

# LABOUR *history*

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## TONY BENN IN HIS OWN WORDS

Jayant Chavda

*meets the veteran left-winger*

## NEW LABOUR, OLD VALUES?

Greg Rosen

*traces the historical roots of the modernisers' creed*

*Plus*

**David Lea**

*remembers Len Murray*

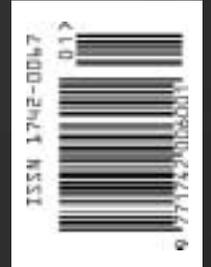
**Denis MacShane**

*on his friend Ben Pimlott*

**Dianne Hayter**

*prepares for the PLP centenary*

*and much more . . .*



## Labour Monuments:

**Paul Richards**

*on a new commission to document, preserve and promote them*

## Reggie Maudling:

**Lewis Baston**

*wonders what he was doing in the Tory Party*

# JOHN SMITH

His battle for OMOV, *by* **MARK STUART**

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# Contents

- 2 Chair's Letter
- 3 Labour's True Centenary: 2006  
*Dianne Hayter*
- 4 John Smith and the Battle for OMOV  
*Mark Stuart*
- 7 Whipping and the War  
*Ted Graham*
- 9 Tony Benn: in His Own Words  
*Jayant Chavda*
- 17 New Labour, Old Values?  
*Greg Rosen*
- 20 Labour's Lost Leader: Reggie Maudling?!!  
*Lewis Baston*
- 22 The Monumental Gap in Our Labour Heritage  
*Paul Richards*
- 24 OBITUARIES  
Len Murray  
Ben Pimlott  
Jack Diamond  
Jack Boddy  
Lewis Carter-Jones  
Stanley Cohen  
Sid Greene  
Jim Marshall  
Richard May  
Gordon Parry  
Margaret Simey
- 31 BOOK REVIEW  
*The Left and the Jews – The Jews and the Left*

## Forthcoming Events

We have several debates planned on a wide range of issues. If you would like to join our email list for events please email [gregrosen2004@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:gregrosen2004@yahoo.co.uk)

## Submissions

If you would like to submit an article, or know of a subject area we should be paying attention to, please use the contact details below.

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## Contact us

You can contact us at:  
The Labour History Group  
c/o John Schwartz  
Institute for Public Policy Research  
30–32 Southampton Street  
London WC2E 7RA

Tel: 020 7740 6108  
[j.schwartz@ippr.org](mailto:j.schwartz@ippr.org)

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# Chair's Letter

W elcome to the third edition of *Labour History*. Our featured interviewee is Tony Benn, whose battle against the hereditary principle secured the right to renounce the hereditary peerage and who, thus far, is the only father of a Labour Cabinet Minister to be himself a son of a Labour Cabinet Minister and to have served in Cabinet himself. Indeed, there has only been one Labour government that didn't have a Benn in it: 1924. And that lasted less than a year. A thought, perhaps, for future Labour Cabinet-makers to conjure with . . .

In other articles, Lord Graham, (or Lord Ted of Ed as he is known to many), who was there, reminds us of the days when Labour governments came without overall majorities as standard and Lewis Baston tells an unusual tale from the days when Reggie and Ronnie were names to conjure with on the Parliamentary benches. Lord Lea has written a tribute to Len Murray, TUC General secretary when Britain's trade unions were at their largest and most

powerful and Lord Rodgers of Quarry bank remembers Lord Diamond, whose long career saw him serve in Wilson's Cabinet but in some ways more notably play a key back-stairs role in the social-democratic wing of the Labour Party.

Over the coming Parliamentary year we have several debates planned on a range of issues, including the 1984 miners strike, the sixtieth anniversary of Labour's victory in 1945 and the legacy of John Smith, which will be held at 7:30pm on 19 October 2004 in Committee room 4 in Parliament. For those who missed it, the discussion hosted by the Labour History Group on the February 1974 election, thirty years on, will be covered in the next issue.

Do get in touch with us if you have any suggestions for articles or 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  
gregrosen2004@yahoo.co.uk

## Memories of John Smith

A Labour History Group discussion on the life and legacy of the late Labour Leader  
with

Pat McFadden,

10 Downing Street's Director of Political Operations and former adviser to John Smith

Margaret Beckett MP (to be confirmed)

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and Former Deputy Leader of the Labour Party

Mark Stuart

John Smith's authorised biographer

19 October, 7.30pm, Committee Room 4, Houses of Parliament, all welcome

# Labour's True Centenary: 2006

Dianne Hayter

On Tuesday 27 February 1900, at twelve noon, the founding conference of what became the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) opened in the Memorial Hall in London's Farringdon Street. However it was not until 1906 – and the first gathering after the general election which returned twenty-nine Labour MPs – that the PLP was formed, and then, at the 1906 Party Conference, the name “Labour Party” adopted in place of Labour Representation Committee.

Not only was the 1906 result a great success for the fledgling party (which had but four MPs before), it also represented the start of the system of campaigning we know today. Fifty candidates had been officially nominated and approved by the LRC, and (unlike in the 1900 election), they had been officially promoted

by affiliated organisations and selected within their constituencies. Labour's 1906 total poll, of 323,195, averaged thirty-seven per cent of the vote in the contested seats.

The twenty nine men (women had yet to join them on the green benches) represented the great trades of Scotland, Wales and England: mining, iron, steel, printing, textiles and transport. Their first task was to elect a Leader (Keir Hardie), with Ramsay MacDonald MP as the Secretary of the Party. The manifesto they had fought highlighted the plight of “the aged poor”, slums, “underfed schoolchildren” and the second meeting of the PLP (on 13 February 1906) agreed to promote bills on a range of subjects including: women's suffrage, unemployment, mines, taxation of land values, child feeding, old age pensions and a shops bill.

It is now time to celebrate these 1906 pioneers, but also

to save, document and exhibit our history from those days. With the blessing of the Labour Party's NEC, a group of historians, journalists, academics and activists are already planning how to commemorate this important anniversary, by seeking to engage the movement in understanding and discovering its own history. We are hoping to publish a commemorative book on the stories of the Labour pioneers and to stimulate displays – whether in libraries, schools or Labour Clubs. We want to support activities at a local level, including oral history projects, to preserve the memories of the past for the generations of the future.

So we now need your involvement to create a plethora of projects, from locating and saving archives (those minute books in someone's loft!), to interviewing key players with long memories, or researching local stories. We then want to

see these written, exhibited or posted on a website for others to enjoy. Local (amateur or professional) archaeologists, historians or archivists might like to track down the history of their CLP, branch, Labour Hall or personalities. Or look at the party's changing membership over time, and how it reflected the community's shifting employment, travel and demographic patterns. A record of trade union affiliations over the years would tell a lot about the rise and fall of different industries. Look around you for good stories and identify some enthusiasts with time to spare and a passion for old photos, record or oral history.

Tony Robinson – fresh from digging up even older civilisations – and Alan Haworth (today's PLP Secretary) will lead a discussion at Conference about what we can all do to contribute to this history project. If you are at Conference, please join us at 12.30 on Wednesday 29 September, in the Hall 7 Meeting Room, Hall 7, at the Hilton Metropole. Otherwise please contact me *c/o* The Labour Party, 16 Old Queen Street, London SW1H 9HP.

*Dianne Hayter is a Member of Labour's NEC and Chair of the 2006 Group.*

# John Smith

## and the battle for OMOV

Mark Stuart

John Smith never tired of telling people that his inspiration for One Member, One Vote (OMOV) was a check-in clerk at Edinburgh Airport, who mentioned that she had just voted for him in one of the ballots for the 1992 leadership election. The clerk added: 'That's the way it should be not just for me, but [for] everyone in the Labour Party.'<sup>1</sup> John Smith agreed. It was the sort of encounter that reinforced his gut instincts about expanding democracy in the Party and the Labour movement.

But, in the immediate aftermath of Labour's 1992 general election defeat, the Party leadership debated how quickly OMOV could be achieved. Neil Kinnock, about to stand down as Labour Leader, and keen for his modernisation project to continue unabated,

wanted to push through OMOV at the 1992 Labour Party Conference. Charles Clarke, his loyal Chief of Staff agreed, arguing that any delay would mean that the new Smith leadership would start off with a crisis that would hang over them for a year.

Equally, John Smith and his Chief of Staff, Murray Elder, had justifiable reasons for delaying a vote on OMOV until 1993. Few doubt that Neil Kinnock could have pushed through OMOV before a general election, but having chosen to stand down, his authority as leader quickly evaporated. All bets were off with the NEC refusing to back his moves for an early vote on OMOV. The two biggest unions – the GMB and the TGWU – were implacably opposed. Also, if Smith waited a year, he benefited from the implementation of a key Kinnock reform

– a reduction in the block vote from 90 per cent to 70 per cent – an essential prerequisite to winning a narrow conference vote. It seems from the available evidence that charging ahead with OMOV in 1992 would have led to Smith being defeated – a catastrophic start to his leadership. The decision to delay was made, and a Union Links Review Group appointed.

Tony Blair, replacing Bryan Gould on the Review Group, wanted 'pure OMOV', including one member, one vote for the selection and reselection of parliamentary candidates. That ambition was unrealistically radical. Various compromises were touted. The ins and outs of the doomed Registered Supporters' Scheme (does anyone remember it?) took up a great deal of time. Critics of Smith, especially in the media, claimed he was moving too slowly. Eventually, Smith im-

posed a solution – 'Levy-plus' – trade union members would pay an extra £3 on top of the political levy they paid to their union in return for voting rights on the selection of parliamentary candidates. Now came the hard part: selling the plan to the union leaders.

In September 1993, John Smith made his famous commitment to full employment at the TUC Congress. The strained mood of the previous few months lifted, but the modernisers felt Smith had sold out to save his skin. The policy pledges – full employment, a national minimum wage, and implementing the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty – were considered unattainable, and yet New Labour subsequently implemented all of these commitments in office. Smith's full employment pledge was an important ingredient in getting OMOV – it changed the mood in the trade union movement. Few could now argue that Smith proposed to break the traditional links between the unions and the Labour Party. Nevertheless, some of the union leaders pocketed the concessions without offering anything in return. In particular, John Smith was driven to helpless fury by John Edmonds of the GMB who refused to budge.



Something much more drastic was required to turn the vote in the leadership's favour. Larry Whitty first proposed, and John Smith accepted, the idea of a confidence vote. Had OMOV been lost at Conference, Smith would have gone to the NEC that evening, and said something along the lines, 'OK, the game's a bogey. This is now a matter of confidence. I want another Conference motion later in the week on OMOV and if I don't win, I will resign.' It says something about John Smith that he was prepared to gamble the leadership of his party on the outcome of OMOV.

For days in the run-up to the conference vote, Smith kept asking for bits of paper so he could tally up how many votes he had on his side of the argument. But it didn't matter how Smith totted-up the votes for and against, he came up with the same depressing answer: defeat.

So what swung the vote narrowly in Smith's favour? Allies of Smith cleverly combined the resolution on OMOV with one supporting the introduction of a quota system for women, requiring half of all winnable seats with no sitting Labour MP to choose a woman candidate. The Manufacturing Science Finance Union (MSF) delegation was opposed to OMOV, but had a long-standing commitment to all-women shortlists. Faced with this dilemma, the delegation voted narrowly to abstain. Their conversion was crucial in tipping the vote the leadership's way because they held 4.5 per cent of the votes, and the eventual winning margin was only 3.1 per cent.

However, another vital element in securing OMOV was winning over the CLP delegates. Groups of Labour MPs, party officials and members of Smith's office canvassed tirelessly in the run-up to the vote. Smith was sending a vitally important message to or-

dinary party members that their votes mattered. And John Prescott's famous speech very much marked the culmination of that canvassing process.

If one actually tries to read Prescott's speech, there is not one proper sentence in it. Remember his conclusion?

*There is no doubt that this man, our Leader, put his head on the block by saying, basically: "I fervently believe" – because that is what he believes – "in the relationship between the trade unions and the Labour Party". He has put his head on the block. Now is our time to vote. Give us a bit of trust and let us vote to support him.*<sup>2</sup>

Despite the grammar, everyone in that conference hall knew by the end of his speech just how much Prescott cared about Labour's relationship with the unions. It was the making of Prescott's career. In the October 1993 reshuffle, he got the employment portfolio he coveted. When John

Smith died in May 1994, Prescott emerged victorious as Deputy Leader. By contrast, Margaret Beckett's opposition to OMOV probably cost her the chance to remain Deputy Leader under Blair.

OMOV had been high-tension stuff, and Smith, basking in victory, and surrounded by political friends and family, celebrated in style with lots of champagne.

Smith had done the right thing in not charging ahead with changes to OMOV in 1992 instead of 1993. After the bruising reforms of the Kinnock period, the Party needed a pause for breath before embarking upon another huge bout of change. The scheme finally agreed wasn't pure OMOV as Blair wanted, but it was a workable OMOV that survives today. Moreover, the change was hugely significant in terms of the Party's image because it showed the electorate that Labour now believed in democratically-arrived-at decisions at party con-

*John Smith and Gordon Brown listen to Tony Blair's 1990 conference speech.*

ferences. rather than union barons casting block votes. But was reform of Clause IV a more important reform in Labour's recent history?

