

A YOUNG FABIAN PAMPHLET 2S 6D

the mechanics of victory

THE MECHANICS OF VICTORY is the third publication of the Young Fabian Group, and has been prepared by a study group, whose views do not necessarily represent the views of all members of the Young Fabian Group.

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I. Introduction

SIX years ago the Wilson Report spoke of the organisation of the Labour Party as 'still at the penny-farthing stage in a jet-propelled era'. Since 1955 some, though not all, the recommendations then made have been carried out, and in those parts of the machinery covered by the report, progress has been made.

However, the report never dealt fully with the head office, the publicity or the financing of the Party. In these fields few reforms have been made over the years, and we are in many respects still at the penny-farthing stage. Moreover, if 1955 was a jet-propelled era, 1962 is the age of the space rocket. In relation to the advances made by our opponents, we in the Labour Party are probably at a greater disadvantage now even than in 1955.

Since the last election, much could and should have been done to improve the machinery of the party. But of course we have been involved in one bitter dispute after another, and there has been little time to think about what is needed, let alone achieve a sufficient consensus of opinion to introduce improvements.

Within the next three years another election will be upon us. In this election the Labour Party may be fighting not only to gain power, but even for its life. If we continue to lose seats as we have done in the last four elections, there is a strong possibility that the fissiparous forces will come to the fore and cause the Party to disintegrate: and the Liberal Party might then take over from Labour, as Labour did from the Liberals during and after the First World War.

That would be a disaster. If it is to be avoided the Labour Party must make a vigorous and determined effort to win the next election. Such an effort will require far-reaching improvements in the Party machinery.

It would, of course, be quite wrong to pretend that organisation is more important than principles and policy, or that elections can be won by organisation alone: organisation exists to put the principles and the policy into effect, and acts within a framework determined by them. But it would be equally wrong to fail to make as powerful an impact as possible

upon the electorate, and at present we show every likelihood of allowing just such a failure to take place.

This pamphlet is an attempt to make up for the neglect of the last few years. It does not aim to cover every aspect of the machinery of the Party. In the present context there would have been little point in going over in detail the ground covered by the Wilson Report, or in getting embroiled in much wider and more contentious issues such as those relating to the power structure of the Party. Thus a host of matters, many of them very important, from the Young Socialists to the selection of candidates and the position of Conference, have been omitted. What has been done is to concentrate on a few central issues, and to highlight those fields where changes are most urgently required—the position of the General Secretary and the relationship of Transport House with the Parliamentary Labour Party, publicity, a national agency service, membership, and finally finance.

2. The Role of the General Secretary

THE General Secretary of the Labour Party is its principal executive officer. Under him work the staff of Transport House and the regional officers of the Party. The agents, though locally engaged and employed, work to the plans which he is responsible for formulating. He is therefore in a position to shape the character of the Party and influence its electoral prospects in a way that is only equalled by two or three of the top Parliamentary leaders.

Since 1900 there have only been four Secretaries of the Party. The first was Ramsay Macdonald and the second Arthur Henderson. These two men were major figures in the Parliamentary Party, and Henderson once combined the job with a Cabinet position. Then in 1934, after Henderson's resignation, the National Executive recommended to Conference that the Secretary of the Party should not hold ministerial rank. However, an amendment moved from the floor went further and changed the constitution to prohibit the General Secretary from standing as a candidate for Parliament or from sitting in it. The reason for this change, which was unsuccessfully resisted by the Executive, stemmed partly from fear that too much power would be concentrated in a single person, and partly from the idea that the job could not be done properly by a man serving in the House of Commons. As a result, Jim Middleton (1935-1944) and Morgan Phillips have been precluded from election to the House of Commons.

We may trace to this decision the greatest single defect in the Party's structure today. There is a serious lack of co-ordination between Head Office and the Parliamentary Party. There is no continuous line of command, no effective link in their daily operations, and no central thought connecting the theme of their political propaganda.

The National Executive Committee, elected at annual Conference, suffers from a weak political impulse which is inevitable with a large group of which about half are only part-time politicians. They have at their command a staff that is overworked and underpaid, and which they supervise by a series of committees on the municipal model. By contrast, the Parliamentary Party, led by the Shadow Cabinet, has a strong political impulse but no executive agency of its own. The ordinary M.P.s, despite their work in specialist groups, are under-used by the Party. Few of them are brought in on research or policy projects undertaken by the Executive.

The result of all this is a clumsiness in operation which gravely handicaps the Party. After the last Election, when it should have been tackled, this problem was pushed into the background by the Clause 4 controversy: now any mention of changing the constitution is looked on with grave

suspicion. It would however, be easy for the N.E.C. to persuade Annual Conference this year to reverse the prohibition against an M.P. serving as General Secretary.

The Best Course

There is an overwhelming case for having a major Parliamentary leader in charge of Transport House. Under him there would be a Director-General who would work as a Permanent Secretary works under his political Minister. This is the position now held by Mr. Macleod in the Conservative Party, where he is the key strategist and planner, with all the powers necessary to carry through his decisions, both in the Commons and in Tory Central Office.

This idea was considered by the Executive after the last election, but it was feared that it would confer too much power on the Parliamentary Party at the expense of the N.E.C. They were not prepared to countenance the implication of 'overlordship' and the proposal was specifically rejected. These objections might be valid if the P.L.P., or the Leader himself were given the right to appoint the General Secretary. But nothing of that kind is suggested. If an M.P. was eligible to be General Secretary, it would only mean that the field of choice would be greatly widened when an appointment came to be made. But an M.P. if selected would still have to be elected by Conference on the recommendation of the N.E.C. The M.P.-General Secretary would therefore draw his authority from the Conference and the N.E.C. in exactly the same way as the last two General Secretaries have done. Similarly, he would only hold the position while he continued to give satisfaction to the N.E.C. and Conference as laid down by the constitution.

