

**TOWARDS  
THE COMMONWEALTH OF  
WALES**

Gwyn A. Williams



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Notes:

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- p.5\*\* For information on the policies of Plaid Cymru, contact  
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- p.6\*\* For pamphlets on the Welsh Senate, contact Plaid Cymru,  
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- p.6\*\* For pamphlets on the Plaid Cymru-SNP pact, contact Plaid  
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In my house, I have the flag of the Welsh Chartists. I possess it by courtesy of HTV, whose seamstresses reproduced it, so that it could be flourished for ten seconds on the TV screen. I will go into no sordid detail to explain just how it passed into my possession: suffice it to say that the procedure was wholly in accord with the Laws of Hywel Dda.

It is a beautiful tricolour, blue for the sky, green for the earth, white for liberty - the colours of the Eisteddfod Gorsedd, Gorsedd Beirdd Ynys Prydain in fact. Across it is blazoned the slogan Universal Liberty. The Welsh version carried only one word, Cyfiawnder (Justice). Under this flag, they marched on Newport in 1839 and were shot down.

The man who devised the flag was Hugh Williams, a lawyer from Machynlleth who lived in St. Clears. He it was who was the grey eminence of, the brains behind, Rebecca and Her Daughters in their guerilla war against authority in west Wales. He worked for an alliance between the small farmers and working people of the west and the ironworkers, colliers and working people of the Valleys - precisely the kind of alliance we need today.

This was the ghost flag behind Rebecca when in 1842, as the Chartists staged their general strike in the Valleys, Mike Bowen of Trelech led the Daughters of Rebecca into Carmarthen in broad daylight. Mike Bowen went in, astride a fine white stallion, in a brilliant white dress, with goldilocks made of horsehair, winking at his buttocks. They were cut down by dragoons.

One day, soon I hope, but certainly one day, we're going to set a Plaid Cymru M.P. on a white stallion and send him galloping up to Carmarthen Guildhall to reclaim its heartland for the Welsh Nation.

I don't think we need insist on the goldilocks. At any rate, the Publications Department of Plaid Cymru isn't going to pay for it! Of course, the local branch of the Plaid might be able to interest Antur Teifi or some similar promoter of small enterprises and to people the Welsh craft shops, the siop y pethe, with Rebecca wigs! Fe Ddaw Becca Eto?

Ah! those Welsh Craft Shops which now grace our landscape almost as frequently as castles and chapels - they're wonderful, aren't they? All those carthenni and funny hats? ... and all those love-spoons?! Do you remember the great days of Welsh love-spoons? - a thousand rail-trucks at Barry Docks, packed to the rim with deep-mined love-spoons from the Rhondda?! Those tall, lurching clippers groaning and creaking out of Barmouth, loaded to the gunwhales with love-spoons quarried out of Blaenau Ffestiniog?! And set alongside them, of course, all that genuine Welsh honey, produced by certified, bilingual Welsh bees ... if you listen to the buzz hard enough, you can hear the mutations! We could set the Rebecca wigs among them.

We could set something else, too - Welsh brain jelly. From the way the Welsh people vote in general elections, it's clear their brains have been pulverised into jelly. Mind you, after the kind of newspapers and TV we've had for twenty years, it's no wonder. As so often in our history, we must capitalise on our misfortune. Bottle Welsh brain jelly and sell it to the tourists! Imagine - tastefully designed glass jars on the shelves of the Craft shops - the Welsh Tourist Board presents Awen Gwalia brain jelly, from the People Who Gave You Lloyd George! ... The People Who Gave You Neil Kinnock! ... Presented by The People Who Gave You The Year Of The Castles!

Believe you me, before long that's about ALL we're going to HAVE to export! Remember what we used to export - first, pigs and preachers, then coal, then teachers, then and now, about half the population? Tomorrow it'll be Rebecca wigs and Welsh brain jelly - if there's anybody Welsh left to make them.

What we call Thatcherism, of course, began under the Labour government of James Callaghan. Since 1979, blwyddyn y pla, the year of the plague, it has ravaged a Wales left defenceless. Look at the state we've got into since:

**JOBS:** Home Counties, plus 9%  
WALES, minus 17%

**WAGES:** Home Counties, Men £233 a week  
WALES, Men £179 a week!  
Home Counties, Women £154 a week  
WALES, Women £118 a week!