The accusation from the modernisers is that a shocked and relieved John Smith closed the shutters on any further reform of the Party after OMOV.<sup>3</sup> Before his death, Smith faced calls from Jack Straw (in May 1993)<sup>4</sup> and Neil Kinnock (February 1994)<sup>5</sup> to completely re-write Clause IV. Smith was extremely angry about Jack Straw's intervention on the issue.

As early as September 1992, Straw had sent a (very wordy) draft report of his analysis of Labour's 1992 general election defeat to the Leader's Office. Straw's basic analysis was that Labour had lost because the electorate was not clear about what the Party stood for. He concluded that if Labour was to refresh its appeal, it needed to recast Clause IV.<sup>6</sup>

In a telephone conversation, Smith told Straw that he would be stirring up a 'hornet's nest' ("Look at what had happened to Gaitskell"). Straw might even lose his Shadow Cabinet seat in the forthcoming PLP election. Smith believed that Clause IV should be allowed to 'wither on the vine'. It was 'a sentimental souvenir, best ignored'.<sup>7</sup> Straw expressed

his disagreement, and said that he did not intend to give up his campaign. Smith was not best pleased. Straw then turned his long paper into a short pamphlet – *Policy and Ideology* – published by his local Blackburn CLP. He also sent his leader a draft, and soon after, was summoned to see Smith. According to Straw, the meeting 'began in a frosty atmosphere, and went from bad to worse'.<sup>8</sup>

There couldn't have been a better set-piece illustration of the fundamental difference between Smith and the modernisers, that his conviction that reform of OMOV was sufficient to get Labour elected, while people like Jack Straw wanted to go much further. During their meeting, Straw argued that Labour had to have the confidence to acknowledge that what was right in October 1917 (when Clause IV was drafted) was not necessarily right in 1993). Straw had been alone with Smith for almost an hour, and ultimately, Smith lost his temper. 'Amidst raised voices, I sought to take my leave', recalls Straw. "You can take this with you too", he [Smith] shouted, as he threw the envelope containing my pamphlet at me. I left."<sup>9</sup> Smith considered removing Straw's Shadow Cabinet portfolio, but was

talked out of it by Roy Hattersley: 'I had to intervene to point out that the young man didn't mean any harm'.<sup>10</sup>

Party unity meant everything to John Smith. Getting rid of Clause IV was more trouble than it was worth. Had he lived, Smith would have put his own imprint on it – based on his R. H. Tawney, Reclaiming the Ground lecture of March 1993 – but he wouldn't have completely re-written it.

Historically, OMOV was probably a more important change than Clause IV, the latter being a cosmetic exercise, a piece of symbolism designed to appeal to disaffected Tory voters pondering whether to switch to Labour. Smith's reform, on the other hand, took away real power from the union leaders – more so than at any time since 1918, especially in relation to the selection of parliamentary candidates – and gave it back to ordinary Party members, and indeed ordinary trade unionists, many of whom subsequently became Labour Party members. The union leaders could no longer fix things as they had done in the past. OMOV was probably the most important single reform in Labour's history, but not as important as the Kinnock reforms taken as a whole. Such

a conclusion is open to debate, but modernisers and long-gamers can at least agree on one point: Smith's OMOV victory cleared the way for Blair's reform of Clause IV, for the hardest battle of all had already been fought and won by Smith.

*Mark Stuart is a political researcher at Nottingham University, and a Research Associate at the University of Hull. He has recently completed writing the authorised biography of John Smith to be published next year by Politico's.*

- 1 Fraser Nelson and Jason Beattie, Interview with Hilary Armstrong, 'Ten years on – Labour's lost leader', the *Scotsman*, 19 July 2002.
- 2 *92nd Annual Conference Report of the Labour Party*, 1993, p. 164.
- 3 For this view, see Jon Soper, *Tony Blair: The Moderniser* (Michael Joseph: London, 1995) p. 165; and John Rentoul, *Tony Blair* (Little, Brown and Company: London, 1995) p. 342; pp. 346-347; James Naughtie, *The Rivals. The Intimate Story of a Political Marriage* (Fourth Estate: London, 2001), p. 48.
- 4 Jack Straw, *Policy and Ideology* (Blackburn Labour Party: Blackburn, 1993).
- 5 Neil Kinnock, *Tomorrow's Socialism* BBC 2, 5 February 1994.
- 6 Jack Straw, General Election 1992. *Section 4: Policy and Ideology* (draft), 12 September 1992. Murray Elder papers, Box 2.
- 7 Written correspondence with Rt Hon. Jack Straw MP, 15 January 2004.
- 8 Written correspondence with Rt Hon. Jack Straw MP, 15 January 2004.
- 9 Written correspondence with Rt Hon. Jack Straw MP, 15 January 2004.
- 10 Interview with Lord Hattersley, 3 March 2003.

# Whipping and the War

Stories from a life at the front-line

Ted Graham

In 1997 after the great Labour victory, I had been a parliamentarian for more than twenty-three years. In that time I had served in a Labour Whips Office for more than nineteen years, in government and in opposition in the Commons for more than five years, and in the Lords for more than fourteen years, the last seven of which I had been the Opposition Chief Whip. The acme of success as a Opposition Chief Whip is to frustrate the legislative programme of the Government. So when we approached the 1997 General Election there were four major Bills still bogged down in the Lords, and there had to be intense 'horse-trading' for them to escape to the Commons, I look back on that one single episode as the highlight of a hectic life as a Whip. You have to be a peculiar kind of guy to take pleasure in frustrating other's plans.

Life in the Government Whips Office during the Callaghan Government of 1976 to 1979 was a constant

fight – and not always against the Tories. Jim had inherited a position where he had no overall majority and this worsened to the extent where he was forced to make the 'Lib-Lab Pact' in 1977 which saved his government for a further two years before the defeat his 1979 and the election of Margaret Thatcher.

The great team which staved-off defeat-after-loom-ing-defeat in those years were Jim Callaghan, Michael Foot as leader of the Commons, Michael Cocks as Labour's Chief Whip, Walter Harrison as his deputy and Jack Dormond who, as Pairing Whip, ruled the pairing list with a rod of iron. He had to, for his majority had disappeared, largely due to the death of Labour MPs and the spectacular loss of some enforced by-elections like Workington, when Fred Peart went to the Lords, and Ashfield when David Marquand went to Europe to work with Roy Jenkins. At the daily Whips meetings Michael Cocks and Walter Harrison cobbled to-

gether a victory out of defeat time and time again. But, in those days it was counted as a victory if the Government avoided a defeat!

Within a month of becoming a Whip I witnessed the episode from which Michael Heseltine earned the nickname 'Tarzan'. A vote was called for which it could be clearly seen that Labour would lose. Yet when the vote took place, the declared result was a victory for the Government – by one vote! Michael Heseltine as the opposition spokesman was outraged, accused the Labour Whips of cheating, seized the Mace and attempted to thrust it on to the baying Labour benches 'below the gangway'. Mayhem! Labour benches singing 'The Red Flag'! Fisticuffs on the floor of the Commons! House suspended! Fortunately, proceedings were not televised then!

The Lib-Lab Pact had been fashioned when Labour lost its overall majority in 1976 and the make-up of the Commons left Labour at constant risk of a motion of 'no confidence' For

such a motion to be effective the Conservatives had to form alliances with others to outvote the Labour benches. Margaret Thatcher had tried this but had not corralled sufficient votes to give her victory. On the other hand Jim Callaghan and Michael Foot had bitten the bullet and made the pact with the Liberals led by David Steel which gave the centre party a place at the top table – not with seats in the Cabinet, but as equal partners on a committee established to gain support in the voting lobbies for Labour, and accommodation for the Liberals on the margins of legislation. However, in September 1978 after an exhausting period of brinkmanship and running the country on a knife-edge, the Liberal Party withdrew from the pact, leaving the Labour Government exposed to attack – providing the Opposition parties could get their act together. The chance came in the early part of 1979, after Jim Callaghan had passed up the opportunity to go to the country in September 1978. Having lost the support of most Trade Unions on the issue of wage restraint, Callaghan led the country into what became known as 'The Winter of Discontent' so that in the early months of 1979 the atmosphere in the country

and indeed within the Labour Movement was sour. In that period the referendums for devolution in both Wales and Scotland were held, and resulted in defeats for the Labour Government proposals. As a result, the Scottish Nationalists took the view that Labour had let them down, and gave notice that they would table a 'ote of no confidence in the Government. That was the signal for all other Parties to support this proposal – and this historic vote came in March 1979.

In the Labour Whips Office we could read the signs and they were not good. We reckoned that we would lose by about five votes. And yet, it was now the task of the Whips office to try to peel off some of those ostensibly committed to bringing down the Government, and the group of Northern Ireland MPs were prime targets. News came through that 'deals were being done' which could – could – result in some of those expected to bring down the government abstaining – even attending and voting with the government! This made it imperative that every Labour vote was secured. Alas, news came that the normally to be relied on votes of Gerry Fitt and Frank Maguire of the Northern Ireland SDLP would not be

forthcoming. Apparently, Roy Mason the Northern Ireland Secretary had infuriated them – to the extent that they would attend the debate but visibly abstain.

Doc Broughton was the MP for Batley and Morley. He suffered from emphysema and only came to Westminster infrequently. In three years I only saw him three times. When he came down he travelled in a taxi accompanied by an oxygen bottle which sustained him. Normally, he appeared at three minutes to ten – and was gone by ten past. His doctor refused to give permission for him to come down for the vote. The dilemma for the PM was simply this, could he risk bringing Doc down. Should he risk Doc's life or his Government? Doc did not come.

In the event, two of the Northern Ireland MPs not only did not vote against us, or abstain – they voted with the Government. Alas, we lost the vote of confidence by 312 to 311 – one more for us or one less for the opposition and we would have survived and lived to fight another day. Doc Broughton remained in bed, and when, next morning, he was told that we – he – had lost by one vote he simply groaned. He died two days later.

One of the great differences between the Commons

and the Lords is that now some sixty years after the end of the Second World War there is no one serving in the Commons who saw action in that war, whereas there are many in the Lords.

To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of D-Day, Lord Cranborne, then leader of the House of Lords was deputed to oversee arrangements, and one day asked me to find him a Labour peer who had landed on the beaches on 6 June 1944. I went to speak to David Ennals and said to him 'David, I am looking for a Labour Peer who landed in Normandy on D-Day'. Politely he told me that it could not be him – he had landed the day before D-Day! He told me that he served in the signals corps and together with two others he had been landed on the beaches from a mini-submarine the day before D-Day! His job was to carefully traverse the beach, get hidden in the dunes and, when the action started, to signal to the battleships offshore, intelligence as to which route those landing should take, avoiding carnage or worse. He said they must have saved many, many lives. On another occasion, in a Labour Peers meeting I was urging my troops to come in late one night and help to am-

bush the Government. Up stood Charlie Leatherland – he stood less than five feet – and told the meting that his limp had come when he was wounded at the Somme in 1916. 'Yes Charlie' said a voice from the back – it was Douglas Houghton – 'but you weren't at Passchendaele, were you?' The hairs stood on the back of my neck. Here were two men both less than five feet recounting to Labour Peers the horrors of the First World War. Charlie had been a Company Sergeant Major in a machine gun corps at the age of eighteen. I saw Douglas a few days before he died at the age of 96. 'What was it really like at Passchendaele' I asked. Tears streamed down his face and eventually he said just one word 'mud'. His best friend Percy had slipped into a sea of mud and no one could save him. In 1924 Douglas was standing in the strand when a bus passed by – with Percy as the conductor! What a reunion! They stopped the traffic! They don't make them like that anymore!

*Ted Grahams was Labour's Chief Whip in the House of Lords from 1990 to 1997.*

*These are extracts from From Tyne to Thames Via the Usual Channels to be published by The Memoir Club in 2005.*

# Tony Benn

## In his own words

Jayant Chavda talked to the veteran left-winger about his lifetime in the Labour Party, this is what he was told:

### EARLY POLITICAL MEMORIES

My dad was a Labour MP, he was a Liberal when he was elected in 1906. He joined the Labour Party the year after I was born. I was born in a Labour household. Father's tradition was a radical, liberal, internationalist, dissenting non-conformist tradition. It was a very, very powerful thing. He said to be me when I was a young boy: 'Dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone, dare to have a purpose firm, dare to make it known'. *Dare to be a Daniel* is the title of my next book which is about my childhood. I met a Labour MP in 1928. I went to his house. His name was Oswald Mosley. The next time I saw him was in 1935 in a blackshirt in Parliament Street and it frightened me. I met Ramsay Macdonald in 1930 because

my dad was in the Labour Cabinet. Macdonald's daughter, who worked with him at Number 10 because his wife had died, wrote to my mother to invite her children to come to Number 10 for trooping the colour. I watched the trooping of the colour and I said afterwards that I expected to see the Prime Minister but I didn't expect a chocolate biscuit. And one of my current jokes is that I have been very suspicious of Labour prime ministers with chocolate biscuits ever since and I have had a lot to offer recently!

Then I met Gandhi in 1931 when he came to London. My dad had been Secretary for India. In 1935 I campaigned in the general election. Dad was defeated in 1931 and 1935 and was elected for Gorton in 1937.

I first went to the Commons when he took his seat in 1937 and I met Lloyd George and Attlee. And then I heard Hitler broadcasting from Nuremberg and wrote an essay on the Spanish civil war.

