

Baroness Symons Of Vernham Dean

by Scott Thompson and Jeffrey Steinberg

Elizabeth Symons, Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean (created Life Peer by nomination of Tony Blair in 1996), is a Senior Labour Peer, director of two companies, consultant to business, and a key figure in the Jeremiah Duggan transatlantic slander operation against Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., along with Mr. and Mrs. Dick Cheney.

Here is an outline of the Baroness's career.

- Born on April 14, 1951, Elizabeth Conway Symons, the daughter of Ernest Symons, who became chairman of the Her Majesty's Board of Inland Revenue, before his retirement, and Elizabeth Megan (née Jenkins).

- Educated at the Putney School for Girls, and received a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts from Girton College, Cambridge.

- Married Philip Bassett in 2001, shortly after Bassett received a job at Tony Blair's 10 Downing Street. She had had a son by Bassett in 1985.

- Researcher at Girton College, 1972-74.

- Administration trainee, Department of the Environment, 1974-77.

- Inland Revenue Staff Federation Assistant Secretary, 1977-78.

- Deputy General Secretary, 1978-89; then, General Secretary, Association of First Division of Civil Servants, 1989-97 (a trade union job).

- Nominated by Blair in 1996 to the House of Lords, as a Labour representative. Took her seat in 1997 as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Common-



DoD/R.D. Ward

Baroness Liz Symons, here in Washington, D.C. in 2001, to sign a Memorandum of Understanding for a \$200 billion contract for the Joint Strike Fighter, awarded to Lockheed Martin. At the time, Lynne Cheney was on the board of Lockheed Martin.

wealth Office.

- Minister of State for Defence Procurement, Ministry of Defence, 1999-2001. It is in this position that we have our first indications of ties with Dick Cheney's Halliburton (Cheney was CEO of Halliburton, and remains infamously in close business association) and Lynne Cheney, who then served on the board of Lockheed Martin (see below).

- Became Minister of State for Trade, Foreign Trade, and Industry, Foreign and Commonwealth Office Department of Trade and Industry, 2001-03, and Minister of International Development, 2001-03.

During that time period, Symons gave advice to lawyer David Mills on the political surroundings of a proposed deal to sell 146 aircraft from British Aerospace in 2003 to the Iranian airline Mahan Air. The deal did not receive preferential treatment otherwise, and it did not go through. It was subsequently revealed that as a consequence of these dealings, Mills's estranged wife, Tessa Jowell (Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport), has been excluded from Cabinet papers and talks on Iran since 2003. Mills is currently under indictment for money-laundering and tax fraud stemming from his advice to former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi on setting up a series of offshore trusts for Berlusconi's Fininvest. On March 10, 2006, prosecutors in Milan asked a judge to order Mills and Berlusconi to stand trial on corruption charges.

- Minister of State for the Middle East, International Security, Consular and Personal Affairs, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, June 2003-May 2005; Deputy Leader of the House of Lords, 2003-May 2005, resigning both positions in the reshuffle after the general elections. She was appointed with her mentor, Lord Levy of Mill Hill (Blair's "bag-man"), as envoy to the Middle East.

- Fellow since 1990 of the British-American Project for a Successor Generation (BAP), which has been called a "junior Bilderberg."

Symons is one of 600 Fellows of BAP, in that she was selected to attend at least one BAP meeting. She said of this transatlantic U.S.-U.K. organization: "I had thought the relationship was special and this program gave that idea a deeply human meaning." BAP started in 1985, holding an annual meeting of 24 Americans and 24 Britons, with a \$425,000 grant from the Pew Memorial Trust, which also funds the right-wing American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and the Heritage Foundation. BAP claims that the idea for its founding came from Sir Charles Villiers, whose daughter is the wife of John Negroponte, and U.S. Rhodes Scholar Lewis Van Duesen. Villiers, an old Etonian, had been in the Special Operations Executive. Van Duesen, a senior partner in Drinker, Biddle, and Reath, was deputy to the first representative to NATO between 1950 and 1952. From BAP's beginning, the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), was heavily involved, and remains the center for the British Advisory Board to BAP. In the United States, the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C., serves a similar U.S. role.

