

John Battle MP

John Battle was born in April 1951 in Bradford, West Yorkshire. John was educated at St Paulinus School, Dewsbury, Upholland College, Liverpool and Leeds University, where he studied English as a mature student, gaining a B.A. in English in 1976.

Whilst still a student John was already active in politics, campaigning on housing issues in Leeds, and in 1980 was elected as a Labour Councillor in Leeds where he was Chair of the Industry, Housing and Urban Development Committees in succession.

John worked as a researcher for the Euro MEP in Leeds, concentrating on international development issues and the mental health sector. In 1983, he became National Co-ordinator for Church Action on Poverty.

John Battle was elected as MP for Leeds West in 1987 winning the seat against the national swing with the highest majority of any seat gained by Labour in the election.

He was Shadow Energy spokesman from 1995-97. Prior to that, he was a member of the Environment Select Committee 1991-92. Employment, Housing and Poverty have always been at the centre of John's political concerns and in 1992 the late John Smith appointed him to be Labour's front bench spokesperson on Housing.

John was also on the Broadcasting Select Committee 1994-95. He chaired All Party Groups on Peru and Epilepsy, was Vice Chairman of the all Party Group on Overseas Development and was a member of the All Party Group on Homelessness. In opposition, John continually pressed for a minimum wage, in 1988 he debated a ten minute rule bill on the statutory minimum wage.

John was appointed as a Minister of State at the Department of Trade and Industry following Labour's 1997 election victory, and was responsible for Energy, Science and Industry publishing a green paper on energy promoting renewable and sustainable sources. In the EU as chair of the Science Ministers committee he secured a new enhanced science budget and got an increased Science budget in the UK.

From July 1999 to the 2001 General Election John was a Minister of State at the Foreign Office, with responsibility for South East Asia, China, Korea, Australia and Latin America. His first challenge was to work through the United Nations to bring peace in East Timor. He also took the International Criminal Court legislation through the House of Commons which let the UK sign up to the ICC in the face of opposition the week before the election in 2001.

In June 2001, John was asked by the Prime Minister to be his envoy visiting faith communities on inter-faith matters. He works to help encourage and intensify the dialogue between different faith communities in the UK. In 2002, John became a Privy Councillor.

John is a member of the International Development Select Committee and Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Friends of CAFOD Group and the chair of the UK Branch of Parliamentarians for Global action. He is also chair of the All parliamentary group on overseas development and chair of the All party group on Columbia. He is vice-chair of the All party group for Debt, Aid and Trade.

His interests in parliament range from the campaign against loan sharks and supporting credit unions to working on issues concerning housing, asbestos, crime, prisons, health poverty and international development.

John lives in his West Leeds Constituency with his wife Mary and their three children. His interests include music, poetry and supporting Leeds United FC.