

PARLIAMENTARY BRIEF

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THE POLITICAL SOCIETY AWARDS WINNERS



The Political Studies Association Awards 2008



POLITICIAN OF THE YEAR

BORIS JOHNSON

Boris Johnson's famous victory in the 2008 contest for the London mayoralty merits the award of Politician of the Year for a number of reasons. In beating a formidable opponent in Ken Livingstone, who had championed London for eight years, Johnson demonstrated the effectiveness of a well-planned campaign.

Despite being dismissed by many early on — even within his own party — tangible policies and an unexpectedly calm, even-handed approach moved public opinion in his favour and marked out the former-Henley MP as a credible mayoral candidate. This



transformation alone merits special mention: prior to becoming London mayor, Johnson's highest political office was as a shadow junior minister, and his public persona was that of a loveable fool. Yet he successfully won hearts and minds in the capital by appealing to his particular version of public interest whilst filling the political stage with his own brand of accessible personality.

A blend of populism and accountability were combined with the articulation of a gamut of imaginative policies, a point conceded by his main opponent. The campaign to return the Routemaster, curtailing bureaucracy, and tackling youth crime successfully mobilised of the electorate, leading to a historic turnout: 45 per cent of those eligible voted in 2008 compared to 35 per cent when Ken Livingstone first came to power in 2000.

Labour MP Jon Cruddas told the Daily Telegraph, 'Boris Johnson is connecting with people emotionally and it's not just because of the celebrity'. The campaign's focus on positive politics rather than negative or personal slurs was a vote-winner, and brought back into the fold many of the 1997-2005 Conservative 'deserters'.

Johnson's impressive drive to victory was climaxed by a magnanimous acceptance speech, cementing the former-Spectator Editor's position as an extremely capable — if somewhat unlikely — politician. Whilst political commentators feared the campaign might be a case of spin without substance, upon Johnson taking office London witnessed a rapid implementation of his policy agenda including measures to make public transport safer through increased policing and the battle against youth crime with the appointment of Ray Lewis

Despite being the first Conservative to hold a major executive office since John Major, Boris Johnson still placed London before the party. Although the Conservative party would like London to be a blue-print for any Cameron-led government through mainstream centre-right policies of civic-activism and political pragmatism, Johnson has maintained his independence and striven to form cross-party alliances at City Hall. Tony Travers remarked that 'many fears expressed in the Guardian and elsewhere about Johnson were misplaced. In a classic Blairite move, he has leaned to the centre-left'. For these reasons, Boris Johnson was the judges' choice as *Politician of the Year*.



PARLIAMENTARIAN OF THE YEAR

VINCE CABLE

Vince Cable was the unanimous choice of the judges for Parliamentarian of the Year Award, partly for delivering the single most effective, and withering, verdict on Gordon Brown as Prime Minister. His observation that 'The House has noticed the Prime Minister's remarkable transformation in the past few weeks from Stalin to Mr Bean, creating chaos out of order rather than order out of chaos' was one of the most hilarious moments witnessed in parliament; witty, biting and a potent mix of the absurd and the accurate. As Simon Hoggart noted at the time, 'A great howl of laughter seemed to fall from the very ceiling. Even Labour members desperately tried to hide their amusement from the whips'. The Liberal Democrat deputy leader's witty and incisive remarks were also brought to bear against the government for their handling of the Northern Rock crisis: 'Tony Blair was widely criticised for advancing £800m for the Millennium Dome. But in the past few weeks this government has provided the equivalent of 30 Millennium Domes to this bank — without even the prospect of a pop concert at the end of it.'

Beyond these now-legendary parliamentary quips, the judges noted the effective contributions made by Vince Cable on a range of economic matters. When the Northern Rock crisis arose, the MP for Twickenham forwarded the same solution months in

advance to the one belatedly implemented by Brown and Alistair Darling. In true Cable fashion, he later told Darling that when Goldman Sachs' exorbitant bill for advice arrived, the chancellor should return it saying he had received 'rather higher quality advice free of charge' from the Lib Dems.

