

We are proud of the record of our Party in Nottingham, proud of its fight for trade-unionism, for better working conditions and higher wages, and for good housing. We are proud of Tom Mann, who stood for Parliament in East Nottingham in 1924; and Bill Rowe, who fought for Spain and was the secretary of the East Midlands District Party for six years.

The crude social justice practised by the men of Sherwood Forest, the campaigns of the Luddites and the Chartists, the fight of the modern trade-union and co-operative movement for higher standards of living are all part of the one struggle for a new humane social system. Socialism is the natural and inevitable result of all the struggles that have made British history so glorious. Today, we stand on the threshold of a new world—a new world where the people of Nottingham will have won everything they suffered and sacrificed for in the past.

Neither the treachery nor servility of the Labour leaders, in their violent opposition to Communism, nor the threats of panic-stricken capitalists, here or in America, to plunge the world into a third World War, can hold back the march of history, the history which we, the people of Nottingham are making. This march will lead us to a Socialist Britain, where man will no longer exploit man, where unemployment, poverty and misery will be unknown; and wars and slumps nightmares of the past.

We Communists inherit the traditions of the great fight waged by the people of Nottingham in the past. In the spirit of the men of Sherwood Forest, the Chartists and the trade-union pioneers, we pledge ourselves to carry forward the torch of Liberty and Social Justice, so courageously held by them. We will not fail in our great task. Inspired by their great example, we pledge ourselves to fight without ceasing for a better future, for a future free from fear and want.

And the people of Nottingham will join us in our great fight, rallying to the red banner of the Communist Party to fight for the future in the name of all the nameless toilers of the past, and the yet-to-be-born children of the future. Come, comrades, your place is beside us—together we will smash this old weary rotten world and build a new one fit for all to live in.

**JOIN THE COMMUNIST PARTY**

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500

YEARS OF STRUGGLE

A PEOPLES HISTORY OF NOTTINGHAM

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# 500 Years of Struggle

## THE STORY OF NOTTINGHAM'S PEOPLE

OUR story begins one day in June in the year 1449—five hundred years ago. By the standards of to-day, Nottingham was only a large-sized village. By the standards of that day, Nottingham was a growing town.

Most people in England depended on the land for their living, although industry and trade were fast becoming more important. Most of the land was owned by a few great feudal Lords; the work was done mainly by unfree serfs, who were bound to work for their lord in exchange for a small holding of land.

This was the period when some unfree serfs, and others oppressed by feudal injustice, escaped from the land and their feudal masters to live in the forests “outside the law.” Such outlaws were often good fighters for social justice, like the legendary Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest, of whom the ballad says:

“For he was a good outlaw,  
And did poor men much good.”

Other serfs fled to towns such as Nottingham, where the citizens recognised them as free men. Slowly the towns grew in numbers and wealth, fighting all the time to free themselves from the paralysing restrictions and exploitation of the parasitic feudal lords. Each fresh victory was marked by the winning of a charter. Nottingham's last great charter of 1449 finally granted complete local self-government.

In 1453 an assessment of wealth of English cities placed Nottingham the lowest on the list of 38, with London as the first. 50 years later a similar assessment showed Nottingham as occupying the 17th place.

## THE RISE OF THE CAPITALISTS

By the sixteenth century a new and prosperous middle-class, whose wealth was based on expanding trade (especially the cloth trade), had fought its way forward. Many of them invested their fortunes in land, and had partly replaced the old feudal aristocracy.

Typical of this class of new rich were the Willoughbys of Wollaton, previously known by the more plebeian name of Bugge.

The sixteenth century was an age of contrast between rich and poor: between the abject misery of “The poor distressed people of Nottingham which is very populous and not any trade to set the poor on work”\* and the flamboyant extravagance of the new capitalists. For it was at this time that Sir Francis Willoughby (who, incidentally, distinguished himself at Christmas, 1597, by spending £92 3s. 5d. on food alone),\* built that ostentatious mansion, Wollaton Hall, at a cost of approximately £80,000. (Contrast average yearly earnings of an agricultural labourer at the time—£14 9s. 3½d.).

