

A HISTORY
OF THE EARLY DAYS
OF THE
NORTHAMPTON LABOUR PARTY
1890 - 1945
AND SOME MEMOIRS
1946-1970
AS PARTY SECRETARY

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January 1971

THE NORTHAMPTON LABOUR PARTY

An Account of its origins and birth

by George Attewell. 1967.

THE EARLY SCENE

To gather something of the early history of the emergence of the Labour and Socialist movement in Northampton it is necessary to go back into the closing years of the 19th century. The pioneers of the party fought elections under a variety of labels. 'Radical', 'Socialist', 'Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.) and their election battles were against a background of a very limited franchise. Universal suffrage was but a distant object to be achieved. Northampton was simply divided for municipal purposes into North, South, East and West wards. It was a two-member constituency for the return of members to the House of Commons.

MEN OF DESTINY

Making his entry into the political struggle in 1890, E.J. Wright was rewarded by sixty one votes in the South ward and yet was ahead of his fellow candidate, E. Morgan, who could only gather twenty eight supporters. Jimmy Bland, T. Powell, W. Whitehall and W. Kirkton were amongst those breaking the ice of a cold electorate in succeeding years. E.L. Poulton (1896), A.G. Slinn (1897), C.J. Scott and James Gribble (1898) were also names making their first slight impact on the electoral scene but destined to play an important part in the history of Northampton and the ultimate birth of the Labour party in Northampton.

Some idea of the limits of the franchise of those far-off days may be gained from the electoral lists of 1900:-
Castle 1943: Far Cotton 755: Kingsthorpe 1556: North 2329
St. Crispin: 2052 St. Edmund 1634: St. James 1197:
St. Michael 2336: South 1468. The birth of the new century and the re-distribution and re-naming of the wards showed the support for local socialists at the municipal elections as follows:-
A.G. Slinn (178), James Gribble (115), J.W.G. Smith (317), C.J. Scott (263)

S.D.F. FIGHTS Kingsthorpe, North and Castle wards with the return
PARLIAMENTARY of J.W.G. Smith, J. Gribble and W. Pitts respectively
ELECTION show the first breakthrough to municipal seats in 1902 and 1903. But lean years followed.

Jack Williams, billed as 'Leader of the London Unemployed', and James Gribble were Social Democratic Federation candidates at the 1905 general election which resulted:-

J. Paul	(Lib)	4472
J.G. Shipman	(Lib)	4235
R.R.B. Orlebar	(Con)	4061
G.F. Barnes	(Con)	3987
J.E. Williams	(S.D.F)	2537
J. Gribble	(S.D.F.)	2361

Mrs. Rose Jarvis registered a 'great victory' in 1906 by beating A.J. (Pat) Darnell by two votes in an election for the board of guardians. In the succeeding years W. Kirkton, A.G. Slinn and W.B. Johnson were elected to the town council. The two latter in 1910, the year when the first tentative steps were taken towards the formation of what ultimately became the Northampton Labour Party.

THE TRADES COUNCIL 'POLITICAL ACTION'

In 1910 Fred O Roberts, secretary of the Northampton Trades Council and later to become M.P. for West Bromwich and Minister of Pensions, moved a resolution with the object of "The Trades Council taking independent political action". Twelve months later he was successful in persuading the executive committee of that body to report on "The best means of enabling the Trades Council to take part in national and local political movements".

The same year which saw the originating effort by F.O. Roberts to lay the foundation for unifying the industrial and political wings of the Labour cause witnessed the elections of H.B. Lees-Smith and C.A. McCurdy as the members of parliament for Northampton. Harry Quelch and James Gribble stood as Social Democrats and the general election result in 1910 was:-

H.B. Lees-Smith	(Lib)	5398
C.A. McCurdy	(Lib)	5289
R.R.B. Orlebar	(Cons)	4564
F.G. Barnes	(Cons)	4464
J. Gribble	(Soc. Democrat)	1792
H. Quelch	(Soc. Democrat)	1617

A SUNDAY

IN 1912 As a consequence of F.O. Roberts' persuasive manner the first positive steps to form the forerunner of to-day's Northampton Labour Party were taken on Sunday, 17th March 1912, at a meeting attended by representatives from the Trades Council, British Socialist Party (B.S.P.) and the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.).

This historic meeting took place at the Trades Club and the resolution reads: "That we delegates (from the foregoing) believe the time has come to form a Labour Representation Committee in Northampton for the purpose of obtaining direct Labour representation on local governing bodies". It will be noted that the original objects were modestly confined to local matters.

The draft constitution provided for delegates from the Trades Council, B.S.P., I.L.P., trade union branches, Co-op Societies and 'other' societies, and one delegate from each ward. Annual fees were 1d a member from trade unions Co-ops and other societies, 10/6d a delegate from the Trades Council, B.S.P. and the I.L.P. Associate members - analogous to to-day's individual members - paid 1/- a year.

BIRTH PANGS Considerable difficulty was experienced with the British Socialist Party which expressed its doubts "that amalgamation of local Labour and Socialist forces would be advisable", and at the 1912/13 elections the B.S.P. and I.L.P. ran local candidates under their own auspices.

After these vicissitudes and birth pangs James Gribble (who had ceased to be a member of B.S.P.) made further suggestions for the linking of the three forces and the Trades Council, acting on his initiative, called a meeting for Sunday 8th February 1914. The minutes of this meeting are headed: 'Labour Party Formation Committee' and the delegate roll is historic:-

Trades Council: A.W. Kersey, W. Samwell, George Kent.

British Socialist Party: Len Smith, C.J. Scott, T.B. Smith, F. Cuthbert.

Independent Labour Party: A. Burrows, W. Rogers, G.H. Woodward, H. Croft.

James Gribble was present and F.O. Roberts acted as secretary.

FAITH AND DOUBTS Some typical extracts from the inaugural meeting are:- J. Gribble: "A necessity for breaking the workers away from the orthodox parties and to do this they must form a Labour Party". Mr. Kent foresaw 'difficulty' and said his association (Teachers) would take more kindly to 'Labour' than one labelled 'Socialist'. C.J. Scott enquired: "Are the I.L.P. and the Trades Council in favour of persistent fight against Liberals and Tories?". Len Smith uncompromisingly stated: "Our men must stick to the name 'British Socialist Party'". Mr. Rogers summed up by declaring: "We are all agreed I think as to the need for this party, there may however be some difficulty about the name!". To which Frank Cuthbert added, and it is dutifully recorded in the minutes: "I am not prepared to water my beliefs!"

READY TO GO Meetings were being held on Sunday mornings and were so lengthy as to detain delegates from their dinner and it became necessary to pass a motion adjourning all meetings at 12.30. The constitution was finally approved and it is recorded that the only clause minuted as 'passed without comment' was the one which read: "All accounts of the committee shall be audited".

By October 1914 the long labours of providing a constitution were over and the Northampton Labour Representation Committee (L.R.C.) was ready to go, and at that meeting Arthur Lyne (later to become Mayor of Northampton and M.P. for Burton) appears as a delegate from the Trades Council. Thursday evenings at the Trades Club was now the order. F.O. Roberts was confirmed in the office of secretary and J. Flinton Harris the president. Vice presidents were A.W. Lyne and L.C. Lovell, the treasurer Will Rogers, and the executive committee consisted of Harold Croft, G.H. Woodward and W.R. Townley.

FOUNDER ORGANISATIONS Founder societies affiliated to the L.R.C. included: Typographical Society, Boot & Shoe Union No.1. and No.2 branches, Brewery Workers (General Workers and General Labourers), National Union of Railwaymen, Tramway Workers, Municipal Employees, Farriers Society, Postal Clerks, Carpenters and Joiners, the Trades Council, Independent Labour Party, and British Socialist Party.

EARLY DAYS OF SPEECH AND MUSIC The onset of the Great War drew attention to the rise in the price of foodstuffs, and various attempts were made to hold meetings under the auspices of the Workers National Movement.

Miss Margaret Bondfield and H.M. Hyndman agreed to speak at a demonstration at the Temperance Hall, Newland, in March 1915. It is noteworthy that the manager of the hall agreed to an advertisement on the screen and the L.R.C. approved: "That the operator should be given a gratuity of 2/6d".

Formerly, May Day demonstrations had been organised jointly by the Trades Council, B.S.P. and the I.L.P., but this task was now undertaken by the Labour Representation Committee for the first time in 1915. There was no procession but the Imperial Band played for an hour before the large mass meeting in the morning. In the evening the committee had organised a violin recital at the Temperance Hall. The recital - the programme being the audience's choice - included Tartini's sonata 'The Devil's Trill', Gounods 'Ave Maria', the Mendelssohn concerto and Verdi's 'Il Trovatore'.

THE WARDS The initiating of organisations in the wards was begun under the following - who may presumably be called 'The first ward secretaries':-

St. James': Emmett Law, Kingsthorpe: F. Lawrence,
Far Cotton: L.C. Lovell, St. Edmund: W.R. Townley,
Kingsley: F. Samwell, South: W.G. Needles, St. Lawrence:
W. Rogers, North: Albert Birt, Castle: W. Garlick,
St. Michael: C.J. Scott, St. Crispin: A.W. Lyne,
Abington: H. White. A distinguished list!

LOCAL OR NATIONAL OBJECTS? Items from the 1915 annual report of F.O. Roberts record 'that it took five years of effort to establish a united party of Labour and Socialist forces', and that the total number of delegates

was forty. The same year saw lengthy discussions as to whether the L.R.C. should apply for affiliation to the national Labour Party. Rent raising and the treatment of consumptives were also amongst the matters discussed. In 1916 the Typographical Society put forward a resolution that the work of the Labour Representation Committee should be extended beyond its 'local' nature in order to take part in 'parliamentary situations'. This was agreed as an alteration to the constitution in 1917 and the only objections came from Northampton No.1. branch of the Boot & Shoe Union.

To revert to 1916, Miss Margaret Bondfield appears to have made her first visit to a tea-table conference on the 17th May at the Divan Cafe in The Drapery. Delegates tickets were 1/- (including tea). Dr. Marion Phillips, advertised as 'The well-known Women's Labour Leader' was the speaker for 1917 May Day meeting and conference at which a resolution was passed 'offering congratulations to Russian comrades on the splendid results of their efforts to secure emancipation'.

BOROUGH The same year saw the issue of the White Paper
TO LOSE on the proposed re-distribution of parliamentary
ONE M.P. seats and which would result in Northampton
 becoming a one member constituency. C.A. McCurdy
and H.B. Lees-Smith were the Liberal M.P.s for the borough,
and there were expressions of regret that Northampton's right
to return two members to the House of Commons - said to have
existed for 600 years - would be disturbed.

