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ALL SOULS COLLEGE

CHRISTOPHER HOOD
CBE FBA

5 March 1947 – 3 January 2025

Gladstone Professor of Government and Fellow of All Souls College, 2001-2014
Emeritus Fellow, All Souls College, 2014-2025
Professor of Public Administration and Public Policy, LSE, 1989-2000
Professor of Government and Public Administration, University of Sydney, 1986-1989

Saturday, 17 May 2025 at 2.30pm

Introduction
by the Warden

Professor Martin Lodge (London School of Economics)

Professor Desmond King (Department of Politics and International Relations, Oxford)

Christina Hood & Marius Ostrowski
In praise of Islay (trad.)
Cànan nan Gàidheal (attr. Murdo MacFarlane)
Leaving Lismore (trad.)

Dr Ruth Dixon (formerly at the Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford)

Mr Paul Johnson (Institute for Fiscal Studies)

Marius Ostrowski
Impromptu in Ab major, op. posth. 142, no. 2 (Franz Schubert)
A Man's a Man for A' That (Robert Burns, arr. Marius Ostrowski)

Martin Lodge

Dear Hood family, Dear colleagues and friends,

It is a great honour and extremely humbling to be asked to speak at this memorial celebration of Professor Christopher Hood. I approach this occasion with a sense of extreme trepidation knowing that anything that I will say, Christopher would have said in much better and more concise ways.

So how can one approach a Commander of the British Empire, Fellow of the British Academy, a three time PSA Mackenzie prize winner, the John Gaus and Brownlow award holder?

One of the discoveries over the past few weeks has been Christopher's ancestral roots in the shipbuilding industry in Moray, the place he and his family returned to frequently and where he also passed away. This connection offers me a fitting metaphor and also a starting point - one particular 'ship', namely Christopher's inaugural lecture at the London School of Economics (LSE) in January 1990.

The lecture attracted considerable media and scholarly interest. Less well-known was that it represented the conclusion of a protracted 'transfer' period which involved questions being raised in the House of Commons as part of the 1988 Education Reform Act. In the lecture, Christopher Hood outlined four dimensions, mega-trends, teaching, problems, and research.

The five mega-trends - privatisation, internationalisation, new public management, automation and public expenditure containment - were identified as intellectual challenges to the field of public policy and administration.

For Christopher, the interchangeable terms public policy and administration meant the study of the contract state. The idea of a 'contract state' emerged as part of a collaborative US-UK research effort in the early 1970s, led in part by Bill Mackenzie. The Carnegie-funded project focused on the way in which an assembly of non-governmental organisations were resourced to provide governmental functions. We have to thank this project for introducing the term 'quango' into the English language. The research carried much of a 'Hood flavour' - carefully arranged typologies, an interest in explanation, case studies, and, most of all a concern with questions of control and accountability.

Christopher extended this interest in developing 'bureaumetrics', exploring cross-national varieties of para-public or private organisations, as well as the the way government regulated itself and sought to regulate risks.

All this work was shaped by a focus on control. The origins of this interest lie in Christopher's undergraduate studies at the University of York with Andrew Dunsire. Drawing on Dunsire's engineering background, Christopher approached his research through the lens of the fundamental components of control systems: directors, detectors, and effectors. The control perspective also was at the heart of the 'tools of government' work.

A more 'informal' perspective, placing tacit understandings at the heart of the analysis, influenced the work on Public Service Bargains. This, in turn, paved the way to a return to questions of accountability and 'blame games' which he pursued in the early years here at Oxford.

The second key theme in Christopher's work is the acceptance and performance factor. Herbert Simon's challenge to the field that it should move beyond proverbs was taken up by Christopher in two ways. First, he focused on the 'acceptance factor' - factors that might account for the rise (and subsequent fall) of particular administrative doctrines or proverbs. Most prominently, the creation of the term 'New Public Management' (NPM) summarised a set of doctrines associated with public sector reform. The 'NPM' label was jointly termed with Michael Jackson. The label is commonly and wrongly associated with the 1991 'A Public Management for all Seasons' article in Public Administration which is the highest cited paper in public administration.