As acting party leader earlier this year Vince Cable positively shone, overseeing the 64-day transition from Menzies Campbell to Nick Clegg. He raised his party's profile and outlined his commitment to social justice, fairness in taxation and the environment. However, by accepting a role as Deputy Leader and not challenging for the top spot, Cable placed the collective before the individual and showed great loyalty to his party.

He values his role as a parliamentarian and seeks to maximise its potential: talking to the *Guardian's* Stuart Jeffries, Cable stated, 'I work very hard in parliament to ask more questions than a great majority of MPs. Despite the fact that many of the powers of parliament have been leached away and it's actually quite difficult to change the legislation, it is possible through good questioning and the use of things like adjournment debates, to steer the public debate.'

A true parliamentarian and highly deserving of the accolade of the Political Studies Association's *Parliamentarian of the Year*.

BACKBENCHER OF THE YEAR

FRANK FIELD

Frank Field won the Backbencher of the Year Award following his persistent and intelligent pressuring of his own government to address the problem created by the abolition of the ten pence tax rate. His well-argued rhetoric represented the discontent felt by many, and while dubbed 'rebel', the Labour MP for Birkenhead would have supported the move in principle if it had been executed properly:

'I favour the abolition of the 10p tax rate. Any move that brings down the standard rate is welcome to me, but it is clear from our post-bags around the country that groups stand to lose and may not be covered by the tax credit changes'. This principled stand in the face of severe pressure from party whips ensured £2.7bn was set aside for those affected, while his continued commitment ensures promises will be delivered.



His successful campaigns are an example of how sensible, forceful backbench campaigning can make a significant difference to government policy. Democracy has triumphed, as have MP's constituents, whilst accountability between elections — something often lamented in the British parliamentary system — has been upheld.

It is an important function of any well-serving MP — and this year alone Frank Field has spoken in 43 debates and asked 219 questions, well above the MP average — to remain dedicated to tackling poverty and low pay through the department of work and pensions.

Simon Hoggart's observation, whilst pure sketch, does successfully capture Field's fearless devotion to his campaigns, and also the respect it affords him from his own party: 'Work and pensions is like a vast, bewildering labyrinth, and to make things worse, inside the maze is Frank Field, a mythical figure, half politician, half secular saint, who lies in wait, snorting and roaring, hoping for stray ministers to get too close, whereupon they are gobbled up and only teeth and fragments of briefing papers are found'.

Although the former Minister for Welfare's status as a rebel has been observed on many occasions, it is the lead that he gives others on important issues, to both constituents and fellow party members, that merits his immense reputation.

Beyond the 10 pence tax fiasco, Field's opposition to the energy efficiency package for homes — for doing too little — gained widespread parliamentary support. His calls for a Labour leadership contest, while controversial, gained a number of signatures from those who believed Gordon Brown had reached his natural conclusion leading country and party.

One of the most cerebral of backbenchers, Frank Field continues to offer measured and effective contributions to debates that often find backing beyond strict party lines. His innovative and radical input to policy discussion is well documented by a plethora of challenging and thoughtful publications, such as this year's *Back from Life Support: Remaking representative and responsible government in Britain*. A much-deserved winner of *Backbencher of the Year*.

SETTING THE POLITICAL AGENDA

ANNE OWERS

Anne Owers CBE was the overwhelming choice for the Setting the Political Agenda award. A long-time campaigner for human rights and the rights of immigrants, she was a surprise choice as Chief Inspector of Prisons.

The first woman appointed to the role, Owers has continued the pioneering, radical work she championed whilst at the pressure group Justice, where she played an instrumental role in ushering in the first Human Rights Act, passed in 1989.

Anne Owers' opposition to the continued prison-building programme and the remorseless increases in the prison population is well documented, and has brought her into conflict with both the government and the Opposition. Rather than follow the populist line toed by those seeking election, she has maintained her opposition through reasoned, constructive arguments and strong principle.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons has condemned mass-imprisonment for being the cause of recidivism, mental illness and other related problems, where the simplicity of the solution comes before the concerns of an individual's care and wellbeing.

This has underpinned her opposition to so-called 'titan' prisons, which can only serve to further exacerbate these problems, simul-

taneously shutting the door to alternative solutions.

