

LABOUR *history*

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The journal of the Labour History Group

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and

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The course has been developed by James Humphreys, who was Head of Corporate Communications at 10 Downing Street before joining Kingston University. Other lecturers include Brian Brivati, an expert on the history of the Labour Party.

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W elcome to the very first issue of *Labour*

History, the journal of the Labour History Group. We launched the Labour History Group in July 2002 to provide a forum for the discussion and debate of issues and personalities in Labour history and have had a phenomenally positive response.

We have now held three discussion evenings in London. The first, led by Professor Kenneth O. Morgan, former Labour Party General Secretary Tom Sawyer and former Fabian Society General Secretary Dianne Hayter, was a lively debate on 'Labour's Second Term: Lessons from History,' comparing the experiences of Attlee, Wilson and Callaghan. Other participants included current and former parliamentarians as Chris Bryant, Ted Graham, Dick Leonard and John Spellar.

In May we had a forthright debate on 'Labour and the Media,' with a panel comprising Harold Wilson's former Press Secretary Joe Haines; David Hill, who ran Labour's communications under Neil Kinnock and John Smith and is now 10 Downing Street's com-

munications chief; and Tim Allan, Deputy Press Secretary to Tony Blair during his first year in Downing Street, a report on the meeting by Martie Woolf is included in this issue. In June we had an enthralling discussion on 'Labour and Militant: twenty years after Liverpool.' The discussion was led by a panel the included Liverpool MP Peter Kilfoyle, Michael Crisk author of *The March of Militant*, Charlie Turnock who in a long career ending up as Assistant General Secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen played a key role in the battle with Militant on Labour's NEC and Baroness Joyce Gould, formerly Labour's National Agent. There were also some illuminating contributions to the discussion from several former leading Militant activists.

Forthcoming events in the autumn will include panel discussions on *In Place of Strife* and 'Hugh Gaitskell: Forty Years on'

Do get in touch with us if you have any suggestions for articles or for events, or if you would just like to get involved. If you are interested in Labour history, then we want to hear from you.

Greg Rosen
Chair, Labour History Group

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Forthcoming Events

november

Panel discussion on *In Place of Strife* with Anne Perkins, Richard Rosser and Geoffrey Goodman.

december

Panel discussion on 'Hugh Gaitskill: Forty years on'. Panellists to be announced.

If you would like to be kept informed about these events and others please email john.schwartz@methuen.co.uk



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paul richards

asks: 'Why study Labour history?'

The claim by L. P. Hartley that: "The Past is a different country and people do things differently there" is not borne out by a study of Labour history. Any student of the Party's History soon finds that the burning issues of today's politics find their echo in the past.

It is hard to identify an issue be it war in the middle-east, health care and education, the relationship between government and trade unions even fox hunting which has not been an issue to stoke debate among Labour's forebears. Big philosophical questions too – the individual's place in society, the role of markets, the balance of personal freedom with broad social objectives – these themes have long been debated on the left. Matt Carter's definitive work on the idealist philosopher T. H. Green admirably proves this case.

There is a tendency in New Labour to presume that history

began in 1997 when Labour was elected or in 1994 when Blair became leader or even, in magnanimous moments, in 1983 when Neil Kinnock began the long march back to electability. All previous events have been airbrushed the popular memory.

In reality Labour supporters need a sense of where the party has come from and where it has been. Here the Labour History magazine serves an important purpose. By sitting at the feet of men like Michael Foot we are better equipped to handle today's issues; by understanding Labour's mistakes we can avoid their repetition; by analysing Labour's triumphs we can seek to emulate them and by understanding the courage, vision and humanity of the people who build the Labour Party we are standing on the shoulders of giants.

Paul Richards is Chair of the Fabian Society.

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paul farrelly

Golding

Hammer of the Left

John Golding, was a tireless soldier of Labour's trade union right-wing. He possessed a natural political nous, authority and energy that belied his short, but stout stature. For him or against him – Golding was the best friend you could have, or the worst enemy, if you found yourself on the wrong side – his sharp, impish sense of humour would always liven up the room.

He and his wife Llin made a formidable political team instinctively “old Labour” in their support for the working class, pensioners, the unemployed and the rights of ordinary people to be represented by trades unions.

In more than 40 years of active politics, including 17 years as an MP, Golding would admit he made more enemies than friends. Often, as when he led the Labour moderates' fight against Militant in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the blood feud would come down to politics, pure and simple. Golding was uncompromising in his hostility towards dreamers and schemers on the left, including Tony Benn and Eric Heffer, whom he believed offered nothing for everyday folk.

At that time, when organising the trade union-led fightback for “common sense”, he was justifiably known as the most influential man in the Labour movement. A master of every political trick in the book, he was bloody-

minded enough to copy the left's tactics and use them to the moderates' advantage. In the Commons tea-room, MPs under threat but innocent in the finer arts of the rough-house – such as Robert Kilroy Silk – would frequently ask Golding how to get themselves organised.

“I'm fed up of this f'...in' idiot. I'm going,” Eric Heffer once shouted at a home policy meeting of Labour's national executive, after Golding stalled another left quick-fix by giving the meeting a two-hour long insight into ordinary, working-class views on every subject under the sun. Alas, in a scene worthy of Basil Fawty, Eric walked straight into one broom cupboard, then another, before slamming his papers down and shouting “Oh f... it, I'm stopping after all.”

“And these were people who thought they could run the country,” Golding remarked in his posthumously published memoirs *Hammer of the Left*. The memoirs, strongly encouraged by Llin, are a testament to the trade union brothers – many from the West Midlands, including John Spellar, now a defence minister, and Roger Godsiff, MP for Birmingham Sparkbrook – who carried the torch during Labour's darkest hours before Militant was finally routed and the party began its tortuous climb back to respectability under Nell Kinnock, John Smith and Tony Blair.

“For him or against him – Golding was the best friend you could have, or the worst enemy, if you found yourself on the wrong side”



Photo of John Golding courtesy of Llin Golding

Occasionally, the hostility to Golding was purely personal. It often fell to John to step where others feared to tread. In 1983, during Labour’s leadership election – in the wake of a disastrous general election defeat and the resignation of Michael Foot as party leader – union tacticians calculated that Roy Hattersley simply did not command enough votes to defeat Kinnock. Hattersley would have to bite his ambition and be content with the deputy leadership instead.

“Do you mean to say that I am going to have to play second fiddle to a red-haired Welsh windbag,” Hattersley exclaimed, when Golding was deputed to deliver the black spot. “Yes, if you put it

like that, you are going to have to play second fiddle to a red-haired, Welsh windbag,” came the uncompromising reply. Hattersley’s undying enmity cost Golding a place in the Shadow Cabinet. If he was bitter at the time, the scars never showed. In politics, his attitude was that you win some, and you lose some. “I got Benn, then they got me,” he said after losing to the left the position he always kept as political officer in the Post Office Engineering Union (POEU). That victory over Benn – the recapture of Labour’s feuding NEC in 1982 after “five years hard labour”, as he put it – was undoubtedly the high point of this strand of Golding’s

career. Using the moderate and soft left’s narrow majority on the NEC, as Foot ab-stained, he ruthlessly removed Benn and his acolytes from all their positions of power.

To many, with Golding playing a key role in determining the 1983 manifesto, it remained a mystery why Labour fought the election on what became known as “the longest suicide note in history”. The answer, if Golding was asked, was straightforward: he had already decided that because of all the feuding, Foot as leader and the Falklands to boot, Labour had already lost the election. He was cunning enough to allow the left enough policy rope to hang

themselves, so the Bennites could never again blame the right as they had done after Jim Callaghan’s defeat in 1979.

While the annals of Labour history will undoubtedly record Golding as one of the right’s best ever “fixers”, a label he took pride in there was much more than that to his political career. Well-versed at an early age in politics and philosophy, he reserved a healthy disregard for ideologists with their heads in the clouds.

He went to Chester Grammar School before studying, eventually, at Keele University and the London School of Economics. He had begun his working life in the Civil Service in London

as an “office boy” at 16, as he described it, then as a clerical officer at the Ministry of National Insurance and it was as a researcher with the Post Office Engineering Union that he returned to Newcastle to stand in a 1969 by-election.

It was then, too, that Golding first met his future wife, Llin, a hospital radiographer, Labour activist and the daughter of a former Labour MP, who was given

“ the annals of Labour history will undoubtedly record Golding as one of the right’s best ever “fixers”, a label he took pride, in ”

the task of driving the young candidate during the election campaign. Both were already married, with separate families of their own, but 11 years later they were to tie the knot together a second time round.

After winning the Newcastle by-election, Golding quickly joined the Wilson government, first as parliamentary private secretary to Eric Varley, then minister for technology, then as a whip. As minister for employment from 1976, he was intensely proud of Labour’s efforts to cushion the blows of unemployment and short-time working, despite the

best efforts of the left to undermine the Callaghan government in the party and the unions.

To a born street-fighter, after 1979 (an election tainted by the tragic death of his eldest son), opposition under Margaret Thatcher came as second nature. Golding still holds the record for the longest-ever Commons speech – 11 hours and 15 minutes speaking to one small amendment – which successfully delayed the privatisation of British Telecom until after the 1983 election. It was a tactic, as one of the outstanding parliamentarians of his day, that he would use repeatedly to great effect. These days rules have changed, so Golding’s record is unlikely to be broken, but delay was then often the only effective tactic against a massive government majority.

Golding was certainly not, though, one of those pompous MPs who enjoy the sound of their own voice. Indeed, he showed an almost childlike pride in his award by the *Guardian* in the 1980s as the Commons’ worst-dressed MP.

In 1986, aged 55, Golding gave up the Newcastle seat after becoming general secretary of the newly-merged National Communications Union, following another vicious battle with the left. There, he had to summon all his negotiating skills in deft handling of strikes and disputes with British Telecom at the height of Thatcher’s onslaught against the

unions. To the end, he remained active in local politics, both in support of Llin and Newcastle’s Labour borough council.

Politics aside, Golding’s great passions were fishing, horse-racing and learning Spanish. Weekend after weekend, he would throw himself waist deep into the rivers of mid-Wales or well-stocked lakes of Hampshire, with the Spanish ambassador often in tow. A fair cook, his family freezer was stocked to the brim with freshly-caught salmon and trout. Asked, too, how come the pot was always full of game, he said it was because of a case he was assisting at an employment tribunal. “The chap’s good with traps,” he would say, “I’m being paid in rabbits instead.”

