

THE STORY OF

PLAID CYMRU

the party of Wales



Dafydd Williams

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— the party of Wales —

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ABERYSTWYTH
PLAID CYMRU
1990

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ER COF AM
ELWYN ROBERTS

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INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The *Story of Plaid Cymru* aims to present a condensed account of the sixty-five year history of the party to those who may not be familiar with its background.

Inevitably many events and many people are omitted from this short sketch of the eventful history of Wales' national movement. Its tight confines rule out detailed analysis and interpretation of the party's successes and failures over the last seven decades.

The *Story of Plaid Cymru* is presented by an author with the value judgments of a committed nationalist, but I hope it looks candidly at the hard times as well as the highlights of the bumpy ride we have had since 1925.

I would like to express my gratitude to Gwerfyl Arthur, administrative secretary of Plaid Cymru, for her advice and encouragement as well as for the hard slog of keying in all 20,000 words of this volume. I am also grateful to Gwynfor Evans for his guidance in preparing the work as well as for his introduction, and to Phil Williams for his advice.

I am indebted to Hywel Davies for allowing me to quote freely from his important book on the history of the party up to 1945, and to the

other authors on whose work I have depended and whose names appear in the text.

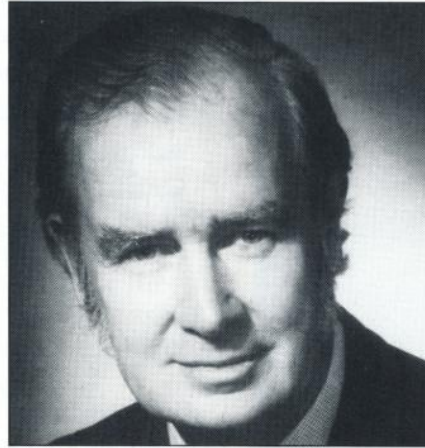
Because of Plaid Cymru's financial situation (some things never change!) publication has been funded independently, and I gratefully acknowledge the support of a number of friends, including Keith and Eluned Bush, Jonathan Edwards, Phyllis Ellis, Huw Evans, Alun Ffred, Dennis Watkins and Dafydd Wigley.

I would also like to thank Marian Delyth and Elwyn Jones for their guidance on design and publication, and Jeff Davison and his colleagues in Davison's Printers, Pontypridd, for their patience and cooperation. I am grateful to Eirwen Gwynn, Nans Jones, John Wynne Jones, Dafydd Orwig and Mair Jones for their help in enabling me to reproduce a number of valuable photographs, D J Davies, Derec Llwyd Morgan, O M Roberts and Meic Stephens for their advice and my parents for their patience during the first phase of writing on holiday in Lanzarote. Despite all this help, I am alone responsible for errors and omissions.

DAFYDD WILLIAMS

FOREWARD BY GWYNFOR EVANS

Honorary President of Plaid Cymru



It is a pleasure to introduce Mr Dafydd Williams' valuable summary of Plaid Cymru's history, which is so appropriately published close to the astounding revolutions in eastern Europe and the Baltic republics, where the power of nationalism has peacefully re-established democracy on the basis of nationality.

Although Welsh nationalism has not yet mobilised sufficient people power to create a Welsh democracy, the scene is being set. Already the huge British multinational power state takes on a dinosauric appearance. It belongs to a past age. The development of a Europe of nations and historic regions, which is fast reducing London power over Wales, could soon create the context in which Wales will take her place as a free and equal nation.

But Dafydd Williams' book raises the question whether there would be in Wales today a nation capable of envisaging this kind of future but for the struggle of Plaid Cymru over two generations. Without the impact of Welsh nationalism, it is likely that London governments would have continued to refuse to treat Wales as a national entity. The situation during the inter-war decades, when government did not acknowledge the existence of a Welsh nation by a single concession, would have persisted unchecked.

In that case there would have been no Welsh Office, no Secretary of State, no splendid radio service, no S4C, no Welsh Development Agency or the host of national institutions that have developed since the war. And who would have raised Welsh national consciousness? Without a nationalist party to fight for Wales is it not likely that, as a part of England in the most highly centralised state in Europe, this ancient nation would now be going out of history as a peripheral region?

As things are there is a fight. A national future for the nation which is the only heir to Roman civilisation in these islands is more than possible. If Welsh nationalists will it with all their heart, a Welsh democracy can be created.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gwynfor Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



1. Where it all began — the room where Plaid Cymru was formed at Maes Gwyn, Y Maes, Pwllheli in August 1925. Six were present at the meeting: Saunders Lewis and Fred Jones from the south, and Lewis Valentine, Moses Gruffydd, H R Jones and David Edmund Williams, a carpenter from Groeslon, Arfon.

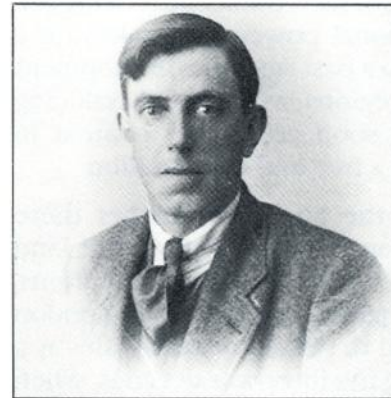
Pwllheli. Deuriwyd a Parh L. E. Valentine a Llywelyn, Prifwrdd ym Maes Gruffydd a chymrogydd. H. R. Jones. a ymgyddwr.

Awst 5^{ed} 1925. Codiwyd a Bwyllwg Gwyn, m Saunders Lewis, D. J. Williams, Abergegnaw, Parh Fred Jones, Gwynedd, a phrosiwr aed holl gen a thau i ychwanegu chwech achr.

Paswyd aed ymgydd aed i chymru Awst 1926.

Deuriwyd a Parh Fred Jones, a L. E. Valentine a Llywelyn a m D. J. Williams, Abergegnaw i annwyl a cyffwrdd ychwanegu a ychwanegu a Bwyllwg, Pwllheli m trwmwyl, a baw Maes Gwyn, Gwynedd a "David Edmund Williams" Cae-nafon. Llywelyn.

2. A nation awakes: Wales' first declaration of freedom since Owain Glyndŵr — minutes of the Nationalist party's first-ever meeting in Pwllheli on 5 August 1925.



3. Hugh Robert Jones, Deiniolen, Arfon (1894-1930). A quarryman and commercial traveller, his determination led to the formation of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru. H R Jones served as the new party's first general secretary from 1925 until his untimely death in 1930.

FOUNDATION

'Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru' - the Welsh Nationalist Party - was founded in August 1925, the result of a fusion of two separate groupings and the impatience of one young man from the quarrying area of Caernarfonshire, H R Jones, who was to become the fledgling party's first organiser.

The new movement was born at a time of turmoil. The First World War - fought, according to official propaganda, for the freedom of small nations - had come to an end just seven years before. As the Versailles peace conference redrew the map of Europe, ex-servicemen returning home to Wales asked themselves why Wales was one of the nations left out. One of them, Lewis Valentine, later the nationalist party's first president, put it this way; "Having believed the rigmarole of the politicians that it was a war to give freedom to small nations, I accepted it totally. When I came out of the war, I was an out-and-out Welsh nationalist."

Young nationalists could also see at close quarters another Celtic nation achieving something like self-government, with the passage of the Irish Free State Act in 1922. An ex-miner, D] Williams, had met the leaders of Sinn Fein which had won a landslide victory in the general election, and visited the government's secret headquarters above a bakery in Dublin.

If national governments could be set up in Ireland, Poland and the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, why not Wales? Wales had all the attributes of a nation, with a language and culture stretching back two millennia and a land border fixed since the seventh century AD.

A leading Welsh historian put it this way; "The crucial events of 1916 and 1922 underlined the contrast between the heroic sacrifice of the Irish and supineness of the Welsh, a contrast which impressed itself in particular on the consciousness of a number of Welsh ex-servicemen who reproached themselves

for having fought for the freedom of all nationalities but their own." ¹

But the prospects for winning statehood for Wales through existing political parties seemed remote. Attempts to secure home rule through the Liberal Party during the nineteenth century had fizzled out with the failure of David Lloyd George's Cymru Fydd movement in 1896. In the twentieth century, the Liberals had been steadily losing ground to the Labour party - the 1922 General Election saw Labour winning eighteen Welsh seats, with the Liberals reduced to eleven. Neither party had referred to Welsh self-government in their manifesto. Despite occasional declarations of support for the principle of home rule - for example by its London conference in 1918 - and the support of individual members such as Keir Hardie, elected MP for Merthyr and Aberdare in 1900, the Labour Party was never likely to make self-government for Wales a major part of its programme.

Any lingering doubts about the possibilities of advance by means of London-based parties were dispelled by the failure of three conferences convened to press for Welsh home rule between 1918 and 1922. Organised by Liberal MPs and largely cold-shouldered for that reason by Labour, the conferences failed to mount any serious campaign for a Parliament for Wales. Only fifty people attended the last home rule conference held in Shrewsbury on 31 March 1922, and they broke up in disarray. The same fate befell efforts in Westminster (for example the home rule bill proposed by East Denbigh's Liberal MP E T John in March 1914 and the Speaker's Conference on devolution all round set up by Prime Minister David Lloyd George which published its inconclusive report in May 1920).

So the early 1920s saw a small but growing number of voices declaring that the time had come for something different, for an organisation which could be trusted to put the interests of Wales first. In the previous century, such opinion had been confined to a few courageous figures such as Michael D Jones.

who inspired the Welsh settlement of Patagonia, and Emrys ap Iwan, who pursued an uncompromising stand for the Welsh language.

Signs that a new spirit was in the air had already appeared in Welsh university colleges. In Aberystwyth, the college authorities blocked publication of an article written by D J Williams which lambasted the British government. The magazine's editor - W Ambrose Bebb - resigned along with its staff-student committee rather than accept this censorship. Bebb was to play a prominent role in the work of Plaid Cymru.

In Bangor a patriotic society called Y Gymdeithas Genedlaethol Gymreig, the Welsh National Society, was set up at the end of the war. Known as Y Tair G (three G's) its members included Lewis Valentine, and it was to prove influential in the formation of the national party.

What Welsh nationalism needed now was a catalyst, and that person was found in the unlikely person of H R Jones, a 'pale salesman' as he was called by one commentator, an ardent and determined advocate of organised nationalism. In September 1924, he organised a public meeting in Caernarfon of known nationalist sympathizers which, to a chorus of press sniping, resolved to form a new Welsh nationalist party.

Acting as secretary to the new grouping, H R Jones now wrote to a leading Welsh intellectual, Saunders Lewis, who had returned from the trenches to take up a lecturer's post in University College, Swansea, inviting him to join. In a correspondence detailed in Hywel Davies' definitive account of the first two decades of Plaid Cymru's history, Lewis sought and obtained a number of commitments.

Unknown to H R Jones and his group, Saunders Lewis was already a leading member of a separate group of southern nationalists. Meeting originally in the Penarth home of GJ and Elisabeth Williams, Y Mudiad Cymreig (the Welsh Movement) aimed to remain a secret organisation until sufficient funds had been raised and members approached.

Lewis succeeded in securing acceptance of the Mudiad's policies without revealing its existence, and by May 1925, the stage had been set for a meeting of the two groups which would launch Wales' first national party.

The date set for the foundation of the new party was 5 August 1925, and the location was an upstairs room in the Maesgwyn Temperance Hotel, Pwllheli - which was hosting that year's National Eisteddfod. It was a small meeting - just six men, four representing the northern 'nationalist Party' led by the Rev. Lewis Valentine, while Saunders Lewis and the Rev. Fred Jones represented Y Mudiad Cymreig, still secret at that stage. D J Williams missed a train connection - by the time he arrived the Welsh Nationalist Party had been set up.

The meeting launched Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru, the Welsh Nationalist Party, with Lewis Valentine as president, and also decided to hold a summer school the following year in Machynlleth, Montgomeryshire. The party's executive committee later gave the go-ahead to the printing of YDdraig Goch (The Red Dragon), an all-Welsh newspaper, which remains in publication till this day.

The aims of the new party were basic, to say the least - 'a Welsh Wales' to be won by means of Wales' local authorities rather than Westminster. But the first organised challenge to London rule of Wales since the days of Owain Glyndwr had begun to get its show on the road.

¹ John Davies, 'Plaid Cymru in Transition' published in *The National Question Again*, Gomer Press, March, 1925.



4. John Saunders Lewis (1893-1985), father of twentieth-century Welsh nationalism, was the dominant figure within Plaid Cymru for the first two decades of its history: as Lieutenant J S Lewis in the South Wales Borderers *circa* 1916 (left), and with Catrin and Jack Daniel. Jack Daniel became party president in 1939.

THE FIRST BATTLE

The party which gathered for its first summer school in Machynlleth in August 1926 had high hopes - but precious little else. It was a tiny movement - 176 members at that time - largely of intellectual background and with only one local concentration of any sort (in Caernarfonshire). But it had faith in the future. H R Jones was appointed the full-time general secretary - a post he held until his untimely death from tuberculosis in 1930.

Saunders Lewis took over as president - a post he did not wish to fill. He was to exercise a dominant influence within Welsh nationalism for the whole of the pre-war period, and quite apart from his great contribution to Welsh literature he remained a figure of political significance until his death in 1985 at the age of 91.

Lewis set out through his writing in Y Ddraig Goch and later as a columnist in Y Faner to fashion a distinctive Welsh opinion on politics, culture, economics and international affairs. His incisive intellect and pungent style always ensured attention.

For its first five years, the new party held to its Mudiad Cymreig line of winning Wales through the country's local authorities, and, like Sinn Fein, not taking up seats in Westminster. It was not a line that could be held for very long. Despite Saunders Lewis' efforts, very few candidates could be found to contest local seats; it could hardly be otherwise in such a small party.

The party's first Parliamentary candidate was fielded naturally enough in the Caernarfon county constituency during the General Election of May 1929. Plaid's candidate Lewis Valentine told electors that he was the first parliamentary candidate in Wales' history to make the country's freedom the sole basis of his campaign. The result must have been a disappointment - just 609 votes, 1.6 per cent of the total poll



5. Kate Roberts (1891-1985), a celebrated novelist and short-story writer, and a member of Plaid Cymru from its earliest days.

- although the 'gallant six hundred' passed into party mythology as a milestone in its history.

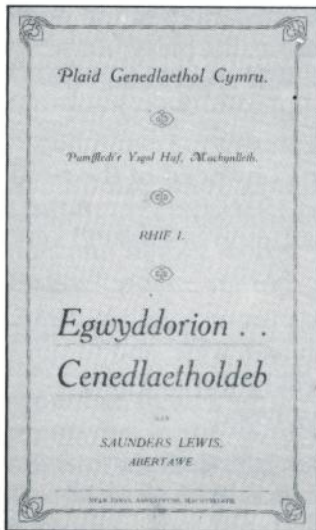
Pressure within the nationalist party now grew to abandon the policy of boycotting Westminster, widely thought to be a factor in lack of support at the polls. A resolution carried against the wishes of Saunders Lewis at the party's 1930 summer school in Llanwrtyd urged that 'parliamentary elections be fought with the aim of sending representatives of the Nationalist Party to Parliament'. Lewis now offered - not for the last time - to step down as leader. The party, wisely, made him stay at the helm. It was a scenario that was to be replayed a number of times before Lewis' presidency came to an end in 1939.

Along with abandonment of the 'Wales Alone' boycott policy, the aims of the party were spelt out in greater detail. Self-government, until now implicit in its doctrine, was now formally promoted in the form of 'Dominion Status' for Wales, along with protection of the culture, language, and traditions of Wales, and full membership of the League of Nations.

