



**JOHN PITCAIRN  
MACKINTOSH**

**1929-1978**

**ARCHIVES OF AN ACADEMIC  
AND POLITICAL LIFE**

**Richard Parry and Charles Raab**

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### **Preface**

These pages are an essay in biography and bibliography. They attempt to sketch something of John P. Mackintosh's academic and political activity, and his life, from his schooldays until his untimely death in 1978. Although we adopt some rough categories below, these three dimensions are inseparable, and future biographers will have many ways of showing how the one shaped the others in different ways at various times. A vast amount of papers, letters and other records of Mackintosh's life and work are preserved, carefully ordered and filed. Much of this material is in handwritten manuscript, and the collection (except for some reserved files) has been deposited in the Special Collections of the National Library of Scotland (Acc. 13476, with a valuable Inventory prepared by the Library in 2014); we give indications of file numbers where relevant. The Main Library archives of the University of Edinburgh also have some material, in Coll 1323). Selectively and with the aim of writing this short sketch, we have read a considerable amount of this collected material, although the surface remains largely unscratched and awaits future generations of historians, political scientists, and other researchers to mine. We must thank four scholars who have used the archives and helped to keep Mackintosh's life and work before the public and academic eye - the late Henry Drucker and David Marquand who edited two collections of Mackintosh's writings (1982) and wrote long and valuable introductions to them, Greg Rosen (1999) and Graham Walker (2013). Rosen's work, originally done for an undergraduate dissertation at the University of Edinburgh, also draws on important interviews he conducted in 1996 with many of Mackintosh's prominent Labour Party colleagues.

### **Scholar and Young Academic**

The enormous collection of John Mackintosh's notes from course lectures he attended, the texts of lectures he gave and notes from sources he read, testifies to his prodigious and meticulous work as a student and as an academic. They show the vast range of his learning and teaching across a wide swathe of politics and history, giving glimpses of his lively and provocative way of getting this across to his students. The astonishing span of his coverage would probably be unthinkable in academia today, where the emphasis is on strict specialism, and coincided with the final flowering of pre-digital text and of easy personal connections between the academic and political elite. Political and personal letters, drafts, the working transactions of daily domestic, social and political life, and whole written-out lectures, come to life in this collection.

John Mackintosh was a Scottish child of the British Empire, born at Simla in India in 1929 and educated in Bombay until 1939; he told Terry Coleman in a brief but revealing Guardian interview in 1977 (file 48) that his father sold whisky and then insurance. His later school and university formation was in middle-class Edinburgh in the troubled 1940s. Mackintosh gained his School Certificates and Highers Qualifications as a pupil at Edinburgh's Melville College, as well as 'Certificate A' for Cadets, for which he had to perform various physical efficiency feats including rope-climbing and shooting (file 15). He also greatly enjoyed the bicycle tour he took of the Highlands with three chums during a summer holiday, which he recalled in a lively typewritten account, 'The Road to the Isles'. This recounted episodes of encounters with helpful locals (one gave them a rabbit for skinning and stewing), spills and chills (tyre punctures and a spectacular bike crash), skinny-dipping in lochs, and hostelling: 'boy's own' stuff showing resourcefulness, camaraderie, and independence (file 15).

His own undergraduate preparation as a student of History at Edinburgh was similarly catholic in its scope: the files preserve his essays, from 'The Foreign Trade of England in the Later Middle Ages' to 'The Picture of Urban Society as revealed in the Canterbury Tales' to 'Compare and Contrast the "Social Contract" and the "Federalist"' (file 207). These were to stand him in very good stead in his later career as an academic historian and political scientist. He greatly admired, and came under the intellectual influence of, Professor Richard Pares, who held a Chair from 1945 to 1954; Pares, who died in 1958, was something of an adviser and mentor to Mackintosh long after he had taken his degree. Mackintosh's student work (file 15) earned him First or Second Class Merit Certificates, very high placements in large classes (for example, fourth in a class of 370 in Moral Philosophy Ordinary, and first in British History Honours, which won him a medal in 1947-48). His notebook for the Constitutional History course he took in 1947-48 survives in the University of Edinburgh Library (Coll. 1323, E2011.01); the chronological and topical lectures covered everything including pre-1000 institutional history, the Norman Conquest, feudalism, and Elizabethan influence on the constitutional policy of James I. He annotated his own notes in the margins, and gave page references to an impressive number of sources. His undergraduate essays, as well as source notes for courses, including much material on Chartism, may be seen in file 16.

In his final year (1949-50) in Edinburgh, Mackintosh's History Final Honours Special Subject was Democratic Movements in Britain and the USA, 1830-60. The two years that he then spent at Balliol College, Oxford – where many academically inclined Scottish graduates had gone, and indeed Pares himself – widened the scope of his studies in the direction of Politics. He was put off by Oxford snobbishness, but his 90-page essay on 'The Chartist Movement in Scotland' earned him Balliol's Kington Oliphant Prize in 1951 (file 15). Thus an Oxford BA was added to his Edinburgh MA.

Mackintosh's next port of call was Princeton University in the USA, where he went as

a visiting student during 1952-53. The extended Mackintosh family on the Pitcairn side included relations living in North America, and there were also connections there through his own family's business contacts. Mackintosh frequently enjoyed their hospitality, and they helped him on his way socially and to an extent financially. The many weekly letters he sent back home to his mother and family in Edinburgh (file 307) allow us a glimpse of his academic and other activities as well as his impressions of America, its politics and its people. He got to the States in style, sailing – along with many other students – on Cunard's Queen Elizabeth, arguably the most prestigious transatlantic liner of its day: Terence Rattigan, Ginger Rogers and A.J. Cronin were also on board. Mackintosh's observations on the differences between his Oxonian and Glaswegian shipmates show him, even then, to have been a keen observer of class-related style and behaviour.

