Journal of
Liberal Democrat HISTORY
Issue 23 / Summer 1999 / £3.50

Leading the Liberals

Liberal Democrat History Group

Issue 23: Summer 1999

The Journal of Liberal Democrat History

The ***Journal of Liberal Democrat History*** is published quarterly by the Liberal Democrat History Group.

ISSN 1463-6557

Editorial/Correspondence

Contributions to the ***Journal*** – letters, articles, and book reviews – are invited, preferably on disc or by email.

The Journal is a refereed publication; all articles submitted will be reviewed.

Contributions should be sent to:
Duncan Brack (Editor)
Flat 9, 6 Hopton Road,
London SW16 2EQ.
email: ldhg@dbrack.dircon.co.uk.

Advertisements

Adverts from relevant organisations and publications are welcome; please contact the Editor for rates.

Subscriptions/Membership

An annual subscription to the ***Journal of Liberal Democrat History*** costs £10.00 (£5.00 unwaged rate; add £5.00 for overseas subscribers); this includes membership of the History Group unless you inform us otherwise.

Send a cheque (payable to 'Liberal Democrat History Group') to:
Patrick Mitchell, 6 Palfrey Place,
London SW8 1PA;
email:
PatrickMitchell1@compuserve.com

The **Liberal Democrat History Group** promotes the discussion and research of historical topics, particularly those relating to the histories of the Liberal Democrats, Liberal Party and the SDP. The Group organises discussion meetings and publishes the quarterly ***Journal of Liberal Democrat History*** and other occasional publications.

For more information, including details of publications, back issues of the ***Journal,*** tape records of meetings, *Mediawatch, Thesiswatch* and *Research in Progress* services, see our web site: **www.dbrack.dircon.co.uk/ldhg.**

Hon President: Earl Russell. Chair: Graham Lippiatt.

Published by
Liberal Democrat History Group,
c/o Flat 9, 6 Hopton Road,
London SW16 2EQ.

Printed by Kall-Kwik,
426 Chiswick High Road,
London W4 5TF.

July 1999

Liberal Leaderships

As the Liberal Democrats enter their second leadership context, *Robert Ingham* looks at contests of the past.

As Liberal Democrats consider who will lead their party into the next century, it is worth looking back at the ways in which Liberal Party leaders were selected and elected in the post-war period. The Liberal Party had four post-1945 leaders – Clement Davies, Jo Grimond, Jeremy Thorpe and David Steel – and each emerged in a different way.

Clement Davies

Sir Archibald Sinclair's unexpected defeat in the 1945 general election left the Liberal Party bereft of leadership in the House of Commons. Sinclair's rapid return to the House was widely expected in Liberal circles, particularly because Gandar Dower, the Tory victor in Caithness & Sutherland, had promised to resign his seat on the defeat of Japan. Consequently, a chairman of the Liberal MPs for just one session of Parliament was sought.

Roy Douglas describes the appointment of Clement Davies in the following way:[1]

> Sir Archibald Sinclair and some of his closest associates met to discuss the question. Sinclair and Sir Percy Harris [Liberal Chief Whip prior to his defeat in 1945] first approached Gwilym Lloyd George, but he refused, largely because he could not afford the incidental expenses which the office would entail. He was also offered – and also refused – the Chairmanship of the Liberal National Party about the same time. When the new House met, he was offered a place on the Opposition front bench by Winston Churchill. Gwilym Lloyd George replied that he would only sit as a Liberal. Churchill's reply was characteristic: 'And what the hell else should you sit as?' But Liberals soon came to the conclusion that he was effectively supporting the Conservatives.
>
> Thus the selection of the Chairman was left to the Liberal MPs, without the benefit of the advice of senior members of the party. The remaining MPs knew little of each other's capabilities, and several of them had not even met before the election. They adopted the remarkable expedient of asking each member to withdraw in turn, while the others discussed his suitability. At least one of the MPs who was well qualified for the office, Hopkin Morris, refused to allow his name to be considered in this manner. But at least the selection was made, and on 2 August they were able to announce that Clement Davies had been chosen Chairman.

Davies' position was thus reminiscent of Sir Donald MacLean, who chaired the Liberal Parliamentary Party during the 1918 Parliament, while being overshadowed by Lloyd George, out of the party but Prime Minister, and H. H. Asquith, out of Parliament but still regarded as leader of the Wee Frees. Unlike Asquith, however, Sinclair was not able to regain his place in the House of Commons. Davies was re-elected as Chairman in 1946 and then again in 1950 and 1951. Gandar Dower's refusal to resign his seat in 1946 seemed to establish Davies as the fully-fledged Liberal leader, and his position was enhanced by the failure of an attempt to replace him with Megan Lloyd George in 1948. Davies' own view was that his later 're-elections' were token confirmations of the 1945 decision.[2]

Jo Grimond

Two interpretations of Jo Grimond's ascension to the Liberal leadership have been offered. Douglas contends that:[3]

> The retirement of Winston Churchill from the Conservative leadership, and of Clement Attlee from the Labour leadership, led to a certain movement for the replacement of Clement Davies by a younger Chairman of the Liberal MPs. This movement was not perceptible to the rank-and-file of the party, who were well satisfied, but was noticeable among some of the more senior members. At the 1956 Assembly, to the real sorrow of many delegates, Clement Davies resigned his office … The choice of a successor was predetermined. One of the five remaining Liberal MPs, Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris, was Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means, which debarred him from active party work. Two others, Donald Wade and Arthur Holt, could not hope to hold their seats if the Con-

servatives chose to oppose them, and dependence of this kind would be highly embarrassing for the Liberal Party. A fourth MP, Roderic Bowen, was too busy with his legal practice. This only left one man: Jo Grimond, the Chief Whip. On 5 November 1956 he was therefore elected Chairman of the Liberal MPs.

Douglas is surely right in describing Grimond as the only viable alternative leader to Davies, but understates the extent to which the party rank-and-file were aware of, and supported, moves to replace Davies. Grimond had starred at the 1955 Assembly, when Davies had been too ill to attend. Speculation was rife in newspapers, including the *Guardian* and *News Chronicle,* in the run-up to the 1956 Assembly, that Davies would soon resign. Grimond received a tumultuous response by the Assembly, making a self-deprecating speech on a motion about automation that he stood 'not as the Great White Hope of the Liberal Party, but as the Great White Hope of Kingston & Surbiton Liberal Association'. The *Guardian* reported after the Assembly that 'delegates to the Liberal Assembly made it unmistakably clear today that Mr. Joseph Grimond was their candidate for the position of leader-elect of the Liberal Party … he left the Assembly as crown prince'. Party leaders, including Philip Fothergill, had indicated that Davies' tenure as leadership was drawing to a close. It was in this atmosphere that Davies tendered his resignation, in the closing speech to the Assembly.[4]

Jeremy Thorpe

Following the 1966 election, Jo Grimond indicated that he would resign as Liberal leader. There were eleven possible candidates to replace him, of whom Jeremy Thorpe, Richard Wainwright, Emlyn Hooson and Eric Lubbock were the main contenders. Tim Beaumont's recollections of the manoeuvrings within the party prior to Thorpe's election are probably characteristic of the negotiations which preceded both Davies' and Grimond's selections.[5] On this occasion, the Liberal MPs decided to hold a ballot amongst themselves. Controversially, the election was scheduled for the day following Grimond's formal resignation, 18 January 1967, decided by a vote of eight to four.

Thorpe won six votes, to three for Hooson and three for Lubbock. Wainwright had not allowed his name to go forward for the election. Although the ballot was secret, the details were leaked to the *Guardian* and published on 19 January 1967. Thorpe was backed by his fellow West Country MPs, Peter Bessell and John Pardoe, as well as by David Steel, Jo Grimond and James Davidson. Lubbock was backed by Michael Winstanley and Richard Wainwright; Hooson by Alistair Mackenzie and Russell Johnston.

