

Political Studies Association Hall of Fame

Although the Political Studies Association has been in existence for a 'mere' fifty years, scholarly work in the area of political studies has a much longer life. Here the PSA pays tribute to several deceased influential thinkers and writers within the discipline.

Harold J. Laski (1893-1950)

Harold J. Laski was one of the founders of the PSA. And the fiftieth anniversary awards have affectionately been named



'The Laskis'. He is an ideal figure after which to name an award since he was interesting, influential and dangerous. Laski

knew many major leaders intimately, such as Churchill, Nehru and F. D. Roosevelt. He was chair of the Labour Party's National Executive Committee during the 1945 election. He was a thorn in the side of the leadership, but half the Cabinet turned out for his funeral in 1950. Laski wrote endlessly and on a wide range of subjects. He was a successful journalist and public lecturer, who earned large sums for tours of America. He was a radical, in later life a quasi-Marxist, and the author of many overtly political tracts.

As such he sounds like a cross between a modern academic superstar and a leftist activist. If he had been no more than this he would now be entirely forgotten, and perhaps justly so. However, he was also a brilliant and dedicated university teacher. Generations of students at the LSE found him an inspirational teacher, and numerous PhD students a diligent supervisor. Laski was revered by the students from the colonies who came to the LSE whilst the British Empire remained intact. Born into a wealthy and cultured Jewish family in Manchester, Laski rebelled early and made his own way. He was unstuffy and in no way racist or patronising. No wonder then that there is still a Laski Centre in India, committed to promoting his works and his memory. Laski was also committed to the cause of workers' education in Britain and tirelessly lectured to working class audiences up and down the country.

Laski was also a scholar. After his death his reputation declined sharply, but since the 1980s and 1990s it has risen steadily. Two major biographies were published in 1993. His early work was devoted to political pluralism, to the critique of state sovereignty and to the idea that all authority is by nature federative. His magisterial *A Grammar of Politics* (1925) attempted to combine this pluralism with a hard headed analysis of the modern state. His *Introduction to Politics* (1931) and *The Rise of European Liberalism* (1936) are still excellent introductions to their subjects and brilliantly written.

Laski's political writings are interventions in conditions now long past. The price of such contemporary relevance is often to become no more than an historical document to later readers. But many of his later works are still worth reading. Anyone interested in constitutional reform in modern Britain can benefit from and be cautioned by his *Reflections on the Constitution* (1951). *The American Presidency* (1938) remains a useful starting point. Many of his essays, such as those collected in *The Danger of Being a Gentleman* (1939), are gems. The Holmes-Laski letters are fascinating.

Laski was a worthy, if complex, founder. He is also still relevant. As we try to cope with understanding the increasing complexity of government both nationally and supra-nationally his views on the plural nature of politics and the necessity of a federal division of labour in governance remain a starting point for new thinking.

Paul Hirst

Ernest Barker (1874-1960)

Ernest Barker was the first occupant of the Cambridge Chair in Political Science which was founded in 1928 with the aid of the Rockefeller Foundation. He held the chair

for eleven years until his retirement.

He came to the Chair comparatively late in his professional life: born in 1874, he was an established scholar and able administrator, having served prior to his appointment at Cambridge as Principal of King's College since 1920. Some of his best work was to follow, both during his tenure of the Chair, and in the long and productive retirement which he enjoyed afterwards.

Barker was the eldest of seven children born to a miner turned farm labourer. At his village school he was fortunate to serve as a 'pace-maker' for the son of a local businessman who was working for a scholarship and began ascending one of few educational ladders then available to an Oxford scholarship, fellowship and lectureship.

Barker brought to the discipline of Politics a wealth of learning, a lively and lucid expression, and an exemplary even-handedness. His forte lay in the history of political thought, a



specialism which had grown out of his early works on Greek political thought and twenty-one years' membership of the Oxford History

Faculty preceding his time at King's College London. But – inspired by such Victorian polymaths as Lord Bryce – Barker straddled the ideas/institutions boundary in political studies with considerable ease. His studies of the political systems of the emergent totalitarian regimes of continental Europe in the inter-war period are particularly illuminating, focused, as they were, by the relevant doctrines.