The year at Princeton fortuitously allowed Mackintosh to see at first hand some landmark episodes. One was the 1952 Presidential election campaign that pitted Dwight Eisenhower against Adlai Stevenson, followed by Eisenhower's subsequent inauguration in January, 1953. Mackintosh, an admirer of the defeated Democrat Stevenson, was scathing about Eisenhower's inauguration ceremony, which was 'hopelessly slovenly'. Moreover, 'his speech was dismal...It is striking to hear the head of the most powerful organisation pull out a bunch of 2<sup>nd</sup> rate platitudes which at best were old and well-worn slogans & at worst dangerous.' Worse was yet to come in the State of the Union address: 'They have only one idea here. America must get what it wants or turn on the pressure, seize the initiative – it's them or us! And that this might lead to world war does not seem to deter them or even to bulk large in their minds. I seriously think they are just now & in this mood, a much greater danger to world peace than the Russians!'. In another letter, Mackintosh wrote: 'All I can see for British politics for the future...is an attempt to guess what America is going to do next and try to stop her!' (file 307).

In the Cold War political climate of the times, this was risky to say except in private correspondence; so, too, might have been the portrait of Marshal Tito he seems to have had on a wall in his rooms. For – as Mackintosh witnessed – the McCarthyite anti-communist crusade was still rampaging. Joe McCarthy was 'a low-level local Mussolini and tells dreadful half truths with implications leading to implications which prove — but they don't if his audience have followed closely. The trouble is that the liberals here are too frightened or perhaps have compromised themselves too much to stand up to him.' Mackintosh observed the effects of McCarthyism on the Princeton campus. He wrote that his professor, the distinguished historian Eric Goldman – later a special adviser to President Lyndon Johnson – was harassed by angry parents who called him 'You dirty Communist'. Many other academics across the land were in McCarthy's intimidating sights as well, but Mackintosh despaired that the Princeton students were too terrified to sign a petition protesting against this witch-hunt: '...this country is not basically liberal; – it is friendly and kindly but believes

that people should agree on a set of basic American tenents [sic] – or get out! Well I am trying to as hard as I can!’ (file 307).

Yet he was to write in his article ‘Forty Years On?’’, published in *The Political Quarterly* in 1968 (reproduced in Marquand (1982)) – his nearest approach to autobiography - that he ‘was delighted with the egalitarian and idealistic atmosphere in the United States’; one supposes this was in contrast to Edinburgh and Britain. He went on: ‘it was a pleasure to live in a street, where the neighbours were plumbers and joiners, where playing the superior-class trick did not pay off and where there was such determination to eradicate abuses. While the Americans might not accept some of the criticisms outsiders make of their society, once they did recognise an injustice, they were determined to root it out. There was a sense in which the dumbest freshman on the campus mattered as much as the most distinguished professor; the United States seemed so dynamic, so open to reform compared with slow-moving and traditional Britain.’

Studying and observing American politics and society were not the only preoccupations of Mackintosh during that year. There was an endless amount of partying at Princeton, visiting New York and other cities, playing cricket, and – later on – sightseeing across Canada and the American West. These diversions at one point put him behind in his academic work for a time until Goldman suggested he get on with it; this included an essay on the US labour movement, 1870-1914. The ‘ash blonde from Vassar’ was one who visited for social events until he became bored with her, but the larger danger in Princeton came from ‘a bunch of predatory town girls...including a widow & a divorced popsy who are a menace as they concentrate on visitors at the Grad college. ...The pity is that none of these ladies are really at all attractive – they just have pots of cash.’ (file 307).

While working for his MA in History at Princeton, Mackintosh worried about his life after that year. He despaired of getting a post back home, and the (Manchester) *Guardian* journalist Alastair Hetherington, who was at Princeton on a Commonwealth Fund Fellowship, suggested journalism. It never became his primary career but during the course of his political life Mackintosh was to be a prolific contributor to the print media, writing with fluency and passion about important issues of the day.

## **Into Scottish Academic Life**

From 1953, Mackintosh settled down to many years of lecturing in history, briefly at Glasgow and then at Edinburgh, or later in politics at Ibadan, Glasgow, Strathclyde, and again at Edinburgh, many of them shared or alternating with his political career. His two professorial appointments lasted just one year each – at Strathclyde University in 1965-66 until he became an MP, and Edinburgh University in 1977-78, the final year of his life. Grinding out

undergraduate lecture after lecture, and in the History lectures drawing on the resources of his own student years, Mackintosh wrote everything in highly legible and fluently readable blue ink on endless foolscap pages, or sometimes, later, on House of Commons notepaper. He intended the lectures to be delivered as written – as was the custom in the years he was Lecturer or Professor – and made occasional delivery notes to himself ('begin slowly and don't hammer'; 'QUIET – but flowing; Don't be dull'; 'Don't lay it on, let it dawn on them') (file 17).