Beaumont recounts that this impasse was not resolved by a consideration of the second preferences expressed for Lubbock and Hooson, as all transferred to each other. Following a meeting of the three candidates, Lubbock and Hooson withdrew their candidatures, and Thorpe was elected unanimously.

David Steel

Many Liberals outside the House of Commons were annoyed that the 1967 leadership election had taken place with such little time allowed for consultation of the wider party. The Young Liberals, Liberal councillors, and some regional federations all expressed their disquiet before the Thorpe ballot. This led to pressure for a change to the system by which Liberal leaders would be elected in future. The contest between David Steel and John Pardoe following Thorpe's resignation in 1976 was settled by a weighted one-member one-vote system, the most extensive ballot then held for the leadership of a national party. Some 70,000 Liberal members expressed their preferences at constituency level, with those votes being converted into 'national votes' by a complicated weighting system. This generated a national result of 12,541 'votes' for Steel and 7,032 'votes' for Pardoe.[6]

The SDP went further in adopting a straightforward one-member one-vote system. The same system was used in the Liberal Democrats in 1988 and again this year.

Robert Ingham is a historical writer.

Notes:

1 R. Douglas, *History of the Liberal Party 1895–1970* (Sidgwick and Jackson, 1971), p. 249.
2 J. S. Rasmussen, *The Liberal Party: a study of retrenchment and revival* (Constable, 1966), pp. 41–44.
3 Douglas, p. 267.
4 Rasmussen, *The Liberal Party,* pp. 44–45; Jo Grimond largely backs the Rasmussen account in his *Memoirs* (Heinneman, 1979), pp. 186–87.
5 *Liberal Democrat History Group Newsletter* 15 (June 1997).
6 The *Journal* would be grateful if any reader could give a more detailed description of the voting system employed in 1976 and the negotiations which preceded its adoption – neither seems to have been the subject of academic study, as yet.

Old Heroes for a New Leader

Liberal Democrat leadership candidates describe their historical inspirations.

The Liberal Democrat History Group asked all the five candidates for the Liberal Democrat leadership to write a short article for the *Journal* on their favourite historical figure or figures – the ones they felt had influenced their own political beliefs most, and why they proved important and relevant. Their replies are printed below.

Jackie Ballard MP

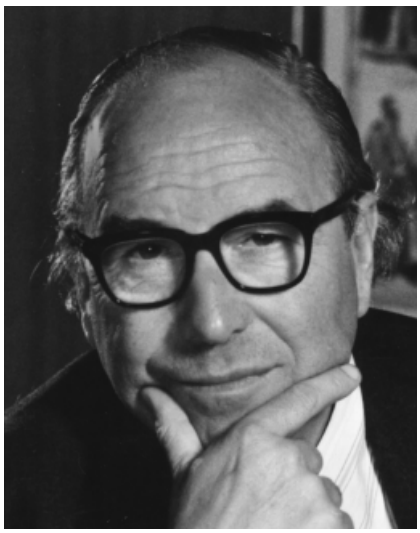
I instinctively recoil from the idea of heroes, because inevitably, being human, they all have their flaws. For this reason, and because they would be horribly embarrassed, I'm not going to write about my two living political heroes – Conrad Russell and Shirley Williams.

The real heroes in life are the people who survive on low incomes, who bring up three children single-handedly, who challenge authority when no-one else believes in their cause, who juggle part-time jobs and childcare, look after elderly relatives or battle with multiple disabilities. They are the unknown and unsung heroes – the sort of people I look at with admiration as I chastise myself for ever complaining about my life.

David Penhaligon loved people and he loved challenges. He was the leader the Liberal Party never had, and his death in 1986 robbed us of one of our most popular and effective campaigners. I never met him, but like all great communicators he had the knack of making everyone feel that they knew him. He fought injustice wherever he found it, his humanity and warmth enabled him to communicate with people who claimed not to be interested in politics, and he never took his feet off the ground. As a young man he joined the Young Liberals, he campaigned from the grassroots up, fighting a no-hope Parliamentary seat himself and encouraging others to stand as Liberals in local elections.

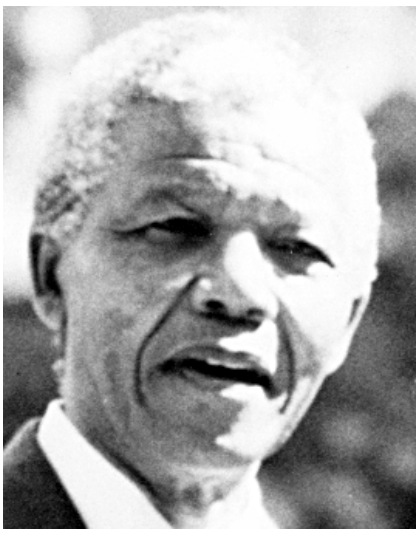
He was committed to community politics and to the liberal approach to local government. Penhaligon wanted to shake the establishment and he wanted a different type of council – devoted to the underdog, not wedded to nineteenth-century ritual but open and accessible to the public. No campaigning workshop is complete without someone quoting Penhaligon's maxim: 'If you have something to say, stick it on a piece of paper and stuff it through the letterbox'. Perhaps one of his other attractions for me is that, in his wife's words, 'he gained the reputation of being distinctly difficult over pacts and alliances with Labour'.

Nancy Seear was an active campaigner for Liberalism for over fifty years. She would not have described herself as a feminist, but was one of our most powerful, indomitable and best-known female representatives, a role model for many women entering politics. In contrast to Penhaligon, Nancy was not a grassroots politician, but she was a talented and energetic speaker who used her ability to campaign for equal pay for women, for democracy in the workplace and many other causes dear to her. In *Why I Am a Liberal Democrat*, published a year before her death, Nancy said: 'I was in Germany when the Nazis made their first big electoral advance,, and watched them centralise everything in sight, destroying pluralism. This left me with the unshakeable conviction that power must be spread as widely as possible.'



Roy Jenkins

David Lloyd George



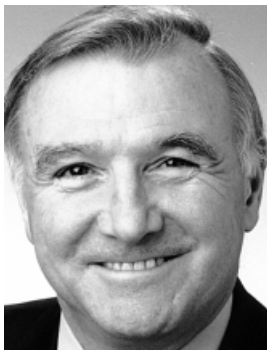
Nelson Mandela

All heroes have their flaws, and hero-worship is misplaced in a Liberal. I didn't agree with everything David Penhaligon or Nancy Seear said or did – but that's how it should be. No-one, not even a hero, is perfect.

Malcolm Bruce MP

The political inspiration for my Liberalism has always been *David Lloyd George*. He came from a fairly modest background and started his career fighting to secure his home base in a tight situation, something with which I can closely identify. He was not afraid to support unpopular causes, like opposition to the Boer War, for which he required police protection.

Above all, he was an energetic campaigner for a radical agenda and, unlike Churchill, for example, combined the qualities of a great war leader with the inspiration that founded the welfare state.



His 'People's Budget' of 1909 is a watershed in British social history. I remember campaigning in a by-election in Dundee as a student in the 1960s and, in a poor tenement area of the town, came across household after household in which the breadwinner described himself as being on the 'Lloyd George'.

Unlike today's Chancellors, Lloyd George steered his budget through all stages in the House of Commons, moving clauses and amendments long into the night. The Liberal Government also fought a general election over the budget and provoked probably the most important confrontation that has ever taken place between the Commons and the Lords. He established unemployment and sickness benefit, and the old age pension, which still form a key part of the social justice debate.

