

THE INAUGURAL GEORGE LANSBURY MEMORIAL LECTURE

# The Choice before One Nation Labour – to Transact or Transform

JON CRUDDAS MP

Queen Mary University of London  
7 November 2013



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## PREFACE

George Lansbury is one of the great figures in the history of the Labour Party. Adored and dismissed in equal measure.

'No brain to speak of', according to Beatrice Webb; 'the most lovable figure in British politics' suggested AJP Taylor.

Just this week on Radio 4 Shirley Williams was recounting a childhood where family friends like Herbert Morrison treated Lansbury with disdain. Yet here in the East End 'good old George' was greeted with popular acclaim – his name literally chanted by children when he appeared in school or playground.

Lansbury is being rediscovered. Although rehabilitation is far from complete.

However, when we talk about the rediscovery of Lansbury we are really talking about something bigger. Orthodox social democratic politics has crashed across Europe. Millions of voters have been lost. We have to find a new politics to reconnect with people and the way we do that is to reclaim the parts of our history that will help.

Through Lansbury we can rediscover exiled traditions within Labour; by returning to questions of ethics and virtue; of lost Utopias. Rebuilding hope, energy and vitality through returning to issues of principle and character.

It is about re-imagining what a Labour Party could be. This re-imagined socialism is romantic, not scientific; humane and warm; passionate yet humble; it is about rediscovering a political sentiment. It pushes back against party orthodoxy, careerism and transactional politics.

That is why I applaud the work of the Lansbury Memorial Committee. Your efforts to promote his life and work help us re-imagine what Labour could be today.

George Lansbury was an East London MP for Bow and Bromley from 1910 to 1912 and from 1922 to 1940.

He was leader of the Labour Party from 1932 to 1935.

He lived at 39 Bow Road. The site is now occupied by a block of flats that bears Lansbury's name and carries a memorial plaque. At the corner of Bow Road and Harley Grove, there is a stone memorial that describes "A great servant of the people".

He was honoured by the people. The Lansbury Estate, Lansbury Gardens, many street names both in London – including in my Dagenham constituency – and his Suffolk birthplace, as well as

Lansbury Lido on the Serpentine are all named after him.

He was born 21 February 1859. His father was a migrant worker. His mother, Anne Lansbury, was of Welsh heritage. His parents drinking defined George's lifelong abstinence from alcohol.

His family were nonconformist and radical. In 1868 they moved to Bethnal Green.

His initial political involvement was with the Liberal Party.

In 1892 he helped form the Bow and Bromley branch of the SDF (Social Democratic Federation). He later joined the ILP (Independent Labour Party). On its formation in 1906 Lansbury joined the Church Socialist League and became its Vice-president.

In 1912 two years after becoming an MP he clashed with Prime Minister Herbert Asquith over the issue of women's suffrage and resigned his seat. 'It was not a wise political decision', he later said. He lost by 751 votes.

Campaigning for women's suffrage, Lansbury was charged with sedition in 1913 and jailed in Pentonville.

In 1912 he helped found *The Daily Herald* newspaper. In 1922 desperately short of funds Lansbury reluctantly handed over the paper to the TUC and the Labour Party. Between 1925 and 1927 he edited Lansbury's *Labour Weekly*.

He established the first pioneering training school for destitute Poplar children in 1905, called Hutton Poplars in the Essex countryside, the model for many subsequent children's homes.

Lansbury led the Poplar Rates Rebellion in 1921, opposing not only the Government and the London County Council, but also leaders of his own party; it was not the only time he and Herbert Morrison, a Labour MP, were on opposite sides.

The rebels refused to hand the tax precept to the LCC instead they gave it to the poor. Thirty councillors, including six women, were jailed by the High Court for six weeks. Council meetings were held in Brixton Prison.

A rates revision was won and Lansbury returned to Parliament in 1922.

In 1927 he was elected Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party. In the Second Labour Government of 1929 he was First Commissioner of Works.