Another Alternative

When a new General Secretary comes to be appointed, the N.E.C. should take its courage in both hands and agree to interview M.P.s who might wish to apply. If they decided to appoint one, Conference would have to ratify his appointment and make the necessary constitutional amendment to permit him to occupy the position. This course of action would solve many of the most difficult problems now facing the Party, and we believe it is the one that should be followed. If, however, either the Executive or Conference are unwilling to do this, it will be necessary to consider other methods for achieving co-ordination. If power is not to be vested in one man, it must necessarily be shared by two. The two obvious men are the Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Party and the General Secretary.

The Deputy Leader would have to be given responsibility for Parliamentary business as 'Shadow' Leader of the House and not confined to a departmental brief. The Secretary and staff would work with him and he would be answerable to the Shadow Cabinet. The General Secretary would continue as head of the machine and the Party staff and would remain answerable to the National Executive. It would have to be clearly

understood that these two men and the Leader would be vested with all the power necessary to reach any practical decisions that they thought necessary and which would of course later be reported to the N.E.C. The Leader and Deputy Leader are already members both of the Shadow Cabinet and the N.E.C. The General Secretary, for the last year or so, has been empowered to attend the Shadow Cabinet. He should, however, be upgraded in such a way as to make him a participating member of it.

If these arrangements were made there would have to be some clear division of responsibility. It should certainly not be drawn between Transport House and the Parliamentary Party but rather between the tactical and strategic functions of both. Political decisions involving the day-to-day campaigning of the Party fall naturally in the tactical field and should come under the Deputy Leader. The servicing and organisation of the machine and research on future policy, being of a strategic character, would then devolve upon the General Secretary. Under this classification publicity is seen to be primarily a tactical function and constituency organisation primarily strategic. At many points the two overlap and here the closest co-operation and consultation would be called for between the two men.

This system, if it could be made to work, would still be only second best. It would however be far more satisfactory than the third way which is now evidently being attempted. Under this scheme, the Deputy Leader, in addition to his 'shadow ministry' in the House, has been made chairman of the organisation sub-committee of the N.E.C. By virtue of this position he is apparently to be built up as effective overlord of Transport House and thus to control the new General Secretary when he is appointed. The difficulty about this arrangement is that it seeks to confer the powers of the General Secretary on a major Parliamentary figure without appointing him as such. To extend the authority of the chairman of one committee to embrace the whole office will only confuse the chain of command still further, create friction within the Executive and leave the General Secretary in a most invidious position.

If overlordship, as a principle, is accepted, it should be exercised as Arthur Henderson exercised it—by virtue of his double authority as a Parliamentary Leader and General Secretary.

Whatever solution is adopted, it is of the greatest importance that the matter should be settled as quickly as possible. Someone must be put in charge now with power to carry through the many and urgent tasks of reorganisation that have to be undertaken.

3. Changes at Transport House

THE first task is to achieve a greater measure of administrative efficiency in Transport House and the Party generally. The Labour Party is a big concern and it must be awake to changes of management methods. There is strong reason to believe that after a thorough check by a skilled consultant specialising in 'O and M' it would be possible to streamline the office and secure financial economy. In one respect improvement is urgent. Consultation inside Transport House between various heads of departments is purely informal and personal, and there is no regular machinery for bringing together key figures to review the work of head office. Despite the valuable initiatives of the staff, there is still no proper upward and downward flow of ideas and suggestions, which are not only valuable in themselves but are essential to good morale.

The next job that must be tackled is the question of salary scales. The Party may not be able to afford as large a staff as the Tories. They are bound to rely on a great deal of voluntary, unpaid help from outside. But this cannot be accepted as a justification for the low salaries paid to those who do work for the Party. Nor can the fact that trade unions usually pay inadequate salaries be used as an excuse to keep salaries low. Not only does this mean that the Party cannot recruit men of the quality it needs, and that people leave it for higher returns, but it also means in some cases that it is satisfied with inadequate work from those who are frankly, not up to the mark and who would not be retained if the Party had to pay them a salary appropriate to the work rightfully expected of them.

The new General Secretary should also look at the committee structure of the N.E.C. These committees closely resemble those operated in local authorities. The chairman takes a continuing interest and keeps in touch with the permanent official whose work comes under his particular committee. But major decisions have to wait for a month (and in the summer for two months) before they can be ratified. All sorts of delays result from this clumsy chain of command. It might be better to appoint certain members of the N.E.C. with power to take necessary decisions in certain fields and to refer others of greater importance right to the top without delay. No executive act should hang upon such a cumbrous authority as now exists.

Propaganda

Another major problem that must be faced is that of co-ordinating propaganda. At the moment this is left to the publicity committee of the N.E.C., largely made up of people without special knowledge or experience in the field. Broadcasting and television is separately handled and decisions are vested in a committee that exists for this purpose. These problems are discussed elsewhere in this pamphlet. If a high-powered Director of Informa-

tion is appointed, as we suggest, he would have to work very closely with the General Secretary and/or the Deputy Leader and should also attend meetings of the Shadow Cabinet. A Party spokesman will carry no weight unless he is known to be on the inside.

A further problem to be faced at once, is the research and policy-making functions of Transport House. The present research department, though excellent, is small and is bound to supplement its slender resources by keeping in close touch with all those creative people outside whose ideas are necessary if the Party is to be replenished regularly with new ideas. It is absolutely essential that a bridge should be built between Transport House and all the sources of new thinking in the community.

