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AUGUST 2020

SHEFFIELD'S CO-OPERATIVE NEWSPAPER

CITY AT THE CROSSROADS

ELECTION RESULT DEMANDS CO-OPERATIVE RESPONSE

More than a year ago, in November 2018, members of the Co-operative Party gathered at Sheffield Town Hall to discuss *Co-operatives Unleashed*, a report commissioned by the party and written by the New Economics Foundation.

The report called for a significant expansion of the co-operative sector in Britain, bringing our economy closer into line with other countries in Europe, where co-operatives thrive at worker and retail level.

Co-operators from across Yorkshire and the Humber debated what this might mean for the Community Wealth Building agenda pioneered by Preston Council, as a response to the austerity agenda pursued by successive Conservative led governments.

Can co-operatives be created in order to deliver local council services in a more compassionate and efficient manner than the private sector? This was the key question put to attendees.

According to former Labour Member of Parliament and independent researcher Les Huckfield, the answer was a defiant no.

"The difficulty that I have when deciding to support the report and the work that the Labour Party are now doing," he stated, "is that they seem to have forgotten that we've done this all before!"

"I am not interested in co-operatives, whatever kind they are, competing against the private sector to deliver public services."



FORMER LABOUR MP LESLIE HUCKFIELD: "SHEFFIELD LED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORKER CO-OPERATIVES IN THE THATCHER YEARS. IT CAN DO SO AGAIN NOW."

"What we've got to be talking about, is the experience in this city, in setting up co-operatives, for our own self defence. We can look after ourselves a hell of a lot better, by controlling the public services we need to go on living."

"It's about our control over our lives. It's about local economic democracy. It's about reciprocity. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. That's the way that working people think about the things, and certainly how we should think about things moving forward."

Though the Co-operative Party and Labour suffered a disappointing result in the 2019 General Election,

standing on a pledge to double the size of the co-operative economy in the UK, the work to implement this policy needn't rely on central government. The Preston Model shows that we can start building the foundations for a new co-operative commonwealth in Sheffield today.

MUTUAL AID AND COVID-19

The Coronavirus pandemic has greatly impacted on our way of life. It has exposed the deleterious effect of austerity on our ability to cope with "war-time" conditions.

Local councils and the NHS have been stripped of the resources and

authority required to contain the infection, and provide assistance to the public, at a local level. The Government was initially reluctant to alter its policies to ensure that people did not go without food and shelter.

Where the Government proved unable or unwilling to help, others helped to fill the breach. Residents and community groups around Sheffield have organised Mutual Aid societies. Local co-operatives delivered food to the vulnerable.

This is co-operation in action. *The Sheffield Co-operator* hopes that such activity will continue into the future, to overcome the inequalities exposed by the Covid-19 pandemic.



A NEW HOME FOR BEANIES WHOLEFOODS

After many years of consideration, Sheffield's award winning co-operative grocery shop Beanies Wholefoods has finally closed its premises at 205 Crookes Valley Road and moved 100 yards up the hill into the former GP surgery and chemist at the corner of Barber and Crookesmoor Road.

The decision to move was taken by after the new premises became available for let last year. The new shop has more floor space, bike racks, a small car park, and an expanded bulk-buy section.

There is now a cafe next door - long desired for by regular customers - which serves homemade cakes, sandwiches, tea and coffee, and soup made from vegetables sold in the shop.

Chris, from Beanies, said: "After paring back after the financial crash,

people are now more comfortable about spending more on local and organic food."

"Beanies uses several local growers to supply the shop's seasonal fruit and veg, and provides both organic and non-organic fare."

Packaging is changing too, with worries about plastic waste leading to Sheffield's wholesalers helping shops like Beanies provide more fruit and veg in bags and cardboard punnets. Personalised, or bulk buying of food or household cleaning supplies, is encouraged.

The shop and cafe have a close-to-zero waste policy, with local food charities making use of surplus stock. Anything wilting goes to co-op member Matt West's compost bins at his Moss Valley smallholding, ready for a new crop.

- ROBIN WILDE

PRINCIPLE 5 HOSTS CO-OP SHOWCASE EVENT

EVENT AT AIZLEWOOD'S MILL IN SHEFFIELD DEMONSTRATES THE STRENGTH OF THE CO-OPERATIVE SECTOR

In September 2019, Principle 5, the Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre, organised for the first time a two-day Co-operative Showcase in Sheffield. It was a gathering of co-operatives to network, meet the public, and present their products and services.

The idea came from discussions with Aizlewood's Mill, the co-operatively run business centre on Nursery Street which houses Principle 5. For years, Aizlewood's Mill have been part of Heritage Open Days, enthusiastically showing to the public their historic, refurbished building. For 2019, the Co-operative Showcase became part of this.

Visitors were treated to a welcoming mini-bazaar of displays and stalls by various types of co-operative, including food, education, print, publishing, phone communications and co-operative development. Retired co-op worker Stuart Cooke offered a display of publicity materials and old photographs of co-operative activities from the days of black-and-white. The event also featured a short talk by Professor Rory Ridley-Duff on developments in the world co-operative movement, and tours of the Principle 5 Resource Centre.

Co-operatives attending included Footprint Printers (Leeds), and various co-ops from Sheffield such as Beanies Wholefoods (which recently moved into new premises) and Fireside Housing Co-op (which is, incidentally, currently seeking new residents). National bodies such as The Phone Co-op and Co-ops UK were also represented.

There were also displays from Sheffield Co-operative Development Group (SCDG), Sheffield Co-operative Party, Sheffield Credit Union, Sheffield Renewables, Principle 5, Portland Works, Regather, Union Street, and Webarchitects.

Co-operatives have historically created culture and common wealth through collective self-help in working class communities. The event celebrated the unique values and principles of the co-operative movement.

It is hoped that the Showcase will become a regular feature in the calendar, bringing people together to meet and discuss co-operatives in a relaxed atmosphere. Another event will be organised when the Open Days return, so please look out for the second Co-operative Showcase!

- JONATHAN COOK

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MAYOR CALLS FOR “COMPLETE RETHINK” ON LOCAL TRANSPORT

DAN JARVIS MP CALLS FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT AND CO-OP BUS COMPANIES AND EXPANSION OF PUBLIC OWNERSHIP



City Region Mayor Dan Jarvis has claimed that a “complete rethink” is needed in order to preserve and improve transport services in South Yorkshire.

Though Mr Jarvis praised the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTe) for doing its best to maintain a decent service, in a letter to Councillor Penny Baker (Liberal Democrat, Stannington), Jarvis stat-

ed that what was needed was greater government funding.

“While the SYPTe does its best...” he wrote, “its architecture and approach are no longer fit for purpose.”

“For far too long, we’ve had more of the executive than the passenger – a complete rethink is required. Arms-length arrangements have also cemented a gap between funding and accountability.”

“I find late running services and the volume of cancellations on some routes frustrating and infuriating... the travelling public has in recent years been subject to steadily deteriorating services.”

“As...Mayor, I have inherited annualised reductions in funding for buses, ultimately attributable to government cuts, resulting in a situation of ‘managed decline’.”

“But we also need a fresh, imaginative approach to how we run local services, including exploring the creation of not-for-profit and co-operative bus companies and expanding public ownership and local, democratic accountability throughout our public transport system.”

- CHRISTOPHER OLEWICZ

SHEFFIELD CO-OP STORE TRIALS GLASS MILK BOTTLES

“The response shows just how close the issue is to people’s hearts. It’s also great to be supporting a local farm”

A local Co-op store on Ecclesall Road has brought back glass milk bottles in response to demands from customers, and as part of its effort to cut down on the amount of plastic waste it generates.

The store is selling glass pint bottles from Our Cow Molly at Dungworth. Customers can return the bottles to the shop to be re-used by the dairy.

According to store manager Pete Cooper, the glass bottles are proving a hit and he’s planning on increasing his order to meet demand. Mr Cooper said: “We’re the first Co-op in the country to sell milk in glass bottles and we believe we’re the first supermarket in the country to do so too.”

“It fits in with the Co-op’s ethos as an environmentally friendly company keen to do what it can to reduce plastic waste. And the response shows just how close the issue is to people’s hearts. It’s also great to be supporting a local farm only a few miles away.”

Our Cow Molly already supplies a local convenience store with milk in glass bottles – where customers get

a discount on their next pint when returning their used bottles. Other stores in the city are now planning to follow suit.

Director of Our Cow Molly, Eddie Andrew, said: “It’s great that the Co-op has become the first major supermarket in the UK to listen to environmentally conscious consumers asking for milk in glass bottles, and to give them what they want. We’re really proud we’ve been able to get our milk on the shelves there and help reduce plastic waste.”

According to recent research, a glass bottle needs to be used at least 13 times before becoming better for the environment than a plastic one. Mr Andrew said this was easily the case with the bottles it delivers, some of which he claimed have been in circulation for 20 years.

- JEN BANKS

Our Cow Molly is open to visitors for sales of milk and ice-cream. Cliffe House Farm Hill Top Road, Sheffield S6 6GW.

First published in *Co-op News* 12 July 2019

COTECH CONFERENCE HELD IN SHEFFIELD

CO-OPERATIVES DISCUSS IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON THE CLIMATE, THE INTERNET, AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

This year saw the first northern gathering of a network of around forty different co-operatives in various technical fields, coordinated by Sheffield-based Webarchitects (www.webarchitects.coop).

The network, started in 2016, is called CoTech (www.coops.tech). Attendees came from around the UK, Europe and even South America. Local housing co-ops Fireside and Brambles provided some of the accommodation.

The two-day event was held at Sheffield’s DINA venue (www.dinavenue.com), behind John Lewis in the city centre. Originally the city’s first ‘Free School’ it was renovated by volunteers in 2016 and is not-for-profit. The Argentinian tech co-operative movement FACTTIC sent three workers as part of a short UK tour, fact-finding and speaking about the co-operative movement in their country.

It seems that the British have something to learn, as Argentinian tech co-ops have been work-ing together for longer than ours. Their economic collapse of 2002 was very severe, but the co-operative movement has blossomed in the aftermath.

Much of the discussion was about

how tech workers can co-operate to make a difference, and the second day began with a visiting speaker from Extinction Rebellion. Ideas through which software can help are being developed as a result.

Environmental issues are a key part of CoTech’s outlook, not least because technology is a heavy user of power and minerals. If better software and internet services can help to make the world a better place, CoTech are the good angels in a murky world. Thanks to the internet, tech workers such as these can have much more international patterns of work-sharing with colleagues across continents.

CoTech uses software called Discourse, supplied by Webarchitects, to keep in touch through a forum of member discussions, without the distractions of social media. Meeting face-to-face occasionally is also vitally important to building relationships.

This gathering was CoTech’s first informal event outside London. Webarchitects later advised another co-operative, Code-Operative, in organising CoTech’s autumn gathering in Newcastle.

- JONATHAN COOK



COFFEE CO-OPERATIVE VISITS UNIVERSITY

On the 14th of September 2019, the University of Sheffield welcomed guests from the CENCOIC co-operative of Colombia, as they visited a number of cafes in Sheffield where their coffee is sold.

CENCOIC are one of the principal suppliers to Roastology, who create the University’s unique blend just two miles away from campus.

A delegation from the university visited the Cauca region of Colombia in 2018 to tour some of the co-operative’s operations. The reciprocal visit was part of an ongoing project between CENCOIC, Roastology, and the University, to investigate ways the University can help the co-operative develop further.

Encompassing workers from three indigenous ethnicities, CENCOIC is a leader in the Colombian coffee trade. The co-operative now involves 2,700 families in the coffee business.

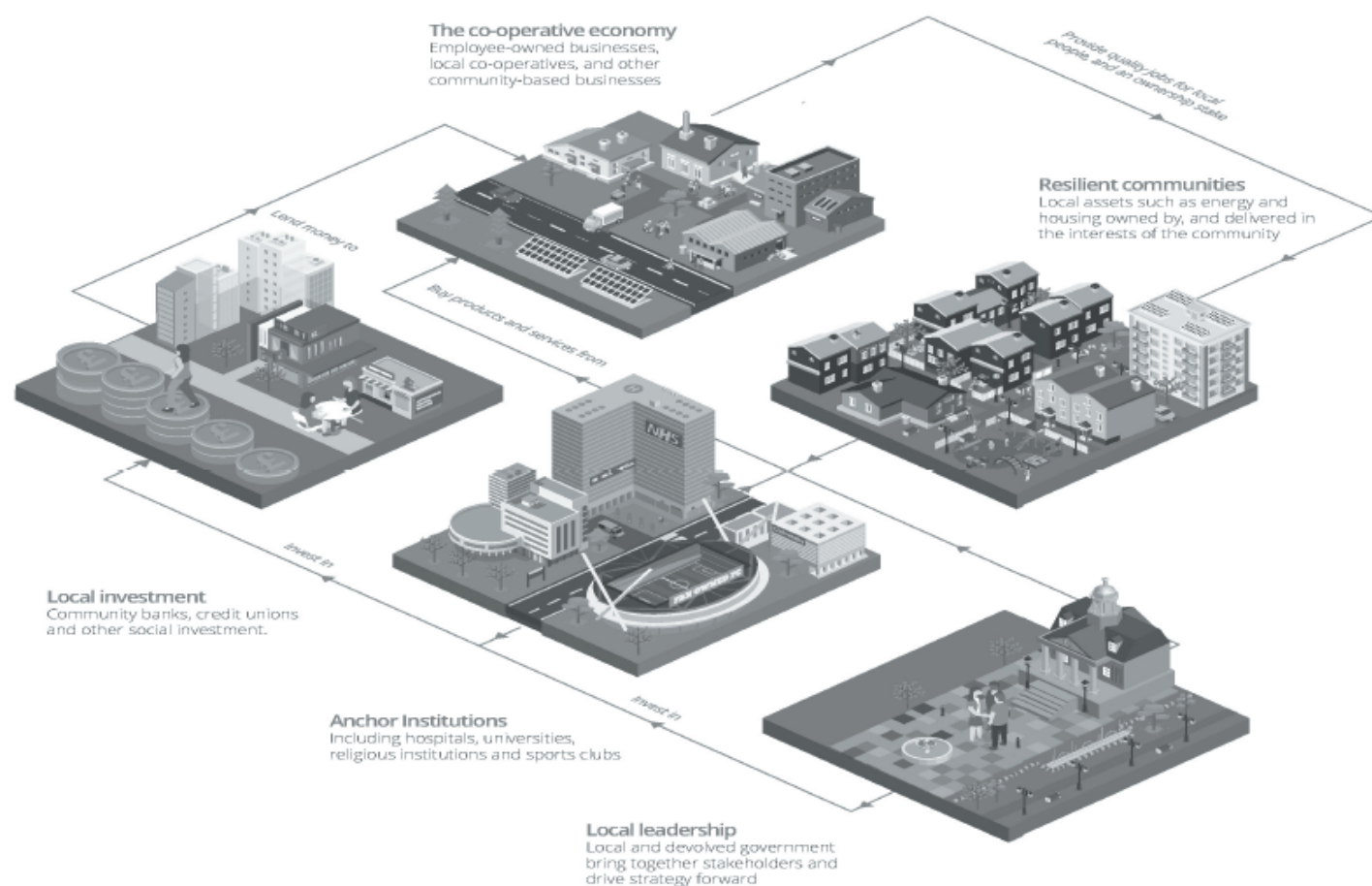
There are 987 women workers, who have recently released their own special coffee called ‘Cafe Femenino’.

“It was a privilege to welcome members of the co-operative to our University”, Peter Anstess, Head of Retail at the University said. “... it was an emotional experience for both our visitors and ourselves to be able to join our growers, roasters and baristas all in one room.”

- CHRISTOPHER OLEWICZ

COMMUNITY OWNED BUILDINGS ADD £220M A YEAR TO ECONOMY

MAKE IT EASIER TO TRANSFER ASSETS INTO COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP, SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY RESEARCHERS CONCLUDE



COMMUNITY OWNED ASSETS PLAY A KEY ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY WEALTH AGENDA AS DEVELOPED BY PRESTON COUNCIL AND CLEVELAND, OHIO IN THE UNITED STATES

Community-owned land and buildings such as leisure centres, sports fields and village halls generate nearly £220m a year for the UK, according to new report produced by academics at Sheffield Hallam University's Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR), written in conjunction with the Institute for Voluntary Action Research.

Our Assets, Our Future is the first analysis of England's much-loved community-owned assets in over a decade, and serves as a check on the financial health of the sector, as well as a much needed census.

