were heaviest in the distressed coalfield areas - falling by close to a third in the North-East and a quarter in South Wales. Pressure in the North increased in the first half of 1927 with heavy canvassing by the insurance press, and the irruption of the Express and Chronicle into the market. (9)

The gloom of Williams' monthly reports is summed up September 1927 "A decline which is lamentable". Then a loss of 6,260 copies in 20 days - desperate even by Herald standards, had taken circulation below the pre-General Strike mark of 360,000. One seventh of total sales were lost in 1927, which ended with a circulation of 339,530 and the crash continued unabated into 1928, gathering pace at holiday times when numerous readers cancelled the paper before going away then chose not to reorder. (10)
In consequence pressure grew for a new net sales certificate - in early 1928 Poyser reported that he anticipated increased heckling as the year went on but dare not issue a new certificate with current sales, as opposed to circulation, running at less than 300,000 against the 362,000 shown on the previous certificate. (11)

The bullet was finally bitten in February. The new certificate for January to December 1927 showed a figure of 317,299 - down 45,000 on the previous certificate, but even then putting the best possible face on the situation. The directors reported: "Whilst the Herald is only using its net sales certificate when it must, its principal rivals are broadcasting theirs showing substantial increases. Advertisers do not need telling to make their deductions". (12)

But external circumstances continued favourable. The Newspaper Press Directory said: "The volume of advertising carried by the great newspapers in 1927 was so large that several of them had to increase the number of their pages in order to carry advertisements. The year was hardly a bonanza for the Herald, but the broad effects of the boom lifted its advertising income #6,000 to #72,450. Poyser faced 1928 and plummeting sales with grave pessimism, but the growth of objective analysis - with inclusion in London Press Exchange campaigns and the London Press Bureau's discovery of the paper's middle-class readership continued to work in its favour. (13)

The week ending February 25th brought in a record #2,640 18/2, topping the mark set exactly a year earlier and three of the four weeks that month, always the best of the year, topped #2,000. Income held up well during the spring and summer, with an unsolicited bonus from publisher Sir Ernest Benn who informed an advertising convention that a full-page advert for "books which are normally difficult to sell - books on relativity, economics, Italian literature and scientific subjects generally" had left his firm "busy shovelling out books in large quantities ever since". (14)

The Herald cheerfully ran this tribute to the serious, highbrow reviewing policy adopted by its literary staff on the front page, followed by a leader noting the intellectual vitality of the Labour movement. But the worry over net sales remained, and mounted with every monthly report of further deterioration. (19)
Understaffing and pay remained problems, in spite of Mellor's efforts. Calling in September 1927 for two new appointments and four pay rises as a "minimum request" he secured only a new reporter and two increases even though with only four general reporters, less than half any other daily, out-of-town work was restricted and there were often only two reporters on duty. In early 1928 he would point out that the total editorial complement of 44 compared to at least 66 on the pre-merger News and 68 on the Chronicle. 

But pressure for economies continued - Reuter was replaced by the new British United Press news service early in 1928, at a saving of $1,620. Williams frequently noted the cost of the Cardiff office, opened in 1927 and seen by Mellor as a bulwark against insurance competition. His difficulties were increased when the directors asked him to "Arrange his duties that he can devote greater time to association with the various officers within the movement, in order to ascertain more clearly the policies and developments that are actually going on". The cost of reorganisation to meet this implied rebuke - which led to Stevenson's promotion to assistant editor - was around $1,000 a year.

Mellor pointed to Monday March 19th to illustrate the difficulties that had "in not so extreme a form, to be faced daily". He said: "The sub-editorial staff consisted of 10. The chief Sub_editor was taking his fortnightly day off, the Industrial Sub-editor had a day owing to him in consequence of the previous illness of the Industrial Editor and one man was away sick. These 10 had to work a seven-hour day (with their time off) beginning at 12 o'clock and finishing at 1 am (in actual fact they finished at 1.30). Two men finished their day when the First Edition went through, 1 man finished at 9, 4 men finished at 10, 1 make-up man finished when the Second Edition went through, leaving 3 men for the Third Edition and the Parliamentary Sub, who worked overtime. That night the whole paper had to be remade on the Second Edition, owing to the course which the Zinoviev debate took, and on the Third Edition extensive changes were necessary. The result was that on the Third Edition the paper was terribly understaffed, and it was necessary for myself and the Night Editor to take a very active, but not purely editorial part in the making of the Second and Third editions."
The paper produced under such conditions continued to look rather different to its competitors. Continuing concern over its performance provoked an outbreak of content analysis - with both London circulation traveller Howard and editor Mellor examining the Herald in relation to its competitors. Mellor's study was a response to the admitted arbitrariness of Howard's categories, but both served to show that the Herald's size and seriousness - emphasis on political and industrial coverage led to an almost complete lack of lighter features, made taking it, even without the insurance factor, an act of commitment.

Howard looked at the main London dailies on 28th November. Admitting that categories were arbitrary, he could nevertheless point to striking divergences in the Herald's coverage of general news and of propaganda, politics, parliament and industrial news. A week-long survey in early December was to show similar patterns.

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N.B features includes women's, arts (18)

Mellor's study, comparing the Herald to the News over the week from 5th to 10th December pointed up the Herald's stress on industrial news and the handicap of its size - The News gave domestic politics comparable coverage while using a considerably smaller proportion of its space.

After taking out advertisements he discovered that the News had run 7213 column inches of copy during the week, against the Herald's 4985.
The request to Mellor about the organisation of his time implied strongly that the board were unhappy with the Herald. But discontent appears to have been less pronounced than in earlier years - MacDonald informed Mellor that it "shrieked too much", but in relatively mild terms compared to those he had used in the past to Allen and Turner. (20)

Williams thought the paper was too depressing: "It emphasises the adverse side of our national life more than the energetically hopeful. Socialism and Labour to me suggest a gospel of hope more than a policy of despair". He continued to see the paper as primarily a movement propagandist organ, seeing attempts to halt circulation decline in these terms: "Despite the propaganda against the Trade Union Bill, despite the most extensive reporting of the Edinburgh TUC, nothing we can do can keep our readers loyal to the Daily Herald". This emphasis was endorsed by the travellers meeting, which expressed scepticism about the value of the picture page. (21)
But Fyfe's belief that his directors did not understand journalist priorities was given credence by Turner's performance at the 1927 TUC. Pouring cold water on an engineers resolution to ballot for a 1/- levy to provide £200,000 funding for a Northern edition he replied to complaints that a MacDonald speech in Glasgow had been reported in other papers but not the Herald by saying: "I guarantee that the speech will be as good tomorrow morning as it was last night". (22)

The engineers resolution had been described as "almost non-controversial" by its seconder, Percy Collick of the Locomotive Engineers and Firemen. But Turner pointed out that £150,000 start-up costs alone would be needed, plus a further subsidy to run the paper.

Herbert Smith for the Miners and JH Thomas for the railwaymen - unions with unimpeachable records of support for the paper - argued that they could not afford both and the resolution was withdrawn following Bevin's appeal: "I am afraid of the vote being used against the Herald if it should be against them". (23)

The movement's financial position hardly permitted taking on extra commitments - with falling membership hitting unions and the Trade Disputes Act cutting Labour's income sharply. Smith summed up the problem at the TUC: "The Miners Federation always objects to being a party to something that it can not accomplish. ... What does this resolution mean? It means that we have to find £40,000 if the levy is agreed to. I have seen the time when it would not be a very difficult thing to do that, but if I were to say we could do it now I would simply be betraying you." (24)

Labour had contributed only £1,000 to the Herald since the end of 1924 and nothing since the end of 1926. It bowed to the inevitable at the end of 1927, meeting the TUC to explain that further payments were impossible. Agreement was reached by the end of 1928 that their shares should be transferred to the TUC - although the process was to drag on for another year. (25)

It was in this context that the Herald Finance Committee continued its search for a solution to the paper's woes - in November rejecting the traditional short-term remedy of production economies: "It is useless thinking of improved methods of production and machinery as a means to reducing costs ... We believe that constant reiteration of the idea of reducing costs as the road to success is a depressing and harassing experience for the staff" (26)
The directors told the General Council: "A situation of some gravity is likely to occur in the near future, but the Directors believe that on this occasion it is possible to foresee and so prevent this by at once taking stock of the present situation and probable future of the paper".

Current circulation was 348,592 and falling against 383,650 when - a significant comment - 'we submitted alternative schemes of development' in June 1927. Sales revenue had fallen #3,000 in a year and a drop in advertising income was anticipated. If circulation fell to 330,000 (net sale 277,000) and advertisement revenue fell to #1,100 losses on the paper would reach #54,000 a year - equivalent to a 3d levy on the TUC's current membership. Even if advertising income held, losses would be #46,000 a year. Instead of subsidising a chronic loss-maker, they argued, the TUC might find a better and potentially less expensive use for its annual levy income by creating a sinking fund, to fund current expenditure and a development scheme for the Herald.

They asked the General Council for some indication of the funds likely to be available to the Herald for the next few years: "So that the problem may be examined before and not during any crisis and so that an exact estimate may be formed of the financial support available." (27)

On 23rd November the directors met the General Council. Citrine outlined the development proposals, and it was agreed to seek a joint meeting of the Victoria House and TUC finance committees. Nobody could accuse them of rushing the issue. They final met on February 7th to set up yet another sub-committee. Chaired by Turner it included Hicks, Walkden and Poulton for the TUC and Allen, Citrine and Morrison for Victoria House. (28)

Meeting again a week later they concluded, with one dissentient not named in the minutes but likely on past form to have been Turner, that "The present method of the Daily Herald had run its course". This view was based on a 48,000 drop in sales in the eight months since the Herald development scheme had been devised - increasing its likely cost from #250,000 to #460,000. This increased the cost of any development scheme from a 1d per member levy for 20 years to 2d for 10 years and 1d for the following ten.
They asked the General Council to consider the alternatives of sustaining current losses of #37-47,000 a year - meaning a subsidy of 2d-3d per member, or of guaranteeing the necessary income "to raise a capital sum to reconstruct the paper and run it for at least four years, with a view to its becoming a self-supporting and powerful proposition". Veterans of the June group, who must already have been suffering from chronic deja vu, can hardly have been surprised that the conclusion was the same - inactivity and silence. (29)

Nor, when the answer finally arrived, was it the one they wanted. A stronger better-resourced General Council was one of the Herald's most consistent causes in the 1920s, but whatever benefits it brought to industrial organisation it was bad for the paper's finances as the doubling of staff in four years from 1923 and the creation of several new departments increased administration's share of TUC budgets and the 3d affiliation fee. Reducing the Publication Fund's share from 2d to 1d in early 1926 was uncontroversial in view of the Herald's relative stability at the time. But the news in May 1928 that a reduction to 1d was planned in order to replenish the Administrative Fund, in deficit while the Publication Fund was in surplus, was a different matter. (30)

It was argued that this should not hurt the Herald. It could still draw #15,830 - against an average of #13,400 over the last four years - from a fund based on a membership of 3.8 million. But reality was worse, as handwritten notes, almost certainly Citrine's, on a memo on the subject indicate. Affiliated membership was now 3.6 million - cutting income to #15,000. And the Herald had already withdrawn #19,000 in the TUC year 1927-8. (31)

Worse than the numbers was the realisation that the paper was now well down the General Council's list of priorities. The Herald directorate took the hint and dropped its development plans, concluding that there was no purpose to further meetings with the TUC Finance Committee. But where else was it supposed to turn? (32)
If the leadership showed little sense of how to finance the Herald, they could, in spite of the mild rebuke to Mellor contained in their proposal that he reorganise his time, be rather happier with their control over editorial policy. Turner noted wryly at the 1927 TUC that "I think it would be the millenium coming if we got something to satisfy us all", but, if not yet automatically its masters' voice, the Herald moved further in that direction during this period. This process is likely to have been eased by the identity of those masters - Lansbury was Chairman of the Labour Party for 1927-8 and Turner chairman of the TUC, a conjunction celebrated by a Herald dinner in their honour, hosted by Mellor.

Speaking at the 1928 TUC, Mellor defined the Herald as "A centre paper trying to keep a level head to the midst of great difficulty". Its voice was increasingly that of the centre not only in relation to left and right, but to the grassroots of the movement - lecturing readers on their duties as active followers.

This tone was seen following a poor result at the Buxton by-election: "There must be in every constituency a keen, zealous and well-informed body of workers, men and women, prepared to carry out the vital work of talking to electors on the doorsteps and winning them over. If the rank-and-file awaken to a realisation of their duty; if attention is paid to the voters lists; if a strong and efficient electoral machine is built up in every constituency, Labour will beat the Tories and Liberals out of the field at the next national appeal to the electors".

At local election time a front-page news story concluded "The duty of all Labour men and women today is clear... Vote early. Vote Labour. Having voted see that your family, your friends, neighbours and workmates vote also". A two-page summary of the "Labour and the Nation" policy document, issued in July 1928, incorporated a box headed "Get It Now".