Just before his death, John took a new mischievous delight at running rings yet again around civil servants in his new appointment to a Ministry of Agriculture advisory panel on the plight of British fresh-water fishing. If the Sir Humphreys of this world thought they could “fix” any committee they liked, they got their lines snagged with Golding. They would always be caught out by the master-fixer himself.

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Paul Farrelly is MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme and editor of John Golding’s memoirs Hammer of the Left, Politico’s, £25.00.

marie woolf

Media Men

A report on the Labour History Group discussion on 'Labour and the Media' held in May 2003

Ted Knight, hard-left candidate for Hornsey in 1979, was canvassing a street in an affluent Tory area when he came across a Labour supporter. 'I have always voted Labour and plan to continue,' the householder told Mr Knight, who promptly inquired what the voter did for a living. 'Until recently I was Permanent Secretary to the Treasury,' he replied. Mr Knight's response was: 'We don't want votes from people like you.'

David Hill told this anecdote to illustrate the difficulties modernisers within Labour Party encountered in their bid to make the Party electable. He was speaking at the Labour History Group seminar on the 'Labour and the Media' in May 2003, where he shared the platform with Harold Wilson's Press Secretary Joe Haines and

Tim Allen who served as Alastair Campbell's deputy during the first year of the Blair administration.

He said the 'on message' culture, so ridiculed by the press in the 1990s, was a reaction to a time when Labour failed completely to communicate a coherent message to voters. 'Let's remember that the Labour Party and the nation lived in separate and parallel universes. The Labour Party was having a dialogue with itself in which it did not want anyone to intrude.'

Mr Hill, who takes over shortly from Alastair Campbell as the Prime Minister's communications chief has previously worked for Roy Hattersley, Neil Kinnock and John Smith. He recounted how, during the 1980s, Labour suffered a persistent pummelling in the press, internal splits, flat polls and self-reverential policies. 'We had to fight the first half of the '87 election about whether we would be-

come third. It was all about self-inflicted wounds,' he said. It was a struggle to convince the Party that they 'should actually talk to the electorate.' The scars of fighting losing bouts with the media meant that after the 1997 election Labour was all about 'consistency of message.'

'There have been jokes that have gone on over the last few years about being on message and people with pagers,' he said. 'But the fact of the matter is if you are treated the way the Labour Party was treated in the way that it was treated right up to the post-Blair leadership election.' He still believes that the press 'tells lies and pursues vendettas.' But he said it was important for the Party to 'keep your mind on the big picture' and not get distracted into petty scuffles over minor newspaper stories.

The role of the BBC was a recurring theme of the meeting. David Hill's opinion was that the BBC should be subjected to closer scrutiny and 'brought up short' more than it is: 'We do need to keep reminding the BBC that they do have responsibility? not so much to the politicians as to the public. They have got to recognise they have an enormous responsibility because of the position they hold in our society.' He said that because they were so 'revered' by the public, the BBC had a 'very great responsibility' to report government affairs accurately. '60 per

cent or 70 per cent of the population believe that every thing they see or hear on the BBC is true and accurate. Because of that, the BBC have a very great responsibility in terms of the general public. And therefore what the government should be reminding them of and what agencies set up by the government should be reminding them of is that responsibility.’

Joe Haines, Harold Wilson’s press secretary, also launched an onslaught on the BBC which he said was guilty of ‘destroying our democracy.’ He said the ‘vanity’ of presenters was ‘enormous’ and they infiltrated every living room in the country. ‘The culture of the BBC is anarchic, they are determined always to destroy. I think this is where the real poison lies today. That is where we should direct our attention.’

Haines, who famously stopped the daily lobby briefings for political journalists while at Number 10, warned against spending too much time worrying about broadsheets and middle-market tabloids. ‘Our people read the much-despised tabloid press,’ he said. ‘If you get the votes of those who read the *Daily Mirror* and the *Sun* you don’t need anyone else’s votes,’ he said. ‘You win with the kind of majority we have now. You

should not worry about what the *Mail* and the *Express*.’

He refuted claims that the ‘press were responsible for losing general elections’ and said the Party must bear some of the blame. Mr Haines chronicled the struggles between the union movement and Harold Wilson, explaining that relations between Transport House and Number 10 were so strained that when the Prime Minister went to speak ‘he took his own lectern.’

“ The culture of the BBC is anarchic, they are determined always to destroy. I think this is where the real poison lies today ” JOE HAINES

‘Since the war we have lost eight general elections and since the war we have won eight general elections. The truth is in ’51, ’55 and ’59 we were as a Party still rooted in the past, we were rooted in wartime and the pre-war days. That’s why we lost. It was nothing to do with the press.’ He said it was true that ‘Tory Newspapers exploit our mistakes’ but scandals and controversy were not created by journalists. ‘The press didn’t create Bernie Ecclestone, or Peter Mandelson or Geoffrey

Robinson or the Hinduja brothers or Keith Vaz, nor Robin Cook nor Clare Short. We presented them with those people and they naturally used it against us,’ he said. ‘We mustn’t complain. The solution is to do better and that we don’t give them own goals. If you keep giving own goals away you lose the league.’

His observations were expanded on by Tim Allan who said that the role of spin had been vastly exaggerated both

Sun was ‘backed up by much tougher monitoring and rebuttal of inaccuracies especially if mistakes were made by broadcasters.’ The meeting took place in the wake of Clare Short’s resignation from the cabinet and Mr Allan said that she was ‘right to say that spin came to dominate political debate in the first term.’

‘We became the story and spin doctors became the story. This was due to journalistic navel gazing and self obsession, but ultimately we knew that we were working in the frenzied environment of the lobby and have to accept responsibility for allowing ourselves to obscure many of the government’s successes,’ he said.

Six years on he said the Government has ‘made an active effort to mend its ways’ and, consequently, spin is much less of an issue. ‘My own view is that the government’s changes to be more open, trustworthy and equal with information are very welcome, but probably don’t go far enough,’ he added. ‘I think that the trend over the next few years will be to more formality, less selectivity, and more direct communication.’

Marie Woolf is Chief Political Correspondent of the Independent.

geoffrey goodman

Foot's Legacy

To describe the legacy of Michael Foot, as he enters that special category of the nonagenarians, is effectively to chronicle the tapestry of twentieth-century British radicalism. No other political figure quite matches this remarkable son of Plymouth – not even his own great hero, Aneurin Bevan. For while Nye was without question, one of a rare handful of truly outstanding politicians of the last century, even he did not combine his own exceptional oratory with a capacity to write in similar style. That is the uniqueness of Michael Foot. His legacy contains not only a life of radical courage and political integrity of special quality: it is also ranged alongside a parallel reputation as an illustrious writer. He did not write fiction in the manner of another of his heroes, Benjamin Disraeli, but the range and bravura of Michael Foot's literary output has been quite breathtaking.

Foot is a kind of renaissance litterateur without a trace of the frequently accompanying trappings of the dilettante. He has always been the master of the brilliant phrase with an ability to recall, even now in his nineties, a remote phrase from some corner of

Byron, Shelley, Keats, Swift and Heine which evokes all the qualities and values of that past brilliance in order to thrust them forward as his own gloss on the future. For proof that this is not mere hyperbole open his marvellous book dedicated as a vindication of Byron, *The Politics of Paradise* published in 1988 shortly before Michael decided to stand down from Parliament.

Of course he did not become Prime Minister. The long years in Parliament from 1945 through to 1992, with a gap of five years between 1955 and 1960 when he returned to inherit Bevan's seat in Ebbw Vale, were remarkable enough in their own right. For years whenever he rose from the back-benches the House of Commons would rapidly fill: his campaigning radicalism, the humour and his matchless facility to choose historic parallels hardly ever failed to

transfix that most critical of all public audiences – a crowded House of Commons.

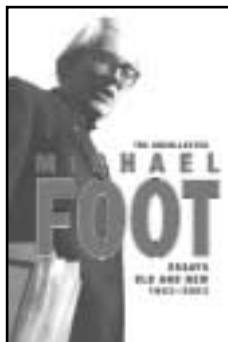
Michael could have been in earlier Labour Governments – he refused Ministerial posts in the Wilson Governments of 1964 and 1966 before finally accepting Cabinet rank in Wilson's 1974 Government. And when he became deputy leader to Prime Minister Jim Callaghan in 1976 his influence within Cabinet and certainly within the Labour Party in the country injected a particular new significance into the normally nominal role of Deputy Prime Minister. That, too, has provided a legacy that is probably unrepeatable.

Jill Foot, who died in 1999, famously once observed that her husband 'is not really cut out for political intrigue'. His heart, she added, 'is really in newspapers and writing'. There was, and remains great truth in what Jill said. And yet Michael Foot remains one of

the great Parliamentarians. He could be mercilessly scolding when he was attacking and rebuking the absurdities of policies whether against the Tory foe or the banalities, as he perceived them, of his own political colleagues. The thrust of Foot's honesty cut through all intrigue and political corruption. Sometimes that has made him an uncomfortable ally even within his own ranks. But there can be no finer legacy offered by this special nonagenarian than that he will not flinch from the truth even if, oft times, it might pain his closest friends. That is what he did when in 1957 he criticised his greatest political ally and hero, Nye Bevan, for refusing to go along with unilateral nuclear disarmament.. It was an exceptional act of personal and moral courage – the very mark of Foot's legacy to all of us.

Geoffrey Goodman is a journalist and broadcaster.

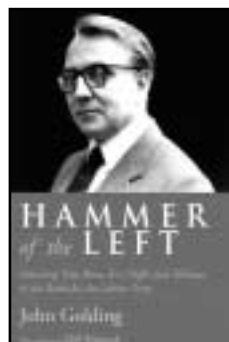
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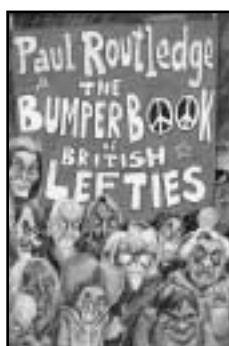
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brian brivati

Michael Foot:

A Life in Books

‘England! With all thy faults I love thee still.’
I said at Calais, and have not forgot it;
I like to speak and lucubrate my fill;
I like the government (but that is not it);
I like the freedom of the press and quill;
I like the *Habeas Corpus* (when we’ve got it)
I like a parliamentary debate,
Particularly when ‘tis not too late;

Our standing army, and disbanded seamen,
Poor’s rate, Reform, my own, the nation’s debt,
Our little riots just to show we are free men,
Our trifling bankruptcies in the Gazette,
Our cloudy climate and our chilly women,
All these I can forgive, and those forget,
And greatly venerate our recent glories,
And wish they were not owing to the Tories.