In his first appointment at Edinburgh, his initial Honours Special Subject offering, taught to a maximum of six students, was 'Industrialism and Politics in Britain and America 1895-1915'. But alongside this concentration, academics of the time were expected to range widely in their lecture classes, which in Mackintosh's case laid the foundation of the extraordinarily wide base of knowledge that he brought to his later political work. Whether it was topics in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century British history (but scarcely a word about Scotland), British foreign policy, German history, American government and politics, and comparisons of the USA, the UK and (later on, at the University of Ibadan) Nigerian systems of government (file 25), the lectures were meticulously prepared, informative, explanatory, and lively. He also held forth on French politics and local government, and on Soviet politics (these in a Comparative Constitutions course at Glasgow). Mackintosh asked stimulating questions about many subjects: for example (to first-year students) in lectures on Utilitarianism and Liberalism, Problems of Political Obligation, Pressure Groups, Free Elections, Is Democracy Working?, and The Media. He summed up his pedagogy in an opening Edinburgh lecture: 'All courses in Arts and Soc. Sci. are to train the mind. Teach people to think. Done by focusing on a set of problems, a discipline, an area of approach....Chief thing is the habit of careful thought.' (file 33). His old habit of writing out voluminous notes from history sourcebooks continued into the era of teaching politics, when he now absorbed the work and theories of leading political scientists and political sociologists; these notes are all carefully preserved in the archive (file 19).

Mackintosh found time to share his interest and knowledge outside academic settings, not only through many publications, pamphlets and newspaper articles, but in lectures such as the one he gave to the Kirkcaldy Fabian Society on the 1960 American election (file 19). Around 1956, when he had embarked on a political career, he drafted very critical papers on Edinburgh's school system and on 'Scottish University Education', in which he castigated from a moral standpoint the social stratification of schooling and the elitism of higher education, chiding even left-wing socialists who wanted to see their children through to Oxbridge and then into elite positions (file 214). This criticism allowed him to expound his view that 'one of the basic principles of socialism is that no section of the community is inherently more valuable than any other. Some jobs require more skill & more specialised training & they should be rewarded by higher wages – but not by any privileged social status. The evil of the

class system we wish to abolish is that it produces false values, misery, frustration and gulfs between sections of the community. It is little improvement if it is to be replaced by a system which rewards a certain type of mental agility by giving it power, prestige and overtones of [class?] behaviour at the expense of inferiority complexes & bitterness for those further down the professional scale & a total inability to communicate with the “lower orders” (file 214).

Mackintosh’s interest in education’s problems and the possibility of change towards a better outcome in terms of social structure were assisted by statistical and other evidence that he gathered even whilst lecturing on subjects remote from this contemporary concern. The study of the social and political contexts of education has never been part of the mainstream of historical and political studies, but Mackintosh’s ideals, plus his growing political ambition and possible practical involvement (he became a Labour candidate for Parliament in Edinburgh Pentlands in 1956, but lost the election in 1959), led him to go more deeply into the subject by undertaking a small-scale piece of research (file 214). He interviewed some 22 Scottish headmasters and schoolmasters in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Paisley, Kilmarnock, and elsewhere, gathering facts and views on schooling and its relationship to higher education. This information gave some weight to Mackintosh’s contrasting of English higher education with Scottish: the latter had a higher percentage intake of school leavers, were more middle-class than aristocratic, and Scottish students aimed at professional occupations rather than at gaining elite status.

But on the other hand, he observed that higher education in Scotland was a middle-class preserve and local education authorities did not give sufficient grants and awards to allow others to attend. He argued that there was too much fact-cramming and exam-fixation in schools and universities as well. It meant that freshers lagged behind their English counterparts, and that the system produced graduates who lacked the maturity and flexibility to compete for places in the civil service. Part of the solution, he thought, was to change the civil service selection system, but there had to be school reform, better university financing, and more student grants. Mackintosh sustained his interest in these educational issues through to the end of 1958, when he attended the Conference of the Universities of the UK in London, where he heard, and took notes on, talks on examinations, teaching in universities, university expansion, and the prospect of new universities (file 214). Years later, he was to write again with critical passion about education and the class system in his article ‘Forty Years On?’; and in 1973, attending a *Times Educational Supplement* conference on ‘Decision making in Education in Scotland’, he wrote notes on the talks given by some of the most prominent – and critical – educationists of the day (file 224). There is perhaps some irony in the fact that, at various times in his political and academic life, Mackintosh found himself making common cause with, or being close to, at least one old Etonian, Wykehamist, Carthusian and Fettesian; and with many Oxonians as well.

## Inside the British Cabinet

A big break for Mackintosh came in 1958 when he was invited by J. D. B. Mitchell, Professor of Constitutional Law and later the holder of the Salvesen Chair of European Institutions in the University of Edinburgh, to update Arthur Berriedale Keith's *British Cabinet System* (1952). This later allowed him to turn the task into a new book of his own, *The British Cabinet* (Stevens & Sons 1962). Armed with this calling card, the young lecturer, barely thirty, secured in almost all cases ready and often enthusiastic acceptances of interviews from the great and good of his time in 1958, 1959 and 1960 (files 55 and 56). Of former Prime Ministers, Attlee replied on 6 June 1958, apparently self-typed, 'I should be glad to give you any assistance in my power' and met Mackintosh in the House of Lords. Eden offered lunch at his Wiltshire home, though in the event this could not be scheduled. Mackintosh's interviews included many of the heavyweights of the 1950s – Bevan, Morrison, Gaitskill, Wilson, Dalton, Monckton, Woolton, Salisbury – and also several who had sat in pre-war Cabinets – Halifax, A.V. Alexander, Stansgate (Tony Benn's father). His oldest respondent, the Liberal Herbert (Viscount) Samuel, first served in 1909 and could relay anecdotes about Gladstone.