A large number of Tony Blair's first officers came from BAP: 1) Peter Mandelson, EU Trade Commissioner; 2) Jonathan Powell, chief of staff; 3) Mo Mowlam, former Labour Northern Ireland Secretary; 4) Matthew Taylor, Downing Street head of policy; 5) Baroness Symons; 6) Lord George Robertson, former NATO Secretary-General; 7) Geoff Mulgan, former head of Downing Street's policy and strategy unit.

- Currently chair of the U.K. Parliament's all-party group on Qatar, the Saudi-British Joint Business Council, and the British Egyptian Society.

- Leading member of the British Fabian Society.
- Former member, General Council, of the Trade Union Council.

- Former member, Executive Council, Campaign for Freedom of Information, 1989-97.

- Former Governor, London Business School, 1993-97.

- Former member, Council of the Open University, 1994-97.

- Member of the Board of Governors of the Ditchley Foundation, a British organization based at Ditchley House



Council of the EU

British Prime Minister Tony Blair nominated Liz Symons as a Life Peer in 1996, and Symons' husband, Philip Bassett, is also in the inner circle of Blair's Cabinet.

near Chipping Noreton, Oxfordshire, which aims to promote especially the Anglo-American special relationship, through 15 annual conferences on matters of international interest. The foundation was incorporated in 1958 by David Wills, descendent of the tobacco-importing family W.D. & H.O. Wills of Bristol.

At each conference, 40 invitees are drawn from senior levels of politics, business, the armed forces, and academia. About one third of the guests are American, one third British, and one third of other nationalities. The current director is Sir Jeremy Greenstock, former British Ambassador to the United Nations. Discussion follows Chatham House rules, and cannot be revealed.

A corresponding American Ditchley Foundation helps shape the conference program, as well as select American participants.

John Major, the former British Prime Minister, is the current chairman of the Ditchley Foundation. Its first chairman, in 1958, was the British historian Sir John Wheeler-Bennett.

- Appointed to the Privy Council in 2001.

- Highly paid consultant on the Middle East to Standard Chartered. She became their consultant a day after leaving office, despite Standard Chartered having gotten lucrative loan guarantees in areas of the world she covered for the Foreign Office.

- Director of British Airways, the largest air carrier in Britain, and the third largest in Europe. This position pays her £2,300 per day, for a few days a year.

- Hired by DLA Piper (known until Sept. 5, 2006 as DLA Piper-Rudnick Gray Cary), in an unknown capacity. DLA Piper is an international legal services provider, which describes itself as a global services organization, the members

of which are separate and distinct legal entities. It is one of the largest legal services providers in the world, second to Clifford Chance in terms of worldwide turnover, at \$1.5 billion, in 2005. Among other things, the firm has provided lobbying services for Lockheed Martin and Raytheon.

- Non-executive board member of Peninsular and Oriental Navigation company (P&O) from Dec. 1, 2005, until Hurricane Katrina forced its sale to Dubai Ports World on March 8, 2006. P&O earned its way into the pages of *Dope, Inc.* (published by Executive Intelligence Review). In 1914, it took over British India Steam Navigation Company, which was then the largest British shipping line, with 131 steamers. In 1918, it gained a controlling interest in the Orient Line, its partner in the England-Australia mail route.

Liz Symons and the Cheneys

These are the leads to Baroness Symons's ties to the Cheney family.

According to *Private Eye* magazine, Sept. 20-Oct. 3, 2002, Baroness Symons gave a £300 million contract to Halliburton in January 2001, to deliver British tanks and hardware to frontline combat situations. At the time, Symons was Minister of State for Defence Procurement.

The *Private Eye* article also reported that in April 2000, while still CEO of Halliburton, Dick Cheney had chaired a conference in Oxfordshire, England, on the subject of his proposal to privatize the military. That session was attended by many top Ministry of Defence officials.