Fifty-one Labour and ILP MPs survived the 1931 election including Lansbury. He became Chairman of the PLP. In 1932 Arthur Henderson leader of the Labour Party stood down from the leadership of the party in the country and Lansbury was elected Leader.

Through the early 1930s his absolute pacifism brought him into conflict with the Party leading to his resignation in 1935 after a brutal

collision with Ernest Bevin at the Brighton Conference literally as giant hailstones smashed into the roof of the Conference Centre and the delegates sang in praise of him.

He was subsequently chair of the "No More War Movement" and the "War Resisters' International" and President of the "Peace Pledge Union".

He died of cancer on 7 May 1940, aged 81, in Manor House Hospital in North London.

He married Bessie in 1880. They had twelve children; he was the father-in-law of suffragette Minnie Lansbury, Belfast-born actress Moyna MacGill, and historian and novelist Raymond Postgate.

George Lansbury was grandfather of actress Angela Lansbury, producers Bruce and Edgar Lansbury, and animator and puppeteer Oliver Postgate.

This potted history suggests Lansbury is not easy to categorise.

In the 1880s and early 1890s he was involved in all four of the forces critical in the development of a distinct labour tradition. Industrially, in the New Unionism of the period. Organisationally, in the SDF, in the ILP and with the Fabian Society.

He stood with Ben Tillett Trade Union leader at the 1889 dock strike, and at times was active with the Fabians. In 1892 he joined the SDF becoming its national organiser in 1895 and subsequently running for Parliament three times under its banner. In 1903 he joined the ILP and emerged as one of its sponsored stars within the PLP. How do we make sense of it?

The East End of London is fundamental to the history of Labour. Two key figures though not from here, had their characters forged in these streets and the local ILP of the first decade of the last century.

Most prominent is Clement Attlee of Haileybury House, Toynbee Hall, the youngest ever Mayor of Stepney; local MP, Leader of the Party and then the Country. Arguably the greatest Prime Minister this country has ever had.

Then there is the greatest Labour Leader of the Opposition. George Lansbury.

To have had a third Labour Government in 1945, or Harold Wilson's and James Callaghan's governments of the 1960s and 1970s – or Tony Blair and Gordon Brown's of more recent years – you had to have a party for them to inherit and subsequently lead. This is what Lansbury delivered through his personal character.

The PLP according to Raymond Postgate 'was reeling from the double shock of treachery and defeat. It wanted someone who could restore its confidence in human decency'. Desertion had destroyed the

PLP. In Lansbury they 'found someone whom they loved and who loved them with no touch of patronage'.

This is part of his legacy – to quote George Thomas Labour MP for Cardiff – 'He not only saved the soul of the party, he saved the party. We could have sunk into oblivion and the Liberals could have been reborn'.

It is the ILP association with Attlee and Lansbury that is vital. This year (2013) marks the 120th anniversary of the ILP. His biographer John Shepherd described the ILP as Lansbury's 'natural home'. Attlee described the critical importance of his own journey to the ILP. It anchors them both within a distinctive English socialist tradition and bridges their political lives.

In 1919 Major Clement Attlee became the youngest ever Mayor of Stepney. He supported Lansbury and the Poplar Rates Rebellion in 1921. He was elected MP for Limehouse in 1922. The same election saw Lansbury get back into parliament a decade after resignation.

In 1934 Attlee became acting leader for nine months when Lansbury fell and nearly died. Later Attlee defeated Greenwood and Morrison when taking over from Lansbury.

The young Clement Attlee joined with fifteen others to form the Stepney branch of the ILP in January 1908; five years earlier a few streets away Lansbury had taken a similar journey.

Founded in Bradford in 1893 the ILP grew from the bottom up – 'from those shadowy parts known as the provinces' to quote E P Thompson. Its image one of bohemianism: 'braving apathy and hostility, buoyed up by optimism, concerned not with the minutiae of political dealings but the broad uncomplicated advocacy of ethical principles'.

