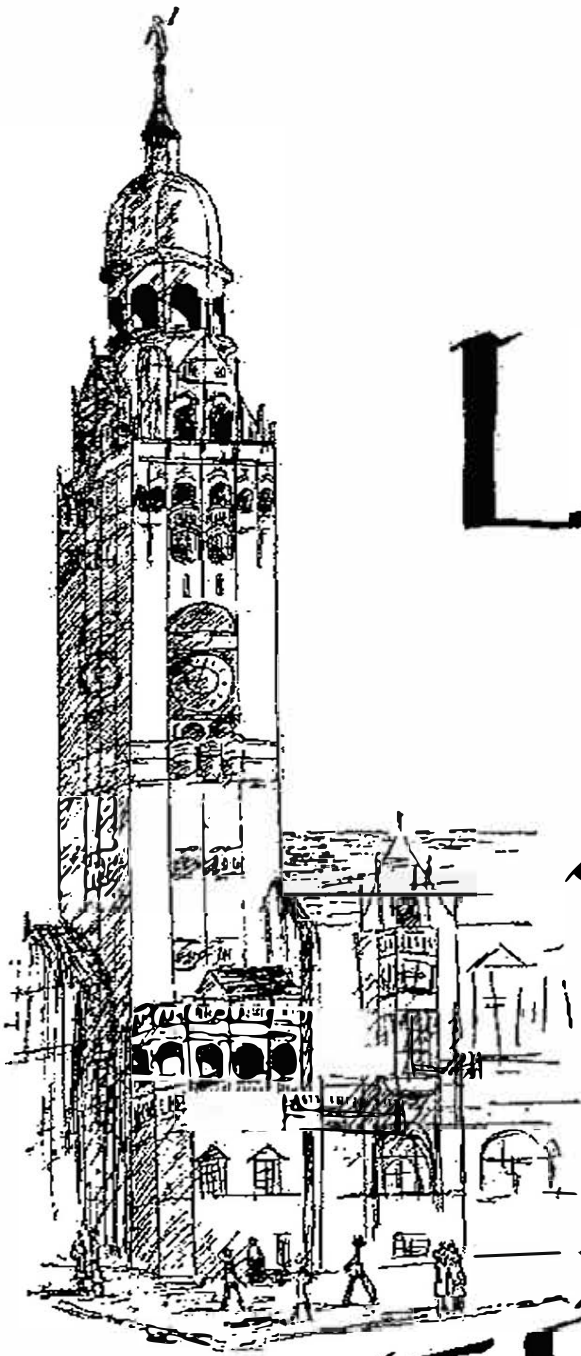


SIX YEARS
OF

LABOUR
RULE

IN

SHEFFIELD
1926~32



THE ORIGINAL MANIFESTO FOR COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING IN SHEFFIELD

SIX YEARS OF LABOUR RULE IN SHEFFIELD, 1926-32

presented by Alderman E.G. Rowlinson

Principle 5 Pamphlet No: 4

Published in 2023 by:
Principle 5: Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre
Aizlewood's Mill
Nursery Street
Sheffield
S3 8GG

Principle FIVE **P5**



Printed by Footprint Workers Co-operative, 16 Back Sholebroke Avenue, Leeds, LS7 3HB

TRIBUTE: 2023

The December 1933 edition of the *Sheffield Co-operator* newspaper warmly celebrated the return to power of the Co-operative and Labour administration which had so ably managed the affairs of the city between 1926-1932. Crucial to their return to power, the *Co-operator* suggested, was the pamphlet you now hold in your hands. *Six Years of Labour Rule in Sheffield*, presented the “forward and constructive policy which had operated during 1926-32.”

It is difficult now to comprehend the sheer amount of work undertaken by the Council in those years. Slums were demolished. New houses were built. New maternity and child welfare facilities led to a twelve-fold increase in attendance. New markets were erected, new roads built, tram routes extended, new swimming pools, new libraries, new schools, new workshops for the blind. A new city hall. These were years of intense work, overseen by the new Direct Labour Department, which brought many services in house and eliminated the “middlemen”.

This republication of *Six Years of Labour Rule* is timely. Not least because we are once again faced with a crisis in the health and wellbeing of the nation. Our housing stock is riddled with damp and mould. There is not enough well-paid work to go around, meaning people cannot build their own wealth or achieve the peace of mind which allows them to flourish. Benefits are too low to sustain a healthy diet and heat homes. The National Health Service is in crisis. What is the benefit of public services if they cannot be accessed in a timely fashion?

The strategy of the Co-operative Party and the Labour Party in the 1920s and 1930s was the Community Wealth Building of its day. *Six Years of Labour Rule, 1926-32* speaks of a moment when the working citizens of Sheffield finally realised the myth of Conservative and Liberal competence in administration, governance, and financial matters. They decided to take matters into their own hands. Today, we can learn from their example as we seek once again to regain control of our lives.

- Principle 5, April 2023

TRIBUTE: 1982

In 1932 the pioneers who laid the foundations for the magnificent socialist city of which we are all so proud, produced this booklet outlining the first six years of Labour control.

A year earlier in 1931, the betrayal of the Labour movement by Ramsey MacDonald and his colleagues had led to all six Parliamentary Constituencies in the city of Sheffield falling to the 'National Government' candidates. The massive strides taken by the first Labour administration were halted by the success of the 'anti-Labour' victory riding on the tide of the 'National Government' deception. That aberration by the people of Sheffield lasted only one year and was only repeated once more (in 1968) through to the present day.

It is now 50 years since the publication of this Manifesto, which stands as a tribute to the will and courage of those who had to face unthinkable odds, both in personal and in political life. It is an irony of fate that it is exactly 50 years, with unemployment and cuts in living standards reminding people so vividly of the 1930s, with the 'anti-Labour' forces raising their heads once again to throw back the forces of progress that have made Sheffield the best city in the United Kingdom in which to live.

The lessons of history have to be learned by those of us who struggle to emulate the achievements of those who came before us, but they must also be learned by those who must be warned against unthinkingly repeating the mistakes of the past – the electorate who decide the destiny of themselves and their fellow citizens.

- David Blunkett
Leader of Sheffield City Labour Group, 1982

FOREWORD

BY

Rt. Hon. Arthur Greenwood M.P.

(Health Minister in Labour Government)

Sheffield was the first great Municipal Borough in the provinces to return a Labour majority. It was served by a Labour Council for six years.

If the citizens of Sheffield will look at this record and compare it with any other six years of administration I am satisfied that they will come to the conclusion that at no time were the people of the city better served. In every direction the Labour Council worked in the interests of the people. It was a Socialist Council, believing in the principle of collective effort.

It extended the operation of direct labour and established and developed the Municipal Printing Works which have been of undoubted benefit to the ratepayers of the city. Its activities in the sphere of housing and education alone merit the support of all public spirited citizens.

It is right that the six years of Labour rule should be placed on permanent record and I trust that this booklet will be widely read. The Labour Party has always stood for the development of municipal services in the firm belief that they can contribute much to a living standard of life and comfort to the people.

This little volume shows what was actually accomplished by a Labour Council with socialist ideals. It should prove to be an inspiration to all right-minded people, to use every effort to secure the triumph of Socialist principles in municipal life.



ALDERMAN ERNEST GEORGE ROWLINSON. J.P

Chairman and Leader,
Sheffield City Council Labour Group.

MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM

SIX YEARS OF LABOUR RULE IN SHEFFIELD

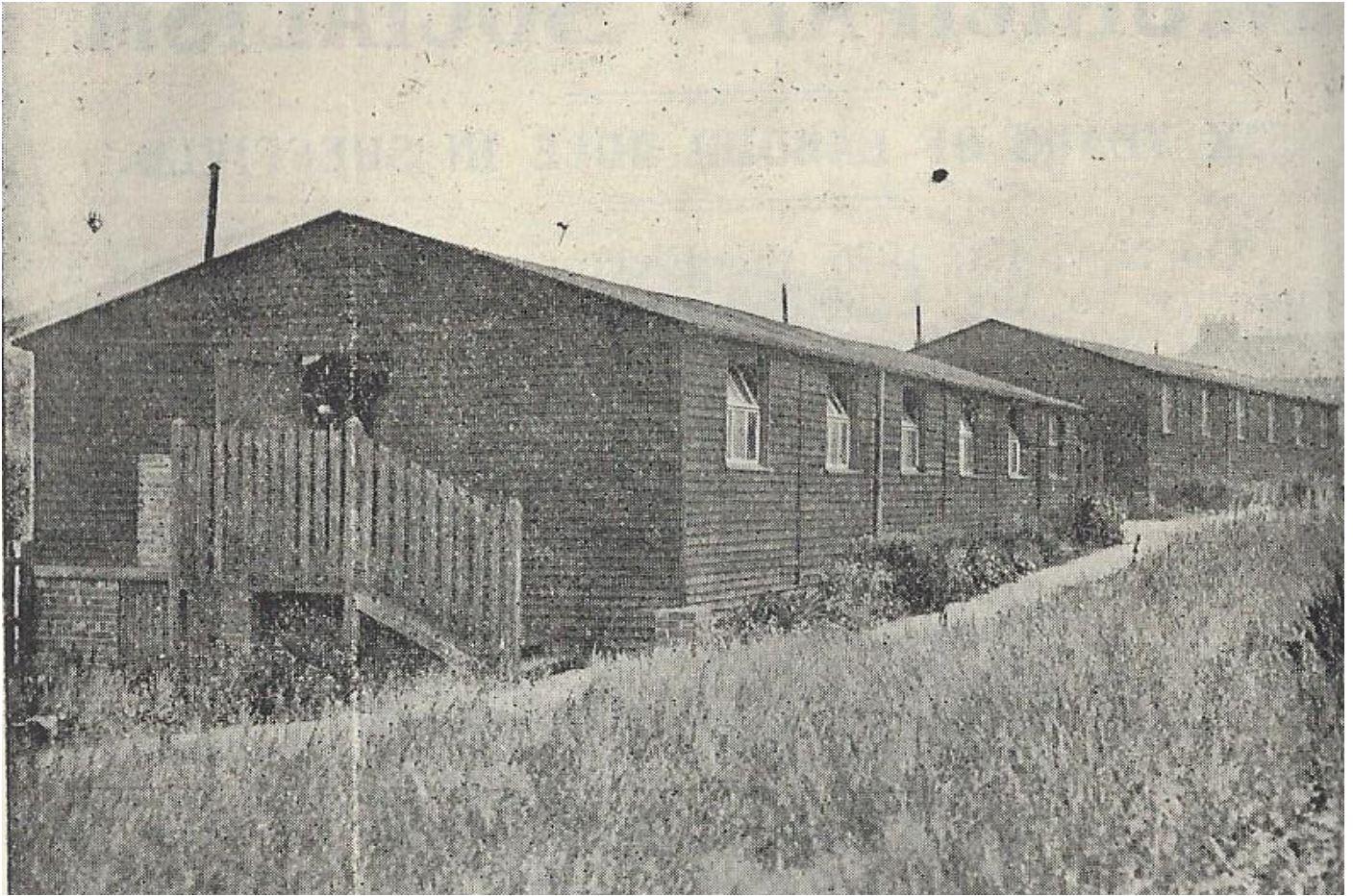
On Nov. 1st, 1926, the Electors of Sheffield gave a majority to the Labour Group on the Sheffield City Council and, for the first time in this country a great Municipal Borough of the provinces came under the control of the Labour Party.

