



Richard Crossman and the Welfare State: Pioneer of Welfare Provision and Labour Politics in Post-War Britain (International Library of Political Studies)

Stephen Thornton

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Generally remembered as a notorious diarist rather than a serious political figure, Richard Crossman's imposing presence in Harold Wilson's Cabinet during the 1964-1970 Labour governments proved, not least to himself, a disappointment. However, in this new reassessment, Stephen Thornton rescues Crossman's political achievements from obscurity. From 1955 to the end of his life in 1974, Crossman was committed to a radical scheme that promised to break Britain free from the existing Beveridge model of welfare provision and transform the social security regime in the UK. Although the scheme as Crossman envisaged it was not directly implemented, his actions did prompt highly significant modifications to both Labour and, more surprisingly, Conservative social security policy. Here Crossman's reputation as a towering figure of the patrician Left is rehabilitated as Thornton argues that in the era of New Labour, the lessons Crossman learned from his project of welfare reform are more valuable and relevant than ever.

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