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

Thesis

How to cite:

© 1992 The Author

Version: Version of Record

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online’s data policy on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk
Constriction, Conformity and Control: The Taming of the Daily Herald 1921-30
Huw Richards
Ph.D 1993
The Open University

Section Six
The genesis of the British Worker was as haphazard and improvised as the rest of the General Council’s preparations for the General Strike - a dispute that it did not want and would seek an escape from at the earliest opportunity. Hostile observers such as the Newspaper Press Directory were to claim that the Worker was planned to have a monopoly of press reporting during the dispute. (1)

Nothing could have been further from the truth. Far from having a strategy for suppressing views the TUC were uncertain 24 hours before the strike started whether to continue the Herald, issue an emergency substitute or do nothing - with inaction commanding some support on the General Council. It took pressure from the print unions and the news that Churchill was setting up a government propaganda sheet to force the decision to set up a strike bulletin, to be produced at the Herald offices under General Council direction. (2)

The Herald was suspended, but the tensions over its content were not. The debate between Fyfe and the Publicity Committee over the strike sheet’s scope were a microcosm of the endless dialectic over the relative importance of political and other news. Fyfe argued for the inclusion of some general news but was overruled by the General Council Publicity committee whose secretary Herbert Tracey put the hardline politics first and last view: “Mr Fyfe does not yet realise that a Strike Bulletin is not a newspaper and my Committee thinks the readers of the "British Worker" are so anxious to get news about the strike that they won’t feel the absence of the cricket scores and other general news Fyfe seems to consider important”. (3)

Though Fyfe, assistant editor Mellor, Williams and Victoria House manager Barrow were responsible for putting the paper out, their role was essentially instrumental. Real control was in the hands of the Publicity Committee, who censored all copy before it went in the paper, while local strike committees were instructed to send copy to Tracey rather than Fyfe. And when the TUC wanted communications included, the writing was normally entrusted to Charles Leatherland, since 1924 Parliamentary correspondent of the Labour News Service. (4)

But the 11 issues they produced between 5th and 17th May were still a recognisable relative of the Herald - its type and headline face clear evidence alongside contributions from Herald regulars such as Gadfly and Tomfool, who provided the small leavening of humour alongside a mass of serious strike news and exhortations to the troops.
The tone and content were those of Herald election issues. It was very much the voice of the centre addressing the activist on the periphery - an approach crystallised in 11 words on 10th May: "Stand Firm. Be loyal to your instructions and Trust Your Leaders". Reports, whether of events at the centre or those provided by strike committees and eyewitnesses in the region, were determinedly upbeat and intended to boost morale. In place of election emphasis on Labour's programme there was a constant reiteration of the General Council's peaceful, constitutional intentions in face of the government's attempts to paint the strike as a attempted revolution. (5)

Putting the paper out was a constant battle. On the first day a police raid halted production for half an hour before the City Commissioners gave their permission for printing to go ahead. (6)

Fyfe believed that the government wanted to suppress the Worker, but lacked the necessary nerve. Instead it seized their paper supplies, replying when attacked in Parliament that the newsprint embargo applied equally to all newspapers. The Worker came down from eight to four pages from May 7th, but it continued thanks to the efforts of Barrow, who located an alternative supply of paper. (7)

Not all Herald staff displayed the selfless heroism hoped for in such circumstances - Fyfe recorded that a General Council instruction was needed to get the machine room running once the decision to produce a bulletin was taken, and the Herald office chapel was to complain post-strike that some members of staff had accepted full wages for work on the Worker. But Fyfe said of Barrow: "He is a tower of strength. Sleeps at the office night after night, yet he's always smiling and calm. He has to be forced to eat by two women members of the Herald staff who have devotedly thrown themselves into the task of keeping us supplied with food day and night". With publication conditions varying from day to day, rapid improvisation to handle new paper sizes, uncertain supplies and staff working themselves into the ground the Worker was reproducing the Herald's early days - with one important difference. (8)
Where Fyfe and his staff were used to producing a paper they were desperate to sell, but had difficulties in persuading the Labour movement to buy, they found themselves overwhelmed by demand. On 8th May he noted: "The demand for the British Worker is insatiable. We could sell to purchasers at the doors three times as many as we print, and we are printing half a million". There were even reports that opportunist sellers were cashing in on demand by selling the paper, priced at 1d, for 2d.

Echoing throughout the 1920s was the demand for the Herald to secure a half-million circulation and publish a Northern edition. With Mellor organising printing arrangements, the Worker attained and passed both targets. The issue of 12th May sold 713,000, made up of 514,000 in London, Manchester 100,000, Cardiff 37,000, Glasgow 30,000, Sunderland 24,000 and Leeds 12,000. And it even managed to make a profit - Williams was eventually to pay more than £4,000 into coalfield relief charities.

Closing on 17th May, with an issue whose limited coverage of non-strike issues represented a small victory for Fyfe over the scruples of the Herald print chapels, the British Worker's farewell message emphasised its relationship with the returning Herald: "Tomorrow the Daily Herald reappears. If all who have have looked forward day by day to the British Worker, who have felt grateful to it and realised its value to the Workers Cause - if all of them will transfer their support to the Herald, the gain will be substantial to that cause which fills so large a place in our hearts".

The gain would in fact have been an overnight doubling of the Herald's sale, with a consequent revolutionising of its prospects. Fyfe suggested that the British Worker name be retained in order to cash in on the loyalties created by the strike, but was overruled. The Daily Herald it remained, but the paper that returned to the newsstands on 18th May had an much more optimistic view of its competitive position than the one that had been suspended a fortnight earlier.

ENDS.
Footnotes Twenty Six

CHAPTER TEN (P180-182)

2. Fyfe - Behind the Scenes op cit p 25-6, Sixty Years op cit p 198.
   TUCGC 3.5.26 min 31,4.5.26 min 36.
3. Fyfe - Behind op cit p 84. Tracey to Fyfe 6.5.26 TUC (General Strike) 252.62(12)
5. BW 5-17.5.26
8. Fyfe - Behind op cit p 26-7,54. TUCGC 4.5.26 min no 47. TUCFC 6.7.26 item 227
9. Fyfe - Behind op cit p 54. Walthamstow Trades Council to Citrine 5.5.26 E Warren to Citrine 6.5.26 TUC(GS)252.62(12)
11. Fyfe - Behind op cit p 86-7. BW 17.5.26
12. Fyfe - Sixty Years op cit p 199

ENDS
The optimism with which the Herald returned reflected the belief that the twin objectives of a 500,000 daily sale and profitability were within its grasp. In late April circulation had been just under 360,000. The print-run on 18th May was 554,000 and "vast demands" from newsagents impressed by the British Worker's performance boosted demand to a peak of 562,213 on 20th May, stretching the creaking print works capacity of 500,000 including machines more than 20 years old.

But returns rocketed together with the print run. Within a month sales had dropped below 450,000, apparently stabilising around 440,000 by late July - up 22.6 per cent nationally, but with increases of only 9 per cent for Wales and 16.9 per cent for Northumberland and Durham evidence of growing privation in the still-striking coalfields.

Just as sales grew then dropped in response to dramatic political or industrial events, advertising again showed the opposite tendency. Poyser predictably returned to "A fine basket full of cancellation orders". The first two weeks after the strike produced advertisement income of just over £1000 each, £450 down on 1925. But the first two weeks in June saw a jump to more than £1200, up £863 on the same fortnight in 1925. He reported his confidence that the few customers who had not returned - including Imperial Tobacco, Gibbs Dentifrice, Gramophone Company, Kraft Cheese and LMS Railway - would return once the coal dispute, which was depressing advertising generally, was over, and could point to several important new accounts and renewals.