The annual report for 1917 records the socialist members of the town council as: A.G. Slinn, A.J. Robinson, W. Pitts, F. Cuthbert, F. Drage and F.G. Kirby. The report also opposed tri-ennial elections for the town council and asked the local M.P.s to support proportional representation. The question of political organisation of women was given its first airing.

'Labour The Northampton Labour Representation Committee
Council' affiliated to the national Labour Party in 1918,
KHAKI and it is assumed formally adopted the name of
ELECTION Northampton Labour Party that year and likewise
 its committee of management became known - and
continued to this day - as the 'Labour Council'.

The general election result in Northampton for 1918 - commonly called the 'Khaki Election', was:-

C.A. McCurdy	(Coalition Lib)	16, 010
W. H.alls	(Labour)	10,735.

INDIVIDUAL There is a gap in the minute record of the
MEN'S SECTION. Labour Council at this point and one is
 dependent upon the records of the 'Individual
Men's Section' for some of the intervening history. The
Men's Section sent ten delegates to the Labour Council and it
is assumed that the Women's Section had a similar representation.

It is evident that ward organisations were still nebulous and the records suggest that their only representatives were the ward secretaries who were without voting power. Regular reports were received of the meetings of the Labour Council and the passage of events of the party is well marked. Meetings of the men's section took place monthly at the party rooms 66 Abington Street and in 1919, E.J. Wright was chairman and G. Simpson the secretary. The latter having taken over from B.T. (Tommy) Spencer who had resigned that office owing to pressure of work.

The desire for social activity was manifest from a resolution sent to the Labour Council urging the arranging of monthly 'smokers'. There were too, protests against the long hours and low wages of nurses at the general hospital, and Labour members of the Town Council reported their efforts to raise 'out relief'.

MARGARET Miss Margaret Bondfield was supported as pros-
BONDFIELD pective parliamentary candidate against the rival
 claims of H.B. Lees-Smith (former Liberal M.P.
for the borough) and J.L. Poulton. The appointment of
C.A. McCurdy the sitting M.P. as food controller precipitated
a by election in 1920. Legal requirements at that time making
this necessary on his being appointed to a 'place of profit'.

The voting figures were:

C.A. McCurdy	(Coalition Lib)	16650
M. Bondfield	(Labour)	13279

Mr. B.T. Spencer was now secretary of the Northampton Labour Party, and the delegates to the Labour Council for 1920 included W.F. Belson, E.J. Wright, G. Simpson, Len Smith and George Iutt. The latter two becoming mayors of the borough in 1949 and 1959 respectively.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND RELIEF TO RUSSIA. A poignant comment on the unemployment situation is reflected in a letter of February 1922 from the Children's Hospitality Committee of the Fellowship of Reconciliation asking members to provide periods of hospitality in their homes for the children from distressed areas. The men's section urged the government to send 'immediate and urgent relief to Russia'. The first reference to 'Town Planning' occurs in 1924 when Ald. A.G. Slinn gave a talk on the subject.

The question of acquiring party premises was also to the fore, and it was decided that although 'a hall was necessary that the party should start a building fund when the piano was paid for'!

LABOUR'S FIRST M.P. A SHORT TERM. The general election in December 1923 saw the election of Miss Margaret Bondfield as the first Labour M.P. for Northampton. The father of the late Mr. 'Jack' Collier was the conservative candidate and Mr. C.A. McCurdy stood as a Liberal without coalition aid. The figures were:-

M. Bondfield	(Lab)	15556
J.V. Collier	(Con)	11520
C.A. McCurdy	(Lib)	11342

The rejoicing over the first Labour government was short lived and at the general election of October 1924 the figures were:-

General Holland	(Con)	16017
M. Bondfield	(Lab)	15046
J. Manfield	(Lib)	9436

Thus the 'radical' borough of Northampton became Tory.

GENERAL STRIKE The fascination of wireless is reflected in a profit which the men's section made in 1925 from a prize draw for a crystal set: a pair of headphones and an aerial. A draw for a similar prize raised £30 the following year. A further reflection of the times is indicated by details of a joint social with the women's section at the price of 4d with 'refreshments at moderate prices'.

Impressions gained during the general strike occupied the attention of members at the May 1926 meeting. A report of the Labour Council later in the year records that £654 was raised for the Miners Fund and that 168 children of the miners were kept in the homes of Northampton people for approximately three months and that thirty six sacks of boots and clothing were collected and sent to the mining areas.

ADVENT OF COL. MALONE Nominations for a prospective parliamentary candidate included W. Hunt, Col Cecil Malone, a Mr. Smith and Len Smith. The men's section decided to support Col. Malone's nomination. At the by election in January 1928 - arising from the death of General Holland - Col. Malone became Northampton's second Labour M.P. The figures were:

Cecil Malone	(Lab)	15173
Capt. Renton	(Con)	14616
C. Morgan	(Lib)	9584
- Hallwood	(Ind. Con)	1093

It is evident from the foregoing figures that the election

of Col. Malone was due in no small measure to the intervention of Mr. Hailwood the independent Conservative and that this aroused a lot of bitterness amongst Tory supporters. Nevertheless, this Labour triumph was confirmed at the general election in 1929. The figures were:-

Col. C. Malone	(Lab)	22,356
Capt. Renton	(Con)	20,177
Miss H. Schillizzi	(Lib)	11,054.

AN 'UNOFFICIAL' CANDIDATE - EXPULSIONS 1929 was also a year of internal discord in the party and arose from certain members supporting an unofficial 'Labour' candidate in the North Ward. Mr. F. Wood stood against the official nominee of the party, Mrs. E.E. Simpson and the result of the poll was:

- Hanafy	(Con)	1030
Mrs. E.E. Simpson	(Lab)	1028
F. Wood	(Ind. Lab)	339

As a result of this defection four members were expelled from the Northampton Party. In the course of time they were re-admitted to membership, one as already reported in these columns becoming a Labour mayor of the borough.

INDIVIDUAL SECTIONS CEASE On March 17th 1930 it was reported to the men's section that the 'new' constitution of the party had been adopted and that the men's section would cease to send delegates to the Labour Council, the party's committee of management. It is evident that representation would henceforth be by individual members through their respective ward organisations and women's sections or central committee. Thus the now familiar representation by delegates from party organisations and trade union branches began.

Mr. George Simpson, after being secretary of the men's section for 12 years resigned and was presented with a fountain pen as a token of appreciation of his long services. The funds of the section were handed over to the party with the express wish that £10 should be allocated to the social committee to buy equipment, tea urns, crockery, and so on.

Permission was given by the Labour Council for the men's section to continue for debating and educational purposes and that ladies should be allowed to attend. The records indicate an average attendance of thirty until May 1931 where they end with Mr. Abrahams as the speaker on "The Pioneers of Printing" and a balance of cash of 19/4¹/₂d. It would seem that throughout this period the women of the party had been meeting monthly on the same basis as the men, discussing similar business and with rights of representation on the Labour Council, nominating for Boards of Guardians, Town Council candidates, and so forth.

THE 1931 DEBACLE Minutes of the Labour Council again become available from 1931. Councillor Mrs. A.A. Adams was chairman and Mr. B.T. Spencer the secretary of the party. The printed rules and constitution were substantially the same as to-day's.

The party endorsed the action of Col. Malone in refusing to support the national government. He had been offered a place in the government to be formed by J. Ramsay MacDonald. The subsequent general election saw Col. Malone's majority swept away in the electoral landslide of 1931. The figures were:-

Sir M. Manningham Buller	(Con)	34,817
Col. C. Malone	(Lab)	19,890

Cons. Majority 14,919.

LABOUR'S FIRST MAYOR Ald. A.G. Slinn, Labour's first mayor-designate was seriously ill and requested that Ald. C.J. Scott should take the oath of office if he was unable to do so. Ald. Slinn died a few days before the mayor-making and thus Ald. C.J. Scott became Labour's first mayor of Northampton in 1931.

A NEW TOWN COUNCIL The Northampton Extension Act 1931 necessitated elections for a new town council and this miniature general election on the newly constituted ward boundaries took place on 12th March 1932.

The Labour Candidates were: (* marks those already councillors)

Castle: * Mrs. A.A. Adams, * J.E. Bugby, F.O. Roberts.
 Delapre: * William Barratt, Mrs. H.M. Nicholls.
 Kingsley: Harry Smith.
 Kingsthorpe: * R.A. Slinn, * A. Weston, R.E. Slinn.
 St. Crispin: * A.E. Burrows, * A.W. Lyne, John Hill.
 St. Edmund: J.H. Ellis, W.T. Jackson.
 St. George: * W.J. Bassett-Lowke, * S. Frost, G.E.O. Cox.
 St. James: Mrs. S.J. Wootton.
 St. Michael: E.L. Poulton, P.P. Smedley.
 South: Rev. Frank Jennings.
 Spencer: * Mrs. A.E. Peach, * E.J. Wright, S. Betts.

The following Labour members lost their seats on the town council: R.A. Slinn, A. Burrows, S. Frost and Mrs. A.E. Peach. F.O. Roberts gained a seat in Castle Ward and Mrs. Nicholls won Delapre by two votes over the Tory candidate.

'COUP' IN DEAPRE WARD Delegates to the Labour Council for 1932 included J. Dickens, Mrs. E. Thomas, Mrs. H.M. Nicholls, Mrs. K.M. Gibbs and W. Pickering. The latter three ultimately becoming mayors of the borough. The July 1932 meeting saw Col. Malone re-selected as prospective parliamentary Labour candidate, and later he was the subject of criticism for saying that the Bata factory should not be built at Tilbury whilst there were 25,000 unemployed in the boot and shoe industry.

Mr. Albert Hope was chairman of the party in 1934 when there occurred what the local paper described as "Labour Coup at Delapre". This arose when the Labour Party did not reveal that Councillor William Barratt would not be standing again and the nomination of A.J. Pameley was made twenty minutes before the time limit for the close of nominations. The one 'surprise' at the 1934 elections was the defeat of Councillor J. Peach (Conservative) in St. Crispin Ward and the election of S. Frost (Labour) by 103 votes.

SON OF MAJOR GUY PAGET 1935 opened with the appointment of Walter Lewis as party agent. Walter Lewis was later to become mayor of the borough in 1955). Agent Walter Lewis reported to the Party E.C. on 9th August 1935 that (interest has been growing by the adherence of the son of Major Guy Paget to our Party', and Mr. Lewis's report speculated whether a public meeting addressed by him (son of Major Guy Paget) would be of special value. The adoption of the report records 'that no action be taken on the foregoing'.