Human tragedy is implied in the story of Wollaton Park. Where the modern housing estate now lies, once stood the thriving village of Sutton Passeys. No trace of it can be found in local records after the time of the building of the mansion. For in those days many hapless villagers were ruthlessly driven from their homes that land might be available for sheep-farming on capitalist lines, or that the extravagant personal wants of a Sir Francis might be satisfied.

Coal lying beneath their lands brought yet more wealth to the Willoughbys. To the agricultural labourers forced to work in the mines for a pittance because there was no other work for them, it brought death by flooding and firedamp.

## THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION

1649 also marks the three-hundredth anniversary of a great event in our national history—the English Revolution.

In 1649, the growing capitalist class, led by Oliver Cromwell and assisted by the craftsmen and small farmers, destroyed feudalism in England. The feudal rulers of Europe reviled the name of Cromwell as do the capitalists that of Stalin to-day. For they saw a king (Charles I) brought to trial and executed as if he were a common citizen, the House of Lords abolished, and a republic or commonwealth established in England.

## NOTTINGHAM A PARLIAMENTARY STRONGHOLD

In 1642 the King, having decided upon a course of civil war, first raised his standard in Nottingham. However, he had misjudged the sympathies of the townspeople: he speedily withdrew elsewhere, having won fewer than 300 recruits.

\*Historical Manuscript Commission (*Middleton*).



Then a great local soldier, Col. Hutchinson, organised the defence of the town and castle for Parliament. He safeguarded the vital Trent crossing, so that the Parliamentarians had free access between North and South throughout the war.

Both Col. Hutchinson and the M.P. for Nottingham, Millington, were among those who signed King Charles's death warrant.

The English Revolution broke the last barriers of feudalism. It allowed the capitalist class freedom to develop modern large-scale industry.

## THE "GOLDEN AGE" OF CAPITALISM

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the capitalist class was reaping the benefits of the Revolution in the seventeenth century. There was a rapid growth of industry, accompanied by the spread of the modern factory system. This resulted in the growth of the industrial towns of the North and Midlands, and the forcing of the population from the countryside.

For the capitalists it was a golden age; fortunes accumulated rapidly; the new machines produced goods cheaply and quickly; as yet there was no competition from abroad.

For the workers it was an age of vile misery and exploitation; they were as yet unorganised; trade-unionism was in its infancy; men, women and even children worked up to eighteen hours a day under unspeakable conditions for a pittance.

## THE HOSIERY INDUSTRY

Nottingham grew to industrial greatness largely upon her traditional industry—hosiery.

The knitting-frame had been invented in 1589 by a clergyman of genius, William Lee of Calverton. During the eighteenth century Nottinghamshire became the leading hosiery area. This was due in part to the low wages and costs current in the Midlands; in part, possibly, to the skill of local workers. For the frame was a great mechanical invention. It consisted of over 2,000 parts, and required considerable technical skill to build and maintain, as well as to operate.

Hosiery remained a "domestic" industry long after the other textile trades had gone over to the factory system. The knitter worked on a hand-operated frame in his own home or in a small workshop belonging to his master, not on power-driven machinery

in a factory. It was estimated that the owner of a frame could, on the average, get his money back within nine years.

The profits that a capitalist could make from frame-rents undoubtedly contributed to the long delay in adopting power-driven hosiery machinery and establishing a factory industry. For the factory meant the abolition of frame-rents. Not till the end of the nineteenth century did hosiery truly become a factory industry.

Similar conditions existed in the lace industry, where power-driven machinery was not introduced until 1830.

## THE LUDDITES

The scattered nature of these industries made it difficult for the framework knitters and lace-workers to combine in trade-unions to fight these abuses. However, throughout the latter part of the eighteenth century, riots in and about Nottingham were an almost annual occurrence.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, starvation wages, combined with the high price of food caused by the Napoleonic wars and recurrent unemployment due to the glutting of the market with cheap inferior work, had made Nottingham a hot-bed of discontent among the working-class. A revolt was born of the fury of despair—the Luddite Rebellion.

