



# Liberal Democrat History Group

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The Liberal Democrat History Group aims to promote the discussion and research of historical topics, particularly those relating to the histories of the Liberal Party and the SDP.

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## New Zealand's Liberal Party

The rise and collapse of the Liberal Party of New Zealand has many parallels with the heyday and decline of the British Liberal Party; by **Neil Stockley**

*'A laboratory in which political and social experiments are every day made for the information and instruction of the older countries of the world [with] a series of measures of social and industrial reform to which, in a period of time, I believe it would be impossible for any other community to parallel.'*

Lord Asquith on New Zealand under the Liberals

The New Zealand Liberal Party held office for a record 21 years between 1891 and 1912. It passed a comprehensive programme of labour reforms, established old age pensions, began a public health system and extended government's role in the economy. During the 1890s, New Zealand was the most radical country in the world, described by contemporary foreign observers as 'the birthplace of the twentieth century'<sup>1</sup> and a 'classical land of state socialism and labour legislation'.<sup>2</sup>

However, the Liberals' aspirations were rather more limited and less radical than their admirers perceived. They strove for a fairer, more harmonious community, not a new society. With an electoral coalition that united small farmer, 'townie' and 'working man', the Liberals were always mindful of political realities. Their legislation, whilst undoubtedly progressive, was experimental rather than doctrinaire, pragmatic, not ideological. Closer land settlement rather than the pursuit of a coherent social policy was the Liberal Government's central aim. Over time, it became more and more dominated by representatives of farmers and residents of secondary towns. The Liberals stood and fell on land policy and the changing attitudes of the rural constituencies. When

A Liberal Democrat History Group Seminar

# God gave the Land to the People!

7.00pm Monday 29 July; for full details see back page

their interventions in the agriculturally-based economy could not deliver to the working class constituencies, the Liberals' coalition fractured between worker and farmer, freeholder and leaseholder.

Out of office, with neither a unifying political doctrine nor any new ideas, faced with a gradually strengthening Labour Party, their core constituencies eroded, the Liberals retreated into rural conservatism and passed the progressive torch to Labour. They were badly squeezed between 'conservative' and 'socialist' forces in the three-party politics of the 1920s. At the end of the decade, almost by accident, the remnant of the old Liberal Party formed a minority administration of uncertain political identity. Then, during the Great Depression, it became part of the most reactionary, most vilified government in New Zealand history.

### *Socialism Without Doctrine?*

The Liberals came to power in the wake of a recession, urban misery, mass migration to Australia, growing land monopoly and industrial unrest. Initially, New Zealand's first political party was really a loose parliamentary alliance of former office holders. In the late 1880s, with the advent of depression and the decline of provincial and pork barrel politics, they united, under John Ballance's leadership, in support of land and labour reforms and protective tariffs. At the closely fought 1890 general election the Liberals promised effective government (which Sir Harry Atkinson's conservative Government had demonstrably failed to provide), a 'fair' labour policy and closer land settlement, to be brought about by forcing the subdivision of large estates.

The eminent New Zealand historian Sir Keith Sinclair described this Liberal Party as 'a world apart from its British namesake' because of a belief that 'only state intervention could cure the country's ills.' He compared the Liberals' ideals to those of the Fabians and other English socialist groups, the American Knights of Labour and the Australian Labour Parties.<sup>3</sup>

During their first five years in office the Liberals passed some fourteen measures regulating working hours, wages and factory conditions and preventing sweating and the exploitation of child labour. A comprehensive, progressive labour code was enacted and a Department of Labour established to monitor working conditions. In 1894, the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act established the world's first compulsory arbitration system. Local conciliation boards set out to resolve industrial disputes. If not satisfied, either party could appeal to the Arbitration Court, whose decisions were legally binding on both. The Act fostered the growth of trade unions, which had to register to appear at the Arbitration Court, all but guaranteed industrial peace for twenty

years and became the basis of the country's industrial relations system for nearly a century.

This did not mean that the Liberals were socialists. Believing 'in the power of the State to administer affairs in a manner that enhanced individual opportunities, but bestowed no special privileges on any section of the community'<sup>4</sup> they set out to more fairly balance the strengths of labour and capital, so that all New Zealanders benefited. The Liberals sought a fairer country that kept Old World evils – class warfare, rule by the elite, mass poverty, urban blight and land monopoly – out of New Zealand. Government policies might benefit particular sections, or even weaken others, particularly if unfairness existed, so long as the interests of the community as a whole were advanced.

The Liberals wanted the benefits of a private enterprise economy to be more widely shared; state activity was the means to this end. In a fledgling economy, only the state could borrow money, buy land, build roads and railways and provide cheap credit. By this means, private enterprise – especially the small-scale dairy farmer – and therefore the economy could prosper.

New Zealand was not ruled by 'New Liberals' in the British idiom. The Government's central preoccupation was always land policy rather than labour relations or social reform. Its primary policy objective, closer land settlement, was the Liberal panacea for the many ills of urban society, especially unemployment. Closer land settlement would ease overcrowding in the towns, reduce demand for accommodation and therefore, keep down rents (and, ultimately, wage demands). It was the alternative to protectionism or such costly Old World measures as poorhouses and relief work. The Liberals' land policy and social programme were, effectively, one and the same. Even the few 'Lib-Lab' MPs accepted this. Smallholdings were idealised by the Liberals:

many settlers had come to New Zealand pursuing the dream of the yeoman farmer.

Labour reforms were, in fact, tangential to the Liberal programme and attracted little interest. For example, only once did a majority of MPs attend a debate on the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Bill. The enactment of the reforms can be attributed to the drive and perseverance of the Minister of Labour, William Pember Reeves, an avowed radical. Nor was the Government a 'Lib-Lab' administration,

even in its early years. In the 1890–93 Parliament, no more than six of the forty-odd Government supporters were 'labour' members. At the 1893 election, the Liberals greatly increased their parliamentary majority but lost seats in the cities,<sup>5</sup> making country interests even more dominant. Rural members supported compulsory arbitration to discipline city trade unionists, not to help them.