In her regular Inspectorate Reports she has never shied away from criticising the Government and continued in the independent mould of Judge Stephen Tumin, HMCIP 1987-1995. Each report has led to its own public debate and catalysed the opportunity to implement positive change.

This year's annual report blamed 'legislation and policies which ignore consequences, cost or effectiveness, together with an absence of strategic direction' whilst the 'scramble to build new prisons' will lead to 'large-scale penal containment'.

Owers has also highlighted the strong link between social problems like poverty, drug addiction and exclusion, and increasing imprisonment. This has led to studies into a diversification of possible solutions and a gradual acceptance that mass-imprisonment is not the single dogmatic solution to societal ills.

Anne Owers has also employed her tenacity and previous expertise of immigrant rights to protect the welfare of those detained. Exposure of bad practices through announced and unannounced detention centre inspections has resulted in wide-spread action being taken on behalf of the Immigration Service to provide greater guarantees for the human rights of all detainees.

Appointed in 2001, Anne Owers has risen to the challenge of being an independent inspectorate, and this year in particular has rightly been recognised for setting this year's political agenda.



POLITICAL JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR

STEVE RICHARDS

Steve Richards was the unanimous choice of the judges for Political Journalist of the Year for his impressive and perceptive contributions to political debate across a variety of outlets.

His columns in *The Independent* have invariably elucidated the occasionally bizarre world of parliamentary politics, as Richards positioned himself above the constant flux in personal popularity. As the newspaper's chief political columnist, Richards has written with astuteness of the problems created by — and afflicting — Gordon Brown, and rather than forecast disaster has offered refreshingly insightful reading amid the mass of superficial writing on the subject.

Richards' proper and fair-minded analysis successfully identified the prime minister's resilience whilst questioning the nature of the Conservative's rise in the polls as genuine or precarious. As a former editor of the *New Statesman* Richards is particularly well-informed on Labour politicians, and his insight has often shone light on misunderstood figures, David Miliband as an example in case.

Steve Richards' ability to see beyond the superficial was much in evidence at the beginning of this year — as early as January he had successfully identified the Northern Rock crisis as the precursor to recession, before many of his professional peers. It is this ability to see beyond the immediate story to the broader issues that has distinguished Richards' work for the *Independent*.

GMTV's *Sunday Programme* — despite absurdly being moved to 6am — has always been worth watching for the quality of a Steve Richards' interview, and has suffered from his departure in July.

An ability to treat his political interviewees as fallible human beings and not dastardly villains has succeeded in facilitating a relaxed atmosphere in which guests are encouraged to opine freely. The respect afforded those before him has not only earned him their



reciprocal respect and trust, but has so often led to front page headlines.

Steve Richards has had a similarly positive effect on BBC Radio 4's *Week in Westminster* as presenter. His enthusiasm has been the catalyst for greater debate and a new format, drawing on politicians, journalists and other experts to take part in longer and more penetrating live round table discussions. These lively and enthralling dialogues have covered all angles of hot topics such as the economy, Iran, and Iraq, providing in-depth commentary whilst successfully remaining accessible and engaging.

Now a well-established voice of British political commentary, Steve Richards was the deserving winner of this year's Political Journalist of the Year award.

POLITICAL BROADCASTER OF THE YEAR

GARY GIBBON

Gary Gibbon's consistently high-quality contributions to Channel 4 News made him a very strong choice of the jury to win Political Broadcaster of the Year. Taking over in 2005 from Elinor Goodman — herself a previous Political Studies Association award winner — was a big step, and certainly a tough act to follow. However, the transition from political cor-

respondent to political editor has been extremely successful, and Gibbon says that he has been proud to 'live up to some of the things she taught me. No one ever turned round and said of her, "That was a slanted piece." I think that's a phenomenal achievement in all those years of broadcasting,' he told the Independent in 2006.

But the former Channel 4 producer has made his own mark on the flagship news programme. Gary Gibbon's lucid and consistent coverage of the tortuous Northern Irish peace process gained widespread acclaim, as did his groundbreaking scoop on attorney general Lord Goldsmith: revealing the legal advice he gave to Tony Blair two weeks before going to war with Iraq won both himself and Jon Snow the Royal Television Society's Home News Award in 2006. He followed this with an equally momentous exclusive scoop, in which he broke the details of Blair's private pre-war meeting with Bush.