Language in covering political stories was frequently a reminder of its official status - jarringly so when juxtaposed with the name of its iconoclastic former editor in May 1928: "The DAILY HERALD is authorised by Mr George Lansbury MP, chairman of the Executive Committee, to make the following statement regarding the Labour Party's electoral programme".
Greater central control was also seen in treatment of movement controversies. Where Fyfe encouraged a free flow of debate over the failings of the 1924 government, Mellor was determined to control the agenda and rules of any discussions. He told the 1928 TUC: "I have tried to run five controversies in two years on matters of urgent importance ... and I have had to stop every one of them because within three days the words "Traitor", "Communist", "Anarchist", "Bolshevik cropped up, letters came and the whole thing had, as we journalists say, to be put on the spike... We could have discussions in the Daily Herald if only we could be sure that the dissenters are going to discuss what they are asked to discuss and not what they think they want to discuss". (38)

Politics continued to dominate the paper - and the extent to which the Herald conception not only of itself but of other newspapers was almost exclusively political was seen in February 1928 when Lord Rothermere announced plans to establish new papers in 14 provincial cities. The story was treated as purely political, with no sense that there might also be a commercial motivation behind the move - a serious blind-spot showing how limited Labour's comprehension of its press adversaries was. A six-column front-page headline "New Press Offensive Against Labour" topped a report that the move "is regarded as a determined effort to extend Daily Mail ideas to the workers in the big cities" and a cartoon showing "Printers Dope Ink" spreading across a map of Britain. (39)

Parliamentary coverage was less dominant than it had been, but continued in the same partisan fashion with Labour leaders delivering "slashing indictments" and Liberals derided for their divisions, similarity to the Conservatives and the untrustworthiness of Lloyd George. In attacking Stanley Baldwin the Herald was torn between indolence and malevolence as an explanation for his failure to deal with Britain's social ills, and in particular the disaster of the coalfields. The happy medium was struck in a leader on "Baldwinism" on 29th August 1927 which argued "Actively and inactively he has done more than any other man to sharpen the class struggle in this land and elsewhere". (40)
But the dominant political theme was defined outside Westminster by two competing double acts - Mond-Turner and Cook-Maxton. The Mond-Turner conferences were the practical expression of the belief, propogated by Citrine, that conciliation and joint consultation with employers were potentially a more fruitful way forward for the trade unions than industrial confrontation. The Cook-Maxton manifesto was the attempted counterblast by sections of the left, and the Herald's reaction was to show how far it had become a paper of the centre.(41)

It was never wildly enthusiastic about Mond-Turner. Its previous view of industrial conciliation had been strongly anti - dismissing Mond's first overture with the comment: "Capitalism depends on there being "two nations". And in that is to be found the root cause of industrial and social unrest. Under Capitalism there can be amelioration of conditions, but under Capitalism there can be no security for peace"(42)

And when the TUC accepted "without prejudice" Mond's offer, on behalf of an unofficial group of employers, of talks the Herald's reaction was guarded. It was not going to condemn any TUC action, but nor need it give fulsome backing. It said that "possibilities should be neither exaggerated nor minimised" warning equally against capitalist belief that "the development presages the speedy end of differences between employers and employed" and a left view that it was "an indication that the Trade Union Movement has abandoned or modified its ideals". The first meeting was reported straight, and unreserved endorsement had to wait for a further week when a leader stated that the General Council had been "presented with an opportunity for raising and posing issues of vital concern to all workers".(43)

Having placed itself firmly behind the General Council line it endorsed their motivation, saying that it had "come to its decisions only after careful consideration and in the future, as in the past, it will be moved solely by anxious care for the welfare of the workers which it represents".(44)
But real enthusiasm was still lacking - and the Herald was always prepared to draw attention to those employers whose actions were not in conciliatory spirit. Its lack of real commitment was certainly noted by Citrine, who was particularly angered by one editorial attack on coal owner Lord Londonderry, and wrote to Turner claiming Mellor was attempting to sabotage the talks: "It is not the first time that a prejudicial leader has appeared and when one remembers that this paper is edited by an ex-Communist it creates misgivings". (45)

Coverage of bitter rows during the summer between Cook, the General Council's main critic, and supporters of the talks was even-handed. But there is little doubt that Citrine was protesting too much. The leader greeting the proposal for a Joint Industrial Council equipped with a permanent research staff and conciliation machinery may have been circumspect, but it was undoubtedly supportive. Much, it said, would depend on the "spirit in which proposals are received and applied". In particular it was up to employers to show good faith on recognition and victimization. But it concluded: "It is not too much to hope that in any case the degree of agreement reached by those who attended the conferences, with their exploration of the vast and involved field of industry, is bound to have an influence in promoting the ends both sides profess to seek". (46)

And the 1928 TUC's rejection by six to one of an engineers resolution to discontinue the talks was seen as "an emphatic and unmistakeable repudiation of charges of 'selling the pass". The General Council's actions were intended: "First and foremost that the lot of the worker shall be considered, and so far as it can be under Capitalism, safeguarded" and, the Herald argued: "No item of Labour and Socialist policy has been sacrificed". (47)

Had the Herald's intentions been those suspected by Citrine it would undoubtedly have given the Cook-Maxton manifesto a warm welcome. That it could only summon up real feeling for the essentially negative task of attacking critics rather than for the positive benefits of the Mond-Turner process shows the extent to which its support was dutiful rather than deeply felt.

But the ferocity with which it launched into the Cook-Maxton document, issued in the New Leader in June and the resounding endorsement it gave to central authority, discipline, established channels, and the General Council showed it acting very firmly as the centre's voice.
Cook and Maxton argued that the principle of making war on capitalism and working-class control of its own destiny was in danger from a new conception that socialism and capitalism should sink their differences and "energy which should be expended on capitalism is now expended on crushing everybody who dares to remain true to the ideal of the movement". Claiming that the movement's fighting spirit was being destroyed, they announced a series of rank and file conferences.

It would have appealed strongly to the Lansbury Herald, up to 1921 at least. The official Herald of 1928 reported the manifesto on page two and subjected it to detailed, withering leader column criticism. Accusing them of making "very serious and unsubstantiated charges" it argued that attempts to improve conditions had always been accepted by socialists and the talks were nothing more than that "The conference is deliberate and exploratory...its object is to discover whether by negotiation and agreement an improvement can be effected in the condition of the workers". There was no need for "rank and file" conferences - the TUC and Labour machinery already existed and the Maxton-Cook meetings would "enfeeble solidarity". (48)

Mellor returned to the attack four days later, with the claim that Maxton and Cook were "putting the Mond conference totally out of proportion" and employing the accusation, eternally levelled at the radical left by the pragmatic centre, of a poor grasp of reality.

"Thinking cannot be fruitful unless it is carried on in relation to existing facts. And one of the facts is that Capitalism excists. That being so the workers, through the Trade Unions, are compelled, by negotiation if possible, byt strike if necessary, to seek amelioration of their lot". (49)

But the Herald readership still had a powerful left contingent, and a heavy mailbag resulted - with equal numbers of pros and cons printed each day. Thus A Coleman of Garndiffaith :

"Millions of workers in our country will hail with delight the lead given by Messrs Maxton and Cook. No doubt they will again be put in the pillory" was balanced by DM Cheetham of Edgbaston :

"If they had wished to ginger up the Movement, one would have thought that their respective posts of influence would have given them adequate scope". (50)
Similarly T Shrimpton of Paignton's query "Where is a shred of evidence that the fighting spirit of the Party is being destroyed?" and belief that the row could only have a "disruptive effect, and if successful, destroy the work of the past 30 years" was answered by A Behenna of Truro's fear of "30 years of sacrifice destroyed by compromising with the political philosophy of our opponents". (51)

Maxton succeeded in winning the support of the ILP, a further indication of the party's growing alienation from the Labour centre, but the campaign had little impact save as an indicator of the movement's fault lines and the Herald's changing relationship to them. (52)

The voice of the centre also spoke with increasing power against Communists and associated groups such as the Minority Movement, in reflection of the attacks on Communist influence conducted by both Labour and the TUC in the 1927-9 period. No value held a higher place in the Herald canon than Labour discipline and solidarity and previously dutiful criticism took on new venom with the Communists increasingly depicted as subverters of this solidarity rather than fellow socialists who believed in politically incompatible methods. The harder line was signalled by a leader just before the 1927 TUC. Quoting Pollitt on the Communist inspiration of the Minority Movement it argued: "Trade Unions have no need to form a Society of Critics in order to make their voices heard. The place to do that is within the trade union.... There is always a readiness to take short cuts and form ad hoc organisations instead of working through the ordinary democratic machinery. This weakness provides a field for recruitment for any body with a strong conscious purpose, and that accounts for much of the confusion in the Labour Movement of this country". (53)

The conference voted overwhelmingly to cut off relations with the Russian unions - a decision the Herald backed "Because the methods of the Russian leaders are at the moment out of harmony with the methods and traditions of the British Trade Union Movement". The Russians were not the only ones. Delegates on the day of the debate had woken up to a Herald leader describing Minority Movement policy as "calculated and designed to create not unity and steady progress, but indiscipline, doubt and drift". (54)
Their violent response to the Russian decision gave the Herald an opportunity for yet another broadside displaying a lack of restraint in language that the paper reserved for acknowledged enemies. Their comments had been "Full of wild and whirling charges...a puerile imitation of "fraternal" messages from Moscow which have done so much to make impossible the maintenance of friendly relations...they do not argue, they do not reason. They throw mud at their fellow-delegates. That is all...Such methods call for the strongest condemnation...not only does the Minority Movement vilify British trade unionism, but it is doing a grave disservice to Russia, of whose interests it professes to be the custodian".(55)

The extent of the Herald's shift since the early 1920s was shown when the Greater London Branch of the Left-Wing Movement, the Minority's political counterpart, led by Bethnal Green Alderman Vaughan, once a Poplar ally - accused the Labour conference of "throwing over every working-class principle for which it was convened". The Herald argued that violence of language does not indicate clarity of thought and this comment was "the sort of statement that reveals in a flash the falsity of point of view and attitude of those who give it assent".(56)

The anti-Communist backlash was seen at a succession of union conferences in 1928, culminating in a memorable brawl at the Miners conference in Llandudno. The Herald which devoted a six column front-page banner to the incident, reported in its leader column that "being inured by hard experience to the rough and tumble of the coalfields, the Llandudno conference soon recovered calm, and proceeded to deal with subjects of the gravest importance".(57)

The comment was notably short of any note of condemnation - there is almost a touch of pride in the remark that union conferences were "usually models of decorum, but the miners showed yesterday their capacity to outtrival some of the stormy meetings of shareholders and others which have recently figured in the newspapers".(58)

When Moscow ordered British Communists to oppose Labour more openly a move which would in the past have been condemned as pointlessly divisive was welcomed as ending "unctuous and insincere talk of a United front" and clearly differentiating the Labour Left from the Communists.(59)
And when Communists fielded candidates against Labour they were attacked with the vigour reserved for apostates. The description of the Communist candidate at the Aberdeen North by-election was in terms that might have come from a Liberal or Conservative paper: "His round face and merry eyes take on the true aspect of the fanatic when he is in the thick of the fray... His bitter denunciations of all of his opponents, and particularly of the Labour Party, are harsh and violent, like the policy of armed revolution and civil war for which he stands". The report described a Communist meeting at which "All four speakers devoted their whole time to attacking Labour, and it is evident that the Communists are the best allies of the Tory". (60)

News reports on Communist themes, treated straight in the past, now came in for hostile treatment. The Red International's annual report was covered under the headline "Red Aims and Claims", and the story was studded with the scepticism implied by the word "claim". (61)

Similarly there was more than a hint of irony in the report on the Minority Movement's annual conference: "Complete harmony prevailed... there were no amendments and no speeches in opposition to the resolutions... there was hardly a speech which did not denounce either the General Council of the Trades Union Congress or individual members of it". (62)

The Herald's anti-Communism carried to its logical conclusion when the 1928 TUC voted to set up an inquiry into "disruptive elements". The Herald leader gestured in the direction of the influence of Tory and Liberal trade unionists before laying into the real enemy: "The dictated activities of the Minority Movement... reducing the power of the Unions to secure the rights and protect the interests of their members... Disruption whether through the apathy and ignorance of the "paying member" or through the ill-judged activities of the "Left" means the postponement of hopes of the intelligent worker for a civilised and human life". (63)

The Herald's alignment with the ethical, centrist, gradualist leadership of the Labour Party was confirmed by its enthusiasm for the Labour and the Nation programme, apotheosis of that tendency and MacDonald's declared belief that a Labour government "Could not accomplish impossibilities, but would steadily go forward to something nobler and better". From the left John Wheatley said there was little Liberals could not accept, that the programme would take 40 years and still fail to bring about socialism. Maxton saw it imbued with ideas of "long, slow gradualism". (64)
Once again the Herald chose the centre over the critics. Its report called the programme:

"The most important political document of modern times... Abrilliantly written exposure of the failure of Capitalism and a convincing re-statement of the case for Socialism, it will inevitably command the attention for many months to come of those concerned with the well-being of the nation".

The leader endorsement was imbued with the ameliorative short-term purposes and ethical long-term aspirations of the party leadership. It excused the programme's moderation by saying there was "much to destroy before even the foundations can be laid" and declared: "The final tests of a Labour Government's achievement will be the extent to which it has improved the condition of life of the people and the progress which it has made in the application of socialist principles, for whilst the former is an important immediate duty, the realisation of a Socialist Commonwealth is the only certain way of attaining a civilised standard of life for all". (65)

That demand for an improved condition of life meant the Herald was forever on the lookout for employers demanding wage cuts and ready to denounce them in ferocious terms. Its delight knew no bounds when American motor magnate Henry Ford argued that low wages were a major cause of British unemployment. (66)

But attacking wage cuts was rather more difficult when a major union, the National Union of Railwaymen, conceded a 2½ per cent cut and JH Thomas said he was "proud of the settlement", hailed it as "a triumph for British common sense"

It could hardly attack an agreement reached by a major union - nor let so fundamental breach in its declared principles pass without comment. It eventually contrived to square this troublesome circle when the settlement went to the NUR conference, by invoking the principle of not intervening in the union's internal affairs: "With all the facts before them it will be for the delegates to decide, and outside advice would be sheer impertinence", while making the general point that wide application of such settlements could only multiply depression and arguing optimistically that the railwaymen's restraint had earned the right to consultation on company policy. (67)
Chapter Twelve: Tailspin June 1927 - September 1928

iii Content: Foreign

If the most significant feature of home coverage had been increasingly active opposition to Communism, the same spirit was extended by the Herald directors into their scrutiny of foreign coverage. Those directors long convinced that the foreign staff were a focus of Communist influence saw an opportunity to attack the problem early in 1928 when foreign sub-editor Walter Holmes left to become editor of the Communist Sunday Worker. Approval for a replacement was given subject to "the Editor giving a satisfactory assurance that the man had no connection whatever with the Communist Party". (68)

Though excluding Communists at home, British Labour continued to argue against isolating Russia internationally - allowing the Herald to continue advocating the inclusion of Russia in the IFTU, which it said: "Must choose whether to continue on the old lines, dominated administratively and politically by a Central European bloc, or whether it is to expand into a world-embracing institution". (69).

