



# Reference Biography Service

*BIO Book*

## THE RT HON JAMES CALLAGHAN MP PRIME MINISTER AND FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY

Mr James Callaghan was appointed Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury on Monday 5 April 1976, following his election as Leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party and the resignation of Mr Harold Wilson as Prime Minister earlier that day. Prior to becoming Prime Minister Mr Callaghan had, since the return to office of the Labour Party in March 1974, served as Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Mr Callaghan is Member of Parliament for Cardiff South East.

James Callaghan was born in 1912, son of a Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy. He was educated at an elementary school and at the Portsmouth Northern Grammar School. In 1929 he entered the Civil Service as a Tax Officer in the Inland Revenue Department. He joined the Inland Revenue Staff Federation, became a branch secretary and sat on its Executive, and in 1936 resigned his Civil Service appointment to become its Assistant Secretary — a post he held until 1947. He also lectured on industrial history for the Workers' Educational Association.

In 1942 Mr Callaghan volunteered and joined the Royal Navy as an Ordinary Seaman. Later he was commissioned as a Lieutenant, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, and served with the East Indies Fleet, then stationed at Ceylon. He also served at the Admiralty.

He had joined the Labour Party in 1931, and in 1944 was adopted as prospective Labour candidate for Cardiff South, for which he was elected to Parliament in 1945. With the redistribution of parliamentary boundaries in 1950, his seat became Cardiff South East, which he has represented ever since. In 1975 he was made an Honorary Freeman of the City of Cardiff.

After his election in 1945 Mr Callaghan became Parliamentary Private Secretary to Mr John Parker, Under-Secretary of State for Dominion (later Commonwealth) Affairs, but resigned a few months later. He spoke on Far Eastern affairs, and on financial questions; he also took a great interest in Service matters, pressed the Government on its demobilisation plans, and as Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party's Defence and Services Committee (1945-47) was largely responsible for the reduction of the conscription period from 18 to 12 months.

Mr Callaghan was appointed to junior ministerial office in the Government changes of October 1947, when he became Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Transport. During his term of office the nationalisation of the railways took effect and a big drive was made for road safety, Mr Callaghan becoming chairman of the Ministry's new Road Safety Committee. While at the Ministry he was responsible for the introduction of zebra crossings and for "cats' eye" studs in the roads. During the 1950-51 Parliament, he was Parliamentary and Financial Secretary to the Admiralty.

During his early years in Parliament and his first period in Opposition Mr Callaghan also took a great interest in foreign affairs. He visited Russia in the winter of 1945-46, and was a member of a parliamentary delegation to West Africa in 1947. In 1949 he was appointed to

the first meeting of the Council of Europe, and deputised for Mr Herbert Morrison when the latter was absent from Strasbourg. He returned to Strasbourg in 1950 and 1954. He was Phillips lecturer at Haverford College, Philadelphia, USA in 1953; in 1957 he was a member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Delegation to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland; and in 1961 he was a member of the Chatham House Commonwealth Relations conference at Palmerston North, New Zealand – and visited Australia, Indonesia, Singapore, Burma and India.

In the Labour Governments of 1964-70, Mr Callaghan served first as Chancellor of the Exchequer (from 1964-67). Following the acceptance of his advice to devalue in November 1967, he tendered his resignation as Chancellor, and was appointed Secretary of State for the Home Department.

While he was in this office, his Department was responsible for the Race Relations Act of 1968, which extended the fields in which racial discrimination became unlawful, re-constituted and strengthened the Race Relations Board, and provided for the establishment of the Community Relations Commission. He initiated the Urban Aid Programme for help to deprived areas and piloted the Children and Young Persons Bill through Parliament. The discussion paper, *People in Prison* on the treatment of offenders, was also produced at that time. He was Home Secretary when Northern Ireland affairs still came under his Department and gave the British Government's active encouragement to the then Northern Ireland Government's programme of social, political and economic reform.

In Opposition Mr Callaghan was spokesman for the Parliamentary Labour Party on transport 1951-53; for fuel and power 1953-55; colonial affairs 1956-61 (during which time he made frequent visits to Africa); Treasury affairs 1961-64. He was elected Member of the Shadow Cabinet every year from 1951-64 and from 1970-74. Following his appointment in 1972 as the Labour Party's chief spokesman in the House of Commons on Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, he visited the Soviet Union, South East Asia, Eastern Europe and various other European countries.

When the Labour Party took office in March 1974 he was appointed Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which post he played a major role in renegotiating Britain's terms of membership of the EEC.

Since 1957, apart from a short interval, Mr Callaghan has been a member of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party (from 1967, as the Party's Treasurer). At the Labour Party's Conference in 1973 he was elected chairman of the Party for 1973-74. He has written frequently in the press on political subjects and has taken part in political features on radio and television. In September 1973 he published a book on Northern Ireland, entitled *A House Divided*. Formerly a Visiting Fellow Nuffield College, Oxford, he is now an Honorary Fellow.

Mr Callaghan is President of the United Kingdom Pilots' Association (since 1963) and Honorary President of the International Maritime Pilots' Association (since 1971).

He married Audrey Elizabeth Moulton in 1938; they have a son and two daughters, all of whom are married, and eight grandchildren.

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