For several years previously the Conservatives and Liberals had joined forces under various titles to defeat the Socialists but only succeeded in adding yearly to the strength of the Socialist vote. The union of Liberals and Conservatives has been complete and it has been the fashion periodically to change the title of the Anti-Labour Party, the present title being the 'Progressive Party.' This desperate attempt to camouflage Conservative reaction has failed to hide the fact that the people, the sources of finance and the reactionary policy are still the same. We use the term Anti-Labour Party throughout these pages, to identify the reactionaries under whatever title they were running.

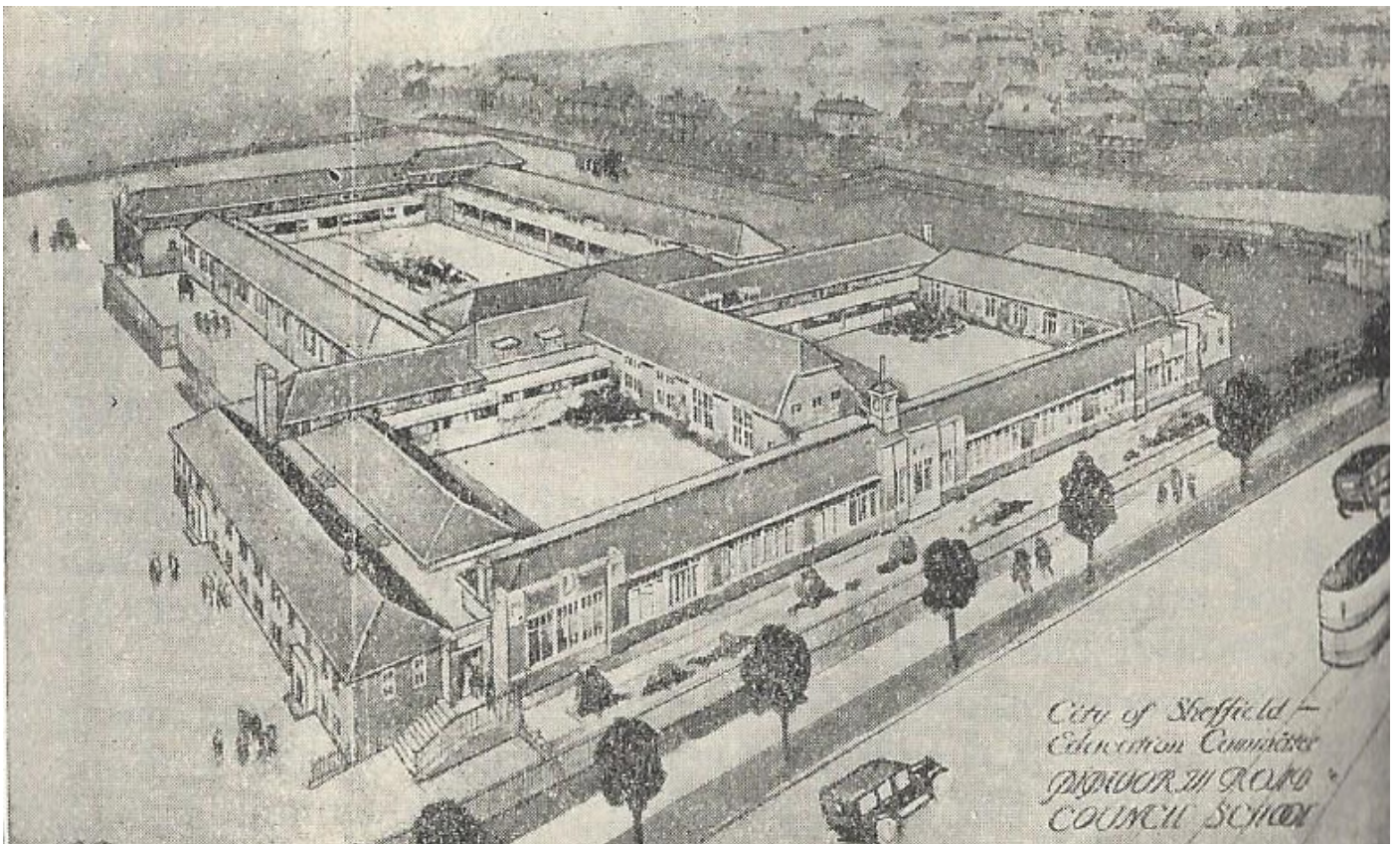
The programme under which Labour appealed for support was wide but plain and definite in its purpose. Its mainspring has been wherever possible to use the great municipal machine for the improvement of the city and bring the greatest health, educational and cultural benefits to the people. In the trading departments, Labour increased the services and reduced the costs so that the benefits of municipalisation should be for the many and not for a comparatively few wealthy ratepayers.

The work of the Party during the six years in power was a great civic achievement. Wide interest has been evoked and in response to an urge from many directions this booklet has been issued.

It records some of the results of the strenuous work and loyal co-operation of every member of the Labour Group under the chairmanship of Alderman E. G. Rowlinson, J.P.



ANTI-LABOUR SCHOOLS FOR 3000 CHILDREN ON THE MANOR ESTATE



ONE OF THE FOUR SCHOOLS LABOUR HAS SUPPLIED ON MANOR AND WYBOURN

EDUCATION

The shortage of accommodation in the schools of Sheffield was very serious, and even the Conservative Ministers for Education had warned the Anti-Labour Party, who were then in power in the city, that the grant would be reconsidered if the position was not remedied.

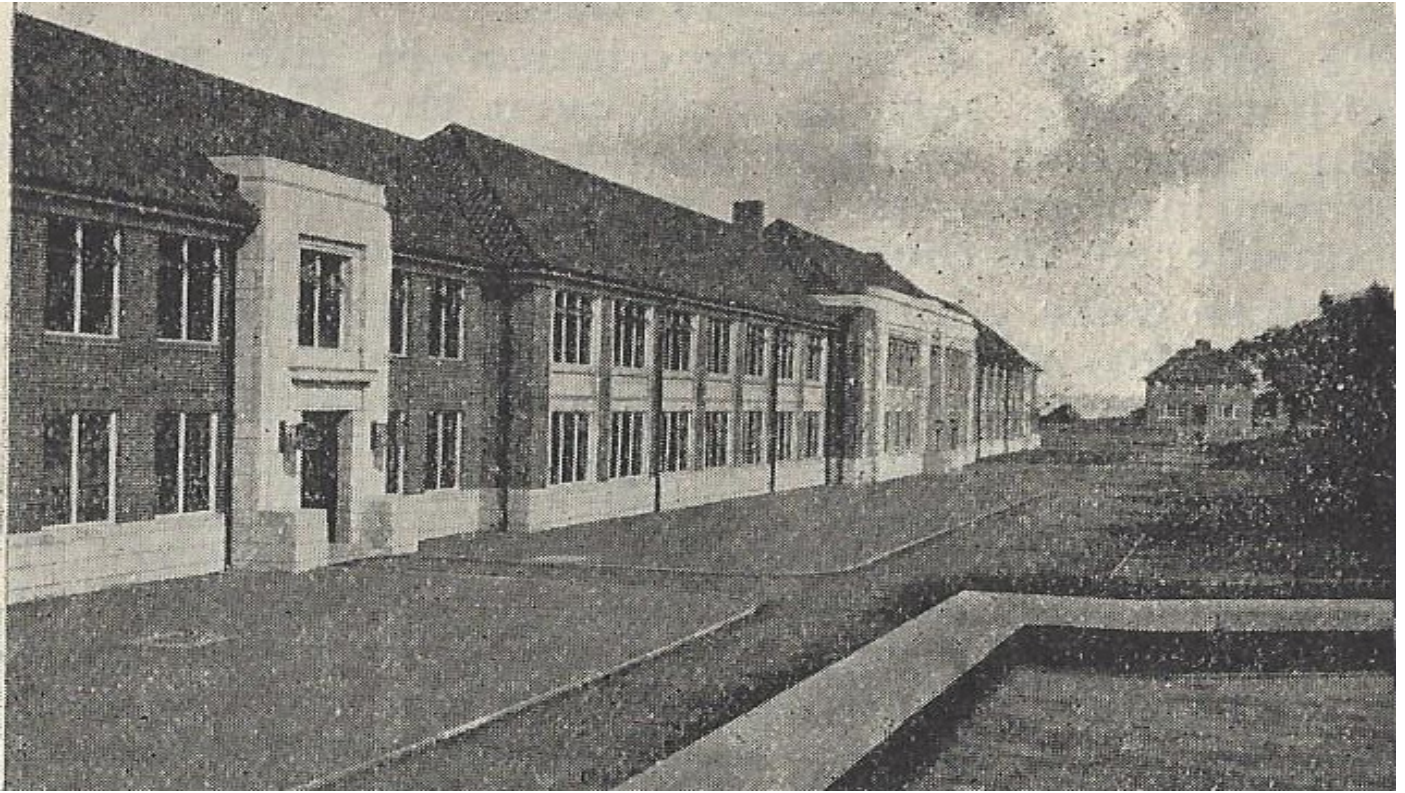
Children were compelled to travel long distances from new estates to existing schools, overcrowding these to a degree that was disgraceful. It was common to find two and three classes in the small assembly halls that were then provided. A terrible educational indictment of the Anti-Labour Party is revealed in the September 1926 minutes of the Education Committee.