Under Keir Hardie in 1895 the ILP turned away from the doctrinaire economism of the SDF.

Instead it created a unique blend of domestic socialism. In the notion of a 'Labour Church' and the 'Socialist Sunday School' movements with their alternative commandments which sought 'the realisation of Heaven in this life by the establishment of a society founded on justice and love to thy neighbour' and to 'honour the good, be courteous to all, bow down to none'.

Its politics ethical, not materialistic. Romantic and utopian built around the dignity of the human being and our fundamental equality. For Attlee it was a secularised ethic; for Lansbury a Christian one. Both refracted into a story of patriotic renewal and English virtue although divided around military intervention. One the second to last off the beach at Gallipoli in the First World War, the other resigning from the party leadership through a pacifist absolutism.

The ILP radicalism forged in these streets defined the political

certainties and leadership qualities of Lansbury and Attlee. It held the party together after 1932 yet propelled Lansbury into resignation. It defined the texture of the 1945 government. It enthused Attlee's political passions although locked down within a English middle-class 'rib cage of tradition' and disguised by what Frank Field MP has called the self creation of a personal political 'death mask'.

It is part of a now exiled English socialism – let's give it a name. Let's call it a "One Nation Politics".

The final political speech made by William Morris was in Holborn Town Hall in 1896 seconding a George Lansbury motion. Much later on the 25th anniversary of Morris's death Lansbury sat in a prison cell reflecting that 'fellowship is life' and 'his conception of what life would be when men and women are free'. The key to George Lansbury is that he offers us the link between the Labour Party and Morris.

After the Second World War, parts of the so called 'New Left' in the UK sought to focus on William Morris and his work as part of a general rehabilitation of a perceived English historical socialist arc. This owed a profound debt to English romanticism: anti scientific and artistic in orientation.

EP Thompson's work is part of a distinct political project within the Communist Party to identify a specific English radicalism – a politics of virtue – in the character of Morris himself, but also of the emerging working class. The sub-title of Thompson's biography of Morris is *Romantic to Revolutionary*.

Raymond Williams, in his classic text *Culture and Society*, defines a political, artistic and cultural tradition from John Ruskin, through Morris, to the modern New Left.

Starting with John Ruskin, he focuses on his resistance to laissez faire society through artistic criticism where 'the art of any country is the exponent of its social and political virtues... the exponent of its ethical life'.

What we value in life is taken out of the realm of political economy – of supply and demand, and calculus – and instead relates to the virtue of the labour itself – seen as the 'joyful and right exertion of perfect life in man'.

Within Ruskin, the notion of wealth and value, and indeed labour, are used to attack 19th-century liberalism for its cold utilitarianism, and instead promote a society governed by 'what is good for men, raising them and making them happy'. To live a virtuous life; to become wiser, compassionate, righteous, creative. What it is to become a 'free-born Englishman'.

What is of value is not the notion of 'exchange value'. It amounts to a radical critique of political economy; of economic transactions. It is the source of a distinctly English, radical transformative politics. One that is sometimes identifiable within the Labour Party.

Morris is the critical link, as this form of socialist thought is attached to the political formation of the emerging working class in the late 19th century.

This turbulent period of class struggle occurs alongside a 'neo-classical' economic revolution; removing value away from labour itself into the scientific realm of individual rational preferences. It still dominates today. It is called neo-liberalism

The socialism of Morris is grounded in the emancipatory conception of human labour and creativity. Art constitutes a politics of resistance to life being commodified. This is what constitutes socialism.

This was not – as is often assumed – backward looking or anti-technology. This is a crass misreading of Morris: to pitch him as against civilisation. Rather it is built around the creativity of human labour. It is a continuous struggle, not just against capitalism – given its alienating effects on human creativity – but also left-wing utilitarianism and Fabianism.

Socialist change is not simply political and economic change – the 'machinery' of socialism – as he called it – but heightened consciousness that aims to realise a person's true capacities. Self realisation.