As the Liberty lads o'er the sea  
Bought their freedom, and cheaply, with blood,  
So we, boys, we  
Will die fighting, or live free,  
And down with all kings but King Ludd!

—Byron: "Song for the Luddites."

Although the social system was responsible for their misery, the Luddites struck at what seemed the immediate cause of their sufferings—individual hosiers and their knitting-frames. A secret society, said to be led by a mysterious figure, King Ludd, was responsible for the systematic smashing of frames throughout the county.

## LORD BYRON

The organisation of the Luddites was good, and the authorities made little headway against them. Byron the poet bitterly opposed in the House of Lords a bill to make frame-smashing punishable by death. Of the military's efforts to quell the riots he said:



“ Such marchings and counter-marchings ! From Nottingham to Bulwell, from Bulwell to Basford, from Basford to Mansfield ! And when at length the detachments arrive at their destination in all ‘ the pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war,’ they came just in time to witness the mischief which had been done, and to ascertain the escape of the perpetrators, to collect the *spoila optima* in the fragments of broken frames, and return to their quarters amidst the derision of old women and the hooting of children.”

Bribery failed utterly to reveal the identity of the Luddites. The Nottingham authorities offered up to £2,000, probably from a government secret service fund.

“ But all was unavailing : nothing could penetrate the mystery of Luddism nor break the bond of union which bound its mischievous and deluded devotees together. In spite of all their errors and all their crimes, it was impossible to withhold admiration from the stern integrity of purpose which thus led a number of poor men to withstand the tempting offer of bribes.”

—*Bailey : “ Annals of Nottinghamshire.”*

However, the Luddites did not realise the true cause of their distress. The movement never developed beyond the economic level into a political struggle for a new social order.

The end of the war with France (1815) intensified the economic crisis. The temper of the workers rose high : so high, in fact, that a government provocateur, Oliver the Spy, had no difficulty in getting a small body of Derbyshire workers, lightly armed and led by Jeremiah Brandreth, to march on Nottingham. Result : easy defeat and execution of Jeremiah Brandreth.

## HOW THE WORKERS WERE HOUSED

Nottingham, before 1750, was a “ garden city ” of some 2,000 houses and 10,000 people. Cottages stretched along its main streets and behind the cottages were large enclosed “ greens.”

By 1801 the population had trebled, largely as a result of the rapid growth of the hosiery industry. The town itself, however, could not grow. The hosiery and outdoor lace workers were squeezed into hovels fronting on to mean narrow alleys and enclosed courts behind the main streets ; the “ greens ” rapidly disappeared. Outward expansion was impossible because the Duke of Newcastle’s castle park, Earl Middleton’s Wollaton Park and the privately-owned “ common ” fields and meadows to the north and south blocked the way.

The poverty of the people and the greed of the landlords forced our forefathers to live out their brief existences in a town that had degenerated from an “ exquisite spot,” as Dr. Charles Deering had called it in 1739, to a maze of mean and filthy courts and alleys.

For Nottingham was notorious throughout Britain for its 8,000 “ back-to-back ” houses. These were usually built round narrow courts enclosed on all four sides and entered by a narrow tunnel.

“ In Nottingham there are in all 11,000 houses, of which between 7,000 and 8,500 are built back-to-back.....so that no through ventilation is possible, while a single privy usually serves several houses.”

—*Engels : “ Conditions of the Working Class in England in 1844.”*

There was no underground drainage in the lower parts of the town where the working people lived. The filth ran in open channels through the courts and entrance tunnels and out into the streets. Cholera resulting from this broke out in 1832. The ruling class began to fear for their lives and appointed a parliamentary commission of enquiry into the state of large towns.