It is evident that rumours were rife that Col. Malone was considering withdrawing as prospective parliamentary candidate, and the party E.C. of 31st August 1935 had before it a report that a verbatim copy of Col. Malone's decision to resign had been published in the local paper. The feelings of members may be gauged by the decision of the E.C. 'without discussion' to recommend to the Labour Council that it accept the resignation. It also added a further recommendation: "that approaches be made to W. Jewett, W. Barratt, Prof. R.H. Towney and Mrs. A.A. Adams".

REGGIE A special meeting of the party executive
 PAGET'S committee was held on 19th October 1935 at
 LONG HAUL 6.30 p.m. prior to the Labour Council and
 recommended "That R.T. Paget be the Labour Party candidate
 for Northampton". The emergency committee bringing forward
 the name of Mr. Paget consisted of W. Lewis, B.T. Spencer,
 S.A. Betts, Mrs. H.M. Nicholls, C.H. Chinn and H. Dunkley.
 Despite this brief period to prepare his campaign Mr. Paget
 came within 1455 votes of unseating the sitting member,
 Sir M. Manningham Buller. The figures for the general election
 in October 1935, were:-

Sir. M. Manningham Buller	(Con)	25,438
R.T. Paget	(Lab)	23,983

Cons. majority	1,455
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In May 1936 R.T. Paget was again approved as prospective parliamentary candidate, although he was to wait a further nine years by reason of the intervention of the 1939/45 war before the opportunity again arose to meet the electors.

THE EVE Events which were to occupy the attention of the
 OF WAR. party in the years leading up to the outbreak of war included supporting the Spanish workers against Fascism, support for the Jarrow marchers from the distressed areas, and blind marchers. Both marching 'Against Unemployment'. The abdication process received the attention of the Labour Council in 1936 but no resolution was agreed and no declaration made to the press.

The gathering war clouds are reflected in 1939 by the receipt of a circular dealing with air raid precautions. Resolutions pressed for provision for adequate air raid shelters, and the party's resolution for annual conference reads: "That deep air raid shelters should be provided for the whole of the urban population and that the sum of £400 Mill. be allocated for this purpose".

The Labour Group was now seventeen strong on the town council, and Mr. R.T. Paget's writings and speeches on the international situation earned him, vide the 'Northampton Independent' the titles of "that irrepressible oratorical firecracker" and "King of the Market Square".

WAR The outbreak of the second World War on
 YEARS 3rd September 1939 resulted in the closing down of many activities of political life. Efforts were made to continue the organisation of the party, although the formulation of policy matters necessarily lost much of its force. An electoral truce was observed by the major parties at both local and national level.

The Labour Council because of the blackout and air raid precautions met at 7.p.m. and closed at 8.30. It was also agreed that meetings should be adjourned on the sounding of the air raid sirens and should not be held at all if an 'Alert' was signalled by 6 p.m. Mr. R.T. Paget had joined the Royal Naval V.R. and in January 1942 the party received greetings from him adding that although he had been proposed for invaliding out he "had succeeded in remaining and would soon be posted to anti-submarine work". In 1943 Mr. Paget advised the party of his release from the services and of his general availability.

WAR-TIME Despite the electoral truce, a parliamentary
 ELECTION by election occurred in December 1940 due to the death of Sir. M. Manningham Buller, the sitting Conservative Member. Mr. W. Spencer Summers was the Tory candidate and was opposed by Mr. W.S. Seamark (Pacifist)

campaigning for a negotiated peace. The results were:-

W. S. Summers	(Con)	16,587
W.S. Seamark	(Pacifist)	1,167
Con. majority		15,420

War time memories from the minutes record dissatisfaction about air-raid shelters and the abandonment of meeting because of the sounding of air raid alarms. One also notes the due recording of empowering the caretaker of the party premises to secure black-out material and the use of the rooms as a depot for fire-watchers. A motion on 10th June 1942 urging the opening of a second front was defeated.

Mr. R.A. Slinn took over the party secretaryship in 1942 and upon his resignation was succeeded by Mr. Ron Spencer with Mr. Frank Branson as assistant secretary. September 1944 saw Mr. R.T. Paget formally selected as prospective candidate and at the December meeting Mr. Len Smith was appointed as organiser and agent. Mrs. Joan Camp acted as secretary of the Northampton Labour Party during 1945 and as the war was nearing its end attention was given to the question of municipal elections and it was reported that 39 nominations had been received from the local government panel.

1945 The Party E.C. in 1945 consisted of:
 POLITICAL Mrs. H.M. Nicholls (Chairman), S. Betts, F. Curtis,
 TRIUMPH. A.A. Hope, J. Hutchins, Miss E. Lacon, Miss Thompson,
 Mrs. J. Martin, Geo Nutt, ' Pickering, Ron Spencer,
 M. Spevok, W. Swann, Mrs. E. Thomas, F. Tollit, W. Walker,
 Cyril Webb.

Mr. R.T. Paget was adopted as candidate on 5th June at the Town Hall and at the general election on 5th July - the counting taking place some two weeks later in order to allow service men and women's votes to be recorded - the result in Northampton which was to herald Mr. Paget's long record as Member for the Borough, was:-

R.T. Paget	(Lab)	27,681
W.S. Summers	(Con)	20,684
J. Bugby	(Ind)	749

Lab. majority 6,997.

Thenation wide sweep to Labour was completed at the municipal elections for a 'new' town council and the following Labour members were elected or re-elected to the town council:-

Kingsthorpe:	G. Clifton, A. Weston, W. Belson.
Delapre:	F. Saunders, A.J. Pamely, Mrs. H.M. Nicholls.
Spencer:	F. Tollit, Frank Lee, Mrs. Olive Lee.
St. Crispin:	A.A. Hope, J.H. Ellis, S. Betts,
Weston:	A. Hodson.
St. George:	W. Pickering, W. J. Bassett-Lowke.
Castle:	W.R. Townley, Saul Doffman, W. Lewis.
St. Edmund:	F. Etherington, H. Harrison.
St. James:	A. Farey, G.J. Hackett, M. O'Brien.

A. Burrows and A.W. Lyne were re-elected aldermen and the following elected aldermen: W. Bassett-Lowke, A. Weston, Mrs. H.M. Nicholls, A.J. Pamely, W.R. Townley.

At by elections consequent on the aldermanic elevations the following were elected councillors: Ron Spencer (St. George), W.J. Walker (Kingsthorpe), J. Dickins (Castle), Mrs. K.M. Gibbs, (Delapre).

Labour thus had its first clear majority in the House of Commons and locally its first majority on the Northampton Town Council after 35 years of history and the travail of two world wars. A history embracing the trials of socialist pioneers in the latter years of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the 20th to F. O. Roberts making the attempt to unify the industrial and political wings of Labour and on to 1945 with Clem Attlee at the head of a Labour Government with a very large majority, and locally, Councillor Frank Lee taking over the leadership of Northampton's Labour Group to manage the municipal affairs of the borough. Its former leader, Ald. A.W. Lyne having been elected M.P. for Burton on Trent and Mr. H.C. Attewell - another doughty fighter for the Labour movement in Northampton - winning the parliamentary seat of Market Harborough.

The writer was appointed secretary of the Northampton Labour Party in the early part of 1946. It is however, no part of this document to deal with the details of the succeeding 21 years except to comment on the changing fortunes inherent in political life and parties and of Mr. R.T. Paget's record as Member for the Borough.

From the local triumph of 1945 Labour was swept from power at the town hall in 1949 but regained a majority in 1953. After a brief twelve months it was lost in 1954 and retrieved in 1956, a year when the parties reached a 'dead heat' but the decision of the Conservative mayor to remain "strictly neutral" gave Labour a small technical majority.

The local Tories regained power in 1959 but in 1964 another 'dead heat' eventuated, and on this occasion the Conservative mayor announced that he would give his casting vote with the Tory party so as to ensure control. However, it was not to be. A tie in one ward resulted in the issue being apparently decided by the drawing of names from the now famous 'pepper pots' and the election of the Tory candidate. A successful election petition was launched resulting in the Labour candidate being given the seat and resulting in a Labour majority on the Council.

The extensions of the Borough boundaries in 1965 led to bitter controversy over the manner of the wards' distribution and the elections for a 'new' council justified Labour complaints and forebodings and resulted in the Conservatives being returned with an overwhelming majority. Despite these changing fortunes the Northampton Labour Party and Group has good reason to cherish the leadership of the late Aldermen Frank Lee and Walter Lewis, and the present leader Councillor Miss Carol Trusler.

From the first appearance in 1935 and his ultimate triumph in 1945 Mr. Reginald Paget has at successive elections retained Northampton's seat in the House of Commons for Labour. Eight general elections and at the time of writing twenty two years continuous service in the House. The record of electoral successes and service as M.P. for Northampton are without parallel in the history of the Borough, and in view of the almost certain decision to make Northampton into two constituencies, impossible to be equalled or even approached.

GEORGE ATTEWELL

Secretary Northampton Labour Party.

November 1967

POST WAR YEARS 1946 opened with a strong Labour Group of 23 councillors and seven aldermen under the leadership of Councillor Frank Lee, B.A., B.Sc., a lecturer in economics for the Workers Education Association. The presentation of 'Labour's First Budget' by him was an event signalled by the party having Councillor Lee's speech printed verbatim in a special booklet.

Councillor Walter Lewis succeeded Ald. Mrs. H.M. Nicholls as chairman of the party. It is noteworthy - in view of the events some twenty years later - that the Labour Council as early as February 1946 arranged for a deputation to see the borough M.P., Mr. R.T. Paget, to express the urgent necessity of legislation to combat anti-racial (and fascist) propaganda.

NEW PARTY SECRETARY Mr. George Attewell was elected party secretary and one of his first duties in 1946 was to press the regional council conference to support a resolution calling for the payment for loss of time to elected representatives on local authorities. During October the labour group formally adopted model standing orders. The main effect was to prevent co-opted members voting on group matters. As a result the labour council in November rescinded the Minute which gave aldermen and councillors and co-opted members voting rights by virtue of office. The right to attend and participate in discussion was not affected by the decision.

