

# LABOUR *history*

Issue 2 • Spring 2004 • ISSN 1742-0067

*The journal of the Labour History Group*

UK £3.50 • US \$5.95

## Labour's Lord Chancellors

Ben Elton

*on the judicial giants of the left*

## Popping Down the Co-Op

Hazel Blears MP

*on lessons from the co-operators*

*Plus*

Tam Dalyell

*remembers Don Concannon*

Stuart Thompson

*reviews 'Red Queen'*

*and much more . . .*

Bernard Donoughue

John Greive Smith

Mike Yarwood

Jayant Chavda

*and Joe Haines*

*reassess the man  
in the Ganex mac*



# WILSON

The life and legacy of a Labour Prime Minister

### MA in POLITICAL COMMUNICATION, ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNING

Everyone is competing for public opinion - Government, businesses, campaigning groups, even the media themselves. Gaining the necessary skills and understanding the complexity of the contemporary political environment are at the heart of this new MA programme in Political Communication, Advocacy and Campaigning.

The course covers

- Local and national government, quangos and agencies, and the EU: how they really operate, and how to influence them effectively.
- All aspects of communications, media management, public relations, marketing and branding.
- The History of political communication, current trends, and future developments.
- Practical skills on everything from drafting a press release to developing an internal communications strategy, and from negotiating to documentary-making.

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.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

Please contact the Faculty's Admissions Office for further information:

Admissions Office (Postgraduate Courses),  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Kingston University,  
Penrhyn Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2EE.

Tel: 020 8547 8361/7378

Fax: 020 8547 7388

Email: [hspostgrad-info@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:hspostgrad-info@kingston.ac.uk)



Labour History  
is published by the Labour  
History Group.

**Patrons**

James Callaghan  
Michael Foot  
Neil Kinnock

**Editorial Advisory Board**

Kenneth O. Morgan  
Brian Brivati  
Kevin Jefferys  
Chris Wrigley  
Keith Laybourn  
Robert Pearce

ISSN 1742-0067

Editor: John Schwartz

**Advertisements**

To advertise in the  
next issue call  
John Schwartz  
on 07801 800 222

**Editorial**

Contributions to *Labour  
History* are invited.

*Labour History*  
is a refereed  
publication; all  
articles submitted  
will be reviewed and  
publication is not  
guaranteed.

Contributions should be  
emailed or posted  
to the address below.

All articles remain  
copyright © their authors.

**Subscription**

An annual subscription to  
*Labour History* costs £10.

Copies of *Labour History*  
are included  
in the membership  
fee for the Labour  
History Group.

# Contents

- 3 Chair's Letter
- 4 DEBATING POINTS  
Hugh Gaitskell's Legacy  
In Place of Strife
- 7 Woolwich 1904  
*Paul Tyler*
- 10 Harold Wilson: His Life and Times  
*Bernard Donoughue*
- 17 Wilson and the Press  
*Joe Haines*
- 20 Wilson's World Cup  
*Jayant Chavda*
- 21 The DEA: Wilson's Economic Revolution?  
*John Grieve Smith*
- 24 What Can the Co-operators Teach us Today?  
*Hazel Blears*
- 26 OBITUARIES  
Gareth Williams  
Don Concannon  
Jack Dormand  
John Gallacher  
Peter Hardy  
Roy Hughes  
Hugh Jenkins  
Bob Mitchell  
Hugh Scanlon  
Harold Walker  
George Wallace
- 30 BOOK REVIEWS  
*From Bevan to Blair*  
*The Diaries of A. L. Rouse*  
*Red Queen*

## Forthcoming Events

We have several debates planned on a range of issues, including the 1984 miners strike, Labour's youth movement, and John Smith. If you would to join our mailing list for events please email [john.schwartz@methuen.co.uk](mailto:john.schwartz@methuen.co.uk)

## Submissions

The next issue of *Labour History* will focus on John Smith, his life and contribution to the Labour Party. If you would like to submit an article please use the contact details below.

## WCML

The Working Class Movement Library in Salford is a rapidly growing repository of material reflecting the lives of working people from the time of the industrial revolution. Because of the vast amount of material that is being deposited, the library is in urgent need of financial support. It also needs volunteers to assist the librarian in sorting, filing, labelling and organising the computer catalogue and website. If anyone can spare any cash or time please contact Ruth Frow on [enquiries@wcml.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@wcml.org.uk).

## Contact us

You can contact us at  
The Labour History Group  
c/o John Schwartz  
Flat C, 7 Queensdown Road  
London E5 8NN  
email: [john.schwartz@methuen.co.uk](mailto:john.schwartz@methuen.co.uk)

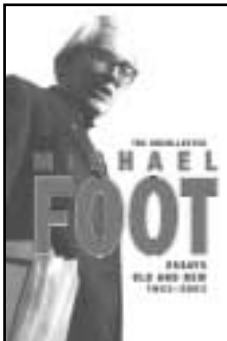
If you would like to join the Labour History Group please fill out the slip and return it to:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The Labour History Group  
c/o John Schwartz  
Flat C, 7 Queensdown Road  
London E5 8NN

I enclose a cheque made payable to the Labour History Group for \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please charge my credit / debit card the amount of \_\_\_\_\_  
Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Issue Number (Switch only): \_\_\_\_\_

# Labour History from **Politico's Publishing**



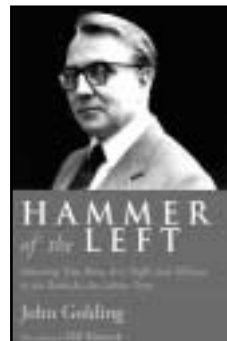
## **The Uncollected Michael Foot** **Essays Old and New, 1953-2003**

Edited by Brian Brivati

Superb new collection of essays from the former Labour leader.

**Signed copies available**

400pp HB, £20.00



## **Hammer of the Left** **Defeating Tony Benn, Eric Heffer and Militant in the Battle for the Labour Party**

John Goding

Posthumously published memoir from the great 'fixer' of the Labour right.

416pp HB, £25.00



## **Joan Maynard** **Passionate Socialist**

Kristine Mason O'Connor

Affectionate biography of a tireless campaigner for left-wing causes.

416pp HB, £25.00



## **The Bumper Book of British Lefties**

Paul Routledge

Two hundred hilarious pen portraits from Britain's top leftie journalist.

256pp HB, £14.99



## **Dictionary of Labour Biography**

Edited by Greg Rosen

The definitive reference book of the left.

664pp HB, £30.00



## **Ernest Bevin**

Alan Bullock

Heavyweight biography of a fascinating Labour politician.

800pp HB, £30.00



## **The Heat of the Kitchen**

Bernard Donoughue

Acclaimed memoirs from a life at the centre of politics.

400pp HB, £25.00



## **Glimmers of Twilight**

Joe Haines

The controversial inside story of the Wilson government.

256pp HB, £20.00



## **Clem Attlee**

Francis Beckett

Definitive biography of this great Labour Prime Minister.

320pp PB, £9.99



## **Guiding Light: The Collected Speeches of John Smith**

Inspiring speeches from the late Labour leader.

800pp HB, £30.00

To order these and many other Labour History titles please contact:

### **Central Books**

99 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN

Tel: 0845 458 9910, Fax: 0845 458 9912

Email: [mo@centralbooks.com](mailto:mo@centralbooks.com)

[www.centralbooks.co.uk](http://www.centralbooks.co.uk)

# Chair's Letter

In 1964 Harold Wilson harnessed the white heat of the technological revolution to lead Labour from opposition to government. It was a time of great hope. Wilson spoke of building a 'New Britain'. 'We are living in the jet age but we are governed by an Edwardian establishment mentality,' he declared, 'Labour will replace the closed, exclusive society by an open society . . . in which brains will take precedence over blue-blood, and craftsmanship will be more important than caste.'<sup>1</sup> He attacked the 'system of values where the spiv, the speculator, the takeover bidder, the tax-evader, the land-grabber are exalted . . . where the verb "to have" means more than the verb "to be" . . . the philosophy of hedonism . . . the fact that in this so-called affluent society there is so much avoidable poverty . . .'<sup>2</sup>

And did they build the New Jerusalem? In the early 1950s satirists had invented 'Mr Butskell,' an amalgam of Labour's ex-chancellor Hugh Gaitskell and Tory chancellor Rab Butler, to symbolise the lack of differentiation between the two main parties. Wilson's rhetoric implied that the party agendas were profoundly different, that Tory government by Bevin<sup>3</sup> was different and worse than Labour government had been under Bevin<sup>4</sup> and Bevan,<sup>5</sup> and that the substitution of Wilson's trademark gannex raincoat for the tweed of the grouse-moor aristocrats that characterised Sir Alec Douglas-Home's Conservative government would mean a wholesale transformation of Britain. For the satirists, Wilson's victory transformed Britain from a country where everything was on HP<sup>6</sup> to a country with HP<sup>7</sup> on everything and from a country where deeds spoke louder than words to one in which Deedes<sup>8</sup> lost his voice in Cabinet.

As the sixties drew to a close, elections became a duel between Wilson and the new Conservative leader Edward Heath: grammar school technocrats both, they were dubbed respectively the man with the pipe and the man with the boat. At

the 1970 election, an over-confident Wilson fought 'yesterday's men' and lost. In February 1974 Heath gambled an election on 'who runs Britain'. His aim was to strengthen his bargaining hand with a fresh mandate against industrial militancy. He lost, and Wilson returned to Downing Street, the last Labour leader to enter government from opposition until Blair won the 1997 election. Wilson's situation was very different however. Having been premier himself only a few years before, some of the problems he inherited were of his own making.

Forty years on from 1964 and thirty years on from 1974, this, the second edition of *Labour History*, looks back and discusses the achievements and the disappointments of the Wilson era. Two articles are written from the discussions the Labour History Group has hosted over the past few months. One, on the legacy and loss of Hugh Gaitskell, Wilson's predecessor as Labour leader, was held in December. The debate on *In Place of Strife*, Wilson's attempt to reform industrial relations, took place in November. This year we have several debates planned on a range of issues, including the 1984 miners strike, Labour's youth movement, and John Smith.

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

1 Wilson's Speech on 'The New Britain' 19 January 1964, Birmingham Town Hall.

2 Wilson's speech on 'Our National Purpose' 5 April 1964, Royal Albert Hall, London.

3 Reginald Bevin, a prominent Conservative Minister 1959–64.

4 Ernest Bevin, Labour's Foreign Secretary 1945–51.

5 Aneurin Bevan, Labour Minister of Health 1945–51.

6 Hire-purchase.

7 Sauce.

8 William (Lord) Deedes, Conservative Cabinet Minister 1962–64 and later editor of the *Daily Telegraph*.

# Debating Points

## Hugh Gaitskell's Political Legacy

Labour History *debate*  
with Bernard Donoughue,  
Bill Rodgers and Dick  
Mabon, 10 December 2003

PATRICK LOUGHRAN

---

Pondering how different a Hugh Gaitskell premiership would have been from Harold Wilson's tenure as Prime Minister has become one of the great 'What Ifs...?' of modern Labour history.

Juxtapose sketches of the two men and one cannot help but be struck by the contrast. Laments on Gaitskell invariably centre on his honesty, loyalty and adherence to principle over expediency. Portraits of his successor as Labour leader are always harsher for the comparison. Nye Bevan's description of Wilson as 'much more dangerous than Gaitskell because he isn't honest and he isn't a man of principle, but a sheer, absolute careerist, out for himself alone'<sup>1</sup> encapsulates what has become an unforgiving consensus on the Wilsonian style.

Bernard Donoughue – a young follower of Gaitskell who later headed the No. 10 Policy Unit under Wilson – is in an unrivalled position to have observed the two men's

starkly different conceptions of leadership: 'Gaitskell's fight and fight and fight again speech was about him standing up for what he believed. I later worked for Harold Wilson for whom I have great affection but I have to tell you that he would not have stood up and talked about fighting and fighting and fighting again. He would have been in the backroom negotiating all kinds of deals and compromises.'

Donoughue was speaking at a recent Labour History Group seminar on Hugh Gaitskell's legacy forty years after his death. He was joined by former 'Gaitskellite' MPs, Bill Rodgers and Dickson Mabon.

Gaitskell's early death at the age of fifty-six in 1963 meant that he never became Prime Minister as it appeared certain he would. In the one General Election he did contest as Labour leader in 1959, the Conservative victory was decisive. Today, he seems to have largely disappeared from view. Despite strong claims to be so, he is seldom hailed as an influence by current leading Labour modernisers. So what was it about Gaitskell that inspired such fierce loyalty among a group

of followers who were happy to become known as 'Gaitskellites'?

