

Clip 15 – Becoming an MP

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From: James Cox meets Jennie Lee, 22nd June 1982

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In: 00:07:30

Out: 00:08:50

Dur: 00:01:21

James Cox: Had you ever been to London before? It must have been very odd coming from that background and suddenly arriving in the House of Commons with all its traditions and that encrustation and panoply of power and all the rest of it?

Jennie Lee: Yes, I had been to London before because at 1927 I made my first speech at an ILP annual conference, and I was quite capable of getting on the train on a Friday night, travelling down to London, coming back on Sunday night, having a gorgeous time. There was Fenner Brockway, Margaret Louis, lots of friends, I had a gorgeous weekend.

JC: So, you weren't daunted by being an MP?

JL: Oh no.

JC: In fact you were I think at that time the youngest member of the House of Commons and you have an interesting, I think an interesting connection with another radical lady who also became the youngest member of the House of Commons in her time, Bernadette Devlin, because you also broke House of Commons tradition as Bernadette Devlin did by choosing to make your maiden speech, not in the time honoured way about non-controversial subjects but as a frontal attack and assault on Winston Churchill.

JL: Yes, I would never have dreamt of making a tame speech. I'd gone down there because there were things I had to say, and I said [th]em.