The Government saw townsmen and workers as



'New Zealand Santa Claus': Ballance brings prosperity (NZ Observer, 1892)

## *Liberalism and Unionism Part Company*

'economic dependents, entitled on moral and social grounds to something better than the long depression had yielded, but nevertheless, not as worthy objects of state investment. The dependents were to share at second hand in state-promoted prosperity when it percolated down from successful farming. If the dependents' portion was anti-socially small, then benevolent state regulation and the Arbitration Court's judgements would get them a little more.'<sup>6</sup>

The progress of social and labour legislation was constrained by political considerations. From 1893 until his death in 1906, the Government was completely dominated by Prime Minister Richard John Seddon – 'King Dick' – of whom Sidney and Beatrice Webb wrote: 'The common people .... feel that he is working for them – that he is their servant, labouring with zeal, intense industry, indomitable pluck and just the sort of capacity which they can appreciate.'<sup>7</sup> Therefore, 'the limits of reform in the Liberal era were defined as the limits the people themselves wished to impose.'<sup>8</sup>

By 1895, Reeves was isolated, viewed by his colleagues as too extreme. A new round of proposed labour measures was blocked by Liberal MPs who feared that stronger trade unions would jeopardise the interests of their constituents – farmers, rural local authorities and shopkeepers. Seddon, anxious that the Government's programme should not run ahead of its constituents' wishes, announced that the Government would not legislate for one class alone. Reeves' departure to become Agent-General in London marked the end of the Government's commitment to progressive labour legislation. The Liberals were now preoccupied with keeping the support of the farmers who wanted to freehold the land they leased at its original price plus one per cent, and city businessmen who opposed 'excessive' social legislation.

In 1898 the Government passed the Old Age Pensions Act, giving the aged poor a small pension. This laid the foundation stone for New Zealand's modern welfare state. Seddon's motivations were mixed. They were partly humanitarian, as the early settlers and gold miners began to reach retirement age, and partly economic, for spending power would be expanded. He had political motives too; the first bill was introduced on the eve of the 1896 election. The history of this initiative demonstrates the Liberals' experimentalism and caution, rather than a sophisticated social policy.<sup>9</sup> Whilst the pension was, in effect, means-tested, it was funded from general revenue rather than special tax or contributions. And it was an interim measure, allowing the costs to be assessed later. This was the Government's last significant piece of reforming legislation.

The Liberals' education reforms are too often overlooked. In the early 1900s, free places were introduced into secondary schools, the national primary school service was reformed, and technical education introduced. Similarly, a centralised public health system was introduced, a campaign launched to raise public awareness of the importance of hygiene and pure water and new maternity hospitals built. Advances were given to workers to finance housing construction, a more useful policy than simply building special houses for workers.<sup>10</sup> But these were piecemeal and, sometimes, reactive measures, based on depreciating intellectual and political capital. The New Zealand Liberal project was largely completed by 1900.

During the late 1890s, New Zealanders were amongst the most prosperous people in the world. 'The mood of the Seddonian age was the most expansive that the country had experienced .... soundly based .... on rising prices, on hard work and on a just society .... and [according to Seddon] on humanism in politics.'<sup>11</sup> His Government's hold on power was never in doubt. Seddon offered a choice between government by the selfish few or those who represented the feelings and aspirations of the people; his strongly-led party or the divided, disorganised opposition.

However, Seddon's comfortable election victories masked significant political undercurrents which eventually overwhelmed the Liberal Party. His attempts to steer a middle course, fairly balancing the demands of labour and capital, were undermined by factionalism. Signs of wage-earner discontent emerged at the 1896 election. The Government was re-elected but lost some urban support because unemployment had increased, with the promised benefits of the land reforms yet to show through. Union restlessness led to calls in 1898 for an independent labour party. The following year, Seddon sought to redefine the Party's relationship with organised labour (and build an effective political organisation) by forming the Liberal and Labour Federation. Many Liberals greeted this with suspicion. They maintained that the Party existed to advance the national interest and the equality of all individuals, rather than class or sectional demands.

By the early 1900s, there was considerable union dissatisfaction with the conciliation and arbitration system. The conciliation boards were increasingly slow and legalistic in their deliberations. In 1901, an anti-labour Liberal MP succeeded in amending the I,C & A Act to allow direct referral of a dispute to the Arbitration Court when either side demanded it. To the Government's chagrin, an informal union-employer alliance had helped to undermine the conciliation system. Employers had begun to see the Court as a guarantor of economic stability and many unions saw the Court as more sympathetic to their claims. Soon, the Arbitration Court became more parsimonious in its deliberations and refused to allow any element of profit-sharing. Real wages declined between 1902 and 1910.<sup>12</sup> Pressure from rural and business interests led the Government to refuse the principal demand by many (though not all) union leaders – statutory preference in employment for union members. Similarly, protest from shopkeepers – a key Liberal constituency – all but wrecked Seddon's attempt to regulate the hours worked in shops and offices. In 1906, New Zealand saw its first strikes for twelve years.

The Liberals did the lose the workers' support immediately. Until 1908, the working class electorate was the party's most solid constituency. Indeed, in the town and country seats, mining, dairy factory or construction workers were key components in the party's electoral coalition.<sup>13</sup> However, labour's gradual estrangement from Liberalism had three significant consequences.

First, the formation of an independent labour party became inevitable. In 1904, the Trades and Labour Councils set up a Political Labour League, which supported candidates

in the 1905 and 1908 elections. It was succeeded by the first Labour Party and then a moderate radical, welfarist United Labour Party. A deep concern that rival Liberal or Labour candidates could allow opposition (conservative) candidates to win led the Government to introduce the 'second ballot' for the 1908 and 1911 elections. Where a candidate failed to receive 50 per cent or more of the vote, a 'run-off' ballot was held a week later. The Liberal Government was returned in 1908, despite a loss of support amongst rural and urban conservative voters. That poll also saw the election of a PLL MP, who was followed by a second Labour member in a 1910 byelection.

Second, attempts by the Government's radical critics to 'destroy capitalism' by smashing the arbitration system, brought new political problems. In 1908, a strike at the Blackball Mine on the west coast of the South Island successfully flouted the court's authority. Major strikes followed in Auckland and Wellington. The radical unionists' so-called Red Federation urged unions to opt out of the arbitration system. Their criticisms of the court drew sympathy from affiliating unions but somewhat more ambivalence from their members.

The Government, now led by Sir Joseph Ward, faced an insoluble dilemma: either be soft on radical unions or alienate labour. Following Blackball, it outlawed strikes covered by a new court award and brought in new penalties and disputes procedures, further alienating sections of the union movement from both Government and arbitration. Opposition and farming leaders charged that Ward's reliance on labour support stopped him from tackling the 'Red Feds'. To assuage conservatives within his own party and avoid divisive issues as the 1908 election approached, Ward declared a 'legislative holiday'. This had little appeal.

Third, the Government's destiny became more dependent on its rural and land policies. The Liberals became hopelessly divided between freehold and leasehold factions. In the 1900s, the freehold cause became a popular rallying cry for established and aspiring property-holders, freeholders and leaseholders. Ward tried to appease both factions by replacing the lease-in-perpetuity with short renewable leases, supplemented by periodic revaluations. The tenants could buy their land at its current value. This did not satisfy the freeholders and in 1909

# Workers of Wellington!

Think before you cast your vote to-day!  
What is the choice that lies before you?