Byron, *Bebbo* 47 and 49

Michael Foot was born in Plymouth in 1913 the middle son of the extraordinary brood fathered by the great bibliophile Issac. As Michael makes plain in his essay ‘Sally’s Broomstick’¹ he was initially more interested in adventure stories than literature. Sally introduced him to the delights of Arnold Bennett and in particular *How to live 24 Hours a Day* and *Literary Taste*. These books and the fact that he had been born into a house seemingly made of books set him

on the path of a reader. That road led him to write. His first book was published in February 1940. Before the days of May and in the arguably the darkest hour of European history, Foot marshalled the case for war and against appeasement in unmistakable terms.²

This book seeks to tell the story of the most tragic years in human history. The tale is confined chiefly to Europe. Much of great importance is omitted, many edges are left jagged. It would need an Edward Gibbon to appreciate the scale of the crimes and follies committed in this era; perhaps only a Karl Marx could unravel their causes and make original discoveries. I have sought rather to give some hint of the terrific force of the hopes and fears which have driven men along their course through these years, to describe the giants and pigmies who have guided them, to peer only occasionally beneath the surface . . . No attempt is made at impartiality in this book. Unbiased historians are as insufferable as the people who profess no politics . . . Since all the great historians have attacked one another like by-election candidates I hope to emulate them in their venom, if in nothing else.

This was followed in the same year by perhaps his most famous book: *Guilty Men*:

The England of the Conservative party condoned fascism, consorted with fascism, connived at imperialist war, abandoned any hope of building a sane and secure international society. It was the England of the left, the England of

*Labour, it was the resurrection of this other England which saved the world, and the hopes of the European revolution will depend on which England rules as the fighting subsidies.*³

The last in his remarkable wartime trilogy appeared in 1943:

*Yet there was still another England. This other England detested Fascism from the day of its birth. It fought against the betrayal of Abyssinia. It denounced the policy which led to the massacre of Spain. It struggled in opposition throughout those years to build an international society and it understood that the chief enemy which must be fought was Fascism in whatever guise it might appear and whatever land it might capture the apparatus of the State. This was the England of the Left, the England of Labour, the England which inherited and adapted to the modern age the European policy which made this country the leader of nations in the nineteenth century. This England made errors too, but they were errors of a quite different nature from those crimes committed by the men who believed that could reach comfortable terms of settlement with the forces of fascism which threatened to engulf the continent in a new Dark Age . . . This 'Other England' which in Garibaldi's words 'always helps the needs and necessities of the human race', was kept alive.*⁴

The cause of the 'other England' has been central to Foot's politics and his writing ever since. The post war books and pamphlets reflected on the twin themes of politics and literature. In one stream of his prose the great rhetoric of the *Evening Standard* during the war is clear. Foot edited the paper from 1942 and was instrumental in articulating the nature of the democratic and radical struggle Britain was engaged in. This radical stream continued in his work focusing either on individuals like Nye Bevan or great causes, like the bomb. The other stream, no less radical, focussed on individual writers and their contributions to both literature and politics. In a series of books Foot wrote about his literary heroes in uncompromisingly positive ways. Both these streams came together in his essays which ranged from the celebration and defence of members of his personal pantheon – Hazlitt, Byron, Shelley, H. G. Wells, Swift, Stendhal and, Heine – to the great political themes of the day.

He began his post war books with a defence of Jonathan Swift.

For the Tale of Tub was a stupendous satire on almost every establishment institution and custom of the

*age. The papists on the one hand and the dissenters on the other were the two principal victims, but almost everyone else fell beneath the lash. 'Satire is a sort of glass,' said the writer, 'wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own.' Not many beholders could fail to discover their own features in his glass, and if the Whigs as such were granted immunity, lawyers and bishops, courtiers and statesman, philosophers and kings were mocked with the same coarse exuberance lavished on hack writers and political toadies in every shape and posture. Even the English Church, the pallid hero of the piece, did not escape, and, even in the year of Blenheim, the love of military glory was included among the proofs of madness with which all mankind was possessed . . . Nothing was sacred. The whole was a tour-de-force in which the author upheld the ideals of political moderation with ribald extravagance and launched his crusade for the one true Church of Christ in the language of blasphemy.*⁵

This was followed by the two volumes of his life of Nye Bevan. These volumes have been described as the greatest political biography of the twentieth century. As partisan examples of the genre, it is a judgement that is hard to shake. Almost any page is quotable but this is the description of Bevan's resignation from the Labour Government 1945–51.

When Bevan rose next day to deliver his resignation speech parliamentary conditions were arctic; he did indeed resemble some primitive polar explorer setting off, in the face of blinding sleet and snow, on a wild, inexplicable adventure. He was almost alone. No newspaper that morning backed his stand. Some, like the Daily Mirror, had been whipped up by Morrison, not that much whipping was necessary, to destroy his character. No shred of sympathy for him prevailed on the Tory benches; rather he had revived overnight all the fears and frenzies of the 'vermin' period. On the Labour side, the immediate overpowering alarm was that he had plotted or clumsily contrived the destruction of the rickety Labour Government and an electoral disaster of, conceivably, 1931 proportions. Even most of those reckoned as his friends were dubious about or, more usually, bitterly critical of his tactics. Gone, irrecoverably it seemed, was the fulsome admiration he had extorted by his parliamentary triumph of a bare eight months before. And when he sat down forty-five minutes later not a touch of warmth alleviated the universal coldness. No single cheer greeted his peroration. And at once, in various quarters the whole speech was pronounced a crime and a blunder, and, judged by the impact in those first freezing minutes when he left the Chamber, with only two or three of his friends following him,

it certainly appeared that he had made a ruinous error, more than enough to wreck a career. Yet it was partly the quality of the speech which left his hearers gasping. It was not solely a work of calculation; no speech by Bevan could be. It was deliberate political act, but it was also an explosion of the forces pent up within him for months, even years. Some of the phrases and perhaps the least premeditated, lingered on in the political atmosphere throughout the 1950s and 1960s and retain their force today. At every turn it had upon it the stamp of boldness, the audacity of Danton. So an assembly accustomed to all the arts of appeasing eloquence, and Bevan among the foremost could use them when he wanted, was stunned.

After the great work of biography came a trilogy of essay collections: *Debts of Honour* in 1980, *Another Heart and other Pulses* in 1984 and *Loyalists and Loners* in 1986. Of these the pick is the first and the pick of the essays is the one on Issac:

In 1910, thirty years old, he crossed the Tamar into Cornwall again on another notable expedition; he just failed to become Liberal M.P. for Bodmin by forty-one votes. In 1919 he fought Lady Astor in Plymouth when Waldorf Astor became a peer, lost his deposit, and the family, all even of us, or at least all old enough

to know what was what, sang in unison:

*Who's that knocking at the door?
Who's that knocking at the door?
If it's Astor and his wife, we'll stab
'em with a knife
And they won't be Tories any more.*

How many battles of long ago had my father refought, and how many of the present day had he watched from his library windows? He preached of Marston Moor, and retreated with Montaigne to his tower . . . 'Hope', he would whisper, and the little Cornish chapel would be utterly still. 'The gospel of hope'; he had the congregation in the hollow of his hand. Within a few sentences the language could become stirring and resonant:

*Hope, the paramount duty
That Heaven lays
For its own honour, on man's
Suffering heart.*

Swift had been defended in 1957 and now yet another trilogy was to come as Foot tackled first Byron (1988) and then H. G. Wells (1995). In the *The Politics of Paradise: A Vindication of Byron*, Hazlitt is also vindicated but in many ways the real hero is Venice:

Sometimes Beppo is associated – curiously it may seem to modern tastes or judgements – with the period in Byron's Venetian life when he is

supposed to have plunged almost irrecoverably and with the most debilitating effects even on this physical appearance, into a life of dissipation, sometimes with one mistress or sometimes with several.

True enough, Beppo was written in a couple of days or nights, according to such reliable observers as Hobbhouse, at the very time when these rumours about his sexual feats were starting to reach the outside world.

So Beppo may help to sustain a quite different thesis: that the days or nights of dissipation were more the exception than the rule and that he was applying his mind with his usual zest to the exciting world around him and the books on this table.

Beppo, for sure, was not the product of a melancholy, downcast spirit but much more that of one who had sensed a new vitality in Venice itself, among the Italians whose capabilities he extolled in that memorable introduction to Canto IV.

The Venice of Goldoni, of Casti, Burati, and many more of the same gifts... Venice, past, present and future, had captivated him and he could turn with ease from one aspect to another.

In 1999 Foot warned the world of the danger of nuclear proliferation in the sub-continent in *Dr Strangelove I Presume*. In 2003 he completed a quartet of collections with *The Uncollected Foot, Essays Old and New, 1953–*

2003. New projects are planned for the years ahead, a collection of speeches and perhaps a book about Plymouth Argyle. In addition to these volumes Foot was a frequent and frequently brilliant House of Commons speaker and the finest polemical journalist of his generation.

If we take this life in words together we have the most substantial literary politician of the twentieth century. A scope much wider than Churchill's and a style much readable. A biographical gift of insight more telling and less ponderous than Roy Jenkins. An essayist more memorable and quotable than any other English politician of the era. It is a body of work that is essential reading for any aspiring politician, writer or journalist.

- 1 *The uncollected Michael Foot. Essays Old and New, 1953–2003, Politico's*, 2003, pp 23.
- 2 *Armistice 1918–1939*, George G Harrap & Co, 1940, pp 274.
- 3 *Guilty Men*, Victor Gollancz, 1940. Foot co-authored with Peter Howard, and Frank Owen under the name Cassius.
- 4 *The Trial of Mussolini. Being a Verbatim Report of the First Great Trial for War Criminals held in London sometime in 1944 or 1945*, Victor Gollancz, 1943, pp 80–81. Written as Cassius.
- 5 *The Pen and the Sword: Jonathan Swift and the Power of the Press*, Macgibbon and Kee, 1957 and Collins 1984.