It found that there are more than 6,300 community-owned assets of various sizes and types in the country. Despite limited resources, three-quarters of these assets say

they are in good financial health, and surprisingly, nearly a third of all those assets counted were brought into community ownership in the past decade – making community ownership a growth sector. One in five assets made an operating loss of 10% or more of revenue in the last financial year.

In response to their findings, the authors of the report have called for

greater support to be provided to allow community assets to fulfil their economic potential. Ian Wilson, lead author and principal research fellow from CRESR, said: "Most people involved in running community assets do so in order to preserve and improve them because they are of value to their local community. Although 31% of these assets are in excellent financial health, the sector needs more financial support in order to fulfil its economic potential."

While the sector is growing, this growth is uneven. Poorer areas are less likely to have community-owned assets, with the most deprived 30% of neighbourhoods containing just 18% of assets.

On the whole, rural areas have more assets in community ownership than urban areas, with some exceptions, including Liverpool, Birmingham, and Manchester. This suggests the importance of creating an environment which is supportive of community ownership.

The authors propose a range of measures which national and local government should consider to support the growth of the community ownership sector.

These include making it easier to transfer assets into community ownership, providing more business planning and general support for community organisations, and ensuring community owners have more reliable access to cheap finance and greater protections against financial difficulties.

Vidhya Alakeson, Chief Executive of Power to Change, said: "While many are fond of community-owned shops, parks, pubs and heritage buildings, few are aware how economically important these assets are. That's why we need concerted action from policymakers at all levels to support community ownership."

- CHRISTOPHER OLEWICZ

REPORT OUTLINES COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS TO HOUSING CRISIS

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD RESEARCHERS STATE THAT COMMUNITY HOUSING WOULD BOOST COMMUNITY COHESION, OPEN UP THE HOUSING SYSTEM, AND KEEP INCOME "LOCAL"

A new report involving academics from the University of Sheffield has revealed the potential of community-led housing to generate social benefits amidst the general housing crisis in Britain.

Housing Futures: Community-led Alternatives for Greater Manchester, researched by the Realising Just Cities programme at the Urban Institute, University of Sheffield, and funded by the Mistra Urban Futures centre, makes a series of recommendations to maximise the contribution of community-led housing towards achieving a more progressive, democratic and inclusive housing system.

Community-led housing schemes, the report states, allow people and communities to play a leading role in

addressing their own housing needs, with benefits including:

- Positive neighbourhood outcomes for health and social wellbeing, environmental sustainability and skills and employment.
- Protecting communities against gentrification-induced displacement.
- Keeping income within community-led organisations and reinvesting it for community use.
- Opening up the housing system.

Examples of successful community-led housing projects include: The Turner Prize-winning Granby 4 Streets in the Toxteth area of Liverpool, which was begun following a long-term campaign by residents

against disinvestment and neglect; and Homes for Change in the Hulme area of Manchester.

The report also explores what community-led housing may have to offer low income urban neighbourhoods within the Greater Manchester City Region.

Dr Sophie King, from the University of Sheffield's Urban Institute, said: "Community-led housing has strong potential to contribute towards addressing some of the failures of the current housing system. By rejecting the private right to profit, community-led groups can exert local democratic control over their housing circumstances, enabling residents to directly shape their neighbourhoods. The sector requires

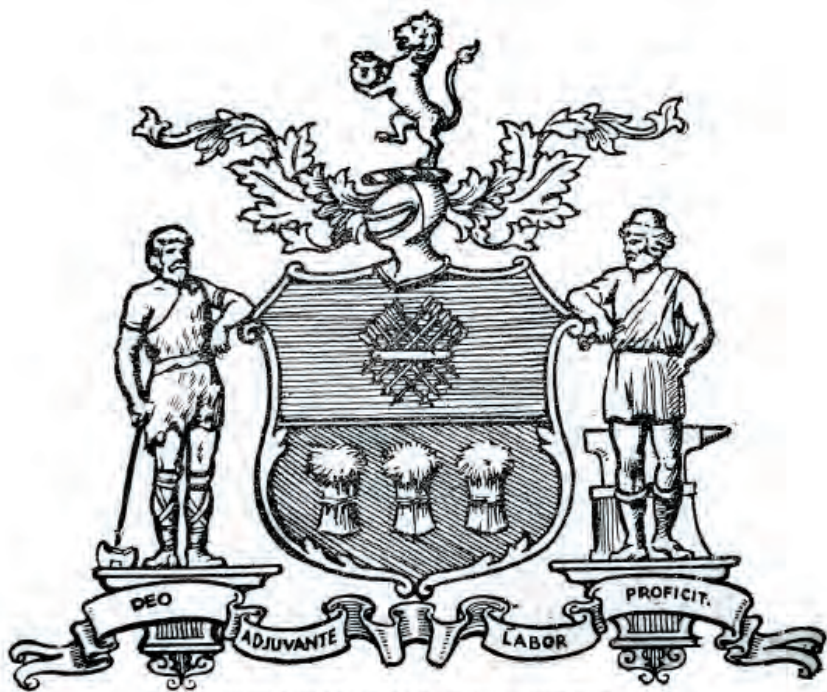
appropriate support to meet its potential, and to find ways to scale upwards and outwards."

The report found that community led housing is more likely to generate positive social welfare and democratic gains when communities take a leadership role and are properly involved in their implementation and governance. However, it also concluded that the creation of community-led housing projects for low-income communities was an outcome that could only be achieved with the appropriate forms of investment, support, and popular mobilisation.

This means that access to land, finance and technical development support are critical to the success of social housing. There is an urgent need to stall the large-scale privatisation of public land across the City Region and make more land available for community control.

- HANNAH POSTLES

Courtesy of University of Sheffield
18 December 2018



"GOD WILLING, LABOUR ACHIEVES"

NOTES FROM THE COUNCIL

THE RESIGNATION OF JULIE DORE: Council Leader Julie Dore announced earlier this year that she would step down at the May 2020 local elections. She has now delayed her departure in order to oversee the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

THE CO-OPERATOR RESPONDS: Since 2010, Sheffield has faced a £460m cut to its budget, with further cuts scheduled for the 2020s. With little room to manoeuvre, the Council worked hard to protect local services, and this is to be commended. However, there have also been serious miscalculations, such as the treatment of tree protestors. In assessing how the Council can help the city recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, this edition of *The Sheffield Co-operator* provides numerous examples of how, in the past, Sheffield pursued radical solutions in an effort to build a better future for its residents. In facing the challenges of the next decade, the Council can do worse than reconnect with its reputation for pursuing innovative policies.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF SAVING BIRLEY SPA

On 30th August 2018, at a public meeting, MP Clive Betts made the announcement that the auction of Birley Spa Bath House had been halted. Little did we realise, that this was not the battle over, but instead it was just beginning.

The Victorian building was made an Asset of Community Value in early November 2018, meaning the council had to give us 6 months notice to sell it, which they duly did, less than a fortnight later.

Our first meeting with the council was that December, there was a surprising number of councillors and officers there. Personally, I felt the environment was quite hostile, with the representative from Property Services being by far the most vocal and negative. We were initially quite taken aback, but soon found our voice and the meeting concluded with us being sent off to formulate a business plan.

It is worth saying at this point that we were all new to this, we are neither heritage nor business experts, but we have an unshakeable vision for, and commitment to the Spa.

The business presentation meeting eventually went ahead in March and was very well received by our local councillors and Jim Steinke, the cabinet member responsible for Neighbourhoods and Community Safety. (Prior to this we had been unable to present our plans, as a representative from Property Services told us that the building was to be put out to conditional tender.) We were told to expect a letter, but the letter never came. Following the council elections there was a cabinet reshuffle, and Jim Steinke was replaced.

It's fair to say that things then took a turn for the worse. We had been told we needed to find a business to rent part of the building to help generate an income. We had one, Karma Hub, which offers Yoga and Holistic services. This tied in perfectly with our ethos of being a centre for health and wellbeing. Box ticked, we were good to go.

At our meeting in June, for some reason, the goalposts were moved, and suddenly we needed to generate more income, office or residential were the only solution apparently. We left that meeting shell-shocked, but worse was to come. On 11th July 2019 we were told we had till the 10th August to find funds to cover the cost of the building repairs, around £200,00, and an income of £30,000 per annum!

We believe that the letter we never received would have allowed us to apply for funding to repair the building. Without it we were absolutely powerless.

We were determined to not give up without a fight, so we went to the press. The *Sheffield Star* and Radio Sheffield were both incredibly supportive, giving us column inches and air time. We arranged a "Hands around the Spa" event which was very successful. We were front page news! It was empowering to know that people cared.

One week later, and two days before our next meeting with the council, we were contacted by a local businessman, who wanted to help us keep the Spa within the community. This was truly wonderful news. On the 5th August we arrived at the Town Hall, with some trepidation, for our meeting with Councillor Paul Wood, but, everything had changed again!

The deadline was now gone. The council stated they were going to work with us and possibly fund some of the repairs. All sides are determined to make this work. Finally we felt we were moving forward, and could begin to achieve our goals. The Sheffield Co-operative Development Group (SCDG) were potentially going to work with us. We were accepted on to the Prosper North Mentoring programme, which covers developing sustainable community business, and may give us access to the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund. We are becoming a Company Limited by Guarantee,

and will be able to apply for funding for repairs and begin fundraising in earnest.

When we have funds over £5,000 we will become a registered charity. Volunteer days, with support from Rangers, have slowly started bringing the gardens back into shape. The local Fire Station and a gardening company are coming to help us make further headway. Our May Day Event last year was a great success and a revelation as to how many people hold as yet undocumented stories of the Spa's history. There is still so much to discover! Through the restoration of Birley Spa we intend to not only revisit its origins in the Victorian era, when bathing in chalybeate waters was all the rage, but also, to invoke the site's most glorious days as Pleasure Grounds, but with a modern twist, helping our visitors to have greater engagement with the environment and nature around them.

We have had valuable support from other Friends groups and Heritage experts, without which we may well have failed some time ago. That said, we have to acknowledge we have made mistakes, on our own, and bad advice has been followed, to our cost. The learning curve is almost vertical. It seems terribly long winded, but I think it is important to understand how much of a complex process it has been to date. We have no reason to believe things will run smoothly from here on in. Although perhaps, that means we are more prepared for what the future holds.

The momentum behind our group has grown apace, Birley Spa has taken on a life of its own, our hidden gem is making itself known, and about time too!

- FIONA MILNE

www.friendsofbirleyspa.org/

THE CHALLENGE FOR CO-OPS

The renowned American geographer and essayist, Murray Bookchin is best known for his "communalist" political theory. Communalism, described by Bookchin, advocates for a society built around localising democratic societies away from central control, towards face-to-face democracy organised together in a loose federation. These communalist ideas have found increasing traction amongst left-wing activists and politicians who would seek to recapture the devolution of power narrative from Conservative "Big Society" policies, and instead for powerful city and regional governments.

These, they think can command greater legitimacy and participation; while still working towards socially liberal and ecological causes. These are the principles we see at work in the so called "Preston Model", as well as in major European cities

such as Barcelona and Grenoble. Given the focus of the communalist project on participatory democracies, and the role that co-operatives have played in places like Preston, it's interesting that its founder had little positive to say about workers' co-operatives. Bookchin was deeply sceptical of the potential for co-operatives to functionally improve workers' lives.

In a particularly scathing passage he describes the worker control of their workplaces as a "dirty bourgeois trick" which merely allows workers to "plan their own misery", rather than contributing to a functionally different economy whose production is democratically organised and seeks to meet the needs of its participants.

Moreover, he believed if they are in competition with capitalist businesses, co-ops, however well intentioned, will be pressured to drop their social interests in order to remain viable. Co-ops themselves do not challenge the market factors that cause ruthlessness and disinterest, but instead abide by their rules believing themselves to be too virtuous to be alienated. Both of these criticisms speak to my experiences working in co-ops. I'm sure many fellow co-operators are well aware that unpaid hours are the elephant in the room.

Similarly, the small workforce, tight budgets and belief in the social values of a co-op's work can mean things like sick leave and holiday seem to slip away from us in the way we would never let a traditional employer off the hook for.

THE CHALLENGE

Co-operatives (quite understandably!) seek workers who will participate fully in the co-op's activities, and not view it as a job "to be left at the door". A far cry from the traditional left message of clearly defined and limited working hours!

I risk leaving this edition of The Co-operator with a sour note. I still believe that co-operatives and workplace democracy have a role to play in transforming our economy for the better. Bookchin's views on co-ops are sidelined within the new municipalist movements he helped found. In the tumultuous decade ahead, we in the movement must keep our attention trained on these questions:

- In a time where the campaign for shorter working hours goes mainstream, how can the high demands co-ops place on worker participation remain relevant?
- How do we combat the insidious workplace cultures that can grow within co-ops?
- What can co-ops offer that strong workplace unions cannot?

Hopefully some of my fellow co-operators can offer their responses in later editions.

- ELLIOT WOODHOUSE

CO-OPERATION AND THE CHINESE CO-OPERATIVE SECTOR



YINGJIA (JADE) CAO WRITES ABOUT THE RECENT GROWTH OF THE CO-OPERATIVE SECTOR IN CHINA

I'm an international student from the University of Sheffield who studies Information Systems. In my second semester this year, I decided to apply for a part-time job advertised by the university Postgraduate Advantage Scheme to extend my working experience. That's how I came to learn of Principle 5 and the co-operative movement.

The British co-operative movement has gone through a long history. Chinese co-operatives began much later than in Britain, and given that Chinese society has undergone periods of high instability in the past, their progress has been uneven. But a large number of people do participate in the Movement.

PROFESSOR HU JUN

The first co-operative organization in Chinese history was born in 1918. The Consumer Cooperative of Peking University was founded by Professor Hu Jun and his students at the university. In September 1922, Mao Zedong founded the Road Worker Consumer Co-operative in Anyuan, the first co-operative led by the Communist Party of China.

After the founding of New China in 1949, co-operative ideas were generally adopted in Chinese society. There were both urban and rural organisations; supply and marketing co-ops, consumer co-ops, credit co-ops, production co-ops and transport co-ops. By 1955, co-operation in agriculture, commerce, and handicraft, had rapidly developed.

However, due to a change in direction made by government, which was the effort to implement a full socialist transformation in Chinese society through a planned economy under the People's Commune, the peasant co-operative economy broke down, and became increasingly unable to meet the requirements of economic development. This lasted for

INNER CITY REGENERATION

Whilst recognising that for some time this has been an on going issue for the City Council, the recent decline nationally in high street retail outlets is an issue that shall undermine the efforts of all local authorities, whatever their political composition, to generate prosperity in their area. Covid-19 has brought this painfully into focus, and we must now consider a future beyond retail employment.

Up to the present time, I am unaware of any ideas being advanced as to whether or not this is achievable, given the fact that we have yet to find an alternative to capitalism as the preferential system for ordering society.

The Labour Party nationally has not advanced any ideas that could persuade people generally that if we wish to live in the future, we have to create a harmonious, safer and caring society.

Locally, efforts have been made to start that process. The former District Labour Party was reformed into a campaign committee. This committee now needs to assert itself. It is of little use campaigning unless we have something to campaign for. Or-

dinary Labour Party members need to start now to develop new ideas for Sheffield, before we are overtaken by events.

THE UNDECLARED WAR

After two and a half centuries of exploitation of the Earth's natural resources, we are now aware of the kind of damage our way of life is having upon our environment and ourselves.

Over the past decade we have experienced serious flooding as a result of concentrated heavy rain over a relatively short period of time. These flash floods, which swell rivers that then flood inland towns and cities, are just the start of what is to come.

These changes are not just affecting the UK. They are taking place worldwide, and they will have serious implications for farmers across the world. Britain will be impacted greatly, given the amount of food we import.

When reading the Labour Party's manifesto commitments for the last election, I found them to be completely inadequate when set against the latest scientific forecasts made at the January UN Climate Change Conference.

By the fact that Labour are not in power and cannot get legislation placed upon the statute book, the worry I have is the apparent relaxed tone of the Party's manifesto. It doesn't convey any sense of urgency. Nor is there any reference to the fact that we are going to have to change our way of life very quickly just to survive.

This is why I have personally described climate change as an Undeclared War. Much like terrorism, this enemy is difficult to predict, and even when we can, it arrives on such a scale we are temporarily overwhelmed. On two occasions, the UN has tried to get the world's greatest contributors to reduce pollution levels. On both occasions, these nations have failed to meet reduction targets.

Scientists state we have about ten years at the very most to try and reduce carbon emissions in order for the world to be able to continue sustaining human life. I foresee a huge task ahead to get people mentally prepared for the huge changes we have to make to face a serious future. Regrettably our political system is failing on every front to face up to the greatest threat to mankind since the last ice age.

- KENNETH CURRAN



20 years.

