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National Government. 'It is the greatest compliment I have ever had paid to me... I have always stuck up for the miners and shall always do so and they want a friend more than ever now' [SP c508 Ben Lambert, Secretary of Sacriston Lodge to Sankey, 14 August 1931, copy reply, 31 August 1931]. His wealth at death was £85 588 13s 2d.

Sources: (1) **MSS:** Bodleian library University of Oxford, Sankey Papers, correspondence, diaries and papers; correspondence with Lord Ponsonby, Ponsonby Papers; British Library Oriental and India Office Collections, letters to Lord Reading; National Archives, Scotland, letters to Lord Lothian; National Archives MSS Lord Chancellor's Office; Ramsay MacDonald Papers. National Library, Scotland letters to Lord Haldane. (2) **Reports:** Reports of the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry (Sankey) 1919, Cmd 84, 85, 86, 210359 XI; 361 XIII. (3) **Books and articles:** G.D.H. Cole, *Labour in the Coal Mining Industry* (1923); Richard Burdon Haldane, *An Autobiography*; (1929); R.F.V. Heuston, *Lives of the Lord Chancellors 1885–1940* (Oxford, 1964); R.J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity 1917–1940* (Oxford, 1974); Stephen Koss, *Lord Haldane, Scapegoat for Liberalism* (NY, 1969); Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler, 1933–40* (Cambridge, 1975); David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (1977); N. Mackenzie (ed), *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb Volume 3 1912–1947* (1978); R. Stevens, *Law and Politics: the House of Lords as a Judicial Body 1800–1976* (Oxford, 1979); N and J. Mackenzie (eds.), *The Diary of Beatrice Webb, Vol. 3, 1905–1924* (1984); John Vincent (ed), *The Crawford Papers: The Journals of David Lindsay Twenty-Seventh Earl of Crawford and Tenth Earl of Balcarres* (Manchester, 1985); Barry Supple, *The History of the British Coal Industry Volume 4 1913–1946: The Political Economy of Decline* (Oxford, 1987); Phillip Williamson, 'The Labour Party and the House of Lords 1918–1931', *Parliamentary History*, vol. 10 (1991), 317–341; David C. Smith, *The Time Traveller: The Life of H.G. Wells* (1992); Clyde Sanger, *Malcolm MacDonald: An End to Empire* (Liverpool, 1995); R. Self (ed), *The Austen Chamberlain Diary Letters* (1995); D. Howell *Macdonald's Party: Identities and Crisis 1922–31* (Oxford, 2002); "Sankey, John, Viscount Sankey", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 2004; Nicholas Owen, *The British Left and India* (Oxford, 2007).

DAVID HOWELL

See also: †William JOWITT; †Robert SMILLIE; †Sidney James WEBB

SHEARSMITH, Cornelius Tonge (1884–1914)

SOCIALIST AND TRADE UNIONIST

Cornelius ('Con') Tonge Shearsmith was born on 19 August 1884, the son of Edwin Shearsmith (1845–1893) and Mary Ann Tonge. Edwin, a Hull-born butcher, had married Mary, of Immingham, nine years his junior, in 1873. They settled at 4 Emporium Buildings, on Spring Bank. The arrival of Cornelius completed the family, which already contained two sons and three daughters. Cornelius Shearsmith started work at age fifteen in 1899 as a clerk for J.A. Carhill, a chartered accountant established in one of Hull's small and busy streets, the Land of Green Ginger.

Shearsmith was soon politically involved, joining the local Fabian Society branch, headed, in the years before the First World War, by a medical man, Dr Joseph Nelson. He also became acquainted with Reverend Reeman, a pastor at the Old Salem Congregational Church, probably in spring 1909, when a trio of Nonconformist preachers launched a local 'Socialist Crusade'. As an aspiring journalist, Shearsmith is said to have contributed a couple of articles to the *Christian World* magazine—but he was remembered less as a religious person than as a staunch socialist. His last and most solid loyalty was to the Hull branch of the British Socialist Party (BSP), the party that succeeded the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1911.