A significant part of this pioneering effort on the 'acceptance factor' involved the work on *Administrative Argument* and, subsequently, in *Art of the State*. This later work featured the growing interest in applying ideas from grid-group cultural theory, as put forward by Mary Douglas but first encountered through Christopher's conversations with Aaron Wildavsky in Australia. The cultural theory lens provided a way of theorising and typologising different control relationships.

However, Christopher's work extended to the other side of the 'Proverbs of Administration' challenge, namely the exploration of 'performance'. We find that interest in the 'structure-performance' hypothesis regarding organizational forms, the interest in government expenditure management and cut-back, the work on performance indicators and targets as well as the joint work with Ruth Dixon on seeking to understand the consequences of 'managerialism' for administration in the UK.

The third key theme is the limits of administration. His 1976 book remains to this day unrivalled in its perspective on implementation. The focus on the 'administrative factor' - the going back to 'first principles', the emphasis on pre-requisites and on unintended consequences can be traced to his initial BLitt work on the taxation of horse-race gambling. Unintended consequences in the context of NPM were discussed in the inaugural lecture as 'problems', especially in terms of 'waste', 'malversation' and 'catastrophe'.

If these three themes of control, acceptance and performance, as well as limits - might represent building blocks for an indicative Veen diagramme, there are some other common 'Hood-shipbuilding' characteristics. In the inaugural lecture, he noted that research had a range of functions, ranging from tracing and categorising, explanation, memorising to criticising. His work covered all of these dimensions. His work was distinct in being interested in both political and administrative logics, it was distinct because of its emphasis on 'control', the interest in exploring the boundaries of disciplines, and the blend of drawing on historical ideas and painstaking empirical work. Christopher had a unique talent to simplify complexity. In doing so, he revealed the often absurd nature of executive government.

The 1990 inaugural lecture also noted the changing nature of the who, what and how of teaching. Christopher was interested in customer orientation and 'learning outcomes' before the term became a standard requirement for course reading lists. My own first encounter involved a lecture on the privatisation 'mega-trend' which concluded on a futility-type argument which appealed to me greatly. He was also a strong believer in teaching-related peer-review. As a prospective GTA, I was permitted to join in a 'pre-course' planning session. I found Christopher standing on a chair, diligently scribbling on a whiteboard with two colleagues watching on.

This same customer orientation characterised his approach towards research supervision. Even if every session did involve the kind of trepidation I already mentioned, there was deep engagement with whatever one may have produced - and without the expectation to become a 'mini-Hood'. How influential Christopher was to his students was evident in the 65th birthday celebration at the Institute for Government which included participants flying in from Brazil, Israel and Japan. For those of us who had the honour to collaborate with him, it was near impossible to keep up with Christopher - for some intercontinental collaborators, like Michael Jackson, this involved being woken by lengthy faxes at 2am in the morning.

Internationalisation was not merely a mega-trend; it also represented Christopher's outlook. Moving between York and Glasgow (with the possibility of joining the Bank of England), seeking to escape from the Glasgow University environment through research stays at York, residing at the renowned Bielefeld centre, spending time in Singapore, holding a chair at Sydney, following in the footsteps of another Mackenzie scholar, Dick Spann, and subsequently joining the London School of Economics (LSE) and Oxford University, this international perspective stood out in unique contrast to the more conventional North Atlantic perspective that permeates much of contemporary scholarship.

Regardless of location, there was institution building. Christopher was not the person interested in vanity or empire building exercises. Rather 'management' was a necessity, executed with extreme diligence, fairness and humility. At Sydney, he launched new teaching initiatives and sought to build new avenues for research and practice, involving the police. The same can be said about his time at the LSE. As convenor between 1995-

98, he inherited a financially bust and mismanaged department. He displayed crisis management skills when the departmental computers vanished over night. He managed a successful first ever RAE exercise and reformed undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. He also applied architecture in terms of a student-facing 'one stop shop' in in the dilapidated King's Chambers.

Christopher played a pivotal role in setting up the interdisciplinary MSc Regulation and the ESRC Centre for Analysis of Risk and Regulation. Subsequently, and others will elaborate on this further, one could witness his talents as programme director of the ESRC public services programme.

