

THE FATE OF OUR COMMUNITY: TYNGED EIN CYMUNED

IWERDDON 1916, RWSIA 1917, CYMRU?, [ABERYSTWYTH GRAFFITI, CIRCA 1978] *

I am doubly honoured to give this lecture at the National Library of Wales which I first visited whilst at Gwersyll yr Urdd in Llangranog in 1958. Our guide was the late Owen Edwards who was then working at the Library. Circles really do intersect in Wales, in space and over time.

Firstly I have long admired the admirable work of the Welsh Political Archive and recognise its remarkable holdings, not least those of the enigmatic Thomas Jones, variously described, somewhat jokingly by Baldwin, as a 'bolshevik', by senior Whitehall civil servants as 'the little Welsh Socialist', by Michael Foot as 'an Establishment flunky' and Aneurin Bevan rather bluntly as 'that old bugger from Rhymney'.

Thomas Jones' 240 bound volumes and over 2000 pages of small volumes, well over a half a million words in length, are an incredible resource for contemporary historians.

Secondly, I am honoured because I follow an impressive series of speakers, including my friends Dai Smith and Rhodri Morgan. Rhodri's only advice to me was 'dim copio!'. Dai said, 'as always, be yourself'.

I have taken their advice. So, here we go. It is Bonfire Night after all, so stand well back.

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On 6th February 1979 I gave the funeral oration at an overflowing Abertridwr Chapel to Jack Roberts, known locally and throughout the South Wales Valleys as 'Jack Russia'. Born in Penrhyndeudraeth, Merionethshire, appropriately as he said on May Day 1899, he described himself as a practising Christian and a practising Communist.

He was part of that great human wave of migrants who came south, worked at Senghennydd's Universal Colliery, was on the 'fortunate' shift in 1913 on that fateful day which took the lives of 439 miners; he became a Communist, was victimised for his union activities, imprisoned in the anti-scab Bedwas Riots in 1933, fought in 1937 in the International Brigades against Fascism in Spain; was Secretary of the Workmen's Hall; and was Chair of the Appeals Committee of the Caerphilly National Eisteddfod where Gwilym Tilsey won the Chair with 'Awdl Foliant i'r Glowr'.

I said at his funeral,

'... a man like Jack Roberts, and all his comrades who went to Spain, has a special place within the Welsh Labour Movement, and the whole of Welsh society ...'.

Later that day I chaired a meeting in my home village of Crynant in the Dulais Valley in support of devolution in Wales. There seemed to be as many people on the platform as there were in the audience.

I was at the time a young extra-mural tutor, having just completed my doctoral thesis on Wales and the Spanish Civil War. I was a political activist and campaigner for devolution. I would have liked to describe myself – rather grandly – as the Irish poet and Labour politician Michael D Higgins described Raymond Williams, as engaging in *praxis*, combining theoretical analysis with action, integrating our own personal biography with history:

'I welcomed (he said in his Raymond Williams Welsh Annual Lecture *The Migrant's Return*, in 1996) his commitment to a politics that opposed economic exploitation, cultural domination and personal repression through his practical involvement in the democratic work of University extension'. (NIACE Cymru publication 1996, pp. 2-3).

Michael D Higgins is one of those rare 'organic intellectuals' not unlike Jack Roberts, who captures the mood of the times: they were, and are, the voices of our people,

sometimes discordant, but nonetheless, always authentic. Both in their own ways as Michael D Higgins said of Raymond Williams 'rendered the arid polarity between tradition and modernity redundant'.

I often reflect on that apparent paradox, why was it that so many people came to pay tribute to our collective past on February 6th 1979 and so few to find out about our own future? Jack spoke and lived **for us**: we spoke **at them**.

Was the funeral, then, an affirmation of a commitment to a particular kind of common political culture and a particular kind of community? That is what I want to speak to you about tonight.

Choosing a title is always a challenge, particularly if what I have to say has diminished in contemporary and contextual relevance by the time the date arrives. Fortuitously this is not so tonight.

This title connects to our collective past, to our present, to our future, to Aberystwyth, and most of all to the work of one of Wales' great historians, my friend and my tutor Emeritus Professor Ieuan Gwynedd Jones.

I dedicate this lecture to him tonight and thank him for all that he has done in teaching generations of students, even though he told me that my writing was sometimes too 'engagé'!

