



David Peace: I AM A CHRISTIAN AND A SOCIALIST, DESPITE YOU

This Bulletin comprises a chapter excerpted from *Red or Dead* (London: Faber & Faber, 2013), David Peace's biography-based novel about Bill Shankly, seminal manager of Liverpool Football Club from 1959–1974. Reproduced with kind permission. Original English spelling and orthography have been maintained.

Cover image: Radio City Tower, Liverpool, built 1969.

Ring. The bottle on the doorstep. Ring. The paper through the letterbox. Ring. The letters on the mat. Ring. The knocking on the door. Ring. The telephone never stopped ringing. With invitations and with offers. With offers and with requests. The invitation to come here, the invitation to go there. The offer to do this, the offer to do that. That request and this request. Bill Shankly tried to answer them all. Bill Shankly wanted to answer them all. Bill Shankly tried to accommodate them all. Bill Shankly wanted to accommodate them all. Bill Shankly wanted to keep busy. Bill Shankly tried to keep busy. To visit this hospital, to speak at that dinner. And to host a weekly radio show on Radio City. Bill Shankly wanted to do it, Bill Shankly was happy to do it. If people wanted him to do it, if people were happy for him to do it. That was all Bill Shankly wanted. To give the people what they wanted, to make the people happy —

But the people were not happy,
the people were depressed,
depressed and angry —

The people were demonstrating outside the Radio City building. The people were protesting against Harold Wilson and his Labour government. But inside the building. Inside the studio. In the dark and in the silence. Harold Wilson looked across the table at Bill Shankly. Harold Wilson nodded, Harold Wilson smiled. And Harold Wilson said, I was very glad when I heard you were going to do this and you wrote to me, and I wrote, almost by return of post, I think.

Yes, said Bill Shankly. It was a tremendously quick reply. The leading statesman in the land. In fact, the prime minister of Great Britain. I mean, for you to find the time to come here is unbelievable. I mean, I thought that as a football manager I had a hard job ...

Harold Wilson laughed.

But I can tell you one thing. Whereas I had to look after fifty-five thousand, you've to look after fifty-five million!

Yes, but it's a very similar job, you know? You know what they said about me? When I formed the Cabinet the first time? Hardly anyone had ever sat in a Cabinet before. We'd been out of office for thirteen years. And it was said, I used to say it myself, that I'd take the penalties, I acted as a goalkeeper, I went and took the corner kicks, dashed down the wing. Now I've got a very experienced Cabinet and I said, I'm not going to do that. They didn't believe me. I said, I'm going to be what we used to call a deep-lying centre-half. I couldn't say sweeper because nobody would

understand it outside football.

No, laughed Bill Shankly. No, no.

A lot of kind of people don't understand football, wouldn't know. And then, I think it was the *Liverpool Post* said, Funny, he's doing more than that. They said, In fact, he's being a manager. He's not even on the field. To which I said, I was very proud, from Liverpool, to refer to 'the Manager', which means Bill Shankly territory. I said this in a speech. I regard it as a compliment. But I went on to say this: where does the manager usually sit? On the substitutes' bench. I was reminding my team that I've got people on the substitutes' bench who think they are at least as good as anybody on the field. And I think that's the similarity of a prime minister's job and a football manager's job.

Yes, said Bill Shankly. In other words, you delegated the right men for the right job?

Right. But not only that. Like a manager's job, if your team gets relegated, as mine did in 1970, then some people start saying they want a change.

That's correct, said Bill Shankly. Yes. But you have proven, and I hope that you will keep proving that you are the man.

I've been there nearly as long as you were in Liverpool.

In politics longer than that, said Bill Shankly. Than at Liverpool, anyway. Er, Mrs Wilson writes poetry?

Harold Wilson said, Yeah, yeah.

This is true?

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, She does. She always has, since she was a girl. And then, a few years ago, she was asked to put some in a book, and I think, according to her publisher, it's the biggest sale of any book of poetry since the war.

Is that a fact, asked Bill Shankly.

Well, it's all genuine stuff that she still believes in. She writes about human things. She wrote about Aberfan. She was so moved by the Aberfan disaster, when all those schoolchildren were killed, I flew down that night. She came soon after. And she also writes about things like the Durham Miners' Gala ...

Yes, oh yes.

And at Durham this year, she read them both out.

Authentic, said Bill Shankly.

Yes, that's right. That she feels.

I mean, actually, said Bill Shankly, I was born in the same county as Scotland's greatest poet, Robert Burns ...

Harold Wilson said, Ah yes.

Who was not only a poet. A philosopher, a prophet. Everything. You name it. I think that if he had have lived until he was old as Shakespeare and Wordsworth and them, I think that he would possibly have been in the First Division and they would have been in the Second Division.

Harold Wilson shook his head. And Harold Wilson said, I think, well, he is in the First Division, isn't he?

Yes, said Bill Shankly. Yes.

And I know his poetry less than my wife does. Though I've never known it, when I've been speaking in Scotland, that somebody on the platform hasn't quoted something. Either something familiar or something I didn't know. The Secretary of State for Scotland, who is a great Burns Night speaker, he can recite yards of it at a time. Most Scotsmen can, I think ...

He, said Bill Shankly, in actual fact, was one of the early people on socialism ...

Harold Wilson said, He was really was, yes.

Possibly the first one was Jesus Christ, of course, said Bill Shankly. But after that, Burns was a real socialist. And one of the instigators of socialism, I think. Of course, he was a great character as well, Robert Burns.

Harold Wilson nodded again. And Harold Wilson said, Yes, he was. I haven't read as much about him as I should. But as a socialist, if one uses this phrase, and he was an early one as you say, it was because he felt it. It was because he loved his fellow men ...

