

Paul Foot and the thuggish Ricky Tomlinson

I am writing this letter very carefully, because I am trembling with rage and mustn't show it. My subject is the class traitor the Hon Paul Foot and his liking for the thuggish Ricky Tomlinson. Foot was brought up in a distinguished upper middle-class family. He is coy about where he went to school, but is an Oxford graduate. Yet early on he decided to ally himself wholeheartedly with the working class and blind himself to their failings. It is a striking example of the *trahison des clerics* which sorely afflicted our country in the last century, and still continues.

Foot says in his review of Tomlinson's shameless autobiography that the latter's 1973 trial and conviction were 'disgraceful', that the charges were 'trumped up', and that the sentence of two years' imprisonment was 'savage'. As a barrister practising at the time I can say that none of this is true. It was the use of flying pickets by building workers, and later by miners, that was disgraceful. It involved the criminal use of coercive force on a large scale, and was rightly banned by Thatcherite legislation (not overturned in the years of subsequent Labour rule).

My final use for the sickbag relates to Foot's appropriation of a moving stanza by A E Housman to decorate his disgusting piece.

[Published in *Oldie* 179, February 2004.]