

## DEDICATION:

This book is dedicated to the memory of my dear friend and comrade, **John Stewart Simpson, "Ian"** to his friends. A victim of Scotland's heavy industry, he died aged 66 at Hairmyres Hospital Lanarkshire, on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2003 from mesothelioma, (asbestos related lung cancer).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

The information contained in these pages has been gleaned from countless conversations, stories told, articles, pamphlets and books read over more years than I care to remember. My thanks goes to those friends, acquaintances and total strangers who over the years passed on some of these stories. I have tried to list some of the books that would deal much more fully with the subjects than these pages were intended. A special thanks must go to **Audrey Canning** of the **William Gallacher Memorial Library** at the **Caledonian University**, without whose expertise, pleasantly and willingly given, I would have disappeared under a mountain of books and pamphlets never again to emerge into the light of day. I must also thank the **Caledonian University Glasgow** and the **Mitchell Library Glasgow** for the use of their facilities.

I would further like to acknowledge my gratitude to **Bob Jones** and **Gina Bridgehead** for allowing the inclusion of their obituary to John Taylor Caldwell, to **Stevie Gallagher** for his contribution, The ca' canny strike and Counter Information and **Mairtin O'Caithin** for his contribution on The Birth of Glasgow's Anarchism.

A special thanks and warm gratitude to my friend **Stasia Rice** for all her help and encouragement, without which this 2nd edition would never have appeared.

These pages were never meant to be anything other than a summary of some of the events and people that have helped to shape the Glasgow of today, a glimpse at a history that is sometimes difficult to find. My hope is that anyone who reads these few pages will be prompted to dig a little bit deeper and discover a rich heritage of which we can be very proud and perhaps try to contribute to that struggle and carry the heritage forward.

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## **CONTENTS.**

<b>PAGE.</b>	<b>TITLE.</b>
1	GLASGOW THE NAME.
3	GLASGOW CITY OF REBELLION.
6	THOMAS. MUIR 1765-1799
11	GLASGOW WEAVERS STRIKE 1787.
13	1820 INSURRECTION.
19	COTTON SPINNERS STRIKE.
21	TOM. ANDERSON 1863-1947.
25	THE BIRTH OF GLASGOW'S ANARCHISM.
37	THE SCOTTISH LABOUR PARTY, 19 MAY 1888.
38	THE WORLD'S FIRST CA' CANNY STRIKE, 1889.
40	MARY BARBOUR, 1875-1958.
42	HELEN CRAWFURD, 1877-1954.
46	JOHN MACLEAN, 1879-1923.
51	SINGER STRIKE, 1911.
54	THE RENT STRIKE.
57	TOM BELL, 1882-1944.
63	JANE HAMILTON PATRICK, 1884-1971.
66	GUY ALDRED, 1886-1963.
77	CLYDE WORKERS COMMITTEE.
81	GEORGE (BALLARD) BARRETT, 1888?-1917.
84	FIRST WORLD WAR PEACE MOVEMENT.
87	WOMEN'S PEACE CRUSADE, JUNE 1916.
89	THE RENT STRIKE TO BLOODY FRIDAY 1919.
96	HELEN BROWN SCOTT LENNOX, 1889?-1960.
97	ETHEL MACDONALD, 1909-1960.
101	FIGHT FOR FREEDOM OF SPEECH ON THE GREEN.
105	JOHN TAYLOR CALDWELL, 1911-2007.
109	GENERAL STRIKE, 1926.
118	CLYDESIDE APPRENTICES STRIKE, 1937.
121	ROBERT (BOBBY) LYNN, 1924-1996.
124	WORLD WAR 2 CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS.
131	UPPER CLYDE SHIPBUILDERS WORK-IN, 1971/72
145	COUNTER INFORMATION.
148	SOURCES/FURTHER READING.

Due to an error on my behalf the chapter on Wm. McDougal that appeared in the first edition has been omitted from this edition. Hopefully it will appear in the next run. Those wishing to read a summary of this Glasgow activist's life will find it at:  
[http://radicalglasgow.me.uk/strugglepedia/index.php?title=William\\_C.\\_McDougal](http://radicalglasgow.me.uk/strugglepedia/index.php?title=William_C._McDougal).

## **GLASGOW, THE NAME.**

### **INTRODUCTION.**

The name 'Glasgow' has gone through considerable changes over the centuries. The earliest Charters refer to the city as 'Glaschu', while the earliest seals give several different spellings. In the seal of 1180 the spelling is 'Glesgu', and the seal of 1325 it is 'Glagu'. In 1297 the Earl of Warrenne and Surry to the English King refers to 'Glasgeu' in another letter from the same Earl it becomes 'Glascu'. In a letter from Hugh de Cressingham in 1297 to the King of England it has the spelling 'Glasgu'. In the Charter of 1324 by Robert the 3rd it is written as 'Glasgw'. Another Charter of 1419 by John Stewart, Lord Darnley has it as 'Glaschow'. Yet again the spelling changes in the will of Archbishop Betoun where he refers to himself as Archeuesque de Glasco.

### **ORIGINS OF THE NAME.**

It is generally accepted the name is not from Gaelic, as at the time of its formation this area was a Welsh settlement. It is probably from the Welsh 'Glas', and 'cu' or 'gu'; translates as 'Beloved Green Place' and is referring to the spot where Kentigern met Columba thus Kentigern becoming the Patron Saint of Glasgow.

### **RADICAL GLASGOW?**

Mention Glasgow and various stereotypes jump to mind, dreadful slums, hard drinking, random violence, razor gangs, shipbuilding, locomotive makers and other heavy industries. What else is written about the city usually refers to captains of industry, architects, inventors, and medical men of note. Scratch the surface however, and you find another Glasgow with a long tradition, the real Glasgow, 'Radical Glasgow'.

Glasgow can boast of a long tradition of radical movements growing from the ranks of ordinary people. People struggling not only to improve their own conditions but that of all working class people.

Glasgow can lay claim to a series of firsts. Besides being the birthplace of the 'European Temperance Movement', the following are just some other firsts that can be added to its roll of honour:

- Birth of the Scottish Labour Movement
- First effective trade unions formed.
- First trade union papers printed.
- Scottish Co-op movement first established.

- Scottish Labour Party founded.
- First Trades Council in Scotland.

## **HISTORY OF GLASGOW GREEN.**

The Glasgow Green has always been a focal point for the people of Glasgow and a cradle of social movements throughout its history. The following list is but a hint at the history of the Green:

- Through the 1700 and 1800s, the various reform movements.
- Pre 1914, the woman's suffrage movements.
- 1916, rent strikes.
- 1938 anti-fascist movements.
- 1971 U.C.S. crisis.
- 1984 miner's strike.

## **CONCLUSION.**

Both the above lists could be expanded depending where you place your focus, and no doubt will continue to expand as the people of Glasgow go on to face new challenges.

I hope the following articles give at least some insight into that other Glasgow, the Glasgow that does not always find its story in the mainstream literature about the city, but is the true heart of the City of Glasgow, the city of compassion and vision.

# **GLASGOW CITY OF REBELLION.**

## **INTRODUCTION.**

From the days of Wallace, Scotland has always had a revolutionary movement. At one time fighting for religious liberty, at another for political equality, more recently for economic and industrial freedom and freedom of the individual. In all of this Glasgow has always played an important part and been home to radical reform movements.

### **1706-THE UNION.**

Glasgow gained in wealth because of the Union, when its tobacco trade rapidly expanded and later the sugar and cotton trades. Surplus wealth began flowing into mining, textile, iron and railway industries. By 1885 ten Scots firms produced 20% of Britain's steel output. After 1870 the Clyde replaced the Thames as the centre of British shipbuilding, and this, in association with the expanding railway and heavy engineering industries in Glasgow, created a new force, the 'Industrial Working Class'. By 1892 two thirds of all Trade Unionists in Scotland worked in Glasgow. Rebels of Glasgow and the West of Scotland shared the problems of the Northern English industrial population and also shared the hopes of the English Radical Reformers.

### **1706 - AGAINST THE UNION.**

In spite of this the Union was not universally accepted throughout the country. Glasgow saw popular but violent reaction to this arrangement. On one occasion a large crowd lead by Finly and Montgomery took control of the Bishop's House. The local forces could not remove them and the Dragoons were called from Edinburgh to dislodge them. Finly and Montgomery were duly arrested. The crowd took it upon itself to seize the City's Magistrates and dispatched a few of them to Edinburgh with the strictest mandate to obtain the release of the prisoners. However the Privy Council in Edinburgh rejected the request and sent the Magistrates back to Glasgow with the instruction to take better control of their city.

### **JUNE 1725 - THE MALT TAX RIOTS.**

Due to the gross dislike of the 'Malt Tax' there were wide spread riots across the country. The most serious of these was June 1725 in Glasgow. When Revenue Officers arrived to assess the Maltsters, they were met by large angry crowds who barred their way. On June the 24th a large crowd decided to attack the house of Duncan Campbell of Shawfield believing

that he had supported the tax in the Houses of Parliament. The angry scenes prompted the Lord Advocate Duncan Forbes to call in troops from Edinburgh. The Provost was not in agreement with this decision and refused to use them against the rioters. However the crowd, unhappy with the presence of the troops attacked them. The troops retaliated, at first with powder and then with shot. This resulted in the death of 8 civilians. The Provost ordered the troops to withdraw. The Magistrates spent most of their time investigating the civilian deaths rather than pursuing the leaders of the attack on Shawfield House. It was obvious that the town council had no more love of the 'malt tax' than the angry crowds. Their thoughts would also be on the fact that they had to live in the city after the massacre by the troops. The Lord Advocate somewhat alarmed at the events in the city went himself to Glasgow and arrested the City Magistrates and took them to Edinburgh. There was a failed prosecution of the Magistrates in Edinburgh and they returned to their City of Glasgow to a boisterous welcome from the crowd.

#### **15th FEBRUARY 1800.**

Unemployment and high taxes during this period caused wide spread demonstrations which culminated on the 15th. of February 1800 when angry and hungry crowds took to the streets. They marched along Argyle Street attacking meatsellers and grocers' shops. Meanwhile vast crowds in the districts of Townhead and Calton were also smashing into similar types of shops. The authorities felt compelled to call out the troops to disperse the rioters.

#### **1812 WEAVERS STRIKE.**

1812 saw in Scotland until that date. The weavers were on strike in an attempt to protect their living standards. The strike was on the whole a peaceful protest, though the Magistrates and the Government claimed otherwise in an attempt to become heavy handed with the strikers. The strike lasted three months and eventually run out of funds and collapsed. Because of this strike Trade Unionism was declared illegal in Scotland and remained so until 1824. Seven of the strikers were arrested and charged with 'illegal combination' and were each sentenced to 18 months in prison.

#### **6th MARCH 1848**

There was a serious riot in the city of Glasgow on the 6th of March 1848. It came about when the unemployed operatives had expected a distribu-



-tion of provisions. The provisions never appeared and the starving and angry crowds set off up Irongate and other main streets of the city centre breaking into food and gun shops. Business in the city came to a standstill and all city centre shops closed. The people continued to march through the streets shouting 'bread or revolution'. Eventually the 'riot act' was read. Other groups marched off in other directions entering food shops and demanding bread. The authorities, alarmed at the events sent to Edinburgh for more troops. The following day crowds again gathered at Bridgeton where 'out-pensioners' were under arms. A young boy threw an object at the troops and was arrested but the crowd stormed the arresting group and rescued the boy. Police Superintendent, Captain Smart gave the order to fire: five of the crowd were shot. The Military continued to patrol the streets and the crowd still lined the streets for some days. All public offices were securely guarded.

### **1915 RENT STRIKES**

1915 saw Glasgow and Clydeside districts gripped by a massive grass roots movement against large rent increases imposed by landlords. Over 25,000 tenants refused to pay rent increases. The struggle spread to the Clydeside engineering workshops and shipyards, forcing the government to introduce the 1915 Rent Restriction Act.

### **1919 'FORTY HOUR WEEK' STRIKE.**

In 1919 the struggle for a shorter working week came to a head with a strike which had the support of practically all the workers in the area. Marches and demonstrations were organised. One massive demonstration in George Square caused the authorities some concern and the police baton charged the crowd creating mayhem. The government fearing revolution sent English troops with tanks into the city.

## **THOMAS MUIR, 1765-1799.**

### **EARLY LIFE.**

Thomas Muir was born and lived at a place called Huntershill, a district just to the north of Glasgow. The house still stands surrounded by it's gardens and trees. Thomas was born into a wealthy home. He studied law at Glasgow University but left on a point of honour in 1780 and completed his studies at Edinburgh University eventually having a law practice in Glasgow. He was however drawn to the reform movements that had developed all over Scotland. The reform movements had gathered momentum as the French revolution in 1789 inspired support for parliamentary reform all over Britain. Thomas Muir had connections with numerous reform societies throughout Scotland; in 1792 with William Skirving he helped to set up Scottish Reform Clubs, the membership open to every class. He wrote many pamphlets and spoke at a considerable number of meetings. He was an open and ardent supporter of radical political reform at a time when the authorities were becoming ever more nervous due to the events in France.

### **ARREST AND BANISHMENT.**

One year later, after presenting a nationalistic address to the Scottish Reform Movement General Convention, on behalf of United Irishmen. Thomas Muir was arrested and charged with sedition. His trial date, which took place in Edinburgh, was brought forward by several months while he was visiting France. Unable to get travelling arrangements in time, his non attendance made him an outlaw. He was found guilty of, '...having created disaffection by means of seditious speeches'. He returned to Scotland in August 1793 and was sentenced to be banished to Botany Bay for 14 years. However, George Washington heard of his sentence and sent the USS Otter to rescue him and take him to the new Republic of America. His escape was made good in 1796, however the USS Otter, on its way home was wrecked off Panama. Thomas Muir was then arrested by the Spanish and taken to Havana where he was deemed to be a spy and shipped back to Spain. On the way back to Spain they encountered three British ships and a battle ensued in which Thomas Muir lost an eye. The Spanish released him in 1797 whereupon he made his way to France. He was made a French citizen and died at Chantilly in 1799.

## THE FRENCH CONNECTION.

Here is the account from the primary newspaper of the French Revolution the *Gazette Nationale ou le Moniteur Universel*, No 72, 2 December 1797 of his escape and his arrival in France in 1797.

The celebrated Scot Thomas Muir, escaped from a thousand dangers is on the point of arriving in Paris. His transportation belongs to the history of revolutions; his courage in the face of adversity must serve as an example to the converts of philosophy and the happy issue of all his misfortunes must encourage all the martyrs of liberty.

The Scots have never forgotten their ancient independence, the massacre of their ancestors, the tragic death of their last Queen, the expulsion of the Stuarts from the throne of Great Britain: these memories, the consciousness of their want, the shocking contrast of English luxury, perhaps finally the example of our revolution, were the causes of the revolutionary movements which appeared in Scotland in 1792, in which Thomas Muir played one of the premier roles.

The secret committees which had been formed throughout the whole of Scotland unmasked themselves all at once. They sent delegates to Edinburgh who met together in a national convention with the avowed goal of obtaining parliamentary reform. Thomas Muir, enlightened thinker and impassioned orator was a member of this convention and left his mark on it. The British government deeply alarmed by the sudden meeting of this assembly, at once dispersed it. Many members were arrested and brought to trial in 1794, some of them, amongst others one named Jackson, were condemned to death; Thomas Muir and three others were deported to Botany Bay.

The uprising in Scotland gave great hopes to our revolutionary government; the hopes evaporated; but the republicans of France, who saw in the Edinburgh convention only the friends of liberty, interested themselves deeply in their fate. When the old committee of public safety learnt of the deportation of Muir and many of his companions, it sent out several frigates to rescue them, but they did not succeed and these unfortunates were left on the desolate shore of New Holland [Australia] Botany Bay: the vast tomb where the British government indiscriminately heaps together the most vile scoundrels and brave thinkers against whom it has taken umbrage. It was there that Thomas Muir, treated as a criminal for having wanted the liberty of his native land, was to end his

days, but one often says and I repeat with a sort of devout credulity: a benevolent spirit watches over the friends of man and the destiny of free peoples. Such a guardian angel took an interest in our unfortunate philanthropist, an American boat landed in this place of despair. Thomas Muir was received on board and conducted to the North West coast of America, but there he met new dangers, an English warship left Botany Bay several days before the American, and anchored in the same waters. Muir was in danger of being discovered and recaptured. To escape his persecutors once more, he resolved to traverse the continent of America: a terrifying enterprise, for which he needed the courage of a hero and the resignation of a sage. Happily the Captain of a Spanish schooner which he found in the harbour of Nootka gave him passage to Saint Blas, at the mouth of the gulf of California. As soon as he arrived Muir wrote to the viceroy of Mexico asking for hospitality in the name of the Republic of France, friends of the King of Spain. His request was favourably accepted and he was permitted to cross Mexican territory. He arrived next at Havana. The governor of this colony, without giving reasons, treated the stranger as a prisoner of war. Captive for four months, Muir suffered the most horrible treatment. Such are the most part of the petty despots who govern the colonies of great powers, they demonstrate their authority on defenceless individuals and think that the arbitrary power they exercise makes them equal to their masters. Finally, Thomas Muir was put on board a frigate to be taken to Spain, but this wasn't the end of his misfortunes. When the frigate was about to enter Cadiz it was attacked by part of Jervis's squadron who were blockading the port. The English had been informed that Thomas Muir was on board this ship and they wanted to put an end to the escape of this famous republican. This made them very eager for combat. The Spaniards defended themselves bravely. Muir saw the captivity awaiting him and preferred death. He armed himself, he fought, he hurled himself into the midst of danger. He had the courage of despair. He was wounded in the face and fell bathed in his own blood. The frigate was forced to surrender to the English. Muir became the principal object of their search. The English were told that he had been killed in combat and thrown in the sea. He lay for six days in their custody without being recognised - due to the disfigurement of his wound. Finally persuaded that he was no more, the English returned him to shore with the other prisoners.

Transported to the hospital at Cadiz, Muir was recognised by a Frenchman. The consul of the republic hurried at once to see him and to offer him his condolences, help and testimony of his high regard.

Muir addressed to the Directory the tale of his adventures and solemnly declared that he adopted the Republic of France as his native land. He received a very favourable response from the government, which was all that he could desire. Since then he has considered himself our fellow-citizen, free in the universe. He waits only for his recovery to come to France.

Translated by L. Yeoman from Gazette Nationale ou le Moniteur Universel, No 72, 2 December 1797

### **ORATOR, THE TRIAL SPEECH.**

The 3 hour speech that Thomas Muir made at his trial in Edinburgh was considered such a wonderful piece of English that it was published as an English text to be used in English exams in schools of some States in America until 1860. The following is a short extract from that speech.

*"This is now perhaps the last time that I shall address my country. I have explored the tenor of my past life. Nothing shall tear me from the record of my departed days. The enemies of reform have scrutinised, in a manner hitherto unexampled in Scotland, every action I may have performed, every word I may have uttered. Of crimes, most foul and horrible, have I been accused: of attempting to rear the standards of civil war; to plunge this land in blood, and to cover it with desolation. At every step, as the evidence of the crown advanced, my innocence has brightened. So far from inflaming the minds of men to sedition and outrage, all the witnesses have concurred, that my only anxiety was, to impress upon them the necessity of peace, of good order, and of good morals.*

*What then has been my crime? Not the lending to a relation a copy of Mr. Paine's works; not the giving away to another a few numbers of an innocent and constitutional publication; but for having dared to be, according to the measure of my feeble abilities, a strenuous and active advocate for an equal representation of the people, in the house of the people; for having dared to attempt to accomplish a measure, by legal means, which was to diminish the weight of their taxes, and to put an end to the effusion of their blood.*

*From my infancy to this moment, I have devoted myself to the cause of the people. It is a good cause. It will ultimately prevail. It will finally*

*triumph. Say then openly, in your verdict, if you do condemn me, which I presume you will not, that it is for my attachment to this cause alone, and not for those vain and wretched pretexts stated in the indictment, intended only to colour and disguise the real motives of my accusation. The time will come, when men must stand or fall by their actions; when all human pageantry shall cease; when the hearts of all shall be laid open to view.*

*If you regard your most important interests; if you wish that your consciences should whisper to you words of consolation, rather than speak to you in the terrible language of remorse, weigh well the verdict you are about to pronounce.*

*As for me, I am careless and indifferent to my fate. I can look danger, and I can look death in the face; for I am shielded by the consciousness of my own rectitude. I may be condemned to languish in the recesses of a dungeon. I may be doomed to ascend the scaffold. Nothing can deprive me of the recollection of the past; nothing can destroy my inward peace of mind, arising from the remembrance of having discharged my duty."*

In 1844 a monument was erected to him in Edinburgh.

## **THE BURNS CONNECTION.**

It is generally believed that it was the 1792 trials of the "Scottish Martyrs" Muir, Skirving, Palmer, Margarot, Gerrald that influenced Burns to pen "Scots Wha Hae" in 1793.

## **GLASGOW'S WEAVERS' STRIKE, 1787**

### **BACKGROUND.**

Glasgow's population at this period was around 60,000. Weaving was the main occupation in Glasgow and surrounding districts after the collapse of the tobacco trade due to the American War of Independence. The movement for parliamentary reform was still a seed in people's hearts. It took the French Revolution to cause it to shoot and grow. Attempts by workers to unite in defence of their living standards were deemed an offence under common law. The weavers' strike of 1787 was the first recorded strike in Glasgow's history.

Around June 1787 the Glasgow weavers and those of surrounding areas learned that the payments for weaving muslin were to be cut. This would be the second cut to the weavers income in eight months.

Many meetings were held around the districts and on June the 30th 1787 seven thousand attended a meeting on Glasgow Green. On the 4th of July terms of a unanimous resolution from the meeting appeared in a letter printed in the Glasgow Mercury. The letter was sent by James Mirrie on behalf of the committee appointed by the weavers. The letter pointed out that the cut suggested by the manufacturers would bring weavers income down by one-fourth while other trades had been rightfully rising in face of an increase in house rents and other means of subsistence. It also stated that they would not 'offer violence to any man or his work'.

### **STRIKE.**

The strike started in June and lasted through July, August, September in to October. Calton was a district then just outside Glasgow's boundary. Most of the population of the district were weavers. Around mid-day on Monday 3rd September, the authorities of Glasgow learned that a large crowd of weavers had formed at Calton near the city boundary at Gallowgate. The Lord Provost and Magistrates arrived to disperse the crowd but were driven back by stones thrown by the weavers. Later in the day the authorities were informed that the weavers were again assembling and proposed to march to Glasgow Cathedral.

### **RIOT ACT.**

The 39th Regiment of Foot, under the command of Colonel Kellet was sent. With them went the Lord Provost, the Sheriff-Substitute, a Magistrate and others intent on dispersing the weavers. The groups met at a spot near Drygate Bridge. The soldiers were ordered to open fire, 3

weavers were killed outright and three were mortally wounded. A considerable number were wounded. How many can only be guessed at.

It is now accepted that the Riot Act was not read, it is claimed that the Sheriff-Substitute was preparing to read the Riot Act when the soldiers opened fire in self defence. After the riot Magistrates offered rewards for information leading to the arrest of activists. As well as James Granger, one of the main organisers of the strike, others were arrested but not brought to trial. On the 4th September the Magistrates brought in another regiment from Beith.

Towards the end of September Colonel Kellet and Major Powlet were presented with the freedom of the city. At the Tontine Tavern a dinner was given for the officers. Each soldier stationed in Glasgow was given a new pair of shoes and stockings.

### **TRIAL AND SENTENCE.**

James Granger's trial, he was then aged 38, married and had six children, took place in Edinburgh in the year 1788. It was the first case of "forming illegal combinations" in Scotland. He was found guilty on Tuesday 22nd July and sentenced on Friday 25th The sentence was that he be carried to the Tollbooth, to remain there until the 13th August, on which day he would be publicly whipped through the streets of the city at the hands of the Common Executioner; that he should then be set at liberty and allowed till the 15th October to settle his affairs, after which he is to banish himself from Scotland for seven years, under the usual certifications, in case of his again returning during that term. A severe price to pay for trying to prevent a wage cut. James Granger returned and took part in the 1811-1812 strike and lived to the age of 75.



## **1820 INSURRECTION.**

### **CONDITIONS.**

The late 1700s through to the 1800s saw brutal repression of the reform groups. Execution and transportation being the norm for dissent. Bad harvests, chronic unemployment and soaring food prices caused destitution throughout the working class. Riots took place and ever severer punishments imposed. The Glasgow Advertiser, reports that six baker boys of good character were transported without charge, trial or conviction, for making a disturbance. In Glasgow on the 15th February 1800, hungry and angry crowds attacked meatsellers and grocers shops in Argyle Street, Townhead and Calton in an attempt to feed themselves. As usual the troops were sent in to disperse the crowds.

A short lived lull during the war against Napoleon soon ended with the Corn Law Act of 1815, plus a fresh wave of unemployment once again increasing the destitution. Once more demands for reform grew in strength. There were more riots in Glasgow, Dundee and Perth, jails filled to overflowing. In 1817 the Rev. Neil Douglas was indicted for preaching in an Anderston church against the Libertine Regent. Due to incompetence of the government spies the case collapsed. During 1819 and 1820 Glasgow was expanding taking in districts such as Bridgeton, Calton and Anderston. The population was around 147,000, most of the work was in mills and factories. The normal working day started at 5.30am, and it was a 14 hour day. Child labour was common, children as young as 6 years of age would be employed as machine operators, the wage would be a shilling a week. There was wide spread unemployment with abject poverty. Women and children sleeping rough was not an unusual sight.

### **UNITED SCOTSMAN SOCIETIES.**

Those working for reform were not intimidated and grew in strength and numbers. In spite of Government repression thousands of pamphlets appeared, one such pamphlet by Margarot reached 100,000 copies. There were meetings both secret and open. With the enforcement of the Militia (Conscription) Act, secret and revolutionary United Scotsman Societies, sprang up. The workers seeing the Army as the instrument of oppression used by the Authorities against the people. The Societies spread rapidly. When ever a Branch reached 16 members another was formed. Their National Convention met every 7 weeks, usually in Glasgow. On the

Glasgow Green workers went through military drill for the day of the Revolution.

One Sunday morning in 1820 a document appeared on walls all over Glasgow. It stated 'Friends and Countrymen! Rouse from that state in which we have sunk for so many years, we are at length compelled from the extremity of our sufferings, and the contempt heaped upon our petitions for redress, to assert our rights at the hazard of our lives.' There was also a call to arms signed, 'By order of the Committee of Organization for forming a Provisional Government. Glasgow April 1st. 1820.'

A footnote read; 'Britons - God - Justice - the wish of all good men, are with us. Join together and make it one good cause, and the nations of the earth shall hail the day when the Standard of Liberty shall be raised on its native soil.' Government agents spread stories that the workers in England were already armed, and that Kinloch of Kinloch was on his way from France with 50,000 troops: 5,000 of which would be camped on the Cathkin Braes and would seize the city's banks and other institutional centres. They would also arrest any reactionaries. Of course this was a deliberate attempt to get the Reformers to act knowing the weakness of the Reformers arms and the superior forces at the authorities' disposal, allowing them to destroy the Reform movement and execute its main activists.

## **ANDREW HARDIE.**

There was considerable excitement and discussion in working-class districts. More and more courageous young men formed groups of volunteers all in the hope of liberation from poverty and destitution. Their arms and equipment however never matched their courage. Many Glasgow weavers answered the call of 'The Committee for the Formation of a Provisional Government', among them was a young man named Andrew Hardie. Andrew Hardie and about eighty other young men met at Fir Park (now the Necropolis), behind the Cathedral. They were informed by an alleged comrade from England that they were to march to Falkirk to meet up with reinforcements from England. After the forces met they were to take over the Carron Ironworks where there would be arms. Of course there were no such English reinforcements.

Hardie met Baird at Condorret and become sworn comrades and were unanimously elected leaders of the small band. Marching through the night to Castlecary, by which time their numbers were down to about half

the original number. Some of the original group were government agents and had left the group on the pretext of organising further support from other areas. The reinforcements from England nowhere to be seen, soon the less courageous seeing the odds against them slipped away one by one. The small band left would have been aware that it would be impossible for them to take the Carron Ironworks and that they had been misled and no doubt would have abandoned the project. Before they could make that decision, just at the hill of Bonnymuir a troop of Hussars from Stirling Castle confronted them. The small band of ill equipped and ill armed weavers and artisans decide to fight rather than surrender. It was a fierce, grim and bloody battle, all of the band were either dead or wounded before the surrender. The Commander of the Hussars was wounded and his horse shot from under him. By nightfall all the Reformers had been rounded up and imprisoned in Stirling Castle. Later taken to Edinburgh to be tried as traitors. The Gazette announced to all of Europe that the treasonable Provisional Government of Scotland had been annihilated. The false proclamation of the authorities had succeeded, it had brought the Reformers into open conflict with the forces of the Crown, they could now be tried for high treason and executed rather than transportation.

### **JAMES WILSON.**

Another reformer was James Wilson, a much respected man in the district of Strathavon. He would be 60 years old at the time of the 'Proclamation'. His home was a meeting place for all advanced thinkers of the district. In the early morning a day or so after the 'Proclamation' Wilson was roused by a man calling himself Shields, who earlier by fallacious promises had gathered about 30 volunteers. Shields stated that the 'Provisional Government' was meeting with success right across the country and they must all take up arms and support the struggle. Wilson at first was not convinced, Shields cursed and swore, calling him a coward and stated that he would be shot. Wilson unwillingly agreed. Shields insisted Wilson took with him a rusty old sword that was hanging on the wall. The little band set off, Wilson carrying an old tattered banner that had been picked up on route. The banner read 'Scotland free - or a desert'. After marching some distance Shields slipped away. When Wilson noticed this he was suspicious and called for the project to be abandoned. Wilson had

reached his home when he was surrounded by police, taken to Hamilton barracks and then in irons to Glasgow.

Wilson was brought to trial on the 20th July 1820 charged with treason. The jury could not agree on a conviction. Those against, agreed a guilty verdict when the others agreed to unanimously recommend mercy. It was known that Wilson was a peace loving man and would never harm anyone. Considering his age and demeanour and merely 'technically guilty', it was never thought that the law would be so merciless. However the government afraid of growing demands for reform were out to deter the people from supporting the reformers. Wilson was sentenced to be executed within 40 days. All pleadings for mercy on his behalf from prominent and respected men failed. On the 30th of August 1820, Wilson was taken from his cell and bound, calmly he read and requested the audience join him in singing the 51st Psalm, this was solemnly done. He was taken to the scaffold outside the Justiciary Hall where about 20,000 people had assembled. Surrounding the scaffold were the Rifle Brigade, the 33rd Regiment of Infantry and the 3rd Dragoon Guards. A little while after being hanged he was cut down and the axeman severed his head. Prior to his execution Wilson had requested that his remains be buried 'in the dust of his fathers' in the village of Strathavon. He was lead to believe that his request would be granted. His relatives came in mourning to witness the execution and claim his remains but instead the authorities gave the order that the remains should be carted to the paupers ground near the High Church and to be buried there under the watchful eye of the Sheriff-Officer. However that night Wilson's daughter and niece, disinterred the body and with the aid of others carried it back to Strathavon for an honoured burial.

Of those arrested at the battle of Bonnymuir, Andrew Hardie was the first to be tried. The trial was a travesty of justice with an English barrister prosecuting and government spies giving false testimony. Andrew Hardie was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged, beheaded and quartered. A few more preliminaries saw the death sentence given against all remaining eighteen prisoners with John Baird being singled out as being equally guilty as Hardie. Before the execution date of 8th. of September, all the prisoners with the exception of Hardie and Baird were granted mercy and transported to New South Wales, and eventually pardoned in 1832 by William IV.

On the 8th of September 1820 the gallows stood ready in the square off Broad Street under the walls of Stirling Castle. While waiting to be taken to the scaffold, Baird and Hardie were asked if they would like a glass of wine. They accepted and rose to their feet, Hardie said 'Here is to a speedy deliverance to our Country', and Baird responded with, 'Amen! and may the homeless wind that wafts o'er our silent graves blow to our countrymen their true and legitimate rights'. The Sheriff then asked if they intended to address the crowd from the scaffold. When they replied they would, the Sheriff stated he would refuse their request. This caused some protest from the courtroom. The Sheriff then agreed they could say a few non-political words.

Once placed on the drop of the gallows Baird addressed the silent crowd saying, 'Fellow countrymen, it is our dying prayer that you may all worship God according to your respective creeds, ... Although this day we die an ignominious death by unjust laws our blood, which in a very few minutes shall flow on this scaffold, will cry to heaven for vengeance, and may it be the means of our afflicted countrymen's speedy redemption'. An infuriated Sheriff stepped forward to silence Baird, but a roar from the crowd seemed to stop him. However, Baird said no more.

