

AL/2863
17, RECTORY PLACE,
WOOLWICH.

June 3rd, 1912.

WOOLWICH, 1903-12.

I.

DEAR COMRADE,

I have promised the Pioneer Press and the Woolwich Labour Party to help in the raising of £1,000.

WOOLWICH HAS BEEN GENEROUS IN GIVING. It has given more freely than any town of its size that I know to the building up of a Labour Organisation that shall last and shall cover the whole field of the worker's life. It has given freely to great causes outside—as the Penrhyn Miners, the great Miners' Strike and Lock-out of 1893, the big Engineers' Strike and Lock-Out in 1897-98, the South Wales Miners in 1910-11, to name a few of the larger only.

WHAT WOOLWICH HAS ACCOMPLISHED. Woolwich Labour has organised itself for political and industrial action alike, for education and recreation, and last, but not least, for the *Woolwich Pioneer*, as an experiment in Labour journalism.

I. POLITICAL ACTION :—

- (a) The *Parliamentary* seat has been four times fought and three times won. The 1903 Election, when Will Crooks was first returned, was of international significance, coming at the crucial moment of the founding of the British Labour Party and sending a wave of enthusiasm over the country.
- (b) At four *London County Councils* seven seats have been contested. In 1904 two Labour Councillors were elected. The defeats were notable fights in which George Lansbury, Margaret Bondfield, and W. S. Sanders, side by side with our Woolwich men, have prepared the way for an organised Labour Party on the L.C.C.
- (c) In three *Borough Council* fights 106 out of 108 seats have been fought ; 48 seats have been won ; 5 Labour Aldermen elected, and 2 Labour Mayors installed. For three years Labour held a two-thirds majority on the Council, and laid the foundations of a solid Labour programme.
- (d) For the *Board of Guardians* 35 seats were fought and 17 won.
- (e) At 18 By-Elections for the Borough Council and the Board of Guardians 9 seats have been carried by Labour men and women.
- (f) Registration has been carried on mainly by volunteer effort. Last year, at a cost of only £34, 780 claims and objections were sustained, out of a total of 874 entered on behalf of the Labour Representation Association—a percentage of 89.34.
- (g) A new civic sense has been evoked. A steady Labour vote of some 8,000 has been maintained, and Woolwich has repeatedly polled the biggest percentage of voters of any London Borough in L.C.C. and Borough Council Elections.

2. **INDUSTRIAL ACTION.** The Woolwich Trades Council has led the way amongst the Councils of the South in the industrial organisation of Labour. It has removed the reproach that Government workmen are among the worst organised of workmen. While assisting in the organisation of particular grades, it has steadily worked for the solidarity of both high and low paid workmen. It has won from Government Departments the recognition of Trade Unions; for local Municipal employees a 30s. minimum and 48 hours week, and the adoption of Trade Union conditions on all municipal contracts. It has fostered the spirit of direct action by the workers, and the marches to London by thousands of Government workmen were the direct outcome of its methods.
3. **EDUCATION AND RECREATION.** The Woolwich Labour Party has set education in the forefront of its work. For instance, in the winter of 1907-8 alone it arranged an educational campaign of 147 lectures in 11 Wards. It has brought together a Sociological Group for the closer study of the fundamental problems which Labour has been called to face. A wonderful spontaneity has characterised its social and recreational life. The performances of the Woolwich Labour Choir at the Albert Hall have won it a foremost place in the world of music. The May Day Festas and Christmas Parties at the Town Hall have earned a name for good fellowship and fine music far beyond Woolwich.
4. **"THE PIONEER."** *The Woolwich Pioneer* has proved itself a true pioneer of Labour journalism, making ready for the great Labour dailies which need to be established, not merely as isolated papers, but as a federated group of Press organs for the whole Movement throughout the country. It has cost us heavily in effort and money. Many times it has strained our resources almost to breaking point. But it has won friends for Woolwich from far and wide. After eight years of continuous struggle we are at last in sight of the day when *The Pioneer* will be able to stand alone without help from outside. We are now girding ourselves for one more big effort, and invite from all our friends their heartiest co-operation.

WOOLWICH HAS ALREADY SHOWN ITSELF A LABORATORY OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT. It has almost unique advantages for becoming a laboratory of social science also—of profound importance not merely to the Labour Movement but, from a wider outlook, to the whole community.

HELP. These things being so, I confidently ask your help. A few big gifts would bring great cheer. The strain is great on a few, while the many are being united and while stable and flexible organisation of the forces of Labour is being steadily consolidated.

If you are one of those who are able to help us handsomely, we will hope to repay your gift by better work for the Cause. But throughout we have learned to rely mainly on the small gifts of the many. If you cannot give us a large gift, will you, anyhow, give us your mite? Six stamps, if no more, or a small postal order—added to the gifts of others—will help us towards seeing through our experiment to a successful issue. A gift from conviction and sympathy, if it be but a few pennies, is worth more to us than much gold of the doubter.

Faithfully yours,

C. H. GRINLING.