The Senior Inspector there presented a report. He disclosed that out of 3,000 children of school age on the Manor Estate, only 1,014 were attending school and of those 782 were going to seven different schools outside the district. He further stated that some of the 1,014 who had been admitted during the past week has been out of school for over eight months and that 2,000 children of school age were not in attendance at school, mainly because there was no school accommodation.

The report also shows that the only provision on the estate for 3,000 children was the two wooden huts (illustrated on the opposite page), giving 'accommodation' for 232 children. When the Labour Party gained control of the Council the two wooden huts were replaced as early as possible by four fine new schools. In various parts of the city new schools have been built and 11,000 additional primary school places provided.

In building these schools, Labour had regard to the new concept of education outlined by the Hadow Report.

Secondary Education: For secondary education new schools have been provided, making a total of 5,800 school places, an increase of nearly 80 per cent. In 1932, no less than 1,425 children were admitted to secondary and intermediate schools in the city to receive higher education.



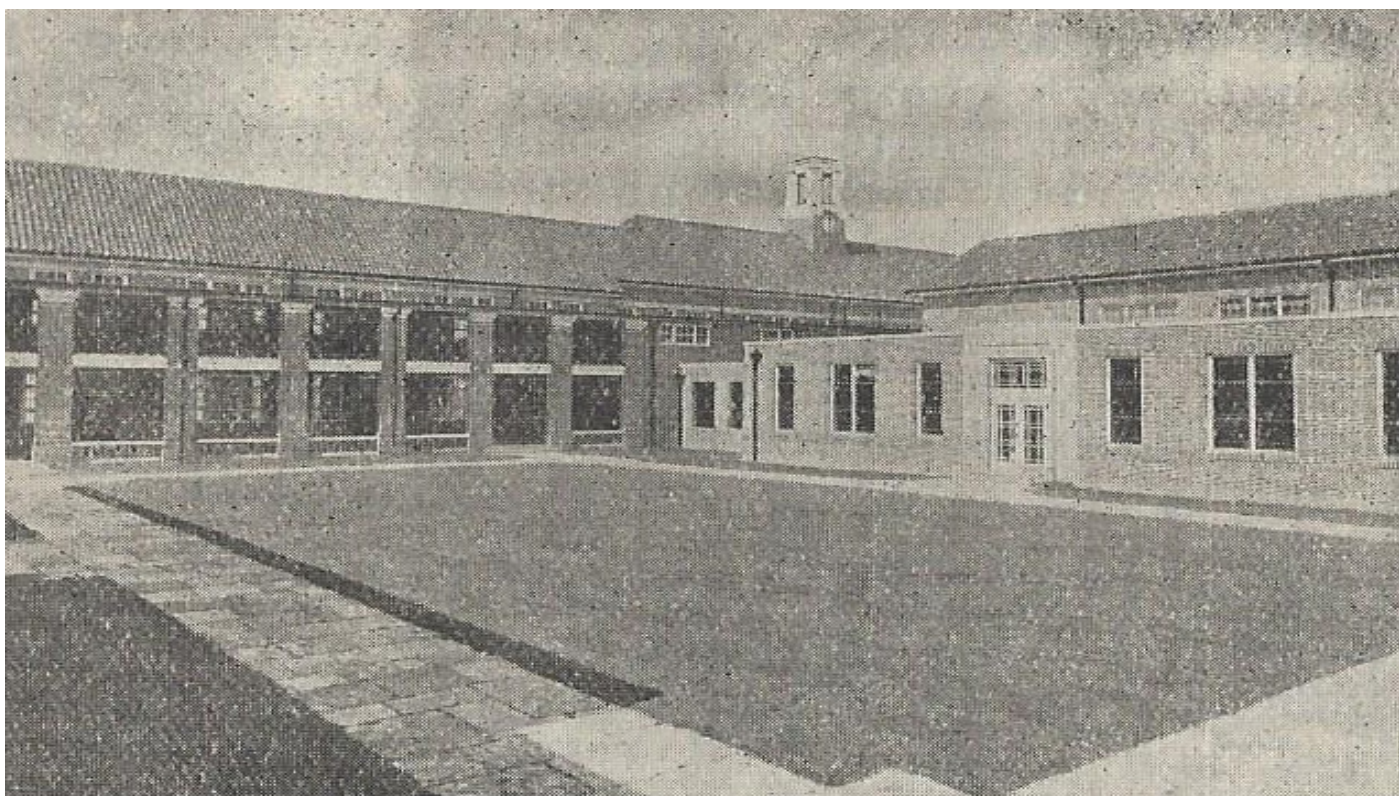
LABOUR'S SECONDARY SCHOOL AT HIGH STORRS

To meet the increased poverty in the city, 667 pupils in secondary and intermediate schools have been in receipt of maintenance allowances during the last year, thus removing this barrier between intelligent children and higher education. Increased facilities have been given and grants made to allow scholars to proceed from secondary schools to various universities.

Nursery Schools and Health: In catering for the very poor parts of the city two nursery schools have been established and an open-air day and residential school for children whose emaciated condition would have been conducive to tuberculosis and other diseases. Poverty again made it necessary in the primary schools to provide over one and a half million free meals last year.

The health side has still further been safeguarded by a large increase in the medical service both in the clinics and in the schools. The dental staff has been doubled and other medical staffs increased. This has resulted in tuberculosis, anaemia and malnutrition being wiped out in hundreds of cases and children suffering from the ravages of sickness, restored to their normal place in the school.

Although there has been a lessening in the number of children attend-



ONE OF THE QUADRANGLES

ing schools the teaching staffs have been increased in order to reduce the size of the classes and allow individual attention to be given to the children. Large assembly halls have been provided in the new schools, which are a centre for social and educational activities in the district.

FINANCE

It is difficult to appreciate the morass into which the Municipal finances of Sheffield had drifted in the years preceding 1926. Sheffield had suffered by a large imported population during the war and, after the wave of spurious prosperity had receded, the city was left with an abnormal population and a large number of unemployed. Sheffield was almost the first city to feel the burden and had large unemployment figures before the general depression set in throughout other parts of the country.

The ostrich-like policy of the Anti-Labour Party sought to get over immediate difficulties by borrowing or deferring payment by suspense accounts, thereby piling up enormous debt responsibilities. An instance of this was the Poor Law debt of over £1,000,000 created by money being borrowed to meet payments, which should have been made out of a Poor Rate. Thus the rate was artificially deflated and liabilities were held back to be met later.

Debts repaid: Not only did Labour cease borrowing but were compelled to pay to the State £61,000 per year to liquidate the debt incurred by the Anti-Labour Party in escaping their annual responsibility. This sum of £61,00, by the way, has to be paid annually until 15 years' payments have been made. In addition to this there was nearly £1,000,000 overdraft at the bank, for which the City was paying, in interest, half a percent above the bank rate.

At the behest of the property owners in the city, the Anti-Labour Party departed from the policy of compounding to a direct rating system. This made the collection of the rate in those poverty-stricken areas a very difficult task indeed and nearly three-quarters of a million pounds in unpaid rates resulted from this absurd policy. In their efforts to do the impossible and collect, in one year alone 44,000 summonses were issued in the city.

Compounding: The compounding system was instituted with the result that not only was the rapidly-mounting sum of arrears arrested, but each year saw a substantial reduction made in the already accumulated arrears together with a reduction to normal of summonses. Cases of hardship and destitution were examined by rota and the arrears, in difficult cases, wiped out.

Parliamentary powers were sought to institute municipal banking, but this power was refused by the House of Lords.

Land Purchase: We sought and secured powers for the placing of a 2d. Rate (£20,000 yearly) towards a Purchase of Lands Fund. This scheme enabled prompt and economic purchase of land without saddling the city with payments spread over a period of sixty years, which method would make the total payment at least three times as large as that paid by cash. By this means, Beauchief Abbey, Golf Course and the surrounding land, part of Ecclesall Woods and other estates have been bought outright for the public. In four years property was purchased for £70,000 which under Anti-Labour methods would have cost the city £210,000.

