

WARDLE, George James.

BIOGRAPHIES OF LIVING MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

In 1929 the Prime Minister (the Right Honourable Stanley Baldwin, M.P.) appointed a Committee, presided over by Colonel the Right Honourable Josiah Wedgwood, D.S.O., M.P., to examine the material available for a record of the personnel and politics of members of the House of Commons from A.D. 1264. The Committee reported that the task of preparing and publishing such a record was possible and should be undertaken.

It has been suggested that it would be desirable for living Members or ex-Members of Parliament to assist in the compilation of their own biographies. Below are questions which ought to be dealt with. It would be useful to have answers to these from our predecessors and contemporaries; they will inform and guide our contemporaries and successors in this and other lands.

No biographer, only the man himself, can answer such questions.

1. When did you first become interested in national politics? Why?
2. What influence started you on this line of thought?
3. What books formed your political views?
4. What were your religious convictions?
5. Which was then your favourite newspaper?
6. Why did you want to be an M.P.?
7. What or who first led you to think of it as a career?
8. What was your trade, profession or occupation?
9. Annual income, earned and un-earned, when first you stood for Parliament?
10. Had you experience of public work—if so, what?
11. How did you first get a seat?
12. What was your chief political interest?
13. On what did you, in fact, concentrate most in Parliament?
14. What did it cost you then to contest? And how much yearly while M.P.?
15. Who, at that time, was your ideal living British statesman, or dead statesman of any land?
16. How did Parliament modify your views?
17. How did being an M.P. affect your earning capacity?
18. What did you enjoy most in Parliamentary life?
19. What did you dislike most, apart from getting re-elected?
20. Which speech do you think was your best?
21. What was the greatest speech that you remember hearing?
22. Did speeches affect your vote?
23. What was your best piece of work?
24. If you are no longer in Parliament, why did you leave?

Answers to all these questions are optional. If it is desired that answers be treated as confidential, they should be enclosed in brackets; these will remain unpublished for 100 years.

Please supply also the usual bald facts from "Who's Who" or any other work of reference so as to save the compilers trouble.

Please write your answers overleaf.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORY OF PARLIAMENT,
1, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE BUILDINGS,
DARTMOUTH STREET, S.W.1.

- 1- About 1893 - The Home Rule Bill of that year first attracted my attention to politics.
- 2 Then my attention was called to "The Canon" edited by Robert Clatchford - I became a regular subscriber & joined "The Independent Labour Party".
- 3 Ho. Rudin - Carlyle - G. H. Harson - were at the time my favorite authors & afterwards I read almost anything I could get hold of in regard to Socialism - Economics & Trade Unionism - A movement to which I became attached.
- 4 Brought up as a Wesleyan & for a time a Local Preacher - I found eventually the ~~Common~~ Common acceptance of certain dogmas too narrow for me though never a member of the Ethical Society I was much attracted to it.
5. See above - also the Labour Leader in Sir Hardie's time.
- 6 & 11. My Study of Economics & early experiences as a factory lad led me to desire to do something to lighten the lot of the workers. In the meantime I had joined a Trade Union - The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants - An opportunity arose when I was 33 - I applied for & obtained the position of Editor of the Railway Review - the official organ of the Union. This was at the time the movement for a separate Labour Party was active & I took a leading part in this movement. Eventually I was chosen as one of the Railway Candidates & in the General Election of 1906 I was elected as one of the two members for Stockport - a seat I held for 14 years - Before I became Editor of the paper referred to above I had been a Railway Clerk for 18 years - My salary at the time of leaving was £100 per year & I received 3/- per week as Editor & on appointment when elected to Parliament I received

£150 per year - There was no payment of members & I continued to continue the position of Editor with attendance ^{at the House of Commons} receiving a small sum from my Union for expenses - This was eventually raised to £200 per annum which was my whole income until payment of members was instituted - ~~After~~ After that the payment from the Union ceased -
14. My Election Expenses were guaranteed & paid by the Union. If I remember rightly my first election cost just over £500. (12) ~~My~~ My yearly expenses were kept to a minimum. Most of the work was voluntary & it was some years before a paid agent was appointed - Even then it was only a part time job -

(12 + 13) My efforts in Parliament were mostly concentrated on labour matters & I loved Committee work most of all. My first experience in this direction was on the Workhouse Committee appointed to Enquire into the traps in the Post Office & although several Committees have since made other Enquiries they have never departed from the lines ~~made~~ laid down by that Committee. It sat for two years. After that I sat on many other Committees - the two principal ones being the Speaker's Conference on "Franchise" - which first granted ~~bona fide~~ the vote - & I had the honour of moving the resolution which was adopted which settled the principle - I was also a member of Lord Balfour's "Burlingame Committee on Industrial Commercial Policy after the War"

15. I cannot say that I set up any idol - Either living or dead.

16. Only in the direction of gradual evolution rather than in favour of any sudden or violent changes.

17. Very little - except as it gave me an opportunity

of earning a little extra as a journalist - I was
subsequently invited to and became a Fellow of the
Institute of Journalists

18. My work as Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of
Trade 1917-8. the hardest & most satisfactory work
I ever undertook -

19. The waste of time -

20 + 23; ^{On one occasion} It was my good fortune to secure a place in the
Ballot, and on a sudden inspiration I decided to
draw attention to the Condition of the Blind. What
was my surprise to hear someone succeed. When the time
came I spoke for half an hour & put all I knew
into my speech to justify my choice. The result was
the appointment of a Committee which sat for nearly
two years - Sir G. Kay's father (afterwards Lord Downham) was
Chairman & including myself - 4 blind persons - (Sir
Arthur Pearson was one) & several others - The ~~Committee~~
Committee's report laid the foundation of all
those efforts which have done so much to
alleviate the lot of the blind in this Country -
On the morning after my speech the Manchester
Guardian characterized the occasion as one
of those which showed the House of Commons at its
best. I consider ^{this} the best ^{single} piece of work I did
in the House -

21. A difficult question - but by its dramatic interest
I consider Mr. A. Miles (Lord Advocate) reply to an attack
by Mr. Arthur Dalfour the finest speech I heard while
in the House - next I rank Mr. Asquith's on
the first introduction of Old Pensions -

22. A break down on account of overwork ~~and~~
compelled me to leave the House in 1920 -
& I have not sought to enter it as a Member
since -