All three speakers talked of the real sense of shock that was felt at his passing. Bill Rodgers recounted the impact on the young Tony Crosland who was in tears following the memorial service and on Roy Jenkins who felt unable to attend because it was 'so painful'. Dick Mabon described how his death led to 'great lamentations in the labour movement' and Bernard Donoughue how he was 'personally politically bereaved and felt I could never attach myself to someone in politics again.'

Bill Rodgers dedicated his early political life to the Gaitskell cause, organising the Campaign for Democratic Socialism (CDS) to mobilise grassroots opinion in support of Gaitskellite policies in the early 1960s. He described how he 'became tremendously committed to his spirit, his thoughts and his character': 'Intelligence, judgement, courage and especially loyalty. All of those characteristics – which he looked to in others – were very much all true of him.'

Bernard Donoughue was also a member of CDS and

said that Gaitskell was a particularly attractive figure to the young for his 'blazing integrity and courage': 'Most politicians learn to compromise. To the young, Gaitskell was attractive because he did not appear to be like that. He had principles and he was prepared to stand by them.'

Gaitskell's determination to modernise a party whose dominant instinct was to preserve the legacy of the Attlee government in aspic struck a resonance with those who had come to regard it as too old fashioned. For Donoughue, 'he was clearly trying to move the Labour Party away from its flat cap, trade union dominated image. He was aware of the aspirations of younger people who were inclining to be much more classless than the Labour Party acknowledged at the time. He was also surrounded by very impressive young people like Roy Jenkins, Tony Crosland and Bill Rodgers who appeared to have a touch of the future about them.'

But the qualities which inspired such fealty in his acolytes made Gaitskell a controversial figure. The traits that led admirers to label him principled were seen as stubbornness and inflexibility by opponents. Bill

Rodgers detected in him a 'prickliness' and 'prissiness'. Mabon describes Gaitskell as a 'very partisan leader, not a pussy foot': 'He became known for defying his own party when he thought they were wrong'.

It was this partisanship which so polarises views on Gaitskell. For devotees, had he lived, the necessary fight to move beyond the 1945 settlement would not have been fudged. In this view, Harold Wilson is the guilty man who sacrificed Labour's need to face up to the changing society around it on the altar of party unity. To Gaitskell's critics, his rigidity would have spilt asunder a party that, at its heart, did not share his revisionist outlook.

As Bernard Donoughue concluded: 'As Prime Minister, you do have to take people with you that you don't particularly like or respect and I don't know how good he would have been at that. I think there would have been collisions. The Labour Party was not then ready for the kind of modernisation which we were all hungry for. You could argue that we had to go through the horrors of the late 1970s and 1980s to prove that some of the old luggage had

to be thrown away.'

*Patrick Loughran is the Labour Party's Head of Political Research*

<sup>1</sup> John Campbell, *Nye Bevan*, p.350, Richard Cohen Books, 1997

## In Place of Strife

Labour History Debate  
*Richard Rosser, Geoffrey Gooman and Anne Perkins,*  
12 November 2003

JOHN SCHWARTZ

---

In April 1968 Harold Wilson moved Barbara Castle from the Department of Transport, where she had been the minister who introduced seatbelts and the breathalyser, to the Department of Employment and Productivity. There, her actions would have no lesser impact on British society, but certainly not in the way she would have hoped.

The effect of her white paper *In Place of Strife* and the reasons behind its proposals were the subject of a Labour History Group discussion in November 2003. Barbara Castle's biographer Anne Perkins, the veteran industrial and political journalist Geoffrey Goodman and Richard Rosser, then General Secretary of the TSSA were the panellists.

Geoffrey Goodman set the scene: 'The 1966 election was the most significant Labour victory since 1945. Harold Wilson had great hopes and Labour had a very close and mutually understanding relationship with the unions. But then there was the usual economic crisis and the industrial climate became full of tension.'

Wilson's government had become plagued by unofficial strikes, the public was turning against the trades unions and the traditional relationship between the Labour Party and the unions was starting to break down. As Richard Rosser explained: 'The Trade Union movement were beginning to find out that the attitudes of a Labour government were not necessarily their own.'

Goodman offered an example of Wilson's increasing frustration with the unions: 'Harold went to an AEU national committee meeting and told them to throw away their rulebook. That was quite equivalent to Tony Blair abandoning Clause IV and that alerted the trade unions to what they might have to face.'

Ray Gunter at the Department of Labour had instigated a Royal Commission under Lord

Donovan in 1965 to investigate the changing role of trade unions in society and the economy. But Gunter's replacement by Barbara Castle in 1968 was widely seen as signifying his failure. She was famously combative, and, as Anne Perkins pointed out, 'Wilson put Barbara into the Department of Employment to signal a determination to act'.

Castle's job was to broker a new understanding with the unions, but also to bring them to heel. And so *In Place of Strife*, a white paper supposedly in response to Lord Donovan's proposals, was born.

In fact, where Donovan had recommended reform of the union system rather than legal curbs on unofficial strikes, *In Place of Strife* aimed to restrict the power of unions with a raft of measures including: secret ballots before every strike; a cooling off period of 28 days before big strikes; collective bargaining with legally binding results; a new Industrial Relations Court and penal sanctions to force unions to comply.

Predictably, the unions were extremely hostile. Furthermore, it is probable that Castle's combative ap-

proach did little to cool tempers. But as Richard Rosser pointed out 'there was opposition virtually across the labour movement. Fifty-five Labour MPs voted against and another forty abstained . . . and the Labour Party NEC also voted against the policy by sixteen votes to five.'

There was also opposition in Cabinet – led by Jim Callaghan who vehemently

people were taken in by that or regarded it as any more than a fudge by a government that was backing down.'

As Anne Perkins said: '*In Place of Strife* now stands as a metaphor for failure in government Wilson and Barbara had not thought through what they were trying to achieve. But it had asked the question which lay at the heart of the post-war settlement, it asked "did trade

“*In Place of Strife* did contain the ingredients of a programme that, if it had been possible for it to succeed, then not only would the 1970 election result have been different, but we would not have had Thatcherism”

opposed state regulation of the unions.

After a vicious battle in Cabinet and Parliament, in the Party and the country, Castle was defeated. Richard Rosser explained: 'The bill was dropped, the deal was that the TUC would encourage union mergers and play a positive role in resolving disputes. I don't think that too many

unions still believe in and were prepared to promote social cohesion?"

Castle's career looked to be over, but it is a testament to the spirit of this remarkable politician that she fought back to establish the Equal Pay Act in 1970 and took a Cabinet place as Secretary of State for Health and Social Services in Wilson's govern-

ment from 1974 until 1976. Her Cabinet career was only brought to an end by the ascension of her archenemy Callaghan to the premiership.

A *Sunday Times* column at one of the times of *In Place of Strife* hinted at the legacy of its failure: 'Conservatives are wise to give the white paper – which owes so much to their prompting their general support for it lays foundations on which they can build.'

Geoffrey Goodman made the point explicitly: '*In Place of Strife* did contain the ingredients of a programme that, if it had been possible for it to succeed, then not only would the 1970 election result have been different, but we would not have had Thatcherism.'

Thatcher's reforms decimated union membership and changed the attitude of the British public and, indeed, the Labour Party, to trade unions. Richard Rosser explained: 'This government has an attitude and a feeling that the trades union movement is one section of society that has a particular view, but as a government it has to take account the electorate as a whole if it is going to survive.'

*John Schwartz is the editor of Labour History.*

Woolwich was unique in 1904. This year

marks the centenary of Woolwich becoming the first constituency in the country to have returned Labour representation at all levels of government – parliamentary, regional (London County Council), and local (Council). Before 1903, Woolwich constituency was a ‘Tory democracy’, and within twelve months, it had become a Labour stronghold. This article is a brief history of its political conversion, which concluded with Will Crooks’ victory in the Woolwich by-election in March 1903; the first Labour council in November, and two seats secured on the LCC in

“ Before 1903, Woolwich constituency was a ‘Tory democracy’, and within twelve months, it had become a Labour stronghold ”

March 1904. How was this political transformation achieved?

After the opening of the Blackwall tunnel in 1897, and during the Boer War (1899–1902), an influx of skilled work-

# paul tyler

## Woolwich

### 1904

ers, including many nonconformists from the north country and Scotland, attracted by the prospects of employment in the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, had a large effect on the social composition of the borough. These immigrants became members of an Arsenal workforce that was strongly unionised, and constituents of a relatively stable community, where workingmen’s clubs took an active part in local politics, and by London standards nonconformity was strong. This factor seemed to suggest a basis for a strong Liberalism, but this was not the case.<sup>1</sup> Liberalism failed to capture Woolwich in the 1890s, which led to a strong Tory working-class vote, and Woolwich in this period was a rare example of a ‘Tory

Democracy.’ In fact, the weakness of the Liberals worked eventually in Labour’s favour; it was a promising basis for socialist growth.

Between 1899–1901, over four thousand people moved into the area, a large number of whom were employed in the Arsenal. During the Boer War, the Arsenal employed 20,015 workers, approximately seventeen per cent of the total population of the Woolwich. In the 1880s, the main centres for working-class politics were the local workingmen’s and radical clubs. The clubs helped to break down sectional barriers between different crafts and grades and became an important element in the growth of the independent Labour representation movement in the 1890s.

During this period, trade union organisation was strong in Woolwich at a time when the movement in London was notably weak. For example, ASE membership more than doubled between 1885 and 1891. In July 1889, the Woolwich Gasworkers' Union was founded.

These developments, and the emergence of growing socialist organisations like the ILP, the Social Democratic Federation, and the Socialist League, were pivotal to the growth of an independent Labour movement. In addition, the resurgent trade unionism of the late 1880s and early 1890s had a major radicalising influence on the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society (RACS – founded by the ASE in 1868) in this period, especially around the engineers' eight-hour day campaign (which was achieved in the Arsenal in 1894), and the engineers' lockout 1896–7. The Trades Council and the ILP was founded in 1894 and his advancement led to closer links between the RACS and the political and trade union organisations in the area.

The education classes and propaganda work of the co-operative, and the labour movement during the late 1890s were among the influences locally that helped create the demand for independent labour representation and layed the foundation for a trade union–socialist alliance that was to prove decisive. As part of this

agitation, during 1899, the Trades Council organised public meetings outside the Arsenal Gate, and invited speakers who proclaimed propaganda of an explicit socialist character. The speakers included John Burns, Tom Mann, Ben Tillett, Will Thorne, Andreas Sheu, Herbert Burrows, Edward and Eleanor Marx-Aveling, Harry



The gate of the Royal Woolwich Arsenal in 1904.

Quelch and Henry Mayers Hyndman. In 1901 and 1902 the Trades Council seized the opportunity to test Labour's mettle on the stump in two borough by-elections; in both Progressive and Labour candidates were elected. With this new impetus, workmen turned their thoughts to fighting the next parliamentary election. The writing was on the wall for the Tories and Unionists.

In February 1902, the credibility of the Unionists again suffered. The Moderates (Tories), who were the majority on the Woolwich Borough Council, were accused of flouting their electoral promises on housing policy. The ensuing fiasco not only undermined the electorate's trust in Moderate councillors but

also led to the demise of Conservative and Unionist Parliamentary representation. Nearly all councillors campaigned in the 1900 council elections on a policy in favour of housing the people. When they were elected the Moderate recalcitrants held firm against public criticism, and as expected and predicted, opposed the housing scheme. This did much to under-

mine their electoral integrity in the Borough, especially with those associated with progressive and democratic organisations, and they paid the price at the ballot box in the local elections of November 1903.

In the spring of 1902 a joint Registration Committee representing the Woolwich District Trades and Labour Council, the Borough of Woolwich Progressive Association, Woolwich Branch of

“The Woolwich parliamentary result, along with Arthur Henderson’s victory at Barnard Castle in July 1903, marked the beginning of Labour’s rise electorally”

the Independent Labour Party, and the local Parliamentary Committee was formed to undertake an exhaustive check of the voters’ register to achieve the registration of all supporters, and win the Parliamentary seat for Labour. Following this the Joint Registration Committee set up a small committee to organise a selection conference of all trades, friendly, temperance, and co-operative organisations of the district. The conference was held in the

Trinity School Rooms, Woolwich, in November 1902, where delegates representing nearly all the organisations in the borough unanimously resolved to invite Will Crooks to contest the seat.<sup>2</sup> Crooks accepted the nomination.