Mackintosh explained his methodology in 1977 (25 September, file 99) to Anthony Seldon, who was doing his doctoral research on Churchill's last government (later published as *Churchill's Indian Summer*, 1981) and asked to see interview notes with since-deceased respondents. Mackintosh replied: 'I went and saw all these people and made a practice of never making notes in front of them as it put them off. I then went and sat down outside and did my own kind of shorthand and scrawled down all that I needed from the interview but I fear it would not be of use to any other research worker and therefore I am sorry that I am not able to help you'. This was disingenuous: whatever rough shorthand stage there may have been, the archive shows that the final notes are entirely legible and intelligible, often with questions on the left hand side of the paper and answers on the right.

## Nigeria and After

It was in 1961 that Mackintosh relocated to Nigeria as a lecturer at the University of Ibadan. He left Edinburgh in a mood of gloom over not having won a Parliamentary seat and over what he saw as the hide-bound ways of the University. His eventual disenchantment with the new Nigeria was acknowledged: 'my greatest disappointment', he wrote in 'Forty Years On?'. He assiduously researched politics and government in the newly independent federal government, traveling to many places to conduct interviews with government officials (many of them ex-colonial), politicians and advisers. His interest in the workings of federalism in the regions and in the centre (file 308) led to the publication of *Nigerian Government and Politics* in 1966. The corruption, self-seeking, and 'collapse of democracy' that he witnessed led to his return to the UK in 1963 to seek his academic and political fortunes. He traveled back to the UK and visited Edinburgh at various times in 1962-63, a major complication at this



time being an acrimonious divorce from his first wife Jean and remarriage in 1963 to Una Maclean. Mackintosh's domestic life was turbulent, with his two children going separate ways with their parents (file 308).

In 1963 Mackintosh became Lecturer, and then Senior Lecturer, in Politics at Glasgow University (while continuing to live in Edinburgh). In 1964 he narrowly failed to win the Conservative seat of Berwick and East Lothian held by Sir William Anstruther-Gray, but continued to take up constituency cases with the Scottish Office using his Labour Party contacts (file 303); junior minister Dickson Mabon had to tell him (17 May 1965) that he had written on an educational case to Anstruther-Gray 'but I cannot, for reasons of protocol, send you a copy, nor even officially tell you that he had it'. This file gives a clue to Mackintosh's latter assiduous handling of constituency business, although access to constituency files after he became an MP (files 304-5) is more restricted for data protection reasons.

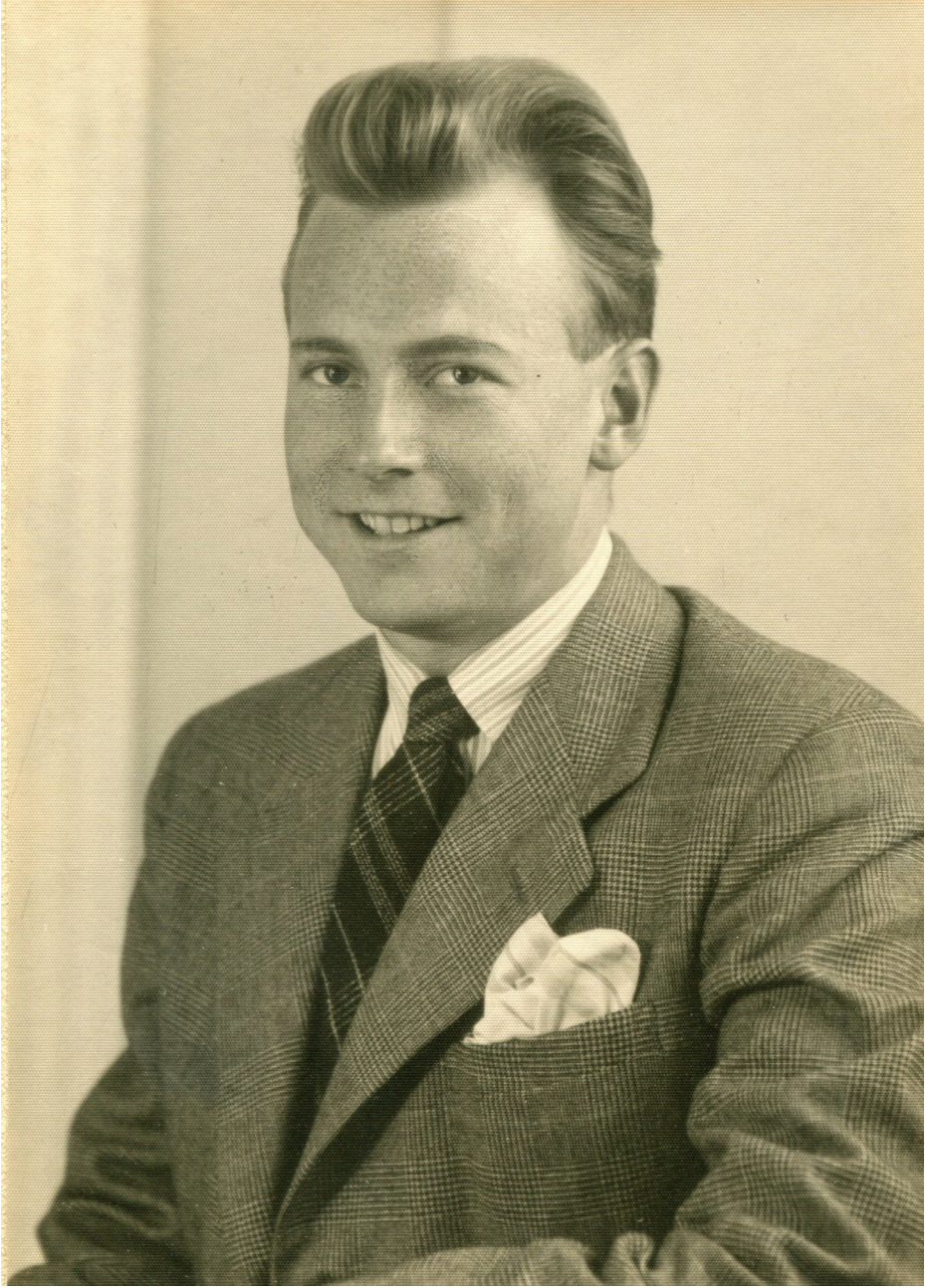
The files show that exchanges with civil servants were formal and professional, but civil servants were frequenters of the Mackintosh home in the closely-knit world of Edinburgh; file 142 records an off-the-record dinner he organised at home in January 1975 for a group that included future Permanent Secretary Kerr Fraser. Mackintosh wrote to them in his characteristic mid-twentieth century way that 'I intend this to be a social occasion as well as one where we could talk about future administrative and political developments in Scotland so please bring your wife if she would like to come...?'