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michael foot

North Cornwall 1939

I re-read for the purposes of this article the record of what happened in this country just fifty years ago, in March 1939, when the Spanish Civil War came to its pitiful end. No one, certainly no one with any appreciation of his country's honour, can read the story without a rising sense of shame. It was the most shameful decade in our history, and those last diplomatic or parliamentary rites at the Spanish graveside had some claim to be the most wretched of all.

Other events in Europe throughout that February and March quite dwarfed the Spanish scene. Hitler was preparing for his seizure of Prague, in defiance of all the promises of peace in our time which Chamberlain had accepted at Munich less than six months before. Stalin made a speech, little recognised for its momentous implications by political leaders in the West, that he might not be prepared to pull capitalist chestnuts out of the fire. He did refer directly to the consequences of the non-intervention policy in Spain. But no Western leader, least of all the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, would respond. Spain for them had always been a sideshow, a distraction.

They were just glad to see the end of it. But even leaving aside the monstrous misjudgement of our own national interest, the

world's interest, involved in the so-called non-intervention policy to be considered in a moment, we might have been spared the last indignities, the last infamies.

Britain rushed to bestow official recognition on the nationalist regime of General Franco even before the ink was available to sign the undertakings between his military forces and those of the defeated Spanish Republic. Franco despatched a telegram to Chamberlain promising that after the surrender only criminals would suffer reprisals. This was considered to be the only condition Britain could extract. Lord Halifax, our compliant Foreign

Secretary in the House of Lords, was somewhat more explicit. No country outside Spain, he said, could judge whether any Spaniard was guilty of a crime or not, and any offer of British help in the evacuation of the Republicans would prejudice the British reconciliation with the victors.

In fact, the indiscriminate vengeance against all those considered guilty of 'subversive activities' had been started much earlier. One Italian general reported to Count Ciano, Mussolini's Foreign Minister, that Franco had already launched in Barcelona 'a very thorough and drastic purge'. Many Italians, including several

imprisoned by the Republicans, were among those executed. Mussolini himself, as reported by Ciano, was more realistic than the British Ministers. 'Let them all be shot. Dead men tell no tales.'

A last remnant of British honour was rescued by the debate which the Labour and Liberal Parties forced in the House of Commons. Chamberlain had deviously agreed to the recognition more with the French premier before the Commons was informed. 'We see in this action', said Clement Attlee, leader of the Labour Party, 'a gross betrayal of democracy, the consummation of two and a half years of the hypocritical pretence of non-intervention and a connivance all the time at aggression. And this is only one step further in the downward march of His Majesty's Government in which at every stage they do not sell, but give away, the permanent interests of this country. They do not do anything to build up peace or stop war, but merely announce to the whole world that anyone who is out to use force can always be sure he will have a friend in the British Prime Minister.'

And Chamberlain could reply only that Franco had given pledges of mercy and that Britain could enforce no conditions upon him. True enough. And that refusal and incapacity to exert any British restraint on Franco's repression continued from that mo-

ment, throughout the long years of the Second World War itself, until Franco's death forty years later. Only in these last few years has the world had a fresh chance to see what Spanish democracy can achieve.

“A last remnant of British honour was rescued by the debate which the Labour and Liberal Parties forced in the House of Commons.”

But wait. Spanish democracy: was there any such a species? The Spanish Civil War: was it not always an inscrutable Spanish affair, 'a faction fight', as another notable member of Chamberlain's pre-war Cabinet, Sir Samuel Hoare, dubbed it at the time? Were not the poets and others (80 per cent working class, by the way) who went off to fight in the International Brigade, were they not just a bunch of eccentrics, tricked by an international conspiracy or Communist plotters or their own leftish hallucinations? How could they see England's freedom too swaying in the Spanish scales?

The modern craving for cynicism is often fed by the official histories, whether written in Chamberlainite or Churchillian terms. For Winston Churchill

himself, along with the others, was blinded by his class prejudice in the early days of the war and he was a notable absentee from that debate in March 1939 when the last act of dishonour was approved.

Beware of all such prevarications, old or new; they are just the latest versions of the big lie we were told in the 1930s. Dig a little deeper into the archives and it will be discovered that Hitler and Mussolini had been ready to retreat if the British or French Governments had shown one small part of the courage of the International Brigaders who came from the beleaguered democratic states of those times and from some of the dictatorships too. Fascism could have been destroyed on Spanish battlefields. Considering the scale of the Second World War, here is surely the greatest might-have-been in all history, and if the claim is still dismissed, something near proof about the actual date of the turning point may be offered to clinch the case.

When the Franco revolt against the democratically elected government of Spain was launched in June 1936, the military advantages lay with the rebel forces and they carried their assault to the precincts of Madrid. The prize was almost within their grasp. They were thwarted then and for the next two and a half years by great sections of the



Guernica, Pablo Picasso, 1937. During the Spanish Civil War the Basque village of Guernica in northern Spain was used for bombing practice by Hitler's burgeoning war machine. The village was pounded with high-explosive and incendiary bombs for over three hours. Sixteen hundred civilians were killed or wounded. This painting was Picasso's protest at the atrocity.

Spanish people, by the strength of Spanish democracy. 'Had Spain been left to herself,' reported an eminent reporter of *The Times* on the spot on 7 January 1937, 'the war would have been over long ago.'

“Spanish democracy held its own against all that European fascism could mobilise against it for nearly three years, as long almost as, say, the Americans were involved in the Second World War”

Spanish courage and Spanish endurance did all that could be expected of them. Even the fearful internal divisions within the

ranks of the defenders of Spanish democracy, which George Orwell and others chronicled with such pitiless objectivity, could not destroy the cause. Spain was betrayed in London and in the most respectable accents of Sir Anthony Eden. 'The British Government was throughout the real inspiration of non-intervention' wrote Hugh Thomas in his classic history of the war.

Some of us, piecing together the evidence available from many quarters, tried to say as much in 1936 and 1937. Spanish democracy held its own against all that European fascism could mobilise against it for nearly three years, as long almost as, say, the Americans were involved in the Second World War. Madrid was held by the democratic forces all through the period of the fascist conquest of Austria and the Munich sell-out, right up to 1939 when Dr

Negrin's duly-elected Government was at last forced to surrender to the fascist onslaught without a whimper of protest from official circles in London.

I recall that time quite well, partly because some of us participated in the last by-election conducted in Britain before the actual outbreak of war. It took place in North Cornwall in 1939, and the Conservative candidate plastered the hoardings with the poster: "YOU ARE READING THIS IN PEACE BECAUSE YOU LIVE UNDER A NATIONAL GOVERNMENT". It was all part of the campaign against the socialist (or Liberal) warmongers who had wanted to send aid to Spain, and the posters were still there, slightly tattered, when war came to Britain on 3 September 1939.

Michael Foot was Leader of the Labour Party from 1980 to 1983.

richard rosser

Now is the Winter of Our Discontent?

The collapse of the Social Contract and pay restraint in the face of cuts in public expenditure and continuing, though falling, high levels of inflation resulted in a parting of the ways between the trade unions and the Labour Government culminating in the so called 1978 to 1979 'Winter of Discontent'.

The 1978 TUC and Labour Party Conferences rejected the Government's desired new pay norm of 5 per cent, rejected wage restraint and voted for a return to free collective bargaining. Industrial action by car workers, bakers, and lorry and tanker drivers followed that Autumn, and the new year saw strike action by train drivers and public sector workers, including ambulance staff and those involved in water and sewer-

age, and refuse collection and disposal. The trade unions did not feel able – some say willing – to try and look beyond the next pay round to the likely longer term consequences of their actions for both their members and trade unionism.

On 28 March 1979 the Government, under increasingly heavy pressure and already dependent on the support of other parties in the Commons to survive, lost a motion of no confidence by one vote. The General Election result on 3 May 1979 was the inevitable outcome. A Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher was returned, and with it the end of the consensus politics of the post war era, and the beginning, among other things, of a sustained assault on trade unions. An assault made so much easier for the incoming Government by the public's

perception of trade unions being at an all time low following the 'Winter of Discontent'. Warnings had previously been given. In 1976 Tom Bradley MP attended the Trades Union Congress as Chairman of the Labour Party. In his speech he told delegates that the only alternative to Labour 'was not a gentle reforming Conservative administration of the centre, or a rent-a-crowd revolution on the streets, but the most right-wing reactionary Government we have seen in our lifetime'. Certainly the Labour Party paid a heavy price for the 1979 General Election defeat and the events surrounding it, but so too did the trade unions as they were marginalized and side-lined, with membership falling by 40 per cent, during the resultant 18 years of continuous Conservative Government.

Recriminations over re-

sponsibility for the 1979 defeat widened divisions and the Left tightened their grip. It was not until Neil Kinnock was elected Leader after the 1983 General Election debacle, with its infamous Labour manifesto, that the long and tortuous process began of restoring political credibility and with it the prospect of electoral success.

Is the position today similar to 1979? In some respects 'yes', in others 'no'. The economy is much stronger in 2003 than it was in the winter of 1978 to 1979. Unemployment is low, inflation is low, mortgage rates are low, pay has been increasing by more than the cost of living and we are not in hock to the International Monetary Fund and its conditions for providing credit. The Government has a decisive majority in the Commons, is not dependent on other parties for its survival, is not near the end of its current term of office, and is not vulnerable to being brought down by a vote of no confidence. It is unlikely that industrial action on a scale that could seriously harm the Government and the economy is about to occur.

On the other side of the coin, though, we are seeing an increasing strain in relations

between the Labour Government and the trade unions just as we did in the months leading up to the 1979 General Election. There seems to be an unwillingness in many quarters to recognise the considerable achievements of this Government, while pressing for further progress. The hard Left are finding their voice with calls for the Prime Minister, the Party's strongest electoral asset, to resign, and claims that there is no difference between this Government and a Conservative Government. The facts are not allowed to get in the way of the easy soundbite. New leaders of some trade unions appear committed to pushing the Labour Government well to the left and to reducing financial support if they do not get their own way. When it comes to extolling the real benefits this Government has delivered they behave like Trappist monks.