Meanwhile a distinct economic policy was being hammered out by economist Dr D J Davies, who had emigrated to the United States where he had worked as a miner, a professional boxer and a Navy engineer. Davies, a former Labour party



6. Machynlleth 1926, outside Owain Glyndŵr's Parliament House — Plaid's first Summer School.



7. 'Egwyddorion Cenedlaetholdeb' — the principles of nationalism — the Nationalist Party's first pamphlet, published in 1926.

THE SUMMER SCHOOL

The annual summer school occupied a key role in the activities of Plaid Cymru for its first fifty years. The Ysgol Haf was typically a mixture of lectures and social activity, together with a morning and afternoon session as a party conference.

The schools were important in providing a focus for a membership which in the earlier years of the party was 'non political' and not involved in local activity. "Such was their dominance of the Nationalist Party calendar that they may be taken to reflect the true nature of the party during the inter-war period", concludes historian Hywel Davies.

The traditional summer school was generally held in the weekend preceding the National Eisteddfod, usually in a not too distant locality.

The last combined summer school and conference was held in Dolgellau in 1967, and the summer school declined as an attraction from that point in time. A proposal to abandon the event owing to lack of time after the 1970 general election was however rejected by the national executive at the insistence of Miss Cassie Davies.

After an interval of some years, the party relaunched their summer school at Ferryside, near Carmarthen in May 1990.

member, had been won over to nationalism by his experience of cooperation practised in Denmark, and his contribution was strongly influenced by the example of the Scandinavian countries. *The Economics of Self Government* which was published in 1931 set out decentralisation and cooperative economic development as Plaid's alternative to capitalism and communism.

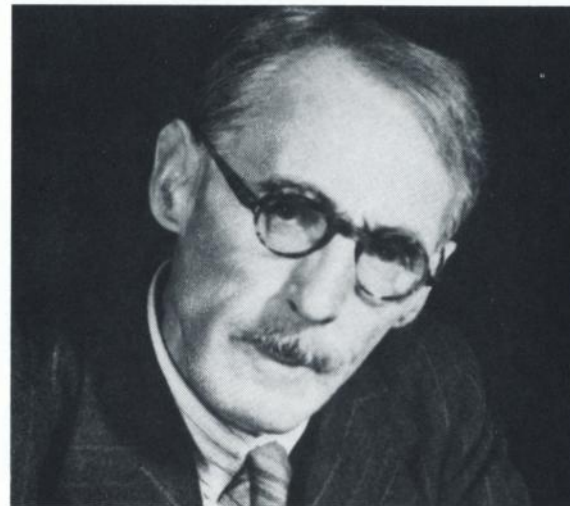
These new ideas were strongly supported by Saunders Lewis, long a trenchant critic of big capitalism, private and state. Lewis' critique of large-scale capitalism and Marxism would probably have received a more sympathetic audience in the environmentally conscious 1990s than in pre-war Wales. In an early attack on the Fascist emphasis on the state, Lewis described the nation as a 'community of communities' - including families and trade unions as well as neighbourhoods. Emphasis on the value of community was to remain an abiding theme for Plaid Cymru in sharp contrast to the state centralisation of the Labour party.

In January 1932, the party launched its English-language companion of *Y Ddraig Goch*, following a good deal of prodding from DJ Davies and not without some controversy. The Welsh Nationalist (later Welsh Nation) was aimed to reach the parts the other paper couldn't - the heavily populated, largely English-speaking areas of south Wales.

But in retrospect perhaps the most decisive step was the appointment of J E Jones as general secretary in succession to the party's first organiser, the ardent campaigner of whom one well-wisher said; "Mr H R Jones was a dreamer and he should have lived in an age like that of the Crusades. It seems ridiculous that he died in his bed."

The new man was a teacher and university graduate. As secretary of Plaid's London branch, he built it into the largest and most influential party branch: four of its barrister members drafted the constitution of a self-governing Wales. 'J E' was a 'systems man'. He set about creating an organisation out of

8. Ambrose Bebb



nothing, and developed a flair for publicity and press relations which won the respect of hard-bitten journalists. His role was crucial in preparing Plaid Cymru for the challenges of the post-1945 world. It was fortunate that the nationalist party had a committed and gifted organiser at work as it approached its second decade of existence. For there was little sign of the breakthrough hoped for by its pioneers. Saunders Lewis and those around him steadily became more convinced of the need for 'action' to stir the people of Wales as 1936, the year of the four-hundredth anniversary of the Act of Union of England and Wales, steadily approached.

Lewis objected strongly to the proposed visit to Neath in 1936 of an English agricultural show, the Bath and West, and to the economic damage it might do to the weaker Royal Welsh Show. Civil disobedience was openly discussed.

But then a greater threat loomed. And the young Welsh Nationalist Party found itself in a face-to-face battle with the English government.

FIRE IN THE NORTH

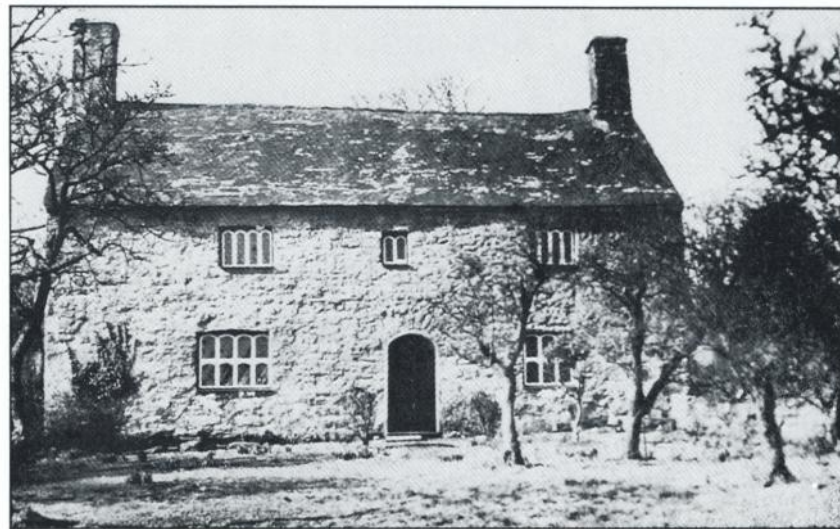
In 1936 Stanley Baldwin's Conservative government finally approved the site for a new RAF training range - at Penyerth, near Pwllheli in the Llyn peninsula. Two sites in England - Bude Bay in Northumberland and Abbotsbury, Dorset - had been rejected, following strenuous local opposition. Opposition to the site in Northumberland was based on its historical associations, while the Abbotsbury site was opposed because of an adjacent swannery.

Nationalist resistance to the Penyerth scheme was spontaneous. Caernarfonshire County Committee rejected the plan at once, and the 1935 Plaid conference condemned any new bases in Wales. Although opinion in the Pwllheli area was divided, by the summer of 1936 it was clear that the tide was running against the bombing school, with the local Labour and Liberal parties supporting the Plaid no-base campaign.

In June, a protest letter sent to Prime Minister Baldwin claimed that 1,000 representative bodies in Wales objected to the Penyerth range. Despite the opposition, the government remained obdurate, and Baldwin rejected meeting a delegation to discuss the issue.

At 1.30 a.m. on 8 September 1936 Saunders Lewis and two other leading nationalists entered the camp site and set fire to huts and timber stores. The three then gave themselves up at Pwllheli police station.

The "Fire in Llŷn" made an enormous impact in Wales. The three men now charged and facing trial were well-known, reputable figures - Lewis, a university lecturer with a rising reputation in the literary field; Lewis Valentine, a Baptist minister and scholar; and DJ Williams, a teacher and author. The Western Mail noted that it was the first time for six centuries, since the days of Owain Glyndwr, that charges of



9. Penyerth, destroyed by London government, 1936.

law-breaking had been brought against the protagonists of Welsh freedom.

The subsequent trial at Caernarfon Crown Court proved as spectacular as the burning itself. Large crowds sang outside as the trial went on. Inside the courtroom, Saunders Lewis fenced with the trial judge who became well aware that his court had been successfully turned into a trial of English government in Wales.¹ There was a further shock in store when the jury failed to agree a verdict and the three defendants were feted in the streets outside.

Retribution was soon to be exacted. The Penyerth case was transferred to the Old Bailey in London, where the jury declared their guilty verdict without troubling to retire. The transfer aroused great bitterness. Former Prime Minister David Lloyd George, hostile as he was to the burning, was outraged: "This is the first Government that has tried Wales at the Old Bailey" he wrote from Jamaica to his daughter Megan. "I wish I

PENYBERTH

The Penyberth operation was remarkable for its secrecy and meticulous planning, which bore all the hallmarks of the organisational skills of party general secretary J E Jones.

The identity of those immediately involved apart from the three defendants was kept confidential for many years. The party's leaders took considerable pains to distance J E Jones from direct involvement: they could not afford to have their organiser behind bars at a critical time in the party's history.

It is now known that as well as the defendants a group of four people were immediately responsible for the events of 8 September 1936 — J E Jones, Welsh Nationalist editor Robin Richards, Victor Hampson Jones and O M Roberts, later chairman of Gwynedd county council.

Following release from Wormwood Scrubs, Saunders Lewis was dismissed from his post as a lecturer in Welsh at University College, Swansea, and remained an outcast from 'respectable' academic circles until the 1950s. The other defendants were more fortunate — Lewis Valentine remained a Baptist minister and D J Williams kept his teaching post in Fishguard, Pembrokeshire.

There are many anecdotes about the nine months in Wormwood Scrubs. The three Welsh prisoners chose to attend a French learners' class in order to be able to meet. The ruse was soon discovered — because of Saunders Lewis' fluent French — but the three were allowed to continue with their lessons.

The burning of the bombing schools and the vindictive conduct of Lewis' employers had a profound effect on Welsh-language literature. From now on, it would be difficult to find a writer of substance in Welsh who was not a nationalist; and no major poet would rejoice in Wales' links with England or its shrinking Empire.



10. Saunders Lewis writing his address to the jury in Caernarfon Crown Court — a photograph taken by Dr Gwent Jones in October 1936: “And I claim that, if the moral law counts for anything, the people who ought to be in this dock are the people responsible for the destruction of Penyberth”.

were there and I wish I were forty years younger. I should be prepared to risk a protest that would be a defiance”.² As the three Plaid leaders began a nine-month gaol sentence in Wormwood Scrubs, the cause of Welsh nationalism had never been stronger. The high-handed treatment of the Welsh language during the trials led to a national language petition calling for equal status for Welsh. Organised by Dafydd Jenkins who chronicled the Penyberth saga in *Tân yn Llŷn*, the petition attracted 365,000 signatures and was one of the national movement’s major achievements. It resulted in the first concession to the Welsh language by Westminster - the 1942 Welsh Courts Act.³ The vast rally in Caernarfon of some 12,000 people to welcome the Penyberth three on their release was the biggest such event ever organised by the nationalist party. There was widespread anger at the subsequent dismissal of Saunders Lewis from his post by the University authorities in Swansea.

Penyberth did not produce the revolution in Welsh spirit for which Saunders Lewis had hoped. The apparent increase in popular support for nationalism proved to be of limited duration in the tense run-up to the Second World War. The party itself was too small and lacked sufficient community roots to reap the harvest in terms of seats fought and votes won. But there was another dimension. For the first time in centuries people had suffered for their vision of a free Wales. And that strengthened the backbone of the movement that alone could win Welsh freedom.

¹ *Tân yn Llŷn* by Dafydd Jenkins, Plaid Cymru 1937 and 1975.

² *Lloyd George Family Letters 1885- 1936*, ed. Kenneth O Morgan, University of Wales Press / Oxford University Press, 1973.

³ Gerald Morgan, *The Dragons Tongue*, Triskel Press, 1966.



11. Caernarfon, September 1937 — a crowd of twelve thousand sing to welcome the Penyberth three after their release from Wormwood Scrubs.

WALES AND THE WAR

The Second World War posed a real dilemma for every movement which believed in peace and democracy, and Plaid Cymru was no exception. The paradox is that the party was to emerge in 1945 stronger than ever.

Welsh nationalists had no illusions about the nature of English imperialism; during the carnage of 1914-18 many of them had experienced at first hand the reality of war supposedly fought for the freedom of small nations. They were understandably less ready than some to fall for the same line a second time round.

As international tension mounted, the party's 1935 conference in Ruthin denounced imperialism as the cause of war, and called for the kind of nationalism that upheld the rights of all nations and supported the League of Nations. The party also opposed conscription, on nationalist grounds; and other members resisted on the grounds of pacifism.

Inevitably, however, as the outbreak of war approached, dissent appeared within the party. One of Plaid's founding fathers, Ambrose Bebb, withdrew from party activities because of its 'Wales neutral' policy: despite his previous admiration for the right-wing Action Francaise party Bebb was a trenchant opponent of Nazi Germany and the danger it posed to France and the rest of Europe. In 1937, party members showed clearly where their sympathies lay by voting in support of solidarity with the embattled Basque government, which was fighting a desperate battle against Franco's army. As the war began, some members joined the armed forces, judging that the fight against Fascism outweighed other considerations. Plaid Cymru's attitude to the war was based on the conviction that its duty was the defence of Wales.

Saunders Lewis' 13-year term as party leader came to an end in 1939, although he was to remain in party politics until 1945:



12. War-time cartoon by Dewi Prys Thomas, later Professor of Architecture in University College, Cardiff. *Welsh Nation*, 1944.

his successor JE Daniel shared the same general outlook. For the national movement it was a bleak time: some believed the party ought to go into 'hibernation', while Lewis himself expressed doubts whether the movement could survive the conflict. Membership, newspaper sales, and financial receipts which had risen steeply during the Pen-y-berth campaign fell away after 1958. Doggedly, the nationalist movement held together during the war. Then the tide turned, and from 1942 onwards support and confidence increased. Party summer schools were well-attended. There was even a two-fronted attack on the Plaid leadership from a group of non-Welsh-speaking south Wales members, including Trefor Morgan and Ted Merriman, for failing to contest two parliamentary by-elections in 1942.

An attempt to smear the party as Fascist and under the thumb of the Catholic church - Saunders Lewis was a convert to Catholicism - backfired in style, with party leaders counter-attacking with vigour and confidence. In fact there was a big increase in the number of pamphlets published on a range of issues, including one calling for a Welsh economic development agency similar to Roosevelt's Tennessee Valley Authority.

Nationalists alone were to resist the War Ministry take-over of land in the Epynt mountains of south Breconshire and the transfer of Welsh workers to the Midlands and south-east of England. In 1943 they had the opportunity to test the political temperature once more, in a by-election for the University of Wales constituency.

The party at once chose Saunders Lewis as their candidate and set about the campaign with vigour. The defending Liberals realised that they had no reason for complacency, although a war-time convention meant there would be no opposition from Labour or Conservatives. No-one could forget the treatment Lewis had received at the hands of the University after Pen-y-berth. The Liberal Party fielded as their choice a leading Welsh academic, Professor W] Gruffydd, who had briefly been vice-president of the Nationalist Party - and secured the full support of the Welsh establishment and the *Western Mail*.

Although the result failed to realise Nationalist hopes, with Saunders Lewis gaining 1,330 votes, 22.5 per cent of the poll, the campaign itself proved a tonic for party organisation. Meetings were well attended. "The Blaid is working gloriously - like one great movement", Lewis wrote.