On the 11 March 1903 Will Crooks was elected to Parliament as the first Labour member for Woolwich and the fourth member of the Parliamentary Labour Representative Committee (LRC) in the House of Commons. It was the first time in eight years that the seat had been contested. The result of the by-election was a resounding victory for Crooks, who won with a considerable majority. Crooks polled 8,687 votes, and Geoffrey Drage (Conservative & Unionist) 5,458 votes.<sup>3</sup> Crooks returned 64.4 per cent of the poll on an 87.7 per cent turnout. Compared with 1895, Crooks increased the Labour vote by 4,830, and increased the turnout by over eleven per cent.<sup>4</sup>

Following this triumph, the Tories were again defeated at the local elections in November. Labour securing the return of twenty-five candidates out of thirty-six; twelve of the Labour councillors were members of the ILP, including Reverend Jenkins-Jones, the Unitarian minister of Woolwich, and the first Labour Mayor 1903–5. In addition, not only was the local Labour association successful in gaining a majority on the local council, they also

helped to return two Labour representatives, Fred Chamber and Jenkins-Jones, to the LCC in March 1904, and nine to the Board of Guardians the following month.

The Woolwich parliamentary result, along with Arthur Henderson’s victory at Barnard Castle in July 1903, marked the beginning of Labour’s rise electorally, and had a lasting political resonance for the pattern and style of future elections throughout the country. The advent of Labour threatened the electoral supremacy of both the Liberals and the Conservatives and changed the balance of power within the bounds of national politics. An analysis of the record shows that not only was Crooks’ contribution significant to the emergence of the LRC after its foundation in 1900, but that he played an important role in the consolidation of the Labour Party between 1906 and 1918.<sup>5</sup>

*Dr Paul Tyler is a member of the Working Lives Research Institute at London Metropolitan University*

1. D. Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party 1888-1906*, 1983, p. 264.
2. *Woolwich Labour Journal*, December 1902, p. 4.
3. 1903 Election Results, Greenwich Heritage Center, the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich (GHC).
4. Woolwich Electoral Register 1902-3, (GHC)
5. P. F. Tyler, *Will Crooks MP, local activist and Labour pioneer: Poplar to Woolwich 1852-1921*, unpublished PhD thesis, 2002, London Metropolitan University.

# bernard donoghue

# Harold Wilson

## The Life and Legacy of a Labour Prime Minister

**H**arold Wilson's particular approach to politics and government is best understood first through his upbringing. His Northern non-conformist background continued to shine throughout his long career and was clearly reflected in his personal style of life, which remained authentically and commendably provincial. He was never seduced by the glitter of the metropolitan Establishment into which he moved but of which he never saw himself as a paid-up member. Below, I shall begin by describing Wilson's upbringing, then his remarkable career as Labour Leader and Prime Minister, and conclude with an attempt to sum up his personality. I hope to catch some of the many aspects of his complex character, including the light as well as the shade, on which most London newspaper commentators

concentrated in the last twenty years of his working life.

James Harold Wilson always saw himself as a Yorkshireman. Born in Huddersfield on 11 March 1916, his family traced back in the county to the fourteenth century and were, until his grandfather moved

with strong trade union ties. From when he was one year old, his family owned their own homes in respectable middle class districts, and they also bought a car when he was seven, so they could be placed as reasonably comfortable lower middle class, with aspirations to upward mobili-

ty, though this progress was halted by his father's periodic unemployment in the post-war slump. Central to his family background was a strong non-conformism stretching back generations to the Cromwellian civil war. And linked to non-conformism was his devotion to the Boy Scout movement, in which his father was a District Commissioner. Harold joined as a Wolf Cub aged 8 and rose to be a King's Scout, of which he was always proud. The movement was a strong formative influence on him, giving him solid standards and a belief in self-improvement and clean living. He remained attached to the Scouts even in the 1950s, when he was already Leader of the Labour Party. Observing him much later, I felt that, in a way, the party manifesto was his adult version of the Boy Scouts Code, to be learned by heart and obeyed.

His education was properly meritocratic. He attended a council elementary school, a Huddersfield secondary school, and then the excellent Wirral Grammar School, where he thrived and became Head Boy. He was bright and studious but not considered to be intellectually exception-

“ I felt that, in a way, the party manifesto was his adult version of the Boy Scouts Code, to be learned by heart and obeyed ”

close to Manchester, based on Helmsley in the North Riding, close to the Abbey of Rievaulx, from which he later took his peerage title.

His father was an industrial chemist working in the dyestuffs industry. His mother was from a more clearly working class background

ty, though this progress was halted by his father's periodic unemployment in the post-war slump. Central to his family background was a strong non-conformism stretching back generations to the Cromwellian civil war. And linked to non-conformism was his devotion to

al. The same was true at Oxford, where he won an exhibition – not an open scholarship – to Jesus, one of the less distinguished colleges, and worked very hard to achieve a good first. He never mixed in any of the glittering Oxford social sets – which included some contemporaries who were later to be Labour colleagues in Parliament and in government. His eyes were fixed firmly on climbing the career ladder.

His first big step towards public life was when he had the luck to be offered a research post studying unemployment and the trade cycle by Sir William Beveridge, later the author of the epoch-making *Full Employment in a Free Society* and usually perceived as the father of the Welfare State. Wilson had little affinity with the egotistical old tyrant, but the research confirmed his inclinations towards factually-based central planning and, most importantly, put him visibly on the appropriate public career ladder. He quickly moved into Whitehall with the Economic Section of the Cabinet Office and then again with Beveridge, dealing with coal production. His contacts there with the coal industry and the National Union of Miners helped him to get nomination

for the safe Labour seat of Ormskirk. In July 1945, aged twenty-nine, he was elected and launched onto a remarkable thirty-year career in politics and government.

His rise within two years to be the youngest Cabinet Minister since 1806 as President of the Board of Trade was meteoric, though almost without political trace. He happened to be, as is so often important in politics, in the right place at the right time, and he rode on the back of his then hero, Stafford Cripps, though in the Party and the country few people knew of him.

Over the next sixteen years, twelve of them in opposition, he built a strong base in the party, negotiating a series of political hurdles which revealed his dexterity and flexibility but also created the widespread impression that he was slippery and unprincipled. His resignation with Bevan from the 1951 Cabinet was seen as deserting the sinking Labour ship – although he did actually agree with Bevan on giving welfare a higher priority than defence. Wilson quickly played an active part in the left wing Tribune media circus of the early 1950s, further alienating the Labour right. But when Bevan resigned from the

shadow cabinet over German rearmament, Wilson, while agreeing with Bevan on the issue, took the opportunity to take Bevan's place at the top table. He had now offended both the left and the right.

After Labour's terrible defeat in 1959, he opposed Gaitskellite revisionism, especially concerning the abolition of the Clause IV commitment to wholesale further nationalisation (changes which this author actively supported). Wilson was inherently less radical than Gaitskell and the Young Turks, Crosland and Jenkins, then surrounding the Labour leader. Also, as a pragmatist, he saw no reason to split the party over a non-issue, since Clause IV was to him just an aspiration with no hope or risk of being implemented. He was emphatically defeated when standing against Gaitskell in the 1960 leadership election. But he was by then established as the clear alternative leader. He had trodden on many sensitive fingers on the way up, but he was by then at the top of the ladder and was comfortably elected leader after Gaitskell tragically died in 1963.

His standing in the party then was not ideal. He was loathed and mistrusted by the old Gaitskellite right, who

never forgave him for stealing their hero's crown. He was mistrusted, though tinged with admiration by his natural constituency in the centre. And on the left he was mistrusted for having abandoned them, but they grudgingly supported him because he was the best hope they had. But most had come to respect his political skills. Over the next four years until 1967 Wilson put on a dazzling display of leadership and won over all but the intransigent right-wing to admire him. Wilson quickly improved his previously pedantic public speaking and launched a blitzkrieg against the crumbling Tory Government, cruelly and wittily exposing Macmillan's faded Edwardianism and Home's economic illiteracy. He was surely the most effective opposition leader in post-war Britain. He also conciliated his old Gaitskellite enemies by giving them key positions in the shadow cabinet and by finally coming out firmly against his old accomplices in the unilateralist movement.

He was able to sidestep the perennially destructive left-right divisions – which he always derided privately as 'theology' – by basing his policy campaigns on his own genuine non-sectarian beliefs

Wilson with his wife Mary and son Giles in 1951 strolling near their Hampstead home.



in achieving economic progress through planning and the use of science and technology. He launched his impressive 'white heat of technology' speech at the 1963 Scarborough conference and followed it up with more statements on the theme of a 'New Britain' based on improved technology. These exposed the Tories as amateur and out of date whereas his 'newish' Labour Party was by contrast modern and professional (recent echoes there!). It is easy today to forget the excitement which Wilson then created across the media and the electorate. He was never of course really a radical thinker. His planning approach was rooted in the wartime conditions which he had experienced in Whitehall. His 'socialism' often seemed to me to be a mixture of non-conformism, natural dirigisme, and anti-establishment 'chip-on-the-shoulder'. But in its modern technological dressing, it offered then a kind of 'third way' between the antique Marxist left and the divisively revisionist Gaitskellite right. It was what Wilson genuinely believed in (it was not true as many critics asserted that he did not believe in anything). It also provided him with a reasonably coherent intellectual and po-

litical framework on which he could base his Government when he just scraped home in the 1964 election and roared to a landslide victory in 1966.

These years from 1963 to 1967 were Wilson's time of peak triumph. As Prime Minister, he towered above his Government colleagues, few of whom had Cabinet experience, and he often took the lead in their departments' policy areas. He imposed his views on modernising Britain, inspiring the 1965 National Economic Plan which reflected his commitment to improve Britain's dismal economic performance by central planning and coordinating technological resources. He strove to reform the antiquated Whitehall machine, with new departments and the Fulton Enquiry into the civil service. He created new ministers of Economic Planning and of Technology and appointed a distinguished scientist as Education Minister. He initiated a dramatic expansion of higher education, created his beloved Open University, and launched the new DHSS. Overseas he began Britain's long overdue withdrawal from East of Suez and also first prepared the way for entry into the European Economic Community.

Perhaps of most lasting significance, he oversaw a remarkable period of social reform which adjusted British laws to the more libertarian values of the 1960s. Between 1965 and 1969, capital punishment, theatre censorship and corporal punishment in prisons were abolished. Britain's primitive laws relating to homosexuality, divorce and abortion (despite his Catholic constituency) were liberalized, so individuals were no longer persecuted for their personal behaviour. He strongly supported the first law against racial discrimination. The initial impetus for these changes often lay elsewhere, especially with Roy Jenkins, a great reforming Home Secretary. But it is to Wilson's credit that, against all his non-conformist conditioning, he quickly promoted Jenkins to the Cabinet and then supported his liberal proposals. His Government in 1964–70 both reflected and shaped the changes of moral and social values in post-war Britain and put these more civilized values into a lasting legal context.

Wilson also showed advanced thinking in his support for Barbara Castle's *In Place of Strife* proposals to reform Britain's neolithic trade unions. But by then in 1969

the gloss had gone from him and he was defeated by the powerful forces of conservatism within the Labour movement and parliamentary party. A series of policy setbacks – the cuts to public services in 1966, the abandonment of the National Plan, the humiliating devaluation of 1967 (from which his credibility never fully recovered), the failure to bring the Rhodesian rebels under control – all these and more

“ Wilson oversaw a remarkable period of social reform which adjusted British laws to the more libertarian values of the 1960s ”

served to disappoint the high hopes raised in 1964. The press, which had at first praised him to the skies, now relentlessly vilified him without reference to facts or fairness. His personal poll ratings slumped from fifty-seven per cent in early 1967 to twenty-seven per cent a year later. Labour suffered a string of by-election disasters. In Cabinet and the party, right-wing and centrist malcontents began moves to replace him with either Callaghan or Jenkins,

neither of whom did much to discourage the plots. Wilson retreated into his Number 10 bunker, supported by Marcia Williams and the kitchen cabinet. No modern Prime Minister (except perhaps for Major in 1995–97) has ever been so beleaguered and seemed so forlorn.

Although the economy picked up a little towards the end of his Government, and the polls with it, his electoral defeat in 1970 was rooted in

disenchantment: that the great ambitions of 1964 had not been fulfilled. Certainly his key approach to the economy of central planning and interventionism had not worked; in fact it already began to look out of date as the supporters of a free economy gained ground.

On kitchen cabinet advice, he personalized the 1970 election into a 'presidential' campaign and so the defeat firmly attached to him. It was the worst setback of Wilson's polit-

ical career and it devastated his self-confidence. The gloomy days of opposition in 1970–74 continued these bleak days for him. The press always referred to him as yesterday's man, devious and unprincipled, seeking only personal or party advantage. He clung on to the leadership, mainly because the supporters of Callaghan and Jenkins each reluctantly preferred to stay with the apparently doomed incumbent rather than to risk precipitating the accession of the other.