The commissioners “ found ” 200 cellar-dwellings excavated in the rock under the back-to-backs, 11 to 12 feet square, 6 feet 8 inches high, each housing eight to twelve people. Many of these hovels were the workshops of the hosiery and lace workers as well as their dwelling places. The high temperature and dampness required for lace-dressing produced swarms of vermin. “ In comparison with these wretched places, factories are Elysiums,” said the commissioners. Our forefathers in Nottingham had an average expectation of life 25% lower than the national average for England as a whole.

Then, as now, scarcity of housing in the face of a crying demand paid excellent profits to the slum-owners. The land-owners were biding their time. Our Lord Newcastle, owner of the Castle grounds and the Park; Earl Middleton, owner of Wollaton Park; Mr. Musters, owner of the whole parish of Colwick; and the rest of them were waiting for the best moment to sell their badly-needed land for building.

The middle-classes obtained housing—at a price ! 9,000 square yards of Standard Hill were sold by auction for £7,000, and the Park was let on 99-year leases at an annual ground rent of £136 per acre in the 1820’s. Money, it should be remembered, was worth far more then.



In 1787 the enclosing of the old "common" lands of the town for building purposes had become a municipal election issue. There were over 1,400 acres of them; the meadows in the south, and fields stretching to the Forest and Mapperley Plains in the north and east.

Out of a population of 50,000 in 1834, less than 3,000 were "burgesses." One in ten of these burgesses had small parcels of the common land allotted to them by the Corporation according to seniority, while the remainder had the right of grazing their animals, if any, over the common fields.

The majority of the burgesses were unwilling to part with these rights, partly because they did not trust the corrupt Corporation to compensate them, partly because they hoped, if they survived long enough, to become eligible for one of the plots of land. Many of the burgesses were under-paid knitters; this was fortunate for the slum-landlords, because in this way some of the poor were bought off to help them in preventing the expansion of the town through building on the common lands. So the slums in the centre continued to pay well.

## THE REFORM BILL

The capitalist class utilised the growing working-class movement to secure the passing of the 1832 Reform Bill. The object of this bill was to transfer the right of parliamentary representation from the depopulated rural areas in the control of the landed gentry to the middle-classes in the new industrial towns.

When the bill was first presented it was rejected by the Lords. Riots resulted throughout the country. In Nottingham, an angry crowd set fire to the castle, and destroyed a silk mill and other buildings. The rioters, on being advised to disperse the following day, are reported as saying: "What's the use of dispersing, we might as well die here where we are, as go home and be starved."\* Three men were executed for the destruction of the mill.

The owner of the Castle, the Duke of Newcastle, was hated, not without reason, by the people of Nottingham. He freely admitted that he had only to show his face to cause a riot. The destruction of his residence, however, proved for him a blessing in disguise. He wrung £21,000 compensation from the already hard-pressed inhabitants of the Hundred of Broxtowe, within whose boundaries the Castle happened to lie.

In 1832 the Reform Bill became law. Its passing was due in no small measure to working-class agitation, yet the working-

\*Sutton: Date Book.

class as a whole had got nothing out of it. The majority of them still had no vote. Furthermore, the capitalist class made use of their victory to pass the hated Poor Law of 1834. The workers were disillusioned. They began to realise that they would never improve their lot through an alliance with the capitalist class. Only an independent workers' movement could do that. Such a movement was Chartism.

## CHARTISM

In 1837, the newly-formed London Working Men's Association issued the People's Charter for presentation to Parliament. Its demands included universal manhood suffrage, vote by secret ballot, and the payment of M.P's. The acceptance of the Chartists' demands at that time would have been, in the words of Engels, "Sufficient to overthrow the whole English constitution, Queen and Lords included."

Slogans such as:

"FOR CHILDREN AND WIFE WE WAR TO THE KNIFE," "UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE OR UNIVERSAL REVENGE," "THEY THAT PERISH BY THE SWORD ARE BETTER THAN THEY THAT PERISH BY HUNGER," were to be seen at Chartist demonstrations.

Nottingham soon became a Chartists' stronghold.

