

Committee 1906.  
of February  
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That there be no  
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Secretary and one of the  
Moved: That W. Henderson  
There being no further nomination  
resolved accordingly  
After a discussion upon Bills, Resol  
the meeting adjourned until 11.0 a.m.

# Men Who Made



Meeting in Com  
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# LABOUR

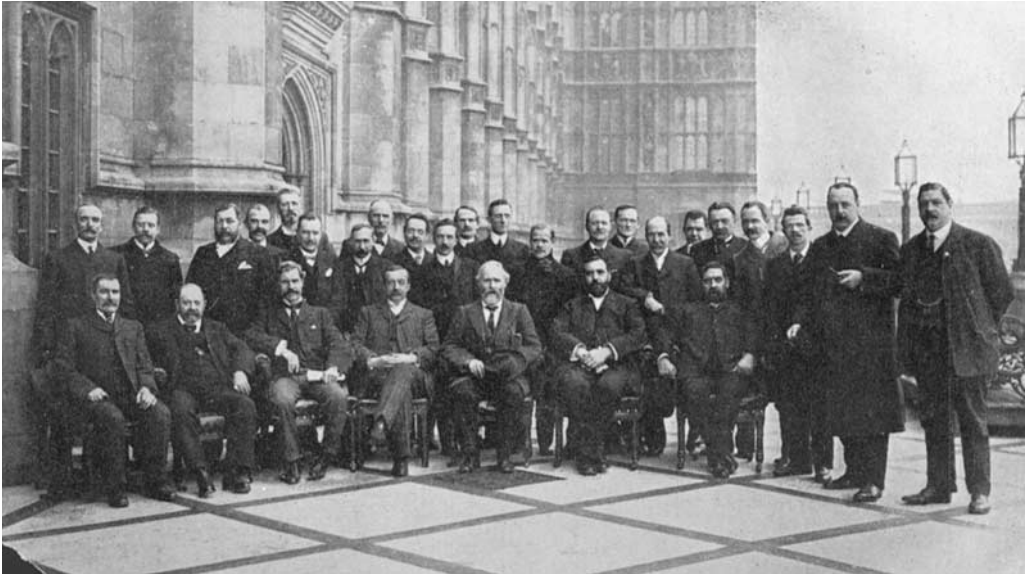
Alan Haworth and Dianne Hayter

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On a summons to the Executive  
Committee of the L.P.C. the Labour Party  
Committee Room No 12 of the House of Com  
on Monday the 12<sup>th</sup> of February at 3.0 p  
There was a full attendance of Mem  
L.P.C. and Mr Henderson as Chairman  
Executive Committee  
Resolved: That we set on the Opposit  
the House - on the two front be  
the gangways, if possible.  
Resolved: That we do not fe  
section in the House with the  
members, but that we expre  
with them on

MEN  
WHO MADE  
LABOUR

With a Foreword by  
Tony Blair



*The Original Parliamentary Labour Party, February 1906  
The Terrace of the House of Commons*

Seated, left to right:

*W. Tyson Wilson, Alex Wilkie, J. Ramsay MacDonald, Arthur Henderson, J. Keir Hardie, David Shackleton, Will Crooks.*

Standing, left to right:

*John Jenkins, Charles Bowerman, John Hodge, James Parker, George Kelly, Walter Hudson, George Wardle, George Barnes, Fred Jowett, George Roberts, Charles Duncan, T. Freddie Richards, Stephen Walsh, Alfred Gill, Philip Snowden, Thomas Summerbell, J.T. Macpherson, Thomas Glover, James Seddon, J.R. Clynes, James O'Grady, Will Thorne.*



*100 years on. The 2006 PLP photographed in the Chamber of the House of Commons, February 2006.*

MEN  
*WHO MADE*  
LABOUR

The PLP of 1906 –  
the personalities and  
the politics

*Edited by*

ALAN HAWORTH *and*  
DIANNE HAYTER

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To the memory of

**Sir Frank Barlow CBE,**

a former Secretary of the Parliamentary Labour Party, whose interest in the victor of the Clitheroe by-election of 1902, Sir David Shackleton, eventually led to this book, and to the memory of the 29 Labour MPs elected in 1906.

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# Contents

Notes on Contributors	xi
Foreword	xvii
Tony Blair, the Prime Minister	
Acknowledgements	xix
Introduction: The Turning Point in the History of Labour	1
Alan Haworth and Dianne Hayter	
Labour's Parliamentary Pioneers of 1906	9
David E. Martin	
<b>1906: THE 29 OBITUARIES</b>	
1 <b>BARNES, George</b> , Glasgow Blackfriars	23
David Marshall	
2 <b>BOWERMAN, Charles</b> , Lewisham Deptford	31
Joan Ruddock	
3 <b>CLYNES, J.R.</b> , Manchester North East	39
Tony Lloyd	
4 <b>CROOKS, Will</b> , Woolwich	47
Nick Raynsford	
5 <b>DUNCAN, Charles</b> , Barrow-in-Furness	55
John Hutton	
6 <b>GILL, Alfred</b> , Bolton	61
Brian Iddon	

7	<b>GLOVER, Thomas</b> , St Helens Shaun Woodward	67
8	<b>HARDIE, J. Keir</b> , Merthyr Tydfil Ann Clwyd	75
9	<b>HENDERSON, Arthur</b> , Barnard Castle Derek Foster	83
10	<b>HODGE, John</b> , Manchester Gorton Sir Gerald Kaufman	91
11	<b>HUDSON, Walter</b> , Newcastle upon Tyne Jim Cousins	99
12	<b>JENKINS, John</b> , Chatham Jonathan Shaw	107
13	<b>JOWETT, Fred</b> , Bradford West Marsha Singh	113
14	<b>KELLEY, George</b> , Manchester South West Tony Lloyd	121
15	<b>MACDONALD, Ramsay</b> , Leicester Patricia Hewitt	125
16	<b>MACPHERSON, J.T.</b> , Preston Mark Hendrick	133
17	<b>O'GRADY, James</b> , Leeds East Hilary Benn	137
18	<b>PARKER, James</b> , Halifax Alice Mahon	143
19	<b>RICHARDS, T. Freddie</b> , Wolverhampton West Dennis Turner	147
20	<b>ROBERTS, George</b> , Norwich Charles Clarke	155
21	<b>SEDDON, James</b> , Newton Dave Watts	163
22	<b>SHACKLETON, David</b> , Clitheroe Alan Haworth	171
23	<b>SNOWDEN, Philip</b> , Blackburn Jack Straw	181
24	<b>SUMMERBELL, Thomas</b> , Sunderland Chris Mullin	189
25	<b>THORNE, Will</b> , West Ham Tony Banks and Giles Radice	193