**MONEY TO SPEND:** Home Counties, £4,000 a year per head  
WALES, £3,000 a year per head!

**HOUSES BUILT BEFORE 1982:** Home Counties, 28%  
WALES, 40% .. and a sight different the  
houses are too!

British Rail is going to spend £80 - £120 million on the South-East of England; it says it "can't afford" to spend £5 million on a line from Newport to Ebbw Vale for the Garden Festival! The Ministry of Defence spends half its huge budget in the South-East of England. That's unofficial 'regional aid' to the already affluent South-East of about £4 billion! Official regional aid to us has been slashed! Everywhere you look - Health, Social Services, Education, we are at the bottom of every European League Table!

And this in a country which, in the awful year, of 1983, the World Bank ranked as the sixteenth wealthiest country in the world! In that terrible year, we produced \$8,100 dollars per head of the population, more or less level with Belgium. In that year, we produced MORE wealth per head than New Zealand, Italy, Spain, Israel, and even oil-rich Oman.

Poor Old Wales, My Aunt Maggie Ann! We need money to run our own lives, they say - we've got that money! Or rather, we produce it, but we haven't got it. We've got to get a grip on it!

A fat lot of good it does us, because along with several other countries and regions on this Island, we are made marginal and strangled by this archaic state structure of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and About a Half of Northern Ireland. This Great Britain, an offshore island of Europe, has lost an empire and failed to find a role. It has stumbled into Europe half-heartedly, turned itself into Airstrip One of an American Empire, has permitted manufacturing industry to rot and has relied on the increasingly corrupt banking and financial capacity of the City of London, on the dubious and precarious profits of a service economy, and on North Sea Oil.



Of course, a few favoured districts and some favoured groups and classes have benefitted. Within Wales, the Cardiff region and the southern coastal strip is becoming a mini-metropolis of this diseased and doomed society, though riddled with contradictions within itself; but largely, outside the south-east of England, whole populations on this Island of Britain have been left stranded like a derelict whale on a polluted beach. Our society lives on spec, on tic; it's a credit-card society. And the time is running out for it. During the 1990s the oil is going to run out and the sky will be black with the wings of the chickens coming home to roost, chickens which will bear an uncanny resemblance to vultures! Every contradiction in our society will intensify to the flashpoint. And this state structure of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and About a Half of Northern Ireland is already beginning to come apart at the seams. It's started in Ireland. The Scots are utterly disaffected and moving towards rebellion. They will drive this Island into a constitutional crisis - just as the oil runs out.

Of course, its rulers are riding easy at present. They have won a crushing majority at their Westminster. People in work are a jump ahead of inflation, the victims have been rendered almost invisible and the population remains conservative in temper ... even as public services and the idea of community slide into ruin and social life slithers into barbarism. These purblind and ruthless people are back in power; they will develop their policies and drive us into the ditch. We have to confront this Doomsday Scenario.

You can imagine what could happen to Wales! Wales will shrivel up. A depersonalised and dehumanised Wales will shrivel up into a costa bureaucratica in the south and a costa geriatrixa in the north. In between - sheep (no doubt yielding lamp chops with that warm, radioactive glow and filling the menus of Blas ar Gymru restaurants with Curried Leg of Lamb Trawsfynydd served with a dash of Yr Wylfa Sauce and Sellafield Sprouts?) - holiday homes burning merrily away and fifty folk-museums where there used to be communities - all no doubt selling bottled Welsh brain jelly to tourists.

There's only one answer to that: to quote my uncle T. Rowland Hughes in William Jones - cadw dy blydi chips! Or to use the more dignified terms of Dylan Thomas, we will not go gently into anybody's good night. We've got to fight back. How do we fight back?

The first fact we must face in Plaid Cymru, The Party of Wales, is that the fight is going to be a long one. At present we in Plaid Cymru, the Party of Wales, are like Early Christians in the late Roman Empire. That shouldn't bother us too much. Look what happened to the Christian Church after Rome! - and in this British state empire it is late indeed, it is late afternoon, going on for evening.