But slowly, among wider Labour supporters, a grudging respect arose for his durability as one of life's survivors and for his party management skills. This was confirmed in the 1972 crisis over entry to the Common Market. With the party deeply divided, he trimmed back from his earlier position of seeking entry to one of neutrality, belatedly grasping the referendum device to delay the European crunch and leave the decision to the electorate. He lost his deputy leader Jenkins and the hard core of the right. It also confirmed the impression that he would sail with any wind to keep the bulk of the party united and behind him as leader. But it did ensure that he could fight the 1974 election on a reasonably united platform, each side willing

to wait for the referendum.

Like most commentators, Wilson thought he would lose the 1974 election. Had he indeed lost, he would have immediately resigned the party leadership and left the political stage at a low point and to very few cheers. In fact he ran a shrewd campaign and squeezed home with less votes but a few more seats than Ted Heath. His pleasure at erasing the bitter memory of defeat in 1970 was visible to those of us campaigning with him. A second modest victory in October appealed to his weakness of boasting about his genuinely remarkable record of winning four elections out of five as party leader.

His final premiership was conducted quite differently from the triumphal days of 1964–66. He kept a distinctly low profile, with none of the earlier circus performance in the spotlight on the high wire. There was a touch of autumnal mellowness about him and – privately committed to retire in 1976 – some of the earlier demons of paranoid suspicions seemed to have left him (at least for colleagues, though not for the security services). He exuded some of Stanley Baldwin’s ‘quiet life’.

His relations with key colleagues, especially with Callaghan, were more relaxed,

and he came to be seen by the public and the party as an old familiar, who had been around Westminster as long as most people could remember, with some characteristic tricks still up his sleeve, but with his faults well known. Above all he seemed essential to holding his fissiparous party together. That objective became his single overriding political objective: and it was not a dishonorable one. In this unifying role he negotiated the Government

parted at virtually the only time in his leadership when there were no plots among colleagues to remove him, and when there was almost universal, if often passive and unenthusiastic, support for his leadership of the party. He had finally convinced the right wing that he was not really a left-winger; the centre that, if anything, he was one of them; and the left that, although not really one of them, at least he understood their tribalism.

“ In the decades after his resignation in 1976, Wilson became an almost forgotten figure. In fact his political achievements had been remarkable ”

into an incomes policy and to remaining in the Common Market without losing the trade unions or the left. The referendum, to Wilson’s constant amusement, had secured Britain’s membership of the EEC for Jenkins and his pro-marketeters, even though Roy had passionately opposed the device, and it defeated Benn’s anti-marketeters, even though Benn had invented it.

Wilson resigned in March 1976 at the age of 60, as he had long planned. Ironically he de-

nours seriously, viewing them as just useful tools of patronage, rewards for loyalty or even silencers on the disloyal. But the resulting clamour damaged him, especially as it seemed to confirm longstanding suspicions about the nature of some of the odd businessmen who had fringed Marcia’s entourage. It meant, sadly, that the final public and media view of Harold Wilson in action was besmirched and did not give credit to the remarkable achievements of his political career.

The furore also reflected the important role in his life, for good or ill of Marcia Williams. She joined him in 1956, shortly before his mother’s death, and became in a way his ‘political wife’, having huge influence, even an eerie control over him.

In the decades after his resignation in 1976, Wilson became an almost forgotten figure. In fact his political achievements had been remarkable. He won four out of five general elections. That record must be set against what happened in the twenty years after his retirement, when Labour lost four elections in a row. During the thirteen years of his leadership of Labour, he held the party together, whereas within five years of his retirement, it suf-

However, his resignation was clouded by the atmosphere of scandal surrounding his bizarre final honours list, which contained people whose contributions to public life – as opposed to contributions to his political office – were not easy to detect. Some of them were hardly known to Wilson, though close to His Personal and Political Secretary Marcia Williams (later Lady Falkender). He was puzzled by the public reaction, since he had personally never taken ho-

ferred a major split and almost came third in the subsequent election. As a party leader he exhibited consummate skills in holding together what had become a collection of conflicting minority interests and beliefs. He was equally impressive as chairman of the Cabinet, shrewdly balancing there the main factions within his Government, giving every side and player the opportunity to express a view, always seeking consensus and maintaining unity. He would often dismiss these consensual skills with a self-deprecating grin, quoting James Maxton's saying that 'If you cannot ride three horses at once, you should not be in the circus'. But it was still a remarkable feat of political management.

Towards the end he carefully built a close alliance with his most senior colleague, James Callaghan, burying old jealousies and disagreements, and so created a solid foundation of Cabinet stability at the heart of the Government. It also prepared the way for Callaghan's succession. Their joint conduct of the 1974–75 EEC renegotiations was little short of brilliant, keeping Britain in Europe while preserving unity in the Cabinet and the Labour Party when a majority of party members and MPs were certainly hostile. Some of the

contemporary disappointment with his achievements derived from comparisons with the high expectations generated – not least by him – in the heady days of 1963–67, when great future economic growth seemed assured. But I agree with Jim Callaghan's measured words to the emotional Cabinet when Wilson announced his resignation in March 1976: future historians, when they fairly assess the great problems which faced his government, will surely assess him more generously than at present.

Harold Wilson's private personality was as mixed and complex as his public persona. He had many positive personal qualities. He could be kind and accessibly humorous, though perhaps not truly warm, there was always a sense of inner coolness and loneliness about him. He was soft, almost feline, and did not like personal confrontation, using the jagged edges of Marcia Williams and Joe Haines to do much of the tough work on his behalf. He loved gossip and the small change of politics, on which we whiled away many happy hours in Number 10 – in a way his kitchen cabinet staff were a substitute for his personal family with which, in my view, like many politicians, he spent too little time. He was

Wilson addressing a May Day festival in 1969.



also too often attracted to the marginalia of government, preferring to ponder over the appointment of a Bishop than have to resolve the gritty problems of British industry. This made him very human, but sometimes frustrating to work for. He could be too often distracted into trivia, especially when Marcia was putting pressure on him. He had an astonishing capacity for work when he was engaged and his mind, once of Rolls Royce calibre, still in the later years showed flashes of quicksilver. He was clever and studious in a practical way. But he was not an intellectual in the true sense, with little interest in theories, concepts or high-flown ideas. He did not follow the high arts and his cultural pleasures rarely extended beyond Gilbert and Sullivan music or an occasional thriller novel.

What I found particularly attractive was that he had absolutely no side to him, nor any of the pretensions or assumptions of grandeur that sometimes grow in high office. He had no interest in personal wealth or what it might buy and just had simple tastes in most aspects of his life. When the London media referred snootily to his liking for steak and kidney pie and tomato sauce, they were actually touching on one of his most

engaging qualities, which no amount of high office corrupted. Indeed, to the end, he remained touchingly and authentically Northern middle-class, middle-brow, provincial in the best sense of the word, and a non-conformist grammar school 'litle Englander'. He had no trace of snobbery or racism or chauvinism. He instinctively and unthinkingly treated women as equals, with no stain of the awkward and often patronising politically correct feminism which cluttered later generations. He just automatically viewed women as equal to men and advanced them accordingly in his governments as none of his contemporary leaders did in the rest of the political world.

Like all human beings (except, apparently, the hated journalists who so sanctimoniously denounced him), Wilson had faults. Indeed I saw a huge range of character, between his best, which was impressive, and his worst, which could descend to the shabby. As Tony Crosland complained to me, he could be seriously boring, especially when repeating his too familiar string of anecdotes about when, as President of the Board of Trade, he negotiated Britain's trade agreements with the Russians in 1947–49. He also boasted too much about

the 'career records' which he had achieved. He liked ticking off this list: that he had won more elections than any other twentieth-century British leader and that only Gladstone had won as many ever; and in 1974 he was very aware that he needed only two more years in office to become the longest-serving Prime Minister since Salisbury, which may be why he set himself to retire in 1976 once he had achieved that record. He also – sadly, in view of his later medical record – boasted about his phenomenal memory, though he did not trust it in my time and had to have even his smallest public statement written out for him. In this boasting, as in his delightful mischievousness, he was like a schoolboy, sometimes engagingly wicked, sometimes the boring 'swot' from the lower fifth. In my mind, I could always see him as a plump boy scout in brown khaki shorts, quoting from the Boy Scouts Code.

History will eventually write more favourably of Harold Wilson than hitherto and will respect the remarkable achievements of his political career. His personality was anyway complex, open to accusations of deviousness, and included a darkly suspicious side and a willingness to be dragged into shabby trivia which was un-

worthy of him. As a politician he eschewed dogmatism and showed a limitless flexibility in both pursuing his leadership ambitions and, when leader, in achieving his central aim of holding together a fundamentally divided party. All this left him vulnerable to accusations of being light on serious principles. He above all suffered from an inevitable failure to meet the high hopes of reform which he in particular had raised when entering Number 10.

But he was personally in many ways an engaging man and certainly an authentic product of his provincial background. He enjoyed a remarkably successful political career and in Government achieved much more than he is usually currently given credit for. He will surely be remembered and honoured in the Labour movement as an outstanding leader who held his party together in a way that probably no other contemporary colleague could have achieved for so long. It is a political record of which he could, and all in the Labour movement should, rightly be proud.

*Lord Donoghue of Ashton was the first head of the Number 10 Policy Unit. His memoir, The Heat of the Kitchen is published by Politico's.*

Tony Blair had a honeymoon lasting for years with the press and broadcasters. Harold Wilson's lasted for weeks and Clem Attlee's didn't last as long as the journey from Buckingham Palace to Downing Street to take up the reins of running a war-torn country and a shattered economy. The difference between the three Labour Prime Ministers is that Attlee didn't care what the press said because he didn't read it, on the grounds that he knew more about what was going on than the best-informed political columnist and therefore didn't need to, and the others read it too much.

Despite the dreadful press he has had over the past few months, Tony Blair has got off lightly compared to Attlee and Wilson. For Attlee, you would get a flavour of hostility if you read the daily reports of the *Lynskey Tribunal* and the events leading up to it. I lived with Wilson's. According to *The Times*, 'when his [Wilson's] lips moved, you knew he was lying.' On another occasion, under the editorship of William Rees-Mogg, a replica eighteenth-century squire whose horse had mistakenly taken a wrong turning and ended up in Fleet Street, the paper declared that 'George Brown drunk was a better man than Harold Wilson sober,' probably the most ludicrous press-political judgment ever

# joe haines Wilson and the Press

in my experience and one which only Rees-Mogg and a drunken George Brown could possibly believe. And that from a press more restrained in its language than today's. Imagined wrong-doings and scandals which weren't were regularly 'exposed', from the laughingly-ridiculous 'Wilson puts 2d on loaf' headline (when he didn't know the price was going up and had no responsibility for it) to the seriously-ridiculous: allegations that Ted Short, Wilson's deputy in his 1974-76 Government, had a secret bank account in Switzerland; Wilson's own secret account in the London office of a Swiss bank, supplied to the papers by a bank clerk going through a nervous break-down; and the Wilson signature which showed his involvement in a land deal when a moment's inquiry would have shown that the signature was a crude forgery. I have written before – and won't repeat here –

about the scandalous behaviour of the BBC in the production of *Yesterday's Men*, the largest of the multitude of blots on the BBC's record (from which Attlee was mercifully free) but, in any case, it was the press with which Wilson was principally concerned because when he was Prime Minister it set the agenda for political fevers, rather than the the broadcasters who set it today. There were occasions, especially after devaluation in 1967, when he was so bitter that he resolved to have nothing more to do with them, a personal sacrifice like an addict becoming clean. Those who talk lightly about the freedom of the press ought sometimes to consider whether that freedom can be disentangled from the freedom of a newspaper to express its proprietor's political prejudices. Wilson asked me once to define the ambit of the privacy law for which he occasionally yearned. My reply – that the private citizen

should be granted the same privacy as newspapers granted to their proprietors – was later used by him in a speech to editors, without noticeable effect.

Some of the abusive language which followed the consequences of the seamen's strike in 1966 – one of which was devaluation – was, however, partly his fault. At first, he loved the press too much, reminisced about the time when the *Guardian* offered him a job – which would not have been a wise career move for either party – and believed that he understood journalism, which is why his subsequent hurt and disappointment was so great.