Yes, said Bill Shankly. Yes.

But he was not a theoretical socialist ...

No, said Bill Shankly. No.

I don't think he'd understand anything about the theory of value or any of the scientific socialist writing that I don't bother much with myself, either ...

No.

But he just felt a love of his fellow human beings and he wanted to see their lot improved.

That sums him up, said Bill Shankly. He was born in poverty. And he died in poverty.

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, And he didn't believe

that the Lord created people to be unequal. That he created one set of people designed to rule the earth and others, you know, to just be the hewers of wood and drawers of water.

His books have been translated for the whole of Russia, said Bill Shankly. Most countries in the world, in fact. But Russia more than anybody, I think.

I've found that. I've been in Russia many times and they really, I think, worship the ground he walks on. I think he's been translated into about one hundred and sixty Russian languages. And I remember, many years ago, they brought out a special postage stamp in his honour. Before it was thought of being done in Britain.

They did, said Bill Shankly. They did. For his anniversary. That's right.

He was a well-known man for the women, of course?

Harold Wilson said. Yes. I think he got around a little bit ...

Bill Shankly laughed.

And I think if he'd been in one of your football teams, you'd have been onto him about the hours he kept.

Yes, said Bill Shankly. I think I'd have had somebody, a detective, watching where he went at night-time.

Harold Wilson said, I think, if he had lived today, he might be in the Scottish football team. Better not say that ...

Well, it's a well-known fact, said Bill Shankly, that in his day, if a man committed fornication, he was reported to the local minister. And the minister sent for the man and he sat him in front of the congregation in a seat called the cutty stool. And he humiliated him in front of all the congregation. This was a well-known thing. Now it would appear that Burns was so often there that he had a season ticket.

Harold Wilson nodded again. And Harold Wilson said, Yes. It's what you call a sin bin in football.

That's correct, said Bill Shankly. Burns was in the sin bin. But, nevertheless, a fantastic man. Er, Huddersfield, Mr Wilson?

I was born there ...

Yes, yes.

I was at school there until I was sixteen, And then I came to Merseyside ...

Your background in Huddersfield, which I know well, of course. I was there five years.

Well, I know, yes. You were manager there.

And I used to play up at Oaks, said Bill Shankly. At the top of the hill there. And at the back of the field we started playing five-a-side football. On a Sunday afternoon. And it started off about five-a-side, then when it finished up there was about fifteen-a-side.

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, My grandfather and grandmother were married at Oaks. Oaks Chapel. I was there until I was sixteen. Of course, I played football, but was never good enough. I used to go to watch Huddersfield Town every week. I played a bit of rugby league. But not professionally, of course. Then I came to Merseyside because my father lost his job, got another job on the Wirral, and I went to Wirral Grammar School, Wirral County School as it then was, and where I had to play rugby union. And I came to like that as well. But a lot of my formative career was spent on Merseyside as well as in Yorkshire.

Well, I think that, you mention rugby? I think it's a very good thing for character. I think that the rugby boys are good boys.

Harold Wilson laughed. And Harold Wilson said, Well, soccer is, too. It's a good thing for character. And bad character sometimes.

I think that rugby union, said Bill Shankly, I mean, at school, I think it's a good thing for boys.

Yes. Well, I played it for two years. I was captain of the school team and a future England international was in the team when we played our first match and got beaten seventy-four-nil ...

Bill Shankly laughed.

Well, it wasn't bad. We were thirty-seven-nil at half-time and we didn't deteriorate.

Who were you playing for, asked Bill Shankly. Everton?

No, we were playing for our school. You see, it was a young school. A new school. Only a year old. I was the only boy in the sixth form. And we asked one of the neighbouring schools to give us their fourth team. And they were suspicious. So they gave us their second team and they overwhelmed us.

Ah, yes. That was a form of cheating, wasn't it, said Bill Shankly. And Bill Shankly looked down at his clipboard —

Er, it's down here that you went to the Wirral Grammar School, and that was strictly rugby, was it?

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, Strictly rugby. Well, at one point, the then headmaster, who was an excellent man, got worried

that the boys had got nothing to do at lunchtime. So, as school captain, I said I would organise some healthy sports. And we played football every lunchtime. After lunch. Soccer. And I rather enjoyed playing soccer with ten-foot posts.

Aye, laughed Bill Shankly again. I bet you did. Because you had every chance of scoring a goal!

Harold Wilson laughed. And Harold Wilson said, Get the long shots in, yes. Well, I also did a lot of running. I ran for the Wirral Athletic Club. I got their youth championship. And then I ran in the Liverpool and District and we got the bronze, my team.

You were cross-country champion of Merseyside schools?

Harold Wilson shook his head. And Harold Wilson said, No, just the Wirral. I ran all sorts of other sports there. I once ran in the Northern Counties Athletic Championship, behind the man who set the record that year and was the English captain. And I got a good back view of him when we set off.

This cross-country. Mr Wilson? This is really a soul-destroying job, isn't it?

I'd never done much. I was short-and middle-distance. And then I went out to train at our cross-country headquarters and they asked me to run in the championship because they had a good runner who they, you know, wanted to give a chance. And somebody hadn't turned up. And I just stuck to him and beat him barefoot.

But this all leads up to the fact that you are prime minister of Great Britain. And you've played football, you've played rugby. You were cross-country champion. Now, I've run all distances ...

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, So have I, really. I could never decide what my distance was.

But the cross-country one is really soul-destroying?

Well, it is. And if you get a bit of a stitch. Or have the wrong thing to eat or drink beforehand ...