Mackintosh's only session as Professor of Politics at Strathclyde (1965-66) was overshadowed by the likely General Election and his eventual success in winning Berwick and East Lothian in March 1966. He attempted to continue part-time, especially to pursue his idea of establishing an Institute of Local Government Studies, but an initial provisional offer of this status by Strathclyde was withdrawn pending the appointment of a successor to the Chair. The Registrar explained (19 May 1966, file 27) that they were not being 'anti-Mackintosh' but 'pro-successor'; that turned out to be the unsympathetic Richard Rose – 'he just does not wish anything which I have done or am doing still to be connected with Strathclyde, and this despite the fact that I have a post on continuing annual tenure as a Research Supervisor at the University' (3 October 1966, file 293).

This forced Mackintosh to seek other homes of convenience for his research projects. A SSRC project on Parliamentary activity and backbench influence in the 1850s, 1910s and 1960s was nominally housed at Sheffield in 1967-69 under Bernard Crick (file 64); making pioneering use of computer analysis of votes, it was researched by Norma Percy, whom Mackintosh helped to launch on her outstanding career as a documentary-maker. But the big book out of this research, projected by Mackintosh for many years and designed to substantiate the thesis that the period of decline of backbench influence was the late nineteenth century, never appeared. Meanwhile major works did appear, including the



*John Mackintosh with his mother, Mary Mackintosh (nee Pitcairn).*



*John.*



*John, Mary (mother), Colin (John's brother) c.late 1950's.*



*John with his wife Dr. Una Maclean and their children and stepchildren: Seated L to R - Aysha, Stuart, Una, Deirdre, John, Paul; standing L to R: Malcolm, Charlotte, Tunde. 1971.*



*John, Tunde, Una. c.1964/5.*



*John, Deirdre, Stuart at constituency event c. 1975. (2 unidentified ladies + child on left).*

# LOOK AT THE RECORD

**ECONOMIC RECOVERY:  
SOUND BALANCE OF  
PAYMENTS**

**120,000 JOBS BROUGHT TO  
SCOTLAND**

**RECORD 43,000 HOUSES A  
YEAR BUILT IN SCOTLAND**

**MORE SPENT ON EDUCA-  
TION THAN ON DEFENCE**

**PENSIONS UP FOUR TIMES  
AND NOW WORTH 20% MORE**

**HEALTH EXPENDITURE UP  
FROM 4.2% OF THE NATIONAL  
PRODUCT TO 5%**



**AND VOTE FOR**

# JOHN P.

# MACKINTOSH

**YOUR LABOUR CANDIDATE**

*Campaign poster.*



*Family group L to R: Charlotte, Paul, Aysha, John, Una, Malcolm, Tunde. c. 1966/7.*



*John.*



## THE JOHN P. MACKINTOSH MEMORIAL



JOHN P. MACKINTOSH

1929 – 1978

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

BERWICK AND EAST LOTHIAN

BETWEEN

1966 and 1978

THE UNVEILING CEREMONY

EAST LINTON

23rd SEPTEMBER, 1979

2.45 p.m

*Notice of Memorial Unveiling Ceremony,  
East Linton, 1979.*



*East Linton Memorial Unveiling Ceremony, 23/9/79. Group includes Deirdre, Una, Stuart, Dr. Colin Mackintosh (John's brother), and David Steel (at the time Leader of the Liberal Party).*

Nigerian book mentioned earlier, and *The Government and Politics of Britain* (four editions 1970-77). A shorter work, *The Devolution of Power: Local Democracy, Regionalism and Nationalism*, appeared as a Penguin Special in 1968 and was highly influential in its appraisal of Scottish and Welsh nationalism alongside English regionalism and suggestions of cross-UK solutions.

### **In Parliament, but not out of Academia**

From early in his time at Westminster, Mackintosh was one of the awkward squad, too brilliant and indiscreet to make progress within his party. Being kept off committees whose subject-matter he knew a lot about was a consistent complaint. On 31 January 1967 he wrote to Richard Crossman as Leader of the House (the issue was Mackintosh's exclusion from the Agriculture Committee as a Scottish member), unusually making a photocopy of a manuscript letter (file 95): 'may I put the point I should have made when you set about me in the corridor last night?...you are committed to the view that backbenchers and the House in general should be more active...if a junior backbencher then uses one of the few small openings available to make a point, is it fair or consistent with your views to descend on the backbencher with all your towering personal and intellectual force and belabor him for juvenile misdemeanours (behaving 'like a spoilt seven year old' were the actual words)?'