Historian Hywel Davies regards the University by-election as a turning point. Within two years the party was able to fight a record number of Welsh seats - seven constituencies, including three in south Wales; the best the party had done previously was to contest two seats - Caernarfonshire and the University - in 1931. Two by-elections fought earlier in 1945 - admittedly under the wartime political truce - saw JE Daniel poll 24.8 per cent in the Caernarfon Boroughs and young south Wales party organiser Wynne Samuel scoring a remarkable 6,290 votes, 16.2 per cent of the poll in Neath, the party's first ever foray into parliamentary elections in the south.

By the end of the year, the party had chosen a new leader to inherit the mantle of Saunders Lewis. Throughout his



13. Plaid fights the War Office land-grab — a demonstration outside Army headquarters in Shrewsbury.

presidency, Lewis had urged nationalists to respond positively to practical challenges; from now on, they were to do so more effectively, operating for the first time as a real political party. It was in 1945 rather than in 1925, Hywel Davies writes, with this new commitment that the Welsh Nationalist Party confirmed itself as a political party in embryo. Up to that time, it had acted as an affirmation of Welsh nationality, its very existence being a 'call to nationhood'. Conveniently for historians, it was now beginning to refer to itself as Plaid Cymru.



14. South Wales organiser Wynne Samuel (back row, left) with senior party officials during the 1950 summer school in Newport, Gwent. Wynne Samuel joined the staff of Plaid Cymru in 1940 and later became one of the few Plaid Cymru councillors in the late forties when he won a seat on Pontardawe urban district council. An expert on local government and a qualified barrister with a doctorate in law, he was one of Plaid Cymru's leading orators, and helped found the Association of Welsh Community Councils. With him in the back row: J Gwyn Griffiths, D J Williams and Dan Thomas. Front row: J E Jones, Gwynfor Evans and O M Roberts (later chairman of Gwynedd county council, and one of the team involved in the burning of the Penyberth bombing school).

POST-WAR PLAID

Plaid Cymru's new leader was Gwynfor Evans. Elected as party president by the Llangollen summer school in August 1945 at the age of 31, he was destined to put the party firmly on the political map of Britain. The movement he inherited now showed distinct signs of growth potential.

In the general election held a month earlier Plaid's seven candidates polled together over 16,000 votes. Dr Gwenan Jones took 24.5 per cent of the vote in the University seat, with Gwynfor Evans winning 10.3 per cent in Merioneth (the first time for Plaid to fight the seat) and Wynne Samuel holding on to 7.3 per cent in Neath.

The party's first serious venture as an all-Wales movement was followed by the transfer of its headquarters from Caernarfon to Cardiff. It was a significant move. With general secretary J E Jones in the south, Plaid now began its inch-by-inch growth in the Valleys.

A new generation of nationalists were to climb two flights of stairs to the party's new office rented at 8 Queen Street in the centre of Cardiff. Among the staff who moved south, Nans Jones from Treborth near Bangor - for many years the party women's organiser - was to play a key role in co-ordinating organisation in post-war Wales. The party had already been active in the Rhondda under the leadership of Kitchener Davies, Kate Roberts and her husband, Morris Williams, who worked as a printer with Evans and Short. Both 'Kitch' and Morris Williams had contested local elections, and Plaid's new president was soon in action addressing street-corner meetings throughout the Valleys.

The party soon found an opportunity to show its teeth. A by-election at Ogmere in June 1946 saw Plaid Cymru's candidate Trefor Morgan taking over 30 per cent of the vote in a straight fight against Labour.

Plaid Cymru lost no time in pointing to the new Labour government's failure to honour promises made by some of its candidates to set up a Welsh Parliament. In a three-cornered fight in the December 1946 Aberdare by-election, Wynne Samuel collected 7,090 votes, 20 per cent of the vote, pushing the Conservative candidate into third place. The party now threw itself into campaigns to defend Welsh land, organising a spectacular rally on the shores of Llyn-y-fan against the vast tracts of land held by the War Office. Plaid Cymru also fought a Forestry Commission scheme to take over a million acres; after a big rally above Rhandirmwyn in Carmarthenshire the Commission abandoned their first plans for planting in the upper Tywi valley in Carmarthenshire.

Plaid pressure in the mid-1940s - and its new-found hunger to carry the fight to the London parties - pushed Attlee's Labour government into setting up an advisory Council for Wales and Monmouthshire in 1948. But the nationalists were at this stage still too thin on the ground to take full advantage of the momentum built up at the end of the war.

Plaid Cymru again fought seven seats in the general election of February 1950, and took 17,580 votes, while Labour clung on precariously to power in London. But with another election called in October 1951 and with finances strained, the party fielded only four candidates.

By now, Plaid members were embroiled in the move to petition Westminster to set up a Welsh Parliament. The Parliament for Wales campaign, sponsored officially by Undeb Cymru Fydd and which lasted from 1950 to 1956, was also supported by the Liberal and Communist parties and by five Labour MPs. But from the start it was evident that the hard work would have to be done by Nationalists. J E Jones had prepared the ground by organising the first of a series of rallies which were to be held annually by Plaid Cymru for over a quarter of a century. 'A Parliament for Wales in Five Years' was the slogan of the first of these, held in Machynlleth in 1949,



15. Trawsfynydd, 1951 — Gwynfor Evans negotiates with an army officer while Plaid members block the road to the military camp in their two-day vigil. Among those in the front row are Dan Thomas (on the left), R Tudur Jones (and behind him, Waldo Williams), J E Jones (third from left in the front), Glyn James and Dr Pennar Davies.





16. Dr William George hands over the torch to runners en route for the Parliament for Wales rally in Cardiff 1953. Among the runners are Chris Rees (left) and Emrys Roberts (right).

and the biggest took place in Cardiff's Sophia Gardens pavilion in 1953 when S O Davies, Merthyr, became the first Labour MP ever to speak from a Plaid Cymru platform.

But other Labour MPs soon fell by the wayside, and the support of the Liberals - with the exception of the redoubtable Lady Megan Lloyd George, then MP for Anglesey - proved distinctly lukewarm. None of the other 'pro-petition' Liberal MPs - Roderick Bowen (Cardigan), Clement Davies (Montgomery), or Hopkin Morris (Carmarthen)- put in an appearance on campaign platforms.

The main thrust of the Parliament for Wales campaign - the collection of thousands of signatures - began to falter; but the situation was retrieved by Plaid Cymru's Gwynedd organiser Elwyn Roberts, who in 1955 was 'lent' by the party to the

campaign. Elwyn Roberts, Plaid's financial director, soon put his resolve and formidable skills as an organiser to good use. A quarter of a million signatures were collected for the petition which was presented to Parliament on 24 April 1956. Thirty-two thousand of the 240,652 signatures were collected in the Rhondda. If the petition fell on deaf ears in London, the campaign in Wales had a positive spin-off for Plaid Cymru. Gwynfor Evans fought the Aberdare by-election in 1954, taking 16 per cent of the votes Cast. The party went on to fight eleven seats in the general election of 25 May 1955, amassing a new record total of 45,000 votes, with Gwynfor Evans winning over a fifth of the poll in Merioneth.

During the 1950s, it seemed that Plaid Cymru was firmly set on the course of broadening its base as a constitutional national party. It continued to stage protests, such as the blocking of a road at Trawsfynydd for two days in protest against the War Office takeover of land in September 1951. A young Swansea man, Chris Rees, was sentenced to a year's gaol for refusing to do national service on the grounds of being a Welsh nationalist; he had the distinction of being the first Plaid candidate to fight a parliamentary election from a prison cell, winning 4,101 votes (10.6 per cent) in the Gower constituency.

For the first ten years after the War, however, Plaid Cymru seemed embarked on a constitutional, electoral course, a role which its post-war leadership was taking up with increasing confidence.

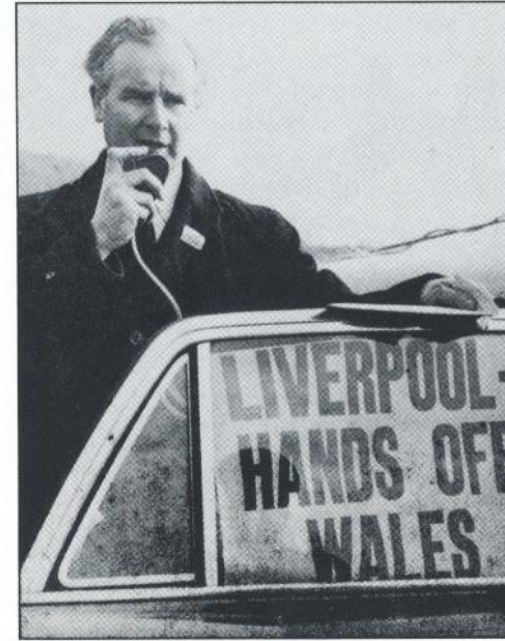
Then the party was abruptly plunged into a bitter struggle with the British government - a fight which was to galvanise the whole of Wales.



17. Two cartoons by Meirion Roberts, Old Colwyn, sum up London government's handling of Wales — exploitation by London party politicians, Alec Douglas-Home, George Brown and Harold Wilson (top), and how to make them sit up — starring Harold Macmillan and Hugh Gaitskell (below).



TRYWERYN



18. The fight for Tryweryn — Gwynfor Evans in action at the opening of the Llyn Celyn reservoir, October 1965.

At the end of 1955, the people of a small village near Y Bala woke to the news that the Liverpool Corporation had announced plans to build a new reservoir in Wales - and drown their homes. Liverpool's scheme involved flooding a substantial part of the Tryweryn valley in Meirionnydd, and the displacement of the Welsh-speaking community of Capel Celyn.

From the moment that the threat to Tryweryn was revealed, Plaid Cymru threw itself into the battle to save the valley. Its success in mobilising Welsh public opinion against the scheme reflected the progress which it had made as a major national pressure group since 1936.

General secretary JE Jones was to write: “Our first big achievement was to get virtually the whole of Wales - local councils (125 of them) and movements of all sorts - to adopt resolutions opposing Liverpool’s plan; all Wales was on our side.”“ Plaid Cymru had already established a local defence committee, and protest meetings were organised in Y Bala and Liverpool. Water was one of Wales’ most precious natural resources, the party argued. Liverpool was drowning a Welsh valley, not to secure necessary drinking water, but rather for industrial purposes. The city already drew extensive supplies of water from the Llanwddyn reservoir which it took without payment - and some of which it resold for a handsome profit.

Gwynfor Evans played a leading role throughout the campaign, carrying the fight to a hostile meeting of Liverpool councillors. The entire population of threatened Capel Celyn - all except a baby less than a year old - marched through the streets of the city in the struggle to save their homes and community.

The Tryweryn campaign won the support of virtually the whole of Wales. For the first time, Plaid Cymru gained the support of Welsh MPs; only one - David Llewellyn, the Conservative member for Cardiff North - was to vote for Liverpool’s private measure on its second reading in the Commons. The party’s efforts secured near-unanimous backing from local organisations all over Wales, in contrast to the Penyberth fight two decades earlier. But Capel Celyn was not to be saved. By pushing through the reservoir bill as a private measure, Liverpool Corporation avoided the need to secure the consent of Welsh local authorities. During the summer of 1957, the Commons passed the Tryweryn bill on its third reading by 175 votes to 79.

It was an object lesson in political realities. Welsh MPs had been outnumbered by English Members. The united voice of Wales was ignored, and the declared wishes of their elected representatives had been flouted. Within the ‘United Kingdom’ Wales was powerless, and would remain so unless it won the right to self-government.

Despite the energy put in to the fight to protect Tryweryn, the campaign and its aftermath led to a period of controversy within Plaid Cymru. The party had adhered to constitutional methods in facing up to Liverpool’s threat; there was no repetition of the symbolic act of the burning of the bombing school. Perhaps this reflected the party’s own growth and its increasing confidence in a dual role as a political party and pressure group.

As the construction gangs moved in on doomed Capel Celyn, some nationalists chose more direct resistance. Two young industrial workers, Dave Pritchard of New Tredegar and David Walters, an underground colliery worker from Bargoed, were discovered draining oil from an electric transformer on the site. They were discharged by Y Bala magistrates in October 1962 after a hearing in which they were defended by a young Wrexham-based solicitor, Elystan Morgan. Emyr Llywelyn Jones, a student, received a one-year gaol sentence for a more serious act of sabotage. From this time, the use of explosives was to grow significantly, as did the appearance of groups openly supporting use of paramilitary tactics, a course of action always strongly condemned by Plaid Cymru.

Tryweryn has remained a potent symbol for Welsh people. The official opening in October 1965 was the scene of a memorable demonstration in which, following the cutting of guy ropes, a marquee descended gracefully on to the big-wigs within.

The issue of Welsh water and its exploitation by outsiders has remained very much a live issue. It is generally identified with Plaid Cymru, an indication of how the national movement was able to project itself as a movement with a message on a range of issues. During the exceptionally dry summer of 1989, the buildings of Capel Celyn were revealed once more; and within a few days nationalist slogans had appeared on their walls. One footnote to Plaid Cymru’s campaign for Tryweryn was not to emerge for another three decades. In 1989, Cabinet papers

released under the thirty-year rule revealed that nationalist pressure had played a decisive role in determining the construction of new steelworks at Llanwern in Gwent. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Heathcote Amory, warned his Cabinet colleagues in a secret memorandum; “There is still great resentment over the support given by the Government to Liverpool’s Bill for flooding part of the Tryweryn valley in Merioneth . . . If the Government were now to stop the building of the stripmill in Wales, criticism of the Government would be greatly intensified and Welsh nationalist feeling aroused. The dangers of such a situation must not be under-rated.”²

‘Remember Tryweryn’ abides as a powerful slogan to this day - a defeat perhaps, but also an inspiration.

¹ *Tros Gymru* by J E Jones, Gwasg John Penry, Swansea 1970.

² *Western Mail*, 2 January 1989.



19. 1955 — Chris Rees is welcomed after his release from Swansea prison by general secretary J E Jones and Gwynfor Evans.



20. Rally in the rain — in Llanuwchllyn, during the Tryweryn campaign. In the picture is Tom Jones (left), later a leading member of Gwynedd county council.



21. Jennie Eirian Davies.

THE ROAD TO CARMARTHEN

It was a full three decades after Lewis Valentine and his gallant six hundred made their mark on Welsh electoral history that the national party fought over half the seats in Wales. In the general election held on 8 October 1959, twenty Plaid candidates gained between them 77,571 votes, an average of close on four thousand votes each. In retrospect, the election marked a significant advance on Plaid Cymru's fortunes as a political force: but the result did not match the heightened expectations of its members. The party had hoped for a better result in Merioneth, where Gwynfor Evans was fighting for the fourth time. His result, 22.9 per cent of the poll, proved to be the best in Wales, a pointer to the growing electoral attraction of the Plaid leader; but the party had hoped for better. A leading Meirionnydd member Tom Jones, Llanuwchllyn, chaired a party commission which identified problems of finance and organisation in its review of the election.

Growth in south Wales was reflected in greater readiness to contest local elections. A Rhondda miner and former party organiser, Glyn James, became one of Plaid's first officially sponsored councillors when he captured a seat in Ferndale in May 1960. Plaid Cymru was steadily widening its support, and taking full advantage of growing disillusion with Labour. The 1959 election showed some quite respectable results in industrial south Wales, where an indigenous nationalism with its own ethos was now beginning to emerge.

One important consequence of Plaid growth was that it now began to exert direct pressure on the Labour Party in its Welsh heartlands. Labour had previously ridden roughshod over demands for greater practical recognition of nationhood. Party leaders in London turned a deaf ear to calls for the appointment of a Secretary of State for Wales. During the Attlee government of 1945-51 concessions were limited to an annual

White Paper on Welsh affairs from 1946, and the setting up of a nominated Welsh Council in 1948. One of the Council's chairmen, a leading trade unionist and Labour member, Huw T Edwards, was to join Plaid Cymru in 1959 and remain a member for some years, partly in protest at the Council's ineffectiveness as an advisory body.