It continued to regard that dominant group as deeply conservative and, in a demonstration of its assumption that the affairs of international trade union bodies were of as much interest to general readers as they were to union general secretaries, gave massive coverage to the revelation that one of the joint secretaries of the IFTU had three years earlier proposed action be taken to exclude the Russians without the knowledge of the British delegation - an action condemned vigorously by Citrine in what the Herald termed a "brilliant and dignified" speech. (70)

Russian coverage also continued to be broadly sympathetic - the leader on the 10th anniversary of the revolution celebrated the lone survival of "This great working-class society" while expressing the normal reservations. New Leader editor Noel Brailsford expounded on the same theme at greater length in the lead feature slot, concluding that: "The great gain which overshadows every other, and dwarfs the sins and omissions of this new era, is the liberation of the working class.... Workers children grow up, for the first time in the world's history, without the deadening consciousness that they belong to an inferior caste. They know that they are members of a society organised for the purpose of aiding them to develop all the talents of human nature. That is the glory of Russia, and in the wide world she boasts it alone". (71)
The same could not be said of India, whence a Trade Union inquiry returned to report an entire population threatened by starvation. The Herald seized on the opportunity to reprise its anti-imperialist themes, reporting "A terrible indictment both of British rule and of the Indian employing class". The leader commented "They have lived for over a century under British rule. And this is what it has brought them". (72)

India provided the distinctive foreign theme of this period - the Herald's rejection of the boycott as an instrument of policy. This was a viewpoint placing it firmly within a British labourist viewpoint which, MacKibbin notes, had no tradition of rejectionism and operated on the basis of reaching accommodation with existing political systems. (73)

In consequence it found itself for once at odds with Indian nationalism - pained by the decision to boycott the Simon Commission: "The negative spirit of boycott which seems to predominate at the moment is one that is least likely to help forward the immediate progress of India towards the desired goal of self-government". (74)

Heavy coverage of the Indian Assembly vote for boycott probably owed something to straightforward relish of a good story - the tellers announcement was accompanied by uproar as an excited Indian reporter dislodged his typewriter, which crashed onto the head of the Finance Minister sitting immediately below, stunning him. The pragmatic stance was reaffirmed in August when the Indian Home Rule Committee called for Dominion status. This would, it recognised with a possible glance at stances taken in its own past, be seen as a weakening by supporters of full independence. But it was a "tremendous step away from the present impossible impasse and would not debar India from further advance". (75)

The other rejection of boycott was seen when Sacco and Vanzetti, seven years on death row, were finally executed in Massachusetts. The Herald campaigned fiercely for a fortnight to save them - a British demonstration concluded with "The singing of the Red Flag and cheers for the DAILY HERALD for its vigorous championing of the cause". But when 'Gadfly', using his real name C Langdon Everard, called in a letter to the editor for a boycott of American goods, it disagreed. It argued in response that a boycott would be hard to organise, would hurt British workers who handled American goods and missed the point that capitalism generally, not only the American version, was to blame. The best response was to fight to replace "Mammonlaw" in Britain. (76)
There was no change in the broad scepticism with which the Herald regarded attempts to legislate for international peace - continuing to argue that the League of Nations and events such as the Geneva disarmament talks and the Kellogg-Briand declaration calling for the renunciation of war were only as good as the governments taking part.

This viewpoint ran through a feature on the eighth anniversary of the League: "The predominantly reactionary character of the principal Governments represented in the Council and the Assembly is reason enough that the League has not done more. That it has done so much is evidence of the great things that could be achieved by a League in which the predominant role was played by Socialist Governments pursuing not imperialist objects, but those aims of international co-operation and concord which lie at the very basis of the Socialist creed". (77)

And it underpinned the echo of the famous Bateman cartoon in the reaction to Russian Foreign Minister Litvinov's proposal of total disarmament: "Mr Litvinov has done one of those things which are startling by their very simplicity. He has instructed the Disarmament Commission to discuss - Disarmament! The reply of other governments should afford a significant revelation of their real intentions". The predictable rejections were taken as confirming its expectations. (78)

Britain's Conservative government continued its role as a leading villain - reinforced when British delegate Lord Cushenden told the League that Britain was already disarmed - in Herald eyes an idiocy equal to Austen Chamberlain's claim that the empire was "the oldest League of Peace in the world". The British caveats to Kellogg-Briand were described as "deeply disturbing" and "sufficient to cover practically every war in which the British Empire has ever been engaged". Cushenden was labelled "The great objector..the great opposer", leading again to the conclusion "Peace and Disarmament will never come from capitalist governments". (79)
News and Sport

But there was never any question in the minds of the Herald's decision-makers that significant international events like Kellogg-Briand were newsworthy. They conformed to an extremely serious-minded conception of news value, based on the simple test "Is it important?". That had always been the Herald test. This was an explicit rejection of commercial news values, prepared to emphasise the trivial if it was of interest to readers. But this period saw a change as the Herald for the first time gave prominence to stories that it regarded as trivial. MF Mellor, the Marx-influenced rationalist, could clearly hardly contain his impatience at the excitement over the rejection of the new Anglican Prayer Book or the doctrinal disagreements over Bishop Barnes of Birmingham's views on evolution. Lansbury, certainly, and probably Fyfe would have reacted differently.

The comment: "It would react disastrously if the quarrels of the Anglican church were to be superimposed on much more vital social issues. And it is in Social Issues, with the Condition of the People, with Unemployment, with Housing, with Mining, with Peace, that we would have Parliament deal" sums up the Herald leaders, emphasising with capital letters that deeds rather than creeds were what mattered. (80)

But Mellor also knew from his postbag that church controversies interested his readers. Another, admittedly on a broader subject, produced record postbags when newly appointed Archbishop Lang said that the sacrifice of the war had been worth it. Important or not by the traditional test, such issues were newsworthy - and Mellor gave them extensive coverage with the rejection of the prayer book rated a front-page lead story. (81)

Similar treatment was given to long-distance swimmers. When one female claimant admitted hoaxing, the Herald argued that it would reduce interest in events "which are already felt by many to be overdone". A challenge between two women swimmers led to the comment: "It would be churlish to envy these charming and spirited young women their ration of publicity, but one of these days a long-suffering public may intimate that it is growing tired of these overdone long swims". (82)
Yet one of the protagonists in particular, London typist Mercedes Gleitze, continued to receive at least her ration of publicity for her exploits. One possible reason aside from the inherent newsworthiness of long-distance swimmers was that London clerks and office workers were just the sort of people the Herald needed to attract as readers as stories about someone with whom they could readily identify were a potential circulation-puller. (83)

Falling even more clearly into the category of the distinctive Herald human interest story was that of unemployed Mountain Ash miner John Penar Williams, labelled "The Welsh Chaliapine" after winning the solo voice prize at the 1928 National Eisteddfod. This met numerous Herald needs. It was about a typical Herald reader, provided Welsh interest at a time when Mellor wanted to justify the Cardiff office and fight back against insurance competition, presented the paper as benefactor, could be tied to the political angle of the human waste in the coalfields and was a happy story - answering Robert Williams desire to see socialism presented as "a gospel of hope more than a policy of despair". (84)

Williams, reported as possessing "Not only a voice that reminds critics much of Chaliapine, but much of the striking physique and personal dignity that characterise the famous Russian", had been offered a BBC audition and the Herald seized the opportunity to take him to London. Over the next few ways he was a constant feature in the paper, pictured leaving the BBC with his music under his arm and at the microphone during his audition - which led to an offer. (85)

When he auditioned for HMV at the Queen's Hall, the Herald front-page story explained: "Three months before he came to London last Monday as the DAILY HERALD's guest, Mr Williams was working down a pit, following the occupation he had been bred to as a boy. Now the unemployed miner with the wonderful bass voice has been offered engagements of a very considerable value for the next few weeks". (86)
The following day saw a cryptic item on the popularity of the "surprise" items at the end of Friday's programmes on BBC radio, together with the question "What'll Happen Tonight". It was, as the Herald admitted the following day in the report that climaxed the story, gave it a happy ending and the paper its credit, headlined "Enter Mr Williams: "Daily Herald" Singer's Spectacular Debut: BBC SURPRISE: Millions of Excited Listeners", a 'pretty broad hint'. The Herald said "no singer ever had such a send-off before" and that Williams "found himself famous before he went to bed".(87)

The Herald was also prepared to put its own distinctive twist on a particularly successful popular press stunt - the Westminster Gazette 'mystery man' Lobby Lud who created great excitement during the slow news days of summer 1927 by travelling around seaside resorts handing out money to those who identified him. The characteristic Herald difference was that their "Traveller" travelled incognito to gather opinions rather than give out money: "His aim is to draw from all sorts and conditions of men and women their inner thoughts on the things that matter today"(88).

It was also typical of the paper that even when pursuing a popular paper stunt, it should put a political gloss on the operation. The "things that matter" turned out to be overwhelmingly political in nature or implication. The Traveller in his first piece expressed a desire to avoid the sort of people normally quoted in the Herald, but his definitions were couched in political terms: "Decide to steer clear of the Labour Party and trade union officials. Must try to meet rank-and-filers and get them to talk. Hope to meet member of Spencer Union".(89)

The staccato present tense style was dropped after his first article, set on a train heading north, in favour of more conventional past tense reportage. The Spencer union man turned out to be a Herald reader, with his MFGB counterpart taking the Express. Both held "very low views of the intelligence of a section of their fellow-workers...Yes, our chaps have a Triple Alliance of their own - Football, Racing and Beer".(90)
There was the Canadian businessman who called British capitalists: "The slowest businessmen I've ever met" and a aspiring teacher: "His father was a trade unionist, a Labour man and a nonconformist. He had decided that his father's ideas would be no aid to him in the career had had planned for himself, so he had joined the Anglican Church and the the local Tory association". (91)

East Anglia farm workers were sceptical of Liberal policy: "We have had enough of Lloyd George and his promises in the past, and we are fed up with him", while a Liverpool labourer viewed his lot fatalistically: "He showed no deep-seated resentment against the condition of his life. An almost cheerful resignation and a vague hope that somehow, and sooner or later, things would improve, virtually sums up his attitude". (92)

The conclusions too were political. Finishing the series with an imaginary dialogue between himself and a Labour pessimist "Mr Glump", he concluded that "There are more Henry Dubbs in this world than you and I wot of, but the youngsters who are coming along have a wider vision... I am confident that the Labour Movement is making sure, steady and permanent progress". (93)

Progress of a different sort was being made by long-distance fliers, but trail-blazing flights were accompanied in the summer of 1927 by a string of fatalities. Labour MP Harry Day, a Herald favourite, was among those who called for restrictions on flights. But the Herald held to its belief that scientific progress could be related to social progress, arguing that the critics were "acting precipitately" and that if calls for a ban on railways when Huskisson was killed had been heeded: "Social development would have been arrested. The aeroplane and the airship are destined to bring about a tremendous change in the habits and outlook of mankind, and few people would wish to see them impeded so long as they are not used for the purpose of war". (94)

The social progress roots of this viewpoint were made clear by a very different attitude to speed records. Britain's victory in the Schnieder Trophy races was rated a front-page lead, but accompanied by a leader "Cui Bono" that assumed readers' knowledge of basic Latin as well as arguing that speed for its own sake was futile. (95)

Two enthusiasms - the benefits of modern science and of international cooperation, merged into a single story when the Italian Nobile expedition, crashed on Spitzbergen, were located by wireless messages. The Herald declared it "One of the romances of modern science". (96)
The Italians' flight and disappearance had provided a string of front-page stories - so now did their ordeal as they waited more than a month for rescue. When a Russian icebreaker finally accomplished this, the Herald saw an inspiring message about international cooperation: "Splendid endurance and splendid courage and of the human comradeship which overrode all national and other prejudices". (97)

In mid 1928 the Herald found a flier it could endorse without reservation. Amelia Earhart was not only the first woman to fly the Atlantic, but the possessor of interests that the Herald could identify with: "I wanna see your Toynbee Hall; your welfare centres interest me immensely; my social work in American to me is my life's ambition", she told a reporter who evidently fell in love with her on the spot.

"Who is this heroine of the Transatlantic? Well, when I saw her she was all smiles and charm. Tall, I should think about 5ft 8in, slim, the "1928 woman" type in fact with a mop of curly bobbed hair shielding a laughing face.

"Miss Earhart is a true woman. "I dunno", she told me, what I'm going to do. Cause you realise that I'm tired" - this whilst she pulled her finger wearily through her hair.

"Can you imagine a tall, lissom girl with that delightful hair, and the happy laughing face, in a khaki shirt, red tie, brown jumper, black riding trousers, stockings to match...". (98)

A less innocently sensual note had been struck earlier in the year by a charge of indecency against Sir Leo Chiozza Money, a member of the Sankey Coal Commission and Irene Savidge, a 22 year old woman, in Hyde Park.

The conjunction of a famous man, a young woman and the charge was made for the popular press. But the Herald coverage was overlain by its political and social analysis. The actual trial and acquittal were covered with some delicacy. The charging officers "described what they alleged they saw". (99)
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The Herald was not a kneejerk anti-police paper, but was more prepared than most popular papers to accept that they might be at fault. Miss Savidge's claims of "third degree" interrogation and the subsequent decision to set up an inquiry led to the comment: "The whole procedure of the law from top to bottom is on trial". Its response to the inquiry, heavily covered with three consecutive front-page leads, had both a party-political and a social basis when it condemned the majority report exonerating the police and concentrated its coverage on the minority report by Labour representative HB Lees Smith which it said: "Commands intellectual respect and restates with admirable force and clarity the case for the rights of the citizen". The majority report was dismissed for the attitude: "Here is a distinguished police officer. There is a working-class girl. Of the two the girl is obviously the liar". (100)

The importance of sports coverage was acknowledged at the start of the 1928-9 football season, when it was announced that an extra Monday page would be devoted to fuller coverage, sacrificing the picture page. But cricket continued to be the one sport capable of commanding front page space - notably a delighted response to Yorkshire's offer of the captaincy to professional Herbert Sutcliffe in October 1927. (101)

But the distinctive sports feature of this period was the arrival of greyhound racing in Britain. The Herald's initial reaction was based on support for better working-class entertainment and loathing of hunting - several leaders were devoted to the infamy of stag-hunting. The thought that gambling, the great horror of the respectable working-class to whom it habitually spoke, might be involved does not appear to have occurred to it. It had "little doubt that this new pastime will achieve a great democratic success" and quoted approvingly the slogan "thrill of the race without the cruelty of the chase". (102)
Warmth continued through early reports: "Dog Racing Has A Great Start" it headlined the full-column front page story, picture and full results devoted to the first day at White City. The writer was "confident that my fellow-Londoners will take pleasure in it for many a long day". A colour feature in August 1928 on an 80,000 audience at White City reported: "Only a minority of the crowd made bets. The vast majority sat or stood on the upper tier around the stadium with scarcely a thought beyond seven half-minute thrills - there were 120 minutes of waiting". But disdain for gambling shone through descriptions of regular gamblers, with betters described as "timid as sheep in a shearing pen". (103)

Reality finally dawned, bringing with it a very different attitude. SA fresh White City feature showed a different world to the benign scene of a month earlier. On the journey there: "only one subject was discussed - the chances of certain dogs and the prices to be offered by the bookmakers. Not a word was heard about sport".