You don't want to give in, said Bill Shankly. Do you?

No, no. You don't ...

You want to go on until you die, said Bill Shankly.

Well, actually, that's good for politics. I remember when I was up and coming, really, one of the greatest journalists, now dead, said, Watch this man. He's a long-distance runner ...

Yes, said Bill Shankly. Yes!

A long-distance runner who gets there in the end ...

Yes, said Bill Shankly again. That's what I said at the beginning of the football season ...

And keeps on running.

When they said, Who is going to win the League? I said, Listen. This is a marathon. This isn't a short sprint.

Harold Wilson said, It's very tight at the moment between the top ones. I heard you, actually, last season. Oh, I shouldn't think ten or a dozen matches before the end, saying Derby County were going to win. I heard you on the radio say that.

Well, I had seen all the teams then, Mr Wilson.

You were quite positive about it. And it was a near thing. But you were right. You were right.

Well, I think that they only used the bits they wanted to use.

Harold Wilson asked, Did they?

In actual fact, my first bet was Liverpool. And Derby County was my saving bet. And they edited it so that I was Derby County.

Harold Wilson smiled. And Harold Wilson said, Oh, I gave you credit for it then, you see.

Well, I did back Derby County. I had seen Derby at Liverpool. I'd seen all the teams. And I felt that Derby had enough class.

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, Your Liverpool team was one of the greatest I've ever seen.

Oh yes ...

It still is, of course.

Oh yes, said Bill Shankly again. Yes, yes. They've got character. And they are never beaten. They last the game. The game that we did play, it was geared to bring everybody into the game. And simplify it. Consequently, you didn't have more to do than me, if you were on the same team ...

Harold Wilson nodded again. And Harold Wilson said, Yes, I know. Well, my theory about this is the same with politics. I often use the analogy. In fact, people say I get boring ...

No, said Bill Shankly. No.

... the way I use analogies in the House of Commons. But it helps you understand it. So I always say, No team is going to win the Cup or the League unless it's got good reserves.

Yes, said Bill Shankly. Yes.

And I've paid as much attention to building up my reserves. As I say, after being out of office for thirteen years. I reckon that if my first team got under a bus, my second team could take over. And my third team shows in some ways more promise than any of them.

Yes, said Bill Shankly. This is true. This is true.

And you've got to give them responsibility young.

Exactly, said Bill Shankly. And if I had a well-known player, unable to play through injury, which would be a terrible blow. Some teams, if they lose a key player, that's them gone, you know? And the pessimistic will let that get them down. But when I had a key player injured, I used to say to the boy apprentice, Now listen, son. You're a better player than him. You see? And have a little bit of psychology.

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, But I don't have the problem of temporary substitution. I have the problem of taking people off the substitutes' bench, like you do. I mean, for a very long time, you had five or six world-class forwards ...

Oh, we did, said Bill Shankly.

And your problem was who to leave out.

We did.

Harold Wilson said, And they were always disappointed, whichever one was left out.

But our football was a form of socialism, said Bill Shankly.

Well, I think you know, you have the great advantage here—and it's true of certain other parts of the country—of tremendous schools' football. I mean, how often have my own constituents' boys gone on to the national championships, schoolboy championships, different parts of the constituency, different parts of Merseyside—and I've seen those kids playing and you'll find that kids of about ten or twelve are getting watched by the scouts.

Well, I've seen a few eleven-year-olds and twelve-year-olds recently. And there's a few of them can play, I can tell you.

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, Yes, well they're born with it, they've got the gift. As long as they work at it.

They've got it, said Bill Shankly. And if they've got the ability, then a breakthrough is going to come out. And I've got my eyes on them, you know? So this is the thing. Er, back to the running. The grit that you showed in your cross-country. This is your character. And this is why you rose to be prime minister.

Harold Wilson nodded again. And Harold Wilson said, Well, you talk about Robbie Burns. But one of my favourite songs is from Harry Lauder. *Keep Right on to the End of the Road*.

Oh yes, said Bill Shankly. Yes.

If you've got a problem to solve, you've got to keep at it. You've just got to keep at it. And with us — again I'll take your football analogy — in politics timing is everything. People will nag you. Why haven't you done it? Why don't you get on with it?

Yes, said Bill Shankly again. Yes.

I was nagged all the summer about the anti-inflation policy. I knew what I wanted. And I was confident I'd get it. But it had to be the right time. So I had to get kicked in the teeth and everything else. Because I seemed to be complacent and lazy. But there's a time. And you know when that time is, you know when's the time to hit that ball. And it's the same thing ...

And only you know that, said Bill Shankly. Only you.

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, And only you know that. If you're a professional. And if you're not, you'd better make way for somebody else.

And only the manager knows of a football club, said Bill Shankly. What he's got to do. And when to do it. This is the thing.

Exactly. And how he's going to shape them ...

And the man who's willing, said Bill Shankly, he takes the stick if it goes wrong. And how you've got to bring this man on, and perhaps disappoint another, sometimes breaks his heart.

And he's not going to be told by somebody else when to bring him on, said Bill Shankly. He brings him in. The same as you bring your men in at the right time. And you make your statements at the right time. As you say, it's all timing.

And football managers. Politicians. Get it wrong sometimes ...

Oh yes, said Bill Shankly. It's the simplest thing in the world.

And don't we hear about it?

Well, said Bill Shankly. It's a loud bang when a football manager does something wrong. But when you make a larger boob, with you then it's a bigger bang, of course.

Mind you, we have the right to answer back. In Parliament.

Sure, said Bill Shankly. Sure, sure.