In May, 1842, Parliament rejected out of hand a petition for the Charter, signed by 3,315,000 people—well over half the adult male population. In August, 1842, there was a strike of 2,000 Nottingham workers in response to an appeal for a general strike to force the acceptance of the Charter, the first clear instance of a strike to secure political ends. Chartists demonstrated at Hucknall, Bulwell, Arnold, Basford and Mapperley Hills. However, they were dispersed by the military, and the strike movement broke up.

This year, too, saw the Chartist, Joseph Sturge, standing for election in Nottingham. He was defeated by a narrow margin, after a thrilling campaign, including a mighty meeting in the Market Place at which the opponents came within inches of blows.

By 1847 Nottingham did have a Chartist M.P., the famous Fergus O'Connor. He won his seat by an overwhelming majority from a Liberal Cabinet Minister. Even years afterwards, when the tide of Chartism had receded, the Chartist, Ernest Jones received faithful support in Nottingham when he stood for Parliament.



## THE WINNING OF A BETTER TOWN

Chartism might not have achieved its aims nationally, but it had far-reaching local effects. In 1845, after the workers had frightened the ruling class with their support for the People's Charter, the Nottingham Enclosure Act was passed.

The Act led to the building of the terrace cottages which cover so much of Nottingham to-day. The spacing between buildings was improved and back-to-backs no longer built.

In spite of the Act, many of the cottages were set too close together. Moreover, the landowners and speculative builders were allowed by Tory-dominated local councils to make fortunes by erecting houses in areas subject to flooding.

Open space, although quite generously allocated under the Act, was distributed largely to the benefit of the rich. The Arboretum and the Forest were and are of little use to those who live in St. Ann's Ward, Carlton and Sneinton.

Slum clearance went ahead slowly. However, there wasn't enough profit in it for anybody to build decent houses for the working-class. Improvements planned by the Health authorities could not be made to yield more than 3%. Even then the rents of the new houses were prohibitively high for all but the better-paid skilled workers. (This probably sounds familiar to the few who have a pre-fab. to-day).

## NOTTINGHAM'S HOUSING TODAY

This obstacle of finding the money for working-class housing remained "insoluble" until eighty years later when, following World War I, the Russian people's revolution and the general labour unrest in this country, the government of the day felt there was going to be trouble unless something was done to build "homes for heroes." Considerable slum areas were cleared after 1923 by means of subsidies from the Exchequer, and it became possible for the Corporation to build their estates.

What of the housing situation to-day? In 1945 it was estimated that Nottingham needed 18,000 new houses. By 1948 only 3,003 houses had been completed. At this rate of building it will take until 1963 to complete the 1945 estimate, that is if Sir Stafford permits it.

"Many houses considered unfit for human habitation in 1939 continue to be occupied. Many more houses have since come into the unfit category."\*

\*City Housing Architect's Department.

"Legal overcrowding: 4131 people living in 301 houses,"\* *i.e.*, over 13 persons per house.

"These are the cases of legal overcrowding which have come to the notice of the Health Dept. In point of fact there must be many more cases."\*

These are all quotations from the 1947 Report of the Medical Officer of Health for Nottingham. This overcrowding cannot be remedied without further new building and a more stringent requisitioning policy.

## THE GROWTH OF INDUSTRIAL NOTTINGHAM— 1850-1949

From the point of view of the capitalist, the second half of the nineteenth century was one of unequalled prosperity. From the point of view of the workers of Nottingham it was a period of unparalleled ruthless exploitation and suffering. In Nottingham, as in the rest of the country, extensive industrial expansion took place, at first mainly in the already established hosiery and lace industries.

Working conditions had improved by the end of the century, largely owing to the growth of a strong trade-union movement. By 1894 practically all the adult male workers in the Nottingham machine-lace trade belonged to the union, the Amalgamated Society of Operative Lacemakers.

