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Bartley, Paula

Labour Women in Power

Cabinet Ministers in the Twentieth Century

- Examines why so few women have historically been appointed as Labour Party Cabinet Ministers
- Shows how the only five female Labour Cabinet Ministers prior to 1997 influenced, and were influenced by, the prevailing culture in parliament
- Explores the social, cultural and political dynamics affecting the lives of twentieth-century female Labour Party Cabinet Ministers

This book examines the political lives and contributions of Margaret Bondfield, Ellen Wilkinson, Barbara Castle, Judith Hart and Shirley Williams, the only five women to achieve Cabinet rank in a Labour Government from the party's creation until Blair became Prime Minister. Paula Bartley brings together newly discovered archival material and published work to provide a survey of these women, all of whom managed to make a mark out of all proportion to their numbers. Charting their ideas, characters, and formative influences, Bartley provides an account of their rise to power, analysing their contribution to policy making, and assessing their significance and reputation. She shows that these women were not a homogeneous group, but came from diverse family backgrounds, entered politics in their own discrete way, and rose to power at different times. Some were more successful than others, but despite their diversity these women shared one thing in common: they all functioned in a male world.

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