

= Jack Dormand =

John Donkin Dormand , Baron Dormand of Easington ( 27 August 1919 ? 18 December 2003 ) , known as Jack Dormand , was a British educationist and Labour Party politician from the coal mining area of Easington in County Durham , in the north @-@ east of England . He was Member of Parliament ( MP ) for the Easington constituency from 1970 until his retirement in 1987 .

Described as an " old @-@ style centre @-@ right socialist " , Dormand was a working @-@ class child who progressed through grammar school education to study at Oxford and Harvard to a career as an educational administrator before entering Parliament at the age 50 , where he was noted as an advocate for education and for mining areas . He never achieved ministerial office , but as a skilled administrator he played a significant role as a government whip in the 1970s , and as Chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party when the party was in opposition in the 1980s . An atheist and a staunch republican , he reluctantly accepted a life peerage when he retired from the House of Commons and was an active working peer until his death 16 years later .

= = Early life = =

Dormand was born near Easington at the workingmen 's club in the village of Haswell , when his father Bernard , a former miner , was steward . He was educated locally at Wellfield Grammar School . Although he later took up rugby , he was a skilled footballer in his youth , good enough to have professional trials with both Manchester United and Charlton Athletic . Sport remained a major part of his life ; until his death he remained a member Houghton @-@ le @-@ Spring Rugby Club and of Burnmoor Cricket Club , last playing both games at the age of 63 .

After training as a teacher at Bede College , Durham University , he was not called up for military service during World War II , because teaching was a reserved occupation . After the war he improved his qualifications by taking a Postgraduate Certificate in Education ( PGCE ) at Loughborough College in 1947 . In the 1950s he studied at St Peter 's College , Oxford , where he was awarded a diploma in public and social administration with distinction and won a Fulbright Scholarship to Harvard in his second year ( 1954 ) , becoming a friend of the future Senator Ted Kennedy .

From 1940 to 1948 Dormand worked as a teacher in the coal mining community of Easington , teaching at Hordern Modern School and his old school , now renamed Wellfield A.J. Dawson Grammar School . In 1948 , he gave up teaching to become an education advisor to Durham County Council , and in 1957 moved to be adviser to the National Coal Board . He stayed with the NCB for only two years before returning to Durham to be Further Education organiser ; from 1963 to 1970 he was Director of Education for Easington Rural District Council . He was also the President of the Easington branch of the National Union of Teachers .

= = Political career = =

Dormand had been a member of the Labour Party since the age of 18 . He was elected to Haswell parish council at the age of 26 , and at 30 to Easington rural district council .

Manny Shinwell , the then 85 @-@ year @-@ old veteran Labour Member of Parliament ( MP ) for the Easington constituency , announced in 1969 that he would not contest the next general election . Dormand , who had been secretary of the Easington Constituency Labour Party throughout the 1960s and Shinwell 's presumed successor , was selected as the new Labour candidate to contest the ultra @-@ safe seat ( Shinwell had been re @-@ elected in 1966 with over 80 % of the votes ) . At the 1970 general election in which Harold Wilson 's Labour government was defeated , Dormand was returned to the House of Commons with a barely reduced 79 @-@ 8 % share of the vote .

= = Education = =

His maiden speech on 8 July 1970 focused on education and on the needs of Durham as an "

excepted district " , and in particular on those classed as " slow learners " . It was well received , and the then Secretary of State for Education Margaret Thatcher was seen to be making notes . Dormand 's views on education were supportive of comprehensive education , and in July 1973 he urged the abolition of private schools ( attacking particularly those Labour MPs who sent their children to be educated privately ) .

Dormand opposed Britain 's membership of the European Economic Community ( EEC ) , and at the time of the referendum on EEC membership in 1975 he was an advocate for the United Kingdom leaving the EEC and rejoining the European Free Trade Association . His main work in opposition was as a member of select committee on nationalised industries , where his knowledge and inquisitorial skills won him the respect of the committee 's left @-@ wing chair Ian Mikardo . In February 1972 he called for employment for miners who had been made redundant , and became Secretary of the Parliamentary Labour Party 's Northern Group in 1973 .

= = = Republicanism = = =

Dormand later described himself as " a republican for as long as I can remember having an interest in politics " and was a long @-@ serving secretary of the all @-@ party Parliamentary republican group . He spoke out in opposition to the monarchy , declaring in 1971 that " the whole of the royal establishment from the Queen downwards could go , lock stock and barrel tomorrow " . He extended his criticism to the hereditary peerage in February 1973 . In 1974 he and fellow Labour MP Willie Hamilton took the required oath declaring their allegiance to the Queen , then admitted that they had not meant it . The same year , he criticised the number of Royal servants who appeared on the biannual honours lists , calling instead for " scores of miners " to be honoured as they were just as worthy .