Of all the very distinguished Swansea historians who taught us in the 1960's - Glanmor Williams, Alun Davies, Ken Morgan, Prys Morgan, David Jones, Peter Stead – it was Ieuan who posed that very problematic question 'what is distinctive about community in Wales?', a question repeated by that other great teacher and writer Raymond Williams who of course described it as a slippery concept.

I begin then with Ieuan's preface to his 1987 collection of essays on the social history of Victorian Wales entitled *Communities*:

‘It is an illusion to believe that the processes by which communities were made in rural Wales were entirely different from those operating in industrial areas, as if the former was somehow insulated from the latter. Especially it is the relative simplicities of their social structures and their shared religious culture that needs to be stressed. It was these which made the transition from one to the other intelligible for the thousands of migrants who made the journey from country to town, and it was these which came to be expressed most completely and, for a time, most satisfyingly in a **common political culture**’ (my emphasis) (pp. x – xi).

Ieuan’s historically grounded phrase will be my personal and textual theme in this lecture.

In the late 1970’s, when that Aberystwyth graffiti was painted, there was a millenarian, even for some an apocalyptic, feeling, very much a minority feeling as it turned out. It was a belief that Iwerddon 1916 and Rwsia 1917 would be followed by some revolutionary, devolutionary, awakening in 1979 in Wales because we still believed that we shared, in Ieuan’s words, ‘a common political culture’ which had existed in the recent past.

But to go beyond Ieuan’s thesis to say that a common political culture existed in the 1970’s as it had, say in the 1870’s, is to misrepresent the complexities of Welsh society over that time: as another of Ieuan’s students, Dai Smith, has written, Wales is a ‘plurality of cultures’. And we ignore them at our peril.

It is the task not just of politicians but of every active citizen to understand these complexities and not to assume that ‘a common political culture’ just happens, is always with us and is without a very specific definition and can be conjured up by politicians, public servants and other opinion formers of various kinds who observe today’s Wales - whenever they wish, through smoke and mirrors, to usher in the wish-fulfilment of unity.

Indeed it is the task of every active citizen to understand not only what is meant by 'a common political culture', but what precisely is meant by 'community' and what is meant by 'nation'. So much of this is still what Michael D Higgins called 'a reductive nostalgia', 'reactionary' and revealing a lack of genuine solidarity with 'the alleged bonds of parish and place'.

The artificial nineteenth century construct of Wales defined, so often, as a nation by sobriety, sabbatarianism, the Welsh language and religious nonconformity would have excluded virtually everyone of us today and certainly Aneurin Bevan, Saunders Lewis and Shirley Bassey would not have had a welcome in those hillsides.

I remember my late father enthusiastically coining the 1979 devolution slogan 'Wales against the Tories'. It was as it turned out as inadequate and as divisive as Arthur Scargill's 'the miners united will never be defeated' in 1984-85. Both slogans presupposed 'a common political culture' and one 'community'. Both slogans were aspirational and well-meaning, but both were disconnected from political and social reality.

What did leuan mean by a common political culture? I think he meant a progressive, tolerant, enlightened, democratic culture, a virtual community that is simultaneously local, Welsh, British, European and global. It was both spiritual and secular.

For me it is most emphatically the culture that has grown out of the Enlightenment, it is the culture of Tom Paine, Richard Price, Robert Owen, Henry Richard, Eunice Stallard's Greenham Common, Tyrone O'Sullivan's Tower, and it is the culture too of our greatest honorary Welshman, Paul Robeson, who in 1957 implored us down that transatlantic telephone line to strive for those universal values of 'peace, dignity and abundance'.

That common political culture is then based on a community defined by the shared values of fellowship and social solidarity. But what does this all mean today and in the recent past? Is it the so-called 'fairness' of last month's Comprehensive

Spending Review or is it the enduring and all-encompassing 'fairness' of the National Health Service, the nearest we have to a revered Constitution?

For me, it is, as ever, about political choices, or as Aneurin Bevan would have it, 'The religion of socialism is the language of priorities'.

I remember being with Hywel Teifi Edwards the morning after the devolution vote in 1979. We were both angry and depressed, Hywel, as you would expect, more than me. And then two months later I was in the United States speaking to American miners who asked me about Margaret Thatcher. I said, rather foolishly, 'I don't know much about her, it doesn't matter anyway, she won't last'.

Let me move on to slightly firmer ground: my own family and community roots which most definitely shape my ideas about a common political culture and a Welsh and international community. For me, and for many of us, the personal is the political.

It was a family and a community that were different, even 'odd' as Gwyn Alf described his own Dowlais: but it was definitely Welsh, even though inevitably it was like nowhere else.

