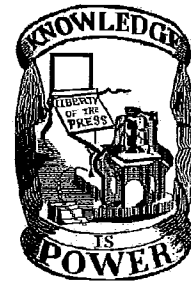


# Shelf Life



The Newsletter of the Working Class Movement Library

Registered Charity No.1115731

Issue No.13 Winter 2006

## Library Assists in NUJ Centenary Celebrations

The Library helped members from the National Union of Journalists' Manchester branch put together a display telling the story of the origins of the union in Manchester and traced the history of the NUJ with an emphasis on the union in the North West. There was also a section in the display devoted to Journalism Matters - showing how journalists have helped make a difference, from Peterloo to the present day.

It formed part of the celebrations to mark the centenary of a meeting held in Manchester in 1906 which agreed to set up a national union for journalists.

The union's national executive committee met in Manchester on the anniversary of the date itself - just a few minutes' walk from where the historic meeting was held at the Albion Hotel, Piccadilly, on November 17 1906.

On the day of the centenary celebration, NUJ members and officials from the UK and Ireland viewed the display and toured the library.

NUJ Manchester branch chair Chris Rea said: "We would like to thank people at the library for the help and support we were given when working on the display. All NUJ members were very impressed with the library and with the warm welcome they received. A social evening followed, attended by union members and their guests, as well as friends from the library and colleagues from other unions.



Library co-founder Ruth Frow with Greg Neale, Chris Morley and Tim Gopsill pictured in front of the display at the library.

NUJ President Chris Morley spoke about the significance of the 1906 meeting in Manchester which was followed four months later by the 1907 conference in Birmingham which founded the NUJ.

Speakers included Ruth Frow who spoke about the role played by radical journalists in the last two centuries. BBC historian and NUJ member Greg Neale talked about the new NUJ history book which he has written with Tim Gopsill, editor of the union's newspaper 'The Journalist'. The president and vice-president, Michelle Stanistreet, cut a celebratory cake which featured the NUJ logo and a picture of a picket line.

Chris Morley also made a special presentation to NUJ Member of Honour Alan Knowles who first joined the union in 1944.

Alan, a former NEC member, held branch positions in Bolton and Manchester and is a former FOC at the BBC. He has been a branch delegate to Manchester Trades Council for 45 years although he will be retiring next year when he reaches his 80th birthday! Alan remembers the union's 50th anniversary celebration in Manchester which he helped organise and which was attended by Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson.

## Ethical Investment Policy

*The Working Class Movement Library is a registered charity whose aims and objectives are:-*

*To promote the education of the public in relation to the history of the working class movement by facilitating and promoting research into, and dissemination of information about, all aspects of such history*

*To collect and preserve material produced by or about the working class of Britain and Ireland and to promote the role and contribution of the working class as widely as possible to the public.*

*To establish an educational library and centre which will provide the facilities of a specialist library to all interested in the working class movement and which will receive and classify material from any available source for the use of students, research workers and all other persons interested in matters concerning the history of the working class.*

*The Trustees recognise and accept their responsibilities to invest in the best financial interests of the library, but would wish to balance this with an ethical investment policy which reflects the objectives and ethos of the Trust as well as the views and wishes of donors, supporters and volunteers.*

*To this end we aim to invest in companies whose products or services are of benefit to humankind, with minimal harmful impacts, and with an emphasis on meeting basic needs rather than luxuries. We do not however automatically rule out companies whose activities might be considered largely frivolous, if their customers are not predominantly the privileged in society.*

*Our portfolio will have the following characteristics: Be relatively concentrated, for example, by making significant investments in companies which fit these policies well. Avoid companies involved in armaments, tobacco manufacture; retailing as a major activity, avoid companies and countries that deny their employees and citizens the freedoms of association enshrined in the International Labour Organisation conventions. We will also have regard to the way companies conduct their businesses in all the markets in which they operate, as well as what their business is. This includes: employment conditions, equal opportunities policy and practice attitude to the communities in which they operate promotion of human rights, especially in countries with oppressive regimes.*