The improvement continued into June and July. Poyser reported that though he was discounting to keep business, other papers were having to offer more and cheerfully brandished a letter from confectioners JS Fry showing the Herald to be a more economical advertising medium than the average national or provincial daily paper.
Like Lansbury in early 1925, Fyfe chose a period of relative financial success to beat a retreat from the Herald, resigning in July. He had promised to stay for three years and was now well into a fourth with no holiday longer than 10 days. He had no doubt he left the paper stronger than he found it: "Its circulation had more than trebled. Its advertisements had largely increased. It was now a very fair newspaper, thanks to the efforts of its staff. It would have been a first-class newspaper if we had not had to cut and pinch and scrape in every direction." (5)

But his resignation, like Lansbury's, reflected the tensions within the Herald - in this case his poor relations with staff and directors. Fyfe would subsequently blame his resignation on the refusal of arbitrators including a Herald director to confirm reporter Fox's sacking over the Daily Mail libel. (6)

He laid direct blame on Williams and Bevin "intriguing with more than their usual energy". No evidence is quoted against Williams, but an anonymous memo in the TUC files, damningly critical of Fyfe's performance as a manager, may provide the answer. The author had a good day-to-day knowledge of the paper's organisation and saw its Labour Movement role as paramount - both point strongly to Williams. (7)

It commented: "The Editor has not the real co-operation and confidence of the staff, and this is in no way due to any lack on the part of the staff to co-operate, but purely a temperamental weakness of the Editor, it is made worse by the fact that his judgment is unstable and erratic, that he has not the knowledge of the different phases of the movement that several members of the staff possess, and is too susceptible to personal influence." (8)

Fyfe recalled that Bevin attacked him at a Board meeting for disloyalty - a letter to a reader explaining that inadequate Herald coverage was the Board's fault for providing insufficient resources. He was certain that he could have won the argument: "I had only to appeal to results to defeat Bevin, and maybe drive him from the field". This has to be doubted. Bevin was not in the habit of losing battles and the memo suggests that Fyfe's position was not as unchallengeable as he believed. But he recognised an opportunity for making the Board pay him off as they had Lansbury's deputy Gerald Gould. (9)
The issue went to the Victoria House board who agreed to accept Fyfe's resignation from 31st August with a payment of £750. Fyfe recalled: "I told the members I understood from Bevin that they would like a change in the editorship. Some of them looked surprised, but they always did what Bevin told them to do, so they assented". There is no recorded explanation on Bevin's side, but his comments in the previous September on Fyfe's refusal to listen to suggestions about the paper can be taken as evidence of pre-existing ill-feeling.

A sub-committee was set up to appoint a successor. (10)

Fyfe's departure was accompanied by bitterness over one of his last leaders. Having spent the last three and a half months of his editorship observing the Labour movement self-denying ordinance against public debate on its major current controversy - the outcome of the General Strike, he evidently took the view that in his penultimate issue, August 30th, he need no longer defer to his union directors. This personal parting shot was aimed squarely at the Minority Movement's bitter criticisms of the General Council's decision to stop the strike.

He said shouts of "traitor" were: "the stock-in-trade of Communists. As we know from published documents, abuse and destruction of all those who hold official positions in the Labour Movement have been commanded from Moscow as a means of breaking that Movement up". He went on to argue that there was no mystery about the end of the strike and strongly endorsed the General Council's actions - in the process indicating that the miners continued resistance was futile.

"And events are now proving that the Council were right.

"If the miners representatives had agreed to accept that Memorandum as a basis for negotiation, work could have been resumed three and a half months ago, and no mine-worker would have got less than 50s a week."

When it was rejected by the miners representatives, the General Council felt it would be "futile" to ask the unions to "continue their sacrifice for another day".

"The council was satisfied that, however long it continued the strike, it would still be in the same position as far as the attitude of the Miners Executive was concerned."
"The Minority Movement's attack is not the honest criticism offered in the interest of the Labour Movement, but deliberate venom intended to help in the destruction of the Movement and the substitution of Communism for it". (11)

Fyfe was visited by a Communist Party delegation who asked him to withdraw the leader. Supporters outside the Herald building sang the Internationale, but the serenade was unavailing. But dismay was not confined to Communists. At the TUC Civil Service Clerical Association leader WJ Brown commented that if the self-denying ordinance on the strike "was good enough for the delegates at this Congress it is good enough for the editor of the Labour Daily". Turner said: "I think everybody in the movement regretted its appearance in the "Daily Herald" - at least I did". (12)

Yet Fyfe's farewell was hardly out of line with the previous editorial line. Acceptance of the self-denying ordinance implied rejection of those on the left who wanted the argument now. The Herald leader on its decision not to publish a speech by AJ Cook shows the paper still in 'official bulletin' mode. It was, in spite of Fyfe's repeated protestations that it was a newspaper and not a political tract, prepared to suppress a news story for political reasons, and in so doing lay into the critics on the left: "We deliberately refrained from publishing the spicy bits of a speech that intended to do as much harm as possible. We know that the harm it did would recoil on the miners. We did not want them to suffer for the lack of self-control shown by the Secretary of their Federation.

It went on: "Let us further say to all who want to arraign others or to excuse themselves, or to hit out right and left and convict everybody else of stupidity or treachery, or both, that they are doing cruel injury to the cause which they profess to have at heart.

"This is a time for moderate speaking, for making allowances, for reckoning up what we have lost and what we have gained, what we have learned and how best we can apply the lessons for the advantage of our great movement". (13)
Fyfe followed in his Saturday column with an explicit attack on leftwingers who were writing to the Herald under the headline "Save Us From Our Friends" - describing the critics as "One-eyed hysterical defeatists (who) would like to split the whole movement". "At a time when no one should dare to judge, without full knowledge of the facts, men and women upon whom heavy and alarming responsibility rested, they hurl abuse and accusations, they demand heads on chargers, they threaten to "give up the HERALD" if it does not run as viciously and wildly mad as they".(14)

The Herald's self-proclaimed neutrality in fact aligned it closely with the non-Minority left of the General Council. Swales, Hicks and Tillett wrote to the Herald proclaiming the strike a success - a viewpoint echoed, according to Postgate, by chairman Turner. While Frank Varley of the Miners alleged "abject surrender", John Wheatley complained of "the greatest and most bungled" strike and the TUC were deluged with resolutions of complaint and confusion from local branches and committees, the Herald had rapidly endorsed this optimistic view of the outcome.(15)

On 19th May it had declared: "It was a greater success than anyone had dared to hope. It struck dismal apprehension into the hearts of the oppressors...Now, it is the Workers who loom huge and impressive. The Owning Class has shrivelled up...It was the most wonderful, the most inspiring illustration of Labour's new-found solidarity. After it nothing can ever be the same again".(16)

The normal range of coverage was maintained, but the miners continuing struggle dominated to the extent that one reader could complain in late August: "I have been wondering these last few days if the Daily Herald is a paper for the whole of the workers or just for the miners".(17)

Returning on 18th May with the six-column banner "Mineowners Opposed To Premier's Proposals", it was not until 19th June that a front-page banner unrelated to the strike appeared - the one greeting the North Hammersmith by-election victory on 29th May was sub-headed "Sweeping Vindication of Campaign for Miners' Claims".(18)
The dispute provided the Herald with a story covering all three main home news categories - politics, industry and human interest. Devotedly detailed reporting chronicled every twist of the national story of the strike. Government was still seen as either unconcerned or the tool of the incorrigible mineowners, but the bulk of reporting was factual. Front page headlines such as "Mr Herbert Smith States Miners Terms", "Miners Appeal to British Trade Unions" and "Premier's "Ten Days" Ultimatum to Miners" alternated with more loaded versions such as "Government Playing the Mineowners Game" and "Mineowners Amazing Reply To The Miners". (19)

The factual style on occasion became downright bureaucratic, cast in union circular prose, as when the TUC's plans for relieving conditions in the coalfield were reported: "Plans for a far-reaching movement to help the locked-out miners and their families, and to meet the developing attacks on the workers generally are rapidly approaching completion at the headquarters of the Trades Union Congress, and it is probable that the General Council will be in a position to make an important announcement of policy next week.