After the reform and opening up of China in the mid-to-late 1970s the rural household contract responsibility system greatly increased the enthusiasm of farmers, leading to improvements in rural productivity, and a better standard of living.

Nonetheless, the agricultural sector has always been weak in China, and farmers a vulnerable group. With the development of the market economy, this weakness has been exacerbated. It is difficult for a single household to manage the risks of the market.

Hence co-operatives began a revival. In 1982, 17 farmers in Jiepai Town, Tianchang County, Anhui Province jointly established the first new farmer co-operative formed after the liberalisation, the Aquatic Research Association.

In the 1990s, localities across China

actively explored the development and improvement of various co-operative economic organisations.

In addition to the original community co-operative economic organisations, supply and marketing co-operatives, and credit co-operatives, which have been developed and improved to a certain extent, a large number of new rural co-operative organisations emerged and developed rapidly, such as farmers' professional co-operatives, professional associations, and joint-stock co-operatives, which are based on the principles of democracy, equality, and mutual benefit.

Today, many Chinese academics who study the domestic economy focus on the importance of rural support. Following the passage of the Law on Specialised Farmer Co-operatives formally implemented in July

2007, the number of rural co-operatives having industrial-commercial business registration was recorded as around 100,000. By 2013, this had grown to 689,000 by and was expected to reach 900,000 by 2015 (*China News Review*, 2013).

From my own point of view, co-operation contradicts the concept of competition, where people get together to seek for mutual benefits rather than seeing each other as an enemy to fight for resources. To me, the idea of co-operation and the implementation of co-operatives seem like an ideal world, away from capitalism and class differentiation.

However, there can also be fake co-operatives as well, where cooperatives are used as a mask under which the core is still unfairness.

- YINGJIA (JADE) CAO

THE POLITICIAN AS SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

In 2011, the then Member of Parliament for Birkenhead, Frank Field suggested that MPs should carve out a new role for themselves in their constituencies as social entrepreneurs. Politicians, he claimed, “could no longer fully represent the well-being of their constituents by operating simply as MPs have done [since] ... the 19th century.”

Bringing together local leaders and organisations to form Community Interest Companies to tackle social problems, MPs could use their political capital, Field stated, to develop projects addressing the key issues in their constituencies. Once the lessons had been learned, those projects that worked could be scaled-up and replicated across the country.

At a time when new solutions are needed to lessen inequality, Field’s words are welcome. In seeking further inspiration, one might also take inspiration from one of his predecessors. For Henry Harvey Vivian, Liberal MP for Birkenhead from 1906-1910, was certainly an innovator. An advocate of “Co-partnership”, a form of co-operation, Vivian’s desire to see working men enjoy the benefits of house ownership led him to actively participate in the development of the Garden Suburbs movement in the 1900s and 1910s.

Unlike retail co-operation, which distributes surplus profits to con-

sumers in the form of a dividend, a co-partnership scheme, operates more like a workers co-operative, giving primacy to the employees, who invest their money, time, and skills, in exchange for shares, a share in the profits, and the right to take managerial decisions.

The idea first found form in the Labour Association, formed in 1884. Vivian became friendly with two of its leaders, Edward Owen Greening and Thomas Blandford, and was appointed its Secretary in 1890 at the age of 22.

Though Vivian saw the development of large corporations as inevitable, he felt that labour, in self-defence, could form corporations of its own, in order to mould the future into a third way between a narrow capitalism, devoid of public spirit, and a labour bloc, unreasoning and devoid of responsibility for the businesses in which they were employed.

Over the next decade, in addition to his secretarial duties, Vivian toured the country, lecturing on the subject of co-partnership and assisting workers in setting up schemes.

Inspired by Thomas More’s *Utopia*, Robert Owen in Lanarkshire, and the Christian Socialists, Vivian took from these sources the lesson that new ‘systems’ of society depended on men and women willingly participating in a remodelling of their natures “to fit a new, cut and dried, mould”. Repeated failures suggested that this was incredibly

difficult to achieve.

“It is only over long periods of time that one can prove that there has been growth,” Vivian once lectured. “Any proposed changes in the political, social, and economical structure of a country which takes for granted great and striking change for the better in human motives, passions and prejudices is drawing a bill on human nature which stands a very good chance of being dishonoured when it becomes due. Whilst appealing to and stimulating the best in our nature it seems to be wisdom to assume normal conduct in our practical efforts at remodelling society.”

“Over long periods of time we hammer out very laboriously and painfully great principles for guiding human conduct. Great and lofty minds from time to time interpret these, but generations and ages even pass away before the average of us fully realise and practise the truths proclaimed. This may not be in the minds of some a very cheering view of the law of progress, but if it is the true view it is wisdom to recognise it.”

In February 1901, Vivian was invited to meet a group of builders in Ealing, to advise them on establishing a co-partnership housing scheme. He persuaded the men to share in his vision of an ambitious scheme built on communal rather than individual ownership, a community of individuals who would say, “this estate is ours” rather than “this house

is mine”. Over the next decade, the Breatham Garden Suburb was born.

Following his election as MP for Birkenhead, Vivian led another project in Liverpool, the Wavertree Garden Suburb. The aim of the enterprise? To “provide a residential suburb for the people of Liverpool amid surroundings which conduce to both health and pleasure”. For a time, its telegraphic address was ‘Antislum, Liverpool’.

CHANGING TIMES

Vivian held Birkenhead by 144 votes in January 1910 but lost in the December election of that same year. Standing as a Liberal, he was re-elected briefly as the member for Totnes, in December 1923, but lost to the Conservatives the following October. He died at his home, The Limes, Crouch End Hill, Middlesex, on 30th May 1930. By this time, co-partnership as a movement was declining, in favour of profit sharing and municipal housing schemes.

As we look to the future, however, Vivian’s understanding of co-partnership as a means of social uplift can provide an example of how Members of Parliament can use their position to effect social change in their constituencies, bringing together local people to experiment with new ideas today, rather than simply waiting - often in vain - on a favourable result in the next election.

- CHRISTOPHER OLEWICZ



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A BRIEF MUNICIPAL HISTORY OF SHEFFIELD

THE *SHEFFIELD CO-OPERATOR* RECOUNTS THE RECENT POLITICAL HISTORY OF SHEFFIELD AND ITS STRUGGLE FOR PROSPERITY

On 21st May 1897, Queen Victoria officially opened Sheffield Town Hall, a significant marker of the ambition of the City Council in the four years since Sheffield achieved city status in 1893.

What follows is a history that briefly recounts the politics of the city since that time, with a focus on the ideological divide between public and private enterprise.

A CONSERVATIVE COUNCIL

In the late 19th century, before the rise of the Labour Party, the Conservative and Liberal parties were not as hostile to public ownership as they are today.

For close to two decades between 1883 and 1901, Sheffield was controlled by the local Conservative Party and its defacto leader, W.C. Leng, the Editor of the Sheffield Daily Telegraph, and Vice-President of the Sheffield Association for Promoting Sanitary Reform, and the Better Housing of the Poor.

Although hostile to labour unions, Leng was nonetheless reported to have claimed to be a socialist, and as such, ruthlessly targeted the skilled working-class men of the city as potential voters for the Conservatives and his ambitious Improvement Act.

In the 1890s, Sheffield had the fifth highest Rates (the forerunner to Council Tax) in the country. A proportion of the profits from Council-owned enterprises was diverted back into social improvements, and a significant amount was returned to ratepayers in the form of subsidies.

Although the city never reached the heights of Birmingham – the most heavily municipalised authority in the country, and also a Conservative-led council – in that decade, the markets, the water company, and the electricity company, had all been taken into council ownership, in the belief that these services could be run more cheaply and effectively by the Council than by private companies.

RETURN TO REACTIONISM

Leng died in 1901, and consequently, the Sheffield Conservatives quickly lost sight of his vision. Rate subsidies increased at the expense of public improvements, and no further municipalisation occurred. The 'first and most pressing duty' of the Party from that point forward, was to 'combat the insidious and utterly fallacious doctrines of socialism'.

The 1905 Conservative manifesto was particularly class-partisan.

It pledged to raise tram fares and oppose road-making schemes that might give jobs to the unemployed, and to oppose the building of working-class housing at High Storrs on land which had been purchased at public expense for that specific purpose.

A further proposed development at Wincobank was denounced as a 'socialistic' attempt to suppress individuals 'as holders of property.' King Edward VII School - opened in 1905, as an authority-controlled school – was redesignated as a fee-paying school for 'the sons of the middle and upper classes.'

ILP AND LABOUR

By this time, Labour had begun their ascendancy. It was in the steel-producing areas of the city that the Independent Labour Party (ILP) first began to gain a foothold, with the first branch established in 1893. In that year, it contested the Attercliffe by-election, after the Liberals passed over a Lib-Lab candidate endorsed by the Sheffield Federated Trades Council in favour of a local sawmill owner. Although Frank Smith finished last in the poll, the election persuaded future Prime Minister Ramsey McDonald to commit to the ILP.

For much of the 19th century, Sheffield's economy had been dominated by independent craftsmen, or 'little mesters'. As large-scale industry had become more dominant, these 'mesters' had begun to lose their competitive edge in the marketplace. They were generally supportive of Liberal or Lib-Lab candidates, once the Liberals began their practice of running working-class Liberal candidates.

The nature of work in the large factories contributed to the development of a tight-knit and independent working-class identity that was antagonistic to 'the bosses'. Lib-Labs however, generally came from the light trades.

Working class conservatism was concentrated in the Central Division, represented by Sir Howard Vincent from 1885 to 1908. Park Constituency, a mining area, also retained Conservative sympathies, due to the influence of the Duke of Norfolk.

In 1900, the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) was formed. Its Sheffield branch consisted of nine representatives from heavy industry, two from light industry, and seven from the transport and general unions. It worked to unite trade unionists and ILP members behind

Labour candidates, in the belief that organised labour could only effect change if it achieved a majority on the Council, and then worked to re-divert its profits away from rate subsidisation, and towards a more ambitious improvement plan.

The first Labour councillor was elected in 1905, (R.G. Murray, ILP and Gasworkers) for Brightside Ward. Four years later, Joseph Pointer was elected as Member of Parliament for Attercliffe and retained the seat in 1910 after the Liberal candidate withdrew.

THE GREAT WAR

The Great War had an enormous effect on Sheffield. The city served as a major centre for the armaments production, and by 1918, its population had grown to 500,000. The Council commissioned noted planner Patrick

Abercrombie to develop an ambitious new city plan. The Sheffield Civic Survey and Development plan of 1924 was a broadly conceived plan for the future of the city, based on a civic survey that considered the needs of the people; their access to work, need for utilities and other services, and their surroundings.

The challenge, Abercrombie explained, was to arrange the 'parts of the city so that they form one satisfactory mechanism, each part performing its functions in the best way.'

The outcome was that housing in the city centre was demolished, in favour of a series of low density 'satellite settlements', giving Sheffield its 'big village' flavour.

In spite of this upheaval, the Conservatives refused to countenance any proposals made by Labour to improve infrastructure or welfare in the city. In 1922, Sir Albert Hobson claimed that the people of Sheffield had discovered a new industry - breeding - in order to claim additional benefits. Councillor Matt Sheppard asked rhetorically at a by-election meeting, "What are the Labour Party?" The answer? "They are colossal humbugs, hypocrites, Bolsheviks, Fabians and the cosmopolitan refuse of Europe."



MAN ON RIGHT: Vote Socialist and get summat for now't.
MAN ON LEFT: Aye, and at my expense! I'm voting for t'Citizen Candidates. Their policy will bring more work, and help all of us to do better.



AFTER THE 1926 COUNCIL ELECTION, TRAM CONSTRUCTION WAS BROUGHT IN-HOUSE TO CUT OUT "THE MIDDLE MEN"

CLEGG AND THE LIBERALS

Throughout the late 19th and early 20th century, the Liberals lacked a coherent political position. Some favoured social improvements, and the municipalisation of the tramways was pushed through with only one Liberal voting against. It was they who had encouraged the purchase of the land at High Storrs for housing, and had stopped the Conservatives when the latter attempted to force its sale.

Perhaps more than the Great War, or the efforts of Labour leader E.G. Rowlinson, the single contributing factor which aided the rise of the Labour Party in Sheffield was William Clegg, who was leader of the Sheffield Liberal Party for nearly 30 years.

A solicitor and former footballer, Clegg also, like Leng, claimed to be a 'socialist.' True socialism, Clegg claimed, meant "the provision of those things which were necessary for the benefit and advantage of the people as a whole, and which could not be supplied by private enterprise." The 'spurious' socialism of the Labour Party, on the other hand,

preached confiscation without compensation, nationalisation without payment, and the "levelling down of individuals instead of the levelling up."

Clegg practiced an intolerant political style. In his 70s by the 1920s, his incapability to make any accommodation to the Labour position led him to make ill-conceived decisions. In both 1921 and 1923, Labour boycotted the Committee work of the Council in protest at the unjust allocation of places. Labour made up one third of the Council but were allocated just one of fifteen key committee positions.

Clegg justified his actions with his motto 'To the victor, the spoils'. Even his one-time political ally, Alderman Moses Humberstone, described him as 'the biggest autocrat I know'.

THE CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

In order to prevent Labour from becoming the largest party on the Council, the Conservatives and Liberals formed a coalition - the Citizens Association - later known as the Municipal Progressive Party. The division between Labour and its oppo-

nents now became clear. The Association would focus on maximising Rate subsidies, while Labour would use the profits of Council owned enterprises to undertake social improvements.

By the mid-1920s, Sheffield had outgrown its infrastructure. The Sheffield Corporation operated just eight public baths and no wash-houses and had just one infant and maternity welfare centre. Plans to build a sanatorium for those made sick by working in heavy industry were repeatedly deferred on economy grounds. The city spent proportionately less than any other local authority in the country on education. There were few council houses, and public health continued to be endangered by the large number of antiquated privy middens (outside toilets) and ash pits located in the poorer areas of the city.

Exacerbating these problems was the fact that the Association was financially incompetent. Its leaders made several decisions in the name of short-term economy which ultimately placed the Council's finances under significant strain. It raised loans at unnecessarily high interest rates to meet immediate demands. Its decision to reform Rates collection was disastrous and led to the issuing of 255,000 summonses for non-payment, 289 imprisonments and a loss of £700,000 in revenue. This policy in particular undermined the Association's main claim to superiority - their belief that the working classes did not have the skills required to take responsibility for the finances of a large city, and that the job should be left to businessmen and professionals.

The Association was always a marriage of convenience. It lacked the administrative guile of Birmingham's Conservatives, and its efforts to keep down the Rates led to a frugality "which bordered on miserliness." H. Keeble Hawson, summed up the role of the Association aptly. "The sudden post-war depression ... produced a startling change. All ideas of progress and expansion had been forgotten. The men who had guided the Council for so long and had inspired the vigorous policies of earlier years had grown old; they could not face the challenge of the times and so Sheffield in 1926 became the first of the big cities to fall under Socialist control."

SIX YEARS OF LABOUR

Labour's chance finally came in November 1926. On a wave of pro-labour sentiment following the General Strike, the Party finally succeeded in winning a majority to implement its 'Progressive Charter.'

The primary issue of that election, the Sheffield Co-operator declared, was to replace the vested interests that controlled the lives of working people in Sheffield, which limited their activities and retarded and restricted the development of munic-

ipal enterprise, with representatives who pledged 'unfettered extension and development in every phase of municipal activity.'

Labour inherited a host of social problems from the Association. Most pressing was the Manor Estate. While 6,000 houses had been built on the Manor, the build quality was poor, and local amenities were scarce. Only 1,000 of the 3,000 children on the estate were able to attend school.

Drastic action was required. The Council built maternity and child welfare centres, and wash-houses, and took over the Poor Law hospitals. Care of consumptives, the blind and those formerly treated in the hospitals was taken over by the Corporation. Workshops were built for the blind, and benefits paid so that for the first time, they could enjoy a reasonable standard of living. Tram construction was brought in-house, and new routes were built across the city. New markets and abattoirs were built. Secondary school provision was increased by over 80%. Almost 9,000 ash pits were replaced with 15,000 new dustbins. Almost 8,000 new houses were constructed, and 2,500 courtyards were provided with electricity for the first time. The first central library, located on Surrey Street and widely viewed as being inadequate, was replaced.