There were references to "a wildly gesticulating mob", to the promoters who "gazed with approval as they gazed with approval on the great oval wall of men and women who represented the half-sovereigns and shillings that matter so much to the track-owner", and to "a mad rush for money for nothing". (104)

Unhappy that current legislation did nothing to regulate dog racing, the Herald supported proposals to create a local licensing system. But the old disdain for betting was itself on the wane. A leader on the 1928 Derby commented that "Moralists may condemn, economists talk of waste, enthusiasts for world reformation groan - but among the flutterers are moralists, economists and enthusiasts! Derby day is a holiday in more ways than one!" (105)

A Capitalist Scheme

One possible explanation for this change of tune was the leadership's realization that few working-class speculations could be more costly than their own in running a newspaper. By the time the 1928 TUC met the paper was in its acutest crisis since the Congress of 1923.

Advertising performance could not be blamed. Income was up #1000 in the seven weeks to the end of the August. And the paper's management had felt sufficiently confident of its pulling power to take the risk of a more selective policy in relation to one group of advertisements - those for birth control.
Since 1919 the Herald had been the only London daily to carry them, and controversy had
recurred over the period. Circulation manager Le Good argued that they damaged the paper's
standing and Williams felt that lost income - around £35 - £37 daily, could rapidly be
replaced.

Poyser was sceptical that any other insertions were being lost as a result and concerned that
any ban should not exclude reputable clinics and publications, a position backed by Mellor. The
eventual decision was that "We do not refuse birth control advertisements as a matter of
principle but instruct the General Manager to obtain the services of a reputable authority on the
birth control advertisements offered for insertion in the Daily Herald". (106)

But advertising success stared in the face of circulation disaster. By the end of August it had
fallen to 310,504 - down 8,744 on the month - with returns up to 16 per cent. Williams noted
that the 260,000 net sale was "Perilously near to the 250,000 we are wont to regard as the
nucleus of those who buy the Herald at all costs", but saw no possibility of stabilisation at even
this level. A #19,465 drop in sales income in the first half of the year - close to #750 per
week - put the recent #150 a week increase in advertising into depressing context. (107)

The General Council and the Victoria House directors, meeting during the TUC, responded in
the time honoured manner: "It was decided that the new General Council appoint a committee to
consider the general situation". It became clear during the Congress session that movement
resources were no longer sufficient to fund the paper properly, and that the General Council was
preparing to go outside to finance the developments needed to make it competitive. (108)

Bevin told Bromley of ASLEF: "We shall have to produce a financial scheme which we must
submit to the movement which will involve the raising of capital and the guaranteeing of capital
in the manner which I have indicated. That is our view. I should not like in answering a question
to attempt to forecast exactly what form that report will take, because I think it would be
presumption on my part".

But he could hint at the size of the scheme. Asked by Brownlie of the Engineers if a million
pounds was the sum needed, he said: "I think you have summed it up very well. I think that is
the absolute minimum we can do with". Mellor cited the same sum in the context of a Northern
Edition.
Rejection of methods tried so far was implicit in Bevin's comment: "It is no good appealing for shillings, or appealing for pence, appealing for more affiliation fees, in order to go on from hand to mouth. ... It may mean going to the market for money; it may mean using affiliation fees in the future to guarantee the interest on that money, but we must get sufficient at least to launch out on a wide footing."

Citrine pointed the same way, discussing affiliation fees: "Instead of using that merely to put into a reserve fund to meet any losses that may accrue, that we should use that money to guarantee interest on any capital sum that may be raised upon the open market. That is the only way in which the "Daily Herald" can be expanded and worked as you desire.

Winding up for the General Council in his well-practised role of worldly wise pragmatist, Thomas argued powerfully in the same direction: "You must not come along afterwards and say: 'This is the capitalist system, this is playing with the enemy'. You must not say that. If you are going to run this thing on a commercial basis, do it right away. I am pleased to join the Committee, but I am not going to start out unless it is clearly understood that we are going to fight these people with their own weapons but with the backing of our own movement."

Without such a scheme the movement risked going into a general election, and possibly into government, with no voice in the press. So, he promised "There will be a scheme brought to you, a big scheme, a scheme that you have never before considered, a scheme that I repeat is going to be a capitalist scheme, because you cannot run the "Herald" on sentiment."

Congress acceptance of the report was a collective admission that the means of running the Herald adopted since the movement takeover had failed. The search for a means of implementing the report and adopting a new financial structure adopted was to dominate the following year.(109)

vi. Conclusion

The 1927-8 period marked a further step in the establishment of central leadership control over the Herald paralleling the squeeze on Communist and left influence within the movement. This was seen in the relative lack of debate in the paper as much as in its muted but definite support for Mond-Turner and its assaults on the Cook-Maxton rebellion.
News values continued to be heavily political, but the treatment of warring bishops and channel swimmers show the first indications of a commercial conception of newsworthiness taking account of likely reader interest as much as intrinsic importance.

But small changes in balance and content failed to halt the continuing decline in circulation as competition continued to intensify. Failure to implement the Williams-Allen development plan at the beginning of this period reflected a belief that the paper's problems were too fundamental to be combatted by a relatively small injection of capital. By the end of the period the movement's resources had effectively been exhausted, and the decision to pursue large scale development made the involvement of external funders inevitable. From now on the Herald's fortunes would be tied to those of bodies outside the Labour movement.

ENDS
1. RPTUC 1928 p 497
2. Ibid p 495. GM rep 15.12.27 TUC 788.21
3. RPTUC 1928 p 495
4. CM reps 21.7.27, 19.1.28 TUC 788.22
5. NW 23.7.27, 4.2.16, 23.6, 13, 20.10.28, 10.8.29. Memo 14.2.28 for joint meeting on 15.2.28 TUC 789.81
6. AM rep 16.2.28 TUC 788.23, DH 1.2.28
7. CM rep 21.6.28 TUC 788.22
8. VHPCo Board rep 27.9.27 TUC 788.26. GM rep 29.8.29 TUC 788.21
9. CM reps 19.5.27, 17.6.27, 31.8.27 TUC 788.22. GM rep 19.5.27 TUC 788.21
10. CM summary of circulation losses August 1928 TUC 788.01
12. CM rep 21.1.28 TUC 788.23
14. AM rep 22.3.28, 22.4.28 TUC 788.23. VHPCo dir 25.7.28 TUC 788.26
15. GM rep 19.9.27, Ed rep 31.8.27 both LPDH 533. Ed rep 22.3.28 TUC 788.24
16. AM rep 16.2.28 TUC 788.23. VHPCo Board min 18.11.27 TUC 788.26. Ed rep 22.3.28 loc cit
17. Ed rep 22.3.28 loc cit
18. CM rep 15.12.27 TUC 788.22
20. MacDonald to Mellor 25.7.27 JRMPRO File 100 Item 148-50
21. GM rep 26.9, 15.12.27 TUC 788.21
22. RPTUC 1927 p 397-401
23. Ibid p 397-403
24. Ibid p 401-2
25. Publication Fund Summary 27.10.28 TUC 789.01. Consultation meeting min 21.12.27 TUC 788.1. Middleton to Citrine 24.1.28, Citrine to Henderson 27.1.28 TUC 789.7
26. VHPCo FC report 26.9.27 TUC 788.5
27. VHPCo FC 3.11.27, 16.11.27 TUC 789.1. VHPCo dir special memorandum 18.11.27 TUC 788.5
28. VHPCo dir meeting with TUCGC 23.11.27 TUC 788.11. Joint meeting min 7.2.28 TUC 789.81. TUCFC 7.2.28 item 90
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29. Joint meeting min 15.2.28 TUC 789.81. Memo for VHPCo FC and TUC FC sub-committee 20.2.28 TUC 788.5

30. Citrine memo to GC 21.6.28 TUC 789.01. TUCFC 7.5.28 item 47. Note drawn up by AC Firth on relationship between Labour Party and Victoria House, March 1929 TUC 789.7.

31. Citrine memo 21.6.28 loc cit. GC min 27.6.28 min no 270

32. VHPCo dir 24.5.28 LPDH 547

33. RPTUC 1927 p 401. NW 3.12.27

34. RPTUC 1928 p 500

35. DH 1.7.27

36. DH 1.11.27, 7.7.28

37. DH 28.5.28

38. RPTUC 1928 p 499

39. DH 14.2.28

40. DH 29.8.27


42. DH 19.10.27

43. DH 22.12, 13, 23.1.28

44. DH 25.1.28

45. Citrine to Turner 24.8.28 TUC 788.62

46. DH 28.6, 5.7.28

47. DH 21.6.28

48. DH 25.6.28

49. Ibid

50. DH 27.6.28

51. DH 2.7.28. Clegg op cit p 466. Davies op cit p 75

52. A Williams op cit p 29-44. Shaw - Discipline and Discord op cit p 13-15

53. DH 29.8.27

54. DH 8, 9, 9.27

55. DH 10.9.27

56. DH 27.2.28

57. DH 19.7.28

58. Ibid

59. DH 22.2.28

60. DH 13.8.28

61. DH 20.7.28

62. DH 27.8.28
63. DH 5.9.28
64. DH 21.5, 4.10.28
65. DH 7.7.28
66. DH 11.4.28
67. DH 28, 30.7.28
68. VHP Co Dir 27.3.28 LP DH 543 NW 3.3.28
69. DH 1.8.27
70. DH 2.8.27
71. DH 7.11.27
72. DH 26.5.28
73. McKibbin - Ideologies op cit p 1
74. DH 3.1.28
75. DH 20.2, 16.8.28
76. DH 22, 24, 25.8.27
77. DH 10.1.28
78. DH 1.12.27
79. DH 12.9, 23.12.27, 23.5, 4.7.28
80. DH 9.6.28 ("Creeds and Deeds" leader 21.10.27)
81. DH 5.6, 9, 16.8.28
82. DH 17.10, 1.12.27
83. DH 15.10.27, 10.4.28
84. GM rep 15.12.27 TUC loc cit
85. DH 10, 13, 22.8.28
86. DH 23.8.28
87. DH 24, 25.8.28
88. DH 13, 15, 16.8.27. Miles Kington - You Are Mr Lobby Lud - BBC Radio 4, December 1983.
89. DH 16.8.27
90. DH 17.8.27
91. DH 19.8.27
92. DH 29.8.27
93. DH 3.9.27
94. DH 9, 13.9.27
95. DH 27.9.27, 14.3.28
96. DH 11.6.28
97. DH 13.7.28
98. DH 20.6.28
99. DH 3.5.28
100. DH 18, 19.5, 14.7.28
101. DH 25, 10, 3.11.27, 23, 27.8.28.
102. DH 10.8, 21.11.27 (stag hunting) 26.4.27 (greyhounds)
103. DH 21, 22.6, 22.8.27
104. DH 17.9.27
105. DH 15.3, 5.6.28
106. Reports to VHPCo Dir 24.5.28 LPDH 544
107. GM rep 29.8.29 TUC 788.21
108. TUCGC min 3.9.28 min 345

ENDS
Construction, conformity and control: the taming of the Daily Herald 1921-30

Thesis

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Constriction, Conformity and Control: The Taming of the Daily Herald 1921-30
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Ph.D 1993
The Open University

Section Six
The genesis of the British Worker was as haphazard and improvised as the rest of the General Council's preparations for the General Strike - a dispute that it did not want and would seek an escape from at the earliest opportunity. Hostile observers such as the Newspaper Press Directory were to claim that the Worker was planned to have a monopoly of press reporting during the dispute. (1)

Nothing could have been further from the truth. Far from having a strategy for suppressing views the TUC were uncertain 24 hours before the strike started whether to continue the Herald, issue an emergency substitute or do nothing - with inaction commanding some support on the General Council. It took pressure from the print unions and the news that Churchill was setting up a government propaganda sheet to force the decision to set up a strike bulletin, to be produced at the Herald offices under General Council direction. (2)

The Herald was suspended, but the tensions over its content were not. The debate between Fyfe and the Publicity Committee over the strike sheet's scope were a microcosm of the endless dialectic over the relative importance of political and other news. Fyfe argued for the inclusion of some general news but was overruled by the General Council Publicity committee whose secretary Herbert Tracey put the hardline politics first and last view: "Mr Fyfe does not yet realise that a Strike Bulletin is not a newspaper and my Committee thinks the readers of the "British Worker" are so anxious to get news about the strike that they won't feel the absence of the cricket scores and other general news Fyfe seems to consider important". (3)

Though Fyfe, assistant editor Mellor, Williams and Victoria House manager Barrow were responsible for putting the paper out, their role was essentially instrumental. Real control was in the hands of the Publicity Committee, who censored all copy before it went in the paper, while local strike committees were instructed to send copy to Tracey rather than Fyfe. And when the TUC wanted communications included, the writing was normally entrusted to Charles Leatherland, since 1924 Parliamentary correspondent of the Labour News Service. (4)

But the 11 issues they produced between 5th and 17th May were still a recognisable relative of the Herald - its type and headline face clear evidence alongside contributions from Herald regulars such as Gadfly and Tomfool, who provided the small leavening of humour alongside a mass of serious strike news and exhortations to the troops.
The tone and content were those of Herald election issues. It was very much the voice of the centre addressing the activist on the periphery - an approach crystallised in 11 words on 10th May: "Stand Firm. Be loyal to your instructions and Trust Your Leaders". Reports, whether of events at the centre or those provided by strike committees and eyewitnesses in the region, were determinedly upbeat and intended to boost morale. In place of election emphasis on Labour's programme there was a constant reiteration of the General Council's peaceful, constitutional intentions in face of the government's attempts to paint the strike as a attempted revolution. (5)

Putting the paper out was a constant battle. On the first day a police raid halted production for half an hour before the City Commissioners gave their permission for printing to go ahead. (6)

Fyfe believed that the government wanted to suppress the Worker, but lacked the necessary nerve. Instead it seized their paper supplies, replying when attacked in Parliament that the newsprint embargo applied equally to all newspapers. The Worker came down from eight to four pages from May 7th, but it continued thanks to the efforts of Barrow, who located an alternative supply of paper. (7)