By the late fifties, it was clear that further concessions would be necessary to hold back the growing tide of Welsh nationalism. Concessions from the Tories had already included a Ministry for Welsh Affairs, attached to one of the major government departments, then a Minister of State, the Welsh Grand Committee in Westminster, and recognition of Cardiff as the capital city of Wales. With Plaid Cymru now an organised force waiting in the wings, the London parties could no longer afford to ignore the wishes of Wales. The Labour Party now accepted establishment of a Secretary of State for Wales in their manifesto for the 1964 election. Veteran MP Jim Griffiths became the first Welsh Secretary, and his personal influence helped secure early transfer of solid powers over housing, local government and highways for the new Welsh Office; but without the pressure of Plaid Cymru it is unlikely that this major devolution of power would have occurred in the first place.

Nevertheless, the early 1960s were to prove difficult for Plaid Cymru's leadership, as Gwynfor Evans was to acknowledge} One ginger group within Plaid Cymru - the Belle Vue group, named after an Aberystwyth hotel - advocated direct action to meet 'acts of aggression' such as Tryweryn, and party leaders had to fight to secure defeat of a strongly worded motion at their Llangollen conference in August 1961. Disputes - concerned with tactics and organisation rather than policy - continued throughout the early sixties. The influx of new members from south-east Wales into the ranks of Plaid Cymru was gradually transforming the image of the party. Accommodating this new and impatient generation was no easy task.

Phil Williams, one of the leading new members from the Valleys, records how the national party avoided a split during these difficult years; within two days of a stormy meeting of the executive in 1965, a letter arrived from Gwynfor Evans' home in Llangadog, Carmarthenshire. Phil Williams was to ponder a decade later how many letters like this had held the Blaid together at a difficult time in its history.²

The early sixties marked a decisive change in the organisation of Welsh nationalism. Until 1959, it was generally accepted that Plaid Cymru was to operate as an umbrella for the whole national movement. Apart from the 'non-political' work of Urdd Gobaith Cymru, the Welsh League of Youth, and the National Eisteddfod, the burden of caring for the transmission of the country's identity fell largely upon a single organisation and a handful of people. As the movement grew during the 1950s, so the tensions mounted; with raised expectations on all fronts, everyone expected something different - some, the primacy of the Welsh language, for others direct action in defence of national rights.

The time had come for the national movement to evolve, and during the next fifteen years, a range of organisations were to emerge to play their own specialist role in the struggle for Wales' future.

Perhaps the most significant pointer for the future came in 1962, when Plaid Cymru held its annual summer school at Pontarddulais. Earlier in the year, Saunders Lewis had delivered a radio lecture calling on the movement to "make it impossible to carry on the business of local government or central government without the Welsh language".³ Saunders Lewis had withdrawn from party political activity in 1945; his call was more electrifying for that reason.

Lewis intended Plaid Cymru to be the vehicle for the project he had in mind; but the new generation believed that the time had come for a separate movement. The result was the formation at Pontarddulais of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, the

22. Gwynfor and Rhiannon Evans meet Irish leader Eamon de Valera.



Welsh Language Society, which was to become one of the most successful pressure groups in Europe. Soon it would move from under the umbrella of the party, and acquire its own identity and vigorous style of campaign.

Since 1962, the growth of other parallel movements has strengthened the national cause. The Welsh schools' movement, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, the Welsh pop industry pioneered by Sain Cyf, and later on media companies have all emerged to play their own specialist role in a widening spectrum. Plaid Cymru, despite losing the energies of some of those involved in other spheres, gained from this process. Its role as a political party was becoming clearer. The 1965 Machynlleth summer school adopted detailed policies on the

shape of Welsh local government, advocating 21 'most-purpose' authorities together with neighbourhood councils for all communities.

In 1964, nationalist candidates contested 23 seats, a new record, with general election campaigns for the first time in Brecon and Radnor, Merthyr Tydfil, and Montgomery. But the overall share of the poll was reduced - from 10.3 per cent in 1959 to 8.4 per cent in 1964.

Two years later, the party secured a similar share of the poll in the election on 31 March 1966 which returned a Labour government with a working majority (8.7 per cent across 20 constituencies). Both results were felt to be disappointing; although a marked swing to Plaid was registered in Carmarthen where Gwynfor Evans was now fighting in his home constituency.

Some commentators have interpreted the election results and the growth of parallel movements as evidence of drift and fragmentation? This is a judgment strongly resisted by observers such as Phil Williams, who points to Plaid Cymru's changed role and its evolution as a party of the whole of Wales. The size of the vote in a Westminster election was probably not a good guide to its underlying growth. The swing to Labour in both elections made it harder to sustain the nationalist vote and break new ground.

One acid test was Plaid's clearly increased stamina. In 1951, a second general election within two years had necessitated a drastic cut-back in the number of seats fought. By 1966, the party could take a similar challenge in its stride despite the defection of a leading member, Elystan Morgan, later Labour MP for Cardigan 1966-1974 and a government minister. It had evolved into a political party - though it had not escaped growing pains in the process.

One small landmark in the party's history was its first party political broadcast in 1965. For its first forty years of existence, Plaid Cymru had faced an almost total broadcasting blackout. A proposal by the National Broadcasting Council for Wales to

23. Party officials at a rally in Rhos in 1953: Gwynfor Evans, Emrys Roberts, Glenwen Evans, Nans Jones and Glyn James. Standing at the back is Elwyn Roberts - Plaid's anchor man who held the movement to its course as post-war finance director and chief organiser.



allow a series of local party broadcasts, including provision for Plaid Cymru, was vetoed by the government in 1955 - with the connivance of the Labour party.

More serious was the gag on news and current affairs coverage, best exemplified early in the party's history by a notorious BBC decision in 1931 to axe a scheduled radio talk by Saunders Lewis. The broadcast was published by the party as the Banned Wireless Talk on Welsh nationalism.

During the 1950s, the party began hitting back - with an illegal pirate radio station which tuned into television frequencies at close-down. Radio Free Wales, which was particularly active in the Valleys, moved round frequently to avoid detection.

Plaid's success in raising its flag in most parts of Wales was a tonic in itself for many of its veteran members. But no-one could have guessed how soon its first big breakthrough was to come.

¹ Bywyd Cymro by Gwynfor Evans.

² Voice from the Valleys by Phil Williams, published by Plaid Cymru, 1981.

³ Tynged yr Iaith, BBC radio lecture broadcast on 13 February 1962.

⁴ For example, Alan Butt Philip, The Welsh Question, 1975, Oxford University Press.

WALES' FIRST WIN

In May 1966 news came of the death of Labour's Carmarthen MP Lady Megan Lloyd George, daughter of former Prime Minister David Lloyd George and a prominent supporter of the Parliament for Wales campaign during the fifties. Lady Megan, a formidable personality, had previously sat for the Liberals in Anglesey before her return to Westminster as MP for Carmarthen in 1957.

The by-election found Plaid Cymru in a buoyant mood, despite the pinning back of their overall vote in the general election the previous March. The protracted campaign to save Tryweryn had raised national consciousness, and at the beginning of the year Plaid morale was boosted by the gift of two thousand pounds from a founder-member Dr DJ Williams, one of the Penyberth Three. 'D J' had donated the entire proceeds of the sale of Penrhwi, his home at Rhydcymerau, Carmarthenshire, immortalised in his book *Hen Dy Fferm*.

Carmarthen was by no means easy territory for Plaid Cymru - at the end of the Second World War there were only a handful of members in the area. Not until 1955 did the party field a general election candidate - Jennie Eirian Davies, later editor of *Y Faner*, who contested a by-election in the seat two years later. Throughout the 1950s, Plaid's share of the poll was lower than in the neighbouring industrial constituency of Llanelli - fought three times in a row by Eirwyn Morgan, during his time as a minister at Bancffosfelen. As the party geared itself up for a summer campaign, it was conscious of starting from third place - some 10,000 votes behind Labour and 8,000 short of the Liberals, both of whom were fielding able candidates. Labour's candidate was Gwilym Prys Davies, while Hywel Davies stood for the Liberals. Harold Wilson's Labour government, returned to power in March, continued to retain its lead in public opinion polls.



24. How the Press saw it — some of the headlines which followed the Carmarthen by-election of 14 July 1966.

But Plaid Cymru had a trump card to play. Their leader Gwynfor Evans was already in place as candidate. Evans had bucked the trend of the recent general election by pushing up Plaid's share of the vote in the constituency to 16.1 per cent. A member of Carmarthenshire County Council since 1949, he had a strong local profile.

Nationalists now threw themselves into what was to become a historic campaign. During the previous decade the local party had grown in effectiveness - especially since the key post of constituency secretary was taken up by Montgomery-born lecturer Cyril Jones. Their energetic campaign was boosted by members from other parts of Wales. They had at their disposal an impressive range of election literature inspired by novelist Islwyn Ffowc Elis. The far-flung villages and farms of 'Shir Gar' were canvassed effectively for the first time. A remarkable number of Plaid's workers were young people - and the spirit of the sixties was abroad. Reports came back of parents switching their allegiance to Plaid in response to arguments on the hearth. "Erom the beginning there was the scent of victory in the summer air", said Phil Williams.¹ Despite the unmistakable signs of a Plaid bandwagon and an electrifying eve-of-poll meeting in Carmarthen's Lyric cinema, Gwynfor Evans himself doubted predictions that he would win. This was by now his eighth parliamentary campaign; in only two previous encounters had he held his deposit.

But the result, announced to an ecstatic crowd outside Carmarthen's Guild Hall in the early hours, showed that he had pulled off a sensational victory. 'Wales Wins Carmarthen' said the *Daily Mail* headline. Another newspaper said that it was 'The Day the Celts Came in from the Cold' while - ultimate accolade - news of the by-election even appeared on the front page of Pravda!

As a mammoth celebratory motorcade set off across the Black Mountains, political observers realised that Welsh politics would never be the same again. For all the ups and downs that would follow, Plaid Cymru had now proved it was a force to be reckoned with. A credibility barrier had been surmounted. More than ever, the London parties were forced to take Wales seriously. The Carmarthen by-election - held on Bastille Day, 14 July 1966 - would go down in history.

Gwynfor Evans took his seat in Westminster as the first Plaid Cymru Member of Parliament the following Wednesday, to the

cheers and singing of hundreds of nationalist supporters who travelled to London. His entry into the Commons led to an immediate clash when he was prevented from taking the oath in Welsh. The Plaid MP's first question to the Prime Minister was whether he would set up a parliament for Wales. The answer of course was 'No' - and Harold Wilson went on to say, rightly enough, that there was only one member of the House of Commons who had a mandate to secure a Welsh parliament. Gwynfor Evans was shortly to perfect the technique of asking hundreds of parliamentary questions, for oral and written answer, many of which were published by the party in a series of 'Black Papers' on Wales.

The impact of Carmarthen was felt throughout Wales - and beyond. The victory was widely regarded as a national event, and welcomed by people who had no connections with the party. It led to a surge of new members and had a powerful knock-on effect, which boosted Plaid's electoral fortunes. Scottish Nationalists found that Carmarthen boosted their own campaign in the Hamilton by-election. An interesting postscript came later on when the government announced the site of the new multi-million Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre. Curiously enough, it was to be located in Morriston near Swansea - just down the road from the scene of Welsh nationalism's biggest triumph.

¹ Voice from the Valleys, op cit.

THE VALLEYS STIR

The dust of Carmarthen had hardly settled before a resurgent Plaid Cymru showed its mettle in Labour's Valley heartlands.

Within nine months of Gwynfor Evans' victory, the people of the Rhondda West constituency came close to unseating Labour in one of their safest seats - with Plaid candidate Vic Davies coming within 2,300 votes of winning a by-election held in March 1967.

The shock for the Labour Establishment was profound. If seats like Rhondda West were to tumble, then Labour's grip on its fourteen Valley seats and other constituencies would be in grave jeopardy. Plaid Cymru had to be stopped - so the Wilson government moved quickly. This time it was the Royal Mint, no less, which was shifted to Llantrisant, amid howls of protest from its London workforce - and comments by a prominent Labour local council leader, T Dan Smith, that north-east England would benefit from a good dose of Welsh nationalism!

Plaid's advance was a tonic for Scottish nationalists. The following November, Mrs Winifred Ewing scored a major triumph by winning the Hamilton by-election for the SNP - which in turn boosted Plaid Cymru who now faced the prospect of an exciting by-election tussle in Caerffili during the summer of 1968. The candidate was one of its rising young generation, Bargoed-born Dr Phil Williams who had a growing reputation as a physicist and space scientist.

Phil Williams grasped the opportunity of the Caerffili constituency to spell out Plaid Cymru's policies for a free Wales including a detailed economic strategy which was in sharp contrast to the dismal lack of vision evident in the Labour governments 'plan'. Labour's record in government - so different from its promises in opposition - also came in for

25. Gwynfor Evans takes Plaid's first seat in Westminster.



scrutiny. At one stage during the late sixties pit closures in Wales were running at the rate of one every seven weeks.

Once more, the Labour Party struggled home after an all-out battle. The spectacle of the 400-vehicle Plaid motorcade winding through the Rhymney Valley is one of the abiding television images of the sixties in Wales. This time, the Labour majority was slashed to 1,874 from the massive 21,000 margin over the Tories in the election two years before.

The concerted surge of Welsh and Scottish nationalism clearly demanded more than the embarrassing dispatch of a few goodies to placate the rebellious Celts - although reprieve of the threatened Penallta colliery followed swiftly in the wake of the by-election.

At the end of the year, Harold Wilson's government announced the setting up of a Royal Commission, to be chaired by a distinguished economist, Lord Geoffrey Crowther. The Commission would be asked to suggest constitutional changes, required to meet the needs of the 'several countries, nations and regions of the United Kingdom'.

Appointment of a Royal Commission remains a classic Establishment tactic to head off pressure for radical change. Most commissions could be relied upon to take years to produce their report. By the time their recommendations appeared, they could often be safely left to gather dust. Fate, however, was to determine a very different outcome for the Commission's report, when it eventually appeared? Fresh from its by-election tussles, Plaid Cymru made full use of the platform provided by the Royal Commission. The party's own constitutional proposals were ratified by a special conference held in the Temple of Peace, Cardiff, on 7 March 1970 before presentation to the Commission. The plans drawn up by an expert panel, including a number of distinguished Welsh lawyers, advocated a two-chamber Parliament for Wales, elected by proportional representation. England, Wales and Scotland would each be fully self-governing countries, cooperating within a 'Britannic Confederation' with joint boards administering matters of common concern, such as transport.

Plaid also presented the Crowther Commission with its massively detailed Economic Plan for Wales. This was the work of the party's Research Group, which had been founded in 1966 and whose leading members included the plan's co-authors, Dr Phil Williams and the party's newly adopted candidate for Merioneth, Mr Dafydd Wigley, who had a strong background in industry. Lord Crowther was to find the economic plan - which had taken three years to prepare - an impressive document. The core of the Plaid blueprint was based on work on an 'input-output' matrix analysis of the Welsh economy supervised by a leading Welsh economist, Professor Edward Nevin - work which had apparently been ignored by the Labour government in drawing up Wales.- The Way Ahead.

The Plaid plan aimed to provide employment within reasonable travelling distance of all Welsh communities. It did so by analysing and targetting growth industries. An attractive



26. Plaid Cymru's team giving evidence to the Royal Commission on the Constitution at the City Hall, Cardiff, in 1969. At the table: Chris Rees, Dewi Watcyn Powell, Gwynfor Evans MP, Dafydd Williams, Phil Williams and Dafydd Wigley.

infrastructure would be provided by a series of major and minor industrial parks, served by key communications and back-up in the shape of industrial education and common facilities. A powerful development authority would play a key role in attracting and setting up new industry.