26	<b>WALSH, Stephen</b> , Ince Ian McCartney	201
27	<b>WARDLE, George</b> , Stockport Ann Coffey	207
28	<b>WILKIE, Alex</b> , Dundee Ernie Ross	213
29	<b>WILSON, W.T.</b> , West Houghton Ruth Kelly	221
	<i>Voice of the People: 50 Years of the Parliamentary Labour Party</i> (reprint)	229
	<i>Labour's Early Days</i> (reprint) Lord Shepherd	241
	First PLP Minutes	263
	Appendix:	
	List of Chairmen and Secretaries of the PLP, 1906–2006	267
	Labour Party 1906 Manifesto	268
	Bibliography	271
	Index	275

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# Notes on Contributors

The late **Tony Banks** was MP for West Ham from 1997 to 2005, having previously represented Newham North West from 1983 to 1997. Prior to that, he had been Head of Research at the AUEW, and the Political Adviser to the Minister of Overseas Development in 1975. He was a GLC Member from 1970 to 1977 and 1981 to 1986 and its Chairman from 1985 to 1986. He was the Minister for Sports from 1997 to 1999. Appointed to the Lords as Lord Stratford, he died just after completing his chapter.

**Hilary Benn** has been the MP for Leeds Central since June 1999, and the Secretary of State for International Development since 2003. With a degree in Russian and East European Studies, he has been Deputy Leader of Ealing Council. He was a trade union Research Officer with ASTMS and Head of Policy and Communications at MSF. Prior to his election, he was Special Adviser to David Blunkett MP, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, and from 1999 to 2001 was a member of the Environment, Transport and the Regions Select Committee, before becoming a Home Office minister.

**Charles Clarke** has been the MP for Norwich South since 1997. He read Mathematics and Economics at Cambridge and was President of the National Union of Students from 1975 to 1977. He was a Hackney Councillor and Chair of Housing. He was Chief of Staff to the then Labour Leader, Neil Kinnock, until the 1992 election when he became Chief Executive of a public affairs consultancy until he became an MP. He was a Junior Minister in the Department of Education, a Minister of State at the Home Office and then Minister without Portfolio and Labour Party Chair before becoming the Secretary of State for Education and Skills and subsequently, in 2004, Home Secretary.

**Ann Clwyd** has been the MP for Cynon Valley since 1984, prior to which she was the MEP for Mid and West Wales. She is the Chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party and, in 2003/04, was the BBC/*House Magazine* and the *Spectator* 'Backbencher of the Year' and also won the Channel 4 Political Award for 'Campaigning Politician of the Year'. Since May 2003 she has been the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to Iraq on Human Rights. She is Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Human Rights Group and Chair

of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Before entering politics, she was a journalist with the BBC, and Wales correspondent for the *Guardian* and the *Observer*.

**Ann Coffey** has been the MP for Stockport since 1992. Born in Scotland, she studied Sociology at South Bank University and Psychiatric Social Work at the University of Manchester before becoming a Social Worker Team Leader with responsibility for fostering and adoption. She is now PPS to Alistair Darling MP, Secretary of State for Transport, having been the PPS to the Prime Minister (1997–98) and Shadow Health Minister (1996–97).

**Jim Cousins** has been the MP for Newcastle upon Tyne Central since 1987, having lived on Tyneside since 1968. He served on the Trade and Industry Select Committee Inquiry into the Iraq Supergun in 1990–92 and has been a member of the Treasury Select Committee since 1997.

**Derek Foster** was the MP for Bishop Auckland from 1979 to 2005, when he was appointed to the House of Lords. Before his election, he held senior positions in the voluntary and public sectors and served on Sunderland Council and the Tyne and Wear Metropolitan County Council, as well as being Chairman of the North of England Development Council. In Parliament, he has been PPS to Neil Kinnock, the elected Chief Whip (and thus on the Shadow Cabinet) from 1985 to 1995, joint Chair of the Education and Employment Select Committee (1997–2001), and was appointed to the Privy Council in 1993.

**Alan Haworth** was born in Blackburn, Lancashire in 1948. He was appointed to the staff of the Labour Party in 1975, working for the PLP. He has held a variety of posts in the Labour Party – including three years as a Constituency Secretary (Newham North East CLP) – and for several years was a member of the Executive Committee of the Labour Coordinating Committee. For 12 years from 1992 he was the Secretary of the Parliamentary Labour Party. He was elevated to the Peerage in 2004 as Lord Haworth of Fisherfield. He is author of 113 obituaries of former Labour MPs, some of which were published in *The Politico's Book of the Dead* (Politico's, 2003).

**Dianne Hayter** is a member of the Labour Party NEC. She was formerly General Secretary of the Fabian Society, Chief Executive of the European Parliamentary Labour Party and Chief Executive of two health charities. She is on the Board of the National Consumer Council and the Determinations Panel of the Pensions Regulator and is the former Deputy Chair of the Financial Services Consumer Panel. She is the author of *Fightback! Labour's Traditional Right in the 1970s and 1980s* (MUP, 2005) and various other publications.