Yet he went on from that to take over leadership of the country in the darkest hours of the First World War and saw through the peace negotiations. His inability to fulfil his pledge to build 'homes fit for heroes' led to his eclipse, but that was because of divisions within his own party that left him a prisoner of the Conservatives. In spite of the 1922 setback he still managed to inspire the Liberal Yellow Book for the 1929 election, which reinvigorated the Liberal Party before its demise in the Depression and Second World War.

Lloyd George, for all his faults, was the epitome of a radical campaigning Liberal. His ideas were practical, clear and coherent. His passion grew out of his commitment to his own background and his own community. He was compromised by a lack of personal wealth, which led him into dubious business ventures and accusations of selling titles. His energies led him into many compromising liaisons, which earned him the abusive nickname of the old goat. This doesn't make him a more attractive personality, but shows him as very human. In today's febrile era of tabloid intrusion he would almost certainly have been destroyed. British society would have been the poorer and the torch of Liberalism would have been dimmed.

I regard myself as a practical radical, always striving for ideas which are easily understood, will improve people's lives in measurable ways and are credible and achievable. For this Lloyd George was and remains my inspiration.

Simon Hughes MP

David Lloyd George

Lloyd George really did know my grandfather. I was first taken to Lloyd George's childhood home (and his final resting place) by the banks of the River Dwyfor by my grandfather before I was three. I have visited regularly ever since. Lloyd George has been an inspiration partly because he

David Penhaligon

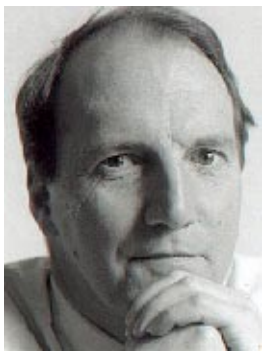
Nancy Seear

William Wilberforce

had no privileged background and a difficult upbringing. In spite of the inevitable human weaknesses of all politicians, he was the central figure of one of the two greatest periods of radical change this country has known during the last hundred years.

Lloyd George's determination to set in place the beginning of our pension and social security system, his willingness to remain a radical when in office as well as when in opposition, his great 'People's Budget' of 1909, his commitment to constitutional reform and disestablishment and his abiding interest in international affairs are a combination of priorities to which I have always aspired.

In addition, the Welsh wizard had the ability to inspire ordinary non-party political people, to engage them in the political process, to support radical politics and to get them to respond to the liberal message. Making liberal democracy popular – even populist – is a cause we should champion again.



Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, President of South Africa 1994–99)

Just as Lloyd George was my hero from the first half of the century, so Nelson Mandela is my hero from the second. I am privileged to have met him.

When I first started campaigning against apartheid (with Peter Hain, among others), Nelson Mandela was one of the leaders of the struggle from behind bars.

When I first went to South Africa in 1986, I stood amongst the burned-out homes of the Crossroads squatter camp, encircled by South African Defence Force armoured cars, and sneaked into townships at night to see families whose members had been necklaced. Mandela was the liberation leader waiting in the wings.

When I spoke alongside Jesse Jackson to tens of thousands in Trafalgar Square at an anti-apartheid rally, Mandela was the inspiration for the international solidarity and struggle. When Mandela walked free from his prison cell, he was the symbol of the triumph of good over evil, and of perseverance over adversity.

When the first South African democratic elections took place, Mandela was the leader who rose above party politics. When he was President of South Africa he was the living embodiment of the qualities of forgiveness, generosity and statesmanship.

Mandela is the radical pluralist, an enlightened, principled sort of leader who is an inspiration for millions. He is an object lesson, not just for this century but for the next.

Charles Kennedy

It is sometimes difficult to pick one historical hero, when there are so many on offer to Liberal Democrats. I am sure we have all been influenced by the thinking of people such as Mill and Keynes, and they certainly loom large in my own personal hall of fame.

But for a more personal choice, I am opting for someone who has had a deep impact on my involvement in politics, and a profound effect on the shape of our party. I have also had the privilege to know and work with him for nearly twenty years: *Roy Jenkins*.

There is much that I could say about Roy, as a minister, an important figure in European politics, a gifted author, and latterly, an

elder statesman. But here, I would like to focus on his importance to me as a political mentor and personal inspiration.

The late 1970s were difficult times for anyone with an instinctively progressive outlook and a strong belief in social justice. I was hostile to the Conservative Party of the time, which was steadily losing its 'one nation' credentials, and drifting further to the right, guided by Thatcher and Joseph. Yet at the same time, the Labour Party was becoming more and more narrow-minded, inward-looking and extreme.

Out of this unhappy state of affairs came Roy Jenkins' famous 1979 Dimbleby Lecture, 'Home Thoughts from Abroad'. Every so often in life, you hear someone articulate your own thoughts – and they do so with an elegance and eloquence which make you wish you had been able to say it yourself. As an open-minded, pro-European, moderate-thinking Scot, Roy Jenkins' Dimbleby Lecture had that effect on me. He brought sharply into focus the unease I felt about the choices that Labour and the Conservatives were offering the British people.

Roy offered a vision of the type of political party I wanted to join. He spoke of the need for a party of the radical centre to bring about constitutional and electoral reform at the heart of our political life, to end the failures of the two-party system. The new political system that resulted would allow parties to cooperate where they shared ideas. The new party that Jenkins saw leading these changes would also devolve power, while advancing new policy agendas for women, the third world, and the environment. He spoke too of the need to combine 'the innovating stimulus of the free market economy' without the 'brutality of its untrammelled distribution of rewards or its indifference to unemployment'.

For me, the Dimbleby Lecture was a rallying cry for those who wished politics to move beyond the class war that it had become, and it struck many chords. It was a vision of a radical, decentralist, and internationalist party, combining the best of the progressive Liberal and social democratic traditions. It was a vision of the party that we have become. From the first, I was clear that I wanted to be part of this new force in British politics.

David Rendel MP

There are two historical figures who stand out in my own political development. Both were notable for their dogged pursuit of liberal values.

One, *William Wilberforce,* turned a cause into a campaign and the campaign into a historic victory, the abolition of the slave trade.

The other, *Nancy Seear,* stands out precisely because she persisted despite much less obvious success. Persistence in a just cause in the face of likely defeat can be even more impressive than persistence when in view of probable victory.

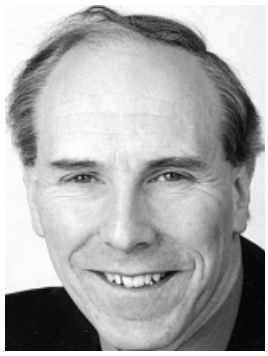
Today, there are many people living in poverty and many more with few choices in life, but slavery as it existed less than two centuries ago has been wiped from the planet. Much of the credit for this belongs to the Yorkshire MP William Wilberforce, who led the abolition campaign.

The campaign spanned five decades and there were many setbacks, not least because of the powerful vested interests defending slavery. However, in 1807 Parliament agreed to enforce fines on anyone found engaging in the trade. But ending the trade in Britain was only ever Wilberforce's initial objective. Once that was achieved, he turned to the international trade and to the principle that one person could legitimately own another. Despite failing health, he lived to see slavery finally abolished in 1833, two days before his death.

Wilberforce was not, however, a one-issue politician. His major concern was to inject the process of government with ethics. For Wilberforce the code was Christian. Today I am sure it would be liberal and democratic. Like most politicians, though, it is wise to be aware of the faults. I do not subscribe to all of Wilberforce's views. He backed legislation after the Peterloo massacre which would make Jack Straw feel uneasy; and his support for the Corn Laws undoubtedly kept many people in poverty. But Wilberforce's battle against slavery is a model for us all: the persistent pursuit of an unquestionable cause against fiercely vested interests to eventual success.