“ Despite the dreadful press he has had over the past few months, Tony Blair has got off lightly compared to Attlee and Wilson ”

When Wilson first became leader of the Labour party after the death of Hugh Gaitskell, the right-wing of the party – and its journalistic cronies at the Reform Club – never forgave him. But for the ordinary journalist, and in a few cases his editor, he was refreshing because he was new and different. He had an attractive, modest wife. He had two young sons. He was witty. He knew the value of a soundbite before the word was ever constructed. He was ap-

proachable. Much though I idolised Gaitskell at that time, he had none of those Wilson attributes. Even Gaitskell's wife, Dora, shared her name with the acronym of the Defence of the Realm Act. By contrast, as a political tap-dancer, Wilson was in Fred Astaire's class. As Leader of the Opposition, Wilson would go, say, to Birmingham and make a stinging, sarcastic attack on the Tories and the crusty aristocratic society they represented; by the time the Tories replied, Wilson was, perhaps, in Manchester, denouncing employers, the businessmen, the gnomes of Zurich, the financial

hardmen who had prospered under in the Conservatives' 'thirteen wasted years', the moral corruption their rule, etc. He was always a step or two ahead of the game. It was all great fun for the press – until he became Prime Minister in October, 1964. By December, we were in an economic crisis and the press-Prime Minister rot began to set in.

Wilson enjoyed meeting the lobby – the Palace of Westminster political correspondents – in their

little eyrie above the myriad corridors of the Commons. He chatted to them freely and they listened attentively. But somehow his words, his thoughts, his meanings, never quite translated into print in the way he intended, not without a sneering clause or a cynical questioning. After a while, he grew tired of meeting the massed ranks of reporters and decided to form what became known as the 'White Commonwealth': selected, senior journalists who knew their trade, whom he knew on first-name terms (he called them by their first names, they respectfully called him 'Prime Minister') and who, above all, he could trust to tell no one of their meetings. Neither he nor his then press secretary (not me) seemed to realise that a dozen of the most eminent political editors could not suddenly disappear from the Press Gallery and then next day all have similar stories about the Government's plans without the junior, more Bolshie, reporters – the 'Black Commonwealth', so to speak – getting suspicious. I know, I was one of them. It was a duty upon all of us to expose what was happening. Wilson failed to understand that a cosy chat over a glass of claret wasn't going to influence those bent on his early destruction. Those meetings quickly ended.

My first overseas assignment with Wilson was in 1966 when I flew in his plane to Moscow. The

return flight was the first and, to date, the only time, I had champagne and fried bacon for breakfast. It was enjoyable and enticing: the unspoken message – delivered by every Prime Minister since – was that ‘I’ve made your job easy, now you do the same to me.’ After a while, after his second election victory, after his second or third economic crisis, it stopped working. One of the first steps I took when I became his press secretary in 1969 was to end those jaunts. After all, if his plane had crashed it was better for the journalists to be at the airport reporting the tragedy than to be aboard the aircraft and a part of it. I was always firmly of the view that the public role of the press secretary was to help the Prime Minister with the press and not the reverse.

During the years of opposition after the defeat in June, 1970, the press, if anything, was worse. Only the *Guardian* among the broadsheets offered limp support; only the *Daily Mirror* among the tabloids offered an enthusiastic one. The rest were hostile with little remission. Europe was a main problem. The press then (even the *Mirror*) was more enthusiastic for being part of Europe than it is today, the

Beaverbrook *Express* excepted. Wilson’s ducking and diving to prevent the party declaring outright hostility to what was then called the Common Market, brought no praise, only more enmity. In the run-up to the first general election of 1974 it reached its nadir. Wilson was written off well in advance of polling day, especially by those who superficially read opinion polls and based their mistaken judgments upon them. Few papers assigned

“During the years of opposition after the defeat in June, 1970, the press, if anything, was worse”

senior reporters to cover his campaign. Even the *Mirror* only sent John Pilger, whose interview with Wilson was an unmitigated disaster. By the time voting ended on February 28, the top reporters were gathering to in London to welcome Ted Heath’s triumph while a small group of No. 2s or less gathered in the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool, silently watching Wilson and I walking into the hotel as the polls closed, with not a question between them. An hour or so

later, they were banging (politely) on the door of Wilson’s suite asking to talk to him. Too late, I fear. As Churchill might have said: in victory, malice.

Press coverage got no better over the next few months: the involvement of Lady Falkender (Marcia Williams, his personal and private secretary) and her family in the Wigan slag heaps affair, the false allegations against Ted Short, followed by allegations against his wife and then yet

others against Bob Mellish, the chief whip, were relentless up until the second 1974 election in October.

I thought we had achieved a more relaxed approach to the press, giving them nothing and taking what we could. But as the second campaign was about to begin Wilson drafted, on the basis of rumour eagerly fed to him by newcomers to our team, a violent attack on the press, including the charge that ‘cohorts’ of journalism were running round the country try-

ing to justify false statements about him. When he showed it to me, I struck out all the inflammatory references. He promptly put them back again. The natural hostility of the press was one thing; to go out of our way to incite it to further excesses was another. It reached the point where an arrangement was made (from which Wilson and I, separately, and for different reasons, distanced ourselves) to shut down the *Daily Mail* in election week if, as the rumour-mongers persuaded him, an explosive, damaging story about his personal tax affairs was published. It never was, of course, because it didn’t exist. The reason that Harold would never have made a good journalist was that he never applied a scrupulous scrutiny to any rumour that was fed to him.

Yet the love-hate relationship between him and Fleet Street never faded. The last press occasion I attended with him after his retirement was announced was with his old friends at the *Mirror*. When, after leaving Downing Street, he went to lunch at the *Express*, he went alone.

*Joe Haines’ memoir of his time as Wilson’s Press Secretary, Glimmers of Twilight is published by Politico’s.*

jayant chavda

# Wilson's World Cup

Some of the more enduring myths in Labour history concerns the role that England's World Cup performances played in the electoral fortunes of Harold Wilson. Many people continue to believe that England's World Cup victory created a feel-good factor which Labour exploited to win the 1966 general election. The facts is that Labour was re-elected with a majority of ninety-six on 31 March, a full four months before England beat West Germany in the final at Wembley on 30 July. There's no doubt that the World Cup triumph was timely for the Labour Government. Wilson had announced painful economic measures that month and for a short period the national mood of celebration meant people forgot about the prices and wages freeze.

The other myth relates to the part that England's ejection by (ironically) West Germany in the quarter-finals of the Mexico World Cup, four days before polling day, played in the Labour Government's defeat in the

1970 general election. The Government didn't need to call an election until April 1971 but it was widely felt that it couldn't go to the polls after the expected upheaval of de-militarisation in January 1971. So the choice was between June and October 1970.

Although Roy Jenkins says in his autobiography, *A Life at the Centre*, that Wilson had told him that he had decided on 18 June 1970 as far back as 1966, there's no doubt that the timing of the World Cup (which ran from 30 May to 21 June) was a crucial factor in his final decision. A note to the Prime Minister from the Chief Whip, Bob Mellish, which was released under the thirty year rule in 2001, confirms this. In the note – dated 11 May 1970 – Mellish set out the considerations affecting the timing of the election, with the World Cup prominent among them.

England were expected to do well in Mexico '70 with many football pundits believing that the side was stronger than the one that had triumphed four years earlier. After Brazil narrowly defeated

England in their group stage encounter, Pele told Bobby Moore that he would see him again in the final. However, disaster struck for the team just before the quarter-final with West Germany on 14 June. Gordon Banks – who had made an astonishing save from a Pele header in the Brazil match – was taken ill with a stomach complaint. England were, however, cruising to victory at 2-0 when Sir Alf Ramsay decided to take Bobby Charlton off. Peter Bonetti – Banks' replacement – then failed to keep out a weak effort from Franz Beckenbauer and was off his line when Uwe Seeler headed in the German equaliser. Gerd Muller scored the winner in extra-time and England were out of the Cup.

But was it England's defeat which precipitated Labour's demise? Many, including Richard Crossman, blamed Wilson's presidential campaigning style. Crossman wrote in his diary: 'Harold's comfy, complacent, good-humoured mixing with the crowds hadn't been able to sustain itself for more than a fortnight and by the end of the sec-

ond week the voice of doom, the endless repetitive reminders of rising prices, broken promises, unfavourable trade figures, all took their toll.' The unfavourable trade figures was a reference to the May balance of trade, published three days before election day, which showed a £31m deficit. These unexpected figures were caused by the purchase of two jumbo jets for British Airways which cost £18.5m.

Other factors cited for Labour's defeat were Roy Jenkins' decision not to produce a give-away pre-election Budget; the failure of *In Place of Strife*; devaluation; and the July 1966 deflationary measures. In truth, it was probably a combination of all these factors, plus Harold Wilson's over-optimism following the May local election results, which contributed to Labour's 1970 defeat. It is highly unlikely that England's exit from Mexico '70 made any difference to voting intentions though there will always be those who will blame the bug in Gordon Banks' stomach.

Harold Wilson once said, 'Have you noticed that we only win the World Cup under a Labour Government.' The heroics of Jonny Wilkinson and company have ensured that this statement continues to remain true.

john grievé smith

# The DEA

## Wilson's Economic Revolution?

### ORIGINS

The Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) was very much Harold Wilson's personal creation. He favoured the idea of a new planning department even before he became leader of the Labour Party in February 1963.<sup>1</sup> The concept of planning had changed radically since 1945. In the early post-war years, when goods were still in short supply, planning and controls, or rationing, went together. As far as essential goods were concerned they reflected the idea of 'fair shares' as contrasted to 'rationing by the purse'. In the wider economic field, planning and controls enabled governments to give priority to essential investment and the export drive. 'Planning' also had a resonance for some on the left because it was a fundamental feature of the 'Socialist' economies in

the Communist bloc. But this form of what the French called *dirigiste* planning became less and less relevant as post-war shortages eased and demand no longer exceeded supply.

By the 1960s the success of the post-war French economy, and the feeling that we were being left behind by the rate of growth of other European economies, had made 'indicative' planning fashionable across the political spectrum. It was the Tory Government in 1961 that set up the National Economic Development Council (NEDC) with representatives of employers, trade unions and governments as a forum (outside the Government machine) to encourage industrial growth. The basic concept here was that if everyone could agree on a common national plan, industry and government would invest accordingly and

the planned rate of growth would be achieved.

### ORGANISATION

Establishing a new department was intended to bring planning into the heart of the government machine where it could play a central role in the formation and execution of economic policy, and serve as a counterweight to the Treasury which was distrusted as having a deflationary bias. Thomas Balogh, Wilson's economic *confidante*, is widely credited with making the first specific proposals as to what the new department's remit should be. He prepared a paper in May 1963 which proposed splitting the Treasury into a new Ministry of Expansion or Production and a Finance Department.<sup>2</sup> Wilson took a more cautious view and sought advice from a variety of people with more direct experience of the government

machine. The key group was a Fabian working party under the Chairmanship of Robert Neild (who was to become Economic Adviser to the Treasury after the election) and of which Tony Crosland and the author were a members.

Our report on *The Machinery of Economic Policy* proposed that the Ministry of Planning should be responsible for national and regional planning, the 'hard core' of which would be the investment programmes for public and private investment, where it would coordinate the work of the Production Departments responsible – especially those responsible for the nationalized industries, hitherto a key Treasury function. The Treasury would remain responsible for fiscal and monetary policy and public expenditure, but would no longer be the sole or dominant department in the economic policy field.

In the event, the respective responsibilities of the two departments were not finally agreed until the DEA had been in existence for some months. The *Concordat* of December 1964 emphasized the need for close cooperation between the two departments, particularly on eco-

conomic analysis, forecasting, and public expenditure programmes, but with the Treasury remaining responsible for public expenditure and finance. When the *Concordat* was circulated to senior members of the DEA staff, it was accompanied by



George Brown,  
'First Secretary  
at the DEA.

a minute from George Brown to the Head of the Civil Service (Sir Laurence Helsby) stating that differences of opinion were liable to arise between the DEA and the Treasury in the field of public expenditure and

neither department should have the exclusive right to make the final decision; but such differences should so far as possible be settled by bilateral talks between the two departments at an appropriate level.

Despite the delay in getting formal agreement to its remit, the DEA was in action within days of the election. As expected, George Brown was appointed to head the department with the title of 'First Secretary', in effect Deputy Prime Minister, thus giving him comparable status to Jim Callaghan, the Chancellor of the Exchequer – a move generally supposed to safeguard Wilson's position by creating a stand-off between his two most probable successors. Tony Crosland was appointed Minister of State and Bill Rodgers and Maurice Foley Under Secretaries. Eric Roll was made Permanent Secretary; Fred Catherwood became Chief Industrial Adviser; Donald MacDougall moved over from the NEDC as Director General in charge of planning, with John Jukes as his deputy, and Arthur Peterson was deputy secretary in charge of regional policy. At the start, Douglas Allen (later Lord Croham) from the

Treasury was temporarily in charge until Roll came back from Washington and succeeded him as Permanent Secretary in 1966. The remainder of the staff were rapidly recruited from the NEDC, industry, other outside sources and a variety of government departments.

