

John Hamilton

(2 September 1922 – 14 December 2006)

John Hamilton is remembered in the City of Liverpool by many people, and for many different reasons. For residents of the Fairfield neighbourhood of Kensington, he was a familiar figure who had lived in the same house he was born in for all of his life. For members of the Liverpool Society of Friends he was well known as a lifelong Quaker. For the voters of the Granby ward in L8 he was a conscientious and hardworking councillor. To the more general public he was the longstanding leader of Liverpool City Council: from 1974 to 1987.

Memories of John Hamilton's political and public roles vary. To some he was a great healer of divisions who could straddle the fractious groupings of the Liverpool Labour Party of the 1970s and 1980s. To others he at times seemed a figure at the mercy of political forces beyond his control in the bruising confrontations of the 1980s.

More personal assessments however agree. John Hamilton was a man of deep socialist principle. He was a great advocate of peace as a member of CND and a leading figure in the Quaker Northern Friends Peace Board. He was also awarded a medal by the Duncan Society of Liverpool for his contributions to public housing.

Most of all however, John Hamilton is remembered for his contributions to education. He campaigned all of his life for equality of opportunity through the comprehensive schools system. He was a governor for Breckfield Comprehensive School, Chair of the City Council's Education Group and for many years also the Secretary of the Socialist Education Association. He served as Chair of Governors of Liverpool Polytechnic (today Liverpool John Moores University) and was a member of the University of Liverpool's Council between 1964 and 1988. He himself was a voracious reader: a fact attested to by the hundreds of books that lined the walls of his home.

In his personal life John Hamilton was a very private man. Still, he is remembered by many people who knew him as warm and attentive to individuals. He was given for instance to presenting those who had achieved something important with a present of a book, and earnest congratulations. Rational in his speech and manner, knowledgeable in his conversation and enlightened in his outlook, he is a figure who reminds us of the value of lifelong learning and its importance for the cultural life of the City.