The primary cause of the current strain in relationships is not, as in 1979, pay restraint and reductions in public expenditure. This time it is the role of the private sector in the provision of public services, not least the health service, and the Government's approach to reform of the public services generally. Other issues

get thrown in as well to stoke up the fire such as the war with Iraq, the reduction in occupational pension schemes, the remuneration packages of company directors and the decline in jobs in the manufacturing industry.

A divided Party is a weakened Party. Parties that are split do not normally win General Elections. The danger of the present situation, if it worsens, is that it may give the public a clear impression that the Government is isolated, under attack from all quarters and losing its grip, and particularly so if the tension appears not just to be with the trade unions but also with the Labour Party itself. However the difficult relationship with some trade union leaders will only appear to be a damaging split from the Government's point of view if, through its words and actions, it gives the message, as happened in 1979, that the support of the trade unions for key policy objectives is crucial. It is unlikely that the Prime Minister has any intention of giving such a message.

Unfortunately, trade unions now represent well under a third of the workforce, significantly less than they did in 1979. The opinion polls continue to suggest a remarkably high level of support for a

Government at the mid point of its second term of office. Against this background it would be surprising if the Prime Minister considered that the more voluble and antagonistic trade union leaders represented the views of the majority of people at work. The Government does in any case give greater emphasis to addressing the concerns and aspirations of the consumers of public services than to the producers if there is a conflict between the two, and producers in one public service are consumers in the others.

But we cannot afford to relax. There is real intensity in the bitterness towards the Government and the Prime Minister from within the ranks of the hard Left in the trade unions. A replay of the disastrous political outcome of the 'Winter of Discontent' will only become a threat if the voices of moderation and reason within the trade unions are drowned out. Drowned out either through complacency or through being denied the oxygen of media coverage so readily given to the disaffected who can scarcely bring themselves to say or write a good word about the Government. If the trade union message for the next two years is almost exclusively negative, and little dif-

ferent in its general thrust from that of the Conservatives and their supporters, it will have a cumulative adverse impact on the attitude of trade union members in particular, and voters in general, towards the Government at the next Election. That will not only be bad news for the Government but also for the trade unions. Nearly all the legislation helpful to people at work, and to their trade unions, has been passed by Labour Governments, including this one, whilst Conservative Government legislation has been hostile. A change of Government will mean trade unions being marginalised, the repeal of as much as possible of this Government's legislation beneficial to working people, major cuts in investment in our public services, and a real struggle for unions to retain even existing levels of membership. As 1979 should have taught us, a return to internal confrontation and division offers nothing more than a fast track return to the helplessness of Opposition.

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The D Notice Affair

lewis baston

finds a modern parallel in a scandal from Labour's past

The confrontation began one morning in February with a journalist coming forward with a story, and the government reacting with blind fury. The ingredients were explosive – a media-conscious Prime Minister, a controversial journalist in the spotlight, ‘intelligence’, contacts between civil servants and the media, and a source within the defence establishment who was the target of a spin operation. Was this in 2003? No, 1967.

The affair began with an article on the front page of the *Daily Express* by Chapman Pincher. The *Express* at that time had a place in Labour government demonology roughly equivalent to the *Today* programme now: an arrogant, confrontational opponent. Pincher was particularly unpopular in Downing Street for a series of stories attacking defence cutbacks, the sources

for which were often leaks from service chiefs and what is rather oddly known as the ‘intelligence community’. Pincher had been an irritant for some time, and when on 21 February he published a story alleging that the security services routinely monitored every single overseas cable and telegram (a practice anticipating the powers under the current Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act over email). Harold Wilson, and the government in general, exploded in wrath against Pincher – they felt their opponents had finally overstepped the mark and an example was to be made of the journalist involved. Against all advice, he stood up in Parliament and accused the *Express* of recklessly putting lives at risk

The problem with Pincher's story was not so much its accuracy but the fact that it appeared at all. The Ministry of Defence had what were called ‘D Notices’ (D for ‘Defence’),

an informal system whereby publication of sensitive stories would be banned by agreement of a committee of senior journalists and MoD officers. In practice, journalists like Pincher who often worked in this area would inform the secretary of the D Notice committee about their stories and ask if they breached any D Notices. In 1967 the secretary was a retired Colonel, ‘Sammy’ Lohan, who shared many of Pincher's political and defence views and was a frequent lunch partner. Lohan at first told Pincher that the cables story was not under any D Notice, then that it was, and then again that it was not, but that he was under strong political pressure not to allow it to appear. Pincher went ahead, but not before an attempt by Foreign Secretary George Brown, never at his best late in the evening, to intervene with the *Express*'s proprietor (who may well have been willing to suppress the story but could

not understand what Brown was driving at).

A quick inquiry was ordered into the circumstances of the *Express* story and took evidence from the leading figures at the newspaper and several departments of the government. It was chaired by Lord Radcliffe, an august judge without whose imprint no official report in the 1950s or 1960s could be considered complete, flanked by Manny Shinwell for Labour and Selwyn Lloyd for the Conservatives. The Radcliffe Report published in June acquitted Pincher of breaching a D Notice and implicitly rejected the evidence of the Foreign Secretary and other Whitehall witnesses. It found that the Ministry of Defence had, on instructions from the Foreign Office, lied to the press. While this would now probably be considered a resigning matter for someone in Brown's position, the Wilson government took the extraordinary step of

rejecting the *Radcliffe Report* and publishing its own White Paper upholding its position. This action impressed nobody outside the civil service, for whom Wilson had taken a heavy political risk, and the whole affair caused serious damage to the government's relations not only with the *Express* but also with most of the press.

Wilson's behaviour over the D Notice affair baffled many of his colleagues. Richard Crossman and Barbara Castle agreed that 'he's gone off his rocker.' Wilson seemed, in the spring of 1967, to be obsessed by the business and devoted hours of attention to its intricacies at the expense of other pressing matters – such as the situation in the Middle East that culminated in the June 1967 Six Day War. The decision to reject Radcliffe and issue a White Paper was sprung on a surprised Cabinet at the last minute, probably because Wilson knew that they would consider it bad politics. The principal tactic used in defending the government's actions in June was to smear Colonel Lohan, and Wilson's dubious intelligence sidekick George Wigg assembled the evidence. As he wound up the debate on the White Paper, without a chance for any rebuttal, Wilson announced that

Lohan had been a major source of leaks to Pincher and that the previous Tory government had been worried about their relationship.

The Wilson government acted much more roughly over D Notices than the Blair government has done over the dossier reports it disliked, and with less reason. Pincher was a conscientious journalist who had a solid story and had taken trouble to check it with the D Notice authorities. However, in dealing with Pincher's original story, there was a knowing release of false information from Whitehall press offices. Then Lohan was publicly branded as incompetent and biased, accused of numerous character flaws and forced out of his position. Wilson then topped it all by rejecting the official report he had commissioned and using a late night speech in the ensuing debate to blacken Lohan's name still further. There were no ministerial resignations, or even serious calls for any. Neither did Wilson feel any need to apologise – except, apparently, ten years later in a private conversation with Pincher. It can hardly be said that there was a golden age of high standards from which current events reveal a disturbing slide. It is interesting to wonder what might have happened if Lohan had com-

mitted suicide under the barrage he sustained.

There is, however, a case for understanding if not excusing Wilson's behaviour. Large elements of the defence and security establishment had not reconciled themselves to the fact that Labour was in government and Wilson felt uncomfortable at not being truly in the driving seat as far as these people were concerned. As we now know, some even went as far as to plot against him in the 1970s, but in 1967 Lohan seemed a particularly flagrant case. He had strong right wing views, he was a heavy drinker, there was confusion in Whitehall about whether he himself had been properly vetted for the job, and he moved in the same social circles as journalists like Pincher and former Tory ministers. Wilson also had evidence, thanks to a double agent of his own in the form of Tory MP Henry Kerby, that Lohan was briefing Tory MPs on how to frame parliamentary questions, and passing on scandalous gossip about ministers' sex lives. While Lohan may have been innocent of passing on classified information, he was hardly the man to be protecting the Wilson government's interests with the press. It is true

of Wilson, as in the old adage, that just because you're paranoid it doesn't mean they're not out to get you.

The D Notice affair at the time excited little public interest, despite the arguments among politicians and journalists. The bad feeling between Wilson and the media lingered on. According to Henry James, a Downing Street press officer at the time, 'the D Notice affair was the turning point. From then on, he wasn't taken seriously – an air of cynicism entered. It made my job harder.' After having an unnaturally good press since he became Leader of the Opposition in 1963, Wilson had an unfairly critical press afterwards. While few among the electorate could recall the D Notice affair by the time of the next election in 1970, many could remember the 1967–69 series of humiliating retreats and reversals, from devaluation to *In Place of Strife*, all covered in loving detail by the media. D Notices as such might not have changed anyone's vote, but the affair did nothing but damage to Wilson.

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nathan yeowell

Judith Hart

Labour's Forgotten *Grande Dame*

Dame Judith Hart is something of an unknown figure to most on the Left. Unlike her fellow Labour MPs Barbara Castle and Jennie Lee, she does not occupy a prominent place in the consciousness of the political classes. Neither *fêted* as the 'Red Queen' of Labour politics nor respected as the spouse and sparring partner of one of the Party's greatest heroes, Judith nonetheless deserves recognition as one of the most important female politicians to grace the Labour benches during the post-war period. From the height of her influence in the 1970s, her legacy has affected the Labour Party, for good or ill, for twenty-five years.

Judith Hart was a prominent player in the Party dramas played out under Harold Wilson and James Callaghan between 1964 and 1979. Indeed, she was one of only three female MPs to be appointed to the Cabinet by Wilson or Callaghan along with Barbara Castle and Shirley Williams.

This said, her tenure in Cabinet was short and inglorious. A junior Minister and key ally of Wilson's after 1964, he appointed her to the non-departmental post of Paymaster General in October 1969, with responsibility for, amongst other things, the presentation and co-ordination of Government policy. She was relegated from the Cabinet in October 1969 for having turned against her benefactor

and adopting a *bullish stance in opposition to In Place of Strife* – a stand that prompted Wilson, in private at least, to lambast her as 'a prattling woman' better suited to life as a PPS or junior Minister.¹

Her consolation was the Overseas Development Ministry (ODM). Although technically a demotion, the move gave Judith operational control of the department; it also provided her with a political vocation for the remainder of her public life.