Growing up in the mining community of Onllwyn in the Dulais valley in a Christian – communist household there was obviously a mixture of influences. My father had himself been created by a mixture of influences: he learned all his communication skills, as we call them now, in the chapel including canu penillion, adrodd, areithu; at school he learnt to sing the Marseillaise in Welsh through the influence of a progressive headteacher. His grandmother wanted him to be a pregethwr: his phenomenal memory of the Bible and of hymns would have stood him in good stead. As it happens that skill did prove useful occasionally in negotiating with employers and reaching out to the men and women he strove to represent, he was certainly, as we were, representative of a plurality of cultures and positions, personal and political.

On Sunday the communists cleaned the secular shrine, the Miners' Welfare Hall. I was one of them with my father. The rest of the day, Ysgol Sul and Cwrdd – I was one of those too, with my mother.

Our home welcomed such visitors as Krishna Menon, the future Indian Foreign Secretary, Cheddi Jagan, the future Prime Minister of Guyana, the Scottish historian Robin Page Arnot and delegations of miners from China, the Soviet Union, Africa and many other countries. But we also welcomed the Reverend Erastus Jones and the Reverend Vivian Jones, the latter as a young minister who wished to understand the local community better by borrowing my father's copy of the **Communist Manifesto**.

In 1957 my father took me to hear Niclas y Glais, an old friend, preaching in nearby Rhigos and right on cue, as my father predicted, Niclas compared the new Soviet Sputnik with the star over Bethlehem.

The local pit, too, was a microcosm of Wales and the world: there were Irish Catholics, free-thinking Spaniards, one of whom, Gregorio Esteban – whose brother Victoriano was killed in the International Brigades – taught Spanish through the medium of Welsh in Abercrave Welfare Hall. And there were even people from North Wales: my father was taught to sing with the harp by the chapel's codwr canu Griffith Ellis Griffith from Caesarea near Caernarfon.

My father collected the Polish artist and Jewish refugee Josef Herman from Neath Station and delivered him to Ystradgynlais, and then he appeared in nearby Cwmgiedd in the anti-Nazi film on the obliteration of the Czech village Lidice. **The Silent Village** is now seen as a masterwork of the great English documentary film maker, Humphrey Jennings.

Sheltering a refugee came naturally to a Christian Socialist household whose ancestral roots stretched back to the Huguenots who landed in Carmarthenshire several centuries before. All that was the unspoken but deeply felt background to my family life before my own birth in 1946 into a Socialist Wales and a Socialist Britain.

In all this internationalism, there was to be no English spoken on the hearth until my sister married an Englishman in 1964. My father would admonish us, 'Beth yw'r Saesneg mawr hyn!'.

My father's friends included Brinley and Tillie Griffiths. Brinley was a teacher and a Conscientious Objector of the First World War and Tillie had been a Suffragist: they counted amongst their friends Fenner Brockway, James Maxton, Sylvia Pankhurst and CLR James who completed his monumental *Black Jacobins* in their home in Crynant. All were, in their different ways, world leaders, organic intellectuals, pioneers in the socialist, feminist and anti-colonial struggles – and all thankfully very engaged, very engagé.

One of Brinley's pupils was the writer Menna Gallie, who describes Brinley and the post-war world in her third novel *The Small Mine* (1962):

'He was a kindly ageing socialist whose gods were Marx and Lenin, with Tolstoi to make up the Trinity and D H Lawrence as a seraph in close attendance. He was as bald as a monk with the face of a saint and patience to everlasting with kids ...' (p 49).

Brinley had the finest socialist library in South Wales – that was what attracted C L R James in the 1930's. As a boy in the 1950's I would visit their home called 'Camden' after Walt Whitman's home in New Jersey. He would say, 'Go to the library and choose a book'.

The library had been bequeathed to the South Wales Miners' Federation and before he died we had already created the South Wales Miners' Library at Swansea University. Professor Glanmor Williams said at the opening in 1973 that its creation out of the remnants of the old Miners' Institute libraries represented a modern affirmation of the purpose of the University of Wales, 'Prifysgol y Werin', 'the People's University'.

This was my first experience of a political assertion of the common political culture – it was an affirmation of Raymond Williams’s ‘Long Revolution’ – that there is a common learning democratic culture which we all share, or at least we ought to be able to share. It was a community of shared values that we were embracing. It was at the same time dynamic, aspirational and permanently challenging. There was nothing romantic about any of this: but yes, it was idealistic about values and purpose even as it was both rooted and vulnerable.