## **THE FATE OF HARDIE AND BAIRD.**

When the crowd again became silent, Hardie spoke saying, 'Yes, my countrymen, in a few minutes our blood shall be shed on this scaffold, and our heads severed from our bodies on the block you all see on that other scaffold, for no other sin but seeking the legitimate rights of our ill used and down trodden beloved countrymen'. At this the furious Sheriff stepped forward and ordered him to stop, '-such violent and improper language'. Again the crowd roar, 'Murder! Murder! Murder!'. Hardie continued, 'My friends, I hope none of you are hurt by this exhibition. Please, after it is over, go quietly home and read your Bibles, and remember the fate of Hardie and Baird'. Hardie, turning to the Sheriff said, 'Sheriff, what we said to our countrymen we intended to say, no matter whether you granted us liberty or not. So we are now both done'. They were allowed to embrace each other and then the murder in the name of justice took place. After hanging from the scaffold until dead, the hangman, Tam Young and the masked headsman carried the bodies over to the second scaffold. Hardie's head was first placed on the block and was removed with one blow, with Baird, however, the headsman

missed and smashed the jawbone, the second blow removed Baird's head. After these gruesome events the scene from the crowd when breaking up was one of screaming, shrieking and some fainting amid cries for vengeance.

### **AN HONOURABLE BURIAL.**

The dismembered bodies were buried in a single grave outside Stirling Castle, where they remained for 27 years. It was then decided by Glasgow Radicals to give them an honourable burial. A party of Radicals travelled from Glasgow to Stirling to find the grave, but the grave was unmarked. However an old man named Thomas Chalmers, pointed out a particular spot claiming this to be the grave. After much doubt and considerable digging they came upon the bones of two bodies. The old man had been accurate in his pinpointing the spot as the bones could be identified by the smashed jawbone of Baird. They were disinterred and reverently buried in Sighthill Cemetery in the north of Glasgow and an inscribed monument erected by public subscription.

## **COTTON SPINNERS STRIKE, 1837**

### **DEPRESSION AND STRIKE.**

1830 saw a sharp depression grip the West of Scotland. By 1837 the weaving industry was attempting to push through wage cuts. The cotton spinners of Glasgow took strike action in an attempt to defend their wages. The strike lasted from July through to the end of August 1837. During the strike a blackleg (knobstick), was shot and the authorities arrested the leadership of the union. Those held in prison were indicted on midnight on the 24th of October, the last possible moment they could be legally held. The trial was to take place on the 10th of November in Edinburgh.

### **TRIAL.**

The Public Prosecutor had taken three months to put their case together. The defence had fifteen days to prepare an answer to the charges. Three days before the trial and without knowledge of their agents, the prisoners were moved, heavily ironed, from Bridewell Jail in Glasgow to Edinburgh Jail. Just before the trial the Crown stated " ...not convenient for them to proceed with the trial...", and postponed the trial until the 27th of November. The delay increased the expenses for the prisoners' council and the witnesses.

Andrew Gemmel, the law agent for the prisoners put all other business aside, immediately employed 15 extra clerks and worked day and night to copy down Crown witnesses' evidence. This amounted to 2 large volumes containing evidence from over 150 witnesses from different parts of the country and was completed in fifteen days. The verdict from the trial was;

On charges,

1. Conspiracy to keep wages up.
2. Disturbances at Oakbank Factory.
3. Molestation at Mile End Factory.

Proven by a majority of one vote.

On other charges;

Appointment of "secret committee" to do unlawful acts.

Attempting to set fire to houses and factories.

Invading dwelling houses of, and assaulting "knobs".

Not proven by unanimous verdict.

The sentence of the court was that the prisoners should be transported for a period of 7 years. However they spent 3 years in prison hulks at Woolwich on the Thames and then were pardoned. After the trial the Cotton Spinners' Union collapsed due to the lack of funds.

### **WAGE TRENDS.**

Below is a short table showing the trend in wages during the period referred to above.

Wage trends (wkly)	1836-37	1841-42	1846-47
Cotton spinners (machine)	25/-	35/-	25/- 26/-
Cotton spinners (power)	6/-	11/-	7/- 8/-
Coalminers	30/-	25/-	15/-20/-
Bricklayers	18/-21/-	21/-	24/-
Joiners	20/-	?	22/-
Stone masons	22/-	18/-	22/6
Handloom weavers	6/-	6/-	7/-
Railway labourers	14/-	?	15/-
Railway masons	21/-	21/-	21/-31/-



## **TOM ANDERSON, 1863-1947**

### **EARLY YEARS.**

Tom Anderson was born on the 17th December 1863, at a place called Pollokshaws in Glasgow. His father, a hand-loom weaver came from a long line of hand-loom weavers and a line of Presbyterians. Though Tom's father was a Presbyterian he also held very strong radical views and taught his children to be courteous to all but bow to none. The family moved to Airdrie, at that time it was a small village not far from Glasgow. At the age of ten, Tom started work. He did not follow the family craft but at the age of fourteen started his apprenticeship as a joiner with Shanks of Motherwell (a small town near Airdrie). Tom was by nature a rebel and did not take readily to the ideas of the Church. He became an avid reader and devoured the books in the local library. His favourite being Gibbon's "Decline and fall of the Roman Empire", he later wrote 'Across the Ages', a small book based on his study of this book. His attendance at Church dwindled and eventually stopped as Tom became a Freethinker.

### **TRADE UNIONISM & POLITICS.**

At the age of twenty in 1883 he moved back to Glasgow and joined the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, a year later he was elected as the society's president. In 1889, Tom married Bella Craig, she came from a Unitarian family. Throughout her life she looked on the bible stories as stories of childhood and not to be taken seriously, she was a staunch comrade and enthusiastically helped Tom in all his activities. They had three sons James, Robert, and Tom, and one daughter, Bella. During the 1914-1918 war, their son James was an Absolutist. The year 1894 saw Tom join the newly formed Independent Labour Party and worked with them for several years. Later he joined the Socialist Democratic Federation, and threw himself into its pioneering work. In 1907 the south side branch of the SDF presented Tom with an illuminated address in appreciation of his work on behalf of socialism.

### **SOCIALIST SUNDAY SCHOOL.**

1894 was also the year that Tom founded the first Socialist Sunday school and three years later he formed the South Side Socialist Sunday School, which continued well into the 1930s. Tom believed in the Catholic maxim, "Give us the child until he is six, and you can do what you like with him afterwards". For over thirty years Tom Anderson

taught the children of the working class the virtue of independence, the power to think for themselves and the meaning of socialist revolution. Tom was an accomplished musician and a fine poet, and in 1907 he compiled a song book containing fifty three songs. Of these songs thirty three had original melodies and most were of a socialist nature. His poetry was always of social protest and revolt. Tom Anderson was probably the first socialist member of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners and it was as a socialist that in January and February 1901 he led one of the biggest strikes in the city. Throughout the strike Tom showed himself to be a courageous and very capable leader and gained the respect of all the workers involved and those out with the trade. After the strike Tom found it almost impossible to get work, he seemed to be blacklisted by all of the city's employers. At this period he left his trade and started working for himself.

### **TEN PROLETARIAN MAXIMS.**

Tom now joined the Socialist Labour Party, and in 1910 they opened a Socialist School for children. They dropped the word "Sunday" as they did not want to be seen as hypocrites. Tom became President of the school and remained so throughout its existence. In June 1917 the first issue of Revolution appeared with Tom as editor. 1917 also saw Tom write his famous 'Ten Proletarian Maxims', he believed them to be the basic principles of Revolutionary Socialism. In 1918, Tom founded the Proletarian School Movement in conjunction with the Proletarian Colleges, with the ten proletarian maxims as the basis of its teachings. The movement was inaugurated with the purpose of teaching children of the working class the necessity of abolishing the present political state. In March 1919 the first number of the 'Red Dawn' appeared, this was the official organ of the Proletarian School Movement and Tom was the editor. The Proletarian Colleges were to carry forward the work of the Proletarian Schools, but embrace all the social activities of the working class. Among the subjects taught were, economics, industrial history, sexual science, drama and music. Tom Anderson as Principle of the college was fortunate to have the help and assistance of John MacLean MA, John S. Clarke and many others in the socialist revolutionary movement. On the 4th of April 1920, the Proletarian Schools held their first annual conference with Tom Anderson as President. The outcome of this conference was the formation of the International Proletarian School

Movement affiliated to the Third International and the Young People's Movement. By now the movement had a good hold in Scotland and Wales and was spreading in the Midlands and the south.

In 1923, a public petition was organised by the National Citizens Union, deploring, "...the existence and the rapid growth of Proletarian Schools which by their teaching of sedition and revolution, and their blasphemous treatment of all religion, are fast becoming a menace to the stability of the democratic constitution of his country; as well as to our national character, moral standards, and home life; and urge upon the Government the necessity of taking immediate steps to deal with this communist movement to pervert the minds of British children; and to give all facilities for the private bill which is being introduced with this object into the House of Commons." The private bill mentioned in the above petition was introduced into the House of Commons by Sir John Butchard Bart., MP. The National Citizens Union managed to raise 71 petitions and collect 72,718 signatures. Some indication as to how worried the established institutions had become.

### **SPEAKER & WRITER.**

As well as being an excellent speaker Tom Anderson was a brilliant story teller and over a period of many years wrote extensively, often under different pen names, the better known being John Davidson, Mary Davis and Margaret Dobson. In July 1919, under the name of John Davidson he published in book form his story of the class war. It appeared in the New York Weekly People, it was reprinted in the Socialist and the Sydney People and the IWW of Sydney printed it in thousands as a propaganda leaflet. In February 1924, under the name of Margaret Dobson, he published Sex knowledge for Parents. In July 1924 the Government confiscated the entire issue, leaving Tom facing considerable financial difficulties. Tom Anderson continued in the revolutionary movement all his life and also continued writing. Below is listed some of Tom Anderson's printed thoughts;

- Across the Ages: Short stories for young workers, (part 1) 1930, (part 2) 1932, 3rd. ed 1945.
- Two slaves and the underman (1915)
- The Proletarian song-book (1919)
- The fat bourgeois: A story for the young (1919)
- The class state (1930)

- Comrade Josef Dietzgen (1937)
- Comrade John MacLean: His life (1930, 2nd. ed. 1938)
- The God Man (1931)
- The story of the inquisition (1946)
- Proletarian poems (2nd. ed. 1946)

This is only a small proportion of the writings of Tom Anderson but might give some idea to the breadth of ideas and the effort he put into his beliefs. Tom had been involved in public speaking from the age of fourteen and then from the age of twenty five to the age of fifty five there never was a week he didn't speak at one or more meetings during the open air propaganda season, nor during the winter indoor meetings.

Tom, was born in poverty of working class parents, he was well qualified to understand their plight and their hopes. He never drifted away from his class nor betrayed any of the principles he professed. After a lifetime of struggle for the cause of revolutionary socialism Tom Anderson died in 1947.

## **THE BIRTH OF GLASGOW'S ANARCHISM.**

### **THE BRITISH BIRTH**

It is difficult to pinpoint the start of British Anarchism. It would seem that there were no Anarchist Groups before 1880, though there are records of individual Anarchists before this date. The non-conformists of the era who were seeking freedom from C of E intervention were in no way prepared to allow freedom for secularists. It was around 1880 that Socialism crept in to influence the radical movements of that period. Though the ruling elite, from 1850 on, included capitalist and professional classes, it in no way reduced its belief in its exclusive right to rule. The society of the late 1800's was divided into two main classes, the productive class, masters and men, and the un- or non productive class, the aristocracy and the church. The real power lying with the latter group.

It is probably not surprising that socialism, or some attempt at social justice, was creeping in at this time as the Booth Survey of 1880 states that 1/3 of the population were living well below a most stringent subsistence level. Misery, degradation and disease at the bottom of the social structure could graphically compare to Dante's Inferno.

Around the 1880's Anarchist Mutualism, collectivism and communism were being taken up by British reform groups. Some of the credit for this perhaps should be given to Frank Kitz born 1848, and his support for the Paris Commune 1871. What was now being called into question was the justice of a system which conferred wealth on a class of parasites and shrouded the lives of thousands, who laboured, in poverty.

1877 Frank Kitz formed the English Revolutionary Society at Rose St. London.

In 1878. Anti-socialist laws were introduced in Germany, the resulting persecution saw a considerable influx of German Socialists to London. German Anarchist Groups had existed since around the mid 1870's and the anti-socialist laws probably created more anarchists than they could ever hope to silence. 1878 saw Johann Most arrive in London from Germany. 4/1/1879 saw the first issue of "Freiheit", from 1890 on it began printing specifically Anarchist articles.

## THE GLASGOW BIRTH.

The following is a short extract from **Mairtin O' Cathain's** book **'With a bent elbow and a clenched fist'** A Brief History of the Glasgow Anarchists

### INTRODUCTION.

Sometime during the Spanish Revolution, probably about 1937, a Glaswegian who had gone to fight Franco, was arrested by the Stalinist authorities then in the process of crushing the revolution. This nameless individual, popularised by the play *From the Calton to Catalonia* by Willie Maley, had been 'leader aff' of the Cheeky Forty, a Garnkad-based gang, and was arrested in Spain for 'hooliganism'. Fighting the state for years on his own doorstep had obviously whetted this character's appetite for a more large-scale engagement. One could easily claim generations of Glasgow criminal rebels against the status quo for the cause of anarchism, but then many anarchists might not agree with such an inclusion. Certainly, the crux of the matter is that Glasgow has had and continues to have a long and venerable history of revolt. Anarchism has found a central role, I would argue, in that development and has, moreover, always found a welcoming home in the tenements, factories, pubs, halls and back-rooms, as well as the hearts and minds of Glasgow people. But what is it?

Defining anarchism is sometimes like trying to sieve sunlight - as it is anarchist it defies definition and evolves against it. There are, to my mind, only a couple of general principles that most anarchists agree on. These come from that early pioneer of the movement, Mikhail Bakunin, who summed up the idea by saying socialism without freedom is tyranny just as freedom without socialism is exploitation. These two elements are the fundamentals of anarchy - liberty and equality - in equal measure and to their full, guided only by the obvious fact that freedom is only freedom when it does not interfere with the freedom of others. This may sound like an overly simplistic description of a profound and subtle philosophy, but it is better than defining anarchists by what we oppose. There are numerous traditions and differences between anarchists, but this book will try insofar as possible to follow the 'anarchism without adjectives' position. A considerable body of material relating to the Glasgow anarchists is already available and many anarchists across the world may at

some time have heard of Guy Aldred or Stuart Christie. Mark Shipway's *Anti-Parliamentary Communism*, published in 1996, drew together many of the strands of anarchism in Glasgow and presented them in a lucid and engaging fashion. This work drew heavily on John Taylor Caldwell's 1988 book, *Come Dungeons Dark*, which outlined the life and work of Guy Aldred. Caldwell's own autobiography followed in two volumes published in 1993 and 1999 (*Severely Dealt With: Growing up in Belfast and Glasgow* and *With Fate Conspire: Memoirs of a Glasgow seafarer and anarchist*). Unfortunately, Shipway's book was published too late to benefit from the insights of Caldwell's second volume, or from the extremely valuable oral history placed on the world-wide web by the late Scottish anarchist Ian Heavens of Spunk Press and the Edinburgh Autonomous Centre. This latter contribution contains a 1977 interview conducted with Charlie Baird Snr., who had been involved with the Glasgow anarchists for many years, and also a more lengthy interview with Charlie Baird, Mollie Baird, John Taylor Caldwell, and the Raesides, Jimmy and Babs, who had returned from Australia to Glasgow for a visit in 1987. Most recently, the appearance of Stuart Christie's autobiography, *My Granny Made Me an Anarchist: The Christie File: Part 1, 1946-64* (2002), which will run to several volumes when completed (*General Franco Made Me a Terrorist: The Christie File: Part 2, 1964-67* was published in 2003, and the third volume, *Edward Heath Made Me Angry: The Christie File: Part 3, 1967-80*, is due in 2004), add immeasurably to our knowledge of anarchism in Glasgow, Scotland, and Britain. The above works form the corpus of the material produced about anarchism in Glasgow, and as well as drawing together elements from each I have added a number of other sources, such as Rhona Hodgart's valuable biographical pamphlet on Ethel McDonald and extracts, like Robert Lynn's, from the 1988 *Worker's City* book. Certainly a single volume summary of Glasgow anarchism was needed, even if only to pull together the various scattered pieces mentioned above.

Anarchism and anarchists do not play a major role in the historiography of Clydeside, and mostly it merits a mention for the perceived eccentricity of Aldred or because the demigods of Glasgow labourism, such as John McGovern, Willie Gallacher, and Manny Shinwell were briefly anarchists in the city. The shibboleths of the 'Red Clydeside' saga have failed to be shaken never mind stirred by the fact that Glasgow anarchists

were involved in almost every single strike and labour protest in the city from 1915 to 1920. That their numbers could not compete with those of the Independent Labour Party and its state socialist cohorts, should by rights, validate if not ennoble their importance and significance. The avoidance or disinterest of labour historians in tackling anarchism may be a reflection of many things, and while anarchists are not seeking to redefine 'Red Clydeside' as 'Red and Black Clydeside' just yet, many of us feel it is incumbent upon established Scottish labour historians to sit up and take notice of a movement that pre-dates both the Labour Party and state communism. Having started with a 'primitive rebel' of the Glasgow street gang scene by way of illustration, I would also like to end with one. Thomas Coyne, a gang member from the Wine Alley in Govan, was recorded in the summer of 1934 as shouting at police officers prior to attacking them, 'Sillitoe can't stop us can you?' The reference here was to the Glasgow Police Chief Constable brought in to 'clean up' the city and deal with its young tearaways, but with a slight re-structuring we can re-apply the challenge to 2004 by saying our history shows that 'State capitalism and state socialism can't stop us, can you?'

## **ROOTS & CONTEXT, 1871-1892**

'Life must be lived forwards, but can only be understood backwards'  
Kierkegaard

The roots of Glasgow anarchism can be traced in many individuals, movements and struggles. The city's Whiggish, radical and liberal leanings from the eighteenth into the nineteenth century were a fertile ground for theories and modes of struggle opposed to authoritarianism, capitalism and conservatism. Although claimed by generations of Marxists, the militant Glasgow cotton weavers of 1773 and 1787, appear to have been largely leaderless and their strike and sabotage techniques presaged the development of syndicalism over a hundred years later. But their method was not alone a tactic, for the cotton weavers encompassed an entire world-view of radicalism and utopian alternatives within their union 'combination'. Their's was a revolutionary ardour inspired by the libertarian rhetoric of the American revolution and expressed within the union by a brotherhood of equality and affection that served as the basis for their 'new world'. Six of the 1787 Calton weavers paid the ultimate price for that ardour and world view, but the tradition of militant syndicalism



pioneered by them lived on, despite being channelled down the dead-end road of parliamentary reform by some of their followers in later years. The great English libertarian, William Godwin (1756-1836), following on from the Calton Weavers also exercised a profound influence on the establishment of anarchist sympathies in Glasgow. His great 1793 work, *Political Justice*, was very popular, and in Glasgow, as in other urban districts, literally hundreds of workers banded together to purchase and read copies. By 1833, Glasgow's cotton bosses were still opposing the Factory Act of that year brought in to reduce the working day from 12 to 10 hours, while in 1839, those gathered to hear the early communitarian socialist, Robert Owen, were already terming themselves 'socialists'. Max Nettlau, the excellent anarchist historian, described Owen (who had read Godwin), as 'a thoroughly emancipated mind', and felt Owen's attempts to create cooperative 'free towns', like New Lanark, envisioned new societies of self-governing status that would have no interest in or need for the state. Owen also exerted an influence on Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and through his communistic endeavours in Glasgow - in a city already coloured by radical anti-authoritarian trades unionism, a culture of anarchism in all but name was well-established by the 1850s. Lest readers imagine this to have been a puritanical culture, it is interesting to note that in 1859 there was the establishment known as the Working Men's Refreshment Rooms in the Gallowgate (where working men still refresh themselves with regularity, often accompanied by working women). The keeper of the Rooms was arrested in that year for the distillation of some form of poitin, but no doubt such initiative was taken up again after a suitable period of time had elapsed. 'Whiskey and freedom gang the'gither', as Rabbie said.

### **THE DUNDONALD ENIGMA.**

The earliest known fragment of Glasgow anarchist history we can talk of centres around the figure of Duncan Dundonald, apparently a Clydeside-based engineering worker. Dundonald is of great importance because he is said to have met Mikhail Bakunin in Geneva in 1869, translated the Jesuitical Revolutionary Catechism in 1870, and then returned to Scotland to carry out anarchist propaganda and revolutionary sabotage. This would accord anarchism in Scotland generally, and in Glasgow particularly, the same vintage as its Spanish, and Barcelona, counterpart. While Dundonald appears to have been no Giuseppe Fanelli (1827-77), he

seems to have gone home to Glasgow earnestly intent on missionising for anarchism, and this may go some way to explaining the depth and longevity of anarchist sentiment on Clydeside for over a hundred years thereafter. His obscurity to later generations of Glasgow anarchists could be related to the fact that he emigrated to Australia, possibly in the 1890s, where he settled in Melbourne and continued his activities under the assumed name of Donald Duncan. Much more research needs to be completed on this potentially critical individual for Glasgow and Scottish anarchist history.

### **THE MCDONALDS.**

According to the late Albert Meltzer, Glasgow anarchism can be dated to the early efforts of Amy McDonald and her German partner, Fred, a baker and member of the First International, who had been allied to the German anarchist workers. He states they were based in Brighton in their small flat, and spoke on the Green, where they were often attacked by irate Christians. This clashes, or may simply be confused with the account of John Taylor Caldwell, who alleges organised it is 'buried in a certain amount of mystery'. The anarchist propaganda in Glasgow began with a French Communard and his partner - a woman named McDonald - from Crown Street in the Gorbals sometime after 1871. He also states the anarchists used Glasgow Green (as did most orators and politicians), though they took up their pitch most regularly on Jail Square, facing the old court house. Caldwell states, however, that no-one has been able to properly research the early movement so similarity of these accounts indicates that they are about one and the same subject, though Meltzer clearly shows more exactitude and certainty (and was younger than Caldwell when writing his history).

### **THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE ANARCHISTS & VISITORS.**

The next step in the development of Glasgow anarchism came in 1884 with the founding of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) branch in Glasgow. Many of those involved in the SDF had been members of the Democratic Club and/or the Republican Club in the city, and were in the main ardently anti-parliamentarian. This caused divisions as happened elsewhere, and when William Morris broke away to form the more vibrant Socialist League, most Glasgow SDF members simply decamped to the new body. Branches then quickly appeared in other parts of Scotland. It has been argued that most members of the Glasgow

Socialist League were middle-class intellectuals, and while there were quite a number of prominent individuals from such a background, the anarchist backbone of the group was composed chiefly of the working class element.

After the 1886 visit to Glasgow of Peter Kropotkin and with the established anarchist propaganda continuing in the city, the local branch of the Socialist League became much more ardently anarchist than merely anti-parliamentarian. This much was noted by William Morris himself in his diary when he commented, 'Kropotkin's visit has turned them a little in the Anarchist direction, which gives them an agreeable air of toleration'. The 'Anarchist Prince', as the media liked to portray him, spoke on 27 November on 'Socialism: Its Growing Force and Final Aim'.

Kropotkin's visit was followed in 1888 by that of Chicago anarchist, Lucy Parsons, partner of Albert Parsons, one of the executed Haymarket martyrs. This can only have served to further strengthen anarchist sentiment coming, as it did, hard on the heels of the expulsion of the parliamentarian advocates from within the Socialist League. The Socialist League itself did not have a long life thereafter, and its collapse in 1890, left the way open for independent anarchist organisation up and down the country. Those efforts had crystallised in Glasgow within the space of two years, and the stage was set for an identifiably anarchist grouping to emerge. By 1937, there were 3 groups of libertarians in Glasgow, Aldred's USM, Wm McDougall's APCF (of which Jennie Patrick was a member) and Anarchist Federation of Frank Leech

### **'Bailte bánbhreaca idir neoin bhig agus béal maidne' Seosamh Mac-Grianna**

As has been noted, the Glasgow branch of the Socialist League became quickly subsumed by anarchist sentiment long before the breakaway of the parliamentarians and place-hunters. There is little doubt but that the advocates of anarchism were also predominantly working class, as we know that many of the former middle class members of the Glasgow Socialist League later became prime movers in the Independent and Scottish Labour Parties. Although there is not, as yet, any direct evidence that Glasgow's Socialist League anarchists had started to organise as a distinct body prior to 1892, they certainly were active and referring to themselves as anarchists prior to that. Whether we can say that the

anarchist propaganda of the McDonalds constituted a group is open to debate, but the formation of the first Glasgow Anarchist Group came about late in 1892. The initial burst of activity did not last and according to a member of the group, J. Blair Smith, writing in the Sheffield-based, *The Anarchist*, it was not until October 1893 that a proper re-organisation took place and the Group set to work, eventually by the following year gaining 'five times the members we started with'. The local Social Democratic Federation showed solidarity and worked alongside the anarchists, but all anarchist speakers and publications were quickly banned by the Labour Party in the city. Whether this was as a result of old Socialist League animosities or through losing members to the libertarians, as Blair Smith claimed, is arguable, but it set the tone of hostility and intolerance towards anarchism that the Labour Party in Scotland maintained for many years thereafter.

Undoubtedly, anarchism more widely in Scotland was a growing force at this time. The Edinburgh Socialist League and its ginger group, the Scottish Land and Labour League, also evinced the strong libertarian character of its Glasgow counterpart early on. Much of this was down to the activism and propaganda of a number of important anarchists in 'auld reekie', such as Andreas Scheu, Thomas H. Bell and Paul Reclus, nephew of the famous French anarchist geographer, Elisée Reclus. Andreas Scheu (1844-1927) was an Austrian furniture designer active in German anarchist politics from as early as 1870. He went to London in 1874 where he was involved with and quickly became disillusioned by the stagnation of émigré German socialists. In Johann Most (1846-1906), he found a much more active and energetic anarchist comrade and helped Most with his German language newspaper, *Freiheit*, published in London and smuggled into Germany from 1879 to 1882. Most served 16 months hard labour in England for an article titled 'Endlich' (At Last), in response to the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, and left for New York on his release. Scheu had grown impatient of Most's lax attitude to security and general indiscretion before his arrest but with Most gone, and only the pedestrian conversation of the Anarchist Club to fill the space, Scheu drifted into the Democratic Federation, its successor the Social Democratic Federation, and then the Socialist League, of which he was a founder member. Scheu took a sales job with Jaeger in Edinburgh in 1885 and remained in the city until the 1890s where he was

a beacon of anti-authoritarian sentiment and practise. He made many contacts with Glasgow over the years and presumably many trips also. He eventually returned to Germany via London after many years of activism throughout which he appears to have remained a committed anti-parliamentarian socialist if not an anarchist.

Thomas H. Bell, was another young member of the Edinburgh Socialist League, who, perhaps inspired by the example and ideas of Scheu, became a confirmed anarchist and carried this revolutionary creed with him to London and then Los Angeles, where he was still active in the 1930s. Bell made a favourable impression on many anarchists who came across him, most notably Voltairine de Cleyre and he was related by marriage to the indefatigable English anarchist, John Turner (1864-1934), who employed him as secretary of the 3,000 strong Shop Assistants' Union in 1898. Bell had been active in the Freedom Group in London along with his companion Lizzie Turner Bell. His sister, Jessie Bell Westwater was also later an anarchist activist in the US. It is generally less safe to assume that Bell had Glasgow contacts and a hand in helping the movement there, but his omission from consideration would certainly be unfair, and might also draw the criticism of a Glasgow bias in this work.

A third individual worth mentioning whom we can be more certain spoke and supported the early Glasgow anarchists from a base in Edinburgh was Paul Reclus (1858-1941). Reclus, like another French anarchist Luci  n Gu  r  neau (1857-1940), spent a number of years in Scotland after police crackdowns against anarchists in France. Reclus lived in Edinburgh from about 1894 and visited Glasgow often where he was involved in aiding the local anarchist movement. He eventually returned to France in 1914.

It is important to mention the influence of Edinburgh because one of the first acts of the Glasgow Anarchists after their re-formation in October 1893, was the organisation of a Scottish Anarchist Conference in December of that year. The Scottish Labour Party was meeting at the same time in Glasgow and so the Anarchists may have chosen the date specially. We don't know much about the individuals involved with the Glasgow Anarchists at this time with a few exceptions. John Paton, a co-founder of the later Glasgow Anarchist Group, fails to name those he claimed were active in the 1890s group whom he met around 1910-12. He refers

on a few occasions to what he termed a 'Pickwickian grocer from Springburn' who was an anarchist-communist, but who despite his incoherency, encouraged Paton to move towards anarchism. He also refers to 'a polyglot Swiss baker with an extreme fondness for quoting Michael Bakunin', a character who appears to closely resemble the pioneering figure of Fred McDonald. An individual, actually named by Paton as one of the old anarchist group, was an Irishman, named McLardy, probably from Belfast originally. Paton is generally dismissive of the older anarchists in Glasgow, however, whom he judged to be non-committal and largely theoretical in their anarchism. Whether this attitude contributed to the later divisions in the Group, and the departure of 1890s veteran Angus McKay is difficult to say but it cannot have helped matters. There are only two members of the 1890s Glasgow Anarchists whom we know any detail about, and this is largely due to the fact of their long association with prominent American anarchists who kept their correspondence. William and Maggie Duff were an unmarried couple active in Glasgow anarchist circles since the 1880s. William (1868-1939) was born in the village of Kirriemuir, near Forfar in Angus, the son of David Duff, an ale brewer from Forfar and Jessie Lowdon. William was their first son, born into the rich history of the Clan Duff, descendants of Scotland's earliest people, the Picts. Interestingly, he was born just on the other side of the Grampians from James Tochatti (1852-1928), a Ballater-born Scots-Italian anarchist, son of Joseph Tochatti and Jean Cormack. Tochatti together with his companion was an tireless anarchist propagandist in London for many years before his death at Poole in Dorset, and may well have had Glasgow contacts. His Highland comrade, William Duff was in Glasgow by the 1880s where he lived with his stepparents at Rose Street in the Gorbals and worked as a slater, his stepfather, Charles Martin from Cromdale in Morayshire being a signal fitter. No record of a marriage seems to exist for William and Margaret Duff (born, like the later great woman anarchist, Ethel McDonald, in Motherwell in 1873), but the two had a child, William Morris Duff, born in 1896, and they were living together at 9 Carfin Street, Govanhill, Glasgow in 1897. It was at this address that they played host to Voltairine de Cleyre during her tour of Scotland in September 1897. De Cleyre became a great friend of the Duffs as a result and a lifelong lover of

Scotland which she claimed was, ‘the sharpest, ruggedest, wittiest place on earth’.

William Duff had contributed to the London-based anarchist journal, *Alarm*, which was associated with the short-lived ‘Associated Anarchists’ group of Carl Quinn, and to the San Francisco anarchist-communist paper, *Free Society*, of which he was the Glasgow distributor. He was a close friend of Elisée Reclus and more so his Edinburgh-based nephew, Paul, who visited Glasgow regularly, as well as in intimate of Emma Goldman and Peter Kropotkin. Red Emma visited in 1895 and Duff presented her with a copy of Kropotkin’s *In Russian and French Prisons*, and when the Russians and their agents destroyed many copies of the book in 1887, it was Duff who provided a copy to Kropotkin himself when he was looking for one. As they did with other anarchist visitors over the years, the Duffs arranged meetings for Voltairine de Cleyre in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Paisley and Dundee, the last of which Voltairine didn’t like and in a fit of strangely affected Scots declared it to be ‘no very bonnie the noo’ in a letter to her sister. Obviously the Scottish experience had indeed had a profound effect on her, either that or she was taking the piss! These visits show the spread of anarchism at this time in Scotland and its wide appeal – Voltairine spoke to the ILP and Women’s Labour Party in addition to local anarchists. The Duffs also took her into the foothills of the Highlands, the Trossachs, and along Loch Lomond, which they may well have done with other anarchist visitors to Glasgow, pre-figuring the later ‘bus runs’ of Bobby Lynn in the 1960s.

The year after Voltairine de Cleyre’s visit, William Duff published a *Solidarity Leaflet* in Glasgow containing her long anti-religious poem, ‘The Gods and the People’. He and Maggie also paved the way for her return visit to the city in August and September 1903, soon after she had been shot by a mentally ill man in America, in an incident from which she never completely recovered and which led to her death in 1912 at the early age of 45. The Duffs were at 91 Aitkenhead Road in Glasgow when Voltairine returned, and they and their local comrades arranged a number of speaking engagements for her, though probably fewer than in 1897. William McGill, of Pollokshaws, who ran an anarchist bookstore in the city centre, chaired Voltairine’s talk to the Progressive Union, an important intellectual and campaigning forum that exercised a profound influence on the leading Scottish Marxists, John Maclean (1879-1923) and

James McDougall (1891-1963). The Progressive Union was actually founded by an uncle of McDougall's, named Daniel, who was himself an anarchist.