Nancy Seear's influence on my politics is rather more direct. I looked up to her for many years. I campaigned with her. Like many Liberal Democrats, I still feel her loss.

Nancy was, above all, a great liberal. Someone who regarded the state with the suspicion it deserves. Someone whose prime focus was helping people to achieve their full potential, to lead their own path in life as they would wish to. But Nancy coupled her intellect with an undying self-belief and a practical determination to see liberalism in action. She worked tirelessly in election campaigns and in the House of Lords. Long after she had first become a hero of mine I had the pleasure of working alongside her. She was and is an inspiration



There are frequent dark moments in politics, especially for the third party. It is at these times that we need people like Nancy Seear and William Wilberforce. People whose belief in their cause is such that they are undaunted by the scale of their task. People who see a set-back as just another hurdle to overcome. There is no doubt that we will have many hurdles on our path to government. But we must go on walking that path. We owe it to those who have given so much to get us this far.

Lloyd George and the Conservative Party

As politicians today grapple with the so-called 'Third Way,' perhaps they should consider the lessons of the past. By *Jim Thorne.*

A prime minister accused of governing in a presidential manner; ambitions to reach beyond party boundaries in an effort to build consensus at the centre ground of British politics; a disunited and directionless Conservative Party. Sounds familiar? Each of these statements reflects upon the premiership of David Lloyd George.

It is common to associate Lloyd George with Welsh radicalism, or to regard him as the New Liberal (and yes, the emphasis at the time was on 'New') whose social reform was representative of the political sea change that finally brought the Labour Party to power. In fact, as historians of the Liberal Party of course know only too well, Lloyd George was Prime Minister of a Conservative-dominated government for nearly six years between 1916 and 1922.

This remarkable marriage, consummated by the formation of a coalition government in the name of national unity, was a crucial factor in the decline of the Liberal Party and the rise of Labour. The historiography of this transformation in party politics tends to concentrate upon the contrasting fortunes of these two parties. This essay tries to convey the suggestion that by his actions Lloyd George unwittingly saved the Tories from the fate that actually befell the Liberals.

There can be no doubt that the parameters of British politics in the Edwardian period were changing rapidly and that the existing political parties needed to adapt to them. The formation of the Labour Representation Committee (later to become the Labour Party) in 1900, aiming to represent in parliament its affiliated trade unions and socialist societies, was an obvious indication of the social changes which had been gradually altering politics at grassroots level. Historians of the Labour Party have argued that Liberal decline was the inevitable result of the extension of the franchise in 1918, and not the result of the political experience of war.[1] Implicit in this argument is the notion that the Liberal Party was unable to compete successfully on the political battlefield of the left.

Without stepping too heavily into this particular arena of debate, this essay focuses instead upon the political battlefield of the right in an effort to show that there was no inevitability about the decline of the Liberal Party. Although the Liberals did lose some ground to the Labour Party before the Great War, it was the Conservatives who had most to fear from the rise of the labour movement. The Tories had no chance of competing in the struggle to win the progressive left-wing vote, and an extension of the electoral franchise loomed ominously on the horizon for them.

By 1918, therefore, the real political battle from the Conservative perspective was the one for the domination of the moderate right-wing vote, and this was a prize the Liberal Party seemed well disposed to win. As late as October 1919 the Conservative leader Andrew Bonar Law confided to his colleague Arthur James Balfour, 'I am perfectly certain, indeed, I do not think anyone can doubt this, that our party on the old lines will never have any future again in this country.'[2] And by the time this statement was made, the Conservatives were the dominant party of government, and the Liberals were hopelessly divided. As Martin Pugh has written, the wartime coalition of 1916 created a vacuum on the left that enabled the Labour Party to 'occupy the role played by the Edwardian Liberals in social reform, while the Liberal Party itself moved to the right.'[3] The Conservative Party's association with Lloyd George was a dangerous gamble, because while it exacerbated Liberal divisions it also watered down the traditional distinctions between Liberalism and Toryism.

The collapse of the last Liberal government on 25 May 1915 was the first of three critical wartime blows to the Liberal Party. The second blow came in December 1916, when Lloyd George replaced Asquith at the head of the coalition government, and the third in 1918 when it was decided that this alliance would fight the election under the 'coupon' arrangement. Each of these blows, which helped to consign the Liberal Party to third-party status after the war, resulted from decisions taken and circumstances at the highest levels of politics. The Liberal Party was critically split in December 1916, but its constituents at that time were not. Ultimately this was a division caused by a clash of personalities, not principles or objectives.

The political crisis of May 1915, like the crisis of December of the following year, was driven primarily by a desire to improve the way in which the war was being run. There is little evidence to suggest that the Asquith coalition itself caused any lasting damage to the Liberal Party. On the contrary, it was the Conservatives who had most cause for complaint in 1915. Although, in agreeing to a coalition Bonar Law had averted a likely election, which many Conservatives agreed would be disastrous for the nation and the party, he also stifled opposition to the still predominantly Liberal government. Furthermore, the few concessions won by Bonar Law in terms of Tory cabinet positions in 1915 'underlined for the Conservatives that it was not a genuine coalition but a triumph for Asquith.'[4] It did not become apparent that the Conservatives had made any political headway during the war until the 'palace revolution' of December 1916.

There still remains much confusion as to the intentions and roles played by the protagonists who ousted Asquith from office on 5 December 1916. Opinions differ as to whether Lloyd George conspired to replace Asquith himself. Robert Blake claimed that 'Lloyd George had nothing to do with the article' leading in *The Times* on 4 December which apparently encouraged Asquith to resign,[5] while Viscount Samuel recalled in 1945: 'Confident that his own qualities would make him a better war premier than Asquith, [Lloyd George] no doubt felt that he was not merely justified but under a duty to overthrow his chief and replace him.'[6]


A DISTINGUISHED STRANGER.

In his biography of Bonar Law, Blake absolves the Tory leader from having had any intention of removing Asquith from the premiership.[7] Nevertheless, there is the suggestion that Lloyd George's rise to power was in fact the result of a Conservative-inspired conspiracy. Martin Gilbert has expressed the view that the Tories were in too volatile a state under Bonar Law to have made the removal of Asquith anything more than an accident.[8] Yet a reference in the diary of Christopher Addison, dated 7 April 1916, commenting on a letter Lloyd George had apparently received from the Conservative Arthur Lee, suggests that the Tories were capable of more sinister undertakings than Gilbert gives them credit for:

> It was a long typewritten document in the form of a draft, full of verbiage, innuendoes and suggestions and practically inviting L.G. to ally himself with one or two Tory leaders and 'go for' the P.M … This document made me more suspicious of the pressure that is being brought to bear upon L.G. than anything he has hitherto told me. One hardly likes to write these things, but I could not avoid the suspicion that it was part of a game by a feeble section of the Conservatives to get him out of office and force an election on a Tory issue, which would result in bringing them in with the Liberal Party hopelessly divided.[9]

Addison's evidence suggests that at least some Conservatives saw Lloyd George as their possible redeemer months before Asquith was finally removed. This questions Bonar Law's motives for refusing to form a government on 5 December when asked to do so by the King. But there is little reason to doubt Bonar Law's own explanation that he only saw possible benefit in forming an administration if both Asquith and Lloyd George agreed to serve in it.[10]

By 1917 many Tories perhaps felt that the decision to join forces with their arch-enemy of old was justified. There were calls for the arrangement of a negotiated peace from men as eminent as Lord Lansdowne; Tsarist Russia had collapsed; and industrial unrest in Britain, particularly severe in Clydeside, seemed to threaten the war effort itself. The Conservative Party was able to ride

the problems it could have been left to face alone during the war on the crest of Lloyd George's unassailable popularity.

