



# 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 Yourself?**

**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 Yourself!**

**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.