After 1903 and de Cleyre's visit, the Glasgow Anarchists seem to enter into a decline. John Taylor Caldwell states that 'from 1903 to 1909 the Glasgow Group gave way to the Paisley Group, but it revived when John Macara came from Edinburgh and stirred it back to life'. This matches the observation of John Paton who says that by 1910 'there had been no anarchist propaganda in Glasgow for many years, although at one time there had been an active group'. To what extent 'wee McAra', as he was known, managed to re-start the Glasgow movement is difficult to say. This Edinburgh-based anarchist (probably born in Crieff in Perthshire in 1870), was a tramp speaker for anarchism and a tireless propagandist, who was the first to give open-air speeches on anarchism in Belfast, where he also spent three months in Crumlin Road Jail. McAra was never an organisation person and because of this when he moved on after a period of propaganda work, the support he had garnered for anarchism usually dissipated. This did not actually occur in 1909/10 and this may have been because McAra encouraged a Bristol anarchist, George Ballard (or Barrett), to come to the city and carry on the work he had started. The material here is mainly from Mairtin O'Cathain's book;

**"With a bent elbow and a clenched fist"** Thanks Mairtin.

other sources include; John Quail THE SLOW BURNING FUSE,  
John Taylor Caldwell. WITH FATE CONSPIRE

John Taylor Caldwell. COME DUNGEONS DARK The life and times  
of Guy Aldred.

Rhona M. Hodgart. ETHEL MACDONALD,



## THE SCOTTISH LABOUR PARTY, 19<sup>TH</sup>. MAY 1888.

27 men met in Glasgow under the chairmanship of John Murdoch to organise a Labour Party in Scotland. The aims of the meeting were laid out by Keir Hardie, who had made the conference possible. Also present was the Rev. Geo. Brooks of the Christian Commonwealth.

The meeting passed the following resolution unanimously, "*In the opinion of this meeting it is desirable that a Parliamentary Labour Party should be formed in Scotland and we hereby appoint the following as a committee to arrange for a conference being held on the earliest possible date; Duncan McPherson, Keir Hardie, Charles Kennedy, George Mitchel and Robert Hutchison.*"

The committee met on the 26<sup>th</sup>. of May 1888 calling for a conference of Trade Unions, Political Organisations and Societies working for the moral and social elevation of the people plus all people the committee deemed entitled. The meeting to be held in Glasgow on the 14<sup>th</sup>. of August 1888 followed by an open air demonstration on Glasgow Green on the same day, the aim, to form a Parliamentary Labour Party of Scotland.

The conference actually took place on the 25<sup>th</sup>. of August 1888 in the Waterloo Rooms in Glasgow and was chaired by R. B. Cunninghame-Graham. The constitution was drawn up;

I. *That the association be called the Scottish Parliamentary Labour Party.*

II. *That its object be to educate the people politically, and to secure the return to Parliament and all local bodies, of members pledged to its programme.* It had a programme of 15 sections, all of this was moved and seconded and so was born the Scottish Labour Party.

## **THE WORLD'S FIRST CA' CANNY STRIKE, 1889**

### **SOCIAL CONDITIONS.**

The 1889 dock strike took place during a time of extreme poverty among the working class with the dock workers among some of the worst of that army of deprivation. It also took place on the back of the successful "Match Girls Strike" and a time of child labour. One such case of child labour quoted in the "Children's Employment Commission 1863" is that of 8 year old William Newham. He had been employed for 3 or 4 months, was given half an hour to do one task and is paid one farthing. He starts at 7am. and finishes at 8pm with breakfast at 8am, dinner at 1pm and tea at 5pm. He gets one hour for dinner and half an hour for the other two breaks. He used to learn to read and write but can't write his own name, only short words like rat etc.. He never did sums, "I know the figures but can't reckon them up." He sometimes goes to school on Sundays where they teach him to read, but he doesn't know what the book is, "It's a little one." Quote made in Parliament concerning the dock workers: " The poor fellows are miserably clad, scarcely with a boot on their foot, in a most miserable state ... These are men who come to work in our docks who come on without having a bit of food in their stomachs, perhaps since the previous day; they have worked for an hour and have earned 5d. [2p]; their hunger will not allow them to continue: they take the 5d. in order that they may get food, perhaps the first food they have had for twenty-four hours.' Colonel G.R. Birt, the general manager at Millwall Docks, to a Parliamentary committee.

### **EMPLOYMENT.**

Employment on the docks varied considerably from day to day. On some days as many as 3,000 could be employed on one dock and on the next day 200. Though 5d an hour was considered "reasonable" with 1d an hour extra for working between 6pm and 6am. However due to being employed by the hour and from hour to hour, the average weekly wage would vary from 3 shillings to 7 shillings, with luck playing a big part on whether you were employed or not. Many of those that worked on the docks lived in the "Common Lodging Houses."

### **WAGES..**

From "British Labour Statistics" wages of trades around 1889. Fitters and turners; wkly. 38 shillings for 54 hour week. Bricklayers; 9d an hour for 52½ hour week. Building labourer; 6d an hour for 52½ hour week.

Compositors; wkly. 36 shillings for 54 hour week. Agricultural labourer wkly. 13 shillings and 4 pence, hours at the masters discretion.

### **THE STRIKE & BLACKLEGS.**

June 1889, the newly formed National Union of Dock Labourers (formed in February 1889) come out on strike in Glasgow in support of the National Amalgamated Sailors and Firemen's Union, who had been agitating for months previously for better wages and conditions.

Management had brought in hundreds of scabs and blacklegs from around the British Isles to try and break the strike in the Clyde ports.\* True to form the scabs made a complete hash of trying to do a job that took years to build up any sort of rhythm and skill. It even got so bad that a scab lost his life when he fell overboard while unloading cargo from a ship.

By July 5th the newly formed union had run out of strike funds and so agreed to go back to work at the old wage level. The dock employers throughout the strike said they were happy with the scabs work, even though cargo was being lost and dropped and in general was a full four times slower at unloading, ships were also being condemned as unseaworthy due to dangerous loading. To break the strike the employers had had to keep up a false front and pretend everything was rosy.

### **THEN THE 'ca' canny WAS INTRODUCED!**

It was agreed by the dock workers when they returned that since the scabs work was seen as acceptable and paid at a higher rate, then it was only logical to keep the same level of incompetence and slowness as well as dropping as many packages in to the water as the scabs but there would be no need to fall in the water in the same manner as the scabs. – and so the the "ca' canny"\*\*\* strike was born.

Within a few months the employers had offered the dock labourers a pay increase if they went back to pre-strike work rate. \*workers from Dundee, Tilbury and Leeds once they had found out that they had been brought in as strike breakers all refused to work, even though free tobacco, food and higher wages were all on offer from the hard done by employers!

- Info from Geoff Brown, "**Sabotage; A Study In Industrial Conflict**" Spokesman Books 1977. ISBN 0 85 124 282 0

- Info from "The Great Dock Strike 1889" by Terry McCarthy. ISBN: 0-297-79199-0 Weidenfeld & Nicolson 91 Clapham High St. London SW4 7TA **Article written by Stevie Gallagher.**

## **MARY BARBOUR, 1875-1958**

### **EARLY LIFE.**

Mary Barbour was born on the 22nd of February 1875 in the village of Kilbarchan. She was the third child of seven, her father was a carpet weaver. In 1887 the family moved to the village of Elderslie. Mary worked as a thread twister eventually becoming a carpet printer. The year 1896 saw her marry David Barbour and settle in the Govan Burgh of Glasgow. She joined and became an active member of the Kinning Park Co-operative Guild, The first to be established in Scotland.

### **GLASGOW RENT STRIKE & WOMEN'S PEACE CRUSADE.**

Mary joined the Independent Labour Party and the Socialist Sunday School. The Glasgow rent strike during the first world war brought her to the forefront of local political activity. Because of large rent increases by the Landlords, the Glasgow Women's Housing Association was born in 1914. It was in Govan that the first active resistance to rent increases appeared. Mary Barbour was instrumental in forming the South Govan Women's Housing Association. As a working class housewife with two sons and her husband an engineer in the shipyards she was well qualified to be energetically engaged in all its activities from the organising of committees to the physical prevention of evictions and the hounding of the Sheriff's Officers. This type of activity soon spread to the whole of the Clydeside area. The situation climaxed on the 17th of November 1915 with one of the largest demonstrations in Glasgow's political history. Thousands of women marching with thousands of shipyard and engineering workers paraded through the streets of the city to the Glasgow Sheriff's Court where the demonstration was near riot proportions. Out of this defiant stand came the "Rent Restriction Act" heralding in a change in the housing system of the city of Glasgow. The act also benefited tenants across the country. Mary's involvement in this struggle had made her a working class hero in Govan and much further afield. Together with Helen Crawford and Agnes Dollan, Mary, in June 1916, was instrumental in founding the Women's Peace Crusade in Glasgow. She was a frequent and regular speaker at its many rallies on Glasgow Green.

## **FIRST WOMAN LABOUR COUNCILLOR.**

1920 saw Mary stand as one of three candidates for the Fairfield Ward of Govan, and elected to the Glasgow Town Council as its first woman Labour Councillor. It was mainly the women's vote that gave her the 4,701 votes that marked her success. During her term as a Labour Councillor she fought for many causes to help the poorest in the community. The range of policies that she pushed for covered a very wide spectrum but all for the benefit of the working class community. Among them were such things as washhouses, laundries and public baths, free milk to school children, child welfare centres, play areas, pensions for mothers, home helps and municipal banks, she also pushed for a campaign against consumption.

## **FIRST WOMAN BAILLIE.**

The years 1924-1927 saw her serve as Glasgow Corporation's first woman Baillie and appointed as one of the first woman Magistrates in Glasgow. Her council work allowed her to develop her commitment to the welfare of women and children. In 1925 she was chairperson of the Women's Welfare and Advisory Clinic, Glasgow's first family planning centre. Mary worked continuously and energetically to raise funds to support its team of women doctors and nurses.

Mary Barbour retired from her council work in 1931 but never relented on her work load in committees for welfare and housing and remained energetically involved in Co-operative Committees. In her later years she continued her commitment to the welfare of the poor by organising trips to the seaside for children of the poor.

At the inaugural meeting in Glasgow of the Scottish National Assembly of Women she was the guest speaker. At the age of 83 she died on the 2nd of April 1958. Her funeral took place at Craigton Crematorium in Govan.

## **HELEN CRAWFURD, 1877-1954.**

### **BACKGROUND.**

Born Helen Jack on the 9th of November 1877 in the district of Gorbals Glasgow, the 4th child of the family of 4 daughters and 3 sons of William Jack, a respected master baker and Helen Jack (nee Kyle).

While still a child the family moved to Ipswich where she was educated. When Helen was 17 the family moved back to Glasgow to the middle-class district of Hyndland. Helen was shocked by the poverty and the conditions of Glasgow's working class and was made aware of politics by her parents. Her father was at one time President of the Operative Bakers Association. A deeply religious family, her father was Church of Scotland Presbyterian, her mother a confirmed Methodist. Discussions on religion and politics were a regular feature of the family home.

Helen married the Reverend Alex Montgomerie Crawford on the 18th of September 1898. However she soon rebelled against the theological teaching of the Church, believing that it was discriminatory against women. Her interest in the women's movement was furthered by reading the works of Josephine Butler.

### **WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.**

She joined the suffrage movement around 1900 and in 1910 joined the Women's Social and Political Union, (WSPU). Helen fully endorsed the militant actions of the Pankhursts in attempting to gain the vote for women. In 1912 she was arrested and sentenced to one month in Holloway Prison for breaking the windows of the Liberal Minister of Education's residence in London. 1913 saw her again arrested for trying to protect Mrs. Pankhurst from police brutality at a meeting in the St. Andrew's Halls Glasgow. She was later released and re-arrested the following night for breaking the windows of the Army recruiting offices and sentenced to one month in Duke Street Prison Glasgow. It was in this prison that she went on her first hunger strike and 8 days later was released. Prison life did nothing to dent her passion, she went on to become one of the best known and most popular members of the Scottish Suffragette Movement. Helen was again arrested in 1914 at a meeting in Perth and sent to Perth Prison. After a 5 day hunger strike she was released. Shortly after her return to Glasgow a bomb exploded in Botanic

Gardens Glasgow, she was blamed and this resulted in her fourth prison sentence and her third hunger strike in two years.

### **SOCIALISM.**

Shortly after the start of 1914 she left the WSPU because of its pro-war stance. Her shift from the radical suffrage politics to a socialist standpoint was in part due to her association with the Glasgow Repertory Theatre and the plays of Ibsen, Shaw, Galsworthy, Gorky and others. Helen was appalled at the infant mortality rate and sheer depravation in the Glasgow slums. Such conditions caused her to question a system that could tolerate this to continue. Around 1912 onwards Helen's speeches, though still with a Christian content, leaned towards a Socialist message. 1914 saw her proclaim her Socialist beliefs by joining the Independent Labour Party, (ILP).

In spite of the loss of both her husband and her mother in 1914, Helen Crawford throughout the war was a constant and energetic political activist. Always keen to involve women in the fight against the war, Helen with her friend Agnes Dollan organised large and regular meetings on Glasgow Green. 1915 saw Helen and Agnes found the Glasgow branch of the Women's International League. In an attempt to attract more working-class women and form a strong militant anti-war movement, Helen with Mary Barbour and other women activists in June 1916 organised a peace conference, this gave birth to the Women's Peace Crusade (WPC) in Glasgow. June 1917 in Glasgow saw the launch of the National Women's Peace Crusade with Helen Crawford as its Honorary Secretary. Helen's strong anti-war stance brought her into contact with, and worked alongside, John MacLean.

### **RENT STRIKES & ILP.**

While taking a leading role in the anti-war movement Helen was very active in the 1915 rent strikes. She was appointed secretary of the Glasgow Women's Housing Association (GWhA), and was an important figure in rallying housewives to fight the rent increases. Her efforts along with Mary Barbour, Agnes Dollan, Jessie Stephens and other women activists resulted in the "Rent Restriction Act" of 1915. This act benefited tenants all over the country.

By the end of the war Helen Crawford was seen as a national political figure. 1918 saw her appointed as Vice-President of the Scottish Divisional Council of the ILP. She was becoming disillusioned with the ILP,

seeing it more a reformist group rather than socialist and was becoming more aware of the ideas of Tom Bell and Arthur McManus who in 1920 set up the British Communist Party. At the 1920 Easter conference of the ILP Helen presided at a meeting to form an unofficial group to be known as the "left wing" of the ILP.

### **COMMUNISM.**

While still Vice-President of the Scottish division of the ILP she accepted an invitation to the second congress of the Third Communist International in Moscow. Her journey there proved somewhat arduous. Her passport was confiscated by the Norwegian authorities. Avoiding the police she made her way to a fishing boat which carried her out to sea where she boarded a cargo vessel, it took her to the port of Alexandrovic and from there she made her way to Moscow where she had an interview with Lenin. She joined the newly formed Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in 1921. The same year saw Helen appointed to the Executive Committee a position she held for many years. Helen was always keen to involve women and in 1922 she edited a page of the official communist party newspaper the "Communist" called Page for Women.

### **FAMINE RELIEF.**

1920 saw much of Helen's energy devoted to the Workers International Relief Organisation, (WIR). In 1922 she became its secretary. During her term she raised money for the famine-stricken region of the Volga this allowed them to carry out relief work in Germany and in all the mining districts of Britain during the miners' lock-out which followed the general strike of 1926. She also managed to extend the relief work to the famine-stricken west of Ireland and the Scottish Highlands during the depression. During the German elections of 1924 she addressed a meeting of 10,000 in Berlin on behalf of the German Communist Party (KPD). In the struggle against fascism prior to the 1939 war Helen was Secretary of the anti-fascist organisation in Glasgow. On the eve of the 2nd World War in 1939 she organised a Peace Congress of representatives from countries within the British Empire.

### **LATTER YEARS.**

The small quiet town of Dunoon on the lower reaches of the Clyde became her home during the latter years of her life. Though Dunoon was the sort of town where elderly people go to retire Helen never retired, still working for the cause of women and for the working class community of



the town. In 1945, while at the age of 68, she was elected to the Dunoon Town Council. Helen still kept up a considerable correspondence on both local and international affairs in the press. Just days before her death one of her letters appeared in the Daily Worker. At the age of 75 she was Chairperson of a session of the Scottish Congress of the Communist Party.

Helen Crawford Anderson died on the 18th of April 1954 at the age of 77.

## **JOHN MACLEAN, 1879-1923.**

### **EARLY LIFE.**

Born 26th August 1879 in the district of Pollokshaws near Glasgow. His family were forced by the clearances of 1840 to move to the industrial belt of Scotland. John, second youngest of seven, (3 died at birth) was 8 when his father died. His mother for a while returned to her trade as a weaver. Later she opened a shop but that failed. She took in lodgers to provide for herself and her children. Her self sacrifice and suffering had a tremendous impact on John. It was her self sacrifice that allowed John to be educated, and he vowed to use his education in the service of the working class.

### **EDUCATION.**

Educated at Queen's Park School and Pollokshaws Academy. During this time he would work during the vacations as a news vendor, a caddy at the local golf course and also in a print work machine shop. His first appointment was as pupil teacher at Polmadie School 1896-97. He enrolled at the Free Church Teachers' College graduating in the year 1900. His first full time teaching appointment was at Strathbungo School Shawlands. In 1903 he joined the S.D.F. He registered as a part time student with Glasgow University and in 1904 graduated with an M.A. in Political Economy. The years from 1904 to 1907 he attended continuation classes at the Glasgow Technical College studying three subjects chemistry, mathematics and physics.

### **INFLUENCES AND BELIEFS.**

John was a founder member of the Glasgow Teachers' Society, in 1905. His socialism was born from a hatred of landlordism that had grown out of the personal social experiences of his family and a rejection of religion, (although brought up a strict Calvinist of the Original Secession Church). His reading of T. H. Huxley, H. Spencer and others, added to his experiences and observations regarding the hypocrisy of the Churches on social questions turned John to secularism very early in his life.

His Calvinistic upbringing endowed him with a very strong sense of morality, austerity and seriousness. He rarely visited the theatre or art galleries, never drank or smoked had a strong appreciation and love of literature. In spite of his humanitarianism and unstinting generosity that impressed everyone who met him he appeared to lack a sense of humour.

## **EARLY CAMPAIGNS.**

In 1900 he joined the Pollokshaws Progressive Union, this was mainly an educational and debating society but also campaigned for progressive social reforms and proved to be a useful platform for John's intellectual and political ideas. It also introduced him to a wide range of concepts and writers in the social sciences. The year 1905 saw John as the Pollokshaws Co-operative Society's delegate to the British Co-operative Congress held in Paisley. He used this platform and subsequent ones, to advocate a more class orientated approach. In 1912 at the Renfrewshire Co-operative Society's conference his resolution, "urging school boards to introduce classes in Marxian Economics and if they failed, to carry on classes under the auspices of the Societies themselves" the resolution was passed. Many large west of Scotland Co-operative Societies did hold these classes. In 1914 John was conducting a speaker's class for the Glasgow Guildswomen. August 1914 saw the Co-operative leaders become very patriotic and John's influence in the Co-operative Movement diminished.

## **HIS ROLE AS LECTURER.**

In 1906 he was appointed SDP lecturer in economics, he conducted his class unfailingly every Sunday in Glasgow. Weekdays with James MacDougall the classes were taken to the outlying districts of Glasgow and Lanarkshire, where he won the respect of the workers in the mining areas. During the winter of 1915 the classes in Glasgow attracted 400 workers, the classes were suspended in 1916. Due to MacLean's efforts the classes resumed in 1917 with a class roll of 500 in Glasgow and 1000 in the coalfields of Lanarkshire and Fife.

## **THE SINGER STRIKE AND OTHER DEMONSTRATIONS.**

In 1908 John MacLean enthusiastically threw himself into organising the unemployed and lead one demonstration through the Glasgow Stock Exchange. 1910 saw him successfully organise female workers at Neilston thread mills, who were on strike for higher wages and shorter hours. He was involved in the 1911 strike at the American owned Singer Machine Co. at Clydebank. It was during this strike that he came into contact with members of syndicalist union the Independent Workers of the World and became a believer in the "One Big Union" as the only way to combat monopoly capitalism. He believed that the socialist revolution could be carried out peacefully by the adequate political education of the working class not by the violent overthrow of the system by an elite

group nor would it come through the inevitability of some Darwinian principle. The working class had to acquire political power before it could proceed to socialise the means of production and distribution.

### **THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT.**

Even with this exceptional workload in the field of education he continued to throw himself into active political work at strikes and industrial disputes. By July 1914 it was obvious that the police were taking a greater interest in his meetings. August 9th 1914 saw the first anti-war demonstration held in Glasgow Green under the auspices of the Labour and Socialist Organisation and the Peace Society

Aims of the demonstration;

1. To demand an armistice
2. To protest against food prices
3. To call for Government distribution of food

MacLean stated " ...our business is to develop a 'class patriotism', refusing to murder one another for a sordid world capitalism ". ... " ...let the propertied class go out old and young alike, and defend their blessed property---"

In Glasgow on January 3rd 1915, the BSP passed the following resolution; "That this meeting of the Glasgow members of the BSP. Recognise that this war has been brought about by the intrigues of the Capitalist and Landlord interests of all the countries involved; and that the workers of the world will obtain no advantages out of the war, determines to do all it can to peacefully stop the war at the earliest moment" This summed up John MacLean's views on war, and he continued his anti-war campaign of meetings and articles..

### **FIRST PROSECUTION.**

Wednesday 27th of October 1915 MacLean was brought before the Summary Court in Glasgow charged under the "Defence of the Realm Act" with "uttering statements calculated to prejudice recruiting", and remitted to the Sheriff on the 10th of November. He was brought before Sheriff Lee and defended by Mr Cassels. Long before the proceedings were due to begin a large crowd of workers from all over the Clydeside had assembled in support of MacLean. The Sheriff and Officers were overwhelmed by the numbers and the proceedings had to be suspended for ten minutes to allow the crowd to settle. Dispensing with court

formalities, MacLean loudly stated, "Do you want me to repeat again what I said at the meeting. I have been enlisted for fifteen years in the socialist army which is the only army worth fighting for; God damn all other armies! I have already said so, haven't I? Did you not hear me? The Sheriff sentenced him to a £5 fine or five days imprisonment. After the case MacLean was dismissed from his post as a teacher. On his day of release from Duke St. Prison, a large crowd gathered to greet him, the authorities however, to avoid a demonstration had released him earlier. A delegation of South Lanarkshire miners arrived at Central Station and marched through the streets, on learning of his early release they marched to Pollokshaws to make sure for themselves. Later they made their way to Fairfield Shipyard where a massive workers meeting was held.

### **SECOND PROSECUTION. AND IMPRISONMENT.**

MacLean continued to remain active at work gate meetings during the day and at public meetings in the evening. On the 1st of February 1916 he was again arrested and handed over to the Military authorities in Edinburgh Castle. Public outcry forced his release from Military to Civil authorities. He appeared in private before the Sheriff on the 14th of February and released on bail of £100, the trial set for 11th of April 1916. There were six counts in the indictment concerning statements allegedly to have been made at separate meetings during January 1916. He refused to take the oath and affirmed. He was found guilty on the first four charges, not proven on the fifth and not guilty on the sixth. The sentence was three years penal servitude. Large meetings and demonstrations for his release continued throughout his prison sentence. He was released on the 30th of June 1917 on "ticket of leave", having served 14 months and 22 days. In July 1917 he was served with call up papers, but they were immediately cancelled.

### **SEDITION.**

1917 saw him appointed Consul for Soviet Affairs in Great Britain. He set up a Consulate Office in 12 Portland Street Glasgow. The police raided the office on March 22nd 1918 and arrested MacLean's assistant Louis Shamus. On Monday the 13th of April 1918 they again raided the office and arrested MacLean. The charge was sedition, this was to prove one of the greatest political trials in Scottish history.

May 9th 1918 was the date for the start of the trial in Edinburgh High Court. There were 11 charges in the indictment, accusing MacLean of "

addressing audiences in Glasgow, Shettleston, Cambuslang, Lochgelly and Harthill, making statements which were likely to prejudice the recruiting, training and discipline of H.M. Forces. He further attempted to cause mutiny, sedition and disaffection among the civil population. MacLean conducted his own defence and refused to plead. When advised that he could object to any particular jurymen, he replied, "I would object to the whole of them". Without retiring, the jury intimated through the foreman their verdict of guilty on all charges. He was sentenced to 5 years penal servitude. MacLean turning to friends in the court shouted, "Keep it going, boys; keep it going". His stay in Peterhead Prison caused a considerable deterioration in his health, being force fed through hunger strikes.

### **A FREE MAN AGAIN.**

On his release on the 3rd of December he travelled from Peterhead Prison to Aberdeen by train. On arrival he was given a formal reception by friends of the I.L.P. Later a social was held in the S.L.P. rooms in Aberdeen with MacLean as Guest of Honour. The train carrying him from Aberdeen was due in Glasgow Buchanan Street Station at 4:30. Two hours before its arrival thousands gathered at George Square. The two hours waiting was spent singing revolutionary songs and chanting slogans. Mr and Mrs MacLean were met at the station by a horse drawn carriage, the horse was duly removed and the carriage was drawn through the streets by a group of workers. Thousands lined the streets and thousands more followed the procession as it wound its way through the city to the offices of the A.S.E. in Carlton Place. After short speeches Mr and Mrs MacLean went home by taxi.

### **LAST DAYS.**

John MacLean, though by now a very sick man continued with his meetings. He campaigned as a republican candidate for the Gorbals District in the coming election of 6th of December 1923. Sadly he was seized by a very virulent pneumonia and died two days later on the 30th of November 1923, six days before polling day. On the day of his funeral crowds lined the streets from Eglinton Toll to Auldhouse Road and followed the cortege to Eastwood Cemetery where he was buried.

## **SINGER STRIKE , 1911.**

### **THE BEGINNING;**

In 1867/8 from its American base the Singer Sewing Machine Co. expanded into Scotland. It first opened a small sewing machine factory in Glasgow near John St. However growing demand forced the company to expand to a larger factory in the Bridgeton area of Glasgow. In 1882 they moved again, to a greenfield site at Kilbowie in Clydebank. This was a massive factory employing 3,500 and by 1884 was producing 8,000 machines a week and was now employing 5,000 workers, by 1890 Singer had captured 80% of the world's sewing machine sales, and was by then the biggest sewing machine factory in the world. By 1911 it employed approximately 12,000 of which 3,000 were women, mainly unmarried women.

### **CONDITIONS;**

The factory comprised of 41 departments, the work was broken down in to small boring repetitive actions with a variety of teams making parts, assembling and testing sewing machines for export mainly to Russia.

The shipyards and Singers dominated Clydebank employment, however 60% of the workers lived outside Clydebank which made organising strike action that bit more difficult. By 1911 approximately 50% of Clydebank's young women worked for Singers.

The Singer company always had a bad reputation among the work force, it was a very anti-union company. Tom Bell, an activist during the 1911 strike, in his book "Pioneering Days" states; "The firm refuses to recognise any union, and those union men that were employed had to keep it quiet."

During the early 20th century with the march of mass production methods, employers were imposing new management techniques on the workforces and Singer was ruthless in the implementation of these techniques. Piece work, time and motion study and more "efficient" work practices were the norm with the rate of work being push ever higher.

### **THE STRIKE;**

On 21 March 1911 the Singer factory management provoked a strike when three defect repairers were withdrawn from a team of fifteen women working in the cabinet polishing department, and added the repairers' duties to those of the remaining twelve women but offering them no increase in pay. The women, who were paid piece-work rates

and were likely to lose around 2 shillings (10p) from their weekly wage packets, walked out of the factory and were joined by 380 of their 400 colleagues in the department. The support within the factory for those that walked out was instant and massive, by the end of the following day, 10,000 of the 11,500 employees of Singer were on strike.

This was a major industrial dispute at Singer. It is considered the first battle between labour and international capital in Scotland if not in the UK. It was also the biggest single firm strike in Scotland up to 1914. The strike lasted three weeks. The initial success of the strike was due largely to the solidarity shown by the striking workers of Singer backed up by two main groups in the works; the Industrial Workers of Great Britain (IWGB) and the Socialist Labour Party, both of whom promoted the idea of industrial unionism and provided practical and ideological leadership through out the strike. Before this dispute, workplace divisions on Clyde-side based on occupation, skill, gender and religion would have impeded such a show of worker solidarity. The Singer strike was remarkable in that both men and women, of all occupations, skills and religions, presented a united front in opposition to the ruthlessness of the management techniques.

The company went on the offensive by closing the works and the usual threats of removing production to other plants in Europe, also issuing threats that workers would find difficulty in procuring other employment in the area if the strike was not brought to an immediate end. Regular meetings and demonstrations were held across the burgh for the duration of the strike, including one on 23 March when 8,000 strikers, led by the Duntocher Brass Band, paraded through the streets with tremendous support from the local population as practically every family had somebody involved in the strike

### **THE END;**

Despite the initial firm resolve of the strikers, the strike collapsed. Singer sent out postcards inviting workers to indicate their willingness to return to work. Knowing that the company would be able to identify strike advocates by listing those who did not reply. This and the usual need for a wage caused a considerable number of workers returned to work on 7 April 1911. After a ballot in which the majority of the workers voted to end the strike, the strike committee conceded defeat, the dispute ended with an unconditional return to work on 10 April 1911. As expected and



true to form, soon after the return Singers management pursued a ruthless campaign of systematic victimisation and over 400 workers, including all the strike leaders and known members of the IWGB, were sacked.

After 1945, Singer struggled against a host of new European competitors and an even more serious threat from Japan. The old main building and its famous clock tower were demolished in 1963. A new single-storey factory (the High Volume Domestic Building) opened in 1964. Despite investment during the 1960s, the factory struggled to attain profitability. This was due in part to poor market conditions and partly to Singer's investment in other European and Far Eastern plants to produce more popular domestic models. Between 1960 and 1970, the Kilbowie workforce declined from over 16,000 to just 6,400. During the 1970s, the factory's future was thrown into greater doubt by the perilous financial condition of the parent company, which had run up huge debts in pursuing an unsuccessful diversification strategy. The factory's main markets, in the USA and Europe, slumped. Now working in ageing premises with out-of-date machinery, Kilbowie was making huge losses. In 1978, Singer proposed a reduction in the workforce from 4,800 to just 2,000. There were strenuous efforts to persuade the company to limit job losses and make a commitment to retaining the factory in Clydebank, the Government offered financial assistance to continue the production of industrial machines, albeit on a much-reduced scale. However, a collapse in worker morale, and the Conservative Party's victory at the General Election on 4 May 1979 undermined the negotiations. On 12 October Singer announced that the factory would close in June 1980 "as part of a sweeping program to restructure, consolidate and streamline Singer manufacturing and marketing operations...".

During the 80s Britain saw large swathes of its industrial production close down along with the mining industry.

### **SOURCES;**

The Singer strike Clydebank 1911. Glasgow Labour History Workshop  
ISBN 0-906938-07-4

Glasgow Digital Library Red Clydeside (The singer strike 1911)

## **THE RENT STRIKE.**

### **CAUSES.**

The first world war saw considerable change to the structure of Glasgow's working class. Youth employment was common with boys as young as 11 years of age employed as horse drawn van drivers. Also women being employed in what until then had been all male trades. Ministry of Munitions figures stated that by 1916 there were 18,500 women working in metal trades in the Clydeside area. During the war the standard of living improved considerably with near full employment, endless overtime and restricted pub hours. After the war there was a tremendous rise in unemployment and in poverty.