The Liberal Party, although critically split, was not permanently damaged by the coalition until the general election of 1918. It was decided in the summer of 1918, before the end of the war, that the Conservatives would fight the next election in collaboration with Lloyd George. The Asquithian Liberals were not prepared to join a Lloyd George-led coalition, and Lloyd George was not about to renounce his premiership and return to subordination under Asquith. For Lloyd George the alternatives were to fight the election independently, or remain with the Conservatives. Since 1910, when Lloyd George had first floated the idea of coalition government to overcome party differences during the constitutional crisis, he had had 'an abiding passion for a kind of supreme national synthesis that would soar above petty political partisanship.'[11] This style of government had proved to be successful during the war, and there was every reason to suppose it could be work in peacetime too.

Lloyd George commanded such political influence in 1918 that the benefits of continuing their relationship with him were obvious to all Conservatives. Had the Tories separated from Lloyd George after the war, the Conservative Party could well have emerged from the 1918 election a far smaller and more reactionary party than it did. Despite having some reservations, Bonar Law was keenly aware of the benefits his party could accrue from remaining in coalition. As he explained to Balfour,

> [Lloyd George] would secure a greater hold on the rank and file of our party and he would also be so dependent on that party after an election that he would permanently be driven into the same attitude towards our party which [J.] Chamberlain was placed in before, with this difference — that he would be leader of it. That would, however, I am inclined to think, be not a bad thing for our party, and a good thing for the nation.[12]

Clearly, it was accepted that the Liberal Party would be decisively split as a consequence of an electoral alliance between the Conservatives and Lloyd George.

The 'coupon' arrangement agreed by Freddie Guest and Sir George Younger is itself worthy of some attention here. In terms of their share of parliamentary seats, the Liberals (ignoring their divisions) did badly out of the deal. It provided them with only 159 'coupons' against the 364 given to the Tories,[13] despite the fact that each party had won 272 seats at the previous election. The Liberals were very under-represented in the coalition that campaigned in December 1918 as the group that had steered the nation to victory. While these figures highlight nothing more than how disadvantaged the Liberals were by their split, they also show that the Conservatives were able to rise to a dominant electoral position on the basis of the distribution of 'coupons'.

In fact, because Lloyd George had no real party apparatus to work with, the Tories in effect sacrificed many constituency organisations under the 'coupon' arrangement by handing them over to the Liberals. In this way they were arguably making concessions that their Coalition Liberal partners were in no position to make in return. This was certainly how many Tories perceived the arrangement,[14] perhaps unaware of the long-term benefit that sacrificing some seats to keep the Liberal Party divided would bring to their party. As Viscount Samuel wrote at the time, a divided party meant that: 'At this election, in the eyes of the masses of the people, official Liberalism stood for nothing in particular.'[15]

A significant feature of the coalition after 1918 was its anti-Labour stance. The Russian Revolution and the new Labour Party constitution of 1918 had greatly altered the liberal-minded perception of the Labour threat, which was now positively socialist. Furthermore, the growth of Labour's constituency organisation and its determination to contest every seat made this threat real and all-encompassing. Before the war, the Liberal Party had been largely concerned with consuming Labour votes, but by 1918 most Liberals and Tories alike were conspicuous in their anti-socialism. This certainly encouraged the continuation of the post-war coalition after 1918. The anti-strike measures against railwaymen (in 1919) and miners (in 1921), the disavowal of Sankey's coal nationalisation proposals and the military intervention in Russia were all instances which seemed to justify the feeling that, 'for the left, the coalition had been a time of class war [and] of anti-Bolshevism run mad.'[16] Yet the prolongation of the coalition in 1918 created a moderate niche into which Labour could expand, because of the electoral weakness of a divided Liberal Party.

The part played by Lloyd George in the Conservative survival was significant, if for no other reason than it meant he kept the Liberals divided. Even in 1922, however, the role that the Conservatives were going to play in the future was by no means clear. It is only possible to speak in terms of the party (in its traditional form) being 'saved' because the relationship with Lloyd George was ended. This was certainly how Stanley Baldwin saw the situation in October 1922 when he famously warned a meeting of Tories at the Carlton Club that Lloyd George was a 'dynamic force' who was in danger of causing the old Conservative Party to be 'smashed to atoms and lost in ruins.'

Baldwin's argument won the day, of course, and the decision to end the coalition split the Conservatives, with Austen Chamberlain (party leader at the time) remaining loyal to Lloyd George. But by repudiating Lloyd George the Conservative Party instantly discredited him, leaving those within the party who rejected the Carlton Club decision — such as Austen Chamberlain, Balfour and Birkenhead — somewhat isolated figures. Thus Bonar Law's accession to the premiership in Octo-

THE GREAT IMPROVISER.

ber 1922 was a unifying factor for the Conservative Party, even if this was not immediately obvious to all those involved. The Carlton Club meeting was the defining moment for the Conservative Party in its relationship with Lloyd George. Although Lloyd George seemed to have taken the Tories to the brink of their own disaster by 1922, the balance of power in the relationship between the two changed completely overnight. The Conservative Party had amassed as much benefit as was possible from Lloyd George without causing its own meltdown, and it emerged from the relationship scathed, but far stronger than it had been at its outset.

Lloyd George's role in providing a mainstream constituency for the Tories in what they had feared would be an alien political environment was inadvertently played. The Conservative Party was a somewhat fortuitous beneficiary of political circumstances that were largely beyond its control. In October 1918, for example, Bonar Law had expressed a fear that '[Lloyd George] would like personally nothing better than that there should be a split in our party as a result of which a majority would support him,'[17] yet he proceeded to fight the election in tandem with Lloyd George. It is quite clear that Lloyd George did not intend his alliance with the Conservatives to facilitate their long-term survival at the expense of the Liberal Party.

In Lloyd George's eyes, a new consensus had been formed after the war, and the only anomaly was that Asquith refused to conform to it. Many notable Liberals were to drift into the Conservative Party after 1918 (several more joined the Labour ranks), including Greenwood, Guest, Hilton Young, Grigg, Mond, and, of course, Churchill. This drift illustrated the extent to which the impact of the Great War had pulled Labour and the Conservatives towards the centre ground of British politics. As Lloyd George was well aware, liberalism still survived within the ranks of the Conservative Party after 1918.

Within days of his resignation in 1922, Lloyd George's 'presidential' leadership and his impact upon the progressive forces at the political centre were forgotten as all around sought to distance themselves from him. Ultimately, Lloyd George's experiment with centrist politics failed because he was unable to unite these progressive groups under the Liberal banner. Events clearly showed that without the support of liberal-minded Conservatives, the effort to build consensus at the centre ground of British politics could not last.

Jim Thorne worked in the House of Commons for Mark Oaten MP, and is shortly to become a law student.