Beyond LSE, Christopher was at the heart of a leading science-practice initiatives. One of them involved, together with (now) Lord Butler, LSE-Whitehall seminars to encourage greater academic-civil service exchanges in the early 1990s. Working with natural scientists of the Royal Society on risk ended in a more controversial outcome, but it set the path for further work on questions of government of risk.

Christopher's intellectual life was dedicated to, what Bentham called, 'chrestomathic knowledge'. He was like his mentors Dunsire and Mackenzie shaped by his Scottish-English background, as well as ambivalence towards the English class system. The academic world had little knowledge of his Scottish roots, the lifelong pursuit of Scottish dancing, his knowledge of Gaelic and engagement in the London Gaelic scene, and his enthusiasm of classic cars.

Our last conversation was in late November 2024. We had intended - for some time - to write a book on regulation together - taking a '30 year perspective'. During that conversation we managed to develop a new 'hook' and my side of the bargain was the delivery of 'homework'. I regrettably never got to share this work.

But what remains is deep gratitude, not just for the past; but for all the future that would not be as bright without him.

Desmond King

Dear Friends and Family of Christopher,

This is a sad occasion: Christopher was a wonderful colleague, warm friend and scholar. He is a huge loss. Our condolences to his family.

As we have heard, Christopher was a distinguished scholar transforming the field of public administration and making enormous contributions to comparative public policy. He took on difficult topics including the boundaries of state power, assessing the apposite levels of regulation and understanding how the modern public sector world of civil servants works. Christopher's research – detailed, careful, imaginative and comparative – gave huge intellectual ballast to his 14 years in the Gladstone Chair, a trajectory he continued to forge after de-mitting the position.

As many here will recall, there was immense excitement and relief amongst colleagues in the Department of Politics, when Christopher accepted election to the Gladstone Chair. Colleagues were thrilled to have successfully lured such a brilliant researcher and intellectual leader to this vital University statutory post, who by then stood as a renowned scholar (already a Fellow of the BA, where he later served as a superb chair of the Politics Section) and veteran of demanding institutional affiliations in Australia, and at the LSE where he had immense influence (and where he and I also overlapped as colleagues).

Imaginative and ambitious in his work, Christopher was erudite and massively well read in the social sciences and humanities. He brilliantly applied and advanced the findings of the anthropologist Mary Douglas to develop his original account of how the state operates. The prize winning *The Art of the State* resulted, a masterpiece in learning and analysis, which in common with his many other books on blame, transparency, and articles on public management has garnered tens of thousands of citations from our modern friend Mr Google Scholar - many of the citations come from colleagues in cognate disciplines to political science. *The Art of the State* was one of over 20 books authored by Christopher which together with his ESRC Public Services project and many articles are foundational texts in the field and continue to influence scholars and practitioners worldwide. Christopher rightly received many awards in recognition of his scholarly impact while in Oxford including the prestigious Gaus Prize from the American Political Science Association and election as one of the few non-U.S. based fellows of the coveted National Academy of Public Administration. His books won numerous awards. And his public role was celebrated with the award of a CBE in 2011.

Christopher gave fully and conscientiously to departmental teaching. He was a stalwart on the core paper in comparative politics required of first year MPhil students, offered popular elective options, and supervised a string of exceptional doctoral students. A

gifted communicator, Christopher's knack for formulating seductive typologies and memorable acronyms was an obvious joy for students embarking on graduate study, offering aids to learning and styles of analysis which were gratefully emulated.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given his research interests, Christopher was an exceptional administrator assuming key roles directing our Masters degree, serving on the department's resources committee and communicating with graduate students. He was consistently clear sighted about how faculty posts should be planned within the inevitable fiscal constraints and keen for the department to expand into new areas of study such as China and data analytics.