"It is clear that the workers are faced with the most serious attack in their history....The General Council is proceeding therefore, on the assumption that the struggle may have to be a long and bitter one, and plans are being laid accordingly.

"With this in mind steps will be taken to get and keep in close touch not only with the trade union Executives, but with the whole of the rank and file of the working class" (20).

The human interest element was drawn from the courageous resistance of mining communities. Headlines on a description of the situation in Lancashire read: "No Surrender!" - Lancs Miners Stand Firm: Wonderful Spirit of Men and Leaders: Funds Exhausted, Money and Food Wanted - But No Weakening", and the story commented "In all the trade disputes that I have seen, I have never seen such an understanding between leaders and men, and such a loyalty as this one". (21)

But enthusiasm cohabited with concern about the implications of fund exhaustion and the need for food and money. Within four days of the Herald's return it was giving front page coverage to a women's appeal for miners families chaired by Ellen Wilkinson. (22)
Fyfe himself donated #50 plus the proceeds from "Behind the Scenes of the Great Strike" - which sold 13,000 shilling copies by mid-June - and gave the appeal a regular slot on column three of the front page. Herald headlines exhorted help from readers: "Miners Bairns Need Help - You Must Give It" was not so much a suggestion as an order across six front-page columns. (23)

The direct appeal to the reader - treating them not as a passive consumer but a member of a movement with duties to carry out was also seen in copy: "Just one question. Have you, reading this, sent your contribution to one of the miners' relief funds. If not, do it now". (24)

Emotion-inducing human interest techniques were deployed once miners families started evacuating children. Reports of their arrival in London emphasised privation and the uncaring brutality of government in order to loosen purse strings. "Bairns Needing Homes: Flight From The Wrath of Coalkings" was the headline on one story - sentimental terms such as bairn and mite were used to emphasise the defenceless of victims. "In age they ranged from eight to fourteen. Some are being taken to the seaside by foster parents. Many look as if they need it. "Dr Marion Phillips, one of the secretaries of the Women's Committee, drew one girl to her, a frail mite of seemingly nine years, whose pallor was in marked contrast with the healthy colour of the women around.

"I think the seaside will do you good", she said.

"The child smiled wistfully. "How old are you?"

"Fourteen next October", was the astonishing answer. (25)

To demonstrate the desperate seriousness of the situation Bobby Bear was mobilised to appeal to children: "Are you HELPING THE MINERS CHILDREN?...Little children in the coalfields are suffering so much because their fathers and mothers cannot give them enough food. It makes me ashamed to be so round and fat as I am. Lots of children are helping already...Will YOU do what you can to help?".

The women's committee had devised special collecting cards for children to collect their own and friends pocket money: "Maisie, Ruby and I are giving half our holiday money", they were told. (26)
A consequence of these privations was that early faith in the miners prospects receded. A banner headline on May 29th had trumpeted: "Why The Miners Are Bound To Win", explaining "The Labour Movement will not let the Miners be beaten to their knees. We believe the nation as a whole, in its own interest, will be forced to come to their aid.

"When they go back they will go back at their old wages - because the nation must have coal and cannot get it without their skill and toil". (27)

By August the line had become much more cautious. When the miners rejected a peace plan proposed by church leaders the Herald supported them - arguing that distrust of the church and of arbitration was based on past experience. But its conclusion indicated serious doubts about the miners' ability to win: "What next? The immediate duty before the Labour Movement is clear. The miners must be supported more vigorously than ever before. But the issue of the struggle still seems far away". (28)

The implicit message that a settlement should be sought was reinforced in the following week when delegates agreed to recommend new negotiations. The Herald spoke of a "general feeling of relief" and commented that "Fights to a finish are always inconclusive". (29)

But this was not the reason why some sections of the movement's left - notably the Communist South Wales miner Arthur Horner, expressed unhappiness at the paper's performance. The cause on this occasion was the decision in early July to run a half-page anti-miner advert from "Business Men". The management had been sufficiently nervous to consult Citrine about it, and were told that it should be run provided the union was offered equal free space to reply. It was accompanied by an editorial disclaimer. But it still prompted a fierce letters column reprise of the "reporting both sides" controversy - one anti-advert writer was named Henry Dobb - plus Horner's attack at the TUC. (30)

Given the Herald's serious treatment of the General Strike it is odd to find an agency space filler on the headmaster of Alleyn School's jarringly complacent levity on a subject that it regarded as anything but funny: that following his refusal to allow boys to go out and drive buses, "He believed there was a movement on foot to present him with the Royal Humane Society's medal for having saved life" (more laughter). (31)
Front-page levity was distinctly lacking in a period in which any non-political readers must have felt peculiarly ill-served. Enthusiasm for the exploits of Channel Swimmers was a 1920s phenomenon, but when Gertrude Ederle became the first woman to swim the Channel in August her feat was relegated to second lead by Stanley Baldwin's "mean and untrue" letter to the United States denying starvation in the coalfields. (32)

The sole light touch among lead stories came later that month when the England cricket team recovered the Ashes - importance with which this was regarded indicated by the relegation of an attack on Cook at Chelmsford station, ultimately to contribute to his early death, to a single-column second lead. This followed an outbreak of fury at the decision to prefer young amateur Percy Chapman as England captain ahead of the world's greatest batsman Jack Hobbs, a professional: "The only possible answer is that this concession had to be made to snobbery, which has so often handicapped England in the sports arena", fumed writer Robin Baily. (33)

By this time the Herald directors were involved in an equally significant selection of their own - that of an editor to succeed the departing Hamilton Fyfe.

iii. Enter Mellor

It was not to prove a particularly demanding search. As soon as Fyfe's departure was announced, Newspaper World was reporting that his successor was likely to be drawn from the existing staff - and on 26th August the directors appointed assistant editor William Mellor to the post from 1st September. In spite of their criticisms of the paper over the previous year, there is no evidence that any other candidate was seriously considered. (34)

Mellor, 37, was unequivocally a man of the left. A Guild Socialist before the war, he had been imprisoned as a conscientious objector during it and had afterwards been a proponent of direct action and one of the founding members of the Communist Party of Great Britain. (35)

Nor was he to move significantly to the right in later life - in the 1930s, as one of the leading lights of the Socialist League, he would be refused endorsement as a Labour candidate and become the first editor of Tribune. Margaret Cole described him as a powerful personality whose emotions were easily aroused, formidably effective in argument but prone to bullying.
Michael Foot, who worked on Tribune, remembers him as one of the shouting school of editor. That Dame Margaret could describe him as "stronger in the spoken than the written word" is a reminder that he was a socialist intellectual before he was a professional journalist. (36)

But the width of support and respect for him can be judged from the fact that Allen, the Board's proponent of the news values of conventional journalism as against those of the socialist intellectual, whose reference assisted his appointment. Fyfe and the Victoria House Board had praised him for his role in the British Worker. (37)

The anonymous memo writer was also an enthusiast. Noting that Mellor's 5pm start restricted his influence on the paper, he commented: "His wide, unbiased and very thorough knowledge of the movement enables him to correct errors of policy and fact... his corrections are not always agreed to by the Editor.... it is because of the personal affection of the staff for him, his journalistic ability and his knowledge of the movement that under such conditions of stress he is able to carry out this unequal task". Wittingly or not he made a strong case for promoting him: "In the periods that he has acted as Editor he has created a different atmosphere in the office". (38)

He also appears to have enjoyed MacDonald's trust - Fyfe noted that while the party leader was constantly fearful of Ewer's influence he was unconcerned by Mellor, in Fyfe's view a greater political danger. (39)

Unlike the latecomer Fyfe, Mellor was unequivocally a product of the Labour movement. He introduced himself to the 1926 TUC as "A Labour journalist... I am a Socialist and I stand irrevocably for the Co-operative Commonwealth". The difference with his predecessor was significant - while well to the left of Fyfe his grounding in the movement made him far more likely to tolerate its disciplines and idiosyncrasies. (40)

But his journalistic inheritance left something to be desired. He could count on the support of his deputy WH Stevenson: "A very nice mannered person, methodical, but not an innovator" according to the memo, and Ewer, rated by it as good as anyone in his role on any paper.
Elsewhere it was a grim tale. For historic reasons news editors had little authority and the key news-management relationship with the chief sub-editor was lacking. The current chief sub was well liked and literate, but could not impose authority because of the "sordidness of his private life and habits". The sub editors were mediocre, maltreated good stories in the desire to be "safe" and divided into cliques.