In particular, the whole policy-making procedure needs to be re-examined. In the past Party policy has been formulated by sub-committees of the Executive, to which are co-opted some M.P.s and a few outside experts. The statements thus produced tended to be too detailed, turgid and hard to put across to the public. The question of future policy could be approached in a variety of ways. Commissions could be set up under the chairmanship of a leading member of the Party to review problems in the various fields. They should be able to receive representations and be made up very largely of people expert in those fields, who are free of the limitations imposed by an obsession with practical difficulties. The Youth Commission worked well on this basis, and the Advertising Commission has been constructed in a similar way. The Executive would then be free to pick and choose which of the ideas in the Report should be included in the policy of the Party and in its election manifesto. By such means the main body of the Labour Movement could advance behind a creeping barrage of forward thinking that would keep the enemy continuously on the defensive.

One further idea is worth serious consideration: the transformation of Transport House into a real centre of life for the Party. Not only do a relatively small number of M.P.s ever visit the place, but it has little to offer to Party workers who find themselves in London. What is needed is a sort of club there, where Party people can meet each other and have a meal and a talk and the chance to meet the Parliamentary leadership and the staff. Perhaps the proposed Bevan Memorial Centre could actually be constructed in the building. It would be greatly appreciated and would serve exactly the purpose that is required. There should also be a permanent exhibition of campaign techniques and Party organisational methods which would attract considerable interest and help to establish high national standards.

These are some of the jobs which a new General Secretary will have to face on his appointment. There are no doubt others equally important. The Executive would be wise to allow the new man to tackle them in his own way. It will be necessary to give him a free hand, since he is a man who has to make the machine work. Nothing would be more foolish than to cramp his style by maintaining the lugubrious supervision by countless committees over everything he does. Indeed, no one possessing the qualities of imagination, drive, enthusiasm and vitality that is required for this job could possibly be expected to work under such conditions.

4. The Permanent Campaign

THE Labour Party was in origin a "grass roots" party—a popular party that created its own leadership and central organisation. The belief that this is or should still be the case lies at the root of much of the distaste for 'selling' political programmes. But in fact the position has been reversed. We now have a party organisation, a leadership, a headquarters—but not enough voters.

It is no longer possible for Labour to win by having a better machine for getting voters out on polling day—we shall have to convert people as well, and convert them not only in the weeks preceeding an election, but year in and year out.

The Role of Publicity

The mass media in projecting the political parties have had to concentrate their attention upon a small section of the Parliamentary leadership as representative of the whole party. To the Labour Party, in which the rank-and-file have always regarded themselves as the ultimate authority, this has presented the dilemma of excessive personalisation. In fact it has contributed towards a swing in the balance of power within the Party towards the Parliamentary leadership. The ability of Mr. Gaitskell before the cameras has to stand for the competence of the Party in the eyes of the public.

Organisations like political parties, needing mass attention, cannot contract-out of the use of the mass media. The Tories recognised this some time ago. The Labour Party has at last woken up to the necessity of long-term publicity planning with the appointment, two years before the next election, of a campaign committee.

The composition of this committee is far from ideal—none of its members have been chosen for their expertise in publicity methods. And it is still not clear what its programme is to be. But it is imperative that it should devote itself to working out a long-term co-ordinated strategy embracing not only posters and brochures, but press relations, broadcasting, speeches made by Party leaders and any other form of contact with the voting public. Of course this cannot be a substitute for a proper Party policy—indeed, it would be useless without one. But in the heat of battle over major policy issues, many of these more technical matters have been overlooked, and badly need attention.

As a footnote it is worth quoting. A. A. Rogow and Peter Shore's book on *The Labour Government and British Industry 1945-51*. On publicity they conclude that 'throughout the period, despite frequent warnings and demands for improvement of Labour Party propaganda, little

effective action was taken'. They show that even in the crucial election year 1950-51, the Labour Party, the Co-operative Union and the T.U.C. together spent only £94,000 on all forms of printed publicity. Yet in 1950, they say, Aims of Industry, the P.R. organisation of private enterprise, bought advertising space valued at normal rates at £2m. They conclude that there was a major failure of communication between the Labour Government and the electorate, and that this materially contributed to Labour's defeat. Much the same could be said about each election since then.

The Personnel

We cannot indulge any longer in the pleasant daydream that we are the party of the brilliant amateur. At the last election the Tories had a better brigade of professionals at their disposal, besides a greater number of volunteer workers in every aspect of their campaign. Much could be done by Transport House to organise the voluntary labours of sympathetic practitioners of the mass media: but it must employ, perhaps on short-term contracts, the special skills of the experts.

The excellence of *The Future Labour Offers You*, the chief pamphlet used before the 1959 election, stands out in comparison with the general level of Transport House material. This was because it was produced by a team of professionals—Dick Crossman (virtually a professional propagandist), Sidney Jacobson and Hugh Cudlipp, without reference to the normal propaganda machine. In the ranks of the Labour Party are some of the finest typographers, photographers, commercial artists and popular journalists. At the drop of a hat they would give their services either free or for a small payment. Many of them would consider it a great mark of success to be asked to help the Party. Professionalisation of all Transport House publicity is urgent and essential. There should be no repetition of the rebuff at the last election to a group of public relations men sympathetic to Labour who were rash enough to volunteer proposals for a public relations programme.

The existing Publicity Committee should be replaced by a strengthened Propaganda Advisory Committee of Party members possessing the requisite expertise. This could be called upon by Transport House to assist in its day-to-day needs and work on special projects.