= = Government whip = =

Labour was returned to government at the February 1974 general election , and Dormand was appointed as an assistant government whip under Bob Mellish . He was promoted to be a Lord of the Treasury ( full Government whip ) in a reshuffle after the October election .

The post of a Whip normally required silence in the chamber of the House of Commons , but in February 1976 Dormand was involved in a difficult situation which required him to give an explanation . The Conservative opposition had called a vote censuring the Secretary of State for Industry Eric Varley by reducing his salary to £ 1 @,@ 000 . Dormand was appointed as one of the tellers to count the vote , but both he and his Conservative opposite number miscounted and lost the true count . When Mellish announced the confusion to the Speaker , the Speaker agreed to hold another vote . Embarrassingly for Dormand , many Labour MPs had not stayed to hear the result and were no longer present , resulting in the Conservatives winning the vote by a majority of five . The Government decided that the result was not a true indication of the House 's opinion and overturned the vote a few days later .

When James Callaghan succeeded Wilson as Prime Minister in 1976 , Mellish resigned and was replaced by Michael Cocks , and Dormand was promoted within the Whip 's office to be the pairing whip , a job which involved co @-@ ordinating agreed absences by MPs from one party with those of another so that the outcome of parliamentary votes is not affected . The Home Secretary Merlyn Rees had urged Callaghan to appoint Dormand as Chief Whip rather than Michael Cocks .

The role of the pairing whip remained a crucial one as the government 's slim majority turned to a minority through defeats at by @-@ elections , and Dormand was credited with a central role in helping the government stay in office , telling Wilson that he was too " bloody knackered at the end of the day " to record the events surrounding the late @-@ night votes . In January 1978 Dormand was named in a report by the Serjeant @-@ at @-@ Arms as having assisted in blocking one of the Division lobbies in an attempt to prevent a vote on part of the Government 's legislation to devolve power to Scotland .

On free votes he did not always help the Government . In July 1977 , Dormand voted against the

European Assembly Elections Bill which brought in direct elections to the European Parliament .

= = In opposition = =

When Labour lost the 1979 general election , Dormand served for two years as an opposition whip . He was an active opposition frontbencher who was particularly vocal in criticising the effects of the Thatcher government 's economic policy on the manufacturing industry of the Northern region : in June 1980 he said that the policies were " crucifying " the region and it was " becoming a scene of devastation " . He specifically called on Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir Geoffrey Howe to abandon monetarism .

= = Parliamentary Labour Party chair = =

In the 1970s , Dormand had opposed left @-@ wing infiltration into the Labour Party , and in foreign affairs , he was pro @-@ American and pro @-@ NATO at a time when the party 's left @-@ wing was becoming increasingly hostile to both . In October 1981 , Dormand stood for the vacant position of Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party , supported by the centre @-@ Right Manifesto Group of Labour MPs . The strength of the left @-@ wing in the Constituency Labour Parties at the time had spurred the Manifesto group to improve its organisation , and Dormand ( nominated by former Prime Minister James Callaghan ) defeated the main challenger , left @-@ wing MP Ian Mikardo by 102 votes to 65 , and Mikardo then withdrew . The other three candidates were Harry Ewing ( 22 votes ) , Willie Hamilton ( 11 votes ) and Frank Hooley ( 11 votes ) but all withdrew so no second ballot was held . Dormand held the chairmanship until he retired from the House of Commons in 1987 .

Dormand had a difficult job in trying to unite a fractious Parliamentary party at a time when the Labour Party was growing unpopular . In November 1982 , amidst rumours that a majority of Labour MPs wanted to replace party leader Michael Foot , Dormand gave a radio interview insisting that " I have absolutely no doubt whatever that the vast majority think that Michael Foot is the man for the job at the moment , and will take us into the next general election " . In response , Foot 's critics noted Dormand 's use of the words " at the moment " .

= = Kingmaker for the Speaker = =

After the 1983 general election , Dormand played a key role in the accession to the Speakership of Bernard Weatherill , seconding his nomination for the post . Weatherill had been an opposition whip when Dormand had been working in the Government whip 's office in the late 1970s , but had not been appointed to the Thatcher government ; in supporting him , Dormand pointed out to Labour cheers that Weatherill " is his own man " and would " ensure that the rights of backbenchers were safeguarded " . In July 1983 he worked with his Conservative opposite number Edward du Cann ( Chairman of the 1922 Committee ) to agree an increase in MPs ' pay over that which the Government proposed .

