TURNING A DREAM INTO REALITY

Lord Gwilym Prys-Davies on ‘Developments in the Politics of Wales during the Twentieth Century’

T E Ellis had dreamed of over a century before.

Lord Prys-Davies spoke of the “forces and factors that had obstructed and strengthened the vision”. The twentieth century had been a time of great changes, with two world wars, periods of prosperity and recession, and a dramatic ebb and flow in the development of the political parties.

He turned his attention to a number of important characters in our political history, such as Keir Hardie, Wales’ first Socialist MP; ‘Mabon’ the miners’ leader; David Lloyd George, the Liberal Prime Minister; Aneurin Bevan; James Griffiths, the first Secretary of State for Wales; Saunders Lewis and Gwynfor Evans, leaders of Plaid Cymru, and Ron Davies, previously Secretary of State for Wales.

He also mentioned the strong influence of Socialism and Nonconformism on the Welsh nation, and it was a shame in his opinion that the two influences had not infused “for the highest aims of the nation”.

Lord Prys-Davies himself has played a significant role in Welsh politics. When Gwynfor Evans was elected as Plaid Cymru MP for Carmarthen in the 1966 by-election, Lord Prys-Davies was the Labour party candidate.

He has been a special adviser to the Secretary of State for Wales, 1974-78. He became a member of the House of Lords in 1982, and was official opposition spokesman on health, 1983-89, on Northern Ireland, 1982-93, and on the Welsh Office, from 1987.

For those who missed the opportunity to attend the lecture, printed bilingual copies may be ordered directly from the Marketing Department, The National Library of Wales. A recording of the lecture is also available at the Sound and Moving Image Collection.

Lord Gwilym Prys-Davies with the Librarian Mr Andrew Green and the Treasurer Mr Conrad Bryant
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT:
TOM ELLIS AND THE SDP IN WALES

As part of our oral history project on the SDP in Wales a meeting was arranged in July with Mr Tom Ellis at his home in Ruabon. Mr Ellis was a prominent leader of the SDP in Wales.

The interview touched upon Mr Ellis’s upbringing, education and career as a mining engineer, before moving on to discuss his decision to stand as Labour candidate for Wrexham in 1970. He was the Labour MP for Wrexham from 1970 to 1983.

In 1981 he joined the SDP and represented the new party until his election defeat at the 1983 General Election. The main purpose of the interview was to collect information relating to the formation of the SDP in Wales and Mr Ellis’s relationship with David Owen, Shirley Williams, Roy Jenkins and Gwynoro Jones amongst others.

A digital cassette recording of the interview is now stored with the Sound and Moving Image Collection. [MD73 and MD74].

UKPPAN

The WPA is represented on the United Kingdom Political Parties Archive Network in its role as curator of the Plaid Cymru archive.

A meeting was held last September at the House of Lords. The main business of the meeting was finalising a questionnaire to circulate to local record offices. The purpose of the questionnaire is to locate all records of political parties and to publish a guide to all the relevant sources later in the year.
**Dr. T. I. Ellis (1899-1970)**

A small exhibition has been prepared in the foyer of the Library to mark the centenary of the birth of T. I. Ellis.

Thomas Forwerth Ellis was born in London on 19 December 1899, eight months after the untimely death of his father, Thomas Edward Ellis MP (1859-99). He attended schools in Aberystwyth, Harrow and Westminster and went on to study at UCW Aberystwyth and Jesus College, Oxford.

He worked as a schoolteacher and university lecturer in the Classics before becoming headmaster of Rhyll County School, 1930-40. Between 1940 and 1946 he was a Classics lecturer at Aberystwyth and Lampeter.

Mr Ellis was elected honorary secretary of the Committee for Safeguarding Welsh Culture, a movement which became the New Wales Union (Undeb Cymru Fydd) in 1941. He held a number of positions in the University of Wales and the Church in Wales. He obtained a LL.D. Honours degree from the University of Wales in 1967, and was honoured with the OBE the following year.

