

# William Austin

Conscientious Objector who served as ILP Secretary for five years

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**By John Buckell**

William Austin

William Austin was a compositor for Messrs Lea and Co and Vice-President of the local branch of the Typographical Union, which he represented on Northampton Trades Council. His fellow delegate from the Union was Frederick Roberts, the Trades Council Secretary who was instrumental in the formation of Northampton Labour Party.

In July 1918, William applied to the Borough Tribunal for exemption from military service on conscience grounds. The claim was dismissed and he appealed to the County Appeals Tribunal. William had known Frederick Roberts for 14 years and Roberts vouched for his sincerity, despite being himself a member of the Borough Tribunal. He recalled that in 1913 when a Major Curtis of the National Service League addressed the Trades Council, William had spoken in opposition to the League's proposals. William's claim was still not accepted, however, and he was imprisoned in Wormwood Scrubs.

After the war William was a member of the Executive Committee of Northampton Labour Party and served as ILP Secretary for five years. He stood for election to the Town Council twice, first for South Ward in 1919, and then for Abington Ward in 1920. On neither occasion was he elected.

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