Like his Victorian mentors, too, Barker was no narrow academic political scientist. He cared deeply for the well-being of a wider public, both national and international, and devoted himself to numerous cultural and educational causes throughout his career. He was knighted in 1944



"I'm a bit worried about those polls."

NICHOLAS GARLAND, DAILY TELEGRAPH, 1.10.74

for his contribution to the Books Commission of the Allied Ministers of Education. He admired the character and achievements of England/Britain, perceptions of which informed his abiding liberalism and his scholarship.

Julia Stapleton

Sammy Finer

Sammy Finer began and ended his career in Oxford but his most creative years were spent at the University of Keele (where he was the first Professor of Political Institutions, from 1951-1966) and in retirement. He published *A Primer of Public Administration* and his biography of Edwin Chadwick. He went on to write innovative books on pressure groups (*Anonymous Empire*) and *The Man on Horseback* a wide ranging comparative study of political intervention by the military. His popular textbook on *Comparative Government* was based on his Keele undergraduate lectures. In the 1970s, Finer turned his attention to the British party system and its adversarial features. He devoted his retirement to a monumental three volume comparative study of *The History of Government from the Earliest Times*. This reflected his intellectual boldness and grasp of essentials, combining empirical reference points with conceptual comprehensiveness. Finer offered sureness of touch and felicity of phrase.

In a profession where prudent specialisation tended to dominate, Finer stood out for his imaginative range of conception and panache in execution. Innovation was couched in a swashbuckling style, stimulating to read. He was Chair of the PSA Executive from 1965-68. Advocates of the new institutionalism have much to learn from a protagonist of the best of old institutionalism.

Jack Hayward

G. D. H. Cole (1889-1959)

George Douglas Howard Cole, usually known by his initials, joins this pantheon because in 1944 he became the first



Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory at Oxford, a post he held until retirement in 1957. Yet in other respects his life and work is a

challenge to today's academic political science (a term he always resisted, which is one reason why this association 'studies' politics). Instead of a narrow discipline, talking to itself in an obscure language, Cole wanted relevance, engagement, accessibility and breadth.

His own work exemplified these characteristics. A polymath who ignored academic boundary lines, he held academic posts in three different disciplines (philosophy, economics, and social and political theory) and could well have held posts in at least two others (history and literature). His output was prodigious, including over a hundred books and an endless stream of articles and pamphlets. 'Mr. Cole's whole life would appear to be a protest against the doctrine of restriction of output,' declared one reviewer in 1920, when this output had scarcely started. He was a one-person research assessment exercise.

Along with figures such as Harold Laski and R. H. Tawney, Cole was a leading intellectual of the left in Britain during the first half of the twentieth century. He came to prominence early in the century as the exponent of guild socialism, a doctrine of industrial and social self-government, in opposition to the Webbian version of state socialism; and he retained an enduring commitment to these ideas. This is the link between his first book *The World of Labour* (1913) and his final multi-volume *History of Socialist Thought* (1953-60).

Chronology

The Liberal revival continues, with the party gaining over 6 million votes in each election.

The Sunningdale Agreement introduces devolved power sharing to Northern Ireland, but collapses after 5 months.

1975 *Heath quits as Conservative leader after being outpolled by Thatcher. The Political Studies Association launches a 25th Anniversary edition of Political Studies. Rod Rhodes becomes PSA Secretary.*

1976 *Wilson resigns and is replaced by Jim Callaghan as Labour leader. David Steel is elected Liberal leader. Lord Hailsham complains of 'elective dictatorship'.*

1977 *Labour relies upon a pact with the Liberals to remain in office as its majority disappears.*

1978-79 *Winter of Discontent with large number of strikes.*

1979 *The Conservatives sweep to power with an overall majority of 43 in a landmark election. Margaret Thatcher becomes the first woman PM. The Labour manifesto 'The Labour Way is the Better Way' (it attacked tax cuts, by the way)*

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Between these books was a lifetime of intellectual (and political) activity on behalf of the labour movement and its various institutions, from a perspective he liked to describe as ‘sensible extremism’, and a commitment to politics as an enterprise of public philosophy – including the academic practitioners of the discipline.