Harold Wilson sat up in his seat. And Harold Wilson said, Our parliament. I think, is the greatest thing in the world. The Americans

have got nothing like it. Nothing like it. And I don't know a lot about the Continentals. But it is democracy. The minister, whatever he's done, he's got to answer for it, to a pretty hungry crowd of experts. People who are out to either get him down or support him. And you can't touch it, you can't dodge the responsibility ...

No, no.

If you've made a mistake, say so. And I've always had Question Time. And I was once told Macmillan, who was one of the greatest prime ministers—I didn't agree with him on a lot of things. Nor he with me, but I respected him—and I was told that he used to be almost physically sick before questions, twice a week. I know how he felt. And when a prime minister isn't worried about questions, then democracy is in danger. But I've suddenly changed my psychology. I used to think of it like cricket, you know? If you are supposed to be a top-class batsman, they mustn't take your wicket. And it makes you a bit defensive, you know?

Yes, yes.

And I suddenly said, a fortnight ago, I've got it all wrong. I want to treat questions like football now. If they want to see a goal, let them score a goal. I'll go out and try and score two. And it's slightly changed my attitude. And it's also making the Question Time more exciting.

And you think this is advantageous?

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, I think, if you think in sporting analogies, it helps you in other walks of life. You have a problem I don't have in the same way. But the jobs are similar in many ways. I went into the dressing room after a Huddersfield match. Huddersfield had won. They had played very well. So had the others, too. And I saw the manager talking to them. Although they'd won and he said they played marvellously, but he said, That marking was wrong. He said, Those little ones, you should mark the little ones. And let the big ones mark the big ones. I've often wondered what was said in dressing rooms. It was the first time I'd ever been in one. And I was in the Scottish one just after Frankfurt, you know?

Yes, said Bill Shankly. Ah yes. In the World Cup. I went to see them when ... well, I hoped they were going to pile up all the goals they needed, and they didn't. But it must be hard when your team has done badly and they know it, and you know it, to know exactly what to say to them.

Oh, it's a terrible feeling, said Bill Shankly. I mean, you know what it's like in politics if something goes wrong? I mean, it's a terrible feeling if

you've had a bad day and you've got beaten.

Harold Wilson nodded again. And Harold Wilson said, And the first minute when you go in there, what do you say?

Oh, the first minute after it, said Bill Shankly. I mean, you may have something to say ...

You can't chew them up too badly. Or you'll break their hearts.

No, no, said Bill Shankly. No. It's all psychology. I mean, what you have got to do is, you've got to know your Cabinet. You know all of these men in your Cabinet. You know their strengths and their weaknesses. I have got to know all these players. And I deal with them the way I think. One needs to be spoken to strongly, one needs a little handling. You know all your Cabinet and I know all my players.

You know what they'll take ...

You know what is best for them, said Bill Shankly.

I think another thing with your job and mine. You've got certain people. Some are very, very good at this particular thing or that particular thing. And so I sometimes alter the system of government, the machinery of government, to make sure that a flyer of this particular kind can really develop on that side, so to speak, just as if you've got — well, let's not talk about any local footballers — but we were chatting the other night about Ray Wilson, who went from Huddersfield to Everton. Now if you've got a Ray Wilson there, you will develop, I guess, a particular style of play and tactics to make the greatest use of him ...

Great, said Bill Shankly. Great.

If you've got somebody like Leighton James of Burnley — who, I think, he's a real, good old-fashioned winger of the kind I was brought up to respect and admire and cheer — then, in his case, I can imagine Burnley would build their tactics round a man like that, whereas, if they didn't get him, they'd be doing different tactics.

Mr Wilson, laughed Bill Shankly, you're going to be a manager of a football team soon ...

Harold Wilson shook his head. And Harold Wilson said, I don't think I'd do it very well.

Because your tactics are right!

I'd rather be an amateur watcher of it.

But you played yourself at what level, Mr Wilson?

Oh, I was a goalkeeper in Huddersfield. I was a goalkeeper. I wasn't very good. I had a year off then because I had typhoid fever. And they

didn't have the cures for it that they have these days. And then I went onto the wing. But shortly afterwards, as I say, I went to a rugby school. And the only thing I could do was run fast. And if I got the ball, I'd make for the goal line. Sometimes successfully ...

Well, said Bill Shankly. I mean, there's another piece of your character coming out. Cross-country, the typhoid ...

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, I was camping at a Boy Scouts' camp. We had a local one, you know? We lived in the kind of textile valley. And it was up on the moors. We had an arrangement with the farmer who owned it. And I bought some milk from a local farmer, a milkman, who turned out to be a typhoid carrier. Twelve people got it. Six of them died. And I nearly did. And I lost nearly a year of my school.

You didn't die, said Bill Shankly. You didn't nearly die at all. Because you didn't. Because you weren't going to die ...

Well, I didn't know how bad I was, actually.

No, said Bill Shankly. No, no.

They had to starve you out, you see, for many months. But I had a wonderful schoolmaster, a maths master. He never had a degree. And he was always in a bit of trouble. And he was a great socialist. I owe more to him than to almost anybody, in this way. And he was the maths master. I missed so much maths, over two terms. He said, If you are prepared to stay an hour a day after school, I am. And he said, I'll bring you up to date. And it was the happiest day, I think, he ever had in my time. And he was in tears when he told them that I'd finished third in the form in the maths exam ...

That's fantastic, said Bill Shankly. Fantastic.

And I'll always owe that to him.

So the fact that the typhoid retarded you ... I mean, you gained again. You were behind in the marathon and you made it up.