**Mark Hendrick** became the MP for Preston in a November 2000 by-election and has been PPS to Margaret Beckett as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs since July 2003. He was elected to Salford City Council in 1987 and served on the City Council for eight years. He was the member of the European Parliament for Lancashire Central from 1994 to 1999, where he served as Labour's spokesperson on economic, monetary and industrial policy, and Leader of the Socialists on the European Parliament's Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee.

**Patricia Hewitt** has been the MP for Leicester West since 1997. She worked for Neil Kinnock MP, Leader of the Opposition, from 1983 to 1989 when she moved to the Institute for Public Policy Reform (IPPR) as Deputy Director. She was Deputy Chair of the IPPR Commission of Social Justice. In 1998 she was appointed Economic Secretary at the Treasury, and in 1999 she was promoted to become Minister at the Department for Trade and Industry. Patricia Hewitt was appointed to the Cabinet in 2001, as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and Secretary of State for Health in May 2005.

**John Hutton** has been the MP for Barrow-in-Furness since 1992 and is now the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. He was previously a minister at the Department of Health before joining the Cabinet as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in May 2005. Prior to entering Parliament, he was a senior lecturer at Newcastle Polytechnic having graduated from Oxford University.

**Brian Iddon** is the MP for Bolton South East. He has a PhD in Chemistry from Hull University and taught at both Durham and Salford universities. He was a Bolton Councillor for 21 years prior to his election to Parliament in 1997. He is a member of the Science and Technology Select Committee and also has a particular interest in education, health, the Middle East and Kashmir.

**Sir Gerald Kaufman** is the MP for Gorton, having been elected to Parliament in 1970. Educated at Leeds and Oxford, he was formerly Assistant General Secretary of the Fabian Society, on the political staff of the *Daily Mirror*, and political correspondent of the *New Statesman* before becoming Parliamentary Press Liaison Officer in Downing Street with Prime Minister Harold Wilson. He was a Minister from 1974 to 1979 (at Environment and the Department of Industry), made a Privy Councillor in 1978, was on the Shadow Cabinet (1980–92) and Labour's NEC (1991–92), and was Chairman of the House of Commons Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport from 1997 to 2005, having been Chairman of the National Heritage Select Committee from 1992 to 1997.

**Ruth Kelly** is the MP for Bolton West, which includes a large part of the old Westhoughton Division. She became Education Secretary in 2004 (at the age of 36 – the youngest ever so appointed) after a short spell in the Cabinet Office and three years at the Treasury where she was, successively, Economic Secretary and Financial Secretary. Educated at Oxford and the LSE, she worked on the *Guardian* as an economics writer before joining the Bank of England. After her election in 1997, she became PPS to Nick Brown at the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

**Tony Lloyd** has been an MP since 1983. Between 1983 and 1997 he represented Stretford and since 1997 Manchester Central. He studied at Nottingham University and Manchester Business School, lectured in Business Studies at Salford University, and was a Councillor on Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council (1979–84). He was Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (1997–99) and is now the Leader of the British Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and one of its Vice-Presidents.

**Ian McCartney** has been the MP for Makerfield since 1987, and Labour Party Chair and Minister without Portfolio since 2003. Prior to his election

he was a Councillor on Wigan Borough and a Transport and General Workers Union lay official. In Opposition, he was a spokesperson on health and employment. In government, he has been a Minister at the Department for Trade and Industry where he was responsible for legislation establishing the National Minimum Wage, the Fairness at Work Act and the Competition Act. He was also Minister for Pensions at the Department for Work and Pensions and while Minister of State at the Cabinet Office he oversaw the 2002 Commonwealth Games, drugs policy and the Better Government for Older People initiative.

**Alice Mahon** was the MP for Halifax from 1987 to 2005. A graduate of Bradford University, she lectured at Bradford and Ilkley Community College and was a Councillor on Calderdale Borough Council. She has been PPS to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, on the Select Committee on Health, and a member of the NATO Parliamentary Association. She is a member of Unison.

**David Marshall** is the MP for Glasgow East (from 2005) having represented Glasgow Shettleston from 1979 to 2005. He is a member of the TGWU, and a former transport worker, shop steward and Labour Party Organiser for Glasgow. He was Secretary of the Scottish Group of Labour MPs 1981–2001, Chair of the Transport Select Committee 1987–92, Chair of the Scottish Affairs Select Committee 1997–2001, and Chair of the British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union 1997–2000. He is Chair of the Executive Committee Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch and a member of UK Delegation to the Council of Europe and WEU, and is on the House of Commons Chairman's Panel.

**David E. Martin** teaches in the History Department at the University of Sheffield. A member for several years of the Executive Committee of the Society for the Study of Labour History, he edited the society's journal, the *Labour History Review*, from 1987 to 1998. Co-author of *Labour in British Society 1830–1914* (2000) and co-editor of *Ideology and the Labour Movement* (1979), he also contributed to the first ten volumes of the *Dictionary of Labour Biography* (1972–2000). He wrote sketches of Tony Benn, Roy Hattersley and other Labour Party figures for *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century British Politics* (2002).

**Chris Mullin** has been the MP for Sunderland South since 1987. He has been Chairman of the Home Affairs Committee in the House of Commons and a Junior Minister in three government departments. He was previously the Editor of *Tribune*.

**Giles Radice** was the MP for Chester-le-Street from 1973 to 1983, and for North Durham from 1983 to 2001. He is now a Labour Peer in the House of Lords. He has written extensively on labour policy and history, most recently *Friends and Rivals* (Little, Brown, 2002), about Tony Crosland, Roy Jenkins and Denis Healey. He has been a committed European for many years.

**Nick Raynsford** has been the MP for Greenwich and Woolwich since 1997, having represented Greenwich from 1992 to 1997. He served as a Minister for Local and Regional Government, for Housing and Planning, and for London and Construction between 1997 and 2005, becoming a Privy Councillor in 2001. He was previously the MP for Fulham from 1986

to 1987 and a Councillor on Hammersmith and Fulham from 1971 to 1975. He was Director of SHAC, the London Housing Aid Centre, for a decade before his election. He is now Deputy Chairman of the Construction Industry Council and Vice-President of the Town and Country Planning Association.