Not all Herald staff displayed the selfless heroism hoped for in such circumstances - Fyfe recorded that a General Council instruction was needed to get the machine room running once the decision to produce a bulletin was taken, and the Herald office chapel was to complain post-strike that some members of staff had accepted full wages for work on the Worker. But Fyfe said of Barrow: "He is a tower of strength. Sleeps at the office night after night, yet he's always smiling and calm. He has to be forced to eat by two women members of the Herald staff who have devotedly thrown themselves into the task of keeping us supplied with food day and night". With publication conditions varying from day to day, rapid improvisation to handle new paper sizes, uncertain supplies and staff working themselves into the ground the Worker was reproducing the Herald's early days - with one important difference. (8)
Where Fyfe and his staff were used to producing a paper they were desperate to sell, but had difficulties in persuading the Labour movement to buy, they found themselves overwhelmed by demand. On 8th May he noted: "The demand for the British Worker is insatiable. We could sell to purchasers at the doors three times as many as we print, and we are printing half a million". There were even reports that opportunist sellers were cashing in on demand by selling the paper, priced at 1d, for 2d. (9)

Echoing throughout the 1920s was the demand for the Herald to secure a half-million circulation and publish a Northern edition. With Mellor organising printing arrangements, the Worker attained and passed both targets. The issue of 12th May sold 713,000, made up of 514,000 in London, Manchester 100,000, Cardiff 37,000, Glasgow 30,000, Sunderland 24,000 and Leeds 12,000. And it even managed to make a profit - Williams was eventually to pay more than £4,000 into coalfield relief charities. (10)

Closing on 17th May, with an issue whose limited coverage of non-strike issues represented a small victory for Fyfe over the scruples of the Herald print chapels, the British Worker's farewell message emphasised its relationship with the returning Herald: "Tomorrow the Daily Herald reappears. If all who have have looked forward day by day to the British Worker, who have felt grateful to it and realised its value to the Workers Cause - if all of them will transfer their support to the Herald, the gain will be substantial to that cause which fills so large a place in our hearts". (11)

The gain would in fact have been an overnight doubling of the Herald's sale, with a consequent revolutionising of its prospects. Fyfe suggested that the British Worker name be retained in order to cash in on the loyalties created by the strike, but was overruled. The Daily Herald it remained, but the paper that returned to the newsstands on 18th May had an much more optimistic view of its competitive position than the one that had been suspended a fortnight earlier. (13)

ENDS.
Footnotes Twenty Six

CHAPTER TEN (P180-182)

   TUCGC 3.5.26 min 31, 4.5.26 min 36.
3. Fyfe - *Behind op cit* p 84. Tracey to Fyfe 6.5.26 TUC (General Strike) 252.62(12)
5. BW 5-17.5.26
8. Fyfe - *Behind op cit* p 26-7, 54. TUCGC 4.5.26 min no 47. TUCFC 6.7.26 item 227
9. Fyfe - *Behind op cit* p 54. Walthamstow Trades Council to Citrine 5.5.26
   E Warren to Citrine 6.5.26 TUC(GS)252.62(12)
10. Fyfe - *Behind op cit* p 54. BW 12.5.26. Williams to Citrine 25.3.27
    TUC(GS)252.62(24)
11. Fyfe - *Behind op cit* p 86-7. BW 17.5.26
12. Fyfe - *Sixty Years* op cit p 199

ENDS
The optimism with which the Herald returned reflected the belief that the twin objectives of a 500,000 daily sale and profitability were within its grasp. In late April circulation had been just under 360,000. The print-run on 18th May was 554,000 and "vast demands" from newsagents impressed by the British Worker's performance boosted demand to a peak of 562,213 on 20th May, stretching the creaking print works capacity of 500,000 including machines more than 20 years old.

But returns rocketed together with the print run. Within a month sales had dropped below 450,000, apparently stabilising around 440,000 by late July - up 22.6 per cent nationally, but with increases of only 9 per cent for Wales and 16.9 per cent for Northumberland and Durham evidence of growing privation in the still-striking coalfields.

Just as sales grew then dropped in response to dramatic political or industrial events, advertising again showed the opposite tendency. Poyser predictably returned to "A fine basketfull of cancellation orders". The first two weeks after the strike produced advertisement income of just over £1000 each, £450 down on 1925. But the first two weeks in June saw a jump to more than £1200, up £863 on the same fortnight in 1925. He reported his confidence that the few customers who had not returned - including Imperial Tobacco, Gibbs Dentifrice, Gramophone Company, Kraft Cheese and LMS Railway - would return once the coal dispute, which was depressing advertising generally, was over, and could point to several important new accounts and renewals.

The improvement continued into June and July. Poyser reported that though he was discounting to keep business, other papers were having to offer more and cheerfully brandished a letter from confectioners JS Fry showing the Herald to be a more economical advertising medium than the average national or provincial daily paper.
Like Lansbury in early 1925, Fyfe chose a period of relative financial success to beat a retreat from the Herald, resigning in July. He had promised to stay for three years and was now well into a fourth with no holiday longer than 10 days. He had no doubt he left the paper stronger than he found it: “Its circulation had more than trebled. Its advertisements had largely increased. It was now a very fair newspaper, thanks to the efforts of its staff. It would have been a first-class newspaper if we had not had to cut and pinch and scrape in every direction.”

But his resignation, like Lansbury’s, reflected the tensions within the Herald - in this case his poor relations with staff and directors. Fyfe would subsequently blame his resignation on the refusal of arbitrators including a Herald director to confirm reporter Fox’s sacking over the Daily Mail libel.

He laid direct blame on Williams and Bevin “intriguing with more than their usual energy”. No evidence is quoted against Williams, but an anonymous memo in the TUC files, damningly critical of Fyfe’s performance as a manager, may provide the answer. The author had a good day-to-day knowledge of the paper’s organisation and saw its Labour Movement role as paramount - both point strongly to Williams.

It commented: “The Editor has not the real co-operation and confidence of the staff, and this is in no way due to any lack on the part of the staff to co-operate, but purely a temperamental weakness of the Editor, it is made worse by the fact that his judgment is unstable and erratic, that he has not the knowledge of the different phases of the movement that several members of the staff possess, and is too susceptible to personal influence.”

Fyfe recalled that Bevin attacked him at a Board meeting for disloyalty - a letter to a reader explaining that inadequate Herald coverage was the Board’s fault for providing insufficient resources. He was certain that he could have won the argument: “I had only to appeal to results to defeat Bevin, and maybe drive him from the field”. This has to be doubted. Bevin was not in the habit of losing battles and the memo suggests that Fyfe’s position was not as unchallengeable as he believed. But he recognised an opportunity for making the Board pay him off as they had Lansbury’s deputy Gerald Gould.
The issue went to the Victoria House board who agreed to accept Fyfe's resignation from 31st August with a payment of £750. Fyfe recalled: "I told the members I understood from Bevin that they would like a change in the editorship. Some of them looked surprised, but they always did what Bevin told them to do, so they assented". There is no recorded explanation on Bevin's side, but his comments in the previous September on Fyfe's refusal to listen to suggestions about the paper can be taken as evidence of pre-existing ill-feeling.

A sub-committee was set up to appoint a successor.(10)

iiContent 1 : Aftermath.

Fyfe's departure was accompanied by bitterness over one of his last leaders. Having spent the last three and a half months of his editorship observing the Labour movement self-denying ordinance against public debate on its major current controversy - the outcome of the General Strike, he evidently took the view that in his penultimate issue, August 30th, he need no longer defer to his union directors. This personal parting shot was aimed squarely at the Minority Movement's bitter criticisms of the General Council's decision to stop the strike.

He said shouts of "traitor" were "the stock-in-trade of Communists. As we know from published documents, abuse and destruction of all those who hold official positions in the Labour Movement have been commanded from Moscow as a means of breaking that Movement up". He went on to argue that there was no mystery about the end of the strike and strongly endorsed the General Council's actions - in the process indicating that the miners continued resistance was futile.

"And events are now proving that the Council were right.

"If the miners representatives had agreed to accept that Memorandum as a basis for negotiation, work could have been resumed three and a half months ago, and no mine-worker would have got less than 50s a week.."

When it was rejected by the miners representatives, the General Council felt it would be "futile" to ask the unions to "continue their sacrifice for another day".

"The council was satisfied that, however long it continued the strike, it would still be in the same position as far as the attitude of the Miners Executive was concerned."
"The Minority Movement's attack is not the honest criticism offered in the interest of the Labour Movement, but deliberate venom intended to help in the destruction of the Movement and the substitution of Communism for it." (11)

Fyfe was visited by a Communist Party delegation who asked him to withdraw the leader. Supporters outside the Herald building sang the Internationale, but the serenade was unavailing. But dismay was not confined to Communists. At the TUC Civil Service Clerical Association leader WJ Brown commented that if the self-denying ordinance on the strike "was good enough for the delegates at this Congress it is good enough for the editor of the Labour Daily". Turner said: "I think everybody in the movement regretted its appearance in the "Daily Herald" - at least I did". (12)

Yet Fyfe's farewell was hardly out of line with the previous editorial line. Acceptance of the self-denying ordinance implied rejection of those on the left who wanted the argument now. The Herald leader on its decision not to publish a speech by AJ Cook shows the paper still in 'official bulletin' mode. It was, in spite of Fyfe's repeated protestations that it was a newspaper and not a political tract, prepared to suppress a news story for political reasons, and in so doing lay into the critics on the left: "We deliberately refrained from publishing the spicy bits of a speech that intended to do as much harm as possible. We know that the harm it did would recoil on the miners. We did not want them to suffer for the lack of self-control shown by the Secretary of their Federation.

It went on: "Let us further say to all who want to arraign others or to excuse themselves, or to hit out right and left and convict everybody else of stupidity or treachery, or both, that they are doing cruel injury to the cause which they profess to have at heart.

"This is a time for moderate speaking, for making allowances, for reckoning up what we have lost and what we have gained, what we have learned and how best we can apply the lessons for the advantage of our great movement". (13)
Fyte followed in his Saturday column with an explicit attack on leftwingers who were writing to the Herald under the headline "Save Us From Our Friends" - describing the critics as "One-eyed hysterical defeatists (who) would like to split the whole movement". "At a time when no one should dare to judge, without full knowledge of the facts, men and women upon whom heavy and alarming responsibility rested, they hurl abuse and accusations, they demand heads on chargers, they threaten to "give up the HERALD" if it does not run as viciously and wildly mad as they".(14)

The Herald's self-proclaimed neutrality in fact aligned it closely with the non-Minority left of the General Council. Swales, Hicks and Tillett wrote to the Herald proclaiming the strike a success - a viewpoint echoed, according to Postgate, by chairman Turner. While Frank Varley of the Miners alleged "abject surrender", John Wheatley complained of "the greatest and most bungled" strike and the TUC were deluged with resolutions of complaint and confusion from local branches and committees, the Herald had rapidly endorsed this optimistic view of the outcome.(15)

On 19th May it had declared: "It was a greater success than anyone had dared to hope. It struck dismal apprehension into the hearts of the oppressors...Now, it is the Workers who loom huge and impressive. The Owning Class has shrivelled up...It was the most wonderful, the most inspiring illustration of Labour's new-found solidarity. After it nothing can ever be the same again".(16)

The normal range of coverage was maintained, but the miners continuing struggle dominated to the extent that one reader could complain in late August: "I have been wondering these last few days if the Daily Herald is a paper for the whole of the workers or just for the miners".(17)

Returning on 18th May with the six-column banner "Mineowners Opposed To Premier's Proposals", it was not until 19th June that a front-page banner unrelated to the strike appeared - the one greeting the North Hammersmith by-election victory on 29th May was sub-headed "Sweeping Vindication of Campaign for Miners' Claims".(18)
The dispute provided the Herald with a story covering all three main home news categories - politics, industry and human interest. Devotedly detailed reporting chronicled every twist of the national story of the strike. Government was still seen as either unconcerned or the tool of the incorrigible mineowners, but the bulk of reporting was factual. Front page headlines such as "Mr Herbert Smith States Miners Terms", "Miners Appeal to British Trade Unions" and "Premier's "Ten Days" Ultimatum to Miners" alternated with more loaded versions such as "Government Playing the Mineowners Game" and "Mineowners Amazing Reply To The Miners".

The factual style on occasion became downright bureaucratic, cast in union circular prose, as when the TUC's plans for relieving conditions in the coalfield were reported: "Plans for a far-reaching movement to help the locked-out miners and their families, and to meet the developing attacks on the workers generally are rapidly approaching completion at the headquarters of the Trades Union Congress, and it is probable that the General Council will be in a position to make an important announcement of policy next week.

"It is clear that the workers are faced with the most serious attack in their history....The General Council is proceeding therefore, on the assumption that the struggle may have to be a long and bitter one, and plans are being laid accordingly.

"With this in mind steps will be taken to get and keep in close touch not only with the trade union Executives, but with the whole of the rank and file of the working class".

The human interest element was drawn from the courageous resistance of mining communities. Headlines on a description of the situation in Lancashire read: "No Surrender!" - Lancs Miners Stand Firm: Wonderful Spirit of Men and Leaders: Funds Exhausted, Money and Food Wanted - But No Weakening", and the story commented "In all the trade disputes that I have seen, I have never seen such an understanding between leaders and men, and such a loyalty as this one".

But enthusiasm cohabited with concern about the implications of fund exhaustion and the need for food and money. Within four days of the Herald's return it was giving front page coverage to a women's appeal for miners families chaired by Ellen Wilkinson.
Fyfe himself donated £50 plus the proceeds from "Behind the Scenes of the Great Strike" - which sold 13,000 shilling copies by mid-June - and gave the appeal a regular slot on column three of the front page. Herald headlines exhorted help from readers: "Miners Bairns Need Help - You Must Give It" was not so much a suggestion as an order across six front-page columns. (23)

The direct appeal to the reader - treating them not as a passive consumer but a member of a movement with duties to carry out was also seen in copy: "Just one question. Have you, reading this, sent your contribution to one of the miners' relief funds. If not, do it now" (24)

Emotion-inducing human interest techniques were deployed once miners families started evacuating children. Reports of their arrival in London emphasised privation and the uncaring brutality of government in order to loosen purse strings. "Bairns Needing Homes: Flight From The Wrath of Coalkings" was the headline on one story - sentimental terms such as bairn and mite were used to emphasise the defenceless of victims. "In age they ranged from eight to fourteen. Some are being taken to the seaside by foster parents. Many look as if they need it.

"Dr Marion Phillips, one of the secretaries of the Women's Committee, drew one girl to her, a frail mite of seemingly nine years, whose pallor was in marked contrast with the healthy colour of the women around.

"I think the seaside will do you good", she said.

"The child smiled wistfully. "How old are you?"