Harold Wilson nodded again. And Harold Wilson said, It was a challenge. And there were a lot of young masters at Wirral School. It was a new school. Apart from the head, there was nobody over thirty. And there was a wonderful chap taught classics. And he was a very good rugby player and cricketer. Played for Leicestershire seconds. And he was an example. He was killed at the age of twenty-seven, just only been appointed headmaster. Killed in the Lake District, climbing. Or walking, really. But he made an impression on everybody.

You see, said Bill Shankly, if you look at all the men, such as you,

who have reached the peak of your careers ... I mean, they all had setbacks, Mr Wilson ...

Setbacks?

Without setbacks, you don't know what trouble is, do you? You don't know how to fight back!

Harold Wilson laughed. And Harold Wilson said, I had mine when I was relegated in 1970. You know, when we lost the election. And many people thought we were going to win. I wasn't so sure. And I had to set out and build it all up again. Keep the team together first, keep the team together. Don't let them get disheartened.

That's the thing, said Bill Shankly.

But that was a harder task, getting back, than actually running the government before. It's harder to be leader of a big national party in opposition than when you've got the responsibility of government.

So you say to me, How does it feel when you get beat in a big match? I mean, how does it feel when you lose the election?

Harold Wilson said, When you get relegated, yes.

But, in actual fact, vote-wise, I mean, there's more socialists than there are anybody else. But still you lose the election?

There's a lot of estimates ...

I mean, how come, Mr Wilson, that a man can vote one way then change his mind?

Harold Wilson shrugged. Harold Wilson smiled. And Harold Wilson said, But they do. And sometimes they vote for personalities as well as policies. I read somewhere that, basically, people are committed Labour people, more than Conservatives. And of course, more young people are coming on that way. But they change from time to time. They get fed up with the government, like supporters get fed up with a team. And I think that's what's happened. I'll tell you, though, I was listening to the World Cup that Sunday night. The Sunday before. And we were winning two-nil, with about twenty minutes to go. And when I heard we lost three-two, I thought there'd be an effect. And I did hear there were a lot of voters saying, Oh, I can't stand anything after this. You know, it affected them. I think it had some effect on the election. Not decisive, of course.

In Mexico? In Mexico, yes. And I think the mistake was to take Charlton off. That was the signal to the Germans. All they had to do was pile into the attack. As long as Bobby was there, they had got to cover their own goal and they weren't going to get the equaliser or the winning goal.

But that's a matter of opinion.

Well, you see. That's, again, the same. Me, who was manager at one time. You, as prime minister. You've to make that decision. Now the manager made it and things went wrong. Now if he hadn't have taken Charlton off, they may have lost just the same.

May have lost the same, yes.

So he, in his wisdom, thought he was right. So you would have did the same thing, and so would I.

Maybe, maybe. Well, you've got to follow your judgement.

Sure you have, said Bill Shankly. If you can't make decisions, you're nothing. Nothing ...

Well, you've got to take decisions that'll get attacked, misrepresented, sometimes praised. Sometimes you make a big mistake and you don't get attacked for it. They may not know it. May not see it. But you know you've made the mistake. And then you are lucky if other people don't find it out ...

They don't know about it, said Bill Shankly. Because it's only you that knows it.

Harold Wilson smiled again. And Harold Wilson said, They are looking at a different part of the field.

Yes, yes, said Bill Shankly. Er, you've been thirty-five years on the Merseyside?

Harold Wilson sat back in his seat. Harold Wilson nodded again. And Harold Wilson said, I came here, yes, in 1932, to live here and go to school. Then I was elected for Ormskirk in 1940, which included a lot of Liverpool, thirty-seven thousand people within the Liverpool boundary, in West Derby, Dovecot and Croxteth. And then there was boundary changes. And I went to the new division of Huyton, still keeping Kirkby. And now, of course, Huyton has lost Kirkby. And all the time, it's been growing. Kirkby's an entirely different place. It was a little farm village when I first represented it.

A big place now, said Bill Shankly. Been there many times.

Harold Wilson said, Yes. Big place now.

So that's a long time, said Bill Shankly. I mean, to be in the same place. Now, I mean, I know that everything is difficult in politics, Mr Wilson. Everything is difficult. I mean, you are the leader of the country. And not long ago, er, we went into the Common Market. I don't know anything really about the Common Market. Candidly, my whole life's been

football. And I'm not exactly ignorant about other facts, of course. I mean, everyday life. But the Common Market? Er, you took us into the Common Market?

Harold Wilson shook his head. And Harold Wilson said, Well, it'd been going on since 1962. And we always said, It's good for us, if we're not going to be crippled by it, and if it doesn't break up the Commonwealth. And this is what the Labour Party said in opposition then. And when we were in government, we applied. And De Gaulle vetoed it, as he'd vetoed Harold Macmillan. Then the Conservatives took us in, Mr Heath, but I didn't think he had the country behind him. We said we would negotiate. And if we didn't get the right terms, we would recommend coming out. Then we had a referendum and the country decisively voted. Now nobody is in any doubt. We are a democratic country. People who fought hard against what I was saying in the referendum have loyally accepted it. I think that's the kind of country that we are. And we've got big problems to solve. We've got to strengthen our own economy to make us better partners as well as to survive and prosper there. And I have some criticisms of other European countries. But mainly their football style again. Back to football. Back to football again ...

Yes, said Bill Shankly. Well, I mean, I think, whether we are in the Common Market or not, I think we've still got to work hard. So it wouldn't make any difference really.