**Ernie Ross** was the MP for Dundee West from 1979 to 2005. His earlier career was in engineering. He was a member of the House of Commons Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, Chair of the PLP Staff Liaison Committee, 1987–2005, and Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

**Joan Ruddock** has been MP for Lewisham Deptford since 1987. She rose to national prominence in the early 1980s as Chair of CND. Within Parliament, she was the first full-time Minister for Women under the new Labour government, and she now sits on the International Development Select Committee.

**Jonathan Shaw** has been the MP for Chatham and Aylesford since his unexpected election in 1997 to the newly created seat of Chatham and Aylesford, the bulk of which was previously a safe Tory seat. His 1997 majority of 2,790 was bettered in 2001 and in 2005 Jonathan gained a third successive term. Prior to becoming an MP, Jonathan worked as a social worker with Kent County Council and served as a Councillor for Rochester City Council. He has been a member of both the Environmental Audit Select Committee and the Education and Skills Select Committee before becoming the PPS to the Secretary of State for Education in 2005.

**Marsha Singh** has been the MP for Bradford West since 1997. Born in India, he has a degree from Loughborough University and was Senior Development Manager with Bradford Community Health Authority before his election. He is on the Select Committee on International Development and was on the Home Affairs Select Committee. He is Treasurer of the All-Party Kashmir Group and Vice-Chair of the All-Party Race and Community Group.

**Jack Straw** has been the MP for Blackburn since 1979. Now Foreign Secretary, he was Home Secretary from 1997 to 2001. A graduate of Leeds university, he was President of the NUS from 1969 to 1971 and a Special Adviser in the 1974–79 Labour government. He has also been an Islington Councillor as well as Deputy Leader of the ILEA (Inner London Education Authority).

**Dennis Turner** was the Labour and Co-op MP for Wolverhampton South East from 1987 to 2005 when he was elevated to the Peerage as Lord Bilston. He was previously a member of Wolverhampton Council for 20 years, serving as Deputy Leader from 1979 to 1986, and on West Midlands County Council from 1973 to 1986. Within the House of Commons, he was a Labour Whip in Opposition, PPS to Clare Short from 1997 to 2003 and Chairman of the Catering Committee from 1997 to 2005.

**Dave Watts** has been MP for St Helens North since 1997 and was PPS to the Minister (John Spellar) at the Ministry of Defence and then at the Department for Transport. He went on to be PPS to John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister, and is now a Lord Commissioner and Government Whip.

He was previously Leader of St Helens Council from 1993 to 1997. He has been Labour Party Organiser, Research Assistant to Angela Eagle MP and John Evans MP, a shop steward at United Biscuits AEU and a St Helens Councillor from 1979 to 1997.

**Shaun Woodward** has been the Labour MP for St Helens South since 2001. Prior to his election, he worked for the National Consumer Council, and was the Editor of BBC TV's *That's Life*, a Producer of *Newsnight* and Director of Communications for the Conservative Party. He was elected as the Conservative MP for Whitney in 1997 but crossed the floor and joined the Labour Party in 1997. He is now a Minister in the Northern Ireland Office.

# Foreword



*Tony Blair*

**W**HEN THE LABOUR Representation Committee was formed in 1900, its purpose was to secure a viable and credible Labour Party in Parliament. Keir Hardie and his allies knew that there could be little progress towards the party's progressive goals without power and that only through Parliament could the great reforms Britain needed be delivered.

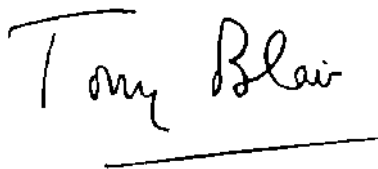
That is why this centenary anniversary is so important to the Labour movement. Britain in 1906 was not yet a proper democracy. There was no universal suffrage. Women did not have the vote. But 29 Labour election victories meant that the voice of the people could never again be ignored as the famous picture at Westminster of the new MPs underlined. The 1906 election marked a crucial staging post towards building a fairer and better country.

Today, 100 years later, we can see the results of their pioneering endeavours. Labour, for the first time in its history, has won three successive

election victories. The Parliamentary Party numbers not 29 but 353 MPs, who were photographed for the centenary in the Chamber of the House of Commons in February 2006. But all of us are aware of the debt we owe our predecessors and are proud to be following in their footsteps.

The Parliamentary Party of 1906 was a very broad church. MPs represented constituencies from right across Britain. Not all called themselves socialists. Many, like Arthur Henderson, were nonconformist radicals whose socialism owed more to Methodism than to Marx. But they overcame their differences to work together, based on a common commitment to using the power of government to enable people, regardless of their background, to realise their own potential. It is a belief that continues to drive this Labour government in very different times today.

The prospect of any Labour government in 1906, of course, was still a distant dream. The immediate challenge was to persuade the new Liberal administration to begin tackling the still Dickensian horrors of Britain at the time. The fledgling Parliamentary Labour Party succeeded in starting to build a fairer, kinder country because its MPs were ready to work with all those who shared their aims. Our party has always been at its most successful when it has looked outwards and has the courage to respond to changing circumstances. That remains as true today as ever.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Blair". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

*May 2006  
10 Downing Street*

# Acknowledgements

The authors would like to pay particular tribute to the following, all of whom helped with researching or writing various parts of the book: Terry Ashton, Stephen Bird, Leyland Booth, David Boothroyd, Andy Bowden, John Chesshire, Christine Coates, Mark Davies, the Dundee City Council Local History Department, Jan Ferry, Claire Forrest, Rose Gibson of the Leeds Central Library, Andrew Howard Gill, John Grigg, John Gyford, the Staff of the House of Commons Library, the Labour History Museum, John Lloyd, Gillian Lonergan (Co-operative College), John Maxton, Frank Meeres (whose work is the basis of Charles Clarke's chapter), Gareth Myton, the Newcastle Local Studies and Family History Centre, Marcus Papadopoulos, Mary Presland, Paul Richards, Janet Setchfield (Secretary of Leicester West CLP who made available some of her private collection of historic papers to Patricia Hewitt), Tony Robinson, Greg Rosen, Ali Ross, Matthew Seward, Heidi Topman and the Thursday Group (St Helens' Historic Society).