Then I went into the war. I was in the Air Force in second class. I was in Africa, went up to Egypt and Palestine. I was rowing on the sea of Galilee when the war ended.

I got back just in time to campaign for the general election.

My background had a strong moral basis, strong international basis, a strong dissenting basis and an understanding that fascism comes when there is despair. I bought *Mein Kampf* when I was 11 and I read it occasionally because it shows when

people are utterly cynical and utterly despairing then a demigod can come along and find an enemy and build a power structure. And that helps me to understand the attacks on asylum seekers now.

### FATHER'S INFLUENCE

He was a member of the radical group of Liberal MPs in the early twenties and stood against Lloyd George because he opposed the coalition. He did refer to socialism but there was no analytical socialism in his thinking. He didn't have roots in the Labour movement but ended up on the left of the Labour Party. He was supported by the Wapping Trades Council, and fought on the slogan "friends of Labour, working men, stick to Gladstone, vote for

Benn”, when he was first elected. He supported the cigar workers against the lock-out before the First World War. He was a passionate supporter of the Irish cause and campaigned against the Black and Tans.

#### THE 1945 GENERAL ELECTION

I didn't think we would win. Churchill had won the war single-handedly. I went to Transport House when the results came out and there were these Tory ministers collapsing, and I went home and told my dad that we were going to win and my dad didn't believe it.

I was too young to vote, you had to be 21, I'd been in the the Air Force, never killed anyone but I had been a pilot, and they wouldn't let me vote which was intolerable. That's why I am favour of votes at 16.

The arguments then were so powerful. If you can have full employment to kill people then why in God's name can you not have it to build houses, recruit nurses and teachers. And the answer was that you could do it – and that carry on of wartime planning into peacetime planning was the core of the postwar consensus which Churchill really agreed with. We defeated not Churchill but the prewar Tory party in 1945. The early

Churchill was really radical: he made a really radical speech on prison reform as Home Secretary in 1910, nationalised BP, set up trade boards and set up labour exchanges. The Churchill, Macmillan, Heath tradition was well to the left of New Labour. When Thatcher came to power it was a counter-revolution against the settlement of 1945. New Labour accepted the counter-revolution.

#### THE 1945–51 LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Unlike Blair or Thatcher, Attlee believed in a balanced cabinet (as did Wilson). There's no balance now, you're either with us or against us: are you one of us? Attlee was a chairman really, and a very good chairman.

Clem was very progressive, if you read the *Labour Party in Perspective*, he was well to the left of New Labour. And he wanted Nye to succeed him as Prime Minister. He was very disappointed that Nye threw it away.

He was always Major Attlee. He was a patriarchal major. He and Macmillan were very influenced by the first world war. Macmillan saw these guys slaughtered in France and then treated like dirt in the post-war period. And his 'Middle Way', in which he said you have to have

a planned economy, was really important in informing the radical consensus focused around the 1945 manifesto. We got rid of the Empire without an Algeria or Vietnam war – an amazing thing to do.

The main thing about the Labour Party was that it was democratic and its idea was that people could shape their future.

#### ENTERING PARLIAMENT AS STAFFORD CRIPPS' SUCCESSOR IN BRISTOL

Cripps resigned and I was approached because Tony Crosland, who I had known extremely well and who was member for the neighbouring constituency, South Gloucestershire, recommended me to Mervyn Stockwood, who was later Bishop of Southwark and who was then a Labour councillor.

Then on polling day, 30 November 1950, Truman said he might drop the atom bomb in Korea, and I didn't notice because the candidate is too busy, but my vote dropped by 10,000. And Attlee went straight to Washington the next day and stopped Truman – and that was the beginning of the special relationship.

And I voted against the Government within a matter of weeks on the Z-reservists in

Korea. The next big event was Nye's resignation. I heard Nye speak at the party meeting and also in the House. He said three important things about the Cold War: one, the Russians didn't have the strength to attack the West, having lost twenty million people, second, they don't want to invade, and third, if you go for this you will launch a witchhunt against the left. And he was absolutely right. The rearmament programme cost us the 1951 election not Nye and the split – because of inflation, the grounds on which Wilson resigned.

I was asked to join the Bevanites by Fenner Brockway but I didn't because I was very new and didn't want to be part of a group with its own whipping system but my sympathies were always with them. Then we had the bitter conflict. The hatred of Nye, leading to his expulsion from the PLP, and the hatred of Wilson was really the poison and Gaitskell was responsible for a lot of it as well as Morrison.

#### NYE BEVAN AND THE 'NAKED INTO THE CONFERENCE CHAMBER' SPEECH

Well, Nye with 'naked into the conference chamber' was persuaded to do it by Sam Watson, who said we've got a chance of a Labour govern-

ment. That was a horrific statement because we have never been clothed or unclothed in the conference chamber because our weapons have been lent to us by the Americans. It utterly demoralised the left and the Bevanites died the day he made that speech.

#### HUGH GAITSKELL

He could have split the Hampstead set on the tied cottage, he was so pernickety. His principled stand on equality and Suez was something to respect. He would never have joined the SDP, he was a Labour man rooted in the party.

#### SUEZ

Gaitskell initially supported the conflict, made a wobbly speech, and then Alf Robens, Ken Younger and myself went to see him and then he came out passionately against.

I do see parallels between Anthony Eden and Tony Blair. When I see Tony Blair he seems totally possessed in the same way as Anthony Eden – and nothing gets through to him.

#### THE 1959 ELECTION DEFEAT AND THE ATTEMPT TO ABOLISH CLAUSE IV

I knew Hugh Gaitskell very well after working very closely

with him on the party political broadcasts during the election. I was on the NEC. And in one of my first meetings, he proposed the abolition of Clause IV. He couldn't get away with it because the unions would have to have changed their constitutions and Dick Crossman outflanked him in a brilliant way. Crossman said, "Am I right in saying this is a restatement of Labour's objectives?", and Gaitskell replied, "Yes." Crossman also asked, "Does this reaffirm them." And Gaitskell said yes. So it came out that the new Clause IV "reaffirmed and restated Labour's objectives!" And nobody remembered Hugh Gaitskell's alternative anymore than anyone remembers the new Clause IV. It was an attempt to distant himself from the unions and socialism. Hugh believed passionately in equality and international law and looking back he comes out of it quite well. But when he said "I'll fight and fight and fight again to save the Party I love", what he was saying was that he would fight and fight and fight again to keep weapons of mass destruction!

We formed the Hydrogen Bomb National Committee in 1954 in support of Attlee's call for a summit after Christmas Island. We had a



*Benn as Minister of Technology in 1967*



petition with the likes of George Thomas and Tony Greenwood supporting. I resigned from the NEC in 1960 after Gaitskell's speech on principle and earlier I had resigned in 1958 as defence spokesman because I couldn't contemplate the use of bombs.

#### TONY CROSLAND AND FABIAN THINKING

We become very close friends after he taught me economics at Oxford. There was a certain *naïveté* about Tony Crosland. He thought the pits couldn't be privatized. He thought the 1945 achievements were absolutely safe. I was very fond of him but he was also very arrogant. He made a joke about me when I was a student. I said I wanted to get rid of the stigma of being an intellectual and he said first of all you have to get the stigma! But he did make a considerable contribution and he was a principled, serious, thoughtful guy. He became a hero to what later became New Labour. However, I think there was a certain *naïveté* in thinking that the post-war settlement exempted you from the growing pressures of global capital. He was in the old Fabian tradition – they the Fabians would manage the world. And Blair has en-

tered into a PFI with international capital that he will manage Britain on behalf of international capital. You have to make a choice: do you change society to meet human need. Or do you accept society and change what people want, and that is a very right wing idea.

#### GAITSKELL AND THE THOUSAND YEARS OF HISTORY SPEECH

Roy Jenkins was upset about the speech and Hugh said to me, "The trouble with Roy is that he is an extremist – on Europe!" Crosland was very upset too. And it was the language of UKIP though it probably had more Commonwealth connotations. But that was when his reputation in the party began to grow. I did recognise that what Hugh said had a very profound effect on bringing the Labour Party back together again.

#### GAITSKELL'S LEGACY

It's difficult to speculate about what would have happened had he lived. I was critical of the pernickety way in which he operated and a certain intellectual superiority, and his hostility towards Frank Cousins was passionate. I think he's got a proper place in the party. And I'll never forget his stance on Suez and his passion for

equality. Personally, he was always very nice to me.

#### THE PEERAGE BATTLE

It taught me everything about the establishment and the political system.

My dad supported me and felt terribly guilty for taking the peerage but there were no life peerages in those days. I wrote to Churchill as Prime Minister for support and he wrote a lovely letter back saying yours is a hard case. And I said 'can I use it', and he said 'no' because he was Prime Minister. He wrote me a letter within 24 hours of resigning as Prime Minister which I used in Bristol. I must be the only Labour candidate who circulated 60,000 copies of a letter from a Tory Leader. Gaitskell was a bit cautious but he did give me broad support. I was thrown out, fought the Lords, and then re-elected in a by-election.

What I learnt from it from was that you never get justice from the top. I went to the committee for privileges in the Lords, they threw me out, I went to the Committee for Privileges in the Commons, and they threw me out. What I learnt was that if you ever want to win then you have to take the case to the public. Democracy has two roles: one is to defuse opposition, but the

left sees it as an instrument of advance. And these two roles co-exist in what we call parliamentary democracy and I am on the dissenting side of it. It does mean that if you push and push and push then the guys at the top will capitulate.

#### THE ELECTION OF HAROLD WILSON AS LABOUR LEADER

I supported his election as Labour leader and helped him with all his New Britain speeches – and my wife thought up the phrase New Britain in January 1964 – although she always denied it. 'White Heat' was a very important speech. What he said was totally different from what was interpreted. People thought that Harold was going to put on a white coat and go around with a blowtorch and modernise the country. What he really said was that the development of capitalism was going to burn us up with technological unemployment unless we plan the economy. The early Wilson was very imaginative and very courageous.

He balanced his government and was a great believer in cabinet discussions. In January 1968 – I looked it up in my diary – we had eight full day discussions during that month.

He got cynical and paranoid at the end because if

you're Prime Minister there's nowhere to go but down. But I retain an affection for Harold Wilson.

#### BECOMING A MINISTER

I was 39 when I took charge of the biggest department in Whitehall. I recreated the Post Office board. I went to the old UPW. I set up meetings in the department and issued numbered minutes on a mass of things: an interpreters service, a national data processing service and introduced the Giro.

I found it very, very interesting. Harold offered me a Cabinet job after the 1966 election as the Minister for Public Buildings and Works but he advised me against taking it, so I didn't take it. And so I entered the Cabinet as Minister for Technology after Frank Cousins resigned.

I was very influenced by what I had read about Stafford Cripps when he became President of the Board of Trade. He held a lot of public meetings and I did the same.

My life story as a minister was two things – a long campaign against deindustrialisation (we had the largest motorbike industry in the world, the largest machine tool industry, etc) and also working closely with trade unions. I

became a strong supporter of industrial democracy. It brought me, subsequently, into conflict with the cabinet.

#### IN PLACE OF STRIFE

I had a certain sympathy for Barbara Castle. Jim Callaghan came out against it and was dropped from the inner Cabinet. I think I probably got it wrong but later recognised that we lost the 1970 election as a product of *In Place of Strife*. As chairman of the Labour Party in 71–72 I went to the TUC and made a strong appeal for the breach to be mended and we then set up the TUC–Labour Party Liaison Committee. The recovery of relations between the unions and the party was a difficult operation but it took place between 71 and 74 and led to the 74 manifesto which was a radical one. And that was a product of all that was done in bringing the unions back into closer relations with the party.

#### THE LEGACY OF THE 1964–70 GOVERNMENT

The Open University was Harold's greatest memorial. He was very much against comprehensive education. He said grammar schools would be abolished over his dead body, and people said that was another reason to abolish

them! He never understood the importance of comprehensive education, which Tony Crosland did. My wife was very involved in the plans for comprehensive education as founder of the Comprehensive Schools Committee.

#### ENOCH POWELL

Wilson was furious with my speech attacking Enoch Powell during the 1970 election. He said 'keep race out of it'. But I was so upset by what Powell said. There was a terrible row with Wilson but I was very glad I said it.

I had known Enoch since 1951 and he was a complex character. Even though he was in favour of hereditary peerages he helped me in my battle. They said he had the best mind in Parliament until he made it up! He used to address the shopkeepers in Wolverhampton on the PSBR, he treated people with great respect, and his speeches were always very interesting. He played a considerable part in Labour's victory in 74. I have a personal feeling for Enoch despite the awful damage of his speech. It was his classical education that got him into trouble.

#### THE 1970 DEFEAT

Harold did his walkabouts. He was so overconfident, he was

above politics, Labour was the natural party of government and so on. And it was a presidential campaign. Heath said he would cut prices at a stroke, which was very clever. I suppose we had run out of steam and there was a lot of pent-up hostility in the Labour Party and the trade unions. And so as soon as we lost there was a great wave of radicalism just as there was after we lost in 79 – because the party is very loyal to its government but when it fails, my God, the real feeling comes out.