At the time of the Halliburton contract, Cheney was Vice President, but he continued to be paid by Halliburton with stock options, and his ties ran deep with the company, as revealed by the fact that in 2004 he was caught lying about them, denying to Congress that he had any role in procuring Administration contracts for Halliburton. Leaked Pentagon internal e-mails, however, confirm that the awarding of a multibillion-dollar pre-war contract to Halliburton for restoration of Iraq's oil industry, was "coordinated with the VP's office."

In October 2001, Symons was involved in negotiating and approving a \$200 billion contract for the Joint Strike Fighter, which went to Lockheed Martin, a company on whose board, at the time, sat Lynne Cheney. Lynne Cheney was on the board of Lockheed Martin from 1994-2001, and she left with \$500,000 in deferred payments.

No sooner had the Bush Administration gotten down to business, than the Undersecretary for Defense Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics announced, on Oct. 26, 2001, the decision to proceed with the Joint Strike Fighter. The accompanying photo shows Symons in Washington to sign the Memorandum of Understanding for the Structural Development Design phase of the fighter project. James G. Roche, who announced the decision, teamed up Lockheed Martin (principal), Northrup Grumman, and British Aerospace. Interchangeable engines were to be produced by Pratt &

Whitney and GE/Rolls Royce. Overall, the shared \$400 billion to produce this aircraft makes it the most lucrative one ever.

Eight Lockheed Martin senior personnel—including Lynne Cheney—joined the Bush Administration. Others include: Bruce P. Jackson, a Lockheed vice president from 1993-2001, who became chairman of the Board of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq and chaired the Republican Party Platform subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Policy. Also, Otto Reich, appointed by President Bush as Special Envoy to the Western Hemisphere, came from Lockheed.

During April 2001, Lynne Cheney travelled on several occasions to Great Britain, as an informal "cultural emissary" of the Bush-Cheney Administration, meeting with British intellectuals, and promoting the "English-speaking partnership."

Lynne Cheney's doctorate at the University of Wisconsin was on the 19th-Century neo-Kantian Matthew Arnold, whose works helped to inspire the later founding of the Fabian Society, of which Symons is a prominent member. The Fabian Society is an arm of 20th-Century British liberal imperialism. It is the British Fabian Society, presently affiliated with "Christian Socialist" Tony Blair, which exerts intellectual control over the Cheney household, and through it.

In October 2003, Symons appeared on the same podium with Elizabeth Cheney, daughter of Lynne and Dick, who was, at the time, a top State Department Middle East official. The conference was a London meeting of the Arab International Women's Forum, and Symons has played an important role in "women's affairs" in Britain. In addition, as noted above, in June 2003, Symons had been appointed Minister for Middle East Affairs at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The title of the forum was "Women in the Arab World: Windows of Opportunity Opening Wider in Business and Public Life."

Symons is known to have snubbed those protesting the torture at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, including of British detainees, an operation initiated by Dick Cheney et al.

A Concise Timeline of the Symons-Duggan Affair

Early March 2003: Jeremiah Duggan, a 22-year-old British student, meets LaRouche Youth Movement organizers in Paris at a literature table, engages in a discussion, and takes some literature. Duggan is told about an international conference in Germany at the end of the month. He is particularly interested in LaRouche's strong opposition to the Cheney-Blair Iraq War and the imperial policies underlying that unjust invasion. Over the next several weeks, Duggan exchanges several e-mail messages with LYM organizers, and arranges to travel to Germany for the conference.

March 27, 2003: Duggan, attending the Schiller Institute international conference and youth cadre school near Wiesba-



BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan met with British Ministry of Defence weapons scientist David Kelly in May 2003 and then broadcast Kelly's accusation that the WMD charges in the government's Sept. 24, 2002 white paper were "sexed up."

den, Germany, is killed when he jumps in front of speeding cars on an autobahn. Wiesbaden police and prosecutors investigate the death, and conclude that Duggan committed suicide.