These changes would of course require more money, and we turn to this question in a later section of the pamphlet.

The Press

The Press Department at Transport House is at present mainly an information bureau. It deals with the more formal arrangements of the Party, and is little used to put across policy. It is worth remarking here that there is an inbuilt weakness in the reporting of the Labour Party in the Press. This lies in the division of this function between the political correspondents, with their mainly Parliamentary contacts, and the industrial correspondents, with their mainly trade union contacts. Broadly, the division between the two is a geographical one, depending on whether the event

takes place within the House of Commons precincts or not. Given limited contact between the two groups of journalists, this politically arbitrary division is a weakness, especially as the political correspondents are inevitably preoccupied with Government policy most of the time.

Another weakness is the indiscriminate (and often inaccurate) gossip by leading members of the Party on which much reporting of the Labour Party is based. Nothing said here should be interpreted as meaning that the journalist should be treated as a passive recipient of information—reporters will always have their contacts and make good use of them. But much of the factual reporting of the Labour Party, and of the policy inherent in Party decisions is done by a haphazard, hole in the corner method—as anyone will discover who goes into the Marquis of Granby, the nearest pub to Transport House, after an N.E.C. meeting. Both journalists and the Party stand to gain from a greater regularisation, as well as a greater frankness, in their mutual contact. The N.E.C. often behaves as though it were positively afraid of publicity—after a recent meeting of the N.E.C. the official press handout contained no reference to the main story which emerged from the meeting, and which most papers ran the next day to the almost complete exclusion of the matter in the handout.

The story was that Mr. George Brown was to carry out a personal enquiry into the failure of the Party at the Moss Side and other by-elections, in his new capacity as chairman of the sub-committee responsible for the constituency party machine. This story at least revealed an energetic reaction to events: the official handout was about the Shops and Offices Act, which, though a worthy subject, was not news.

Formal contact with the press, outside Parliament, is limited at the moment to press conferences held after the monthly meeting of the N.E.C. (usually taken up with formal decisions taken by the N.E.C.), and handouts sent irregularly to the press saying, perhaps, that Gaitskell is to tour the Black Country, or giving a quotation from his speech there.

What is needed is a greatly extended use of the technique of informal, possibly off-the-record, press conferences to explain Labour Party policy and to give *all* journalists a background against which to report Labour Party affairs. This technique is used extensively by Ministries and other bodies. It is of course used (by the Labour leaders as much as anyone) in the House of Commons. But this is not enough. To take an instance, the Government's Immigration Bill was known to be coming for some weeks previous to its appearance. Yet the Parliamentary Party only finally decided its attitude the night before the day of the debate—so presumably deciding total Party policy on the issue. But this was limited to Parliament, and was much too late to establish the Party's position on the issue in the eyes of the country at large. What was needed was an earlier, better publicised policy decision.

Even the purely information role of the Press Department could be improved. The bare handouts reading like a railway time-table that are sent out to newspapers to announce a tour by Mr. Gaitskell simply go straight into the journalist's capacious waste paper basket. *Why* is he going

there, *what* will he do as a result, *how* is it connected with current political issues? These things are rarely said, and are what makes a story. In short, there is no effort to feed to the Press positive interesting information that it would be glad to use. As a result Labour Party reporting degenerates only too frequently into sniffing out the latest internal fracas in minute detail.

Why could the Labour Party not hold a public press conference, as it did in the last election campaign, on every major issue that arises? It could choose its own time for putting over its 'line' (instead of having it dictated by the Government, as happens at present), and would then not have to rely only on Parliamentary performance to put across Labour policy. This reliance is very odd to see in a supposedly mass party, and is a great weakness, if only because on the day of debate the Government's view inevitably gets priority in reporting. Another way of ending this reliance would be far greater emphasis on extra-Parliamentary speech-making by Party leaders (with a higher quality of speeches than at present).

Radio and Television

Broadcasting finally emerged at the last election as the chief medium through which the fight between the parties is waged. In this country no direct political advertising is allowed on radio and television, and neither television channel managed to produce a direct confrontation of the two major party leaders, as occurred at the last U.S. Presidential election. Nevertheless, these two media have greatly increased the area of the campaign for which they are responsible.

The Labour Party, which once refused to allow its annual conference to be televised, now seems to have become more sophisticated and less squeamish when confronted with the glaring lights and the camera lens. It has good reason to congratulate itself on the high quality of the election broadcasts of 1959 which possibly saved Labour from even greater disaster. Joseph Trenaman and Denis McQuail in their study of the effect of television in the last election *Television and the Political Image* were able to demonstrate the effectiveness of Labour's use of television in those three vital weeks, but emphasise that the actual number of votes changed as a result of the broadcasts was very small; the changing of voting habits on a large scale can only come about over a very long period of repeated effort and successful broadcasting.

To produce anything like a swing in its favour the Party's machinery for projecting its image on television must be permanently geared to the pitch it reached temporarily in the election campaign. The idea of a connected series of broadcasts was a successful one, and there is no reason why the annual round of party political broadcasts should not be designed in a similar way.

We suggest that the organisation built up to produce the 1959 election broadcasts should be in existence permanently to produce the dozen or so party political programmes broadcast every year. On these occasions the viewers of both channels are joined—there is no rival programme on television appearing simultaneously. Labour's programmes, if they were always

as witty, direct and entertaining as they were at the time of the 1959 election, would not leave the viewing public regretting the lack of alternative programmes. But such programmes will have to be expensive.