This common political culture, admittedly, took on a particular form in the South Wales Valleys in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Admittedly this was exceptional in its distinctiveness. The people I have been describing, – the last generation of largely self-educated men and women, Robespierre Thomas, Jim Kremlin and the Dai Dialectic of Menna Gallie’s novels – were all organic intellectuals.

They were the antithesis of the opinion formers of today who allude to a common political culture which denies the conflicts of modern Welsh society: a society still divided by class, gender, race, language and disability.

Together, all these constitute the ‘Labour Question’ which so baffled the Welsh establishment of the early twentieth century which in turn worried about the consequences of the apparently final progressive advances of the Chartist, Trade Union, Labour and Suffragette movements.

Political commentators today write frequently of the power of ‘think tanks’ on Government policy formulation. In the last hundred years I would suggest the most perceptive – although certainly by no means always correct – early think tank formulator was Thomas Jones, founder of Coleg Harlech, the Pilgrim Trust, **The Welsh Outlook**, Gregynog and all it represented.

It was in **The Welsh Outlook** that revealingly ‘The Mind of the Miner’ was explored in an anonymous article at the height of the Great War in July 1916:

‘To the average Britisher, the Welsh miner is an enigma. His almost revolutionary conduct during recent years and his apparent indifference to the national interest have greatly bewildered, not only the man in the street but the ablest and most experienced journalists in the country. ...

South Wales is the industrial storm centre of Great Britain. The Welsh miner is always in the van of Trade Union progress; what he suggests today, his comrades in other coalfields adopt tomorrow. ...

The South Wales miner is a Celt and his Celtic fire and enthusiasm came into the fight with earnestness and vigour. ... The Welshman loves a strike like an Irishman loves a row. ...’ (vol. iii, no. 31, p. 217).

It was Thomas Jones, confidante of Prime Ministers, caustically judged by Michael Foot as an ‘establishment flunky’, friend of coal owners, frequent visitor to Cliveden and alleged supporter of inter-war appeasement, who understood all too well that the Liberal hegemony in Wales had come to an end, even though he continued to serve anti-Labour coalitions.

In 1934, at Treharris Workmen’s and Tradesmen’s Library, he said,

‘The story of the revolution is told on the shelves of your library. Compare the books you were buying and reading in 1884 and 1934. Today there are strange authors and strange subjects. ...

Spengler’s ***Decline of the West***

Havelock Ellis, ***Studies of the Psychology of Sex*** (6 vols)

Bertrand Russell, ***Marriage and Morals***

Bukharin, ***Historical Materialism***

You have moved from Palestine to Russia. This is far less true of the books on the Welsh [language] shelves. There you have moved from volumes of

sermons to volumes of stories and short light essays. ... It is a movement from theology to history and to fiction and shows very little trace of the volcanic eruptions which have thrown up the books on the English shelves.¹

What Thomas Jones had recognised was the battle of ideas between the Welsh establishment's *The Welsh Outlook* and Keir Hardie's *Merthyr Pioneer*, and the triumph of the latter.

In scrolling forward nearly a century, I hesitate to suggest that the same battle may be taking place symbolically between Wales' two current think tanks, the Institute of Welsh Affairs and the Bevan Foundation. I could not possibly comment because I am associated with one and not the other. But I can trace the lineaments, historical and cultural, that still inform divergent political opinions and actions.

And I do ask the central and pertinent question: are our think tanks and our universities connecting to the daily lives of the people of Wales and at the same time locating Wales within a wider world?

Anyway, what is not in doubt is the battle over the definition of that 'common political culture' and that what we mean by 'community' continues today in its significance and importance as it did in Thomas Jones' times. There are many more self-styled opinion-formers today, but none with TJ's gravitas, however flawed his judgement might have been.

That generation of organic intellectuals of the coalfield, of which my parents were a part, seized that ideological hegemony in 1945 and shaped their own distinct common political culture and sense of 'community'.

It was that special kind of political culture in Wales and Britain that I took into my work simultaneously as an adult education tutor, political activist and historian. The creation of the South Wales Miners' Library out of the remnants of the Workmen's

¹ Thomas Jones, 'Workmen's Libraries' in *Leeks and Daffodils* (1942).

Institute libraries was the starting point in the early 1970's, along with the emergence of Llafur, what we then called the Welsh Labour History Society.

Dai Smith, in his review of my book on the Miners' Strike of 1984-1985 *History on Our Side* (2009), described me as 'historian as witness and activist as historian'. Fanciful or not, that is how I would characterise myself during this period, both at the University and maybe still in my Parliamentary work.