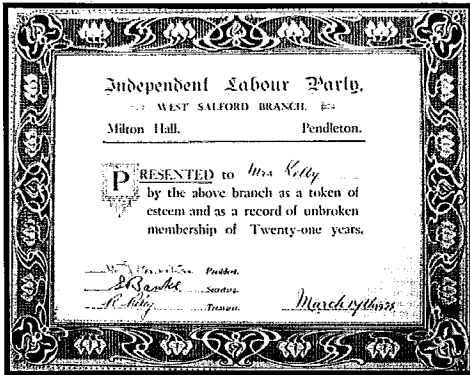
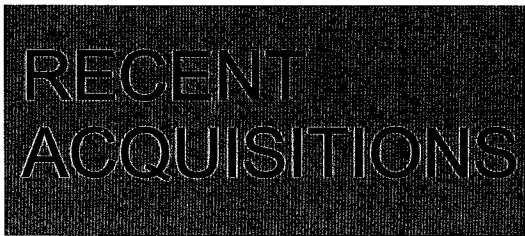
When giving thought as to how best to invest our recent bequests the obvious question of ethical investments was raised. There was unanimity amongst the Trustees that certain types of investment were a no-no, not just to the Trustees, but our friends and supporters as well. After much careful thought this is what has been adopted as the Library's ethical investment policy and will be rigorously applied to all our investments.



## The Late Pete Ritman

The library recently lost a long standing friend with the death of Pete Ritman. Pete's life long involvement in the movement will be sorely missed. He had requested that any donations should be given to the library and this has resulted in a magnificent contribution of over £500. Our condolences to Dodi and thanks to Pete for his significant contribution over the years.

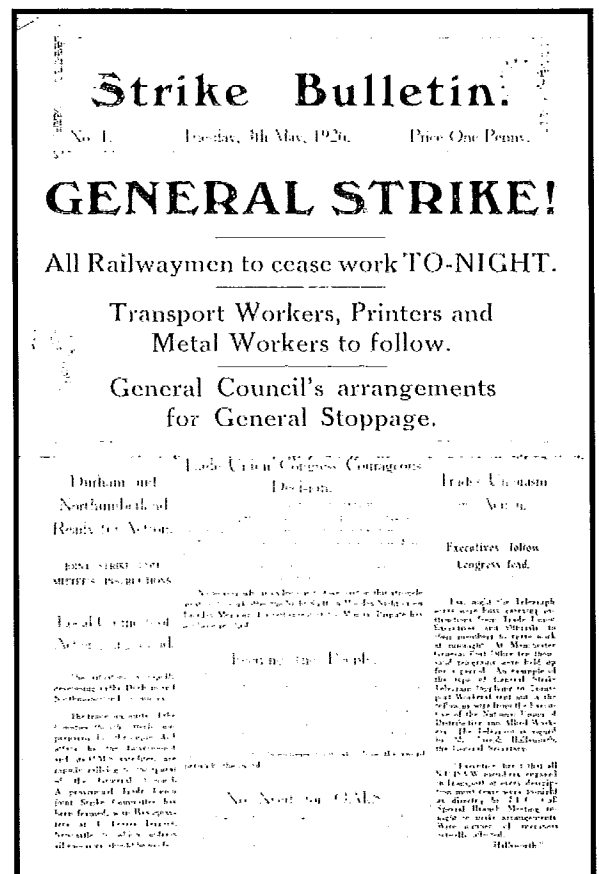
A fairly quiet couple of months, but still a number of donations have arrived in their new home. A long standing friend of the library, Sheila Lemoine, has deposited her collection with us and the Openshaw family, long associated with the labour party in Salford, have left a variety of material including photographs and press cuttings into our care. One of the interesting items is a long service certificate issued by the Independent Labour Party in 1928, which can be found alongside.



## Aid to Researchers

The library contains a mass of information much of which is impossible to find elsewhere! Kevin McPhillips, one of our volunteers, began a project earlier this year which will be of great significance to researchers. Fittingly, given that 2006 is the eightieth anniversary of the General Strike, he has been identifying all of the references to the strike in our primary source material. The views of the TUC and key players in the drama are well recorded in the many books and pamphlets that have come out since then, but the minute books give a direct insight into the feelings and emotions of the rank and file trade unionists in a wide range of industries and occupations. In some instances, such as the minutes of the Bradford Typographical Association, the story of the strike, as it affected that group of unionists, is retold in substantial detail. In other instances references are almost in passing! Kevin also collated references in other union publications to the Strike and the Miners Lockout that continued long after the General Strike was called off. Here the political perspective of the union affected the degree of information passed on to members. For example the Clerks Union leadership, which supported the Strike, provided volumes of information for members about the causes that had led up to the General Strike and the plight of British miners who the strikers were taking action in support of. Obviously, to what extent individual members supported the official line must remain uncertain.

