

1921		MARCH					1921
SUN	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THU.	FRI.	SAT.	
Last M. 28 31	New M. 10th	1	2	3	4	5	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
27	28	29	30	31	First M. 17th	Full M. 24th	



The First.... But Not The Last!

We are delighted to have secured David Potter as our third guest writer. We should also mention that this story sees its publication brought forward by a week. The logic is that the centenary of the event takes place on March 4th 2021, which allows us to launch on the actual date of the poll. We felt that was an appropriate and correct step to take.

David Potter was born in Forfar, attending Forfar Academy, and then St Andrews University. David read Classics at St, Andrews, and thereafter spent his working life teaching both Classics and Spanish at Glenrothes High School from 1971 until 2003.

Since retiring he has taught at various schools on a part-time or temporary basis. He is married to Rosemary, has three children, five grandchildren, and one dog. His hobbies are football, cricket, drama and the poetry of Robert Burns.

A well-known face in the town, David has written several books on football, cricket and local history. David is proud to say that he is equally passionate about all three subjects, but his greatest pleasure is walking in the fresh air on a bright day accompanied by his dog.

Here is David's take on what was an earth-shattering day in the "Lang Toon".

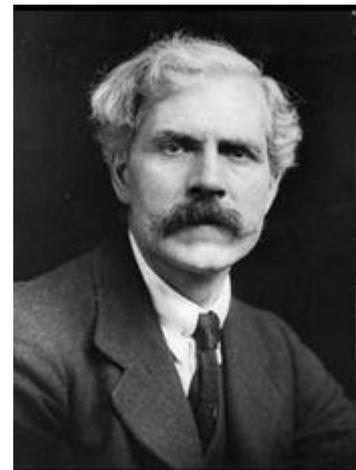
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In many ways, Tom Kennedy can be considered to be the heroic pioneer of the Labour movement in Kirkcaldy. An inspiring politician



and fine orator, it was he who won Kirkcaldy for Labour for the first time in the classic by-election of 1921 held on the date of March 4 with the slogan "March forth on March fourth".

He then served in Ramsay MacDonald's two Labour Governments of 1924 and 1929-1931 becoming a Privy Counsellor in 1931. Had he stayed in politics, he would have graced the Attlee Labour Government from 1945 onwards, but ill health compelled his resignation in 1943. He died in 1954 at the age of 79.



RamsayMacDonal

His early years were spent in Aberdeenshire, and indeed he talked with a broad Aberdonian accent all his political life, something that was (shamefully) sneered at by The Fife Free Press, who like many institutions, feared the Labour Party in the early 1920s.

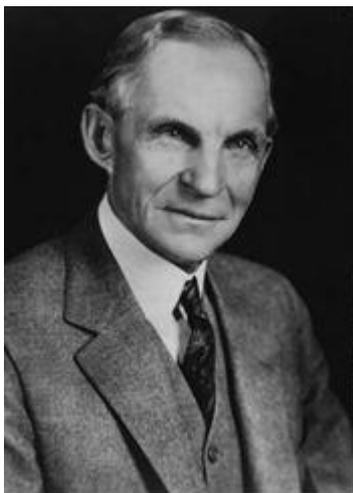


Well educated in his native village of Kennethmont, Kennedy started off life as a railway clerk with the Great North of Scotland Railway Company and joined the Social Democratic Federation, one of a plethora of left-wing parties which would eventually be subsumed by the Labour Party.



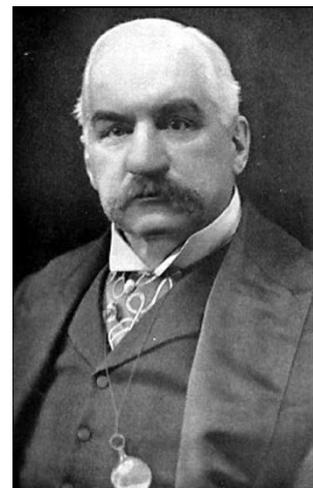
MP Aberdeen North 1896 - 1918

He stood unsuccessfully for Parliament for the Aberdeen North constituency in the General Elections of 1906 and 1910, and then became the National Organiser of the British Socialist Party, a job he reluctantly relinquished in 1914 to join up for the First World War. He also worked in insurance valuations and the building industry at various times of his life.