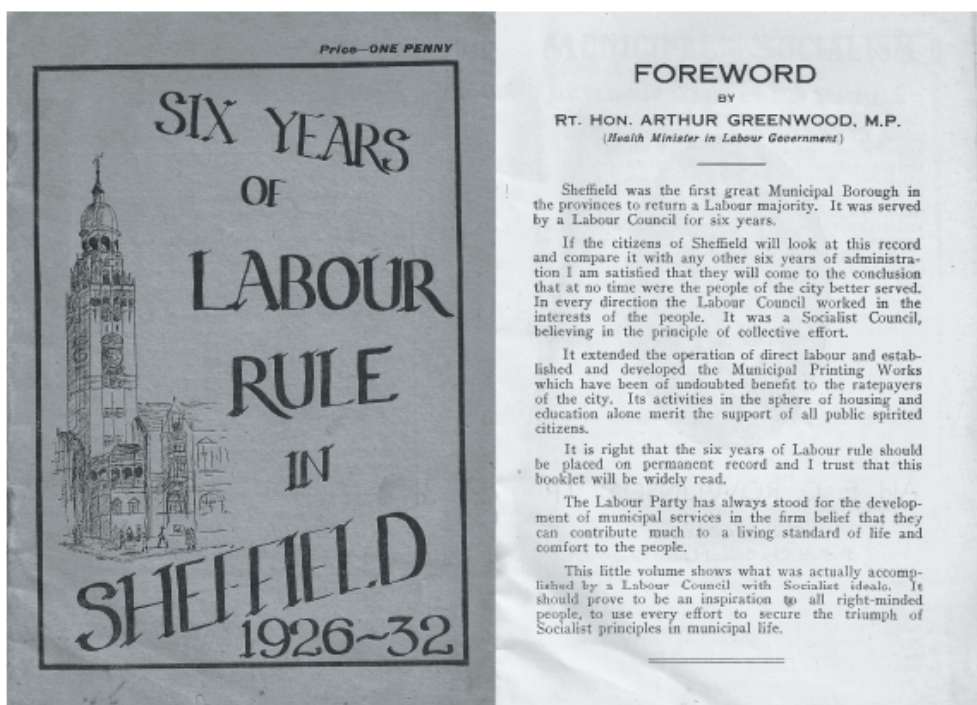
All this work was undertaken by 'direct labour' employed by the Council, financed by a rate increase, and a £1.5 million stock issue to pay off debts incurred by the Association. In celebration of their efforts, the new Council owned Printing Department issued a pamphlet in 1932, Six Years of Labour Rule in Sheffield, 1926-32, which detailed Labour's many achievements.

The Labour Group was blessed with a number of talented administrators. T.H. Watkins, a railway accountant, played a dominating role in the Corporation's financial planning; Albert Ballard and J.H. Bingham were the principal architects of Sheffield's educational reforms; William Asbury had an unrivalled practical knowledge and concern for health provision.

Leading the Group was E.G. Rowlinson who led Sheffield Labour, with the exception of two one-year spells, from 1926 until his early death in 1941. Rowlinson became a full-time administrator; chairman of two committees and a member of six others. In spite of his many commitments, the Labour Group was largely united throughout this period.

Into the 1930s, Labour continued to advance, particularly in the development of new housing estates. Planned along 'garden suburb' lines, 27,000 council owned dwellings were built by 1940.

Its competence in managing the financial affairs of the city while undertaking these ambitious projects was at odds with the chequered record of the Labour Party nationally. In 1937, George Orwell felt that the



INHERITING A HOST OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS, THE FIRST LABOUR COUNCIL PUBLISHED A PAMPHLET OUTLINING THE PROGRESS IT HAD MADE IN IMPROVING SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN THE CITY

Sheffield residents ‘wanted to be pre-eminent in everything.’

POST-WAR BOOM

Victory in the Second World War, and the election of a Labour government, transformed the role of the Council.

During the War, when the Coalition was in power, and proposing a National Health Service, the Council worried that the removal of hospitals from local authority control might undermine municipal democracy. But after the 1945 Election, it acquiesced, no doubt keen to support the national party. When electricity was nationalised, it was the Conservatives and Liberals who protested. Much later, it was the Conservatives and Liberals who opposed the removal of the tram system.

Sheffield boomed in the 1950s, and its population grew to 600,000. To manage this growth, the Council put into place another redevelopment plan. The Lower Don Valley was zoned as industrial only, and all existing housing was cleared. Sheffield became recognised nationally for its innovative ‘streets in the sky’ housing developments, particularly Park Hill flats. Consequently, the city did not experience suburbanisation to as large a degree as other cities.

The city centre was rebuilt, mostly by private developers conforming to a Council developed plan. To oversee these endeavours, the Public Works Department was expanded, and a Manager appointed. Existing public buildings were repainted and redecorated.

The Conservative and Liberal opposition worked to hold back Labour’s programme. When the Conservatives briefly regained control of the Council in the 1960s, they attempted to force the Council to put out all contracts worth in excess of £500 to competitive tender, before they could be allocated to Public Works.

MANAGERIALISM

Regrettably, but in line with the development of state-bureaucracies and the professionalisation of administration in the post-war period, the Council became more distant and managerial, less able to incorporate ‘lay opinion’, from community groups, and even ‘backbench’ councillors.

By the late 1960s, there were 24 Council departments, in addition to 20 committees, overseeing a further 82 sub-committees. These were overseen by the Town Clerk, but with no clear line of authority. The Departments pursued their own policies, with the Chief Officers cultivating relationships with the councillors who controlled the committees.

The election of Ron Ironmonger to the leadership of the Labour Group in 1966 and the appointment of D. B. Harrison as Town Clerk and Chief Executive, led to a sea-change in the

organisation of the Council, Greater power was given to Harrison, who hoped to increase the independence of the Officers from the Councillors.

The number of departments and committees was reduced, and a new Policy Committee was introduced to define the general direction and priorities of the Council. Wary of building departmental empires that they could not penetrate, the councillors ensured that co-ordination remained in the hands of the Committees, even if the work was delegated to the Officers.

THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

Sheffield enjoyed full employment until the mid-1970s. Following the

oil shock of 1974 however, there was an economic retraction, and many steel firms permanently lost their competitive edge in the international market.

The election of Margaret Thatcher prompted a crisis in local government. Economic reforms wreaked havoc on Sheffield, and unemployment skyrocketed. In 1981, the city’s unemployment rate rose above the national average for the first time. By 1984, the manufacturing sector, which had employed almost 50% of the city’s workforce in 1971, employed only 24%.

Opposing Thatcher’s policies was a new generation of working-class left-wing councillors led by David Blunkett. They resented the fact that

government had placed economic orthodoxy ahead of the lives of local people, and in an effort to forge their own path, they decided to create their own economic strategy for Sheffield.

Inspired by the Mondragon Co-operative in northern Spain - responsible for a large percentage of economic activity in the Basque Country - the Council attempted to replicate its achievements. The Council would rid itself of managerialism and bureaucracy, placing more power in the hands of residents, to eliminate economic inequality rather than merely compensate for it with benefits and programmes.

In order to achieve this, the Council created an Employment Department,

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tasked with supporting businesses, creating employment opportunities, and expanding municipal enterprise. A host of services were brought in house, from window cleaning to skip hire. Two full-time Development Workers, and a Product Development Officer, were hired, to develop new worker co-operatives, and design new products.

Examples included Procon, a concrete products co-operative, and later, Traffic Systems, a worker co-operative specialising in traffic systems engineering and maintenance. Some attempts were also made to transform failing businesses in the heavy industries into co-operatives, but these were generally unsuccessful.

Another initiative was the reorganisation of the Estates Department, to utilise council owned land and property to promote community initiatives, rather than “the speculative requirements of private developers”.

Seeking further inspiration, the Council republished Six Years of Labour Rule in Sheffield, recalling the “brave pioneers” who had “laid the foundations for the magnificent socialist city” of which people had been so proud.”

A LOSING BATTLE

By the mid-1980s, the Council employed over 21,000 people, more than five times the workforce of the largest private firm in the city. This was completely at odds with the desires of the Conservative Government, which believed that local councils were wasteful and inefficient, and had therefore trimmed council budgets.

In response, the leaders of the Labour controlled local authorities met in February 1985, and decided that Councils should refuse to set budgets, as part of a strategy to force the government to release extra funding.

Leading Sheffield councillors however, proved unwilling to break the

law, and refused to vote for a no-rate policy. David Blunkett and Clive Betts argued for a policy of setting the maximum legal rate and combining this with a deficit budget, in the hope that at a later point the Government would be forced to make more money available. The District Labour Party (DLP) voted against the proposal, but in conjunction with Conservative and Liberal councillors, a vote to set the legal maximum passed.

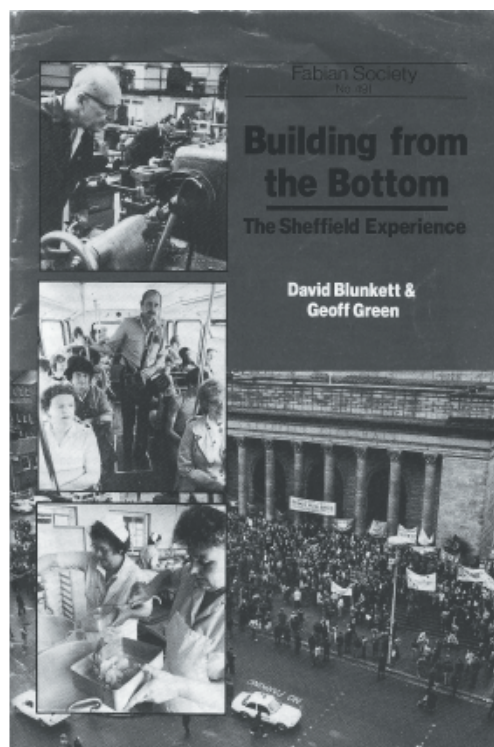
Following this incident, the power of central government to intervene in, and direct local services, and to force local authorities to contract services out to private tender, and to set rates, became extensive, and under significant pressure, Sheffield Council began to reconsider its approach.

URBAN REDEVELOPMENT

In 1980, the Government launched the first Urban Development Corporation (UDC) in London, an attempt to involve private sector finance in regeneration projects. The UDC model was based on the creation of special purpose government-mandated agencies, tasked with regenerating industrial zoned areas.

Sheffield Council initially resisted the introduction of UDCs, and it was only in 1986 that it set up its own alternative, the Sheffield Economic Regeneration Committee (SERC), in an effort to preserve local control that would be lost under the UDC model. Although it consulted with the private sector, SERC took the form of a Council committee.

The following year however, the Council changed its mind, and entered into an agreement with the Government to launch the Sheffield Development Corporation, with a seven-year budget of £50 million and powers to provide services and acquire and dispose of land in an area of 2,000 acres, running from the



SHEFFIELD'S DEFIANT ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC STRATEGY TO THATCHERISM LOOKED TO EMPOWER RESIDENTS TO TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR LIVES AND REDUCE ALIENATION

city centre out into the Don Valley. The Council negotiated to exclude some areas that were already being redeveloped by SERC and to transfer staff over to the Development Corporation.

After years of estrangement, a new effort was made to engage with the Chamber of Commerce. Public-private partnerships were proposed, in order to diversify the economy into leisure, tourism, and new technologies. Plans to build Meadowhall were brought forward.

Gestures such as the flying of the red flag from the Town Hall on May Day, the creation of nuclear free zones, and the annual Karl Marx memorial lecture were dispensed with, to ‘cleanse’ the Council of its ‘negative’ image.

FLAGSHIP INVESTMENTS

A key aim of the Sheffield UDC was to identify of a ‘flagship investment’, to help the city create a positive image for itself. The Council decided that Sheffield would put forward a bid to host the World Student Games, which if successful, would be the largest multi-sporting event held in Britain since the 1948 London Olympics. Sheffield would be transformed into ‘The City of Sport’.

Although the bid was successful, it emerged that the Council had not undertaken the necessary work to assess the ‘realistic possibility’ of the private sector taking an interest in the event. Costs overran, fundraising under-achieved and a deal for television coverage fell through. Though the games went well, costs eventually exceeded £500 million. Councillor Peter Duff, who resigned from the Council in protest, criticised the ideology that had motivated the bid:

“The Council has been dragged into the Thatcher myth that the future lies in tourism, leisure, and recreation. We should be playing to the traditional strengths of a work-

6. CONCLUSION

It is no accident that the Tories have chosen to launch a bitter and devastating attack on local government, and on socialist Labour councils in particular. Along with trade unions, socialism in the community provides not just a defence but a real alternative to our opponents. The Tories know that examples of community enterprise and social ownership and democracy at local level threaten their re-structuring of our economic and social relationships. To destroy socialist initiative at local level is seen by them as destroying the last areas of Labour's strength and with it the base from which to rebuild a committed socialist party with real popular support.

If we are to have a cause rather than a fragmented set of policies, no matter how valuable, then we are by necessity required to set out an alternative set of values to those of the Thatcher Government. We must spell out why the economics of the market place and private enterprise itself create an unacceptable society, and how the concept of community can form an alternative to that of greed and self-interest as the only motivator of innovation and initiative. This pamphlet does not pretend to offer all the answers, but it does set out ideas which reflect libertarian, democratic socialist values in a community setting. We have argued that the work of the early pioneers of local government showed how community, rather than private, interests could solve the major social and economic obscurities of the post, and sought to suggest how their example can be reflected in the technological era of the late twentieth century.

The Labour Party is the only major political force which grew from the grass roots upwards, placing people in Parliament to enable the community itself to carry out the work it had begun. Whether through trade unions in industry, or local government in the community, men and women turn to Parliament to enable the resources of the State to be thrown behind them in bringing about radical change. They did not hand over their task, believing that parliamentary Socialists could legislate benevolently for the millennium. Today the task of building a mass movement requires the same vision and commitment as the democratic socialists of the past displayed in the formative days of the Labour movement. It is important that the Party nationally reflects the movement in the country. The Party must draw upon the radical experience of socialist councils who now provide a fertile source of ideas and energy for socialist reconstruction. Socialist local government also provides a wealth of organisational experience which in recent years has not been so obvious at national level in the Party. We have drawn lessons from sometimes bitter local experience whilst the Labour Party is in opposition nationally. And the single most important lesson is that we must improve our services before we can defend them. We must bridge the gap with democratic machinery which releases the potential of our workforce and encourages active democratic involvement by all our people. If we can stimulate the community action that brings people into the Party and get them to relate their local community problems to a sense of political purpose, then we have begun to change society. All the talk about socialism, all the talk about a new radical approach is useless unless it commits ordinary working people with us. Having won the hearts and minds of our people, we simply cannot fail.



THE WORLD STUDENT GAMES WAS A SUCCESS FOR THE CITY. BUT IT WAS NOT A FINANCIAL SUCCESS. TODAY SHEFFIELD HAS FORGED A REPUTATION AS “THE CITY OF SPORT.”

HEAT AND POWER

The Council encountered further bad luck with its innovative District Heating System, originally managed by the Council in partnership with Sheffield Heat and Power Ltd (the private sector). The project aimed to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill by providing the city centre with a reliable and cost-effective source of energy.

Between July 1989 and March 1990, a series of pipes were installed across the city centre, linking the incinerator on Bernard Road with the Lyceum Theatre, Millennium Galleries, Crucible, and Weston Park Hospital, Sheffield City Hall and several of the university buildings, to provide them with a cheap source of heating. The scheme won the first CHPA Community Heating Award for Innovation.

The main flaw with the scheme was that it was built close to a residential area. Concerns were raised about the smoke and emissions generated by the incinerator, and effect of dioxins on the health of local residents. Anticipating the introduction of the 2000 EU Incineration Directive, an effort was begun to upgrade the incinerator at a cost of £25 million. When this was deemed to be too expensive, the plant was fully privatised, and a 35-year £1.2 billion-pound contract was awarded to Onyx (now Veolia) to run the plant.

Onyx announced that it was cheaper to build a new facility than to upgrade the existing Bernard Road incinerator, completed in 2006. Concerns about the smoke persist to this day, and also, the fact that a shortage of refuse has meant at times that waste has been diverted from local recycling centres, and even imported into the city from elsewhere in the country.

SIGNS OF RECOVERY

By the early 1990s, professional and low-paid employment in Sheffield was starting to grow again, but middle earning category jobs had declined. The combined losses from the Games and the Supertram, meant that the Council was forced to economise.

After the Conservatives were re-elected in 1992, further cuts appeared inevitable, and the Council finally abandoned its no 'redundancy' policy. School building and renovation was cut; teachers were not replaced; school class sizes increased; specialist provision was reduced; Council houses were not built; repairs were not carried out; Children's homes and libraries were closed; home-help reduced; social workers not replaced; and recreation and leisure facilities fell into decline.

In 1992, the Council launched the City Liaison Group (CLG) as a successor to SERC, an independent agency that was successful in both of the bids it made to the Single Re-

generation Budget (SRB), a consolidation of government regeneration programmes under the administration of the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR).