Plaid Cymru's Economic Plan for Wales was deliberately printed in looseleaf form. The authors recognised that their strategy would have to be modified in response to changing economic circumstances. Since then the oil price hike of the middle seventies, reduced growth in many western countries and the 'greenhouse effect' greatly changed the basic parameters. Nevertheless Plaid Cymru's Economic Plan for Wales remains the only serious attempt to work out a

THE PRESSURE MOUNTS

Not every party leader would sit down to write a history book within months of losing a seat in Parliament. But on Christmas Day 1970, Gwynfor Evans sketched the first notes for *Aros Mae*¹, a history of Wales. By the summer *Aros Mae* was in the bookshops and deft salesmanship by party organisers ensured that a second edition was soon in hand. An English language version, *Land of My Fathers*, ran to four editions. Two glossy full colour pictorial booklets by Gwynfor Evans on the history of Wales, in Welsh and English, were produced by the South Wales Echo, not hitherto renowned for its advocacy of the Welsh cause.

Gwynfor Evans seldom lost an opportunity to press home the importance of Wales knowing about its own past. A century of imposed English-dominated education had succeeded in obliterating knowledge of real national history from the minds of generations of Welsh children. Recovering a knowledge of their roots was vital for a renewal of the national identity and confidence of the people of Wales. During the 1980s Plaid Cymru was to seek to establish 16 September as Glyndwr Day - recalling the day in 1400 when Owain Glyndwr was proclaimed Prince of Wales in Glyndyfrdwy at the beginning of a fifteen-year war of independence. The 1970s too were soon to prove a tumultuous decade for Plaid Cymru. In 1972, the party faced their first major electoral test since the general election. The Merthyr by-election was brought about by the death of the redoubtable S O Davies. 'S O' was a stalwart supporter of the Parliament for Wales campaign who had defended his seat as an Independent against an official Labour candidate; to that party's considerable chagrin, he had won in style, with a little help from the local rugby club!

With Edward Heath's Tory government holding the keys of Number Ten, most observers felt that the Labour Party could

upstage Plaid by resuming its traditional role as the channel for Welsh grievance. One Valleys MP boasted that Plaid Cymru would be 'buried'.

But Plaid was not to oblige - thanks to the brilliant campaign fought by Emrys Roberts, who gave up a top public sector job to fight the election. Emrys Roberts was no stranger to Welsh politics. A former member of the party's Cardiff staff, he was already a seasoned campaigner, who had been fielded in by-elections at Newport in 1956 and Ebbw Vale in 1960. A gifted publicist and organiser, he had followed JE Jones as party general secretary between 1962 and 1964 and was recognised as one of Wales' leading orators.

Emrys Roberts' return to the political stage as candidate for Merthyr electrified Plaid Cymru. Despite pitiless weather, party members worked with a will in a noholds-barred campaign organised with panache by Aberdare councillor Glyn Owen.

Emrys Roberts' 37 per cent share of the Merthyr poll was to prove a critical factor in maintaining Plaid Cymru's momentum during the middle of the decade. Despite Labour's role as opposition to the Tory government, and a revival in the fortunes of the Liberals, Plaid Cymru succeeded in keeping its hold on much of the support gained during the surge of the late sixties.²

When Ted Heath dissolved Parliament early in 1974 after a miners' dispute to fight an election on the slogan 'Who Governs Britain?', Plaid Cymru was once again able to field candidates in all 36 seats in Wales. The election was fixed for Thursday 28 February, so the result - appropriately enough for Plaid Cymru - emerged in the early hours of St David's Day, when for the first time the party scored gains in a United Kingdom general election.

One of the wins was in Caernarfon - the seat which, with boundary changes, had been fought in every election since 1929. Here Dafydd Wigley finally wrested the seat from Labour with a 1,728 majority. But the honours for the first Plaid win

comprehensive and detailed strategy for the country's development, and indicates just how far the national party had progressed during the 1960s.

The party's new-found mastery of economics clearly rattled the Labour government. Welsh Secretary George Thomas commissioned a study of Welsh public accounts - a bid to show the abject dependence of Wales on London government. The study turned out to be a boomerang - showing that Wales was actually paying an annual budget surplus of £143 million into the Exchequer. Plaid Cymru demanded that a copy should be placed in every post office - needless to say, not a request which found favour in Westminster - and no such study was carried out again!

Meanwhile the growth and increasing effectiveness of the Welsh language society, Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, was bringing a new form of pressure to bear on London government. Within three years of its formation, Cymdeithas yr Iaith was engaged in unconstitutional but non-violent action - a sit-down on Trefechan bridge in Aberystwyth highlighted demand for court summonses in Welsh. Hundreds of young people were to suffer prison sentences in their struggle to secure the future of the Welsh language. The society succeeded in winning bilingual road fund licences. By the late sixties, the fight for the language was reaching a new intensity; another victory in wresting bilingual road signs from the government was gained only after a bitter struggle.

In the early hours of Sunday, 7 March 1966, a massive explosion caused serious damage to equipment at the site of the Clywedog reservoir in Montgomeryshire - another Welsh valley which was to be drowned, this time by Birmingham. It was to be the first of a series of such incidents, the work of a small group who remained active for several years. Together with the anything-but-secret activities of the colourful Free Wales Army, these events frequently captured the headlines. At the same time, plans for the investiture of Prince Charles at Caernarfon went ahead with the ardent approval of George



27. Vic Davies, who fought the Rhondda West by-election, at Cambrian Colliery, 1967.

Thomas, later Lord Tonypanfy, who was Secretary of State for Wales from 1968 to 1970. The investiture was staged partly in the hope that Welsh nationalism would be engulfed in a tide of royalist sentiment.

Many observers felt that the stormy events of the late sixties were damaging for Plaid Cymru, despite the party's outright condemnation of violence and its decision to expel from the party anyone advocating the use of violent means.

In the wake of its by-election successes, Plaid Cymru's executive decided on fighting all Welsh seats in the 1970 general election. Gwynfor Evans was determined to show that Plaid Cymru was an all-Wales party. The outcome was the party's highest-ever poll - 175,016 votes, 12.5 per cent of the total. But the party was unable to hold Carmarthen, which Labour recaptured with a majority of 3,907. At the time, nationalists felt disappointed. In retrospect, however, the 1970 election can be seen to be a considerable achievement. The party had showed in the Carmarthen by-election that it could win seats. Now it was capable of carrying its tight to all parts of the country.

¹Wales: The Way Ahead, Cmnd 5334. HMSO, 1967.

²In October 1973 (Cmnd 5460). The chair of the Commission had been taken over by Lord Kilbrandon in March 1971 following Lord Crowther's death.

declared go to Merioneth, where an ecstatic crowd in Dolgellau acclaimed the victory of a 27-year old lecturer, Dafydd Elis Thomas.

Meanwhile eighty miles south in Carmarthen tension mounted as news leaked out that the result was going to be desperately close. The first declaration put Gwynfor Evans ahead of Labour MP Gwynoro Jones by two votes - the next showed him losing by one! After counting resumed at noon the next day, the final result showed just three votes lay between the Plaid leader and victory. Quite a few people bitterly reproached themselves for not having made it to the polling station!

Gwynfor Evans declined to press for a further count despite the desperately close finish. By Friday afternoon, it was clear that Harold Wilson and the Labour Party would form the next government - but only just. Another election was likely - and how better to fight it in Carmarthen from just three votes behind?

And so it proved. Harold Wilson sought to extend his majority by calling a second election in October. While Labour gained votes almost everywhere, Carmarthen returned Gwynfor Evans in triumph to Westminster with a 3,640 majority. He now led a team of three in the Commons - both Plaid MPs in Gwynedd had increased their majorities.

And Plaid was not alone. The Scottish National Party captured 30 per cent of the Scottish vote in October 1974 and now had a team of eleven MPs in Westminster. Fourteen representatives of Scottish and Welsh nationalism now sat on the benches of the House of Commons - and the Labour Government, its majority still precarious, was forced to sit up and take notice.

¹ Aros Mae (They Still Abide), a reference to a well-known poem.

² The result was Ted Rowlands (Labour) 15,562 (48.4%), Emrys Roberts (Plaid Cymru) 11,852 (36.7%), Christopher Barr (Con) 2,366 (7.3%), Arthur Jones (Comm) 1519 (5.5%), Arthur Donaldson (Lib) 765 (2.1%).



28. A special train packed with Plaid supporters heads for Westminster after Gwynfor Evans wins Carmarthen in the October 1974 election.

Gwynfor Evans, Welsh nationalism's first winner and leader of Plaid Cymru for over three decades exerted a lasting influence on the politics of Wales.

Although both his parents were from Carmarthenshire, Gwynfor Evans was born in September 1912 in the Anglicised town of Barry, Glamorgan, and English was the language of his home in Somerset Road. It was during his teens that love of Wales and the Welsh language displaced his passion for cricket and hockey and became the dominant influence in his life.

Gwynfor Evans' leadership combined a determined advocacy of Welsh freedom with quiet personal demeanour. As *The Times* observed, his natural diffidence marked a tough fibre. He found little personal satisfaction in the proceedings of Carmarthenshire County Council or the politicking of the House of Commons. But his stamina was prodigious; he was to contest thirteen parliamentary elections, beginning with Merioneth in 1945. His nationalism was firmly based on his Christian values - he was a leading member of the Welsh Independent Church - and a deep belief in peace.

He shared with Saunders Lewis an appreciation of the value of community as distinct from the state, and a whole-hearted commitment to Wales' civilisation and the Welsh language. His insistence on underlining the importance of the history of Wales is analogous to Saunders Lewis' determination to create an independent public opinion: no short-term pay-off perhaps, but both approaches aimed at creating a new generation of nationalists.

Educated in Barry County School, University College, Aberystwyth, and St John's College, Oxford, Gwynfor

Evans' destined career as a lawyer was halted by the gathering clouds of the Second World War. A convinced pacifist, he served in the difficult role of secretary of the association of Welsh pacifists between 1939 and 1945 and his resolute opposition to conscription led to an appearance before a tribunal. But the expected prison sentence was not imposed; and rather than pursuing a lucrative career in law at a time of war Gwynfor Evans moved to Wernellyn farm in Llangadog, Carmarthenshire, to work on a family market gardening business.

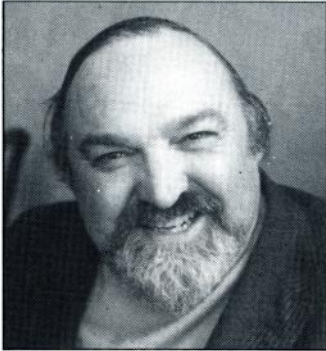
It was in Wernellyn and later in Talar Wen, Llangadog, that the future leader of the nationalist party made his home, marrying Rhiannon, daughter of leading party member Dan Thomas, on St Davids Day 1941. His own membership of Plaid Cymru dates from 1934, after doubts about the viability of a free Wales were dissolved by DJ Davies' *The Economics of Self Government*.

Election as president of Plaid Cymru in succession to Saunders Lewis, Jac Daniel and Abi Williams, came in August 1945. From that time he was to play a dominant role within the national movement. His own hands-on style of leadership reflected the changing role of Plaid Cymru and its increasing level of activity.

Gwynfor Evans' victory in the Carmarthen by-election gave Plaid Cymru what it greatly needed forty years after its foundation - credibility as a political party. With the Carmarthen win and the victory in securing a Welsh television channel in 1980 Gwynfor Evans displayed one of his great gifts - that of making possible what had previously seemed impossible. It was a profound gift for a nation which had lost its freedom centuries before.

29. The Carmarthen by-election proved an inspiration for Welsh culture as well as the country's political life. It marked the beginning of a more positive attitude towards the Welsh language and greater confidence in the concept of Wales as a nation.

The event was celebrated by Harri Webb (left), a leading Anglo-Welsh poet, in his 'Ballad for the Fourteenth of July', recited at the Maesteg summer school the following month by



Eisteddfod-winner Eurig Wyn and published in the September 1966 issue of *Welsh Nation*.

In July 1986 Plaid Cymru celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Penyberth incident and the twentieth anniversary of the Carmarthen by-election in twin rallies at Pwllheli and Carmarthen (below).



A ballad of the fourteenth of July

When Gwynfor got in for Carmarthen,
Old Merlin was roused by our roar,
And we sang the National Anthem
As it's never been sung before.

In the Square before the Guildhall
We gathered two thousand strong,
And as far as Abergwili
They could hear the triumphal song.

And around us were the thousands
Of patriots near and far
Who had played their part in the battle
When Gwynfor got in for Shir Gar.

The Lord Rhys rode with Rebecca,
And Princess Gwenllian came
At the head of a host of heroes
Long fallen without a name.

There was singing in Pantycelyn,
And a prayer at Blaenycloed,
For we'd learnt from Llanddowror the lesson
That freedom can't be destroyed.

Tryweryn flowed into the Tywi,
And Clywedog flood came down
To burst the dams of betrayal
That night in Carmarthen town.

And the snarling ranks of treason
Slunk away with many a curse
In the dawn of right and reason
As they clambered aboard their hearse.

When Gwynfor got in for Carmarthen
The summer night was sweet,
The breeze blew in from the hayfields
And the people danced in the street.

Harri Webb
(Gŵyrfab)

UPS AND DOWNS

Plaid Cymru's MPs were soon to show their skill. During the 1966-70 Parliament Gwynfor Evans had been obliged to use the Commons principally as a means of gaining publicity for the cause of Wales. Now with a strong Nationalist group in a parliament with no clear majority, Plaid MPs proved adept at extracting valuable advances for Wales. During the 1974-9 Parliament they could claim credit for the upgrading of the Welsh Development Agency with its £100 million budget, a promise to set up a Welsh-language television channel, greater security for agricultural tenants' children, and a £3 million concession on Welsh water bills. Compensation for dust disease sufferers in the quarries was another prize Plaid Cymru gained at the very end of the life of the 1974-9 Labour government.

But the biggest result of the Nationalist advance seemed to be the promise of elected Assemblies for Scotland and Wales. The weakness of the Labour government meant it could not afford to shelve the findings of the Royal Commission on the Constitution which had reported in 1973. The resulting devolution debate was to be a central issue for the Wilson and Callaghan governments - albeit one which would result in a major check for the hopes of Wales.

The middle seventies also witnessed a historic breakthrough by Plaid Cymru on Wales' local councils - and in the valleys of Glamorgan and Gwent rather than in rural and Welsh-speaking areas. During the sixties and seventies the party had won and clung on to a number of precarious footholds in the Valleys, thanks to a number of outstanding personalities, such as Glyn James in the Rhondda and Ted Merriman in the Ogmore valley.

Now the increase in party membership since the *annus mirabilis* of 1966 was beginning to work its way through. The number of local branches had increased. Rhanbarth



30. Plaid's Westminster trio — the three MPs, Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon), Gwynfor Evans (Carmarthen) and Dafydd Elis Thomas (Merioneth) soon after the October 1974 general election.

(constituency or area) committees now covered most of Wales. Plaid was becoming more localised, and members' energies were increasingly focussed on working within their own community.

During the summer of 1975, the party pulled off a string of notable by-election wins in Mid Glamorgan - including a seat on Merthyr borough council won by Emrys Roberts in the Troedryhiw area. But no-one expected the triumph which was to follow in the 1976 local elections. In the early hours of 7 May party headquarters staff could hardly believe their ears when a local radio station claimed that Plaid had won control of the Labour stronghold of Merthyr. It soon became clear that Nationalists would also form the administration of the Rhymni Valley, just two seats short of an absolute majority.