Henry Ford

The War of course put many socialists in a quandary. It was of course a fight between two capitalist power blocks "making the world a safer place for Henry Ford and J. Pierrepont Morgan", it was said, or, to put it another way, a family squabble that



J.P. Morgan

got out of hand (it is astonishing but true that the Royal Families of Great Britain, Germany and Russia were all related - and all equally

worthless and decadent!), but many socialists like Kennedy also believed that the war would be the catalyst for change. In this, of course, he was right. There were certainly massive changes in Russia and Germany after the war, and even in victorious Britain, there were many differences in attitudes after the war compared with before.

Kennedy was nearly forty when the war started, possibly a little too old for the front line, but he saw action in the Medical Corps on the Austrian Front - a job which called for its own brand of courage. He would have seen enough horror there to affect him for the rest of his life. When he was demobbed in 1919 he found a job as a secretary in London, living now with his second wife, his first, herself a renowned socialist by the name of Christina Farquharson, having died in 1917. Kennedy was by now a member of the Labour Party, although one hesitates to use the word "party" for it was really an umbrella organization covering a multitude of smaller parties such as the Independent Labour Party, the British Socialist Party and the one that Kennedy belonged to, called (unfortunately in view of later events in Germany) the National Socialist Party.

For some reason (probably to do with lack of organization) Labour had failed to put up a candidate in Kirkcaldy for the General Election of December 1918, called little more than a month after Armistice Day by the victorious Lloyd George, hoping to catch opponents unawares (as he seems to have done in many other constituencies apart from Kirkcaldy) and to cash in on the flush of victory. While most voters were still in the process of returning to normal life, Lloyd George's Coalition won by a landslide, and the Coalition Liberal Sir Henry Dalziel was returned unopposed in Kirkcaldy.

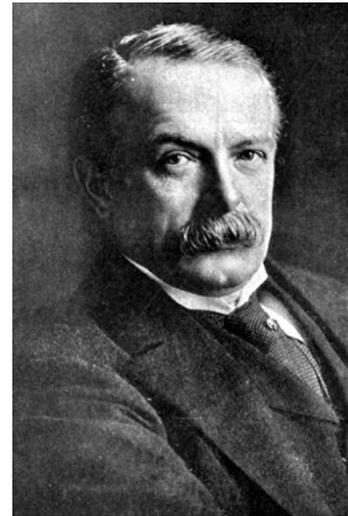
But Dalziel was ageing and in 1920 accepted a peerage in the House of Lords, leaving the need for a by-election in Kirkcaldy. Sir R C

Lockhart, whose family owned Bennoch Works, accepted the nomination as a Coalition Liberal, and Kennedy was invited to take the Labour ticket for what would prove to be a momentous by-election on March 4 1921.



Things had changed since the last Parliamentary election in Kirkcaldy, held now over eleven years ago in January 1910. That was obvious, of course, in the massive revolutions that had happened in the world, notably in Russia and Germany, - the Czar was dead, and the Kaiser an impotent and much reviled exile in Holland. There was also the permanent and poignant reminder of the men who were no longer around, but there were also some more positive things that were happening in Britain itself and in Kirkcaldy in particular. In the first place, it would be the first election in Kirkcaldy in which women would be allowed to vote - not all women, only those over 30 who had certain property qualifications. This was believed to help the Coalition party, but what would certainly help Kennedy was the inclusion of Buckhaven and Methil in the constituency known as "Kirkcaldy Burghs".

