

Papers of Hugh Dalton:
Original Manuscript Diary

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1957

(Folder of Loose Manuscripts)

Reduction Ratio:

12 x

DIARY.

17/2/57.

I am committed to writing an obit for Winston for the New Statesman, and for notes for the B.B.C. It looks as though the ~~first~~ ^{form} ~~work~~ ^{work} will be needed first, perhaps very soon. It would be bad if both were needed ~~later~~ on the same day, & neither written.

Just back yesterday from 2 days at Oxford, dining at Sturford, along with com Martin, little Major Morris, & staying in the very uncomfortable Principal's Lodgings; lunching ^{day} at Trinity with Ian; sitting in the afternoon at Ruskin, talking to Billy Harper, & then listening to a Seminar on Democracy (pretty well); dining at Wyfield High Table with Ian, (Tony there too as at lunch); sleeping at Bonnet-Grove (most comfortable as always); breakfasting; breakfast & dressing house; walking with Ian east little bit to Wittenham Clump; & after lunch driving with Ian, Dora, Cosmo, Virginia & a Nancy to Oxford for a birthday party. C & V both going up. Very well.

In com party politics we've been N. Latham on a minority vote; com party seems united still; Nye very indolent, sometimes sits in corner of smoke room drinking with 3rd year, & missing party notes & even a Shaker Cab.

DIARY 9.3.57.

12 author's copies of Fateful Years arrived today. This is a very handsome and well-turned out book. Much better, particularly as regards the quality of the paper, than Call Back Yesterday.

The Evening Standard is serialising this week, though the publication date is not till April 15th. Reynolds is, at first, rather fussed at this long gap, but is reassured after talking to Miss Le Roy, and being told what a fine show the Evening Standard is putting on.

I present author's copies to

(1) Little Clem, to whom I dedicate "For Clem from Hugh, a plain tale from a diary, through which your stock rises." I also write him a note saying "Here is Vol. II of my History. It is very frank, and will be disliked by some, though not, I hope, by you. In this period our differences narrowed as time went on. All in all we have been comrades in arms through many years, fighting for Britain, for Socialism, and for the World's Freedom. And our victories have been more decisive than our defeats."

(2) "For Hugh Gaitskell, who is honourably mentioned in these despatches. From the author, in gratitude, friendship and high expectation."

(3) "For Ted Short, my friend and Whip, who took a kindly view of occasional absences (always notified in advance) at crises of authorship."

(4) "For Peggy, whom I salute in the Preface. And she was always gay as well."

(5) "For John Vaizey, whom I met once more on Saturday night at Brian Abel-Smith's and who saw me home and stayed talking about himself and the world till 4 a.m."

(6) To Will Davis "A record of a period when we worked together with complete mutual trust and unchanging friendship, in order that our Country should survive, and the people of Co. Durham should enjoy a happier and more abundant life."

2.

(7) Mrs. Tiernan, whose husband, I am told, is a great reader and likes, in particular, reading The Economist.

One copy we must keep, and the other four, I think, shall be for my two literary executors - Bob Fraser and Tony Crosland - for Mike Williams-Thompson and Marjory Durbin.

I must get a second supply later on for others with lesser claims.

The serialisation in the N. E. Gazette and Newcastle Evening Journal won't begin till the day after publication date. Likewise with the Liverpool Post, if that is finally fixed. I have a sort of feeling that this book will go well. I can now enjoy a sense of relaxation, get a new passport and plan a hot summer holiday in Italy.

DIARY 11.3.57.

My first article in the Evening Standard appears today and upsets poor Herbert Morrison, who makes a statement to the press, who all try to get on to me.

I make a statement as follows to the P.A.

"None of us can escape history" said Abraham Lincoln. Those of us who have been much mixed up in public affairs over a long period should be prepared to make their contributions, in the light of their own knowledge and experience, to the story of their times. I have tried to do this for the period 1931-45 in my book The Fateful Years.

"It is open to others to give their own version and to write their own Memoirs. Elder statesmen whoushould be free from the sharpest spurs of ambition and envy which may sometimes tease their juniors, can usefully do this. But it is a help to have kept a Diary and other records."

I also dictated the following on the phone to some press man:

"These three articles in the Evening Standard" (following Morrison's outburst the Standard did five instead of three), "are extracts from my book, The Fateful Years, which will be published on April 15th." (Reynolds, in view of all the publicity, advanced the date to April 8th).

"This book is a serious history of political events, international as well as domestic, between 1931 and 1945. I hope that Mr. Morrison will read the book. He will find some very favourable references to himself as well as an explanation and defence of the policies of the Labour Party.

"The book, I hope, will be of historical value and interest, especially to younger people who have very little detailed information on the events of this period."

(5)

DIARY

19.7.57.