Photo credits: Malcolm Brown (Henderson Medal), David Caplin (Bowerman plaque), Flying Colours (Jim Cousins MP), Eamonn McCabe (Ann Clwyd MP), Terry Moore (2006 PLP), National Portrait Gallery, London (George Henry Roberts), Jago Parker (Alice Mahon).

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# Introduction:

## The Turning Point in the History of Labour

**T**HERE CAN BE no one today who doubts the place of Labour in the country's politics and governance. A third majority government, a Commons majority of 66, and even – just achieved for the first time ever – Labour comprising the largest single group in the Lords, albeit far short of a majority. One hundred years ago, Parliament looked very different – and not simply because it was all male and white. It was only in 1900 that the trade unions, Fabians and the Independent Labour Party took their first tentative steps to getting working people into Parliament by establishing the Labour Representation Committee (LRC). Then in 1906, the sudden arrival of 29 Labour men led to the establishment on 12 February 1906 of the Parliamentary Labour Party – the PLP – whose centenary is celebrated in 2006, and to the metamorphosis of the LRC into the Labour Party.

This volume is not a history of the party since then. By contrast, it seeks to look at 1906 through the eyes of those whose arrival in Westminster we commemorate. Thus the obituaries of those 29 men, with one exception<sup>1</sup> written by their twenty-first-century successors, dwell on their origins, expectations, world vision and achievements in the context of early twentieth-century conditions. The achievements of this small band of pioneers are

<sup>1</sup> The single exception is that of David Shackleton – first elected for Clitheroe in a by-election in 1902. The appreciation of Shackleton's life is written by Alan Haworth, former Secretary of the PLP. It is a remarkable story. Shackleton was elected to Parliament unopposed in 1902, unopposed even in his selection as a candidate. He is the first and only man ever to serve simultaneously on the Executive Committees of the LRC and the TUC and the only person in the history of the TUC to be elected to serve for a second term as Chairman – and this whilst he was de facto Chairman of the PLP. Later, in a most impressive second career, he became the first working-class Permanent Secretary of any government Department – the first ever Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Labour – and the first Labour knight. Yet few people know anything about Shackleton. It was to remedy this astonishing state of affairs, and the simultaneous realisation that very little is known or at least remembered in the Labour movement about the majority of these founding fathers, that gave rise to the genesis of this book. To mark the centenary of the election of the Men who Made Labour in 1906, there is now a little more on the record, in 2006. Their successors have done them proud, and rightly so, for were it not for the achievements of these 29 men, there may not have been today's successors.

remarkable, not least because of the backgrounds from which they emerged. Along with the Lib-Lab MPs (working men elected under the Liberal banner) they mostly left school at 11, 12 or 13. Overwhelmingly they earned their living in hard manual work, with their intellectual curiosity and public involvement nurtured by the chapel, books, trade unions, the temperance movement and their experience of life. No maintenance grants, no subsidised fees nor university places for them; instead night school, Ruskin Hall,<sup>2</sup> libraries, newspapers and debates on how to improve the conditions they saw around them helped formulate their politics and fostered their desire to change things. David Martin's splendid chapter, reviewing the background of the 29 (together with J.W. Taylor who joined the PLP just days after its creation, but too late to be included in the iconic group photograph taken on the Terrace of the House of Commons and reproduced on the front cover) tells a tale of ordinary men who overcame poverty, illegitimacy, alcoholic parents, large families, unemployment and barren hopes to become extraordinary pioneers.

However, in the earliest days, there were other major challenges confronting them: the absence of universal suffrage, no salaries for MPs, the entrenched position of the Liberals – and the reaction to war. It was their differing responses to the 1914–18 war that caused their first major divide, more than a decade before the economic crisis of the 1930s that led MacDonald – Labour's first Prime Minister – to split off from Labour and plunge the party into opposition. So neither policy divides nor even party splits are new, although the effects of these – whether in 1914, the 1930s or the 1980s – are identical: extended periods of opposition. It thus took longer than anticipated for the party, first grouped in Parliament in 1906, to form sustained Labour governments.

Something of the surprise, and delight, at a majority government can be sensed from the two 1950s pamphlets reproduced (in slightly edited forms) at the end of this book: *Voice of the People* (commemorating 50 years of the PLP in 1956) and *Labour's Early Days* by Lord Shepherd.<sup>3</sup> These marvelled at Attlee's 1945 achievement, whilst the 1956 NEC celebrated the Jubilee with a service in Westminster Abbey; a reception, cabaret and dance<sup>4</sup> at the Seymour Hall, London, where speeches were given by Hugh Gaitskell, H. Scott Lindsay,<sup>5</sup> and leaders of the Labour Parties in the West Indies who happened to be in London for the Caribbean Conference; as well as ten commemorative events across the country.<sup>6</sup> By the mid-1950s, the party already had some major successes to honour. In Gaitskell's words:

Poverty and insecurity have diminished, the welfare state has been built; many injustices . . . remedied, and, abroad, real progress has been made in the advance of our colonies to democratic self-government and independence. In all this, the Labour Party has been the driving force. It was the hard work and sacrifice of our pioneers which gradually won over public opinion towards accepting the ideals of socialism – ideals which . . . were regarded as impractical and even positively

2 Which Bowerman later helped establish as Ruskin College, serving on its Executive for several decades.

3 See pages 229 and 241.

4 No doubt reflecting the new Leader's enjoyment of the dance floor, Hugh Gaitskell having just taken over from Clem Attlee.