Notes:

1 See H.C.G. Matthew, R.I. McKibbin and J.A. Kay, 'The Franchise Factor in the Rise of the Labour Party', *English Historical Review* xci (1976).
2 Bonar Law to Balfour, 5/10/19: Balfour Papers pp. 272–80, as cited in K.O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: the Lloyd George Coalition Government, 1918–1922* (Oxford, 1979), p. 31.
3 M. Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics 1867–1939* (2nd edn., Oxford, 1993), p. 172.
4 Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics,* p. 167.
5 R. Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister: The Life and Times of Andrew Bonar Law* (London, 1955), p. 328.
6 Viscount Samuel, *Memoirs*, (London, 1945), p. 120.
7 Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister,* p. 327.
8 M. Gilbert, *David Lloyd George: The Organiser of Victory 1912–1916*, (London, 1992), p. 387.
9 C. Addison, *Four and a Half Years: A Personal Diary from June 1914 to January 1919*, Vol. I (London, 1934), p. 190.
10 See Bonar Law Papers 85.A.1, as cited in Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister,* p. 337.
11 K.O. Morgan, '1902–1924', in D. Butler (ed.), *Coalitions in British Politics,* (London, 1978), p. 27.
12 Bonar Law to Balfour, 5/10/18, Balfour Papers; as cited in Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister,* p. 385.
13 C. Ponting, *Churchill* (London, 1994), p. 219.
14 i.e. Lord Salisbury; see Morgan, '1902–1924', p. 39. Also see Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister,* p. 393, for Younger's reaction.
15 H. Samuel to W. Runciman, 9/1/19, as quoted in Samuel, *Memoirs,* p. 133.
16 Morgan, '1902-1924', p. 49.
17 Bonar Law to Balfour, 5/10/18, Balfour Papers; as quoted in Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister*, p. 384.

Gladstone and Books

Lord Jenkins of Hillhead gave the Gladstone Lecture at St Deiniol's Library, Hawarden, on 8 July 1998, in the centenary year of Gladstone's death.

As you may imagine, this is not the first time that I have talked about Gladstone. It is, however, very much the first time that I have ventured to do it so very close to his home ground. I talked in both Chester and Llandudno 2½ years ago, soon after the publication of my book on him, thereby establishing a sort of bracket on Hawarden. But Hawarden itself, and St Deiniol's Library in particular, offers a new order of presumptuousness.

There is a further aspect of challenge about today. Sir William Gladstone has heard me on his distinguished ancestor on three previous occasions this summer. On this fourth occasion, if I were to cover the same topics, when I catch his eye I must expect either a drooping eyelid, or, if he is too polite to let that happen, at least a silently critical comparative appraisal of my performances, rather as though I were an actor subject to off days. And I must also spare a thought for my wife, who is also rather used to me on Gladstone.

So I thought I would chose a somewhat different approach and talk not about Gladstone in general, but about *Gladstone and Books,* his reading habits and a comparison between them and those of other Prime Ministers – which I hope is an appropriate subject for a library.

Throughout his life he had both a physical and an intellectual obsession with books. In 1854, during his first Chancellorship on his first day back in London after an absence of eight weeks he wrote 'worked 5½ hours on my books' – this meant unpacking and arranging, and was a fairly typical diary entry both in London and at Hawarden. One of the most vivid and symbolic pictures from his extreme old age was 'the wheeling of the books'. When he had built and endowed this library with £40,000 of 1890s money, he himself spend several days at the age of eighty-six pushing barrows full of the contents of his own library along the connecting route.

It was not just that the handling of books appeared to give him the same sort of satisfaction that a dedicated old-style grocer might have got from cutting and wrapping pounds of butter or cheese. He also believed that, in his unending battle against the efflux of time, he might gain a few yards of territory by unrelenting and sometimes indiscriminate reading. Augustine Birrell, great wit but ineffective minister, said that: 'Gladstone would rather read a second-rate book than think a first-rate thought', which was an odd statement for it assumes that a first-rate thought can be done to order. This wild and almost pointless eclecticism was splendidly illustrated by his 1853 reading of, as he put it 'Colt and his revolvers'. This meant a recently published work by the American inventor of a type of pistol which bore the unpromising title of: *On the Application of Machining to the Manufacture of Rotating Chamber-Barrel Fire Arms and their Peculiarities.*

We have already heard this morning about the 20,000 books which he consumed during his active adult reading life, say the seventy or seventy-one years from 1825, when he was sixteen, to 1896 or 1897, when he was eighty-six or eighty-seven. Thereafter his eyesight was too bad for reading. 20,000 is an extraordinary, an almost unbelievable quantity of books to have got through. It means an average of 280 a year. Perhaps inspired by Gladstone, I have taken to keeping a list of what I read, and it comes out remarkably steadily at between seventy-five and eighty-five a year.

Was Gladstone's claim therefore just an idle boast? Politicians are well-known boasters. 20,000 is a good round number to think of, 10,000 not good enough, 30,000 too far over the top. But no, they are all listed, mostly annotated, and many of them to be seen here at St Deiniol's.

What did he read? 20,000 leaves room for a great deal of eclecticism, and this he certainly practised. He read a great deal of theology and of church history, for as well as his politics he was deeply involved in almost every liturgical and eschatological dispute – of which there were a great number – of the middle years of the nineteenth century. He also wrote theology. Indeed when after his first (1868–74) pre-

miership he withdrew from the leadership of the Liberal Party it was in order to devote himself for his declining years to producing theological works. The trouble was that he was by no means a first-class theologian, whereas he undoubtedly was a first-class politician and, indeed, statesman. As a result, almost like the operation of a physical law, he was after eighteen months drawn back into what he was best at, and filled his declining years, which lasted a quarter of a century, with, amongst other things, being Prime Minister another three times.

He was a better classical scholar than he was a theologian, although even here, while he had sound knowledge and muscular intelligence, he lacked the intuitive verbal sensitivity which marked out the greatest classicists. (Nevertheless he got a wonderful rhythm into the Latin translation of the hymn which we sang this morning.) He devoted a lot of time to classical texts. He read the Bible in Greek every day. He was devoted to Homer, and published several commentaries upon him, including some fairly fantastical theories which tried to see him as part of the headwaters of Christianity. Towards the end of his life work on his new translation of the odes of Horace became a ruling passion with Gladstone. When he got back from Windsor following an ungracious audience with the Queen (on her side more than his) after his last resignation as Prime Minister, he immediately got down to a Horace translation.

As a literary critic of works in English his performance was somewhere between his theology and his classicism. He wrote one very good long essay on Tennyson, whom he also created the first and almost the only poet-peer – Byron inherited his title and was not created – although they, Gladstone and Tennyson mostly circled around each other like two cats with arched backs, perhaps sub-consciously aware that they, together with a handful of others – Newman, Dickens, Darwin, perhaps Carlyle, were amongst the handful of great stars of the nineteenth century and, as such, needing their own unimpeded orbits. They were also said still to be jealous, fifty years later, Prime Minister and Poet Laureate, about which had stood higher in the affection of Arthur Hallam.

Gladstone also undoubtedly read more fiction when he was in office than any subsequent British Prime Minister until Macmillan, although Macmillan read fiction which was contemporary to Gladstone rather than to himself nearly a century later, and Asquith would have run them both fairly close as a third contender. No other Prime Minister would have been near. But Gladstone read all the main Victorian novels as they came out – Trollope and George Eliot certainly, Dickens a little less strongly, and many lesser ones as well. And he also found time to go back quite frequently to Fanny Burney, Jane Austen and the Brontës.

This, then, was the broad pattern of Gladstone's reading. What about the reading habits of other British politicians and particularly Prime Ministers? The pattern varies a lot. There were undoubtedly some very classically and more generally historically educated figures in the middle of the nineteenth century – Peel and Derby most notably. And Disraeli was highly literate both in input and output. Balfour and Asquith were sophisticated intellectuals.

Then there was a sag until the near quarter century starting in 1940 when British governments were led by a series of men whose minds were to an exceptional extent moulded, refreshed and stimulated by their historical knowledge. Churchill was, of course, the outstanding example. Although he had no formal training, he wrote history with a verve unequalled by any other British statesman, and with a professionalism which could be rivalled in this category only by John Morley or James Bryce. Beyond that, his imagination was constantly seized by the tides of historical events and an epic view of how great men could direct them. He was undoubtedly much motivated by an awareness of his own historical destiny.

