

At the Crossroads

by Adrian Mitchell

I built the best of England
With my brain and with my hands.
Liberty Equality Fraternity –
That's where I took my stand,
And the people called me Old Labour
The brave heart of this land

I walked out of the smoky streets
To enjoy some country air,
But when I came to the crossroads,
I saw a weird sight there –
A man in a silver business suit
Swivelling in a black leather chair

He jumped right up and shook my hand
and giggled with mysterious glee.
Then he stared and said: 'Old Labour,
I can tell your destiny.
I'm the Great Political Entrepreneur –
Would you like to do a deal with me?'

Well, the style of his smile and the size of his eyes
Made him look like a shopping mall.
I told him straight: 'I'm a socialist,
I support fair shares for all.'
He said: 'Capitalism *means* fair shares,
Provided that you play ball.'

I said: 'I can think of something
Capitalism can't arrange
And that's the common ownership
Of the means of production, distribution and exchange.
And war makes so much more profit
That the idea of peace is strange.'

‘I was born for peace and justice
 For every race and nationality.
 I’m for people, not for profit,
 I want to see the children free
 With no more than 12 kids in a class
 Revelling in liberty.’

‘But let’s not talk about the people,’
 The sophisticated stranger said.
 ‘You must have targets of your own –
 Let’s talk about you instead.’
 And my brain was enthralled by his silver voice
 Though my heart was filled with dread.

‘I know you have a heart,’ said the shining voice
 ‘And I know you have an excellent mind.
 Why not become an Entrepreneur –
 Leave those people of yours behind?
 You shall live in mansions and grand hotels
 And be constantly wined and dined.

‘You shall have your own island and bodyguard
 And your own show on TV,
 And a heated pool and a gymnasium
 And become a powerful Celebrity.’
 ‘I think I could fancy that,’ I said,
 ‘But what’s the cost going to be?’

Well, I knew. But I signed – in my own life-blood.
 He extracted my soul with care
 And placed it in his credit card case
 And he gave me his black leather chair.
 Then he laughed and said: ‘You are New Labour now.’
 I said: ‘Thank you, Mr Blair.’

Adrian Mitchell died on 20 December 2008.