

# A quote from a book ‘Soap Box Evangelist’

Jim Simons M.P



A few weeks ago I found this book which was inherited from my father Cliff Willetts. The quotation says something about TGRS in the early 1950's from a total outsider.

“My wife and I preached in the Nonconformist Chapels finding much of the old primitive Methodist fervour that the more sedate Wesleyanism had failed to subdue; there was a warm-hearted spontaneity that released a few ‘Hallelujahs’ and inspired the repeat of hymn choruses”.

On one occasion, just before a general election, I was invited to preach at a special ‘men’s service’ in a Methodist church just outside my constituency. The Mayor resplendent in his chain of office was sitting beside me. As I rose to pronounce the benediction he held out a restraining hand, rose and began to address the congregation himself. ‘*There was a call from Macedonia thundered. But, in this case for Macedonia read Brierley Hill where our preacher is the parliamentary candidate, go over and help him*’.

There followed ten minutes of stories about Jim Simons in the Bull Ring, closing his speech with ‘These

things shall be;’ Jim Preaching at the Ragged School, etc., etc.

Eventually I pronounced the Benediction and went to the vestry in fear and trembling, wondering what effect this would have on the Society Stewards. I needn’t have worried; they had their diaries out ready to pencil in the date of my next visit.

This quote is taken from ‘Soap Box Evangelist’ by Jim Simons; *‘Of course I never preach party politics from the pulpit. I relate social problems to the Christian gospel and make my Christian witness as I believe it is the duty of all public men, who accept the Christian faith, to do’.*