

uine living wage would, I believe, be sound strategy. Hitherto Socialists have argued in their propaganda that if industry and the land were nationalised, the consequence would be an increase in our national wealth, and a fairer distribution of the national income. The happy result looked to the average man rather remote, and preliminary processes did not grip his attention. There is much to be said for reversing the order of thought and action. Let us rather begin by demanding the fairer division of wealth; let us insist, first of all, on the elementary human claim to a living wage and then enforce the wide economic changes by which alone it can be realised and secured. The fixing, whether by combined trade union action, or by a Royal Commission, of any adequate figure, would drive us at once into big political changes. The demand is a battering-ram levelled at the present system.'

To some extent Maxton, who took over from Allen and became the virtual leader of the ILP for most of the interwar period, somewhat lost the plot. He failed to make the starting point of the drive towards socialism a position one that had already a wide acceptance and, as the great Left orator of his age, he concentrated

instead on trying to rouse working class support for the package as a whole. He did, early in 1931, use success in the ballot for private members' bills to launch 'The ILP Living Wage Bill'. It provided for the determination of what should constitute the living wage within three months by a committee composed of three working class housewives, three union representatives and three representatives of the co-operative movement. By that time the ILP had long been at odds with the rest of the Labour Party over its 'gradualism' and the restrictions imposed by the standing orders of the parliamentary party.

Unsurprisingly, though the bill passed its second reading by 122 to 51, there was not the remotest chance that MacDonald's government would give it the necessary time and support to go any further. Brockway reported in the ILP weekly the *New Leader* that 'Those voting for the Bill included, of course, many who desired to register support for the principle without any belief in its immediate application. No Cabinet minister voted, but the Chief Whips, five junior Whips and five Under-Secretaries voted with the ILP' That now seems quite impressive – especially in the circumstances where there was much resent-

ment of the ILP in the other parts of the Labour Party and it was already discussing the possibility of disaffiliation.

Let's return finally to the point highlighted earlier. The sexist language of the period apart, can we now really quarrel with Brailsford's argument in a *New Leader* article "Socialism in Our Generation. The Living Wage as Lever' early in 1926? 'Strangers who watch our movement often liken it to 'religion'.' The analogy is 'dangerously true', he wrote. The living wage was 'a simple human demand, which must carry with it, if we can stir the ambitions and stimulate the thinking of the average worker and his wife, assent to all the rest'. The reaction to proposals for giving priority to, for example, bank nationalisation, were likely to be 'cold, bewildered and sceptical'. This point was reiterated in the Living Wage report

'This policy has the merit of making a simple and concrete appeal to the average worker and his wife. Family Allowances and a Living Wage touch them in their daily experience of life. Once their attention is concentrated on these things, the rest of the scheme will enlist their defensive instincts'.

Ian Bullock's book *Romancing the Revolution. The Myth of Soviet Democracy and the British Left* was published last year. He co-wrote *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement - 1880-1914* with Logie Barrow and co-edited *Sylvia Pankhurst, From Artist to Anti-Fascist* with Richard Pankhurst. He is currently working on a book on the inter-war ILP

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J C Kenworthy - From Bondage to Brotherhood 1894

Kenworthy was a Christian communist anarchist and the leading English proponent of the views of Leo Tolstoy. Born in Liverpool and influenced by his reading of Ruskin, a university graduate and poet who worked at the Mansfield House settlement in Canning Town in East London, he became secretary of the Land Colonisation Society. He was a regular contributor to the *Anarchist Freedom*. He then joined the Brotherhood movement, established by the Georgist congregationalist minister John Bruce Wallace. Wallace had established non-doctrinaire Brotherhood churches in Southgate, Forest Gate and Walthamstow in north east London, which, according to their entry in the 1896 *Labour Annual*, sought 'to apply the principles of the Sermon on the Mount literally and fully to individual and social conduct, which they interpret into action by efforts to found industries and businesses on what may be described as Socialist Co-operative lines'. In 1894, Kenworthy established a Brotherhood Church in West Croydon, together with a co-operative store and a communal Brotherhood house. Besides poetry, he published *The Anatomy of Misery* (1893), a series of lectures on Christian economics, *The Christian Revolt* (1893), *From Bondage to Brotherhood – A Message to the Workers* (1894) and *Tolstoy: His Life and Works* (1902). His work is covered in Bevir's: *The Making of British Socialism*,

reviewed in *Chartist* 255.

"Cease from following after those who dangle before you new Laws, new Acts of Parliament, who ask you to do nothing but – vote! The Law has been framed by oppressors: neglect it, let it die. In place of it, by the power of Brotherhood, will come up the true Democratic means of Government – unfettered Public Opinion, which is the Will of the People. Keep away from lawyers, judges; on your parts, let the Law perish. But give heed to those who tell you that the first change needed is in your own hearts, in your own ways of looking upon life and upon each other; who can help to marshal you in industrial regiments, and show you the peaceful way to win back all whereof you have been robbed. Those who understand the power of the commercial machinery, know, past doubt, that if you workers so willed, the General Strike and General Co-operation would gain England for you in a week, and turn it into Paradise in a twelvemonth. This is fact, and no fairy tale. The winter is yet with us, but He who sends the spring to the land, prepares also a spring time for the soul of man. Groans of men, sobs of women, and cries of children are calling us. Sisters, Brothers, let us go about our work."