In the cauldron of 1880s England it was a politics built around the search for an authentic human life and growth. The struggle for a society that releases other human virtues.

The period was one of profound change and economic rupture; of major political realignment and struggle. Socialist responses divided between rationalist and romantic. Morris as the key figure on one side. Fabianism, utilitarianism and various socialist scientific or economic strands on the other.

Here stands the classic fault line within the history of socialism as later defined by economic historian RH Tawney – between its economic and its ethical traditions.

Morris is long dead yet arguably remains the most significant figure in English socialism.

The three great prophets of Labour and the ILP: Keir Hardie, Ramsey MacDonald and George Lansbury – the 'apostles of the old faith' to quote Ken Morgan- were all driven by a profound sense of human fellowship forged alongside Morris in the 1880s.

Keir Hardie, 'a latter-day Jesus', formed as a rebel in the Ayrshire coal-fields in the 1880s. A founder of the ILP in 1893. The illegitimate teenage

miner reading Carlyle and Ruskin. He cited William Morris as the 'greatest man whom the socialist movement has yet claimed in this country'.

Ramsey MacDonald, who joined the ILP in 1894 when essentially a utopian pacifist. He maintained a unique popular appeal; a charisma that David Marquand explains 'partly because he spoke to and for this strand of British socialism, that produced the ILP Arts Guild of the middle twenties and which looked back to Walter Crane and William Morris'. Macdonald was able to 'capture the imagination of the Labour movement in a way that a narrowly political leader would have found it hard to do'.

And Lansbury who wrote from his south London prison cell: 'in the columns of commonweal, in pamphlets, lectures and speeches [he] made me realise that there was something more to be thought of than Acts of Parliament and State Bureaucracy...surely what we strive for is a society of free men and women bound together by ties of comradeship and communal wellbeing as pictured by Morris'.

Yet gradually through the 1930s the page turned – the planners, scientists, organisers and the economists – Dalton, Morrison, Bevin, Jay, Gaitskill, Wilson, won out. The rationalists that won out, backed by the unions, who retreated into the party structures. Mechanistic, centralising remedies won out.

Webb's mistake, according to Morris, was to 'overestimate the importance of the mechanism of a system of society apart from the end towards which it may be used'. The question of human virtue becomes at best residual.

The romantics lost. Sure, from time to time a few creep through. Bevan with his focus on the aesthetic of council house production. His 'emotional concern for human life'. Deeply artistic, he held a libertarian belief in the capacity of all humans to flourish. He could make socialism sing. A 'sensual puritan' as described by Michael Foot.

Indeed Foot himself had elements of the tradition, alongside Kinnock and early Blair. Yet generally this tradition has crashed, burned or been exiled.

It is William Morris that lies behind the romance of socialism. Its possibilities. Its hopes. The sense of a creative life we could all live: that is our shared humanity. It also talks of what we have lost as we commodify our lives and our relationships; our children, our culture.

WB Yeats, wrote this of Morris: 'No man I have ever known was so well loved... People loved him as children are loved. I soon discovered his spontaneity and joy and made him my chief of men'.

This devotion echoes the East End children's devotion to Lansbury as they sang about him in the school yard.

Virtually 80 years ago, in early December 1933, in Gainsborough having opened a bazaar and before addressing a party meeting Labour Leader Lansbury fell and very badly fractured his thigh.

He felt close to death. He was to remain in the Manor House Hospital in Hampstead for over six months – he had his 75th birthday there.

He used the period to good effect. Publishing two books within a year. The first was a second volume of memoirs. The other a volume entitled *My England*. In effect a new Christian socialist manifesto built around a series of articles published in *The Clarion*.

It is here that George declares his essential creed- his '**desire always is to chain down misery and set happiness free**'. The task at hand, literally 'to reconstruct the whole life of the nation'.