**You know well**

THAT Labour cannot hope to carry this election alone;  
THAT even if Labour held the balance of power in next Parliament, it could not carry even the most moderate and reasonable of its measures without the sympathy and help of Liberalism.

THAT from Reform, the policy of Conservatism and reaction, you will get neither help nor sympathy, but obstinate opposition to any and every progressive and democratic proposal.

**What then is your duty to Yourselves?**

In the name of Labour,  
For the workers, their hopes, their aspirations and their future

## Stand by Liberalism NOW!

To the Extremists, Liberalism has no meaning. And why? Because Liberalism stands for Democracy, for Freedom of Speech, for the Equality of Opportunity, for Liberty.

But to the Moderates, the chosen gospel of the Extremists stands for Tyranny.

To the Extremist, Liberalism has no meaning and makes no appeal.

But to Moderate Labour, the men and women who form the vast majority of the wage earners;

Those who hold by the great traditions of Democracy; Those who stand for "Government of the People by the people," not by a despotic "class-owning" minority.

Those who would gladly strive and work and live for "the common weal";

To them, Moderate Labour, Liberalism has always been a firm and faithful ally.

## Workers of Wellington!

The extremists are blind leaders of the blind! The path they would have you to follow descends into the abyss of Revolution, Anarchy and Ruin.

With the Extremists to guide you, what prospect have you but defeat, disaster and overthrowing?

Why should you not seize the splendid opportunities that Liberalism offers you to-day?

Why should you waste the every year in vain struggle, straining out your hands for the unsustainable, "heart sick with hope deferred"?

You cannot even in your wildest dreams expect the speedy realisation of Labour's hopes and wishes. Why by opposing Liberalism, should you aid the Masses to secure the triumph of "Reform"?

What can you do to check reaction, to defeat Conservatism, to strike a blow for the great cause of Democratic Freedom?

Where Labour stands between a Liberal and a Massite every vote that you cast for Labour is a vote that helps Reform

**Will you have Reaction or Progress?**

Do you stand for Freedom or Tyranny?

If you choose Progress and Freedom, your own hope lies in the Victory of Liberalism.

**Do not lose this Present Certainty for the sake of dreams that may never find fulfilment.**

**Be True to Yourselves!**

In the name of Labour and the Workers' Cause!

## Stand by LIBERALISM TO-DAY!

*The Liberals tried desperately but unsuccessfully to retain traditional urban worker support at the 1919 election. This appeal was published in the New Zealand Times, 17 December 1919*

Ward's attempts to further satisfy the farming lobby were blocked by the leasehold faction. Farmers Union support swung towards the opposition, now organised as the Reform Party under W.F. Massey. He shrewdly promised the grant of freehold, 'honest administration', a tough line on militant unions and an end to 'socialist' legislation with popular Liberal policies left untouched.

At the 1911 election the Liberals' share of the popular (second ballot) vote crashed by more than a third<sup>14</sup> and they won four fewer seats than Reform.<sup>15</sup> The Government was swept away by a widespread demand for change. The rightward shift of rural and urban conservative voters was matched by a marked leftward lurch by many working class voters. Caught in the middle, the Liberal Government collapsed.<sup>16</sup>

## From Moderation to Conservatism

For the following fifteen years, the Liberals drifted into ideological conservatism and political confusion. The 1914 election, narrowly won by Reform,<sup>17</sup> amply demonstrated the extent of the Liberal Party's split personality and political dilemmas. Ward at least checked the drain on the left by campaigning as the voice of compassion. Still, he offered nothing new in such areas as health or education, where urban memories of past inaction were long. A Lib-Lab alliance to prevent a split anti-Reform vote was concluded in some city constituencies. Its main effect appears to have to help the successful candidates from the various Labour groupings.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, conservative scare tactics following the Waihi strike (smashed by Massey's Government) led Ward to keep unionists at arms length. Rural Liberal candidates campaigned as freeholders in the North Island, leaseholders in the South. All were 'anti-Red Fed' and 'pro-development'. For its part, Reform offered a proven record of tough action against militant unions and the traditional Liberal state investment programme, now under new farmer management.

As in Britain, the First World War became a major factor in the Liberals' accelerating decline. Between 1915 and 1919, Ward and five colleagues served in Massey's twelve-man National Government. Whilst Ward wanted to hold office

again, pressure for national unity from both the Governor and the public left little option. With the war over, Ward withdrew from the Coalition to chart an independent political course. However, the Liberals had very little room in which to manoeuvre. The wartime economy, over which Ward presided as Minister of Finance, had brought high inflation, lower real wages and deteriorating health and education services. The Liberals' core constituencies – small-scale farmers, timber and public works employees, city white and blue collar workers – suffered most. Labour, now reconstituted as a single effective political force, had fertile political soil to till and now offered no electoral pact with those who had sustained Massey, its arch-nemesis, in office.

In an attempt to stem the urban Labour tide, the Liberals published a radical manifesto. It advocated a state bank, new price controls, nationalisation of the coal mines, massive spending on education, universal pensions, workers housing and urban railways – all with no increase in taxes! It was an unconvincing gesture; too little, too late for the discontented. At the same time, Ward tried to reassure the farmers and the urban middle class urban voters that the Liberals were opposed to the 'extreme' Labour Party.

The conservative press accused Ward of courting 'red' voters and finally forced him to deny that he would rely on 'Bolshevik' Labour support if the 1919 election brought a hung Parliament. During the campaign, he was continually on the defensive, vainly trying to define a distinctive Liberal position in a polarised political climate. The Liberals were routed, winning just 19 of the 80 seats in Parliament. Ward and his deputy were amongst the casualties. The party had faltered in the cities, where Labour was now the single most popular party. Massey had a comfortable parliamentary majority, based on a mere 37 per cent of the popular vote. He had succeeded in uniting the countryside, winning against the Liberals, and the more affluent city seats, beating Liberal and Labour. Only in the more mixed town seats did the Liberals predominate. The pattern for the era of three-party politics was thus established: Reform victories based on an anti-government vote split between Labour and Liberal, well-off and poorer city constituencies, mixed town and conservative countryside.<sup>19</sup>

The Liberals singularly failed to meet the challenges or grasp the opportunities of this new, complex environment. The Party changed its name twice during the early 'twenties and suffered from lacklustre leadership, chronic parliamentary disorganisation and a lack of innovative policy. There was no Beveridge or Keynes to provide fresh ideas or a new direction. A rural downturn and budget cuts left the Reform Government vulnerable in the run-up to the 1922 general election. However, Massey was able to form a minority government. The Liberals remained the second largest party by a bare margin of seats.<sup>20</sup> Their pre-election talks to reach an accommodation with Labour foundered when they would not commit to proportional representation. With no programme or campaign for the cities, the 'United Progressive Liberal Labour Party', lost all its poorer urban seats to Labour and was eclipsed by Reform in the well-to-do suburbs. Freed from trying to appeal to 'the workers', the Liberals became little more than a town party and a repository for farmers' protest votes.