### **GLASGOW WOMEN'S HOUSING ASSOCIATION.**

In pre First World war Glasgow there were a large number of empty houses, by the year 1915 all were occupied by incoming workers to the munitions and allied war industry trades. A shortage of workers and materials saw a lack of maintenance and the housing stock deteriorate rapidly. At the beginning of the war the landlords tried to implement large rent increases, at risk were 7,000 pensioners and families whose men were fighting in France. This brought about the formation of the "Glasgow Women's Housing Association" and many local "Women's Housing Associations" to resist the increases. All manner of peaceful activities were used to prevent evictions and drive out the Sheriff's officers. There were constant meetings in an attempt to be one step ahead of the Sheriff's officers. All manner of communication was used to summon help, everything from drums, bells, trumpets and anything that could be used to create a warning sound to rally the supporters who were mainly women as the men were at work in the yards and factories at these times. They would then indulge in cramming into closes and stairs to prevent the entry of the Sheriff's officers and so prevent them from carrying out their evictions. They also used little paper bags of flour, peasmeal and whiting as missiles directed at the bowler hatted officers. These activities culminated on the 17th of November 1915 with the massive demonstration and march of thousands through the city streets and on to the Glasgow Sheriff's Court. This resulted in the immediate implementation of the "1915 Rent Restriction Act" which benefited tenants across the country. The Rent Act was to run for 6 months after the war. However immediately after the war the Glasgow Property and

Factors' Association demanded large rent increases. The City's tenants organised the Scottish Labour Housing Association. John Wheatley through an ILP campaign helped to bring about the 1920 Rent Restriction Act. The intended compromise was that there would be an immediate increase of 15% plus another 25% if essential repairs were done. The tenants, however stated that there had been no repairs since 1914 and precious few before that. On the 23rd of August 1920 a General Strike was called and had a massive support in Glasgow. A large demonstration took place on Glasgow Green and "Notices of Increase" were piled up and set alight. The property owners response was to take out eviction orders in Court against tenants who refused to pay. During the period between the 1920s and the 1930s Glasgow's unemployment never fell below 20% with a population of over 1,250,000. Unemployment in the city climbed to over 25% during the thirties. The Labour Housing Association pointed out that the cases could be continued in the Sheriff Court, who were unlikely to grant thousands of decrees for eviction of unemployed tenants. It appears that the Glasgow Sheriffs were not unsympathetic to the plight of the poor tenants. The "GLASGOW HERALD", a newspaper not noted for its sympathy towards the ordinary folk of Glasgow, carried an article on, "...the human consequences of this endless litigation against the poor..."

### **LEGAL CONFUSION.**

The numerous attempts at peaceful protest to the evictions continued, using the same methods as before. Thousands of windows had notices stating, "We are not paying rent increases". The situation with regards to tenants under Scots law was that when they signed their original tenancy agreement accepting the rent the agreement was binding on both parties as long as the tenant paid the stated rent. The factor could not alter the rent without first issuing a Notice of Removal", giving the tenant the option of accepting the new rent or vacating the premises. On the 26th of November 1920 the Sheriff-substitute Menzies of Dumbarton Sheriff Court held that the rent increases allowed by the 1920 "Rent Act" are invalid where no "Notice of Removal" had been given. Further, rent increases paid under these circumstances could be reclaimed by the tenants. At the same time, on the same day the Glasgow Sheriff Court gave the opposite ruling on an identical case involving "Emmanuel Shinwell", who was duly evicted. The Factors Association appealed the

Dumbarton Court decision all the way through the legal system to the Law Lords and in each appeal the decision was to agree with the Dumbarton Court's findings. The Glasgow "Rent Strike " movement, though still continuing was now weaker than the situation in Clydebank where it remained solid and very militant.

### **ASSESSMENT.**

Due to the trouble and chaos of the rent situation the government in January 1925 set up a commission under "Lord Constable" to look at the whole affair of rented accommodation. This more or less brought about the collapse of the "Rent Strike" movement. The rent strikes were not led by any one person or group. This was a genuine popular struggle involving; women, housewives, the "National Unemployed Workers Movement", militants, organised vigilantes, propagandists and housing associations.

## **TOM BELL, 1882-1944.**

### **FORMATIVE YEARS.**

Thomas Bell (always known as Tom) was born in Parkhead, a district in the East End of Glasgow. Parkhead at that time was still a semi-rural village. His family were originally fishing folks from John O'Groats who migrated to Ayrshire where Tom's father was born. Tom's father became a stonemason and moved to the Glasgow area for work. Settling in Parkhead he married Barr Hargreaves, daughter of a local mining family. Tom was the first born of two sons and two daughters. Tom started school in the spring of 1889 and left in the spring of 1894. While at school, like so many young children, he worked part-time - his job was delivering milk. Getting up at six o'clock every morning, summer and winter he received 1/6p (app. 7.5P today's money) for his effort. Leaving school at eleven Tom's first full-time job was as a dairy-boy, working from 6:30 am, to 6 or 7 o'clock seven days a week for 3/6p, (app.17.5P today). Leaving there he moved to a mineral water manufacturer. Tom could not help but be interested in the miners strike of 1894 due to the close proximity of the coal mines to his home. He also took a very keen interest in the railway workers strike of 1897 following the processions of workers as they marched through the streets of Parkhead. It was at this time that his thoughts started turning to atheism and labour politics. Tom though had experienced his first strike at school when he with some other pupils refused to enter school in protest at the cruelty of some of the teachers.

At the age of 15 he started his apprenticeship as an iron moulder in Glasgow's Springfield steelworks. As a young man he would get into political discussions at street corner meetings, strengthening his atheist and socialist views. Soon he would make his first visit to the Secular Society in Brunswick Street Glasgow. The speaker was G. W. Foote, this fired his enthusiasm for more information. He went on to read all Shakespeare's plays and saw most of them performed. Now 17 he devoured the works of Huxley, Darwin and The Rationalist Press Association. Tom soon developed a broad intellectual grasp of politics and philosophy and very soon he was regarded as something of a thinker by his fellow workmates. In keeping with his belief of self education, Tom Bell attended evening classes in French, geology and astronomy at the Andersonian College Glasgow, later becoming a member of the West of

Scotland Astronomical Society. He also, for three years, took courses in English literature under Professor Eyre-Todd at the Academy of Literature. In addition to this Tom became closely associated with the Plebs League, an organisation whose aim was to provide marxist education for workers.

### **SOCIALIST POLITICS.**

1900 saw Tom join the Independent Labour Party. He became somewhat disillusioned with the party because of its lack of emphasis on theory, and in 1902 attended economic classes run by the Social Democratic Federation at 63 Adelphi Street in the south side of Glasgow. In February 1903 he joined the SDF but soon after this, due to a split, Tom with some others formed the Glasgow Socialist Society and then changed the name in August 1903 to the Socialist Labour Party. Apart from Tom Bell and James Connolly, the party had many prominent personalities such as Arthur McManus and Neil MacLean, who was appointed national secretary. Although Tom was a founder member and leading theorist of the SLP, in 1907 he found himself facing expulsion because he agreed with the conclusions of a pamphlet, 'The Decadence of the SLP', written by Richard Dalglish, a Glasgow member of the SLP. The pamphlet claimed the SLP was wrong to favour the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), as it was not a "truly socialist" organisation. Tom was eventually re-admitted to the SLP at its 1908 conference and he also became a propagandist for Advocates of Industrial Unionism, the SLP's response to the IWW. In the beginning of the SLP's life, the main speaker was James Connolly, but Tom Bell was also a frequent speaker on its platform. The party also ran economic classes until 1920.

Tom held classes every winter from 1905 until 1920 with the exception of one year when he worked in London and Liverpool. The SLP also ran small tutor courses and from these emerged a band of class tutors who held classes in factories and shipyards. Tom had joined the Associated Ironmoulders of Scotland, in 1904 and by 1919 he was elected president of the Scottish Ironmoulders Union.

### **MARRIAGE.**

It was during the early years of the SLP that Tom met Lizzie Aitken, who was also a member of the SLP. Her father was a stonemason and an atheist. Tom and Lizzie were married by Sheriff's warrant in Glasgow on

February 4th 1910. Tragedy struck some four years later when their younger son Lawrence died from a chill.

### **SINGER STRIKE.**

Tom became a propagandist for the broad based industrial union and was a member of the Singer's Branch of the Industrial Workers of Great Britain. He was an active member during the 1911 Singer's Strike that started after the dismissal of a woman worker. The Singer Co, in an attempt to break the new militant union, decided on a lock-out. The factory was shut down and 10,000 workers were locked out. Without success, the management made an appeal to "loyal" workers to return to work. They then decided to send a postcard to everyone on the firm's books, inviting them to return the card and say if they wished to resume work. The firm, through the press, reported an overwhelming majority for resuming work and promised revisions of pay and conditions and opened the gates after a week's lock-out. Believing the press the workers started to return to work. After the strike was over leading members of the union were dismissed.

### **FIRST WORLD WAR.**

At the beginning of the first world war, in 1914, there was considerable unrest in British industry, Glasgow and the Clydeside were not exempt. Among the workers in industry there was a tremendous amount of anti war feeling. Tom Bell stated that his attitude to the war was one of open hostility and resistance to the war on socialist grounds. During the first half of 1914 there were on average 150 strikes a month. Due to the Treasury Act, and the Munitions Act, many unofficial committees were formed and in 1915 the Clyde Workers Committee was founded. Tom Bell returned to Glasgow in 1916 after a year working in London and Liverpool and became a member of the Clyde Workers Committee. Tom along with Jock McBain, an engineer and member of the SLP, continued the policy of educating the Clydeside workers in the principles of industrial unionism. 1917 saw Tom devoting his energies in the task of being a leader in a national strike of engineers and foundry workers in their demand for a forty-seven hour week. To guarantee the strike was well organised, Tom along with Willie Gallacher, were instrumental in forming the Clyde Emergency Committee. The strike being deadlocked, the Clyde Emergency Committee sent Tom Bell and Jock McBain to negoti-

ate with the Ministry of Munitions in London, the negotiations ultimately being successful.

### **FORTY-HOUR WEEK.**

Tom Bell as president of the Scottish Ironmoulders Union played a leading role in the Clydeside agitation for a forty-hour week. On Friday January 31st 1919 Tom was part of a demonstration march to George Square. There was a police baton charge and a riot ensued with the leaders being arrested. The government was so alarmed by the event that English troops were paraded through the streets, The initial support for the strike was not sustained and the forty-hour week was not achieved. 1919 also saw Tom become national secretary of the SLP and editor and director of the official paper of the SLP, the Socialist.

### **COMMUNIST PARTY.**

After March 1919, in spite of their prominent positions in the SLP and their commitment to the party, both Tom Bell and Arthur McManus were becoming increasingly alienated from the party. This was mainly due to their contact with the Russian Communist Party and their being urged to leave the SLP and form a single communist party. From then on they became involved in a movement to unite all radical members of other left-wing parties to join them and form a single communist party. In April 1919, while still members of the SLP, Tom Bell, Arthur McManus, J.T. Murphy and Willie Paul formed a separate faction within the party called the Unity Communist Group. While still continuing to be members of the SLP they withdrew from its internal politics, this forced the executive committee of the SLP to dissolve the Unity Communist Group in the beginning of 1920. After this Tom Bell and Arthur McManus formed another Unity Group and invited delegates to attend a Unity Conference at Nottingham in April 1920. The Nottingham conference, with Tom Bell acting as secretary, issued a manifesto putting forward the offer of joining a "Bona fide" Communist Party in preference to all other political parties. The publication of the manifesto and their refusal to attend the official conference of the SLP in Carlisle, held the same month, resulted in Tom Bell and those associated with the Nottingham conference being expelled from the SLP. Tom was obliged to resign the editorship of the Socialist. Together with Arthur McManus and Willie Paul he set up the Joint Provisional Committee of the Communist Party, its first national convention being held on July 31st 1920. From this the Communist Party



of Great Britain was formed with Tom Bell and Harry Pollitt as its first full-time employees.

### **LENIN.**

During the 1920s Tom was closely involved with international politics. January 1921 saw him make his second trip to Moscow having been invited to the third congress of the Communist International. He was the first representative of the CPGB to be appointed to the executive committee of the CI. On this visit Tom was travelling without a visa and to avoid the police he had to sleep in a coal bunker on board a small cargo vessel. He was in Moscow for five months and had a meeting with Lenin who showed considerable interest in the miners' movement in South Wales. In 1922, along with Arthur McManus, Tom returned to Moscow for the fourth congress of the CI. It was then decided that he should stay in Russia as a foreign reporter and representative of the CPGB. From Russia he wrote a number of articles for the Communist on various topics before returning to Britain at the end of 1922.

Tom held a considerable number of prominent positions on a range of committees. He was on the executive committee with William Gallacher and Helen Crawford until 1929. Tom was also on the Political Bureau and the Organising Bureau and was responsible for the propaganda work of the party. He was also head of the Education Dept. and organised classes in Marxism until 1925. As a writer of considerable experience Tom was appointed editor of the party's monthly paper, the Communist Review. Tom's work with the CPGB eventually caused him to settle in London.

### **ARREST.**

Tom Bell was arrested in Glasgow on the 4th of August 1925 shortly after speaking at a demonstration, and taken to Wandsworth Prison where he discovered that 11 other communist leaders, including William Gallacher and every member of the political bureau, had been arrested for being members of the CPGB. All received prison sentences - Tom's was six months. Tom believed that this was a deliberate action of the government to weaken the labour movement in preparation for the impending general strike.

### **1930s**

After the general strike Tom Bell went back to Moscow to work on the Communist Review and to do work for the Propaganda Department. In

1929 he once again returned to Britain and along with William Gallacher and Harry Pollitt was appointed to the newly formed political bureau of the CPGB. During the 1930s, Tom continued to embrace the general policies of the CPGB and devoted time and energy to the international movement combating fascism in Spain and Italy. In 1930 he joined The Friends of the Soviet Union, a Communist Party front organisation and in 1937 became its secretary. In the struggle to fight fascism in Europe Tom joined the National Council for Democratic Aid and the International Class War Prisoners Aid. Both these organisations were formed to give aid to interned anti-fascist prisoners during the Spanish Civil War. During all of this activity he managed time to write his "History of the British Communist Party" which was published in 1937.

Tom Bell, saw Nazi Germany as a threat of world fascism and supported the general policies of the CPGB and through this supported the second world war. The remaining years of his life were spent at the CPGB headquarters on London helping victims of the war. Tom Bell, a lifelong teetotaler and a small sturdy man, was said to have a rather serious facial expression. He was direct and honest, he never tired in his dedication to his beliefs and principles and he died in his native city of Glasgow on the 19th of April 1944.

## **JANE HAMILTON PATRICK, 1884-1971.**

### **EARLY YEARS.**

Jenny Patrick, as she was known, was born in Glasgow in February 1884. Her father had a "Ladies Costumier" shop in Sauchiehall Street, the family lived in nearby Garnethill. Jenny's mother died in childbirth, and her father married almost immediately. Her stepmother did not treat Jenny the same as her own, she would dress her own in finery and Jenny in cast-offs. Jenny left Garnethill School at 14 and started work with a printer in St. Vincent Street Glasgow, as a copy-holder. At 16 she became a typesetter and later was employed as a printer by a footwear company. Jenny joined the Glasgow Anarchist Group, in 1914, and became secretary in 1916. After the 1914/18 war the Glasgow Anarchists, Jenny with them, joined with the Communists of Guy Aldred's group and in 1920 the group was renamed the Glasgow Communist Group. This group had three branches in Glasgow, Central, Springburn and Shettleston, there was also an association with other groups in Lanarkshire. In 1921 these groups were coming together to form an Anti-Parliamentary Federation which would have its own new newspaper called "The Red Commune", Jenny Patrick would be the secretary. The new paper appeared on the 1st. of February this was before the new group had been formally finalised. The Anti-parliamentary Communist Federation came into being at Easter 1921 and Jenny was a founded member.

### **ARREST AND PRISON.**

On the 2nd of March, Guy Aldred was arrested in London and a police raid on Bakunin House in Glasgow saw Jenny Patrick arrested with Douglas McLeish, a group member and a printer named Andrew Fleming. All four made a formal appearance before the Sheriff on the 7th of March 1921 and were remanded in custody for a fortnight before appearing before the Lord Justice Clark. Andrew Fleming was released on £200 bail, Jenny Patrick and Douglas McLeish on bail of £150 each and Guy Aldred was remanded in custody. until the case against them came up for a hearing on Tuesday the 21st of June, 1921, at the Glasgow High Court. The indictment covered eight pages and involved charges of urging anti-parliamentary action, employing a Sinn Fein tactic and conspiracy to cause disaffection among the populace. The trial lasted two days and received wide publicity in the press. The jury took a only a few minutes to return a verdict of "Guilty". Lord Skerrington passed sentences of Guy

Aldred one year, Douglas McLeish, three months, Jenny Patrick, three months, Andrew Fleming, three months and a fine of £50 or another three months. Aldred and McLeish were taken to Barlinnie Prison, Fleming and Jenny Patrick were taken to Duke Street Prison.

### **DISOWNED.**

When Jenny came out of prison her family disowned her and she moved into Bakunin House. When Guy Aldred was released from prison there had been a split between himself and his partner for a number of years, Rose Witcop. Rose returned to London to continue with her family planning campaign while Guy remained at Bakunin House in Glasgow. Rose Witcop died in 1932 aged forty two.

Jenny and Guy moved into a tenement flat in Baliol Street Glasgow, became partners and remained so until his death in 1963. Although Jenny Patrick did not approve of Guy's Parliamentary Election tactics she continued to support him in all his campaigns.

### **SPANISH CIVIL WAR.**

July 1936 saw the start of the Spanish Civil war and an upsurge in political activity among the socialist groups in support of the Spanish workers and their struggle. The Glasgow Anarchists were asked to send a representative to Barcelona, but in fact sent two. Ethel MacDonald went as the Glasgow Anarchist representative and Jenny Patrick as the representative of the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation. Both women, with very little money, left for Spain on the 20th. of October 1936. they reached Paris with one franc between them. Jenny and Ethel with no papers and only the help of comrades, hitch-hiked across France and eventually reach Spain. Ethel was sent to Barcelona, Jenny to Madrid to the Ministry of Information, where she served with the CNT-FAI's Comité de Defensa, editing the English edition of their paper Frente Libertario, there she experienced the siege of Madrid. In 1937 she moved to Barcelona in charge of CNT's English radio bulletin.. While there Jenny and Ethel experienced the momentous May Days. Her eye-witness accounts of the Communist Party counter revolutionary conspiracy against the Anarchists were rushed into print in Glasgow by Guy Aldred in a special Barcelona Bulletin. Both Jenny and Ethel, while in Barcelona, helped to fill the soldiers clips with bullets and gather information . She returned to Glasgow on May the 20th. 1937, Ethel remained until November 1937.

## **STRICKLAND PRESS.**

After returning from Spain, Jenny joined with Guy Aldred, Ethel McDonald and John Caldwell in setting up the Strickland Press in 1939 at 104-106 George Street Glasgow. Her experience as a printer was invaluable, among other jobs she set up the headlines, something she had done since her days as a young woman. For 25 years Jenny with others worked long wageless hours, printing socialist and anarchist literature, notably the USM's *The Word*. In 1945 due to a dispute with the Scottish Typographical Association the work could not be contracted out, Jenny and Ethel did the typesetting themselves.

## **DEATH.**

Jenny a small woman, she was respected for her dynamic personality and persistent and courageous character. She never sought the limelight, but endured poverty and hardship for the sake of her anarchist principles. A few years after Guy's death she became ill and very frail and was nursed at her home in Baliol Street by John Taylor Caldwell, a comrade of long standing. Eventually she had to be moved to hospital where she died a few days later, Jane Hamilton Patrick was cremated at Maryhill Crematorium where John Taylor Caldwell said the tribute, sadly only a handful of mourners were present.

## **GUY ALDRED, 1886-1963.**

### **ORIGINS.**

Though born in London and spending the early years of his life there it was Glasgow that he spent most his adult life and in Glasgow that he died. Because of his popularity in the City we can rightly claim him as one of the City's Sons.

Guy Alfred Aldred was born in Clerkenwell London on the 5th of November 1886 as a result of a short liaison at the beginning of 1886 between his father, a 22 year old Naval Lieutenant and a 19 year old parasol maker, Ada Caroline Holdsworth. Ada was socially unacceptable to the young Lieutenant, however he did the "respectable thing", marrying Ada on the 13th September 1886 but leaving her at the church after the wedding to return to his mother. On Guy Fawkes night the 5th November 1886 Ada gave birth to a son, hence the name "Guy", his middle name Alfred was after his father. Guy was brought up in the home of Ada's father, Charles Holdsworth a Victorian radical.

### **BOY PREACHER.**

In 1902 at the age of 15 he printed his own leaflets and set about London as a "boy preacher" handing out leaflets and receiving ridicule and disdain in return. He eventually found work as an office boy with the National Press Agency in Whitefriars House. Soon he was writing articles for the agency and was promoted to position of Sub-Editor. At this time Guy met an evangelist called McMasters, together they founded the "Christian Social Mission". Five days after his 16th birthday the Mission opened with Guy as the "Holloway boy preacher", giving his first public sermon however It did not go down too well with his audience nor the other preachers due to its non-conformist approach.

By persistent writing to the Reverend Charles Voysey - BA, Guy was eventually granted an audience on the 20th December 1902. The 74 year old well-to-do Voysey was taken aback when confronted with a coarsely dressed 16 year old working class boy as his letters had indicated otherwise. After cautious preliminaries on the part of Voysey they settled down to a discussion that lasted three hours. The friendship was to continue until the old man's death in 1912.

In January 1903 the Reverend George Martin an Anglican Minister arrived at Guy's home holding one of Guy's leaflets from six months earlier and asking to meet the "Holloway Boy Preacher". Martin was a

gentle, compassionate and learned man who lived and worked in London's worst slums. Guy joined him in his work with London's poorest. Many nights were spent in long discussions in Martin's damp attic, the friendship lasted six years and had an immense impact on young Guy. At the end of January 1903 the "Holloway boy preacher" gave his last sermon from the pulpit and left the "Christian Social Mission".

### **AGNOSTIC.**

During 1903-1904, Guy was speaking at the "Institute on Theism" but felt it was time to set up his own organisation. He called it the "Theistic Mission", it met every Sunday and drew a considerable though not always friendly crowd. Guy was becoming known as a forceful young orator. He was also shifting towards atheism. August 1904 the meeting banner changed, it now read "The Clerkenwell Freethought Mission". Meetings from then on were on some instances extremely hostile. On one occasion the crowd charged the platform, knocked Guy to the ground and started to beat him, as he tried to regain the platform they again pulled him off with the police intervening to put an end to the meeting. Around this time he was reading "The Agnostic Journal" and became friendly with its editor "Saladin", William Stewart Ross, a Scotsman. It was at the Journal's office that he met another Scotsman John Morrison Davidson, these two men introduced Guy to Scottish affairs.

### **SOCIALISM.**

1904 Guy heard Daniel De Leon speak on Clerkenwell Green, this led him to the "Socialist Labour Party". These meetings confirmed his belief in socialism, in 1905 he joined the "Social Democratic Federation". Though only nineteen Guy was an accomplished orator and a tremendous gain to the Socialist platform. 1906 he was appointed Parliamentary Correspondent for "Justice", the organ of the SDF. Guy, an anti-parliamentarian, approached the job with hint of cynicism. Also in 1906 he relinquished the job. Shortly after this in June of the same year he broke with the SDF. The split was in part due to airing his atheist views from the platform when the federation did not want religion, anti or otherwise to muddy the socialist message.

### **ANTI-PARLIAMENTARIAN.**

He was now a confirmed anti-parliamentarian and socialist. In October 1906 the "Islington Gazette" published his "Revolutionary Manifesto" in which he proposed to stand at the next election but refuse to take the Oath.

Guy Aldred was by now a well know speaker at Hyde Park. An eloquent speaker with extremist views his platform always drew large crowds. He was also contributing to several socialist papers and contributed to all thirty issues of "The Voice of Labour" an anarchist paper, this lead him to the anarchist club in Jubilee Street.

### **ANARCHIST.**

While visiting the "Jubilee Street Club" during 1906 Guy became more acquainted with Anarchist ideas and with many Anarchists of note from that period. He wrote two articles for "Freedom", the Anarchist paper. The Anarchist Rudolf Rocker referred to Guy as one of the promising young men of our time. It was at the "Jubilee Club" that Rocker asked Guy to stand in for Kropotkin who was to speak but could not attend. Guy's leanings were towards Proudhon and critical of Kropotkin. By now Guy was speaking every night at different places in London and three times on a Sunday in Hyde Park. The Sunday meetings were under the banner of the "National Secular Society". In January 1907, approaching the age of 21, saw Guy leave the "National Press Agency" for the "Daily Chronicle", six months later he left the paper and journalism intent on being a full-time propagandist, relying on collections and donations for his living, printing and any other expenses. At the "Jubilee Club" in 1907 he was introduced to "Rose Witcop" younger sister of "Milly Witcop", partner of Rudolf Rocker. The friendship developed but not to the pleasure of Guy's mother.

### **BAKUNIN PRESS.**

In 1907 Guy in conjunction with John Turner and others formed the "Industrial Union of Direct Action". A union opposed to reforms its purpose was to organise for social revolution. In a short period there were branches in Dover, Liverpool, Leeds and Weston-super-Mare, plus six branches in London. Shortly after this Guy founded the "Communist Propaganda Group". The group spread rapidly, first with several branches in London, Wales, the North of England, then to Scotland with branches in Glasgow, Paisley, Fife, Aberdeen, Dundee and several towns in Lanarkshire. In 1921 all these groups federated into the "Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation". It was also around 1907 Guy, in the basement of his home, set up the first of his "Bakunin Press".

Continued disapproval and resentment from Guy's mother about his association with Rose, she referred to her as "...that bloody Jewess",



eventually forced Guy to leave home in January 1908. The two of them entered a period of extreme poverty with all its entailing problems. Rose Witcop was taken from the midst of the May Day parade of the 2nd of May 1909 to Queen Charlotte's Hospital where she gave birth to a boy. Due to the fact that she gave her name as Miss Witcop and did not wear a ring her treatment was cold and what the staff deemed fitting a fallen woman. Guy was not allowed to see her or receive any information about her until her discharge. The baby was called "Annesley", as a mark of respect to their friend the Reverend Voysey.

### **PRISON.**

On the 2nd of July 1909 the Secretary of State for India, Sir Curzon Wylie was assassinated by Madan Lal Dhingra. On the day he was sentenced to death the printer of "The Indian Sociologist" was also sentenced to six months imprisonment. The Lord Chief Justice at the trial stated this was a warning that printing this sort of matter was a serious breach of the law. The "Times" in an article stated, nobody would dare print this sheet again. Guy, though not in favour of assassination and no advocate of nationalism was very much against suppression of opinion. So he duly printed the August issue of "The Indian Sociologist" and was arrested on the 25th of August; the trial was set for September the 10th at the Central Criminal Court. Guy conducted his own defence, was found guilty and sentenced to twelve months hard labour. Sir William Strickland heard of the trial and sent Guy a telegram congratulating him on his stand for freedom, he also sent him £10. This friendship lasted until Strickland's death in 1938. Guy was released from prison on the 2nd of July 1910.

### **GLASGOW.**

It was the "Clarion Scouts" that brought Guy to Glasgow. In 1912 he accepted their invitation to speak at the City's Pavilion Theatre. The theatre was packed His fellow speaker was "Madam Sorge" with "Willie Gallacher" in the chair. Guy then went on to speak at nine "Clarion Scouts" open air meetings with a final rally at the Charing Cross fountain. He also spoke at the Renfrew Street Hall of the "Socialist Labour Party" and accepted the "Glasgow Anarchists" invitation to come back to speak at a series of meetings. Guy's skill on the platform and his intellectual breadth went down well with the Glasgow Anarchists. The Clarion had asked him back to Glasgow in 1913 but Guy arrived six weeks early to

speak for the Anarchists. During the 1913 Clarion tour Guy spoke at meetings in Paisley, Dumfries, Dundee, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Leith and Kirkcaldy and after that he spoke every night for two weeks for his newly formed "Communist Group". Guy was by now a familiar figure in Glasgow drawing large crowds at street corner meetings throughout the City. 1914 saw Guy back in Glasgow to speak for the Anarchists on May Sunday. It was a grand affair, twenty thousand people with representatives from over 100 organisations set off from George Square accompanied by bands, banners, drums, whistles and singing they merrily marched their way to Glasgow Green.

### **COURT MARTIAL & PRISON.**

In the early hours of April 14th 1916 a police sergeant called at Guy's London home and asked if he had received his call-up notice. Guy stated he had not and did not expect to receive the said notice as he was a married man. The sergeant asked for proof. The obvious proof, the presence of Rose and the child Annesley was not accepted. Guy and Rose on a matter of principle had no certificate to offer. Without summons or warrant Guy was arrested. He was charged with failing to report for Military Service, in spite of the fact that he had never been asked, and as a married man he was not yet due for service. He appeared at West London Police Court later that day. The Magistrate expressed surprise at the informal nature of Guy's arrest, but said that he "was here anyway". Scott Duckers acting for Guy stated that Guy was a married man by Scots Law of Habit and Repute and was not due to receive his call-up with the present batch. The case was adjourned until the 27th April. Guy continued his anti-war campaigning. The resumed hearing was brief. The Magistrate had still not been advised on Scots marriage law so the case was again adjourned until May 4th. When the Court convened on the 4th of May Guy conducted his own defence. The Magistrate fined him £5 and handed him over to the military authorities. He was taken under escort to Davis Street Barracks. His treatment at the Barracks was typical of the way the military treated conscientious objectors, brutal to say the least. On May 16th Guy was handed a sheet of paper on which to write his defence. It was a long and passionate defence based on his principles and beliefs. This his first Court Martial was to be held on May 17th. After the Court Martial he was held in his cell for two days before sentence was pronounced, six month military detention. On May 26th 1916 Guy

appealed against his sentence. The Commanding Officer turned it down. On Monday 16th June Guy was ordered to parade, he refused and was taken before the Colonel who remanded him for court martial (his second). This took place at Fovant Camp on Tuesday 27th June. Guy's defence was that he was not a soldier but a civilian since he never received call-up notice. He was found guilty and sentenced to nine months hard labour. Later at a tribunal Guy was granted a "Certificate of Discharge". On the 4th of July 1916 Guy was moved to Winchester Prison then on August 25th he was transferred to the village of Dyce in the north of Scotland where a camp of tents had been erected in a granite quarry on a sea of mud. In these work camps a total of sixty nine conscientious objectors died. Guy walked out of the camp and returned to London but on the 1st of November he was arrested and sent to Wormwood Scrubs prison. Despite his having a Certificate of Discharge from the Army dated September 21st Guy would face another two cases of Court Martial and a further two years six months hard labour. March the 28th 1917 Guy was released from prison and taken under escort to Exeter Military Camp, his Certificate of Discharge ignored. He was given another order but he refused and was confined to the guardroom. Due to filthy conditions in the Guardroom Guy contracted scabies. He was returned to Deepcot Military Camp at the beginning of May then on the 9th of May he was ordered to parade which he refused and was therefore remanded for Court Martial. In spite of his Certificate of Discharge, he was deemed a soldier and went on to face his third Court Martial. It took place on the 17th of May 1917 with the very short proceedings resulting in Guy being sentenced to 18 months hard labour and sent to Wandsworth Prison. During this period there had been considerable unrest and protest by the conscientious objectors in the labour and work camps and in prisons. Wandsworth was probably the worst from the point of view of the authorities. A work and discipline strike had been planned. The ringleaders which included Guy were sentenced to 42 days 'No.1' punishment. This consisted of 42 days solitary confinement with 3 days on bread and water and then 3 days off while locked in a bare unheated basement cell. After 3 days they were transferred to Brixton Prison, from their arrival at Brixton they continued their struggle against cruel and unjust treatment of conscientious objectors.

1918 August the 20th Guy, with two others, their sentenced served according to a government ruling should have been returned to their respective Army Units for formal dismissal. Instead they were transferred to Blackdown Barracks, Farnborough where they were given an order which they refused and were once more on remand for Court Martial. Guy Aldred's fourth. Throughout his terms of imprisonment Guy managed to write and was able to smuggle out several articles which were published in his paper the Spur. In his absence the articles edited by Rose Witcop.

Guy's fourth Court Martial saw him speak for himself and the other two prisoners. In spite of showing that their sentences were in contravention of the Army Act and other illegalities in their treatment, a few days later he received a further two years hard labour. During the short period between August and September 1918 Guy managed to have several articles smuggled out and published in the Spur. Among these were "All for the Cause", "Shall we Deny", and "Militarism and Woodland". Another article smuggled out was "Socialism, Unity, and Reality". It was read at the Brixton branch of the ILP on the 14th of February 1918.

### **GLASGOW AGAIN.**

On January the 7th 1919 Guy was released on licence and was expected to make his own way back to Wandsworth Prison to be re-admitted on the 3rd of February. Instead he boarded a train for Glasgow. He said he was attracted to Glasgow by its citizen's truculent attitude, rebellious spirit and disrespect for leaders. The Glasgow Anarchists held a welcome meeting in St Mungo Halls, York Street, where Guy spoke on "The present struggle for liberty". The following month he spoke again in Glasgow then on to Wales, back to London; speaking at the Clapham Labour Party, Walthamstow British Socialist Party and then moving north again touring the North of England and Scotland as far north as Aberdeen. He returned to London and on the 10th of March and while speaking on Clapham Common he was arrested and taken to Wandsworth Prison. He stated that he would not eat or work until he was released from his illegal and vindictive imprisonment. In Guy's absence trouble at Wandsworth had not abated, he arrived back in the middle of an inquiry and continued his strike as he said he would. He was released after 4 days, that evening he was back on Clapham Common.