#### DEVALUATION

Economic policy throughout the life of the DEA was dominated by the problem of sterling and the balance of payments. Virtually all the economists who advised future Labour Ministers in the run up to the election (except Balogh) were in favour of devaluation. We saw this as an essential step to improving the balance of payments without resort to continual deflationary packages in the face of sterling crises with a consequent loss of growth. The decision made by the new Prime Minister and his two key colleagues within hours of taking office not to devalue cast a shadow over the whole project of planning for faster growth. Wilson appears to have been influenced by fear that devaluation would both be politically damaging and create loss of confidence in financial circles. He also referred later to the real burden on

our resources of the terms of trade effect (i.e. if we had to export more to buy a given volume of imports.) Instead the new Government met the crisis they had inherited with a package of measures, including an import surcharge, hotly contested by our trading partners. There was a further sterling crisis in July 1966 which led the Chancellor to respond with a deflationary package, but sterling eventually had to be devalued in November 1967.

#### THE NATIONAL PLAN

The centre piece of the DEA's work was the National Plan, published in September 1965 (after what seemed to me, as its editor, a very long twelve months. Its fundamental target or assumption, carried over from the work of the NEDC, was that national output would grow by twenty-five per cent between 1964 and 1970. The Plan was published after extensive discussion in what now seems the surprisingly short time of only twelve months (in September 1965) – but at the time seemed an eternity!

It included a 'Check List of Action Required' setting out what needed to be done and the bodies responsible for doing it. This did not, how-

ever, include the most critical requirement of all, the ability of the Treasury to follow demand management policies consonant with this rate of growth. In the event balance of payments crises precluded that and growth in the six year period was only fourteen per cent. Nevertheless the DEA followed a vigorous industrial, or 'supply side', policy (not something first created by New Labour!) including the creation of the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation (IRC) to promote greater efficiency through rationalization.

Regional planning was seen as an important element in national planning. As part of the new planning machinery, the Government created a series of Regional Economic Planning Councils with nominated members, supported by boards of civil servants with a DEA chairman. The scope for increasing manpower by providing more jobs in the less prosperous areas of the country was then very much less than it is today, but the Plan suggested that the numbers employed could be increased by 200,000 in this way. A feature of planning work at that time (which is notably lacking today) was to look at the regional distribu-

tion of population, employment and housing in the context of an integrated national picture, rather than considering different regions in isolation.

#### PRICES AND INCOMES POLICY

If inflation was to be kept in check without resort to deflationary measures, it was necessary to ensure wage restraint either by voluntary means, or as a last resort, a statutory prices and incomes policy. The achievement of such a policy was a prime concern of the DEA and one in which George Brown himself was heavily involved – to what he later regarded as the detriment of other aspects of policy. The first step in December 1964 was to get the agreement of unions, and employers to the 'Statement of Intent' setting up broad policy objectives. This was followed by discussion on the machinery needed to achieve this and the principals on which it should operate. These were set out in the 1965 White Paper on Prices and Incomes Policy, and the National Board for Prices and Incomes was set up under the Chairmanship of a former Conservative MP, Aubrey Jones. The July 1966 sterling crisis led to a six

month freeze on wages, salaries dividends and prices followed by a further six months of severe restraint.

#### DECLINE

By that time George Brown had become convinced that devaluation was essential. But although he had some key supporters in the Cabinet, devaluation was ruled out. The Government announced a further package of deflationary measures in July 1966, and what had become the inevitable devaluation did not take place until November 1967. In August 1966 Wilson moved Brown (who had earlier threatened to resign but been dissuaded from doing so) to the Foreign office, swapping places with Michael Stewart. That was effectively the end of the DEA, although it lingered on with Peter Shore taking over in August 1967 then with Wilson himself as First Secretary until it was finally wound up in October 1969. But well before then it was clear that the National Plan was dead.

#### VERDICT

Wilson said later that he did not regret the decision to establish the DEA and it had achieved a good deal, particularly in the fields of indus-

trial modernization and regional planning, but it had not (as he had hoped) presented an adequate offset to the Treasury.<sup>3</sup> Brown referred to it as "a social revolution that failed" – "orthodox financial control won".<sup>4</sup> It might be said that the irony was that it was the Treasury's economic policies that failed, but the DEA that paid the price. But one can only really pass judgment on the Government's economic policy as a whole, and in so far as that failed to achieve faster growth, it was ultimately the responsibility of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet as a whole.

- 1 *The Labour Government 1964–70: A Personal Record*, Harold Wilson (Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1971)
- 2 *Out of the Wilderness: Tony Benn Diaries 1963–67* (Hutchinson 1987)
- 3 Op cit
- 4 *In My Way*, George Brown (Gollancz 1971)

*The author would like to thank Sir Fred Catherwood, Lord Croham, Sir Donald MacDougall, Robert Neild and Lord Roll for help in preparing this article, although they are in no way responsible for the result.*

*John Grieve Smith is a Fellow of Robinson College, Cambridge and was Assistant Director of Planning in the DEA.*

# hazel blears

## What can the Co-operators Teach us Today

So often we talk about the co-operative movement in the past tense. It is right that the spirit and vision of the early co-operators, and Robert Owen in particular, are the subject of study, discussion, and commemoration. But I believe that the co-operative movement is more than a historical artefact. It is a living, breathing movement, and within it are the values which should drive today's politics. In the co-operative movement, I believe we find the values which should inform, not just economic organisation, but also social and political organisation.

The ideas that inspired the co-operative founders, or 'pioneers', were a direct reaction to the social and economic upheavals of the 1840s.

Co-operators are sometimes branded 'utopian', often in the pejorative sense of the word. We are dismissed as idle, or even naïve, dreamers, who do not understand our fellow man and woman.

But there was nothing 'utopian' about the industrial workers who banded together

in this mid-Victorian period to form the co-operative movement, firstly in Rochdale in 1844, and then throughout urban and agricultural Britain.

For them, co-operation was a matter of life and death; a practical attempt to create a better life for themselves.

Their times were tough and unforgiving. The decade was known as the 'hungry forties'. Malnutrition and starvation were commonplace, and not only in Ireland during the potato famine. The 1840s were a period of huge political and economic turmoil. The industrial revolution had created both the greatest wealth and the greatest misery the world had ever seen. The factory system had destroyed traditional communities, jobs and patterns of work and leisure. Cities were sprawling, with little planning or strategic thinking about the human costs.

You may think the internet is having a big impact. It is nothing compared to the steam engine!

Friedrich Engels wrote, when he was just twenty-four years old, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* the

same year the Rochdale Pioneers started their co-op –1844.

He describes the horrors of the rapidly industrialising northern cities. My own city of Salford he describes as 'wretched, damp, filthy cottages, that the streets which surround them are usually in the most miserable and filthy condition, laid out without the slightest reference to ventilation, with reference solely to the profit secured by the contractor'.

As well as poor environmental conditions, the workers' food and drink was dirty, adulterated and expensive. There's an old Labour movement song about 'the man who waters the workers' beer'. There was a lot worse than water used in workers' daily food and drink.

In 1844, the Sessions of Court for Rochdale show a pattern of fines for food retailers using false measures to defraud their customers:

*16 June four dealers fined ten shillings for using light weights.*

*19 June one dealer fined five shillings.*

*13 July nine dealers fined.*

*24 July four dealers fined ten to twenty shillings.*

And these were just the ones getting caught.

So the Rochdale Pioneers were not utopian dreamers or idle philosophers. They were practical, imaginative men of action.

They knew the retailers were ripping them off; they knew the factory owners who employed them (most were weavers) were exploiting them through long hours and low pay; they knew the jerry-builders who built their homes were jeopardising their health.

And so the co-operative idea was a reaction against their own conditions and a reaction against the dominant economic contemporary theory of laissez-faire.

Today we might call them 'social entrepreneurs' or even proponents of 'direct action'.

The values which underpinned the co-op in Toad Lane, Rochdale and which underpin all subsequent co-operatives, from Sweden to Swindon, from the Kibbutz to the corner shop, are what give

the co-operative movement a lasting relevance.

Those values might be summarised as:

- a belief in democracy;
- a desire for equality;
- a belief in social responsibility;
- a desire to trade fairly at home and abroad;
- a concern for the environment, the community, and the wider world.

These co-operative values are also shared by socialists, who would see them applied to all areas of life. It is no coincidence that the followers of Robert Owen, the father of British co-operation were not only known as ‘Owenites’ but also ‘socialists’ – the first time this word appears in England.

Perhaps the most radical, important and lasting concept behind co-operation is the idea that people are shaped their environment, education, and the wider society. Even today, this is a dangerous idea to those with power and property. It challenges existing inequalities and patterns of ownership, and drives a stake through the heart of the idea of ‘a social order’ or ‘class system’ which would always have rich and poor. The pioneers of co-operation did not want to just be shopkeepers. They did-

not just want to be able to do you a good deal on a Ford Mondeo and supply an affordable funeral. They wanted to change the world, in the most literal sense of those words. By creating an alternative to capitalism, they wanted to create a co-operative community, in which the true human spirit can be liberated. Hence the concern, not just with retail, but with education, housing and building, and even whole ‘co-operative villages’.

The idea that your lot in life is not decided by your own weaknesses or foibles, or that the social order is not determined by unchallengeable market forces or even divine providence, is the great challenging, radical, civilising idea of the age. It’s a heady idea – and it means that through social activism and politics, we can master our destiny and make a real difference. So the values of co-operation, vital to the Rochdale Pioneers and Robert Owen, are vital to us today. Vital, because as well as dreamers, the co-operators were builders.

One of the great tensions at the heart of progressive politics in the hundred years of Labour’s existence has been between centralisers and decentralisers. Some – from the Webbs to Herbert Morrison to Harold Wilson – have seen big,

powerful, centralised agencies of the state as the most effective way to deliver social services. The NHS is the best example of the centralised system. But there is another historical Labour tradition, which I believe needs dusting down and putting back into the heart of government – namely the tradition of local action, social activism, devolved services, and local democratic control. The co-op stands of course in this latter tradition, but so do the pioneers of local government, the Poplar councillors and the municipal ‘gas and water’ socialists, and the Guild Socialists of G. D. H. Cole.

This is my politics. A belief that local people have the wit and wisdom to control their own affairs, run their own lives, and make their own decisions, without the state breathing down their neck. This tradition stands against the overarching state, but is distinct from the Tory of idea of sink or swim and social Darwinism. I explored these ideas in my recent Fabian Society pamphlet *Communities in Control*. They have a huge impact on the way we think about local services, including health, education, leisure services, policing, transport, and social services. The co-operative ideal – sometimes also known as the mutual ide-

al – can be applied across the public services, giving ownership to local people. This is a version of ‘common ownership’ that Labour can adopt with confidence. We can be the party of government, without being the party of the establishment. We can win power at the ballot box in order to give it away to the people.

In 1944, to mark one hundred years of co-operation, the socialist and Fabian G. D. H. Cole wrote a sweeping history of the co-op. He concluded:

*The co-operative movement has cause to be proud of its hundred years of democratic development; but in a rapidly changing world which is on the eve of vast further technical and social advances, it can by no means afford to be complacent, or to stand still.*

His words then ring true today. So it is right that students of Labour history study the co-operative movement, read its histories and visit its museums. But for socialists, co-operation is best discussed in the present and future tenses.

*Hazel Blears is MP for Salford, Minister of State at the Home Office, and a member of Labour’s NEC. She is author of Communities in Control: Public Services and Local Socialism.*

# Obituaries



## Gareth Williams

MATTHEW  
SEWARD

The Labour Party has too often lost major figures at the peak of their careers – one thinks of Hugh Gaitskell, Tony Crosland, John Smith and Donald Dewar. Just prior to last year's Labour Party Conference, Gareth Williams, Labour's Leader in the House of Lords, died suddenly.

His death came as a great shock to all those who knew him. The Prime Minister described him as 'a politician at the height of his powers who played as always a full role in cabinet discussions on Thursday. It will be hard for his cabinet colleagues and his many friends within and outside politics to accept that we will not see him again.' John Prescott said: 'It's hard to believe that we won't hear his humour and good sense again.'