When prosperity returned to the countryside, the Liberals were left exposed. For the 1925 election, the party, now called National, offered little more than elements of its old land programme with new agricultural banks, which other parties were already investigating. Indeed, there were now few substantive policy differences between Reform and National. Reform, now led by Gordon Coates, won a landslide victory, overwhelming National in the countryside and all but sweeping away its remaining town and suburban seats. Electoral polarisation left the erstwhile Liberals with just 11 seats out of 80.

The strange afterlife of Liberal New Zealand then took a bizarre and tragic twist. Within two years, with agricultural prices tumbling and unemployment rising, Coates' popularity collapsed. Business interests were particularly annoyed with his failure to follow a true conservative, laissez-faire economic path. These interests absorbed the rump of National MPs and a revived party organisation to form the United Party.<sup>21</sup> 'The common denominator was opposition to Reform and a conservatism so fierce that it could confuse the fact of government activity with the doctrine of socialism.'<sup>22</sup> One Labour MP dismissed the new group as 'composed of odds and ends .... a dish of left-over food from the saloon'. Still, United emerged from the 1928 election as the single largest party. Led by Sir Joseph Ward – now in his seventy-third year and showing signs of senility – it formed a minority government with the support of the Labour Party. Reform's unpopularity was the main reason, followed by Ward's campaign promise to borrow abroad some £70 million for loans to 'settlers and home-builders', rebuilding the rail infrastructure and 'advancing prosperity'. This pledge was made in error, probably during a diabetic blackout,<sup>23</sup> but United strategists soon recognised its broad appeal to an anxious public.

United governed alone for three unhappy years. Within months of the election, Ward's health failed. He resigned and then died in 1930. The Government had no new policies to tackle rapidly rising unemployment. None of the £70 million was ever borrowed. In the face of an unprecedented national crisis, the unimpressive new Prime Minister George Forbes formed a coalition with Reform which defeated Labour at the polls. By 1933, the value of the country's exports had dropped by 40 per cent, its national income by a quarter.<sup>24</sup>

The Great Depression is remembered with deep bitterness in New Zealand. The Coalition saw no alternative to balancing the budget. Civil service wages were cut, minimum pay rates abolished, pensions slashed by 30 per cent, health spending reduced, the school leaving age raised, public works scaled down. By 1933, an estimated 25 per cent of the male labour force was out of work. The Government's answer was 'relief work', usually humiliating and always for a below-subsistence wage. These were the 'sugarbag years' of primitive relief camps, soup kitchens, malnourished school children, rioting and looting in Auckland and Wellington, repression of free speech, and the 'special' police. To the public, Forbes and Coates became little more than folk devils.

The general election of 1935 saw the National Political Federation, as it was now called, annihilated in the worst defeat ever suffered by a governing party.<sup>25</sup> The Labour Party was at last victorious. Despite calling itself a democratic socialist

party, Labour's programme recalled the old Liberal theme: state humanitarianism based on a sound economy. In his victory broadcast, the incoming Prime Minister, M.J. Savage, promised to 'begin where Richard John Seddon and his colleagues left off'.

*Neil Stockley is Director of Policy at Liberal Democrat headquarters, having been Senior Researcher in the Commons Whips Office. Until 1993, he worked in New Zealand, including a period in Prime Minister David Lange's private office.*

- 1 Frank Parsons, quoted in Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, Harmondsworth, 1959, p.172
- 2 Albert Metin, quoted in Len Richardson, 'Parties and Political Change,' in W.H. Oliver and B.R. Williams (eds), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Auckland, 1981, pp197-225 at p.203
- 3 Sinclair, *op. cit.*, p. 172
- 4 Michael Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward – A Political Biography*, Auckland, 1993, pp. 38-39
- 5 Until 1902, MPs from the cities were elected on an at-large basis. As a result, Liberal and various types of anti-Liberal MP were generally swept in and out in blocks.
- 6 Robert Chapman, 'The Decline of the Liberals,' in Robert Chapman (ed.), *Ends and Means in New Zealand Politics*, Auckland, 1961, pp. 18-24 at p.19.
- 7 Quoted in David Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals – The Years of Power 1891-1912*, Auckland, 1988, p.199
- 8 David Hamer, 'Centralisation and Nationalism (1891-1912)' in Keith Sinclair (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, Auckland 1990, pp. 125-152 at p.126

- 9 Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, *op.cit.*, pp. 146-149
- 10 *Ibid*, p.183
- 11 Sinclair, *op. cit.*, p. 192
- 12 Sinclair, *op cit*, p. 201
- 13 Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, *op. cit.*, at p. 201
- 14 Sinclair, *op.cit.*, p.209. *The Liberal share of the popular vote fell from 60 per cent to 41 per cent.*
- 15 Michael Bassett, *Three Party Politics in New Zealand 1911-1931*, Auckland, 1982, p.5
- 16 *In the new Parliament the Labour members held the balance of power and voted with the Government on the crucial no-confidence motion of 6 July 1912. It was Independents and the Government's own dissidents who effectively ended the Liberal era.*
- 17 *After recounts in several constituencies, Reform won 41 seats, Liberal 34 and Labour 5*
- 18 Barry Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, Auckland, 1980, p. 87
- 19 *For a full analysis of the complex results, see Robert Chapman, The Political Scene 1919-1931*, Auckland, 1969, pp 6-8
- 20 *The state of the parties immediately after the election was Reform 39, Liberal 19, Labour 17, Independents 5.*
- 21 Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward*, *op.cit*, p.262
- 22 Chapman, *op. cit.*, p. 46
- 23 Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward*, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-6.
- 24 Sinclair, *op.cit.*, p.255
- 25 *The following year, the United and Reform parties formally merged to form the New Zealand National Party. Acknowledged as New Zealand's centre-right party, it eventually became the natural party of government. National ruled from 1949 to 1957, 1960 to 1972, 1975 to 1984 and from 1990 to the present.*

## Research in Progress

This column aims to assist the progress of research projects currently being undertaken, at graduate, postgraduate or similar level. If you think you can help any of the individuals listed below with their thesis - or if you know anyone who can - please get in touch with them to pass on details of sources, contacts, or any other helpful information. If you know of any other research project in progress for inclusion in this column, please send details to Duncan Brack at the address on the back page.

**The Liberal Party and foreign and defence policy, 1922-88.** Book and articles; of particular interest is the possibility of interviewing anyone involved in formulating the foreign and defence policies of the Liberal Party. Dr R. S. Grayson, 8 Millway Close, Oxford OX2 8BJ.

