

Daily Herald

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THE HERITAGE of FLEET STREET

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The Daily Herald was first published as a newssheet by the London print unions during their 1911 strike and 66 issues were published between January and April. The initial success and a sale of around 25,000 copies encouraged the printers to broaden their coverage to include general as well as strike news.

Although the newssheet closed, its leaders committed to its relaunch as a permanent newspaper once sufficient funds had been raised. They were joined by dockers' leader Ben Tillett and the Labour MP George Lansbury. They appealed for £10,000, but when the Daily Herald launched on April 15, 1912 it had a working capital of £300.

Its first decade was its most radical. The major struggle in the Labour movement at the time was between those who believed in Parliamentary socialism and those who believed that industrial action was more likely to deliver the reforms they sought. The Daily Herald was to play a crucial role in this conflict. It was also a fervent advocate of female suffrage.

The Daily Herald became a weekly publication during the First World War. It became the main forum for anti-war opinion in the country and was a strong supporter of the Russian Revolution. Its circulation rose to over 250,000. Increased sales meant increased production costs. These were not offset by advertising revenue as its readership profile meant the paper struggled to attract advertisers.

In 1919 the paper reverted to daily publication and now had a circulation of 330,000. Its survival had been a triumph of enthusiasm over financial logic, leading Lord Northcliffe to call it "the Miracle of Fleet Street". Its unprofitability meant it was not in a position to compete in the circulation war of the 1920s and 1930s which featured free insurance schemes for readers and a wealth of free gifts and special offers. By 1922 Lansbury was faced with closure or persuading the official Labour movement to take it over which the party and the Trades Union Congress agreed to. While this brought initial stability, the paper was not able to profit financially. In 1928 the TUC took full ownership and the following year went into a commercial partnership with Odhams Press.

IDEALS FOR WORKERS.

Mr. James Parker, M.P., on National Prosperity.

Mr. James Parker, Labour Member for Halifax, addressed the men's meeting at Whitefield's Tabernacle yesterday afternoon.

Our present-day ideals, he declared, as manifested by the ordinary activities of human life, appeared to be "get on, never mind how, but get on."

"I ask you a plain, straight question: Do you think that Parliament is as indispensable as the dustman? I don't." (Laughter and applause.)

"You can do without the former sooner than you can do without the latter." (Hear, hear and applause.)

"Prosperity for the nation! Of what did it consist? Empire building may be all right, but if our object is to give the backward races a fuller life, then, indeed, is our Empire worth the building. But if we only wish to use them for our profit, then it is not well, and our Empire cannot endure."

From the front page of the first issue on 15 April 1912

This allowed the Daily Herald to compete on a level playing field and in mid-1933 it became the first daily newspaper in the world to record a circulation of over two million, beating the Daily Express by a few days. However its official ties, lack of advertising revenue and the change in the Daily Mirror from a middle-class paper to one aimed at a mass working class readership curtailed its ability to grow. By the time it reached its peak circulation of 2.1 million in 1947, the Daily Mirror and Daily Express were nearing 4 million.

By 1961 the paper was in serious difficulties and was sold to Mirror Group. Three years later International Publishing Corporation acquired the title, ceasing its publication on September 14, 1964 and launching a new paper called The

Sun in its place, aimed at the affluent young and the graduates and technocrats coming out of the new universities and technology colleges.