The Broadcasting Advisory Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party worked well in 1959, but the dismantling of the emergency election co-ordinating organisation has left insufficient working contact between the publicity department of Transport House and the Broadcasting Advisory Committee. While the former has the power and money the latter tends to have the ideas. There must be a permanent flow of ideas between M.P.s and other prominent sympathisers who regularly broadcast, on the one hand, and the relevant organisational departments in Transport House on the other.

The Conservative Party some years ago decided to take television extremely seriously; although it can afford to buy more expertise for the job, it should not be impossible for the Labour Party's broadcasting department to do its job thoroughly. There should be constant monitoring of, and analysis of audience research on, broadcasts which might influence the public view of the Labour Party. Reports should be circularised to M.P.s and supporters whose influence could be used in speeches and articles to counteract any wrong impressions that had been given. Advice based on monitoring should be made available to all political Labour broadcasters.

Some time ago the Conservative Central Office was able to rule that no M.P. should appear in the television studios wearing a dinner jacket or formal dress for fear this evoked the impression that Conservatives were grinders of the faces of the poor. Such discipline is impossible as well as undesirable in our happily less conformist party. But let us at least create a powerful and expert press and broadcasting department which can give authoritative advice, even on minutiae which might subconsciously influence the voter, to all the people who appear in public on behalf of the Party.

Making it Work

Partly our criticisms point to a crisis of management within the Party organisation. But they go further than this. There has been a failure within the movement to give public relations a high enough status. The timing and arrangement of released information is an inseparable aspect of Party policy and of Party organisation. Even Party members learn more from the newspapers and television about Labour affairs than they do by means of circulars and internal communications. Next to the General Secretary himself, there is or should be no figure more vital than the person in command of publicity. It is not possible for the General Secretary to cope alone with both tasks; not only is the work itself of enormous importance but the way in which it has to be carried out have become infinitely more complicated.

The formation of the new Campaign Committee should do a great deal to break the logjam in the organisation of publicity. But in addition there should be a Director of Information in charge of all matters of

press, radio, television and publicity. He would be in charge of the permanent campaign for getting Labour's ideas across to the public; in him would be vested the task of concerting and planning the public relations of the Party. He would also have the right of attending all meetings of the N.E.C. and the Shadow Cabinet, as the General Secretary has.

The Deputy Leader, the General Secretary and the Director of Information would need to meet frequently to exchange news of developments within the Party in the country, within the Party in Parliament and in national and international politics. Decisions would be made (within the framework of existing Party policy) which the Director of Information would proceed to communicate to the press and argue out with journalists and editors. At his command would be all the Party's publicity and communications facilities. The Party's response to every development in politics thus would be rapidly created and instantly communicated.

One of the difficulties in the past has been the need the Press has felt for a spokesman both influential and always accessible to represent the Labour Party. In the Parliamentary recess the Labour Party usually ceases to function. The Government continues to make decisions and implement them, though the Opposition remains practically silent. An Opposition should be permanently in evidence, should maintain its presence in the political life of the country, even when its leaders are absent abroad. Under the system we recommend the Director of Information would stand in for the leadership during the Parliamentary recess and whenever they are personally unavailable; their opinions and statements would be communicated to him for release to the Press and mass media. The Leader, Deputy Leader and General Secretary should always be free by telephone at least to make use of the publicity machine of the Party.

The Labour Party badly needs this permanent publicity initiative; when, for instance, the figures for homelessness in London are revealed the Leader or his Deputy should have a statement immediately and quotably available, reminding the public of the Party's policies on rents and land. In this way the Party would be constantly in the public's mind, not as a divided and half-absent apology for an opposition but as an alternative administration exposing and answering every move the Government makes.

5. In the Constituencies

ONE of the basic needs of the Labour Party all over the country is a proper 'civil service'. Ideally, there would be an able full-time agent in every constituency, and each agent would have security of employment, a good guaranteed income, the possibility of promotion and a fair pension, a house and secretarial assistance. Were such a situation ever achieved it would mean an immense improvement in the local organisation of the Party.

At the moment this ideal is just pie in the sky because of lack of money. However, the need for such a National Agency Service is great and it should be accepted as one of the Party's objectives. In the meantime, pending the raising of more money, lack of money must not be used as an excuse for failing to make any improvements at all.

Number of Full-time Agents

1951	...	...	...	296
1955	...	...	...	252
1959	...	...	...	243
1961	...	...	...	210

There is a continuing decrease in the number of agents, the turnover remains high, the level of ability of applicants is depressingly low, and we still lack a proper training scheme.

What should be done now?

(a) We must closely scrutinise the function of party officials at local level and consider how their jobs can be made into attractive posts carrying reasonable security and possibilities of promotion. As they stand at present, the posts are badly paid, not as secure as they should be and insufficiently attractive to entice many people who would make good officials to apply. We think that the post of agent should automatically include the secretaryship of local parties, and that, wherever possible, trade unions might consider the status of Party Agent as equivalent to that of District Secretary or Organiser and that a measure of interchangeability be encouraged. We should also make these posts attractive enough to encourage, for example, students who have graduated from Ruskin College or Stanford Hall Co-operative College to consider taking up jobs as full-time party officials.

(b) As an interim target the Party might aim by the next election to increase the number of full-time agents to the 1951 figure of 296.

(c) The Regional Staffs need to be increased in numbers and improved in calibre: pay and conditions must be made good enough to attract more people of first-rate ability. In this way something can be done to make up for the lack of full-time agents.

(d) The Labour Party prides itself on its voluntary basis, yet are we quite confident that we make the best possible use of all the voluntary labour available? It is time a thorough appraisal was made of the best way in which to use part-time voluntary personnel. There must be plenty of people of ability and with a certain amount of time available, for instance teachers, who could be encouraged to take posts in the Party either voluntarily or at a moderate part-time salary. Greater efforts should be made to recruit such people, and give them a fuller training.