The CLG's flagship initiative, 'The Heart of the City' sought to upgrade the city centre and run-down neighbourhoods, attract new businesses, and increase the student population of the city to over 50,000. Projects included the redevelopment of Midland Railway Station, and the building of the Winter Garden.

The Council also began to look towards the European Union for funding. The city secured 'Objective One' status, which opened up £820 million pounds to more than 250 organisations and over 650 projects, increasing the size of the local economy by 8.5%. Partnership working with the private sector was a precondition of this funding.

BOB KERSLAKE

Driving much of this change was Council leader Mike Bower, and Bob Kerslake, who was appointed Chief Executive in 1996. Kerslake's appointment, combined with the election of a Labour government the following year, gave the city a much-needed boost. "Inheriting a dire budgetary situation ... and a lack of resources", Kerslake sought a formal rapprochement with the Chamber of Commerce and the wider business community. He embraced the new attitude towards public-private partnerships and outsourcing agreements, which led to the city being awarded further grants from the Government and the EU.

The Sheffield First Partnership, founded in 1998 to manage the regeneration of the city, was given the responsibility of restoring the city centre, improving transport links, encouraging enterprise development including incubators created through the universities. The apparent success of this model encouraged the Government to require all local authorities to follow Sheffield's lead and establish partnership boards, known as Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs).

Kerslake also re-organised the Council, streamlining its 14 existing departments into five executive sections. A quarter of all Council services were outsourced to trusts and the private sector, overseen by a system of performance indicators. The Council tapped into a host of government programmes targeted at addressing inequalities, such as the New Deal for Communities, Sure Start, Neighbourhood Renewal, and the Social Exclusion Unit.

In 2001, a Government mandated Urban Regeneration Company – Sheffield One – was set up as a successor to the UDC. Sheffield One was developed by the Council in conjunction with the regional development agency Yorkshire Forward, and English Partnerships, the national development agency. Major funding came from the EU Objective 1 Fund. Revised every three years, the new City Strategy set out the long-term vision for the Council, "to create new jobs and ensure that local communities have access to them". Kerslake also played a founding role in the creation of the Core Cities Network, a lobbying group of eight major post-industrial cities that

would fight for greater local control over funding. In recognition of his efforts, he was made a non-executive board member of Department for Communities and Local Government.

In the first decade of the new millennium, public sector job growth drove much of the recovery in Sheffield. A 2012 study showed that public administration, education and health made up over a third of all the jobs in the city, with private sector jobs responsible for half, heavily concentrated in Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs). This progress coincided however, with severe cuts to the Council's core budget. Many jobs were lost, functions amalgamated, and programmes cancelled or shrunk, and only accelerated following the election of the Conservative-led coalition government in 2010.

OUTSOURCING

Although the Kerslake years, and those of his successor, John Mothersole, had many positives, the outsourcing of contracts to the private sector has often been problematic.

The first major agreement negotiated by the Council was agreed in January 1998, when it agreed to outsource its IT and finance operations to CSL, a subsidiary of Deloitte and Touche. At £130m, it was 50% larger than the largest existing agreement to date, negotiated by the London Borough of Croydon.

Under the terms of the CSL deal, 500 employees were transferred to the private sector, at a reported saving of £50 million. CSL were tasked with collecting Council Tax, paying staff, and processing all payments aside from benefits.

Less than two years later, CSL were fined by the Council after a huge backlog of Housing Benefits claims led to an explosion in rent arrears, forcing the Council to prioritise payments to private tenants in order to prevent mass evictions.

One of the conditions of having been awarded the contract was that CSL had to provide evidence to the Council that their pension scheme could match that of the existing Local Government Pension Scheme. However, CSL subsequently encountered acute financial problems, meaning they were unable to meet their obligations to the scheme. The pensions were subsequently transferred, despite the resistance of the Liberal Democrats on the Council, and CSL were eventually replaced by Capita, who maintain the contract to this day.

Perhaps more controversial was the outsourcing of the highways redevelopment contract, negotiated partly by the Liberal Democrats during their period in power, and Labour after they regained control in 2010. A 25-year contract to maintain Sheffield's roads, at £2.2bn it was one of the largest Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) agreed to date by a



THE LARGEST GLASS HOUSE IN EUROPE, THE WINTER GARDEN WAS THE CENTERPIECE OF THE HEART OF THE CITY PROJECT

local authority.

The Council have always maintained that it was the only way that they could guarantee road improvements, yet its attitude towards those campaigning against the felling of street trees has been controversial.

AUSTERITY

By the time of the 2008 Financial Crisis, Sheffield had increased its population moderately, and appeared to be thriving, though it still ranked 14 out of 15 major UK cities for 'liveliness'. It suffered, as it does today, from pockets of high relative deprivation, and a high-level skills shortage, particularly in the areas most affected by de-industrialisation of the 1980s.

The austerity of the next decade saw the Council budget reduced by £430m. Welfare cuts of a further £4 billion around the country are currently planned for the 2020s. With nearly a quarter of Sheffield's localities counting in the most deprived 10% of areas in the nation, and three areas counting among the 1% most deprived areas, the impact will be devastating. With the Council unable to raise Council Tax rates, it is unable to invest in the local economy.

Employment in the city has grown since 2010 but the nature of work has changed, with increasing numbers of people undertaking part-time work. Efforts to bring in extra investment from China failed. Announced in 2016, a reported £1 billion deal with the Sichuan Guodong Group – the largest deal to date between a Chinese company and a British city outside London – promised investment and jobs. Proposals to turn the Central Library, which needs extensive repairs, into a hotel were poorly received, and eventually abandoned. Three years later, the deal collapsed with little evidence of any investment having taken place.

A CO-OPERATIVE FUTURE?

When the Coalition was elected in 2010, it replaced Regional Development Agencies with Local Enterprise Partnerships. The Core Cities Group actively supported the development of City Deals; funding and development agreements between central and local government to create City Regions, overseen by an elected mayor.

After five years of ill-tempered negotiation, the Sheffield City Region deal was signed in early 2020, two years after Dan Jarvis was elected Mayor, with a mandate to oversee a £30m a year fund, to guide economic development across Sheffield, Rotherham, Barnsley, Chesterfield and Doncaster.

It is hard to argue against the fact that private investment has done much to 'upgrade' certain areas of the city centre. Cultural events, such as the Festival of the Mind, and Sheffield Doc/Fest have brought art-

ists and performers to the city. Sheffield is the Real Ale Capital of Britain and is internationally known as the Home of Snooker.

Over the past 30 years, the city's student population has grown to 60,000, helped by a large increase in the number of international students.

With civic leaders convinced that the future of Sheffield lies in digital and advanced manufacturing, questions remain as to how wealth can be redirected to deprived areas, where jobs and opportunities remain scarce. With the High Street continuing to contract, the problems will become more acute, particularly as we contend with the long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As we have seen, Sheffield has consistently implemented radical

solutions – both public and private – in an effort to improve the life of the city. Sometimes those efforts succeeded, and sometimes they failed.

More important, is the fact that they were tried at all. Dan Jarvis has pledged to adopt co-operative approaches to local services where possible. Perhaps then, soon, Sheffield will become a co-operative city? Can co-operation bring prosperity back to those areas of the city that have so long been allowed to decline due to lack of work and opportunities? Maybe, but without trying, it will not.

- CHRISTOPHER OLEWICZ

- For sources and further information, contact Principle 5: The Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre.

**The SHEFFIELD
Co-OPERATOR**

The Sheffield Co-operator is edited by Principle 5: The Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre.

For enquiries, letters, and other correspondence please email: sheffcooperator@gmail.com

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WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO BUILD A FEMINIST CO-OPERATION?

CLEM BONNEAU EXPLORES THE ONGOING CAMPAIGN FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN CO-OPERATIVES

The co-operative movement is based on the principles of democracy, and autonomy. Alongside these principles, they often share values of equality, equity and solidarity. Their structure ensures that the founding principles are respected, but putting values of equality and solidarity into practice is a much greater challenge. Gender inequalities in co-operatives were at the centre of the 2011 Women's Challenge campaign, launched by the movement to raise awareness and reduce inequalities.

Unfortunately nearly a decade after the launch of the campaign, we are still very far from the movement being gender-balanced. Women are still under-represented in managerial positions in co-ops. For some co-ops there is still an important gender pay gap and opportunities are still much greater for male co-operators.

Despite our best intentions, we can't always dislodge the more deeply rooted inequalities as easily as we might think and often co-ops fail to identify what needs to change. I will not get into details about the origins and causes of gender inequalities, for Simone de Beauvoir does a brilliant job of it in *The Second Sex*. Instead I would like to focus on some of the reasons we struggle tackling

these inequalities.

Awareness: A lot of male co-operators are still unaware of the challenges women face at work. Sociologist Arlene Daniels talks about invisible labour to refer to the unpaid labour performed by women (housework and caregiving responsibilities) and the expectation that women will take on a larger share of this economically and culturally devalued work.

Few co-operators are aware of the stress and exhaustion it causes, and how often it prevents women from taking on more responsibilities at work for fear of letting down their colleagues or their family. The internet is packed full of strategies for women to overcome this stress by themselves, thus fostering a culture in which women have to adapt to their workplace rather than the opposite.

The stepping stone to a fair and equal workplace is to create supportive structures for women to access the same opportunities as their male colleagues so they don't have to choose between their careers and care duties.

Genuine representation: When speaking of representation, co-ops often fail to see further than attendance to meetings. However, studies



THE NATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE WOMENS' GUILD CAMPAIGNED FOR MATERNITY RIGHTS AND THE MINIMUM WAGE, FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN AS CONSUMERS NOT WORKERS

show that even when women are present at meetings they are still consistently less likely than men to substantively participate. Far from having less to say women don't always feel that they can oppose a male colleague. They will often wait for their turn to speak, and if the conversation is led by strong charismatic male co-operators, that turn might not come very often.

Not only do co-ops need more women in leadership positions but they also need to reflect on their communication and meeting styles and focus on giving everyone an equal opportunity to speak, some co-ops might benefit from trained facilitators for example.

tators for example.

A common effort: Finally, feminist issues have to be tackled by all members of the co-op with a real understanding of the benefits of a gender-balanced workplace, not only for women themselves but for the well-being and efficiency of the co-op.

In a 1997 article, Lynne Bouchard suggested some feminist principles be added to the seven Co-operative Principles, including equality, equity and inclusivity. Nearly 25 years later, this feels more relevant than ever in order to create a gender-balanced environment. So why not reimagine our principles with a feminist twist?

- CLEM BONNEAU



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IN PROFILE: THE MANOR AND CASTLE DEVELOPMENT TRUST

KEN CURRAN RECALLS THE
BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT
OF THE MANOR AND CASTLE
DEVELOPMENT TRUST

The story of the Manor and Castle Development Trust is part of the much larger story of one of Sheffield's poorest wards, Manor and Castle, since 1979.

Elected Prime Minister in that year, Margaret Thatcher began to attack the very fabric of post-war settlement placed upon the Statute Book by the Labour Party in 1945. She promised to privatise the core industries - coal and steel - which employed millions of people, and restrict trade union rights to favour businesses. Heavy industry and engineering products, it was believed, could be bought from Asia cheaper than it was to produce them in the UK. This led to the collapse of Sheffield's industrial base almost in an instant.

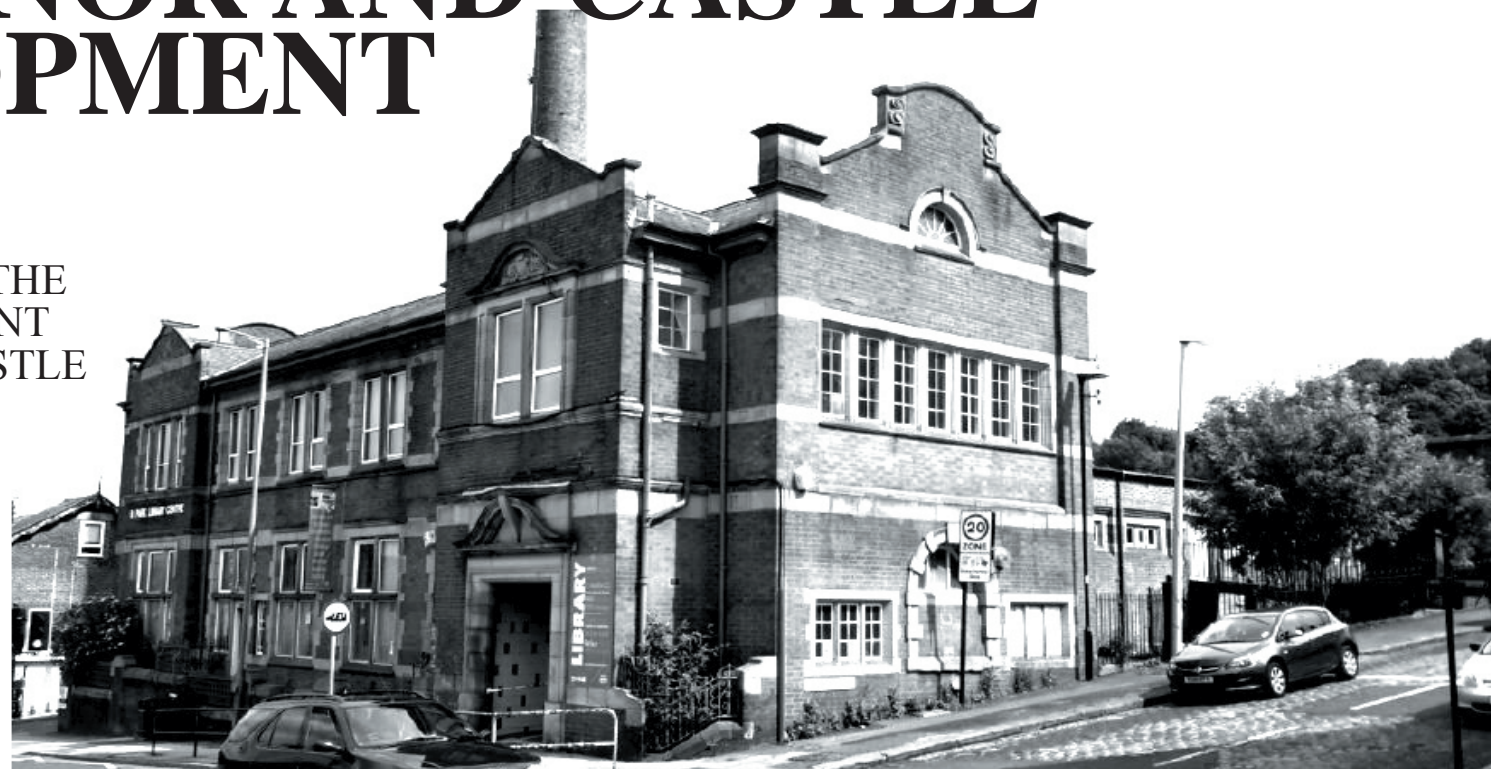
THE MANOR

On the Manor Estate unemployment peaked at around 40%. Exacerbating the problem was the fact that the Estate's housing stock was in a shocking condition, as it had been built with sub-standard materials.

The two issues combined to create a sense of worthlessness among the local residents, who felt abandoned by the Council. For generations, they had been a source of labour for the steel, metal bashing, mining, foundry, and cutlery industries. They couldn't understand why a job was vitally important one day, and had no value the next!

Out of desperation, a group of unemployed workers occupied the former County Council Depot - which is now a motel - at the junction of Sheffield Parkway and Prince of Wales Road. Following a lot of publicity in the *Sheffield Star*, they were invited by the Leader of the Council, David Blunkett, to discuss what their intentions were.

They explained their desire to use the depot as a job creation initiative. The Council agreed to set aside a small budget for what became the Manor Project, with a pair of Council Officers given the task of assisting the rebels to achieve this objective. Efforts were made to set up a painting and decorating company, a car cleaning and valeting service, and a gardening service. These were reasonable ideas, but were little use



THE MANOR AND CASTLE DEVELOPMENT TRUST, BASED IN PARK LIBRARY ON DUKE STREET, HAS WORKED FOR OVER TWO DECADES TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF LOCAL RESIDENTS

in an area which had no money and where few people owned cars.

Eventually, a Project Manager was appointed, but she had a huge task on her hands, trying to work with people who, because of their lack of experience of running a business, were of little help. The Project was running out of money. The problems were compounded when the manager tragically lost her life in a traffic accident. It advertised for a new Manager, and received one application, from David Clarkson, who was living in Stocksbridge. David had previously served as a Trades Union Shop Steward at a Foundry in the West Midlands. Later, he attended Bristol University where he studied Politics, and met his wife, who was from Sheffield.