## **BAKUNIN HOUSE.**

A conference under the auspices of the ILP and the BSP formed a "Hands of Russia" committee and on this platform Guy Aldred spoke with Bertrand Russell. Prior to 1921 the words "Communist", "Socialist" and "Anti-parliamentarian", went hand in hand. It was only after that date, after the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain that you had to differentiate. At the time of leaving prison Guy associated himself with the newly formed Communist League, becoming its organiser and editor of its paper "The Communist". Guy was now working ever closer with Glasgow Anarchists, who had their head quarters in an old Victorian terraced house which they called "Bakunin House", it remained an open political centre for about twelve years. Guy and his colleagues continued to strengthen the anti-parliamentary groups especially in Glasgow.

## **SINN FEIN TACTIC..**

The "Glasgow Communist Group" produced its own paper "The Red Commune" and in February 1921 it carried an article by Guy called the "Sinn Fein Tactic". This was a reference to the tactic of standing for election but not swearing the oath or taking your seat. Because of the times, the authorities took the term "Sinn Fein" very seriously. On March the 2nd Guy's London home was raided by the police and special branch, after four hours searching they found nothing. Never the less they decided to arrest Guy, who pointed out that they were acting on a Glasgow Magistrate's Warrant and it was not valid in London. They took him and locked him up anyway and three days later formally arrested him in his cell. The Glasgow police also raided Bakunin House arresting Jane Patrick - the secretary, Douglas McLeish - group member and Andrew Fleming a printer. Guy Aldred was charged with conspiring with Patrick and McLeish to "excite popular disaffection, commotion, and violence to popular authority". They made a formal appearance before the Sheriff on March the 7th and were remanded in custody for two weeks before appearing before Lord Chief Clerk who released Andrew Fleming on £200 bail, Douglas McLeish and Jane Patrick on £150 bail each but remanded Guy Aldred in custody. He remained in custody until the trial at Glasgow High Court on June 21st 1921. The jury took a few minutes to reach a guilty verdict. Lord Skerrington passed sentence; Guy Aldred 1 year, Jane Patrick 3 months, Douglas McLeish 3 months, Andrew Fleming, 3 months and a fine of £50 or another three months. Guy Aldred

and Douglas McLeish went to Barlinnie Prison while Jane Patrick and Andrew Fleming were sent to Duke Street Prison. Guy served the full year plus the four months remand, the authorities stated that the remand did not count, the first time ever.

### **FAMILY PLANNING.**

December 22nd 1922 Guy was prosecuted for publishing Margaret Sanger's family planning pamphlet "Family Limitation". The authorities deemed it an attack on the nation's morals. Conducting his own defence, he called as a defence witness Sir Arbuthnot Lane, consultant surgeon at Guy's Hospital London. Sir Lane stated that every young couple about to get married should have this pamphlet. Never the less, the Magistrate, "in the interest of the morals of society", ordered the pamphlet to be destroyed. Rose Witcop continued covertly to produce it.

### **GLASGOW GREEN.**

Guy Aldred brought out a new paper, The Commune, it appeared on May 1923. One of its tasks was to challenge the Glasgow City Council on the matter of free speech on Glasgow Green. On April 13th 1916 Glasgow Corporation passed a bye-law withdrawing the right of assembly on the Green, but it was not enforced until 1922 and then challenged by John MacLean, Guy Aldred and others. There were numerous attempts to have the bye-law repealed, it was not until March 3rd 1932 that the struggle found success.

In 1933 Guy left the Anti-parliamentary Communist Federation, he was later to form the Glasgow Townhead Branch of the ILP formed the United Socialist Movement. The group met in a hall in Stirling Road with the indoor meetings being held on a Wednesday and Sunday with a fund raising social on Fridays. Guy worked under this banner for the next thirty years. The Group would use elections to discredit the ballot box. At one election Guy managed to get nominated as candidate for 14 of the city's 37 wards managing to get over a thousand votes. An astonishing result as a referendum on less than half the city.

### **FREE ADVICE.**

Guy always lived on the very edge of poverty, never taking fees for speaking, relying on money from sales of papers and pamphlets. Around this time he opened a second-hand book shop in Buchanan Street. No business entrepreneur he was more inclined to "lend" rather than sell books was soon left without stock in the shop and had to close. He

opened an "Advice Bureau" in a dingy little office in Queen Street; with no toilet, no lighting and no heating and from here he offered legal advice, letter writing and typing. He never charged leaving it to the client to make a donation. Most of the clients being poor and in debt never left a donation or at most a shilling (10p). Financially it was a failure but was possibly the forerunner of today's Citizen's Advice Bureaus.

### **STRICKLAND PRESS.**

Sir Walter Strickland died on August 1938 having left most of his money to peace causes of which Guy was the executor. Due to Strickland's hatred of Imperial Britain most of his money was invested in countries that would be at war with Britain before the will was probated. Guy received £3,000, with this he bought some second-hand printing machinery and Bakunin Press - renamed Strickland Press in memory of Sir Walter - moved into 104-106 George Street Glasgow. Strickland Press set about republishing many of Guy's pamphlets and the Word, which would appear every month for 25 years, for 22 years of this period a free copy of the Word was sent to every Labour MP.

### **POST WORLD WAR 2 ACTIVITIES.**

At a meeting on 7th of April 1946 in Central Halls Glasgow Guy put forward his ideas for world government. His office at George Street became the headquarters of the World Federalists, some Anarchists objected to his use of the word "government".

In May 1945 Guy was asked to stand as a "peace candidate" by the Scottish Union of Ex-service Men and Women. The election was July 5th 1945 and Guy stood as 'Independent Socialist'. During the campaign Guy sometimes addressed three meetings on the same day but in spite of this he polled only 300 votes and Labour won a landslide victory across the country. In the Bridgeton bye-election on the 29th of August 1946 Guy again stood as Independent Socialist against four other candidates. Although the ILP won, Labour, still running high was 2nd and Guy this time polled 405 votes. Another bye-election in January 1947; the district of Camlachie, a win for the Conservatives, this time Guy gained a few more votes and came in above the Liberals. Guy stood in three more elections, February 1950, October 1951, and November 1962.

During the 1950s the Word had a fairly good circulation by postal subscription around Glasgow and Lanarkshire, but Strickland Press was always in financial trouble. A problem that aggravated the situation was

the Scottish Typographical Association's refusal to allow suppliers to serve Strickland Press because it employed women. This was not true as nobody was employed, it was a working partnership of two men and two women and was in no financial position to employ anybody. The late 50s and early 60s saw the demolition of large tracts of Glasgow and the premises in George Street were due for demolition. The building was more or less pulled down around his head as Guy sat tight, with no offer of alternative premises, trying to continue in a building that leaked, had plaster falling on the printing machinery and began to smell foul. Eventually the council, in February 1962, gave him the keys of a small shop in Montrose Street and the Press moved in on March 1962. Guy still addressed meetings on the first Sunday of every month in the Central Halls Bath Street and on occasions spoke at the Workers Open Forum in Renfrew Street Halls and he also continued to take on cases of personal injustice, all without a fee. At the age of 76 Guy stood for the Woodside District in the general election of Thursday 22nd of November 1962. He had spoken every night of the campaign plus interviews and questions while continuing with the next issue of the Word. Sadly he only polled 134 votes. The cold damp fog of the November weather, cold stuffy halls and excessive work load, the press physically falling apart and mounting debts, was beginning to take its toll. As a very cold winter moved slowly on to February 1963 Guy caught a cold but continued to work. His condition deteriorated and at one point was taken to hospital but signed himself out next day. Informed that he had a heart condition and warned against public speaking, he continued his monthly meetings. A compromise was made, he would sit at home and record his speeches and have them played at the meeting but Guy decided that if he could sit at home for an hour speaking into a microphone he could sit for an hour on the platform. His last meeting on Sunday the 6th. of October 1963 left him physically exhausted. On Wednesday the 16th he was admitted to hospital, he died on Thursday the 17th of October 1963.

Guy Alfred Aldred had worked ceaselessly at his propaganda, writing, publishing and public speaking, he took on injustices wherever he saw it. He had spoken at every May Day for 60 years except the years he spent in prison. He never once asked for a fee nor sought personal gain, throughout his 62 years of campaigning his principles never faltered.



## **THE CLYDE WORKERS COMMITTEE.**

### **THE SPARK, THE FORMING OF THE LWC.**

In 1915 during a prolonged period of considerable economic hardship for most industrial workers, Clydeside engineering employers refused workers demands for a wage increase. The insatiable demand for war munitions had led to a rapid rise in inflation and a savage attack on the living standards of the working class. Workers were demanding wage increases to offset these repressive conditions. At this time Weir's of Cathcart was paying workers brought over from their American plant 6/- shillings a week more than workers in their Glasgow plant.

The dispute between workers and management at Weir's very rapidly escalated into strike action. The strike was organised by a strike committee named the Labour Withholding Committee (LWC). This committee comprised of rank and file trade union members and shop stewards. It was they who remained in control of the strike rather than the officials from the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE).

The strike started in February 1915 and lasted almost 3 weeks. At its peak 10,000 members of the ASE from 8 separate engineering works were on strike throughout Clydeside. The officials from the ASE denounced the strike and backed the government's demands to resume work. It was this double pressure from the government and their own trade union that drove the workers from the various engineering works in Glasgow to form the LWC to give the workers a voice and to organise the strike to their wishes.

Although the strikers demands were not met, its importance is in the fact of it forming the LWC. A committee formed from rank and file union members that determined policy in the work place and refused to follow the directives from union officials when those directives conflicted with the demands of that rank and file.

### **THE MUNITIONS ACT.**

The government alarmed by the February 1915 strike, summoned trade union leaders to a special conference. The result of this conference being the now notorious Treasury Agreement. The outcome of which was that all independent union rights and conditions including the right to strike, were abandoned for the duration of the war.

It also allowed the employers to "dilute" labour. Meaning they could employ unskilled labour in skilled jobs to compensate for the growing

labour shortage, due to the every increasing demand for munitions and the endless slaughter of young men at the front. The Munitions Act also made strikes illegal and restrictions of output a criminal offence. The Munitions Act also allowed for the setting up of Munitions Tribunals to deal with any transgressions of the act.

October 1915 saw one such tribunal, the outcome of which was that 3 shipwrights from Fairfield Shipyard on the Clyde were sentenced to one months imprisonment for their refusal to pay a fine imposed because of their strike action in support of two sacked workers. The imprisonment of the 3 shipwrights prompted the official union representatives to call for a public enquiry. However, the LWC, which had reformed after the February 1915 strike, were seeking immediate strike action. A rather shaky and uneasy peace remained while official union leaders and the rank and file LWC waited for the government's response. With the lack of any response from the government, the LWC decided, with the full backing of the workers, to act on their own by issuing an ultimatum to the government; If the shipwrights were not released within 3 days there would be widespread industrial action throughout the Clydeside until their release.

Three days after the LWC ultimatum the shipwrights were released. It was later discovered the the imprisoned men's fines had been paid. The general feeling among the LWC and others was that the fines had been paid by ASE officials in an attempt to prevent widespread industrial action on Clydeside over which they could exercise little or no control.

### **THE CLYDE WORKERS COMMITTEE.**

This victory lead to the LWC deciding to form a permanent committee to resist the Munitions act. It was to be called the Clyde Workers Committee, (CWC) and organised on the same democratic principles as the LWC. It would have 250-300 delegates elected directly from the work place, it would meet weekly.

This was a seismic shift in the employee/ management working relationship on Clydeside. Up until then shop stewards in the industry merely existed as card inspectors and implementers of national and district committees policies. However, after the forming of the CWC in 1915, increasingly it was the workers through the CWC that controlled the policy on the shop floor and in negotiations, much to the consternation of the official trade unions. The CWC in 1915 stated; "We will support

the officials just as long as they represent the workers, but we will act independently immediately they misrepresent them.”

As the CWC had no faith in the official trade union to protect the workers interests, when the government Dilution Commission, in January 1916, arrived in Glasgow to attempt to implement “dilution” in the munitions factories it was the CWC who sought to negotiate a more radical policy with the commission in an attempt to secure greater workers control over the process of “dilution”. Although by this time the CWC was responsible for representing the workforce in 29 Clydeside engineering works, the Dilution Commission refused to recognise its authority and declined the CWC’s offer to meet and discuss proposals for implementation.

### **ARREST AND DEPORTATION.**

Between January and March 1916 the Dilution Commission met little or no opposition from workers and trade unions elsewhere on Clydeside. During this period it however little or no progress was made in the Clydeside engineering industry. A situation that the government felt that it could not tolerate much longer.

A management decision at Beardmore’s engineering works Parkhead Glasgow, to refuse shop stewards access to new “dilutees” brought about strike action in March 1916. In the following four days workers at three other munitions factories came out in sympathy with the Beardmore strikers. These events on Clydeside were creating a degree of nervousness in the government and the Dilution committee who were afraid that the actions of the syndicalist inspired CWC would impede munitions production and possibly spread to other areas.

On order of the government on March 24 1916, the military authorities arrested and deported Kirkwood, Haggerty, Shields, Wainright and Faulds, the Beardmore shop stewards. On the same day they arrested and deported McManus and Messer two shop stewards from Weir’s of Cathcart, one of the factories that came out on strike in Sympathy with the Beardmore strikers. On March 29 the military authorities again swooped and arrested and deported Glass, Bridges and Kennedy, 3 more shop stewards from Weir’s.

The shop stewards were sent to Edinburgh where they had to report to the police three times daily. These restrictions were kept in place until 14 June 1917. It was obvious to all that the arrested shop stewards had been abandoned by their official trade union, they were also refused any union

benefit during the deportation. These deportations broke the resistance to the implementation of “dilution” in the Clydeside engineering industry, it also realised the government’s aim in bring about the demise of the CWC for the duration of the war.

Following the end of the war there was a fear of mass unemployment due to the demobilisation of the troops and the demise of the munitions factories. The common view held by the majority of workers in shipbuilding, engineering and mining was that a drastic cut in the number of hours in the working week, with the same war time pay levels was the only solution.

On January 1919 the CWC held a meeting of its shop stewards from shipbuilding and engineering, from this meeting the “Forty Hour” movement was born, and the decision was taken to go with the miners in their demand for a reduction to the weekly hours to help absorb the increase to the workforce and the reducing number of jobs.

Further information; <http://gdl.cdrl.strath.ac.uk/redclyde>

## **GEORGE (BALLARD) BARRETT, 1888?-1917**

### **THE EARLY YEARS.**

George Ballard was born in Hertfordshire, his exact date of birth is unknown but is thought to be around 1888. At a very early age he became active in socialism and soon joined the Bristol Socialist Society. He rapidly became opposed to electoral political action, by February, 1908 George was a committed anarchist promoting direct action as opposed to parliamentary activity. By mid 1909 he had moved to Walthamstowe, London and was working on Waltham Abbey. At this time he was active in the anarchist movement in London and an active and popular speaker often speaking at lunchtime meetings and cycling twenty miles a day after work to speak at evening meetings.

### **THE GLASGOW PERIOD**

It was in April, 1910 that George moved to Glasgow. It was here that he began a solitary campaign of street-speaking, on occasions assisted by John McAra from Edinburgh. He proved to be an able and very eloquent speaker whose passion and conviction impressed all who heard him and soon began to attract a considerable following. It was at this time that George Ballard with John Paton formed the Glasgow Anarchist Group. There had been no or little anarchist propaganda in Glasgow for some years. The idea was to have it as a free commune idea with no leadership. The first meeting was held in the Clarion Club, Gorbals, Glasgow, George Ballard made a short statement and invited the floor to express its self and then sat down. There was silence, obviously this was not what was expected by those who had turned up. There were three such meetings before it was agreed that George should be chairperson and give an opening speech. From then on things moved forward. The Group held regular meetings, mainly outdoors meetings were also held in the Clarion Club. As a prominent member of the Glasgow Anarchist Group, George helped to swell the numbers of the Group's active members, at the Group's first business meeting called later in the year the Group had 20 active members and by May 1st. 1911, the group had 50 active members.

### **PETER THE PAINTER**

After the "Siege of Sydney Street" in London, on January, 1911, in which Peter Piatkov, "Peter the Painter", was the only one to escape, the authorities thought he had escaped to Glasgow and was being sheltered by the Glasgow Anarchist Group. The police called at the Clarion Club

and asked the caretaker for names and addresses. At the following meeting two plain clothes police officers sitting in the group as new members were exposed. After being exposed they politely excused themselves and left.

### **THE SEAMEN'S STRIKE 1911**

The Glasgow Anarchist Group was actively involved in the Seamen's Strike of 1911. George's activity in the Seamen's Strike saw him arrested and charged with leading an attack on the wharves. The reason for the attack was that the wharves were employing scab labour during the strike. However due to the strength of the strike the charges were dropped, but this activity cost him his job, the usual way of trying to starve activists into submission. George Ballard, in an attempt to avoid victimisation became George Barrett, a name he had used as a nom-de-plume in the past. The same year the Group began to expand its activities beyond Glasgow. Soon they were holding meetings at two places in Glasgow, as well as Paisley, Clydebank, Maryhill and Parkhead.

### **MAY DAY 1913**

On May day 1913 George Barrett with the help of George Davidson started to produce the weekly paper "The Anarchist". The paper ran for 34 issues and was to prove George Barrett to be every bit as good a writer as he was a speaker. His involvement in the paper was at every level, writing articles doing all the editing, plus lots of odd jobs such as folding, packing, getting the paper rolled off and even rushing with things to the post, there were times things had to go to the pawn to pay the "comps" wages. Even with the extra workload of the paper George continued to speak at every opportunity, lunchtime and evening meetings being the normal routine, his energy seemed to be boundless. George Barrett's ability as a speaker took him on several speaking tours of Scotland and England. On these tours he would help to set up anarchist groups wherever he was speaking, most of these groups lasted throughout the 1914-18 war.

### **THE DUBLIN CONNECTION**

When the government suppressed James Connolly's newspaper in Dublin it was the Glasgow Anarchist Group that took over the printing of the paper for them and smuggled it into Ireland. The British mainland police, although they raided several anarchist presses, including "Freedom Press" in London, they never managed to get the right one.

## **AN EARLY DEATH**

Speaking at a meeting in Edinburgh in March 1913 George Barrett caught a chill from which he never fully recovered. He developed tuberculosis which proved to virulent and deadly and died in January 1917.

George Barrett was certainly one of the clearest thinkers and ablest of speakers of his era, his passion, intensity and faith never wavered even although he lived to see most of his work undone by the war. He profoundly believed that the system could not be merely altered to make the ordinary peoples' lives better, it had to be a complete revolution. His pamphlets were written with clear, precise thought and simple language. His pamphlet "The Last War" showed that the war was the workers being used to settle a quarrel between their masters and that the real war was the taking over of the means of production and distribution by the workers. The government condemned the pamphlet "The Last War" but not before 10,000 copies had been sold. Just a few months before his death George Barrett produced two more brilliant pamphlets, "The Anarchist Revolution" and "Objections to Anarchism", proving that right to the end he was an accomplished propagandist who had never strayed from his anarchist convictions.

## **FIRST WORLD WAR PEACE MOVEMENT.**

### **GLASGOW.**

At the beginning of the war Glasgow was the leading militant city, the major centre of mass support for the anti-war movement. John MacLean grew to be a giant by his anti-war stance. Though he was an important figure he was not alone. James Maxton and his sisters were on holiday the day that war was declared and immediately decided to hold a street meeting against the war. There were many more like minded people in the City. Pro-war meetings in the city were more than likely to turn into anti-war demonstrations. Glasgow's socialists, in all their various groupings, campaigned for peace from the day war was declared and continued their efforts right up to the armistice. Among the groups involved were the ILP, the Labour and Socialist Alliance, the Women's international League, the Peace Society, the Women's Social and Political Union, and many others. But the Women's Peace Crusade was possibly the one with the largest following and in Glasgow the one with the largest working class grassroots support.

### **WOMEN'S REACTIONS TO WAR.**

Women's position in the first world war was split. The suffragette movement split in diametrically opposed attitudes. In Glasgow Helen Crawford signified the anti-war grouping and became a major force. While Helen Fraser led the push for support of the war.

The first world war was the first total war. It introduced massive civilian mobilisation into the army. It forced the domestic economy to swing over totally to the war effort. With this came the flood of female labour into industry. Here we saw contradictions emerging, women's industrial ability contrasting with the accepted female virtues of wife, mother and nurse. With men away at the war it showed women very capable of organising when faced with new challenges. Two examples of this were the rent strikes, and the peace movement. The fact that the peace movement survived at all in the face of massive government anti-German, pro-war propaganda and a vicious jingoistic pro-war press stands as testament to the tremendous courage and principles of all those involved. Women were also involved in other struggles such as the No Conscription Fellowship, but it was the Women's Peace Crusade that made the greatest contribution to the peace struggle. On August 9th 1914 the ILP and the



Glasgow branch of the peace society organised an anti-war demonstration of 5,000 people on Glasgow Green. On June the 29th 1916 Lloyd George was invited to Glasgow by the City of Glasgow Corporation to receive the "Freedom of the City". This brought about violent demonstrations against such an action with calls that the "Freedom of the City" should be give to John MacLean, David Kirkwood, and others who were at that moment in prison for their anti-war stance. Lloyd George was advised not to come to Glasgow as there would be a revolution when he arrived.

### **POLITICAL MIX.**

Glasgow's unusual political mix, the remarkable day-to-day links between feminism and socialism, between the ILP and the Women's Social and Political Union, plus the neighbourhood groups strengthened through the rent strike provided a unique seedbed for a popular women's anti-war protest movement. On June 10th 1916 came the launch of the Women's Peace Crusade headed by Helen Crawford. Over 200 women from 16 organisations attended. Following this conference a campaign of street meetings were organised, the first of these being held in Springburn and Maryhill. This was a deliberate attempt to involve working class women in the campaign. The Women's Peace Crusade moved the anti-war protest out beyond the earlier small-scale narrowly based groups, it created effective links with working class women across Scotland, not just with committed socialists but with a broad range of women concerned about the war's effect on families, homes and jobs. Glasgow June 1917 saw the national launch of the Women's Peace Crusade, after which it spread like wild fire across the country and it remained consistently active until the end of the war, by which time it had over 100 branches. The Glasgow movement continued with its activities on all fronts, street meetings, public meetings, meetings outside shipyard gates, marches, demonstrations on Glasgow Green, selling badges, distributing literature and so on. At one demonstration outside the Glasgow City Chambers, when the City Corporation refused to see their delegation Helen Crawford and Agnes Dollan broke into the building and showered councillors with leaflets. On another occasion both they and Mrs. Ferguson were arrested and later admonished. It is reported that they were at first offered their freedom if they would refrain from holding any more meetings, they refused. Comparing Glasgow's anti-war campaign with Manchester's

probably the next largest movement, Glasgow's was predominantly working class where as Manchester's was mainly middle-class with strong links to Manchester University. The Women's International League though anti-war held regular monthly meetings in public halls with noted speakers but not always dealing with the war.

### **WOMEN'S PEACE CRUSADE.**

At large public meetings they held, national figures in the peace movement would speak. But in Glasgow the main contribution of the Women's Peace Crusade was the constant grassroots work done by local propagandists. Some of this effort can be gauged by the sheer number of street meetings held over a 3 week period during June/July 1917. During this short period the Women's Peace Crusade members spoke at street meetings in: Partick, Maryhill, Bridgeton, Parkhead, Govan, Govanhill, Whiteinch, Shettleston, Springburn, Possilpark, Bellahouston, Rutherglen, Paisley, Barrhead, Overnewton, Cambuslang, Blantyre, Alloa, Cowdenbeath, Drongan, Drumpark, Douglas Water, Lanark and Edinburgh. On Sunday July the 8th 1917 the Women's Peace Crusade organised a mass demonstration in Glasgow; from two sides of the city processions wound their way through the city accompanied by bands and banners. As they approached the Glasgow Green they merged into one massive colourful demonstration of some 14,000 people.

This was essentially a housewives' movement including married women whose husbands and sons had been killed in the war. The emphasis was on the family. At demonstrations women, men and children marched in separate contingents. The children would carry banners bearing such slogans as "I want my Daddy". The crusade also had religious overtones with the badges of the "Angel of Peace" protecting children. This in no way saved them from attacks, both physical at their meetings and literary in the press. Both these attacks were on occasions lead by the clergy. This link between the socialists on the one hand and the religious pacifists on the other was an attempt by the Women's Peace Crusade to create a broad mass movement against the war.

After the Armistice, these women who had challenged the accepted naive "Idealism", courageously opposing the war from the very beginning, felt mixed emotions; remorse at the number of young men's lives lost and maimed, yet hope that it might never happen again.

## **WOMEN'S PEACE CRUSADE JUNE 1916.**

### **THE LAUNCH**

Because anti-war feelings were running high in Glasgow it was only natural that Glasgow became the militant centre of the anti-war movement, with John MacLean at its core. A giant of the anti-war movement as he was, of course John MacLean did not stand alone in this battle against the war, it is said that pro-war meetings in the city were more than likely to turn into anti-war demonstrations. However, it was the women activists including Helen Crawford, Agnes Dollan and Mary Barbour who in June 1916 organised a peace conference in the city which gave birth to The Women's Peace Crusade which became a dominant force in the anti-war movement. There is some variation on the actual date but June 10th 1916 is generally accepted as the birth of the Women's Peace Crusade. A year later, June 1917 saw the Women's Peace Crusade go national with the launch of the National Women's Peace Crusade with Helen Crawford as its Honorary Secretary

The Women's Peace Crusade split the suffragette movement with the majority, in Glasgow at least, turning their activities to the anti-war movement and the rump taking a pro-war stance.

Many of the women activists in the Women's Peace Crusade were not new to this type of struggle as many of them were active in the suffragettes, the Glasgow rent strikes and also the No Conscription Fellowship. However the Women's Peace Crusade was a concerted attempt to get working-class women organised against the war and made a major contribution to the anti-war movement.

### **MASS DEMONSTRATION AND SPREAD**

Sunday June 8th. 1917 saw Glasgow Green become a technicolour kaleidoscope as Women's Peace Crusade processions from all corners of the City converged on the Green, the usual focal point for demonstrations and struggle in the city, turning the Green into a sea of colourful banners and filling the air with lively music. Estimates put the number of men and women assembled on that occasion as 12,000-14,000. All there in defiance of the avalanche of patriotic jingoism from the media and official circles, and with one desire, to stop the war.

Resolutions were put forward congratulating the Russian revolution of that year and called for immediate peace negotiations. After this event the

Women's Peace Crusade rapidly spread to cities of northern England and the Midlands including Birmingham.

### **GEORGE SQUARE PROTEST**

At the beginning of December 1917 the Women's Peace Crusade had asked the Corporation of the City of Glasgow to receive a peace deputation, the request was refused. However, the members of the Women's Peace Crusade were determined that their voice should be heard. So on December 13th 1917 a number of women assembled in George Square opposite the City Chambers to let the Corporation hear their voices raised in opposition to the war. Among those present were Helen Crawford, and Agnes Dollan, their banners were held high and peace leaflets were distributed to those passing by and other on-lookers.

### **THE BROLLY BATTLE**

During this anti-war display in George Square the Patriot League arrived and started harassing the women in the peace demonstration, attempting to destroy their leaflets and tearing their banners. Fights ensued and the women of the Women's Peace Crusade defended themselves by brandishing their umbrellas. George Square which had been the site of many a political struggle now saw a mini war.

### **ENTRY TO THE CITY CHAMBERS**

At this point Helen Crawford and Agnes Dollan managed, by fair means or foul, to gain entry to the City Chambers and as the meeting of the City Corporation got under way, trying to ignore the demonstration outside, Helen and Agnes showered the councillors with anti-war leaflets.

### **RELIGION**

Although the Women's Peace Crusade can be said to have had religious under currents it was still an attempt to build a broad working class anti-war movement and many, if not most, of its leading activists were socialists. It was essentially a housewives movement with men and women marching in different sections. It gained support from housewives who had lost husbands and sons in the war, or whose husbands and sons were on the battle fields.

## **THE RENT STRIKE TO BLOODY FRIDAY, 1919.**

### **GLASGOW'S BLOODY FRIDAY 1919.**

Like all the events in political struggle it is difficult to trace the thread back to what brought it to this stage, Bloody Friday 1919 is no different. This was not just an attack on a large demonstration in Glasgow, it was the culmination of a series of radical events in Glasgow and the Clyde-side area where the state showed its brutality. Perhaps we could even take it back to the 18th century and the radicals like Thomas Muir and others. However we can certainly take it back to the rent strikes of the first world war, the forming of the Labour Withholding Committee, (LWC) The Clyde Workers Committee (CWC) and the political climate of that period.

### **THE RENT STRIKE.**

In pre First World War Glasgow there were a large number of empty houses, by the year 1915 all were occupied by incoming workers to the munitions and allied war industry trades. A shortage of workers and materials saw a lack of maintenance and the housing stock deteriorate rapidly. At the beginning of the war the landlords tried to implement large rent increases, at the receiving end of this were 7,000 pensioners and families whose men were fighting in France. This brought about the formation of the "Glasgow Women's Housing Association" and many other local "Women's Housing Associations" to resist the increases. A variety of peaceful activities were used to prevent evictions and drive out the Sheriff's officers. There were constant meetings in an attempt to be one step ahead of the Sheriff's officers. All manner of communication was used to summon help, everything from drums, bells, trumpets and anything that could be used to create a warning sound to rally supporters, who were mainly women as the men were at work in the yards and factories at these times. They would then indulge in cramming into closes and stairs to prevent the entry of the Sheriff's officers and so prevent them from carrying out their evictions. They also used little paper bags of flour, peasmeal and whiting as missiles directed at the bowler hatted officers. These activities culminated on the 17th of November 1915 with the massive demonstration and march of thousands through the city streets and on to the Glasgow Sheriff's Court. The size of the demonstration caused the Sheriff at the court to phone the Prime Minister of the day, this resulted in the immediate implementation of the "1915 Rent Restriction Act" which benefited tenants across the country.

## **THE LABOUR WITHHOLDING COMMITTEE.**

This happened in a time of war, so it was obvious that by 1915 Glasgow and Clydeside had a very large class oriented militant grassroots movement and had forced the Government on this occasion to act in their favour. The rent strike was mainly a women's organisation but the men were proving to be just as militant in the workplaces. Around the same time in 1915 during a prolonged period of considerable economic hardship for most industrial workers, Clydeside engineering employers refused workers demands for a wage increase. The insatiable demand for war munitions had led to a rapid rise in inflation and a savage attack on the living standards of the working class. Workers were demanding wage increases to offset these repressive conditions. At this time Weir's of Cathcart was paying workers brought over from their American plant, 6/- shillings a week more than workers in their Glasgow plant.

The dispute between workers and management at Weir's rapidly escalated into strike action. The strike was organised by a strike committee named the Labour Withholding Committee (LWC). This committee comprised of rank and file trade union members and shop stewards. It was they who remained in control of the strike rather than the officials from the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE).

The strike started in February 1915 and lasted almost 3 weeks. At its peak 10,000 members of the ASE from 8 separate engineering works were on strike throughout Clydeside. The officials from the ASE denounced the strike and backed the government's demands to resume work. It was this double pressure from the government and their own trade union that drove the workers from the various engineering works in Glasgow to form the LWC to give the workers a voice and to organise the strike to their wishes.

Although the strikers demands were not met, its importance is in the fact of it forming the LWC. A committee formed from rank and file union members that determined policy in the work place and refused to follow the directives from union officials when those directives conflicted with the demands of that rank and file.

## **THE MUNITIONS ACT.**

The government alarmed by the February 1915 strike, summoned trade union leaders to a special conference. The result of this conference being the now notorious Treasury Agreement. The outcome of which was that

all independent union rights and conditions including the right to strike, were abandoned for the duration of the war. It also allowed the employers to “dilute” labour. Meaning they could employ unskilled labour in skilled jobs to compensate for the growing labour shortage, due to the every increasing demand for munitions and the endless slaughter of young men at the front. The Munitions Act also made strikes illegal and restrictions of output a criminal offence. The Munitions Act also allowed for the setting up of Munitions Tribunals to deal with any transgressions of the act.

October 1915 saw one such tribunal, the outcome of which was that 3 shipwrights from Fairfield Shipyard on the Clyde were sentenced to one months imprisonment for their refusal to pay a fine imposed because of their strike action in support of two sacked workers. The imprisonment of the 3 shipwrights prompted the official union representatives to call for a public enquiry. However, the LWC, which had reformed after the February 1915 strike, were seeking immediate strike action. A rather shaky and uneasy peace remained while official union leaders and the rank and file LWC waited for the government’s response. With the lack of any response from the government, the LWC decided, with the full backing of the workers, to act on their own by issuing an ultimatum to the government; If the shipwrights were not released within 3 days there would be widespread industrial action throughout Clydeside until their release.