The significance of Lansbury is best understood in these pages – especially chapter 17 entitled 'The Joy of Living'. A unique blend of ILP radicalism, Christian Socialism and the possibilities of human creativity and advancement inspired by Morris. More than any other Labour politician Lansbury had become anchored within, and spoke to, this specific romantic, English radical socialist tradition. With five essential elements.

First a 'national popular' patriotic socialism.

Second, a transformative agenda that rejects a shallow end transactional labour politics.

Third, a socialism hinged on gaining power to give it away – a trust in people and a radical democratic bent.

Four, a feminism driven by a specific understanding of human equality.

Fifth, an ethic anchored within a conception of the human condition and its creative possibilities, duties and obligations and sense of fellowship.

...

It is of direct relevance today. The book was published 5 years after the crash and economic rupture of 1929. It was written 3 years after the collapse of the Second Labour Government.

Today we stand in precisely the same spot in the political cycle driven by crisis and political rupture.

Today we consider Lansbury's life 5 years after the epochal events of 2008 and 3 years after the collapse of the last Labour Government arguably triggering our greatest crisis since 1931.

...

Labour has a terrible record at such historic turning points.

From our inception we have been plagued by a fundamental tension between orthodoxy and radicalism especially acute at moments of crisis; between transaction and transformation.

You can detect it throughout our history.

Soon after its formation, Keir Hardie argued that Labour had 'its conscience dulled by lust of power to that sense of justice which is the salt of national life, it reels towards its doom'

Twenty-five years later in *The Choice before the Labour Party* Tawney describes – after retreat in national government – how the government 'did not fall with a crash, in a tornado from the blue. But crawled slowly to its doom.'

It was consumed by a 'cautious conventionality' who 'retard the recovery of the party by concealing its malady'

It courted the voters 'with hopes of cheaply won benefits, and if it did not despise them, sometimes addressed them as though it did. **It demanded too little and offered too much.**'

His words echo down from the past – through Bevan, Kinnock and indeed Blair when railing against party orthodoxy.

'The gravest weakness of British Labour is... its lack of creed. The Labour Party is hesitant in action, because divided in mind. It does not achieve what it could, because it does not know what it wants'.

There is, he says, a 'void in the mind of the Labour Party', which leads us into 'intellectual timidity, conservatism, conventionality, which keeps policy trailing tardily in the rear of realities.'

Lansbury shared these criticisms and re-established the creed demanded by Tawney hinged around 'The Joy of Living' – a utopian ILP socialism – literally to build the 'New Jerusalem' – anchored in the streets of Bow – where you find the good Samaritan in 'every court and alley' – and the desire for human self realisation and to live a good life.

The Labour Party is the vehicle – to provide this 'wisdom, knowledge and understanding'. It is a patriotic endeavour he equates with Irish Home Rule. He urges the party to be 'born again'; an explicit attempt to re-establish a political sentiment after the loss and desertion of 1931 reflected in the character of his own leadership.

John Shepherd argues that a total renewal of his religious faith occurred in hospital. He believed he had been spared by God to carry on with his work. It was reflected in a strengthened pacifism as the drumbeat to war grew louder. There was to be inevitable confrontation with the likes of Dalton, Bevin and Citrine as Labour re-examined its foreign policy with renewed emphasis on military force in the fight against fascism.

Alongside a reasserted faith there is also a sense of loneliness and melancholia. The personal separation in a hospital bed. The political iso-

lation from a Party shifting toward a more muscular patriotic identity. These are played out alongside personal tragedy. Bessie had died in 1933; his son Edgar died on 28 May 1935.

Labour has too often renounced the transformative in favour of the transactional.

It has too often retreated from the compromises and messy realities of people into the order and security of the state.

Transactional politics delivers real benefits to people.

But they don't change anything fundamental in the economic structures and social hierarchies that are the dynamo of inequality.

On their own they don't generate power and self confidence in people.

For that sense of personal fulfilment, self-knowledge, achievement, dignity, self-esteem, of a life lived well and true to one's self – you need something more – you need a story that speaks to people's hopes and dreams and in which they recognise themselves.