"Fourteen next October", was the astonishing answer. (25)

To demonstrate the desperate seriousness of the situation Bobby Bear was mobilised to appeal to children: "Are you HELPING THE MINERS CHILDREN?...Little children in the coalfields are suffering so much because their fathers and mothers cannot give them enough food. It makes me ashamed to be so round and fat as I am. Lots of children are helping already... Will YOU do what you can to help?".

The women's committee had devised special collecting cards for children to collect their own and friends pocket money: "Maisie, Ruby and I are giving half our holiday money", they were told. (26)
A consequence of these privations was that early faith in the miners' prospects receded. A banner headline on May 29th had trumpeted: "Why The Miners Are Bound To Win", explaining "The Labour Movement will not let the Miners be beaten to their knees. We believe the nation as a whole, in its own interest, will be forced to come to their aid. "When they go back they will go back at their old wages - because the nation must have coal and cannot get it without their skill and toil". (27)

By August the line had become much more cautious. When the miners rejected a peace plan proposed by church leaders the Herald supported them - arguing that distrust of the church and of arbitration was based on past experience. But its conclusion indicated serious doubts about the miners' ability to win: "What next? The immediate duty before the Labour Movement is clear. The miners must be supported more vigorously than ever before. But the issue of the struggle still seems far away". (28)

The implicit message that a settlement should be sought was reinforced in the following week when delegates agreed to recommend new negotiations. The Herald spoke of a "general feeling of relief" and commented that "Fights to a finish are always inconclusive". (29)

But this was not the reason why some sections of the movement's left - notably the Communist South Wales miner Arthur Horner, expressed unhappiness at the paper's performance. The cause on this occasion was the decision in early July to run a half-page anti-miner advert from "Business Men". The management had been sufficiently nervous to consult Citrine about it, and were told that it should be run provided the union was offered equal free space to reply. It was accompanied by an editorial disclaimer. But it still prompted a fierce letters column reprise of the "reporting both sides" controversy - one anti-advert writer was named Henry Dobb - plus Horner's attack at the TUC. (30)

Given the Herald's serious treatment of the General Strike it is odd to find an agency space filler on the headmaster of Alleyn School's jarringly complacent levity on a subject that it regarded as anything but funny: that following his refusal to allow boys to go out and drive buses, "He believed there was a movement on foot to present him with the Royal Humane Society's medal for having saved life" (more laughter). (31)
Front-page levity was distinctly lacking in a period in which any non-political readers must have felt peculiarly ill-served. Enthusiasm for the exploits of Channel Swimmers was a 1920s phenomenon, but when Gertrude Ederle became the first woman to swim the Channel in August her feat was relegated to second lead by Stanley Baldwin's "mean and untrue" letter to the United States denying starvation in the coalfields.(32)

The sole light touch among lead stories came later that month when the England cricket team recovered the Ashes - importance with which this was regarded indicated by the relegation of an attack on Cook at Chelmsford station, ultimately to contribute to his early death, to a single-column second lead. This followed an outbreak of fury at the decision to prefer young amateur Percy Chapman as England captain ahead of the world's greatest batsman Jack Hobbs, a professional: "The only possible answer is that this concession had to be made to snobbery, which has so often handicapped England in the sports arena", fumed writer Robin Baily.(33)

By this time the Herald directors were involved in an equally significant selection of their own - that of an editor to succeed the departing Hamilton Fyfe.

iii. Enter Mellor

It was not to prove a particularly demanding search. As soon as Fyfe's departure was announced, Newspaper World was reporting that his successor was likely to be drawn from the existing staff - and on 26th August the directors appointed assistant editor William Mellor to the post from 1st September. In spite of their criticisms of the paper over the previous year, there is no evidence that any other candidate was seriously considered.(34)

Mellor, 37, was unequivocally a man of the left. A Guild Socialist before the war, he had been imprisoned as a conscientious objector during it and had afterwards been a proponent of direct action and one of the founding members of the Communist Party of Great Britain.(35)

Nor was he to move significantly to the right in later life - in the 1930s, as one of the leading lights of the Socialist League, he would be refused endorsement as a Labour candidate and become the first editor of Tribune. Margaret Cole described him as a powerful personality whose emotions were easily aroused, formidably effective in argument but prone to bullying.
Michael Foot, who worked on Tribune, remembers him as one of the shouting school of editor. That Dame Margaret could describe him as "stronger in the spoken than the written word" is a reminder that he was a socialist intellectual before he was a professional journalist. (36)

But the width of support and respect for him can be judged from the fact that Allen, the Board's proponent of the news values of conventional journalism as against those of the socialist intellectual, whose reference assisted his appointment. Fyfe and the Victoria House Board had praised him for his role in the British Worker. (37)

The anonymous memo writer was also an enthusiast. Noting that Mellor's 5pm start restricted his influence on the paper, he commented: "His wide, unbiased and very thorough knowledge of the movement enables him to correct errors of policy and fact... his corrections are not always agreed to by the Editor.... it is because of the personal affection of the staff for him, his journalistic ability and his knowledge of the movement that under such conditions of stress he is able to carry out this unequal task". Wittingly or not he made a strong case for promoting him: "In the periods that he has acted as Editor he has created a different atmosphere in the office". (38)

He also appears to have enjoyed MacDonald's trust - Fyfe noted that while the party leader was constantly fearful of Ewer's influence he was unconcerned by Mellor, in Fyfe's view a greater political danger. (39)

Unlike the latecomer Fyfe, Mellor was unequivocally a product of the Labour movement. He introduced himself to the 1926 TUC as "A Labour journalist... I am a Socialist and I stand irrevocably for the Co-operative Commonwealth". The difference with his predecessor was significant - while well to the left of Fyfe his grounding in the movement made him far more likely to tolerate its disciplines and idiosyncracies. (40)

But his journalistic inheritance left something to be desired. He could count on the support of his deputy WH Stevenson: "A very nice mannered person, methodical, but not an innovator" according to the memo, and Ewer, rated by it as good as anyone in his role on any paper.
Elsewhere it was a grim tale. For historic reasons news editors had little authority and the key news-management relationship with the chief sub-editor was lacking. The current chief sub was well liked and literate, but could not impose authority because of the "sordidness of his private life and habits". The sub editors were mediocre, maltreated good stories in the desire to be "safe" and divided into cliques.

Not that good stories were likely to be frequent with a news staff described as rarely leaving the office and spending most time reworking cuttings from other papers: "The reporting staff of the paper, with one exception, is rather slothful and there is an unwholesome atmosphere in their habits, an interest in Labour or Trade Union affairs is absolutely lacking, selfishness and petty jealousies are often manifest, and no journalistic rivalry is noticeable". The industrial department had been in flux over the last 18 months, leading to inadequate and inconsistent coverage. (41)

Mellor might under the circumstances have hoped for increased editorial budgets. Instead there were immediate requests for reductions, and by November Williams could report a £40 a week cut in costs. Sober commercial reality had reasserted itself after the brief euphoria of May. Williams had greeted the new editor with a report pointing to a gentle decline in sales, a loss of £17,015 in the first eight months of the year and the comment: "Experience of Daily Herald ups and downs proves that caution is better than recklessness". (42)

Similar wariness characterised directors' reports to the two national conferences. At the TUC they could point to a 60,000 increase in sales over the year and increased advertising revenue. But a more significant issue was the need for capital development: "Instead of merely being forced to watch from the windows of the 'Herald' office the erection of splendid premises equipped with the most up-to-date machinery for the anti-Trade Union Press, on income derived very largely from the newspaper pence of good Trade Unionists, we should be building, developing and ever extending the power and influence of Labour's own press". (43).
When Labour met a month later directors Cramp and Turner sympathised with expansionist resolutions, but pointed as ever to the financial constrictions. The Prudential Staff Association, representing the party propagandist view of the Herald, called for extra space for movement news and articles by Labour leaders, while Bolton Labour Party called for a Northern edition. In reply to Bolton Cramp said: "The need for it was obvious, but the sinews of war were not so apparent at the present time". Turner costed it at a prohibitive #120,000, and pointed out that the paper's subsidy ran out in 1928.

Advertising continued to show more encouraging trends than other commercial aspects. Poyser reported that post-strike anti-Herald feeling was gone by October and annual revenue for the year around #3,500 up.

The Herald remained a poor relation in the market - advertising was still only around 20 per cent of the paper's income against the 60 per cent quoted by Lord Beaverbrook for his Evening Standard.

Improvements owed much to the commitment of Poyser's staff. But external factors were also at last working in their favour as market research progressively displaced subjective analysis in advertising. The first commercial readership survey took place in 1924 and "Cost per 1,000 circulation" and "purchasing power" became the dominant factors - with surveys like J Walter Thompson's campaign for Sun Maid Raisins in the late 1920s establishing that working-class in bulk had massive purchasing power.

The change took several years, and couldn't turn the 1920s Herald into a winner - big circulations still ruled. But it provided the Herald with a much more promising environment than the rule of subjectivity. From 1927 on the London Press Exchange included the Herald in its mass market campaigns. A year later a London Research Bureau survey found that the Herald's circulation figures concealed a sizeable, but previously unsuspected, lower middle-class readership.

But politics continued to impinge on Poyser's department. He and Williams were both convinced by comments to canvassers that any association with Communism hit the paper, so the editorial distancing had its advertising equivalent in the refusal of two Communist-funded insertions criticising the movement's leaders.
Growing intolerance of Communist influence in the wake of the General Strike claimed a further victim in the Herald League, by now something of a relic of the paper's pre-war days as an independent political force. It had dwindled to a rump of 12 branches and 40 to 50 study groups and its demise was signalled by Citrine's complaints that the Birmingham branch was planning a joint meeting with the Communist "Sunday Worker" while the propaganda caravan was being used in tandem with Minority Movement publicity. Williams, arguing the League had no publicity use, recommended closure to the Board. It was wound up in early December by George Belt, secretary since 1914, who joined the Herald propaganda staff. Once both symbol and practitioner of the Herald's support for extra-parliamentary action, its demise was a further symbolic indication of the paper's move into the firmly constitutional camp. Editor Mellor appears to have accepted this suppression of a group he would until recently have regarded as political allies, without demur (49).

iv. Content: Under New Management

But at this stage his overwhelming priority would have been getting to grips with the responsibilities he had inherited a few months earlier. The power of an individual editor to influence a paper is, in the short-term at least, limited. As complex institutions they take time to change, as Fyfe, disappointed in his quest to eliminate comment from Herald news stories in four years in charge, had discovered.

Mellor's ability to change the Herald was further circumscribed by the coal dispute, which continued to define the paper for his first three months in charge. So the distinctive features of his style emerged slowly and gradually, concealed amid a far greater mass of continuity.

But there were early indications of a new style. The appeal in his third issue was couched in terms of the readers' own experience as workers and the precise significance of their contributions: "PAY DAY IS TO-DAY: or tomorrow for most workers". Two per cent of miners were back at work "The Other 98% DEPEND ON YOU". This technique and timing were used periodically for the rest of the dispute (50).
The editorial line changed little, but the terms in which it was expressed were different. Fyfe had come from the dominant ethical strain in British socialism, making semi-mystical references to the "City of God" as an aspiration. As an ex-Communist, Mellor had been influenced by Marxist analysis - a grounding that showed in his use of "scientific" as a positive adjective. Early examples were the commendation of Pugh's presidential address to the 1926 TUC as "An important contribution towards scientific trade union policy" and a leader on the importance of "pulling this basic industry to its feet by the application of scientific methods of production, and making it serve national ends". (51)

Mellor was much more disposed than Fyfe to deal with the same topic day after day in his leaders as the story developed and also rather more political in his scope. On 25th November separate leaders dealt with the death of Krassin, the Poor Law, by-elections and the state of the Liberal Party. Confronted with so many hard political issues, Fyfe would probably have leavened the mix with a softer, more whimsical leader on a general topic - but these became something of a rarity. (52)

Political news became even more dominant. In early November, Mrs Roscoe Brunner, wife of Sir Alfred Mond's business partner, was shot dead only hours after visiting the Herald offices and being interviewed by Stevenson. So strong a story might have struck a less political editor as a natural lead. The interview and her letter to Stevenson seeking a meeting were run on the front page, as was the following day's report that the interview had created a sensation. But both took second place to the coal dispute. (53)

Mellor was likelier to construct a splash story around a single interview with a prominent Labour figure - not only, predictably, MacDonald's equivocating views on the miners "I Know That Right Will Win In The End", but such as "Plight of Britain's Chief Export Industry", built on an interview with the leader of the Cotton Operatives. (54)
Official Labour stories became rather more propagandist. Advertising and bureaucracy mix in a report that "An inspiring story of progress is contained in the report, published yesterday, which the National Executive of the Labour Party is to submit to its annual conference". An occasional tendency to reproduce an official circular verbatim rather than report it crept in - forming the lead story on 4th November in the TUC's official appeal for financial aid for the miners. (55)

Some stories just read like circulars: "Strenuous efforts, which are certain to be sustained, are being made by the opponents of Labour to prevent any further encroachment by the working-class forces in the important sphere of local administration" was the intro to a story on local government elections explaining that "Keen hopes are entertained at the Labour Party headquarters that November will witness great Labour victories in all the Boroughs. These hopes were voiced to me yesterday by Mr Egerton P Wake, the Labour Party's national agent". (56)

In covering party discipline Mellor upheld the right, and importance of dissent: "Criticism of leaders is not only a right but a duty". He had received a public license for some dissent from his most influential director when Bevin told the 1926 TUC: "I want to see it more informative: I would like to see it provoke more criticism, have a more determined mind very often... when it is absolutely convinced that a certain line is right to be prepared to take that line, even if for the moment it happens to be unpopular. Unless the editor and the staff can express their thoughts, and are prepared at times to face even your hostility if they believe they are right, then the paper is not worth its salt in developing thought and in moulding public opinion". (57)

But there were clear limits on this right. Left MP John Beckett's intemperate attack on Thomas and MacDonald at Labour conference provoked a leader arguing that the right of dissent through party structures was conditional on not providing ammunition for enemies: "There is criticism and criticism. Criticism that is necessary and helpful: criticism that is superfluous and unhelpful. It is not hard to place Mr Beckett's Margate speech in its proper place in that dichotomy". (58)
But alongside movement discipline came reminders of the Lansbury days. Lansbury's long
time deputy Gerald Gould was recalled as the main Saturday columnist - writing in a
philosophical, literary style, citing Shaw and William James in one early effort, dealing mostly
with issues that were political by implication rather than current controversy. (59)

