

Stephen Keynes, a nephew of Maynard Keynes, spoke at the Keynes Conference Dinner about Maynard as a person. His words were 'off the cuff' with no notes, but the speech was not recorded. He has now written a note, as follows, of what he would like to have said.

Stephen Keynes Note on JMK as a person

October 8th 2016

Maynard was not the least interested in children, but he was my godfather as well as my uncle, so my mother used to take me occasionally to visit him at his flat in Gordon Square. As a consequence of the heart disease which he suffered from the mid-1930s, he was supposed not to get dressed until lunchtime. So when we visited him, his bed was always covered with the matters about which he was reading and thinking and with whatever he was engaged in writing at that time. But I learnt early on about his optimism when he sent me a postcard in 1940, in which he explained to my mother that the War would not last long. He used to lend Tilton to my parents from time to time, but he was never there at the same time as us.

As you will no doubt know, he was exhausted by all the negotiations he carried out on behalf of the Treasury during the War, and that his heart disease led to his death after his desperately difficult negotiation (which often stretched from early morning until late evening) of the American loan to the UK after the War.

However, in December 1945 he took me with him to the very coarse pantomime at the Arts Theatre, which he had constructed in Cambridge in 1935 – not least as a potential venue for Lydia, who had given up dancing as a ballerina when they married in 1925. Lydia had decided to act in Ibsen's plays, but her performances did not attract audiences. I have memories of Maynard taking me to the pantomime at the Arts Theatre and how he himself joined enthusiastically in singing along with Widow Twankey's outrageously vulgar songs! This encounter had an immediately productive consequence for me, as I had left school during that December – and there was no chance of me getting called up for military service, as places in the colleges were only open for ex-service undergraduates and a few medical students. Maynard adroitly suggested that if I applied for a scholarship in January, this could provide me with entry even if I did not win one. After the exams Provost Sheppard entertained all the candidates in his drawing room – and to put us at ease he started singing one of Widow Twankey's songs, but forgot it, and I was able to provide the words! As we left the room, one of the candidates who had not seen who had spoken up, said to me: 'the chap who completed that song will get a scholarship!'

Maynard's three-month idyllic and passionate holiday with Duncan Grant in 1908 on Hoy in the Orkneys established their close friendship. Maynard had not been brought up by his parents with any particular interest in the Arts, but his relationship with Duncan, his memberships of the Cambridge Apostles and the Bloomsbury Group, and his later friendship with Dadie Rylands were the origins of his subsequent intense involvements therein. I believe that his lifetime of participation and promotion of the Arts was inspired and activated wholly as a result of his personal friendships in these worlds.

Maynard and Lydia often stayed in their flat in Cambridge during weekends, and I used to join them at their Sunday lunch with his parents, who outlived him by many years. His mother had become

Mayor of Cambridge in 1932 and during the lunches he talked to her much of the time in relation to their mutual interest in social welfare and his activities while working with Beveridge in the planning of the Welfare State (which Attlee, as Prime Minister after the War, established in the UK). Incidentally, when I read Part 2 Economics in 1947/48, I was tutored by Prof Pigou at King's and he became a close friend: he had originally disputed Maynard's theories, but by then was happy to accept them. Maynard was a lifelong member of the Liberal Party.

At the lunches he also often talked about CEMA (the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts), which he had established and Chaired in order to ensure that cultural events and the arts remained alive in London throughout the War. This led on after the War to his establishment and Chairmanship of the Arts Council.

David Garnett organised the formation of a dining club in the 1920s for members of the Bloomsbury Group, and I was made a member in 1951. I remember being told by one distinguished member in later years, the wit Isaiah Berlin, that when he was sat next to Maynard at a Dinner in Washington in 1945, Maynard totally ignored his attempt to join in the conversation. So I have to admit that Maynard could occasionally be arrogant and put people down.

Maynard was a very emotional person and I remember an occasion when Maynard was talking to his parents about the restoration of Covent Garden, of which he had become Chairman after its near destruction while acting as a wartime warehouse. Just before its reopening, the usherettes had surrendered some of their limited number of clothing coupons to enable the dress circle lights to be properly shaded – and tears trickled down his cheek as he told this moving story!