Three days after the LWC ultimatum the shipwrights were released. It was later discovered the imprisoned men’s fines had been paid. The general feeling among the LWC and others was that the fines had been paid by ASE officials in an attempt to prevent widespread industrial action on Clydeside over which they could exercise little or no control.

### **THE CLYDE WORKERS COMMITTEE.**

This victory lead to the LWC deciding to form a permanent committee to resist the Munitions Act. It was to be called the Clyde Workers Committee, (CWC) and organised on the same democratic principles as the LWC. It would have 250-300 delegates elected directly from the work place, it would meet weekly.

This was a seismic shift in the employee/management working relationship on Clydeside. Up until then shop stewards in the industry merely existed as card inspectors and implementers of national and district

committees policies. However, after the forming of the CWC in 1915, increasingly it was the workers through the CWC that controlled the policy on the shop floor and in negotiations, much to the consternation of the official trade unions. The CWC in 1915 stated; "We will support the officials just as long as they represent the workers, but we will act independently immediately they misrepresent them." Simple, the CWC had no faith in the official trade union to protect the workers interests.

### **ARREST AND DEPRIVATION.**

Between January and March 1916 the Dilution Commission met little or no opposition from workers and trade unions elsewhere on Clydeside. During this period however, little or no progress was made in the Clyde-side engineering industry. A situation that the government felt that it could not tolerate much longer.

A management decision at Beardmore's engineering works Parkhead Glasgow, to refuse shop stewards access to new "dilutees" brought about strike action in March 1916. In the following four days workers at three other munitions factories came out in sympathy with the Beardmore strikers. These events on Clydeside were creating a degree of nervousness in the government and the Dilution committee who were afraid that the actions of the syndicalist inspired CWC would impede munitions production and possibly spread to other areas.

On order of the government on March 24 1916, the military authorities arrested and deported Kirkwood, Haggerty, Shields, Wainright and Faulds, the Beardmore shop stewards. On the same day they arrested and deported McManus and Messer two shop stewards from Weir's of Cathcart, one of the factories that came out on strike in Sympathy with the Beardmore strikers. On March 29 the military authorities again swooped and arrested and deported Glass, Bridges and Kennedy, 3 more shop stewards from Weir's. The shop stewards were sent to Edinburgh where they had to report to the police three times daily. These restrictions were kept in place until 14 June 1917. These deportations broke the resistance to the implementation of "dilution" in the Clydeside engineering industry, it also realised the government's aim in bring about the demise of the CWC for the duration of the war.

### **THE FORTY-HOUR WEEK.**

Following the end of the war there was a fear of mass unemployment due to the demobilisation of the troops and the demise of the munitions



factories. The common view held by the majority of workers in shipbuilding, engineering and mining was that a drastic cut in the number of hours in the working week, with the same war time pay levels was the only solution.

On January 1919 the CWC held a meeting of its shop stewards from shipbuilding and engineering, from this meeting the "Forty Hour" movement was born, and the decision was taken to go with the miners in their demand for a reduction to the weekly hours to help absorb the increase to the workforce and the reducing number of jobs. In terms of both its tactics and its demands the January 1919, 40 Hours Strike led by the CWC was the most radical strike seen to that date on Clydeside. The objectives of the strike were to secure a reduction of weekly working hours to 40 in order that discharged soldiers could be found employment, and to stop the re-emergence of a pool of unemployment, thereby maintaining the strength of the workers against capital. The leaders of the CWC had dismissed a nationally negotiated 47-hour week agreement that had been agreed between employers and the official trade unions. The CWC had widespread support amongst workers and other important trade union bodies within the Clydeside area for their demands for a 40-hour working week.

At the start of the strike Clydeside employers were unconcerned, the feeling being that the strike was the result of a dispute between official and unofficial trade union leaders and would have little impact on them. Both the government and trade union officials were also initially unconcerned, feeling that without official support the strike would quickly fade. These views changed drastically just four days into the strike. By 30 January 1919 40,000 workers in the engineering and shipbuilding industries in Clydeside were out on strike. Electricity supply workers in Glasgow had come out in sympathy, plus the strike was joined by 36,000 miners in the Lanarkshire and Stirlingshire coalfields. It was stated that during the first week of the strike not a single trade in the Clydeside area was left unaffected by strike action. The rapid spread of the strike was attributed to the large-scale deployment of flying pickets by the CWC, largely made up of discharged servicemen.

## **THE DEMONSTRATION, BLOODY FRIDAY.**

On Friday 31 January 1919 upwards of 60,000 demonstrators gathered in George Square Glasgow in support of the 40-hours strike and to hear the Lord Provost's reply to the workers' request for a 40-hour week. Whilst the deputation was in the building the police mounted a vicious and unprovoked attack on the demonstrators, felling unarmed men and women with their batons. The demonstrators, including large numbers of ex-servicemen, retaliated with whatever was available, fists, iron railings and broken bottles, and forced the police to retreat. On hearing the noise from the square the strike leaders, who were meeting with the Lord Provost, rushed outside in an attempt to restore order. One of the leaders, David Kirkwood, was felled to the ground by a police baton, and along with William Gallacher was arrested.

### **RIOTS AND ARRESTS.**

After the initial confrontation between the demonstrators and the police in George Square, further fighting continued in and around the city centre streets for many hours afterwards. The Townhead area of the city and Glasgow Green, where many of the demonstrators had regrouped after the initial police charge, were the scenes of running battles between police and demonstrators. In the immediate aftermath of 'Bloody Friday', as it became known, other leaders of the Clyde Workers' Committee were arrested, including Emanuel Shinwell, Harry Hopkins and George Ed-bury.

### **TROOPS.**

The strike and the events of January 31 1919 "Bloody Friday" raised the Government's concerns about industrial militancy and revolutionary political activity in Glasgow. Considerable fears within government of a workers' revolution in Glasgow led to the deployment of troops and tanks in the city. A full battalion of Scottish soldiers stationed at Maryhill barracks in Glasgow at the time were locked down and confined to barracks and an estimated 10,000 English troops and tanks were sent to Glasgow in the immediate aftermath of Bloody Friday. Soldiers with fixed bayonets marched with tanks through the streets of the City. There were soldiers patrolling the streets and machine guns on the roofs in George Square. No Scottish troops were deployed, with the government fearing fellow Scots, soldiers or otherwise, would go over to the workers if a revolutionary situation developed in the area. It was the British state's

largest military mobilisation against its own people and showed they were quite prepared to shed workers' blood in protecting the establishment.

### **PARTIAL VICTORY.**

On 10 February 1919 the 40-hours strike was called off by the Joint Strike Committee. Whilst not achieving their stated aim of a 40-hour working week, the striking workers from the engineering and shipbuilding industries did return to work having at least negotiated an agreement that guaranteed them a 47-hour working week; 10 hours less than prior to the strike.

## **HELEN BROWN SCOTT LENNOX, 1889?-1960**

### **CHURCH TO ATHEISM.**

Helen Brown Scott Lennox was the daughter of a Church of Scotland Minister and is thought to have come from Lesmahagow. She attended Glasgow University at a time when very few women were offered places and graduated with an honours degree in Classics. Her transition to atheism came after hearing Guy Aldred speak at one of his meetings. According to John Taylor Caldwell, on revealing her atheism to her father his only comment was "Is that all that's wrong with you? I thought you were objecting to your stepmother."

### **QUIET PROPAGANDIST.**

Helen first became active in the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation, when the group split she left with Guy Aldred and others becoming an active member in his newly formed United Socialist Movement.

Helen, a scholarly, self-sacrificing, modest, quiet and quite timid young woman was a reasonable poet and Strickland Press published a booklet of her poems "Swords into Ploughshares". In spite of her degree, she never worked as anything above a junior typist and lived her life in the slums of Glasgow. She gave all she could in effort, time and financial support to the United Socialist Movement. One of her tasks was to chalk the streets with information about coming events, a common practice in those days, she would cover a large number of streets and a considerable distance with her chalk, her timid nature undaunted by the jibes and abuse hurled at her by onlookers.

After world war 2, when the Americans started to set up bases in Britain, Helen was a familiar sight on the streets of Glasgow alone with her placard;

**AMERICA'S LARGEST AIRCRAFT CARRIER**

**SS GREAT BRITAIN**

**SEVERAL MILLION CHILDREN ABOARD**

Bearing in mind her quiet timid nature, this must have required considerable courage. Helen Brown Scott Lennox died suddenly on April 27th. 1960 and was cremated in Maryhill Crematorium, a fellow comrade, Willie McDougal, saying the words of tribute.

## **ETHEL MACDONALD, 1909 1960.**

### **THE DEFINING MOMENT.**

Ethel MacDonald born Motherwell, just outside Glasgow 24 th. of February 1909. She was one of nine children. Leaving home at sixteen became active in women's movements and the rights of the working class. From an early age Ethel was an active socialist, still only sixteen she joined the Bellshill, Independent Labour Party, (ILP). Worked as waitress and shop assistant, 1931 she came in contact with Guy Aldred who asked her to become his secretary. Ethel left the ILP and joined Guy Aldred in the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation, (APCF). 1934 the APCF split over the issue of the nature of its opposition to Labour Parliamentarianism. Guy Aldred lead the splinter group, Ethel joined him in the United Socialist Movement, and remained a member of the USM and a close comrade of Guy Aldred until her death in 1960. Ethel MacDonald stated that her first encounter with Guy Aldred was the moment which determined for future.

### **SPANISH CIVIL WAR.**

Although Ethel and Guy never achieved any form of financial security they never ceased their intensely energetic political activity in pursuit of their political goals. July 1936 saw the out break of the Spanish Civil War, this sparked a tremendous increase in political activity, especially among groups of the left. The USM diverted all its energies into supporting the struggle of the Spanish workers. Guy Aldred was invited by the French anarchist activist, Pruhommeaux to send a Scottish anarchist to Barcelona. Ethel MacDonald was asked to go because of her work in publishing and circulating the newsheet "Regeneration" in support of the Spanish CNT and FAI (Federacion Anarquista Iberica), the Spanish, militant federation of anarchist groups. Guy Aldred co-opted Jenny Patrick as the APCF representative. Both women set off for Spain, they left Glasgow on the 20th of October, 1936 with very little money, they reached Paris with one franc between them. With the help of comrades and sympathisers and without money or papers the hitch-hiked across France and eventually reached Spain. Ethel and Jenny were part of a vast army of workers and intellectuals making their way to Spain to join the fight against fascism in spite of their own governments' policy of "Non-intervention". Ethel was sent to Barcelona and Jenny to Madrid.

## **ACTION IN SPAIN.**

From arriving in Barcelona in November 1936 until January 1937, Ethel MacDonald managed to send back to Glasgow a bulletin every few days. They gave details of activities in Barcelona and some of the surrounding villages, describing how villages had been organised on a communal basis, how empty nunneries and monasteries had been turned into hospitals, offices and schools, she also told of the difficulties. Many of these bulletins made their way into main stream press. After January 1937 she began her radio broadcasts as the English speaking propagandist for the Barcelona Anarchist radio station and was listened to in many countries throughout the world.

After seven months in Spain, Jenny Patrick returned to Glasgow on the 24 th. of May 1937, it would be November 1937 before Ethel returned to Glasgow. After the May battles and the June the 16th . round up of POUM members and foreign activists, Ethel spent her time smuggling food and letters in to comrades in prison and smuggling out letters and information. She put herself in considerable danger by helping foreign anarchist to escape Spain, she done this by borrowing civilian clothes to disguise soldiers and begging crews of foreign ships to give secret and safe passage for wanted men in danger. News of her activities reached the British press, Ethel became know as the "Scots Scarlet Pimpernel".

## **PRISON.**

It was obvious that sooner rather than later Ethel would be arrested and imprisoned. The inevitable happened, but while in prison she was still a problem to the "new" Barcelona authorities. The charge against her was, associating with prisoners during her visits to jailed comrades and conspiring with them in a foreign tongue. While in prison she would collect letters from other prisoners and smuggled them out with her own in cans in which her food had been brought in. Those for abroad were given to a French skipper and others got to the British Consul. By the same means it was possible to organise a hunger strike in every prison in Barcelona where anarchist prisoners were held.

Ethel was once again in the Glasgow press, the Evening Times on Friday the 9th . of July 1937 ran an article on Fenner Brockway's visit to Spain and again on July 14th. when it described her release after the "trifling" charges against her were dropped. When Mr. Brockway met her after being released and again as he left Spain, she was undecided whether she

would come back to this country or stay in Spain . She accepted her arrest and imprisonment very philosophically, but it is Mr Brockway's view that she would be wise to return home." The Evening Times carried more news of her on August 25th.,

While still in Spain life for Ethel was not easy after her release from prison, her attempts to get her papers and belongings proved fruitless, she never slept twice in the same place and most certainly suffered considerable hardship in her desire to serve her cause As Anarchists tried to tell the world of the "white terror", and "the purges" that were now part and parcel of Barcelona, Ethel was only one of a host of foreigners caught up in the terror.

### **BACK HOME.**

During her spell in Spain, she produced regular bulletins with accurate information that were in turn printed in several newspapers, her radio broadcasts were listened to by people in many countries. For a brief spell, between July and November 1937, the spotlight of fame shone on Ethel MacDonald, newspapers across the country carried articles speculating on the whereabouts of the "Scots Scarlet Pimpernel", articles referred to the "Bellshill Girl Anarchist". In one newspaper report her parents stated that they would gladly sell their furniture to raise money to bring her home if they could get in contact with her. They appealed to the British Consulate to do everything in their power to get in touch with her. On Friday September, 24th. 1937, The Evening Times hit the streets with the front page headlines, " Miss Ethel MacDonald reaches Paris". It was revealed that she had left Spain on the 4th. of September 1937 "under escort" , News of Ethel's activities in Spain had spread to most countries throughout the world, many of these countries sent invitations for her to come and speak of her experiences. Early November 1937 found Ethel back in her native Glasgow, welcomed by several hundred people. The Evening Citizen carried a report of her arrival, "There was sadness in Ethel MacDonald's face as she said: "I went to Spain full of hopes and dreams. It promised to be Utopia realised. I return full of sadness, dulled by the tragedy I have seen". Then she whispered to friends: "I'm so thrilled by the welcome. But it 's terribly embarrassing. Please take me away". Ethel MacDonald proved to as fearless at home as she had been in Spain and would not be silenced on the truth of what happened in

Barcelona. She launched herself on a lecturing and speaking tour throughout Britain giving details of her personal experiences while in Spain.

### **THE CALL-UP.**

In late 1940 Ethel received her call-up papers, after reading them she wrote across them in blue pencil the words, "GET LOST", and posted them back. Some weeks later she received further notification stating that they had not had a satisfactory response to the first notice and must remind her of the serious consequences of not complying with the Act, etc, etc, and she must report to the Recruiting Officer within seven days. Her response on this occasion was to write in large blue letters, "COME AND GET ME." this she duly posted. She received no further notification, perhaps the authorities had no desire to give the "Scottish Pimpernel" an opportunity to organise wholesale escapes from a women's prison.

### **HER DEATH.**

Near the end of February 1958, Ethel was standing on a box adjusting some piece of machinery at the Strickland Press when she fell. From then on she needed a stick to get around, it soon became clear that Ethel was suffering from a very serious illness. Her physical deterioration was rapid, and soon her comrades had to nurse her at home. Ethel MacDonald died in Knightswood Hospital on the 1st . of December 1960 of multiple sclerosis.

The Glasgow newspapers were inundated with tributes to her dedication, bravery and remembering her days of glory.

The Glasgow Evening Citizen wrote;

SCOTS "SCARLET PIMPERNAL" DIES, She became legend in Spain  
The small dark-haired woman - once called Scotland's "Scarlet Pimpernel" during the mid-1930's - is dead. And so ends the legend of Ethel MacDonald.

Guy Aldred wrote;

*" — it would be absurd to pretend that I can console myself to her passing. As I have said I feel very keenly that she has been cheated of life— It seems to me a pity that she cannot know what I think of her; that she cannot realise how thoroughly I understand her, that she will never know that I wish she was here among the living and that if someone had to die that I could be numbered among the dead—"*



## **FIGHT FOR FREEDOM OF SPEECH ON THE GREEN. HEART OF THE CITY.**

Glasgow Green lies in the centre of the city, it is the oldest of Glasgow's parks. Its origin lies in the common lands of the Burgh. Since the 1100s the area of the Green has been used for all manner of purposes from peat cutting, pasturing, slaughtering cattle, executions, walking, talking and playing.

On April 13th 1916 Glasgow Corporation repealed a bye-law passed in 1896 covering the regulation of city parks and replaced it with bye-law 20, restricting the right of free assembly. The bye-law was not invoked until 1922 when it became responsible for a considerable number of riotous disturbances during the 1920s and 30s.

### **JOYCELYN SQUARE.**

On July 30th 1923, after many protests and demonstrations, bye-law 20 was amended to make an exception to the area outside the gates of the Green at Joycelyn Square. Meetings were still being cleared from outside all other city parks, this was not always concluded quietly. Guy Alfred Aldred challenged the bye-law by holding meetings outside the gates of the Botanic Gardens, because of its historical traditions he considered the Green a special case. On July 6th 1924 Guy Aldred addressed an open letter in "The Commune" to the Lord Provost, Magistrates and the City Council. He referred to the right of unlicensed liberty of free speech on Glasgow Green secured by long tradition and respected by the Common Law of Scotland. In the letter he made it known that he would be one of seventy speakers participating in an orderly quiet meeting at the monument on Glasgow Green. He also mentioned the seventy cases pending and those already in prison being treated like common criminals because of speaking on the Green without a permit. The meeting went ahead as advertised and further meetings for several weeks after this. At each meeting the police took names and charged the speakers. The speakers were drawn from two groups, Guy Aldred's Anti-parliamentary Communist Federation, and John MacLean's Scottish Workers' Republican Party.

### **EXEMPTION REPEALED.**

On November 29th 1926 at a meeting of the Glasgow Parks Sub-Committee a report was read detailing complaints from the Magistrates Committee, referring to the abuse of Joycelyn Square by undesirables such as

racing tipsters attracting a rowdy and troublesome element. A motion was put to the Parks Sub-Committee that the exemption of the square from the restrictions covering the Green should be repealed; the motion was carried.

At this point in time Guy Aldred was in London on another campaign when on February 15th 1925 he was arrested from his platform in Hyde Park and charged with blasphemy and sedition. When he got notice that the Sheriff Principal A.O.M MacKenzie, had received an application from Glasgow Corporation for deletion of the clause in the bye-law exempting Joycelyn Square from the restriction that applied to the Green he lodged Notice of Appeal. The hearing was on March 29th 1927, Guy Aldred appeared in person to state his objections.

Aldred quoted Acts and authorities supporting his view that the bye-law was beyond the legal authority of the Corporation and inconsistent with the laws of Scotland and that this bye-law was in fact an act of prohibition. He also stated that the London authorities had laws to prevent tipsters from acting in Hyde Park but allowed public meetings. Sheriff MacKenzie on April 1st 1927 confirmed the bye-law. The Glasgow Herald went further in an article on April 2nd suggesting that the Corporation take steps to regulate all street corner oratory within the city. The Daily Herald carried the headline "Glasgow Green Silent".

### **TRAMP PREACHERS.**

June 1931 saw the issue come very much alive again when the Brotherhood of the Way - known as Tramp Preachers - arrived in Glasgow and started with fervour and passion to preach on the Green. They seldom had anywhere to sleep and had no worldly possessions bar their wooden crosses. They relied on collections to survive, prison to them would mean food and a bed. They were continually arrested and sentenced to thirty days in prison, their only defence in court was to loudly sing "Onward Christian Soldiers".

John McGovern, ILP Member of Parliament for Shettleston, asked the Secretary of State William Adamson if he would release the Tramp Preachers. Not happy with the answer McGovern persisted until the speaker ordered him to leave the Chamber. He refused and as four doorkeepers tried to remove him supporters took hold of him in an attempt to prevent his removal. As this struggling mass of bodies rumbled towards the door the House was treated to a scene more in keeping

with a street meeting being broken up by the police. McGovern was eventually ejected from the Chamber and was suspended for the remainder of the session. The event got him widespread publicity and he announced to the press that he would speak on Glasgow Green without a permit.

A Free Speech Council was formed. On Sunday July 5th 1931 McGovern arrived at the Green to speak, a crowd of some six thousand had assembled. The meeting was allowed to proceed with the police taking the names of all the speakers, of which there was no shortage. The speakers were McGovern, Aldred, Pickering, McShane, Rennie, Heenan, McDougal, Reilly, McGlinchy and Lanaghan. All made two Court appearances and were fined £3 each. Guy Aldred gave Notice of Appeal on behalf of all the accused.

### **COUNCIL OF ACTION.**

At a meeting in Central Halls Glasgow on September 19th 1931 the Free Speech Committee became a permanent Council of Action. The Council of Action was held together because of the issue of the Green. In actual fact the members were from many different shades of the left with different motives. They ranged from the right to work, anti-means tests, anti-parliamentarians and others; in many instances there was little love lost between them.

### **RIOTS.**

The differing motives and the fragmented leadership led to the days of rioting that occurred on and after October 1st 1931. On Thursday October 1st a large crowd had assembled on the Green, estimates were put at 100,000 although the police estimate was 40,000. The police had instructed certain members of the Council of Action to lead demonstrators away in organised groups in different directions. Some of the crowd were armed with sticks, hammers and bottles as instructed the previous day by certain members of the Council of Action. There appears to have been a disturbance at the head of a large group preparing to march off the Green. McGovern was assaulted and arrested. The police charged the crowd, McShane ended up behind the police and led a group who were going to "have a go at the police", away from the Green over the Suspension Bridge and into the Gorbals. Rioting broke out all over the city and it went on over the weekend. Shop windows were smashed and shops looted in every street in the city. It was reported that the city "is in a grip of terror".

On Monday October 5th Guy Aldred held a meeting on the Green and sternly rebuked McGovern and McShane for stirring up the people with no other purpose than to appear to be their leader and further their own personal agenda.

January 18th 1932 saw McGovern, McShane and ten others appear in court charged with assault, mobbing and rioting. McShane was acquitted, the police stating that he had complied with their instructions. McGovern was also acquitted as he was in custody before the violence erupted. The ten others, all ordinary members of the public, each received three months in prison.

### **BYE-LAW 20 REPEALED.**

The appeal against the conviction of Guy Aldred, John McGovern and others for speaking on Glasgow Green on July 5th 1931 came before the High Court of Justiciary on October 17th 1931. Though the appeal was unsuccessful, observations made by the Lord Justice General were brought to the notice of the Parks Committee. These observations and the events of October 1st to 6th 1931 brought the Parks Committee, on March 3rd 1932 to repeal bye-law 20 and an amended bye-law that gave the right to public meetings, literature sales, and collections on places set aside by Notice for that purpose. The amendment was confirmed on June 8th 1932 by Sheriff Principal MacKenzie. The old bandstand part of the Green was set aside for public speaking. Guy Aldred maintained that the amended bye-law applied to every park in the city and that the corporation was failing in its duty if it did not set aside by notice parts of all the city parks where citizens could meet and freely debate.

The right of Freedom of Assembly only returned to Glasgow Green because of the determined and always courageous struggle of those involved. The events of Glasgow Green prove that all rights we sometimes take for granted have to be vigilantly guarded or they disappear and to have them returned can be a hard and bitter struggle.

## **JOHN TAYLOR CALDWELL, 1911-2007**

### **THE LINK.**

With the death of John Taylor Caldwell aged 95 we have lost the last significant link with an anarchist anti-parliamentary form of socialism/communism which flourished in the first few decades of the last century, and was part of a tradition of libertarian socialism going back to the days of William Morris and the Socialist League – a socialism based on working-class self-activity manifest in workers' councils and direct action rather than in reliance on political parties, whether social democratic or revolutionary.

This kind of anarchism is assumed to have become extinct during the inter-War period, crushed between the pincers of the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Communist Party. But in a few places, notably Glasgow, it continued to flourish, thanks to individuals like John and his mentor, Guy Aldred. Aldred was the main organiser and theoretician of this movement. John's first encounter with him at the Glasgow May Day demonstration in 1934 left such a deep impression on him that later in the year he joined Aldred's United Socialist Movement (USM). In 1938, John left his seafaring employment to work, full time but unpaid, for Aldred's movement. For almost three decades he devoted himself to printing the movement's paper *The Word* (plus a veritable mountain of pamphlets) and turned his hand to whatever needed doing. The USM took an important part in all the political actions of its time, from support of the Spanish revolutionary cause in 1936-8, through the anti-war struggles of 1939-45 (in which John himself was a conscientious objector), and on to the anti-militarist and peace campaigns of the Fifties and Sixties.

### **STRICKLAND PRESS.**

All this was achieved against a background of ever-present poverty, with barely enough money to eat, never mind provide meeting rooms or publish its propaganda. The most intense period of activity was undoubtedly 1936-38 in support of the Spanish revolutionary cause. Meeting were held every night and funds had to be raised to send two comrades (Ethel MacDonald and Jenny Patrick) to Spain. But the group was in desperate need of a printing press. Amazingly, Aldred persuaded a "Roneo" salesman to let them have a duplicator on approval, which was

immediately pressed into service to produce a broadsheet, *Regeneracion*, giving uncensored news from Spain. In 1938 the group again became homeless and the duplicator was repossessed. But with a generous donation from one of their stalwarts, they managed to acquire an antiquated printing press at scrap value from the veteran Glasgow socialist Tom Anderson. A new paper was hurried into print ready for May Day, and following John's suggestion it was called *The Word*. It was an instant success, and as John noted, was seized on "as readily as if it were a free handbill." By 1939, with the help of the Strickland bequest, the Strickland Press was set up at 104-106 George Street. From there, *The Word* continued to be published until, in 1962, the Press was forced to remove to Montrose Street. The George Street premises were the heart of this anarchist oasis in Glasgow, as a meeting-place, bookshop, printing press and social centre for a whole generation of Glaswegians. John managed to capture this in an epitaph for the group's old HQ written after it had been bulldozed for a new University of Strathclyde building: When the meeting was over the chairs were replaced and the audience meandered upstairs where books were bought and fresh arguments broke out amongst small groups. The old man was tired... but he was loth to hurry them away. Some, he knew, went home to misery and loneliness. The evening in the old cellar was a rare feast of companionship for them. And for the few young ones it was good too. Not just a case of agreeing with the old master, but a challenge to read and, most importantly, to think for themselves.

### **POST WAR PERIOD.**

In the post-war period Aldred was a candidate in a number of General Elections and by-elections – not in the hope or expectation of being elected, but purely as a propaganda exercise, a cost-effective way "to expose the farcical and false nature of parliamentarism," as John put it. In all of these, John acted as Aldred's election agent, handling key aspects of the campaigns from organising the nocturnal squads of bill-posters and street-chalkers to booking meeting-halls to printing and delivering 10,000 handbills and election addresses. Despite this frenzy of activity, in Aldred's lifetime John took a background role. After Aldred's death in October 1963, however, he stepped forward to keep the movement going. Virtually single-handedly he continued to publish *The Word* (later trans-

muted to The Word Quarterly). But the USM fell into decline, and by 1968 John was forced to close its printing press and bookshop.

### **PROTECTING THE HERITAGE.**

Still he refused to be silenced. He devoted the rest of his long life to "guarding the movement against oblivion", depositing archival material in libraries such as the Mitchell Library and the libraries of Strathclyde and Glasgow Caledonian Universities, and editing a collection of Aldred's works for World Microfilms. In addition, Luath Press published his biography of Guy Aldred, *Come Dungeons Dark* (1988) albeit in abbreviated form, and subsequently Northern Herald Books published his two important volumes of autobiography, *Severely Dealt With* (1993) and *With Fate Conspire* (1999). The former, a vivid depiction of his harsh upbringing in Belfast and Glasgow, was well received and was a bestseller for three consecutive months at John Smith's historic bookshop in central Glasgow (now also, alas, defunct). Most recently, about eighteen months before his death, John had made an important contribution to a forthcoming film about "The Spanish Pimpernel", Ethel MacDonald.

### **SPEAKER.**

In addition, John was always willing to speak at events in Glasgow, trying to bring alive the history of the movement for a new generation of anarchists and direct actionists. This he did well into his nineties, for example speaking at Glasgow's John Maclean Centre three or four years ago.

### **GROWING UP IN GLASGOW AND BELFAST.**

Born in Whiteinch, Glasgow, the third child of a family of six, John moved to Belfast at the age of three, but following his mother's death, in 1925 the family moved back to Glasgow, where he and his younger siblings endured semi-starvation and frequent beatings at the hands of their father and stepmother.

### **SELF EDUCATED.**

Beyond a knowledge of the three Rs acquired in a Belfast elementary school, John was completely self-educated. He had the insatiable thirst for knowledge which until fairly recently was a characteristic feature of working class radical movements. Stimulated by the striking picture of Neanderthal Man featured in an instalment of Wells' *Outline of History*, he went on to read widely in history, literature, poetry, philosophy and

political ideas, contributing his knowledge of these subjects to the discussion groups which were an integral part of USM activities.

He was also a writer of no mean talent. Occasionally he would contribute an article for *The Word*, but he also wrote a series of children's stories for the *Daily Mirror* and *The Comet*. He was even invited to join the staff of Amalgamated Press but characteristically put his unpaid political work first. He had a deep love of poetry, and from his adolescence an abiding fascination with the life and work of Thomas Chatterton, but most of his own poetry remained unpublished. To some extent this may have been due to his self-effacing character. He was, as he put it, "a humble and obscure actor", and working with the domineering personality of Guy Aldred did nothing to alter this. Yet after Aldred's death his many talents blossomed. He was always ready to assist fellow workers with their research, especially if it promised to "spread the word" to new audiences and to shed new light on the movement to which he had devoted his life. Aldred's 1961 tribute to Ethel MacDonald is equally applicable to John: "...it seems rather odd that we should have the desire to struggle forward and to change the world and to put it right. Yet for some strange reason a contradiction arises within us. We do struggle, we do change the world. One generation emerges into another. The hopes of yesterday's heroes and martyrs become the inspiring slogans of the martyrs and heroes of today, and by them are passed on to the heroes and martyrs that will be tomorrow... I must be bold in mind and spirit so as to play my part in bringing about the new world in which [John Caldwell] believed, and to create which [he] toiled and struggled."

John Taylor Caldwell, seaman and anarchist, born 14 July 1911; died 12 January 2007.

**This article was written as an obituary to John Taylor Caldwell by Bob Jones and Gina Bridgeland and appeared in several publications.**

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Also [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Taylor\\_Caldwell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Taylor_Caldwell)



## **GENERAL STRIKE, 1926.**

### **ORIGINS OF THE STRIKE.**

The roots of the 1926 General Strike go back to before the 1914 - 1918 war. Over the years a struggle had been developing between; on the one hand a growing militant working class and on the other the employers and the state. The strike was initiated to defend the living conditions of the miners. There was now a realisation by the mass of the workers that joint action by the whole trade union movement was needed to defend the wages and conditions of the working class.

The miners in 1919 won the 7 hour day with a pay increase, while the shipbuilding and engineering industry succeeded in getting their working week reduced from 54 hours to 47. Any concessions won directly after the war were made in an attempt to halt rising working class militancy. In 1922 the mines had been under government control, in early 1922 the mine owners once more took control of the mines and immediately announced savage wage cuts; lock-out notices were posted on all pits coming into force on March 31st. The Triple Industrial Alliance, an alliance formed in 1914 by miners, transport workers and railwaymen, called for a rail and transport strike to begin on April 12th 1922. The government called up the reservists and declared a state of emergency. A proposed scheme for a temporary settlement of the wages issue on a district basis was rejected by the miners Executive Council. The other parties of the alliance called off the strike, declaring that the miners had rejected a chance of a settlement. The miners resumed work on the mine owners terms. After this defeat of the miners employers imposed wage cuts throughout most industries: heavy and light engineering, building, transport, the cotton industry and others.

The 1924 Labour government returned to the Gold Standard, which in turn increased prices of British goods on the export market. With the drop in coal exports the mine owners proposed a new wage structure that would cut miners wages by between 10% and 25%. The mine owners, without further discussion, imposed the new wage structure as from July 31st 1925. The TUC in agreement with the rail and transport unions decided to operate an embargo on the movement of coal. The government agreed to pay the mine owners a subsidy until 1st of May 1926, and the mine owners withdrew their notices. On the 31st of July 1925 the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, stated "All the workers of this country

have got to take reductions in wages to help to put industry on its feet". During the next nine months the government prepared for a showdown with the unions. On the other hand, in spite of continual warnings from activist and from some left wing groups, the TUC leadership made no preparations for the showdown that would inevitably follow the end of the mining subsidy.