5 Who had been Secretary of the PLP until 1944.

6 NEC Report to the 1956 Labour Party Conference and *The Times*, 11 February 1956.

dangerous. Our older comrades had to strive against heavy odds and face much unpopularity.<sup>7</sup>

However, even as the party members celebrated in 1956, they recognised that the extraordinary victory of 1906:

. . . so bravely won . . . [behind which] was a long, proud and often tragic history that reached back through the centuries; . . . a story of the human suffering of men and women . . . for the right to share fairly in the wealth they produced . . . [a] story in which the weapons of want, poverty, imprisonment and transportation had been wielded mercilessly to crush the spirit of freedom . . . a story of struggle, and more often than not a story of defeat, but now the first great victory had been won. Britain's Parliament, so long the prerogative of the rich and privileged, was at last to hear the voice of the people.<sup>8</sup>

Such sentiments had even been heard from the pulpit. Speaking in St Paul's Cathedral soon after the 1906 result, the Archbishop of York proclaimed:

The great dumb mass of our working folk . . . has found its voice; it has exerted its strength, and comes forth challenging attention . . . Here are the men, at least, who have worked in pit and factory, whose friends are among the dwellers in our overcrowded cities . . . These men will bring first hand knowledge of the facts of life to the study of these problems. They will take care that amid all the business of politics 'the poor shall not always be forgotten'.<sup>9</sup>

Moving to the prosaic, the anniversary pamphlet goes on to recount the first 50 years of the PLP under headings such as 'The Test', 'Government', 'Tragedy' and 'Adversity'.

An early test for the party was in its response to the war, when MacDonald, Hardie and others turned away from supporting this conflict. By contrast, some of their number joined the government to support the successful prosecution of the war – at least two of whom maintained this viewpoint despite the deaths of their own sons in service. George Barnes' youngest son, Henry, was killed on the Western Front but this did not change his father's views. If anything, it reinforced his belief that, if such suffering and sacrifice were to be justified, the country had to unite. In 1918, Steve Walsh stood for election as a supporter of the coalition and its achievements in the war, notwithstanding the death of his son on active service. Barnes, Walsh and Wilkie supported conscription, whilst Charles Duncan, Arthur Henderson, Will Thorne, James Parker and the fiercely patriotic George Wardle joined recruiting campaigns, with James O'Grady even travelling to Dublin to help the army recruit there. Duncan went on a delegation to the United States to bolster American support for the war. Clynes persuaded the unions to agree not to strike until the war was over, and George Roberts helped end the 1915 miners' strike to assist the war effort. Furthermore, Clynes took a group of workers to Ypres to press the cause.<sup>10</sup> O'Grady, a Vice President of the patriotic British Workers' League,

7 Hugh Gaitskell, then Leader of the Labour Party, in his Foreword to *Voice of the People*, February 1956.

8 *Voice of the People*. See p. 230.

9 Quoted in *Voice of the People*.

10 Clynes did, however, save the workers' beer – albeit slightly diluted (see p. 42).

visited the Western Front several times while Roberts inspected the camps of German prisoners of war. Some of these MPs, such as O'Grady, were attacked by their local parties for their support of the war, and this was the motive behind Labour's first ever de-selection (of Roberts in Norwich in 1917). Likewise, John Hodge was later nearly de-selected in Gorton and it caused Parker to fall out with his local party members. In contrast, it was their opposition to the war that cost Philip Snowden and Fred Jowett the support of the electorate, and therefore their seats, in Blackburn and Bradford respectively in 1918.<sup>11</sup>

The other shadow over Labour's early years was the adversity of unemployment – the all-too-human impact of the world's economic crisis. Patricia Hewitt's piece on the role of her predecessor, Ramsay MacDonald, comments:

The enormity of the economic crisis rattled the entire political class, not just Labour's leadership . . . For parliamentarians, brought up with the certainties of Empire, Monarchy and Parliament, it was beyond their comprehension or control. We . . . should try to understand the unprecedented circumstances that led to [MacDonald's actions]. When asked by the King to form a government, the son of a servant and a ploughman did not refuse.<sup>12</sup>

The Labour movement, early on, believed that 'the presence of aliens in Britain is not a cause of unemployment amongst British workers'.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, it identified solutions including 'that local authorities should execute public work when the labour market was depressed'. This was a movement with an agenda for change, not simply a catalogue of complaints. It took time for a programme of policy positions to be developed, although the 1906 Manifesto (reproduced in the [Appendix](#)) highlights the issues of concern. First, the party had to develop an identity and philosophy of its own. In later years, both the communists and militants had to be kept out of the Labour Party, but at the beginning of the twentieth century it was the party's complete independence from Liberalism that was the issue, and from 1906 candidates had to agree to abstain from identifying themselves with or promoting the interests of any party not eligible for affiliation to Labour.

Another early issue, retold in the histories, was of the PLP's relationship with the NEC. At the 1906 annual party conference, the Parliamentary Party submitted the first of the Parliamentary Reports, which have remained a feature of annual conferences ever since. As Shepherd noted: 'The historical importance of this lies in the constitutional status acquired by the parliamentary party to the party conference. The Parliamentary Party, having direct access to conference, is not now, and has never been, subject to the direction of the National Executive Committee.'<sup>14</sup> The party's constitution was important in dealing with the selection of parliamentary candidates.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the de-selection of MPs (as with Roberts), the

<sup>11</sup> Keith Laybourn, 'Philip Snowden (1st Viscount Snowden)', in Greg Rosen (ed.), *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, Politico's, 2001, p. 540.

<sup>12</sup> See p. 129.

<sup>13</sup> *Labour's Early Days*. See p. 248.

<sup>14</sup> See p. 249.

<sup>15</sup> An issue that returned in force in the 1970s and 1980s; Dianne Hayter, *Fightback! Labour's Traditional Right in the 1970s and 1980s*, Manchester University Press, 2005.

party had frequent changes of Leader – although normally by the Leader’s own choice to stand down. However, in 1922 Clynes became the only Leader of the Labour Party to be voted out of office in the Parliamentary Party’s 100-year history.

