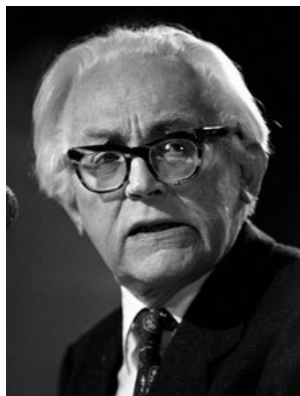


MICHAEL FOOT, TOUGH OLD BRITISH RADICAL EST MORT- A VERY PERSONAL RECOLLECTION!

opinion by |larry iles



Michael Foot's favorite bibliophile Frenchman was the fine essayist and stylist, Montaigne. Even though the "fables" of this writer teach us to accept our death as ordered classical fate all of us unsurprisingly should find "natural" as part of living a good life. Foot's death at 96 yesterday in my native Great Britain is, however, something of a shock. And its impact on overall European culture is stunning; a loss felt equally as of the last of the older Kennedy (Progressive American) or older Trudeau (Canadian Liberal) dynasties on this continent. When I last saw and heard Michael orate at a sparsely attended Brighton cinema rally for his multi-volume biography of ex-miner minister Aneurin Bevan on the subject of war crimes by dictators, he could barely speak or stand, despite his walking stick, with his immense wild gray hair blowing in the air conditioner behind the stage. Already cruel disablement, and this was all over five years ago!

Foot came from a family of brilliant, intellectual, mostly male politicians in England's West Country, home of the Plymouth founding fathers. And indeed when first, finally, elected as a Labour MP in 194, he represented that WWII Fascist-bombed city, where his father had built up a law business, always fee-waived and accessible to the poor. The male bias was something the Foot brothers found hard to overcome in themselves. John, later Lord Foot, the youngest brother, whom I have a treasured fine prose letter from, found contrasting happiness sexually with an American wife whose natural zest enabled her to withstand Isaac, the solicitor patriarch. Michael had a harder time, being rejected by the late cute Socialist redhead Lady Barbara Castle, in many ways his muse, for, probably, being inherently a "too rational Liberal". In the end he outlived the divorcee film producer he did marry. Even she, Jill, found the vast book collections he filled their houses with near "unbearable." Like his father, Michael made his living out of both journalism and book-collecting.

But "Footie", as Conservatives and Liberals derisively castigated him, was no mere ineffectual Labour intellectual, after his conversion to Socialism upon encountering the impoverished slums of the future Beatles' Liverpool seaport city in the 1930's, where he arrived for shop clerk work, so fresh from a privileged Oxford University Liberal club background that his straight-laced mother had expected for him. He rose to be not only Secretary of State for Employment in the 1970's minority Labour governments but, truly the explosive and fiery conscience of both Europe's and even this continent's intellectual left; that part, that is, that takes part in elections. And that does not hide in artificial tenured academe as too many in Can-US-UK inertly do!

Occasionally, this almost willing identification by Foot with what he interpreted as "the people's cause" led to bizarre wrong-headed causes even in the eyes of his European economic and political unity against US monopoly and war capitalism. Foot led the 1975 Referendum opposition to the UK's continued EU involvement, claiming that the popular UK Commons ancient "sovereignty" was at perishable stake. Literarily, too, he had Tory prose heroes like the satire ridiculist J. Swift because he (overstressed) their nonconformity aspects, or of least for sheer word display power as in

Swift's pompous anti-war whig Gulliver's Travels book.

He unfortunately was not a success when reaching the ultimate pinnacle of official leadership of the whole vast Labour party up against Margaret Thatcher in her first re-election as UK PM in 1983. It wasn't even that he had been wrong-footed on her Falklands war cries, as wisely he made for many of us (I was then in my own youthful Liberal party allegiance), that the then Fascist Argentinian force should be opposed! Instead, alas, Foot's oracular long-sentenced style, and passionate unscripted speech, were usited for rivalry with Lady Thatcher's Reaganesque TV soundbites and vast business funds. And vast elements of Labour's priveleged ranks broke off to form a third party in disdain for his hostility to the EU-- worthily, but surely very unworthily too, for the antagonism of his his long-held campaign for nuclear disarmament for Reagan (and the youthful Cheney) saddled upon us cruise nuke missiles, the mass women's protests from Berlin to Greenham Common! Michael, a man of rooted conviction and carnivorous combat zest, had taken on in early aging, more of the status quo than even he could overthrow, as a Radical socialist and pretty open agnostic.

However, his monument is all around you, especially in his copious Monitor-style columns, most easily accessible in the Free Daily Herald you can see in the third floor of the Ellis Library in Columbia, where in the 1940s and 50s re rages against Tory fascists and for Bevan's 1948 free National Health Service, still surviving. Books, Google and BBC still serve up his womndrous speeches, forever, hopefully. He will be missed for his unrivalled eloquence. Read him!