But rather like Crossman himself, Mackintosh had the acknowledged status as a brilliant intellectual maverick who could exploit his insider status (though never that of a minister) to study the Westminster system he had written and thought about as an outsider. He embarked upon a second edition of *The British Cabinet* (published in 1968) and his interviews are reported in file 68. Again, Harold Wilson was of help, giving him an interview and (presumably) facilitating those with his Cabinet Secretary, Burke Trend, and Principal Private Secretary, Michael Halls. Some interviews seem not to have been written up, others seem like chats over a drink at Westminster. Frustratingly they are not dated, but seem to be 1966 or in most cases 1967. As with the first edition interviews, Mackintosh was interested in political gossip and inside stories as well as structural matters that were the ostensible object of his research. The archives show his good connections with MPs of all parties: there is more than one 'yours ever, Margaret' letter from Mrs Thatcher.

After *The British Cabinet*, Mackintosh became a semi-official establishment commentator, in the way that leads to invitations to write *Times* obituaries and entries in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Mackintosh's first effort for *The Times* was Herbert Morrison in 1965, which appeared on Morrison's death two months later (referring to Morrison's *Government and Parliament* (1954), Mackintosh commented 'a brilliant intuitive politician, he did not explain how he played by ear, but set out the actual score as it was on the official music sheet' – a good definition of the approach Mackintosh tried to supersede in his own writing). Other names mentioned in the file (48) include Denis Healey and James Callaghan, but the plum

was Harold Wilson, drafted in 1965-66.

This led to an extraordinary pair of events, which a suspicious mind might seem as linked. In 1970 a photo of the start of the proof of the Wilson obituary (which was in Mackintosh's possession and is in the file), and an extract from the text appeared in *Private Eye*. By then Mackintosh was alienated from Wilson. In 1973 he wrote an 8 page manuscript (file 46) entitled 'The Scarlet Emperor has no Clothes' and suggested to *Times* editor William Rees-Mogg (12 September 1973) that it either be printed as by an anonymous socialist, or be the basis of a 'Wilson must go' editorial. Mackintosh was not prepared to publish it under his name, although he was a regular *Times* columnist.

Rees-Mogg did not take the bait and, returning the anonymous manuscript (23 September 1973), apologised that Mackintosh's covering letter had mysteriously been lost in the office and warned him that it might have been purloined and leaked to 'Private Eye or some similar publication'. A week later the letter followed, allegedly a victim of overzealous filing. To round things off, Mackintosh confirmed to Terry Coleman in the 1977 *Guardian* interview (file 48) that an attribution to him of the Wilson obituary by the defunct *Daily Sketch* years before was correct. A letter of profuse apology to *The Times* followed (15 February 1977). Not surprisingly, the obituary published by *The Times* on Wilson's death in 1995 is not Mackintosh's – it is shorter and less good – but Mackintosh's views on Wilson did appear as a chapter in his edited volume, *British Prime Ministers*, in 1977.

The combination of academic pursuits and practical politics, including being an MP, ran through the rest of Mackintosh's life. Having lost his seat in the February, 1974 General Election, he was disappointed in March in his bid to become the Gladstone Professor of Government and Public Administration at Oxford, but there were other Chair prospects elsewhere (e.g., University College London, East Anglia, Durham) and he had academic supporters who were on the lookout and kept his name in circulation (file 26). He was returned to Parliament in October, 1974, but continued to be blocked from posts in the Wilson and Callaghan Governments and remained an uncontrollable force on the back benches. A month later, he wrote to John Hilary Smith, whom he had met in Nigeria during one of his research tours when Smith had been serving in the Nigerian administration, and who was now serving in the Government of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, later becoming its Governor-General. Mackintosh confided that he had stood again for Parliament 'because the present situation looks so dicey and it is worth being in Parliament when all is in flux and the future so unclear... Like you, I wish Harold [Wilson] was out of the way and really he does poison British politics. I hope we don't have to put up with him much longer. He is past the statistical average and indeed is now way out on his own in terms of Prime Ministerial longevity'. A period of estrangement from Una between December 1974 and August 1975, when she wished to concentrate on her own career, left Mackintosh with single parent responsibilities at weekends and added to his cares and workload.

## **Back to Academia, but not out of Parliament**

The files preserve an interesting exchange of views: in May, 1976 his great friend and confidant, David Millar – his oldest school friend who later became a Clerk at the House of Commons and with whom Mackintosh sometimes stayed when in London – suggested that Mackintosh should go for the Edinburgh Politics Chair that was likely to become vacant soon, ‘and if you get it, leave the House’. This was because ‘I can’t see much hope of a career for you in the House, even after Wilson’s disappearance, and feel that this will increasingly frustrate you (and your friends) and begin to have regrettable effects.’ (file 26). With the prospect of Scottish devolution in the air, Millar went on to say: ‘If you got the chair you could do the Scots Assembly as well, and you would, of course, do it extremely well. It would, at least for the first 4 years, be fascinating and rewarding. Thereafter I think it would be duller & more “Stormont-ish” than you would like – but that’s too far ahead to worry about.’ But the Chair would give you a new, fresh start, which I feel you need, keep Una happy, which is paramount, and bring rewards of a deeper kind than can now Parl’t’ (file 26).