Gareth was born in a taxi in North Wales in 1941. His was a modest background, one to which he alluded, quoting Yeats, following protestations from the hereditary peers faced with expulsion from the House of Lords in 1998:

*My own father was a village school-teacher. His father was gassed in the First World War and could not, therefore, work properly thereafter. His father, my father's grandfather, remembered the evictions in West Wales of tenant farmers because they voted according to their consciences in parliamentary elections before the secret ballot Act of 1870 was passed. They were evicted from their homes and their farms and many of them had to emigrate. They were back-country people. They lived unremarked, though not unremarkable, lives, and I take up the noble Lord's words, of duty and service. There are millions like them in our country today. All I would say is this: "they are no petty people."*

House of Lords *Hansard*,  
15 Oct 1998, cols 1164–65

Gareth got into his local grammar school and won a scholarship to Cambridge, where as a law student he was a direct contemporary of Michael Howard, Ken Clarke and John Gummer. Although Gareth variously worked as a bus conductor, in an amusement arcade and as a teacher,

his first love was the law. His first experience in the public eye was acting in the Jeremy Thorpe case and he went on to be one of the country's top barristers, with particular specialisation in media and libel cases involving personalities as varied as Elton John, Graeme Souness and Michael Jackson.

He left this successful career to join Labour's front-bench in the Lords in 1992. Working as a minister in the Home Office and Attorney General in Labour's first term, he joined the Cabinet as Leader of the House of Lords after the 2001 election.

In this role his principal responsibilities concerned reform of the Lords, seeing through Labour's programme of legislation and speaking on Northern Ireland matters. But it is also gratifying that Gareth lived to see action taken on two of the causes personally most important to him – a Children's Commissioner, and a separate Supreme Court and Judicial Appointments Commission.

On the Lords' first sitting day after Gareth's death, the House joined in paying tributes. Speaking of her former deputy, ex-leader Margaret Jay quoted a contribution of his during the debates on the

House of Lords Act. Gareth had made clear his objection to the principle of the hereditary peers' presence, but also his understanding of the hurt and disappointment that they might feel. He finished by remarking:

*I mentioned that I worked in Wales for a time. When I was there I tried to guess at the hurt, disappointment and bewilderment of miners who were dispossessed of their daily work, their loyal communities, friendships, homes and prospects. Disappointment and enforced change come to us all, and those I know and care for in those mining communities are certainly not strangers to them. That is not to oppose ignobly the disappointment of one class of our fellow citizens against the disappointment of another. It is stating, I hope gently and with understanding, the fact that change must come to every one of us. The noble Earl, Lord Arran, spoke of the continuous service over centuries. I accept that. But continuous service over the centuries grants in our world no eternal freehold on a particular position. It grants no wand to wave to give power, position, influence and privilege to the sons and daughters.*

House of Lords *Hansard*,  
30 Mar 1999, col 426

Gareth Williams was only the third Cabinet minister to

die in office in the last half century, following Tony Crosland in 1977 and Iain Macleod in 1970. Politically intelligent and radical, personally entertaining and witty, he continues to be missed by his many friends both inside and outside the party.

*Matthew Seward was Special Adviser to Lord Williams from 2001 to 2003.*



## Don Concannon

TAM DALYELL

Some Members of Parliament are important in the Commons and in the Government to an extent out of all proportion to their public media persona. Don Concannon was far from a household name; yet in the Commons this 6ft 5in ex-lance corporal in the Coldstream Guards and representative of the Nottinghamshire miners was

a figure of considerable importance.

As a whip from 1968 until 1974, both in government and in opposition, he was a central figure in the Parliamentary Labour Party. Thousands of times I heard it said that 'you'd better clear it with Don'. As a Northern Ireland minister in the 1970s, he was extremely effective.

John Dennis Concannon – no one called him either John or Dennis – was brought up outside Doncaster and educated at Rossington Secondary School, later taking an extramural degree at Nottingham University. Originally a national serviceman, he found that he liked being in the Guards so much that he opted to stay with the regiment until 1953, when he became a miner. He left regular service only because he became married to Iris Wilson and found that service life did not chime with matrimony. During his time in the Guards he served in Libya and Cyprus and in 1950 became a lance corporal.

The circumstances of Concannon's selection and election to the House of Commons in June 1966 were unique. In 1964 Bernard Taylor, who had rep-

resented Mansfield since a by-election in 1941, defeated Kenneth Clarke by 29,055 votes to 10,021 votes, with a Liberal obtaining 6,628. The election was well into the second week of the campaign when Taylor suddenly announced, to everyone's surprise and consternation, that he was retiring.

There was no Labour candidate for the seat. Hurriedly a selection conference was cobbled together and the candidate chosen was Concannon, who had been on the Mansfield Borough Council since 1963 and was a branch official of the National Union of Mine Workers at Rufford Colliery in Nottinghamshire. It was literally true that he was working at the coal face for his last shift only a fortnight before he became a Member of Parliament for an impregnable Labour seat.

Concannon's interest in the services was exemplified by his maiden speech on 10 May 1966 on second reading of the Reserve Forces Bill, when he said:

*I was in the Coldstream Guards for six years, so now all the Guardsmen are no longer to be found on the opposite [Conservative] side of the House. I have been a Class B Reservist for*

*six years and a Territorial for another eight years.*

He displayed a ready wit in repartee. He was the first person to give Michael Heseltine the sobriquet of 'Tarzan'. And I vividly remember when Sir Gerald Nabarro, bewhiskered MP for Kidderminster, at his most portentous in rhetorical flow, declaimed: 'And why do you think I have this miner's lantern in my lapel?' Quick as a flash, Concannon shouted across the chamber: 'Because they've run out of canaries!' The House collapsed with laughter. Even Nabarro was reduced to a broad grin.

None of his contemporaries was surprised that John Silkin, then the newly appointed Government Chief Whip, should bring Concannon into the whips' office, after only a bare eighteen months on the back benches. In 1970, with Labour coming into opposition, Harold Wilson, aware that it was good for the party's image to have a champion of the services, made Concannon a senior whip, and for a brief period in 1974 on Labour's return to government he became Vice-Chamberlain of the Royal Household. I am told by a

friend in the Palace that the Queen was tickled pink by having such a good-natured Coldstream Guardsman as the MP with the duty of writing out in longhand the précis of the day's events in the House of Commons which he presented to her each evening. Certain it is that, in my forty years, no Vice-Chamberlain of the Household performing his ceremonial duties of proceeding from the bar to the mace has done it as impressively as Concannon.

When he first came into the House of Commons, on account of Irish ancestry, he was one of the few to express concern about the situation in Northern Ireland. His great friend Kevin McNamara, MP for Hull, was active in the campaign for democracy in Ulster, which pointed out the grievances of the minority that existed in Northern Ireland and urged the Government to do something about it. One of Concannon's formative experiences was to be taken by Kevin McNamara and Sir Patrick Duffy (with whom he then shared a flat in London, John Ellis and Neil Kinnock making up the quintet in the house of Anne Swingle) on a fact-finding visit to Northern Ireland.

Appointed Under-Secretary of State in the Northern Ireland Office in 1974, then Minister of State from 1976, Concannon bore the brunt of flying backwards and forwards from Belfast to London as the Labour majority of five, and then three, dwindled to minus one. As the minister responsible for industrial development he championed the case of the DeLorean car factory which, along with Roy Mason, he passionately believed would bring jobs to Belfast and, with the jobs, an improvement in his second responsibility, that of security. Scrupulously loyal to Mason, Concannon was really a constitutional nationalist in my opinion, who wanted a link between the north and south of Ireland and got on particularly well with Brian Lenihan, then the Foreign Minister in Dublin. I believe that Concannon was genuinely distressed when he was asked to go and tell Bobby Sands that the Labour government would not support him in his hunger strike.

Before the critical vote which brought down the Labour government in March 1979, Concannon was despatched to find his friend Frank Maguire, the inde-

pendent member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, in his pub. Concannon succeeded in getting Maguire to London but, because of a last-minute agreement with the Unionists, neither Maguire nor Gerry Fitt could be induced to support the government. The Callaghan administration fell.

In opposition Concannon was for a short time responsible on the front bench for defence, returning to responsibility for Northern Ireland in late 1980. His political career really came to an end on a tragic night in 1985 when, coming off the motorway slip road, he crashed under a lorry that was doing an unlawful U-turn. He suffered terrible whiplash and related tinnitus. He wished to retire straight away, claiming that he could no longer do the job of a MP, but was persuaded by his erstwhile flat-mate Neil Kinnock to hold off until the general election.

In recent years Concannon did excellent work as a member of the Commonwealth War Graves Com-

*Reprinted by permission from The Independent, Obituaries, 19 December 2003.*

*Tam Dabzell is Member of Parliament for Linlithgow.*

#### LORD DORMAND OF EASINGTON

Jack Dormand died on 19 December 2003, aged 84. He was Labour MP for Easington 1970–87. He was an Assistant Government Whip in 1974, a Lord Commissioner of HM Treasury and Government Whip 1974–79 and an Opposition Whip 1979–81. He was Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party 1981–87, and Labour Peers' Representative on the Parliamentary Committee (Shadow Cabinet) 1994–97. He was created a life peer in 1987.

#### LORD GALLACHER

John Gallacher died on 4 January 2004, aged 83. He was Secretary of the International Co-operative Alliance 1963–67, Parliamentary Secretary of the Co-operative Union 1974–83 and President of the Institute of Meat 1983–86. He was an Opposition Whip 1985–92 and Opposition frontbench spokesperson for Agriculture, Food, Forestry and Fisheries 1987–97. He was created a life peer in 1982.

#### LORD HARDY OF WATH DL

Peter Hardy died on 14 December 2003, aged 72. He was Labour MP for Rother Valley 1970–83 and for Wentworth 1983–97. He was a member of Wathupon-Dearne Urban District Council 1960–70 and its Chairman 1968–69. He was President of Wath-upon-Dearne Labour Party 1960–68, contested Scarborough and Whitby in 1964 and Sheffield Hallam in 1966. He was Parliamentary Private Secretary to Tony Crosland as Environment and Foreign Secretary 1974–77 and to David Owen as Foreign Secretary 1977–79. Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party Energy Committee, 1974–92, he was a member of the UK delegation to the Council of Europe and Western European Union 1976–97. He was created a life peer and a Deputy Lieutenant of South Yorkshire in 1997.

#### LORD ISLYWN DL

Roy Hughes died on 19 December 2003, aged 78. He was Labour MP for Newport 1966–83 and for Newport East 1983–97. He was Parliamentary Private Secretary to Fred Mulley as Minister of Transport 1974–75, was a member of the Speaker's Panel 1982–84 and 1991–97 and Opposition Spokesman on Welsh Affairs 1984–88. He was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Gwent in 1992 and created a life peer in 1997.

#### LORD JENKINS OF PUTNEY

Hugh Jenkins died on 26 January 2004, aged 95. He was Labour MP for Putney 1964–79.

Working for the Prudential Assurance Company 1930–40 including as an Assistant-Superintendent 1935–40, he served in the Royal Observer Corps from 1938 and with the Royal Air Force Fighter Command 1941–45. He was seconded to the Government of Burma as Director of English Programmes for Rangoon Radio 1945–46, was Research and Publicity Officer for the National Union of Bank Employees 1946–50, its Greater London Organiser 1947–48 and Editor of *The Bank Officer* 1948, and Assistant Secretary 1950–57 and Assistant General Secretary 1957–64 of the British Actors' Equity Association. He contested Enfield West in 1950 and Mitcham in 1955, was Labour member for Stoke Newington and Hackney North on the London County Council 1958–65, and was Opposition Spokesperson for the Arts 1973–74, Minister for the Arts 1974–76 and Opposition Spokesperson for the Arts 1981–83. He was Chairman of the H Bomb Campaign Committee 1954, Chairman of Victory for Socialism 1956–60, and Chairman 1979–81 and Vice-President 1981–2004 of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. He was Deputy Chairman 1977–79, Director 1979–86, Consultant 1986–2004 and Life President 1995–2004 of the Theatres Trust and Joint Secretary 1963, Chairman 1964–74 and 1976–86, Vice-President 1986–95 and President 1996–2004 of the Theatres' Advisory Council. He was created a life peer in 1981.

#### BOB MITCHELL

Bob Mitchell died on 18 September 2003, aged 76. He was Labour MP for Southampton Test 1966–70 and for Southampton Itchen 1971–81, then SDP MP for the seat 1981–83. He worked as a mathematics teacher until 1966 when elected to Parliament. He served as member of the European Parliament 1975–79, of the Bureau of the European Socialist Group 1976–79 and of the Speaker's Panel of Chairmen 1979–83. He contested Southampton Itchen for the SDP in 1983 and the SDP/Alliance in 1987, and was Lecturer in Business Studies at Eastleigh College of Further Education 1984–93.

