



# **Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning, and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day**

*Stephen Brooke*

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*Sexual Politics* explores the complex relationship between sexuality and socialist politics in Britain between the 1880s and the present day. Looking at birth control, abortion law reform, and gay rights, this is a timely examination of the relationship between the personal and the political over the last century and a half.

Stephen Brooke tells the stories of individuals such as Edward Carpenter, Dora Russell, Sheila Rowbotham, Ken Livingstone, Peter Tatchell, and Tony Blair, and organizations like the Workers' Birth Control Group, the Abortion Law Reform Association, the National Abortion Campaign, and the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Sexual radicalism, first and second wave feminism, and gay liberation all feature in the book's portrait of the progress of sexual politics from the late nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century.

*Sexual Politics* also offers an analysis of the Labour Party's long and sometimes ambiguous link to issues of sexuality, ending with the considerable contribution made to sex reform by the New Labour governments of 1997 to 2010. Sexual issues were always under the surface of Labour politics in the twentieth century, emerging forcefully in the 1970s and 1980s in a way that brought both division and unity to the party. Brooke stresses the importance of class and gender identity to the fate of sexual issues in British politics, the dynamic nature of British socialism, and the impact of sexual radicalism, feminism, and gay liberation upon socialist and working-class politics. *Sexual Politics* argues that the shifting relationship between the personal and the political is a central element of twentieth-century British history, a relationship that helped define the character of political modernity.

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