

Manse Wife Leads L.P.

An Evening with Gladys Langham

WHEN the forty-second National Conference of Labour Women opens at Largs next Tuesday, the Chairman will be Mrs. Gladys Langham, wife of the superintendent of the Ormskirk circuit, the Rev. Harold W. Langham.

News of this unusual role for a lady of the manse sent me hurrying from an assignment in Newcastle upon Tyne across the Yorkshire moors to the small country town of Ormskirk to talk with Gladys Langham about the place of politics of her life, and how she combines this work with her activities in the church and the home.

It was a grand north of England coal fire that we sat by until after midnight and from our talk I gradually realised a most interesting fact about Gladys Langham.

She is both a minister's wife with all that that entails and an active political thinker and worker at one and the same time. No water-tight compartments. Political responsibility for her—allied to the party she supports—is a 'working out of her faith.' 'We have to act,' she says, 'according to the light we are given.'

Views Respected

Her colleagues in the Labour party know where she stands as a Christian; the members of her husband's church and of her own Women's Fellowship, of which she is president, know where she stands politically. All accept her

position because they know the one is bound up in the other. But Mrs. Langham is not intolerant about the politics of other people. 'I respect their views,' she says, 'as I hope they respect mine.' And they do.

Many influences have contributed to Mrs. Langham's politics. A burning memory from childhood is that of the Jarrow Marchers—'something I can never forget,' she says. There was a headmistress with strong Labour sympathies, and a family background,

worker. Not surprising then at the age of nineteen one of her descendants should be among those who formed the Farin (Berkshire) Labour party. Farin was Mrs. Langham's husband and for the record—her first position was that of private secretary to the chairman of the local Conservative party, also secretary to the local Hunt. Mrs. Langham smiled when I suggested that she might also have been an influence in turning her to the left.

First a Minister's Wife

She has never hankered after a parliamentary career. If the thought has ever occurred to her it has been quickly wiped out by her sense of responsibility as a minister's wife—and she is foremost a minister's wife. This position has never presented a problem to Gladys Langham. Indeed, she sees few things as problems—running a twelve-manse (to say nothing of a large garden, cooking, washing, and no domestic help), presiding at the weekly WF, singing occasionally in the choir, and, until recently, teaching in the Sunday school. Her nineteen-year-old son is at college in London.

Until last September Mr. Langham had been in London for some fifteen years, during that time Gladys Langham



Mrs. Gladys Langham

strongly Methodist, and Liberal rather than Labour, of involvement in local government. A maternal grandfather worked closely with Joseph Arch, fighter for the rights of the agricultural