

T073

Attack on Viscount Tonypandy

I am horrified that someone you describe as a distinguished historian should viciously attack the late Viscount Tonypandy so soon after his lamented death (report, 17 October 1997). [Has this person forgotten *de mortuis nil nisi bonum?*]

I knew George Thomas (as he then was) for some ten years in the 1950s and 1960s. It was then the practice for the assistant draftsman of a public bill to sit next to the chairman of the standing committee and advise him. It chanced that I did this frequently at times when Thomas was chairman, as he frequently was.

You report the distinguished historian as accusing Thomas of chairing standing committees in a dictatorial manner and treating officials with contemptuous disdain. The direct opposite was the case in my recollection. Thomas was friendly and easy with everyone involved, and anxious to do his job as well as it could be done.

The distinguished historian says Thomas only wanted you as a friend if he thought you could be useful. This certainly did not apply in my own case. As a mere assistant draftsman I could not conceivably have been of the slightest use to this rising politician. Yet Thomas went out of his way to befriend not only me but also my wife and family, even visiting our home. I never met anyone in public life who had such genuine concern for others.¹

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¹ *The Times*, 22 October 1997. (Words in square brackets omitted by the Times because 'no one understands Latin now'. The 'distinguished historian' was Sir Robert Rhodes James.)