Judith's first stint at the ODM changed her position on the British political stage, recasting her as the champion of the Third World within the Labour Party. The views she formulated in office and in Opposition after 1970, shaped the Party's attitude to development issues

long after she ceased to have any formal responsibility for the policy in 1979.

In her 1973 book *Aid and Liberation*, she claimed that the subject 'of world poverty, of how the rich countries can and should assist the Third World, of the continuing role of imperialism has been softly cocooned in liberal good intentions, free from the informed criticism, the cold political analysis which is taken for granted in every other substantial field of government spending and government policies.' She saw the fight against poverty in the developing world as synonymous with the fight for greater justice and equality at home, declaring that in 'whatever society we may live, economic injustice, and the poverty

which is its consequence, is the universal enemy.’

She followed this dictum religiously. She fought tirelessly within Whitehall after 1974 for more money for her department, converting the existing policy of providing interest-free loans into one of outright grants for the poorest developing countries. Her greatest achievement was the Lomé Convention of 1975, which revolutionised the EEC’s development policy. The Convention – which Judith negotiated as part of the Wilson Government’s wider renegotiation of Britain’s EEC membership – covered trade, aid and co-operation between the Community and 46 developing countries, many of them former colonies. Such was her commitment that she did not allow her well-known political hostility to the EEC to cloud her sense of purpose.

The department missed Judith’s drive and ideological commitment for nearly twenty years after her final departure in 1979. Not until Clare Short was installed at the re-constituted Department of International Development in 1997 was Judith’s inheritance properly invested, whilst her views on debt relief finally saw fruition in the Jubilee 2000 campaign.

For fourteen years, starting in 1969, Judith was also a member of the Women’s Section of the Labour Party NEC. Throughout this period her political leanings were carefully attuned to – and helped prompt – the leftward shift of the Party’s activist base.

A longtime devotee of left-wing causes – she had form

In December 1971, Judith became Chairman of the NEC’s newly formed Public Sector Group. In the words of one chronicler of the rise of the Left in the 1970s, the Group ‘became the principal engine for driving the party into examining wider areas for public ownership.’²

Judith identified herself with the Group without try-

gled layers of policy-making machinery.’³

The Group helped form the ‘25 Companies’ policy which would have seen a Labour Government nationalise the 25 most profitable companies on the London Stock Exchange. Although the policy was adopted by the Party in 1973 and found a place in the February 1974 manifesto, it was never put into practice, the victim of the ideological battle between the existing mixed economy and the Left’s desire for a more socialistic economic system. The policy also suffered because of its close identification with Tony Benn, the emerging prophet of the Left within the Party. With the triumph of the Left after 1979, the underpinnings of the policy were resuscitated and formed the basis of the Alternative Economic Strategy which Labour advocated during the disastrous general election of 1983 – a strategy to which Judith gave her wholehearted support.

In the early 1970s she formed strong relationships with the socialist regime in Chile and remained one of its most committed supporters after the assassination of President Allende and the imposition of the Pinochet

‘The key to understanding Judith Hart is her now unfashionable commitment to socialism – be it practised at home or abroad. This was allied to a sense of duty: to the working class in Britain; to the poverty stricken millions in the Third World; to her persecuted socialist brethren in Chile.’

as a campaigner for nuclear disarmament and proved to be a thorn in Wilson’s side during his dealings with Ian Smith following Rhodesia’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965 – Judith placed herself at the vanguard of the Left as it groped towards a programme of more full-blooded socialism after the defeat of 1970.

ing to dominate its proceedings, allowing others, like the economists Lord Balogh and Stuart Holland, and the future Labour luminaries Tony Banks and Margaret Jackson (now Beckett), to contribute and formulate policy. Nonetheless she proved ‘instrumental in getting ideas off the ground and in pushing them through the tan-

regime in 1973. Judith became a lifelong friend of Madame Allende, becoming Labour's most vigorous anti-Pinochet torch-bearer until her own death in 1991 – the same year in which she was awarded the Chilean Order of Merit.

Judith's public persona as a tribune of the Left gained her another accolade – that of boogey in the right-wing press. On top of her affiliations with Chile, in the early 1980s she courted criticism for her vocal opposition to the Falklands War – and also to her own party line, which proved to be politically damaging considering that she was, at the time, its Chairman.

It is arguable that she deserves reprimanding for being one of the early architects of the hard-Left, a midwife of the Party's bout of schizophrenia in the early 1980s; yet this is a charge that can be levelled at many others too. In her defence, Judith moved away from the emerging hard-Left, acting as a bulwark of Michael Foot's leadership and voting for John Silkin, as opposed to her old friend Benn, in the caustic Deputy Leadership election of 1981.

One of the principal reasons for Judith's relative obscurity today is the inability to easily pigeonhole her.

Commenting after her death in 1991, Barbara Castle (with whom she did not always enjoy the most harmonious of relationships) claimed that Judith was 'dynamic, physically attractive, courageous and challenging.' Writing in his MP's Chart for 1980, Andrew Roth concurred, stating, again, that she was dynamic and ration-



Judith Hart at an Overseas Development press conference in August 1974

al but at the same 'plot-sensitive' and an 'egoist.'

Her obituary in *The Times* proved to be equally arch, attributing to her a 'grandness of manner and keen sense of position [that] seemed at times inappropriate for the representative of Strathclyde industrial workers.'⁴ There was also widespread surprise and not a little derision when

Judith – in the words of Tony Benn 'a violent anti-colonialist'⁵ – accepted Callaghan's nomination of the DBE in his resignation honours list in 1979.

And yet, Judith had previously resigned from the Government on a point of principle. Her sense of duty to the cause of social egalitarianism led her to resign in

June 1975 following Wilson's decision to move her on from the ODM in the aftermath of the EEC Referendum and the Government's failure to bring greater swathes of British industry under public ownership. In her resignation statement to the House of Commons (which was echoed, nearly thirty years later, by her succes-

sor at International Development), Judith cited her fear that the Government was 'witnessing the first dangerous stages of what could prove to be a historic catastrophe for the Labour Party and the Labour movement.'⁶ She felt that she could do more to further the aspirations of the Labour movement from the backbenches, harrying the Government not to sacrifice the industrial policies she had helped forge.

The key to understanding Judith Hart is her now unfashionable commitment to socialism – be it practised at home or abroad. This was allied to a sense of duty: to the working class in Britain; to the poverty stricken millions in the Third World; to her persecuted socialist brethren in Chile. It was this sense of duty to which she devoted her life – improving the lot of untold millions in Britain and across the developing world.

- 1 Tony Benn, *Office Without Power, Diaries 1968–72*, Hutchinson, London 1988, p. 193.
- 2 Michael Hatfield, *The House the Left Built*, Victor Gollancz Ltd, London 1978, p. 88.
- 3 *Ibid*, p. 90.
- 4 *The Times*, 9 December 1991.
- 5 Tony Benn, *Conflicts of Interest, Diaries 1977–80*, Hutchinson, London 1990, p. 512.
- 6 *Hansard*, 5th Series, 11 June 1975

Nathan Jeowell is a political researcher for the BBC.

Obituaries



Tom Jackson

ANNE PERKINS

In 1971, the extrovert Yorkshireman Tom Jackson, who has died aged 78, led the first national post office workers' strike. In the days when trade union leaders were household names, Jackson, general secretary of what became the Union of Communications Workers (from 1967 to 1982) was a huge figure.

He was instantly identifiable by his flamboyant handlebar moustache and, unafraid of attacking fellow union leaders, robustly expressed support for pay restraint. He predicted that the break-up of the old GPO would lead to the privatisation of telecommunications.

Jackson was born in Leeds, one of four children brought up by his widowed mother in such a tough part of the city that when he applied to be-

come a post office telegraph boy at 14, they sent someone round to check if his family was respectable.

He had wanted to become a baker, but his family was determined he would have a job with a pension. When the GPO took him on, he was called up at the Jack Lane elementary school assembly, and everybody clapped.

He returned from wartime service in the Royal Navy (1943–46) to become a postman and, 18 months later, a sorter, but he was already involved in the affairs of what was then the Union of Post Office Workers (UPW). He was first elected to its executive council in 1955, seen then as a radical in a union with a long anti-Communist party tradition.

In 1964, he became the UPW's national officer, and in 1967 its general secretary, expected to shake up a large-ly invisible union at a time when Harold Wilson's Labour government was rapidly sinking in the esteem of its members.

Thus it was in 1971 that Jackson became the first UPW leader to call out all 230,000 members on national strike. It was the time of the attempt by Edward Heath's Conservative govern-

ment to introduce anti-union legislation, but Jackson, then and later, was insistent that his quarrel - he wanted a 16 per cent pay increase - was with the Post Office, not the politicians.

Later, he was widely criticised for his decision to risk an all-out strike at a time when the government had staked its future on holding down pay, and put in a tough new boss at the Post Office. At the time, Jackson insisted it was the only option. His members wanted it - except the telephonists, who gave only partial support - and at a time of bitter hostility between public and unions, he felt it was invidious to leave some to bare the brunt of occasionally violent attacks. After seven weeks, the union was defeated and nearly bankrupt.

Jackson never quite recovered from the blow to his authority and - as union activists drifted leftwards - he came to be regarded as a rightwinger in an increasingly polarised labour movement. He became embroiled in some bitter internal disputes, including, after criticising the miners for politicising their industrial relations, a threat to depose him. He survived with an emotional speech in which he declared: 'The whole of my life since I left the navy has

been devoted to the interests of the postal workers.'

As the era of Margaret Thatcher's premiership dawned in 1979, Jackson found himself defending not only the integrity of the GPO, but also the Post Office's monopoly against the industry secretary Sir Keith Joseph. He won that battle, but his attempt to prevent the privatisation of British Telecom was doomed.

Jackson had to have an eye removed in 1979 and, in 1983, after nearly 16 years in the top job, he decided to take early retirement. Quoting Dorothy Parker in his valedictory conference address, he said, 'Don't think it hasn't been fun, because it hasn't been.' But, despite the internal wrangling, the man who always described himself as 'just a postman in a suit' was held in great affection by the great majority of his membership. They saw him as their first leader to raise their standing in public esteem.