This year, Channel 4 News' coverage on the faltering status of Gordon Brown as Labour leader as well as the drawing of party lines has been typically astute, lending reliable media to in-depth analysis. Gibbon's endeavours as a reporter have permitted a greater public awareness of cabinet machinations and shone a light into the dark corners of Westminster's corridors: this September he conducted the first televised grilling of

David Miliband over the realities of the summer 'coup' — leading to the foreign secretary and once-leadership contender to his greatest show of loyalty yet; the following week, Gibbon broke the story of the 'awful awful' cabinet meeting, reported to have come fractionally close to triggering a cabinet-wide revolt.

It is significant that the senior broadcast journalists on the jury spoke so highly of Gary Gibbon's determination to cover stories with a depth and precision not always apparent on inferior news programmes, whilst the academic jurors praised his willingness and ability to absorb complex data or argument and present material in an intelligent and accessible manner to viewers.

Therefore this year's *Political Broadcaster of the Year Award* has gone to Channel 4 News' Gary Gibbon

SIR ISAIAH

BERLIN PRIZE

FOR LIFETIME CONTRIBUTION TO POLITICAL STUDIES

VERNON BOGDANOR

Professor Vernon Bogdanor was the unanimous choice of the jurors for the Sir Isaiah Berlin Prize for Lifetime Contribution to Political Studies. The academic jurors amongst us praised his forensic intellect which has yielded a plethora of seminal publications, whilst the journalist jurors also highlighted the erudite and informative contributions to debate offered by Professor Bogdanor in numerous broadcasts and penetrating newspaper pieces.

His views have transcended party politics, driven instead by a passionate desire to sustain and improve our system of constitutional government. This has allowed their publishing in the complete gamut of publications, from the political left to right, whilst his extensive knowledge on the election process and its consequences have seen him regularly called upon as a consultant by ITV during General Elections.

His sober approach has been a necessary antidote to the too-frequent snap conclusions offered by many political commentators. The benefit of historical constitutional context, of which Professor Bogdanor holds in abundance, permits a greater scope, invoking Braudel's *longue durée* when compared to the swirling dust of parliament's momentary events.

His recent observation on the Glenrothes



by-election — that it did not portend the demise of the SNP — was just one example of a trait with great precedent.

As a Fellow, Tutor, and then Principal at Brasenose College, Oxford, Professor Vernon Bogdanor's academic work on constitutions has been of immense scholastic and public benefit: his books, such as *Constitutions in British Politics* and *The Monarchy and the Constitution* have become the standard works on their subjects, whilst, despite a growing literature in this area, *Devolution in the United Kingdom* remains the most authoritative work on the topic.

Politics students from secondary school to post-graduate owe him a debt of gratitude for a lifetime's dedication to the history and workings of the British constitution.

The judges also noted the broader contribution Professor Bogdanor has made to public life and the service of democracy. His advice to government on Freedom of Information has helped open parliament and the executive to greater transparency and accountability for resting on an informed public opinion. The measured, even-handed manner in which debate is forwarded fully encompasses the dual pillars of the public and the executive.

Vernon Bogdanor's contribution to public life has transcended national boundaries: his constitutional expertise has been called upon by governments across the world, from Czech Republic to Israel, Trinidad to Sweden. No contemporary scholar has made such a momentous contribution to this field of British politics, and for this reason, Professor Vernon Bogdanor highly merited the *Sir Isaiah Berlin Prize for Life Time Contribution to Political Studies*.



**POLITICAL STUDIES
COMMUNICATION
AWARD**

**TONY
TRAVERS**

Professor Tony Travers, winner of the Political Studies Communication Award, is one of the most knowledgeable and comprehensive authorities on central-local relations, political decentralisation and local government. As leader of the Greater London Group at the LSE, he has produced a wealth of publications that have impacted academia, the media and public policy.

Whilst Travers' published academic works have become vital tools to any student of local government, his work as an advisor to the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has represented a major contribution to good government in London.