NEW HORIZONS

Soon after his appointment, David froze all expenditure on the Project's enterprises. A number of the original group complained that his actions were undemocratic, but Dave countered that given the state of the Project it was a necessity, a view that was supported by the Council Officers and a minority of the project members. With money still left in the bank account, David organised a door-to-door survey to take place. He trained a number of the members to undertake the surveys, in the knowledge that locally known people were more likely to produce positive results.

The survey revealed the Manor Estate was very poor, and that its residents had a low level of educational attainment. The general opinion was that school had failed residents. What was clear to David was that the era of manual work was coming to

an end, and that people living on the Manor needed to learn new skills if the community was ever to recover from the slump. At this time, he was very much on his own in this opinion; such was the negative view of education on the estate.

It so happened that the former Co-op Butchers Shop, which had closed as a result of the recession, was up for sale. David bought the building, with the intention of setting up an educational facility, which he called the Manor Training & Resource Centre (MaTReC). It was the first social enterprise on the Manor. He secured a grant from the European Union to redecorate the shop, and to convert the shop next door into a Children's Nursery for the use of the students.

MY ROLE

Having spent 20 years as a miner, I had studied Politics, Constitutional Law and European History at Newbattle Abbey Residential College, near Edinburgh. In 1968 I got a job as a Trade Union Officer, for the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) in South Yorkshire. I moved to Sheffield and very soon became involved in the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council. After serving NUPE for 21 years I took early retirement at the end of the 80s as part of the merger process which created UNISON.

For many years I had been a friend of local Labour MP Richard Caborn, and we regularly met up for a pint with friends on Sunday evenings at the Trades and Labour Club. Through these meetings I accepted an offer to do some voluntary work at the Manor Advice Centre.

After a few weeks I crossed the road to look at MaTReC. I explained to

David my interest in the area and my experience, and David offered me a place on the MaTReC Management Committee. Very soon I became immersed in community affairs.

After the completion of MaTReC and the setting up of the Manor Development Company, a further bid to Europe and English Partnerships was submitted to develop a business centre that could let out thirty small units to people at reasonable rents, the hope being that the centre could act as a catalyst to attract more businesses and jobs. A builder was employed who, having formerly owned his own business, was semi-retired, and concerned about the alarming levels of unemployment among young men.

His and David's idea was to create a Manor Building Company, recruiting a number of young men to become apprentices, and training them on the job. They did this, and the Business Centre now standing at the rear of MaTReC is a testament to their vision, as is the second centre, also built on Alison Crescent.

During 1991, I was encouraged to stand as a Labour candidate for the Council for Manor Ward. My branch gave their full support to my bid. In May 1992 I was elected with a large majority. Having been a Local Councillor on Tyneside, I was already familiar with local government.

SOCIAL UNREST

It became very clear soon after joining Sheffield City Council, that while Local Government was basically the same as when I left to study Politics in Edinburgh, national government had radically changed its relationship with local Councils. I found a City Council being held in

bondage by the influence and power of the Conservative Government. Morale was low within the Labour Group. The Liberal opposition were very opportunistic. They had no ideas about how to improve conditions, but happily criticised Labour efforts to improve the morale of the city, particularly the World Student Games, which had been a great success, but sadly not financially.

Around the same time, in 1990, gangs of young people began to gather around St Swithuns Church in Upper Manor. For some time over the summer of that year the local vicar, the Rev Atkinson, spent his time among these people, and I would often join him along with the Secretary of the local Labour Party Ernest Hardy hoping to have a calming influence.

There was always a sense of tension in the air. One night, almost all the windows of the church were broken, and an attempt was made to set fire to the building, which Rev. Atkinson succeeded in preventing.

This kind of incident had re-occurred across the country in the 80s – Toxteth, in Liverpool, Meadow Well in North Tyneside, and Blackwater Farm in London – had all seen major riots, with millions of pounds of damage inflicted. Thatcher and the Conservatives had no answers. The Government was faced with sending in the Army, which was already pre-occupied in Northern Ireland. Michael Heseltine led a Cabinet rebellion which forced Thatcher

to change course.

A day or two later Ernest and I met at the local Rectory to discuss a way forward. For a number of years a Council run Local Forum had gradually fallen away and local tenants no longer had anywhere to take their concerns. Our response was to set up an independent version of the failed Forum, so that people could attend without feeling they were being talked down to by Council Officers.

A letter was put together, signed by those we regarded as key people across the Manor who were supportive of the new approach, and the first meeting of Manor Assembly was called in late July 1990. David Clarson told that meeting what the Manor Project was, and what it had achieved so far. Both David and I constantly talked up whatever achievement was made. There was a great need to challenge the negative attitudes that many people had, that things would never change.

This is not to say that the Project was in good health at this time. Having undertaken great work up to that point, without a proper vision for the future, it was felt that the Project might have run its course. Two away days – paid for by MaTReC – were held at the St George's Hotel at Nether Edge, with 20 students attending, to create that vision.

David told the attendees that they were on the cusp of turning a community which had nothing into a community which owned properties and social enterprises that could em-

ploy local people. Mike Bower, the Leader of the Council, who had a passion for co-operatives, was quick to recognise the logic of David's thinking. We had the nucleus of a vision that was vital for the years ahead.

MANOR AND CASTLE

The work undertaken by Michael Heseltine resulted in the creation of the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) schemes. The SRB was essentially a lottery for deprived areas. Sheffield applied for the first round, and was successful in its plan to rejuvenate the housing stock of Uppert-horpe. Kelvin Flats, and other slum housing in the area, was demolished, and the residents re-housed. While this was positive, it did nothing to solve the unemployment problem.

Meanwhile, things continued to deteriorate on the Manor. In 1996, after a local school was burnt down in an arson attack, Roy Hattersley declared that it was the "worst estate in Britain".

Around that time, the Manor Development Company decided to put forward a bid for the third round of SRB funding. The Leeds based Government office were very impressed by the bid, but advised that the geographical area of the Manor Ward would be too small for consideration, and suggested we talked to community groups in other areas of the city. This included Castle, Wybourn and Hyde Park.

Fortunately, in the 1980s, the Park Community & Wybourn Action Group had been formed, and talks were held with this group in order to form a partnership, which eventually became the Manor & Castle Development Trust. I was prevailed upon to become the Chair. Feeling I could do more for the general condition of the local electorate by taking a leading role helping to operate a social enterprise dedicated to improving the general wellbeing of the community, I announced that if the bid for was successful, I would step down from the Council in order to avoid any conflicts of interest.

Of course, we were successful, the first non-local authority organisation to win an SRB grant. It must have taken the best part of 18 months before the various legalities were settled. The Thatcher-Major years were coming to an end, and New Labour were just beginning to solidify their lead in the polls under Tony Blair. We were officially given the award down on Victoria Quays by Junior Minister Anne Widdicombe.

Over 20 years later, the Trust is still going strong. The Trust branched out, launching The Green Estate – a land management enterprise – in 1998, and building the Quadrent, a business centre on the Parkway. MaTReC has been close to closure on a couple of occasions due to lack of funding. This is a shame, because the service it provides, education, is needed now more than ever.

- KENNETH CURRAN

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SHEFFIELD: A MICROCOSM OF A DEBATE

DAVID BERRY OF SHEFFIELD RENEWABLES EXAMINES HOW GOVERNMENT POLICIES ARE REFLECTED IN LOCAL POLITICS

In the last edition of the *Sheffield Co-operator* much was made of the Preston Model and Community Wealth Building, and the difficulties it faced with the global rules of competition and State support. Since then I have tried to look at other examples.

TWO THREADS

Socialism itself is often described as having two threads of thought and organisation, with the more recognisable Statist model competing with a more localised version proposed by co-operatives and anarchists. These two threads are best described in the seminal work of Hal Draper, *The Two Souls of Socialism* published in 1966.

The United States and Spain have always contained a strong element of co-operation and anarchism. Many of us are already aware of Mondragon, the giant Spanish Co-op - the tenth largest company in Spain. Anarchism has always featured heavily in the US trade union movement with the Wobblies, who made up an element of resistance to Franco in the Spanish Civil War.

I recently came across the story of Marinaleda, an anarchist village in Andalusia, and its workers co-operative, founded on abandoned farmland thirty-five years ago. Its 'back to the land' ethos provides work for the unemployed and offers a basic

allowance when work is not available. It is far from perfect, as it was born out of necessity rather than planned, but its unemployment rate is 4% compared to the regional unemployment rate of 29% and political participation is high. A longer history of the village can be found in the recent book *The Village Against the World* by Dan Hancox.

I also came across academic backing for more localised and independent control of economies. The first woman to win the Nobel Prize for economics was Elinor Ostrom of the US. In 1968 Garrett Hardin wrote a book *The Tragedy of the Commons* in which he argued that resources had to be controlled by either the market or the State or human self interest would destroy them. Ostrom's work provided hundreds of examples around the world where, in fact, communities sufficiently bonded in solidarity had managed natural resources communally for many years.

Ostrom's riposte to Hardin was *Governing the Commons*, a book laying a structural methodology for achieving communal self management. Her work never received its due regard as the left disliked her emphasis on tradition and family as bonds and the right rejected her as being too close to anarchism.

The 2018 World Transformed festival, attached to the Labour Party Conference in Brighton, featured two elements of more localised pol-

itics from across the Atlantic and I was impressed by the strength of their presentations.

The first was from Barbara Dudley, on behalf of the Working Families Party, a minority party in the US two party system, which organises on a local basis around strikes, childcare and minimum wage issues to pressurise candidates in the main parties to support working people. They also stand candidates for local positions on the basis of working class and union support. They endorsed Elizabeth Warren for the Democrat presidential candidacy, and are active across many US States. Initiatives like this may help with a breakthrough for left politics in next year's presidential elections and break the liberal stranglehold on the Democratic Party.

Second was the community economy of Jackson, Mississippi. Like Marinaleda, it was born out of necessity, and is represented by Kali Akuno one of their Directors. The movement, named Jackson Rising, was formed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina when the community felt abandoned by both the State and the market. In the tradition of the Black Liberation Movement the community have built a localised economy of co-operatives and land trusts, but have also focused on democracy, with citizens' assemblies and shared economic power. In its recent mayoral elections the winning

candidate, Chokwe Antar Lumumba, was elected with 93% of the vote. Their story can be read in *Jackson Rising: The Struggle for Economic Democracy and Black Self-Determination in Jackson, Mississippi*.

The environment also featured heavily at the Conference, with the adoption of plans for a New Green Deal, but even here the local/global and market/democracy came into play. How do we square the circle of a global trading system promoting the efficiency of the market and goods being shipped around the world, very often with environmental consequences against protecting local environments and natural resources.

Sheffield recently saw thousands on the streets, protesting against climate change and the burning of the Amazon, but at the same time the EU are ratifying a trade deal with Mercosur, the South American Common Market, to buy more beef, chicken and sugar the very reason ranchers are burning the rainforest.

THE SHEFFIELD.LINK

But, I hear you ask, what has all this to do with Sheffield? The examples in Spain and the US have been born of extremes but reflect some of the debates current in Sheffield all in the same frame. Brexit, trees, buses and democracy. All are parts of the local/global, economic/democratic debate.

The Brexit debate has now long transcended logic into one of raw emotion. The city is split almost equally between those strong supporters of Remain who see the centralised EU economy as offering them greater freedom and sheltering them from globalising trends, and those Leavers who want more national control and see the EU as part of the global marketisation of life.

Secondly, the trees, another split between the economic efficiency of the market and local democratic control by the people. Sheffield City Council, in the guise of private-sector contractor Amey, provoked outrage with plans to fell and replace street trees, and was met with demonstrations, police intervention, and arrests. Yet Network Rail's plan to fell over a million trees for HS2, at a rate of a thousand a week, provoked minor comments and a national petition of less than 200 signatures.

Thirdly, the buses, again a battle of the market versus democracy and control. The chaos of wholesale changes to timetables by private-sector bus companies pitted against local people dependent on public transport for work and school. Like much else, at the bottom of the dilemma is the unwillingness to invest in public, rather than in private profit.

And fourthly, our local democracy itself. After several years of haggling over whether devolution to a City Region was going to offer us more money, democracy, and economic efficiency, we now have an equally



THE COUNCIL SPENT MUCH POLITICAL CAPITAL DURING THE AMEY AFFAIR, BUT WHAT WERE THE ALTERNATIVES?

fierce debate about the model of organisation of our City Council. The strong leader model or the committee system? At the present time we are to have a referendum to decide the matter, with one side claiming democracy, whilst the other claiming efficiency and speed of decision making.

THE VALUE OF ECONOMICS

I offer no view on any of these issues in this article, other than to say that I am a great critic of the market and our current capitalist system, but I do draw attention to the fact that if we are to thrive as a democratic community we must transcend the emotional outpourings of the moment, and the vitriol that goes with it, and recognise the validity of all points of view. At the heart of all these matters is money and its distribution.

Also at the World Transformed, I attended an event with Ann Pettifor, the economist, who berated the left for losing its interest in economics. From a question of 'Who reads the *Financial Times*?' only a half a dozen hands went up and this is what provoked Ann's ire. The object of her anger was the fact that on October 10th 2018 the US Federal Reserve yet again bailed out the financial markets by providing \$75 billion dollars of liquidity (printing money, to you and me) to the shadow banking system, the unregulated financial market underpinning the speculative derivatives market. She pointed out that the Federal Reserve is now underpinning not only the US financial system but that of the whole world. I suppose the question for many is 'How does that affect me?' and the scale of the figure encourages disengagement, or even alienation. But at a time of austerity shouldn't we engage with this and try to think how money that is so short in our everyday lives is suddenly available to those "too big to fail"?

In this age of 24/7 news and positions on Brexit changing hourly it is easy to get carried away with the here and now, and forget to reflect on the past, not only your own past but that of your forebears and how we

got here as a left labour movement. The modern tactic of demonising your opponent rather than debating with them does not help to understand the frustrations suffered by many. The slogan 'Take Back Control' has become associated with the likes of Farage and Boris Johnson, but it has been a cry of workers and citizens throughout capitalism.

The question posed by Ann allowed me to reflect on the issue of control and to think of the history of economics, and how remote we are from the power to control it at the moment. Many see Thomas Paine as one of the founding fathers of our democratic movement, but I am a fan of another economic prophet, Thomas Spence who, a few years later, in 1793, berated Paine for his focus on political rights, and whose cry was that real democratic rights must be grounded in economic rights and that 'the question is.. no longer about what form of government is most favourable to liberty... but which system is most favourable to existence, and capable of delivering us from the deadly mischief of great accumulations of wealth which enables a few unfeeling monsters to starve whole nations.'

For Marx, it was the alienation of workers from production, echoed by Jimmy Reid, convener of the worker sit-in at the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders and later Rector of Glasgow University when he said, 'Let me define what I mean by alienation. It is the cry of the men who feel themselves the victims of ...economic forces beyond their control. It is the frustration of ordinary people excluded from the processes of decision making. The feeling of despair and hopelessness that pervades people who feel with justification that they have no say in shaping or determining their own destinies.'

Remembering the two quotes it echoes the distance people are from the power of controlling their everyday lives. History can help us answer some of the questions as we learn from earlier struggles of those trying to take control of their economic lives but also to gain some coherence in our answers and understanding of

today. Both market and State have been underpinned by institutions, political control and academic legitimacy. For many years the cry of environmentalists was 'act local, think global', and the clash between the local and the global has now introduced another level of alienation. There is a battleground of intellectual ideas that challenge left and right with scale and centralisation of economic power favouring efficiency and cries for devolution and localisation to strengthen democracy and participation.

The economic institutions of Central Banks, the IMF and the World Bank are now far removed from the day-to-day control of citizens, and even their understanding, whilst the strength of local campaigns still underpins for many the wish to control their lives and environment.

AN ECONOMIC BATTLE

For much of its history, capitalism has been a battle between the Market and the State, with liberals feeling that the market and its self-balancing prophecies fulfilled the early promise of Paine's rhetoric, and those more like Spence, who feel that the ownership of the means of production was nearer true economic democracy. During the first period of capitalist production, the market dominated, backed up by mercantile imperialism and gunboat diplomacy, but wars, crises and worker resistance to exploitation was always nipping at the heels of market liberals.

The Great War, followed closely by the Great Financial Crash, the Russian Revolution and Marxism, and warnings from economists such as Keynes saw post-war Europe and the United States following a new model of greater State intervention and the mixed economy founded at Bretton Woods in 1945. State ownership of key industries, import substitution policies and full employment replaced private monopoly and free trade. This era is referred to as the 'golden era' in economics, with growing GDP matched by redistribution, the Welfare State and democratic control of the "crowning heights of the economy".