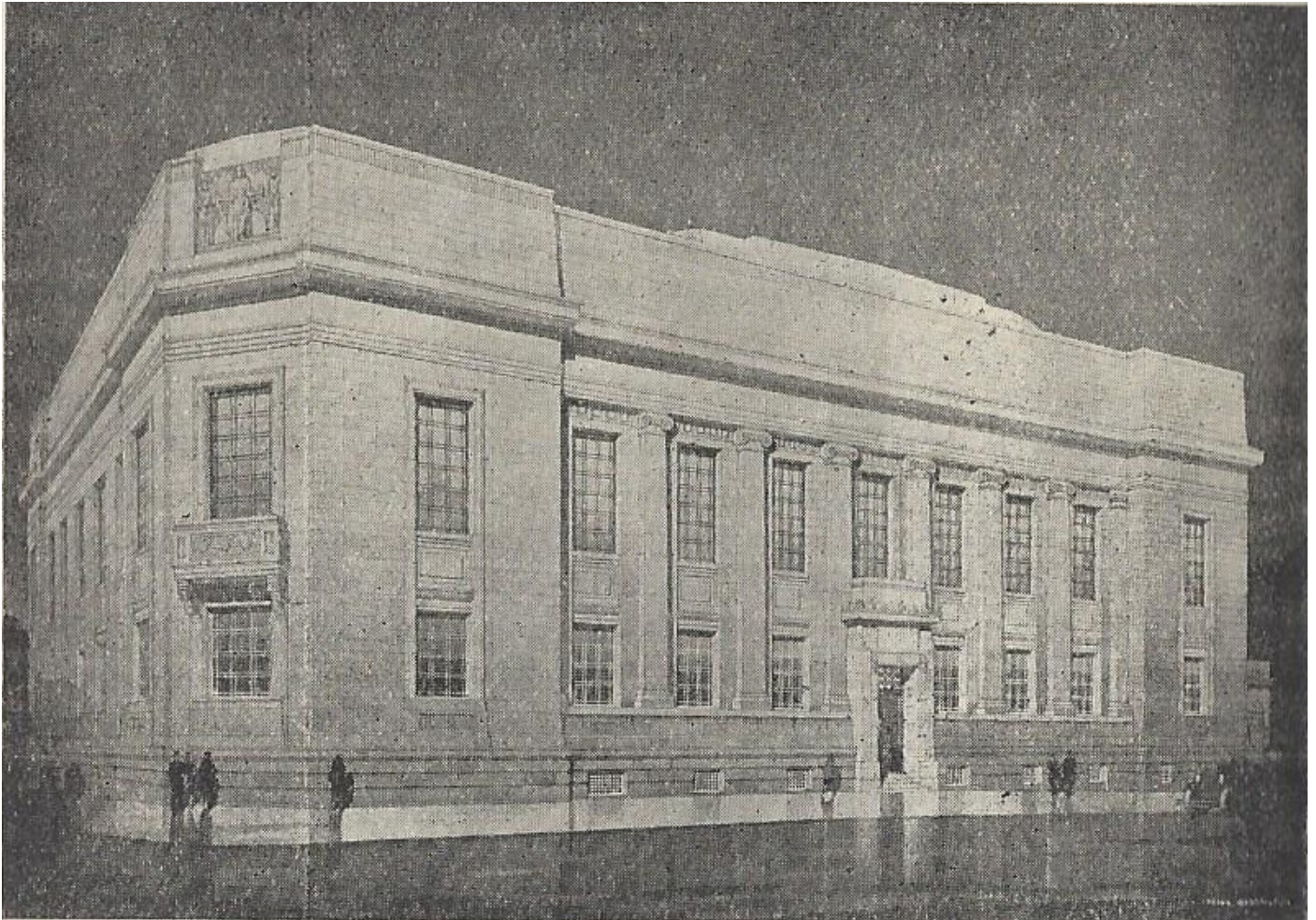
Labour also paid off by cash numerous small loans which had been entered into for municipal purposes. One instance of this was in 1932 when for a sum of £18,000, future responsibilities amounting to over £53,000 were wiped out. Savings were made in many directions. By abolishing many of the old Committees of the Council which were dealing with similar work, overlapping and friction was prevented and much expenditure made needless.

Municipal Insurance: The Finance Committee developed the policy of undertaking the Corporation's insurance. Third party, workmen's compensation, fidelity guarantee and motor insurance funds were set up and the fire insurance responsibilities extended from time to time. The result of this venture is that today there appears a surplus on these funds of £98,000 such as unexpended premiums.

The system of task work for the unemployed set up by our opponents was stupid in the extreme. Under this scheme hundreds of men were employed, in turn, on utterly useless work. One instance where a field was repeatedly dug over for no purpose whatever, created disgust among the onlookers and shame amongst those who were compelled to indulge in this futile work.

Useful work: As an alternative, Labour provided funds for an enormous scheme of useful work. Housing schemes increased, new roads made, miles of additional tram tracks added, open-air baths, new markets, abattoir, libraries, schools and houses were erected. From particulars taken out over a period of five years ending March 1932 the fact is disclosed that no less than eleven and three-quarter million man days of useful work had been provided by the Corporation, exclusive of all clerical and administrative staffs.

When the Government in its policy of unloading responsibilities upon local authorities cut down unemployment benefit by 10 per cent, the Finance Committee made provision for this cut to be restored in all cases where destitution would follow that reduction.



CENTRAL LIBRARY AND ART GALLERY

DIRECT LABOUR

As a result of the tremendous sums which were being spent upon repairing newly-erected houses built by private enterprise (in one year £48,000 being required to repair houses alone) a Direct Labour Department was established. Under this Department, houses, schools and public buildings, including the new Library now approaching completion, were erected and a splendid standard of workmanship was established thereby.

In furthering this policy, it is interesting to note that the whole of the Sheffield trams are now built by Direct Labour. Under the last competitive tender, the local firm which had built the city's trams quoted a price of £580 per car more than the cost of building by direct labour and, it is generally admitted that these cars are amongst the finest in the country today.

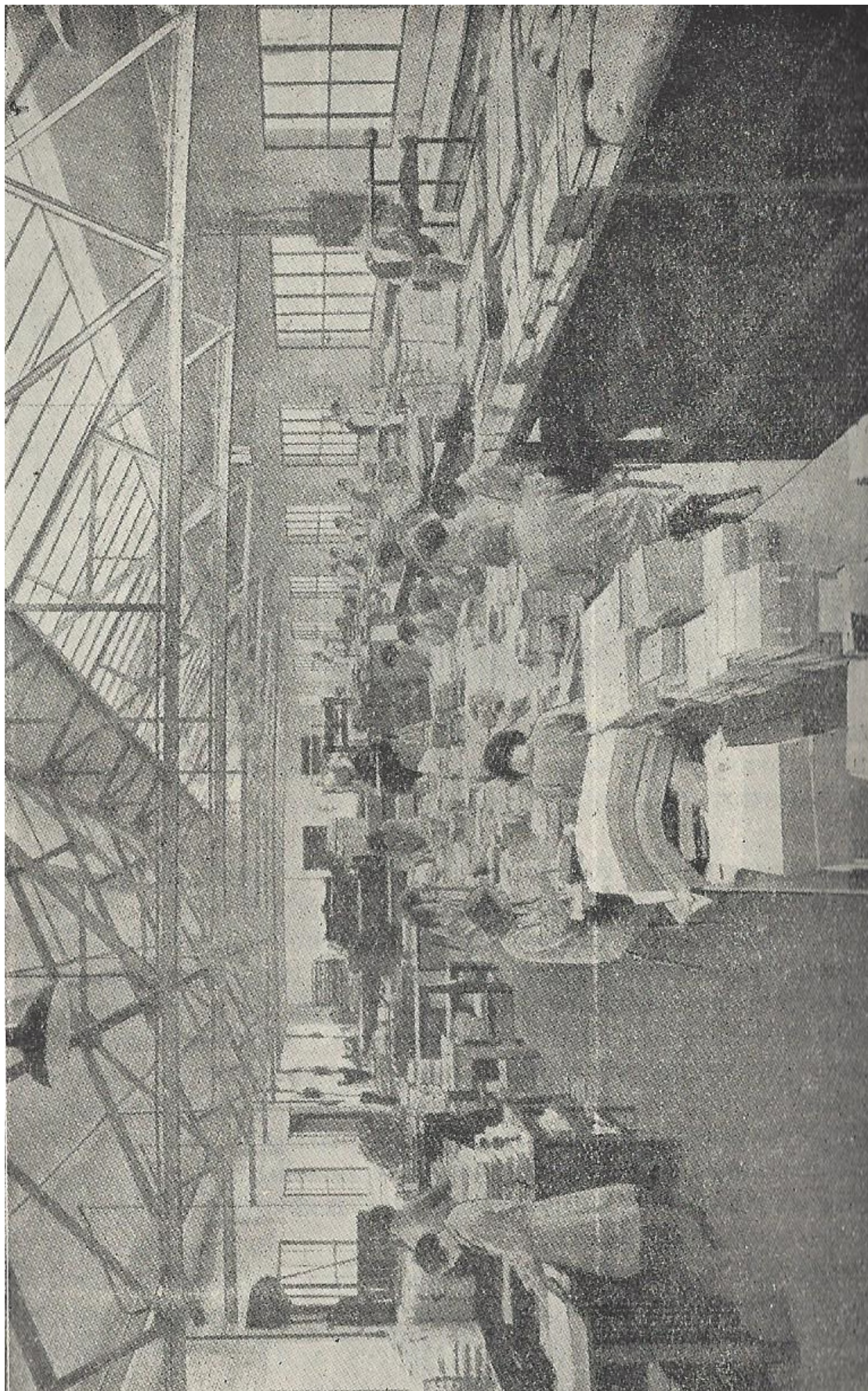
The most important thing from the Trade Union point of view is that in all these works by direct labour the wages and conditions operating are far superior to those of private firms.

Printing: In 1927 a Municipal Printing Department was set up – the first in Great Britain to supply the needs of the whole Corporation Departments. This Department was developed in spite of most bitter opposition from all vested interests concerned. Municipal candidates, supported by them, made this the main plank of their platform but it let them down badly. The fight has been continued to Smethwick where the High Court declined to grant an injunction against Smethwick for establishing a Municipal Printing plant on lines similar to that of Sheffield.

The success of this Socialist experiment was in no small measure due to Dr Percival Sharp who, at that time, was the Director of Education and who, with a fine display of public spirit, for four years voluntarily supervised and directed this great undertaking. The building in which this department is now housed was designed by the City Architect (as were our Schools and Library) and was completed in the short period of ten months.