#### THE HEATH U-TURN AND 1974 ELECTIONS

I wrote an article about Heath's 1972 Industry Act in the *Sunday Times* called "Heath's spadework for socialism" and said how we could use the legislation. He even had the power to overturn multinational companies if they had done something wrong, the power to intervene in local authorities etc. Then he said to people: 'Who governs Britain?' and they said: 'Not you Mr Heath', so the idea that the unions defeated him was untrue, it was the electors who defeated him.

#### THE RADICAL INDUSTRIAL POLICY PROGRAMME

There was lots of forces which stymied the programme.

Harold did not really agree with it. He tried to water down the 'Regeneration of Britain' White Paper and the Treasury was put to work against 'Bennism', and the CBI was opposed. Then after the referendum Wilson moved me to Energy. It was quite a hard period but we did excite a lot of support in the trade union movement and the Labour Party.

My attitude towards politics is to keep a high level of public understanding so you are renewed by pressure from the outside. I never had any legislation to implement except Heath's because I was sacked before the Industry Bill went through.

#### NOT RESIGNING FROM THE WILSON-CALLAGHAN GOVERNMENTS

There were lots of calls for me to resign from the government. The problem with resigning is that if you resign from the Cabinet and there's a vote of confidence do you vote for the government which you have resigned from? If you don't vote or vote against the government and there's an election then do you stand as a candidate to get it re-elected? I came to the conclusion that the only case for resignation was if you came to the opinion that the government you were

a member of was no longer the lesser of two evils. I argued my case and I won some and lost some – I won on not cutting benefits in 1976 and I defeated that by circulating the minutes from 1931, which made Jim furious.

The only thing I would be ashamed of was I if ever said something just to get on and I don't think I ever did that. I make no apology for making mistakes (of which I made a million) or for working within the Party. There are too many socialist parties these days and not enough socialists in the Labour Party! I really do feel that if you can't win the Labour Party around to your view then you're never going to change Britain so you have to work within the Party.

#### JIM CALLAGHAN AS PRIME MINISTER

I am very fond of Jim and I said to him once, I do prefer you to Harold because he was always left wing at conference and right wing in parliament whereas you're right wing all the time! In 1973 (after his prostate operation) he told me that he was going to give up, and I said we would discuss it after his second administration .

#### THE IMF CRISIS

Jim was very clever and handled it well and thought that

that he should dispose of the alternative economic strategy first. So I had a whole day to present my case and I had limited support from Peter Shore and even from Tony Crosland. They said it was a siege economy and I said your strategy had the bankers in the castle and our supporters outside and at least with mine our supporters were inside. Harold Lever was sent to America to frighten the Americans into support the Government otherwise this man Mr Benn would come along and I was used as a bogeyman. I attribute our defeat in 1979 mainly to that decision in 1976. I think the IMF consciously destroyed the Labour Cabinet even though it was right-wing under Jim, it was too left wing for the IMF.

#### THE LIB-LAB PACT

I opposed the pact because I had to consult the Liberal shadow spokesperson and I wanted to consult the PLP. I had to clear things with David Penhaligon. I thought we should take a stand. I would rather you fought and lost then compromised and lost on a compromise because you had at least retained your self-respect.

#### AN OCTOBER 1978 ELECTION

I wrote to Jim and said I think we might lose control of the

situation in the winter. And he infuriated the unions at the TUC conference because they had a party laid on. He was close to the unions but he let them down.

#### WINTER OF DISCONTENT

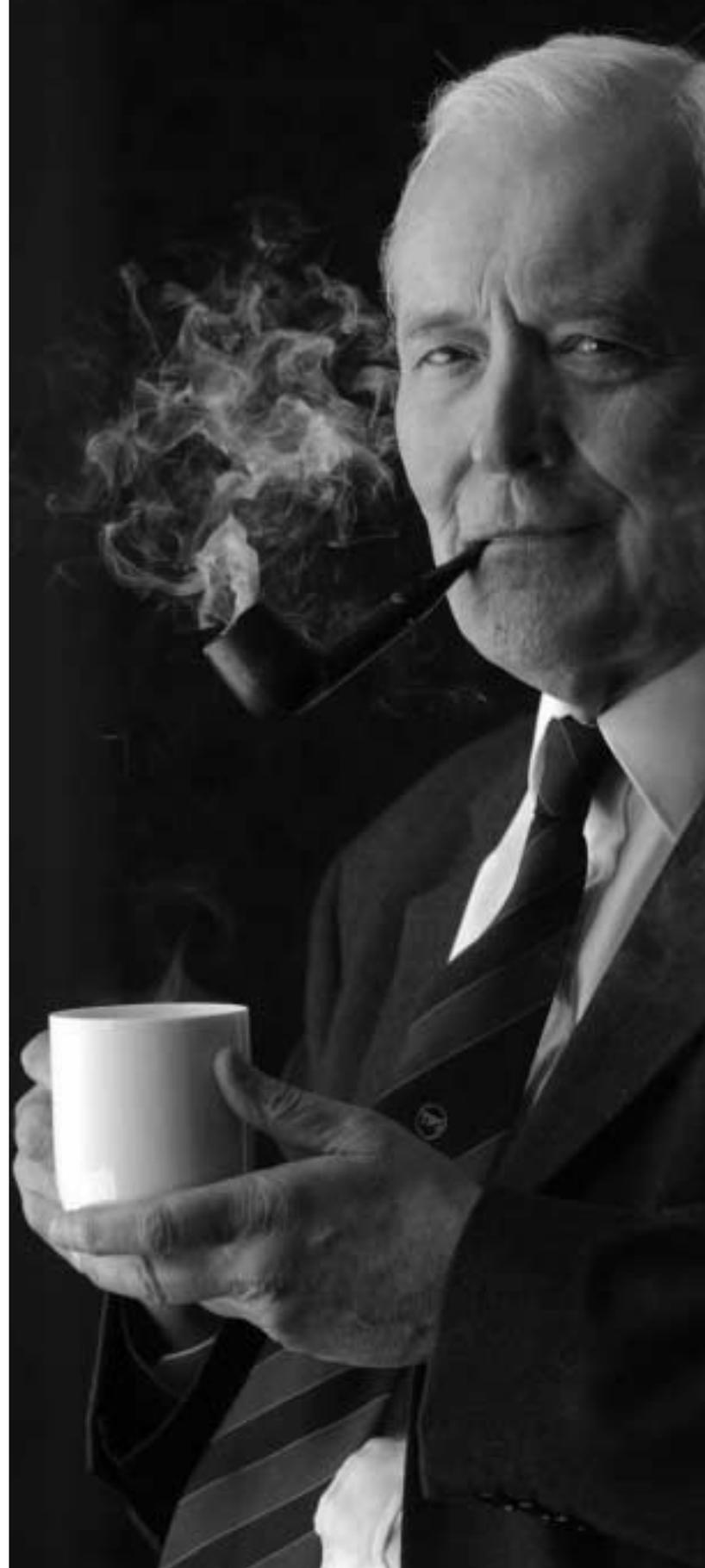
I used to go to the Civil Contingencies Committee and kept in touch with the unions. What I did learn was that establishment didn't know what to do and were very confused that winter. I did fend off the state of emergency where I would have authorized seventeen year old soldiers to drive oil tankers. And then it ended in tragedy with the election of Thatcher.

Mrs Thatcher succeeded on 'Labour Isn't Working' and hostility towards trade unions.

#### LABOUR PARTY CHANGES

##### DURING FROM 1979-83

I was trying to achieve the democratisation of the party because I felt the party was more and more centrally controlled. And of course it was the electoral college which elected Blair. Mandatory selection was triggered by the SDP. I think it was necessary because the party was in big trouble. And now it has been dismantled, except for the electoral college, by Blair and I am not sure if you could say the Party is democratic, con-



*The veteran left-winger, complete with pipe and mug of tea.*

ference doesn't matter, candidates are picked by lists and so on. I think Blair's main contribution to British politics is to dismantle democracy.

#### THE DEPUTY LEADERSHIP CONTEST

My wife thought I made a mistake in standing. I always saw elections (party and national) as opportunities to open up a debate. If I'd been primarily concerned about being elected then I wouldn't have said half the things that I said. You've got to be elected on what you believe in. The debate would have continued even if I hadn't stood.

#### CAUSES OF DEFEAT IN THE 1983 ELECTION

We lost ten per cent of our MPs to the SDP, which had done terrible damage, and they had media support. During the campaign Callaghan and Wilson came out against the manifesto which didn't help. When I look at the manifesto – getting Russia out of Afghanistan, anti-apartheid, weapons of mass destruction – it anticipated some of the things now on the agenda though it might have been put badly and rather crudely. I don't think it would have been possible to win in 1983, whatever had been put in the manifesto, even with a New Labour

manifesto as Thatcher was fighting her first re-election.

#### THE MINER'S STRIKE

First on the question of whether there had been a ballot. There was a ballot on the incentive scheme, which the Cabinet forced me to implement when I was a minister. I was against it on the principle of the day wage. The miners rejected the incentive scheme and Nottinghamshire went to the courts and got a separate ballot and adopted it. If there had been a ballot, Nottingham would have gone to the courts and would have won for carrying on because they thought their pits were safe even though they were later all closed down. But the strike was engineered not by Scargill but by Thatcher. Corton Wood, which was the trigger, was a pit which was given ten years – and they closed it down. They told Scargill to keep away from the lodge meeting and he thought they would agree (to the closure) but they voted to strike and appealed to him. There were many conference resolutions in the NUM about taking action if there were closures and they didn't have a choice. Scargill was defending his members. The media role was disgraceful during the strike.

#### MODERNISATION OF THE PARTY UNDER KINNOCK

I have always been in favour of being professional and being up to date. But this was a deliberate disengagement from what we were all about. Kinnock gave up everything he believed in and in the end nobody believed a word he said – and he ceased to be himself, because he previously was a very attractive character. I think Mandelson was the force behind it. They believed that Thatcher was so powerful, that the only way you could win was to operate as a critic within the big tent of Thatcherism.

I was opposed to expelling Militant. I have always opposed using organisational methods to deal with argument. I thought the defence of jobs in Liverpool and Lambeth was right. What they did there in the face of the challenge Thatcher posed was right.

#### JOHN SMITH

He was a Scottish Presbyterian so I understood him because my mother was a Scot. He was a very kind man, a very fair man, a very principled man – and I liked him. He worked with me at the Department of Energy. And I went to his funeral, which was a very moving occasion. And, yes, we would have won the 1997 election under John Smith.

#### THE BLAIR GOVERNMENT

I first met Tony Blair in 1983 when Tony Booth, Cherie's father, said to me that his daughter was standing as a candidate. So I went to Chatham and spoke and she made a very good speech. I didn't vote for him as leader but I wrote to him and wished him luck. He wrote a very nice letter back saying that he had never forgotten the speech I made for Cherie and said that it was the finest statement of socialist philosophy that he had ever heard. I sent him the tape of the speech – it was pure 1983 manifesto!

He supported me in the Deputy Leadership contest, and I heard one of his first speeches from the front bench – it was a very powerful appearance. It was quite clear from the beginning what he was about. He said New Labour was a new political party. He split the party but kept it within the party.

Once we were elected I voted against the lone parent cuts, in favour of comprehensive schools, and against the bombing of Iraq. Blair said we wouldn't increase income tax so it became more and more of a Thatcherite government. Mrs Thatcher was asked about her greatest achievement and she replied, "New Labour."

# New Labour, Old Values?

Greg Rosen argues that New Labour's ideas and values can be detected throughout the history of the Party in a piece taken from his new book *I'm Telling You . . . and You'll Listen: Labour's Story and the Speeches that Shaped it* published by Politico's in November.

In May 1997 Tony Blair formed what was to become the first Labour government in history to be elected to two full terms. Like its predecessors, it has had its ups and downs. But at no time has it plumbed the depths of unpopularity achieved by Labour governments of the past. Blair consciously sought to avoid 'over-promising', the mistake made by both Ramsay MacDonald and Harold Wilson. The famous pledge card carried round in every Labour Party member's back pocket during the 1997 election contained promises at once radical and achievable. Not for New Labour the rhetoric of 'a fundamental shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families.' Yet the pledges contained promises that Labour had been making for decades and had failed in the past to

keep. They included the historic demands for a minimum wage and for Scottish and Welsh devolution, to which Labour had been committed since the days of Keir Hardie and never managed to deliver. Indeed, the last Labour government had spent a considerable amount of its parliamentary time trying and failing to get devolution on the statute book. Another pledge, to reduce class sizes to thirty or under in primary schools, was an old chestnut from the sixties. Wilson went into the 1964 election pledged to reduce class sizes to thirty 'at the earliest possible opportunity.' All of them. Thirty-three years later it remained to be done. Blair, Brown and Blunkett did not promise to do it all at one go, but wanted to be able to make some progress at least.

Likewise, while Labour in the 1970s promised a wealth

tax but never implemented it, New Labour pledged and implemented the more modest (but nevertheless substantial) windfall tax on the privatised utilities to pay for the New Deal, in itself emblematic of New Labour's commitment to Ernest Bevin's pledge on unemployment in 1944.

Perhaps the greatest contrast with previous Labour governments has been in the economic sphere. Gordon Brown, steeped in the history of the Labour Party himself, has arguably done more to learn from it than any of his predecessors. He is unquestionably the most successful Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer in history, as well as the longest serving. Despite repeated predictions of impending recession from Conservatives and commentators (remember Francis Maude's 'downturn made in Downing Street' mantra?) he

is the first Labour Chancellor in history not to have been embroiled in economic crisis. The fact that nobody mentions stop-go (or boom and bust) economics any more is a tribute to his success.