A transformative politics is about voicing what people already know and feel but struggle to find the words for.

Transactional politics is about slicing and dicing the electorate in search of victory.

People are reduced to votes and units of calculus.

But to what end and for what purpose?

We need the statisticians, empiricists, calculators, tacticians, policy technicians to help build a better decent society.

But too often Labour has sent them forth without reason or purpose, other than a tribal urge for victory.

Too many of our manifestos end up as lists of policies, an offer to this group, a promise to that, the different parts never adding up to anything that makes sense to people.

As Tawney said in 1934: 'it demanded too little and offered too much'.

It is the One Nation frame that can hold both the transformative and transactional.

Neither can win without the other.

So the Policy Review I am involved with is about producing evidence based policy but embedded in a deeper story of One Nation.

The story determines the policy making and the policy making gives substance and detail to the story and both are given political reality by the movement building of our Party reforms.

...

The mass political party of the 20th century that George Lansbury led is gone.

The cultures and social formations of the industrial working class that gave it life and sustained it have gone.

More recently, social democracy has suffered a cultural devastation – almost if you like, a social death – and while the structures of our party survive the meanings that gave them life have not.

We are dwindling, and we have to change.

We have to return to our exiled traditions and galvanise for the future.

Indeed the One Nation tradition grows out of the moral outrage at the mechanisation of society. It begins with Carlyle's the Condition of England question in his essay on Chartism in 1839. His raging against the inhumanity of industrialisation gives first voice to the One Nation tradition: 'the condition of the great body of people in a country is the condition of the country itself'.

Out of it grows the social novels of Gaskell, Dickens, Disraeli's *Sybil or Two Nations*, and Ruskin. It is the tradition of an English modernity of virtue and sensibility and Morris was its greatest exponent.

It was given form within the ILP and Labour through Hardie, MacDonald and Lansbury. It lay deep within Attlee and the texture of his great transformative government. It is captured in the character of Lansbury more than any other and saved the Party at its moment of acute crisis.

Politics is always first and foremost poetic because if it lacks the spirit to transform people and give them hope for a better life then it will fail to tackle the fundamental power relations that keep them in their place, however many policies it has lined up.

That's why to me Lansbury is so important, not just for what he stood for but for his failures and the lessons we can learn from his exemplary life.

Attlee said of Lansbury: 'he was a great Londoner and a great Englishman and a socialist who practiced and preached the brotherhood of man. He was a sincere and devoted Christian who strove to follow in the footsteps of his master'.

Harold Laski said of him 'he was absolutely straightforward, absolutely democratic and entirely fearless'

Bob Holman described his own journey to Lansbury as reaffirming his belief in Labour for 'putting socialist principles into practice in our everyday behaviour and relationships'.

George Lansbury was the quintessential Labour moralist; the utopian visionary driven by the search for cooperation and fellowship. Not in the abstract but lived every day in these streets that he

never left. He embodies the history of both ethical socialism and the ILP in this country.

Lansbury was a genuine radical in terms of women's emancipation and the widening of the franchise; driven by fundamental concerns about human dignity and equal worth which at different times left him in Brixton and Pentonville and on hunger strike.

Personal advancement in the House of Commons didn't interest him. Resignation spoke volumes as to personal frustration with the Westminster Party and Parliament itself. Aged 53 he threw away his seat.

He was sent to Pentonville in 1913 following militant rhetoric some saw as sedition. Demonstrations and mass singing followed in support of his hunger strike. The people got him out of there.

He was the driver behind the most important public document of the last century – the Minority Report on the Future of the Poor Laws.

As Poor Law Guardian his hatred of the workhouse was personal, deep and profound. The Minority Report was the cornerstone of the future Welfare State delivered by that other great ILP East End activist Clem Attlee. Both refused to accept the notion of the undeserving poor – we should remember that.

