

Subject: Guardian Unlimited: William Whitlock
Date: Sun, 8 Aug 2004 00:03:08 +0000 (UTC)
From: ljotis@excite.com
To: whitlock@bcegg.com

X5273/1

L.J. Otis spotted this on the Guardian Unlimited site and thought you should see it.

To see this story with its related links on the Guardian Unlimited site, go to
<http://www.guardian.co.uk>

William Whitlock
Loyal Labour MP who took the blame for a colonial humiliation
Andrew Roth
Wednesday November 07 2001
The Guardian

William Whitlock, who has died aged 83, was Labour MP for Nottingham North from 1959 to 1983, and gained a certain notoriety when, as under-secretary for foreign and Commonwealth affairs, he was chased off the eastern Caribbean island of Anguilla in 1969.

Two years earlier, the British government had proposed linking the then colonies of St Kitts, Nevis and Anguilla. Hating the idea of playing second fiddle to St Kitts, the 6,000 Anguillians declared independence. Whitlock arrived on the island in March 1969 with a set of proposals aimed at solving the stalemate, including an amnesty for the rebels.

The visit, however, ended in disaster. Although welcomed by Anguillians singing God Save The Queen, he was forced to leave after armed men blocked the road to the house where he was lunching. Shots were fired and Whitlock had to beat a retreat.

Back in London, he lost his ministerial job. Some felt that he had been scapegoated and that Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart had offered him little support. Back in Anguilla, the threatened linkage with St Kitts was abandoned and colonial rule restored with the help of the Metropolitan police. Today, Anguilla remains an overseas territory.

The episode overlooks the fact that Whitlock never received credit for his support for the right of Uganda Asians with British passports to enter Britain in 1968, a move opposed by Home Secretary James Callaghan and Richard Crossman, the leader of the house.

Although based in the East Midlands, Whitlock was born in Southampton, the son of a docker. He was educated at Itchen grammar school and managed two years at Southampton University before his father's death forced him to go to work to help support the family.

During the second world war, he spent six years in his father's regiment, the

Hampshires. He served in Belgium in 1940, scrambling on to a boat on the last day of the Dunkirk evacuation. He then transferred to the airborne forces, narrowly avoiding capture after gliding into land near Nijmegen in the disastrous Arnhem operation. He later served as president of the Nottinghamshire Parachute Association.

After the war, he became East Midlands area organiser for the shopworkers' union, Usdaw. His organising skills enabled him to expand into regional union and political networks. He became president of Leicester trades council (1955-56), then of Leicester Labour party. His soft-left outlook, and support for CND helped his selection for Nottingham North, which he won in the 1959 general election.

Making a typically quiet entry into the Commons, his organising skills, loyalism and persuasive manner again helped him into the Labour whips' office, where he moved steadily upwards from 1962 to become deputy chief whip in 1967.

Whitlock's parliamentary career ended in the 1983 election, when all three Nottingham seats fell to the Tories, although he lost by only 362 votes. Although he never complained publicly, he was angry that the then Labour leader Michael Foot refused to recommend him for a life peerage: this was partly because Foot loathed the Lords and partly, perhaps, because Whitlock was, by then, 65. He kept his counsel because he was the old sort of quiet loyalist.

He is survived by his wife, Jessie, whom he married in 1943, and five sons.

Â· William Charles Whitlock, politician, born June 20 1918; died November 2 2001

Copyright Guardian Newspapers Limited

W50

WW188/WG83