In other areas there has been more continuity than some commentators would have you believe. The education standards agenda that Blair and David Blunkett put at the heart of New Labour policymaking is rooted in the traditional Labour values expounded in James Callaghan's Ruskin speech of 1976. It was Callaghan who first raised the issue of literacy and numeracy standards in schools and it was Blunkett's literacy and numeracy hours that sought to provide the answer. Likewise, New Labour's 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime,' approach, including its focus on 'anti-social behaviour', bears a remarkable

similarity to that which Labour's annual conference demanded of its government in 1978. Even its most eloquent critics, Jeremy Corbyn and Bob Marshall-Andrews, are the same. And Gordon Brown's 'five economic tests' on the Euro bear a striking resemblance to the 'Five Conditions' agreed by Gaitskell and Wilson in 1961 which underpinned the basis of Labour's approach to membership of the Common Market.

Indeed, rhetorically there is a lot that is more traditional to 'New Labour: New Britain' than has met the contemporary eye. The New Britain metaphor itself was – on the advice of the young Tony Benn – central to Harold Wilson's 1964 campaign. It was also the oratorical device with which new MP John Freeman sought to capture the hopes and aspirations of his generation in the first speech of the new 1945 Parliament: 'D-day in the battle for the New Britain!' Perhaps Peter Mandelson is more the grandson of Herbert Morrison than is commonly thought.

There are several areas where New Labour has been criticised as having nothing to say. 'The public schools offend not only against the

"weak", let alone the strong ideal of equal opportunity; they offend even more against any ideal of social cohesion or democracy. This privileged stratum of education, the exclusive preserve of the wealthier classes, socially and physically segregated from the state educational system, is the greatest single cause of stratification and class-consciousness in

“The New Britain metaphor itself was – on the advice of the young Tony Benn – central to Harold Wilson's 1964 campaign”

Britain.' So wrote Anthony Crosland in 1961. Previous Labour governments had failed to tackle this, and Hugh Gaitskell himself had attacked the inadequacy of party policy on the issue from the floor of Party Conference in 1953. Crosland himself was to be in the privileged position – as Education Secretary in Wilson's Cabinet during 1965–7 – to do something about it. He set up a Royal Commission, which, as they

say, took minutes and wasted years. 'Of all the futile committees on which I have sat none equalled the Public Schools Commission,' recalled Noel Annan. It reported in 1968. Nothing happened; such were the economic crises of the time, the Labour government felt it lacked the resources to take forward its recommendations. In many of the areas

that New Labour can be most criticised for a lack of a fully thought-through solution to an ongoing conundrum, it is doing no worse than following in the good footsteps of 'Old Labour.'

Some of the more personal attacks have been similar too. New Labour's Blairite leadership has been branded an Islington elite. Callaghan was attacked for his appointment of his son-in-law Peter Jay to the Washington embassy. Wilson was derided for

his retirement 'Lavender list' of peerages for cronies, and for appointing a Cabinet full of Oxford dons and public-school chums, one of whom, old-Etonian Lord Longford, had been Hugh Gaitskell's Tory flatmate at university. Gaitskell himself was mocked for consorting with his Froggal friends, while Nye Bevan braved barbed taunts for his 'Bollinger Bolshevism' and a friendship with Tory media mogul Lord Beaverbrook that he shared with Michael Foot. Ramsay MacDonald was accused of an undue fondness for marchionesses and even Keir Hardie had to face down accusations of putting his regard for certain suffragettes above the socialist crusade. Clement Attlee had an open bias towards promoting fellow alumni of his old public school, Haileybury, to senior government jobs, yet somehow managed to escape criticism. Hugh Dalton, who still mourned the death of his friend and idol Rupert Brooke (who bore an alarming physical resemblance to Hugh Grant) urged the promotion of dashing floppy-haired young chaps who took his fancy. The Bevanites backed other Bevanites, and the Bennites other Bennites. Ernest Bevin liked to pro-

mote people from the West Country, where he had been born. Herbert Morrison liked Londoners, and Scots. Most of the Jenkinsites went to Oxford. There was, perhaps, a grain of truth in many of these accusations of cronyism and human frailty.

In the aftermath of September 11th 2001, Blair has been criticised for the approach he has taken to foreign policy, and specifically on war in Iraq. Whether you agree with Blair or not, it is difficult to doubt the sincerity of his convictions or to substantiate an accusation of pursuing it merely to court domestic popularity.

Moreover, the whole issue of interventionism versus isolationism, of the effectiveness of international institutions such as the United Nations and the issue of alliances with right-wing leaders of democratic states against totalitarian dictators abroad brings us right back to the debates that wracked the Labour Party in the 1930s about Spain and re-armament. As Anne Clwyd said in her speech to Labour's 2003 conference: 'I have believed in regime change for the last 20 years. I do not believe we should turn a blind eye to such atrocities. They have, after all, stirred this

great Labour movement for over a century – in Spain, in Nazi Germany, Cambodia and Chile.'

As Paul Richards tellingly observed in his new collection of Blair's speeches and articles, 'As Party leader and later as Prime Minister, all of Blair's pronouncements owe something to his advisers and civil servants, notably Alastair Campbell, and none can be credited solely to Blair. No modern Prime Minister sits alone crafting major speeches or articles. Major speeches, particularly the annual speech to the Labour Party Conference, can be the result of scores of people's efforts.' Richards is right, but this does not actually make Blair any different from either Harold Wilson, whose 1964 speeches had input from Tony Benn, or Hugh Gaitskell, whose 1959 conference speech was largely written by Tony Crosland

Blair has been famously criticised for his lack of verbs. But his capacity to enthuse and inspire cannot be denied. Sometimes he is at his best when he departs from his script and speaks from the heart. At other times it is when his back is to the wall. And this is one capacity that marks him out from his predecessors.

One of those occasions was on September 10th 2002. September 11th 2001 had been the day Blair was scheduled to address the annual TUC Congress. He never gave the speech. During the year that followed a great deal was to happen in the trade union movement. The immediate impact of the September 11th tragedy included the collapse of the aviation market. Tourists, particularly American tourists, stopped flying. Airline revenue collapsed and orders for new aircraft, engines and other manufactures were axed. Massive job losses followed across the UK aviation and manufacturing industry. The announcement by several large employers with AEEU partnership agreements of the closure of their pension schemes undoubtedly contributed to the defeat of AEEU General Secretary Ken Jackson, who was standing for re-election, by his comparatively unknown left-wing challenger Derek Simpson in July 2002. Jackson, dubbed Blair's favourite union leader by the press, had been an outspoken supporter of both the Labour government and industrial partnership. Simpson made clear that his approach would be different. Indeed, right

across the union movement, hard-left candidates, some of whom were openly Marxist, were deposing moderates. By the time Blair arrived in Blackpool for the 2004 TUC, he had lost his most powerful union supporter, and he was getting a great deal of opprobrium for his approach to the 'war on terror.' Delegates wanted reassurance. The media was almost unanimous in its prediction that Blair would get a roasting such as no Labour leader had suffered since the days of imposed pay restraint. But Blair made the case for the war on terror, and the case against Saddam Hussein, he laid out the government's achievements and restated the need for a partnership between Labour and the unions.

He also faced a hardbiten and sceptical audience, but as he finished they rose to give him in a fifty-second standing ovation. It was a reaction for which Harold Wilson could only have dreamed.

*Greg Rosen is the Chair of the Labour History Group. His new book, I'm Telling You . . . and You'll Listen: Labour's Story and the Speeches that Shaped it is published in November by Politico's.*

# Labour's lost leader: Reggie Maudling??!!

Lewis Baston

For the last five years I have been writing the biography of Reginald Maudling, who served in Conservative Cabinets as Chancellor and Home Secretary, and very nearly became leader of the Party in 1965. Despite everything (and there is a lot to forgive) I still like Reggie and find a lot of his political ideas and his approach to life very appealing. So what was he doing in the Conservative Party?

My question is a bit more than a reflex reaction that Reggie was, to quote Jo-Anne Nadler's memoir, 'Too Nice to be a Tory'. Any minister who had seen Kenya, Zambia and half the Caribbean through to independence, then launched what an opponent called 'the biggest spending spree by any Government in peacetime', targeted at public service investment and overseas aid, before going on to introduce non-custodial sentencing,

would generally be reckoned to have quite a respectable liberal-left pedigree. Maudling also, throughout his life, said rather left-wing sounding things. Writing in 1943 he noted that 'control is part of the machinery of freedom and in the freedom of civilized man control is absorbed and transcended... [the Conservatives should argue that] the purpose of State control and the guiding principle of its application is the achievement of true freedom.' To more doctrinaire modern ideologues, this statement cannot be considered compatible with the Tory faith. Even at the time, Hayek's 1944 free market tract *The Road to Serfdom* was dedicated 'to the socialists of all parties' and he would certainly have included Maudling among that number. From a different starting point, Maudling had ended up at much the same place philosophically as Labour's social democrats. His politics recog-

nised as appropriate the demand for economic equality and accepted the validity of the most usual left wing critique of negative freedom. He accepted that the state has a major role in remedying social injustice.

These were not youthful excesses. As Home Secretary he wrote in 1972 that 'in modern political circumstances a capitalist economy must be prepared to accept a far greater degree of systematic control over the level of incomes and prices than we have ever contemplated before.' He thought the worst day in the history of the Tory Party was when Margaret Thatcher won the leadership election and in the late 1970s, as an unrepentant Keynesian, Maudling mocked Healey's gestures towards monetarist economics. It was hardly possible to slip a cigarette paper, let alone one of the fat cigars beloved of both men, between the politics of Roy Jenkins and Reginald Maudling. Yet both

served happily in their respective parties until the mid 1970s, when they started to have doubts and, in Maudling's case in 1973, muse about the desirability of the emergence of a party of the 'extreme centre'. Why was Maudling not one of Labour's social democrats?

For part of the answer one has to look back to Maudling's origins. He came from the upper middle class – his father was one of the most noted actuaries in the City of London. His mother was a ferocious snob to whom respectability was all. Some, such as Tony Crosland, rebel against the assumptions of childhood, but Reggie was always inclined to find comfort. His school, Merchant Taylor's, was one of the best for an intelligent, though fat and lazy, boy like him. Intellectual achievement was prized and Reggie was accelerated through his classes while kindly games masters allowed him to develop his golf rather than suffer the mud and humiliation of the rugby field. Early on, Reggie made his peace with the 'system' and learned to operate within it rather than seek the course of rebellion.

In 1939 he took the step of asking Harold Nicolson, then a 'National Labour' MP (who had sought nomination for

four different parties in four years in the early 1930s) which party he should join. When Nicolson's diaries, recording the incident, were published, Maudling explained, 'I had never contemplated joining the Socialists, but although by temperament Conservative, I was interested in the National Labour concept. In fact, I was thinking of the parties of the centre, or right of centre, and asking advice on this.'

National Labour was the small fragment of the Labour Party which had followed MacDonald into coalition in 1931. It still lingered on in 1939 as part of the pretence that there was a National rather than Tory government, and as a flag of convenience for Nicolson and a couple of others. National Labour's propaganda stressed co-operation in industry and the party aspired to be a synthesis of political approaches. It would, for instance, accept the traditional Conservative policy of tariffs while also creating publicly owned corporations like the London Passenger Transport Board. Maudling prized rationality and compromise in his politics, and he saw National Labour as institutionalising these values. Maudling acknowledged Hegel as his principal intellectual influence, and often spoke

in terms of the dialectic (a synthesis emerging from the clash of thesis and antithesis) as the driving force of history. Reggie's strongest belief, stronger than any other policy or principle, was in the value of consensus as a process.

Maudling ended up choosing the Conservatives, joining the party in 1941, rather than Labour, as the instrument of his search for consensus. The reasons why Labour seemed beyond the pale were ideological, cultural and temperamental. The ideological problem for him was Labour's ostensible commitment to socialism and nationalisation. From his earliest recorded political statements, it is clear that Maudling had no faith in direct state management as a means of running industries; he felt that his wartime experiences in Whitehall taught him that 'State enterprise is not a good thing for the economy as a whole.' He believed in regulated, reformed capitalism. So, of course, did many contemporary social democrats, but Maudling saw nationalisation as counterproductive and saw no reason to pretend otherwise. He rejected the church because he did not think it right to subscribe to aims and creeds in which he did not believe, even if he accepted a lot of its values, and he rejected

socialism for the same reason.

Maudling also did not have any connection with the cultures from which mid-century Labour identity flowed – no trade unionism, no Methodism, no progressive intellectual influence, no sense of being part of a movement, no spark of rebellion or anger in his politics. The Conservative Party at the time was an increasingly broad ideological church, moving a long way in practice during the wartime coalition to embrace the welfare state, planning, consensus and reform. It was moving in Maudling's direction, and he was well placed after serving in Whitehall during the war to carry the reformist Tory banner in the 1945 election and join the Party's research staff later that year. He was one of the very first people in Britain to have mapped out a political career path from party researcher to front line politician, now a very well trodden route.

If Maudling had chosen Labour, he might have done moderately well as an MP and minister. Constituency parties then were tolerant enough of the varieties of human life to embrace Hartley Shawcross, Reggie Paget and Woodrow Wyatt, so there was no reason to think that there was nowhere that could have taken Maudling to their hearts.

