



Occupy Economics Working Group

Notes of Meeting on Monday 2nd February 2018
at Friends House, 73-177 Euston Rd, Kings Cross, London NW1 2BJ



Present: Janos Abel, John Courtneidge, Schlacke, Mary Fee (notes).

Janos, who is working with a group develop the Communalist Model, which proposes three stages of development, asked John about the three phases of Jesus's ministry, which he said were (i) a Call for Justice, (ii) the Reality of Abundance through Sharing (eg the parable of the Feeding of the Five Thousand - those who are impoverished have a lot of resources) and (iii) The Theology of Giving.

John then drew a comparison with Norman society, in which there were three classes of people, those who worked, those who fought and those who prayed. The Normans supported Roman Catholicism – William the Conqueror s arrived with a papal banner – and practised Gelassenheit (tranquil submission) -
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gelassenheit> • http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/normans/society_01.shtml

Mary mentioned John Simpson's report and discussion on BBC1's This Week on the failure of Democracy. **John** countered this by saying that that the NHS is an example of democracy working to create the common good: the first 1918 manifesto of the Labour Party talked about the Socialist Commonwealth, and how the Fabians, Beatrice and Sidney Webb, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sidney-and-Beatrice-Webb> - founders of the LSE - connected with Trotsky. They co-opted Clement Attlee – but he used the phrase, the Co-operative Commonwealth - Clement Attlee, initially joined the Fabians, but moved his affiliation to the Independent Labour Party. John mentioned a thesis submitted to the University of Central Lancashire by **Angela Whitecross** which explores the history of this relationship: <http://clock.uclan.ac.uk/11485/>

CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH OR NEW JERUSALEM? THE CO-OPERATIVE PARTY AND THE LABOUR PARTY, 1931-1951

Abstract: The Co-operative Party, despite representing the largest consumer and social movement in Britain, is systematically overlooked or misunderstood in twentieth century British political historiography. What makes this neglect more surprising is that from 1927 the Co-operative Party had a formal electoral agreement with the Labour Party, the basis of which remains in place today. Through this agreement the two parties agreed to work together to return joint Co-operative-Labour candidates in certain constituencies. This unique political alliance reflected a shared ideological ground between the two parties, united in their aim to displace capitalism with common ownership. However, despite this common aim, the methods through which this would be achieved varied and whilst the Labour Party focused on state ownership as key to the 'socialist commonwealth', the Co-operative Party, as the political arm of the co-operative movement embodied the ideal of a 'co-operative commonwealth' built on the principles of democratic voluntary association.

Historians who have addressed the relationship between the Labour Party and the co-operative movement have argued that co-operative methods of ownership were systematically marginalised, overlooked and ignored by the Labour Party, particularly during the 1945 to 1951 period of Labour Government. In this context, this thesis will examine the political relationship between the Co-operative Party and the Labour Party in the broader period from 1931 to 1951. It will argue that both organisational and ideological factors contributed to the invisibility of co-operative methods of ownership in the policies of the Labour Party. Moreover, this will provide an additional perspective to debates regarding the development of the Labour Party during the 1930s and over the future direction of nationalisation post 1945. Despite its marginality the Co-operative Party represented a large body of working class consumers and a significant business organisation, which straddled both the labour movement and co-operative movement.

Whilst this thesis agrees that co-operative ideas of ownership remained a minor influence on the Labour Party throughout this period, it will nevertheless argue that Co-operative Party contributions to policy discussions provide an alternative perspective from which a growing recognition of the diversity of influences on the Labour Party can be explored. In doing so this thesis will also provide an original interpretation of the organisational and policy history of the Co-operative Party. This will highlight tensions not only with the Labour Party, but also within the co-operative movement with regards to the function and purpose of the Co-operative Party - and more significantly the role of the co-operative movement in a socialist society.

John's main focus is **Co-operative Socialism** which has been adopted by the Economics Working Group – he is currently working, with Gianne Broughton a book called "Enough - How co-operative socialism can create a peaceful and fair world"

MF/mf/180203 - <http://occupylondon.org.uk> • <http://www.co-operativesocialism.org>