Shearsmith's socialist faith went hand-in-hand with his trade union activism. A member of the National Union of Clerks (NUC), he became vice-chairman of its Hull branch in the early 1910s and was elected as its chair at the beginning of 1914, taking over from a certain A.C. Hall. The local branch was particularly dynamic at this time, having recruited a sizeable number of women members. Consequently, at Whitsuntide 1914, the NUC's annual congress came to Hull. Shearsmith, appreciated for his 'considerable ability as a speaker' and his 'clear way of expounding his views', was amongst those who addressed the clerks' Paragon Square mass meeting on the event's final day [*Hull Daily Mail*, 2 July 1914]. The 200 delegates at the congress represented 13,000 dues payers nationally, a figure that had increased by 25% in only one year. Just a week before Shearsmith died, the *Hull Daily Mail* published his response to two clerks who had expressed scepticism about the value of NUC membership [*Hull Daily Mail*, 29 June 1914]: it is a well-argued and energetic plea, making it easy to understand why he was perceived locally as 'a hard worker and a clear thinker' [*Monthly Labour Journal*, July 1914].

As a representative of the NUC branch, Shearsmith also sat on the Executive of the Hull Trades and Labour Council from the end of 1912. According to Fred Booth, the Lib-Lab editor of Hull's *Monthly Labour Journal*, he acted, with other 'rebel members', as 'a veritable watchdog' [*Hull Times*, 4 July 1914]. Indeed, in the turbulent months that followed the seamen and dockers' strike of June 1911, the Trades Council became home to a new generation of activists, often members of the BSP, who defined themselves as revolutionary socialists. They took a sympathetic view of the syndicalism associated with the 'Great Labour Unrest' of the period and supported what they termed 'greater unionism'. 'The real battlefield of Labour', Shearsmith wrote, 'is not at Westminster, but in the workshop and in the factory, in the mine and in the mill' [*Monthly Labour Journal*, February 1914]. During the Dublin dockers' lock-out of 1913–1914, Shearsmith was in charge of the local support fund and, alongside the Hull branch of the Daily Herald League, welcomed Jim Larkin heartily when he visited the city. When a meeting was organised in Hull on Sunday 29 March 1914 to support nine South African trade-unionists who had just been deported by their government, Shearsmith was one of the few local activists to mention the plight of the black workforce exploited in the British-owned mines [*Monthly Labour Journal*, June 1914]. Such initiatives did not go down well with the older, more moderate generation inside the Trades Council, which explains why many felt that he could be 'stinging' and even 'waspish' [*Hull Times*, 4 July 1914].

All in all, though 'his views for the re-organisation of society... did not find general favour', Shearsmith seems to have run his NUC branch in an open-minded way, making sure that 'all phases of political thought (were) fully and adequately represented, and (managed) to work in harmony' [*Hull Daily Mail*, 2 July 1914]. The feeling conveyed in various tributes to his memory was that he wanted, above all, to be 'serviceable to his class': 'What a big heart for mankind this little fellow had' [*Monthly Labour Journal*, July 1914]. Booth lamented, expressing a grief shared beyond the socialist milieu. On the verge of a war that was to put British labour's internationalism to a test, it should also be noted that his loss considerably weakened the local voice for pacifism.

Shearsmith died at his home, at 8 Milton Street, of acute meningitis, on Wednesday 1 July 1914, at the age of 29. He had just returned from a holiday in a houseboat on the upper reaches of the River Hull when he started developing rheumatic fever. His old comrade, Dr Joseph Nelson, was unable to stop the illness and shop assistant William A. Grainger, a fellow BSPer, took a week's leave to nurse his comrade in his final unconscious days. He was buried on Friday 3 July in the Borough Cemetery on Spring Bank. The funeral was paid for by the NUC. Of the two poems sent by 'friends of our late Comrade C.T. Shearsmith' published on the front page of the October edition of the *Monthly Labour Journal*, one was signed by 'a Lady Member'. But there is no evidence of him ever being married.