### **SPECIAL CONFERENCE.**

On Thursday April 29th 1926 a special conference of the Executive Councils of the 200 unions affiliated to the British TUC was called to consider the mining dispute. It unanimously accepted the following resolution, "This conference of Executives of Trade Unions affiliated to the Trades Union Congress endorse the efforts of the General Council to secure an honourable settlement of the differences in the coal mining industry. It further instructs the Industrial Committee of the General Council to continue its efforts and declares its readiness to continue provided that the impending lock-out notices of the mine workers are not enforced. That this conference hereby adjourns until tomorrow (Friday) and agrees to remain in London to enable the General Council to consult, report and take instructions".

The conference was not a fire and thunder affair but rather timid. Whether they were either afraid of or had tried to ignore the prospects of a general strike. Hoping that their declared support for the miners would somehow produce a settlement without further action, the special conference was adjourned until Friday; it resumed in the morning and then continued to adjourn and resume until 11:30 PM when it received the Negotiating Committee's report - it had achieved nothing. No proposals had been made by the Prime Minister, the cabinet or the mine owners that meant anything less than complete surrender by the miners. It was now very clear, the mine owners and the miners were ready for a struggle. The attitude of the Industrial Committee of the TUC was not at all clear.

On Friday April 30th 1926 the mine owners put forward their final demands to the miners, "A uniform national minimum of 20% over 1914 standard wage on a uniform 8 hour day". For miners in Scotland that meant a wage cut from a wage of 9/4 a day, to 7/6 a day for skilled coalface workers and a wage cut from a wage of 6/8 a day to 6/- a day for labourers, plus an extra hour on each daily shift. A special miner's conference rejected the mine owners new terms.

## **GENERAL COUNCIL.**

On May 1st 1926 the cabinet had refused to ask the mine owners to suspend the lock-out. The previous day the King had signed a proclamation declaring a state of emergency. Local authorities were informed by a Ministry of Health circular that the measures previously arranged should be taken to cope with a national stoppage. Civil Commissioners and their staff's names were published. The Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies (OMS), set up to keep supplies moving in the event of a strike, put up notices asking for more volunteers. Troops were moved to all industrial sites. All this was in place before any official call by the General Council of the TUC for strike action. The Conference of Executives decided to accept the General Council's recommendation to strike by 3,655,527 votes for and 49,911 against. The strike was to begin on Monday May 3rd 1926 at 11:59PM.

## **GLASGOW.**

On the eve of the strike a May Day demonstration marched through Bridgeton to Glasgow Green; there was a tremendous feeling of solidarity, also a wide spread class consciousness which in some degree was due to the selfless effort of the great propagandist and political activist John MacLean, who died in November 1923. It was obvious from the mood of the demonstration that the people were ready with the miners to face a showdown with the employers and the government. The mass support for the miners was more a class instinct than a political development.

Glasgow, the industrial heartland of Scotland, was also the centre of the strike in Scotland. Most militant areas formed Councils of Action, and industrial areas were organised by strike committees. Throughout North Lanarkshire and the Vale of Leven, two of the most militant areas in the West of Scotland, Councils of Action were formed. Strike committees were formed throughout North Ayrshire, the Stirlingshire Coalfields and East Renfrewshire. In Glasgow it was the Central Strike Co-ordinating Committee of the Trades and Labour Council that took control, this was set up at the last minute. There was an overwhelming response to the first line call-out which included workers from railways, transport, building, chemical, gas, print and steel.

## **RUTHERGLEN TRAM.**

One of the problems facing the Glasgow Central Strike Committee was having to deal with a Tory City Council. The City Council was very

active in promoting the OMS. Also, the City Council ran the City's tram service, and tried to keep it running with OMS volunteers, this caused frequent and violent clashes between the police and strikers. Hundreds were arrested in these clashes. The government was worried about what might happen in the great industrial cities like Glasgow and sent 7 naval vessels to the Clyde in an attempt to overawe the strikers. Naval ratings were used to protect OMS volunteers unloading goods at the Glasgow docks. The police and OMS volunteers tried to run a tram service through Rutherglen. The first tram driven by university students protected by police got as far as Rutherglen High Street where it was surrounded by hundreds of strikers. The trolley was taken off the overhead wires, the students were manhandled, and the police beat a hasty retreat. The tram stood in the High Street silent and still for the rest of the strike. The tram service was the weakest link in the solidarity of the strike in Glasgow. Crowds were inclined to gather in the streets, they were unorganised crowds who resented the activities of blacklegs and tended to show their anger. Spontaneous mass picketing frequently occurred throughout the strike, large numbers of men and women from a district would go out to try and stop any strike breaking activity, putting themselves at risk to arrest and imprisonment. The usual targets were buses, trams and lorries. On Tuesday the 4th of May, in the Eastend of the City three buses were attacked and overturned. On Thursday the 6th of May a miners' picket marched to Ruby Street tram depot, Ruby Street was a cul-de-sac with the tram depot gates at the top; as the miners reached the tram depot gates the gates swung open and an army of police charged out with batons drawn, a violent scene ensued with many arrests. On the same day in the Central District of Glasgow attempts were made to stop buses, one being overturned and ten people arrested. There were other violent clashes at Bridgeton with 64 arrests. There were riots on the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday with 120 arrests. In Glasgow the solidarity of the strike and the spontaneous mass picketing was an indication of the strength of feeling in support of the strike.

### **HARD LABOUR.**

On Monday May the 10th 100 people appeared before the Glasgow Sheriff Court, 22 were given from 1 - 3 months hard labour. On the same day at the Glasgow Police Courts a further 100 cases were dealt with for minor offences.

There was widespread anger at the conduct of the police, more so the Specials and at the severity of the sentences. Parliament passed regulations giving power to the police to prohibit public meetings. Courts were being seen as instruments of class hatred and vengeance. In one hearing a well dressed young man was charged with stone throwing in a disturbance and given 3 months on the evidence of two policemen, contrary to several independent witnesses. A woman charged with mobbing and rioting was arrested on Friday the 7th of May she was refused bail and held in remand for two weeks in spite of the fact that she was the mother of 5 young children. On May the 14th the Labour group on the City Council called for a full inquiry into the conduct of the police after receiving several complaints from uninvolved citizens about unwarranted attacks on them, in particularly by the Specials. Tales of police and strikers playing football together never happened in Glasgow. There were calls for workers to carry "walking sticks" as a means of defending themselves, however instructions from the higher echelons instructed the workers to be peaceful and law abiding even though this was proving almost impossible due to the attitude of the police.

### **THE SCOTTISH WORKER.**

The Minority Movement issued a daily "Worker's Press" until raided and closed down by the police. The police prevented strikers from holding meetings, this was a serious barrier to attempts to discuss and share news of the strike. There were instances of the police forcibly breaking up strikers' meetings. The "Scottish Worker" was published on May the 10th and for the next six days. On the first day of issue 25,000 copies sold in the first hour. The lack of published material during the strike had been a difficulty, information being carried by word of mouth round the area by walking, cycling, motorcycle or what ever was available. Political divisions of the left that had been fiercely debated over the years had all been forgotten, the main theme of all debate was to make the strike solid.

### **WIDESPREAD SUPPORT.**

How solid the strike was can be seen from the these figures: of the 2400 railway clerks in Glasgow only less than 300 turn up for work, Glasgow Corporation had 1087 tramcars but less than 200 were able to run, none of them were running on the Eastend routes, but only on central routes. A few buses were running between Glasgow and some places south and west of the city. The number of trains that normally ran to and from

Glasgow on a daily bases numbered about 14000, only 28 trains ran from Glasgow Central Station on Saturday. There were almost no blacklegs from the great mass of unemployed in spite of their poverty and suffering.

### **ARRESTS.**

There were a large number of arrests in Glasgow during the nine days. By Monday morning about 300 had been arrested, of which 120 had been arrested in the Eastend of the City between Wednesday and Friday. The police violence and high number of arrests seemed to have no effect on the morale of the strikers. Towards the end of the first week of the strike there seems to have been unprovoked police violence. This may have been an attempt to intimidate the people in the hope that they would abandon outdoor meetings and mass picketing. Bridgeton seems to have seen some of the worst of this, following the mass picket of the Ruby Street tram depot. During the day of Friday 7th the police attacked the Bridgeton area, a busy, densely populated working class district, making 44 arrests. The reason given was that youths were holding up bread vans and coal lorries. In the evening crowds gathered in the streets around Bridgeton Cross, the police and mounted police attacked the crowds with batons. The following day the Bridgeton Parish and Town Councillors complained to the Superintendent of the Eastern Police Division of, "The molestation of unoffending citizens by agitated policemen who were accused of unwarranted interference with a number of persons."

### **Sir HERBERT SAMUEL.**

As the strikers all over the country were improving their organisational skills and over coming the lack of preparation for the strike by the leaders of the TUC, events in London were taking place that neither the strikers nor the miners leaders were aware of. Chairman of the Coal Commission, Sir Herbert Samuel, whose proposals had been turned down by the miners, returned to London from holidaying abroad and offered his services as mediator. The government informed him that abandonment of the strike must precede any official negotiations. On the 7th, 8th and 9th of May the BTUC negotiating committee without the miners met Sir Samuel. He drafted a memorandum in which it was proposed that no wage cuts should be made without some assurances that the reorganisation measures proposed in the Samuel Commission Report would be effectively adopted. It was also proposed that a Miners National Board should be set up to seek a final settlement. The Miners National Board

would prepare a simplified wage agreement which should not affect the wages of the lower paid men and would fix reasonable figures below which the wage of no class of labour should be reduced. These were a revamp of the Samuel Commission Report that the miners had already rejected. The mine owners raised no functional objections to these proposals.

### **STRIKE CALLED OFF.**

Against the wishes of the miners, the General Council called off the strike on the basis of the Samuel Memorandum and on May 12th they informed Baldwin that the strike was over. This was done without any guarantees, with no terms, no written statement, it was unconditional surrender. The militant shipyard and engineering second line of workers had just joined the strike in force. It was obvious the workers were taking control of the strike, when the surprised call-off was announced.

### **GLASGWEGIAN ANGER.**

The reaction by the vast majority of the Glasgow strikers to the end of the strike was of: surprise, anger, betrayal and disgust. Tom Scollan stated "the reaction was disgust, absolute disgust all over Glasgow, . the rank and file movement were still loyal, would have carried on". Kerrigan wrote, "The overwhelming feeling was of anger, disgust and a feeling of having been betrayed, . the rank and file would not only have carried on but would have sharpened the struggle". The Partick Strike Committee held a mass meeting in a cinema with an overflow meeting outside which resolved that, "We protest against and deplore the calling off of the general strike and, furthermore, we call upon the Scottish TUC to issue an immediate call for the resumption of the strike until such time as a definite basis for a settlement is forthcoming and an assurance given that there will be no victimisation as a result of the general strike." The Glasgow Trades and Labour Council on the 14th of May passed the following motion moved by Kerrigan by 149 votes for and 36 against, "That the Trades and Labour Council express to the TUC strong disapproval of the manner in which the general strike was terminated." One strike official stated, "A victorious army disarmed and handed over to its enemy" . In spite of the depth of feeling, they made no attempt to continue the strike locally. Most commentators agree that the strength of the strike came from the solidarity of the grass roots mass support and the weakness from above by the limp hand of indecisive bureaucracy. The

strikers shock and disgust at the call off was only matched by the employers' and government's shock and surprise at their victory. At the BTUC Bournemouth Congress, September 1926 Jack Tanner of the AEU asserted "The rank and file of all unions affiliated to congress want to know the whole truth regarding the national strike".

### **RETURN TO WORK.**

It would appear that in Glasgow none of the strikers disobeyed the TUC's orders by continuing the strike in support of the miners. However, victimisation of strikers was rife. On the railways, tramways, at the Clyde Trust, at Singer's works in Clydebank and in the newspaper industry strikes continued on terms of reinstatement, strikers eventually having to make concessions to the employers. On the railways new conditions were inferior to those in place before the strike. On the Glasgow tramways 188 T. & G.W.U. members lost their jobs. In the newspaper industry in Glasgow the three main publishers, taking in the Glasgow Herald, the Evening Times, the Bulletin, and the Evening Citizen, refused to negotiate with the unions and refused to employ union labour. In many industries throughout Glasgow leading strike activists were never reinstated to their jobs.

### **AFTERMATH.**

The miners' struggle continued. The Glasgow Trades and Labour Council called upon the General Council of the TUC to immediately reimpose a 5% levy on all organised workers in employment in order to carry out its promise to support the miners in their struggle and to ensure their final victory. The calling off of the general strike had been a betrayal of the working class and a particularly brutal betrayal of the miners. The miners struggled on until deprivation, poverty, starvation and sheer desperation drove them back in November 1926 to lower wages and worse conditions. In some coalfields wages were less than the 1926 unemployment benefit. The historian A. J. P. Taylor commented on the general strike with these words, "The response of the trade union members was fantastic, all stopped work when called upon, and practically none returned to work until the strike was over. These were the very men who had rallied to the defence of Belgium in 1914, The voluntary recruitment of the first world war and the general strike of 1926 were acts of spontaneous generosity, without parallel in any country. The first was whipped on by almost every organ of public opinion, the second was undertaken despite their



disapproval. Such nobility deserves more than passing tribute. The strikers asked nothing for themselves. They did not seek to challenge the government, still less to overthrow the constitution. They merely wanted the miners to have a living wage."

## **CLYDESIDE APPRENTICES STRIKE, 1937.**

### **WAGE RATES.**

Apprentices for some time had felt that they were drastically under paid, and were no more than a form of cheap labour. Apprentices' wages ranged from 8/- to 19/- a week. In his first year he would be paid from 8/- to 12/- per week and a last year boy would receive 16/- to 19/-. Apprentices of 23 years of age would be paid 20/- per week. Boys in their last year would on most occasions be doing the same work as a skilled man but were paid 19/-. An apprentice plater in his last year would be paid 19/10 a week while two labourers working with him would be paid £2:7/- each per week. In some cases a boy could use up to two thirds of his wage in transport just getting to and from his job together with his insurance, the remainder was to go towards his keep and put some money in his pocket.

### **STRIKE.**

The strike started on March 18th 1937 when 70 apprentices at Lobitz engineering factory took strike action. On Wednesday March 31st 500 apprentices walked out at the Fairfield Shipyard, at Govan in Glasgow. The involvement of Fairfields apprentices proved to be a catalyst for the strike as they were able to form mass pickets and encourage other apprentices to get involved. By Saturday 5,000 apprentices from over 60 firms had joined the strike. By the end of the following week 90% of the 14,000 apprentices from 130 firms in the Clydeside area were out on strike. The newspapers attempted to portray the strike as some sort of childish juvenile prank which would soon blow over. By the end of April the Govan apprentices had taken over an abandoned shop as their headquarters. The boys were aware of the fact that inactivity would erode support for the strike. An extensive communication system kept hundreds of apprentices involved in maintaining the strike. They organised the "Apprentices Olympics" and there was also a daily football league with 48 factory teams to help maintain enthusiasm for the strike.

The original view that the boys' strike would collapse because of lack of organisation was no longer held with any certainty. One union official stated that, "organisation among the boys was something wonderful". Employers started to send letters to the parents of the boys worded in a similar manner to:

Dear Madam, Your son John ceased work last week. We would like to draw your attention to the fact that unless he returns his action may endanger his future career" They also stated that the boys indentures made it unlawful for them to strike.

The apprentices stated their demands in a Charter:

A standard rate of wages and an increase in wage each year;

1st year, 15/- a week, 2nd year, 17/6 a week, 3rd year, 20/- a week, 4th year, 25/- a week, 5th year, 30/- a week.

A reasonable ratio of apprentices to journeymen. In addition, they demanded a proper trade training, and no sacking at 21.

By April the 7th many firms were in difficulties because of shortages of components normally produced by older apprentices. The situation was made worse by many journeymen refusing to do apprentices' work. The engineers in Govan threatened to join the apprentices on the street if any adult was suspended because of hold-ups caused by the strike.

### **EDINBURGH, MIDDLESBURGH & NEWCASTLE.**

The strike was now spreading out from Clydeside. In Edinburgh apprentices with support of the unions, having endorsed the Clydeside Apprentices' Charter, sent their demands to the employers and joined the strike; apprentices in Middlesburgh and Newcastle followed. On April 12th the Clydeside District Committee of the AEU, and the Confederation of Shipbuilding & Engineering Unions offered support and strike pay to the apprentices. On Friday April 16th they added to that support by calling a one day general strike, and on the Clyde 100,000 men stopped work in support of the apprentices. The Glasgow Trades Council printed a special bulletin for sale to the public allowing the apprentices to put forward their case and counter the misrepresentation in the capitalist press. Glasgow City Council granted permission for the apprentices to organise street collections. £320 was raised on the first collection, and the sale of the "Bulletin" raised a further £120.

### **OFFICIAL RECOGNITION.**

The Confederation of Shipbuilding & Engineering Unions together with representatives from the Apprentices' Strike Committee asked to meet the employers to discuss the apprentices' demands. The employers refused, insisting on negotiating with each shipyard and each workshop separately. The unions decided to ban all overtime until the apprentices returned to work in victory. This put at risk the completion of £20 million

of armaments under production on the Clyde. The strike's aims gained considerably in strength when the AEU and other unions gave the strike official recognition. In the May 1st issue of the "Challenge" the Apprentices Strike Committee stressed that the apprentices would not return until their wage demands had been met and the right of the unions to negotiate for the apprentices had been won. The employers refusal to negotiate with the apprentices' leadership more or less changed the strike into a lock-out.

### **AGREEMENT.**

On the 30th of April local union officials urged a mass meeting of strikers to resume work so that their grievances could be pursued through established channels. Failing this the officials predicted a gradual disorganised return to work, in which case the boys' spokesmen would be victimised. In these circumstances the apprentices had no option but to reluctantly return to work. They agreed to re-start work on May 5th 1937. The employers responded by introducing a new minimum apprentice wage scale ranging from 12/6 to 27/-. While the employers conceded wage rises, the apprentices' strike had confirmed their aversion to trade union representation for apprentices.

### **SECOND STRIKE WAVE.**

In spite of hostility from the AEU leadership, the Clydeside Apprentices' Strike Committee remained active through the summer of 1937, maintaining a skeletal organisation ready for any event. In September 1937 apprentices' frustration at the failure of industrial relations procedures to resolve the issues raised by the Clydeside apprentices sparked a second wave of strikes, which swept through many main English engineering centres. The English apprentices failed to generate the cohesive organisation shown during the Clydeside strike. English apprentices were more willing to settle at a factory level thereby abandoning the "Apprentices Charter".

The 1937 apprentices strike transformed the status of apprentices from separate individuals with practically no employment rights, to unionised workers. The apprentices were not forced back to work on the employers' terms; they succeeded in forcing major concessions on earnings and trade union rights from the employers.

## **ROBERT (BOBBY) LYNN, 1924-1996.**

### **CALTON BORN.**

The Wee Man is Dead! Robert Lynn has snuffed it. In the heart of Glasgow - the Calton - hundreds of people are genuinely mourning the loss of one of its best loved sons. Born in the Calton in 1924 Robert cherubic-faced, curly haired small and dapper, generous and non-judgemental he was educated at St. Mungo's Academy. Leaving school at 14 years of age he took up an engineering apprenticeship in the Yarrow's Shipyard on Clydeside. Already possessing an awareness of class consciousness he was swept up in the maelstrom of political activity which was occurring during the war years in British industry, mining, shipyard and engineering. Always disaffected by the Communist Party members' policy of subordinating workers' interests to those of Stalin's foreign policy, he looked elsewhere for his ideas.

### **STIRNER BASED ANARCHISM.**

Bobby began to explore the ideas of anarchist thinkers, among them Max Stirner (1806-56). Authoritarian socialist states justified themselves by advocating that only the state can bring about and guarantee the freedom of the people. Stirner however, argued that freedom was not an abstract end in itself. Freedom was simply the means to the real end of being in control over one's own actions. Stirner's "The Ego and His own" is a powerful critique of what he called "fixed ideas", be they religious, rational, nationalist or idealogical. For Stirner all "ideas" needed to be treated simply as that-"ideas"- working hypotheses rather than ideologies. Ideologies always make hypocrites of us by denying our real, complex selves in the name of "fixed ideas". In opposition to statism, both capitalist and communist, Stirner appeared to suggest a union of "egoists", a sort of anarchist federalism. However, like most anarchists he was opposed to providing a blueprint for society. That was precisely what he was fighting against. Peter Kopotkin defined it thus: "It is impossible to legislate for the future. All we can do is to guess, vaguely, its essential tendencies and clear the road for it." Robert Lynn interpreted this "union of egoists" literally as a workers' union, a way of organising freely within industry.

### **FIRST STRIKE AND BLACKLIST.**

In 1943 the strike on Tyneside, which saw Jock Haston and Roy Tearso imprisoned, quickly spread to the Clyde where many shipyards were

brought to a halt. Robert working as an apprentice in Yarrows became actively involved in the struggle to better the wages and conditions of his colleagues - a battle that had to be fought and refought in ensuing years. During the second world war the Communist Party dominated the influential shop stewards' committees but their policy of subordinating the workers' interests to those of Soviet Russia drew a withering fire from anarchists, Trotskyists and non-Communist Party socialists alike. This experience had a profound effect on Robert and it was then he began to nurture the beliefs of Bakunin and the industrial strategy of syndicalism. In the post-war years Robert's influence in shipbuilding became increasingly irritating to both employers and communist-led union officials, he was eventually "blacklisted" with the approval of both. Unable to get work he then joined the Merchant Navy as an engineering officer and spent some years seeing the world and its peoples. During this period he devoured libraries.

### **THE GLASGOW ANARCHIST GROUP.**

Returning to Glasgow in the early fifties he threw himself into everything; politics, marriage and trade union activity. He became an active member of the Glasgow Anarchist Group which consisted of Frank Leach, Jimmy Raeside and Eddie Shaw, who were already well-respected names in anarchist circles. As George Woodcock expressed: The Glasgow Anarchist Group is the only group in the world where the egocentric philosophies of Max Stirner took root and were given popular expression. The anarchists held an open workers forum in Renfrew Street, Glasgow where anarchists, Socialist Party of Great Britain. (SPGB), nationalists and Trotskyists debated - sometimes physically. In an open air arena ordinary working class men and women discussed passionately the ideas of Feurbuch, Clara Zetkin, Bakunin, Kropotkin and many, many others. Robert Lynn revelled in this, what he called the University of Life. **In the late fifties, with the death of Leach and the departure of Raeside and Shaw abroad, the Glasgow Anarchist Group disintegrated and** the task of reorganisation was left to Robert. This he did by immersing himself in his local community of the Calton. He and Jean, his constant companion, became well-known, well-respected and to many, well-loved characters. Robert again went back to industry and worked at Howden's engineering plant in the south side of Glasgow. There he promoted his ideas of syndicalism and libertarianism. Sadly, thanks to trade union

officials who immediately recognised the threat to their power, Robert's views did not meet with any great success. However it was the Glasgow Anarchist Group of the early seventies which was to prove the most fruitful for Robert's ideas. There became a massive blossoming of literature and direct action which exploded on the scene. The publication of booklets such as *Practical Anarchy* and *Why Vote?*, all bearing Robert's signature, appeared and were avidly read by many people who, being disillusioned with political parties of all shades, were becoming attracted to the ideas of anarchism. A great number of events were initiated by Robert especially the Glasgow Anarchist Summer School which is now becoming a tradition that attracts libertarian socialists from all over Britain. For a considerable time Robert (Bobby) Lynn held regular meetings of the Glasgow Anarchist group at 4 Ross Street Calton Glasgow. A "single-end" derelict ground floor flat just off the Gallowgate near the Barrows. His death on August 16th, was a blow to his family, his many friends and comrades, and even also to his political opponents. He was generous to a fault and although he did not suffer fools gladly he rarely had a bad word to say about anyone, even the worst of us. Robert is survived by Jean and daughters Jean, Joan and Betty.

### **Sources;**

This material was lifted from libcom and slightly edited;  
<http://libcom.org/library/the-wee-man-is-dead-an-obituary-of-robert-lynn> libcom.

**Granny made me an anachists** By Stuart Christie.

## **WORLD WAR 2, CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS.**

### **NO CONSCRIPTION LEAGUE.**

The peace movement during the 2nd World War was far different to the type of movement that formed during the First World War. The 1914-1918 peace movement was a mass movement with women playing a major role, and featured marches and demonstrations. Also the left on the political field were united in their total opposition to the war. During the 2nd World War, the political left was split with most seeing it as a war against fascism, and that they therefore supported the war. The main groups of the left that remained opposed to the war were the Independent Labour Party, the Socialist Party of Great Britain, and the Anarchists. The No Conscription League also had branches in most towns and cities throughout the country, and Glasgow was no exception. The Glasgow City branch met in the SSP rooms at 70 Robertson Street, Glasgow. The Glasgow Branch of the NCL held a meeting in the Central Halls on Bath Street on Wednesday 2nd November 1939; the hall was packed and another meeting was arranged for Wednesday 17th November. The first meeting of the Glasgow (South Side) NCL, was held in Nov 1939. Regular meetings were arranged for every Thursday at 7:30 in the ILP rooms 643 Govan Road. The NCL Glasgow (Central Branch) filled the St. Andrew's Halls on Sunday 19th November 1939 with a meeting at which the speakers were Guy Aldred and Councillor Tom Kerr plus two "conchies". The Glasgow Clarion Scouts commander, W. L. Taylor, held meetings in support of the ILP and the Peace Pledge Movement.

In October 1939, Baillie Thomas A. Kerr, a Glasgow Senior Magistrate, and a conscientious objector in the 1st World War showed his convictions by joining the Glasgow Branch of the NCL as soon as it was formed. In doing so he expected political victimisation.

### **GLASGOW & WEST of SCOTLAND TRIBUNAL RESULTS.**

Between conscription being introduced in Britain in 1939 and April 1940 26,681 conscientious objectors had registered. The Glasgow and West of Scotland Tribunal for conscientious objectors opened its proceedings at Glasgow Sheriff Court on 16th of October 1939. Those sitting were: Sir Archibald Campbell Black KC, OBE, Sir Robert Bruce LLD, William Lorimer OBE, Robert Bryce Walker CBE, and J J. Craik Henderson.



According to the Reverend T. J. Harvey, Minister of Partick Baptist Church, all of those sitting on the Tribunal supported the war, and seemed to believe it their duty not to grant exemption. During the first three days 59 cases were heard, with the following results:

Non combatant service, 26.

National service of a civilian nature, 15.

Entered on the Military Register, 11.

Unconditional exemption, 7.

On the first day the first case took only a few minutes; this was the best period of the tribunal hearings. After the first day, with certain rare exceptions, the Tribunal was openly hostile to the applicants. Recruiting for the forces and open hostility towards the applicants became the norm for days 2 and 3. From then on the tribunal ceased to enquire into the sincerity of the applicants, having decided that its duty was to persuade, guide or command the applicants into some form of service. To youths unaccustomed to a courtroom atmosphere, this was nothing short of brow-beating.

The Reverend Richard Lee MA, of Ross Street Unitarian Church Glasgow stated "that it was amazing that men of scholarship and intellect should uphold the distinction between a political CO and a religious CO, and proceed to condemn the conscience of a political CO as mere cowardice, while accepting the conscience of a Plymouth Brethren or Christadelphian. It is assumed that a man's conscience is regarded as having some relation to an ethical religion. If the CO can quote from the Bible, he has a greater chance of remaining on the valid CO list." By the 16th November 1939, the Glasgow tribunal had placed only 30 objectors (13%) on the unconditional register. Other figures were 41% removed from the CO register, (therefore having to go to the army or to jail), 24% registered for non-combatant service, 22% registered as COs on condition they undertake civilian work or training. When these figures are compared with the rest of the country it becomes clear that COs in Scotland had a greater risk of being removed from the register than anywhere else in Britain. The figures for other parts of the country were London 21% removed from the CO register; SW England 3% removed from the register and 41% registered as unconditional COs; whilst in North Wales no objectors were taken off the CO Register. In Britain as a

whole the average for refusal was 19%, whereas the figures for Scotland were:

SW Scotland, 41% refusal.

SE Scotland, 34% refusal.

N Scotland, 50% refusal.

NE Scotland, 22% refusal.

In Glasgow reasoned political argument was usually turned down, whereas religious objectors were considered much more favourably.

### **PHILIP BOYLE.**

Although there was no united front from the political left, those who took up the stance against the war did so with conviction and courage. Some with a small act of defiance such as Douglas Campbell, son of Ethel Campbell, Secretary of the SSP, who was sent home from Queen's Park Secondary School for refusing to obtain or carry a gas mask; a sign of the stand he would make in later years as a CO. Another courageous stand was that of Philip Boyle of 246 Todd Street Dennistoun Glasgow. Phillip was the first 2nd World War CO in Glasgow to face court martial, and also the first Catholic CO in Britain to face court martial. Arrested on Monday May 6th 1940 at 10 pm at home, he was held overnight; the following morning at Glasgow Eastern Police Court he was handed over to the military authorities. From then until his court martial on May 24th he suffered very rough treatment. The "New Leader" of May 16th published a description of Phillip Boyle's treatment on being handed over to the military Authorities. "When the father of the arrested CO visited his son in prison he found that the young man was clad only in an old macintosh. The soldier's uniform which had previously been forced on him, lay on the floor. . The CO, Phillip Boyle, of Dennistoun Glasgow, had been placed under arrest and taken to Maryhill Barracks. After he had been forced into a uniform, he was taken before the Commanding Officer, who told Boyle to go home for the day and then come back tomorrow and be a good soldier. . Instead, Boyle went back to his cell and stripped himself of the uniform. . Boyle had been refused exemption by the Local and Appellate Tribunals on the grounds that as a Catholic he could not be a CO," The Catholic hierarchy, seconded by the Catholic press, maintained that a Catholic cannot be a CO.

## COURT MARTIAL

On the 24th May 1940 Phillip Boyle faced his first court martial charged with having, while on active service, disobeyed a lawful command given by his superior officer and refused to wear his military uniform when ordered to do so. On June 6th Phillip was found guilty and sentenced to 112 days, reduced to 28 days, and removed to Barlinnie Military Prison. He was released from Barlinnie Military Prison on September 19th and returned to Maryhill Barracks. On Monday July 15th Philip Boyle faced his second court martial. He was found guilty and sentenced to 98 days imprisonment without hard labour in Barlinnie Civil Prison. The "Scottish Daily Express" on Saturday 5th October 1940 reported the case of Phillip Boyle under the heading "Private CO Appears in Civvies". The report contained the following passage:

"Phillip Boyle, a Glasgow civil service student, now a most unwilling private of the HLI, said last May; "nobody will make me a soldier." The army took away his suit, but he refused to "sign it in". They used force to uniform him. He was court martialled. He did "solitary". Then he did the regulation 90 days detention, and yesterday he appeared to the outside world. Still stubborn and unbroken, this 21 year old man was led in by an officer and a lance-corporal to the CO Appeal Court in Edinburgh wearing his own brown suit. At the hearing Mr Gordon Stott, Advocate, pointed to the dress and said "It shows that in the eyes of the military authorities he had proved his case" The Chairman asked Boyle if he would be a non-combatant; the reply was an emphatic no. "Would he do farm work?" - "Nothing I am compelled to do." "Boyle seemed to be going the limit" added Mr Stott, "I have seen his cell and I think that anyone who is prepared to put up with such conditions is a very strong objector."

On the 15th October 1940, Mr Campbell Stephen was advised by the Ministry of Labour that Phillip Boyle had been granted conditional exemption, the condition being that he should work on land drainage, forestry or agriculture. It would be correct to say that another case, that of Glasgow CO Bert Campbell, set a pattern that would be repeated throughout the country. Bert as a conscientious objector was sentenced to one year in prison, his appeal was refused which meant that at the end of his sentence he would again be handed over to the Military, after which he would be sentenced to a further two years in prison, and so it

could go on. The medical examination after the call up was not all that it should have been, as in the case of Glasgow CO, James Curran. James suffered from St. Vitus Dance and had been under the doctor's care since 1931. He was graded A1, and after being manhandled he was sent to Liverpool, then sentenced to 28 days at Chorley.

The Order in Council, made at Buckingham Palace on May 9th 1940, order No. 680, 1940 adding Regulations 2c and 94a to and amending Regulation 39a of the Defence (General) Regulations, 1939, made under Section 1, Emergency Powers (Defence) Act 1939, gave the Secretary of State a raft of new measures he could use against individuals and organisations plus the right to seize printing presses.