A member of the TUC general council from 1967 to 1982, he was its chairman from 1978 to 1979, and chaired its international committee from 1978 to 1982.

He and Norma Burrow, his wife of 33 years, divorced in 1982. When he retired, still only 57, he and his second wife, Kate Tognarelli – an English teacher – set up a

mail-order, antiquarian and second-hand book business at a terraced house in Ilkley, near his birthplace. Kate survives him, as do two daughters, one from each of his marriages.

Thomas Jackson, trade unionist, born 9 April 1925; died 6 June 2003.

Anne Perkins is a journalist and author of Red Queen the authorised biography of Barbara Castle, Macmillan, £20.00



Hartley Shawcross

LEWIS BASTON

Sir Hartley Shawcross is often remembered, thanks to a clever invention by Bernard Levin in the 1950s, as 'Sir Shortly Floorcross' because of his tenuous moorings in the Labour Party. He never actually physically crossed the floor of the House of Commons, but he became alienated from

the Labour Party during the latter half of his long and productive life.

He was born on 4 February 1902 in Giessen, Germany, where his father John Shawcross was in post as Professor of English Literature. Hartley was among the first individual members of the Labour Party. He canvassed in Wandsworth during the 1918 general election and served as ward secretary while at Dulwich College and as election agent for Lewis Silkin in 1922. He acted as interpreter for the British delegation to the first post-war meeting of the Socialist International in Geneva, and was persuaded by Herbert Morrison to start a legal career to facilitate his political ambitions. His first career was as a barrister; he trained at Gray's Inn, was called to the Bar in 1925, and appeared in celebrated cases such as the Gresford Colliery disaster inquiry in 1934 and several murder cases, taking Silk in 1939. He married Alberta Shyvers in 1924, although their life together was blighted by her ill health. She died in 1943. He married his second wife, Joan Mather, in 1944, and they had three children, including the journalist William Shawcross.

He was knighted in 1945, and was approached by both

Labour and the Conservatives to stand in the post-war election. He accepted the Labour nomination for the safe seat of St Helens, Lancashire – Labour in every election since 1918 except 1931 – which he duly won in July 1945 and represented until his resignation in 1958. His brother Christopher won Widnes.

Shawcross's Labour career was a singular product of the hope and idealism that surrounded the victory of 1945; he was angered by the gap between wealth and poverty and impatient at the inefficiency and even corruption he encountered in private business, and had faith that Labour could do something about it. His legal expertise made him the obvious choice for Attorney General when the Attlee government was formed. Among his responsibilities was acting as the British prosecuting counsel at the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal, which was the most notable episode of his legal career. He has retained an interest in international and human rights law, which he played an important part in developing at Nuremberg.

As a front-bench speaker in the Commons, Shawcross spoke in the forceful style of the law courts, which occasionally got him into trouble.

He is much quoted as having boasted in 1946 that 'We are the Masters now', when introducing the bill repealing the 1927 Trade Union Act, but like many such oft-cited remarks it is recorded inaccurately: he actually said that 'We are the masters at the moment', in response to a challenge from Churchill.

Shawcross occasionally prosecuted criminal cases as Attorney General, including William 'Lord Haw-Haw' Joyce and Haigh, the acid bath murderer, but his role in the Lynskey Tribunal of 1948 into allegations of corruption at the Board of Trade was most notable. His questioning of the accused minister, John Belcher, was brutal, although he made little headway with the confidence trickster Sidney Stanley. Shawcross, with Attlee very much behind him, enforced the puritanical standards of conduct expected in the Labour government of 1945–51.

After the resignation of Nye Bevan, Shawcross enjoyed a brief period in the Cabinet, as President of the Board of Trade from 24 April 1951. He had hoped to be appointed Foreign Secretary after Bevin, but Morrison took on the post instead to the detriment of his historical reputation. He started work on ending Resale Price Maintenance but left the Board of Trade before it could be accomplished.

In the party civil wars of the 1950s Shawcross was a partisan of the right wing, and was regarded by some commentators as a potential

leader, but he was increasingly discontented with party politics and although a regular speaker at Labour weekend meetings he was an irregular attender in the House of Commons.

In 1959 he took up a position on the cross-benches in the House of Lords; he allowed his Labour Party membership to lapse. Never an admirer of Harold Wilson, Shawcross became highly critical of the record of the Labour government in 1964–70 and was reported as calling for Wilson's resignation in January 1968. Shawcross suffered a cruel loss in January 1974, when his wife was killed in a riding accident. After 1974 he continued City and commercial activities on a modest level, including being Chairman of Thames Television and running the City panel which investigated takeovers. He intervened occasionally in the Lords, including helping to impede the passage of the War Crimes Act in 1991. In 1995 he published his memoirs, *Life Sentence* (London: Constable). Although an important minister in the Labour government of 1945–51, the political career of Sir Hartley Shawcross was rather an interlude between the Bar and business.

Lord Shawcross of Friston, politician and barrister, born 4 February 1902; died 10 July 2003.

Lewis Baston is co-author of The Political Map of Britain, Politico's, £30.00

LORD GLADWIN OF CLEE

Derek Gladwin died on 10 April 2003, aged 72. He was Regional Secretary (Southern Region) for the General and Municipal Workers' Union (GMWU) 1970–90 and Chairman of the Labour Party's Conference Arrangements Committee 1974–90. He worked for the GMWU as a Regional Officer 1956–63 and National Industrial Officer 1963–70. He was a member of the board of the Post Office 1972–94 and of British Aerospace 1977–91. He served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Industrial Society 1968–91, of the Employment Appeal Tribunal 1992–2002, of the Board of Trustees of the British Diabetics Association (later Diabetes UK) 1995–2001, and of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body from 1998. He was a Visiting Fellow at Nuffield College, Oxford 1978–86, and Chairman of the Governing Council 1979–99 and Honorary President from 2000 of Ruskin College, Oxford. He was appointed a Justice of the Peace in Surrey in 1969, made an OBE in 1977, a CBE in 1979 and created a life peer in 1994.

EDDIE LOYDEN

Eddie Loyden died on 27 April 2003, aged 79. He was Labour MP for Liverpool Garston 1974–79 and 1983–97. He became a shop steward for Transport and General Workers' Union in 1954, a Branch Chairman in 1959, a member of its District Committee for Docks and Waterways 1967 and of its National Committee in 1968. He was President of Liverpool Trades Council in 1967 and of Merseyside Trades Council in 1974. He served as a member of Liverpool City Council from 1960 (and as its Deputy Leader in 1983), of Liverpool District Council from 1973, of Merseyside Metropolitan County Council from 1973 and of Liverpool Metropolitan District Council 1980–83. He was a member of the Parliamentary Labour Party's Transport, Foreign Affairs and Health Committees 1983–97.

PAUL DAISLEY

Paul Daisley died on 18 June 2003, aged 44. He had been Labour MP for Brent East since 2001, succeeding Ken Livingstone. He served on Brent Borough Council from 1990 and was its Leader from 1996–2001. A member of MSE, he was a Branch Secretary for ASTMS 1979–84.

LORD MILNER OF LEEDS

Arthur Milner died on 20 August, aged 79. A Labour hereditary peer, he was elected to remain as one of the 92 hereditary peers following the House of Lords Act 1999. He served in the reserve and auxiliary Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1952, reaching the rank of Flight Lieutenant and was awarded the Air Efficiency Award in 1952. Admitted as a solicitor, he was a partner and from 1988 a consultant with Gregory, Rowcliffe & Milners (formerly Milners, Curry & Gaskell) Solicitors. He served as an Opposition Whip 1971–74, a member of the Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills 1982–92 and of the Select Committees on Private Bills 1990–96. He is succeeded in the peerage by his son Richard.

Matthew Seward

BOOK REVIEWS

The Uncollected Michael Foot

edited by Brian Brivati
Politico's Publishing £20.00
JAYANT CHAVDA

Who is the real Michael Foot? It is a reasonable question to ask because he has excelled in an astonishingly wide range of fields during the course of seventy years in public life: journalism, politics, literary criticism, campaigning, biography and oratory. Foot's reluctance to write an autobiography has meant that we have had to turn to his essays to discover his inner life and the forces that have motivated his work. His writings lead us to conclude that he is a romantic, devoted to the radical ideals of the Enlightenment like his many political and literary heroes, but also an internationalist and, through the influence of his late wife, Jill Craigie, a strong feminist.

It is also clear from reading the essays that the many facets of Michael Foot form a remarkably coherent whole. For in his writings Foot brings the clarity of a journalist, the pragmatism of a politician, the single-mindedness of a campaigner, the devotion of a biographer and the passion of an orator to

bear in his judgements on public affairs and political and literary figures.

Foot's latest collection of essays – like its predecessors, *Debts of Honour* (1980) *Another Heart and Other Pulses* (1984) and *Loyalists and Loners* (1986) – is a wonderful testimony to his wide reading and interests. There are pieces on figures as diverse as Montaigne, C. L. R. James, Jack Jones, Mikhail Gorbachev and Salman Rushdie – and on subjects as important as weapons of mass destruction, the Balkans conflict, and poverty in India. All of them are characterised by a generosity of spirit; a global perspective; and a belief in the power of words and ideas to bring about progressive change.

Foot is especially good when he is reviving the reputation of left wing figures such as George Lansbury and Harold Laski. He also manages to vindicate Aneurin Bevan, yet again, in his otherwise complimentary review of Denis Healey's autobiography, *The Time of My Life*.

In the past Foot has paid fulsome tributes to some unlikely figures – Disraeli, Beaverbrook and Enoch Powell to name but three – and in this collection he continues that tradition with his

essay on Conor Cruise O'Brien's biography of Edmund Burke. But this tribute is perhaps not so surprising as Foot's greatest hero, Hazlitt, was also an ardent admirer of Burke.

Elsewhere we get beautifully evocative writing on the places that were closest to his and Jill Craigie's heart – Venice, Dubrovnik and, of course, Hampstead. We also get to read an amusing account on the virtues of dogs in which Foot ponders how the history of mankind and womankind would have differed if the human race had acquired the canine gift for forgiveness.