Tony Wright

Michael Oakeshott (1901-1990)

Michael Oakeshott was a Fellow of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge from 1925 to 1951 and Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics from 1951 until his retirement in 1968. Four major philosophical concerns run through his writings. He was deeply interested in the nature of philosophy, which he systematically explored in *Experience and its Modes* (1933), the nature of rationality, which he explored in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (1962) the nature of human conduct, most systematically analysed in *On Human Conduct* (1975), and the nature of historical inquiry, articulated in a number of essays collected in his *On History and Other Essays* (1983).

For Oakeshott philosophy was uniquely concerned to undertake a relentless critique of assumptions with a view to offering a comprehensive and presuppositionless account of human experience. Rationality was not a natural or transcendental faculty or power but a form of behaviour, and was embedded in and structured by traditions governing an activity. As for human conduct, it consisted in pursuit of wished-for satisfaction within a given social context in consonance with established practices. History was a disinterested attempt to construct a coherent account of the past in its own terms.

For Oakeshott all human associations were structured in terms of practices. Since the latter were instrumental and pragmatic or non-

instrumental and moral in nature, all associations were enterprise or moral associations. For him political community belonged to the latter category. To highlight this fact he called it civil association, an association of equals united in terms of their subscription to common principles of civility. Although Oakeshott’s conception of civil association bears a considerable resemblance to those of Hobbes and Kant, it is distinctive in crucial respects and represents a highly original contribution to political philosophy.

Oakeshott was one of the finest, though not the most influential, of political philosophers of the twentieth century. He developed a distinct style of philosophising and an almost entirely new language, the hallmark of a truly creative mind. He challenged the positivist view of rationality, the collectivist and individualist conceptions of human beings, the functional view of legitimacy, the recurrent confusion between power and authority and between individuality and individualism, and offered a persuasive political theory base on the ideas of individuality, civility and conversational politics.

Lord Parekh

Ramsay Muir (1872-1941)

Ramsay Muir deservedly may be regarded as one of the forerunners of British social science. Like Laski and Cole, he inhabited both the world of letters (he produced some 29 publications) and the world of affairs (he was briefly MP for Rochdale, and President of the Liberal Party). He was a lecturer and professor of modern history at both Manchester and Liverpool universities. His publications were extensive, ranging from international and commonwealth affairs to municipal government in Liverpool; most significant, perhaps, was his *How Britain is Governed* (1930), arguably the first textbook on the subject and which W. J. M. Mackenzie, S. E. Finer and other founders of British political science read as undergraduates. Some of its themes (e.g. regional devolution and

reform of the Upper House) were to become unfashionable in the 1950s and 1960s, but now, once again, are mainstream concerns of the academic and public agenda.

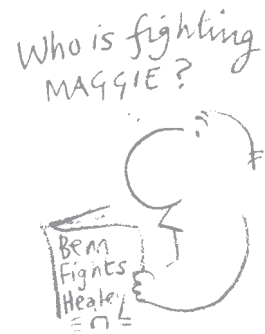
He was also an educationist, helping to promote Liverpool to full university status and being a member of the Calcutta Commission on the reform of Indian universities. As a journalist, he became editor of *The Saturday Westminster* for a while, and he contributed to public policy and political debate as an influential co-author of *Britain’s Industrial Future* – the famous *Yellow Book* (1928) – and as a stalwart of the Liberal Summer School.

As his exact contemporary, Sir Ernest Barker, said of him: “He was a professor in politics and a politician among professors. The mixture made his essence, as he, by the fire of his conviction, made it a living unity... a scholar prophet”.

Lord Smith of Clifton

John P. Mackintosh (1926-1978)

John Mackintosh belonged to the classic tradition of British political studies in the tradition of Bagehot, Bryce, Graham Wallas and Harold Laski. He was, at one and the same time, a scholar, a prolific journalist, and a political activist and Member of Parliament. Above all, he was an educator. To all these activities he brought the same mixture of originality, lucidity, intellectual breadth and rhetorical force. Not for him the dead hand of academic jargon or the hermetic exclusiveness of the self-proclaimed professional. He had no patience with the imitative faddism of American-style 1960s behaviourism or, for that matter, with the ponderous scholasticism of 1970s neo-Marxism. He did not live to see the rise of public choice theory in the 1980s and 1990s or the proliferating Rawls industry of the same period, but it is a safe bet that he would have been equally impatient with them.