Duggan had confided to his conference roommates, in his last days, that he was diagnosed with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, an illness that can induce schizophrenic behavior, including paranoia. He had begun to show signs of emotional stress during the day before his suicide, March 26, and had fled the apartment where he was staying, March 27, at approximately 3:30 in the morning. When a LYM organizer called Jeremiah's girlfriend, Maya Villanueva, in Paris, shortly after Duggan left the apartment, to see whether she had heard from him, the girlfriend cynically asked, "Is there a river nearby?" Subsequently, both Erica Duggan (Jeremiah's mother) and Maya Villanueva have failed, notably, to mention Jeremiah's diagnosed illness, fuelling the media fraud about the alleged role of the Schiller Institute in his death. Erica Duggan has acknowledged to reporters that she, Jeremiah's father (from whom she is divorced), and Jeremiah, had undergone group counselling at the Tavistock Clinic in London when Jeremiah was approximately seven years old.

March 28, 2003: Jeremiah Duggan's parents meet in Wiesbaden with representatives of the Schiller Institute. Although they make no mention of Jeremiah's Obsessive Compulsive Disorder diagnosis, the meeting is very cordial, given the tragic circumstances.

April 1, 2003: The LaRouche in 2004 campaign releases the first 250,000-copy run of *Children of Satan: The 'Ignoble Liars' Behind Bush's No-Exit War*. The pamphlet exposes the entire neo-conservative cabal inside the Bush-Cheney Administration behind the Iraq War, and surfaces damning evidence that many of the leading Bush-Cheney neo-cons are protégés of the late University of Chicago philosophy professor Leo Strauss, a protégé of Nazi Party fascist ideologues Carl Schmitt and Martin Heidegger. Within a short period of time after the release of the campaign report, mainstream media in North America and Europe pick up the basic themes of the *Children of Satan* book, particularly the demonic role of Strauss in the neo-con drive for empire, based on perpetual war.

April 3, 2003: Lyndon LaRouche is interviewed for six minutes on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) news show "Live Five." LaRouche is introduced as a leading critic of the Bush Administration's Iraq War, and as a candidate for the 2004 Democratic Party Presidential nomination.

May 22, 2003: British Ministry of Defence weapons scientist Dr. David Kelly meets with BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan at London's Charing Cross Hotel, where he allegedly tells the journalist that 10 Downing Street operatives, including Alastair Campbell, "sexed up" the British government's Sept. 24, 2002 white paper, which accused Saddam Hussein of amassing weapons of mass destruction, in violation of United Nations resolutions.

May 29, 2003: BBC's "Radio 4 Today" news broadcast airs a report by Gilligan, levelling the charges about the "sexed-up" dossier as having been aimed at making a more convincing, albeit false, case for war with Iraq.

June 2, 2003: BBC "Newsnight" science editor Susan Watts broadcasts a second story, using Dr. Kelly as a source, and raising concerns about the Sept. 24, 2002 dossier's claims that Saddam could launch WMD on 45 minutes' notice.

June 9, 2003: LaRouche is again interviewed on the BBC "Live Five" news show, this time for 12 minutes. The subject of the interview is LaRouche's recent call for the impeachment of Vice President Dick Cheney, for his role in the faking of intelligence, including making knowingly false claims of Saddam Hussein purchasing nuclear bomb material in Africa, to justify the Iraq invasion.

July 7, 2003: The Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons, after a week of tumultuous hearings, clears Blair communications director Alastair Campbell of "sexing up" the 10 Downing Street white paper.

July 8, 2003: Blair chairs a meeting at No. 10, where it is agreed that Dr. Kelly's name will be released as the source of the Gilligan story. Former U.S. Ambassador Joseph Wilson publishes an op-ed in the *New York Times* revealing, for the first time, that he was the emissary sent by the CIA to Niger in February 2002, to probe allegations that Iraq had attempted to purchase vast quantities of "yellowcake" uranium, to produce nuclear bombs. His conclusion: There was no truth to the story.