Maudling was highly competent as a minister, agreeable company, not inclined to resign or be difficult – an obvious pick for a Gaitskell Cabinet. But perhaps he might not have gone any further. The reasons he never led the Tories would have applied – lack of aggression, an appearance of not wanting it enough, a lack of partisan spirit. And he would surely have said something at some point like his quip to unemployed workers in 1962 that it was jolly nice to meet them but he had a lot of work to do, even if they didn't.

While Maudling could not have joined the Labour Party of the 1940s, it is hard to see him, if transplanted to the 1990s or 2000s, anywhere other than New Labour. He would have had to trim a little to the right, and not talk in such interventionist and liberal terms, but he could have managed. For the successors to Maudling's pragmatism, Establishment mindedness, Hegelian politics of synthesis, careerism, and to be fair his genuine beliefs in One Nation, the welfare state and global development, the Labour Party now seems a comfortable enough resting place.

*Lewis Baston is author of Reggie: The Life of Reginald Maudling, published in October*

# The Monumental Gap in our Labour Heritage

Paul Richards on a new commission to document, preserve and promote monuments to Labour's heroes and heroines

Visitors are left in little doubt that Britain has a long imperial and military history. In every provincial town, city, and the capital there are statues and monuments to kings, queens, generals and statesmen. There are thousands of Victoria Roads, Streets and Drives from Abingdon to Yeovil, over 250 Wellington Streets, over 200 Nelson Streets, 17 Albert Squares from Dundee to Widnes, and 44 roads named after the relief of Mafeking. Add these street names to public buildings and halls, statues, columns and, in the case of Waterloo, whole towns, and the map of Britain is a solid product of our country's imperial, military and monarchical past.

Running in parallel to, and sometimes in direct conflict with, this version of

British history is another strand of our history which one struggles to find commemorated on quite the same scale. The history of the Labour movement in Britain, and of the Labour Party, is a hidden history. But there are monuments to the heroes and leaders of the Labour Party throughout Britain, built in the twentieth century, to reflect a different tradition to the warriors and imperialists. Their numbers are sparse, their position sometimes understated, but they remind us of Labour's history, from Keir Hardie to John Smith.

Unless a *Labour History* reader can disabuse me, I don't believe there exists an up-to-date archive or directory of Labour statues and monuments. You stumble upon them by chance or luck. Statues, plaques, housing estates, building names, and

street names dedicated to Labour leaders and Ministers are in danger of falling into disrepair and worse, the names they commemorate are in danger of being forgotten, airbrushed from our collective history.

To put this right, this article is being published to draw attention to a new initiative: The Commission for Labour Monuments. The Commission is designed to achieve three things:

- to identify and list all monuments, statues, plaques, named buildings and streets commemorating Labour Party figures from 1900 onwards;
- to campaign to preserve such monuments from removal, destruction or disrepair; and
- to advise on and to promote new monuments to Labour's leaders and heroes.

The first step is to identify and log monuments. Some are well-known local landmarks. There is a fine statue of Clement Attlee outside Stepney Town Hall in the East End of London, where Attlee was elected mayor in 1919. There is a Callaghan Square in Cardiff, the city he represented from 1945 to 1987. That city also boasts a statue of Aneurin Bevan in Queen Street. Tony Crosland is commemorated by Crosland Road in his constituency of Grimsby. There's an Ernest Bevin College in Tooting in London, and a Bevin Square, in the old Wandsworth constituency where Bevin won a by-election in 1940. George Lansbury, Labour's leader from 1932 to 1935 is remembered in the name of the Lansbury Estate, built from 1949 onwards by the London County Council (LCC) on the blitzed streets north of the

East India Dock Road. Keir Hardie is remembered in over forty street names, especially in his native Scotland.

The post-war reconstruction created opportunities for civic leaders to commemorate Labour's leaders. On many housing estates, blocks and buildings have Labour-inspired names. For example, in North Fulham, the post-war Clem Attlee Estate boasts blocks named after Edith Summerskill, Ellen Wilkinson, Herbert Morrison, Michael Stewart, Margeret Herbison, Frank Soskice, Hugh Dalton, and many others. In 1995, the same estate saw the opening of John Smith Avenue by Baroness Smith to remember her late husband. In 2002, a nine foot bronze statue of Donald Dewar was unveiled in Glasgow by Tony Blair. After repeated acts of vandalism, a CCTV camera was installed to prevent damage to the statue. Harold Wilson has a life-long learning centre named after him – on the Isles of Scilly where he famously spent his holidays.

The second step is to archive these monuments, record the details of their establishment, and protect them from removal. Like war memorials, they must be allowed to stand for future generations.

The visitor to Britain should go home with a greater



Then, we must ensure that recent leaders are properly commemorated. Who would you like to see a statue of? Does Michael Foot deserve a statue in Ebbw Vale, or his home town of Portsmouth? Should Hugh Gaitskell have more than the close named after him in Fulham? What about Margaret Bondfield, Ellen Wilkinson, or Jo Richardson – don't they deserve statues more than General Haigh?

The visitor to Britain should go home with a greater

sense of our history than the generals and monarchs.

Commenting on a row in Blackburn over whether to erect a statue of the town's former MP Barbara Castle in June 2004, the *Guardian* opined:

*The decision to commission a memorial requires an examination of shared values...this highlights one further role for the public memorial, once familiarity with the subject has faded from living memory. Then, statues become part of the furniture of collective memory. When a significant number of Britons apparently don't even know*

*what D-Day was about, it is more vital than ever to mark the contribution made by earlier generations.'*

Nowhere is that truer than of Britain's Labour history.

*The Commission for Labour Monuments is a new initiative chaired by Paul Richards, former chair of the Fabian Society. Its patron is Hazel Blears, MP for Salford. If you would like to supply information about monuments in your area, you can contact the Commission on: labourmonuments@prcommunications.co.uk*

*Tony Blair admires the statue of Harold Wilson unveiled in Huddersfield in 1999.*

# Obituaries



## Len Murray

DAVID LEA

Effective trade unionism – warts and all – is an indispensable condition of a more equal and democratic society. Len Murray saw it as a privilege to devote his life to that cause. The huge advances made in the lives of working people and their families against the background of full employment is its own reward. But each generation throws up new challenges: it was ever thus.

Unlike the general secretaries of any the affiliated unions, the role of the General Secretary of the TUC has inevitably to be to project the purposes of the movement as a whole, never to criticise unions in public, particularly when in dispute – not least when on inter-union disputes – without for the most part any leverage –

apart from persuasion – to influence their actions in the wider interest – or indeed in the union's own interest.

The best analogy, Murray often said, was with the United Nations. The question often posed: “Why isn't it doing more?” begs precisely these same questions. The UN is nothing if it is not supported actively by the most powerful member states, but against a democratic background. Then its effectiveness is creatively transformed, notwithstanding the fact that “interfering in the internal affairs of a sovereign state” has until recently been a bridge too far.

These were – by analogy – recurrent themes in Len Murray's years as TUC General Secretary from 1973 to 1984, when he resigned to mark the end of the road in his personal ability to relate to Mrs Thatcher. This was signalled not only by her disdain for the conventions on consultation on new industrial relations legislation but by her abrogation of a basic human right – that of freedom of association – at GCHQ, generally acknowledged to have been in part the result of US pressure. This was a slur that in effect deemed trade unionism at GCHQ to be so far beyond

the pale as to be incompatible with loyalty to the state. One of Murray's greatest sources of satisfaction in 1997 was the immediate restoration of these rights after a united campaign lasting for thirteen years.

Murray had a long apprenticeship under George Woodcock – to whom he acknowledged an immeasurable debt – as Head of the Economic Department then Assistant General Secretary in the years from 1947 – in other words going back to the days when such iconic figures as Bevin and Citrine were still in public life – and indelible influences. He formed clear convictions about the need to work with the flow of changing labour and product markets – in the public sector and private sector alike, our members being consumers of the services of both – much the toughest concept to put across, as we all found, at weekend schools and the like.

Harold Wilson was of course heavily into this agenda but sometimes thought there were short cuts – a rather characteristic reaction. *Plus ça change?*

On Murray's view – and indeed that of all of us working in Congress House at the time – the recklessness of



Barbara Castle in 1968/9 in aborting the agreed TUC–CBI follow up to the report of the Donovan Royal Commission was worse than a crime; it was a mistake. (The headline purpose was to deal with unofficial strikes, through changes in procedure agreements; the issue of strike ballots was to come later.) A considerable innovator in other areas, with an historic breakthrough on gender discrimination and equal pay, Castle's attempt to impose the White Paper *In Place of Strife* – was wholly responsible for that fiasco. When we then retrieved the situation in 1969 it was not the TUC's fault that our tough 'Programme for Action' for the reform of union rule books was so readily characterised as 'the trade unions running the government'. We should between us never have got there

in the first place. And New Labour should stop reiterating myths about that period.

It is worth noting that Murray's eleven year period as General Secretary starting in 1973 – at the time of the successful miners strike under Joe Gormley's leadership of the NUM and the remarkable sequence of events leading to Ted Heath losing the February 1974 election. So his period of office divides roughly equally between periods of Conservative and Labour governments.

In the autumn of 1978, he had the deepest misgivings about Jim Callaghan's decision to postpone the election we had been led to expect; he had put forward another round of pay policy which we told him we could not deliver. This was after four years of the Social Contract – on which we had delivered to the letter. We all knew that

incomes policy could not be a permanent way of life – even Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon had hit the buffers in the previous twelve months. And as incomes policy precludes open arbitration, it is difficult to see how we could have moved – without the government moving at the same time – to impose a formula to protect key public services.

Some observers have posed the question whether the pain for all concerned, then and subsequently, was somehow of our own making. Murray judged that to be erroneous. 'We will deliver' was to Len Murray an article of faith and he ensured that it was never breached. It explains why he so despised the facile criticism which holds the trade union movement primarily responsible for what hap-

pened in 1969 as well as in 1979 – the defining moments in many ways for the Labour and Trade Union Movement since 1945.

The strangest aspect of all this in some ways is that the trade union movement's closest and most candid friend in the political leadership – Jim Callaghan – was at the heart of these two greatest traumas of the past fifty years – and there was considerable mutual regard between the two men.

But why is the relationship inherently so difficult? There are two caricatures. One has the politicians facing election despairing of the trade unions failing to understand that voters are consumers of public services, and failing as delivery vehicles for the bright new ideas which the political leadership has dreamed up, the other caricature has trade unions

*Len Murray arriving at 10 Downing Street to meet with James Callaghan in 1979 with Ken Gill, Ken Graham and Norman Willis.*

portraying the politicians as betraying workers' interests in face of blackmail by multinational media magnates and obdurate employers.

Murray would simply note that too few of us now have experience of both wings of the movement and are far too ready to demonise the other. But he would at this point strongly assert that trade unions are not political parties. – the lion's share of the members' £100 a year or so is of course not for the political fund but for research and negotiations with employers and services to members, and fighting funds of one sort or another.

Murray noted that the current halving of membership from the peak in 1979 neatly matches that from 1920 to the mid and late 1930s, – yet that fall was followed in the 1940s onward by a recovery to new heights. It is hard to see that replicating itself today, if the conventional wisdom about globalisation and the unstoppable (though surely very peculiar and one doubts whether sustainable) Chinese Model of the labour market with no autonomous trade unions (but what are they?) and extreme income inequality (but is that inevitable at this stage

of growth?) is now the accepted benchmark for a manufacturing, with industrial nations transferring production accordingly. Murray was firm on the universality of certain principles enshrined in the ILO and these are under threat.

One recurrent issue which Murray debated with colleagues over the past thirty years has been that of the 'single channel' of worker representation through trade union structures and/or the potential role of works council representatives. In the UK tradition, Murray disliked the formal dichotomy of the German system but was very anxious for the debate to go forward, including its more advance relation – the Bullock proposals. We are all looking forward to the first real test of the first step which has emerged through the EU directive on information and consultation.

Perhaps the decline in membership is not the same as a decline in representative capacity, as French trade unions leaders have frequently been heard to assert; Murray saw this as too clever by half – as a Panglossian gloss to which Voltaire would donned his hat; Murray would have gone back to basics and have pointed out

that it is the coverage of collective bargaining that is the best correlate with equality in the OECD countries – Scandinavia still standing out as the example of this. But the fact that in Europe we are now moving towards what Jacques Delors described as framework agreements implemented though national law – a huge step forward in many ways – has also affected the purely 'voluntarist' doctrine, and Murray was decidedly traditionalist on this front.

At national level Murray would also note that relationships with Government have to be part of the triangle of consultations with Social Partners through bodies such as NEDC created by Harold Macmillan in 1962 and abolished by Norman Lamont in 1992 (but with the Treasury, it has to be said, playing the arrogant sceptic from start to finish, just as it has relentlessly on all matters European).

The need for the three of them – TUC, CBI and Government – to see eye to eye on the nightmarishly intractable issues of pensions policy – one requiring a long term vision if ever there was one – is a current instance crying out for the philosophy of tripartitism, indubitably not

just a concept for the history books.

Murray's upbringing as a Shropshire lad, with tragic accidents befalling both his parents – and then his war service in the King's Shropshire Light Infantry – made him a stoic but resolutely determined to provide a place in the sun for the sort of people he grew up with.