Learning from the defeat of 1979 and the narrow slogan 'Wales against the Tories', the Wales Congress in Support of Mining Communities during the Miners' Strike 1984-85 was a political and historical affirmation of the need to build a common political culture based on shared community values.

Raymond Williams observed at the time in his essay *Mining the Meaning* that the common usage of such words as 'community' was testimony to a different and distinct culture. He signalled the coming of a 'new order'.² We all held our breath. But a shift was taking place, connections were being made, again.

'Wales against the Tories' of 1979 had been superseded in 1984-85 by 'the NUM Fights for Wales' and Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg's 'Cae Pwll, Lladd Cymuned' and 'Heb Waith, Dim Iaith': such new slogans were testimony to that significant shift. Thus we had the range of diverse organisations from Cymdeithas yr Iaith, to the Welsh Council of Churches and the Gays and Lesbians Groups and everything else seemingly along the way, including sometimes parts of the police and the NCB Management. It was a Gramscian historic compromise which encircled and isolated, albeit briefly, the Conservative Government in Wales.

Aberystwyth twinned with Maesteg, Rhiwbina with Rhondda Fach, Ynys Môn with Onllwyn, Blaenau Ffestiniog with Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen and Ystradgynlais with Nicaragua (I am still trying to work that one out).

² Raymond Williams, 'Mining the Meaning: Keywords in Miners' Strike' in *Resources of Hope* (1989), pp. 120-27.

But the inescapable fact was that we all had to re-adjust to what was soon a largely post-coal world in Wales. The next century, the one we are now in, would be different from both the two preceding ones, economically and socially. Culturally and politically, there were links to be made, and causes still to be served.

The creation of the Community University of the Valleys in 1993 – still prospering in nearly twenty locations in South West Wales – was one manifestation of this recurring common political culture, based here on collectivist learning democratic partnerships between Swansea University and local communities which sought to preserve and enhance collectivist community values of social solidarity in a new post-coal era. There were others. And clarity of thought allied to the passion of commitment was still at the necessary core. We did not retreat from that. We built, again, on the lessons of history.

It is my belief that the shift in political thinking from the miners' strike onwards was a major, if not the major, contributing factor in the devolution victory of 1997, and this essentially is the central argument of my book on the strike, *History on Our Side* (2009).

Now sometimes I would be challenged (Heaven forbid!) and people would say that not everyone believes these political and historical assertions. But, you know, I take my inspiration from Iolo Morganwg, Dr William Price, Hywel Teifi Edwards and Gwyn Alf Williams. A quartet that would give the Marx Brothers a run for their money! I suspect they would agree with me that even if it isn't true, it deserves to be true.

In my parliamentary life since 2001, I have worked on the basis that we need to achieve a benign, caring element to our aspirational common political culture. My Carers Equal Opportunities Act in 2004 was based on the need to recognise that all carers should have the same equal opportunities as everyone else in society. And as the Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee in the last Parliament, I worked always on the basis that we were the collective voice of Wales within Parliament: so much so that when we achieved the impossible by publishing a unanimous report on the Welsh Language Legislative Competence Order, it was based on the genuine belief

that all the main political parties in Wales had made their constructive contributions to the enhancing of the Welsh Language. It is not true that I closed my eyes when I was speaking to the ranks of Welsh Tories, and imagined I was speaking only to the maverick Simpatico Sir Wyn Roberts, now Lord Roberts of Conwy.

In both instances the Carers Act and the work of the Welsh Affairs Committee were a practical affirmation for me of the progressive universal values of the Twentieth Century – the values of figures as disparate and connected as David Lloyd George, Sir William Beveridge, Eleanor Rathbone, Jim Griffiths and Barbara Castle.

In my new role as Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights I will obviously be championing the rights of all citizens, by defending the Human Rights Act and the new Equality Act. That common political culture I have been talking about tonight is exemplified in these two pieces of legislation, standing as they do on the crucial building blocks of universality: the Welfare State, the Equal Pay Act – so eloquently illustrated in the recent film ‘Made in Dagenham’, and by the advances made in democratic devolution across the United Kingdom.

The recent Equalities and Human Rights Commission Report ***How Fair is Britain?*** highlights deep race, gender and class divisions in British Society. If the Comprehensive Spending Review and any new legislation makes the situation worse, then my Joint Committee on Human Rights is duty bound to hold the Government to account, particularly if vulnerable groups are put more at risk and fairness is denied.

