

JOHN MACKINTOSH — AN APPRECIATION

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John Mackintosh died on the 30th of July 1978 at the tragically early age of 48 when at the height of his remarkable powers, and while enjoying vastly his two roles of professor and of politician. I knew the book before I knew the man. *The British Cabinet* was at first warmly praised by most academics, then it became a universal target for critical exercises, from thousands of student essays to scores of learned articles; but even before his death, it had entered a third phase of recognition as a classic work on the British Constitution. No other book has pulled together so much historical knowledge and showed so well how Britain is governed. Students tend to believe that the book is primarily about whether the Prime Minister or the Cabinet governs. John never posed so crude a dichotomy. The real thesis of the book is far broader: that cabinet government is limited in its use of power not merely by Parliament, or even the parties, but by public opinion and politics in its broadest sense.

This is the clue, I think, to his character and career. Deeply as he believed in the House of Commons, yet he saw that it too was only a part of politics; and that there were more politics and political education “out of doors” than “in-doors” — as the eighteenth century had put it. His journalism, his broadcasting and his peripatetic, persistent and stimulating lecturing were neither venal nor just an excess of adrenalin: he was deeply radical in the sense that he believed primarily in public controversy out-of-doors, outside Parliament to rouse public opinion to influence government, as being the heart of politics. Thus he did not seek high office and was judged too “independent” and “reckless” for it, though it might have come with time as with Dick Crossman; and he refused offers of junior office simply as an attempt to muzzle him. He valued his chair and a column in *The Times* more than being Minister of this or that — there

was a certain arrogance in this maybe, but a definite truth too: his way carried more political influence — we are short of political ideas, not of administrators. There was pith in his joke to friends, “I am the Enoch Powell of the Left”. He was deeply radical and had the common touch as well as the academic graces (as an English friend, I was always astounded by his mixture of reckless vulgarity in a *fight* and of academic graces in a *controversy* — was it Glasgow and Edinburgh combined in one character?). But this radicalism, though of the Labour movement, did not imply specifically left-wing sympathies: there are a few Tories of that ilk, and all Liberals (save one) who go out to the people, but to the actual people, not the left-wing myth, at times. John was a realist. Perhaps too much of a realist. Politics *is* the art of the possible. But *what* is possible? He asked for a positive theory of a mixed economy in the last major article he published before his death in the July number of the *Political Quarterly* which we edited together; but the mix might have been suspect to many in the Parliamentary Labour Party — although he called their bluff in talking about the mixed economy at all. One thinks of him mainly, however, for his honesty rather than his theoretical clarity. I do not think that he was reckless, he was simply courageous and no respecter of persons. So many are self-seekingly prudent. Orwell once wrote that “liberty is telling people what they do not want to hear”. John was a master of that, and a “bonnie fechter” right down the line — whether over Scottish devolution or trade union reform. When he wrecked the Government’s majority over the passage of the Dock Labour Bill by his deliberate abstention, no one claimed that his action was motivated by any reason other than that he did not believe in it in principle.

He excited jealousy as well as admiration. As he took strong blows himself without bearing any grudge, he was naively surprised that some other politicians didn’t like the ring — unless the fight was fixed. But the admiration was greater. Two days after he died saw a memorial meeting in the largest committee room of Parliament which was crowded with MPs from all parties and many, many others. All the tributes pointed to his independence. If British politics had a hundred Mackintoshes it would be unworkable; but if it does not have a few still in the House, it would not be worth having. Above all, he showed that the academic and the political can, when the sincerity, scholarship

and honesty of a man are clear, be bridged. He believed that they should be bridged. He would listen politely for a few moments when friends advised him to concentrate his energy — but if one went on too long, he would say, “What, and become like so and so!” — and laughter of self-knowledge swept all away in merriment. He had to be twice as large and active in two fields as most of us ever hope to be in one. One loved him for the enemies he has made. One loved him for the impossible example. He irritated one every time one met him that he was also dealing with something else. But there are so many like that. Who can one think of in the whole of the United Kingdom like John?