Heavy Cost Reduction: Today the whole of the buildings, plant, machinery and several tons of type have been paid for by the difference between the competitive prices current amongst the printers and the prices at which the work has been turned out by the Corporation Printing Department. From time to time reductions have been made in the charges made to the various Departments for printing supplies and today the requirements are being provided at prices so near to cost price that they cannot possibly be competed with. And yet a sufficient margin is being left to pay all current expenditure.

A few instances are given below, taken from a published report showing the difference between the Master Printers' extravagant prices and those charged by the Printing Department.



SHEFFIELD MUNICIPAL PRINTING WORKS - BOOKBINDING DEPARTMENT

	Printers' Price 1926			Printing first Price			Department's Price from 1/4/32		
	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d
Town Clerk's Dept.									
245,000 Ballot Papers	116	7	0	85	15	0	64	0	0
Rating Dept.									
88,940 Demand Notes	74	0	0	66	13	0	53	0	0
Public Assistce. Dept.									
1,000 Task Sheets	15	0	0	4	0	0	2	5	0
Posting Sheets per 1000	15	0	0	4	0	0	2	10	0
4,000 Ledger Sheets	44	0	0	28	15	0	16	0	0

It can easily be understood why Smethwick, Bristol and other places are emulating Sheffield's striking example.

It is interesting to note, in connection with this venture, that the misrepresentations which took place up and down the country had an opportunity of being produced in a Court of Law when Dr. Sharp took action in respect of libels that were published. The traducers of this public success, however, avoided this opportunity of confirming on oath the ridiculous statements made. The inferences were withdrawn, apologies were given and damages paid.

PUBLIC HEALTH

The Labour Party was quite well aware of the great task they were undertaking in connection with our local public health administration, when they took control of civic affairs in 1927, and determined to bring a new spirit into public health affairs. In no other area in this country could a socialist Health Committee have had greater scope for its activities, and during the six years under review we raised our health services to a standard not surpassed by any other comparable authority in Great Britain.

The first step was to secure complete coordination of our public health activities, because we had at that time a number of separate Committees of the Council functioning without any regard to the requirements and

needs of each other. For instance one Committee was responsible for the welfare of the patients in a hospital, and another Committee dealt with the staff of the same institution.

This was quickly changed by amalgamating a number of committees and bringing into existence a new and enlarged Health Committee, charged with the duties of dealing with all aspects of public health administration in the City.

Sanitation: The question of sanitation was tackled, which in many parts of the borough had been greatly deficient. By 1928 the work of conversion of privy middens was completed with the exception of a few on the outskirts of the City where no sewers existed. Another hotbed of disease, the fixed ashpit, was dealt with, and during the six years of Labour control we abolished 8,806 as against 894 abolished by the Anti-Labour Party during the previous six years. At the end of 1932 there were only about 400 still to be dealt with.

The Anti-Labour Party did not compel the property owner to provide a sanitary dustbin to each house, but we at once decided that henceforth that must be done, and 15,002 were provided between Nov. 1926 and Nov. 1932, as against a paltry total of 169 by our opponents.

Backyards in thousands have been paved; the public have been encouraged to report to the Medical Officer of Health any refusal on the part of the landlord to keep his property in a decent state of repair, and where this has not been done after notice we have applied the full rigour of the law. An example was set to other local authorities by the introduction of the system of dustless collection of household refuse. In these, and many other ways, we have created for our inhabitants sound healthy surroundings which are essential to efficient public health administration.

Maternity and Child Welfare: A maternity and child welfare service was developed to which we can refer with pride. Skilled medical advice and treatment were made available for all expectant mothers who needed it free of charge and nearly 40 per cent of them attended the clinics in the City in 1932.

The number of beds in our Maternity Hospitals was increased from 36 to 80, and extensions, which will make available 32 additional beds. It was decided that accommodation could not be regarded as nearly adequate until there were at least 250 beds.

Our infant welfare service has been a boon and blessing to the thousands who year by year have attended in ever increasing numbers. In 1927 we bridged the gap in child life, which exists in many areas, where children are ignored by the Local Authority between 12 months and five years of age, when they come under the control of the School Medical Service. A scheme was introduced whereby our Health Visitors were charged with the duties of supervising such children, by visiting their homes at regular intervals and, encouraging where necessary, a visit to the Centre, to secure advice and treatment. It has enabled them, in much larger numbers, to start their school careers free from many of the diseases and weaknesses which previously were only disclosed at school age. One example will suffice, that of rickets, a deficiency disease, and definitely preventable. We started a clinic where free advice and treatment were available also hospital treatment, when necessary. Hundreds of patients have attended, and the acute type of the disease has been cured in every instance. Deformity has been prevented in early cases, and crippled patients have been cured or improved.

The closest co-operation between all sections of our public health administration, including the school medical service (referred to under "Education"), and the excellent result achieved by our preventive work will be revealed to a much greater extent by the physical advantages to the adults of the next generation.

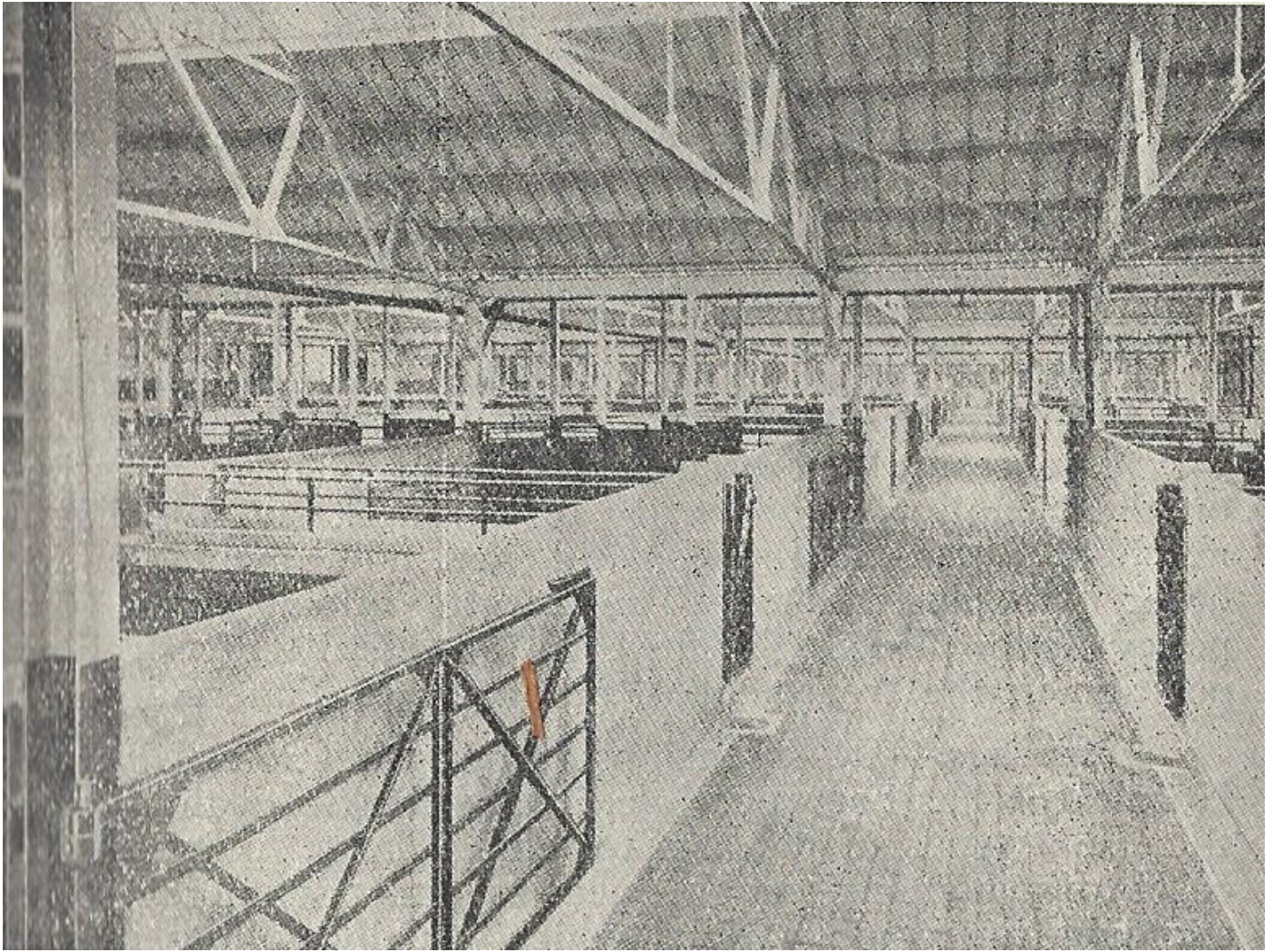
Food Purity: The purity of our milk supply has been insisted on, and our achievements in this direction are well worthy of note. We have demanded a high standard both at source of supply and at the premises of the distributor, and encouraged the sale of bottled milk wherever possible, in order to ensure it reaching the consumer in a clean and wholesome condition. Regular sampling of milk within our area has taken place, not only to detect adulteration, but also to determine whether the milk was free from tubercular infection. Surgical tuberculosis, which is referred to later, is largely a milk-bourne disease, and as such is pre-



DEMOLISHING KILLING SHAMBLES

ventable. The fullest use has been made of the powers under the Food and Drugs Acts in connection with other food stuffs, etc. by inspection sampling and analysis, and prosecution of offenders. We refuse to allow unscrupulous persons to make unholy profit by tampering with the food of the people with impunity.

For upwards of 40 years animals had been slaughtered for human consumption in a foul shambles actually owned by the Corporation, which had been condemned by the press and the public for years. Labour demolished this grave menace to the public health and built a public abattoir, acknowledged to be the finest in Great Britain. In addition, 154 private slaughterhouses were abolished. This new building is thoroughly up-to-date, and provides for centralised humane slaughter with proper and efficient inspection, together with the conditioning and marketing of meat under the best possible conditions, with cold storage and marked accommodation for imported meat. The value of centralised



THE ABATTOIR LAIRAGE

slaughter cannot be over-estimated. Take the quantity of condemned meat alone. In 1929 prior to the opening of the abattoir it averaged 8 tons per month. For the year ended December 31st 1932, it averaged 22 tons per month. Comment would be superfluous.