An Educated and Participating Rank and File

At present a large part of the membership is insufficiently informed about and responsive to new ideas, whether they concern national policy or local affairs. Much more needs to be done to encourage a proper upwards and downwards flow of information and ideas.

Unless adequate consideration is given to policy by the members of a democratic socialist party, organisation as an end in itself becomes pointless. Most constituency parties do, and all should have a programme of political education and discussion. The problem is how to give such discussions vitality and purpose. It would help if every C.L.P. aimed to prepare policy statements on matters of local interest. They should be especially concerned with such matters as town planning, 'civic trust issues', race relations, housing co-operatives, consumer problems, the arts and local amenities. Local parties should have a 'Plan for our Town', and much more should be done to consult those local people with creative ideas, such as architects, teachers and doctors, many of whom would be willing to help if given encouragement.

The Labour Party should be seen to be a party interested in people and their problems, in participating in their lives, and not only concerned with fighting battles over complex problems, which although important are not always considered the only things that matter in life. The image of the bitter, quarrelsome intellectual is too frequently conveyed when socialists discuss things that, justifiably or not, people do not understand and are bored by.

Many constituency parties waste a great deal of time and bore new members to distraction by duplication of meetings. The same business is discussed at Ward, G.M.C. and Executive Committee level, and sometimes at Borough Parties too. We consider that Borough Parties usually serve little useful purpose and should be down-graded to the level of liaison bodies, as recommended by the Wilson Report.

The overlapping of business between E.Cs. and G.M.Cs. is a problem the solution of which is in the hands of the constituency parties themselves. The G.M.C. should be the chief political forum of the party, and the E.C. should be left with a fairly free hand to deal with business and

administrative matters, reporting periodically to the G.M.C. If a party chairman is unable or unwilling to prevent the G.M.C. from discussing in fine detail every aspect of the E.C. report, the business might just as well go to the G.M.C. in the first place and the E.C. be dispensed with. Normally, however, a strong and continuing lead from the chairman should enable the essential distinction between the two committees to be maintained.

The suggestion made in the *Political Quarterly* of July, 1960, that Ward parties and G.M.C.s should be replaced by a General Party Meeting which all members would be entitled to attend, deserves further consideration. But it would probably only prove practicable in highly concentrated urban areas: in most constituencies the moderately interested member would be much more likely to attend a meeting in his immediate vicinity than to make a journey, often of several miles, to the centre of the constituency. But conditions vary so much between individual constituencies that there is a strong case for enabling constituency parties to devise their own constitutions and bases of representation, within clearly defined limits, rather than conforming to a standard pattern as at present.

6. Membership

THE pattern of membership in various constituencies shows that Labour's strength in the country is by no means reflected in the figures for Party membership. Nor is it true that constituencies with big Labour majorities are, as one might reasonably expect, those with the largest memberships. Many Labour strongholds, like Ebbw Vale or Easington, possess only a fraction of the total membership possible in those areas, while more marginal seats like Yeovil or Hemel Hempstead have large and active memberships. And on average, as the table shows, the larger the Labour majority, the smaller the Labour Party membership.

			<i>Number of Seats</i>		<i>Average Labour Party Membership (1960)</i>
MAJORITY (1959)	LABOUR	Over 20,000	24	...	1,058
		6,001—20,000	117	...	1,292
		3,001—6,000	53	...	1,426
		0—3,000	64	...	1,550
	NON-LABOUR	0—3,000	56	...	1,672
		3,001—6,000	50	...	1,851
		Over 6,000	254	...	1,217

Note: Northern Ireland omitted.

Clearly the constituency parties in safe areas are not tapping the resources open to them, possibly because they feel it unnecessary and sometimes because local oligarchies do not like the idea of an increased membership diluting their hold over the local machine. Whatever the reason, the Party nationally cannot afford to ignore the loss of income and active support through neglect of the Labour voters in safe constituencies. If Party affiliation fees were related to the size of the Labour vote in the constituencies as well as actual membership, local parties would be encouraged to embark on recruiting campaigns in order to improve their finances. Such a policy would not only activate parties which have become complacent, but would also allow for the deployment of additional funds from the centre. Recommendations along these lines were made in the Wilson Report. It is time they were implemented.

We have considered various methods by which Party membership and support could be increased: there are a number of suggestions which we feel deserve wide discussion within the Labour Movement:

- i. Two tier membership.
- ii. Registered supporters.
- iii. National Membership Weeks.

There are two possible forms of two-tier membership. One form springs from the belief that many Labour voters would be prepared to join the Party in a nominal sense, but would not undertake membership which implied a large number of duties. The development of a massive roll of supporters, paying a subscription of say 2/6 a year, would significantly increase income in many constituencies.

It would be unreasonable to expect that Party membership in the full sense should be conferred in this way and those wishing to participate in Party affairs should be prepared to make a larger contribution. But any proposal which could be stigmatised as providing for first and second-class membership, would be unacceptable to the Party. We therefore put forward instead the idea of Registered Supporters who would make an annual contribution to the Party of a smaller sum than the proposed new membership subscription.

Such a system would have the advantage of building up a systematic record of supporters in the constituencies and make more voters consciously identified with the Labour Party. It may be argued that, by suggesting such a scheme, we are merely providing an opportunity for apathetic members and supporters to shrink from their responsibilities in undertaking a more active role. This is a misguided view which ignores the fact that many people have no wish to commit themselves entirely to a political organisation or involve themselves entirely in political matters, but would be prepared to associate themselves in some measure at least with the aims of the Labour Party.

