

J. B. CUMBERIDGE

BORN Oct 9th 1889 in Middleton, Manchester.

My earliest memories I have, is of starting School at the Infants School of Holy Innocents, a branch of the TONCIE-CUM-ALKRINGTON PARISH of the Church of England.

The School comprised one large room where all ages up to 8 years were taught at the same time.

At 8 years old I was transferred to the Senior School known as TONCIE SECHOON. I have begun my preparations to pass the 11 year old Examination so that I could go to work half time if I passed, even at that age I knew I would have to go to work in the Cotton Mill to help out the family which was a large one, & increasing as each year passed, I passed the examination & started as a half timer in the Mill learning the trade.

It was a very old Mill, with old Machinery which in the main had quite a number of unfenced moving parts resulting in quite a number of accidents amongst the younger learners, I myself had an accident in which I almost lost my index finger on my right hand, it was only the timely intervention of my Father it was stitched & bandaged & allowed to heal in a natural way.

It was during this period that I had my first experience of Rationing, we as children had a ration of 2 slices of bread each meal, such was the poverty of those days, I did not get paid any wages during my incapacity.

~~and~~ I must explain that the personnel of a pair of Spinning Mules or Jennies consisted of the MINDER, BIG PEEPER & little PEEPER the Minder being responsible for the wages of his Big and little Piecer, if the Mules or Jennies broke down production stopped & so did wages for the Minder all wages for Piecers had to be paid the Minder's Wage was paid on his production, which of course is called PIECE WORK & even to-day production seems to be the measure of a man's wages.

In those days the 1900's work consisted of 10 hrs per day & 6 hours on Saturday mornings when my Father started work at 8 years old he worked 60 hours a week.

We had to start at 6 A.M. & stop at 5:30 P.M. with a break for Breakfast at 8-8:30 & dinner from 12:30 P.M. to 1:30 P.M., but when my Father started work he worked 10 hrs daily for 6 days a week, his pay for a full week of 51- was just 1 pair hours, when I started as a half timer I got 5/7 when I worked mornings & 5/3 when I worked afternoons & when I worked afternoons I had to work Saturday morning to run out the hours worked.

The effect of the Wages I earned did make things at home a little more bearable, there were a large family when I went to work which increased to 9 as the years rolled by so that whatever extra was earned was in the end swallowed up by increase of mouths to feed.

Things changed about this time, a new Education Act was passed, & one had to go to school until 14, but a loop hole was allowed if one wanted to work full time one could sit for an exam at 13 years & if passed start to work full time at 13, which I did ~~pass~~ of course I had 2 years of interrupted schooling, I was going to school half time for 2 years, when I started full time I was carrying 11/- per week out of which special clothing had to be purchased white corded Overalls with special pockets, & they were not cheap by any means, we had to strip off all clothing with the exception of a shirt, down the Overalls take stockings & shoes (Chaps) off & walk about in bare feet, the atmosphere inside a mill was hot & very humid, & it was a very sweaty job.

About this time 1900-2 the Boer War had ended, I well remember the men coming home, & the aftermath of the War was a boom in the Cotton Trade, & Spinning Mills sprang up all over Lancashire & Weaving Looms as well to meet the demand for Cotton goods of all kinds, & it was during this period that I went to work at one of the new mills in which were installed all the latest up-to-date Machinery & I soon got on there being quick to learn, & within a short time I was earning about 20% more than my Father. (I must add, that the new Machines were much larger than the old ones my Father worked on) That of course explains the difference, I was producing more, so strictly speaking on balance we were, as you were kind of position. It was during this period that I got had my first taste of Politics, the Agents of the Tories & Liberals engaged us to walk the streets singing Parodies to the tune of (Good Bye Dolly Gray) a very popular Boer War Song, one night we paraded for the Tories & one night for the Liberals, we get paid of course, that is the only time I ever made any

money out of Pobbies, since then it has  
 cost me quite a sum. My hobbies at this  
 time were mainly Sport, Running,  
 Football, Cricket, etc. There was not anything  
 else for boys who worked 10 hours a day  
 & 6 hours on Sat.

I enlisted in the  
 Territorial Army <sup>1908</sup> the first year of its  
 existence & attended 4 camps up to  
 1912, my Employer objected to me having  
 2 weeks camp, being a W Com I had to attend  
 camp so I was more or less forced to resign,  
 but 2 years later the First World War  
 broke out & I joined up in the Duke of  
 Lancaster's Trenchers, I had had enough  
 of the Infantry as a Territorial, soon  
 after joining up I got married & being  
 in the Cavalry I got quite a lot of  
 leave to come home, Cavalry were no  
 use in French Warfare & it was quite some  
 time before the powers that be decided to  
 transfer the lot to the fighting services.  
 I was after I came home that I became  
 a Rebel, I joined the I.L.P. & was very soon  
 involved in meetings, distributing  
 & selling literature, this period was from  
 1920 to 1930.