Moreover the long term is on our side. When Owain Glyn Dwr tried to divide Britain into three kingdoms so that Wales could live, his policy was quite practical. Something like this was happening all over Europe. It would not have survived. From his day to ours, the tide of centralisation has run irresistibly. But today, friends, we are living through a great turn in human affairs. The very motor forces of our society are dispersing and extending: production, technology, authority, the idea of work, the idea of leisure. It may take several further crises, another generation, perhaps, before people fully grasp this reality and its implications. The first fifty years will be the worst! But a Europe which is a community of communities is now becoming a real possibility. A Europe which is a community of communities is in fact imprinted on the motor forces of our society. And Europe is the motherland of all of us. The tides of history are running for us, provided we get through the next fifty years. In fifty years, History will be on our side. How do we get through those years?

First, Plaid Cymru must become what its name says it is, The Party of Wales. Plaid was born in a struggle to defend and advance the Welsh language, its culture and its society. This remains the core of our being, our tap root, our dynamic. It is our version of what the old Brut was to Owain Glyn Dwr. We must advance to a new Welsh Language Act and root the language and everything it means in the soil. We must save the Bro and extend it. And we also have to carry the spirit of the language campaign into the four-fifths of our people who use English. The very success of the Welsh language campaign has turned English-speaking Welsh people into the new disinherited of Wales. Until very recently, most of our media, in league with most of our enemies, were trying to identify Wales with the Welsh language alone, thus expelling the vast majority of the Welsh from the Welsh nation. Speaking as a Shoni, all I have to say to them is: "Cadw dy blydi chips!" Karl Francis, that fine Welsh film-maker, was once thinking of imitating Gwynfor Evans and staging a fast in order to defend and assert the Welshness of Welsh people who speak English. There are hundreds of thousands like us.

There can be no abiding future for the Welsh language unless there is an abiding Welshness for the vast majority of our people who use English. That is the real sheet anchor of the survival of the Welsh language. That is why, parallel to our demand for a Welsh Language Act, we are demanding a new broadcasting system for Wales in English which is national, democratic and answerable to the Welsh people. It's time we nationalised Broadcasting House, Llandaff. While we're at it, we might as well nationalise our capital city of Cardiff as well.

But it goes further than that. By my calculation, some 37% of the population of Wales are not Welsh at all by birth, origin or tradition; that is nearly two in every five of the people who live in Wales! They are members of Wales, or ought to be.

Plaid Cymru, the Party of Wales, has to think territorially. We have a frontier in Wales. Ironically, our frontier was created by the Act of Union with England in the sixteenth century. Even more ironically, it followed the borders of the old Marcher Lordships. Our historic frontier was formed by the estate boundaries of an earlier oligarchy of our exploiters. So be it. Other peoples have made do with worse frontiers than that. Everything west of that line in Wales and our first duty is to LOVE IT. It's easy to love Wales on top of Cader Idris, in the vale of Clwyd. It's easy to love Wales at Mwnt, on Rhiw Sion Cwilt; it's doubly easy to love Wales in the vale of Teifi. But you have to love Wales in Merthyr Tydfil bus station, in Despensers Gardens Cardiff. You've got to love Wales in Blaenau Ffestiniog on a wet Sunday afternoon, in Bethesda during an endless cydadrodd competition in a semi-national Urdd. You've got to love Wales in Pontepool and Nanteeglo and Mays-glass Newport. Above all you must love Wales in Nanteeglo and Pontepool and Mays-glass Newport. It's easy to love Cymru Wen, Cymru Lan; you've got to love Cymru Front, Dirty Old Wales. We've got to love every filthy, polluted, corrupt inch of her, because every filthy, polluted, corrupt inch of her is OUR filthy, polluted, corrupt inch and no power on earth is going to take it away from us.



