THE RISE AND FALL OF THE LABOUR LEFT

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PATRICK SEYD

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To Benjamin, Dan and Rachel

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Preface

This study of the Labour Left has taken a long time to complete and as a consequence I have built up a considerable number of personal debts over the years. I am pleased to acknowledge the initial financial support provided by the Social Science Research Council (as it was then named). As a mature student with family commitments I could not have afforded to return to academic study without its support. I would also like to acknowledge the confidence which Professors Bernard Crick and Royden Harrison, both at Sheffield University in the late 1960s, expressed in my research potential. I learnt from them the necessary interrelationship between thought and action. Both of them have made important contributions to political debate and have campaigned for radical change and I am proud to be part of that tradition in Sheffield.

I owe thanks to very many people in the Labour Party who have given freely of their time. Very rarely did anyone refuse to talk to me. Their generosity and hospitality is a reflection of all that is good on the Labour Left. It would be invidious to mention just a few names, and some asked not to be publicly identified, and therefore I thank them all in general terms.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance and advice of Leo Beckett, David Beetham, Henry Drucker, Alan Haworth, Arthur Lipow, Jean McCrindle and Anne Pettifor who all read and commented on parts of the text. Alan Tennant and Ken Simons gave generously of their time and provided considerable assistance and advice on the Party activist survey. The University of Sheffield Research Fund provided funds for part of the survey. In spite of other pressing demands on her time Marg Jaram retained her calmness and typed the complete text with speed and great efficiency.

I owe a particular debt of gratitude to three persons. For almost twenty years Lewis Minkin has shared his knowledge with me, stimulated me with his wide-ranging ideas, and

encouraged me at a time when I felt like abandoning the project. The fact that I have completed this study is due in large part to his consistent support and friendship.

My only regret is that Jim MacFarlane is not alive to see the end-product. For twenty-five years he was my closest friend. He encouraged me to move to Sheffield and continue with my studies. I learnt an immense amount from him about South Yorkshire and its mining communities. Above all I benefited from his constant probing of fundamentals. He was one of the finest representatives of the British labour movement.

Most important of all I owe a very considerable debt of gratitude to my wife Rosalind, who interrupted her own career in order that I could continue with my studies. She encouraged me in difficult times and the final product is a small repayment for her continuous support and commitment. Our children – Benjamin, Dan and Rachel – have grown up with this project. I hope it has not put them off Labour politics for life! I dedicate this book to them in the confidence that if the Labour Left succeeds in building popular support their lives will be safer and more pleasant.

I should add that all the people mentioned have contributed greatly but I alone am responsible for the interpretations.

PATRICK SEYD