Thomas Piketty, in his epic *Capital* sees this era as an anomaly unlikely to be repeated, which ended after the system suffered its own crisis in the

70s with the oil crises and inflation stalling growth and creating rising unemployment. This crisis allowed the market liberals such as Friedman and Hayek, backed by Thatcher and Reagan, to seize the initiative and return to market fundamentalism.

The process of using the opportunity of crises to establish new regimes has been honed into a theory of crises by Naomi Klein in her book *The Shock Doctrine*. Privatisation, government cuts and most importantly the surrender of the financial system to the private banking system saw huge growth in private credit alongside labour's declining share of GDP and security of employment. The birth of globalisation and the free movement of capital was born and named the "Washington Consensus" created and guided by subsequent US governments and the US Treasury. The process was aided by the defeat of the Soviet Union.

Once again, ensuring the stability of the system has proved too much of a challenge. There have been over 80 financial crises requiring IMF or US bailouts, each accompanied by 'structural adjustment', meaning rules on reducing the role of the State and increasing market power. This culminated in the financial crash of 2008 and the subsequent printing of up to \$14 trillion by central banks to bolster the market system.

Despite the huge injections of money, the real economy has only felt austerity and declining living standards. In a Radio 4 programme Andy Haldane, Chief Economist at the Bank of England, reckoned less than 5% reached the real economy of manufacturing and family budgets. This is where we are today, waiting for the next crisis and feeling the world spinning with little control.

WHAT NEXT?

After ten years of austerity, and after spending hundreds of billions of pounds saving a corrosive financial system we need the same action to rescue our public services and democracy. The issue of control of our lives, the market/democracy and global/local is an old one and we need to resolve the same issues that were being debated over 200 years ago. That it is a global argument, as well as one to have in Sheffield.

- DAVID BERRY



SHEFFIELD COUNCIL HAVE DECLARED A CLIMATE EMERGENCY YET BUS USAGE IS DOWN 18% IN TEN YEARS



PETERLOO AND THE PRESENT CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

ON THE OCCASION OF THE BI-CENTENARY OF PETERLOO, JOHN HALSTEAD REVIEWS THE PROSPECTS FOR ELECTORAL REFORM IN BRITAIN

The bi-centenary of the Peterloo Massacre fell on 16th August 2019. There was a commemorative meeting in Manchester, despite bad weather. Manchester Trades Council also organized a commemorative march to Albert Square two days later, in more favourable weather conditions. The events of 16th August 1819 have apparently been more recalled this year than at any other time during the last two hundred years, with major exhibitions at the People's History Museum and the John Rylands Library of the University of Manchester. What has this all been about, and what is its contemporary relevance?

There was an enormous gathering of textile weavers and others at St Peter's Field, Manchester, on 16 August 1819. People even came from Oldham and Saddleworth. The crowd included many women and children. The assembly gathered to hear Henry 'Orator' Hunt speak in favour of parliamentary reform. Populous towns like Manchester were then completely unrepresented in the House of Commons. Those attending the rally had no vote.

Any assembly in favour of rights, let alone asserting them from a platform, was then viewed as seditious. The Home Secretary, local magistrates and their informers had combined with the military and local yeomanry in 1817 to arrest working men attempting to go from Manchester to London with blankets on their backs to seek reform. The same forces were unleashed upon the crowd two years later, but more brutally. Whereas only one person was killed in 1817, eighteen were killed

by the slashing sabres in 1819 and some 400 injured. Women were an especial target of the horsemen who rode into the crowd. Henry Hunt was arrested with nine other radicals and put on trial at York in 1820. The details, in documents from the period, can all be seen at the John Rylands Library.

The contemporary description of the day as a 'massacre' was entirely to the point. The naming of the site as 'Peterloo' was to echo the terrible loss of life at the battle of Waterloo in 1815. The event gave rise to general outrage. The reaction in Yorkshire is especially interesting because it had been home to a parliamentary reform movement for five years during the 1780s. Members of the Yorkshire Whig gentry and even Earl Fitzwilliam of Wentworth Woodhouse were involved in a county protest meeting at York, as well as working class people at other meetings in places like Leeds. Fitzwilliam, Lord Lieutenant of the County and head of the West Riding magistracy, was consequently dismissed from his position by the Government. The radical, Godfrey Higgins of Skellow Grange, Doncaster, who had written to the Yorkshire gentry in favour of parliamentary reform in 1817, resigned his position as a magistrate in solidarity with Fitzwilliam.

The clamour for reform could not be completely dispelled during the 1820s. A disruption of trade following the collapse of many banks in 1825 eventually led to the creation of Political Unions and the reform crisis from 1830 onwards which produced the Great Reform Act of 1832. Manchester and other northern man-

ufacturing towns obtained their first parliamentary representation, but on a very narrow and restricted franchise. Middle class reformers were generally satisfied by the Act of 1832, but working class activists were not. The 'lions' were urged 'to rouse from their slumbers', producing Chartist agitation between 1838 and 1848. Petitions for the six points of the Charter in this period were unsuccessful. Universal male suffrage, annual parliaments, payment for MPs, abolition of property qualifications, equal sized constituencies, and the secret ballot, were either not achieved or delayed for many years. Male suffrage, for example, on the modern basis, was not achieved before 1918. Votes for women, which the Charter ought to have included, were not satisfactorily extended until 1928.

However, two hundred years after the Peterloo Massacre, the question is whether that history is adequate for today?

DEMOCRACY TODAY

The argument for annual parliaments - or shorter, since some argued for triennial - was that the representatives would have to be more responsive to the views of their electors than with longer terms. They would have to sacrifice their independent judgement and become delegates. The constitutional position today is that parliament is sovereign as a representative body.

But use of the referendum device by political parties as a way of dealing with internal factional disagreements has created a crisis

and conflict between direct and representative democracy. The simple majority produced by a 'referendum of the people which must be obeyed' gives rise to several questions.

In the first place, is it wise to erect direct democracy as the constitutional principle against representative democracy? In any case, can we say that the franchise that concerned the Chartists is satisfactory now, for the purposes of either direct or representative democracy? And can we say that the institutional arrangements that frame political activity are satisfactory from a democratic point of view?

I see several problems. First, the question of the franchise, whether for referenda or parliamentary elections. The vote has now been given to people at eighteen years of age rather than twenty-one, but in the Scottish independence referendum it was given to Scots aged sixteen. In the face of the climate emergency, the most effective voice has been that of Greta Thunberg, the Swedish schoolgirl. She first acted while only fifteen. We need say no more to make the case for votes at sixteen! But the right to vote depends on registration. This should not be a matter of individual responsibility. People should be registered automatically by public authorities. There is no technical difficulty in doing this. Those who argue against it are arguably seeking to gerrymander the system for their own advantage.

A second problem is the first-past-the-post system. It used to be argued, when social class was seen as the primary political division within a two-party system, that there was a 'swing of the pendulum' at general elections, giving fair, if not entirely equal chances of success to both sides. But election studies since the end of the Second World War have consistently noted the erosion of class-based support for the main parties.

The parties forming governments have regularly been placed in office on a minority rather than a majority of the popular vote. There can be little doubt that the Chartists of the 19th century would have thought this undemocratic. The whole point of their activity was to enable the unrepresented majority to have its voice against the then represented minority!

But this is only part of the matter. There is good reason to suppose that the two-party system may have expired for the foreseeable future. The main reason may be that the Scottish National Party has become a substantial Westminster presence and is likely to remain so - this side of any possible independence - because of the strains generated by Brexit. The grip of Labour in Scotland, which has been an important factor in its Westminster success from the days of Kier Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald to John Smith and Gordon Brown, is now broken. The Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party



is now at odds with their Conservative colleagues at Westminster because of Johnson's Brexit proposal. In England, nationalist feeling has now fractured the Conservatives and given rise to other parties. These latter have not gained seats at Westminster, but votes for them increases the likelihood of hung parliaments, quite apart from the existence of the Liberal Party that formed a coalition with Cameron in 2010.

Several points arise. The British polity is founded on the belief that the country needs 'the smack of firm government'. That was partly produced by a two-party system, but is less likely in a multi-party and hung-parliament system. In any case, the claim that a system is democratic is patently hollow when the balance of views among the electors is not approximately represented amongst the views of the elected members. Massive votes for some parties result in a small number of seats, and for other parties there is a thin distribution of a large number of voters, for many seats. This breaks the link between the views of the electors and the representatives. A reform of the electoral system is urgently required if it is to be called democratic!

The electoral system is not the be-all and end-all of the democracy question. We have a second chamber, the House of Lords, which is constituted on an undemocratic basis. While some have argued for a unicameral or single-chamber system, the view that we only get well-drafted legislation if we have a revising chamber is more powerful. It can be less based on parties, and house many people qualified for effective scrutiny who would not seek election to the other chamber. They should all be elected, but on a different basis from the Commons.

Reform of the second chamber could be the basis for strengthened representation of nationalities and English regions within the British polity. This is important because of the increased likelihood of a break-up of Britain following Brexit, and the scandalous neglect of large parts of the provinces by a metropolitan political elite.

The doctrine of 'the Queen in Parliament' and use of the prerogative powers of the Crown is designed to produce 'firm government' and

domination by the executive. Decisions in the Supreme Court have demonstrated that sovereignty is a matter for parliament, not the executive, or a Queen rubber-stamping its unprincipled advice. In the 19th century, parliamentarians were able to think and act relatively independently until the growth of the rigid party whipping system. The present situation, which is closer constitutionally to the condition of the Civil War of the 1640s than at any other time in our history, shows the need for them to be able to act independently. It is high time we had a radical shake up of the system. Here in the north, we now feel the effects of a lack of proper democracy, just as did the unrepresented at Peterloo in 1819.

THE 2019 RESULT

The December 2019 general election appeared to show an emphatic return to the two-party system. The Conservative victory and decisive majority of 80 means we will be subjected to 'firm government' for five years, if not longer. But in the long view it seems clear that the election result has strengthened rather than weakened the pressures for the break-up of Britain, because of the dominance of the Scottish National Party with 48 seats out of a total of 59, and the collapse of their major UK opponents. Labour has only one seat, in Edinburgh, and Scottish Conservative MPs have reduced from thirteen to six. More important for the break-up of Britain, perhaps, is the loss of two seats by the Democratic Unionist Party, reducing their numbers to eight. Nationalist parties (Sinn Féin and the Social and Democratic Labour Party) were victorious in nine constituencies, and a party neutral on the union (the Alliance Party) in another. Only the two SDLP representatives and the Alliance member will take up their House of Commons seats, but the Johnson government with a large Conservative majority will no longer be in thrall to the DUP.

With Brexit, the erection of a border between Northern Ireland and the British mainland, as a consequence of the former's inclusion in the EU customs union and the latter's absence from it, would be almost certain to intensify pressure from business interests for an all-Ireland

referendum on reunification. What seems to be a more difficult issue is whether we have returned to the dominance of two parties. Perhaps, within the first-past-the-post electoral system, but I wonder.

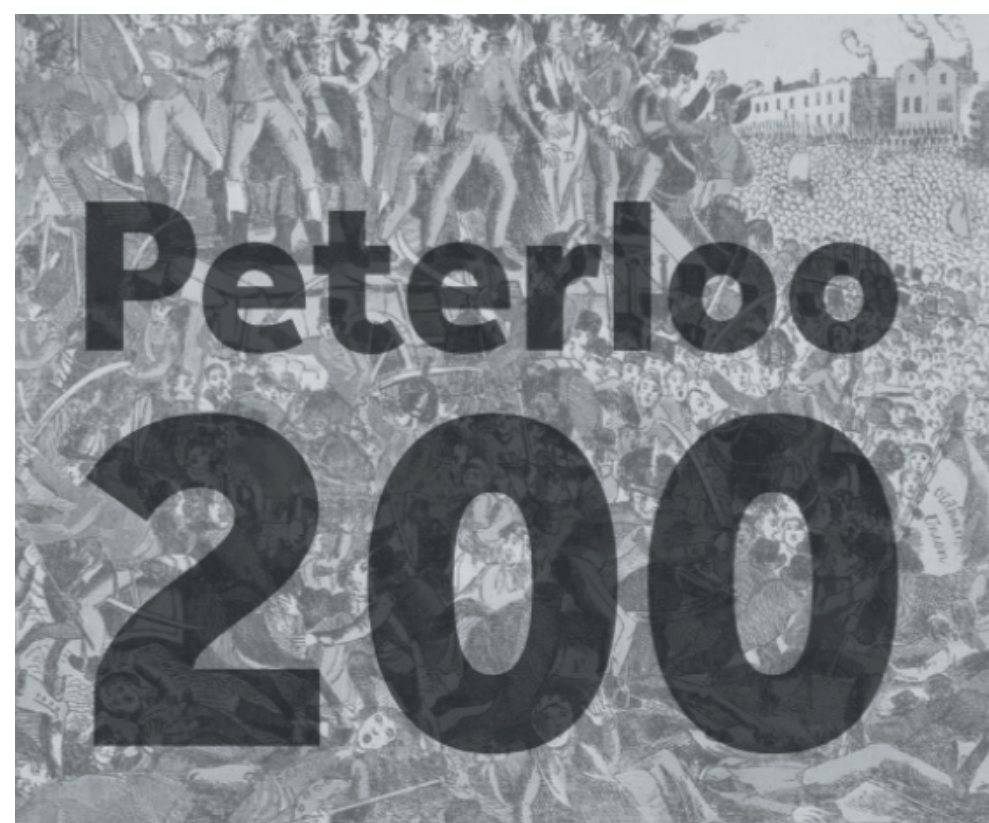
In discussion of the operation of business cycles, the Russian economist Nikolai Kondratiev drew attention to the existence of long waves born out of technological innovation. These waves or cycles of some forty to sixty years, it is argued, contain four sub-cycles, dubbed spring, summer, autumn and winter. The characteristic of the 'winter' is said to be debilitating depression that tears the social fabric of society, as the gulf between the dwindling number of 'haves' and the expanding number of 'have-nots' increases dramatically. There could not be a more accurate description of our present condition, but is there an analogy in the long-wave notion for social

movements and politics?

In raising this we leave aside the disturbing sub-cycle analogy between now and the depression of the inter-war years, that brought about virulent extremist political forces, to draw attention to the demise of the Liberal Party. Its success in Britain can arguably be dated from the Whig government formed after the passage of the Reform Act of 1832, or in a more modern version from the Conservative split caused by Sir Robert Peel's repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, but it became a spent force after the First World War. It remains so, despite - and because of - its participation in the Cameron government of 2010-2015. The number of Liberal Party Members of Parliament in the inter-war period did not exceed 66, while Labour emerged in December 2019 with a more substantial 203.

But can we suppose that there will be a political spring at some time in the future produced by underlying conditions analogous to those of 1900 to 1923/1929 that brought about minority Labour governments? Or 1939 to 1945 that ushered in majority Labour government? Pessimism about the future success of progressive political forces may be a mistake, but modern conditions seem unlikely to provide the basis for a resurgence of old-fashioned Labour in its old heartlands. Is Labour, like the old Liberal Party, now in slow-burn long-term decline? Only time will tell.

- JOHN HALSTEAD



The Path to Proportional Representation

Foreword by
Jonathan Reynolds MP
and **Rupa Huq MP**

Researched and compiled by **Owen Winter**
Edited by **Joe Sousek**
Introduction by **Prof. Arend Lijphart, Dr Salomon Orellana and Prof. David Soskice**

THE MAKE VOTES MATTER CAMPAIGN CELEBRATED THE BI-CENENARY WITH A CALL FOR ELECTORAL REFORM

SHEFFIELD HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES: PART ONE

THE *SHEFFIELD CO-OPERATOR* CELEBRATES AN EARLY EXPERIMENT IN ECO-FRIENDLY HOUSE BUILDING

In the late 1970s, the Labour Government set up the National Co-operative Development Agency with the purpose of promoting the interests of the co-operative sector. In 1980, Sheffield City Council - along with the Co-operative Party, the Sheffield Trades Council, the Co-operative Bank, and the two Sheffield co-operative societies - played a major part in the establishment of the Sheffield Co-operative Development Group (SCDG).

The 1980s were a hard time for Sheffield. However, the generous support pool available to those who wished to start co-operatives, meant that those who did come forward found in the council, an enthusiastic champion. Empowering these groups, the Council supported a number of successful co-operatives, particularly housing projects.

SHEFFIELD SOLAR HOUSING

Paxton Court, a cul-de-sac off Spring Close Mount, overlooking Meersbrook, is a development of thirteen low-cost, low-energy, passive solar houses, built by the Sheffield Solar Housing Co-operative between 1983 and 1986.