Nationally, things were slowly beginning to turn against Lloyd George. He had of course, deservedly, basked in the glory of victory and being the most powerful man on earth, did little to discourage people from describing him as the "man who won the war", but he was conspicuously failing to deliver on his promise of creating "a land fit for heroes to live in". Unemployment was high, labour problems were rife particularly in the heavy industries of coal



and rail, and poverty was all too obvious, particularly among families who had lost their breadwinner. Housing, health and education were all in a shocking state for the most powerful nation in the world, and those who had fought in the war were beginning to cast doubt on the moral excellence of the British Empire, particularly when they saw what was happening in Ireland where the legitimate struggle of the Irish people was being crushed so brutally by the ex-convicts and murderous ex-servicemen called the Black and Tans. Glasgow had flirted with revolution in the George Square riots of late January 1919, and troops had had to be deployed, although not those from the Maryhill Barracks whose loyalty to the crown was far from certain.



There was a certain disillusionment in Liberal circles in Kirkcaldy, not so much with Dalziel as with Lloyd George who was being seen more and more as a Tory rather than a Liberal. It was no secret that the survival of the Coalition depended to a large extent on the Conservatives, and it was feared that Lloyd George had to keep them happy by implementing a few Tory policies. With the rise of the Labour Party, there was a real chance that the Liberals might be squeezed. One prominent member of the

Liberal Party went so far as to say that "It (the Liberal Party) was not so much in abeyance, it was extinct". Local Liberals were beginning to suffer from an identity crisis. Did they go for Lockhart and Lloyd George, the nominal Liberals, or did they go for the party of the future, the one that they had more and more in common with - the Labour Party?

The Fife Free Press was one of those institutions which suffered this crisis of confidence. It had been, of course, clearly and volubly Liberal

Kennedy fought a good campaign, aiming to win the hearts of lady voters by producing his baby son at his election meetings in the Adam Smith Halls, Pathhead Halls and the Olympia Skating Rink on the High Street. He was charming, never descended to mud slinging or vitriol and was always chivalrous to his opponent Robert Lockhart, who in turn (in an astonishing piece of candour by no means common in political circles) was heard to say that it would not be the world's greatest disaster if Kennedy won.

But there was one aspect of Kennedy's campaign which caused apprehension. His supporters, raucous and enthusiastic, had been known to walk along the High Street singing songs like "The Red Flag" with all its references to "martyred dead" "gallows grim" and

"dungeons dark". Worse still was the strident "Internationale" with its calls to "comrades of oppression" to await "the lava flame of liberation". This sounded like

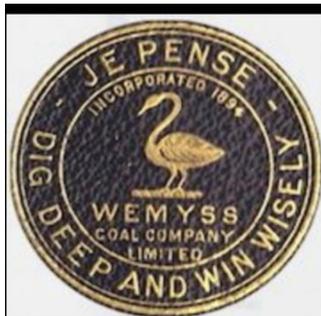


revolutionary stuff, and in the same way that French Revolution dominated British thought for over a century after its happening, the



Russian Revolution, particularly the callous murder of the Tsar and his children in 1918, was known to put the wind up the British establishment - and indeed many people in Kirkcaldy.

There was of course fierce hatred of the local family dynasties who ran local industries. Although war casualties were spread throughout all social classes (Lockhart had had a son who was killed in 1916), the Nairns and indeed the Lockharts came in for criticism for their perceived war profiteering and hoarding of wealth while



their workers existed on a pittance. But the real venom was reserved for the Wemyss family whose Wemyss Coal Company ran coal mining in most of East Fife. There was of course, as we have said, a background in industrial unrest, something that would get a lot worse in 1926.

Kennedy's supporters were also guilty of one occasion disrupting Lockhart's meetings. Some of this was old-fashioned heckling, but there were other occasions when Lockhart was shouted down and had to await the none-too-gentle removal of the miscreants by stewards. Kennedy indeed had to appeal to some of his own followers to temper their zeal, stressing that Lockhart had a right to be heard.

