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 Seven
A 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 coordinated: "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 Llandeilo, 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. (15)

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. (16)

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”. (17)
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.

PAPER Gen News/ Foreign/ Parl, Pol, Ind/ Sport/ Pics/ Features / ads/ Tol/ Pages

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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.
<table>
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<tr>
<td>Political Foreign</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>383</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4.45%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>48</td>
<td>360</td>
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<td></td>
<td>.66%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industrial Foreign</td>
<td>39</td>
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<td>Pictures</td>
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<td>Sport</td>
<td>1082</td>
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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 be 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 £37,470 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. (33)

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. (34)

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"(35)

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". (36)

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". (37)
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 engineer's 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 succesful, 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 alby - 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 outrival 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. Abruptly 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".

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.

But attacking wage cuts was rather more difficult when a major union, the National Union of Railwaymen, conceded a 2% 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.
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)
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 intiate 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 an 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 he had planned for himself, so he had joined the Anglican Church and 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 can think 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)
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
Footnotes Thirty

Chapter Twelve (p212-242)

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 23.7.27,4.2.16,23.6,13,20.10.26,10.8.29. 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
CM summary of circulation losses August 1928 TUC 788.01
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34. RPTUC 1928 p 500

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37. DH 28.5.28

38. RPTUC 1928 p 499

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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

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