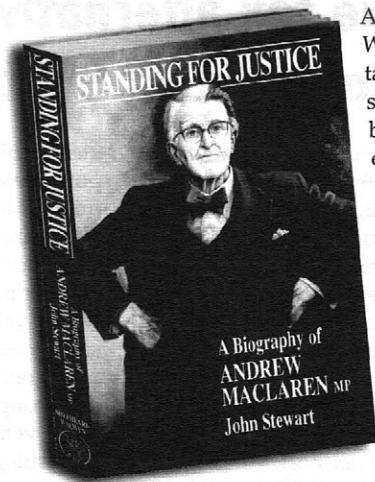


**Standing for Justice: A  
biography of Andrew  
McLaren MP**

**John Stewart**  
Shepherd-Walwyn  
£18.95 hardback



ANDREW MCLAREN WAS equipped with a talent for public speaking and fired by a passion for education and the arts.

As he stepped from a platform in 1908 he was commended for his oratory but was advised that his content was less than convincing. It was suggested that McLaren read Henry George's *Progress and*

*Poverty*. McLaren accepted George's diagnosis of the cause of poverty, his conclusions and, unlike Winston Churchill, never departed from them in his 92 years of life, of which two decades between the World Wars were spent in the House of Commons.

McLaren disapproved with pained distaste of any description of himself as a politician. Yet he was a proud constitutionalist throughout his two decades as an MP. His role in the House was as the lightning conductor – and sometimes the thunder – that brought down political humbug. He was a tireless teacher who opposed confused

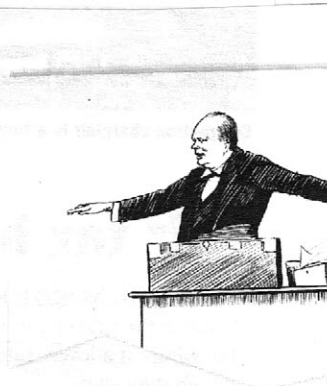
thinking by returning to the beginning of political thought: man needed "air, sunshine, water and land" to sustain life.

There are some faults in this biography. Most importantly, the author does not highlight or fully explain his subject's political principles. McLaren constantly stressed that history was concerned not with events or personages, but with ideas which changed cultures and civilisations. He owed much of the greater part of his political thought to *Progress and Poverty*.

Stewart omits McLaren's moment of conversion, which set him to venture beyond his parish in Glasgow and find his way into Parliament. McLaren owed the greater part of his political thought to George's book.

The style is ponderous and the political reflections are over-simplified. Many quotations are too long to convey the essence of a character as immediate as McLaren's.

Politics is a fast flowing river. The



changing events and the needs of the hour make it appear that the essential quality needed is flexibility and pragmatism. As Turgot remarked, the pragmatist reflects every image in front of him as faithfully as a pane of glass, but he retains nothing. Rather than concentrate on the structure of society, McLaren followed in George's footsteps by focusing on its foundation – the base of political architecture.

This biography offers a warm and well-researched portrait of this teacher of political thought.