Monthly parliamentary reports became a feature of Mr. R.T. Paget's activities. The November municipal elections resulted in 'no change' although Mr. Len Smith and Mr. George Nutt were elected to the borough council vide the death of Mr. W. Belson and the decision of Mrs. Olive Lee to not stand again for election. Sunday evening debates at the party rooms were begun in 1947. The venture met with diminishing success and was abandoned within a few months. Ald. A.W. Lyne M.P. who had gained the parliamentary seat of Burton on Trent at the 1945 political landslide brought a contingent of his supporters to Northampton and they were entertained to tea and a dance in the evening.

A LABOUR CLUB. The first of many resolutions with the view to beginning a labour club in Northampton was introduced by members of Weston ward. The attempt - like later ones - proved abortive. The decision to 'take no action' was based on 'the difficulties of the Trades Council when exploring a similar venture.' Discussion surrounding the possibility of starting a labour club suffered from the inherent fallacy that trade unions had only to be approached and they would be forthcoming with funds to invest. In practice it was realised that trade union rules about the application of their funds were very strict and left little scope for such speculative ventures as investing in labour clubs.

Rationing of many items was still in force and the shortage of fuel gave rise to a request to the town council for greater publicity to the correct formula for making briquettes from slack coal. The resolution also urged that transportation be arranged for the sale of coke to outlying districts of the town. The hardy annual of forming a labour club led to a further exploration of the subject "conditional upon no license being obtained for the premises". Needless to say, with this restriction imposed no more was heard of the matter.

LABOUR YOUTH The Northampton Labour League of Youth was formed in 1947, the forerunner of many ill-fated attempts to organise youth within the Labour Party. This particular venture began in good faith and participated in the Northampton Youth Parliament. This debating chamber was the Guildhall. The 'Mr. Speaker' was duly robed and wigged, and the 'hon. members' were mainly composed of youth from the Labour, Liberal, and Conservative parties. The restriction of the age of Labour's youth to 21 compared with 35 for the other two parties

was an obvious handicap, but this was overcome by grafting on other members under the title 'Youth Group'. The youth parliament was very successful for a season or two. It probably foundered because its debates became too noisy and 'interruptions' and 'interjections' became mere heckling.

Recommendations of the parliamentary boundary commission that the Northampton constituency would be the whole of the municipal area, bringing in the perimeter of the borough with its large proportion of council houses, undoubtedly added to the safety of Northampton as a 'Labour seat'. In November 1947 Labour's first Mayor of Northampton, Ald. C.J. Scott, died as a result of a road accident. 'Charlie' Scott was the doyen of the party; during his mayoralty he caused many uplifted eyebrows by persisting in riding about on his ladies' bicycle. Tragically, he met his death whilst riding his beloved bike. At his funeral, the officers of the party and group walked alongside the hearse and acted as pall bearers. A coloured photo of C.J. Scott in his mayoral robes hangs in the party office and is a treasured possession.

MUNICIPAL ELECTION LOSSES Labour faced the municipal elections of 1947 - the last year of November elections before changing to the present May period - in an atmosphere hostile to the party. The main annoyance to the electors was the continued rationing. The majority on the town council was cut from ten to four. Councillor Albert Hope continued as Whip of the group and his reports to the labour council were features of particular interest. The reports, while being factual and a recapitulation of events, were always laced with his brand of mordant humour and wit. For some reason, no one has ever tried to recapture the precision and pleasure of those outstanding reports which Albert Hope so diligently typed and delivered.

LABOUR AND POWER The onset of the National Health Service in 1948 saw the beginning of many years effort to obtain greater labour representation on regional hospital boards and management committees. A number of party members attended a public meeting at Kettering to be addressed by Mr. Nye Bevan the then Minister of health. Their efforts to persuade Mr. Bevan of the need to ensure adequate workers' representation received sharp treatment from him and led to no little bitterness in the hearts of the delegates.

This would seem to be almost symptomatic of the continued reluctance of Labour - when in power - to be other than anxious to avoid the charge of favouring one's own. The Tories when in power - or out of it for that matter - do not seem bound by the same inhibitions. It really is no wonder that when members hear politicians pontificating that 'politics is about power' they wonder why Labour politicians do not use it when they have it.

John Pickering was welcomed to the labour council as a delegate from Castle ward and was to give many years of valued service to the party as ward secretary and to the borough as an excellent town councillor. It is interesting to note here that the labour council pressed for amendment to the regulations which barred the free use of the town hall for political meetings. To-day we would look askance at the idea that this hall was not freely available for the dissemination of political views. Further resolutions, which were a foretaste of things to come, complained of racial propaganda and the need for more rigid control by the government over profits, prices and rents.

Such is fame! Mr. R.T. Paget suggested that Michael Foot, M.P. and Richard Crossman M.P. should be invited to address public meetings, but it was felt that these would not provide sufficient attraction and that efforts should be made to get a cabinet minister. A feature of the Minutes to this time was the frequency of resolutions and enquiries regarding 'alleged' remarks by colleagues to which umbrage was taken. These occurred on all sorts of occasions, committee meetings, town council meetings,

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trade union meetings. Skins seemed to be very thin those days! The labour council in July 1948 solemnly heard complaints that the railings at the cattle market were being painted by non-craftsmen. It would seem that the explanation of the skill required was trivial and that the men had no other job to do and the alternative was to 'to stand them off' still caused "serious concern" to those who are seriously concerned about such matters.

LADY DELEGATES Figuring among the 'welcome to new delegates' to the labour council were Miss Doris Britten and her sister Irene who were to give many years of faithful service to the Labour movement, and Miss Ruth Perkins and Miss Carol Trusler who were later to become mayor of the borough and leader of the labour group respectively. Consequent upon the re-organisation of the parliamentary constituency, Mr. R.T. Paget was chosen as the Labour candidate for Northampton. The passing of the Representation of the People Act 1948 which changed the date of municipal elections from November to May meant that no normal elections were held in 1949.

AFTER EFFECTS OF WAR. The Northampton party took a particular interest in the Rushcliffe proposals for a national system of legal aid and advice and actively supported the Haldane Society which played an important part in bringing the Legal Aid and Advice Act to the statute book.

The party's first post-war bazaar resulted in over £300 net profit. These bazaars were a regular biennial event for many years but the support for this form of money raising waned. The austerity of the immediate post war years gave these events a boost because the opportunity of obtaining goods and clothing and woollies 'off the ration' was too good to miss. This bonanza for the purchasers was made possible by the sacrificial giving of goods by members from their own personal rations. The effects of the war were still noticeable by a resolution of the labour council calling for 'the safe disposal of ammunition so as to avoid accidents to children'.

TORIES 1949 opened with Mr. Horace Harrison handing over the chairmanship to Mr. Cyril Webb. The first municipal elections to be held in the month of May were disastrous for Labour. Four seats were lost: A.A. Hope (St. Crispin), A. Farey (St. James'), F. Etherington (St. Edmund) and Ron Spencer (St. George). The party however, made one gain from Liberalin Delapre Ward where Mr. A.E. Scott - brother of the late Charles Scott - was the successful candidate. The position on the town council with the Conservatives in the majority was:

	Aldermen Councillors	
Labour	6	15
Conservatives	6	20
Liberal		1

By elections due to Conservative aldermanic elevations registered no success for Labour, but a further by election in Kingsthorpe ward due to the death of Councillor George Clifton resulted in the election of Mrs. Grace Brown. Consequent upon Mr. Albert Hope losing his seat on the council Councillor Fred Saunders was elected whip of the labour group. In June the party mourned the death of Mr. B.T. (Tommy) Spencer. He had given many years of service to the Labour Party in Northampton as secretary and in latter years, as treasurer. The funeral service took place at the Friends' Meeting House and members of the party were enabled to pay tributes at the service. Mr. Albert Hope was appointed treasurer of the party.

R.T.PAGET DEFENDS MANSTEIN Resolutions were received relating to the action of Mr. R.T. Paget in undertaking the defence of Field Marshall Manstein who was standing trial for alleged war crimes. The party executive committee expressed its confidence that Mr. Paget's action was based on the desire to ensure a fair trial and justice for the defendant, and invited Mr. Paget to address the labour council on the matter. The motion deploring Mr. Paget's action was defeated by 25 votes to 19 on September 1949.

WARD CASH A clash occurred in the selection of a candidate for one of the wards. The ward meeting had refused to select the retiring councillor on the grounds that there had not been regularity in attending ward meetings. A feature of the dispute was the apparent number of new members of the party who were dominating the proceedings. The party E.C. took a strong line on the matter on the basis that there had been no formal complaint or inquiry, and that such arbitrary action was highly prejudicial to the councillor's standing in the eyes of the public and those who employed the councillor. The labour council overwhelmingly supported the E.C. and the councillor was duly adopted and returned to the town council.

1950 GENERAL ELECTION The parliamentary election of February 1950 led to a drastic reduction of the number of Labour M.P.s but Mr. R.T. Paget had a personal success with a majority of 7282. The figures being:

R.T. Paget (Lab)	31,946
R.L. Agnew (Con)	24,664
S.H. Alloway (Lib)	8,619.

Mr. Laurie Carter was the chairman of the party. In March the Trades Council ceased its affiliation to the party and it was noted in the Minutes "that good relations would still exist between the Trades Council and the Labour Party". Although the initiative to dis-affiliate arose from the trades council there was general relief that matters discussed by the party would not longer be reported - albeit that the council went into 'committee' - in the presence of a newspaper reporter.

Mr. R.T. Paget's speech in the House of Commons on the question of re-arming Germany drew criticism in the form of a resolution 'deploring his persistent anti-Russian attitude'. The motion was defeated by 18 votes to 17 with a number of delegates abstaining. A further resolution 'Condemning the intervention of a Labour Government in the civil war in Korea' was considered by mandated delegates and was defeated by 36 votes to 20. The May elections resulted in the loss of seats in St. George ward (W. Rickering) and St. James' ward (M. O'Brien) and the gain of St. Crispin ward via Mr. F. Etherington.

FURTHER MUNICIPAL LOSSES Councillor Syd Betts was chairman for 1951 and the February meeting carried a motion opposing the proposals to re-arm Germany and Japan. Labour suffered further losses at the May elections, losing two seats: Delapre (Mrs. K.M. Gibbs) and St. James' (G.J. Hackett). The position on the council resulting:

	Aldermen	Councillors
Labour	6	12
Conservative	6	23
Liberal		1

The labour party seems particularly prone to becoming involved in law suits, and the first of many requests to follow over the years was received for financial help to defend a court case. 'Labour's law suits' seemed to be fairly evenly divided between those for libel or slander and members of local authorities being in infringement of the local government Acts.