Many of Plaid's gains were to be forfeited three years later when the seats won had to be defended on the same day as the

general election, although analysis showed that in most cases the Plaid vote had actually increased. Nevertheless, the fact remained that Plaid Cymru had demonstrated it could win and run local authorities - another significant landmark in the party's long trek towards a free Wales.

The mid-1970s marked a high point in the morale of the movement. The party's appeal to buy a new national headquarters was well-timed - even if the precise timing was helped by a notice to quit the office in Number 8, Queen Street! Altogether, £46,000 was raised to purchase and refurbish a three-storey building in 51 Cathedral Road, Cardiff - a sum raised by the dedicated effort of a few key party members including Dafydd Wigley and chairman Eurfyl ap Gwilym. One leading broadcaster in Cardiff had the questionable misfortune to be visited twice in the same night, and concluded that perhaps Plaid Cymru was buying two offices! Plaid's headquarters staff took possession of their new office, mortgage free, during August 1977.

Yet despite the undoubted nationalist advances of the seventies, there were some ominous signs. From the beginning it was clear that the Labour party was split down the middle on its commitment to establishing elected assemblies for Wales and Scotland. As the devolution legislation ground its way through the Commons, anti-assembly Labour MPs joined the Tories in sabotaging their own government's policy. When Neil Kinnock's group of MPs savaged the Wales Bill, the government's lack of commitment was shown by the absence of any disciplinary action. During the referendum itself, it became clear that most Labour MPs and councillors bitterly opposed the Assembly proposals, which were rejected on 1 March 1979 by a 4 to 1 majority. Scottish voters backed the plans for a more powerful, legislative Assembly, but not by the margin demanded by the anti-devolutionists in Westminster.

The first sustained attempt to wrest self-government from London had ended in failure. And Wales would have a heavy price to pay.



31. Party staff take a break from the 1977 conference on the prom at Aberystwyth (from left to right): Gwyneth Evans and Linda Williams (Carmarthen), Gwerfyl Arthur (HQ), Enid Mummery (Anglesey), Nans Jones (women's organiser), Gwenda Williams (Caernarfon), Heulwen Huws (Westminster). Back row: Leslie Davies (HQ), Peter Hughes Griffiths (Carmarthen), Dafydd Williams (HQ), Phil Davies (Ceredigion), Elfed Jones (Clwyd) and Elfed Roberts (Merioneth).



THE THATCHER YEARS

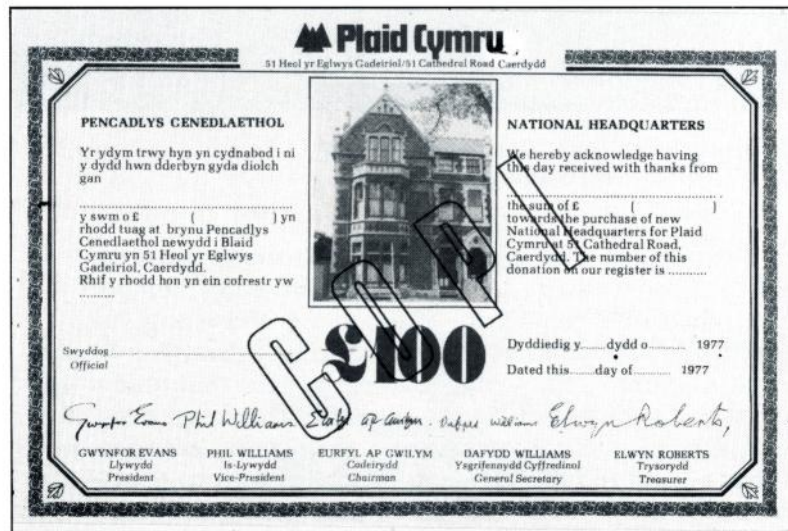
32. (opposite) Plaid Cymru candidates, agents and organisers meet in Llandrindod to prepare for the 1979 general election: Front row, from left: Eric Roberts, Gruffydd ab Gwent, Eifion Thomas, Siân Meredudd, Dafydd Elis Thomas, Phil Williams, Gwynfor Evans, Eurfyl ap Gwilym, Dafydd Wigley, Michael Jones, Ron Dawe. Second row: Richard Fattorini, Heini Gruffydd, Aubrey Thomas, Viv John, Owen John Thomas, Emyr Price, Hywel Roberts, Phil Richards, Glyn James, Bill Hyde, John L Williams, Phil Davies, John Rogers, Jim Rees, John Dixon, Ray Kane, Huw Phillips. Third row: Dafydd Williams, Gwyn Jones, Enid Mummery, Gwerfyl Arthur, Dafydd Huws, Vaughan Roderick, John Arwyn, Maldwyn Lewis, Frank Evans. Back row: Elfed Roberts, Don Morgan, Huw Roberts, Syd Morgan, Chris Franks, Aled Gwyn, Malcolm Parker, Peter Hughes Griffiths, Eurig Wyn.

During the Assembly referendum campaign, ex-leader Saunders Lewis warned in a letter to the Western Mail that a No vote would result in jobs lost in Wales. London government would not treat the Welsh with healthy respect if they showed that they lacked the guts to run their own affairs.

In fact the first blow fell before the referendum ballot boxes were opened. With the voting over, the British Steel Corporation felt emboldened enough by opinion poll predictions to announce savage cuts in employment in Welsh plants. It was the opening salvo in a series of post-referendum blows which would include the virtual destruction of the Welsh coal industry.

One consequence of the treachery of Welsh anti-Assembly MPs headed by Neil Kinnock was the return to power of the Tories led by Margaret Thatcher. Unable to deliver a Scottish Assembly, James Callaghan's Labour government was narrowly defeated in a vote of no confidence originally tabled by the SNP. Plaid Cymru's MPs, unlike their Scottish Nationalist colleagues, voted to keep the Callaghan government in power; they shrewdly secured a new deal for dust disease victims in the Welsh quarries as the price for their support. The election was held on 3 May 1979. It was soon apparent that the Labour government, weakened by a series of industrial disputes during the 1978-9 'winter of discontent' had been defeated. England had voted in the Conservatives - Wales and Scotland were therefore to endure a Tory government, this time led by a very different sort of Prime Minister.

For Plaid Cymru the election could have been much worse, fought as it was barely four months after the Assembly referendum. The two Gwynedd MPs held Caernarfon and Merioneth. But an increase in the Conservative share of the vote at Carmarthen, from six to 23 per cent, aided by a



33. A stake in the future of Wales — copy of the shares issued by Plaid Cymru in the successful drive to buy new headquarters in Cathedral Road, Cardiff.

misleading opinion poll commissioned by BBC Wales, led to the capture of the seat by Labour. And Plaid's share of the poll in industrial south-east Wales also declined. In the local elections, held on the same day as the general election, the Plaid vote held up well; but the higher turnout produced an increased Labour vote, wiping out many of the gains of 1976.

For nationalists with a yen for statistics, the first-ever direct elections for the European Parliament held in June 1979 held out a crumb of comfort: on a lower turnout the four Plaid candidates gained a considerably greater share of the poll - 11.7 per cent, fractionally higher than the previous highest percentage poll in the 1970 Westminster election. The European vote was a pointer to an important future trend - but that was little consolation for the disappointment of the Assembly referendum and the loss of Gwynfor Evans' seat at Carmarthen.

A sombre meeting of the party National Council held at Llandrindod the same month established a five-member Commission of Inquiry "to consider and report back on the position of Plaid Cymru following the Referendum and elections of 1979 and on the steps that need to be taken to facilitate the attainment of Plaid Cymru's goals".

The setting up of the commission reflected concern that the party's own successes in the sixties and seventies had not succeeded in advancing the cause of self-government for Wales. The commission accepted that there was no easy road to national freedom. Its main report, signed by four of the members, believed that the party had become too preoccupied with elections and Westminster-based politics. Phil Williams in a separate report expressed concern that Plaid was retreating to Welsh-speaking areas.² The party's 1981 conference at Carmarthen was later to accept the advocacy of 'community socialism' - which the commissioners stressed was in sharp contrast to the 'state centralism and British imperialism' of the Labour Party.



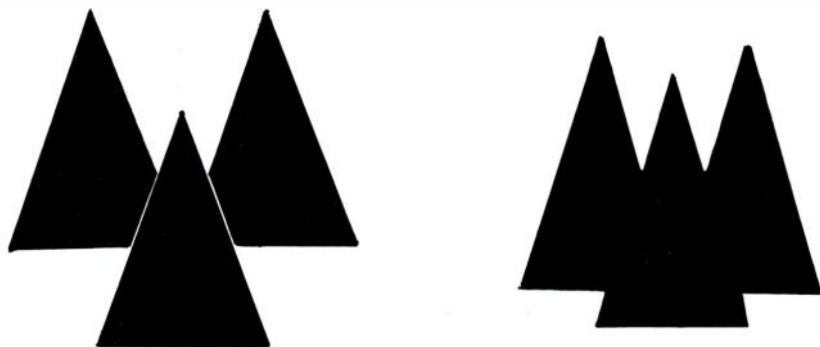
34. The Thatcher years — nationalist graffiti in Trelewis sums up Wales' plight under London government.

There can be no denying that the early Thatcher years were a bleak time for the party of Wales. Some left-wing members formed their own republican offshoot, the Welsh Socialist Republican Movement, which proved to be a diversion from the main course of the struggle. It was not the first time - or the last - for such groupings to emerge. There had been two previous republican splinter-groups, the Gwerin group in the pre-war period and the Welsh Republicans who were active from 1949 to 1957. Concern about migration into Wales would lead to the formation of the Covenanters in the 1980s. Within Plaid Cymru itself, there were disputes about the party's aims and ideology which were not resolved until the party's Holyhead conference in 1986.

But even in its darkest hour, Plaid Cymru was to show it could fight back. Within a year of Mrs Thatcher becoming Prime Minister, Welsh nationalism took on the government - and won.

¹ The Pneumoconiosis Etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979, which secured its Second Reading on 2 April 1979 and royal assent two days later.

² Report of the Plaid Cymru Commission of Inquiry, 1981. The members were Eurfyl ap Gwilym, Emrys Roberts, Owen John Thomas, Dafydd Wigley and Phil Williams.



35. Plaid's emblem, the Triban, in the thirties, sixties and nineties. The design — by artist and architect Richard Huws — symbolises the mountains of Wales.

THE FIGHT FOR THE WELSH CHANNEL

Plaid Cymru had always recognised the importance of broadcasting. Winning a radio service for Wales had been one of Saunders Lewis' earliest aims - and one in which he proved surprisingly successful. In the 1920s and early 1930s, there were no radio programmes in Welsh, and the broadcasting service was run from Bristol. In 1927, five years after the establishment of the BBC, the only regular broadcasting in Welsh was half an hour a week broadcast from Dublin on Radio Eireann! It took a decade of struggle to win recognition for Wales within the BBC, and to secure a daily 20 minutes' radio in Welsh during the Second World War.

Plaid Cymru pressure for an independent Welsh broadcasting corporation secured a measure of autonomy for the BBC in Wales. In the 1950s, Gwynfor Evans played a leading role in fighting plans to downgrade Welsh radio programmes to an inferior waveband. Plaid Cymru formed Cymdeithas y Gwrandawyr (the listeners' society), whose members refused to pay the radio licence fee. As a member of the society, the Plaid leader was brought before Llangadog magistrates court - and the original wavelength was won back. The advent of television made the need for Welsh control of broadcasting more urgent than ever. Gwynfor Evans was in the thick of efforts to set up and run Teledu Cymru, an independent TV company which successfully broadcast seven hours a week of Welsh-language programmes in 1962-3, but which was brought down by reception difficulties in the hilly terrain allocated to them.

Mass television greatly increased the pressure on the Welsh language in its heartlands. The TV set in the corner brought Anglo-American culture into almost every Welsh home.



36. Campaign for the Welsh TV channel: demonstrations in Wales (opposite), outside Westminster — the banner referred to the broken promise made in the Queen's Speech to Parliament — and after the big rally in Cardiff's Sophia Pavilion (Gwynfor Evans talks to Ted Merriman, with Glyn James, Dafydd Elis Thomas, Dafydd Wigley and Dafydd Williams).



Teachers soon observed the effects on the language spoken by school children.

During the 1970s, pressure increased for a Welsh-language television service, with a vigorous campaign led by Cymdeithas yr Iaith, now a formidable pressure group. The society's long struggle was without precedent. Hundreds were sent to prison for the cause. There was support too from a broad cross-section of public opinion in Wales. Plaid Cymru's annual conference set out its demands in 1972 - an independent Welsh Broadcasting Corporation providing a complete broadcasting service in both English and Welsh. A Welsh television channel was backed by an all-party campaign, and a national conference convened by the Lord Mayor of Cardiff voted in favour of the policy in June 1973.

The steady pressure on all fronts brought results. Five official committees and commissions examined the cause for a Welsh TV service - all arrived at the same conclusion, that a service should be provided on the vacant fourth channel. In 1974 the Labour government announced it accepted the principle - although practical measures were referred to the Annan Committee which was examining the whole field of broadcasting. In 1979 all the major political parties pledged themselves to set up a Welsh TV channel in their election manifestos, and following Mrs Thatcher's victory, the new Tory government undertook in the Queen's Speech to "seek an early start with the fourth television channel in Wales". By now funding was already in place for the engineering and transmission work - £18 million had already been set aside by the Labour government.

So it came as a massive shock when the Tory Home Secretary William Whitelaw announced on 11 September 1979 in a speech at Cambridge that the government intended to renege on its pledge. There would be no Welsh television channel - despite all the promises. Many nationalists concluded that the referendum fiasco and the check in Plaid Cymru's vote in 1979

had led London to believe it could treat Wales with contempt} The response in Wales was immediate. The Welsh Language Society stepped up its efforts. Plaid Cymru's conference in Llandudno voted to oppose payment of television licences and carry the fight to the courts. A campaign team led by Carmarthen organiser Peter Hughes Griffiths began work on planning tactics. But the prospects seemed bleak. This after all was the government which was to pride itself on its resolute approach.

Then in May 1980 Gwynfor Evans made a dramatic announcement. Calling on the government to honour its promise to Wales, he stated his intention to begin a hunger strike in the autumn, a 'fast unto death' as the newspapers put it.

No-one doubted his resolve. Many nationalists were horrified at the prospect. Before the public announcement two party officials travelled to his Llangadog home. They hoped to persuade him not to go ahead - but Gwynfor Evans was adamant; his concern was to hammer out precise details of the campaign.

Once the die was cast, Plaid Cymru members rallied round their leader. A series of major rallies began in the summer with the object of demonstrating mass support. It rapidly became apparent that Gwynfor Evans had accurately gauged the strength of public opinion. Twenty-two meetings had been arranged for the Plaid leader in Wales between 6 September and the date set for beginning his hunger strike in Llangadog, Sunday 5 October. Two thousand people packed Cardiff's Sophia Gardens Pavilion at the beginning of the campaign, and all the rallies proved successful. By giving the government five months' warning, the Plaid president had ensured they were subject to maximum pressure. The Archbishop of Wales, the Right Reverend Gwilym O Williams, Sir Cennydd Treharne, Sir Goronwy Daniel, Lord Cledwyn and Michael Foot were among prominent figures who intervened.

Finally on 17 September, almost exactly a year after Mr Whitelaw's speech, the government caved in. Talks between the new Welsh Secretary Nicholas Edwards and representatives of 'moderate opinion' provided the cover used to beat a hasty retreat. The Welsh television channel would go ahead after all. A well-timed slogan ingeniously painted on the river wall of the House of Commons summed it up: 'GWYNFOR 1 - THATCHER 0'. It was the government's first U-turn.