### **DEFENCE REGULATION No.39A.**

The pressure of the State was not only felt by COs, but by their supporters. On Wednesday July 31st 1940, Frank Leech, James Kennedy, Frank Dorans and Edward Shaw were arrested under Sheriff's Warrant and charged with contravening Defence Regulations No. 39A. Leech was charged that, between June 8th and July 20th, in premises occupied by the Anarchist Federation at 127 George Street Glasgow he publicly, in a window facing the street, placed an advertisement in the following terms, "Conscientious objectors and those about to register, meet here every Wednesday at 8pm. Call for free advice anytime. Assert your right to freedom." The charge alleged that this was an invitation and incitement to persons who had become, or might become, liable under the National Services Armed Forces Act 1939, to be called up for service to attend a meeting in the premises when advice and guidance were given concerning methods of procuring exemption from combatant military service. The charge continued, Leech did, preparatory to an endeavour being made at these meetings by the three other accused and others unknown, incite persons attending the meeting to evade the duties and liabilities which they might become liable to perform or discharge by virtue of the said Act, contrary to the Defence (General) regulation 1939. The charges against Shaw, Kennedy and Dorans was that, on various occasions they held mock Conscientious Objectors Tribunals, thereby providing the most effective methods for procuring exemption and did incite those present to evade any duties or liabilities they were, or might become, liable to discharge. The case was called in the Sheriff Summary Court the following morning Thursday 1st August, with Sheriff Robertson presid-

ing. The trial was set for Thursday 4th September 1940. The prosecution later advanced the hearing to Tuesday 20th August. The trial took place with Sheriff Wellwood Johnston presiding; evidence was given by two police constables who described visiting, in plain clothes, the mock tribunals held in the back shop at 127 George Street. Among questions asked were these two put by Sheriff Wellwood Johnston to Constable John McHardy:

Sheriff; "Did you see anything in the nature of people who were not conscientious objectors being urged to pretend to be COs?"

Witness; "No"

Sheriff; "Did you notice any sort of attempt to advise people to profess opinions, which they did not really hold, in order to evade service?"

Witness; "No"

The trial was adjourned until Thursday 22nd August. After further questioning Sheriff Wellwood Johnston intimated that he did not propose to hear the four accused. Finding the accused not guilty, he gave a most important ruling and a statement of the right of civil liberty during those very trying days when freedom was menaced. The Sheriff stated; "In order to succeed in this case the Crown must establish that an endeavour was made to incite persons to evade their duties or liabilities under the National Service (Armed Forces) Act. . According to the dictionary , to "incite" means "to rouse or stir up, to move to action, to spur, or urge on." It is not easy, or perhaps it is not possible, to imagine incitement without some sort of direct exhortation, and in the present case direct exhortation to evade duties was not only not proved but disproved." This trial legalised mock tribunals.

### **PERSECUTION.**

The COs who were sent to work on farms were under the control of the farmers and their treatment got so dreadful that there were calls that for humanitarian reasons they be removed from the farmers' control and placed under the control of some other body. Some Municipal Councils sacked any COs in their employment. The press kept up a campaign against COs and their supporters, claiming that most COs were "pansies" or "gay". They also claimed that they were cowards, but when we consider the treatment from some of the general public, the institutions, the effect on their families and friends, the treatment in courts and prisons, and the separation from 99% of the population, we have to accept that

only a very determined, very strong conviction would carry them through. This is not the characteristic of a coward. The Peace Pledge Union continued holding its meetings throughout the war at the Dick Sheppard Centre, 48 Dundas Street, Glasgow. They managed to raise funds by donations, collections and a stamp card system whereby regular donors had a card and bought stamps for varying amounts. Notes from their audit for the period 8th October 1941 to 30th April 1942 show the income for the period as £473.15.3. They also managed to produce a twice monthly bulletin. Others working for the conscientious objectors like the Scottish Pacifist Fund for Conscientious Objectors raised funds by various activities run by the Women's Conscientious Objectors Fund. These groups along with the Fellowship of Conscientious Objectors and the National Council of Civil Liberties, though working independently, also worked under the umbrella group, the Scottish Central Board for Conscientious Objectors. Bearing in mind the number of these groups, it is obvious that up to the end of the war the public were still supporting them with donations, as shown by the audit sheet of the Fellowship of Conscientious Objectors, at their meeting held in the Geneva Room of the Green's Playhouse in Renfield Street, Glasgow in late 1945. The audit sheet gives the income from 1st March 1944 to 26th July 1945, as £269.3.7

On the 21st September 1946 at a special meeting held in the Central Halls, Bath Street, Glasgow the Scottish Central Board for Conscientious Objectors passed a motion to voluntarily dissolve itself.

### **PEACE PLEDGE UNION.**

In spite of the considerable pressure brought to bear on COs and their support groups, their effort never wavered. Groups such as the NCL, the ILP, the Anarchist Federation, and the Workers Open Forum continued with their anti-war meetings throughout the war. Near the end of the war the Peace Pledge Union held meetings under the banner of "Has conscription come to stay", while the NCL went with the banner "How to prevent another war". The mock tribunals continued, and the Anarchists, among others, continued to try and find "safe houses" for deserters.

## **UPPER CLYDE SHIPBUILDERS WORK-IN, 1971/72.**

### **BOOM & BUST.**

The end of the 2nd World War, for understandable reasons, saw British shipyards enjoy a period of boom. The boom however soon turned to decline due to lack of investment. In 1965 the Labour government in an attempt to stop the decline set up the Geddes committee on the future of shipbuilding and how it could become more competitive. In the spring of 1966 the committee reported its findings. It recommended that the government should invest money in consolidating shipbuilding on the Clyde. So, in February 1968, Fairfields and Stephens on the south bank, Connells and Yarrows on the north bank and John Browns at Clydebank were incorporated into one company and Upper Clyde Shipbuilders came into being. The government had a 48.4% holding in the consortium there was also a £5.5m interest free government loan over the first three years. There was a labour force of 13,000 and an order book of £87m.

In spite of the new air of confidence the early years of the venture inherited a considerable package of real problems. Among the problems were poor capital investment, unprofitable orders and a legacy of poor worker-management relations. The consortium addressed the problems, improving worker-management relations, acquiring a more profitable order book and reducing the work force by a policy of redundancies. In view of the progress made the Labour government made available further grants and loans. The progress was such that by the end of 1970 the UCS Chairman reported that the company was "gaining in strength and morale as each day passes" and that he felt the company could be profitable by 1972. It appeared that Clyde shipbuilding had a bright future.

### **TORY GOVERNMENT.**

Elections in June 1970 brought about a change of government. The new Conservative government was determined to return state industries to private ownership and to get rid of "lame duck" firms. This dogma meant that on the 4th of February 1971 the prime symbol of British engineering, Rolls Royce, was forced into liquidation.

### **LAME DUCKS.**

On the 11th February 1971 Mr John Davies, author of the "lame duck" strategy and Secretary for Trade and Industry announced that Yarrows would be taken from the consortium and returned to the private sector and indicated that no more public money would be made available to

UCS. Although UCS had made no request for further money at this stage the Minister's statement brought about a rush of creditors' claims and UCS was refused further credit. By June 1971 the company's cash flow ceased and the management requested a further government loan. On Friday June 11th UCS Chairman Anthony Hepper announced to a meeting of the trade unions that to survive the company's present cash crisis he had sought £6m from the government. The alternative was to petition for a provisional liquidator. The Glasgow Herald on Saturday 12th ran an article pointing out the dire consequences of the impending collapse of UCS and warning the government, "the economic and social cost - never mind the political cost - of allowing UCS to go to the wall could be vastly greater than £6m". On Sunday 13th Secretary for Trade and Industry John Davies met UCS chairman Anthony Hepper for final discussions. On Sunday evening at Chequers, Davies met with Prime Minister Heath. A full Cabinet meeting was called for Monday morning. At question time in the House of Commons on Monday 14th June 1971 John Davies stood up and stated the government's intention not to save the UCS from bankruptcy. The statement was met by two very different responses; in the Visitors' Gallery the UCS shop stewards, who had travelled down to lobby for support, sat grim and devastated while the government back benchers cheered with some gusto. Davies then announced the appointment of a Provisional Liquidator and commissioned a report on the state of the UCS. The committee that would carry out the report became known as the "Three Wise Men", a fourth was later added. The four men - Alexander McDonald, Chairman of Distillers; Sir Alexander Glen, shipping magnate; David MacDonald of Hill Samuel; and Lord Rubens - did not inspire those at UCS with confidence.

### **MASS RESISTANCE.**

If prior to the 14th June the government had been planning its strategy concerning the UCS, the same had been happening with the work force of the UCS. On Saturday morning 12th June there was a meeting in Glasgow of all the leading shop stewards from each of the yards, and it was agreed to call a meeting the following day of all the shop stewards within UCS. This meeting took place on Sunday afternoon, with over 200 attending. During the meeting plans were drawn up for a campaign of mass resistance. It was here that the idea of a "work in" was formulated as opposed to a strike, which would probably speed the closure of the



yards. Slogans were put forward which encapsulated the mood of the meeting which was to be maintained for the duration of the protest; -The Right to Work; Not a Yard will Close; Not a Man Down the Road.

### **MASS MEETINGS.**

Monday 14th June saw mass meetings take place in the four yards, and the shop stewards' plan was accepted with overwhelming support. The STUC had already, at the previous meeting, pledged their support. The plan now was to gain the support of the wider labour and trade union movements. That Monday evening, with the government's decision known, another meeting took place in Clydebank Town Hall to meet the shop stewards' delegation on its return from London. The delegation arrived at Clydebank accompanied by some Scottish Labour MPs and Tony Benn, Shadow Minister for Trade and Industry. It was obvious that Tony Benn, a leading figure in the Labour Party, had come to be seen to be supporting the direct action of the workers to defend their jobs. In his speech at the meeting, to loud cheers, he said, "Your decision not to evacuate the yards is absolutely justified." This was a tremendous boost to the morale of those involved. The feelings of the Clydebank community were captured in a phrase by Bob Fleming, Lord Provost of Clydebank when he said "The government were trying to do to Clydebank what the Germans had failed to do during the second world war." He stated that the Clydebank Town Council would stand by the UCS workers and agreed to underwrite from the Common Good Fund the £1,250 cost of hiring a train for the following day to take hundreds of workers to lobby the Prime Minister in London.

### **CHURCH SUPPORT.**

Tuesday 15th June saw a train leave Glasgow crammed full with angry representatives from all four yards of UCS, Yarrows, Rolls Royce, Babcocks, Singers and British Steel Corporation intending not just to take their own anger but the outrage of the Scottish community in general to the seat of government in London. A joint telegram from the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Roman Catholic Cardinal and other leading Churchmen was sent to the Prime Minister advising him that "without the existence of alternative industry, the action would be so damaging to the economy of Scotland in an area of already severe unemployment, and would have such social and human consequences, as to be totally unacceptable in a responsible society."

## **TONY BENN.**

The attack on the government in the debate on the 15th June 1971 in the House of Commons was led by Tony Benn; he accused the government of deliberately engineering a liquidity crisis by the withholding of Treasury shipbuilding credit guarantees. He gave a detailed account, citing UCS management figures, of the progress the company had made towards viability despite the earlier difficulties: An 87% increase in productivity in steel in 12 months. A current order book worth £90m with a possible £100m worth of profitable orders in the pipeline. A 16% reduction in the steelwork labour force and a 25% reduction in the labour force overall in the previous 15 months. Deliveries of ships increased from 3 in 1968, 7 in 1969 to 12 in 1970, with a programme for 1971 for 18 deliveries. He then went on to make the charge that it was a political decision that was killing off the UCS and not simply economics. The UCS debate lasted almost seven hours and it was drained and weary Tory MPs that filed through the Westminster division lobbies just about the same time the train with its angry cargo was pulling out of Glasgow for London.

## **DOWNING STREET.**

The demonstrators' train arrived at Euston London at 6am on Wednesday 16th June and was met by Tony Benn. A mass rally was held at the Methodist Central Hall not far from the House of Commons, where they were joined by about forty Labour MPs, before marching on to Downing Street and then on to the House of Commons. On arriving at Downing Street a delegation went into No. 10 and spent an hour with the Prime Minister, Mr Heath. The members of the delegation were, Lord Provost Bob Fleming, shop stewards Reid, Airlie, Barr, Dickie, Cook and McInnes. Although the meeting to all accounts was polite, it was very clear to the delegation the Mr Heath and his government had no intention of changing anything to favour UCS.

## **LORD PROVOST OF GLASGOW.**

It was now very clear to the shop stewards that as far as the government was concerned, the decision was set in stone, and the only road open to the UCS work force was to mobilise as much political, industrial, and general support as possible, and to arrange a show of strength that might bring about the overturn of the government's decision. The following week saw the effort intensify to bring about that mobilisation. A further

meeting was arranged for the next Monday. Clydebank clergymen agreed to print and distribute protest petitions among their congregations. Posters and stickers started to appear in shop windows and shopkeepers began to place collection cans in their shops. Similar events were taking place in Glasgow and further afield. Donald Liddle, Lord Provost of Glasgow, chaired a crisis meeting of members of the STUC, MPs, and local authority representatives. The meeting was unanimous in demanding that shipbuilding should be retained on the Upper Clyde. It was now obvious that all Clydeside was staunchly behind the campaign to save the UCS.

### **GEORGE SQUARE.**

On Monday June 21st a meeting was held in the old Rosevale Cinema in Partick; at this meeting the plans were laid for an industrial stoppage and demonstration two days later. On Wednesday June 23rd thousands of marchers assembled in George Square, Glasgow. It was a warm sunny day as they arrived from far and wide. Three special trains from Clydebank, another full train from the Hillington factory of Rolls Royce, plus the entire Clydebank Town Council. It is estimated that well over 100,000 stopped work and more than 40,000 assembled to join the march. It was the biggest demonstration since the 2nd World War. Meanwhile the Davies Committee of the "wise men" continued with their investigation of the company and completed their report in six weeks. The Cabinet discussed the report at a two hour meeting on Wednesday, July 28th. While all this was going on the STUC had again met with Davies in London in another attempt to avert the impending social disaster but left empty handed. It was on Thursday July 29th in a packed House of Commons that Davies made the committee's findings public and proclaimed that UCS had been doomed from the start, "any continuation of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in its present form would be wholly unjustified." The government accepted the committee's conclusions in full, the findings being that production should be concentrated at the Govan and Linthouse sites where "it should be possible to form a new company which would retain a viable shipbuilding capability on the Upper Clyde." If this was carried through the workforce would be reduced to 2,500 men. UCS was to go into liquidation, the workforce reduced from 8,500 to 2,500. A new company would be set up at Govan and Linthouse, whilst the Clydebank and Scotstoun yards would close.

## **WORK-IN BEGINS.**

The news of the closure of the two yards was met with disbelief all over Clydeside but probably more so in Clydebank where the idea of John Browns actually closing created shock and bewilderment. The Glasgow Herald had an article describing the atmosphere as "a town in mourning, groups discussed the decision in hushed tones, creating the atmosphere normally found at the scene of a disaster," The work-in started immediately at John Browns; the other yards were still on holiday, but enacted the same policy the following week. At John Browns, the shop stewards requested permission from the liquidator Mr. Courtney Smith, to enter the yard; this was refused and the matter was referred back to the co-ordinating committee who sent Garry Ross, John Browns' boilermakers' convenor, to the gate where he informed the gateman Alex Stewart, that the shop stewards were now in charge and the barrier was opened. The work-in now in progress, all men and materials entering or leaving the yards were under the control of the shop stewards, Mr. Courtney Smith accepted the fact that the workers were in control. The taking over of the yards was a quite efficient drama-free event; the police, who had been warned to expect some sort of incident, had no need to interfere.

## **FINANCE.**

It was always known that money would be a major problem for the success of the campaign, and as well as a 50p levy per worker, an appeal, led by Jimmy Airlie, was launched through the media on the 2nd August. Within a matter of days support came flowing in, not only from all over Britain, but from all around the world. Support came from across the Atlantic, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Cash from individuals and from organisations also arrived. Other shipbuilding areas in Britain agreed to give support by means of a weekly levy. Other donations included £1,000 from John Lennon and Yoko, £2,700 from the shipyard workers of the Soviet Union, £1,000 from the National Union of Mine-workers, £600 from Dutch shipyard workers, and many more large donations. However the bulk of mail was from smaller groups, individuals and public collections. By the end of August the total had reached £46,353, and it was necessary to seek the services of an accountant. The fund was later managed by the Burgh Chamberlain of Clydebank Town Council.

## **GLASGOW VISIT.**

The sheer range and passion of the opposition to the government's plans had taken them by surprise. Their first shock was the intensity of the debate on the "wise men's" report held in the House of Commons on August 2nd. The report actually weakened the government's position by showing that UCS had inherited approximately £12m in losses from the parent companies. Although there was no change in the government's intentions, the language took on a more sympathetic tone. Davies made his first visit to Glasgow on August 3rd. He seemed surprised at the ferocity of the criticism being hurled at him from all sections of the community. His meetings with a cross section of Scottish businesses achieved nothing, in fact those who could be counted as friends of the Tory government were among the most critical of his plans, namely the 2,000 who, if liquidation went through, stood to lose £32,000,000. John Thomson of Thomson Shipcranes, Greenock, was one creditor owed £80,000; he raised a formal objection to the appointment of a liquidator, stating that he had the backing of 600 creditors. He openly stated, "The figures of 'debt' are part of a plot to paint a black picture and teach the workers a lesson."

At the time of liquidation the UCS order book was about to increase by £120,000,000. The entire crisis was the direct result of a cash flow problem brought about by the government withholding credit guarantees. Also, the liquidation had taken place without any consultation with the Scottish banks allowing credit to the UCS.

## **TRADE UNION SUPPORT.**

August 12th saw 1200 shop stewards from all over Scotland and the North of England arrive in Glasgow to show solidarity with the UCS "work-in". The delegates agreed to appeal to all workers to help financially in support of the "work-in". A decision to hold a demonstration in Glasgow on Wednesday August 18th was unanimously endorsed. On Monday the 16th the STUC convened the first Special Congress in its history. It was held in the Partick Burgh Hall where 400 delegates heard the General Secretary of the TUC, Vic Feather, pledge the strength of the British trade union movement in support of the UCS "work-in". There was an unanimous decision to support the industrial stoppage and demonstration on August 18th.

## **DEMONSTRATION.**

Wednesday 18th August arrived, and by mid-day thousands were beginning to assemble in George Square, arriving by special trains and coaches, by mini bus and by car from all over Scotland and from all corners of England. The figure for those in Scotland who stopped work in support of the demonstration was put at 200,000. The city's public transport system, due to the large numbers of its members who had stopped work, was finding it almost impossible to ferry the crowds into the city. By the afternoon the crowd could no longer be contained in George Square and began to fill up the adjoining streets and still they kept arriving. At 3pm the marchers armed with placards and colourful union banners set off for Glasgow Green accompanied by many bands. The music, the colour and the warm sunny weather, gave the march a carnival atmosphere. Lots of the colourful banners were testimony to the support from England, with names such as: "London Airport", "Manchester", "Liverpool", "Dagenham", "Coventry", "Wolverhampton", "Tyneside", "Derby", "Birmingham", "Barrow" and many more. Leading the procession to Glasgow Green, were shop stewards McInnes, Cook, Jimmy Reid, Jimmy Airlie, Dickie, Barr, along with Willie Ross of the Labour Party, Tony Benn, James Jack of the STUC, Hugh Scanlan of the engineers, Dan McGarvey of the boilermakers, Vic Feather, General Secretary of the TUC, and Alex. Murray of the Communist Party. While the leading marchers were arriving at Glasgow Green the marchers were still assembling and leaving George Square. The entire route was lined by cheering supporters, and the city centre was at a standstill. The estimated number who marched was put at over 80,000. At Glasgow Green all the speakers pledge to fight unemployment with special praise for the UCS for being the spearhead in the fight for the right to work.

## **ARCHIBALD KELLY.**

This show of such widespread solidarity was a serious blow to the government's confidence in the UCS affair, so much so that the following day, Thursday August 19th, Mr Davies's assistant Sir John Eden was dispatched to hurriedly arranged meetings in Glasgow and London. The meetings were fruitless as both sides were still looking in different directions. A further embarrassing blow to the government's case came in the person of Archibald Kelly, a Clydeside entrepreneur, who stated through the press his interest in buying all four yards. Though the shop

stewards were a little sceptical of this line, the liquidator, took a much more positive view and stated, " I see no need to talk of the closures of any of the yards. I never have." This statement gave the shop stewards another opportunity to put the government under further pressure. The government was still intent on pursuing a two yard solution and organised direct talks with the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions but excluded the shop stewards from the talks. During the talks the government admitted the "wise men's" report had not been an in depth study and announced a more thorough review, hinting that it might consider financial assistance to a buyer of the two remaining yards. The shop stewards with the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions agreed to give consideration to any proposals to keep the four yards open even if not as one unit.

### **REDUNDANCIES.**

The liquidators announcement of the first redundancies created fresh problems for the "work-in" as the wages of the redundant men would have to be met by the funds of the campaign. By September 1st 399 men had been made redundant; to maintain their "work-in" wages £40,000 would be required. To counter the resultant drop in morale the shop stewards organised mass meetings and launched an internal bulletin furnishing everyone with accurate information of what was actually happening, as opposed to the speculation in the press. Of the 399 men made redundant, 277 decided to stay with the "work-in" and were able to continue working and receiving their average weekly wage from the campaign fund. This was made possible by the fact that by September 1971, material support for the UCS "work-in" had grown considerably with flag days in Glasgow and Dundee; house to house collections were organised in Aberdeen, and everywhere across the country factory meetings were arranged to raise levies to add to the campaign fund. Alongside this 18 local authorities had pledged direct support and local support groups formed in cities, towns and villages throughout Scotland and England. It was now obvious that the support for the UCS, "work-in", rather than fading as time went on, was growing daily.

### **STUC INQUIRY.**

The STUC on September 1st opened an inquiry into "the social and economic consequences of the decision to run down UCS." The STUC made the inquiry as broad based and objective as possible, with Professor

Illsley of Aberdeen University in the Chair assisted by Frank Cousins, former General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, and George Perry, chairman of General Motors (Scotland). The inquiry called more than 40 witnesses, among them senior politicians, senior management from UCS, as well as shop stewards. Once again the government's cause was undermined when the inquiry called Jimmy Reid. He made available to the inquiry photocopies of a document, later to be called the "Ridley letters". The letters proved that the government's plan for UCS was not drawn up from economics circumstances in government but had been planned while in opposition. The author of the letters, written in 1969, was Nicholas Ridley, Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Trade and Industry, when he was Opposition Spokesman on technology. The letters made clear Ridley's plan that no further public money should be given to UCS, and after carving off Yarrows, the rest should be sold off to private enterprise. What was more damning was the language Ridley used in the letters, he wrote, "We could put in a government 'butcher' to cut up UCS and to sell (cheaply) to Lower Clyde and others, the assets of UCS". Copies of the letters were circulated to the press. The government's case took another blow when on September 17th Ken Douglas, then Managing Director of UCS, in a tabloid newspaper interview stated that the company had made record improvements in productivity and progress in industrial relations, also saying that UCS had been building ships so fast that "the problem became where to park them. Our fitting-out basins were full." This interview was taken as public support for the UCS "work-in".

### **BENEFIT CONCERTS.**

By the end of September the campaign fund had climbed to an all time high. Several events were responsible for this. Stars from the world of entertainment gave two benefit concerts in the King's Theatre, Glasgow, and the publicity from the tabloid article and the STUC inquiry boosted support to a new high. Journalists gave increasing space to the campaign, professional groups offered their services and the clergymen issued statements deploring the decision to "butcher UCS". However, undeterred, the government continued to push ahead with its two yard plan by appointing a rudimentary board for the two yards, Govan and Linthouse. At first they could not get anybody from the business world to accept the position, among those who refused was Lord Weir, Chairman of the Weir



Engineering Group. Eventually the government found three who were prepared to accept, Archie Gilchrist, Managing Director of a ship steering gear manufacturer, Angus Grossart, merchant banker and treasurer of the Conservative Party in Scotland, and Hugh Stenhouse, who was appointed Chairman. The shop stewards refused to recognise or co-operate with the appointees, nor could they gain access to the yards. The Co-ordinating Committee for the "work-in" stated that from here on it would be using the Linthouse Board Room. On September 24th, a mass meeting of 8,000 workers in Govan endorsed the shop stewards policy of non co-operation.

#### **FOUR YARDS OR NONE.**

At this stage the new Chairman (Stenhouse) let it be known that he was prepared to listen to proposals that went beyond the government's declared position; the shop stewards agreed an exploratory meeting to see if he would consider, "extending his position to cover the four yards." Stenhouse at later meetings agreed that the Scotstoun yard would be considered if it could be shown to be viable. However he would not consider the Clydebank yard but would press the government to find a solution for the yard. Stenhouse then made a request for Archie Gilchrist and himself to tour the yards at Scotstoun, Govan and Linthouse. The shop stewards reply was an emphatic no, they also added that no member of their Board would be allowed in unless they included Clydebank in the plans. Stenhouse eventually agreed to look seriously at Clydebank, if he could get government backing. The government however had not changed its position and in early October the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Union was called to a meeting with Davies, who made it clear that as far as the government was concerned there was no room for the Clydebank yard. He added that unless there was "meaningful discussions" with the new Govan Shipbuilders Company, no new order would be released for Govan and there would be an immediate cut in jobs. This was seen by the shop stewards as an attempt by the government to divide the workforce leaving Clydebank out and isolated. On October 8th. a mass meeting was held at Linthouse where a powerful message of "four yards or none" was the outcome. Further meetings in London between the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Union and Davies brought about new developments, including the Co-ordinating Committee agreeing to open discussions with Govan Ship-

builders on the understanding that the government would implement the immediate release of the Govan orders. The government agreed to a feasibility study at Scotstoun, and Davies also agreed to "make every effort to encourage a purchaser for the Clydebank yard." Following these developments the Co-ordinating Committee at a full shop stewards meeting restated its commitment to continue the "work-in" until the future of the four yards was secured.

### **LOW MORALE.**

By the end of October the campaign seemed to be in a kind of limbo, with people waiting for the feasibility study for Scotstoun to be completed, and the search for a purchaser for Clydebank showing little progress. The newspapers no longer seeing it as a drama, moved it from the front pages; the public's awareness seemed to have changed, now seeing it as just a matter of discussions. The effect of all this on the fighting fund was to cause contributions to decline. Also at this time a series of domestic problems between yards materialised, mainly from a feeling of uncertainty, more so in the Clydebank yard where there was still a real fear of being left out of any deal. The morale took another dip when the news broke that Hugh Stenhouse had been killed in a road accident on the November 24th. A further meeting with Davies on December 23rd. produced no further change.

### **MARATHON.**

The start of 1972 saw Lord Strathalmond appointed as Stenhouse's successor as Chairman of Govan Shipbuilders. The appointment seemed to bring with it a new feeling of flexibility and understanding in relation to the Clydebank problem. The start of the year also saw the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Union on January 8th. send their representative, Dan McGarvey, to Houston Texas in an attempt to find a buyer for the Clydebank yard. The trade union had taken this initiative on the hope that the government would join forces with them to give great impetus to the quest; the government refused to participate. Dan McGarvey's Texas visit was very reassuring. Although the first contact, a company called Breaksea, had little credibility, his approach to the Marathon Manufacturing Corporation, the world's largest deep sea oilrig construction company, appeared to have more promise. By the end of January, Wayne Harbin, Marathon's President, had visited London and Clydebank and stated that the yard was a serious proposal, not only

because of the site but the availability of the skilled craftsmen that they so badly needed.

### **GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT.**

February 2nd 1972 saw a draft report of the government's "more thorough review of the situation" regarding the UCS land on Lord Strathallmond's desk. He lost no time in making his own assessment of the situation; he wrote, "we feel the problem of shipbuilding on the upper Clyde must be treated at the outset as a social one, or one in the national interest, or both", thus making the argument that the government should make available generous aid for the new company. On the strength of this statement, Dan McGarvey and the shop stewards met Davies in London on the February 14th; there they discussed the details of the funding for the Govan, Linthouse, and Scotstoun yards and received assurance on the level of funding that would be made available. The government also gave a commitment to give its full co-operation and support in trying to bring Marathon to Clydebank. The outcome of this meeting convinced the shop stewards that they could now agree to early negotiations with the new Govan Shipbuilders.

### **VICTORY.**

The extent of the government assistance to the Govan Shipbuilders, including Scotstoun, was announced to the House of Commons by Davies on February 28th. Even the most optimistic supporters of the campaign were pleasantly surprised by the amount, a total of £35,000,000 was to be made available, taking into account the current number employed which was 4,300. It was now obvious that the government's "lame duck" and non-intervention policies had been shattered by the determination of the "work-in", and the strength of the support. The decision between the government and Marathon dragged on longer than anticipated. This was mainly due to two facts; firstly, Marathon was intent on getting maximum assistance from the government; there was also still the matter of agreements to be sorted out between Marathon, an American company, and the British trade unions. Two months later, on the 28th April, the government and Marathon reached an agreement. It took a further three months for the unions and Marathon to finally come to an acceptable agreement, which was signed on the 7th August, 1972. Now that Clydebank was secure, formal agreements with Govan Ship-

builders could be concluded, and the 6th September saw this completed. One week later Govan Shipbuilders became a reality. Sixteen months after the "work-in" campaign started, on the 9th October 1972 the terms of the settlement were endorsed at the final mass meeting of the UCS campaign. It was seen as a campaign to save more than jobs, it was a struggle to save communities. Jimmy Reid's words best sum it up when he said, "it was a victory not just for the workers but for the whole Scottish community."

## **COUNTER INFORMATION.**

### **A RICH FIELD..**

Since the start of the industrial revolution Glasgow has always been rich in its production of independent radical newspapers, bulletins, free-sheets etc. Over the years the various radical groups have plied their wares by selling or handing out these independent publications at street corners, public meeting places and workplaces or where ever. However Counter Information (CI) stands out as probably Scotland's best agitational paper in the late 20th century. Heavily influenced by Anarchist/Libertarian Socialist ideas on how to organise, resist and report on all manner of resistance, (CI) achieved a standard and a circulation that probably hasn't been reached since.

### **BORN OF CONFLICT.**

Counter Information (CI) started life during the miners' dispute of the 1980's to counter the lies and propaganda of mainstream media. We were involved in many aspects of the miners struggle and because we were working with and within mining communities and seen the autonomous nature of the organising at grassroots level, we felt we had to report these happenings to a wider audience. As the miners' strike came to a conclusion it was decided to continue with the news-sheet. We had built up so many and varied contacts throughout Scotland, Wales and England that we felt we could produce an informative and inspiring source of resistance.

### **A RADICAL PEDIGREE.**

C.I. was a collective (some of us had been involved in the past with such projects Paisley Gutter Press, Practical Anarchy, Here and Now, Black Bairn, Glasgow Bookshop Collective and others I canny remember) where everybody had a say in the content of the paper. We had regular meetings in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Grangemouth. These were usually on a rotational basis but the cities were where the actual physical lay-out took place, in the days before computers! The editorial meetings discussed letters, articles, papers, magazines, ideas we had received from around the world. We had contacts in all 5 continents and these took up a large part of the editorial content. We gave priority to those we received

as eye-witness accounts or from participants themselves and these became known as “from our correspondent”.

### **MIDNIGHT OIL EDITORIALS.**

The editorial meetings are a thing of legend and at times could take up to 8 hours to agree on the content, style, spelling and grammar! A lot of heated argument at times took place but overall the collective stayed focused and cohesive. We had a no alcohol policy during meetings but once the meeting had finished we would head for the pub or crack open some cider to celebrate. Its thirsty work talking for so long! The news-sheet was self financed by the members of the collective and from the many grateful donations made by our supporters in the form of standing orders, cash, cheques or stamps. C.I. tried to come out on a 3 monthly basis and also do “one offs” if need be. We had a print run of 12,000 minimum and this was often added to due to demand. We had contacts in other areas of the world who also printed; photocopied and other wise reproduced the paper as well.

### **GLOBAL INFLUENCE.**

Counter Information was also invited to many discussions around the globe most notably in South Korea in 1988 to discuss what the idea of what peace meant. This had been organised by the remnants of the Korean Anarchist movement that had been decimated during Japanese occupation in the 1940’s. And another notable invite was to a Self-Determination event in Govan, Glasgow, where the main speaker was Noam Chomsky. We also attended the Anarchist Bookfair in London annually along with other regular Anarchist periodicals to discuss and formulate national activities.

### **LAST BUT NOT FINAL COPY.**

The last ever Counter Information was published in summer 2003 and can be viewed online or at any Radical Independent Bookfair Event, where an archive of past printed C.I. s are available to read. The actual collective members are now getting on with their lives, some are involved in the Industrial Workers of the World, some are active in ACE in Edinburgh, some are involved in global solidarity issues and some are involved in community projects, some (believe it or not) have even stood

for the SSP!! The legacy of Counter Information can be seen in news-sheets such as Schnews, Indymedia and a host of local Anarchist news-sheets from South Wales to Glasgow, covering events and reporting resistance to authority. Long may they continue!

**This material was supplied by Stevie Gallagher. Thanks Stevie.**

## Sources & Some Suggested Further Reading.

(i)

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