

IN MEMORIAM

SIR RICHARD BERNARD FRANK STEWART BODY (WEST WING & WEST HOUSE 1941-44)

Sir Richard Body, who has died aged 90, was a Conservative MP who held traditional values of public service. Not for him the greasy pole nor, necessarily, adherence to the party line. The welfare of his constituents came first and his approach was influenced by his Quaker beliefs.

He came from an old Shinfield family with ancient connections to Reading School, where Richard gained Seekers Initials and reached the Shooting VIII. On 6th November, 1943 he was the Conservative candidate in the mock parliamentary election held by the Debating Society. He won (and his fellow West Winger, lifelong friend, and future Labour MP J M H (John) Lee (1935-45), representing Popular Front, came third.)

Richard had decided that he had wanted to be a Conservative MP even before that particular event. He went on to found the Reading Young Conservatives, served three years in the Royal Air Force and was called to the Bar. The choice of the Legal profession was one of simple calculation that it would enable him to combine a



Richard Body in 1993 credit PA

parliamentary career with legal work that would provide a sufficient income to sustain him. At first it scarcely worked like that and he struggled for some years.

During that time, he stood and failed to gain the seat in Rotherham, Abertillery and Leek. Eventually he became the candidate for Billericay and set up offices in the constituency to further his cause. He took the seat at the 1955 general election. Billericay being the first to declare and Richard the first MP to have his victory announced on live television.

He held the seat until 1959, speaking often, building his reputation, juggling his two careers. He then took the decision to stand down, maximise his earnings at the Bar and return to Parliament in due time. His choice of the legal profession now paid off. He worked hard; hard enough to buy his house and a farm from his earnings, and then he sought further candidature.

In 1965 he was back at Westminster as MP for Holland with Boston, which he represented until 1997 and then, with the constituency refigured as Boston and Skegness, for a further four years until 2001. By that time, he was seventy-four and had spent 40 years in the House of Commons, specialising in agricultural and environmental subjects.

Richard had, early on, fallen out with his party over the European Community and adopted an increasingly anti-EEC stance. He became one of John Major's so called "Bastards" who resigned the Whip over Maastricht, exasperating Mr Major to the point when he is reported to have said 'Every time I hear the name Body I hear the sound of white coats flapping'.

Richard Body served as President of the Anti-Common Market League, a Vice President of the Society for Individual Freedom, President of the Free Trade League and Cobden Club. He was a working farmer, a breeder of pigs and blood hounds, an early supporter of environmental causes and, like another OR who is currently the agricultural story editor of *The Archers*, rumoured to have at one time written the column "*Old Muckspreader*" for *Private Eye*.

He was the author of a number of books on agricultural subjects and the owner of the journal *The New European*. He had connections with both the Green Movement and the UK Independence Party and latterly he supported the English Democrats call for an English Parliament.

Sir Richard lived at Stanford Dingley and is survived by his wife, Lady Marion, who he married in 1959, their children Jane and Richard and grandsons Edmund and Rowland.

KCB

R B F S Body, born 18 May 1927, died 26 February 2018, aged 90.