A last word — who can one think of who brought so many Englishmen, like myself, to see that the Scottish national spirit needed and would be incomplete without political forms? The Scotland Bill ground through the House of Commons as if it were a weary political necessity: John treated it as a matter of the deepest principle. So it was. And so was he a man of principle — though he never denied that a fight could be enjoyed.

GEOFF SHAW — AN APPRECIATION

THE Rt. Hon. BRUCE MILLAN

Geoff Shaw himself would have been embarrassed and confused by the tributes that have been paid to him since his death on 28 April 1978. He never sought publicity for himself, for he was an unassuming and genuinely humble man. He was also motivated by very clear social and political ideals which left no room for anything that might have been interpreted as a cult of personality. Geoff Shaw nevertheless provided in his life and work an inspiration to all who knew and worked with him, and played the key role, as first Convener of Strathclyde Region, in setting up that Authority and determining the manner and tone in which it operated. His practical achievements and the memories he leaves behind him will continue to influence Scottish politics for a long time to come. However, Geoff was not just a “practical” politician who helped to launch Strathclyde. He was a deeply committed Socialist with a strong sense of social

justice. He threw himself with vigour and commitment into everything he took up — whether the needs of the deprived areas of Glasgow or in his international concerns, for example his longstanding involvement in CND.

Geoff Shaw was born in 1927. His background was Edinburgh and professional middle class, and he was educated at Edinburgh Academy from 1933 until 1944, when he was Dux Gold Medallist. He went the same year to Edinburgh University to study Arts, but his studies were interrupted by two years National Service in the Royal Navy. Typically, he was concerned to emphasise that most of this service was spent at a land base in Malta. He returned to Edinburgh University in 1948 to study philosophy and moral philosophy, and graduated Master of Arts in June 1950. After three further years studying theology at New College, Edinburgh, he graduated Bachelor of Divinity. He then undertook a year's post-graduate study at the Union Theological Seminary in New York. It was during his period of theological study that Geoff first became involved in community work, first in Pilton, Edinburgh and then in New York, where he worked with the East Harlem Protestant Parish. This worked outside the traditional religious style and attempted to take the Church out into the world to share the social and economic circumstances of the community in which it found itself. It was while in Harlem that he became particularly aware of the conflicts facing the under-privileged young, between the values of home and family and the values of the street and of gang culture. Support for the young therefore became a key part of Geoff's thinking, and his Harlem experience was an important influence on what he did later.

He returned to Scotland in 1955 and spent the next two years as a boys' leader in Church House, Bridgeton, a youth club attached to the Church of St Francis in the East.

In 1957 Geoff Shaw and a number of like-minded friends moved to the Gorbals and persuaded the Glasgow Presbytery — after initial hesitation — to support them in a new form of ministry. The Gorbals Group is still perhaps the initiative for which Geoff Shaw is best known. The Group's object was to live among the people with whom it was concerned, identify their needs at first hand (and indeed share in them) and so be able to respond and help them. An important part of the thinking was that people should be helped to develop their own capabilities to help them-

selves. The Group lived a communal life, sharing a house in the early years, pooling their resources, and sharing a common Christian witness which was self-evidently important to them all. The key point in their week was their regular Thursday evening meeting when they gathered together for discussion and communal worship, and all members of the Group regarded attendance at this meeting as an overriding obligation. In line with his earlier interests, Geoff Shaw's particular concern within the Group was to establish informal group activities with boys of the neighbourhood. He also played an important role in setting up the *Gorbals View*, an influential local paper which was eventually taken over by a local tenants' association (itself a product of the Group's activities) and which is still published as *The View*.

Members of the Group came and went until it was formally wound up in 1973. Geoff Shaw himself remained in the Gorbals beyond that, retaining his links with the community and providing a temporary home for a succession of boys in need. By then he was deeply involved in local politics in Glasgow Corporation, to which he was elected in 1970 to represent Govanhill, and where he quickly became sub-convenor of the Social Work and Health Committee (1971) and leader of the Labour Group (1973-1974). It was typical of Geoff that he still lived in the Gorbals until fairly recently before his death.