Not that good stories were likely to be frequent with a news staff described as rarely leaving the office and spending most time reworking cuttings from other papers: "The reporting staff of the paper, with one exception, is rather slothful and there is an unwholesome atmosphere in their habits, an interest in Labour or Trade Union affairs is absolutely lacking, selfishness and petty jealousies are often manifest, and no journalistic rivalry is noticeable". The industrial department had been in flux over the last 18 months, leading to inadequate and inconsistent coverage. (41)

Mellor might under the circumstances have hoped for increased editorial budgets. Instead there were immediate requests for reductions, and by November Williams could report a £40 a week cut in costs. Sober commercial reality had reasserted itself after the brief euphoria of May. Williams had greeted the new editor with a report pointing to a gentle decline in sales, a loss of £17,015 in the first eight months of the year and the comment: "Experience of Daily Herald ups and downs proves that caution is better than recklessness". (42)

Similar wariness characterised directors’ reports to the two national conferences. At the TUC they could point to a 60,000 increase in sales over the year and increased advertising revenue. But a more significant issue was the need for capital development: "Instead of merely being forced to watch from the windows of the 'Herald' office the erection of splendid premises equipped with the most up-to-date machinery for the anti-Trade Union Press, on income derived very largely from the newspaper pence of good Trade Unionists, we should be building, developing and ever extending the power and influence of Labour’s own press". (43).
When Labour met a month later directors Cramp and Turner sympathised with expansionist resolutions, but pointed as ever to the financial constrictions. The Prudential Staff Association, representing the party propagandist view of the Herald, called for extra space for movement news and articles by Labour leaders, while Bolton Labour Party called for a Northern edition. In reply to Bolton Cramp said: "The need for it was obvious, but the sinews of war were not so apparent at the present time". Turner costed it at a prohibitive £120,000, and pointed out that the paper's subsidy ran out in 1928.

Advertising continued to show more encouraging trends than other commercial aspects. Poyser reported that post-strike anti-Herald feeling was gone by October and annual revenue for the year around £3,500 up.

The Herald remained a poor relation in the market - advertising was still only around 20 per cent of the paper's income against the 60 per cent quoted by Lord Beaverbrook for his Evening Standard.

Improvements owed much to the commitment of Poyser's staff. But external factors were also at last working in their favour as market research progressively displaced subjective analysis in advertising. The first commercial readership survey took place in 1924 and "Cost per 1,000 circulation" and "purchasing power" became the dominant factors - with surveys like J Walter Thompson's campaign for Sun Maid Raisins in the late 1920s establishing that working-class in bulk had massive purchasing power.

The change took several years, and couldn't turn the 1920s Herald into a winner - big circulations still ruled. But it provided the Herald with a much more promising environment than the rule of subjectivity. From 1927 on the London Press Exchange included the Herald in its mass market campaigns. A year later a London Research Bureau survey found that the Herald's circulation figures concealed a sizeable, but previously unsuspected, lower middle-class readership.

But politics continued to impinge on Poyser's department. He and Williams were both convinced by comments to canvassers that any association with Communism hit the paper, so the editorial distancing had its advertising equivalent in the refusal of two Communist-funded insertions criticising the movement's leaders.
Growing intolerance of Communist influence in the wake of the General Strike claimed a further victim in the Herald League, by now something of a relic of the paper's pre-war days as an independent political force. It had dwindled to a rump of 12 branches and 40 to 50 study groups and its demise was signalled by Citrine's complaints that the Birmingham branch was planning a joint meeting with the Communist "Sunday Worker" while the propaganda caravan was being used in tandem with Minority Movement publicity. Williams, arguing the League had no publicity use, recommended closure to the Board. It was wound up in early December by George Belt, secretary since 1914, who joined the Herald propaganda staff. Once both symbol and practitioner of the Herald's support for extra-parliamentary action, its demise was a further symbolic indication of the paper's move into the firmly constitutional camp. Editor Mellor appears to have accepted this suppression of a group he would until recently have regarded as political allies, without demur (49).

iv. Content: Under New Management

But at this stage his overwhelming priority would have been getting to grips with the responsibilities he had inherited a few months earlier. The power of an individual editor to influence a paper is, in the short-term at least, limited. As complex institutions they take time to change, as Fyfe, disappointed in his quest to eliminate comment from Herald news stories in four years in charge, had discovered.

Mellor's ability to change the Herald was further circumscribed by the coal dispute, which continued to define the paper for his first three months in charge. So the distinctive features of his style emerged slowly and gradually, concealed amid a far greater mass of continuity.

But there were early indications of a new style. The appeal in his third issue was couched in terms of the readers' own experience as workers and the precise significance of their contributions: "PAY DAY IS TO-DAY: or tomorrow for most workers". Two per cent of miners were back at work "The Other 98% DEPEND ON YOU". This technique and timing were used periodically for the rest of the dispute. (50)
The editorial line changed little, but the terms in which it was expressed were different. Fyfe had come from the dominant ethical strain in British socialism, making semi-mystical references to the "City of God" as an aspiration. As an ex-Communist Mellor had been influenced by Marxist analysis - a grounding that showed in his use of "scientific" as a positive adjective.

Early examples were the commending of Pugh's presidential address to the 1926 TUC as "An important contribution towards scientific trade union policy" and a leader on the importance of "pulling this basic industry to its feet by the application of scientific methods of production, and making it serve national ends". (51)

Mellor was much more disposed than Fyfe to deal with the same topic day after day in his leaders as the story developed and also rather more political in his scope. On 25th November separate leaders dealt with the death of Krassin, the Poor Law, by-elections and the state of the Liberal Party. Confronted with so many hard political issues Fyfe would probably have leavened the mix with a softer, more whimsical leader on a general topic - but these became something of a rarity. (52)

Political news became even more dominant. In early November Mrs Roscoe Brunner, wife of Sir Alfred Mond's business partner, was shot dead only hours after visiting the Herald offices and being interviewed by Stevenson. So strong a story might have struck a less political editor as a natural lead. The interview and her letter to Stevenson seeking a meeting were run on the front page, as was the following day's report that the interview had created a sensation. But both took second place to the coal dispute. (53)

Mellor was likelier to construct a splash story around a single interview with a prominent Labour figure - not only, predictably, MacDonald's equivocating views on the miners "I Know That Right Will Win In The End", but such as "Plight of Britain's Chief Export Industry", built on an interview with the leader of the Cotton Operatives. (54)
Official Labour stories became rather more propagandist. Advertising and bureaucracy mix in a report that "An inspiring story of progress is contained in the report, published yesterday, which the National Executive of the Labour Party is to submit to its annual conference." An occasional tendency to reproduce an official circular verbatim rather than report it crept in - forming the lead story on 4th November in the TUC's official appeal for financial aid for the miners. (55)

Some stories just read like circulars: "Strenuous efforts, which are certain to be sustained, are being made by the opponents of Labour to prevent any further encroachment by the working-class forces in the important sphere of local administration" was the intro to a story on local government elections explaining that "Keen hopes are entertained at the Labour Party headquarters that November will witness great Labour victories in all the Boroughs. These hopes were voiced to me yesterday by Mr Egerton P Wake, the Labour Party's national agent." (56)