Clement Attlee saw himself and events less grandiloquently. He had no gift of narrative prose. But his training was historical, as were his continuing intellectual interests. He had an acute instinct for balance between continuity and change, and his laconic sense of proportion, which cut men and events down to size, owed much to his knowledge of the past.

Anthony Eden knew a lot about Persian and Arab history and came to acquire an encyclopaedic knowledge of the minutiae of diplomatic exchanges of the first half of this century. But his interests were more aesthetic than intellectual, and of this quartet his mind was probably the least conditioned by history, just as his term of office and Prime Ministership was much the shortest and least successful.

The fourth member was Harold Macmillan. He, like Attlee, had little of Churchill's command over written English, and he could not therefore compete as a chronicler. But his knowledge was at least as great as Churchill's, and, indeed, covered a wider span. He knew Greek and Roman history in a way that Churchill, whose interests were always concentrated on the past 300 years, never did. Macmillan was not a great writer of history. His six volumes of memoirs, unlike his much more interesting wartime *Mediterranean Diary,* are pretty dull stuff. But his most characteristic speeches moved easily from the Peloponnesian War to the Battle of the Somme.

Since Macmillan's resignation in 1963 it has been mostly downhill all the way so far as historical knowledge and interest – and probably general knowledge and interest too – are concerned. Harold Wilson knew a great deal of detail about the American Civil War, but not much other history. Margaret Thatcher liked arguing by historical comparison, but the comparison was almost always only with the government which immediately preceded hers. She almost invariably argued in a scale of two. Her his-

tory showed few signs of going back beyond 1974.

What of the new regime? Mr Blair has expressed to me his regret that he read law and not history at Oxford and has become a considerable addict of political biography. But the fact remains that it was law that he read.

What about American Presidents? What is true, however, on both sides of the Atlantic is that whether or not politicians read history they now try to write it to an extent which was previously almost unknown. Of the eleven British Prime Ministers between 1880 and 1940 not one wrote full-scale autobiography. Gladstone left a fragment only, as did Balfour, and Lloyd George wrote a large-scale *pièce justificative*, but not an autobiography. Of the ten who have completed their term of office since 1940, only Edward Heath and John Major, both said to be busy writing, have not published.

In the United States there were twelve Presidents between 1880 and 1945. Three of them (Theodore Roosevelt, Coolidge and Hoover) did write memoirs. But since 1945, of the ten who have gone from the highest office only two (Franklin Roosevelt and Kennedy) have, for different but compelling reasons, remained silent. Whether this spate on both sides of the Atlantic produces much good literature may be open to question, but I believe that it at least makes prospective authors a little more aware of how their actions may look in longer perspective and of their performance *vis-a-vis* others who will be working at the memoir face alongside them. And the effects of this and of general historical interest are more likely to be good than bad.

Gladstone stands unique on either side of the Atlantic in the range and quantity of his reading, and rivalled only by Churchill in his written output.

Lord Jenkins of Hillhead was Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords 1988–98, and is the author of several books, including Gladstone *(Macmillan, 1995) and* The Chancellors *(Macmillan, 1998).*

Research in Progress

This column aims to assist research projects in progress. If you can help any of the individuals listed below with sources, contacts, or any other helpful information – or if you know anyone who can – please pass on details to them. If you know of any other research project in progress for inclusion in this column, please send details to the Editor at the address on page 2.

The party agent and English electoral culture, c.1880 – c.1906. The development of political agency as a profession, the role of the election agent in managing election campaigns during this period, and the changing nature of elections, as increased use was made of the press and the platform. *Kathryn Rix, Christ's College, Cambridge, CB2 2BU; awr@bcs.org.uk.*

Liberal policy towards Austria-Hungary, 1905–16. *Andrew Gardner, 22 Birdbrook House, Popham Road, Islington, London N1 8TA; agardner@ssees.ac.uk.*

The Hon H. G. Beaumont (MP for Eastbourne 1906–10). Any information welcome, particularly on his political views (he stood as a Radical). *Tim Beaumont, 40 Elms Road, London SW4 9EX.*

Defections of north-east Liberals to the Conservatives, c.1906–1935. Aims to suggest reasons for defections of individuals and develop an understanding of changes in electoral alignment. Sources include personal papers and newspapers; suggestions about how to get hold of the papers of more obscure Liberal defectors welcome. *Nick Cott, 1a Henry Street, Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE3 1DQ; N.M.Cott@newcastle.ac.uk.*

Liberals and the local government of London 1919–39. *Chris Fox, 173 Worplesdon Road, Guidlford GU2 6XD; christopher.fox7@virgin.net.*

The Liberal Party and foreign and defence policy, 1922–88. Book and articles; of particular interest is the 1920s and '30s, and also the possibility of interviewing anyone involved in formulating the foreign and defence policies of the party. *Dr R. S. Grayson, 8 Cheltenham Avenue, Twickenham TW1 3HD.*

Archibald Sinclair and the Liberal Party 1935–45. Sources, particularly for Sinclair's Air Ministry period (1940–45), the reorganisation of the party in 1936 and the 1945 election, needed. *Ian Hunter, 9 Defoe Avenue, Kew, London TW9 4DL; Ian_Hunter@ATKEARNEY.com.*

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. *Graham Lippiatt, 24 Balmoral Road, South Harrow, HA2 8TD.*

The grassroots organisation of the Liberal Party 1945–64; the role of local activists in the late 1950s revival of the Liberal Party. *Mark Egan, 42 Richmond Road, Gillingham, Kent ME7 1LN.*

The Unservile State Group, 1953–1970s. *Dr Peter Barberis, 24 Lime Avenue, Flixton, Manchester M41 5DE.*

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. *Ruth Fox, 7 Mulberry Court, Bishop's Stortford, Herts CM23 3JW.*

Mill on Limited Liability Partnerships

Not only a notable philosopher, John Stuart Mill was also active on many political issues of the day. *Robert Ingham* looks at one, topical once again.

The House of Commons Trade & Industry Select Committee published a report in February 1999 scrutinising the draft Limited Liability Partnership Bill published by the government (HC59, 1998–99). The draft Bill, if enacted, would introduce to the UK a new means of carrying on a business, combining the internal arrangements of a partnership with the external obligations of a company. The measure might prove popular with some accountancy firms and other professional concerns and the government hope to bring forward a Bill soon.

During the course of their inquiry, the MPs discovered that the concept of a limited liability partnership had been investigated in the nineteenth century. They reported that:

> In 1851 a Select Committee was established to consider the expediency of facilitating the limitation of liability in relation to the law of partnership, at a time when incorporation of companies with limited liability was a laborious and expensive process. After hearing evidence from more than a dozen expert witnesses, including the secretary of legation at the American Embassy, on experience in the United States, and written submissions from, among others, John Stuart Mill and Charles Babbage, this Committee concluded that: 'the best authorities are divided on the subject, and that it would require great care to devise the checks and safeguards against fraud, necessary to accompany such a general relaxation or change in the law'.

Mill's evidence to the 1851 Committee is reprinted below. In it, he discusses many of the same points raised by the Trade & Industry Committee this year, including whether or not limited liability partnerships should be available only to certain professions; rules regarding the registration of partners' details; and arrangements necessary for the protection of clients.

In his last paragraph, Mill applies his Liberal tenets to come down in favour of limited liability partnerships. To those familiar only with *On Liberty*, and his other scholarly works, this piece illustrates the extent to which Mill was engaged with day-to-day issues of practical politics, even before he became a MP himself, in 1865.

Appendix to Report: Reply to queries by *J. Stuart Mill,* Esq.

The liberty of entering into partnerships of limited liability, similar to the *commandite* partnerships of France and other countries, appears to me an important element in the general freedom of commercial transactions, and in many cases a valuable aid to undertakings of general usefulness.