Tony Travers' coverage of this year's London mayoral elections and its aftermath has further highlighted the finesse with which he communicates ideas through the media. The *Evening Standard* was particularly fortunate to have such an astute and penetrating observer available to offer to their readers during the campaign, as his commentaries regularly highlighted the crux of the debate, moving beyond other mainstream outlets. His analysis of the campaign and the results was even-handed and fair whilst successfully transferring his academic rigour and expertise to a non-academic audience. Whilst giving credit to Boris Johnson, Travers argues that 'against a more mainstream Tory candidate, Livingstone would have lost by a bigger



margin' as 'British electors are very suspicious of powerful politicians who stay around for too long'.

Tony Travers' analysis of Johnson's first six months in power has been equally accurate and digestible. Following the removal of Sir Ian Blair as Commissioner for the Metropolitan Police, he delivered a fresh perspective to the relationship between the Mayor's Office — under both Livingstone and Johnson — and the police, while providing analytical context and subsequent consequences of a momentous decision for London. Tony Travers' over-view of the Johnson administration has eloquently dissected the heart of 'Borisocracy', allowing readers a magnified inspection of an often murky field.

Not limited to print journalism, broadcasting is another medium to have been mastered by the LSE lecturer. Both radio and television are used to carry his unique brand of insightful and engaging judgements, and, as with his written word, in a comprehensive manner.

Therefore, the 2008 award for Political Communication was given for the way in which academic knowledge, keen perception and first-rate broadcasting skills were married in a series of shrewd and incisive judgements and commentaries on the London mayoral election and beyond.

**SPECIAL
RECOGNITION
AWARD 1**

**PHILIP
NORTON**

Professor the Lord Norton was an overwhelming choice of the jurors for a Special Recognition Award. Appointed Professor of Government at Hull University in 1986 — at the time Britain's youngest professor of politics — Philip Norton has become, as *The House* magazine so rightly labelled him, 'our greatest living expert on parliament'.

Lord Norton's seminal academic works have played a significant role in shaping how parliament has been perceived and taught, whilst providing a bedrock for Conservative policy in this often troubled area.

From his plethora of academic publications, *Dissension in the House of Commons*, *The Commons in Perspective*, *The Constitution in Flux* and *Parliament in British Politics*



stand out as particularly brilliant in showing the reality of parliament and developing our understanding of British politics.

Professor the Lord Norton has worked hard to remain at the cutting edge of contemporary political developments, embracing new technology and ideology with publications such as *The Internet and its Potential Impact on Parliamentary Democracy* and *Post-Communist and Post-Soviet Legislatures: The Initial Decade*, released this year and last respectively.

His interest and enthusiasm of the internet as a political tool — seen in part by his extensive blogging for the House of Lords and Hull University — has been an important new factor in his work. Whilst allowing him to reach a wider audience, it also permits the grasping of unrealised potential through a medium capable of demystifying parliament, increasing transparency, and promoting inclusiveness.

Lord Norton's exploitation of the internet has also allowed him to continue his teaching despite having to spend most days in Westminster. Overseeing an online MA enables students anywhere to benefit from his first hand parliamentary experience.

Uniquely, Professor Norton's elevation to the Lords has not been at the expense of his academic duties: rather the contrary. Legions of Hull Politics students will testify to his extraordinary, selfless work as Director of the Centre for Legislature Studies, building a formidable department which remains one of the strongest in the country.

Parliamentarians as well as academics have enjoyed the benefit of Philip Norton's immense expertise. His intellectual and practical contributions have bolstered Westminster since being made Lord Norton of Louth in 1998 by the then leader of the opposition, William Hague MP. Not only taking part, his keenness of knowledge and desire for continuous improvement has led him to initiate key debates on parliamentary reform. He currently chairs the Conservative Party's Commission to Strengthen Parliament and

has also offered distinguished service as Chairman of the House of Lords Constitution Committee. An extremely deserving recipient, Professor the Lord Norton's recognition will continue for years to come.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD 2

ANNE PHILLIPS

Professor Anne Phillips was a clear choice for a Special Recognition Award. A Professor of Political and Gender Theory at the LSE since 1999, she is the most important figure in feminist political theory. Her seminal publications have offered cogent challenges to existing narrow assumptions in the spheres of liberal democracy, sexual equality and cultural status.

