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James Harold WILSON  
 Prime Minister and First Lord  
 of the Treasury

Harold Wilson at 48 became the youngest British Prime Minister in this century when the Labor Party won a narrow victory in the October 1964 election. Party leader only since February 1963, he successfully united Labor's diverse elements within a few months, bringing it back into power after 13 years in opposition. He has shown the same managerial skill in his government appointments, placing "moderates" in key cabinet posts, assigning safe spots to "leftists." The juxtaposition, which gives him room for maneuvering, should enable him to retain effective control of the government.



A former economics don and statistician, Wilson has a brilliant mind, organizational ability, debating skill and wit, and unusual political acumen. Since he entered Parliament in 1945, he has held a series of important posts: President of the Board of Trade in the Attlee government (1947-51); Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer (1955-61); and Shadow Foreign Secretary (1961-63). He has never been personally popular with the Labor MP's but is respected for his talents. The center and right wing in particular accused him of overweening ambition, opportunism, deviousness, and shifting political loyalties. He was elected party leader apparently because he was the only Labor MP with the necessary qualities for a potential prime minister. Although he has "flirted" with the left, Wilson is not a doctrinaire socialist. He is above all a pragmatist, well aware of the realities of power. His commitment to close Anglo-US relations is not based solely on sentiment.

Called variously a "loner," "a cold fish," and "a cat who walks by himself," Wilson has no close political friends, and shuns ordinary social life. It is said he trusts no one completely, and vice versa. Before going to Downing Street, he and his wife and two sons lived quietly in a modest house in Hampstead. He has few interests, apart from politics, reading, and golf. A short, stocky man, he smokes a pipe constantly, enjoys simple food (canned salmon, cold roast beef), and drinks moderately (lager, bourbon whiskey). The Wilsons will celebrate their silver wedding anniversary on New Year's Day 1965.

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