Tuberculosis: When we took control there were 147 persons in urgent need of institutional treatment for whom no accommodation was available.

Steps were immediately taken to remedy this grave defect, and sufficient accommodation was quickly provided for all persons suffering from this disease or even suspected of it, if institutional treatment was considered necessary.

A large number of cases were thus treated in the early stages of the disease, discovered by our system of examination of persons who had been definitely in contact with notified cases.

The necessity for isolating infectious cases was fully appreciated. Isolation was accomplished either by admission to hospital or in their own homes, but in those cases where home conditions rendered this impossible the patients were rehoused.

Tuberculosis, in joints and bones, which is mainly a milk-bourne disease, has been so greatly reduced in this city as a result of the success of our policy in insisting on the cleanliness and purity of our milk supply, that a number of beds in the hospital are now available for other orthopaedic cases. The results arising from our policy have placed Sheffield in an admittedly leading position in the treatment of all forms of tuberculosis.

Hospitals: By extensions to our Infectious Diseases Hospital it has been possible, in addition to dealing with the usual types of disease, to admit large numbers of cases of whooping cough, measles and pneumonia, thus avoiding the complications which usually follow in the train of the two former ailments of childhood, with a consequent saving of many valuable lives.

When the Guardians' functions were transferred to the City Council the two Poor Law Hospitals were appropriated under the Public Health Acts, this being in accordance with our policy of limiting to the smallest possible extent the operation of the poor law in the city.

With the exception of persons and/or their dependents in receipt of relief, all cases are admitted as sick inhabitants, the payments, if any, to be made towards the cost of their maintenance being assessed by the Almoner. The reason we admit those in receipt of relief as Public Assistance cases is to avoid duplication and overlapping records and services. The excellent health record of the city, as a result of our forward policy, has made possible the admission into our municipal hospitals of patients who were waiting for admission to voluntary hospitals, but who could not be accommodated there.

Baths and Washhouses: At our Public Baths filtration plants were provided to ensure a continuous supply of clean water. New slipper baths and an open air bathing pool were built and concessions granted in the form of reduced charges to scholars, the unemployed, and the aged. Public wash-houses were built as part of our policy of lightening the burden of those in congested areas.

A large number of public conveniences were modernised and a number of new ones erected, and much better provision was made for women.

The Mentally Defective: Institutional accommodation was increased, the clothing, dietary and general arrangements in our own existing institutions were improved and weekly allowances, outside the poor law, made to those at home who needed it.

Children's Homes: About 600 children in grouped and scattered homes were committed to our care when the Guardians ceased to exist, and under the control of the Health Committee many advantages have accrued to them, including their removal from the old Poor Law atmosphere, which was inseparable from the old administration.

Ambulance Service: The ambulance services of the city were coordinated, including police, voluntary, and municipal hospitals, and the new centralised service was introduced in April 1930 with excellent results.

Contracts: All contracts were coordinated with other Committees of the Corporation where the requirements were common to two or more departments, and considerable savings effected.



WORKSHOPS FOR THE BLIND

Welfare of the Blind: The treatment of the blind in Sheffield for a number of years prior to Labour obtaining control of the City Council was deplorable. Attention had been repeatedly drawn to the miserable conditions of those employed in the workshops, receiving in some cases as low as £1 per week, manufacturing goods which no one wanted, filling the warehouses with these goods, and then disposing of them at next to nothing, thus adding to the heavy trading losses year by year.

Of the other blind persons a few were in receipt of poor law relief or small sums from charity, and the remainder were left to eke out a miserable existence begging or selling matches in the streets, singing and playing in public houses, and begging from door to door.

This was quickly changed and in less than one year, the council had taken complete civic control of all the services.



ANOTHER WORKSHOP

Decent conditions were given to our blind employees. A site of three and three quarter acres in extent was purchased, on which we erected new single-storey workshops, the first and the best of their kind in the country. Large and airy workrooms, slipper baths, concert hall, canteen with spacious grounds well laid out, completed a scheme which enabled our blind friends to work under pleasant conditions, giving them the opportunity for recreation and pleasure to which they were justly entitled, but had been so long denied.

The blind not engaged in the workshops were also catered for in a satisfactory manner, and regular weekly payments made to them, adjusted accordingly to circumstances, free from the pauper taint, and without the irksome restrictions associated with the Poor Law. All are in fact getting a square deal from the rest of the community. **There are no blind persons begging or selling on the streets of Sheffield now.**

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

As will already be understood we limited the activities of the Public Assistance Committee to the control of indoor and outdoor relief.

With regard to the institution, much better provision has been made for those who are unfortunately compelled to tramp the country in search of work, by the erection of new wards. Diets have been improved generally, and in many other directions the conditions of all forced to seek shelter, made much less irksome than was the case before we took control.

Outdoor Relief: It was in the administration of outdoor relief that we were faced with the most difficult problem. We stood four square, however, to protect those, who, in large numbers, had been denied the right over a long period to render useful service to the community in the form of productive work. With them, as with the sick and aged who were compelled, through no fault of their own, to seek public assistance, the poor law was stretched to the uttermost limits, in order that the succour and assistance they so badly needed should be given.

A scale of relief for the able-bodied was instituted much in advance of the overwhelming majority of areas throughout the country, which incurred the wrath of the Ministry of Health, but we stood our ground. It was made possible for friends to help recipients of relief without the latter suffering and we ended the system of taking into account, when assessing relief, the value of free meals provided for the children at school, because we refused to be parties to anything which stood in the way of the children being properly fed.

When the alleged National Government viciously attacked the unemployed in 1931 we refused to be the instruments for carrying out their repugnant policy and instructions were given for the cut to be made up to those with dependents where it was most needed.

TRANSITIONAL PAYMENTS

We agreed with much reluctance, to undertake the duties in connection with the above, but it soon became apparent that in the absence of definite regulations from the Government, it would be impossible to carry out. Accordingly, at the meeting of the City Council in December 1931, it was decided to suspend operations pending the receipt of such instructions.

Unfortunately, we were unable to obtain any definite guidance from the Government on the matter beyond a reminder that, in determining the needs, if any, of an application for transitional payments, the Committee were required to make sure enquiries and otherwise deal with the case as if it were an application by an able bodied person for public assistance.

With no further guidance than this before them, the Committee decided to recommend to the City Council at the January 1932 meeting that the operation of the Order should not be resumed, but in the meantime a request was made by the Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, in the absence of the Minister, that a deputation should meet him in order to discuss ways and means of dealing with the difficult situation.

The deputation, headed by the Lord Mayor, attended at the offices of the Ministry of Labour and secured certain concessions which would enable cases to be dealt with otherwise than on a strictly Poor Law basis and in consequence, at the City Council meeting which followed, it was decided that the duties should be resumed.

Although unable to mitigate all the worst evils, we believe that the stand taken was well justified and the difficulties under which we laboured were understood and appreciated by the overwhelming majority of the unemployed.

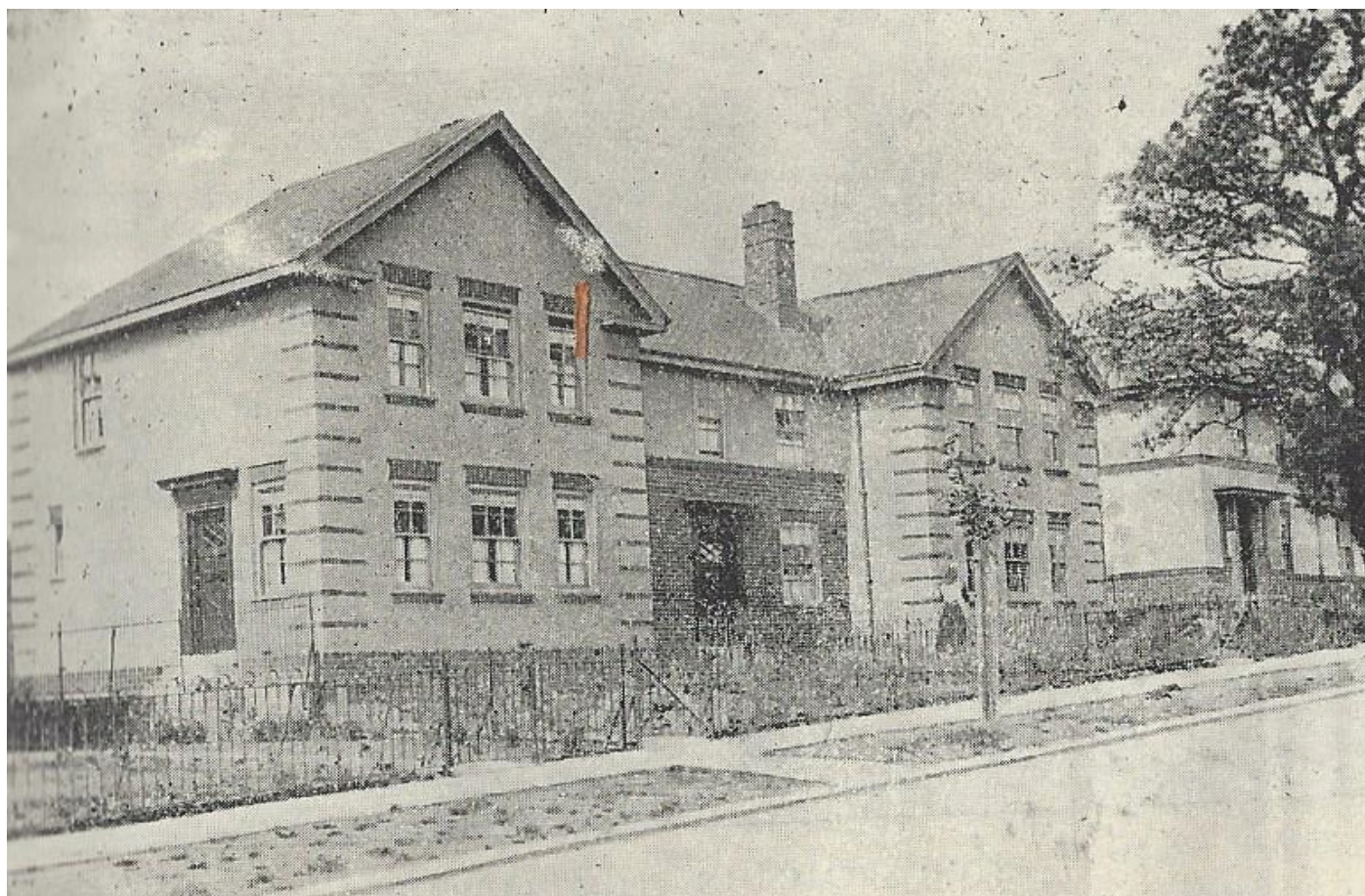


LABOUR DESTROYED THIS SLUM

HOUSING

The supply of houses to let had been sporadic and inadequate during the years preceding 1926. Upon assuming control arrangements were immediately made to have a continuous and expanding programme, which commenced at 1,000 houses per annum, reaching 2,500 per annum at its maximum. The idea was not only to meet the urgent need for accommodation, but also to assure the building trade that in increasing the output of houses it could rely on a continuous demand.