July 11, 2003: Erica Duggan meets with the London Metropolitan Police, to discuss the circumstances surrounding Jeremiah's death. By this time, she has been contacted by individuals and groups affiliated with American Family Foundation (AFF).

July 12, 2003: The London-based *Guardian* newspaper publishes the first smear story linking LaRouche and the Schiller Institute to the suicide-death of Jeremiah Duggan. The author of the story, Hugh Muir, has, in the past, written stories based on information provided by so-called "anti-cult" groups affiliated with the AFF.

July 15, 2003: Dr. David Kelly is called to testify before the Foreign Affairs Committee of Parliament.

July 17, 2003: Dr. Kelly leaves his home in Abingdon in Oxfordshire, telling his wife he is going for a walk. His body is found the next morning by local police. Prime Minister Blair announces the launching of a judicial review of the Kelly case, to be headed by Lord Hutton.

July 21, 2003: BBC airs a slander on LaRouche and the Duggan suicide by Tim Samuels, under the headline, “Mother calls for inquiry into son’s death.”

Aug. 29, 2003: Alastair Campbell resigns as head of the communications office for Blair, denying that he is quitting over the death of Dr. Kelly.

October 2003: The AFF holds a conference in Hartford, Conn. Among the speakers is Dennis King, longtime anti-LaRouche operative. After working in the early 1980s as a paid propagandist for Roy M. Cohn, the former chief counsel to Sen. Joseph McCarthy, King was bankrolled by the neo-conservative Smith Richardson Foundation to write a book-length slander of LaRouche in 1989. During the same period, King’s *pro bono* attorney was Steven Bundy, the son of McGeorge Bundy.

Nov. 5, 2003: A coroner’s inquest into Jeremiah’s death occurs at Hornsey Coroner’s Court, with Dr. William Dolman, HM Coroner for North London, presiding. The British media claim that Dr. Dolman has “rejected” the German authorities’ view that the death was a suicide. Statements attributed to Dr. Dolman suggest that evidence was presented at the inquest by AFF circles, making wild charges that the LaRouche organization is a dangerous cult. British media coverage of the inquest includes interviews with Dennis King and with Chip Berlet. (Berlet, a former Washington, D.C. bureau chief of *High Times* magazine, the semi-official publication of the drug legalization lobby in the U.S.A., was a leader of the National Student Association during the late 1960s, when it was exposed for having received CIA financing, in a *Ramparts* magazine article. Berlet, who joined the National Students Association after the *Ramparts* exposé, was widely regarded, according to sources, as a continuation of CIA penetration.)

Nov. 11, 2003: The *Wiesbadener Kurier* publishes an article challenging the coverage in the British media, and defending the assessment of the Wiesbaden Prosecutor’s Office that Duggan’s death was the result of suicide. Chief Prosecutor Dieter Arlet complains that it is “completely inexplicable how such a characterization could get into the media.” A spokesman for the Prosecutor’s office reports that the German Federal Police (BKA) had found that the British coroner’s inquest had been closed, and that the British media coverage had misrepresented the findings of Dr. Dolman. Arlet says that, based on the BKA inquiry, there are “no grounds for us to reopen the investigation.”

Jan. 28, 2004: The Hutton inquiry issues its final report, totally whitewashing 10 Downing Street’s role in exaggerating the Weapons of Mass Destruction dossier.

Jan. 29, 2004: Greg Dyke, BBC director general, and



The British White Paper of Sept. 24, 2002 accused Saddam Hussein of amassing WMD. Defense scientist Dr. David Kelly was found dead two months after telling the BBC that the charges were “sexed up.”

Gavyn Davies, chairman of the BBC board, both “resign” over government criticism of BBC’s coverage of the Kelly leaks about the “sexed up” report.

Feb. 12, 2004: BBC News airs further slanderous coverage of the Duggan affair by Tim Samuels.

Feb. 25, 2004: A meeting takes place at the British Foreign Office between Erica Duggan and officials, who set up a

followup meeting with Baroness Symons. News of the planned Duggan-Symons meeting is leaked to the British press.

