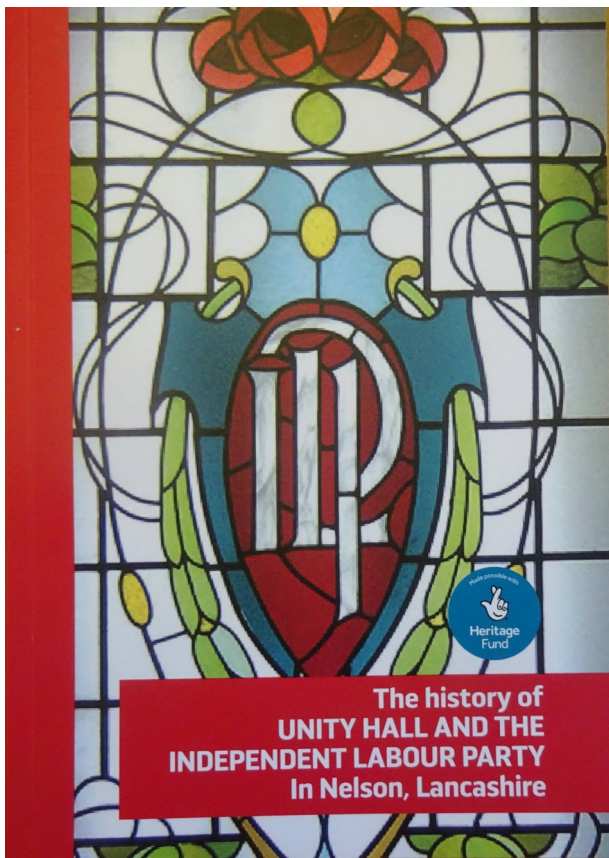


# Principle FIVE

# P5

## August Special 2022



### The ILP Socialist Institute re-opened in October 2021.

An interesting new booklet, *'The History of the Unity Hall and the Independent Labour Party in Nelson, Lancashire'* (available to borrow from P5) has been written, about this building, which today continues its historic purpose.

It has something in common with Principle 5. Education, community and common purpose.

Two snippets from the records:

**1894:** *Nelson ILP appointed their own librarian who 'would obtain for any person any literature enquired for'. ILP emphasises Education... books in library on Sociology, English, History, Grammar, Writing and Esperanto...*

**1904:** *A special meeting of **Nelson ILP** voted to reject money offered by Carnegie to build a new library because his millions had been made on the backs of the working class.*

[Adapted from *'The History of the Unity Hall and the Independent Labour Party in Nelson, Lancashire'*]

The **Reading Room** has been created to mirror the library in place when the building originally opened, and contains many items of original furniture.

It may not be able to match the boast from the pioneers who ran the original library that they could 'obtain any requested publication' but it is a valuable resource for the community.



The reading room also houses an ever-expanding **Labour History archive**, which is also accessible to the community.

## The Story so far...

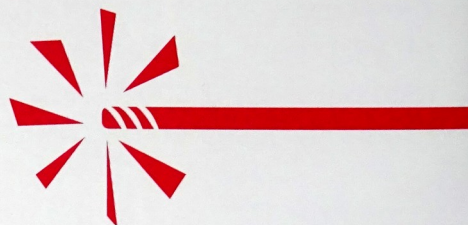
At the beginning of the 1890's, socialism was a relatively new concept.

The idea of the working classes joining together in an organised manner to fight for their rights, in and out of the workplace, was only just beginning to take shape.

In 1891, Robert Blatchford, along with a group of like-minded journalists and writers, had published the first edition of the Clarion newspaper which was hugely popular and influential amongst working people. The Clarion's primary mission as Blatchford saw it was 'to create socialists'.

It also inspired something of a cultural revolution amongst working people based on the concept 'Fellowship is Life' and brought about the creation of many socialist clubs and societies.

It was within this social and political background that the Independent Labour party (ILP) was founded.



Nelson, at that time, was a town with a strong non-conformist tradition and one where the union movement was entrenched in local industry. Such was the strength of feeling in Nelson that the town established its own branch of the ILP in 1892 a year before the national Independent Labour party was formed in Bradford.

Once formed, the Nelson branch went from strength to strength.