Before determining the precise form of any scheme for Registered Supporters a number of pilot projects should be tried out in a variety of constituencies so that the most efficient form of organisation and the level of contribution can be established by empirical means.

The second version of the two-tier membership was exemplified by the C.C.F. in Canada. There a system was operated whereby the upper tier membership received no extra rights but contributed at a higher level. Such a scheme applied in Britain might enable the Party to raise more money from its better-off supporters, and might be combined with some inducement in the way of free literature or other small benefits for those who opted to join at the higher level of subscription.

It is worth noting that an even more sophisticated version of this type of membership is operated by the S.P.D. in Germany, which has what is in effect an income tax on its members. By this means the party in 1957 received £720,000 from under 600,000 members, and the best-off members were expected to pay about £50.

All these possible alternatives in the structure and basis of membership need very careful consideration within the movement: further research and experiment would be needed before any reforms were finally adopted.

However, one thing is clear to us: the present subscription is far too low. It has been 6d. a month ever since 1940, and in the intervening twenty-one years prices have risen nearly three times and earnings four times. At the present level the subscription is hardly worth collecting (indeed, a Party is doing quite well if it collects four out of six shillings a year), whereas

a larger subscription paid by a smaller number of members would encourage far more thorough and effective collection, and hence the main means of communication between the individual member and the Party would be improved, instead of remaining in its present state of all too frequent withering decay.

A bold approach is needed, and we suggest that the subscription should be increased roughly in proportion to the rise in prices since 1940, i.e., to about £1. The New Democratic Party of Canada has decided upon an annual subscription of \$2.50 or nearly £1, with an affiliation fee to the national party of \$1 or about 7/- for individual constituency members. In Sweden the individual subscription to the Social Democratic Party is not fixed for the whole country, but varies slightly according to the decision of the local party: on average it is nearly £1, and the affiliation fee to the national party of \$1 or about 7/- for individual constituency members. These are examples that could be imitated in Britain.

When these changes are made a drive to increase our support in the country would clearly be needed, and this might become a National Campaign Week organised simultaneously every spring by all constituency parties under the direction of Transport House.

7. How can the Money be Found?

THE great majority of the proposals we have made in the preceding pages of this pamphlet will be greeted with the reply 'Yes, but where's the money?'. The Party must therefore consider as a matter of the first priority how its income can be increased.

The question falls into two parts, Transport House and the constituency parties, and in each case there is the question of regular income and the special funds needed for elections.

Transport House

The annual income of the Labour Party nationally is at present about £250,000: about three quarters of this sum comes from the trade unions and the rest from constituency parties and other affiliates, plus a little from investments and, in some years, from donations.

This is insufficient even for our present commitments, for in 1960 there was a deficit of £47,000. This deficit should be covered by the increase in the affiliation fee that will come into force in 1963. But the rise will only suffice to cover the natural increase in the Party's expenditure over the next few years. It will not cover new commitments.

Certain other considerations should also be borne in mind. Until 1954 membership was rising rapidly: 2.7 million in 1945, 5.7m in 1949 and 6.5m in 1954. But since 1954 the membership has been more or less steady, and in the last two years has, of course, fallen. The prospects of further large increases in membership are small. Thus we can no longer look with any assurance to increases in membership as a source of extra money. This changed situation is reflected in the two recent increases in the affiliation fee—from 6d. to 9d. in 1957, and from 9d. to 1/- from 1963 onwards. If the Party is to raise its income in the future it will have to depend upon continual increases in the affiliation fee or upon sources of income as yet untapped.

In comparison to the Labour Party, the Conservatives are immensely wealthy. Their income is a closely guarded secret. But Central Office employs about twice as many people as does Transport House: there is at least one full-time employee in all constituencies, and salaries are certainly much higher. Compare, too, election expenditure. D. E. Butler and Richard Rose in *The British General Election of 1959* estimated that the Conservatives spent £468,000 on political advertising in the twenty-seven months before the election of 1959, to say nothing of the estimated £1½m. of 'politically relevant' public relations expenditure by business groups. The extra expenditure of Transport House at the election was £156,000, plus £80,000 on the earlier 'Inter-Action' campaign. This covers advertising, aid to constituencies and everything else.

Of course the Labour Party cannot possibly equal the Conservatives in expenditure. But what it must have is a vigorous, efficiently run machine that can make the best use of the not inconsiderable weapons that are available. This cannot be done at the present level of income, or under the regime of pinching and scraping economies that has been made necessary by the current deficit: such a regime is detrimental to all initiative and new ideas.

The Constituency Parties

The income of constituency parties cannot easily be worked out. However, Martin Harrison, in *Trade Unions and the Labour Party Since 1945* (p. 99) estimated the income for 1957 "at about £450,000, made up of about £145,000 from the trade unions, £150,000 from subscriptions, £125,000 from gifts, 'events' and 'gambling', and £30,000 from the Co-operatives. This is an average of about £750—but the average covers a spread of between £200 and £3,500, and perhaps higher."

A most conspicuous feature of the income of the constituency parties is the immense gap between the rich and the poor—not fully brought out by Mr. Harrison. There are parties considerably richer than the maximum mentioned in the above quotation. One party in the South of England, for instance, has a net income of over £10,000. Equally conspicuous is the need for money among all but a few rich parties.

What is to be done?

(a) Before discussing the augmentation of the regular income of the Labour Party, it is worth pointing out that both the Labour Party and the trade unions have large political reserve funds. The Labour Party has since the war actually made a profit from election campaigns, and its accumulated election fund now stands at £325,000. This would be enough to pay for over two elections at the 1959 level of expenditure. While a big reserve is necessary, it is doubtful whether such a large one is absolutely essential.