April 1, 2004: Erica Duggan, Rudy Vis, and Lord Janner meet with Baroness Symons at the Foreign Office. Symons announces she will appoint a *pro bono* international human rights lawyer to work with the Duggan family, to pressure German authorities to reverse their assessment of the case.

April 21, 2004: BBC "Live at Five," the show that had twice interviewed Lyndon LaRouche a year earlier, runs an interview with Erica Duggan and Rudy Vis.

May 6, 2004: Blair provokes a firestorm of protests by appointing John Scarlett as the new head of the British Secret Intelligence Service, MI6. Scarlett, as the head of the Joint Intelligence Committee, was the principal author of the Sept. 24, 2002 white paper which lied about Saddam Hussein's ability to launch weapons of mass destruction "within 45 minutes," and his efforts to obtain uranium in Africa, for building nuclear bombs. Scarlett worked closely on the dossier with top Blair aides Alastair Campbell and Phil Bassett, the latter being the husband of Baroness Liz Symons.

May 20, 2004: Italy's *Corriere della Sera* Sunday magazine publishes a lengthy, vicious slander against LaRouche, centered around interviews with Erica and Hugo Duggan, by writer Agostino Gramigna.

May 23, 2004: Members of the LaRouche Youth Movement, distributing an "Open Letter to the *Washington Post*" by Lyndon LaRouche, in front of the *Washington Post* building in downtown Washington, D.C., encounter Michael Winstead. Winstead had briefly infiltrated the Baltimore chapter of the LYM, only to abruptly leave the group, and circulate a series of slanders. Accompanied by a *Washington Post* photographer, Winstead boasts to LYM organizers that he is working for the *Post* on a slander on LaRouche and the LYM, which will heavily feature the Duggan suicide. (When Winstead departed from Baltimore, he left behind a large collection of pornography, which he had downloaded from the Internet.)

Mr. Baroness: Phil Bassett

Phil Bassett is Liz Symons's longtime partner, with whom she had a son in 1985 and whom she married in 2001. Bassett is a former industrial writer for Rupert Murdoch's *Times* of London. In 1997, Bassett was hired by the newly elected Prime Minister Tony Blair to handle labor relations.

From September 2002 until October 2003, Bassett was a senior advisor to Blair and head of the Strategic Communications Unit, which became enmeshed in the "dodgy dossier" scandal with Dr. David Kelly. As such, he and Press Secretary Alastair Campbell travelled to Washington in October 2002 to see Bush appointee Karen Hughes, Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs in the U.S. Department of State, to better coordinate the propaganda line between Washington and 10 Downing Street. There was formed the Coali-

tion Information Centre, with Tucker Eskew deployed to London to work with Campbell and Bassett.

Although not directly involved in drafting the Downing Street dossier, which was the work of MI6 Chief John Scarlett with editorial prerogative to Alastair Campbell, Bassett's e-mails on the subject came out in the Hutton Report. Two e-mails of Sept. 11 have Bassett expressing his unhappiness with the dossier, saying it "reads like the *Sunday Times* at its worst." In another e-mail, Bassett tells Campbell, there was a "very long way to go [with the dossier] I think. Think we are in lot of trouble with this as it stands now." "On another occasion, Bassett e-mailed that the dossier was "intelligence-lite" adding: "We've got to find a way of getting over this by having better intelligence material."

As a former journalist and senior advisor to Tony Blair, Bassett wrote many of op-eds signed by Blair. But Bassett was becoming a liability in the publicity over David Kelly and the "dodgy dossier," and he received a less conspicuous appointment to serve as an advisor to Lord Falconer, the Lord Chancellor, one month after Campbell was forced out of office. Lord Falconer, who stands number three in precedence, is Tony Blair's friend and former landlord. Having failed to receive a secure Labour seat, he was ennobled and made Solicitor General. Now as a Minister of the Cabinet, he is one of the most important figures in the Blair Administration.

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