Sianel Pedwar Cymru finally took to the air in 1982. It was rapidly to win its place in the life of Wales, broadcasting 22 hours a week in Welsh at peak viewing hours. Once its course was set, the government stuck to its commitments on finance, and Welsh broadcasters found there was no shortage of talent for the new service. A whole new industry of independent Welsh television producers sprung up. By 1990, when Gwynfor Evans opened a .£2.5 million studio for the Barcud company at Caernarfon, S4C and its ancillaries employed as many people as did deep coal-mines in Wales.

The battle for Welsh television provided the national movement with a welcome victory at a bleak time in its history. For the many friends and followers of Gwynfor Evans the outcome was also an enormous relief.

¹ See for example Gwynfor Evans, *Byw neu Farw - Lyfe or Death*, Plaid Cymru 1979.

JOBS, COAL AND WATER

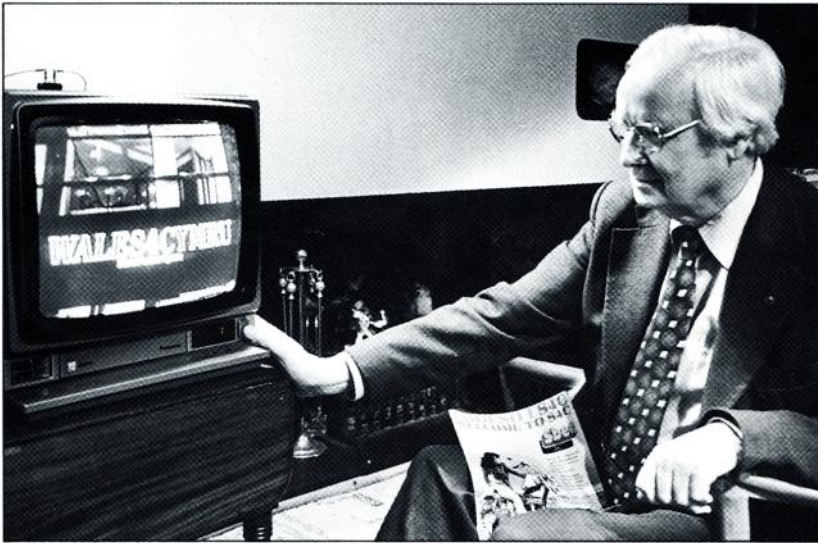
Gwynfor Evans stepped down from his post as president of Plaid Cymru in 1981. He had been at the helm for 36 years. As well as digesting the recommendations of their Commission of Inquiry, the party conference in Carmarthen also had the job of choosing his successor, Caernarfon MP Dafydd Wigley.

Unemployment had climbed steeply during the early 1980s, reaching a peak of 190,368 in January 1986. Plaid Cymru's response was to mount a campaign for jobs in Wales - no easy task, given the feeling of hopelessness at the mounting wave of redundancies. Powerful demonstrations which greeted the Prime Minister in Swansea and Cardiff ensured that in future Mrs Thatcher would be an infrequent visitor to Wales.

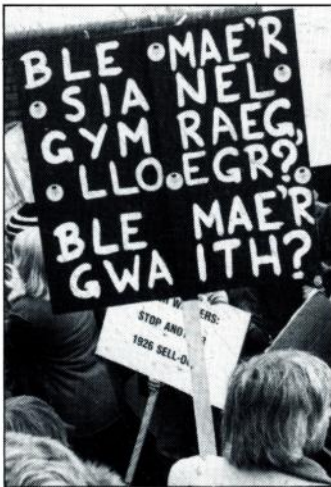
Plaid also resumed the offensive on Welsh water. Nationalists were not alone in pointing to the injustice Wales faced: although Wales supplied Birmingham and Liverpool with their water, Welsh people faced substantially higher water bills than the residents of either city. To add insult to injury, the new Tory government repealed the act which Plaid MPs had helped secure in the 1970s and which had provided Welsh people with a 'partial equalisation' payment of .£3 million. Plaid Cymru's move in calling for an all-out no-payment strike on 1 March 1982 met with considerable public support, especially in the south Wales valleys.

It was a hard fight. Led by their national field organiser Gerald Howells, Plaid members in the valleys fought a running battle with water authority officials. Non-payers whose water was cut off had their supplies restored 'unofficially'.

But defending thousands of people from court action or cuts in supplies was clearly going to be a Herculean task. Dafydd Wigley and water authority chairman John Elfed Jones agreed to a test case in the High Court - a unique deal, in which each



37. Tuesday 2 November 1982 — and victory. In his Llangadog home, Gwynfor Evans tunes in to the first day's broadcasting by Sianel Pedwar Cymru, the television channel he won for Wales and the Welsh language.



38. Eighties protest — 'Where's the Welsh channel, England? Where are the jobs?'



39. Carmarthen, October 1981: Conference rises to Gwynfor Evans after his final address as Plaid Cymru president. Those in the front row of the top table include (from left): Gwynn Matthews (chair, conference steering committee), Elwyn Roberts, Syd Morgan, Dafydd Iwan, Phyllis Ellis, Ieuan Wyn Jones (Plaid chairman), Mrs Rhiannon Evans, Gwynfor, John Dixon, Phil Richards, Dafydd Elis Thomas, Owen John Thomas and Delwyn Phillips.

side agreed not to press for legal costs against the loser. With this concession, Plaid's non-payment campaign was brought to a close on 23 February 1985, although Labour MPs were still trying to smear the party for various instances of non-payment years later!

The test case proved less than conclusive. The Welsh Water Authority made a declaration in open court that it was entitled to seek payment for water exports from Wales, a key element in Plaid's demands. But no substantial payment was ever secured for the 88,000 million gallons of Welsh water exported every year. Welsh water bills remain unfairly high.

Plaid Cymru strenuously opposed the Tories' sell-off of Wales' water resources as part of their programme of privatisation. A large tract of the Severn valley, one of the richest water-producing areas of Wales, is run by the Worcester-based Severn

Trent Water plc as a privatised colony in the heart of Wales. Exploitation of Welsh resources is unlikely to stop this side of self-government.

The 1983 election saw Plaid Cymru consolidate its position in Gwynedd. Both its MPs now seemed firmly entrenched. In Ynys Mon, the party pushed Labour aside to finish a strong second to the Conservatives. Elsewhere, Plaid found its vote compressed; and throughout the eighties its leaders would ponder how their movement could be transformed into an all-Wales party.

Many Plaid members pointed to lack of coverage on the media as the main reason for being unable to advance on a broad front. Within Wales itself, the BBC and the commercial television company HTV by and large accorded Plaid Cymru and its rivals a roughly balanced allocation of air time on their

own programmes; but this came nowhere near making up for the great advantage which the Labour and Tory parties enjoyed on network programmes broadcast throughout the UK.

It is doubtful whether media bias was enough in itself to explain the pemiing in of the Plaid vote. Once again Labour, though beset by internal problems, enjoyed the luxury of opposition; the Alliance between the Liberals and the new Social Democratic Party was riding high in the polls, while Welsh nationalism still suffered from post-referendum blues.

Westminster elections - increasingly 'presidential' in nature and with Plaid shut out of the real forum on network television - were the most diilicult terrain for the party to tackle. Members debated one of the lines advocated by the Commission of Inquiry - to concentrate on local government and devote less effort to parliamentary elections. Certainly Plaid councillors had succeeded in digging themselves in firmly in a number of Valley areas despite disappointing general election votes.

In 1984 the party elected a new president, following the resignation of Daiydd Wigley. Rule changes meant that the new leader was directly elected by party members voting in local meetings. Victory went to Meirionnydd Nant Conwy MP Datydd Elis Thomas, after a close contest with Dafydd Iwan, a former chairman of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg. Both candidates fought on a platform of adherence to Plaid Cymru's vision of community socialism. Historian John Davies judged that Dafydd Elis Thomas' election in part reflected members' concern for Plaid to present itself as a viable rival to the Labour Party in those areas of Wales where the appeal of socialism was still strong.¹

The new Plaid leader was closely involved in the 1984-5 coal industry dispute, which had broken out the previous spring. While sharing doubts about the timing of the strike and its conduct by NUM president Arthur Scargill, Plaid Cymru supported the aim of defending the economic base of mining Communities. By contrast with Labour leader Neil Kinnock,



40. The fight for Wales' water resources — unpaid water bills and petitions are displayed by officials of Treharris and district action committee, including (left) Alain Thomas and (second from right), Gerald Howells, Plaid Cymru national field organiser.

41. Dafydd Elis Thomas MP (left) helps unload food for Abernant miners' families at Gwaun-cae-gurwen after driving from Blaenau Ffestiniog — a scene from the 1984-5 miners' strike.



who failed to put in an appearance on a picket line until the eleventh month of the dispute, Dafydd Elis Thomas was actively engaged in the miners' struggle, and was introduced on one NUM platform as "the miners' MP".

Plaid Cymru branches throughout Wales were to the fore in raising money for miners' families. There was especially strong support from quarrying areas of north Wales - repaid a year later when mining communities in the south Wales valleys rallied round quarry workers facing a protracted dispute with their employers in Gwynedd. Dairy farmers in Dyfed - themselves fighting quota cutbacks - supplied free milk for hard-pressed families. Plaid Cymru was active in organising solidarity with mining communities, cooperating with the trade union movement and setting aside political differences to work with members of other parties. Plaid's European allies, Volksunie in Flanders and the UDB from Brittany, sent practical support.

Plaid's role in the year-long miners' strike symbolised a further stage in the evolution of the party. Gibes by Labour politicians that nationalists were 'Welsh Tories' or worse had always been bizarre - in 1970, Professor Raymond Williams who later joined Plaid Cymru described it as part of the New Left. Now such gibes were heard less and less.

A major role during the coal strike was played by women's groups in the mining areas. The 1980s witnessed a marked increase in the role of women within Plaid Cymru's own organisation, with an active women's section and a greater number of women candidates.

Mrs Thatcher's government drove the miners back to work in March 1985. With no Welsh Parliament to protect the mining communities, the Tories embarked on a programme of pit closures almost as savage as that of the Labour government in the sixties. Yet again, the working people of Wales had to pay the bitter price of Neil Kinnock's sabotage of the 1979 referendum, and the bleak years of Thatcherism which it ushered in.

¹ *The National Question Again*, ed. John Osmond, Gomer Press 1985.

42. Some of the fifty-one Plaid Cymru candidates who stood in community council elections in the Rhymni Valley in April 1985.



FORCING THE PACE FOR WALES

Plaid Cymru is at one and the same time a national movement, a political party and a pressure group for Wales. The spin-off of other groupings during the post-war era meant it could focus on its 'political party' role - with the overt aim of winning elections and wielding power. But the more it threatens its political opponents, the more they are forced to respond. The long trek for a free Wales has - so far - resulted in a growing number of 'concessions' from the British state, the Welsh television channel, S4C, being a clear-cut case.

The most notable of these gains is the Welsh Office, set up by Labour in 1964 as its answer to Plaid Cymru and the pressure for a Welsh Parliament. By 1990, the Welsh Office had grown enormously. Its nominal boss - the Secretary of State for Wales, assisted by two junior ministers - presides over what is virtually a Welsh state. By the end of the eighties, the annual budget of the Welsh Office and its subordinate bodies was topping .£3.5 billion. The powers of the Welsh Office continued to expand, even after the check to reform delivered by the 1979 referendum.

By the end of the 1980s, the case for democratic control of the Welsh Office and its string of non-elected 'quangos' was becoming more and more apparent. In the run-up to the 1987 election, Plaid Cymru pledged itself to press for an elected Senate for Wales in the event of a hung Parliament. The case for democratic control of the Welsh Office was rammed home in a series of 'Get a Grip' leaflets, drawn up by Professor Gwyn A Williams, a noted historian and celebrated orator. For the first time, Plaid's national executive ratified a formal pact with the Scottish National Party pledging mutual support and a package of measures for both countries. The pact, signed after two meetings of the parties' executives in Edinburgh and Cardiff by Dafydd Elis Thomas and SNP chairman Gordon



43. The banner of Plaid Cymru's women's section carried by Siân Edwards and Bini Jones (right) during a march to back slate quarry workers and their families. Photo: Mary Giles.

44. Part of the procession which marched from Penyberth to Pwllheli in July 1986 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the burning of the bombing school.



Wilson, led to the formation of a single Plaid-SNP parliamentary party in Westminster, with a joint whip and a two-party team of spokespeople.

In the event, Mrs Thatcher's Tories were returned to power with a comfortable majority of 147 seats in the general election held on 11 June 1987. But Plaid Cymru was to provide a major upset. The party had targetted two specific seats - Carmarthen, contested in rousing style by extramural lecturer Hywel Teifi Edwards, and Ynys Mon, whose candidate, solicitor Ieuan Wyn Jones, had fought the constituency in 1983 and finished 1,684 votes short of winning the seat from Tory MP Keith Best.

The 1987 Ynys Mon campaign was one of the most powerful ever mounted by Plaid Cymru in a general election. Plaid's most experienced organiser Elfed Roberts was moved in at an early stage. The formidable election machine built up by Dafydd Wigley in Caernarfon was released for the first time over the Menai Straits to boost the efforts of Ynys Mon members. Two nights before the election and with opinion polls predicting a neck-and-neck finish, Plaid workers began their fourth canvass of the key urban area of Holyhead.

A crowd of several thousand in Llangefni acclaimed Ieuan Wyn Jones' win, the first-ever Plaid seat gained from the Tories. jubilation at the Ynys Mon result mingled with disappointment that Hywel Teiti Edwards had not been returned for Carmarthen. Nor could the party point to ground gained from Labour in the Valleys, although there was a significant improvement in the result scored by agriculture spokesman Cynog Dafis in Ceredigion and Pembroke North. Cynog Dafis, a teacher from Talgarreg, near Llandysul, already had a growing reputation as one of Plaid's foremost thinkers. In 1988, he produced the party's response to the critical problem posed for Welsh-speaking communities by heavy migration into rural Wales} The plan, billed as a positive response to the challenge of population transfer, set out a detailed programme for

strengthening the base of Welsh rural society and integrating newcomers into the local communities. Another development was the setting-up of an organisation for newcomers sympathetic to the Welsh language; entitled 'Pont' (bridge), this new association was founded at the prompting of Gwynfor Evans.

The performance of the Plaid trio in the House of Commons proved a big plus for Welsh nationalism, and the party's horizons were steadily widening. By the 1980s, Plaid Cymru was increasingly concerned to win a place for Wales in Europe.

¹ *Migration into Wales: A Positive Response* by Cynog Dafis, Plaid Cymru, July 1988.



45. Singing in the streets of London — jubilant supporters escort Eirian and Ieuan Wyn Jones and their family into Westminster after Plaid's historic 1987 election win in Ynys Môn. Photo: John Wynne Jones.



46. The fight for freedom and justice, indivisible — Dafydd Iwan, vice-president of Plaid Cymru, sings in an anti-apartheid rally. Photo: Marian Delyth.

WALES IN EUROPE

Part of Saunders Lewis' inheritance to Plaid Cymru is its vision of Wales in Europe. Lewis stressed that Welsh civilisation was part of the traditions of Europe, and he foresaw free nations yielding sovereign power to work together within a common European framework.