The 1946 legislation with the end of the Poor Law stands as testament to Lansbury and Attlee and East London's humanity captured in the ILP.

One Nation politics is about reviving the exiled tradition embodied in the life and work of George Lansbury.

It was built in these streets. You can literally see it in the face of the man. Dig out the old photos; his humanity glows, almost as a physical force. And the people knew it.

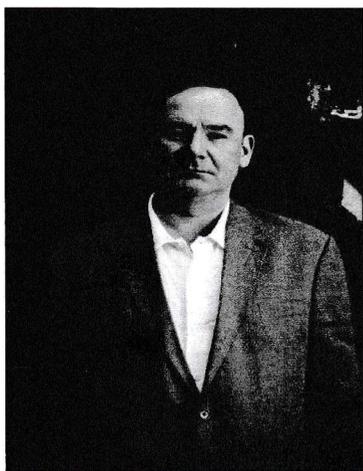
Memory is itself a political act to recapture what we have lost.

George Lansbury saved the Labour Party because he encapsulated the soul of the Party.

It was, he said 'to chain down misery and set happiness free'.

## PEOPLE

<b>Herbert Asquith</b>	1852 – 1928 Liberal Prime Minister
<b>Clement Attlee</b>	1883 – 1967 Labour politician; post WW2 Prime Minister
<b>Walter Citrine</b>	1887 – 1983 Trade Unionist, anti-Communist
<b>Keir Hardie</b>	1856 – 1915 Socialist, labour leader
<b>Bob Holman</b>	Social campaigner, author
<b>Harold Laski</b>	1893 – 1950 Political theorist, Chairman of the Labour Party
<b>Ramsey MacDonald</b>	1866 – 1937 First ever Labour Prime Minister
<b>Ken Morgan</b>	1934 – Historian
<b>William Morris</b>	1834 – 1936 Socialist activist, novelist, textile designer
<b>Herbert Morrison</b>	1888 – 1965 Labour politician, deputy leader
<b>John Ruskin</b>	1819 – 1900 Social thinker, art critic, draughtsman
<b>R H Tawney</b>	1880 – 1962 Economic historian; Christian Socialist
<b>A J P Taylor</b>	1906 – 1990 Historian, journalist and broadcaster
<b>Beatrice Webb</b>	1858 – 1943 Socialist, labour historian, social reformer
<b>Shirley Williams</b>	1930 – Politician, academic, founder member of the SDP



## **Jon Cruddas was re-elected a Member of Parliament at the 2010 general election.**

Cruddas was born in Helston, the son of a sailor, and was educated at the Oaklands Catholic Comprehensive School in Waterlooville, near Portsmouth, before attending the University of Warwick where he qualified with an M.A. and later a Ph.D. in Philosophy, for a thesis entitled *An analysis of value theory, the sphere of production and contemporary approaches to the reorganisation of workplace relations*. He was a visiting fellow at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for a year from 1987.

In 1989, he became a policy officer with the Labour Party before becoming the chief assistant to the General Secretary of the Labour Party in 1994. After the 1997 general election, he became the deputy political secretary to the new Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and as the link between the Prime Minister and the trade unions, he worked heavily on the introduction of the minimum wage. He was a member of the Transport and General Workers Union from 1989 until his election in 2001 when he became MP for Dagenham. In the run up to the 2006 local elections he identified that Labour's focus on Middle England and failure to engage with its traditional supporters was leading to a swelling of support for the far-right BNP.

In 2007, Jon stood for election as Labour's deputy leader following the resignation of Tony Blair and John Prescott as Leader and Deputy Leader. By standing for election, Jon opened the contest to new ideas – especially on housing, immigration and public services. He won the support of tens of thousands of members and trade unionists.

At the last election Jon campaigned hard against the BNP, who enjoyed a strong presence in Barking and Dagenham until they lost all of their councillors in the 2010 elections.

Jon Cruddas has been appointed as head of Labour's policy review, and he is a member of The Shadow Cabinet.