A more successful Leader – who held the post three times (although never as Prime Minister) – was Arthur Henderson. One of the party’s major thinkers, he supported full enfranchisement, including of women – an issue on which he had little success within the party, which prioritised votes for *all* men over the granting of votes to women.<sup>16</sup> He also campaigned for elections to be held on the same day (rather than the 18 separate dates in 1906), payment of MPs and the ‘prevention of the election of members by a minority of votes’.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps luckily for the Labour Party, this latter objective has never come to pass. Strangely unrecognised in Labour history is Henderson’s position as a Nobel Peace Laureate – the only Labour Leader to have received this award.

One other part of the movement’s history has now largely been forgotten – the desire to unite the unions and the party. Shepherd’s pamphlet reminds us of such attempts, which only achieved ‘an exchange of fraternal greetings at annual conferences’ – a practice that continues today. Given the background of the MPs covered in this book, an ever closer working relationship was a very natural aspiration, despite the non-affiliation of certain unions. The LRC was set up so that the unions could have their voice within Parliament, not simply by lobbying it but in occupying it. Many of the 29 MPs continued their trade union work whilst in Parliament, all had a background of union activity and few would have made any distinction between their industrial and political work.

Bowerman, perhaps the prime example of this, had been Chairman of the TUC in 1901, and whilst an MP was its Secretary from 1911 to 1923. John Hodge, later to become the first ever Minister of Labour, had previously presided over the TUC. Shackleton – alone amongst all trade unionists – held the TUC Chairmanship for two years (1907 and 1908), again whilst an MP, as was Gill in 1907. Seddon presided during the war (1915). Others had held this most prestigious of union roles prior to their election: Jenkins in 1895 and O’Grady in 1898.

Many of the 29 had also held senior positions in their own unions, Hodge being President of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, Barnes the General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Thornes and Clynes General Secretary and the President of the General and Municipal Workers’ Union, Gill the Secretary of the Bolton Spinners Association, Shackleton the Secretary of the Darwen Weavers Association, Duncan first the General Secretary of the Workers Union and then Secretary of a section of the TGWU, Hudson President of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (a very nineteenth-century name!) and Assistant Secretary when it merged into the NUR, O’Grady Secretary of the National Federation of General Workers, Seddon President of the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks, Wilkie General Secretary of the Associated Shipwrights’ Society, and Wilson Chairman of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners. Others were union officials (Glover and Hardie in the miners’ union, Henderson with the Iron Founders and Macpherson the Steel Smelters’ Association). For their part, Roberts and Summerbell were office holders in the Norwich and

<sup>16</sup> See pp. 26, 256 and 258.

<sup>17</sup> See p. 257.

Sunderland Trades Councils respectively. Union activity was not without its difficulties, and some experienced unemployment directly as a result of their union activity.

For all of them, though, their lifelong industrial and union experience led them to concentrate on safety and rights at work, hours of work, a minimum wage, pensions, unemployment and national insurance to cover sick pay. Given their backgrounds, two other issues dominated their early years in Parliament: education and school meals. It is perhaps fitting that, as Secretary of State for Education, Ruth Kelly writes about her predecessor's efforts in establishing the first school meals service via the Education (Provision of Meals) Bill, which received Royal Assent in December 1906.

Labour was not the only representative of working people in this election. There were also 'Lib-Lab' MPs: working men fighting under the Liberal banner, of whom a further 25 were elected, with the Labour and Lib-Lab candidates polling over half a million votes – 9 per cent of the national poll. The year 1906 thus saw a real change in composition of the House as the extended franchise began making its mark.

Given the origins of these new MPs, it is hard to imagine what they made of their arrival in what was then very much the capital of the Empire. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Britain was a staunchly three-class society – and it was clear from which of these three they had arisen. They arrived to experience the remains of Dickens' London, but also that of Virginia Woolf, with its assault on their senses, intellectually, noisily, internationally and 'in the bellow and the uproar, the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men . . . brass bands, barrel organs . . . life'.<sup>18</sup> It must have been intimidating, bewildering and daunting to any stranger. How much more so to these men with their background in the pits, engineering or the great textile mills?

One silence in this book is the story of the women. Little was recorded – and thus goes unreported here – of their wives, some who remained in their home towns, sometimes with large families, often with little money. Others lived in London – and thus had to face the same social ascent as their husbands. Little wonder Beatrice Webb offered them encouragement and 'tutoring', but there is still too little known about how they rose to the challenge of the changes they saw in their husbands.

Some of the MPs extended their new worlds into government, and the very highest offices of State. Others ventured into the international community. Bowerman, for example, helped establish the International Federation of Trade Unions. Barnes, a prominent member of the League to Abolish War, was a negotiator at the Paris Peace Conference and one of the signatories of the Treaty of Versailles, a delegate to the first assembly meeting of the League of Nations in Geneva in 1920 and also helped establish the International Labour Organisation – which still exists today. Hardie was a delegate to the Second Workers' International, and Henderson, who had been President of the Labour and Socialist International, went on to become Foreign Secretary. Glover was a representative at an International Conference of Miners and also made visits to India and South Africa, whilst Hodge visited France, Australia and the USA. Gill, Wilkie and Shackleton were members of TUC delegations to the American Federation of Labor Congresses, and O'Grady took in Russia and India before becoming Labour's first Colonial Governor (in Tasmania, which brought him a knighthood, and then the Falklands). As boys, few would have been able to place

<sup>18</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, The Hogarth Press, 1925.

these countries on a globe. As adults, they took their political beliefs onto the global stage.

Twenty-nine remarkable men, who rose to become Prime Minister, Home Secretary, Foreign Secretary, Chair of the PLP,<sup>19</sup> Party Chair, first Minister of Labour, Chancellor of the Exchequer and other ministers. Today, their successors as Home Secretary (Charles Clarke), Foreign Secretary (Jack Straw), PLP Chair (Ann Clwyd), Party Chair (Ian McCartney) plus Cabinet members Patricia Hewitt, Ruth Kelly, John Hutton and Hilary Benn<sup>20</sup> and the other ex-ministers, MPs and former MPs writing here, represent Labour in those same seats 100 years on – although only one seat, that of Ince (Makerfield), has remained without interruption in Labour hands throughout the whole century. The pages that follow tell of individual successes and set-backs, achievements and disappointments. In relating these personal stories, they recount a vital part of Labour's history without which we will understand little of its present, let alone its future.