Christopher engaged with and contributed generously to the intellectual community of politics scholars and students in Oxford. Many colleagues benefitted from his feedback on draft work, his commentary participation in research seminars and his intellectual leadership. Emblematic of this last quality is the book Christopher edited about the development of politics as a discipline in general and specifically in Oxford published by OUP in 2014, entitled *Forging a Discipline: A Critical Assessment of Oxford's Development of the Study of Politics and International Relations in Comparative Politics* and co-edited with Gillian Peele and Desmond King. Aware that 2010 marked a century of politics teaching in Oxford, Christopher resolved on an assessment and overview of the subject. The resulting book arose from Christopher's characteristically meticulous planning – several workshops at which draft chapters were presented and discussed critically preceded submission of the final work – and the breadth of topics addressed. The volume offered sterling essays by numerous Oxford colleagues including Martin Ceadel on IR, Archie Brown and Stephen Whitefield on communist and post-communist studies, John Curtice on election studies, Iain McLean on Dicey and the inimitable Jack Hayward's essay "Beyond Zanzibar" on comparative politics. Lest anyone in the audience fears the volume stood as an ignorable panegyric to Oxford scholars and doubts the status of 'critical assessment' in the subtitle, I happily direct you to Robert Goodin's often withering chapter placing Oxford in comparative perspective!

A fascinating chapter by the historian Simon Green about the All Souls origins of the Gladstone Professorship which Christopher occupied with such distinction, remarks of the Chair's first incumbent that "few men – before or since – can have risen so quickly up Oxford's academic ladder subsequent to so little exertion on their own behalf." In contrast, Christopher's academic success reflected prodigious intelligence and copious research activity before and after his appointment to the Gladstone.

In conclusion, Oxford has lost a wonderful colleague and friend, a towering model of intellectual and academic pluralism, and an assiduous departmental member. Christopher welcomed and encouraged diversity of viewpoints always engaging, never dismissing.

Of the many memories I am fortunate to cherish, those of undertaking joint supervision of doctoral students with Christopher and discussing current intellectual work stand out, each marked by Christopher's good humour and often dry wit.

It is still difficult to grasp the loss of Christopher but today we can at least appreciate and acknowledge all that Christopher did for Oxford and its communities.

Thank you.

Ruth Dixon

I am very grateful indeed to Gillian Hood and to All Souls College for the honour of being invited to speak at this event. I will speak mainly about Christopher's later work in Oxford.

Christopher Hood took a gamble when he employed me in 2006. He was at that time Director of the Public Services Programme funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (the ESRC) and was looking for an assistant to join his small research and administrative team. With my background in medical research and my complete ignorance of the social sciences, I wasn't the obvious person to hire. But the post was only for six months, so I suppose he thought it worth the risk. From that beginning, I worked with Christopher until 2015 and on several publications since then.

To backtrack a little, Christopher came to Oxford in 2001 to become Gladstone Professor of Government at All Souls College and the Department of Politics and International Relations. The ESRC's Public Services Programme was launched in 2004 with Christopher as Director, one of the largest research programmes funded by that Research Council. Almost fifty projects were funded, each having its own principal investigator and research team. Christopher coordinated the programme, which many scholars of public administration regard as a formative period in their careers. He put enormous effort into summarizing and communicating the results to policymakers. My colleague from that time, Rikki Dean, called it "a masterclass in effective research communication."

Christopher was one of the first to notice the implications for public services of the financial crash of 2008. The Programme's closing conference at the end of 2009 was subtitled "*Prosperity, Austerity, and Recovery*." The programme had been launched at a time of prosperity and rising public spending, and Christopher ensured that the conference not only considered the imminent onset of austerity but also looked further forward to consider how public sector skills and expertise could be maintained for an eventual recovery.

During his first ten years at Oxford – as well as being programme Director – Christopher wrote or edited, by my count, nine books. Many of his co-authors and co-editors are here today. Among the books was his very well-regarded analysis of the politics of blame: "*The Blame Game."* He was appointed CBE in 2011 for his services to the Social Sciences. To celebrate his 65th birthday in 2012, Martin Lodge and I edited "*Explorations in Governance*"; a collection of essays that demonstrates the sheer breadth of the areas that he influenced.

Far from wanting to take a break after the Public Services Programme, Christopher was planning his future research. With two other scholars, he prepared a grant proposal for a comparative study of central government strategies in two countries. Christopher submitted the proposal to the ESRC … which turned it down. Stoically, he submitted a

cut-down bid to the Leverhulme Trust and was awarded a modest grant for a project on the UK alone. That grant covered my part-time salary to work on a project with the title "what happened to the future of government?"