A Call to Sporulate

from SLF (spore liberation front) "radical mycology" zine, spring 2009, anti-copyright

How we choose to spend the few years we're allotted on Earth-from the interactions we have with each other to the ways we choose to heal or steal from the planet- is a serious decision with measurable consequences. We determine what quality of life our children will be able to play in, what quality of air they will have to breathe, what fauna and flora they will gaze at in wonder. If an individual takes the time to reflect upon this fact and proceeds to actually do something about it, their perspectives on life and living from then on will be different. Unable to continue ignoring the impact of one's own actions, cognizant individuals can choose to apply a socio-political evaluation to everything they participate in. When we choose to affect the world around us directly, we begin to realize the potential every person has for making this world a better place to live and thrive in. We begin to grow.

In many ways, one's conscious relationship with mushrooms can directly foster this desire for change. The complex life cycle of mushrooms provides profound and novel examples of networking between different species and environs not exhibited by most other life forms. These actions show a sentient concern for not just the mushroom involved but for the surrounding environment as well. We believe that as one learns more about these habits, and the ways in which they can influence our own human behavior, one quickly begins to perceive the interconnectedness of life surrounding them all the more clearly.

Mushrooms spend the majority of their lives as a vast underground web-like structure referred to as mycelium. This mycelial network has been called the earth's central nervous system- it's natural internet- to the way in which information and resources (such as water and minerals) are exchanged and communicated through it in a methodic, rapid, and sentient manner. Adaptive, creative, and aware, the mycelial network interacts with its host environment in a symbiotic manner with the health of the greater system in mind.

Our Representatives

opinion by |james ginns

In these frustrating political times, I always like to point out that our political system is working exactly the way it is designed. People bewail partisanship, but reward it at the ballot box. In the most contested US elections, there are two choices. There is a Republican and a Democrat. If you want more choice, go to the primaries!

I think an individual can really hold a politician or their party accountable for three things (two issues and a tie breaker). Sometimes these issues can seem frivolous to me, though dead serious to others. I don't care about gun control or abortion and it seems strange to me that so many are willing to elect any douche bag that conforms to their position. But hey, it's a democracy.

Of course politicians recognize this, and pay lip service to these hot button issues. Take "fiscal responsibility". Let's face it, anyone who thinks the Republicans are the party for fiscal responsibility has their thumb up their ass. During the Dubya Bush administration, Bush pushed for massive tax cuts and waged two expensive wars. Given the debt accrued by Bush, Obama's programs may in fact be unaffordable, but for Republicans to attack them as fiscally irresponsible would seem to ignore eight years of recent political history.

So what do you do when neither party represents your interests? For me, the three issues are energy, health care and education. When a Republican expresses these views I will vote for him/her. For now though, I'm a solid democrat. But what might happen if Democrats committed themselves to the fantasy called "clean coal" and insisted on building more coal plants via massive federal subsidies? My answer is somewhat tentative. I don't trust Republicans to have a better agenda, On the other hand, I can't hold a politician accountable without being able to reach "across the aisle" as they say in politics. To the extent that people are unwilling to ever abandon party loyalties, politics will always be partisan. And unless people are willing to vote third party, there will always be just two choices.

We, the members of the Spore Liberation Front, see the life cycle of mushrooms, and especially this mycelial stage, as a metaphor for the way humans can choose to interact in and with Gaia, our one world. As an endless cycle of growth, decay, networking, sharing, and purification, this cycle is, for us, a process both beautiful and enchanting, complex and intriguing; more than the life giving destruction its job as decomposer appears to be.

Just as mushrooms use their abilities to share nutrients with plants and break down toxic chemicals to keep their microcosm cleaner and healthier, so can we as humans live committed to the health of our planet through our natural role as stewards and care takers of the land. Like the mushrooms—and their mycelium—that form from individual spores to flourish and co-exist with nature in harmony, so too can we choose to spend our existence interconnected with each other and the planet to grow and live better, fuller lives. Mushrooms teach us how to care for each other, how to see life as a perpetual cycle of interdependence, a fragile balance where not one species dominates but all rely on each other. They help us reconnect with and accept an often denied and feared aspect of the wheel of life, that of death and decay.

Through hunting for and growing our own mushrooms, we learn the value of subsistence and living off the land, of subverting capitalist economic structures, of making our own medicines, and of connecting with the natural world. Using mushrooms for remediation purposes, we are able to reclaim land that has been stolen and destroyed by others that came before us. We are able to put our hands in the dirt directly, healing the damages done so that all life may continue on stronger, healthier, and freer.

Just how crucial mushrooms will be in saving this planet (and ourselves) from the brink of collapse will only be told in time. For now, we urge you, our symbiotic allies and radical mycophiles at large, to put the information we present in these pages to work. For we truly believe that the coming revolution in human existence will be (in ways both literal and metaphorical) a mycelial one.