Harold Wilson sat forward in his seat again. And Harold Wilson said, There is an argument for being in, an argument for being out. But on balance I came out strongly, in the end, for staying in. But it's a big league is this one. You can't go in as cripples. And you've got to build up your economic strength. I mean, people who say we're done for, they're totally wrong. There's more ingenuity and hard work, possibly, in this country than people realise. And we're showing it in our exports now, how well we're doing in a world of depression. But we've got to pull to our full strength or we can be a drag.

Mr Wilson, said Bill Shankly, ever since I can remember, there's been rumours that we were finished ...

Yeah, yeah.

And pessimism. I mean, there's always a shortage of optimism and people willing to get their jackets off. But, I mean, I was born and brought up in the pits. I was in the pit when I was fourteen

Which coalfield were you brought up in?

I was in the Ayrshire coalfield.

Yes, I used to know them very well. Very well. I used to know every miners' leader in Ayrshire, when I was younger.

Well, said Bill Shankly, we were in William Beard and Company, as they were then ...

Harold Wilson said, Beard and Dolmillington.

It was. Beard and Dolmillington.

The managing director, I seem to remember, I'm going back thirty years, was called A.K. McKosh.

That's him, said Bill Shankly. Well, I was in that area. So that, even then, I mean, there was nothing but pessimism. Because it was a mining area. And if there was no pit. And you couldn't play football. You were out. You had no job.

Well, you know, we are developing new sources of coal mining in Scotland, areas that were nearly closed. We're putting in a lot of money now, to develop new seams, because there's new methods now, for mining ...

Well, said Bill Shankly, this area where I am really was only scratched. And I think it's a full coalfield. Well, I didn't think that they should have shut down ...

We're going out to sea. The North Sea has got coal as well as oil. And there are new ways of getting them.

Under the sea at Fife and all.

Harold Wilson nodded again. And Harold Wilson said, I know. I like going to coal-mining areas. I like getting out of London. I've got nothing against London, some wonderful people there. But if you're going to have any job to do with politics or running this country, you've got to get out and meet people where they are. Not just in London. I'm not worried about demonstrators. I don't worry about them. This afternoon I was surprised, even in Liverpool, where I've been, you know, a couple of times a month, there would be crowds outside. They weren't demonstrating either, when I was opening a community health centre. But I like to be out of London on a Friday and go around the country and meet people. Meet real people. Get away from the hothouse atmosphere of politics.

As you say, said Bill Shankly, I think the Houses of Commons is a hothouse. I mean, being in it all week. I mean, it must be a tremendous feeling to get out of it and get away?

Yes. It's a great job to do. But everybody who's there will do it better if

they refresh themselves. As so many do, going to their constituencies, or going, as I've got to do, all over the country.

Yes, said Bill Shankly. You can be too close to it too long. You can't see the wood for the trees.

That's right. You need a breath of fresh air.

Especially if you come to Liverpool, said Bill Shankly.

Harold Wilson laughed. And Harold Wilson said, Fresh air in every way. I've been here three times in the last month. And I shall be coming up five times in the next couple of months ...

Yeah, well, said Bill Shankly. And then, of course, there is two good teams here, too.

Yes, I once paid you that tribute at a football dinner. I said you were the fairest-minded man I've ever met when you said there were two good teams in football, in Merseyside.

Bill Shankly laughed.

No, I did say, if you remember, I criticised you a bit for that, for not mentioning Tranmere Rovers ...

Yeah, laughed Bill Shankly again. Yeah.

You then agreed with me. And you did a lot to help Tranmere Rovers from Liverpool.

I did last season, said Bill Shankly. For a little while, yes.

Before that, though. When you were manager. I mean, there was the goalkeeper ...

Oh yes, said Bill Shankly. Tommy Lawrence. We gave them some money and some players. We've done quite a bit. Mind you, we were trying to help ourselves as well.

That makes sense, doesn't it? Bread cast on the waters ...

But we did try to help them, said Bill Shankly. There is no doubt about that. And we've helped many people. And if you can't help people, then it's a bad day.

Yes, you are helping yourself but finding honourable work for someone who was reaching the end of his First Division career. And, at the same time, helping to develop some young lads.

Yes, said Bill Shankly. Yes. Er, I've been playing, I have played football all my life. And I've been in the game forty-three years now. And I try to keep fit. I mean, I've got an easier task than you, of course. But you now tell me you've lost a lot of weight? And I think you have. You look well ...

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, I have lost about a

stone in weight.

So how do you keep fit then, asked Bill Shankly.

Not in the ways I would like to. I would like a lot more exercise.

When I was at Downing Street before, I used to play golf every weekend when I could, you know, and so I played a bit of golf. And then I got a gammy knee a couple of years ago. And now I've taken it up again this year. My problem is there's so much, things are moving at such a pace all the time, internationally and nationally, that I haven't had the exercise. I take the dog for a walk. He likes that. But I haven't had time to play golf since I came back from my holidays.

So, said Bill Shankly, in actual fact ...

The answer is not enough!

Mr Wilson, said Bill Shankly, not enough. But I think that possibly dieting, if you're not getting too much exercise, would ...

Harold Wilson leant forward. And Harold Wilson said, The real truth is, you know, it's not dieting. Although the doctor thought I was mad, I started drinking a lot of beer. I like it ...

Yes, yes.

It makes me eat less. Now I think I am a bad guinea pig, because most people put weight on with beer ...

They do, said Bill Shankly. They do.

But it works for me.

Well, said Bill Shankly, if you drink more beer and you eat less, then, I mean, and you are losing weight, then it must be working. Because you look fit now. And you must have shed a few pounds.

Harold Wilson nodded again. And Harold Wilson said, I'm much thinner. I'm lower now than I have been for fifteen years.

