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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Section Eight
CHAPTER THIRTEEN: RESCUE September 1928 - September 1929

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 embarassed 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.

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.

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".

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.
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 uniting 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 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)

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 tempts 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 arts 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)

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)
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 journalist as editor - Allen nominated former Daily Newsman 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 staffs (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 hawering 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 "Triumphal 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 embarassment, the Government would have no certainty of being able to secure his departure".

Three years earlier the Herald had raged at the exclusion of Tomsk, 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."(n)

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 ?"(78)

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 Slocombe’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, Melior 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. (85)

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. (86)

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 18,836 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. (87)

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." (88)

But the Herald's long search for help was to be ended by an unsolicited offer. Odhams Press, having expanded their printwork 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. (89)
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. 

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"."

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."
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 consummate 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.(102)
x. Conclusion

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.

ENDS
Chapter Thirteen (p 243-275)

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.
3. Handwritten note 9.10.28 TUC 788.5. FC min 10.10.28 TUC 788.21
4. Allen to Williams 9.11.28 TUC 788.5
6. Minutes of VHPCo Board 27.11.28 LPDH 554, Memorandum for joint meeting of finance sub-committees 29.11.28 TUC 789.82
7. Memo for joint meeting loc cit, VHPCo dir rep 18.12.28 TUC 788.26
9. DH 2,3,6.11.28, 22.3.29
10. DH 2,4.3.29
11. DH 10.11.28, 13.4.29
12. DH 4.10.28
13. DH 2.10.28, 22.3,8.4.29
14. DH 27.3.29
15. DH 22,27.3.29
16. DH 22.12.28, 21.3.29
17. DH 31.1,8,9,15.2,23.25.3.29
18. DH 6,23.2.29
19. DH 9.9.29
20. DH 3.12.28
21. DH 14,27.2.29
22. DH 13.3.29
23. DH 9.10, 26.11, 28.12.29
24. DH 25.10.28
25. DH 27.10,5,6.11.29 Clegg op cit p 453
26. DH 11,13,18.10.28
27. DH 31.1,4,7.2.29
28. DH 23.2.29
29. Citrine to Mellor 31.10.28 TUC 788.61
30. DH 13.12.28 A Williams op cit p 90,139-40.
31. DH 25.4.29
32. DH 17.12.28
33. DH 22.3.29
34. DH 24.10.28, 6-9, 16.3.29
35. Slocombe - Tumult op cit p 30
36. DH Marion Davies 2.10.28 King 27.11.28.
37. DH 15.9.28 Wertheimer - Portrait op cit p 80
38. DH 31.1.29
39. DH 19.9, 15.10.28
40. DH 20, 22, 24.8.28
41. DH 22.8, 17, 22.11, 15.12.28, 6.3.29
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
    Citrine to other committee members. Prudential to Citrine 24.1.29,
    handwritten note (undated, late Jan), Firth to Prudential 1.2.29 TUC
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