**The grass roots organisation of the Liberal Party 1945-64;** the role of local activists in the late 1950s revival of the Liberal Party. Ph.D thesis. Mark Egan, University College, Oxford OX1 4BH.

**The political and electoral strategy of the Liberal Party 1970-79.** Individual constituency papers from this period, and contact with individuals who were

members of the Party's policy committees and/or the Party Council, particularly welcome. Ph.D thesis. Ruth Fox, 9 Chapel Terrace, Headingley, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS6 3JA.

**The Nottingham Liberal Party 1900-20.** Undergraduate thesis. Richard Eagling, 48 Queens Road East, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 2GS.

**The Liberal Party 1945-56.** Contact with members (or opponents) of the Radical Reform Group during the 1950s, and anyone with recollections of the leadership of Clement Davies, sought. Ph.D thesis. Graham Lippiatt, 24 Balmoral Road, South Harrow, HA2 8TD.

# The Liberal Party and the 1945 General Election

*In September last year, the Liberal Democrat History Group published a special supplement on the Liberal Party's campaign in the 1945 general election. In December, the publication, along with an article in Contemporary Record by Malcolm Baines, was reviewed by Tony Greaves and Mark Egan, Roger and Pat Thorn, and Michael Steed, contribute to the continuing debate.*

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## *The Liberal Party and the 1945 General Election*

*by Roger and Pat Thorn*

The Liberal Democrats History Group has recently published several fascinating articles about the 1945 general election, the last being in our December 1995 Newsletter 9, which starts with an excellent review of the debate so far. This election was not so long ago as to leave us without recourse to the views of those then involved. There must be a significant number, happily still with us, who were then intimately involved. I look forward to reading of their observations.

Meanwhile, I preempted this by asking my father to comment upon the interesting article by Peter Joyce. What may be thought of some interest follows, and the reply of my father, J.D. 'Pat' Thorn. He writes first of his own personal involvement as a Liberal in the 1945 election, as a member of Radical Action. He was then aged 25:

'In the election campaign, I was invited to help in the Isle of Ely constituency. I spoke at several meetings, typically in village schools, with a team of us working in relay and I think just one car cleverly timed to move us all one step, one at a time, but keeping the car fully busy. It was quite amusing finishing one's speech almost immediately the next speaker arrived (at what one hoped sounded like the intended end of one's address), because to keep the car waiting put everybody out round the circuit.

I once had to stump-speak for 10 minutes over time and skip one venue altogether. But it was principally the responsibility of the chairman of each meeting to keep the ball in the air. On another occasion the chairman was so interested in listening to himself (or maybe he couldn't believe that a "child" of my age could possibly be the next "speaker"), that I never got his attention to introduce me and hand over.

The eve of poll meeting was something quite else. I suppose the largest town in the constituency was March, and the largest hall there the cinema. The candidate himself was of course the main speaker, but I was honoured to have that meeting included in my itinerary.

I also did quite a lot of loudspeaker van work and one or two street corner set-ups: one in Sutton I remember, which my mother-in-law attended, and was more impressed by hearing my voice from the loudspeaker than by anything I said, I think.

I had previously helped in the byelection in the Bury St Edmund's constituency, supporting Mrs Corbett-Ashby,<sup>1</sup> to the dismay of the Leader, Sir Archibald Sinclair, but to the delight of Radical Action members. That time, all travelling

was by bicycle and apart from the "big night" I more or less had Haverhill to myself. As a first experience, that was all great fun.

But the Ely campaign was rather desperate. However .... at least we did enough to make recovery of the seat later (by Clement Freud) a possibility; and there weren't many seats where that happened, and most of them were in the "Celtic fringe".'

*Roger Thorn, QC  
(Political Officer of the Berwick-upon-Tweed constituency)*

## *The 1945 Election*

I've put some thoughts together, prompted by Peter Joyce's paper<sup>2</sup> – I hope not too haphazardly.

In some particulars I think he misreads his sources regarding the electoral aims, such as the Liberal debates during 1943–45. His best paragraph on the subject is the pre-penultimate one:

'It was also assumed that the electorate viewed general elections as occasions when governments were selected. Alternative objectives were assumed to command little sympathy among the voting public. Many Liberal candidates thus viewed the 1945 election not as an end in itself but as a beginning – the start of a political 'comeback' process which would ultimately result in the formation of a Liberal government. This sentiment was voiced in the last national leaflet issued by the Party during the campaign, which asserted that whatever result was achieved then, 600 candidates would stand in the subsequent contest. This would result in "a clear Liberal majority. A Liberal government will be in power".<sup>74</sup>

With this I largely agree; save that the 1945 election leaflet, to which note 74 relates,<sup>3</sup> should be recognised as a bit of last-minute electoral hype, not bearing the weight Joyce appears to put on it.

The ultimate objective was always simply survival to fight again another day. The one clear fact was that the choice was between a Labour and Conservative government. Very few people were prepared to vote for any other party (the Liberal Party was only one of several) without first being assured that the Party or Member, if elected, would support the preferred major party on the major issue.

So the argument ran, and hence the Liberal leaders, with the further inducement of personally continuing in office until a perhaps not very remote retirement, were mainly concerned in arguing the case for the continuation of the coalition. The

thinking was close to declaring support for Churchill even if Labour could not be prevailed upon to agree. The Lib Nats had made similar decisions in 1931 and '35 (and even after '45, still had more declared MP's than did the 'Independent' Liberals; by then more generally known as 'the' Liberals). Nevertheless, most of the Party rank and file considered that would result in certain, even if delayed, oblivion.

Radical Action upheld this view until there were sufficient PPCs to call the meeting held in London in January 1944. That also prepared the way for an Assembly, eventually called for January '45. Throughout this period there was a degree of distrust of the leader's intentions. Much was said and done for the purpose of putting a shot across the bows of those contemplating a virtual merger with the Lib Nats under the Tories, and needs to be interpreted in that light. It had to be hoped that in spite of the two-party character of the election contest there were enough voters still around here and there who, like us in Radical Action, cared more about providing some sort of future for the Party, and would vote Liberal if given the opportunity. There were real hopes of winning a few seats that way. It turned out to be just possible, whereas by 1950 every single erstwhile Lib Nat remaining had adopted the title 'Conservative'.

### Tactics

I am still inclined to defend the tactics of attacking the Conservative record. It was certainly right where I was, in the Isle of Ely. It could be said that that constituency was atypical. We had a retiring Member standing again (Rothschild) and in 1935, Labour hadn't thought it worth while to put up a candidate at all and there was still, in '45, little trade union influence.