During our six years of office we built 7,844 and made provision for all houses which have been erected since.



AND CREATED THESE HOMES

Opponents' Costly Housing: The houses erected by our opponents prior to 1926 were little better than brick boxes, and were not only unsatisfactory in design, but consisted of shoddy material, and frequently bad workmanship. So flagrant was this that quite early extensive repairs had to be executed to new property, costing in a single year many thousands of pounds. No provision had previously been made by our predecessors to meet such expenditure and these emergencies added to the burden we were called upon to bear.

In addition to the thousands of houses of superior design, workmanship, construction and equipment, which were built, a number of bungalows for aged people were erected, with garden, bathroom and other modern conveniences, and these have been very much appreciated.

Slum Clearance: A determined attack was commenced upon the slums. In this matter our campaign was commenced before slum clearance became a popular cry. It can be claimed that in the period we were in office more property was condemned, and larger numbers of families rehoused from slum areas than in any other comparable city in the country.



STORYTIME AT THE LIBRARY

LIBRARIES

The policy of the Labour Party, which regards libraries as a University for the people, was to speed up reorganisation of existing libraries, and to build new ones, as no new libraries had been erected for 21 years. In a short time, three libraries were reconstructed internally, stocked with new books, and reorganised on modern lines. A new Children's Library, and two new additional Branch Libraries were erected.

Plans for a new Central Library and Art Gallery were prepared, and building commenced in 1930. It is being built by direct labour, and planned to include all the best features known. This will be one of the largest in the country, and a centre of intellectual activity in the City.

Special libraries have been instituted and organised in the Elementary Schools, Evening Schools, Hospitals etc., and book services organised for the Workers' Educational Association Classes, and kindred organisations. In every possible manner our citizens have been encouraged to use these services and the issues increased from 1,765,942 in 1926 to 3,640,035 in 1932.

ELECTRIC SUPPLY

The charges for electricity were reduced to industrial and domestic users to a point which enabled even the domestic user to obtain supplies at seven-tenths of a penny per unit under the Inclusive Domestic Rate. An assisted wiring scheme was developed and the original charges reduced by nearly one half. The results of our policy are to be seen in the increase in the number of consumers from 40,000 in 1926 to over 100,000 in 1932.

TRAMWAYS AND MOTORS

The policy of taking the profits made by the users of our Tramcars for the purpose of relieving the rates was stopped, a policy under which many of those who never or rarely used the Tramcars received the main benefits.

A superior type of tramcar, built in our own workshops was provided, the maximum fare was reduced by 25 per cent, and a number of routes were extended without any increase in fares. Many new bus routes were inaugurated, which have proved an unqualified success.

Sheffield leads the way in quality and design of its cars and buses, and during the period of Labour control many improvements were made for the safety and comfort of the passengers.

STREET LIGHTING

The general lighting of the city was considerably improved and more economical methods adopted. The pledge given that every court would be lighted by us became an accomplished fact, nearly 2,500 courts having being lighted, with great advantages and benefit to the residents.

SEWAGE DISPOSAL

Sheffield is now one of the largest cities in the country using modern methods for sewage disposal, and the Labour Party can take great credit for its development and the completion of a scheme which brought to an end the existence of a number of small antiquated plants which were a danger to public health.



A PART OF THE NEW MARKETS

MARKETS

The Anti-Labour Parties had talked about the reconstruction of the markets for years, but had done nothing.

It was left for Labour, through its Markets Committee, to tackle this difficult job. An up-to-date retail market embodying all modern improvements was built on Castle Hill, and the old unsightly Fitzalan Market replaced by an imposing block of shops, bringing in substantial additional revenue to the corporation in the form of rent and rates. The demolition of the old market also enabled the corporation to carry out very important street improvements which combine to make this area worthy of the city. Labour has, without doubt, made a fine contribution to the complete reconstruction of the city's markets.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Additions to the city's parks and open spaces now bring the total acreage to well over 2,000 acres.

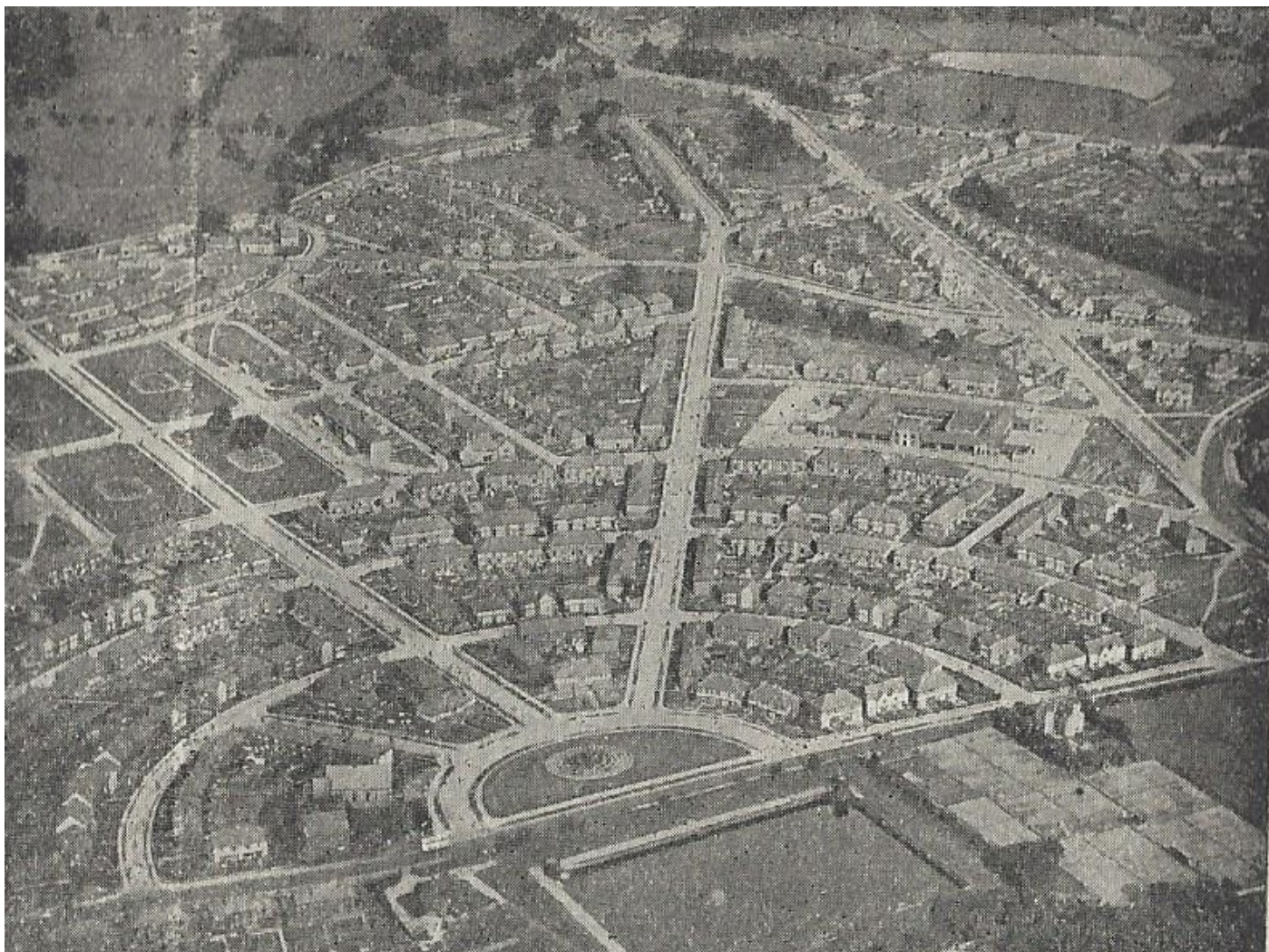
The powers obtained by Labour for the establishment of the purchases of lands fund made it possible to buy land outright, and economically, for the public use. By this method Beauchief Abbey Golf Course and its beautiful surroundings were purchased. The Coal Aston estate and part of the splendid Ecclesall Woods were purchased by this fund, the remainder being secured by generous gifts from the Town Trustees, and Alderman J.G. Graves who in many other instances has generously added to our spaces and parks.

In addition, 2,500 acres of the Burbage Moors have been secured to the public for all time making a total of nearly 5,000 acres of land to which the public have access, including the finest woodland and moorland scenery of which we in Sheffield are very proud. Access to these amenities has been made much easier by the reduced tram and bus fares.