And is it possible that you could get a routine, said Bill Shankly. That you could go and have a walk. Two or three miles?

Harold Wilson shook his head. And Harold Wilson said, I can't get the time. But that dog is always waiting, if I get a chance of an hour. And he's now found the way to the local pub from Chequers.

That's your dog, Paddy?

My dog Paddy, yes. A great, big, soft, daft Labrador.

But is there any way you can get away from the people who are, you know, surrounding you all the time and have a walk?

Harold Wilson said, Oh yes. Yes.

You can do that, really? Do that daily or nightly?

I wouldn't have time. And I'd have to have security protection. Because there are a lot of strange people around these days ...

I know that, said Bill Shankly. I know that.

Harold Wilson smiled. And Harold Wilson said, But they are good fun. We've played golf together, my detectives and I. We go boating together. Long holidays is my answer. I take a long holiday because I never know when I'll be brought back. Sometimes I've been brought back for a week, in the middle of the summer holidays. So I go for three weeks' holiday, as I get hardly any Saturdays or Sundays off. I go for three weeks' holiday. If I'm not brought back by a crisis—and I wasn't this summer—then it's a long holiday. And I enjoy it.

You go to the Scilly Isles, asked Bill Shankly.

Always. Yes. Walking, walking. Swimming, boating.

Wonderful, wonderful.

A bit of fishing.

But this is the whole thing, said Bill Shankly. If you keep fit, it's got to be regular.

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, It should be, it should be. Yes.

It's got to be a little, often, said Bill Shankly. And the way to eat and keep fit and not put weight on is to eat a little, often.

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, But there is a bigger thing than this. And that is sleep. I can always sleep. Last week, when I was tired, I slept for ten hours. And nine hours the next day.

Well, I tell you something, Mr Wilson: if you can sleep that well, you'll have a long life.

And the answer is: never worry. If you worry in the night, you say, If this question can be solved. I'll do it better at nine o'clock than three o'clock. I've taught a lot of people how to sleep.

This is good, said Bill Shankly. Er, and your dog, is it out of condition? I mean, because some dogs do, if they are lying about?

He gets a little bit of weight. On holiday, he walks. I walk him and he walks me. We both walk hard. And he's swimming for two or three hours a day. He's a beautiful swimmer.

Wonderful, wonderful.

And I swim a bit at Chequers. In Mr Heath's time, some generous people built a swimming bath there. That's a good way of doing exercise quickly.

Yes, said Bill Shankly. Yes. That's good for you, too. Not only that—the exercise you get—but the water refreshes you.

Yes, it does. I'm not a good swimmer. I'm a bad swimmer. But I learnt to swim on Merseyside at the Port Sunlight swimming baths, which is where we used to go from Wirral Grammar School.

But the water refreshes you?

Oh, it does. Nothing like seawater. Cold seawater. I like a swimming pool. But in Scilly the water is very cold, very pure and invigorating. And it's good for me.

Now, said Bill Shankly, we've come back to a question that is appertaining to football. What's England's chances in the World Cup? Now, first and foremost, of course, they have got to qualify. And I would say to you, really—change that—what chances have they got in the European Nations Cup?

Harold Wilson sat back in his seat. Harold Wilson laughed. And Harold Wilson said, Isn't it time for me to take over the interview and put that question to you? I'd rather hear your answer on that one. Well, I don't know. I'll simply say the only time we've ever won the World Cup was when we had a Labour government. So at least we've got that condition fulfilled. I think we were very unlucky in Mexico. It could have gone much better. We were unlucky. But I don't know. They are building up a new team. I think they had, in the end, to break up that very great team of 1966. Perhaps clung, tried to keep them together too long. But there's a lot of experiment going on. A lot of brand new lads.

The next one is in the Argentine, said Bill Shankly. Which makes it more difficult. And possibly advantageous to the Latins.

Harold Wilson said, I don't think the high altitude in Mexico was good for countries coming from low altitude ...

Mr Wilson, said Bill Shankly, the game never should have been played in Mexico.

No, no. Any more than the Olympics should. But I think we've a better chance now than I would have thought possible two or three years ago, when we saw that disaster of not getting into the finals, the disaster of not qualifying ...

Not qualifying was a killer, said Bill Shankly. Scotland qualified. And they were a little unlucky.

Well, as I say, I saw them at Frankfurt.

Don Revie is in now, said Bill Shankly. And he's, he's, he's ... Now

he's searching our, er ... What he can do for the best ...

He's experimenting. Yes. Experimenting.

Well, said Bill Shankly, we were talking about getting the best players for the plan of campaign. And utilise them. And possibly it'll take him longer than people think.

Harold Wilson sat forward in his seat. And Harold Wilson asked, What were you naturally?

Right foot, said Bill Shankly. Oh yes. Right-footed.

But you could do both?

Er, I was a reasonable kicker of a ball with my left foot. But I was naturally right-footed.

What was your favourite position?

I played with four on my back, which then was called right-half. But I was a midfield player. Or I'd be a sweeper up. One of the two. We were talking about judgement, of course, which you and I had to have. What do you regard as your biggest mistake? If you did have a big mistake, that is?

Harold Wilson said, Oh, that's my secret!

Bill Shankly laughed.

I have had a number, including some that the commentators in the opposition have not got onto. I think one or two that I would say, particularly here: I think on Rhodesia, for example, in the 1960s, I thought they really were willing to negotiate and get a solution, and I went on. We had the meetings on HMS *Fearless*, HMS *Tiger*. I went there and I think I put a lot of energy into it that was wasted. Now the situation has changed and I hope it is going to be all right. But, I think, other things: I underrated, for example, the economic situation in the 1960s. I didn't realise how virulent could be an attack on sterling. Sometimes, you know, from people just talking and gossiping without really knowing the facts. I was trying to build up the industrial strength and didn't allow enough, I think, for the fact that we could be knocked sideways by a run on sterling. We've learnt a lot from those days. But I think those are the kind of mistakes I would mention ...