Some idea of conditions in the local lace factories in the heyday of capitalism can be gained from the words of a certain Mr. Charlton, a county magistrate, speaking at Nottingham and reported in the *Daily Telegraph* of 17th January, 1860:

"Children of nine and ten years are dragged from their squalid beds at two, three, or four o'clock in the morning and compelled to work for a bare subsistence until ten, eleven, or twelve at night, their limbs wearing away, their frames dwindling, their faces whitening, and their humanity absolutely sinking into a stone-like torpor, utterly horrible to contemplate... We are not surprised that Mr. Mallett, or any other manufacturer, should stand forward and protest against discussion... What can be thought of a town which holds a public meeting to petition that the period of labour for men shall be diminished to eighteen hours a day?"\*\*

In the same year a Nottingham physician reported that among his women patients who were lacemakers one in eight was consumptive.

\* City Housing Architect's Department

\*\* Quoted by Marx in *Capital*.



## PLAYERS, BOOTS AND RALEIGH

Towards the end of the last century, other industries were established in Nottingham, which have now become at least as important as hosiery.

John Player & Sons dates from 1877, when they took over the small, though prosperous, tobacco factory of William Wright & Co. In those days, tobacco was a non-proprietary product. Players were the first firm to realise the possibilities of supplying goods in packets and adopting a registered trade-mark. To-day they probably have the largest tobacco-factory under one roof in the world. They employ about 8,500 workers.

The firm, along with other tobacco companies, joined the Imperial Tobacco Company of Britain and Ireland in 1901. This measure was taken to combat American competition, and maintain high profits.

Jesse Boot had a small shop in Goose Gate in the 1870's. By 1888 the Boots Pure Drug Company had been formed. The founder was a more astute capitalist than most; he had hit on the Woolworth recipe of large sales of cheap commodities, and found a method of cheap production, using girls' and women's labour as well as that of skilled chemists.

The Raleigh Cycle Company was founded in 1887, but it expanded chiefly after the first World War. The high standard of its products was made possible by the technical skill of Nottingham workers, many of whom were drawn from the declining lace and textile industries. The firm undoubtedly benefited from the distressed conditions prevailing in the textile industries.

To-day the company is a vast and prosperous concern: during the year ending in 1948 it made a profit of £1,514,723. It is calculated that this would be sufficient to have given every Raleigh worker nearly £4 per week on top of his or her wages for the whole year. It paid a dividend of 20%, as it has done for the last year or two. (It will be noted that at the end of five years, if Raleighs pay 20% dividend, the original shareholders will have received the whole of the money they had invested and still have the original capital and continue to draw dividend—truly a case of having the cake whilst eating it).

Nottingham's numerous industries were able to employ large numbers of married women, girls and youths. Thus, whilst the total income per working-class family might be higher than the average, the average wage per worker was lower than elsewhere. This can be seen in hosiery manufacture, where, although profits

have been rising steeply, the estimated average weekly wage for the workers in the industry (which employs 65% women), is only £3 18s. 10d.

To-day, the foreign policy of the right-wing Labour Government is leading to an assault on the living standards of the people, and reducing their power to purchase the semi-luxury goods predominantly made in our city.

## SCHOOLS, LIBRARIES AND HOSPITALS

The nineteenth century saw the beginnings of many of our municipal social services.

Nottingham workers struggled to educate themselves long before there was a system of free elementary education. The first Adult School was opened in 1814, and in 1837 the Mechanics' Institute was founded.

With the passing of the 1870 Education Act, gloomy buildings were erected in working-class districts where children were taught the three R's, and where an attempt was made to make them content with their status in life.

Many of these dark sunless piles are still used. Show schools, like the Cottesmore and Player Schools, cannot hide the civic disgrace of such schools as Queen's Walk, Bentinck Road, and other barrack-like monstrosities.

How can a child's personality flower in such surroundings? These schools are an insult to the people of Nottingham. We must fight against the Government's policy of cutting capital expenditure, which is holding up the re-building of schools.

The first public library in Nottingham was opened in 1868, after a lot of opposition from those who thought that reading could be dangerous to the contentment of "their" workers. In 1882 the first Children's Public Library in the whole country was opened in Nottingham.