In covering party discipline Mellor upheld the right, and importance of dissent: "Criticism of leaders is not only a right but a duty". He had received a public license for some dissent from his most influential director when Bevin told the 1926 TUC: "I want to see it more informative: I would like to see it provoke more criticism, have a more determined mind very often... when it is absolutely convinced that a certain line is right to be prepared to take that line, even if for the moment it happens to be unpopular. Unless the editor and the staff can express their thoughts, and are prepared at times to face even your hostility if they believe they are right, then the paper is not worth its salt in developing thought and in moulding public opinion". (57)

But there were clear limits on this right. Left MP John Beckett's intemperate attack on Thomas and MacDonald at Labour conference provoked a leader arguing that the right of dissent through party structures was conditional on not providing ammunition for enemies: "There is criticism and criticism. Criticism that is necessary and helpful: criticism that is superfluous and unhelpful. It is not hard to place Mr Beckett's Margate speech in its proper place in that dichotomy." (58)
But alongside movement discipline came reminders of the Lansbury days. Lansbury's long time deputy Gerald Gould was recalled as the main Saturday columnist - writing in a philosophical, literary style, citing Shaw and William James in one early effort, dealing mostly with issues that were political by implication rather than current controversy. (59)

The November revolution anniversary leader, dropped under Fyfe, was restored with a vigorous endorsement of the Soviet Union's achievement: "In an age of kaleidoscopic change, with crowned heads "ten for a penny" and Governments crashing in every other corner of the earth, the Soviet Union alone has remained stable. While pointedly not endorsing Communist methods, it spoke of attempts to overthrow the Soviet Union. "It is the duty of the workers everywhere, to whatever sections of working-class allegiance, to see that these dastardly schemes do not succeed" (60)

Krassin was greeted as an old friend when he returned to Britain in September, and accorded both an immensely warm leader: "He died, as he would have chosen to die, at his post. And his passing is a loss not only to the Soviet Union, but to the Socialist and Working Class Movements throughout the world" and a lyrical account of his funeral, reminiscent of the Herald's coverage of Lenin's, on his death in November. (61)

The Anniversary leader coincided with a mild redesign - incorporating a bolder, tidier typeface and headlines, the removal of Gadfly from the main centre news page to later in the paper, the introduction of a column of nibs "news flashes" on page three and the replacement of the serial by "Tales That Enthral" - shorter stories, often completed in a single issue by a wider range of authors. (62)

But all such matters remained marginal beside the continuing coal dispute. Coverage remained heavily detailed as before, but with a slightly stronger note of partisanship creeping into reports. In the space of a few days readers were treated twice to the use of the word "expose" - always loaded - in news reports. First that a letter from the miners to Baldwin "Exposed the government's change of front, and showed that "settlement" by districts would lead to chaos.
The government was given the opportunity to retrieve its blunder* then that "In Parliament the Labour Party will fiercely contest the renewal of the Emergency Regulations, and will expose the government's sinister alliance with the mineowners". A later Parliamentary report, always more partisan than other coverage, spoke of "Jix's latest imbecility"(63)

It remained deeply sceptical as some leaders reacted to the General Strike debacle with renewed interest in conciliation and arbitration - arguing against Snowden's protege William Graham that "Strikes and lockouts are born of Capitalism and under Capitalism conciliation and arbitration only pay heed to economic power....(We) see no grounds for believing that "social peace" is attainable while Capitalism exists. We believe that it is only by a proper utilisation of the power to strike and the power to vote that this system can be ended". (64)

Williams placed it in a dilemma by endorsing conciliation in his chairman's address to the Labour conference - provoking uproar by comparing the miners to Samson in the temple: "This despairing policy may be magnificent, but it is not war" and concluded "The Communist Party and the Minority Movement still believe in the General Strike. The Labour Party looks with confidence to the General Election". (65)

The leader trod carefully. It implicitly rejected the left by asserting Williams' right to say what he thought. But the Herald was not yet ready to adopt anything which might be seen as class collaboration. It argued that Williams showed "a feeling of pessimism about the future of the industrial side of the Movement which seems to us unjustified", and that conciliation was "dependent...for success, on the power to stand still" - a power currently denied to Labour. The only way forward was "The building up of an organisation so strong and united politically that it can control the government of the country, so strong and united industrially that it can face a far greater measure of central control and co-ordination of activities than yet exists". (66)
Chapter Eleven: Drifting: May 1926 to June 1927

This conception of the capital-labour relationship as a power struggle was seen in his response to Henry Ford's shorter hours policy and Mond's #33m chemicals trust, forerunner of ICI. Of Ford the Herald said:"His shortening of hours, with its concomitant of lower wages or harder driving, is as harmful in its effect on life and health, as the lengthening favoured by Mr Evan Williams and Mr Baldwin". The view of the Mond trust was that: "(It) cannot change the motive of industry from exploitation to service. For that the socialisation of industry is necessary.. the capitalist is unwittingly paving the way for that ultimate change".(67)

In controversy over strike tactics the Herald followed the instinct to solidarity during disputes by defending leaders against external armchair critics. First came Soviet union leader Tomsky, banned by government from attending the TUC, firing the opening shot in the dispute that was to end the TUC-Soviet rapport opened in 1925.

His telegram to Congress called Thomas "main instigator of defeat" and spoke of the "unforgivable tactics of General Council leaders".

The Herald noted its past support for "hands off Russia", and asked the Russians for similar discretion - a tendency to lecture being "neither helpful nor sound....even if he were equipped with the necessary knowledge has not the slightest justification for pronouncing judgment on issues which have yet to be thrashed out by the British workers".(68)

AJ Cook was quoted as saying that the miners would have expressed themselves much more strongly than Tomsky - but was defended himself by the Herald when attacked from the right, his predecessor Hodges - now secretary of the International Mineworkers. Letters to the paper were quoted as running heavily in his favour while a leader commented: "If Mr Baldwin imagines that men who take the view of Mr Frank Hodges are representative either of the Labour Movement or of the Miners, he will be making another miscalculation. If he imagines that Mr Herbert Smith and Mr Cook, in their insistence on the seven-hour day and national agreements, are not voicing the men in the coalfield, he will suffer yet another bitter disappointment".(69)
Support for the strike remained vigorous and estimates of its prospects optimistic. Not until 15th November, when government settlement terms were recommended by the executive was the inevitability of defeat effectively conceded: "The only issue was an issue of tactics... their delegates recommendation does not mean that the struggle for justice will be given up; it means that it will be transferred to another field." (70)

Rejection, hailed by a leader titled "Unconquered", merely delayed the inevitable. The miners immediately accepted district negotiations and were forced back by the start of December. The summarising leader "Past and Future" struck a note of great pride at the courage, solidarity and sacrifice shown and argued that none of the mistakes made by leaders were dishonourable: "They arose from differing judgments as to the nature of the forces arrayed against the miners, differing views of the utility of carrying on the fight, differing views as to firmness and meaning of "offers", differing views as to efficacy of mass action".

The lessons drawn were both familiar Herald themes and an expression of the paper's tendency to accentuate the positive in criticism - by implication indicting the disunity and cross-purposes displayed during the dispute by calling for measures to avoid such problems in future - the retention of the strike weapon, greater central control and coordination and "the reorganisation of the Movement on lines that will bring unity of command and direction, a common understanding of the tactics for the struggle against Capitalism, and a steadier adherence to the Socialist faith"

v. Content: Anticlimax.