Like most Labour MPs , Dormand opposed the decision of National Union of Mineworkers president Arthur Scargill to call a national strike in 1984 to 1985 , but he supported the miners in the Durham coalfield when his local Easington Colliery and others joined the strike . He accused the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of washing her hands of the dispute like " Pontius Pilate " .

Despite his age , he remained physically active . In the 1970s he had campaigned successfully for the establishment of a parliamentary gym , continued playing cricket and rugby until the age of 63 , and cycled from the House of Commons to his flat near Millbank . The then Leader of the House of Commons , John Biffen , recounted how Dormand would " swathe himself in luminous strips " before setting off , and although he abandoned the bicycle in 1987 , deterred by London 's heavy traffic , he took up walking instead .

= = House of Lords = =

Labour leader Neil Kinnock was expected to ask him to be government chief whip if Labour won the 1987 general election , but Dormand thought it right to retire at the age of 67 . His successor John Cummings was the first miner to become MP for the area .

A staunch republican who deplored all forms of social privilege , including hereditary peerages , he accepted Kinnock 's offer of a seat in the House of Lords with some reluctance , receiving a life peerage as Baron Dormand of Easington , of Easington in the County of Durham on 13 October 1987 .

However , once in the Lords he thrived , serving on numerous select committees , including education , trade and industry , and the liaison and procedure committees . He was also appointed as deputy chairman of the Teesside Development Corporation , whose 12 @, @ 000 acres ( 49 km2 ) of de @-@ industrialised land included part of his former constituency . The Corporation was later condemned by Labour MP Ashok Kumar for having left a legacy of limited and " often inappropriate and threadbare development " .

His areas of expertise included the film industry and tourism , continuing the work he had begun in the Commons as chair of the all @-@ party parliamentary tourism committee in seeking the promotion of tourism in previously overlooked parts of the United Kingdom . He was also a member of the select committee on committee structure of the House of Lords and its chairman at the end of 1991 , and later became Labour Peer ? s Representative on the Shadow Cabinet .

Dormand had been brought up a Christian , an allegiance which continued into adulthood , when he sat on the parochial church council . He described his adoption of atheism as the result of " some years of very considerable thought " , and once freed from the fear of offending religious constituents , his atheism became more outspoken in the Lords ; in July 2000 he called for the disestablishment of the Church of England . He helped form the All Party Humanist Group , and became Vice @-@ President of the British Humanist Association . As a former teacher , he sought parity in schools for religions and humanism , seeking to have both described neutrally rather than propagated . After his death , Michael Turnbull , the former Bishop of Durham , wrote in The Times of how Dormand had pursued this and other causes " without prejudice " and with " a warm affection for others " .

He continued to live in Easington after leaving the Commons , but moved in 1991 to Clipsham , Rutland , to be closer to the House of Lords . He described the move as " traumatic " , but remained active in the Lords until his death , pursuing his interests in education and continuing his opposition to the monarchy . Of some 20 Labour peers opposed to the monarchy , Dormand was the most outspoken , asking the government in November 2001 " whether they will call a referendum on the abolition of the monarchy " ( the Lord Chancellor 's answer was " No , my Lords " ) , and asked in March 2003 for a Select Committee to consider the future of the Monarchy .

He recovered from a double heart bypass in 2001 , and received an honorary doctorate of letters in July 2003 from Loughborough University . His last contribution to the House of Lords debates was on 19 November 2003 , when he criticised the situation of " having to borrow money from the state to undertake a degree course " as " a considerable deterrent to poorer families " . The following week was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Laws by the University of Sunderland , taking the opportunity to repeat his criticism of funding for students by saying " it is very important that young people should not be prevented from going to university " .

That was Dormand 's last visit to his native North @-@ East . He went into hospital in Peterborough four days later , and died on 18 December 2003 , aged 84 . Tony Blair described him as " a life @-@ long servant of the Labour Party " ; When asked by a journalist to choose his own epitaph , the answer had been " he was a canny lad . " A care home in Peterlee is named after him .

= = Family = =

In 1963 , Dormand married Doris Robinson ( née Pearson ) , a former teacher who survived him . He had one stepson , and one stepdaughter from Doris 's previous marriage .