In relating the tactics to the aims, as described above, 'The Isle' was definitely one of the few tens of seats where we had a chance. The tactic had to be to keep as many Liberals as possible within the fold, rather than doing a 'Lib Nat', about which there was still much discussion among Liberal voters, whilst recognising that whatever else, the Liberal Party was unlikely to attract any convinced socialists. Our efforts weren't wasted as, although we didn't win the seat, it became Clement Freud's later.

There was certainly a gross miscalculation of the strength of the Labour vote, but the press and the other parties shared in that. Peter Joyce quotes various Mass Observation polls, but it was the vote from the forces, mostly serving overseas, that put the Labour Party in. I believe that Labour activists had been very energetic at all possible opportunities to exert an influence. Apart from man-to-man contacts there were numerous more formal, even semi-official, occasions when political discussions or debates were arranged, often in small groups, to 'entertain the troops', 'good for morale', 'educational', and all that sort of thing; even mock elections towards the end. Young men from country areas such as most of East Anglia, who in more normal circumstances would have shared many of the views formed for good reasons by earlier generations, were being more or less brain-washed by their city-bred comrades. They were mostly absent from electoral meetings within the constituencies so they were almost isolated

from the usual campaign influences; nor was there much possibility of feedback from them.

If the strength of the Labour support had been known earlier, I don't think either the Liberals or the Conservatives could have done much about it, except to avoid a snap election, as they had tried but failed to do. Nor do I think that the Labour Party themselves were fully aware of the position until quite late. I wouldn't accuse the party as such of responsibility for what their amateur supporters in the forces were doing. Ironically, they were quite unable to live up to public expectations and meet all the promises made unofficially on their behalf, and eventually had to suffer for it.

### Some observations

After the divisions of the Liberal Party in 1931, there were 35 Lib Nat MPs, and 33 'Independent Liberals' (including 4 Lloyd George supporters who were doubly independent and therefore counted as zero, if you follow the arithmetic).

By 1935, instead of the originally hoped-for recombination, the coalition situation persisted but with even more dominant Tory control. Again, individuals in both wings of the Party had to reconsider their positions. In the event, 33 declared Lib Nats were elected and only 21 Independent Liberals. It was very clear that many Lib Nats were swayed by purely personal considerations.

When the wartime Coalition was formed, Independent Liberals under Sir Archibald Sinclair also enjoyed the delights(?) of office in a similar position to the Lib Nats already there.

After 1945, the Lib Nats in parliament became 13, and the Liberals 12. Meanwhile, other parties had come and gone, including the Acland/J B Priestley Common Wealth Party, which in 1942 had looked to be a real threat to the Liberals, not unlike the SDP of 1981 – except that, instead of starting as a rebellion against Labour, it did the opposite and disappeared into it.

Not until 1974 did the Liberal Party recover its 1945 strength.

JD Thom

1 This was at the time of the Coalition Government. I am led to believe that an all party agreement meant that none would stand against a party holding an existing seat. The seat is recalled as having been held by the Tories; but whatever, a 'Liberal' could not contest the seat. So we think that she must have stood without a declared party affiliation – albeit, as a Liberal supporter, and as a Radical Action supporter at that! [RT].

2 See Liberal Democrat History Group Newsletter No 9, December 1995.

3 Note 74: 'Liberal Party Organisation, Late News, London, 1945, election leaflet.'

Note to potential authors: personal reminiscences of aspects of Liberal, SDP or Liberal Democrat history similar to the article above are very welcome. If you are willing to prepare any such – or know anyone who can – please contribute them for publication. Feel free to contact the Editor if you wish to discuss your contribution first.



## The Liberal Performance in 1945

As I read the paper by Peter Joyce on *The Liberal Party and the 1945 General Election* and the response by Mark Egan (LDHG Newsletter 9, December 1995), my psephological hackles rose. Tony Greaves' response (same issue) did not make assumptions (instead it asked intelligent questions), but Joyce's section on 'The Performance of the Liberal Party in the Election' merely assessed the performance by describing the outcome in a few seats while Egan summed up 1945 as a 'grim defeat'. That may be a fair reflection of how the results seemed to Party activists with over-high expectations (in an era when opinion polls did not provide a benchmark); but if we are to assess the impact of the Liberal Party's strategy and campaigning in 1945, we must grapple with the problem of finding a more accurate measure of how the voters reacted to it.

Problem it is. The Party fought less than half the seats in 1945, having fought barely a quarter in 1935. The Conservatives and Labour Parties fought almost all the seats at each election, but at each left a few unfought and – hardly surprisingly – in these few the behaviour of Tory or Labour voters without a candidate at one or both elections had a massive effect on the number of Liberal votes recorded. Almost all of the constituencies to which Joyce fall into this unusual category.

Elsewhere (i.e. in most of the country), the results did not fit the pattern Joyce describes and Egan assumes. In some seats the Liberal vote fell; in others it rose. So far as I know no-one has analysed why the pattern was so inconsistent. There has been no other election since 1922 in which the Liberal performance was so variable and as at the time psephology was in its infancy, the rather special character of the Liberal vote in 1945 seems to have escaped attention.

For those who think the 1945 Liberal campaign failed, contemplate the following figures:

	1935	1945
<i>London suburbs:</i>		
Bromley	12.5%	20.9%
Croydon	8.7% (S)	18.8% (N)
Hendon	7.5%	17.7% *
Chislehurst	9.3%	12.8% *
Uxbridge	8.6%	14.4%
Wood Green	13.1%	21.9%
<i>Provincial suburbs:</i>		
Manchester Withington	16.3%	19.7%
Stourbridge	22.2%	25.2%
<i>Other growth points:</i>		
Blackpool	16.5%	20.6% *
Reading	5.0%	12.6%
(* average of two seats, 1935 seat having been divided)		

By and large what seems to have happened in 1945 was that the traditional Liberal support in rural areas, the Celtic fringe and half a dozen urban seats with a strong personal vote for a sitting MP ebbed away; in most of the country support rose a bit; while in the areas in which there had been the greatest population growth in the inter-war period the Liberal vote

rose most. But since the vast majority of seats did not have a three-cornered fight in both 1935 and 1945, it is not easy to establish this as the pattern.

Moving forward, it is clear that, wherever the pattern of contests allows a comparison, the Liberal vote dropped in 1950 and again in 1951; rose in 1955 and 1959, but not up to the 1945 level; briefly surpassed the 1945 level in 1964, but fell below it again in 1966 and 1970. On that basis the popular response to the Party's 1945 campaign was greater than at six out of seven of the elections from 1950 to 1970.

More interestingly, the growth areas listed above presage the sort of places in which the Grimond-era revival was to be strongest. Orpington man (as she was called in that sexist period) erupted in Eric Lubbock's byelection victory in 1962; Orpington as a constituency was created in 1945, with the division of the fast-growing 1935 Chislehurst seat into two. Blackpool, in 1958, was the first significant local council captured by the Liberals in that period.