For all the proclamations that the miners' struggle would be resumed at some time, it was clear that this would not be soon. For the Herald, deprived of the story that had dominated for the best part of two years, a sense of anticlimax was inevitable. It saw the miners back to work - "Forced To Pit By Hunger" was the headline - and campaigned for an amnesty for trade unionists imprisoned under the Emergency Powers Act, (72)
But the next big story came from overseas - in China where the nationalist Kuomintang came to power in late 1926 and a series of incidents in cities with western concessions disturbed the British government. From the start the Herald backed the KMT. Ramsay MacDonald's call for recognition was a front-page lead in December. The tendency to see the crisis through a Labour movement prism was seen again as British troops departed for China following violence in Hankow and the threat of war occupied the lead slot for 12 consecutive issues from 24th January. Labour protests accounted for several splashes and a leader in early April said: "Organised workers of this country - and a numerous section of the population not connected to the Labour Party and the trade unions - will vigorously oppose war and bloodshed in China" (73)

The anti-imperialism displayed in past reports on India and Egypt reasserted itself. The KMT were accepted as fellow progressives: "(A) strong movement for national independence and real freedom...whole-heartedly for the working-class". The Herald had little doubt that the crisis could be put down to the irresponsible sabre-rattling of a British government bent, abroad as at home, to maintaining privilege - in this case the European concessions in China. When the crisis flared again in April it seized on an ex-Tory MP newspaper correspondent who said that "Nanking gives us a chance" as evidence of warmongering (74)

This analysis dominated the Herald's view of the eventual settlement. The war party, it said: "Hate the very notion of a China that has no Concessions and that wants organisations for the workers and non-interference by external powers". (75)

The year ended with a reassertion of the paper's enthusiasm for modern science - a story summed up 1926 as "A Year of Achievements" and the last front page story of the year featured Baird's latest television experiments: "There is no limit to the scope of this newest science... It is predicted that before many years have passed the family looking-in set will be as common in the home as is now the listening-in set".

The Herald took an optimistic view of such developments: "Already the cinema has done much to reduce drunkenness. The wireless is diminishing that intolerable loneliness which, in conjunction with economic hardship, tends to depopulate the countryside. Cinemas (despite trashy films) and wireless are broadening the minds alike of town dweller and villager". (76)
A reference to the future possibility of watching test matches from Australia reflected Mellor's own interests - his enthusiasm for cricket in particular was sufficient to be recorded in his Dictionary of Labour Biography entry. He redesigned the Monday results page and, unlike Fyfe, devoted leaders to sport - for example in early February giving space to analysis of the social roots of the decline of Welsh rugby union. (77)

Strikes to report were few and far between - Clegg points to the period from 1927 to 1929 as one of unprecedented industrial peace. But detailed coverage of union business and conferences remained a staple diet and a long-running inquiry into post office conditions inspired a typical Herald mix of human interest and industrial investigation in a feature series on working conditions under headlines such as "Men Who Never Work Days" and "Little-known Work of the Postman: Strict Tests Applied To Entrants: Pitfalls on the Road. (78)

Fyfe, not a generous critic, commented that the propaganda element in the Herald became more noticeable as soon as he left, with speeches by certain trade union leaders abounding. This is not incompatible with the countervailing view, expressed by Beatrice Webb, that Mellor had "distinctly improved" the Herald - crediting it with "more character and consistency, better news". Mrs Webb was nothing if not austere and serious-minded in her tastes. (79)

In this period the number of articles by MPs is more noticeable than any profusion of General Council speeches - and not only on political topics. On spate of five contributions in six issues ranged from Wheatley on "The Tory Attack on the Guardians" to Snowden on "Why I Like Detective Novels". (80)

Routine news interviews with leaders were liable to be introduced as though the interview were a news event in itself: "The proposed working agreement between the Labour Party and the Co-operative Party...was discussed, in a DAILY HERALD interview yesterday, by Mr Arthur Henderson MP, secretary of the Labour Party and Chief Opposition Whip". Lead stories contended to be more movement-oriented and propagandist in character: "Big Trade Union Revival Plans" was essentially a new year call for an organising drive by TUC chairman George Hicks while "Labour's Fiery Cross in the Rural Areas" dealt with a renewal of the rural propaganda campaign, a recurring item. (81)
But the Herald was still some way from being a mere loyal follower. It would still take issue with leaders - notably over industrial conciliation, and continued to do so when the potent trio of Pugh, Clynes and Henderson all associated themselves with the issue in early 1927. The Herald rejected Henderson's call for a Speaker's Conference of labour and employers, recalling the failure of a similar event in the more propitious atmosphere of 1919: "Mr Henderson's experience in industrial as well as political affairs is such as to claim, from friend and foe alike, respectful consideration of every suggestion he makes. But with the history of 1919 in mind; with the events of last year still fresh in the memory; with the coming attacks on trade union rights, it is in our view impossible to be hopeful of good results."

While arguing for stronger organisation as the essential element, the Herald was far from its "Hurrah for the Rebels" traditions - quoting approvingly Clynes comment that "generally speaking, the most effective agents for industrial peace are trade union officials" and arguing that Labour were the true supporters of "an orderly industry, an orderly world without class struggles and class antagonism".

Self-denial on the subject of the General Strike was maintained up to and including the special TUC in January. It was reported that Mellor had attended not as a reporter but as a matter of courtesy and that he would not give a full account - not simply acting as a movement sheet rather than a newspaper but making a point of broadcasting the fact.

Earlier in the week the "Sunday Worker" had broken the embargo on the reports from the General Council and the Miners Executive, earning a stern reproof in a leader which argued that "It is no use filling the air with shouts of "Traitor" on the one side and "Bolshevik" on the other." In the same "Answers" advertised JH Thomas "Secret History" of the dispute in terms classifying clearly in just that genre.
The Herald printed all the reports in full, plus a summary of the proceedings in which the General Council view prevailed. Its own leader "The Spirit Lives" pointed to cross-purposes and confusion between the miners and the General Council and failure to resolve them as the root problem. Laying blame on neither, but with its 'accentuate the positive' thrust implicitly backing the General Council, the leader followed familiar themes of better organisation and co-ordination and appeals to the unified spirit shown during the strike. (86)

There were further echoes of the strike in the pit disaster at Cwm, Monmouthshire in March. Pit disasters were always big news for the Herald - major human interest for any paper they struck at the core of its constituency. But what gave Cwm its extra dimension was Stanley Baldwin's visit to the town to express sympathy and the hostile demonstration that greeted him. (87)

The incident was condemned by local MP Evan Davies, but clearly had the support of much of the movement. The Herald steered a skilful line which explained the outburst while clearly regretting it: "It was a painful incident. Behind it lay a complex of human feelings and resentments perfectly understandable to those acquainted with the unprecedented conditions prevailing in the South Wales coalfield. The motives of Mr Baldwin and his wife in visiting this scene of grief were kindly and human. But to the people of Cwm the present is linked with the past. In memories there live the Premier's part in the lock-out." (88)

The Herald's substantial postbag showed less sympathy - John Williams of Dowlais arguing that "He deserved it all" while JE Robertson of Peckham, who saw the demonstration as "splendid", said the leader showed "veiled sympathy for Baldwin", was "deplorable", and "will not deceive the class-conscious worker". In the minority was JC Walker of Roundhay who described the leader as "the sanest comment so far on a perfectly natural if regrettable ebullition of human feeling". (89)
A direct consequence of the strike was the Trade Disputes and Trade Union Act, restricting the rights of unions and enforcing contracting-in on political contributions. The entire movement knew what it thought of this, making the choice of editorial line a simple one. This was to first denounce the bill, labelled the "Anti-Union Bill and the "Blacklegs Charter" and "the most deadly attempt yet made to cripple the Trade union and Labour Movement", then talk up the resistance: "Rising Tide Of Opposition To Baldwin's Bill", "Workers United Against the Blacklegs Charter" and "Labour Launches Greatest Campaign in History". (90)