The history of the General Hospital in Nottingham, opened in 1782, is bound up with the development of the city's industries. By 1875 the factories and collieries had grown to such an extent that the Hospital Board reported that "there was so great an increase in the number of accidents and emergencies" that "the most crying want of the hospital is a new wing for accidents to contain 50 beds."

## THE NOTTINGHAM CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY

The story of the people of Nottingham is not complete without



mention of the Nottingham Co-operative Society. Our Co-op. dates from 1863, when a group of members of a Temperance Society started a co-operative store for the sale of groceries in Lenton. The venture was immediately successful, and other branches were soon established.

During both World Wars the Society campaigned to keep down the price of foodstuffs and to retain the food subsidies. By refusing to raise prices in times of scarcity the Society has kept a valuable check on prices in other shops.

The N.C.S. has played an important role in the political struggle. It made grants in money and kind during the miners' strikes of 1910 and 1912, and again during the General Strike. However, not till 1917, after having had to pay an unjust war-profits tax owing to the lack of co-operative representation in Parliament, did the Society take direct political action and affiliate to the Labour Party.

Nottingham co-operators showed their solidarity with international democracy when £500 was collected towards sending an ambulance to the anti-fascist forces in the Spanish Civil War. The ambulance was later sent on to China.

In 1936 the Nottingham Society was the first to send a delegation to the Soviet Union.

Our Co-op. has been a pioneer in the artistic field. It has a theatre in George Street, where members produce plays of a high standard at prices the workers can afford. The Society sponsors choirs and an orchestra, and arranges lunch-hour concerts for workers and school children.

To celebrate the Quincentenary, the Society is presenting the city with a symphony, to be performed on June 27th and 28th at the Albert Hall.

## TRADE UNIONISM

With the growth of industry in Nottingham, there developed a strong trade-union movement. From 1790 to 1825 the notorious Combination Acts had made trade-unions illegal. Their members were hounded by Government spies and provocateurs. Many of them were hanged or transported for life for daring to belong to an association aiming to better their conditions.

The framework-knitters were probably the first to form a union. One year after the repeal of the Combination Acts in 1825, the Typographical Society was formed; the vehicle-builders

united in 1834, and in 1848 an amalgamation of the unions in the lace trade took place.

The forerunner of our present Trades Council was founded in 1863 and was one of the first in the country. It campaigned, together with other leading Trades Councils, for the amendment of the old unjust Master and Servants Act, under which a workman could be sent to prison for breach of contract in absenting himself from, or leaving, his work. Trade Union action was successful, and the law was amended in 1867.

The present Nottingham and District Trades Council was formed in 1890 at a period when the struggle to organise the lowest paid casual workers was at its height.

Nottingham workers played a fine part in the General Strike of 1926. From the Central Strike Committee of Nottingham, a committee of three was elected to be responsible for all transport going in and out of the city. Permits were issued for essential traffic, and all main roads were picketed; nothing entered or left the city without the permission of the Committee.

## NOTTINGHAM'S LABOUR VOTE

Not until our own century did the working people of Nottingham begin to send their own representatives to Parliament. The process began in 1906 when Richardson, a Liberal who put forward a Labour programme, won South Nottingham. He was replaced at the "khaki" election of 1918 by Arthur Hayday, Nottingham's first Labour M.P. Hayday, however, was a typical right-wing reformist. He became chairman of the T.U.C. He did not protest against the policies of Macdonald and Snowden which led to the Labour betrayal, and he lost his seat in 1931, together with the other Labour M.P.'s. for Nottingham.

By 1945 the people of Nottingham had turned out the Tories: all four city constituencies and the surrounding county constituencies returned Labour members. The Communist Party campaigned energetically for their return, but is now bitterly opposed by the very men it helped to send to Westminster, the men who are now supporting Tory policies.

## TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Out of these five-hundred years of struggle, out of the lessons of history, the Communist Party was formed, some twenty-odd years ago in Nottingham.