It would appear that the 1945 Liberal election campaign was notably successful in its appeal to voters in suburban growth areas and may indeed have laid the seeds for the Party's revival a decade later. That hardly makes it simply a failure. Arguably, as the only election in three decades when there was a significant increase in the willingness of people to vote Liberal in a substantial number of constituencies, it deserves to be regarded as the Party's most successful election campaign between 1929 and 1959.

Certainly the impact of the campaign requires more psephological research and more careful assessment.

*Michael Steed*

*Michael Steed was formerly lecturer in politics at Manchester University and is now honorary lecturer at the University of Kent. He has written extensively on parties and elections. He was President of the Liberal Party 1977–78.*

## Membership Services

*The History Group is pleased to make the following listings available to its members. Recently updated versions now available.*

**Mediawatch:** a bibliography of major articles on the Liberal Democrats appearing in the broadsheet papers, major magazines and academic journals from 1988. A new addition includes articles of historical interest appearing in the major Liberal Democrat journals.

**Thesiswatch:** all higher degree theses listed in the Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research under the titles 'Liberal Party' or 'liberalism' (none yet under SDP or Liberal Democrats!)

*Any History Group member is entitled to receive a copy of either of these free of charge; send an A4 SSAE to Duncan Brack at the address below.*

# Radical Failure

Book Review: *The Decline of British Radicalism 1847–1860* by Miles Taylor (Clarendon Press, Oxford; £45)

Reviewed by Mark Pack

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Miles Taylor's book is an examination of the failure of British radicalism in the 1850s. For many the mere appearance of a book that concentrates on the 1850s in their own right, rather than later or earlier periods, will be welcome. However, this book has an added interest for those wondering about the future of the Liberal Democrats, as there are many parallels between the picture the author draws of radicals and the recent history and possible future of the Liberal Democrats.

Although Taylor's focus is on the 1850s, he first traces the rise of radicalism in the 1830s and 1840s, before examining its failure to make a sustained and successful impact on national government. For him it is the growth of public support for control of the executive that underpinned the growth of radicalism. Parliamentary control of the executive was seen as a means to curbing corruption, waste and abuse of public position for private gain. This emphasis on the centrality of Parliament is somewhat at odds with other historians' preference for using language and culture to examine radicalism, but there is some common ground. In particular, like many others, he sees a continuity in radical beliefs running through the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This was based on the tradition of Foxite Whig constitutionalism with a belief in the primacy of the Commons. Moreover, this continuity helps explain what 'happened' to Chartism after 1848; this tradition of agitation based on eighteenth century ideas of freeborn Englishmen meant many ex-Chartists moved easily on to other radical agitation.

The number of radical MPs was small, but their level of activity was high and the presence of even a few gave an important lever on the exercise of power. With a widespread belief that Parliament mattered, they were also able to act as a focus for a variety of other pressures, such as local reform organisations. Added to a sometimes astute manipulation of the press, this meant some reform successes were achieved.

Usually this meant pressuring and persuading other non-Conservative MPs into supporting them. Although the radicals were nominally independent, when it came to key votes they always voted to oppose the possibility of Conservative government. Radical MPs also came under pressure from the increasingly two-party nature of constituencies to make clear where their loyalties lay – and 'to radicalism' was not a sufficient answer for voters. Thus, although being efficient representatives for local concerns, often revelling in committee work and petitioning, was in the 1830s and 1840s a source of electoral success, by the 1850s it was not sufficient. There was a particular problem for many radical MPs as they were often elected due to local discontent with others rather than any positive enthusiasm for radical cures. This was not a problem in all areas of the country with, for example, the questions of local taxation and government in London providing plenty of scope for radicals to garner positive support. However, this did not apply in other areas, especially the north-west (though quite why this should be the case Taylor does little to explore).

Over time their independence decreased, with the bulk of radical MPs becoming first an appendage to the forming Liberal Party and then being fully subsumed into it, although a few – like Bright and Cobden – long retained a suspicion of taking office. This merger into the Liberals was eased by some common ground with another group who helped form this new party: ex-supporters of Peel. Both groups shared a dislike of high taxes and wasteful government, calling for a cheap and efficient state. Little role is given by Taylor to dissent in local Liberal politics in the 1850s. Rather, importance is attached to financial issues and anti-centralisation beliefs, with the defence of local government against centralising national Whig government with its Westminster-based patronage networks.

Radicals were also squeezed out of their independence by issues involving nationalism and patriotism. Taylor draws emphasis on the importance for radicalism of a different type of patriotism, rooted in pride in public service, a healthy electoral system and control of the executive. At times this seems somewhat detached from the concerns of the bulk of the population, with the emphasis on constitutions rather than class, and civic responsibility rather than social reform. And when foreign wars and disputes arose it was of little help. Many radicals tempered support for cheap government and constitutional reform, seeing foreign involvement as requiring higher taxes and a lack of distracting domestic reform wrangles.

Much of Taylor's story contains parallels with the recent history of the Liberals and Liberal Democrats, especially in his picture of radical MPs being marginalised as the polarisation of a two-party system removed their power in Parliament and reduced their popularity outside. Despite these adverse trends though, radical pressure could still be effective, as in the bringing down of Palmerston in 1858 in the face of his lack of domestic reform, cavalier foreign policy and dismissive attitude towards Parliamentary accountability. This power, though, was only possible as radicals were willing to stomach a Conservative government, rather than – as they saw it – a Liberal government with no liberal policies. Unity with Palmerston was possible again in 1859, catalysed by opposition to the limited nature of Conservative reform proposals. This allowed unity despite the absence of agreement on many domestic issues; having a Liberal government became more important than ideological purity.

Previous generations of radicals were often left behind by this moderation, but also by the increasing emphasis on economic and social issues, rather than institutional reform. As Taylor concludes, 'whether such a system of organised parliamentary liberalism was actually a better safeguard of civil liberties than the strategies favoured by independent radicals is a matter of some doubt.'

*Mark Pack completed a thesis last year on the English electoral system in the first half of the nineteenth-century. He now works at Exeter University, helping to support computing in the Arts faculty.*

# Europe and the Liberal Democrat Tradition

*History Group Conference Fringe Meeting Report*

*by Mark Egan*

The links between the Liberal Democrats, and its predecessor parties, and Europe have always been close. The Liberal Party first backed membership of the Common Market in 1959; the Labour Party's inability to make up its mind in support of the European Community precipitated the formation of the SDP in 1981. Support for European federalism remains a distinctive plank in the Liberal Democrats' programme today, and the Liberal Democrats are one of the strongest Liberal parties in Europe today. For these reasons, the importance of Europe to the Liberal Democrat tradition was considered at the History Group's fringe meeting at the Party's spring conference in Nottingham in March. Graham Watson MEP chaired the meeting at which Alan Butt Philip, five times Liberal candidate for Wells and a leading expert on the single market, Michael Steed, Honorary Lecturer in Politics at the University of Kent at Canterbury, and Lord McNally, former SDP MP for Stockport, all spoke.