Some people have commented on Len Murray's intense dislike of any form of showiness – and his much buttoned up approach to life, reflecting his experiences from childhood onwards. Some years ago, my bank manager asked me to give Murray his regards. In turn, I asked how he knew him. 'Oh, he pulled me out of a blazing tank six days after D-Day' Naturally, I did pass on the message to Len and he looked rather embarrassed. But this characteristic self-effacement should not be confused with a lack of steely resolve or clear principled leadership – qualities which he demonstrated consistently to his close colleagues and indeed all who knew him.

*Lord Lea of Crondall was Assistant General Secretary of the TUC From 1979 to 1999.*



## Ben Pimlott

DENIS MACSHANE

There are three aspects of Ben Pimlott that stand out. First, he was Labour through and through. Other historians who shaped our knowledge of the Labour movement like Alan Bullock or Kenneth Morgan were sympathetic but Pimlott loved the Party and remained a militant – in the French sense of the word. This gave him unique empathy in both writing his great histories of the left in the 1930s, his spell-binding account of Dalton, rightly rescuing him from the rummage room of not-quite-great Labour figures and his masterly biography of Wilson which had sufficient distance from both the epoch and the era to become a definitive re-interpretation.

Second, Pimlott was a reformist. He was an intellec-

tual who placed his energy and talents at the service of the idea of reformism, in contrast to the vanity and sense of self-importance which infects so many other intellectuals who are allowed a public platform in the *Guardian*, the *New Statesman*, or the *London Review of Books*. The years wasted in the cul-de-sacs of Trotskyism and Stalinism that consumed the 1968 generation, of which Ben Pimlott was an exemplar, has left a generation of public-space intellectuals who are good at polemics but bad at analysis. The challenge of the democratic left is to shape a sense of permanent reformism, a Bernsteinian sense of movement which can adapt to the changing contours of capitalism and human development. Pimlott was central to the reclaiming of the Labour Party for social democratic reformism in the 1980s at a time when it was touch and go whether the David Owen–David Steel lib–lab axis might make a real electoral breakthrough.

Today, it all seems a footnote in history. But just two decades ago the space between the Labour Party of Scargill and Benn marching firmly into the abyss of extremism, and the SDP cen-

tre-left alternative patronised by Polly Toynebee and David Marquand with all the liberal media behind them, was small. Pimlott threw his intellectual energy and historical authority into a fight to save the Labour Party he loved. Through a series of pamphlets, essays, articles, and his *Samzidat* newsletter he mounted one of the most effective one-person campaigns ever, to make the case for building on the foundations of the Labour Party and reclaiming it from its leftist and Owenite grave-diggers. Had Pimlott thrown in his lot with the anti-Labour gang with their perches in the *Guardian* and the BBC, the task of the young political team assembled by Neil Kinnock – Blair, Brown, Hewitt, Mandelson *et al* – to move the Labour Party away from the isolationist and protectionist and syndicalist politics of the anti-European, anti-American statist wing of old Labour would have proved much more difficult.

The third aspect of Pimlott that was not much mentioned in the glowing tributes paid to him when he died so young and with cruel abruptness was that he was of the establishment. The son of the distinguished civil servant he went to

Marlborough – where he met his life-long friend and comrade organic intellectual, James Curran – and then Worcester College, Oxford, before setting off for the north east to lecture in history. He stood as a Labour candidate in 1974 and was constantly active in the party. It was a classic *cursum honorum* of the middle-class public school and Oxford young man that gave rise to Clement Attlee, Richard Crossman and Anthony Crosland, and, of course, Tony Blair, who did win a north-east seat at the junior age of twenty-nine.

For Pimlott the timing was not right to make the break into the Commons and a full political life that would certainly have brought cabinet office. The 1979 election ushered in a long period of Tory rule when very few winnable seats became available for the 1968 generation entering their thirties at the moment when becoming a Labour MP was reserved for a lucky few. He turned his remarkable energy into the famous series of books which made his reputation. The book on Labour and the left in the 1930s was in every sense a revolutionary piece of historical writing. Pimlott understood how an active

grass roots campaign that has something important to say can occupy political terrain. He also showed how a party establishment can fight back. Anyone who lived through and was active in the changes in the Labour Party and the trade unions in the 1970s and early 1980s found Pimlott's work a gripping account of how and why a party can change from within. The 1930s had, up to then, a rather boring historiography based on flat accounts of Gollancz and the Left Book Club, the Jarrow March, the 'betrayal' of Ramsay MacDonald, and the bullying of Ernie Bevin. It all segued neatly into Clement Attlee leading Labour into the 1940 coalition with Labour marching to its 1945 rendezvous with welfare state destiny.

Pimlott threw the standard history into the dustbin and revealed a much richer, more complex, more subtle narrative of force and counter-force. Suddenly Labour history became readable again. Previous Labour history had been mainly biography but here was an account of party groupings, conference motions, grass roots networks and forgotten journals which was woven into a narrative that brought to life

the real politics of Labour in the 1930s.

It was a masterly rediscovery of Labour history written with the middle-class confidence that did not need to strive for effect or search for polemical point-scoring. Above all it was beautifully written. This apprenticeship served Pimlott well when he came to write his masterpiece, the biography of Hugh Dalton. Breaking a long book into very short chapters, Pimlott brought pace and page-turning narrative techniques to tell Dalton's extraordinary story. Born into the royal household, the old Etonian turned LSE don, gave Labour in the 1920s and 1930 the economic ballast for the party to develop a series of programmatic policy initiatives which turned it into an effective party of government power.

It is usual to think of the Labour government taking over in 1945 but Attlee, Dalton, Bevin and Morrison held office and wielded effective power from 1940 onwards. It might be better to see Labour in 1951 as being simply exhausted after the most arduous decade in political and government life ever in British history.

One of Pimlott's favourite authors was Hugh Trevor

Roper, the most stylish of the post-war Oxford historians. Trevor-Roper rarely wrote a poor sentence of English. Pimlott's prose was not just graceful and fluent, a quality all good writers should have but had the gift of juxtaposition and an elegant adjective or metaphor that simply lit up the page. At his funeral his sons read out the poems their father liked to hear read out loud at the family table and to comfort him in his last weeks. Most in the church were in tears as they remembered a friend. Yet this love of the beauty of English poems and the electricity of our glorious language give some clue to the cadences and search for right words that made him such a powerful writer.

His biographies of Wilson and the Queen were big-ticket productions establishing Pimlott as one of the major biographers of his time. Both offered revisionist accounts. Wilson was brought back from the scorn and condemnation of those on the right of the Labour Party like Roy Jenkins and Roy Hattersley who had little good to say for him as ministers and MPs in the 1960s and 1970s. He was also rehabilitated from the leftism of Tony Benn and angry Labour of the early 1980s

who derided Wilson for having failed to establish socialism in the 1964–1970 government and done little in his last two years of office, 1974–1976. Pimlott pointed out that Wilson had led Labour to four election victories and somehow kept in office a party in parliament and in the country that seemed determined on permanent political auto-da-fe. The vanity and ego of the Oxford firsts in Wilson cabinet or the comprehensive arrogance of trade union leaders who were out of touch and tune with the Britain of the Beatles and BBC2 can now be scarcely believed. There is no reason why Britain cannot be guided to a reasonable social democratic settlement loosely similar to the social partnership monarchies across the North Sea but the politicians and union leaders Wilson had to work with always placed their own rectitude and self-importance before the need for teamwork in government and solidarity in the party and unions.

Pimlott's biography of the Queen also offered a much better historical account of this countryside and horse-loving woman who has had a crown thrust on her head as a result of her uncle's abdica-

tion. Her common-sense, shrewdness and sense of service to our very British democracy were rescued from the rubbish journalistic accounts that pass for royal biographies.

All the time Pimlott had a partner in his wife, Jean Seaton, who read every word he wrote and from her own distinguished work as a media political scientist could act as a tough and independent editor. The honours came but always with a sense of frustration at never having the chance to take up a full political career, to see from the inside that which he had so brilliantly written from archives, memoirs, interviews and his own experience as a party activist.

Pimlott chaired the Fabian Society and always took part in its executive committee meetings. Somehow he could put down a silly idea without hurting the individual putting it forward. Scores of adults of all ages passed through his hands as Birkbeck students to do masters or doctoral degrees. There is no college like Birkbeck anywhere else in Europe. It is for adults and starts to teach at a time when most professors are going home. As a result Birkbeck books are researched and

written in the morning when the sap is rising and to turn into 10 Gower Street to have a coffee and a chat with Pimlott or Paul Hirst and their colleagues was the best treat in London in the 1980s.

Labour, in power since 1997, owes much to Ben Pimlott's patient excavation of the party's real, not hagiographic history and politics. Pimlott by this time was deep in the minutiae and difficulty of running a major university establishment, Goldsmith's College. To write you have to write all the time, witness the clumsy prose of the active politician who turns his hand to an essay or review. Just at the moment when a Labour government needed the soaring eagle perspectives of Pimlott's historicism and commitment he was burdened down with other duties. Labour has got few if any intellectuals on its side. Despite having done more to attack poverty, create employment, increase and redistribute revenue in favour of public employment, health and education and preside over a near-renaissance of the blighted, destroyed regions of the north, Wales and Scotland which the Tories hated and still hate, the present Labour government enjoys endless

scorn from the left intelligentsia writing in the left-liberal daily and weekly press. *The London Review of Books* attacks openly for an end to the Blair-Brown government.

British left intellectuals know how to be attack dogs against a Tory government but do not know how to throw a protective arm around a Labour government that makes mistakes but is motivated still by its social democratic values. In Paris, Madrid and Berlin there are discussant intellectuals with columns in the serious papers that can engage in a kind of critical public conversation with governments of the reformist left, even if they were full of the faults that Mitterrand and Gonzalez and the German social democrats commit. In London, the left intellectuals shape their procrustean beds for Labour to fit into. The *Guardian* might publish one comment piece every two months which engages in discussion with the serious intent of what Labour is trying to do in power. *The New Statesman* gave up the habit early on. Ben Pimlott, like his friend Hugo Young, realised the importance of what he called a "conversation of the mind" but his death has

robbed us of a chance of that conversation continuing. And to be fair, Labour in power has had no effective project for talking with intellectuals and asking not for their endorsement but for their efforts to step back and look in historical terms at what Labour faced in terms of its inheritance in 1997 and what it has done in terms of constitutional, economic and public sector reform since then.

The Labour cabinets covered in Pimlott's books were full of intellectuals who had written or were to write major books. Today's Labour cabinet is full of can-do social democrats. But the need for ideas and for clear thinking to guide Labour into the uncharted waters of third and possible fourth terms is more than ever necessary. Where are the new Ben Pimlotts? We need them more than ever. And when Labour history in the 1980s comes to be written the contribution of Pimlott to saving the party he loved for future historians by revealing its past history will not be forgotten. Unlike Lord Hattersley he never became a peer.

*Denis MacShane is Labour MP for Rotherham and Minister for Europe.*

# Jack Diamond

BILL RODGERS

John Diamond – known as ‘Jack’ to most of his friends – became Lord Diamond in 1970 having served as Chief Secretary to the Treasury for six years, inside Harold Wilson’s Cabinet for two of them. The son of the Reverend Solomon Diamond, he was born in Leeds on 30 April 1907 and educated there at Leeds Grammar School. He was very much a product of his time and background. Becoming a chartered accountant and moving to London in 1931, he was persuaded to join the Labour party by Austen Albu (who himself later became a Labour MP and a Minister). Thereafter, he brought his financial and administrative skills to the service of the Party whenever asked to do so.

Jack Diamond showed little interest in policy-making but had firm, mainstream convictions about the Labour Party being a party of conscience and reform, moderate, tolerant and fair-minded. He seemed puzzled rather

than angered by those, usually on the left of the party, who appeared to depart from the simple criteria which he believed defined a democratic socialist. He was loyal to those he served, especially Hugh Gaitskell when leader of the party and Jim Callaghan, his boss at the Treasury as Chancellor of the Exchequer. In 1981 he joined the SDP, together with Roy Jenkins, Dick Taverne and Bill Rodgers, (thus making up the whole Treasury Ministerial team of 1969–70) and became the new party’s leader in the House of Lords after 1982. But he was impatient with the inefficiency and indiscipline of the Liberals and did not support merger in 1988. After a short time in David Owen’s rump party, he moved to the cross benches. In 1995 he re-joined the Labour party believing that it had now become, allowing for the passage of time, close to the kind of party that Hugh Gaitskell had sought to create.

Jack Diamond was on the Labour party headquarters list of prospective candidates when he presented himself in Manchester to the Blackley Labour party prior to the 1945 Election. To his surprise he was selected because, so he explained, Catholics would

not vote for a Protestant and Protestants would not vote for a Catholic but both were happy to choose a Jew. His main contribution during the 1945–50 Parliament was as a Chairman of Committees, a role for which his clear mind and persuasive manner strongly recommended him. He presided over the committee stage of the Gas Bill, the longest in that Parliament, although his own attitude to nationalisation was pragmatic rather than ideological.