*Dianne Hayter and Alan Haworth*



*Dianne Hayter*



*Alan Haworth*

<sup>19</sup> A full list of all the PLP Chairmen and Secretaries, from 1906 to 2006, appears in the [Appendix](#).

<sup>20</sup> For whom 1906 marks a different personal centenary – the election of his grandfather (albeit as a Liberal MP) to Parliament.

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# Labour's Parliamentary Pioneers of 1906

WHEN THE CONSERVATIVE government of Arthur Balfour resigned from office in December 1905, four MPs sat as members of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC). They were Keir Hardie, who was returned as member for Merthyr Tydfil at the general election of 1900, Will Crooks, Arthur Henderson and David Shackleton, who had entered Parliament at by-elections. These four were successful at the general election of January 1906, along with 25 other men endorsed by the LRC.<sup>1</sup> At an early stage it was decided their strength warranted a change of title, to the Labour Party. Much discussion related to how the Liberals' landslide victory would affect the nation, and the likely policies of the new Prime Minister, Henry Campbell-Bannerman, but Labour's arrival at Westminster was also a subject of widespread comment.

A frisson of anxiety passed through the highest in the land. 'I see,' wrote the Prince of Wales to Edward VII on 20 January 1906, 'that a great number of Labour Members have been returned which is rather a dangerous sign, but I hope they are not all Socialists.'<sup>2</sup> Balfour, the defeated Conservative leader, also looked with disquiet on the new Labour Party. Campbell-Bannerman, he informed Lady Salisbury, 'is a mere cork, dancing on a torrent which he cannot control and what is going on here is the faint echo of the same movement which has produced massacres in St Petersburg, riots in Vienna, and Socialist processions in Berlin'. Another prominent Conservative, Joseph Chamberlain, wrote of 'the labour earthquake'.<sup>3</sup> But *The Economist* combined complacency with condescension. It allowed that the Labour MPs would bring to the House of Commons a large amount of direct knowledge of social and industrial questions, and, if treated with

- 1 The parliamentary party soon added a thirtieth member, J.W. Taylor, elected for Chester-le-Street with the support of a trade union not affiliated to the LRC. This essay draws on the author's "'The Instruments of the People?': the Parliamentary Labour Party in 1906', in David Martin and David Rubinstein (eds), *Ideology and the Labour Movement*, Croom Helm, 1979.
- 2 Quoted in Harold Nicolson, *King George the Fifth: His Life and Times*, Constable, 1952, p. 94.
- 3 Blanche E.C. Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour, First Earl of Balfour*, Vol. 1, Hutchinson, 1936, p. 329. Chamberlain's letter of 23 January 1906 appears in *The Autobiography of Margot Asquith*, Vol. 2, Thornton Butterworth, 1922, p. 82.

'firmness and sympathy, they may well prove a useful element in our parliamentary system'.<sup>4</sup>

While established opinion was caught in an uncertain mind, the Labour movement, for a short time at least, was jubilant. Demands for a strong working-class presence in government had been made even before the Chartists began their campaigns in the 1830s. The agitation continued, if irregularly, throughout the century. Apart from a few adherents of William Morris's socialist utopia, which marked down the Palace of Westminster as a storehouse for manure, debate centred on the means by which workers could achieve representation in the House of Commons. After the extension of the franchise to many, though by no means all, working men in 1867 and 1885, an influential section of trade unionists believed the interests of labour could be secured through the Liberal Party. Since the 1870s the party had accommodated a handful of 'Lib-Lab' MPs. Most of the men elected were trade union officials, who would also be assisted financially by their members' subscriptions. The Liberal Party benefited from a broadening of its electoral base, although the 'Lib-Labs' were expected to be loyal members of a party that sometimes accorded a low priority to the claims of labour.

Opposition to this arrangement had helped to secure the passing of the motion at the Trades Union Congress of 1899, which led to the establishment of the LRC in 1900. This body welcomed the affiliation of trade unions and socialist societies. Three of the latter joined: the Independent Labour Party (ILP), the Fabian Society and the Social Democratic Federation (but this Marxist group decided the LRC was too moderate and disaffiliated in 1901). However, the historical connection between organised labour and Liberalism did not end with the formation of the LRC, and in some respects it was reinforced. Secret negotiations between the LRC's Secretary, Ramsay MacDonald, and the Liberal Chief Whip, Herbert Gladstone, led to an arrangement that would operate at the next general election. Accordingly, in a number of constituencies LRC candidates did not face Liberal opposition, while in return Liberals were allowed straight fights with the Conservatives. Most of the LRC candidates elected in 1906 owed their seats to this agreement.

## MEN OF THE PEOPLE?

The 30-strong (with J.W. Taylor added) Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) contained men of differing opinions. As the Prince of Wales had hoped, not all were socialists. Then and subsequently the term 'socialist' could be problematic, but 18 MPs probably regarded themselves as such.<sup>5</sup> In the process of electing a leader, Hardie, the socialist veteran, obtained only one vote more than David Shackleton, whose interests were seen as mainly those of the trade unions. In spite of divisions between those closer to Shackleton's views and the ILP members (although some of these were also trade unionists), the personnel of the party shared much common ground, perhaps most strikingly in their social origins. In a political system that, apart from some of the Irish MPs and the handful of 'Lib-Labs', had long been dominated by the two main upper-class parties, the arrival of a group of working-class

<sup>4</sup> *The Economist*, 11 January 1906.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Bealey and Henry Pelling, *Labour and Politics 1900–1906: A History of the Labour Representation Committee*, Macmillan, 1958, p. 276.