[http://www.nelsontowncouncil.gov.uk/\\_UserFiles/Files/Selena%20Cooper%20Project/Unity-A3-folder-flyer7.pdf](http://www.nelsontowncouncil.gov.uk/_UserFiles/Files/Selena%20Cooper%20Project/Unity-A3-folder-flyer7.pdf)

<https://www.independentlabour.org.uk/2021/11/16/history-comes-alive-as-the-ilp-socialist-institute-re-opens-in-nelson/>

[http://www.nelsontowncouncil.gov.uk/Selina\\_Cooper\\_Project\\_34349.aspx](http://www.nelsontowncouncil.gov.uk/Selina_Cooper_Project_34349.aspx)

## **Introduction to 'The History of Unity Hall and the Independent Labour Party in Nelson, Lancashire' by Kevin Webb**

This booklet tells the story of a building. But not just any building. It is a place that has been at the very heart of the local community since it was opened in 1908. The building has had several different names since the foundation stones were laid by Katharine Bruce Glasier and Mrs Selina Cooper at a ceremony in 1907: *The Socialist Institute, The Labour Hall, The Unity Hall, The Unity Wellbeing Centre*.

It is a special building that meant a lot to the people who built it, and for much of its existence has been a **political, educational, and cultural centre for the community of Nelson and beyond**.

When it opened in 1908 it offered working people the opportunity to meet for lectures and discussions and through that, to educate themselves about the social and political issues of the time. It also offered them the chance for social and cultural activities such as, reading, singing, sports, dancing, theatrical productions, and events specially designed for children.

During the first part of the last century many notable people spoke in the building. Politicians such as *Keir Hardie, Philip Snowden, Ramsay MacDonald, Fenner Brockway, and James Maxton*, as well as prominent figures in the campaign for women's suffrage, *Selina Cooper, Sylvia Pankhurst* and *Charlotte Despard*.

Like most thing that have been around for such a long time the building has had its ups and downs and has changed ownership several times. But now, over a hundred years since it first opened its doors, it's back, fully refurbished with great facilities for all the community.

In another hundred years someone will update this record and describe another century of the Hall as a much loved centre for local people.

**Kevin Webb, 2021**



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## New and recommended books

**'The Last Clarion House'** is a double book which reads from both ends. There is a copy in the Principle 5 library and it can also be downloaded as a PDF

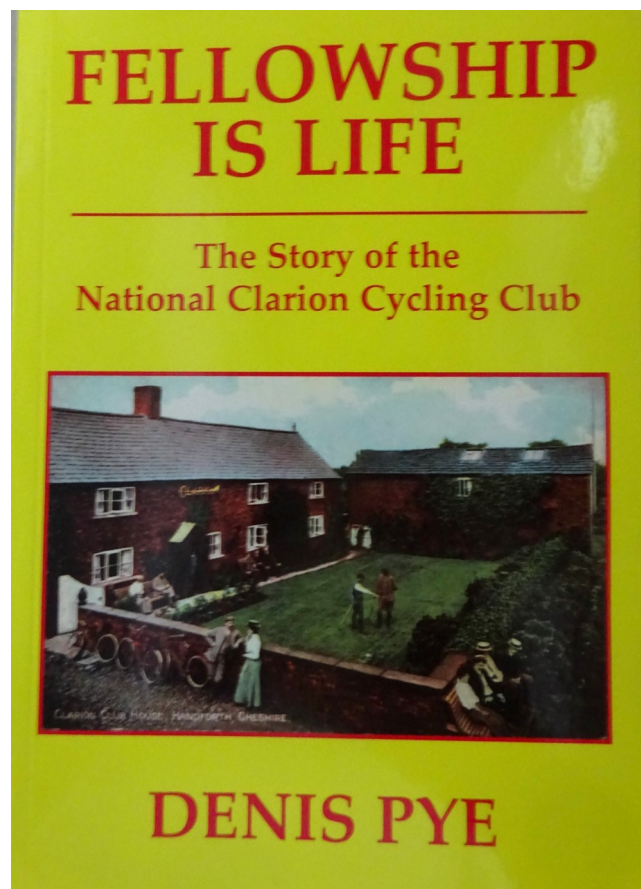
<https://www.clarionhouse.org.uk/clarion-house-book>

There is also an excellent video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsQznVb3biM&t=17s>