It was during the 1920 to 1926 period that I became a very militant Trade Unionist, we had <sup>A</sup> closed Shop in those days & I was Shop Chairman of Stewards & it was during a dispute with the Manager of the Poulton Gas Mill that we staged a sit in Strike, something unheard of in those days we won our point and as a result I was given a weeks notice for my participation in the strike but the Manager was forced to withdraw the notice to terminate my employment.

In 1924 I became a member of the Executive of the Oldham Operatives Springers & was selected from there to the panel of Parliamentary Candidates there were 4 selected, but in the final selection Albert Law of Bolton was selected to fight a seat in Bolton at the ensuing Election, he was elected but lost his seat the following General Election of 1924 upon the dole, the year 1924. Winston Churchill as he was then, became Chancellor of the Exchequer & went back on the Gold Standard as the basis of our currency, as a result wages clamped & spent time, & closing down of manufacturing of all kinds was very prevalent at the time, and the 1926 General Strike was really the result of going back on the Gold Standard, there were several attempts to break the stagnation of industry but all failed & we were ill prepared for the world economic collapse that followed in 1930.

resulting in 2 1/2 million unemployed.

It was during this period I left the Cotton trade & came to Liverpool & when settled down joined the D.P. at Edge Hill, the Chairman then was Bob Edwards now Labour M.P. for Hillston Staffs, his great friend Joseph Chary now Sir Joseph an Past Lord Mayor & now Alderman of The Liverpool City Council. There was rather an amusing incident about this time, there was an election (Gen) & we worked very hard to get Jack Hayes elected for Edge Hill & we succeeded, in the shake up of the Parties 'The Labour Party' again became the largest single party & Ramsey MacDonald again became Prime Minister in a Minority Government. Jack Hayes was given the post as Comptroller of His Majesty's Household & he had to have the usual Court Dress, he sent a full length photograph in his Court Dress to the D.P. & when received there it almost started the Revolution, I don't know what did happen to it after the break away of the D.P. in the 30's, but the last I saw of it, it was turned face to the wall in the main committee room.



During this time we had a General Strike, as an effort to help the miners, this period you will no doubt be very conversant with, but it was at this time that the I.L.P. was very prominent, the General Secretary Fenner Brockway Jimmy Martin, Chairman, George Buchanan, David Kirkwood, Emanuel Pinwell & various others known as the Collyside Reds were during this time elected to the House of Commons, & also the Labour Party was ~~also~~ making headway, the spearhead of course being the I.L.P. So able led by Jimmy Martin, whenever he rose to speak in the Commons & was known to be speaking a full House was assured he was ~~to~~ very able & fluent & a clever debater, & was very widely quoted in the National Press.

After the General Strike collapsed, there was a terrible row going on in the Labour Party which of course was controlled by the Trade Unions, the Leaders of the I.L.P. blamed the timid T.U.C. for the collapse, it all ended up in the I.L.P. breaking away from the L. Party, we held conferences in all large centres of population, we had one in Liverpool at the Patten Hall, personally disagreed with the break away group, & I pointed out at that conference that we the I.L.P. would be the losers, & whatever

influence our Leaders had in the Country generally would be lost, my predictions proved correct, the House of Commons the National Press & all conspired to ignore Maxton & Co & from that time the I.L.P. wandered in the Political Wilderness & is still there.

The Economic collapse of the 1920 resulting in the defeat in the Commons of the Labour Party who formed a Government as the largest group, the help of the Liberals sustained the Labour Party who Governed only with the Liberals consent, the Labour Party were a minority Government & when it suited the Liberals the Labour Party were defeated in a vote in the Commons & a National Government was formed under the Premiership of Ramsey MacDonald, with Phillip Snowden as Chancellor, both very old I.L.P. Leaders & from that and other causes the complete collapse of the Labour Party & the I.L.P.

From that time leading up to the present is current history & one must draw one's own conclusions in the light of happenings during the last 23 years.

J. Blumenthal.

I also had another experience along with other comrades of the I.L.P. - There was a bye election in Miles Platting Division & J. R. CHYNES was the Labour Candidate, we were asked to help, being at the time working only 4 days weekly we decided to go down to Miles Platting & do some canvassing, Miles Platting is one of the most depressing places I had ever seen at that time, with rows of streets after streets of cottage dwellings & with communal conveniences & no hot water, typical slum dwelling, & I can still see in my mind's eye the women who came to their doors after we had hung a huge bell we carried & when we started to hold our meeting & the others canvassing, there were screams of abuse from the housewives & eventually we were chased from the streets for ever in those days of great industrial depression the women we saw conservative, & if I am any judge, still are in the main.