In 1974, having played an important role in the preparatory work for local government reorganisation, he was elected to Strathclyde Regional Council, and it was during the last period of his life, as the Region's first Convener, that I got to know him best. Strathclyde Region is, I believe, a major success story of local government reorganisation in Scotland, and it has produced many able men. But I think that none of them would grudge or dispute the assertion that the Region today is Geoff Shaw's monument. As Convener he combined the roles of chief public representative of the Region and, as Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, the effective political leader as well, in partnership with Dick Stewart as leader of the Labour Group. The burden of these two roles was ultimately too great and the Regional Council has now sensibly decided to split them. But in the first years Geoff carried out both these with distinction and dedication, and it is difficult to imagine the Region turning out as it has, had the arrangements been different. The

representational role was particularly important in the early days and he made great efforts to get out and about to the more distant parts of the Region and demonstrate that the new system could work as much to their advantage as to that of the Glasgow conurbation area. His enthusiasm in those early days for the concept of regionalisation, and his conviction that Strathclyde could be made to work to everyone's advantage, was persuasive. Within the new Council the ruling Labour group took a clear view on priorities, and worked out coherent policies for dealing with them.

Geoff Shaw also provided for Strathclyde an important leavening of humanity and concern for the individual. This was particularly clear in the development of the Region's policies on social deprivation. These policies need money but they also need to develop community initiatives and build up the self-confidence of the community and its capacity to care for itself. Geoff Shaw never lost sight of the simple fact, all too easily forgotten, that the primary object of local government is to provide services for individuals. And he was in no doubt as to which individuals he was most concerned about.

There was thus an essential continuity — a wholeness — in Geoff's life, from his time in New York to his involvement in community work in Glasgow and on to the major political role of his later years, in pursuit of the principles and objectives that moved him. He believed in looking for the goodness in people even when in his social work he was dealing, as he often was, with the hardest of hard cases, in prison and elsewhere.

One aspect of Geoff Shaw that must be emphasised (though others are no doubt more competent to speak of it than I am) was the foundation of his social and political views in his religious beliefs. Having qualified as a Minister, Geoff never, as is well known, had charge of a conventional parish. But the witness he bore in other ways was nevertheless an essentially Christian witness, as the Thursday night meetings of the Gorbals Group confirms. Geoff often described the work he did in the Gorbals as "gossiping the Gospel" — a phrase that needs no expansion, and that certainly speaks volumes for anyone who ever knew him.

It is also worth reflecting on the relatively few years he spent in elected politics, and the heights to which he rose in those years. By the time he was elected to Glasgow Corporation Geoff

was already forty-three, the greater part of his active adult life having been spent in vigorous but unassuming Christian commitment. His Socialist commitment was also well known but his rapid rise to political prominence thereafter is an amazing achievement. It is itself a comment on the respect in which he was generally held, but his values and even his personal lifestyle remained manifestly unaltered in the transition from a private to a very public man.

I think in fact Geoff never really adjusted completely to his role as Strathclyde Convener. Practical politics require some compromise. Geoff was always uneasy about compromise. The atmosphere of tight public expenditure control in which local government reorganisation in Scotland was launched was particularly painful to Geoff. There was so much to do and not enough money to do it with. But he was committed to the Labour Party and to Strathclyde Region and as Secretary of State I found him a loyal and steadfast colleague.

Geoff was an idealist of the best kind, one who was prepared to stand up doggedly for what he believed in and not to shrink from personal sacrifices to achieve it. Idealists in politics are, of course, not always a comfortable experience, either for themselves or for others. They do, however, provide a clear vision which allows them to get through the necessary day-to-day changes of direction without losing sight of the longer term objectives. Geoff's own ideals shine through all that he did, and much of what Strathclyde Region did under him. I had hoped that the man and his ideals would have remained available perhaps for the new Scottish Assembly. That is sadly not to be. But the legacy of his achievements, and the memory of his integrity, dedication and gentle kindness remain to inspire all who knew him. We shall remember too his great charm — I'm sure he would have hated that word — wit and good humour, with none of the priggishness and intolerance often associated with men of high ideals. It was always a happiness to meet Geoff, especially with his delightful wife Sarah, and we shall miss that too.