In this research, Christopher planned to revisit his much earlier work that identified a new trend in public sector management, now widely known as 'New Public Management' or NPM – a term he coined in 1989. Though, as he wrote much later, "NPM turned out to be somewhat mystical in essence, as no two authors … listed exactly the same features in enumerating its traits." In his own words, the NPM approach "stressed the difference management could and should make to the quality and efficiency of public services."

Christopher – who never avoided big questions – wanted to know what happens when NPM is applied over several decades. The UK was an early adopter of NPM in the 1980s and the approach persisted under governments of both right and left. So our task in 2010 was to find out what had happened over the past thirty years. What we found – in summary – was that the cost of running the UK government had risen considerably in real terms and the government did not appear to work any better by the end of the period. And yet, NPM was expected, if nothing else, to cut the costs of running government. Evidence to the contrary required us to rethink some long-held assumptions.

The book from that project, entitled *A Government that Worked Better and Cost Less?* was awarded two major book prizes: the National Academy of Public Administration's Louis Brownlow Book Award in 2015 and the Political Studies Association's W.J.M. Mackenzie Book Prize in 2016.

By that time, Christopher had also been awarded an ESRC Professorial Fellowship. With that grant, he worked with Rozana Himaz on an analysis of financial cutbacks over the very long term which was published in 2017 as *A Century of Fiscal Squeeze Politics*" That study created novel definitions of different types of financial cutback and looked at political as well as economic effects of periods of austerity.

Christopher retired in 2014 but, far from slowing down, became a Visiting Professor at the Blavatnik School of Government and principal investigator on a major project on fiscal control, working with Maia King, Barbara Piotrowska, Iain McLean, and Paul Johnson (who is speaking today). I was delighted to hear that the book from that project – *The Way the Money Goes* – was awarded the Mackenzie prize for 2025. This represents a third Mackenzie prize for Christopher, the first being for *The Art of the State* in 2000 – a book that he regarded as among his most significant. Christopher always particularly appreciated the Mackenzie prize having worked, as we've heard, with William (Bill) Mackenzie in the 1970s.

Christopher was tireless in his generous mentoring of other scholars. After his death, there was an outpouring of gratitude and affection from former students and colleagues.

Many recalled exciting and wide-ranging discussions – "intense but fascinating" as a former graduate student put it. Christopher was fearsomely well-read but deployed his knowledge lightly. He was never patronizing or polemical, and displayed a true respect for everyone he talked with.

While always happy to discuss ideas, Christopher was reticent about his life outside work. From the little I gleaned, his life was rich and varied. His love for his family – for Gillian and their daughters Isobel and Christina – was clear. One day, he mentioned that on the previous weekend he had driven Isobel to her wedding in the Morris Minor car that he had meticulously restored. Gillian, a librarian, not only indexed his books but also provided hospitality for visiting colleagues and friends. Each Christmas during the Public Services Programme, she organized a lunchtime get-together for the administrative and research team. Christopher was a faithful member of the Gaelic Church in London and Gillian tells me he was researching its history. He was also involved in the Gaelic Society of London and had a talent for Scottish dancing. No doubt he kept fit for that activity by cycling home up Headington Hill each day. Christopher and Gillian clearly valued the time that they spent at their house in Moray in the north of Scotland. There, they watched seals and dolphins from the beach and, as he told me once, occasionally even sea-otters.

As his publications show, Christopher collaborated widely and was generous with co-authorship. Perhaps because of the importance that he gave to working across disciplines and for wider audiences, his writing has a superb clarity as well as a dry humour. Last year, I was delighted when Christopher asked me to write a chapter with him for an edited volume on civil services around the world.[1] Writing with him again brought back memories of our earlier work. Once, he asked me to draft a short letter to the *Times Higher Education Supplement* about our work on international rankings. After he had edited my draft, only one of my words remained – but the letter expressed so much better what I had been trying to say. Goodness knows what he would make of my text today. But the fact that none of us will be able to ask Christopher's opinion again brings home the profound loss that his death represents, and how very much we miss him.