#### LORD SCANLON

Hugh Scanlon died on 27 January 2004, aged 90. He was President of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers 1968–78. He was Divisional Organiser in Manchester for the Amalgamated Engineering Union 1947–63 and member of its Executive Council in London 1963–67. He was a member of the Trades Union Congress General Council, 1968–78 and of its

Economic Committee 1968–78, a member of the National Economic Development Council from 1971, of the Metrication Board 1973–78, of the British Gas Corporation 1976–82, of the National Enterprise Board 1977–79, and of the Government Committee of Inquiry into the Teaching of Mathematics in Primary and Secondary Schools in England and Wales in 1978. He was Chairman of the Engineering Industry Training Board 1975–82, Vice-President of the International Metalworkers' Federation 1969–78 and President of the European Metal Workers' Federation 1974–78. He was created a life peer in 1979.

#### LORD WALKER OF DONCASTER DL

Sir Harold Walker died on 11 November 2003, aged 76. He was Labour MP for Doncaster 1964–83 and for Doncaster Central 1983–97. He served in the Royal Navy 1946–48. He was appointed an Assistant Government Whip 1967–68, Joint Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Employment and Productivity 1968–70, opposition spokesman on industrial relations 1970–74, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Employment 1974–76, Minister of State in the department 1976–79 and opposition spokesman on employment 1979–83. He was Chairman of Ways and Means and Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons 1983–92. He was sworn of the Privy Council in 1979, knighted in 1992 and appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of South Yorkshire and created a life peer in 1997.

#### LORD WALLACE OF COSLANY

George Wallace died on 11 November 2003, aged 97. He was Labour MP for Chislehurst 1945–50 and for Norwich North 1964–February 1974. He was the oldest member of the House of Lords. He was a member of Chislehurst-Sidcup Urban District Council 1937–46, served with Number 11 Group of the Royal Air Force Fighter Command 1941–45 and was a member of Kent County Council 1952–57. A junior government whip 1947–50, he was Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Lord President of the Council (Herbert Bowden) 1964–65, to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs (Arthur Bottomley) in 1965 and to the Minister of State at the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (Tony Greenwood) 1967–68. He was a member of the Speaker's Panel of Chairmen 1970–74, a Lord in Waiting and Government Whip 1977–79 and an opposition spokesman and Whip 1979–84. He was created a life peer in 1974.

# Book Reviews

## From Bevan to Blair: Fifty Years Reporting from the Political Frontline

Geoffrey Goodman  
Pluto Press £20.00

JAYANT CHAVDA

---

In the preface to *From Bevan to Blair*, Geoffrey Goodman outlines the reason for writing his memoir: 'I believe the picture I am presenting here is different. This story is a reflection of the century we have just left behind: a reflection of life for a working class, under-educated, certainly under-privileged boy who, through the Depression years and the Second World War, somehow found a pathway into journalism and political life.'

Goodman has more than justified his decision by producing a marvellous volume, which combines social, industrial and political history with a fascinating glimpse into life in Fleet Street during its glory days. We get to revisit some of the key political events of the last fifty years: Aneurin Bevan's 'naked into the conference chamber' speech; the election of the Wilson Government in 1964; *In Place of Strife*; the three day week; the winter of discontent; and the 1984–85 miner's strike. We also get to

hear Goodman's shrewd insights into the likes of Hugh Cudlipp, George Woodcock, Jim Callaghan, Willie Whitelaw and Robert Maxwell.

What distinguished Goodman as a political and industrial correspondent was his empathy with the Labour movement. He understood its values, symbols and traditions. He was also friends with some of the leading figures in the movement, including Aneurin Bevan, Michael Foot and Jack Jones. This enabled Goodman to interpret events with intelligence and sympathy. He is particularly instructive on *In Place of Strife*, where he lays the blame for the White Paper's failure on the Government's tactics rather than the principle of reforming the trade unions.

Goodman is also excellent on politics in the 1970s, capturing the decade's chaos and decay vividly. He is scrupulously fair in his judgement on that era's main protagonists: Harold Wilson and Edward Heath. According to Goodman, Wilson was "an outstanding leader of the Labour Party, with an immensely astute feel for what the British voter would stand for." Goodman believes that Heath, following his u-turn

in 1972, was absolutely sincere in his efforts to work constructively with the unions to solve the economic issues which were facing Britain. The union leaders of the time – such as Jack Jones – have concurred with this view.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the book is the section which deals with the demise of the *Daily Herald* (where Goodman worked as industrial correspondent), and its transformation into the Sun. Initially, the *Mirror* Group, which had owned the *Herald*, kept the *Sun* as part of its stable. But in 1969 it sold the paper to Rupert Murdoch and the rest is history. The *Mirror* was overtaken by the *Sun* as Britain's biggest selling tabloid. And the type of intelligent, popular journalism, pioneered by Hugh Cudlipp's *Mirror*, disappeared too. It really was the end of an era.

Geoffrey Goodman has been true to the words in his preface by writing a unique account. Anyone who is interested in the social and political history of the last fifty years will find this book an exceedingly rewarding read.

*Jayant Chavda is Secretary of the Labour History Group.*

**Red Queen:**  
**The Authorised Biography**  
**of Barbara Castle**

Anne Perkins

Macmillan £20.00

STUART THOMSON

---

To many, Barbara Castle is the personification of the conviction politician – battling hard for the causes she held dear. To a younger generation, she was the hammer of the (soft) left who gave New Labour a bloody nose over its pensions policy and roused the party conference and numerous fringe meetings with her calls for a restoration of earnings-linked pensions.

But to others still, she was the politician unceremoniously dumped from the Cabinet when Callaghan took over from Wilson as Prime Minister. A criticism frequently levelled at Castle was that she was too close to Wilson for too long.

In the 1950s, Castle had proved her credentials in the party beyond doubt as an effective and convinced member of the Bevanite brigade. In Government with Wilson in the 1960s, however, she was part of an administration which disappointed many in the party. Eventually her political reputation suffered

near-fatal damage in the *In Place of Strife* débâcle. Her proposals to curb the power of the trade unions was beaten by a combination of Cabinet and union opposition which left Castle and Wilson hanging in the air and undoubtedly contributed to the electoral defeat of 1970. Depending on how revisionist one wishes to be, her proposals were either a missed opportunity which would have prevented the Thatcherite juggernaut and reformed the unions in line with socialist priorities, or were an ill-judged and ill-timed set of reforms which no one liked. It took much personal and political courage by Castle to rehabilitate herself in the 1974 government and she made several notable and lasting contributions to society in this period.

This book covers much of the conviction of Castle the person and the politician. The political blood which undoubtedly pumped through her veins appears to have provided much of her vigour, staying power and sometimes sheer bloody-mindedness. Perkins' book is very strong in examining the major events of Castle's life, especially the political ones, and the casual observer may come to the book for this reason. Those though wanting to know more about

Castle the person may be left wanting a little more about her early and later life. Castle was so much more than a Member of Parliament and this could come across more strongly in places.

The release of a book like this gives everyone a chance to recall their favourite story about Barbara Castle. Mine is seeing her arrive late at a Tribune rally and join the platform mid-way through a speech by, the then Shadow Chancellor, Gordon Brown. The applause grew louder and the cheers rose up, but only when a puzzled Brown turned round to see the approaching Castle, did he realise that he had been truly upstaged. Castle, it appears, had a habit of doing that! She knew how to work an audience, she could be cutting and could scythe anyone down with a withering comment. Not a skill that many politicians today have.

*Dr Stuart Thomson is a public affairs and communications consultant with DLA Upstream and is the author of several books including New Activism and the Corporate Response, The Social Democratic Dilemma and the Dictionary of Labour Quotations.*



Barbara Castle, July 1974.

## The Diaries of A. L. Rowse

Richard Ollard (ed)  
Penguin £9.99

PETER CLARK

---

Why is it that the best political diaries are by personally unattractive individuals? Chips Channon, Alan Clark and Woodrow Wyatt were – as a charitable observer might say – deeply flawed individuals, but their diaries are compulsive reading. A diarist has, to some extent, to be self-obsessed. Prejudice, snobbery and bitchiness add piquancy to their narrative of events.

A. L. Rowse (1903–1997) was a poet, historian and erstwhile politician. He trod the familiar twentieth-century path from left to right, rubbed shoulders with leading politicians from the 1920s, and personally knew literary luminaries of the twentieth century from Arthur Quiller-Couch to A. N. Wilson.

He came from a very poor Cornish family and won scholarships to the local grammar school and to Oxford. In 1925 when he was twenty-one he was elected Fellow of All Souls, where he sipped port and exchanged banter with Viceroy, Archbishops and Cabinet Ministers. He was active in the Oxford Labour politics of the

G. D. H. Cole era, and in the General Elections of 1931 and 1935 was Labour candidate for Penrhyn and Falmouth. Rowse recommended that Michael Foot succeed him. He was the author of books, primarily on British Tudor history, but also on Cornwall, the Churchill family and Shakespeare. He wrote four volumes of poetry, published several volumes of autobiography, and books on writers who captured his interest – Marlowe, Byron, Matthew Arnold and W. H. Auden. In the 1960s he confronted a student demonstrator outside All Souls: ‘My name is A. L. Rowse. I’ve written thirty books. What have you done?’ By the time he died his tally of books topped the century.

His early socialism was influenced by his reading of Marxist classics, but it ebbed away during the forties although he never lost affectionate esteem for Ernest Bevin and Clement Attlee. ‘A young man pretending to be a Tory,’ he observed in the 1920s, ‘is either a poseur or a nincompoop. No: there is a third possibility: he may be an intelligent young man with a keen eye to his own interest.’ By the 1960s he was railing against taxation going towards the Idiot People in their housing estates, ‘inhabitants of the fuck-hutches’.

Throughout his life he saw himself as a talented unacknowledged outsider. He did not have a happy relationship with ‘the unloving bitch I had for a mother’ and struggled with a predatory homosexuality all his life. ‘As a child I grew up on the fringe, at the park-gate, shut out of the way of life of the gentry.’ This sense of exclusion – social and sexual – was a spur to describe the world to which he vainly aspired, comfortable upper class life, full of family, love and beauty: a vicarious self-gentrification. He is at his best recording the homes and personalities of people, usually from a comfortable background, such as Winston Churchill, G. M. Trevelyan and his baronet brother, Sir Charles, the last survivor of Ramsay MacDonald’s first Labour government.

Rowse combines the bitchiness of Alan Clark with the snobbery of Woodrow Wyatt. His aesthetic insights and his felicitous and feline style make his diaries utterly absorbing. But his inflated sense of his own significance makes him a figure of fun. As the unappreciated but knowing outsider he compares himself to Swift, Cardinal Newman and Lawrences, T. E. and D. H., whose triumphs came after their deaths. ‘I suppose mine

may come then, too,’ he observes sadly, ‘perhaps partly with this journal.’

This may be so. Richard Ollard has called them ‘diaries’ though ‘journals’ may be more accurate. One third of the book is devoted to extracts from diaries, journals and notebooks from the 1920s to the 1940s. There are then long essays, undated by the editor, on travels in Britain and the United States, observations and gossip for the decades of the fifties and sixties. Nothing after 1969.

What will survive of Rowse’s massive oeuvre? Not a lot, I fear. His *Tudor Cornwall*, perhaps some of his poetry. But in most of his work his curmudgeonly personality intrudes. A basic lack of charity prevented him from empathising with complex people whom his increasingly reactionary prejudices could not fathom. Rowse will best be remembered as a dubiously engaging Oxford and Cornish personality, a pioneer of British academic tours of the United States, perhaps as an observer – variously savage, sentimental and shrewd – of the contemporary scene. But, overall, he was nowhere near his own estimation of himself.

*Peter Clark is Chief Executive of AMAR.*



***Remembering our history  
and working for a better future***

Michael J Leahy  
General Secretary

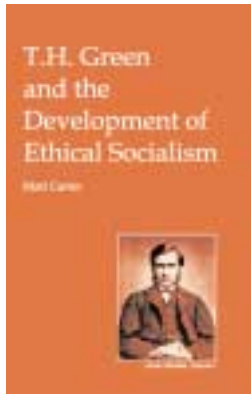
Rob Middlemas  
President

Eddie Lynch  
Assistant General Secretary

ISTC Central Office, Swinton House, 324 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DD  
Phone (020) 7239 1200 [www.istc-tu.org](http://www.istc-tu.org)

Political History and Theory from

# Imprint Academic



234 pp hardback  
ISBN 0 907845 320  
£25.00

## 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  
ISBN 0 907845 41X  
£8.95

## 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

[www.imprint-academic.com](http://www.imprint-academic.com)

Imprint Academic, PO Box 200, Exeter EX5 5YX, T: 01392 841600, F: 01392 841478, E: [sandra@imprint.co.uk](mailto:sandra@imprint.co.uk)