Alan Butt Philip considered the Liberal record on Europe. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Liberals were nationalist in outlook, but the role of Gladstone, especially, in emphasising the importance of employing diplomacy to protect international human rights gave the Liberal Party an internationalist edge which it never lost. After 1945, Liberals were in the vanguard of the movement to create international institutions which would safeguard world peace and security. Although the 1948 Assembly backed European integration and cooperation, elements in the party wished to work towards developing worldwide federalism, and a considerable free trade element was unsure about the implications of joining the Common Market for Britain's trade policy. The Liberal Assembly voted in favour of joining the Common Market in 1959, thus ending a 'wobble' on Europe policy which had largely turned on the free trade issue. Subsequently, the Liberal Party remained committed to Europe, as have the Liberal Democrats, although this commitment has not been without its problems and dilemmas, as the 1992 vote on the Maastricht treaty illustrated. Today, Butt Philip argued, the Party must consider more carefully its relatively uncritical stance on issues such as the 'democratic deficit' in Europe's governing institutions.

The Liberal parties of the EU's member states were discussed by Michael Steed. He first considered the development of ELDR, the Federation of European Liberal Democrat and Reform Parties, into the federal, pro-European group it is today. Its ancestor, the ECSC, formed in 1953, included Italian fascists, French Gaullists and Fianna Fáil. Steed looked in depth at the histories of the various Liberal parties in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France and Italy. The Liberal tradition in all of these countries has been weaker than in Britain and, surprisingly, less enthusiastically committed to the European ideal, although all the various Liberal parties are currently pro-European. Ironically, despite their electoral

weakness, many of the European Liberal parties have enjoyed participation in coalition groups denied to the Liberal Democrats in Britain.

The Labour Party's opposition to British membership of the European Community was a major factor in the formation of the SDP in 1981, and Lord McNally discussed the social democrats' commitment to Europe within the post-war Labour Party. Prior to 1962 Labour was not interested in the moves which led to the formation of the Common Market; its foreign policy was concerned with Britain's relationship with the superpowers, and economic policy debates centred on the issue of nationalisation. Gaitskell's 'thousand years of history' speech in 1962 inspired the formation of a centre-right grouping within the party, committed to the EC. As the issue became more salient within the Labour Party, especially during the 1970s, pro-Europeans within Labour grew increasingly disillusioned with Labour's somersaulting European policy. The SDP's commitment to membership of the EC reflected that, and McNally considered that the Liberal Democrats' recent policy paper on the IGC represented an effective fusion of the Liberal and Social Democratic European traditions.

*Mark Egan is a member of the Liberal Democrat History Group committee.*

## **The Liberal Democrats**

*Edited by Don MacIver*

*The first major publication on the Liberal Democrats is now available. Edited by Don MacIver at Staffordshire University, chapters include:*

- Liberals to Liberal Democrats (John Stevenson)*
- The Liberal tradition (Michael Steed)*
- Liberal Democrat thought (Tudor Jones)*
- Liberal Democrat policy (Duncan Brack)*
- Party organisation (Stephen Ingle)*
- Party members (Lynn Bennie, John Curtice and Wolfgang Rüdig)*
- Factions and groups (Vincent McKee)*
- Political strategy (Don MacIver)*
- Who votes for the centre now? (John Curtice)*
- The electoral record (Collin Rallings and Michael Thrasher)*
- Power in the balance (Michael Temple)*

*The Liberal Democrats is published by Prentice Hall Harvester Wheatsheaf and should be available now in good bookshops. We hope to carry a review in a future edition of the History Group's Newsletter.*

A Liberal Democrat History Group Evening Seminar

## God Gave the Land to the People!

*The policy of the Liberal Party on the question of the land*

Speaker: **Dr Roy Douglas**

Former lecturer at the University of Surrey; several times a Liberal candidate.

Author of *The History of the Liberal Party 1895–1970*.

7.00pm Monday 29 July

Lady Violet Room, National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1.

*Please remember the NLC's dress code!*

*Kindly supported by the National Liberal Club*

## Forthcoming issues

*Liberal Democrat History Group Newsletter 12,*  
*available mid-September 1996:*

Graham Lippiatt: *The Liberal Party and the fall of the Chamberlain Government*

Barry Doyle: *Education and the Liberal rank and file in Edwardian England: the case of Sir George White*

Tony Little: *The evolution of devolution*

Michael Hart: *Liberal dissidents during the Great War*

Book reviews, seminar reports (the repeal of the Corn Laws; the Liberal Party and the land), news of forthcoming events (September Conference fringe meeting, next witness seminar)

### *Special issue, December 1996*

Following the success of our last special issue (The Liberal Party and the Great War, Newsletter 10, March 1996), our next scheduled theme issue will cover the Liberal Revival of the 1950s, '60s and '70s. Potential topics include:

The leadership of Jo Grimond

Orpington Man and the byelection machine

The Young Liberals of the 'Red Guard'

Community politics

The leadership of Jeremy Thorpe

This list is by no means exhaustive; ideas for articles, and offers of contributions, are very welcome. The issue will be edited by Mark Egan (University College, Oxford OX1 4BH; email [uv94003@sable.ox.ac.uk](mailto:uv94003@sable.ox.ac.uk)), with whom ideas and articles should be discussed. The deadline for articles is **15 October 1996**.

## Liberal Democrat History Group

### Annual General Meeting

6.30pm Monday 29 July, preceding the seminar on land policy. All members and prospective members are welcome; an agenda accompanies this Newsletter.

Your chance to question your elected committee – and to stand for election yourself! Nominations close at the AGM; you do not have to be present to be a candidate.

### Appeal for illustrations

The Newsletter is always looking for good quality illustrations to accompany its articles. Black and white line drawings are best; they must be out of copyright or with permission for reproduction already granted. Please contact the Editor with ideas and/or high quality photocopies.

*Membership of the Liberal Democrat History Group costs £5.00 (£3.00 unwaged rate); cheques should be made payable to 'Liberal Democrat History Group' and sent to Patrick Mitchell, 6 Palfrey Place, London SW8 1PA.*

*Contributions to the Newsletter – letters, articles, and book reviews – are invited. Please type them and if possible enclose a computer file on 3.5 inch disc. The deadline for the next issue is **23 July**; contributions should be sent to the Editor, Duncan Brack, at the address below.*

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