SECRETARY'S TANK RIDE Residents of the Adelaide Street area became annoyed at the passage of armoured vehicles by their homes and made strong representations to Mr. Paget about the nuisance caused by vibration and dirt. The war office invited Mr. Paget to inspect the ameliorative action taken by the military authorities to abate the nuisance. As he was unavailable at the time chosen Mr. Paget asked his agent, Mr. George Attewell, to attend at the stated time. Mr. Attewell went along all unsuspecting with Mrs. Attewell and to their embarrassment found themselves in the cars of the 'brass-hats' carried along in a line of tanks and other such vehicles grinding through the streets of Northampton bound for the proving grounds at Far Cotton, after first being entertained in the officers' mess. The party secretary naturally felt that anyone so considerate to a mere party agent must be equally considerate to neighbours. Certainly little more was heard of the alleged nuisance.

GENERAL ELECTION 1951

The general election of October 1951 was felt to be a crucial one. The Conservatives were returned to power at Westminster but Mr. Paget held Northampton by 35,038 votes against 30,244 for Mr. J.V. Collier, a Labour majority of 4,794. This was the first time that Northampton had ever been held for Labour on a straight fight with the Conservatives. Even the election of 1945 had been a three-sided contest by the intervention of an 'Independent'.

A feature of the count at the town hall was the slow and meticulous placing of Mr. Paget's votes compared with the rather more slick handling of Mr. Collier's. Thus, at a given stage, the Tory votes were some ten thousand in front of Labour with the resultant joy on the faces of Mr. Collier's supporters. However, at the stage where the Tory votes were exhausted and piles and piles of Labour votes had yet to be placed and it became obvious that Mr. Paget would be an easy winner the smiles of triumph changed to despair and anguish.

SWING OF 1952. Mr. Tom Baxter, the regional organiser of the Labour Party, died in 1952 and was succeeded by Mr. James Cattermole. A decision to change the time of beginning the proceedings of the labour council from 7.p.m. to 7.30 and finishing at 9.15 instead of 8.45 severed the last link with war time and the restricted hours used to combat the inconvenience of 'black-out'.

G.J. Hackett was the party chairman and the year also saw one of the many disbandments of the efforts to organise youth under the banner of the 'League of Youth'. A hint of unemployment was reflected in the results of the May elections. The party made four gains: St. George (Miss Ruth Perkins), St. James' (G.J. Hackett), St. Michael (S.T. Kinch) and St. Crispin (W. Goodrich). The gain in St. Michael ward was the most sensational. This stronghold of the Tories fell most unexpectedly and to demonstrate that this was no fluke Labour won a further seat in the same ward at a by election some two months later. On this occasion Mr. M. O'Brien was the labour victor.

The following aldermen retired in 1952: A. Weston, A.J. Pameley, W. Bassett-Lowke. Each was presented with an illuminated address by the party. In addition to the gain in St. Michael ward referred to above, by elections resulted in the election of Mr. Denis Walden to St. Crispin ward and Mr. John Brown to Spencer ward. The final placing on the council was:

	Aldermen	Councillors
Labour	5	17
Conservative	7	18
Liberal		1

LABOUR WOMEN'S SUCCESS It was a measure of Labour's upsurge that Northampton Labour women achieved a unique record of having formed a women's section in every ward of the borough when one was formed in St. Michael ward. New delegates for 1953 included Mr. Edgar Davis a former councillor from the Ridings of Yorkshire, and Mr. C.E. Wake, both destined to become councillors of the borough. The party chairman was John Gordon, president of the Northampton branch of the boot and shoe Union.

May day functions, for so long a feature of the party and trades council activities were abandoned because of the difficulty of arranging for a person to accept executive responsibility, but the traditional Sunday evening meeting with Mr. Paget as the speaker was held on the market square. It was however, becoming apparent that these sort of meetings and demonstrations were ceasing to be attractive to either party and trade union supporters, or the general public.

At the May elections both Labour and Conservative gained a ward. As expected, M. O'Brien was unable to hold the gain made in St. Michael ward, but P. McShane continued Labour's success in St. James' ward. Raising funds for the party has always been

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a difficulty. An attempt was made to secure a regular income by means of a 'covenant fund' whereby members would be invited to covenant to pay £1 a year to the party funds over and above the annual subscription. The scheme appeared to have attractions and would have obviated the weary round of prize draws, raffles and so on. The result of the appeal was largely negative and the idea was abandoned.

'LODGERS'
LEVY A Tory proposal of 1954 to impose a means test upon council tenants for the payment of rents met with great hostility from the party. The proposal was withdrawn, and the new party chairman John Brown, presided over a party meeting to hear the details of a further Tory scheme to impose a 'lodgers levy'. In brief, the scheme would allow for an adjustment of rent if a household contained a lodger. Such was the force of Labour's opposition to this imposition of an extra charge that events were later to involve a number of councillors in a court case.

LABOUR
AGAIN IN
CONTROL Success at the May elections in winning three seats placed Labour in control at the town hall. The victors were: C.H. Edwards (St. Crispin), A. Goodrich (St. James') and Maurice Amey (Delapre). Miss Carol Trusler was elected to the council for Castle ward vide the retirement of Saul Doffman. The position on the council was:

	Aldermen	Councillors
Labour	5	20
Conservative	6	16
Liberal	1	

The Liberal alderman was Mr. P. Adams who was supported by Conservative votes.

The introduction of the new Rents Act led to the party in conjunction with the trades council setting up a rents advice bureau. For many months there was a continuous stream of enquirers to the party rooms on the night given over to enquiries and interviews.

In 1954 it was agreed to support the use of a team of university students to canvass for new members. Head Office paid the wages of the students and the party provided the cost of their board and lodgings with party members. The team apparently gained many new members, but later experience revealed that most of the new 'members' had been under the impression that they were contributing 6d to the party funds and had no real idea of becoming members. It also seemed that the canvass team had done little to disabuse the householders of this and had been content to accept 6d 'to get them off the doorstep'.

GENERAL
ELECTION
1955 The early part of 1955 indicated that the first rush for advice under the new rent act was falling off, and the number of callers did not justify the continuance of regular sessions of the advice bureau. Councillor Miss Ruth Perkins was the party chairman, and the Labour Council passed by 22 votes to 17 a resolution recommending opposition to the decision of the shadow cabinet to recommend to the parliamentary Labour party that the Party Whip be withdrawn from Aneurin Bevan.

A special meeting of the Party in April 1955 selected Mr. R.T. Paget to again be the party's candidate for the general election. This meeting did not pass without some acrimony and one of two members indicated that they would not work in the campaign for the candidate. In the event, it transpired that the dissenting members did work in the campaign and very actively at that. The result of the election was:

R.T. Paget (Lab)	32,119
W.G. Clarke (Con)	28,771.

The May municipal elections had been held three weeks before and had led to the loss of three Labour seats on the council. The defeated candidates were S.T. Kiah (St. Michael), Miss Ruth Perkins (St. George) and G.J. Hackett (St. James'). These defeats plus the above mentioned dissension had boded ill for Labour in Northampton, but not for the first time the total municipal voting

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revealed the capacity of the Conservative party to secure a maximum vote of its supporters for borough elections while labour seems to 'hold its fire' for parliamentary campaigns. Thus it was that the Tories polled virtually their parliamentary vote at the municipal elections and were unable to substantially increase it at the general election, whereas Labour added some 10,000 votes

The state of the parties on the town council in 1955, was:

	Aldermen	Councillors
Labour	5	17
Conservative	6	19
Liberal	1	

At subsequent by elections on 21st July Miss Ruth Perkins and G.J. Hackett were returned unopposed for the Kingsthorpe and Spencer wards respectively. A newcomer to the town council at the May elections was D. Longrigg for Castle ward. Ald. Frank Lee, leader of the labour group, died the same year and Ald. Walter Lewis was elected leader of the group.

LODGERS' LEVY Councillors who lived in council houses were
LABOUR COUNCILLORS disbarred from voting on council house matters.
IN COURT. In good faith, but quite mistakenly, a number
 of labour councillors so affected adopted a
procedural device of moving and supporting an amendment to exclude themselves from securing any benefit in defeating the Tory proposals for imposing a lodgers' levy. They were summoned to court on June 17th and were each fined £2. 0. 0. for contravention of the local government act by voting on a matter which they held to have an 'interest'.

Sir Hartley Shawcross, the eminent Q.C. defended the Labour councillors and also conducted the appeal, which was dismissed. It was held by the appeal judges that an 'interest' arose whether one benefitted or not or even if it was to one's disadvantage. Sir Hartley gave his services gratis but there was necessarily considerable legal expenses, and an appeal to all parties in the country led to a quite extraordinary response which covered all the liabilities.

The party presented Sir Hartley with a handsome table-lighter in the form of a miniature knight in armour, and his gratitude for our appreciation was obviously quite sincere. It was evident, too, that Sir Hartley who was to shortly after leave the party had welcomed the opportunity to be of service to a party with which he was losing touch.

In contrast, it was noted that although the question of councillors who lived in council houses being virtually disbarred from voting on council house matters was a very sore point with labour members throughout the country, the head office of the party - presumably acting on instructions of the national executive committee - refused to help with the defence. One can only assume that the peculiar penchant of Labour members for becoming involved in law suits had decided the N.E.C. to avoid helping either the deserving or the undeserving. The sum of over £300 was subscribed by local party organisations and sympathetic parties.

Mr. R.P. Dilleigh presided over the party's affairs in 1956. An unexpected legacy from a deceased member provided the money for committee room chairs and the covering of the room with lino. Labour gained one seat on the council, the victor being Edgar Davis in St. George ward. At a by election in June, the party chairman, Mr. R.P. Dilleigh, was elected councillor for St. Crispin ward vide Mr. C.H. Edwards who had decided to retire because of business commitments.

CONTROL A further win in St. George ward - the 'marginal'
AGAIN ward of the borough - enabled Labour to regain con-
1957 trol of the council. R.S. Horsley captured the seat
from the Tories and the state of the parties on the council was:

	Aldermen	Councillors
Labour	6	19
Conservative	6	17

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Mr. Ron Spencer was chairman of the party, and S.T. Kinch made a return to the town council via a by election in St. Crispin ward due to the resignation of Mr. Denis Walden. Fund raising schemes began in December on the basis of a football competition. This had a limited success and difficulties occurred when the weather caused the abandoning of so many matches with the resulting triviality of prize money.

In 1958 Ald. A.W. Lyne was granted the freedom of the borough.