Writings: The articles that Shearsmith wrote for the *Monthly Labour Journal* (Official Organ of the Hull Trades and Labour Council) were published between January and June 1914.

Sources: (1) MSS: Letter from Steve R. Shearsmith, Cottingham, East Yorkshire, 27 July 2003. (2) **Newspapers and Periodicals:** *Hull Daily Mail*; *Hull Socialist*; *Hull Times*; *Monthly Labour Journal*. (3) **Books, Articles and Thesis:** Kenneth Gillett and Edward MacMahon, *The History of Hull* (Hull, 1989); Yann Béliard, 'The Origins of the Great Labour Unrest: Class Relations in Hull, 1894–1910' (unpublished PhD diss., Paris 13 University, 2007); Yann Béliard, 'Imperial Internationalism? Hull Labour's Support for South African Trade-Unionism on the Eve of the Great War', *Labour History Review*, vol. 74, no. 3 (2009), 319–329. (4) **Obituaries:** *Hull Daily Mail*, 2 July 1914; *Hull Times*, 4 July 1914; *Monthly Labour Journal*, July 1914.

YANN BELIARD

See also: †John ARNOTT; Alfred GOULD; Gus SMITH

SCHMIDT, Gustav Adolph (SMITH, Gus) (1854–1913)

SOCIALIST AND TRADE UNIONIST

In more ways than one, Gus(tav) Smith/Schmidt was a militant 'in between'. A revolutionary of German origin, he often began his speeches with 'We, the workers of Great Britain'. Remembered as 'a familiar figure at the meetings of the Hull Labour Party', he never made a mystery of his admiration for Malatesta and Kropotkin [*Monthly Labour Journal*, 5 July 1913]. A skilled cabinetmaker, he was above all preoccupied with 'the organising of the unorganised'; the thousands of casual workers employed in the port of Hull. A pillar of the local Socialist Club, he adhered neither to the Independent Labour Party (ILP) nor to the Social Democratic Federation (SDF). Though he never sought nor achieved any kind of national recognition, this 'consistent worker for Socialism and Trade Unionism' [*Monthly Labour Journal*, 3 November 1906], this 'hopeful enthusiast in the movement, who looked at life with a cheery smile' [*Hull Daily Mail*, 23 June 1913] played a major role in the development of Hull's labour movement in the late-Victorian and Edwardian years.

Gustav Schmidt, son of Friedrich Wilhelm and Friederike Mathilde Schmidt, was born on 26 February 1854 in Delitzsch, a small town situated in the province of Saxony. In his teens, he left his hometown for nearby Leipzig, the industrial capital of the region, to train as a cabinetmaker. For five years (1868–1873), his apprenticeship led him from one German city to another, until he left for Norway, where he spent two years (1874–1875). Upon returning to Germany, he was forced to do his military service. Eleven months later he deserted, escaping first to Holland, then to Britain. By 1877, he was working as a cabinetmaker in London, but he only stayed there for a short time. In 1878, at the age of twenty-four, his peregrinations led him to Hull, which was to be his terminus. Bismarck passed the first anti-socialist laws in 1878, making it impossible for him to travel back home. In 1881, Schmidt married a local girl, never to move from Humberside again.

In the early 1880s, Schmidt founded the 'Hull Liberty Socialist Club', with the help of half a dozen other German exiles. Though it was officially registered as a cultural association, the authorities were conscious of the political character of the club. Yet, because the club's function was apparently social more than agitational, it seems to have been tolerated. The name was borrowed from *Die Freiheit*, a weekly paper edited in London by the German anarchist-communist Johann Most (1846–1906) between 1879 and 1882. *Freiheit* was also the name of circles founded in Germany by a great admirer of Most's, anarcho-syndicalist Rudolf Rocker (1873–1958), who was an exile in Britain from 1895 to 1918. Schmidt's scarce writings