As we have already stressed, it is unrealistic to think in terms of fighting an election over a few weeks only, for political attitudes are moulded slowly over long periods. Improvement in publicity must be the first and most immediate candidate for extra expenditure and the Party should certainly be prepared to make use of its election fund for this purpose.

Similarly, the trade unions should be prepared to make use of their £1,500,000 political reserves for development in between elections.

(b) But clearly the most important problem is how to raise the Party's regular income. We have already discussed the questions of increasing and augmenting individual subscriptions and relating affiliation fees to the Labour vote as well as to total membership.

The trebling of the subscription would be an important step forward, and it should considerably improve the position of local parties. It would then be possible to make large increases in the affiliation fee. While it

is true that the affiliation fee has increased when the subscription has not, the party must be prepared for further increases in the affiliation fee. Either Transport House must deliberately increase its expenditure until the resulting deficit demands action, or agreement must be reached about the need for new expenditures so that action can be taken straight away to introduce a further rise in the affiliation fee.

(c) The great gap between rich and poor parties has already been noted. At present the richer parties do sometimes make gifts to the national Party or assist their poorer neighbours. It would help if this was done more systematically and on a much larger scale. There are several objections to a straight annual income tax, but when the time comes for election or other special appeals, more deliberate efforts should be made to raise money from the richer parties, and a uniform basis for making contributions could be suggested. In addition, equalisation schemes such as exist between local authorities might be applied to constituency parties. 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his need' is a fine socialist principle and it certainly applies in this instance.

(d) At present the Royal Arsenal is the only Co-operative Society directly affiliated to the Labour Party. A considerable number of societies do spend money on politics. Not all this money is well spent and there is certainly sometimes a duplication of effort. Direct affiliation by Co-operative Societies, at least of a fraction of their membership, would provide a useful additional source of income for the Labour Party and might be a more fruitful form of expenditure for co-operative political funds. It would help too if there was a review of co-op. political activities to see whether some of them could not more profitably be conducted in conjunction with the Labour Party. Perhaps the Co-op. could pay for some of its research to be done by the Fabian Society or the Labour Party Research Department: similarly with schools and pamphlets.

(e) The technique of raising money has nowadays been developed into a high art by organisations which specialise in the job. Churches and other benevolent institutions have so far been the chief beneficiaries, and it is time the Labour Party learnt some lessons from them. Of course most constituency parties do raise funds from football pools, draws and other 'rackets', but they are not all uniformly successful in these endeavours.

We suggest that there should be an expert Fund Raiser working under the Treasurer of the Party who would give advice to local parties on how best to raise money and also himself be responsible for augmenting the income of the national Party from donations or other sources. At the moment the Labour Party is far too haphazard about fund raising and there is great scope for improvement.

At the initiative of the Buckingham C.L.P., several C.L.P.s have recently co-operated in setting up the National Fund Raising Foundation. This organisation is offering advice and assistance to other C.L.P.s that wish to raise more money. It is to be hoped that much use will be made of this offer, but in addition the whole question needs to be taken up and promoted by Transport House.

There is one common objection to such fund-raising activities: they leave no time for political work. Now if the agent does in fact spend all his time running Christmas draws and the like, then this is a fair objection. But fund raising which does little more than pay the salary of the fund raiser cannot be accounted a success. Successful fund raising, such as is practised by a number of constituencies nowadays, leaves a large margin of income over and above that needed to pay for those employed in raising it, and could be the answer to many of the Labour Party's financial difficulties.

8. Conclusion

FOUR of our many proposals and suggestions are of special importance:

(1) The General Secretary should be given greater authority and scope: M.P.s should be made eligible for the job.

(2) All aspects of the Party's publicity should be strengthened and co-ordinated under a high-powered Director of Information.

(3) The membership subscription should be increased sharply.

(4) Great improvements are needed in methods of raising money. A professional fund raiser should be appointed to advise and encourage Constituency Labour Parties.

Some of the proposals we have made are bold ones, and may involve more radical changes than are customary inside the Labour Movement. There is a danger that the less adventurous spirits within the Party will pooh pooh them as impractical. But we are convinced that the Labour Party, in its present critical state, must undertake a radical reappraisal of its machinery. And while we would not pretend that what we have put forward is necessarily the final word, far-reaching reforms are imperative.

Moreover these issues have far wider implications, for the capacity of the Labour Party to overhaul its own machinery will be a test of its prospects for the future. If it cannot muster sufficient energy, imagination and common purpose to achieve these objectives, then its prospects must be considered bleak indeed.

THE YOUNG FABIAN GROUP

was set up in the summer of 1960. Its purpose is to give Socialists under thirty years of age an opportunity to carry out research, discussion and propaganda upon contemporary problems which they consider important. It publishes pamphlets written by its members, arranges monthly meetings and holds day and week-end schools.

The Group is autonomous, electing its own committee. It does of course co-operate with the Fabian Society, which gives financial and clerical help. But the Group is responsible for its own policy and activity, subject to the constitutional rule that it can have no declared political policy beyond that implied by its commitment to democratic Socialism.

The activities of the Group are intended to be complementary to, and not competitive with, the activities of other left-wing youth organisations like the Young Socialists, the New Left, NALSO, etc. The hope is simply that a Young Fabian Group, more adventurous, perhaps, than its parent body, may make its contribution to the development of a vigorous and radical critique of present-day society.

Enquiries about membership should be sent to

THE SECRETARY,
Young Fabian Group,
11, Dartmouth Street, London, S.W.1
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PREVIOUS PAMPHLETS

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