Anyone who comes to live within this affirmed territory of Wales and commits herself or himself to Wales is a member of the Community of the Welsh People. If they commit themselves, they are welcome. If not, not. People who will not commit themselves would be unwelcome in every country on earth. They would be no more welcome in Wales than are the Afrikaners after 300 years among the peoples of South Africa. In my experience, an extraordinary number of non-Welsh people who come into Wales DO commit themselves to Wales. They are triply welcome - in themselves, in their commitment and in their skills. To adapt St Paul: and the greatest of these is commitment. They are members of the community of the Welsh people and Plaid Cymru, the Party of Wales, is the political agency of that community.

Plaid Cymru, the Party of Wales, fights for ALL the People of Wales. So far as we are concerned, anyone who lives in Wales and commits herself or himself to Wales - we don't care what language they speak, we don't care where they or their parents came from, we don't care what colour their faces are: if they commit themselves to Wales, they are Welsh. And on that rock we will in the end build our Welsh Republic, our Commonwealth of Wales, Gweriniaeth y Cymry.

We will build her as a modern self-governing nation, grounded in community democracy and community socialism, which will take its place alongside its sister nations on the Island of Britain and have its own, independent voice within Europe and at the United Nations. Towards this end Plaid Cymru, the Party of Wales, has evolved rational, realistic and imaginative policies.\*\*

How do we advance towards our Commonwealth?

We mobilise the socially disinherited of our society.

**WOMEN.** Women are now over 45% of the official Welsh labour force. When you think of all the other work they do, it is clear that if Wales has a working class today, it is a working class of women. Working women in Wales today are the nearest equivalent we have to Karl Marx's original definition of a proletariat in 1843, a class which is in society, but not of society, a class which suffers from no particular wrong but from wrong in general, a class which cannot free itself without freeing the whole of society from class. If the women of Wales do not free themselves, then Wales will cease to exist. But if the women of Wales move, the earth will move. It is the duty of Plaid Cymru, the Party of Wales, to clear a path, to win space, to win the terrain on which the women of Wales can free themselves.

There are our YOUNG PEOPLE, dumped like rubbish in town and country alike. A horrible human waste. There are what Gramsci called our organic intellectuals, WORKERS BY BRAIN. Capitalism produces them by the thousand and then can't find serious use for their talents. Wales has always teased, and today teems even more with them, unemployed, half-employed, mis-employed. A shocking human waste and a shocking waste of our talent - talent which could serve, indeed transform our people. These three overlapping groups between them total 50% MORE than the entire official working population of Wales!

How can we unleash their energies?

Look for the points of contradiction in our society, look for the points of entry into which we can burrow like Marx's Old Mole of Revolution. One is obvious - this structure of undemocratic institutions, answerable to no-one except the Whitehall bureaucracy, but calling themselves Welsh, which our state has been forced to concede. Institutions which need some kind of Wales to exist, so that they can exist. Look there for the point of no return. By a point of no return, I mean something like the British Reform Act of 1832, a great struggle to win a measure, paltry enough in itself, but which when achieved, meant that there could be no turning back, no halt to the advance of parliamentary democracy.

We find our point of no return in the Welsh State which already exists in the Welsh Office.

The Welsh Office employs 2,800 civil servants directly. It appoints 1,200 more to its quangoes. It spends a budget of £3,000 million a year. That's our money they're spending, and our lives they're messing about. To whom does that Welsh State answer? To Margaret Thatcher and whatever poodle she puts into it. To whom will it answer? To whatever gimcrack politician is thrown up by the state lottery of their General Elections. To whom should it answer? To us, of course, the people of Wales.

We can make it answer to us by electing a Welsh Senate which will take over that Welsh Office, use its wide economic powers, use its money, plus the arrears this British state owes us for the damage it has inflicted upon us, use this array of powers to prise our people up, out of the decline and the poverty which now threaten to engulf us.

That is our nub of contradiction, that is our point of entry, that is where we can drive our society beyond the point of no return. That is why we have made a Welsh Senate the centre-piece of our campaign.\*\*

And we have a better hope of getting it, through our historic alliance with the Scottish National Party. We have entered into a pact with the SNP which sets out hard-nosed, tough, practical terms for any support we might offer a British party in their Westminster.\*\*

At that Westminster now, the Plaid-SNP alliance is stronger than what's left of the SDP. The SNP vote went up sharply in Scotland and there is a strong demand for self-government within Scottish Labour. In Wales, though the Labour Party staged a recovery, its percentage of the Welsh vote is now even lower than in the disaster year of 1979; many of its members are converting to Welsh self-government. The tide is beginning to turn.