Well, I wouldn't call that a mistake, Mr Wilson.

And I think, like you, I sometimes put the odd person in the team that afterwards I thought had been a mistake ...

Well, said Bill Shankly again, I wouldn't call them mistakes ...

Not many ...

I would call them happenings, said Bill Shankly.

Harold Wilson said, You say, in football, you don't have mistakes, you have happenings?

Happenings, said Bill Shankly. And I think it's the same in your case. Happenings.

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, Well, I like the happenings to lead to a win, not a loss.

Right, said Bill Shankly. What made you become a socialist?

Really, very similar to the reason I think anyone you were brought up with would say. I was brought up in an area, the textile valleys of the West Riding, where unemployment, the Depression, was so great and where ... well, my own father was out of work for a year or two. But we didn't have it hard, we didn't have it bad. But a lot of the kids—kids in my patrol in the Scouts, kids in my football team at school—their parents were out of work. Lads were in what we now call the eleven-plus and couldn't go on to the secondary school because of that. I think that's what really started it. But a lot of it was, as I say, also the influence of mostly the religious teachers.

Well, said Bill Shankly, I think to that question I would have said, I think you are what you are. You are born what you are. And I think that a man is a socialist at heart.

Harold Wilson nodded again. And Harold Wilson said, I think you are to a large extent born. My father voted Labour in 1906, though he also worked for Churchill, Winston Churchill, in the 1908 election, as his sub-agent. I was brought up on that legend. But perhaps in my mind the Tories never had a chance. Because I was a little indoctrinated the other way by my family.

Well, said Bill Shankly again, I think that you were a natural-born. And I think if I am born, the politics that is in me, is me.

That's right, Well, it is part of your whole make-up

It is part of my make-up, said Bill Shankly. The same as my religion is part of my make-up ...

Quite right. Absolutely right.

And football is my religion, said Bill Shankly.

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, And I do not say that if a person is religious, he's got to be a socialist. All I say is, if he is a religious person, in my view, he should not feel that his politics and his religion are contradictory. Let him be, as so many are, a good Conservative, a good Liberal, a good Labour man. But he must feel that

what he is doing in politics represents his conception of what religion tells him.

Oh yes, said Bill Shankly. Oh yes. Without doubt. Yes. Now who is the best player you ever did see?

It's difficult. Difficult. But Alec Jackson. Alec Jackson. Another Scotsman. Alec Jackson of Huddersfield.

The side that won the League ...

And in those three years, they were in the Cup final twice. And in the semi-final, with two replays in the middle year.

And the second team, said Bill Shankly, they won the Central League three successive seasons?

They did. And at the same time. That's right.

Now you mention Alec Jackson, said Bill Shankly, I'll tell you a story. Roy Goodall said to me that Alec Jackson used to go into the visiting dressing room, before the game at Huddersfield, and say to the left-back, I bet you a new hat I score three goals. And he used to go out and score three goals. This is the kind of cockiness the man had. He was so brilliant.

Harold Wilson nodded. And Harold Wilson said, He was. And it was tragedy when he was killed. I'm not saying there is nobody as good today. That sounds like a very old fogey. But I am saying, if I were to start picking out one or two today. I'd be unfair to a lot of others. I think there are people as good as he was today. And many would say better. We haven't seen them competing with one another.

Well, said Bill Shankly, I was lucky enough, and fortunate enough, to play in a team where a fellow called Tom Finney played. And of all the players I have seen, I would pick Tommy Finney.

You'd pick Tommy Finney!

Tommy had everything.

Well, what about that story, though, that when he replaced Matthews on the wing for a match, the centre-forward, Stan Mortensen, said, It's not the same? He said that Matthews always had the lace placed correctly. Yes, said Bill Shankly. Correct. Great players both.

A wonderful combination.

Great, great.

Well, we've got some great players today. I've named one or two. And there are a lot more. And you've brought a lot of them on yourself, haven't you?

Well, said Bill Shankly, we have a team here. They complement each

other. They play as a team.

You signed two players from Scunthorpe?

Clemence for eighteen thousand pounds and Keegan for thirty-five thousand pounds. Yes.

At a time when the ruling rate was a couple of hundred thousand for a first-class player?

Yes, said Bill Shankly. Clemence has been a brilliant player.

I've seen him play some good games.

Yes, said Bill Shankly again. Er, now, Mr Wilson, you and I are sitting here. Both from socialist backgrounds. That's not to say that we have no time for anybody else. Because, I mean, the whole world is with us. I've got friends in all walks of life. And I don't let politics or religion bother me. I'll tell you that now. That's a fact. But you were honoured with the OBE. And so was I. So it's one each.

Yes. We got one each.

Who's going to get the next goal?

Harold Wilson smiled. And Harold Wilson said, Well, actually, in some ways, I think I can pull a bit of rank here ...

Bill Shankly laughed.

Mine was given me by Winston Churchill. In your case, it was a lesser prime minister who recommended you.

Very good, laughed Bill Shankly. A wonderful answer, Mr Wilson. And it's been wonderful talking to you. Thank you.

Harold Wilson nodded. Harold Wilson smiled. And Harold Wilson said, Well, thank you very much. I've enjoyed it. It's made a welcome break.

A lovely change. Among friends ...

*