Member of the town council for many years, M.P. for Burton on Trent from 1945-50, leader of the labour group, ex-mayor of Northampton, Ald. Lyne had a record of public service without equal in Northampton. Mr. George Hutchins was chairman of the party for the year, and Councillor W. Goodrich did not seek re-election to the council because of ill-health. Frank Ives was elected in his place for St. Crispin ward. In the space of two years the Labour representation for the ward had completely changed.

LABOUR A step towards unifying the collecting of membership
 LOSES fees was taken in 1959 by the appointment of Mrs.
 CONTROL Shirley Pearce as membership collector. This proved
 an excellent appointment and it is without doubt that
 but for her energy and application the collecting of membership
 subscriptions to the party would have foundered. Mrs. Pearce
 provided a regular contact with the party members and assisted
 in the distribution of literature, draw tickets and so on.
 Miss Carol Trusler occupied the position of chairman for the
 year. The May elections resulted in the loss of two seats
 and the control of the council. Edgar Davies was defeated in
 St. George ward, and in St. James' ward, Peter Keedle failed to
 hold the seat vacated by Arthur Goodrich who decided to not seek
 re-election because of ill-health. The state of the parties on
 the council was reversed:

	Aldermen	Councillors
Labour	6	17
Conservative	6	19.

GENERAL ELECTION September 1959 saw the adoption once more of
 Mr. R.T. Paget as the parliamentary candidate.
 The election took place in October with Mrs. Jill
 Knight as the Tory candidate. Mrs. Knight, an attractive and
 doughty fighter for the Conservative cause was a formidable
 opponent and totalled 25,106 votes. The complete result was:

R.T. Paget	(Lab)	27,823
Mrs. J. Knight	(Con)	25,106
A. Smith	(Lib)	7,170

Mr. Hugh Gaitskell, leader of the parliamentary party attended a highly successful dinner at the Whyte Melville hall in February 1960. The party chairman, Mr. Edgar Davies, presided at the event. One more effort was made to organise youth within the party. This time under the new title 'Young Socialists'. Mr. R.T. Paget, whose interest and knowledge of defence matters was of inestimable worth was congratulated by the party upon being appointed 'shadow' First Lord of the Admiralty. The Women's Supper Club was inaugurated in 1960 and the initial success was to be continued for many years. The club met bi-monthly and speakers from many walks of life - many apolitical - addressed the members after their meal. A large measure of the success of the venture was obviously due to their wisdom in choosing a bright and tasteful venue for their meetings and by gracing the evening with dress accordingly.

DUMMY CANDIDATES That se-saw of wards - St. George - again lived up
 DISAPPROVED to its reputation by unseating Labour's last representative, R.S. Horsley. However, in the succeeding year of 1961 the council elections resulted in 'no change'. Mr. G.R. Rowlands was the party chairman. /

A recurring problem in municipal elections is the choice between contesting all seats irrespective of the possibility of success or concentrating the efforts on the seats which give a feasible hope. Arguments range from those who profess to see the necessity for 'carrying the flag' and the strategical value of drawing the forces of our opponents, to those who feel a widespread campaign wastes money and energies.

An often suggested solution is the running of a 'token' candidate. That is, the nominating of a candidate so as to force a contest and then taking no steps to stage a campaign by either the issue of poll cards, election addresses, meetings or canvassing. Many members have doubts about the moral validity of the latter course. It was agreed by the Labour Council in 1961 that it opposed the principle of fighting all elections if it meant running 'token' or 'dummy' candidates.

TRADE UNION Charges of ballot rigging against some of the
EXPELLED leaders of the Electrical Trades Union and the general revelations of the inquiry into the charges, at national level, led to the expulsion of the Union from the Labour Party. Local delegates of the Union attended the Labour Council and after protesting against the action of the National Executive Committee, tendered their resignations as individual members. In a matter of some twelve months and following a change of leadership in the Union it was welcomed back into membership.

LEN PIGGOTT The municipal elections for 1962 had a particularly touch of poignancy. Mr. Len Piggott, a former
AND headmaster in Northampton, won St. George ward but
WILF WALKER was unable to take his seat on the council because of illness. The campaign itself was fought largely on the personality of Mr. Piggott because he himself was confined to a sick bed. It was undoubtedly a triumph for this quite unique man. His death occurred without his being able to take his place on the council chamber and at the resultant by election the seat was lost.

Mr. George Browett, later to become an officer of the Boot and Shoe Union was returned during the year, unopposed, to fill the vacancy in Kingsthorpe ward created by the sudden death of Councillor Wilf Walker, a popular and able member.

Mr. Bert Comerford combined the offices of treasurer and chairman of the party for 1962 and the same year saw councillor Miss Carol Trusler elected whip of the labour group.

PARTY HONOURS Two gains were made at the 1963 May elections:
FRED HORSHAM. R.S. Horsley (St. George ward) and Peter Keedle (St. James' ward). The latter had the joint satisfaction of entering the council after many attempts and of becoming the party chairman.

Mr. Fred Horsham, secretary of Delapre ward for upward of twenty years was presented with the party's silver badge. This was a well deserved honour for a faithful servant of the Labour Party. The position on the town council for 1963 was:

	Aldermen	Councillors
Labour	5	17
Conservative	7	19

BALANCE A striking feature of the balance of political
OF life in Northampton since 1945 was the changes
POWER which occurred in control at the town hall and the continual marginal nature of St. George and St. James' wards. In general, Labour viewed the following as 'safe' seats: Kingsthorpe, St. Crispin, Delapre, Castle, and Spencer, while the Tories viewed the following as 'their own': Weston, South, Kingsley, St. Michael, and St. Edmund. The balance of power thus resting with St. George and St. James' wards.

Whether this evenness of power was a good thing may be a moot point. It is true that it added zest to an election campaign, but it is also true that it caused councillors to continually have an eye on the 'next election' with the resulting reluctance to

initiate progressive measures because of the uncertainty of their effect upon the electors. A party in power really needs a term of office extending beyond a couple of years if those plans are to mature and be seen in the proper perspective. The uncertainty as to who will be 'boss' next year may also have a restraining effect upon borough officials whose ideas are long term in outlook.

DEATH OF The Labour Party suffered a tragic loss by the
HUGH GAITSKELL death of Hugh Gaitskell. The full strength of his intellectual powers and personal integrity were making their effect upon the party and the electors. Confidence in his ability to make a great prime minister was widespread. The party however, accepted the election of Harold Wilson as leader of the parliamentary party with every satisfaction and a message of congratulation was sent to him.

PEPPER POT 1964, under the chairmanship of Harvey Fruish,
ELECTION provided a sensation at the municipal elections. The Labour party needed to gain two seats to take over control of the council, and it was expected that Mr. Fruish and Mr. Gregson would make the required gains in St. James' and St. George wards respectively. St. James' was duly won, but after a number of recounts in St. George ward the result was a tie.

Agent George Attewell asked to see the 'spoilt' papers and claimed that one of them was a 'good' vote for Mr. Gregson. the basis of his claim was that the voter's intention was clear and indicated by the marking that the elector had erased the cross apparently inadvertently made for the Tory candidate, Mr. Pearson, and placed a firm cross for Mr. Gregson.

The returning officer was Ald. W. Lewis, leader of the labour group, and embarrassment was caused when it was realised that Ald. Lewis had 'officially' rejected the paper. The Representation of the Peoples Act requires that a tie shall be resolved by the casting of lots. This was done by using two pepper-pots and placing a slip of paper in each with the respective names of the candidates. The town clerk, Mr. Vivian Rowe, placed one pot in each of his coat pockets and the returning officer chose one. Upon being opened it was revealed that the name inside was that of the Tory candidate and he was thereupon declared elected as councillor for St. George ward by one vote.

ELECTION Mr. Attewell objected formally to the rejection
PETITION of the aforementioned ballot paper and an election petition was entered and heard at an election court in July. The decision upheld the petition that the ballot paper was a good vote for Mr. Dick Gregson who was consequently declared the elected candidate and Mr. Pearson lost his council seat and Labour took over control of the council.

It is noteworthy that during the interim of the May elections and the holding of the election court in July that the council was equal in political strength, each side having six aldermen and eighteen councillors, and the Conservative mayor announced his intention of using his votes to enable the Tory control to be effective. This was a marked departure from the Tory oft proclaimed belief in the 'neutrality' of the mayoral position.

The election of Mr. Gregson relieved his worship of putting his intentions into practice and arousing the bitterness this would have caused. By elections resulted in the elections of D.T. Lamin for Delapre ward, and Mrs. E.E. Fitzhugh and A.A. Watson for Spencer ward.

GOOD Mr. A.A. (Albert) Hope gave up the position of
COLLEAGUES treasurer and Mr. H. (Bert) Comerford was appointed. Albert Hope had been a tower of strength to the Labour and trade union movement for many years and there was genuine dismay at his retirement from party activities. The appointment of Mr. Comerford, president of the Northampton branch of the Boot and Shoe Union, enabled the firm link with that Union to be continued.

A wellknown figure at party meetings, Mr. Fred Curtis, died during the year. He had a particular place in the affection of

members. Mr. Curtis was totally blind and took a keen and intelligent interest in the administration of the party and the work of the trades council. It was always of interest to see him making Braille notes on his pad and to hear him report from those notes (and his astronomical memory) with unerring accuracy.

VISIT OF HAROLD WILSON. The new leader of the party, Mr. Harold Wilson, addressed a bumper meeting at the town hall on 11th April and the overflow had to be catered for in another large room upstairs. Extensions of the borough boundaries became an accomplished fact and there was much speculation on the effect of re-warding which would become necessary.

One of the founder members of the Northampton party, Mr. Len Smith, died during the year. 'Len' Smith was a popular figure. He had been president of the national union of Boot and Shoe Union, a parliamentary candidate in the west country on a number of occasions, mayor and alderman of the borough of Northampton.

TROTSKYIST EXPULSIONS Continual trouble with the branch of Young Socialists led to their ultimate suspension and the expulsion from the party of a number of its members. The branch had become infiltrated with young persons under Trotskyist domination and elements with violent tendencies.

