

## **Address to John Pinder's Memorial Service 25<sup>th</sup> April 2015**

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John was held in considerable esteem by all of us who believe in the nobility of the European cause. Indeed he was an expression of that nobility in his personal qualities, particularly in his constancy and humility and even more fundamentally in his essential goodness.

He was of course far more than a profound thinker, academic and writer. He was above all a political activist. He sought to apply his abilities to influencing events and not merely commentating on them. He reflected an indefatigable commitment and an activism to advance a political ideal. He did so not as a conventional politician but rather as one who stimulated, provoked and taught in pursuit of a cause that was often far from popular in his own country. It is to that activism, cloaked as it was in a genuine modesty, that I wish to turn.

I remember many years ago being introduced by Garret Fitzgerald to John. Garret too was an idealist and when John was described to me by Garret (who had known so many of the political figures of the European movement), as one of "the great Europeans" I took notice. At the time I knew little about John but the reverence of that introduction has remained with me. It subsequently grew through personal acquaintance.

Europe and federalism was the leitmotif of a life well lived and a profound contribution duly made. This was not merely an intellectual contribution nor was it one made only

through teaching or proselytising through his books (substantial though those contributions were). As John's cause was linked to a belief in the essential dignity and equality of man it was inevitably rooted in a rejection of nationalism. Nationalism is of course a most corrosive of sentiments that has brought about terrible conflict. As nationalism is often the vehicle of some of the political class who seek to harness emotion John ultimately directed his activities towards political engagement through rationality. Whilst he might be accurately described as an intellectual and an academic he was not circumscribed by his academic reflection. He was, above all, a political activist. He sought to stimulate and advance political change.

Other great Europeans like Spinelli did so too in the public arena but John is better compared perhaps to those who laboured more quietly like Max Kohnstamm. Their quiet impact will endure not merely through teaching and writing but also because, in their way, they were inspirational figures.

John was an optimist. He never agreed with the French philosopher who said that to be a prophet it was necessary to be a pessimist. He recognised public opinion moves cyclically. He began his career outside the mainstream in regard to Europe, saw it come nearer and then, more recently move away from him. But he never lost the faith either in his beliefs or in his conviction that his vision would ultimately prevail. He believed that the pendulum would swing back and the ostensible innate hostility towards Europe of many of his countrymen could and would be reversed.

John admired Hugo Young the commentator and journalist. Young wrote about the difficulty for many of the British reconciling a past that they could not forget with a future

that they could not avoid. This difficulty is not merely a British one. John's great contribution as a political activist was in seeking to avoid being dominated by the past and to embrace the future. He sought therefore to change attitudes and to do so by viewing the future as an optimist. He invoked not emotion but rationality in seeking to achieve this objective. He argued the case for many years in the Economist Intelligence Unit through the tortured days of accession negotiations right up to the present time. He never wavered and never sought personal recognition but he influenced generations both directly and indirectly through the impact he made on the whole European movement at home and abroad.

The great British contribution to the thought process of our continent has often been in its practicality and the pragmatism of stating reachable objectives. John was of course practical but he was also tenacious in pursuit of a noble cause. He bears comparison to that great practical politician who stood aside from electoral politics but brought about fundamental change – Jean Monnet. Both believed in incremental progress and neither ever despaired. As Harry Cowie has written John Pinder was the primus inter pares of federalists. He was an inspiration to all of us not merely in the Federal Trust but more generally. He will be greatly missed.