Numerous tennis courts, bowling greens, and other facilities have been provided. Shrubs have been planted and gardens laid out to enhance the beauty of the parks. Pavilions and public conveniences have been erected.

The music and entertainments arranged by the Parks Committee have given many enjoyable hours to thousands of people. Our parks were certainly a credit to the city.

Allotments: Every encouragement was given to all classes of the community to take allotments, and the increased demand was adequately met.



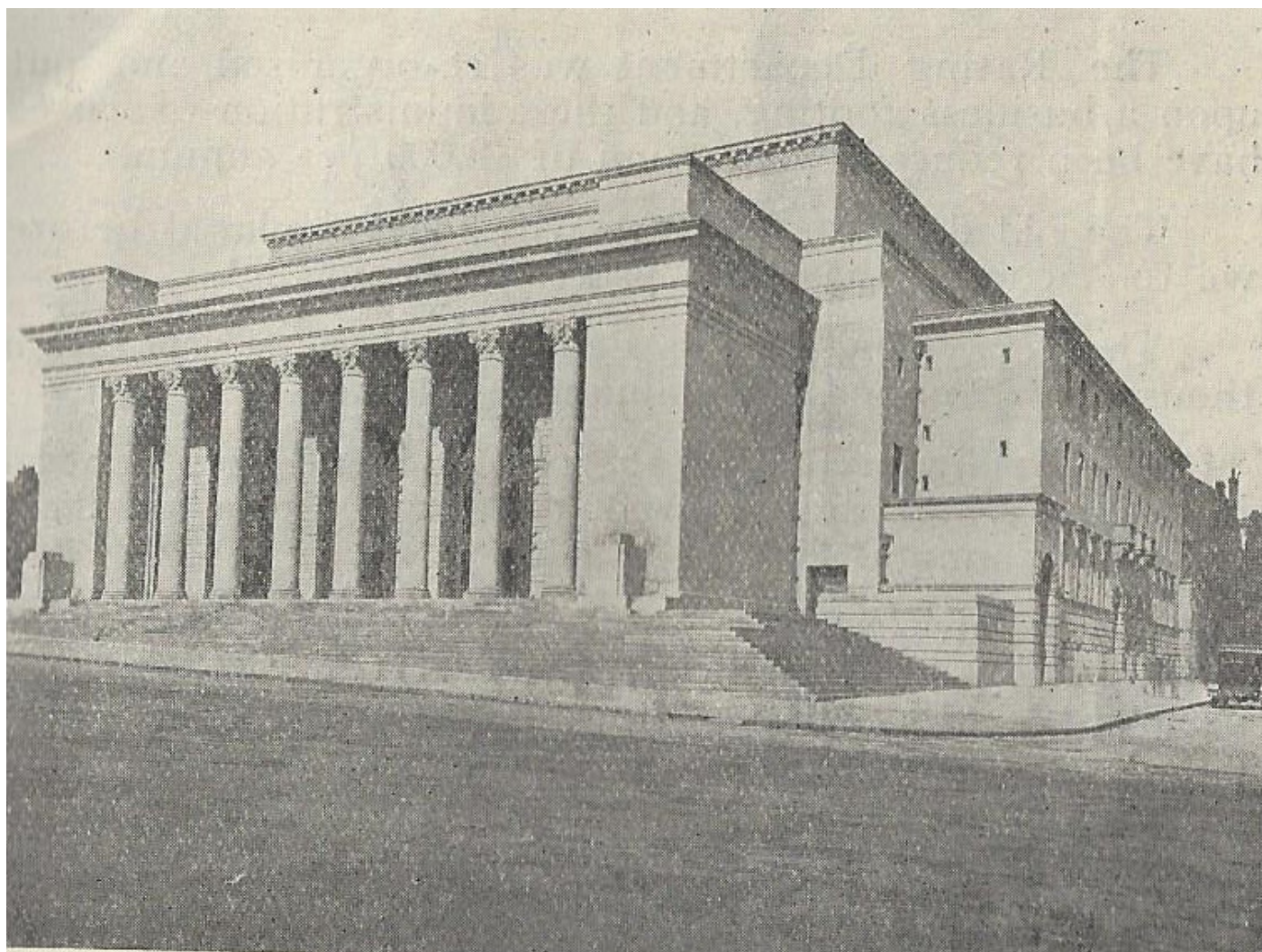
PART OF THE LONGLEY ESTATE

The Labour Party had endeavoured to ensure in the laying out of its new housing estates that there shall be a security against the difficulties which embarrassed the tenants on the estates built by the Anti-Labour Party.

The houses illustrated on Page 29 are typical of those erected in thousands under our direction.

The illustration on this page shows a portion of the Longley Estate from which it will be noticed that a fine elementary school and grounds are in the centre of the 'demand'. This school was built concurrently with the erection of the houses.

It will also be noticed that adequate open spaces prevent any suggestion of congestion. Broad highways and borders planted with trees have produced a really delightful suburb.



SHEFFIELD CITY HALL

CITY HALL

The building of the City Hall was a splendid contribution to Sheffield's civic life. The development of this scheme was subjected to the fiercest criticism by our opponents, who were unable to appreciate what its completion would mean to the city. There has however, been a general chorus of praise for this magnificent building.

As a cultural centre and as a provision for the entertainment and amusement of the citizens and as a place for festivals and conferences it has filled a long standing requirement. As a public building with the nearby Public Library, two very fine additions are made to the amenities and prestige of the city. Incidentally, its building created 120,000 "man days" of work for men who otherwise would have been in receipt of unemployment benefit or public assistance relief.

RATING AND VALUATION

The Rating Department was reorganised and put upon a business footing, and the administration expenses have been reduced by the sum of £8,000 per annum.

The old debt of £419,000, which accumulated before we took control, has been practically paid off. The repayment of this debt saved the Corporation thousands of pounds per annum in Bankers Interest. The amalgamation of the collection of the General Rate and Water Rate saved the Corporation at least £7,500 per annum.

Every few years the properties in the city have to be revalued by order of Parliament. Arrangements have been made whereby we can minimise the heavy cost entailed and the work will be done by our own staff, resulting in a substantial saving to the ratepayers. Business methods have undoubtedly been the key to the success of this Department.

A GREAT JOINT EFFORT

In the foregoing are a few facts that are of interest to anyone concerned in local government. The ideas of municipal socialism are impossible of full expansion under the present restrictions of national legislation. The banking monopoly of credit is a case in point. We unsuccessfully sought powers from parliament to remedy that and to ensure that the public of Sheffield could at least have the credit and advantages of its own incomes and revenues for the civic well-being as is the case in Birmingham.

Men from the Mine, Bench, Lathe, School, Footplate; Bricklayers, Silversmiths, Trade Union officials and women from the homes have banded together with a vision before them and in this booklet some of their successes are recorded and their aspirations revealed. The happiness of the people and the best use of municipal administration to increase that happiness has been the motto of the Labour Party in the Sheffield City Council.

ANTI-LABOUR PARTY'S COSTLY BLUNDER

In April 1921 the Anti-Labour majority, in spite of the vigorous opposition of the Labour Party, instituted the system of making working people pay their rates in lump sums twice yearly.

At the time the rates owing were practically nil.

Arrears grew rapidly. At the end of March, 1927 (six years after) no less than £693,000 in rates was owing.

That grave position was brought about in spite of the fact that the official records disclose that 255,000 summonses were issued which cost the people £3,325.

- 24,702 warrants were issued.
- 2,924 commitments were made, and
- 289 persons were sent to prison as a result of this attempt to do the impossible.

Labour immediately reversed that decision, recognising that with low wages and wide-spread unemployment it was impossible for people to pay half-yearly the sums required.

The satisfactory result of this return to administrative sanity is shown in the preceding pages.

RESULTS

Extracts from the Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the City of Sheffield for year ended December 31st 1928:

“The work of replacement of the old insanitary ‘ashpit’ by sanitary ash-bins is proceeding rapidly and I have been able to satisfy myself that this gradual but steady progress in cleaning up the unclean portions of the city is having the expected effect in a general improvement not only in the health but in the ‘morale’ of the citizens.”

And for the year ended 31st December 1932:

“The deaths from diarrhoea and enteritis have fallen from 109 in 1926 to 33 in 1932. Among the most important factors in bringing about this decline must be placed the encouragement of breast feeding, the extended use of dried milk in artificial feeding and the work of the medical staff and women inspectors at the Maternity and Child Welfare Centre.”

In connection with the above the following attendance figures at the Maternity Clinic for expectant mothers are the very eloquent:-

1926: 1,090 attended

1932: 14,715 attended.

Principle FIVE **P5**



Join Principle 5

An accessible co-operative learning
and information resource for all:

Lending Library

Co-operative archive and information resource

Talks, study groups, visits and film screenings

Engagement with other co-operatives and libraries

Co-operative News available for members

Principle 5 Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre

Aizlewood's Mill, Nursery Street, Sheffield S3 8GG

Tel: 0114 282 3132 Web: <https://www.principle5.coop>

SIX YEARS OF LABOUR RULE IN SHEFFIELD, 1926-32

Principle 5 Pamphlet No: 4

In 1932, the Sheffield City Council Labour Group published this pamphlet to celebrate the first six years of Labour control in Sheffield. In 1926, the Labour Party, and the Co-operative Party - who had first stood candidates in 1919 - finally defeated the 'Anti-Labour' forces which had conspired to keep it away from the levers of power at local level. Once elected, they undertook an ambitious programme of necessary financial reforms and public works in order to improve the health and wellbeing of the city.

With a particular emphasis on employment, health, and housebuilding, *Six Years of Labour Rule in Sheffield, 1926-32* remains an inspiration for those who hope to transform local communities for the better. It was reprinted in 1982 by the Sheffield Women's Printing Co-op to celebrate its 50th anniversary, and in order to recapture the radical spirit of its achievements during the first Margaret Thatcher administration. It is now back in print.

£5

Principle **P5**
FIVE