In addition to these records we also have a very large collection of rank and file leaflets, bulletins, and newsletters that were issued during early May 1926. With the national press severely restricted by striking printers, many workers relied on the TUC British Worker for news and on locally produced papers and bulletins. The government organ 'The British Gazette' and the BBC news being seen by many as grotesquely biased against the workers. Emile Burns in his book "General Strike Trades Councils in Action" recorded immediately after the Strike the work done at local level and the local publications issued. The library has large collection of these rank and file papers. The work by Kevin McPhillips adds a further dimension to our records of "the Nine days in May".



Issued by the Spenn and District Council of Action. Issued well into the strike as agreement had to be reached with the print unions to allow them to produce a printed bulletin rather than the duplicated affairs that appeared elsewhere.

## Trade Union Support



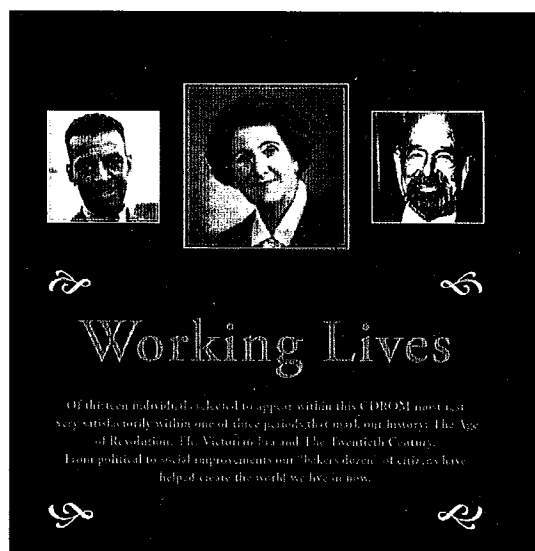
Support from the unions continues to be very reassuring. More and more regions and branches are coming on board giving us help. We now have a magnificent total of 131 sections unions at HQ, regional or branch level giving support. We also have 24 trades councils and county associations recognising the importance of our collection. Since the last issue of Shelf Life we have received further donations totalling over £3,700 from the national union NUMAST and from regions and branches of the following, Amicus, FBU, GMB, NASUWT, NUJ, NUT, RMT, UNISON and USDAW.

You will recall we reported last time that the T&GWU Midlands region paid us a visit. This time the London region of the GMB have written to say that they intend coming up early in the new year. We look forward to meeting them and promise them a warm welcome.

At last, after much gnashing of teeth and torn out hair, our second educational CDROM is finally pressed and available. Getting it to the completion stage has been a massive learning curve for all of us at the library, but we think it has been well worth while with a final product of which we can be proud.

Sponsored by the trade union UNISON it contains biographies of thirteen unsung 'working class heroes' who spent the whole of their lives fighting for a more just and equitable society. Within the individual biographies are links to more detailed information about the campaigns in which they were involved. The text is supported by images, audio and song.

Particular thanks most also go to the Academic Enterprise Unit of Salford University for their help and support. They did all the design work, advised on all technical aspects of putting the disk together and arranged for it to be pressed. In line with our policy free copies will be sent to all schools in Salford.



Copies of the CDROM can be obtained from the library price £10.00 plus £2.50 post and package.

## librarian's lines

Although I've only been here a month I've had many occasions already to be amazed by the richness of the collections, as well as the dedication and friendliness of all the people who put so much effort into keeping the WCML show on the road. I already feel so much at home.

The enquiries that have come through have included:

- \* academic researchers wishing to consult our rich array of records relating to early trades unions such as those of the shipwrights and the silk weavers
- \* people putting together exhibitions on topics as diverse as the International Brigade, Walter Crane, and shopping
- \* individuals seeking information about the work history of their forebears (ranging in date from the early 1800s to the 1960s)

We are keen to ensure that as many people as possible know about our wonderful collections and how they can use them. If you can help spread the word by mentioning us in your own newsletter or by passing on some of our leaflets, we'd be delighted - let us know.