

with great bitterness. The Doctor was boycotted by old clients. He did not flinch; nay, increased his platform activity; and at the first annual conference of the I.L.P. accepted membership of its executive. Mrs. Pankhurst told the *Manchester Labour Prophet*, a little local Labour organ, that since she joined the Socialists she had not received the customary invitations to the Town Hall. On July 20th, 1894, she was adopted as an I.L.P. candidate for the Manchester School Board; though not returned, she was forced to make a serious beginning on the platform.

The winter of 1894 was marked by a crisis of unemployment. In those days there was no insurance, no public relief of any sort for the so-called "able-bodied poor," save admission to the workhouse, which the bulk of the unemployed would not accept; had they done so, only an insignificant fraction of them could have been housed. Under the stirring lead of Dr. and Mrs. Pankhurst, a Committee for the Relief of the Unemployed was formed. Two thousand people were fed daily in Stevenson's Square, large numbers also in Ancoats, Gorton and Openshaw. Mrs. Pankhurst drove out each morning collecting gifts of food from the stallholders in Shudehill Market and the city merchants, then took her place on a lorry handing out soup and bread. She formed a women's sub-committee to cope with the urgent need of the mothers and children. These efforts were used as the basis for the demand that Parliament should make itself responsible for the unemployed, and empower local authorities to acquire such land, machinery and materials as might be needed to provide them with work at Trade Union

rates. In the height of the agitation, Mrs. Pankhurst was elected to the Chorlton Board of Guardians, heading the poll in Openshaw, where distress was greatest.

When the unemployed, led by her husband, marched to the Chorlton Poor Law offices, she was there, on the Board, to compel the admittance of a deputation. Its claims were scornfully rejected in a heated scene, but under her protests, by turns passionate and persuasive, and the deafening roar of the indignant crowd outside, the Guardians hastily reversed their decision, and dispatched a deputation of their own to the City Council, urging it to find immediate work for the unemployed, and to take joint action with the Guardians in establishing arrangements to prevent the recurrence of such crises. Her success in securing this unprecedented action gave her an ascendancy on the Board which she never lost.

In September 1895, she read a paper at the North Western Poor Law Conference on "the powers and duties of Poor Law Guardians in times of exceptional distress," contending that Statutes of Elizabeth and George III had empowered Boards of Guardians to employ workless people in all kinds of industry and to acquire land and material to this end. These powers had never been withdrawn by Parliament, but had been put out of use by the restrictive action of the Poor Law Commissioners and their successors, the Local Government Board. In that conference of case-hardened administrators and experts, it was the first time such proposals had been heard; yet the agitation which had raged through the previous winter lent point and weight to them, and her presence, unexpectedly gentle