By train to Durham for Gala. H.G. and I talk in train. I told him I had asked Len Williams to look up Rules of B.A. C.L.P., and to show me next week what he had found. I told H.G. that I had told L.W. on phone how election of E.C. of C.L.P. worked now, and that L.W. said that this was quite ridiculous and he was sure would not have been approved, if put up to his office; also that I had told L.W. that matter was not urgent for local action since all went dead in August and essential thing would be to change Rules before next Feb., which was date of C.L.P. Annual Meeting. I also told H.G. that I should speak of this and other matters to S.W. on Sunday after Gala. H.G. thought that best plan might be for Alger to seek meeting, as matter of routine, with officers of C.L.P. He could then ask them a number of questions, mostly obvious and lead on to enquiry as to how their E.C. was elected.

21.7.57.

*Saw
Watson*

The Gala being over and the guests departed, I saw S.W. at his house and stayed for an excellent cold lunch being the remains of the feast of the night before. I told him that Longworth had completely failed to arrange a meeting of Miners Lodges in B.A. constituency, as we had hoped. I said I thought that I. had lost prestige and self-confidence as a result of shifts from pit at Etherley to pit at West Auckland where clearly he had failed to establish himself as he had hoped, and later his move to Brusselton Lodge where he was now secretary and checkweighman. S.W. agreed this was most likely. I told him again how our E.C. of C.L.P. was chosen and pointed out that things might so work that not one single miner was on E.C. I said that, to get this changed, and create resentment among miners who were now unaware and apathetic, it would be necessary for him to take an initiative. This, he said, he would most certainly do and that the present arrangement must certainly be changed. He was particularly shocked at provision whereby a third of E.C. must be women! Women, he said, should stand on their own feet for election. I told him of my word with L.W. and promised to keep him informed of later developments. I repeated that there was no great urgency,

particularly in August, but that I thought moves should begin in September.

I then told him that I should not stand again. I expected, from what H.G. told me, some resistance to this. But there was none, he having evidently thought the matter over in the interval, and nodding his head understandingly when I explained that on questions of youth and age I took a most obstinate and doctrinaire position. His chief reaction was that it was indispensable to find a suitable and able young man as my successor. "With a bad candidate", he said, "that seat might easily be lost." I said I did not think it was quite as bad as that, but was most anxious that my successor should be both young, able and acceptable; also that he should be loyal to H.G. and not any sort of Bevanite. I said that I would have been very happy to be succeeded by a young miner, but that I was afraid that there was no one even remotely suitable. I mentioned one or two, including Jack Race, in whom I had in the past taken an interest and had hopes. But J.R. had never recovered from the imagined consequences of the injury to his head in pit accident. S.W. at once dismissed him saying he was a hopeless psychopath as had appeared when they had been together on their Russian trip. I said that I would also be quite happy if there was a young Trade Unionist from some other Union who could make the grade, but that here again, I did not think that any local personality would do. I said that, at this stage, I had no name to suggest, but that we should speak of this again later when we had both had time to look round. We joked about Shinwell. S.W. said he hoped that he would follow my example but was not quite sure whether he would do so willingly. I said I had heard from his constituency and that I thought he might find it difficult to be readopted. I said that I should not think of making any public announcement until after the Labour Party Conference, or otherwise some poor B.A. delegate would be surrounded like a honeypot by bees. He quite agreed and I promised to let him know before I made any public statement. I mentioned that, though there were several undesirables in official positions in the C.L.P., mostly schoolteachers or school caretakers, the Vice President this year was Arthur Cheesmond, who was a miner and worked at Leasingthorne. I noted, however, that he never seemed to attend the meetings of the E.C. He was, I said, personally loyal to me, though not very clever and I

told S.W. the story of how he had been most indignant, though a member of the B.A. U.D.C., because I had been reluctant to take up a housing case which he had sent to me, and had seemed unable to understand that it was he, and not I, who had the responsibility for allotting houses. S.W. knew nothing about him, but we agreed that he might be a useful focal point, particularly as we had the rule that the Vice President succeeded each year to the Presidency and so he would be President in 1958-9. As regards Alger, S.W. said that he was not much of a diplomat, and lacked Lewcock's skill and experience. I said that, though this was so, I thought he would be able, if so instructed by Head Office, to extract the necessary information, and thus start the ball rolling. S.W. said that it might ~~be~~ well be that if these irregularities were disclosed, a special Sub-Committee of the E.C., of which he would, he said, certainly be a member, might be appointed to look into the whole affair and clean it up. I said that, if we met any resistance, this might be a very good thing.

When I related all this to R., she said, quite truly, that one reason why there was such a lack of good young local possibilities, was the heavy emigration of all the best talent in the area during the 1920's and 1930's. This is certainly true.

23.7.57

Saw Len Williams. no evidence that present method of electing E.C.P. etc. has ever 2. Trip to T.P. House. 2. What rule they have, dated 1948. Month 1/2 see the TV refs; 2. Local C.P. 2 4/6 women's sections; also 2/6 Teesdale. Agree with Alger for on fact finding capacity in Sept. to see Wilson & Potts, 2. Enquire, with date, how they elect etc. (He thinks they'll give in something. He'll be inclined to play while they wait. He works with them - recall them of their work (they probably) answer minor P.C. etc. done.)