1964 GENERAL ELECTION October saw the general election and the return of a Labour government with a tiny majority of four under the premiership of Harold Wilson. Mr. R.T. Paget was again returned for Northampton in the face of a second attempt by the redoubtable Mrs. Jill Knight. The figures were:

R.T. Paget (Labour)	28,568
Mrs. J. Knight (Cons)	24,128
Miss E. Watson (Lib)	5,557

The campaign had some elements of tragi-comedy. Mr. Paget was receiving special treatment for a throat affliction and was compelled to fight the campaign virtually without uttering a word. The first glimmer of a returning voice was manifested at the eve of poll rally on the market square when he was just able to croak a few words into the microphone. This handicap naturally made a tremendous amount of work in arranging for deputy speakers, and many abortive efforts were made to tape the whispered words of Mr. Paget and re-broadcast them. It was apparent however, that audiences became restless at merely hearing words through a loud speaker and missed the personality behind the voice.

MR. PAGET 'OVERLOOKED' There was intense disappointment in the party, and indeed throughout Northampton, that Mr. Wilson the new premier did not appoint Mr. Paget to a ministerial position. His many years of service as an M.P. and the fact that he had been 'shadow' defence minister all contributed to the speculation as to why he had been passed over.

The writer's personal opinion is that the throat trouble which had plagued Mr. Paget for some time, plus sombre rumours about his health, had persuaded Harold Wilson to leave the selection for a while. But for events to which we shall refer later, an appointment of high rank would have followed within the next twelve months or so.

BITTERNESS OVER RE-WARDING Councillor Richard Gregson presided over the party in 1965. A year which was to see much wrangling and bitterness over the re-warding plans for the extended borough of Northampton.

Both the Labour and Tory parties were unable to agree on a re-warding plan at the latter end of the previous year, and the proposals of the town council carried on a party vote were passed over by the commissioner at the local inquiry in favour of what was largely a Conservative plan.

A particularly galling part of the decision was the fact that the proposals of the town council - albeit carried on a political vote with a Labour majority - were the result of a considered

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study by the town clerk and so obviously free from political bias. The Tory scheme was evidently politically inspired, it made the marginal ward of St. George a safe seat for the Conservatives and ingeniously used the Barrack Road and Kings-thorpe Road as an arbitrary division to confine Labour strength in a comparatively small number of wards and alternatively attached Tory areas to swing the political balance.

A SECOND INQUIRY

Labour analysts had no doubt that the effect of the Conservative scheme would be to prevent Labour from ever holding more than five wards of the borough. Feeling was so strong that a resolution from the town council and the strong representations of Mr. Paget convinced the Home Secretary of that time that a further inquiry should be held. Uproar in the House of Commons and a motion of censure moved by the Tories was the upshot of this decision. The new inquiry was held early in 1965 amidst an atmosphere of suspense and suspicion. The Tory proposals were virtually unaltered as was the proposals of the town council, and the Labour party proposed some very minor amendments to the plan originally drawn up by the town clerk.

GAMESMANSHIP AT THE INQUIRY.

An inquiry of six full days resulted. Labour was represented by a barrister while the Tories briefed an eminent Q.C. The town council was represented by a barrister with great experience in local government matters. A feature of the hearing was the quite remarkable proof of evidence submitted by a legal member of the Tory party and the days he spent giving evidence. Such was the detail given that the court heard point by point why a place of three or four houses had been given minute study to determine whether they should be in one ward or the other on the basis of 'greater community of interest' by virtue of which way the front and back windows were directed.

Presumably on the basis that if a person was so attentive to detail for a few houses a lot of thought must have been given to the overall scheme this sort of gamesmanship had a profound effect on the commissioner for once again the recommendation was in favour of the plan by the Tory party with the exception of one amendment by the Labour party.

1965

ELECTION DEBACLE

The elections for the new council took place in November 1965 against the background of a sustained campaign, vehemently supported by a large and vocal majority of the teaching profession, against Labour's proposals for comprehensive education. This, together with the political weighting of the wards redistribution according to the formula of the Conservative party's 'disinterested' plan, led to a heavy defeat for Labour. The resulting position on the town council was:

	Aldermen	Councillors
Labour	5	14
Conservative	7	22

The dire forebodings of the party were amply borne out and the wards returning Labour candidates were the expected five: St. Crispin, St. David, Dallington, Castle, and Delapre. In the latter ward the Tory party ran one candidate and he was equal top of the poll with Labour's M. Amey and thus unseated the former Labour councillor, Donald Iamin.

WOMAN LEADER FOR LABOUR GROUP.

For the first time in Northampton the Labour Group elected a woman as leader, Councillor Miss Carol Trusler, and she quickly demonstrated that she had all the qualities necessary for leading a political group.

1965 saw the death of Mrs. Harriett Nicholls, former Labour alderman and mayor of the borough. Mrs. Nicholls upon her retirement as alderman had been honoured by being given the freedom of the borough. Those who welcomed this signal honour and admired her dedication to the service of the people of Northampton recalled on her death, that it was she who had first

introduced Mr. Paget to the party in Northampton, an event which led to his first being selected as parliamentary candidate in 1935.

PAGET TRIUMPH

With Labour nationally on the upsurge the general election was held in March 1966 and once again Mr. Paget triumphed with a handsome majority:

R.T. Paget	(Lab)	31,541
O.C. Wright	(Con)	24,052

Actually, this was Mr. Paget's largest majority ever.

Seven times victor for Labour in Northampton and a total representation of 21 years was a record without equal in the history of Northampton. The writer had the pleasure and satisfaction of being the Labour agent in the last six of these elections. Mr. Len Smith was election agent in 1945. A feature of the 1966 election campaign was the excellent chairmanship of the public meetings by Mr. George Browett, chairman of the party.

CELEBRATION DINNER. A dinner was given on Friday 4th November to mark the completion of 21 years by Mr. Paget as member of parliament for Northampton. Speeches during the evening included one from Sir Geoffrey de Freitas, Member for Kettering, and a silver salver - suitably inscribed - was presented to Mr. Paget to mark the occasion

PAGET RESIGNS WHIP Mr. Paget was however, expressing marked dubiety about the way Mr. Wilson was conducting the government and quite a sensation was caused by his article contributed to the 'Guardian' under the title "Should Labour stay in Office". Events in Rhodesia and the decision of the government to impose severe sanctions against the regime led to Mr. Paget voting against the government after first resigning the parliamentary whip.

REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARIES The May council elections resulted in 'no change' and the Tories therefore retained their ten seats majority.

Draft schemes for the review of the parliamentary boundaries included the proposal that the extended borough of Northampton should have two constituencies, Northampton North and Northampton South. The following were the proposals by the commission; by wards:-

North	South
Kingsthorpe	Duston
Dallington	Castle
St. David	Delapre
Park	South
St. George	St. Crispin
Abington	Weston.

At the public inquiry there seemed no point in contesting the proposals. The suggested boundaries were ward boundaries, and the total electorates balanced numerically and politically.

FURTHER EXPANSION Northampton certainly seemed to be in the throes of continual extension, for no sooner had the re-warding been completed and proposals made for the division of the constituency into two than the government's plans for an expansion of the borough to cope with the expected influx of 70,000 people from the over-populated south-east were made known. When the consultants' plans for the area were made public the party had a special meeting to consider them, as indeed, did so many associations, organisations, and local authorities likely to be affected.

To revert to Mr. Paget's decision to renounce the parliamentary whip. The December meeting of the Labour Council was discussing his attitude on the Rhodesian crisis when news arrived that he had resigned the Whip on the issue and that he intended to vote against the government on the same matter.

Mr. Paget had already taken a standpoint which was unpopular with delegates, and it was evident that a large number felt angry and hurt that he should enter the division lobby along with the Conservatives on an issue which was felt so deeply.

PAGET THE
REBEL

1967 opened rather unhappily with the party conscious of its M.P. being 'outside' the parliamentary party at witnessing his being paraded - to the evident joy of the Tories - as a 'rebel'. Feelings were further exacerbated when Mr. Paget delivered a speech in the House of Commons attacking Mr. Harold Wilson, and following it up by a well publicised speech to a university political club along the same lines.

No doubt due to the greater publicity which the latter speech achieved, far more hostility was aroused by his speech to the students than the one he delivered in the House, although both were substantially alike.

COUNCIL
POSITION
WEAKENS

Mr. G.J. Onn was the chairman for the year of 1967, and the May elections saw the loss of a further council seat in a former 'safe' Labour ward, St. Crispin. An ominous sign, in addition, was the Delapre ward result where it was noticeable that the lone Conservative councillor had not only retained his seat but had a very substantial majority. This, together with the mere 100 Labour majority in the Castle ward and greatly reduced majority in Dallington ward boded ill for 1968 unless there was a great change in the political climate. The position on the council was:

	Aldermen	Councillors
Labour	5	13
Conservative	7	23

Death of
WALTER LEWIS
and
GEORGE HUTCHINS

The deaths of Alderman Walter Lewis and Mr. George Hutchins occurred in 1967. Alderman Lewis was an agent of the party in pre-war days and was Mr. Paget's election agent at the 1935 general election. He was a product politically of the Labour College, having been sent there by the Miners' Union. He was a great scholar and orator, and leader of the Labour Group for many years. George Hutchins was a former chairman of the party and ex-chairman of the Northampton Trades Council. He had been a voluntary lecturer of the national council of Labour colleges, and was a mine of information on constitutional matters. A very able speaker and indefatigable worker for the party, indeed, it was difficult to imagine any facet of the party's activities in which he was not an ever present and popular figure. The writer recalls with affection the many times George Hutchins was his companion at town hall election counts, and the walk home in the dark while the incidents of the campaign were re-traced.

Mr. L.W. Clarke, secretary of St. Crispin ward, was presented with a silver badge to mark the completion of twenty years as secretary of the ward.

LABOUR'S
LOW EBB

The party faced veritable eclipse at the 1968 May elections. A decision to defend the five seats held by Labour and to allow the others

to remain un-contested was a recognition of the critical nature of the elections. St. Crispin ward had been lost the previous year, the Conservatives had held their one seat in Delapre with consummate ease, and Castle ward had been held by a bare 100 votes.

For some reason the Tories decided to not contest St. David ward. They must have regretted this because the result of the poll was disastrous for Labour. St. Crispin and Delapre wards fell as expected, and Labour's worst forebodings were realised when Miss Carol Trusler, leader of the Labour Group, lost Castle ward by 105 votes. A totally unexpected result was the defeat of Mr. John Brown in the hitherto thought impregnable seat at Dallington. At this point in the counting proceedings one could almost hear the Tories' expressions of regret in no contesting St. David ward. The state of the parties on the council after

this dark night in the party's history, was:-
 Labour: 4 Aldermen and 9 councillors
 Conservatives: 8 Aldermen and 27 councillors.