With a referendum on devolution in the air, and weighing up the alternatives, Mackintosh replied to Millar that ‘there are some other difficulties. If I want to stand for the Scottish Parliament it would be easier to do so while still at Westminster as if I resign my Westminster seat or announce that I am not standing again this will upset the Labour Party and particularly the crowd in my area and I would need their support for a nomination to the Scottish Parliament.’ He continued: There is also the possibility that the Devolution Bill may never go through. As to holding the Politics Chair by itself, having done 13 years in university teaching it would be a bit like returning to one’s old pastures and I am afraid I would find it very boring. In which case “the regrettable effects” of which you rightly think might occur if I stay in Parliament could equally occur if I am too bored with university life. ...The whole thing is extremely difficult to work out...(file 26).

When the Edinburgh Chair was advertised in September, 1976, it was as a full-time appointment. Whilst ordinary members of the academic staff had no official say in the matter, Mackintosh’s candidacy was strongly championed by some within the Department of Politics. Dr. Martin Clark wrote to him on 28 October 1976: ‘...the Chair should be filled by someone of unquestioned academic eminence, stimulating to work with, and well able to pick his way through the intricacies of University politics. You would fit the bill very nicely! – and all this quite apart from your culinary skills ...I do hope you decide to apply ..., and I think you would find us not intolerable people to work with’ (file 26).

After Mackintosh had applied, Charles Stewart, the University Secretary, assured him on 2 November that ‘We will certainly do our best to keep it confidential until the decision bursts on an astonished world. ...I do hope it all works out as you would have it’. (file 26).

Whether this might suggest that the appointment was all stitched up, the question of a part-time Chair remained open, and Hugh Robson, as Principal of the University, wrote to Mackintosh in January 1977, saying that a part-time tenure, annually renewable, was discussable, with a view to full-time when the situation permits. But Mackintosh would have to give priority to the Chair and its duties as Head of Department as well as organising teaching and the curriculum. The Chair interview was held on 15 January. A few days later, Mackintosh – putting it the other way round – told Ralf Dahrendorf, Director of the London School of Economics, that ‘the Edinburgh people bit and I have got the Chair on my own terms so that I can keep my seat and continue with my political activity, as well as heading the Department of Politics at Edinburgh’ (file 26). Yet in an undated memorandum on transitional arrangements for the Chair, he explained the delicate political circumstances: he preferred not to resign his ‘critical marginal seat’ but realised that this would not serve the interests of the Politics Department. He wanted to start in October, 1977, and to put his MP work on a ‘care and maintenance’ basis, going to London for 3-line-whip votes; he thought the Chief Whip would assent to this rather than face a by-election (file 26).

Dahrendorf had earlier discussed with Mackintosh his own idea of setting up a Brookings Institution-like think-tank. In a letter that reveals his ambitions at this time, Mackintosh told him that the Social Science Research Council was interested in it and in the possibility of setting up other ones in Scotland and Wales. Before the Chair interview, he needed to know the score on this because ‘the area of work proposed is precisely the one that interests me most and for which I think I am most suitable. I would be happy to take on the Edinburgh job and would convert it into very much the kind of research centre you are proposing, associating it particularly with the problems of devolution. .... My one hesitation about the Edinburgh Chair would be if it involved a great deal of routine academic administration which would prevent one thinking and writing and researching on these topics. ...I would like to be free for the Scottish Assembly or possibly for the European Parliament simply to augment my knowledge of these institutions and I have never taken the view that being the member of a representative assembly prevents one from doing objective writing and research. ...to be in a research institution which, at the same time, did not mind one writing for the papers, appearing on the media and, in general, linking between politics and academic work would really be more attractive to me.’ But securing the Chair now meant that Mackintosh had to ‘sign off the Brookings Institute idea but I do so with some regret.’ (file 26).

At the end of January, 1977, he wrote to his friend, William Ryrie at the British Embassy, Washington. Ryrie – like his near-contemporary Mackintosh, born in India and educated in Edinburgh, and graduating with a First in History in 1951; as a Treasury official he later served as Chancellor Jenkins’ private secretary – had regretted that Mackintosh might leave Parliament. Mackintosh told him: ‘I do intend to stay in politics for precisely the reason you mention as I find the combination at the moment strengthens each end – I can do more at

Edinburgh University because of my parliamentary connection and the Chair makes me a great deal freer in the House to say what I think so thank you very much but probably the electors of Berwick and East Lothian will decide otherwise.’ (file 30).

In the event, they did not. One month into his Chair, Mackintosh told his colleague David Marquand MP, a frequent correspondent in that year, that he was enjoying his teaching but liked to get to London now and then ‘and see what is going on in the real world’ (file 10). But things had not been going well in that world for Mackintosh. In late 1976 he had joined Brian Walden in rebelling against the Dock Work Regulation Bill, which put him into some rather dubious company as a pro-business hero. He remarked to Marquand at the end of August 1977 that ‘the only conclusion is that I should simply get out of the Labour Party, and, indeed, my thoughts are moving increasingly in that direction’ (file 32a). Marquand was, like Mackintosh, a Jenkinsite in the internal Labour Party struggles of the day; he was to leave the Party in 1981 for a prominent place in the newly-formed Social Democratic Party of Jenkins, Owen, Shirley Williams and Bill Rodgers. In long letters to Mackintosh in 1977, he argued the need for a realignment in Labour following after the next General Election to comfort the Party’s social democrats. In September 1977, he thought that slightly younger MPs like Mackintosh, the pro-European former Labour MP and Minister – but now disaffiliated – Dick Taverne, and the Liberal David Steel could come into leadership positions in a social-democratic movement, and leave the likes of Roy Hattersley, Shirley Williams and David Owen behind. (file 10). He thought Mackintosh should position himself when he next addressed his constituency party and could even stand as an Independent.