The basic designs for the houses built by the co-operative - named the Solar-Heating Experimental Dwelling (SHED) - were developed by Cedric Green, an architect at the University of Sheffield. A prototype, 'A House for All Seasons' was entered in into the first European Passive Solar Housing Competition in 1980, where it won joint 2nd Prize.

After one of their number was introduced to Green by a City Councillor at an alternative energy fair in Weston Park, a group of seven friends decided they wanted to start their own eco-housing project. An advertisement was placed in the *Sheffield Star* to find the required number of

people to make the project viable. An additional six people joined the original group.

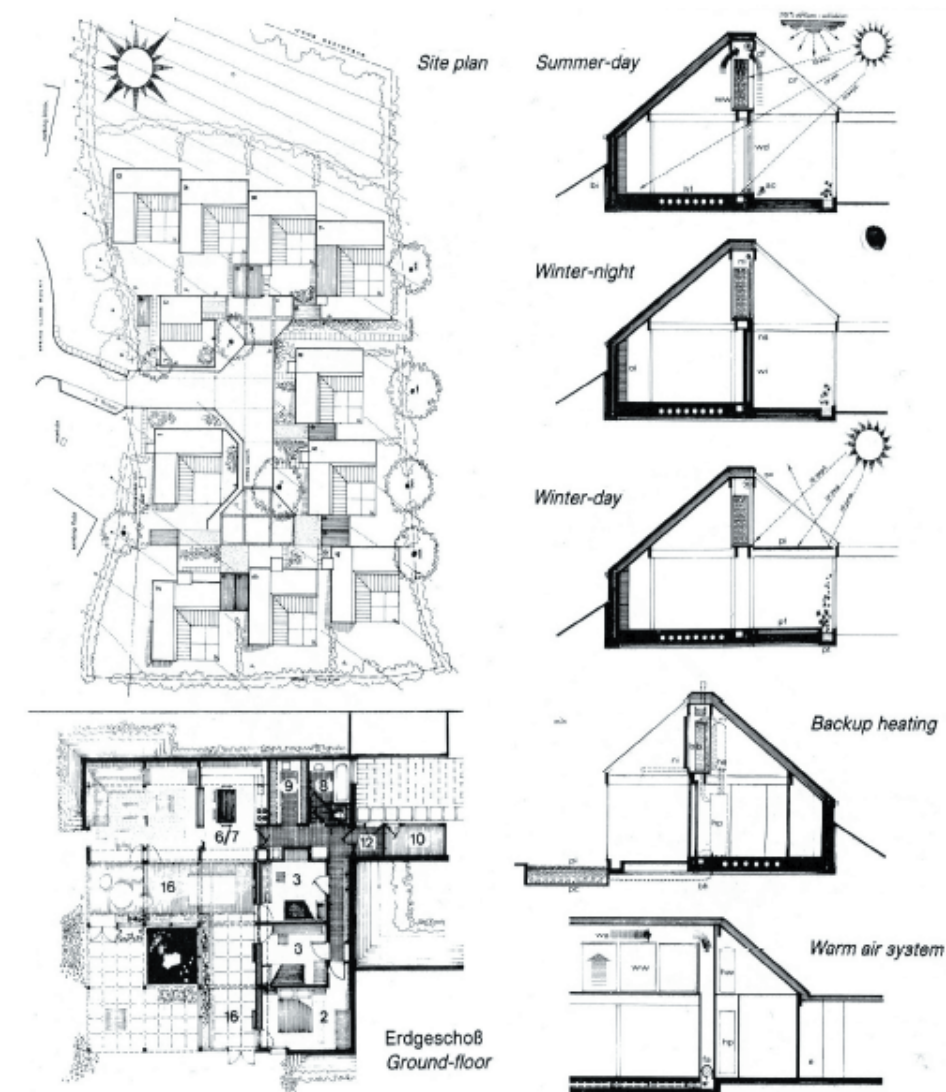
A consensus was reached to register the project as a co-operative, under the auspices of the Industrial Common Ownership Movement (ICOM). The members listed themselves as self-builders and owners, who each put forward an initial £250 of capital.

The group visited the Council, who offered five possible sites for the project, to be purchased on a repayment scheme. The group selected the Paxton Court site, and after an account with a building contractor and supplier was arranged on similar terms, work commenced in June 1983, with an expected completion period of 18 months. In fact, it took around three years.

A HOUSE FOR ALL SEASONS

The homes on Paxton Court are built as low-energy dwellings, incorporating features for passive solar energy collection and thermal storage. Using traditional materials and skills, they incorporate a timber frame construction, with brick and block-work insulated cavity outer walls, tiled roofs, and a timber and glass conservatory. They were built in pairs, in order to limit the amount of money borrowed at any one time, and were sold to their owners following the completion of a habitable shell. In periods of good weather, this arrangement was relaxed so that crucial foundation works could be completed on the other sites. Indoor work was prioritised during periods of bad weather. The price of the house included the site cost, the amount for shared road and service installations and the cost of the materials.

Few of the members came to the project with building skills. Still, they undertook the majority of the



construction work themselves, having agreed to work between 20 to 30 hours a week. Those who worked less over a six-month period were required to pay the co-operative for the hours not worked. A refundable premium of £2,000 was added to encourage members to see out the project.

The members did occasionally call upon skilled labour from outside, such as plasterers and electricians. Architectural students from the University, supervised by Cedric Green, also helped out onsite as part of their coursework.

In a sign of the times, only work undertaken by the men counted towards the required labour hours. Wives and partners were not excluded from membership, and did spend hours working on site, but their labour was not counted. They might have been restricted from the site altogether, if the National Self-Build

Association model rules had been strictly adhered to.

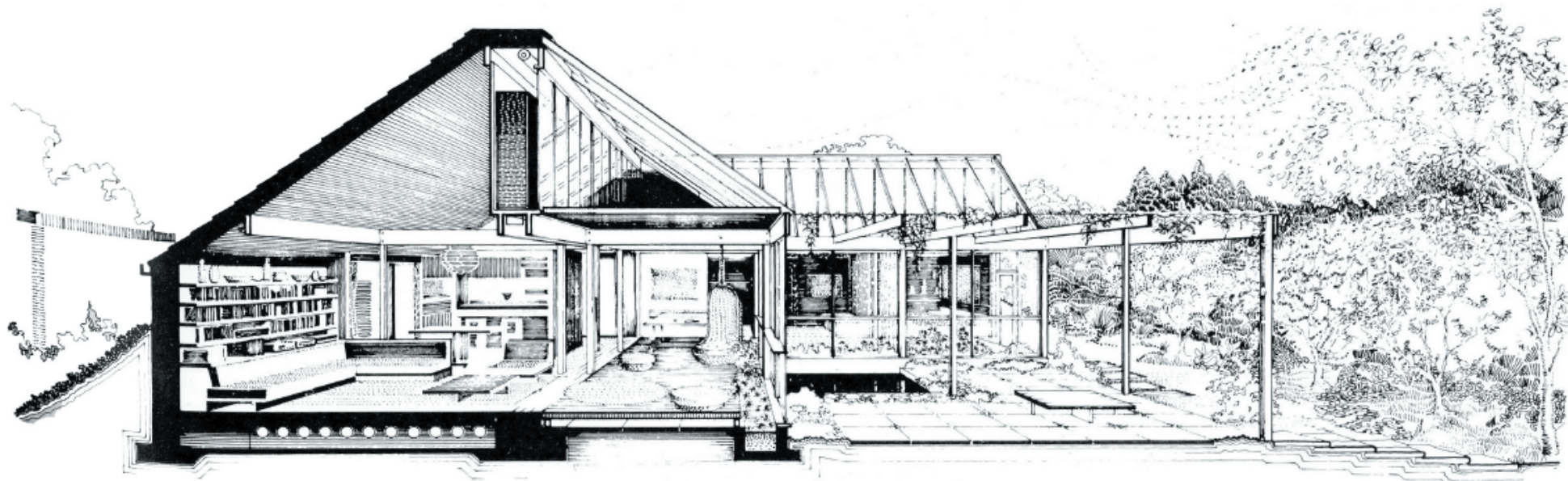
A MODEL CUL-DE-SAC

Although plans to plant an orchard and create allotments were drawn up, after three years of labour, enthusiasm for further development of the site fizzled out, with the members eager to settle down into their new homes.

As of 2011, only one of the original families still lived on the street. Cedric Green, who served as a Technical Advisor to the project, lived in one of the houses for a time, but later emigrated to France.

The completed project, remains an impressive example of how Sheffield Council enabled and supported the development of an innovative housing development.

- CHRISTOPHER OLEWICZ





BOOK REVIEWS

NUTS & BOLTS

How to Start a Food Co-op

by AMY COYLE



the conservative
co-operative
movement

Nuts and Bolts: How to Start a Food Co-op,
by Amy Coyle.
The Conservative Co-operative
Movement (CCM), 2008

Nuts and Bolts, published by the Conservative Co-operative Movement (CCM), was an oddity when it emerged in 2007.

Led by Jesse Norman, the current Member of Parliament for Hereford, the CCM was a short-lived organisation which existed around the periphery of the Coalition Government's move to enact a Co-operatives Bill (passed in 2014).

In the early 1990s, Norman served on the board of Job Ownership Limited (the Employee Ownership Association). In the lead up to his election in 2010, he began advocating for the co-operative sector to play a greater role in the British economy.

"In my view, co-ops are splendidly conservative institutions," he once explained. "Their founding Rochdale Principles give them a broad ethical basis far removed from modern state-first socialism. They belong to no political party or creed." No less than Margaret Thatcher would approve of co-operatives as an extension of her project 'to encourage people to do things for themselves, rather than looking to the State.'

"What I'm talking about is a different form of social organisation, one that is based on sharing the burden amongst a group, rather than finding a pot of capital, although that might be part of it. We need to loosen the rules by which they operate in order for it to be possible for more good schools to come into being. They succeed because they have a more direct link to local people, because the parents have set the thing up - they feel a sense of proprietary ownership of it."

In the particular example of food co-operatives, Norman disparaged the supermarkets which "control the roost." "You get these big out-of-town shopping centres, high food

miles, lots of suburban sprawl, the hollowing out of our high streets. You get this sense that no-one knows where their food comes from. Beef is something you find in a packet, not something you find in a field chewing grass."

Nuts and Bolts, written by Amy Coyle, is an engaging introduction to food co-operatives, though it largely avoids detailed discussion about the financial and logistical issues involved. "Co-ops are great," she writes. "A successful co-op is a huge asset."

THE PARTY LINK

The one shortcoming of the co-operative movement, in Norman's eyes, is its funding of the Co-operative Party, and its links with Labour. The formalisation of the pact between the two parties, and the funding of the Party by the Co-operative Group, he argues, breaks with the Rochdale Principles, which insist on political and religious neutrality.

"How many Co-op members know of these payments? A tiny minority. Why don't they know?" he asks. "Because the Co-op, despite its huge public commitment to ethical business, has decided to ignore the Rochdale Principles of honesty and openness, and keep them in the dark... What is needed now is for the Co-op to level with its own membership, and call a ballot on the issue."

Perhaps Norman was unaware when he made this suggestion, that the Co-operative Group has balloted its membership repeatedly on this issue, and every time, members have voted to continue supporting the Co-operative Party.

A more instructive question that Norman might ask himself is why the co-operative movement felt compelled to involve itself in politics in the first place, having not done so for the first seventy years of the Movement's existence.

The answer is because, in the early 20th century, conservative forces in Britain, supported by the owners of the largest newspapers, tried their hardest to destroy it.

Independent store holders of the time resented the Movement and its success. In an infamous 1934 editorial for the *Daily Mail*, Lord Rothermere likened the Movement to 'a dangerous tumour...eating at the heart of British retail trade.' Rothermere lamented how in only a few generations, the Movement had grown from 'an insignificant association of poor men' merely trying to make ends meet into 'a powerful group of wealthy corporations with huge reserves', that was crushing private traders.

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Rothermere was a long-time supporter of the Proprietary Articles Trade Association (PATA), which since 1906 had pursued an anti-co-operative policy, cutting the Movement out of the market for consumer goods such as gramophones, bicycles, radios and vacuum cleaners. Rothermere did so out of his own adherence to free market capitalism and the principle of 'personal initiative'.

At the same time Rothermere wrote his editorial, the Movement was seeking to strengthen its infrastructure, in response to the fascist persecution of co-operators in Italy, Germany, and Austria. Members feared that the same fate might easily befall the Movement in Britain if it was not prepared.

It was a result of these persistent attacks that the Co-operative Party, founded in 1917, forged a pact with Labour in 1927. Like Norman, conservatives of the day criticised the Movement for involving itself in politics. The *Daily Express* informed its readers that the co-operative movement had been captured by the 'Socialist Party', against the wishes of the majority of its members who wished it to remain apolitical.

Such opinions persisted into the 1930s. Newspapers accused co-operatives of being poor employers, who paid lower wages. It accused the Movement of being the first sector to cut jobs during the Great Depression. In 1930, a new body - the National Organisations Co-ordinated Committee (NOCC) - was established to represent private traders in their fight against the co-operative societies. Supported by Lord Beaverbrook, the NOCC pressured the Government to implement a new tax

on co-operatives, in an effort to kill the 'co-operative octopus'.

These efforts failed, and the Movement continued to flourish into the 1960s, before it began a slow decline in the face of competition from dynamic retailers who targeted 'aspirational' shoppers keen to shake off the co-operative image of thrift and utilitarianism.

COMMUNITY ASSET OR ECONOMIC FORCE?

Little further was heard of the CCM until 2012, when it published a magazine to coincide with the 2012 Year of Co-operatives. In an article for that publication, Norman stated his core claim that co-operatives could challenge 'crony-capitalism' in its core areas of retail and care, and that a Conservative government should help breathe new life into the movement.

Norman's genuine support for co-operatives is hard to reconcile with the reality of the economic system supported so virulently by his Party. The important question to ask is, how large a co-operative sector would the Conservative Party and its supporters tolerate? At what point would they warn once again of the 'co-operative octopus' strangling private enterprise? How much support would a Conservative government provide to the Movement to let it grow?

The chances of another set of Rochdale Pioneers succeeding against the might of the supermarket industry is slim, but without help and support from Government, it will remain a fantasy.

- CHRISTOPHER OLEWICZ

REGATHER CO-OPERATIVE

PROUD TO CELEBRATE THE SHEFFIELD CO-OPERATOR



VEG BOX



We run a fruit & veg box scheme that is local, seasonal, organic. Enjoy Sheffield's finest produce to your door with Regather's Fruit & Veg Box Scheme.

Tailor your box to suit your needs and add in extras such as local eggs, milk, bread, wine, tea and coffee.

Manage your box online, add/remove, skip a week. There is no obligation, so you can cancel anytime. Delivery or Collection. Prices from £5.50.

FARM



Since early 2018 Regather have been busy developing a 15-acre site on the edge of Sheffield in the beautiful Moss Valley. We're establishing a market garden, orchard, polytunnels, beehives and an agro-forestry project.

We want to be part of a sustainable food system and help transforming local food by making more local produce available to the people of Sheffield and our new farm is at the heart of that. The produce will then be distributed in our box scheme.

CIDER



Regather Community cider re-launches for 2019. The UK produces excellent crops of a wide variety of apples each autumn. But with so many apples being ready in one go simply scoffing them isn't always an option. Traditionally bumper crops of apples were made into cider and Regather has launched a project to realise this in Sheffield!

This year the Sheffield community, along with local orchards pooled their apples and we have made cider and fresh apple juice. The first batch will be ready for Spring 2020 so check out our website for more info.

VENUE



Featuring a diverse programme of music, comedy, film and food/drink events. Expect various weekly inhouse series from Regather, along with events from some of the leading independent events partners in Sheffield.

It's available to hire for personal celebrations and private hire. 75 Capacity Standing / 48 Seated. Fully licensed bar & venue in a Grade II listed building.

Catering available on request. Intimate dining spaces are available.

SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

VOLUNTARY
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DEMOCRATIC
MEMBER CONTROL

COOPERATION
AMONG COOPERATIVES

AUTONOMY & INDEPENDENCE

MEMBER
ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

CONCERN
FOR THE
COMMUNITY

EDUCATION
TRAINING AND
INFORMATION

Regather Co-Operative

We help communities to become more resilient by encouraging co-operative involvement in the Sheffield food system, so that money is retained in the local economy, land is more productive, food is better quality, health is improved and people have better awareness of and involvement with how the food system, from local to global, can be changed for the better.

Find out more at

www.regather.net

Or contact us via:

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