MEL CALMAN, *THE TIMES*, 6.9.81

Chronology

became one of the most redundant documents in British political history as the party was removed from power for a generation. Earlier, a majority is not a majority in Scotland, as electors vote for devolution in a referendum, but not in sufficient numbers. The Welsh decisively reject the idea.

1980 *Michael Foot replaces Callaghan as Labour leader, defeating Denis Healey as Labour swings leftwards.*

The PSA launches its second journal Poilitics

1981 *The Social Democratic Party is formed. Ten republican prisoners die on hunger strike in Northern Ireland. Tony Benn loses narrowly to Dennis Healey in the Labour Party deputy leadership contest.*

Rioting occurs in several British cities during the summer.

1982 *Britain wins the Falklands War.*

1983 *The Conservatives win the General Election with a crushing 144 seat majority. Labour's New Hope for Britain manifesto is described as the longest suicide note in history.*

1984 *The Provisional IRA bombs the Grand Hotel in Brighton, nearly killing many of the Cabinet.*

The notion that academics should write only for other academics was, for him, the negation of what the study of politics should be about. In his eyes, political action, political study, political education and political comment were a seamless web. The John Mackintosh who filled the Chamber of the House of Commons when he got up to speak was the same John Mackintosh whose lectures enthralled the first-year Politics students at Edinburgh and whose studies of the British Cabinet and what he called the 'Westminster Model' achieved classic status.

Running through all his activities were a passionate concern for parliamentary democracy and a deep anxiety about its future. The first edition of his study of the Cabinet ended with the haunting question: 'Is the decline of Parliament to be regretted?' His own answer was an emphatic 'yes'; and the key both to his politics and to his academic work lies in his search for solutions to the theoretical and practical problems which that answer implied. His tragic death at 49 left the search unfinished. Nothing has happened since to invalidate the concerns which led him to embark on it.

David Marquand

W. J. M. MacKenzie (1909-1996)

Bill MacKenzie was a big man in every sense, intellectually, physically and morally. Scotland was where he was born and raised, and his outlook on life reflected his roots. At Oxford he took a double first in Greats, and was appointed to one of the earliest politics fellowships in Oxford at Magdalen College. As a Scot, Bill MacKenzie assumed that universities were about scholarship. On becoming a politics don, he sought the critical apparatus; it was not in German, as was the case for classics, but in the American Political Science Review to which he began a subscription in 1932, virtually the only person in England who did so. During the

war he was a temporary civil servant. When asked what he did during the war, he answered: "I was jobbed into the Ministry of Aircraft Production by Tizard to help hold down Bomber Harris, who was mad". There he learned that science is politics, quoting Mr. Dooley, that "politics ain't bean bag".

In 1949 MacKenzie went to the Victoria University of Manchester to establish a Government Department. With a nominal staff of ten, he hired more than two dozen people who ended up professors, including Tony Birch, Jean Blondel, David Donnison, John Erickson and Roger Williams. Scholarship was the reason for being at Manchester. Until the expansion of the university, Manchester had a faculty seminar of world class social scientists. Whoever spoke was treated to straight questions in plain language drawing on vast knowledge and experience of life. Everyone shared the civic pride embodied in the saying 'Manchester made me', and WJMM made Manchester. In 1966 he moved to Glasgow University. There he hired his last bright young men, Chris Hood and Stephen White.

Intellectually, Bill MacKenzie was a radical, going to the root of things. The starting point was usually an intellectual puzzle. The next step was a big leap, often from an unexpected angle. His way of explaining what he found was novel as evident in his 'translation' of the Plowden Report from the Mandarin. MacKenzie was never a 'true believer' in political science as science. Half a lifetime of talking philosophy with people as different as Scottish moralists, Ludwig Wittgenstein, John Austin and Freddie Ayer had left their mark. Nor was he an apologist for the powers that be. When asked him how Her Majesty's Government could do something that seemed palpably wrong, his answer was, "I can explain it, but I can't justify it". His epitaph was written in early Roman times: *Humani nil a me alienum puto* (Nothing that concerns man is alien to me).

Richard Rose