Councillor R.P.Dilleigh was elected leader of this mere rump of a former proud Group, and Mr. Ron Spencer must have considered that his second spell as chairman of the party had been particularly ill-favoured. Such reduced strength on the town council inevitably led to a drastic reduction of Labour representation on committees of the council.

COUNCILLOR "DICK" GREGSON. The Northampton party was to suffer a further tragic blow by the sudden death of Richard Gregson, a councillor for St. David Ward. Councillor Gregson was the national secretary of the Boot & Shoe Union, and his outstanding qualities of intelligence and capacity for leadership had been of incalculable worth to the Labour Group, and indeed, to the party.

The resultant by election in October - which the Tories immediately decided to contest - aroused some fears about the ability of Labour to hold the seat. Certainly its loss would have been tantamount to the loss of all the twelve wards of the borough in one year. In the event, John Brown was selected as the Labour candidate, and in a well organised campaign held the seat very handsomely with a majority of 407. He thus returned to the council from which he had been dismissed by his defeat at the May elections.

GOVERNMENT'S UNPOPULARITY. The close of 1968 showed signs of the disillusionment with the government and the party extending to the active side of the membership. Two members of the executive committee resigned in December, and rank and file members of the party were reported as being disinclined to continue their subscriptions.

In general, it had been the comparatively new members of the party who had seceded from membership, but there were now ominous signs that those whose roots were much deeper were also withdrawing. In some cases, apathy developed into active hostility towards the party and the course being pursued by the Labour government.

LOCAL ISSUES IGNORED. Mr. Graham Mabbutt was elected chairman of the party for 1969. Organisational difficulties together with the adverse political situation were factors taken into account in deciding to again not contest Weston, Abington, Park, St. George, and South wards at the May elections. Despite the pressing incidence of local matters, such as, a most unsatisfactory bus service; the doubtful value of a Tory sponsored interim scheme for education, and the general moribund appearance of Northampton as it awaited detailed development plans, they played little part in determining the outcome of the elections.

LABOUR'S HEAVY DEFEAT The brooding unpopularity of the Labour government overshadowed local personalities and policies. The almost inevitable result was four Labour losses. The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Labour Group, R.P.Dilleigh and D. Longrigg were defeated in St.Crispin and Castle wards respectively. Labour's remaining seat in Delapre and the second of the Dallington ward seats were lost in the defeats of C.E.Wake and A.A.Watson. A feature of the elections was the emergence of 'Independent' candidates in the Park, Castle, and St.Crispin wards. "Local Government by Referendum" was the battle cry of the protagonists in Park ward, whilst the other two candidates fought to express the resentment of householders affected by plans for clearance areas and the matter of adequate compensation.

BACK TO THE 'THIRTIES'

Labour's strength on the town council was reduced to five councillors and four aldermen. 1969 was not an aldermanic year. Had it been so, then a further two aldermanic seats would have been lost. One has to go back to the early Thirties to find Labour's force on the council so depleted. The almost derisory weakness is demonstrated by the ratio on town council committees:- two Labour representatives on all committees with a nominal membership of nine or twelve.

The loss of eight members of the council within twelve months was recognised as a serious threat to the organisation of the party. Many wards look to their council representatives as the spearhead of activities and the welding force of cohesion. It was evident that the party itself could founder if the essential ward structure collapsed as a result of their councillors withdrawal as the leaders of the ward organisations.

LABOUR'S CENTENARIAN

In October, the party celebrated what must be a unique record in the history of the Labour Party - the 100th birthday of a women's section secretary. Mrs. Annie Ball, awarded an M.B.E. some three years previously, had been the nominal secretary of Castle & South women's section since its inception in the Twenties.

A lady of kindly but indomitable spirit, she attended a celebration in her honour. When Mrs. Ball rose to voice her thanks it was a memorable moment for those present to be addressed as 'comrades' by a centenarian. It was humorously related that when the section was first formed, Mrs. Ball was asked to hold the minute book 'for a moment' and for over forty years no one asked her to relinquish it!

In February of 1970 this grand old lady passed to her rest. In a few short months the party also mourned the death of David Longrigg, a former secretary of Northampton Trades Council and town councillor for Castle ward, and John Brown, Leader of the Labour Group and borough magistrate. These untimely deaths severed links with the history of the party in the decades following the second world war.

BOROUGH ELECTION Allen A. Watson presided over the councils of the party in 1970. A year which was to be dominated by elections. The party was experiencing a more favourable wind of change in its direction and this was reflected in the successes at the May municipal elections.

St. Crispin ward and Delapre ward were re-captured for Labour by R.P. Dilleigh and John Rawlings respectively, and the run of losses in Dallington and Castle wards were halted by the success of Mrs. E. Fitzhugh and G.J. Onn. In addition, Harvey Fruish retained St. David ward for Labour.

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

The encouraging results at the local elections were reflected throughout the country and it was no surprise when the prime minister, Harold Wilson, announced his intention to go to the country on 18 June. R.T. Paget, who had served as Northampton's Member since 1945 was re-adopted as candidate and party morale was high.

Many experienced observers testified that the signs indicated a good win for Labour. The national opinion polls fortified this view. Party organisation, as if by magic, found itself transformed from a limping entity into a throbbing activity with a large influx of people to man the campaign.

GENERAL ELECTION Plenty of election workers; a more than ample supply of cars; optimistic canvass returns, all presaged the triumphant return of Labour. Within a few short hours of the close of the poll we knew that Labour had been defeated in the country and that Northampton had been retained for Labour by a bare majority of 1262 votes.

R.T. Paget (Lab.) 27424
C.E. Parkinson (Cons) 26182

Many views were advanced for the unexpected eclipse of Labour, ranging from a 'confidence trick' by the pollsters to lull Labour into complacency, lack of clear-cut policy, to the inevitable cry of 'poor organisation'.

The writer feels that the party's recovery from its political doldrums had been mistaken for that which was nothing more than the elation of a patient recovering from a serious illness. It is possible that had the election been held a week earlier that Labour would have won. Around the 11th of June we appeared to reach our 'peak' but that the final seven days saw the ebbing of this popularity under the persistent dripping of the Tory propaganda on prices.

Party policy and the undoubted achievements of the Labour government certainly found little expression in the campaign, and the ultimate failure of Mr. Wilson's "Meet the People" tours showed once again that it is dangerous in politics to trade on the personal image - whether it be leader or candidate.

MUNICIPAL Aldermanic elevations and deaths of councillors
By ELECTIONS resulted in six by elections in the wards of St. George (2), Abington, South, Weston and St. David. The Labour party was faced with the knowledge that it had no chance of electoral success in any of the wards with the exception of St. David.

There were the further factors that considerable expense had been borne in the municipal and parliamentary campaigns and that the voters were bored with elections. In these circumstances the Labour party contented itself with nominating a candidate in the safe seat of St. David. A series of independent candidates professed their 'abhorrence' of this 'negation of democracy' and fought abortive and largely nominal campaigns in the other wards. J.J. Gardner, the Labour candidate, was returned unopposed for the St. David ward.

TORY AGGRIEVEMENT The local Conservative Agent, Mr. John Dutcher, felt particularly aggrieved by the actions of the 'independents' in precipitating contests. The writer suspects that Mr. Dutcher felt this was some devious conspiracy by the Labour party. In view of the fact that the independents did not oppose the return of the Labour candidate in St. David ward, it must be admitted he had some basis for his doubts and his wonderment about what particular aspect of 'democracy' is served by independent candidates standing only when Labour decides not to contest an election.

To fulfil the objective one would have supposed that Labour should also have been opposed in the St. David ward. The derisory vote obtained by the 'independents' suggests that although the electors may be cynical about political parties in general, they have little regard in particular for independent candidates who often issued poorly produced election addresses; indulge in little canvassing, and ignore the traditional courtesy of issuing poll cards to the electors. These are now forbidden by law.

The position on the town council was now:-

	Councillors	Aldermen
Labour	7	2
Conservative	29	10

TOWN
EXPANSION

Town expansion and clearance areas largely dominated political discussions in 1970.

Little local enthusiasm was demonstrated for the proposals to extend Northampton and increase the population by an additional 70,000 people. Endless newspaper articles and exhibitions left the inhabitants of Northampton unmoved by their exhortations.

CLEARANCE AREAS-
TRADITIONAL TOWN
TO DISAPPEAR

There was however, vehement opposition to the proposed wholesale clearance of something like one-fifth of the town on the grounds of either 'sub-standard' or 'black' areas of the town. It was evident that the borough council, having cleared the 'black' areas of the town was now proceeding ruthlessly to deal with the 'grey' areas.

HOUSE OCCUPIERS
IN 'GREY AREAS

These lived in streets comprised of the traditional terraced houses, mainly owner-occupied who had invested their life savings into bringing their homes up to a very habitable standard.

Many had been improved by the addition of bath rooms, modern tiling for the roofs and installation of a hot water system, plus structural alterations to give room and light.

As a consequence of this expenditure, the occupiers, mainly of an older age group of the population, saw their expectation of a retirement spent 'rent-free' in a house well suited to their requirements robbed in a flash by the stroke of a bureaucratic pen.

'OLD TOWN'

AND

'New TOWN'

Great bitterness was aroused and the protestors lost no time in besieging the local M.P. with their apprehensions and objections. It is impossible to dismiss

the feeling that 1970 was seeing the beginning of the destruction of Northampton and its pleasant mixture of modern and traditional housing and the amalgam of town and country life.

In exchange, one would see Northampton 'new town' with its London immigrants and bias alongside the 'old town'. Stark office buildings, industrial areas, glass and chromium boxes and flats for its homes, all soullessly served by a net-work of high speed roads.

RETIREMENT OF
PARTY SECRETARY

The Northampton Labour Party with its eyes on the now accomplished fact of the town being divided into two constituencies,

looked for a party agent to replace George Attewell who had nominally retired in December 1969, but continued in a part-time capacity after 25 years as party secretary.

Mr. J.H.Smy, a party agent at Bassetlaw, was appointed as successor and arrangements were made for him to take up the post on 1st March 1971.

LAST CHAPTER
1946-71

The last chapter of these notes is taken up by the writer having reviewed the 25 years of his close association with the

Northampton Party as its secretary; agent at seven parliamentary elections which resulted in the recurring election of Mr. R.T.Paget, Q.C. as Member for Northampton. Agent at innumerable municipal elections which had witnessed the ups and downs of political life. An attempt has been made - albeit briefly - to embody the history of Northampton Labour Party from its emergence in the latter years of the nineteenth century as the expression of a politically conscious few of the working class, to its present role as a major factor in the political life of the Borough of Northampton.