



Labour and the Countryside: The Politics of Rural Britain 1918-1939 (Oxford Historical Monographs)

Clare V. J. Griffiths

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The common reputation of the British Labour Party has always been as 'a thing of the town', an essentially urban phenomenon which has failed to engage with the rural electorate or identify itself with rural issues. Yet during the inter-war years, Labour viewed the countryside as a crucial electoral battleground - even claiming that the party could never form a majority administration without winning a significant number of seats across rural Britain. Committing itself to a series of campaigns in rural areas during the 1920s and 30s, Labour developed a rural and often specifically agricultural programme on which to attract new support and members. Labour and the Countryside takes this forgotten chapter in the party's history as a starting point for a fascinating and wide-ranging re-examination of the relationship between the British Left and rural Britain. The first account of this aspect of Labour's history, this book draws on extensive research across a wide variety of original source material, from local party minutes and trade union archives to the records of Labour's first two periods in government.

Historical, literary, and visual representations of the countryside are also examined, along with newspapers, magazines, and propaganda materials. In reconstructing the contexts within which Labour attempted to redefine itself as a voice for the countryside, the resulting study presents a fresh perspective on the political history of the inter-war years.



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