Beginning with *Hidden Hands: Women and Economic Policies*, first published in 1983, Anne Phillips has married the two spheres of Women's Studies and Political Science together in a way that they are now inseparable in any inclusive debate. Feminist theory has become an accepted part of modern politics and society, for which Anne Phillips' pioneering work has been instrumental. In recognition of this fact, the American Political Science Association co-awarded her 1991 book *Engendering Democracy* the Victoria Schuck Award for Best Book on Women and Politics.

Much of her work has revolved around the relationship between equality and difference: the way inequality is sustained through exaggerated perceptions of difference, but also the blind spots associated with thinking



of equality as a matter of treating all people the same.

Her 1995 book on the political representation of gender, ethnicity, and race — for which she coined the phrase *The Politics of Presence* — has informed much subsequent discussion of gender quotas in politics, and has been used in both theoretical and empirical investigations.

In her most recent work on Multiculturalism without Culture, Professor Phillips has explored areas of tension between recognising cultural diversity and promoting gender equality. Here too, she has challenged exaggerated perceptions of — in this case, cultural — difference argued, and the disturbing way in which the rights of women became deployed in a backlash against multiculturalism, yet again finding herself at the forefront of gender theory.

Her research work has always been driven by a commitment to greater equality, and its impact has been felt not only in British political life but well beyond. Her work on women and democracy has resonated in India, South Africa, and South America, as well as across Europe, and her involvement with UNIFEM and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development demonstrates her continuing global commitments.

Her publications continue to be groundbreaking, whilst scores of scholars-to-be at the LSE will testify to the pleasure derived by the intellectual cut-and-thrust of debate stimulated by her work. Hence why the Political Studies Association judges had no hesitation in nominating Anne Phillips for a *Special Recognition Award*.

PSA JUDGES AWARD

MICHAEL COCKERELL

The Political Studies Association Judges' Award, for a special contribution to British politics, goes to Michael Cockerell in recognition of his magnificent series of documentaries and profiles on British political life and leaders.

Always entertaining, informative and superbly narrated, the profiles of political figures such as Edward Heath, Roy Jenkins, David Cameron and, most recently, Tony Blair, have been equally revelatory and thought-provoking. His documentary career has encompassed eight British prime ministers, more than any other reporter in British political broadcasting; as the number increases, so does his perspective and ability. Michael Cockerell's broadcasts contain



that rare quality of containing the mass of substance and insight necessary to interest regular politics watchers, whilst also being sufficiently fascinating to bring in a much broader audience of viewers, intrigued at the interplays of personality and politics skilfully married in his programmes.

A glance at his catalogue reveals the extent to his involvement in political documentary making and how well he has exposed the British political system; the journalist jurors were quick to highlight his unfailing ability to tease information from his subjects. In stripping away the veneer of political gloss, his *How to Be A...* series — on the chancellor, foreign secretary, home secretary, and ex-prime minister — allowed non-political viewers genuine access to traditionally hidden areas whilst still delivering the political analysis expected of a Cockerell film.

Michael Cockerell's fascination with the processes of politics has also taken him beyond documentaries into print. He has authored and co-authored *Sources Close to the Prime Minister* and *Live from Number 10*, both of which threw fascinating new light on the sometimes murky relationship between the media and the political process.

As further proof of his wide-reaching appeal and profound effect, academics on the jury were all quick to note how many of their politics students had commented on how their interest in the subject had been stimulated by Michael Cockerell's political profiles, and there is no doubt that in Britain today the words 'political documentary' and 'Michael Cockerell' are virtually synonymous. In years to come historians will turn to his documentaries to gain a real insight into how politics was conducted in the UK in the 20th and 21st century. Therefore it has given us great pleasure in awarding him the Judges' award for 2008.

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Tel: 020 7381 1611

email: editor@thepolitician.org *web:* www.parliamentarybrief.com

EDITOR: RODERICK CRAWFORD