Kennedy often held open air meetings, lit by torchlight, at the Port Brae end of the High Street, and although they were noisy and accused of "rabble-rousing" by The Fife Free Press who now made not the slightest attempt to hide its loyalties, frequently accusing the "Laborists" (sic) as being wild, uncivilised and "belonging to Russia". Yet, Kennedy himself was a gentle, dignified man, giving the lie to

any attempt to blacken his name, and being patient to delineate clearly the differences between Labour and Communist.

It is important to the early 1920s, not clearly of many people. predominantly would often try obfuscate the word "socialist"



bear in mind that in the two beliefs were defined in the minds The Press, capitalist of course, deliberately to issue, applying the to both of them.

Kennedy was at pains to stress that he was a believer in the "democratic gradualism" method of redistributing wealth, not the violent, revolutionary methods that had prevailed in Russia and which seemed very much to be replacing one dictatorship with another. Indeed, one of his arguments was that if British society did not make some improvement in people's living conditions, there might indeed be a revolution and indeed the Labour Party was the most reliable way to stop such things from happening.

Kennedy campaigned on housing by repeating the (in 1921) novel Labour creed of houses being owned by the Town Council rather than private landlords, he wanted improvements in health and education, the ending of the war in Ireland and a massive investment in giving people jobs. Lockhart on the other hand stressed that things were not too bad, and that, given time and peaceful government, Lloyd George would eventually solve the postwar problems of recession and slump in trade. He was careful not to commit himself too freely to either side in the free trade/protectionism row that had caused such schisms in the Liberal Party and would continue to do so for some time yet. It would be an issue that particularly bedevilled the Coalition with its large Tory component. He said that the

Coalition were a winning team, and that he was proud to be a part of it.

By-elections are of course unusual occurrences. Kirkcaldy enjoyed a tremendous amount of national attention with frequent references to the "lang toun" in newspapers like The Scotsman, The Glasgow Herald, The Courier The Advertiser and even the London-based The Times and The Telegraph, almost all of which, however disillusioned they may have been with Lloyd George and his Coalition, advised the Kirkcaldy voters to keep the Labour candidate "at arm's length", and in one case to give him "a bloody nose, making his face as red as his colours".

It is hard for us to imagine Kirkcaldy some ninety years ago in these uncertain and turbulent times with the role of women changing, the



working classes who had climbed up over the trenches at the Somme in 1916 when someone blew a whistle now clearly telling their masters that they were not going to do this any more, the omnipotent rule of the Church badly shaken by God's inability to bring back the

dead - and above all, the clear and obvious signs that whatever they said about 1918, the fruits of victory had not yet arrived, nor were they likely to.

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6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
27	28	29	30	31	First G. 175	Full M. 240	

Polling Day March 4 (a Friday, unlike nowadays when Thursday is almost always the day) was, in contrast to the rest of the campaign, a wet miserable day and

this may well have affected turnout. During the day, the red and yellow colours of the Coalition Liberals prevailed on cars, but in the evening after the factories finished for the day and the miners came off their shift, more and more of the pure red of Kennedy was seen. Both sets of supporters picketed the polling stations, where many people, including children who had been given a day off because their schools were being used as polling stations, were enjoying the novel experience of a vote in a General Election. No woman had ever voted before in Kirkcaldy and men would have to be in their early thirties to have had the opportunity of exercising their franchise in 1910.

The normal polling stations were used at Pathhead, Dysart, Links and other places and each station would be manned by someone who would explain very kindly to those who had never voted before what exactly to do. Kennedy and Lockhart were both in evidence at the various stations throughout the day, along with their supporters and Kennedy's slogan of "March forth on March fourth" very much in evidence.