He became a familiar figure in Wales mainly due to his work with Undeb Cymru Fydd, and he visited the House of Commons regularly in order to lobby the support of MPs. He published a number of important volumes, including The Development of Higher Education in Wales (1935), a biography of his father, Cofiant T E Ellis (1944 a 1948), and six volumes in the notable series of books exploring Welsh counties, Crwynod'r Siroedd, between 1952 and 1971.

Mr Ellis was a popular broadcaster in Welsh and English, and for twenty years he was a member of the Round Britain Quiz team. He published regularly in periodicals such as Yr Haul, Y Llenor and Barn, and he wrote many entries for the Dictionary of Welsh Biography to 1940.

There is a variety of interesting volumes, pictures, and manuscripts, including letters from Lady Megan Lloyd George, Saunders Lewis, Dr Kate Roberts and Sir Ben Bowen Thomas in the exhibition. Thanks to the kindness of Mrs Mari Ellis, we have also included his OBE medal, his UCW LL.D. degree certificate and a number of unique photographs.

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**Welsh Women's Archive**

*Drawing on the past to build our future*

The Welsh Women's Archive held their AGM at the National Library of Wales last November. The Welsh Women's Archive was established in October 1998 to rescue and preserve sources relating to the history of women in Wales.

Ursula Masson gave a talk on 'Women's politics in Wales at the end of the nineteenth century' and Dr Mari Williams lectured on 'Women and the Second World War in Wales'.

An exhibition, arranged by the WPA on 'Women and the vote', was on display during the event. The exhibition included material relating to the Suffragette campaigns, the first women MPs and the increase in female representation for the National Assembly for Wales elections.

For further information about WWA contact Ursula Masson, School of Humanities, University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd, CF37 1DL. Email: umasson@glam.ac.uk
LABOUR PARTY IN WALES

In August we collected a further group of papers from the Labour Party Wales offices in Cardiff.

The papers span from about 1937-99, (mostly 1980s-90s), and include the original minutes of the Welsh Council of Labour executive, 1937-72, of which we previously held photocopies only.

Also there are annual reports, 1937-71, newspaper cuttings, printed material, and papers relating to elections and the selection of candidates.

The WPA will be arranging an exhibition in November 2000 to mark the centenary of the Labour Party.

NICARAGUA

We have recently listed the papers of the Wales Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 1984-98.

The papers were donated to the WPA by Mr Ben Gregory, campaign secretary and author of a book about the campaign entitled, After I See the Day is Coming, Wales Nicaragua and the future of internationalism (Cardiff, 1998).

The papers include research papers and interviews compiled in the process of writing the book and also minutes and correspondence of the campaign and material relating to local groups.

News in brief - recent acquisitions

NICK AINGER


YES FOR WALES

Leighton Andrews, author of Wales says Yes: the inside story of the Yes for Wales referendum campaign has deposited research material relating to his book on the 1997 referendum.

LEO ABSE

We have received further papers from Leo Abse, Labour MP for Pontypool, 1959-83, and Torfaen, 1983-7. They reflect his long and distinguished career as a backbencher who became involved in tackling social issues. He was leader of the Labour anti-devolution campaign in Wales before the 1979 referendum.

RON DAVIES MP AM

We have received additional papers from Ron Davies's constituency office in Bedwas, and further papers were transferred from the Glamorgan Record Office, Cardiff.

JILL HUTT

Further papers, 1963-9, accumulated by Jill Hutt relating to the TUC, the Parliament for Wales Campaign, and various pressure groups.

WAYNE DAVID


LIBERAL DEMOCRATS WALES

Papers, 1984-99, from the Liberal Democrats' office in Cardiff.

We advise readers to enquire about the conditions placed on the papers before visiting the Library. Many recent WPA acquisitions have restrictions on access or photo-copying.