In 1951 he lost his Blackley seat and did not return to Parliament until a by-election at Gloucester in 1957. But he began to play an increasing behind-the-scenes role culminating in a close association with Hugh Gaitskell, after the latter’s election as Leader in 1955. From 1950–64 he was Treasurer of the Fabian Society and when the Campaign for Democratic Socialism was launched in 1960 in support of Gaitskell, he became its mentor on money-matters. Meanwhile, his training as an accountant made him an obvious member of the Shadow Treasury team and his skills were invaluable in dealing with the Finance Bill. In turn, this earned him the good opinion of Jim Callaghan and he was a

natural appointment as Chief Secretary in Harold Wilson’s Government of 1964. It was a measure of the trust in which he was widely held that his continued association with George Brown did nothing to lose the personal confidence of Wilson or Callaghan although Brown was a thorn in both their sides.

Jack Diamond served as Chief Secretary for six years, declining the offer of a department of his own as Minister of Power because Callaghan asked him to stay at the Treasury. He established the key role of the Chief Secretary in the control of public expenditure without alienating the Ministers whose plans he was often obliged to restrain. After losing Gloucester in 1970 and going to the Lords, he played a full part in its work and for five years was also Chairman of the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth. He published *Public Expenditure in Practice* in 1975 and, was co-author, *Socialism the British Way*, in 1948. Jack never courted publicity and was little known to the party outside Parliament. But his was a model of loyalty and service more common to the middle years of the twentieth century than recent times.

### **JACK BODDY MBE JP**

Jack Boddy died on 9 March 2004, aged 81. He was General Secretary of the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers 1978-82. Served as District Organiser for the Lincolnshire NUAAW from 1953 and for the Norfolk NUAAW from 1960, was a member of the Trades Union Congress General Council 1978-83, leader of the workers' side on the Agricultural Wages Board 1978-87 and Secretary of the Agricultural and Allied Workers Trade Group of the Transport and General Workers Union 1982-87. He was a member of Swaffham Town Council 1987-2003, its Deputy Mayor 1990-91 and its Mayor 1991-92; he was a member of Breckland District Council 1987-99 and Chairman of its Housing Committee 1995-98. He was appointed a Justice of the Peace in Swaffham in 1947 and a Member of the Order of the British Empire in 1973.

### **LEWIS CARTER-JONES CBE**

Lewis Carter-Jones died on 26 August 2004, aged 83. He was Labour MP for Eccles 1964-87. He contested Chester in the 1956 by-election and in 1959. He was Chairman of the Committee for Research for Apparatus for Disabled 1973-80, the Anglo-Columbian Group 1975-87, the Parliamentary Labour Party Disablement Group 1975-81 and of its Aviation Group 1978-87. He was an executive member of the UK Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association 1983-87, Secretary of the Indo-British Parliamentary Group 1966-87, the All-Party BLESMA Group 1973-87 and the All-Party Aviation Group 1980-87, and was Honorary Parliamentary Adviser to the Royal National Institute for the Blind 1973-87, the British Association of Occupational Therapists and the Society of Physiotherapists until 1987. He was a member of the General Advisory Council of the Independent Broadcasting Authority 1982-87, Chairman of the British Committee of Rehabilitation International 1978-92, of the Advisory Group on Artificial Limbs to Department of Health 1993-2004, Vice-President of the Wales Council for the Disabled 1981-2004, of RADAR 1987-2004, a member of the Disablement Services Authority 1987-91, the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee of the Department of Transport 1988-2004. He was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1995.

### **STANLEY COHEN**

Stanley Cohen died on 23 February 2004, aged 76. He was Labour MP for Leeds South East

1970-83. He was employed in the clothing industry 1943-47 and 1949-51, served in Royal Navy 1947-49 and was a clerical officer with British Railways 1951-70. He was a member of Leeds City Council 1952-71 and contested Barkston Ash in 1966. He was Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science, Gordon Oakes, 1976-79.

**LORD GREENE OF HARROW WEALD**  
Sid Greene died on 26 July 2004, aged 94. He was General Secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen 1957-75. He was a member of the Trades Union Congress General Council 1957-75 and its Chairman 1969-70, Chairman of the TUC Economic Committee 1968-75, a member of the National Economic Development Council 1962-75, of the Advisory Council of the Export Credit Guarantees Department 1967-70, a part-time member of the Southern Electricity Board 1964-77 and the National Freight Corporation 1973-77, a Director of the Bank of England 1970-78, of the RTZ Corporation 1975-80 and of Times Newspapers 1975-82. He was appointed a Justice of the Peace in London 1941-65 and was a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Transport. He was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1966, a Knight Bachelor in 1970 and created a life peer in 1974.

### **JIM MARSHALL**

Jim Marshall died on 27 May 2004, aged 63. He had been Labour MP for Leicester South since 1987 and had previously represented the seat October 1974-1983. He worked as a research scientist at the Wool Industries Research Association 1963-67 and was a lecturer at Leicester Polytechnic 1968-74. He was a member of Leeds City Council 1965-68 and of Leicester City Council 1971-76, serving as its Leader in 1974. He contested Harborough in 1970, Leicester South in February 1974 and 1983, was an Assistant Government Whip 1977-79 and an opposition spokesman on home affairs 1982-83 and on Northern Ireland 1988-92.

### **HIS EXCELLENCY JUDGE**

#### **SIR RICHARD MAY**

Richard May died on 1 July 2004, aged 65. He was a Judge of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia 1997-2004 and Labour Leader of the Opposition on Westminster City Council 1974-77. Undertook National Service as a Second Lieutenant in the Durham Light Infantry 1958-60. Called to the

Bar, Inner Temple in 1965, was a Recorder on the Midland and Oxford Circuit 1985-87 and a Circuit Judge 1987-97. He contested Dorset South for Labour in 1970 and Finchley in 1979, and was a member of Westminster City Council 1971-78. He was knighted in 2004.

### **LORD PARRY DL**

Gordon Parry died on 1 September 2004, aged 78. He was Chairman of the Wales Tourist Board 1978-84 and was Chairman 1984-91 and President since 1991 of the Milford Docks Company. He contested Monmouth in 1959 and Pembroke in 1970 and February and October 1974. He was a member of the Welsh Development Authority, the General Advisory Council of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, the Welsh Arts Council, the Schools Council Committee for Wales, the Faculty of Education at the University College of Wales in Aberystwyth, the Council of the Open University, and of the British Tourist Authority 1978-84. He was President of the Pembrokeshire Branch of the Multiple Sclerosis Society, the Pembrokeshire Spastics Society, the Spastics Society of Wales, the Commonwealth Games Appeal Committee for Wales in 1979, the Keep Wales Tidy Committee 1979-2004, the British Institute for Cleaning Science 1981-91, and the Tidy Britain (formerly Keep Britain Tidy) Group 1991-96, having served as its Chairman 1986-91. He was Chairman of the British Cleaning Council 1983-87, the Keep Britain Beautiful Campaign 1986-96, Clean World International 1991-96 and the British Travel Education Trust; Vice President of the National Chamber of Trade 1980, the International Year of Disabled People in Wales 1979, the National Society for Mentally Handicapped Children South Wales Region, the Society of Handicapped Drivers in Wales and the Welsh National Council of YMCAs; Chairman of Taylorplan Services 1987-96 and the Pembrokeshire Radio Company, and non-executive board member of Marriott Services UK Limited 1996-2004. He was created a life peer in 1975 and appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Dyfed in 1993.

### **LADY SIMEY**

Margaret Simey died on 27 July 2004, aged 98. She was a member of Liverpool City Council from 1963, of Merseyside County Council 1974-86 and Chairman of the Merseyside Police Authority 1981-6, during the Toxteth riots and the miners' strike. She was married to the Labour peer Lord Simey.

# BOOK REVIEW

## The Left and the Jews – The Jews and the Left

David Cesarani

Profile Books and Labour  
Friends of Israel, £8.99

JOE MCGOWAN

The shifting nature of Jewish-Left relations is concisely explored in this new book by the University of London's Professor of Modern History. It both surprises and challenges, raising pointed questions about the nature of both socialism and Jewishness. For example, one in five of the 40,000 volunteers in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War were Jewish.

The affinity that Jews have found with socialist ideals is surprising to some, given the anti-semitism associated with sections of liberal and left-wing ideology from the Enlightenment onwards. Voltaire considered the Jews 'detestable' for their attachment to 'superstition'. The post-revolution National Assembly in France agonised over whether declarations regarding the equality of all men applied to Jews, too. The utopianism of the 1800s was infused with Judaeophobic discourse and Karl Marx, though born a Jew himself, was vituperative about Judaism and its culture.

However, as Cesarani points out, many factors engender a natural affinity between Jews and the Left. Living as enclosed minorities for much of their history encouraged principles such as social welfare to flourish within Jewish communities which 'fostered a strong preference for tolerant, pluralistic, rights-based polities.' However, despite this ideological kinship, the dominant narrative of *The Jews and the Left* is that the relationship has presented endless dilemmas for both sides.

The liberalism the Enlightenment may have offered Jews social equality but the universalism of its values posed a threat to the distinct Jewish identity. Ideological opposition to religion as a whole and latent prejudice about Jews in particular left open the question of whether Jews should be expected to give up their identity in order to be accepted in modern society.

Understanding that dilemma, one grasps the attractions of Labour Zionism to Jews in the early part of the twentieth century. Emigration to Palestine created an opportunity to partake in the building of a socialist utopia that did not require Jewish identity to expire as a result. We are reminded of the deep socialist roots of the modern state of

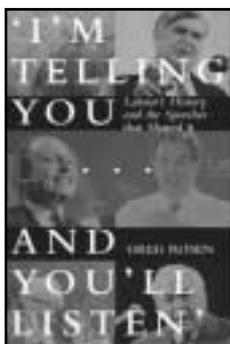
Israel, founded on collective agricultural communities and a Labour and Trades Union Movement that is still greatly influential.

But from this another dilemma emerges. Today, it is attitudes towards Israel which threaten the natural affinity between Jews and the Left. Whilst Jews feel a strong sense of solidarity with the Jewish State, since the 1970s anti-Zionism has been considered by the Left as 'a necessary correlative of anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism and support for national liberation movements.' The recent spectacle of sections of the Left and Islamic groups fusing opposition to the war in Iraq with criticism of Israel has been disconcerting for Jewish people and reinforces old suspicions that the Left is insensitive to Jewish particularity.

With antisemitic attacks on the rise, Professor Cesarani's most powerful message seems to be that, by understanding the historical relationship between Jews and the Left, we can ensure that natural correlations between Jewish values and socialist ideals, rather than forms of anti-Jewish prejudice, are the dominant feature of the relationship in years to come.

*Joe McGowan is the Amicus  
London Political Officer.*

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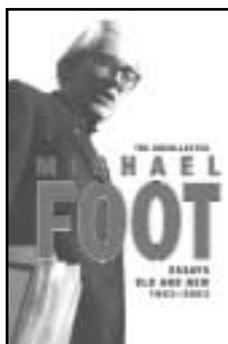
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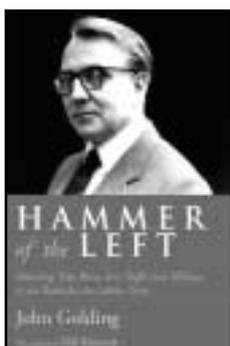
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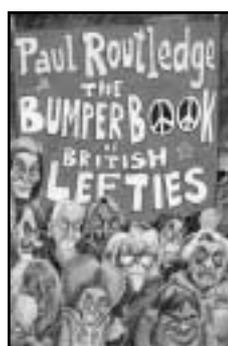


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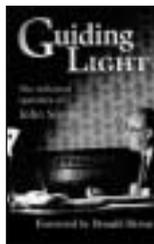


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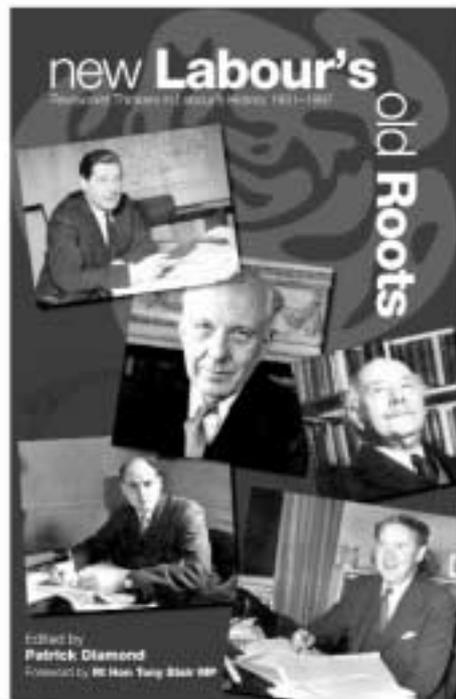
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Patrick Diamond (ed.)

## *New Labour's Old Roots*

256 pages ISBN 0-907845-894 (pbk.), £14.95, September 1, 2004

New Labour was not conjured up out of thin air — it only looks like that because of the party's amnesia concerning its intellectual development. This book provides extracts from fifteen thinkers located within the revisionist tradition — from Tawney, Jay, Crosland and Gaitskell to Gordon Brown — as an antidote to that amnesia. The collection shows that revisionism is not a body of doctrine but a cast of mind that distinguishes between core values (ends) and policy (means). In the debates about the future of public services, the Blair government is determined to avoid the confusion of means and ends; these essays show this determination to be deep-rooted in Labour thought. The author is special adviser at 10 Downing Street.

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