When my father took me in 1964 to the all-night vigil in Llandaff Cathedral organised to save the lives of Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and the other brave comrades of the African National Congress following the Rivonia Trial, we were all affirming our common universal political culture and our belief in a shared community of values, of fellowship, of social solidarity and co-operation or, as I said earlier, as Paul Robeson put it, ‘peace, dignity and abundance’.

Recently, some of us voted for a new leader of the Labour Party. Interestingly, Ed Milliband talked about the 'personal being the political', as I have done tonight. He used one word towards the end of his speech which had a particular resonance for me.

He used the word 'optimist'. I thought he was in good company. I remember Gwyn Alf quoting the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci quoting, I believe, the French Socialist Romain Rolland, 'pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will'.

I remember too my friend and fellow adult education tutor, the Welsh writer Alun Richards telling the nurse who asked him, 'What is your religion?' He simply replied, 'Just put down optimist'.

The re-emergence this week of the historically important Welsh Parliamentary Party is another sign of optimism in response to the growing feeling that we need a cross-party forum in Westminster to fight for fairness for the people of Wales. A creation of the era of Cymru Fydd, it may well once again make a benign contribution towards strengthening our common political culture.

We should recognise all of this, and more, as we move towards the possibility of a stronger National Assembly in 2011. At the moment, that referendum vote is being eclipsed in importance by the attack on the public sector upon which our communities and our common political culture are crucially built.

We will of course need more than just 'optimism' in the coming political struggle following the Comprehensive Spending Review which will require resistance within Wales and far beyond Wales. A bold starting point has been made thanks to devolution with the joint statement of the First Ministers of the three devolved administrations.

But 'optimism' is a good starting point. The 'ladies' of Dagenham and their sisters in Merthyr remind us that whatever those who presume to speak for us may say, a common political culture must be based on consent. And to get there we must be

willing to dissent from those who set out to speak for Wales by conveniently forgetting the Welsh people on the ground.

I discussed earlier Thomas Jones's presumption to 'understand' Wales. Today there are many more TJs populating our Welsh Establishment and far more 'National Institutions' presuming to speak for Wales far beyond our own democratically elected National Assembly for Wales.

I was recently in the Appalachian Mountains in the US where the struggle for economic, political and environmental justice parallels that in Wales. The danger in both places however is **introspection**, in our case, specifically and exclusively on constitutional matters.

Whether it is BBC Wales, the Church in Wales, the Institute of Welsh Affairs or **The Western Mail** – they all in their different ways have been giving, **until recently**, high prominence to constitutional matters.

I say 'until recently' with some deliberation because I detect a sea change. Archbishop Barry Morgan's championing of the poor in Wales gives us great hope; his is the authentic and progressive voice of Wales and his decisive intervention, as ever, is to be welcomed.

Now, whether that perspective continues in the coming months and whether the Welsh people will agree with their self-appointed opinion leaders, only time will tell.

For those of us who will support the Yes Campaign in 2011 for enhanced powers for the Assembly, the challenge is a considerable one. Unless we connect the Constitutional question to the daily lives of ordinary people and their jobs and their public services then we deserve to lose. Political justice must be accompanied by social and economic justice.

So, any constitutional change will require the enthusiastic endorsement of Wales's great estates. Not the landed estates of the eighteenth century, but the working class housing estates of Penparcau, Penrhys, Gurnos and Sandfields, whose working class families are under threat today from the present Coalition Government's Comprehensive Spending Review.

My guess is that their democratic voices will be heard and **they** will determine our fate now that our common political culture is threatened. It will be a case then of 'tynged ein cymuned', 'the fate of our community', which is the real title of this lecture.

As Thomas Jones said perceptively again, and writing of his own time of working for the reactionary coalitions of his own day, and this may be a warning to all those who aspire to speak from such a position for Wales or Britain:

"I have lived [he wrote] too long among the miners and steelworkers of South Wales to fail to remind my masters that politics are concerned with the lives of ordinary folk. ...".³

Gyfeillion, comrades and friends, they may have been **his** masters, but they have never been mine! Nor will they be Wales' so long as that common political culture continues to be a well-spring for all of us into the future, as it has been in our past and should be today.

Diolch yn fawr.

Hywel Francis

³ Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diary* (edited by Keith Middlemass), vol. 1, 1916 – 1925, (1969) p. xii.

Aberavon

* The text of the twenty-fourth annual lecture of the Welsh Political Archive delivered at the Drwm, the National Library of Wales, 5 November 2010.