Mackintosh had the strongest of Jenkinsite credentials, voting for entry to Europe in 1971 and making a powerful speech at the special Labour conference on the matter on 17 July 1971 (in response to a request from the chairman Ian Mikardo for a ‘pro-marketeer from Scotland’ to speak). Jenkins offered unprompted to come to Scotland to speak for Mackintosh in the second 1974 election (29 August 1974, file 95). There is also a handwritten letter on Home Office paper written on 4 April 1976, the day James Callaghan succeeded Wilson, promising help on grounds of both friendship and admired ability and suggesting that it would be a public loss if his talents went on being under-used (file 95). This was not a routine intervention from Jenkins, for as John Campbell’s biography *Roy Jenkins* (2014) makes clear, he was not a prolific or frank letter-writer, reserving his personal comments for conversation and his general reflections for remunerated articles. But no government office came from Callaghan and Mackintosh did not live to have to make the choice about leaving Labour for the SDP.

In a wider sense, Mackintosh’s career and personality invite comparison with Roy Jenkins; a comment in the ‘Scarlet Emperor’ manuscript that Jenkins ‘is held (mainly by those who have not seen him in action) to lack the common touch’ has resonances with its author.

Both were Labour by political family, steeped in knowledge of nineteenth- and twentieth-century British politics, were firm pro-Europeans who travelled and made contacts in other European capitals, dispatched work efficiently, were generous to correspondents, and reveled in convivial company. An approach to Mackintosh could, as the archives attest, easily lead to an invitation to lunch or a drink at Westminster. Unlike Mackintosh, Jenkins held senior ministerial office, but his well-received biographies of Dilke and Asquith, and much later Gladstone and Churchill, were not part of a systematic academic career. Mackintosh's combination of academic work and politician is unique in modern British history, and one very unlikely to be repeated given the demands and expectations now placed on both professions.

## **The Final Year**

Before he could start his new work as Professor of Politics at Edinburgh in Autumn 1977, Mackintosh faced a crisis in his health. Just before going on holiday in July, he became suddenly and critically ill; a tumour in his heart was diagnosed and surgery to remove it performed. The political world was shocked, but Mackintosh typically made as much light of it as he could. Within weeks he was back and embarked on a heroic final year in which he tried to double-bank himself on two full-time jobs. Tuesdays and Wednesdays were his only complete days at Westminster, and he followed Scottish tradition on the professorial role by giving – to great acclaim – a full series of first-year Politics lectures on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays.

By early 1978, another great Mackintosh cause, Scottish devolution, was heading for enactment after a Bill covering both Scotland and Wales had fallen, through the defeat of a timetable motion, in 1977; the price had been the introduction of the hurdle of a 'yes' vote in a referendum supported by 40 percent of the Scottish electorate. Recognising the weakness of campaigns built around a single party and its interests, Mackintosh was central to the establishment of an all-party campaign for a Scottish Assembly (file 149). His connections put together an all-party group of wide provenance to campaign for the Assembly, including the judge Lord Kilbrandon, the regional planner Sir Robert Grieve, the broadcaster and campaigner Ludovic Kennedy, and James Jack of the Scottish Trades Union Congress. An organiser was appointed, but the archives show slow progress with meetings as Mackintosh's load spiraled; in writing to the academic and MP Roderick MacFarquhar on 13 June 1978, he agreed that 'the campaign has not gone well and I have ducked one or two press conferences and the coverage we have had in the media has been appallingly poor simply because everybody is concentrating on the general election...?.

As David Marquand recounted (1982, p1), the initial medical view in 1977 was that the tumour had been benign and the surgery successful; later appraisals were not so optimistic. But he worked at full tilt to the end. In May-June 1978 he was in South Africa and Rhodesia

for two and a half weeks. Writing from Cape Town near the end of May in what was to be his last letter to his wife, Una, he was scathing about the display of racism he perceived among some white South Africans (file 308). On 11 July he was explaining an absence from Commons votes to Michael Foot as a 'bad flu'; to John Smith he said it was 'nothing to worry about' (file 147). Six days before his death on 29 July 1978 he was dictating a letter from hospital to an IT firm who wanted to install a system for the new Scottish Assembly; he made no mention of illness. Typically, this was a generous response to a speculative approach from someone he did not know.

Mackintosh's possible leadership role in the Scottish Assembly that was never implemented is doubly conjectural. His university position would have provided a decisive reason for not making him a minister, and in any case his relations with the Scottish Labour leadership were bad. But his campaigning skills were missed by the Yes side in early 1979 and here as in so much else his combination of intellectual and political weight was irreplaceable. As a token of respect his friends and colleagues from both the political and the academic spheres instituted an annual public lecture in his memory with the support of the University of Edinburgh and East Lothian Council. Ralf Dahrendorf gave the first lecture in 1980 and has been followed by many prominent academics and public figures including John Kenneth Galbraith, Neil Kinnock, Linda Colley, Gordon Brown, Clare Short, John Hume and Neil MacCormick. Special events in 2018 are marking the fortieth anniversary of Mackintosh's death. In this lecture series, in the archives as well as in personal memories, John P. Mackintosh's vivacity and unflagging zest in his life and work live on.



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