A book just added to the Library is **'Fellowship is Life'**

**The story of the National Clarion Cycling Club**, by Denis Pye



**'Edmund Frow (Eddie)  
1906 - 1997  
the making of an activist'**

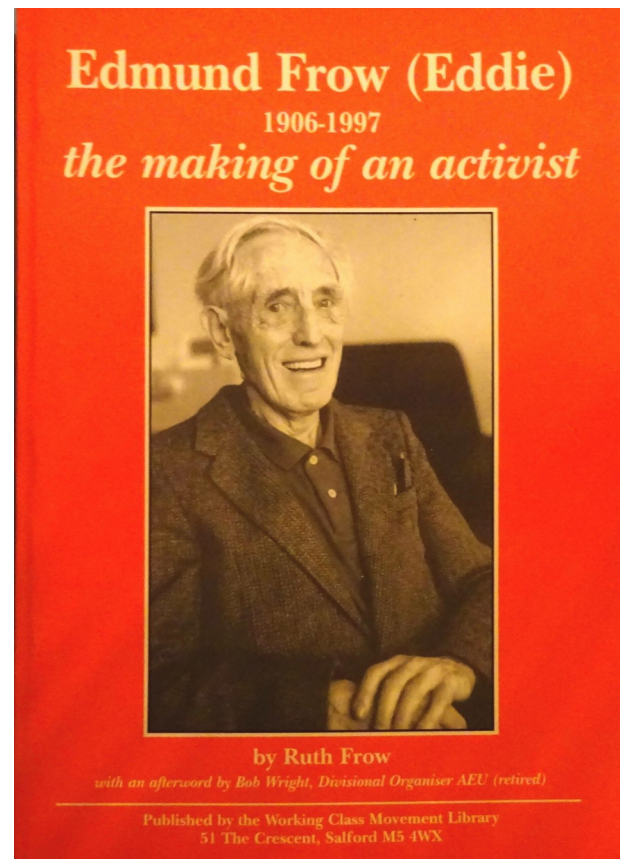
This excellent book is in the Library:

<https://www.principle5.coop/books/edmund-frow-eddie-1906-1997-the-making-of-a-socialist>

Edmund and Ruth Frow were founders of the Working Class Movement Library, Salford

<https://www.wcml.org.uk/>

**WCML**  
Working Class Movement Library



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## **HacktionLab 2022**

It is always good to realise that co-operation is continuing, when it seems that commercial competitiveness dominates the world. I recently attended a conference called **HacktionLab**, which combines the activism of political awareness with creating open source software. Some of the most useful has been years in development, so they aren't flash-in-the-pan ideas but solid programs (apps).

**Karrot** is one such; a tool for self-organised community organising <https://karrot.world>. Used by groups across Europe, it was originally designed to help groups which save food from being wasted, although it's usable for any type of activity. It was described as better than Facebook groups or Meetup for organising. It's one of the few digital tools that doesn't impose hierarchical admin roles, instead it uses a 'trust' network system, and democratic processes. It records all transactions, allowing for statistics, and feedback can be left. It even has some built-in translation. When conflict arises, the software can be used to assist in resolution, through a process prompting a vote on proposed outcomes, eg. expulsion, or remain a member, or vote to continue the discussion.

Nick Sellen, one of the UK-based developers is really interested to find groups in the UK that might find **Karrot** useful to support their activities.

**Mastodon** was described as a very popular social media which is not “corporate”. Instead of being based in Silicon Valley, it’s decentralised, open source and without the censorship/promotion algorithms used by Facebook, etc. Rather than being a “Wild West” of uncensored nonsense, federation is optional, and users can exclude whole blocks of usage, eg. porn, fascism, and certain users. It was described as being good for publicity - “getting the word out”.

Examples of special types of Mastodon instance include **PeerTube**: a video peer-to-peer site. Video is free to view or download, and live streaming is now being introduced (example: <https://sub.media>).

**Inventaire** was described as a site to list and share your books locally, making a decentralised library: <https://inventaire.io>

Others mentioned were **Castopod** for podcast hosting: <https://castopod.org>, and **Pixelfed** for free and ethical photo/image sharing: <https://pixelfed.org>. Also **Pleroma** and **Frendica** were recommended as more Facebook-style social media, and **Writefreely** for blogging: <https://writefreely.org>.

**radar.squat.net**, was the subject of another talk. This is software for online publicity via radical events calendars. It was started 20 years ago, before the all-powerful social media, and is now very reliable, and widely used.

Local groups form events websites, approving what’s listed online in their area (say, a city). Activists post events in one place and they get copied on to elsewhere, “syndicated” as appropriately “tagged”. The decisions for what gets publicised are taken at local level; there are no top-down rules, because the software writers realised that defining “radical” varies between locations.

**In summary, HacktionLab** was an interesting and inspiring conference. We all know that social media giants are *not* working for the benefit of humanity, but for profit – at almost any cost. The role of software in positive social change is yet to come. The values of open source software align well with those of the Co-operative Movement, and it’s good to know that many of the software writers are very radical and politically aware.

**Jonathan Cook, 2022**

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**Members are always welcome to visit the resource centre.**

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