

RIP Tony Benn (1925-2014)

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It's difficult to think of a Labour politician and socialist who has had a more profound effect on the left and for such a long period of time. On Facebook today I keep seeing people say that he inspired them to join the Labour party. I have a signed copy of one of his books that means a huge amount to me. So as no doubt the media will be full of Wikipedia bios, I thought I'd use the official & non official Bios, to put together my own homage and tribute to Tony Benn.

"All war represents a failure of diplomacy." – Tony Benn.

Tony Benn was born on 3rd April 1925, the second son of William Wedgewood Benn and his wife Margaret. His father was a Liberal MP at the time.

He was an MP at 25 and born at just the right time to become a star of the 1959 new-style election broadcasts. Tony subsequently became the youngest member of Gaitskell's shadow cabinet. In the Wilson government of the 60's Tony was seen as the face of technological revolution and opened the famous Post Office Tower in his role as Postmaster General. He was given the new Technology Ministry after the 66 election and was an advocate of the Concorde project. Tony was in the cabinet again from 74 to 79, initially taking on the Secretary of State for Industry role.

Against membership of the European Community, he fought for and won backing on an EC membership referendum from the Labour Party and that led to the UK joining the European Community on 6th June 1975. (Majority 2-1 in favour)

In 1983 his historic constituency was destroyed by boundary changes and he was out of the Commons when Neil Kinnock became leader of the Labour Party. He was soon returned to parliament by the voters of Chesterfield.

Tony tried again to become Labour Leader in 1988, but lost with 89% voting for Neil Kinnock. This marked the beginning of a period where his influence waned and he never returned to the shadow cabinet.

He was against the Poll Tax, The war in Iraq and the erosion of civil liberties in Britain. He always supported the miners during their strike and he was with them in 85 when they marched back to work.

Tony Benn passed away on 14th March 2014, peacefully at home.

"There is no moral difference between a Stealth bomber and a suicide bomber. They both kill innocent people for political reasons." – Tony Benn

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