In its indignation it was prepared to see James Maxton's call for "100,000 shock troops, all fighters and rebels" as a "ringing call to the workers" rather than veiled advocacy of violence and pay only limited attention to the ILP's dropping of MacDonald as nominee for the Labour treasurership. Extended to 12 pages for the duration of the bill's passage through Parliament it commended "Labour's able and devastating attack" and when Labour walked out in protest at the guillotine commented "It was done with that perfect readiness and order which is the result of the discipline which naturally arises when a body of men are united by deep conviction and strong faith". (91)

Greater difficulties were presented when the police raided the Soviet trade commission Arcos in early May. What would once have been furious and instantaneous denunciation became rather warily circumspect. This may have been partly because little initially was known. But more significant was the growing division between the TUC and the Russians - MacFarlane refers to 1927 as the "Year of Transition" in relations. TUC anger over incidents like Tomsky's telegram to the 1926 Congress and a fresh attack by Lozovsky of the Red International early in 1927 - leading Citrine to the conclusion that "The limit of our tolerance has been reached", would lead at the 1927 TUC to the winding up of the Anglo-Russian Joint Advisory Committee, a decision lamely defended by the Herald as "A way of denying ammunition to the TUC's opponents". (92)
Once the government had used the incident as a pretext for breaking off diplomatic relations, the Herald attacked it for following a policy "based on party political expediency" and gave the departing Russians a warm six-column front-page send-off. But the initial doubts, fuelled by an atmosphere in which even Lansbury could complain that the Russians "refuse to accept any person as honest, sincere or sensible who disagrees with their theory, tactics or policy" were more significant. (93)

Debates over theory, tactics and policy were to continue as vigorously behind the scenes at the Herald as they did in its pages in the first half of 1927.

vi A Business Solution

The Herald had gone into 1927 retaining some of the gains of the British Worker, enabling the issue of a net sales certificate showing a 362,701 daily sale - barely down on their previous certificate issued for the months around the 1924 General Election. The first six months of the year produced the best balance sheet since 1924, with a loss of only around #2,800. Atmosphere in the office appears to have improved with Fyfe's departure - in February 1927 The Journalist reported weekly meetings between the editor and the NUJ chapel. (94)

But downward pressure on sales had resumed - dipping below 400,000 as the new year started. This was hardly surprising as rivals continued their rapid progress - the Express and Mail would add more than 300,000 to their joint sale in 1927. The directors reported "Our circulation travellers constantly report that we are under a enormous disadvantage compared with our competitors because we have no insurance scheme". The previous assumption that a Herald scheme was ruled out on cost grounds was increasingly displaced by the thought that not having one might be even more expensive. (95)

An indication that the directors were disposed to think again came in the February directors' report, couched ingeniously in terms calculated to appeal to the class and political outlook of the General Council, noting that "Working class organisations like the Trade Unions, the Friendly Societies and the Co-operative movement have taught thrift, and the necessity for various forms of insurance". (96)
Pointing to the increased circulation of all the Herald's rivals since insurance came in, they argued that the Herald's losses of #24,000 over the last three years weren't much compared to its propaganda value and suggested that insurance expenditure would reinforce this. (97)

The key conversion appears to have been that of General Manager Williams. When the Finance sub-committee chaired by Allen and including Turner, Morrison and Citrine, created by the February directors meeting to look into insurance and costs met for the first time on March 10th, his evidence was the main item. (98)

He reported that the case was so overwhelming that he had the support of the Editor, Circulation Manager, Advertising Manager and Accountant in pressing for the "More or Less Immediate" establishment of an insurance scheme, and presenting a sample #20,000 per year scheme from brokers Muir, Beddall for consideration.

He concluded: "If the Insurance Scheme produced the desired results, preventing a decline in circulation, lowering the percentage of returns, increasing the circulation and thereby increasing the advertisement revenue, we could look forward to the financial results justifying the expenditure of an additional #20,000 a year.

"We simply ought not to go on in the present manner, watching our circulation figure declining from an average of 440,000 in July last to 389,000 which is our present figure"

His case rested on current sales already 30,000 below the 362,701 net sales certificate and the unlikelihood of stabilising even at this point unless "something new and far-reaching" was done. The Liberal News, Chronicle and Gazette had all but doubled their sales in five years of chronic electoral decline. "In my judgment the principal and overwhelming reason is the pull of the insurance scheme", he said.

He reinforced his argument with reports from circulation travellers. I Robinson (East Midlands) said: "Had we been in a position to adopt a similar scheme some years ago, our sales in this area could easily have been double the present figure". Eastern Counties representative TL Rawlings said: "It is a well-known fact in workshops, railroads and factories, workers take other papers in preference to the Daily Herald believing they are covered against every known risk, and in groups of six, are buying it each morning and sharing it, taking turns to pay, as they cannot afford two morning papers each".
In other reports Le Good complained of undue editorial prominence to left-wingers, the frequent adoption of a complaining and grumbling attitude and idiosyncratic make-up. Poyser argued that the Herald's self-presentation accentuated the problem of advertisers' political bias: "We give the impression also that we cater mainly for the worker drawing about #2 per week, and the unemployed. It would be difficult for advertisers reading our paper to realise that there is a big middle class element supporting us" (99).

Taking stock, based on printing estimates from Barrow which also eliminated a Sunday Paper as a serious option, Allen and Williams concluded that movement expenditure of #365,000 over the past seven years to achieve a 370,000 and falling average sale, only 50,000 up since 1921, was "a thoroughly bad business result in return for such expenditure". Endless appeals to the movement for support had outlived their usefulness: The solution must this time be a business solution, and not depend on industrial and political enthusiasm.

The status quo was not an option. With no change the paper would go on losing, and draining union funds. Extra expenditure would be justified if it could push circulation to self-supporting levels. Using Barrow's figures they projected a three year insurance and promotion drive to take the paper to a self-supporting sale of 550,000. If the paper could hit this sales target and pull in the projected advertising income - a substantial if, this would cost #88,400 - or only #10,000 more than maintaining a small declining paper which would still be losing at the end. (100)

Following a further Finance Committee meeting Muir, Beddall prepared estimates for improved schemes costed at #32,500 and #48,250 while Mellor presented a case for regionalised news pages and three additions to staff - a reporter, sub-editor and leader writer. (101)

For the final meeting before proposals were to be submitted to the Board Allen was asked to look at editorial policy. His 17 page analysis recapitulated the main themes, minus the vituperation, that he had developed in his 1925 memo.
He argued that the Herald was only reaching a small, enthusiastic political minority where the lively and varied presentation of news in other papers attracted the non-political majority, allowing them to influence their view of major political and industrial events.

General readers had "not the psychology of the political enthusiast, seeking an informative tendentious pamphlet. The average reader is out for distraction, and not for a daily diet of self-improvement." News coverage should be broader: "even if it seems trivial to our enlightened minds, should be fully treated... the love romance of Pola Negri may seem stupid to the more quietly wedded editor and directors of the Daily Herald, but it is not for that reason foul, and it figured prominently in all other dailies and not at all on the most important day in the Daily Herald".

The Herald should reduce its current mass of "Labour" headlines except where totally justified by news value and avoid the belief that it should automatically be different to other papers. A paper of this sort would be more politically effective than the current Herald by reaching a larger audience: "In a position to be effective on a very wide scale, when each great occasion demands it, and to instil our subtle medicine all the time into a vast clientele". He backed Mellor's call for new appointments, asked for a gossip column in place of the "too highbrow" Way of the World and warned against coverage of Labour's internal controversies. (102)

This exposition of the model casting the Herald as a mass-circulation daily which happened to be Labour ran into opposition from Ben Turner's view of it as a movement newsheet which happened to be a national daily. Turner was happy with the paper, and in any case didn't think there was any money: "We don't want the same kind of news as the other papers. We are a specialist paper, and that is what it was started for", insurance or any increase in staffing.