The November revolution anniversary leader, dropped under Fyfe, was restored with a
vigorous endorsement of the Soviet Union's achievement: "In an age of kaleidoscopic change, with
crowned heads "ten for a penny" and Governments crashing in every other corner of the earth,
the Soviet Union alone has remained stable. While pointedly not endorsing Communist methods, it
spoke of attempts to overthrow the Soviet Union. "It is the duty of the workers everywhere, to
whatever sections of working - class allegiance, to see that these dastardly schemes do not
succeed" (60)

Krassin was greeted as an old friend when he returned to Britain in September, and accorded
both an immensely warm leader: "He died, as he would have chosen to die, at his post. And his
passing is a loss not only to the Soviet Union, but to the Socialist and Working Class Movements
throughout the world" and a lyrical account of his funeral, reminiscent of the Herald's coverage of
Lenin's, on his death in November. (61)

The Anniversary leader coincided with a mild redesign - incorporating a bolder, tidier
typeface and headlines, the removal of Gadfly from the main centre news page to later in the
paper, the introduction of a column of nibs "news flashes" on page three and the replacement of
the serial by "Tales That Enthrall" - shorter stories, often completed in a single issue by a wider
range of authors. (62)

But all such matters remained marginal beside the continuing coal dispute. Coverage
remained heavily detailed as before, but with a slightly stronger note of partisanship creeping
into reports. In the space of a few days readers were treated twice to the use of the word "expose"
- always loaded - in news reports. First that a letter from the miners to Baldwin "Exposed the
government's change of front, and showed that "settlement" by districts would lead to chaos.
The government was given the opportunity to retrieve its blunder* then that "In Parliament the Labour Party will fiercely contest the renewal of the Emergency Regulations, and will expose the government's sinister alliance with the mineowners". A later Parliamentary report, always more partisan than other coverage, spoke of "Jix's latest imbecility"(63)

It remained deeply sceptical as some leaders reacted to the General Strike debacle with renewed interest in conciliation and arbitration - arguing against Snowden's protege William Graham that " Strikes and lockouts are born of Capitalism and under Capitalism conciliation and arbitration only pay heed to economic power....(We) see no grounds for believing that "social peace" is attainable while Capitalism exists. We believe that it is only by a proper utilisation of the power to strike and the power to vote that this system can be ended".(64)

Williams placed it in a dilemma by endorsing conciliation in his chairman's address to the Labour conference - provoking uproar by comparing the miners to Samson in the temple: "This despairing policy may be magnificent, but it is not war" and concluded "The Communist Party and the Minority Movement still believe in the General Strike. The Labour Party looks with confidence to the General Election".(65)

The leader trod carefully. It implicitly rejected the left by asserting Williams' right to say what he thought. But the Herald was not yet ready to adopt anything which might be seen as class collaboration. It argued that Williams showed "a feeling of pessimism about the future of the industrial side of the Movement which seems to us unjustified", and that conciliation was "dependent...for success, on the power to stand still" - a power currently denied to Labour. The only way forward was "The building up of an organisation so strong and united politically that it can control the government of the country, so strong and united industrially that it can face a far greater measure of central control and co-ordination of activities than yet exists".(66)
This conception of the capital-labour relationship as a power struggle was seen in his response to Henry Ford's shorter hours policy and Mond's #33m chemicals trust, forerunner of ICI. Of Ford the Herald said: "His shortening of hours, with its concomitant of lower wages or harder driving, is as harmful in its effect on life and health, as the lengthening favoured by Mr Evan Williams and Mr Baldwin". The view of the Mond trust was that: "(It) cannot change the motive of industry from exploitation to service. For that the socialisation of industry is necessary... the capitalist is unwittingly paving the way for that ultimate change". (67)

In controversy over strike tactics the Herald followed the instinct to solidarity during disputes by defending leaders against external armchair critics. First came Soviet union leader Tomsky, banned by government from attending the TUC, firing the opening shot in the dispute that was to end the TUC-Soviet rapport opened in 1925.

His telegram to Congress called Thomas "main instigator of defeat" and spoke of the "unforgivable tactics of General Council leaders".

The Herald noted its past support for "hands off Russia", and asked the Russians for similar discretion - a tendency to lecture being "neither helpful nor sound... even if he were equipped with the necessary knowledge has not the slightest justification for pronouncing judgment on issues which have yet to be thrashed out by the British workers". (68)

AJ Cook was quoted as saying that the miners would have expressed themselves much more strongly than Tomsky - but was defended himself by the Herald when attacked from the right, his predecessor Hodges - now secretary of the International Mineworkers. Letters to the paper were quoted as running heavily in his favour while a leader commented: "If Mr Baldwin imagines that men who take the view of Mr Frank Hodges are representative either of the Labour Movement or of the Miners, he will be making another miscalculation. If he imagines that Mr Herbert Smith and Mr Cook, in their insistence on the seven-hour day and national agreements, are not voicing the men in the coalfield, he will suffer yet another bitter disappointment". (69)
Support for the strike remained vigorous and estimates of its prospects optimistic. Not until 15th November, when government settlement terms were recommended by the executive was the inevitability of defeat effectively conceded: "The only issue was an issue of tactics...their delegates recommendation does not mean that the struggle for justice will be given up; it means that it will be transferred to another field." (70)

Rejection, hailed by a leader titled "Unconquered I", merely delayed the inevitable. The miners immediately accepted district negotiations and were forced back by the start of December. The summarising leader "Past and Future" struck a note of great pride at the courage, solidarity and sacrifice shown and argued that none of the mistakes made by leaders were dishonourable: "They arose from differing judgments as to the nature of the forces arrayed against the miners, differing views of the utility of carrying on the fight, differing views as to firmness and meaning of "offers", differing views as to efficacy of mass action".

The lessons drawn were both familiar Herald themes and an expression of the paper's tendency to accentuate the positive in criticism - by implication indicting the disunity and cross-purposes displayed during the dispute by calling for measures to avoid such problems in future - the retention of the strike weapon, greater central control and coordination and "the reorganisation of the Movement on lines that will bring unity of command and direction, a common understanding of the tactics for the struggle against Capitalism, and a steadier adherence to the Socialist faith"

V. Content: Anticlimax.

For all the proclamations that the miners' struggle would be resumed at some time, it was clear that this would not be soon. For the Herald, deprived of the story that had dominated for the best part of two years, a sense of anticlimax was inevitable. It saw the miners back to work - "Forced To Pit By Hunger" was the headline - and campaigned for an amnesty for trade unionists imprisoned under the Emergency Powers Act, (72)
But the next big story came from overseas - in China where the nationalist Kuomintang came to power in late 1926 and a series of incidents in cities with western concessions disturbed the British government. From the start the Herald backed the KMT. Ramsay MacDonald's call for recognition was a front-page lead in December. The tendency to see the crisis through a Labour movement prism was seen again as British troops departed for China following violence in Hankow and the threat of war occupied the lead slot for 12 consecutive issues from 24th January. Labour protests accounted for several splashes and a leader in early April said: "Organised workers of this country - and a numerous section of the population not connected to the Labour Party and the trade unions - will vigorously oppose war and bloodshed in China"(73)

The anti-imperialism displayed in past reports on India and Egypt reasserted itself. The KMT were accepted as fellow progressives: "(A) strong movement for national independence and real freedom...whole-heartedly for the working-class". The Herald had little doubt that the crisis could be put down to the irresponsible sabre-rattling of a British government bent, abroad as at home, to maintaining privilege - in this case the European concessions in China. When the crisis flared again in April it seized on an ex-Tory MP newspaper correspondent who said that "Nanking gives us a chance" as evidence of warmongering(74)

This analysis dominated the Herald's view of the eventual settlement. The war party, it said: "Hate the very notion of a China that has no Concessions and that wants organisations for the workers and non-interference by external powers".(75)

The year ended with a reassertion of the paper's enthusiasm for modern science - a story summed up 1926 as "A Year of Achievements" and the last front page story of the year featured Baird's latest television experiments: "There is no limit to the scope of this newest science.. It is predicted that before many years have passed the family looking-in set will be as common in the home as is now the listening-in set".

The Herald took an optimistic view of such developments: "Already the cinema has done much to reduce drunkenness. The wireless is diminishing that intolerable loneliness which, in conjunction with economic hardship, tends to depopulate the countryside. Cinemas (despite trashy films) and wireless are broadening the minds alike of town dweller and villager".(76)
A reference to the future possibility of watching test matches from Australia reflected Mellor's own interests - his enthusiasm for cricket in particular was sufficient to be recorded in his Dictionary of Labour Biography entry. He redesigned the Monday results page and, unlike Fyfe, devoted leaders to sport - for example in early February giving space to analysis of the social roots of the decline of Welsh rugby union.(77)

 Strikes to report were few and far between - Clegg points to the period from 1927 to 1929 as one of unprecedented industrial peace. But detailed coverage of union business and conferences remained a staple diet and a long-running inquiry into post office conditions inspired a typical Herald mix of human interest and industrial investigation in a feature series on working conditions under headlines such as "Men Who Never Work Days" and "Little-known Work of the Postman: Strict Tests Applied To Entrants: Pitfalls on the Road.(78)

 Fyfe, not a generous critic, commented that the propaganda element in the Herald became more noticeable as soon as he left, with speeches by certain trade union leaders abounding. This is not incompatible with the countervailing view, expressed by Beatrice Webb, that Mellor had "distinctly improved" the Herald - crediting it with "more character and consistency, better news". Mrs Webb was nothing if not austere and serious-minded in her tastes.(79)

 In this period the number of articles by MPs is more noticeable than any profusion of General Council speeches - and not only on political topics. On spate of five contributions in six issues ranged from Wheatley on "The Tory Attack on the Guardians" to Snowden on "Why I Like Detective Novels".(80)

 Routine news interviews with leaders were liable to be introduced as though the interview were a news event in itself: "The proposed working agreement between the Labour Party and the Co-operative Party...was discussed, in a DAILY HERALD interview yesterday, by Mr Arthur Henderson MP, secretary of the Labour Party and Chief Opposition Whip". Lead stories continued to be more movement-oriented and propagandist in character: "Big Trade Union Revival Plans" was essentially a new year call for an organising drive by TUC chairman George Hicks while "Labour's Fiery Cross in the Rural Areas" dealt with a renewal of the rural propaganda campaign, a recurring item. (81)
But the Herald was still some way from being a mere loyal follower. It would still take issue with leaders - notably over industrial conciliation, and continued to do so when the potent trio of Pugh, Clynes and Henderson all associated themselves with the issue in early 1927

The Herald rejected Henderson's call for a Speaker's Conference of labour and employers, recalling the failure of a similar event in the more propitious atmosphere of 1919: "Mr Henderson's experience in industrial as well as political affairs is such as to claim, from friend and foe alike, respectful consideration of every suggestion he makes. But with the history of 1919 in mind; with the events of last year still fresh in the memory; with the coming attacks on trade union rights, it is in our view impossible to be hopeful of good results.\(^{(82)}\)

While arguing for stronger organisation as the essential element, the Herald was far from its "Hurrah for the Rebels" traditions - quoting approvingly Clynes comment that "generally speaking, the most effective agents for industrial peace are trade union officials" and arguing that Labour were the true supporters of "an orderly industry, an orderly world without class struggles and class antagonism.\(^{(83)}\)

Self-denial on the subject of the General Strike was maintained up to and including the special TUC in January. It was reported that Mellor had attended not as a reporter but as a matter of courtesy and that he would not give a full account - not simply acting as a movement sheet rather than a newspaper but making a point of broadcasting the fact.\(^{(84)}\)

Earlier in the week the "Sunday Worker" had broken the embargo on the reports from the General Council and the Miners Executive, earning a stern reproof in a leader which argued that "It is no use filling the air with shouts of "Traitor" on the one side and "Bolshevik" on the other.\(^{(85)}\) In the same "Answers" advertised JH Thomas "Secret History" of the dispute in terms classifying clearly in just that genre.
The Herald printed all the reports in full, plus a summary of the proceedings in which the General Council view prevailed. Its own leader "The Spirit Lives" pointed to cross-purposes and confusion between the miners and the General Council and failure to resolve them as the root problem. Laying blame on neither, but with its 'accentuate the positive' thrust implicitly backing the General Council, the leader followed familiar themes of better organisation and co-ordination and appeals to the unified spirit shown during the strike. (86)

There were further echoes of the strike in the pit disaster at Cwm, Monmouthshire in March. Pit disasters were always big news for the Herald - major human interest for any paper they struck at the core of its constituency. But what gave Cwm its extra dimension was Stanley Baldwin's visit to the town to express sympathy and the hostile demonstration that greeted him. (87)

The incident was condemned by local MP Evan Davies, but clearly had the support of much of the movement. The Herald steered a skilful line which explained the outburst while clearly regretting it: "It was a painful incident. Behind it lay a complex of human feelings and resentments perfectly understandable to those acquainted with the unprecedented conditions prevailing in the South Wales coalfield. The motives of Mr Baldwin and his wife in visiting this scene of grief were kindly and human. But to the people of Cwm the present is linked with the past. In memories there live the Premier's part in the lock-out" (88)

The Herald's substantial postbag showed less sympathy - John Williams of Dowlais arguing that "He deserved it all" while JE Robertson of Peckham, who saw the demonstration as "splendid", said the leader showed "veiled sympathy for Baldwin", was "deplorable", and "will not deceive the class-conscious worker". In the minority was JC Walker of Roundhay who described the leader as "the sanest comment so far on a perfectly natural if regrettable ebullition of human feeling". (89)
A direct consequence of the strike was the Trade Disputes and Trade Union Act, restricting the rights of unions and enforcing contracting-in on political contributions. The entire movement knew what it thought of this, making the choice of editorial line a simple one. This was to first denounce the bill, labelled the "Anti-Union Bill and the "Blacklegs Charter" and "the most deadly attempt yet made to cripple the Trade union and Labour Movement", then talk up the resistance: "Rising Tide Of Opposition To Baldwin's Bill", "Workers United Against the Blacklegs Charter" and "Labour Launches Greatest Campaign in History". (90)

In its indignation it was prepared to see James Maxton's call for "100,000 shock troops, all fighters and rebels" as a "ringing call to the workers" rather than veiled advocacy of violence and pay only limited attention to the ILP's dropping of MacDonald as nominee for the Labour treasurership. Extended to 12 pages for the duration of the bill's passage through Parliament it commended "Labour's able and devastating attack" and when Labour walked out in protest at the guillotine commented "It was done with that perfect readiness and order which is the result of the discipline which naturally arises when a body of men are united by deep conviction and strong faith". (91)