Brian Brivati, who edited this volume, notes in his excellent introduction that Foot's writing is underpinned by politics, passion and poetry. He is right but there is something else which suffuses Michael Foot in all his guises and that is a secular humanism. It is a humanism, which goes beyond the confines of party politics and the world of letters, and reaches out to people irrespective of their race, gender, religion, class or political affiliation. Michael Foot is an extraordinary man and we should all celebrate that he is still going strong at 90.

T. H. Green and the development of Ethical Socialism

Matt Carter
Imprint Academic £25.00

PAUL RICHARDS

Politicians come and go. Reshuffles and resignations, sackings and scandals: they are, in Robin Day's cutting phrase, 'here today, and gone tomorrow.' What matters, and makes the difference in politics, is something which rarely bothers the *Guardian* or BBC: ideas. Ideas are what

change the world, politicians merely the agents. An important new book *T. H. Green and the Development of Ethical Socialism* makes the link between the philosophical debates of the late-Victorian era and today's politics. Author Matt Carter's starting point is TH Green, the idealist thinker, who challenged the prevalent views of Liberal *laissez-faire*. Green and his contemporaries developed four notions which would change politics: the common good, a positive view of freedom, equality of opportunity, and a

greater role for the state. Dr Carter looks at the influence of T. H. Green on R. H. Tawney, the early Fabians, the Christian socialists, and in the final pages, on New Labour.

Matt Carter is assistant general secretary of the Labour Party, and a former lecturer and parliamentary candidate in the Vale of York. His first book in 1997, jointly with Tony Wright MP, was a coffee-table celebration of the 'People's Party'. His latest book could not be more different. It is a serious read, richly annotated with foot-

notes and packed with new research. This is not a book to pack in your holiday suitcase – it takes time to read and comprehend. But the effort is worth it. Without exploration of political ideas and their provenance, we will be unable to fashion solutions to the problems of our own age. It is only at the end of epochs that the true importance of certain ideas is revealed. As Dr John Reid said at the book's launch, quoting Hegel: 'The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk.'

MacDonald's Party

David Howell
Oxford £55.00

NATHAN YEOWELL

For members of the Labour Party, the name of Ramsay MacDonald has long been a by-word for failure and treachery. After leading the Party into government twice during the 1920s, MacDonald was seduced by 'the establishment' abandoning Labour in order to head up a National Coalition which was little more than a front for the Conservative Party. The great betrayal of 1931 has cast a long shadow over the reputations of both MacDonald and

the Labour Party of the 1920s. Although efforts have been made to rehabilitate MacDonald and provide an objective account of his time as Labour leader – most prominently David Marquand's 1977 study, *Ramsay MacDonald – the history of the contemporary party* has received scant consideration since the appearance of Ross McKibbin's *The Ideologies of Class* in 1990.

The publication of David Howell's *MacDonald's Party: Labour Identities and Crisis, 1922–1931* (Oxford, 2002), goes a long way to rectifying this. Howell pays meticulous attention to the various forces and pressure groups that made

up the Labour Party: the trade unions, the Left-wing intelligentsia, and the occasionally wilful brethren of the ILP.

In emphasising the political trajectory of such middle-class socialists as Arthur Ponsonby and Sir Charles Trevelyan, Howell refutes the claim, made fashionable by the late Lord Jenkins, that the emergence of a viable and autonomous Labour Party fundamentally weakened the progressive coalition forged by the Liberal Party and ushered in a prolonged period of Conservative dominance. Howell shows that the Labour Party of the 1920s became the natural standard bearer for this coalition. In the age of

mass democracy, Liberalism was a busted flush; MacDonald took advantage of this – in a move echoed by Tony Blair seventy years later – by celebrating the moderation of the Labour Party. This move was MacDonald's real legacy to the Labour Party: the creation of a broader based party, the initial 'broad church' which sustained it for the remainder of the Twentieth Century. It is to Howell's credit that he has re-evaluated this most benighted period of Labour history. Without the advances made under MacDonald, the successes of 1945 and beyond would have proved to have been an even greater struggle.

Orwell

D. J. Taylor

Chatto and Windus £20.00

PETER CLARK

When I was a teenager, George Orwell's writings were a revelation. His clarity, his values, his very words became part of my own intellectual furniture. His quixotic socialism, questioning, undogmatic, rooted in an English heritage, was attractive. His social commentaries, intellectual curiosity and critical acumen – whether applied to Charles Dickens, the art of Donald McGill or boys' weeklies – appealed to a culture-hungry adolescent in revolt against a conservative suburban environment. I devoured all the novels, and I am aware, decades later, how decisively he shaped my mind. I am sure I am not alone.

His life also appealed: a disavowal of a privileged background, a disregard for his own health and comforts, a disorderly personal life and a total dedication to writing. All this is superbly illuminated by this latest biography by a similarly prolific critic, journalist and novelist, D. J. Taylor. It is a writer's biography, in contrast to the academic life by Bernard Crick

twenty years ago. Taylor has relied on extensive written and oral evidence, supplementing an apparently word-perfect knowledge with Orwell's works. He is totally familiar with the literary and cultural worlds of the second quarter of the twentieth century.

Throughout his life, Orwell was his own man. Taylor points out that Orwell was late in being politicised. Fighting in the Spanish Civil War launched him into politics, though what impelled him to such intense action still remains uncertain. And although his *Road to Wigan Pier* has been the most enduring volume of the Left Book Club, it was almost by chance that it became part of that series. He always gave the impression of being a caricature marginal hack, roll-your-own fag in the mouth, tapping away tirelessly at a typewriter, living impractically from hand to mouth in underheated rented rooms. He was an Etonian by default, we were led to believe, getting there by scholarship and not by privilege. And yet despite his embracing of proletarian values it was the Etonian link that surfaces again and again. His fellow-Etonians, Cyril Connolly and Anthony



Powell, turn up to lend a hand, provide a contact or share a memory. It was an Etonian who facilitated his self-chosen exile to Jura. He was even reported, soon after adopting a son, to have wished to have his name put down for Eton.

Orwell continues to fascinate, a paradoxical character, not quite a "secular saint" but a versatile writer of works that will always challenge

and inspire. In his repeated reinvention of himself, he resembles a slightly older contemporary who also died in his mid-forties: T. E. Lawrence. In both cases, an excellent literary output seems to drag along a life, physically frail but with a quirky integrity.

D J Taylor has done justice to his subject: above all his book is well-written, a delight to read.

Blast from the Past

PA Photos



patricia hewitt on campaigning with Michael Foot

This is a great photograph, taken during the 1983 General Election campaign. At the time I was standing as the Labour candidate in Leicester East and Michael came up to campaign for me – and this was our battle bus. He was also the star speaker at a huge public rally we had for the city's three Labour candidates (Jim Marshall, Greville Janner and myself), and at an equally packed meeting in the heart of our Asian community – I remember this particularly because, after much practice, it

was the occasion at which I spoke Hindi in public for the first time.

I remember feeling optimistic for our prospects in Leicester in 1983, buoyed up by the tireless dedication of the many people working hard on the campaign, in Leicester and nationally. Michael Foot embodied that dedication and his support for me personally and his boundless energy to get out and campaign is something I will always remember with great fondness.

However, the terrible reality of the 1983 campaign was that we mistook the enthusiasm of our activists and most loyal supporters for

the views of the public as a whole. We were so busy debating amongst ourselves and winning the internal battle for a 'leftwing' manifesto that we lost sight of the people we thought we were there to represent. Labour lost Leicester East and lost badly in the country. It would be another 14 long years before Labour returned to power and, after working for Neil Kinnock in the 1980s and the voluntary and private sector in the 1990s, I was returned as MP for the next-door seat of Leicester West.

Patricia Hewitt is Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.



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and working for a better future*

Michael J Leahy
General Secretary

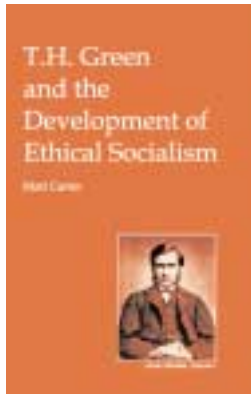
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T.H. Green and the Development of Ethical Socialism

Matt Carter

When Roy Hattersley was asked to explain the philosophical foundations of his socialism, the best he could answer was 'T.H. Green'. In this important new book, Matt Carter – a political philosopher who doubles up as Assistant General Secretary of the Labour Party – attempts to flesh out Hattersley's response, but in the process appropriates Green's idealist philosophy for the New Labour project.

'Ethical' socialism has been a pejorative term ever since 1884, when the Fabians split away from the Fellowship of the New Life. As Shaw put it, the Fabians wanted to 'organise the docks', whereas the ethical socialists were content to 'sit among the dandelions'. This book rejects this simplistic dichotomy and uncovers the influence of Green and the ethical socialists on the Labour Party through Cole, Haldane, Laski and Tawney. While Neil Kinnock and John Smith have acknowledged debts to ethical socialism, Tony Blair provides the best example of the link in this generation, primarily through the influence of the philosopher John Macmurray.

"Carter makes the link between the philosophical debates of the late Victorian era and today's politics." *Fabian Review*
"A good read for all those wanting to understand what makes New Labour tick." *The Guardian*



96 pp paperback
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The Last Prime Minister: Being Honest About the UK Presidency

Graham Allen MP

Echoing Gandhi's verdict on Western civilization, Graham Allen thinks the British constitution would be a very good idea. In *The Last Prime Minister* he showed the British people how they had acquired an executive presidency by stealth. It was the first-ever attempt to codify the Prime Minister's powers, many hidden in the mysteries of the royal prerogative. This timely new edition takes in new issues, including Parliament's constitutional impotence over Iraq.

Since the publication of the first edition the author has grown increasingly pessimistic over the continuing growth of unchecked executive power. Is the PM's appearance before Parliament's liaison committee a prelude to the Presidential press conference? The select committee recommendations have not been implemented and members are still appointed by the whips, while pre-legislative scrutiny has had little impact. It would appear that the turkeys are not going to vote for Christmas.

"Sharp, well-informed and truly alarming." Peter Hennessy
"Should be read by all interested in the constitution." Anthony King
"One of our most original constitutional thinkers." Andrew Marr

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