Counting began at 9.00 am on the morning of Saturday March 5. Motorised vans and horse drawn carriages (with police escort in both cases) had been arriving with ballot boxes since the previous night at the Town House in the High Street (where Marks and Spencer is now), and a large crowd assembled in the rain that morning awaiting the result with the ubiquitous red flags prevalent. Such was the size of the crowd that it became dangerous, but the

pressure eased soon after lunch time when many of the men, weary of the wait, betook themselves off to see Raith Rovers with their mighty halfback line of Raeburn, Morris and Collier and the goalscoring skills of John "Tokey" Duncan, play Clydebank.

Soon after the departure of the football fans (politics was important to many people, but still only second place to football!) a man appeared outside

to announce that there had been a delay because the count was close but that the result was:

T Kennedy	Labour	11,674
Sir RC Lockhart	Coalition Liberal	10,199.

CLOSE OF THE FIGHT	
LABOUR WINS.	
T. KENNEDY	11,674
SIR R. C. LOCKHART	10,199
Labour Majority	1,475



cheers and singing of his own followers, some of whom doubtless believing that deliverance was now at hand from the vile tyranny of the linoleum manufacturers and the mine owners.

The news was greeted with wild exultant cheering, and Lockhart, ever a gentleman, shook hands with Kennedy and wished him a safe trip to Westminster. Kennedy, too exhausted to say much, thanked everyone, being frequently drowned out by the

THE LESSON OF THE ELECTION.

From "Edinburgh Evening News."

The lesson of **Kirkcaldy** Burghs is very important. Propaganda must be met by counter-propaganda, systematically carried out. Political organisations must be overhauled and placed on a thorough'y satisfactory basis. In times past far too much reliance has been placed on the influence of a Member of Parliament. If he conscientiously attends to his duties, he has a full-time job. The work of propaganda and organisation must be left to the constituencies. Why Socialists should now have a monopoly of enthusiasm for political work no one can adequately explain. Every intelligent citizen is bent on securing good government, and should be prepared to work for it. The Socialists have realised that every willing man and woman counts, and that the most humble of individuals has some influence. A leaf must be taken out of their book, and every constituency in the country carefully reviewed by those determined to secure the permanence of Constitutional Government.

Stark's Park (Raith Rovers eventually won 3-0) saw great scenes of joy when a man with a sandwich board (the accepted method of spreading news in the 1920s) walked round the track with the glad tidings of "Kennedy Triumphant". Each section of the crowd took up the cry as he passed until the whole ground echoed into one stentorian paean of praise and delight. Then in scenes reminiscent of Armistice Day, the town enjoyed a great party for the rest of that night. It was a great boost for Labour throughout Scotland with the result greeted with acclaim in places like Glasgow and Dundee.

Not everybody was happy, of course. The Rev John Campbell, long time Minister of the Old Kirk was distinctly put about, perhaps fearing that some of his own flock may well have disobeyed his strictures and voted Labour. No record exists of what his sermon was like the following day, but for the subsequent Sunday, he made a point of advertising what his topic would be. It would be "Works of the Devil - Bolshevism"!

FORMER LABOUR WHIP
Mr. Tom Kennedy, Labour M.P. for Kirkcaldy Burghs, is resigning his seat through ill-health. He was Lord Commissioner of the Treasury in 1924 and Chief Whip of the Labour Party from 1927 to 1931.



KIRKCALDY BURGHs
M.P. TO RESIGN
Mr R. T. Windle, assistant national agent of the Labour party, and Councillor T. F. Hubbard, chairman of Kirkcaldy Burghs Divisional Labour party, have had a meeting at Aberdeen with Mr Thomas Kennedy M.P. for Kirkcaldy Burghs.
Mr Kennedy declared that for health reasons it was his intention to make application for the Chiltern Hundreds.
The initial steps have already been taken by the executive committee of the Kirkcaldy Burghs Divisional Labour party, in co-operation with the national executive, to find a suitable candidate for the vacancy.