Greater difficulties were presented when the police raided the Soviet trade commission Arcos in early May. What would once have been furious and instantaneous denunciation became rather warily circumspect. This may have been partly because little initially was known. But more significant was the growing division between the TUC and the Russians - MacFarlane refers to 1927 as the "Year of Transition" in relations. TUC anger over incidents like Tomsky's telegram to the 1926 Congress and a fresh attack by Lozovsky of the Red International early in 1927 - leading Citrine to the conclusion that "The limit of our tolerance has been reached", would lead at the 1927 TUC to the winding up of the Anglo-Russian Joint Advisory Committee, a decision lamely defended by the Herald as "A way of denying ammunition to the TUC's opponents". (92)
Once the government had used the incident as a pretext for breaking off diplomatic relations, the Herald attacked it for following a policy "based on party political expediency" and gave the departing Russians a warm six-column front-page send-off. But the initial doubts, fuelled by an atmosphere in which even Lansbury could complain that the Russians "refuse to accept any person as honest, sincere or sensible who disagrees with their theory, tactics or policy" were more significant. (93)

Debates over theory, tactics and policy were to continue as vigorously behind the scenes at the Herald as they did in its pages in the first half of 1927.

vi A Business Solution

The Herald had gone into 1927 retaining some of the gains of the British Worker, enabling the issue of a net sales certificate showing a 362,701 daily sale - barely down on their previous certificate issued for the months around the 1924 General Election. The first six months of the year produced the best balance sheet since 1924, with a loss of only around #2,800. Atmosphere in the office appears to have improved with Fyfe's departure - in February 1927 The Journalist reported weekly meetings between the editor and the NUJ chapel. (94)

But downward pressure on sales had resumed - dipping below 400,000 as the new year started. This was hardly surprising as rivals continued their rapid progress - the Express and Mail would add more than 300,000 to their joint sale in 1927. The directors reported "Our circulation travellers constantly report that we are under a enormous disadvantage compared with our competitors because we have no insurance scheme". The previous assumption that a Herald scheme was ruled out on cost grounds was increasingly displaced by the thought that not having one might be even more expensive. (95)

An indication that the directors were disposed to think again came in the February directors' report, couched ingeniously in terms calculated to appeal to the class and political outlook of the General Council, noting that "Working class organisations like the Trade Unions, the Friendly Societies and the Co-operative movement have taught thrift, and the necessity for various forms of insurance". (96)
Pointing to the increased circulation of all the Herald's rivals since insurance came in, they argued that the Herald's losses of $24,000 over the last three years weren't much compared to its propaganda value and suggested that insurance expenditure would reinforce this. (97)

The key conversion appears to have been that of General Manager Williams. When the Finance sub-committee chaired by Allen and including Turner, Morrison and Citrine, created by the February directors meeting to look into insurance and costs met for the first time on March 10th, his evidence was the main item. (98)

He reported that the case was so overwhelming that he had the support of the Editor, Circulation Manager, Advertising Manager and Accountant in pressing for the "More or Less Immediate" establishment of an insurance scheme, and presenting a sample $20,000 per year scheme from brokers Muir, Beddall for consideration.

He concluded: "If the Insurance Scheme produced the desired results, preventing a decline in circulation, lowering the percentage of returns, increasing the circulation and thereby increasing the advertisement revenue, we could look forward to the financial results justifying the expenditure of an additional $20,000 a year.

"We simply ought not to go on in the present manner, watching our circulation figure declining from an average of 440,000 in July last to 389,000 which is our present figure."

His case rested on current sales already 30,000 below the 362,701 net sales certificate and the unlikelihood of stabilising even at this point unless "something new and far-reaching" was done. The Liberal News, Chronicle and Gazette had all but doubled their sales in five years of chronic electoral decline. "In my judgment the principal and overwhelming reason is the pull of the insurance scheme", he said.

He reinforced his argument with reports from circulation travellers. I Robinson (East Midlands) said: "Had we been in a position to adopt a similar scheme some years ago, our sales in this area could easily have been double the present figure". Eastern Counties representative TL Rawlings said: "It is a well-known fact in workshops, railroads and factories, workers take other papers in preference to the Daily Herald believing they are covered against every known risk, and in groups of six, are buying it each morning and sharing it, taking turns to pay, as they cannot afford two morning papers each".
In other reports Le Good complained of undue editorial prominence to left-wingers, the frequent adoption of a complaining and grumbling attitude and idiosyncratic make-up. Poyser argued that the Herald's self-presentation accentuated the problem of advertisers' political bias: "We give the impression also that we cater mainly for the worker drawing about $2 per week, and the unemployed. It would be difficult for advertisers reading our paper to realise that there is a big middle class element supporting us" (99).

Taking stock, based on printing estimates from Barrow which also eliminated a Sunday Paper as a serious option, Allen and Williams concluded that movement expenditure of $365,000 over the past seven years to achieve a 370,000 and falling average sale, only 50,000 up since 1921, was "a thoroughly bad business result in return for such expenditure". Endless appeals to the movement for support had outlived their usefulness: "The solution must this time be a business solution, and not depend on industrial and political enthusiasm".

The status quo was not an option. With no change the paper would go on losing, and draining union funds. Extra expenditure would be justified if it could push circulation to self-supporting levels. Using Barrow's figures they projected a three year insurance and promotion drive to take the paper to a self-supporting sale of 550,000. If the paper could hit this sales target and pull in the projected advertising income - a substantial if, this would cost $88,400 - or only $10,000 more than maintaining a small declining paper which would still be losing at the end. (100)

Following a further Finance Committee meeting Muir, Beddall prepared estimates for improved schemes costed at $32,500 and $48,250 while Mellor presented a case for regionalised news pages and three additions to staff - a reporter, sub-editor and leader writer. (101)

For the final meeting before proposals were to be submitted to the Board Allen was asked to look at editorial policy. His 17 page analysis recapitulated the main themes, minus the vituperation, that he had developed in his 1925 memo.
He argued that the Herald was only reaching a small, enthusiastic political minority where the lively and varied presentation of news in other papers attracted the non-political majority, allowing them to influence their view of major political and industrial events.

General readers had "not the psychology of the political enthusiast, seeking an informative tendentious pamphlet. The average reader is out for distraction, and not for a daily diet of self-improvement." News coverage should be broader: "even if it seems trivial to our enlightened minds, should be fully treated... the love romance of Pola Negri may seem stupid to the more quietly wedded editor and directors of the Daily Herald, but it is not for that reason foul, and it figured prominently in all other dailies and not at all on the most important day in the Daily Herald".

The Herald should reduce its current mass of "Labour" headlines except where totally justified by news value and avoid the belief that it should automatically be different to other papers. A paper of this sort would be more politically effective than the current Herald by reaching a larger audience: "In a position to be effective on a very wide scale, when each great occasion demands it, and to instil our subtle medicine all the time into a vast clientele". He backed Mellor's call for new appointments, asked for a gossip column in place of the "too highbrow" Way of the World and warned again against coverage of Labour's internal controversies. (102)

This exposition of the model casting the Herald as a mass-circulation daily which happened to be Labour ran into opposition from Ben Turner's view of it as a movement newsheet which happened to be a national daily. Turner was happy with the paper, and in any case didn't think there was any money: "We don't want the same kind of news as the other papers. We are a specialist paper, and that is what it was started for", insurance or any increase in staffing.

He concluded: "I think we should try a steady six months - until the end of the year - going on as we are and seeing what effect the attack has upon the circulation. We have had too much worry to try new ventures, and we haven't any more money for the, and won't have for at least two years". His suggestion that they might "Ask our Trades Councils and Labour Party secretaries in the big centres to see that the lineage men do a bit more than some do", spoke volumes for his view of the relationship between movement and paper. (103)
Allen won the debate - the Finance Committee endorsed the development plan and the broad thrust of his paper on 2nd June. But when the Board met on 14th June, Turner turned out to have won the war. Make-up changes were agreed but deferred until other issues had been settled. And these would depend on finance. The minutes record a decision to approach the TUC and Labour Party finance committees to discuss possible funding for the changes desired. There is no evidence that the meeting ever took place - when development was taken up again early in 1928 there were references to proposals having been allowed to lapse back in 1927. In practice the policy adopted was Turner's "Six steady months" was the final outcome. And pretty unsteady they were to be as well. (104)

vi. Conclusion

The miners defeated return to work in late 1926 concluded a period in which the Herald was dominated more completely by a single story than at any other time in the 1920s - even the 1924 spell in government. It was also one in which the leadership extended their control over the paper - aided in this by the appointment of the left-winger Mellor as editor. Where Fyfe had seen himself as an independent actor, Mellor was far more prepared to accept the disciplines imposed by the leadership. But even before Fyfe's departure the ostentatious acceptance of the self-denying ordinance over the end of the General Strike both showed movement priorities being placed ahead of news ones, and endorsement of the leadership line over that of the left. The leadership's ability to impose control was assisted by the closing of the gap between TUC and Labour Party attitudes to Communism and the Soviet Union after two years of division - editorial attacks on the Minority Movement and the cautious treatment of the Arcos raid were the harbingers of this change.

Circulation trends continued as ever downwards, with improvements in the advertising environment only partially offsetting financial problems. As the evidence continued to mount, the conversion of Williams and the Board to the cause of insurance represented another significant shift towards adopting a more conventional commercial model. But the continuing inability of the movement to fund the necessary development and the reluctance of the influential Turner to support major change indicated that a means might have to be found of financing it externally. ENDS
1. GM rep 28.5.26 LPDH 504 CM 16.6.26 PM 17.6.26, GM 18.6.26 reps LPDH 505
   TUCGC 18.5.26 min no 282
2. CM reps 16.6.26 loc cit, 22.7.26 LPDH 512
3. AM rep 16.6.26 LPDH 505
4. AM rep 22.7.26 LPDH 512
5. Fyfe - Seven Selves op cit p 275-6
7. Fyfe - Seven Selves p 276-7. Unsigned memo n.d (late July) TUC 788.01
8. Unsigned memo loc cit
9. Fyfe - Seven Selves op cit p 278
10. Ibid p 279. VHPCo dir 27.7.26 TUC 788.11. TUCGC 14-15.7.26 min 353
11. Bevin memo 15-25.9.25 loc cit
13. DH 25.5.26
14. DH 29.5.26
15. DH 18,20.5.26, Postgate - Lansbury op cit p 240. TUC(GS)252.62(1)16.
16. DH 19.5.26
17. DH 30.8.26
18. DH 18,29.5, 19.6.26
19. Ibid 23.5.2, 15, 21.6, 20.8.26
20. Ibid 26.6.26
21. DH 1.6.26
22. DH 22.5.26
23. DH 23,24.5,2,5,19.6.26
24. DH 21.6.26
25. DH 24.7.26
26. DH 12.8.26
27. DH 29.5.26
28. DH 11.8.26
29. DH 18.8.26
31. DH 26.7.26
33. DH 9, 19.8.26
34. NW 7.8.26. VHPCo dir min 26.8.26 TUC 788.11
35. Margaret Cole - "Mellor, William" in DLH Vol 4 loc cit
37. Fyfe - Behind the Scenes op cit p 26, 54.
38. Financial estimates re the British Worker n.d (June-July) LPOH 518.
39. VHPCo dir min 26.8.26 loc cit
40. RPTUC 1926 p 363-4
41. unsigned memo loc cit
42. GM reps 23.8, 7.10.26 TUC 788.21
43. RPTUC 1926 p 267
44. LPRAC 1926 p 210-13
45. AM reps 6.10.26, 13.1.27 TUC 788.23. Memo from Williams n.d (Dec 1926) LPOH 521
46. Curran - Advertising as a Patronage System loc cit p 75-81
47. Ibid
48. GM rep 7.10.26 TUC 788.21. AM rep 17.11.26 TUC 788.23. Williams memo loc cit
49. Rudland to Citrine 9.11.26, Citrine to Williams 13.11.26, Williams to Citrine 17.11.26, Belt to VHPCo Dir TUC 788. VHPCo dir min 23.11.26 LPOH 514, 6.12.26 LPOH 523
50. DH 3.9.26
51. DH 7, 15.9.26
52. DH 25.11.26
53. DH 6, 7.11.26
54. DH 2.10, 24.11.26
55. DH 22.9, 4.11.26
56. DH 6.10.26
57. DH 15.10.26 RPTUC p 455-6
58. DH 15.10.26
59. DH 30.10.26
60. DH 8.11.26
61. DH 17, 24.9, 25, 28.11.26
62. DH 8.11.26
63. DH 20, 27.9, 25.10.26
64. DH 6.10.26
65. DH 12.10.26
66. Ibid
67. DH 27.9.26
68. DH 10.9, 3.11.26
69. DH 25, 27, 29.9.26
70. DH 15.11.26
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71. DH 27.11.26
72. DH 29.11,1,6,11.12.26
73. DH 7.12.26,24.1-7.2,4.4.27
74. DH 5.1,5.4.27
75. DH 3.5.27
76. DH 30,31.12.26
77. DH 7.2.27
78. DH 8.1,4.5.27. Clegg - op cit p 426
79. Fyfe - Sixty Years op cit p 199. M Cole - Webb diaries 1924-32 op cit p 151 entry of 22.8.27
80. DH 31.3-5.4.27.
81. DH 1,10.1.27
82. DH 12,17.1,4.2.27
83. DH 3.1,4.2.27
84. DH 21.1.27
85. DH 17.1.27
86. DH 22.1.27
87. DH 3.3.27
88. Ibid
89. DH 4,5,7,8.3.27
90. DH 5,6,7,30.4.27
91. DH 18.4,14,17.5.27. TUC GC 27.4.27 min no 204
92. DH 7.1,16.5.27. Clegg op cit p 420-1,476. A. Williams op cit p 29-44.
93. DH 17,25,26,28.5.27
94. The Journalist Feb 1927. AM rep 17.3.27 TUC 788.23. DH accounts for six and 12 months to 31.12.27 LPDH 537
95. CM rep 2.12.26 LPDH 519,13.1.27 LPDH 523 (NB owing to a filing error both the VHPCo directors report of 6.12.27 and the various departmental managers reports for 13.1.27 are filed as LPDH 523). Herald sales and advertisement revenue graphs for 1922-7 TUC 788.5 VHPCo dir rep 18.1.27 TUC 788
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97. Ibid
98. Agenda, Minutes Finance Committee meeting 10.3.27 TUC 789.1
99. Williams report n.d (Feb/Mar 1927) TUC 788.01
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102. Allen memo for FC 11.5.27 TUC 788.5
103. Turner memo to FC 13.5.27 TUC 788.5
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