He concluded: "I think we should try a steady six months - until the end of the year - going on as we are and seeing what effect the attack has upon the circulation. We have had too much worry to try new ventures, and we haven't any more money for the, and won't have for at least two years". His suggestion that they might "Ask our Trades Councils and Labour Party secretaries in the big centres to see that the lineage men do a bit more than some do", spoke volumes for his view of the relationship between movement and paper. (103)
Allen won the debate - the Finance Committee endorsed the development plan and the broad thrust of his paper on 2nd June. But when the Board met on 14th June, Turner turned out to have won the war. Make-up changes were agreed but deferred until other issues had been settled. And these would depend on finance. The minutes record a decision to approach the TUC and Labour Party finance committees to discuss possible funding for the changes desired. There is no evidence that the meeting ever took place - when development was taken up again early in 1928 there were references to proposals having been allowed to lapse back in 1927. In practice the policy adopted was Turner's "Six steady months" was the final outcome. And pretty unsteady they were to be as well. (104)

vi. Conclusion

The miners defeated return to work in late 1926 concluded a period in which the Herald was dominated more completely by a single story than at any other time in the 1920s - even the 1924 spell in government. It was also one in which the leadership extended their control over the paper - aided in this by the appointment of the left-winger Mellor as editor. Where Fyfe had seen himself as an independent actor, Mellor was far more prepared to accept the disciplines imposed by the leadership. But even before Fyfe's departure the ostentatious acceptance of the self-denying ordinance over the end of the General Strike both showed movement priorities being placed ahead of news ones, and endorsement of the leadership line over that of the left. The leadership's ability to impose control was assisted by the closing of the gap between TUC and Labour Party attitudes to Communism and the Soviet Union after two years of division - editorial attacks on the Minority Movement and the cautious treatment of the Arcos raid were the harbingers of this change.

Circulation trends continued as ever downwards, with improvements in the advertising environment only partially offsetting financial problems. As the evidence continued to mount, the conversion of Williams and the Board to the cause of insurance represented another significant shift towards adopting a more conventional commercial model. But the continuing inability of the movement to fund the necessary development and the reluctance of the influential Turner to support major change indicated that a means might have to be found of financing it externally. ENDS
CHAPTER ELEVEN (P183-211)

1. GM rep 28.5.26 LPDH 504 CM 16.6.26 PM 17.6.26, GM 18.6.26 reps LPDH 505 TUCGC 18.5.26 min no 282
2. CM reps 16.6.26 loc cit, 22.7.26 LPDH 512
3. AM rep 16.6.26 LPDH 505
4. AM rep 22.7.26 LPDH 512
5. Fyfe - Seven Selves op cit p 275-6
7. Fyfe - Seven Selves p 276-7. Unsigned memo n.d (late July) TUC 788.01
8. Unsigned memo loc cit
9. Fyfe - Seven Selves op cit p 278
10. Ibid p 279. VHPCo dir 27.7.26 TUC 788.11. TUCGC 14-15.7.26 min 353
11. Bevin memo 15-25.9.25 loc cit
13. DH 25.5.26
14. DH 29.5.26
16. DH 19.5.26
17. DH 30.8.26
18. DH 18,29.5,19.6.26
19. Ibid 23.5.2,15,21.6,20.8.26
20. Ibid 26.6.26
21. DH 1.6.26
22. DH 22.5.26
23. DH 23,24.5,2,5,19.6.26
24. DH 21.6.26
25. DH 24.7.26
26. DH 12.8.26
27. DH 29.5.26
28. DH 11.8.26
29. DH 18.8.26
31. DH 26.7.26
32. DH 7.8.26 Paul Davies - AJ Cook - Manchester University Press 1987 p 109,177
33. DH 9,19.8.26
34. NW 7.8.26. VHPCo dir min 26.8.26 TUC 788.11
35. Margaret Cole - "Mellor, William" in DLH Vol 4 loc cit
37. Fyfe - Behind the Scenes op cit p 26, 54. Financial estimates re the
    British Worker n.d (June-July) LPDH 518. VHPCo dir min 26.8.26 loc
cit
38. Unsigned memo loc cit
39. Fyfe - Seven Selves loc cit p 254
40. RPTUC 1926 p 363-4
41. Unsigned memo loc cit
42. GM reps 23.8, 7.10.26 TUC 788.21
43. RPTUC 1926 p 267
44. LPRAC 1926 p 210-13
45. AM reps 6.10.26, 13.1.27 TUC 788.23. Memo from Williams n.d (Dec 1926)
    LPDH 521
46. Curran - Advertising as a Patronage System loc cit p 75-81
47. Ibid
48. GM rep 7.10.26 TUC 788.21. AM rep 17.11.26 TUC 788.23. Williams memo loc
cit
49. Rudland to Citrine 9.11.26, Citrine to Williams 13.11.26, Williams to
    Citrine 17.11.26, Belt to VHPCo Dir TUC 788. VHPCo dir min 23.11.26 LPDH
    514, 6.12.26 LPDH 523
50. DH 3.9.26
51. DH 7, 15.9.26
52. DH 25.11.26
53. DH 6, 7.11.26
54. DH 2.10, 24.11.26
55. DH 22.9, 4.11.26
56. DH 6.10.26
57. DH 15.10.26. RPTUC p 455-6
58. DH 15.10.26
59. DH 30.10.26
60. DH 8.11.26
61. DH 17, 24.9, 25, 28.11.26
62. DH 8.11.26
63. DH 20, 27.9, 25.10.26
64. DH 6.10.26
65. DH 12.10.26
66. Ibid
67. DH 27.9.26
68. DH 10, 9, 3.11.26
69. DH 25, 27.29.9.26
70. DH 15.11.26
THE DAILY HERALD 1921-30  Footnotes Twenty Eight

71. DH 27.11.26
72. DH 29.11,1,6,11.12.26
73. DH 7.12.26,24.1-7.2,4.4.27
74. DH 5.1,5.4.27
75. DH 3.5.27
76. DH 30,31.12.26
77. DH 7.2.27
78. DH 8.1,4.5.27. Clegg - op cit p 426
79. Fyfe - Sixty Years op cit p 199. M Cole - Webb diaries 1924-32 op cit p 151 entry of 22.8.27
80. DH 31.3-5.4.27.
81. DH 1,10.1.27
82. DH 12,17.1,4.2.27
83. DH 3.1,4.2.27
84. DH 21.1.27
85. DH 17.1.27
86. DH 22.1.27
87. DH 3.3.27
88. Ibid
89. DH 4,5,7,8.3.27
90. DH 5,6,7,30.4.27
91. DH 18.4,14,17.5.27. TUC GC 27.4.27 min no 204
92. DH 7.1,16.5.27. Clegg op cit p 420-1,476. A. Williams op cit p 29-44.
93. DH 17.25,26,28.5.27
94. The Journalist Feb 1927. AM rep 17.3.27 TUC 788.23. DH accounts for six and 12 months to 31.12.27 LPDH 537
95. CM rep 2.12.26 LPDH 519,13.1.27 LPDH 523 (NB owing to a filing error both the VHPCo directors report of 6.12.27 and the various departmental managers reports for 13.1.27 are filed as LPDH 523).
96. VHPCo dir rep Feb 1927 TUC 788
97. Ibid
98. Agenda, Minutes Finance Committee meeting 10.3.27 TUC 789.1
99. Williams report n.d (Feb/Mar 1927) TUC 788.01
100. Muir, Beddall to Daily Herald 14.2.27 TUC files (No ref)
101. Allen and Williams memo 11.4.27 TUC 789.01
102. Allen memo for FC 11.5.27 TUC 788.5
103. Turner memo to FC 13.5.27 TUC 788.5

104. FC rep to VHPCo Board 2.6.27 TUC 788.5. VHPCo dir Special Meeting

14.6.27 TUC 788.11, 789.1. Ordinary Meeting 22.6.27 TUC 788.26

ENDS