Look ahead. The Liberal-SDP alliance is in a shambles. There will be no 're-alignment of the Left' before the next General Election, which the Tories will probably win comfortably, thanks to their massive English vote. Will any kind of 'popular front' get them out before the end of this century? And what kind of 'popular front' will that be? Only one thing can save us - a total reconstruction of the structure of government in this Island, to restore power to its peoples. No political party which is committed to the centralist British state will ever achieve that.

There is one central fact of our political life which people in Wales must now face:

THERE WILL NEVER AGAIN BE A LABOUR GOVERNMENT IN OUR LIFETIME.

The people of Wales, like the Scots, have for three generations vested their hopes in Labour. That long tradition will become dust in their mouths. They will need their own political party to fight for their very survival as a people, a party which does not accept that centralised British state to which Labour is committed, a party which rejects the pale and paltry solutions which the Alliance offers. In some ways, our real campaign began the morning after the General Election.

But whatever happens, we must think long. We have our point of entry, we have our point of no return, we have our instrument, we have our commitment. Plaid Cymru has mapped out its line of march. To advance our people along it, we must transform ourselves into a genuine Party of Wales. That is our duty towards the people we claim to serve. If we make ourselves into such a party then we can help our people resume that long march which they started on way back in the 1830s, when the people of Merthyr raised the red flag, when the Chartists raised their tricoloured banner, when Mike Bowen led the Daughters of Rebecca into Carmarthen.

That long march will be long. It will be rocky. It will be hard. It will be a march towards our republic, our Commonwealth, Gweriniaeth y Cymry. We won't get there, maybe our children won't get there. In the last resort, that does not matter.

It is the struggle which matters.

This small but potent people has lived in these two western peninsulas of the Island of Britain for two thousand years as a Welsh people. In our struggle and through our struggle, we will make sure that this our Welsh people shall not perish from this earth. Our people will live.

Cymru am byth a Chymru'r Werin am byth.

Look ahead. The Liberal-SDP alliance is in a shambles. There will be no 're-alignment' of the Left before the next General Election, which the Tories will probably win comfortably, thanks to their winning English vote. Will any kind of 'popular front' get them out before the end of this century? And what kind of 'popular front' will that be? Only one thing got them in - a total reconstruction of the structure of government in this island, to restore power to its people. No political party which is committed to the neo-conservative British state will ever achieve that.

There is one central fact of our political life which we must all face:

**THERE WILL NEVER AGAIN BE A LAND<sup>2</sup> GOVERNMENT IN OUR LIFETIME.**

The people of Wales, like the Scots, have for many generations vested their hopes in Labour. That long tradition will continue deep in their pockets. They will need their own political party to fight for their very survival as a people, a party which does not accept that centralised British state to which Labour is committed, a party which rejects the pain and policy solutions which the Alliance offers. In some ways, our real campaign begins the morning after the General Election.

But whatever happens, we must think long. We have the task of getting our own point of no return, we have our own way to go. The Welsh language, which Field Cymru has mapped out its line of march. To win it, we must go along it, we must translate ourselves into a language that we can use. That is our way towards the people we claim to serve. If we have accepted the British state then we can help our people resume that way, which will lead us back to our back in the 18th, when the people of Wales were not the people of the British state. Theirs was their own language, their own culture, their own way of life. Theirs was their own language, their own culture, their own way of life. Theirs was their own language, their own culture, their own way of life.

That long march will be long. It will be long, it will be long. It will be a march towards our republic, our Commonwealth, our own way of life. We won't get there, maybe our children won't get there. But that doesn't matter, that does not matter.

It is the struggle which matters.

This small but potent people has lived in these two centuries of struggle of the island of Britain for two thousand years as a Welsh people. In our struggle and through our struggle, we will make sure that the day when people shall not perish from this earth. Our people will live.

Cymru am Byth a Chymru'n Fydd am Byth.



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