But the party of Wales was not bowled over by the prospect of joining the European Economic Community. The Plaid summer school at Llanrwst in 1971 set out its reservations. Concern at the growth of a new nuclear bloc, and of being on the economic fringe were factors in opposing UK entry into the Common Market, but the main reason was that the nation of Wales would find itself without a voice of its own within the new Community. Plaid Cymru later cooperated as part of the multi-party campaign against EEC membership in the 1975 referendum. A detailed set of research papers provided one of the best-argued cases for opting for the European Free Trade Area rather than the Brussels-based Common Market.

Many nationalists appreciated however that admission of the United Kingdom into the European Community was in the long run bound to weaken London; and that London's weakness would be Wales' opportunity. For some members, notably Dafydd Wigley, now MP for Caernarfon, and ex-leader Saunders Lewis, this factor was significant enough to call for a 'Yes' vote in the referendum.

Plaid Cymru lost few tears at the referendum decision in favour of remaining within the EEC. In the Lampeter summer school the following year Phil Williams said quite frankly that he was relieved that the whole issue of UK membership of the EEC was over. "My dilemma was totally expressed by that ill-fated slogan 'Europe - Yes; EEC - No' - not exactly a slogan to raise the army, but it did my express my belief that our real battle is in Europe", Dr Williams said. "At least we can now

escape from the straitjacket of English politics".² Party leaders set out their case for Wales to have a voice in the new Europe after the referendum in a memorandum to the Belgian Prime Minister M. Leo Tindemans during his visit to Cardiff on 2 July 1975 as part of a fact-finding exercise on the future of the Community. This was the first occasion for Plaid Cymru to meet formally with a Prime Minister of any country.

The first direct elections for the European Parliament in Strasbourg proved a pleasant surprise for the party of Wales. Polling took place on 7 June 1979, in the wake of the devolution referendum, elections for a Westminster Parliament and district councils and, in some areas, community councils. The results showed the party's four candidates had polled 83,999 votes. On a reduced turnout, Plaid's percentage vote was 11.7 per cent.

Freedom from the English political straitjacket - and the media bias that formed an integral part of it - clearly brought electoral advantages. The same pattern was repeated in 1984 and 1989; in each case the nationalist share of the vote was appreciably higher in the European elections than the preceding Westminster contests.

Plaid Cymru had already strengthened its links with nationalist parties in continental Europe. A Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations was set up in June 1975, with the participation of nationalist parties from the Basque country, Brittany and Alsace as well as Wales. An independent news agency, Agenor, provided premises for the new bureau in 13 rue Hobbema, Brussels. Most of the funding was provided by the Basque national party, Partido Nacionalista Vasco, the PNV, and a delegation from Euskadi attended the Plaid conference in 1975; and Welsh residents in Brussels, notably Rosanne Reeves, provided much of the vital staff resources.

In May 1984, dairy farmers in Wales were hard hit by the

Continued on page 52

47. Allies meet — in the courtyard of Glyndŵr's Parliament, September 1988. Members of the European Parliament Jaak Vandemeulebroucke, Volksunie, Flanders, chairman of the European Free Alliance (left), and Karlos Garaikoetxea, Eusko Alkartasuna, Basque country (right) with Plaid Cymru's European candidates, Phil Williams (Mid and West Wales), Jill Evans (South East Wales), Dafydd Elis Thomas (North Wales) and Peter Keelan (South Wales).



48. Candidate Syd Morgan is joined on the new Plaid battle-wagon by the Plaid MPs and Jim Sillars, Scottish National Party victor in the Govan by-election. A scene from the Pontypridd by-election campaign, February 1989.



PLAID CYMRU AND PEACE

Plaid Cymru has a record of steadfast opposition against nuclear weapons and the militarism of the British state.

Many of the party's top officials — including Gwynfor Evans — faced law courts and tribunals in their opposition to conscription, and several served prison sentences for their beliefs, including the celebrated poet Waldo Williams.

The party is formally affiliated with CND Cymru, and its opposition to possession of nuclear weapons has been constant ever since the use of atomic bombs against Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. It is the only party with such a record.

The celebrated writer and peace campaigner E P Thomson acknowledged that Plaid Cymru was “one of the most internationalist sections of the peace movement”.

THE WELSH LANGUAGE

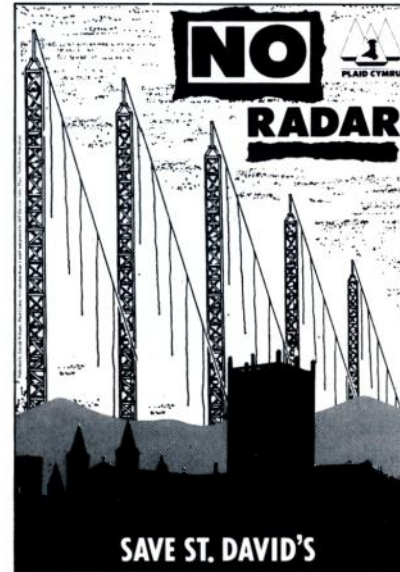
Plaid Cymru's support for the Welsh language has been one of the principal aims of the party since its foundation.

Plaid Cymru became the only political party to use the Welsh language fully in all its activities and campaign for practical measures to boost the language in everyday life.

The main legislative advances — the war-time Welsh Courts Act and the 1967 Welsh Language Act both followed strenuous campaigns led by the party. A successful law-case fought by a Plaid Cymru candidate, Gwynfor S Evans, Betws, whose Welsh nomination forms had been rejected by the Carmarthen County Council, led directly to the setting-up of the Hughes-Parry committee in 1963 and the passage of the language act four years later.

Plaid Cymru aims at a bilingual Wales in which Welsh is recognised as the national language, with a new Welsh language act to guarantee the rights of all citizens. Despite heavy pressure on the language, the campaigns of Plaid Cymru and the broad national movement, including Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, have had considerable success in advancing the use of Welsh and in transforming attitudes towards the language.

49. Plaid Cymru members stage a protest outside the American underground weapons dump at Caerwent — the largest such base in the British Isles (right). A campaign poster (designed by Marian Delyth) produced by Plaid Cymru in 1990 against the building of a US military radar station at St David's in Pembrokeshire and the rally held on 14 July 1990. Photo: Aneurin Richards.





PLAID CYMRU'S LINKS

Plaid Cymru's links with other nations in Europe stretch back well before the War, and owe much to the spell cast by European civilisation on Saunders Lewis and Ambrose Bebb. There was always an especially close link with Brittany. At the end of the war, Plaid leaders were to help Breton nationalists who fell victim to a vicious and shameless persecution by the French authorities, regardless of whether or not they had collaborated during the German occupation. The National Eisteddfod was persuaded to despatch a delegation to Brittany, as two thousand Breton patriots were arrested. Sixty were sentenced to death, and fifteen had been executed up to October 1946 as Paris sought to break Breton nationalism for ever.¹

A former director of the Celtic Institute, Roparz Hemon, brought to trial before the Cour de Justice at Rennes was fortunate that a campaign was under way in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The presence at the trial in 1946 of a young Welsh lawyer, Mr Dewi Watcyn Powell, acting as special correspondent of *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* led to an adjournment of the case and the dropping of many of the charges against him — widely regarded in Brittany as the first victory for Welsh and Breton co-operation. Another nationalist leader, Yann Fouere, sentenced *in absentia* to penal servitude for life for supporting Breton nationalism, escaped to Wales where he was sheltered in Gwynfor Evans' home in Llangadog before settling in Ireland. Many years later when reason had returned to France, Fouere was able to go home, although in October 1975 he was again arrested on his way to the Plaid Cymru conference.

¹*Breton Nationalism* published by the Welsh Nationalist Party, 1946.

sudden imposition of a 9 per cent cut in milk output; agriculture minister Michael Joplin was besieged by angry farmers at Llangadog. Ireland was permitted a slight increase - otherwise the Taoiseach Garrett Fitzgerald had threatened to block the whole scheme in a late-night meeting of the Council of Ministers. Farming communities could see for themselves the importance of winning a voice in Europe. The 1984 European elections saw an especially impressive increase in the Plaid vote in the rural Mid and West Wales constituency, fought by Phil Williams. But steel and coal production, regional economic policy and other key policies were also increasingly being decided at a European rather than British level.

Adoption of the Single European Act by EC member-states accelerated the drift of power to Brussels. Commission President Jacques Delors predicted that by the end of the century, 80 per cent of economic and social decisions would be made in Europe rather than London.

Plaid Cymru's programme for the 1990s reflected the importance of the European dimension. 'Wales in Europe' was more than the slogan for the 1989 Strasbourg Parliament elections. The party picked their four candidates a clear eighteen months before the elections, and in the North Wales seat fielded their leader Dafydd Elis Thomas. The Plaid president had become increasingly identified with the drive to win a place for Wales among the nations of Europe.

In an impressive festival staged in September 1988 at Machynlleth, Powys - meeting place of the Parliament summoned by Owain Glyndwr in the fifteenth century - the party welcomed the leaders of national movements throughout western Europe. In the shadow of the Parliament house, Professor Gwyn A Williams read out a proclamation calling for the liberty of Wales and the other submerged nations of Europe.

By now Plaid Cymru had formally joined the European Free Alliance - an impressive grouping of national and regional

BEYOND THE NINETIES



50. Plaid candidates Jill Evans and Peter Keelan show new logo to Flanders European MP Willy Kuijpers who steered a new deal for Europe's lesser-used languages through the European Parliament in October 1988.

parties from eight of the twelve EC member states. The EFA had replaced the old Bureau of Unrepresented Nations, and gained greatly from direct access to the European Parliament with elected MEPs from Flanders, Scotland, the Basque country and Corsica. In the run-up to the European elections, the party benefited from its good showing in the Pontypridd by-election, in which Plaid candidate Syd Morgan came a strong second with 25 per cent of the poll.

Plaid Cymru had good reason to be pleased with the results of the 1989 European elections. A strong performance by Dafydd Elis Thomas in the North Wales seat pushed the party's share of the all-Wales vote up to 12.9 per cent, its highest to date. The Liberal vote collapsed, while the Greens emerged as a significant force for the first time. The results confirmed Plaid Cymru's standing as Wales' third party, and once again Welsh people responded positively to the call for their country to join Europe.

¹ *Wales and the Common Market: Referendum Study Papers*, Plaid Cymru April 1975.

² Republished in *Voice from the Valleys* by Phil Williams, Plaid Cymru 1981.

The story of Plaid Cymru is still unfolding. The party of Wales has yet to achieve its principal declared aim of self-government for Wales. Forty years of its history went by before it proved its ability to win a seat in the House of Commons. Another decade was to pass before the issue of the government of Wales was forced on to the political agenda of Britain, and that foray was checked by the 1979 referendum.

Hostile observers have predicted the defeat of Plaid Cymru almost from the very moment of its birth, rather like predictions about the destruction of Wales itself which can be traced back as far as the Dark Ages. The illustrious David Lloyd George is to be numbered among the prophets of doom who foresaw the swift demise of the national party, along with a whole string of politicians and observers of considerably less significance. Lloyd George, always sensitive to Welsh aspirations, commented to the press that his constituency "has a new party, the Welsh National Party, that has sprung up in a day like Jonah's gourd and will disappear as quickly".

And yet Plaid Cymru remains. Its existence as the organised voice of Welsh nationalism is in itself a challenge to the parties who rule Wales from Westminster. By now it is rather more than just a call to nationhood. It has yet to make itself the party of Wales in fact as well as in name. But it is a force in the land, whose presence cannot be ignored.

Plaid Cymru has still to defeat the unionist parties. But they already have to take account of the ever-present threat of the nationalist party. The result has been a growing list of concessions. By 1990 the prizes gained even include what amounts in all but name to a Welsh state, controlling most of the work of the central government in our country and spending nearly .£4 billion a year.

Do such gains postpone the day of Welsh liberty? Perhaps they do, and that is certainly the intention of their donors; but it is hard to imagine the post-imperial British state acting in any other way. It is also true that there are some within the British parties who have found Plaid Cymru a useful bargaining-counter.

Despite the heavy pressure on Wales and its nationhood, there are hopeful signs for the future.

The structure of the Welsh state has been built up since 1964; and so too has the case for a democratic parliament to control its activities.

Scotland's progress towards independence is bound to have an impact on Wales. A future London government is likely at some stage to concede a Scottish parliament and that will strengthen the call for equal status for Wales.

Transfer of power from London to Brussels means that Wales needs an independent national voice in the European Community and its expanding single market. The decline of Soviet power and the emergence of self-governing nations in central and eastern Europe can only encourage the people of Wales to shake off London rule.

The circumstances in which the party of Wales operates have changed greatly since August 1925 when the founding fathers gathered in an upstairs room in Pwllheli. But for all the victories and defeats during the last seven decades, the struggle for the life of Wales goes on.

Plaid Cymru will enter the new millennium with the abiding aim of maintaining the nationhood of Wales for the generations to come.



51. Plaid Cymru supporters voice their rejection of the London government's poll tax on the streets of Pontypridd in April 1990.



52. A future for Wales — members of Plaid Cymru's youth section, including their organiser Ashley Drake (centre), post appeals to S4C directors as part of a successful campaign to retain the popular Welsh pop teletext service Sgrin Roc. In 1989, the Federation of Plaid Cymru Students won control of the national executive of the 110,000-strong union of students.



53. United we stand — Scottish and Welsh Nationalist MPs take a break from the 1988 Govan by-election. Left to right: Andrew Welsh, Alec Salmond, Margaret Ewing, Jim Sillars, Dafydd Elis Thomas, Dafydd Wigley, Ieuan Wyn Jones.

Plaid Cymru - the party of Wales

Plaid Cymru operates mainly by means of local branches, of which around 100 were fully registered in 1985, with approximately 75 others operating. Members of Plaid Cymru join the party either via the national office in Cardiff or through local branch organisations. Total membership of the party is estimated at 12,000. Its logo is the "Triban", a mountain-style motif.

- ◆ The structure of the party at local level includes:
Branch ('Cangen')
- ◆ Rhanbarth committees, made up of branch delegates and corresponding normally to Westminster constituency or district council boundaries
- ◆ Talaith (county) councils, which correspond to the eight counties in Wales.

At national level the party structure includes:

- ◆ Y Gynhadledd (annual conference), which decides policies and (by a two-thirds majority) changes in the party constitution;
- ◆ National Council, a body made up mainly of Rhanbarth delegates which frames policies between conferences, approves election manifestos, and amends standing orders;
- ◆ National Executive Committee (25 members) which controls party management and finance, as well as guiding policy formation and strategy;
- ◆ Sections for women, young members and trade unionists.

Plaid Cymru (in 1990) has three MPs (out of 38 Welsh seats), all of whom represent seats in Gwynedd: Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy) who is president of the party, Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon) and Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Mon). The party's MPs form a single group with the four Scottish National Party members following a formal pact signed in 1986. Both parties are also linked with the European Free Alliance of national and regional parties, and the SNP has one

Member of the European Parliament, Mrs Winifred Ewing (Highlands and Islands).

The party is represented on 6 of Wales' 8 county councils, with a total of 25 councillors. There are 81 Plaid Cymru members on Wales' district councils, with representation on 19 of the 37 district authorities.

Publications

Plaid Cymru publishes two newspapers, Y Ddraig Goch (in Welsh) and Welsh Nation (in English) and also sponsors an independent quarterly magazine, Radical Wales. The party produces an internal research document for candidates and a broadsheet for local organisations.

Offices

The party's national office is located in the capital city, Cardiff (at 51 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF1 9HD). There are currently five other staffed offices in Wales serving the three MPs and other constituency organisations, as well as an office in the House of Commons.

Finance

The party receives no hand-outs from industry or trade unions and is almost entirely dependent on voluntary contributions. National turnover in 1988-9 was about £120,000, with some constituency organisations also having substantial income and expenditure.

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