I do not see any weight in the reasons which have been give for confining the principle to certain kinds of business, or for making certain employments an exception from it. The prohibition of *commandite* is, I conceive, only tenable on the principles of the usury laws, and may reasonably be abandoned since those principles have been given up. *Commandite* partnership is merely one of the modes of lending money, viz., at an interest dependent on, and varying with, the profits of the concern; and subject to the condition, in case of failure, of receiving nothing until other creditors have been paid in full. This mode of lending capital is evidently more advantageous than any other mode to all persons with whom the concern may have dealings; and to retain restrictions on this mode after having abandoned them on all others, appears to me inconsistent and inexpedient.

concluded on page 28

Reports

Liberalism and Nationalism: Allies or Enemies?

Fringe meeting, 5 March, with Donald Gorrie MP and Gordon Lishman

Report by Duncan Brack

Speaking in Edinburgh two months before elections to the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly saw nationalist parties take leading opposition roles, our two speakers tried to identify the compatibilities, and the conflicts, between liberalism and nationalism. Each saw very different aspects.

Donald Gorrie, MP and now MSP, differentiated between the nationalism that sprang from love of nation and support for its self-determination, and the imperialism of large countries aiming to conquer their neighbours. 'On the whole', he stated, 'the nationalism of small and self-contained nations has not been harmful and, at its best, has been one of the most creative forces in history'. Our heroes out of history are nationalists fighting imperialists – Wallace, Bruce, William Tell, national resistance movements, and so on.

Liberals have frequently found themselves expressing support for nationalist movements, from Fox and his advocacy of the American revolutionaries, through the enthusiasm for Italian nationhood which brought the Liberal Party, in its modern form, together, to Gladstone's championing of 'the sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan', the rights of the Bulgarians against the Turks, and of the Irish against the British. Asquith's aims in 1914 included war 'until the rights of the small nationalities of Europe are placed upon an unassailable foundation'.

Turning to more local history, Mr Gorrie looked at the relationship between Liberals and Scottish nationalism. Nineteenth-century Scottish Liberals often supported the idea of Scottish nationhood, and many saw a Scottish Parliament as an inevitable successor to Irish home rule. Jo Grimond in particular put home rule at the forefront of the Liberal platform, and favoured cooperation with the SNP.[1] Many Scottish Liberal Democrats were disappointed that the SNP withdrew from the Scottish Constitutional Convention – but despite the clear policy difference between the parties over independence versus federalism, Mr Gorrie argued for accepting the Nationalists as potential allies in the new Scottish Parliament. 'Responsible nationalism is a legitimate political philosophy, and responsible nationalists are normal flawed human beings who can be respectable allies with whom Liberal Democrats can cooperate on the right terms in promoting our agenda for Scotland, just as we could cooperate with Labour or with both or neither.'

Gordon Lishman took a very different view. He saw Liberalism and Nationalism as two wholly antithetical traditions, in the final analysis fundamentally incompatible. He viewed the 'good side' of nationalism, including the examples cited by Donald Gorrie, as essentially being arguments about the abuse of power. Gladstone campaigned for Bulgarian independence, for instance, because he saw it as the best way to end Turkish atrocities, not because he supported Bulgarian nationhood *per se.*

All political philosophies rest on a conception of human nature: on views of generosity of spirit versus selfishness, of rationality versus a belief in myths (of race, or blood, or nation), of inclusiveness versus exclusivity. In Britain, Liberalism is clearly associated with the first terms in each of these three pairs, whereas Conservatism is equally clearly associated with the second (and New Labour is all over the place). Nationalists can fall within either, or between them. It is important to know what their views are on other issues – for a Liberal, the structure of government is not the only matter of concern.

Mr Lishman did not disagree with Mr Gorrie over the possibility of working together with Nationalists, where the conditions were right – a common agenda which could be delivered, clear political advantages, and the right personal chemistry. And historically, Liberals and nationalists had often cooperated advantageously. But a core part of Liberalism is about the creation of institutions, and governmental structures, to which people can best relate. There is no reason why these should be nations (which themselves are relatively recent developments in many parts of the world). In his own case, his home county of Lancashire had a clear cultural identity with which he identified, and he also saw himself as a citizen of Europe, and of the world. But there was no logical reason why any of these units should be the same as those over which governments should be organised. That should derive instead from structures which best enabled decisions to be made which advanced more important goals, such as participation, or human rights, or rational decision-making.

John Stuart Mill advanced a similar argument in *Representative Gov-*

ernment. 'Nobody can suppose', wrote Mill, 'that it is not more beneficial to a Breton, or a Basque of French Navarre, to be brought into the current of the ideas and feelings of a highly civilised and cultivated people – to be a member of the French nationality, admitted on equal terms to all the privileges of French citizenship, sharing the advantages of French protection, and the dignity and prestige of French power – than to sulk on his own rocks, the half-savage relic of past times, revolving in his own little mental orbit, without participation or interest in the general movement of the world. The same remark applies to the Welshman or the Scottish Highlander, as members of the British nation.'

The argument would hardly be put in the same terms today, but it illustrates the general point – and in this context it is interesting to note how the Spanish regions have come to terms with their current status, how they are building relationships with EU structures, how regional government has diminished, not increased, the pressures for independence – and how some regionalist parties (e.g. *Convergencia i Unia* in Catalonia) are becoming more liberal. But more nationalists tended to lean in the direction of rhetoric over blood and race – a simplistic and illiberal answer to the problems of a complex world.

Notes:

1 See Graham Watson, 'Scottish Liberals, Scottish Nationalists and Dreams of a Common Front', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* 22 (Spring 1999).

Biographies

William Lygon, 7th Earl Beauchamp (1872–1938)

David Dutton

Though he has not left an enormous mark upon the historical record, William Lygon, Earl Beauchamp, occupied an important position in Liberal politics for more than two decades. For much of his career he was obliged to grapple with the intractable problems of Liberal decline.

Lygon was born in London on 20 February 1872, the elder son of Frederick Lygon, sixth Earl Beauchamp, and his first wife, Mary, daughter of the fifth Earl Stanhope. Educated at Eton, he succeeded his father as Earl Beauchamp on the day before his nineteenth birthday in 1891, and shortly after going up to Christ Church, Oxford. He thereby inherited 5,000 acres in Worcestershire.

His interest in public affairs quickly became apparent and he became Mayor of Worcester in 1895, at the age of just twenty-three. With his high Anglican background he was a natural adherent of the Unionist party. Even so, most observers – and Beauchamp himself – were surprised when the Unionist Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, offered him the governorship of New South Wales in 1899. He was still only twenty-seven years of age. This rather imaginative appointment proved only partially successful. His early days in Australia were marred by a series of gaffes and misunderstandings, but his patronage of local writers and artists and his readiness, on occasion, to defy protocol won the admiration of some. As governor and commander-in-chief his real power was limited, though the position was not entirely ceremonial. He helped arrange for the participation of New South Wales contingents in the Boer War and calmly dealt with an outbreak of bubonic plague in the colony in 1900. His most significant political act was to refuse, with Chamberlain's backing, a dissolution of the state parliament in 1899 in the knowledge that William Lyne was in a position to form a government. The creation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1900 left Beauchamp in a difficult position. He went on leave in October on half-pay and did not return.

In 1902 Beauchamp married Lady Lettice Grosvenor, sister of the Duke Westminster, and prepared to throw himself into British politics. But the Unionists' move after 1903 towards the policy of tariff reform alienated a life-long free trader. Not surprisingly, he was received with enthusiasm into the Liberal ranks. He was known to be wealthy and influential and had the reputation of being a model landlord. Beauchamp soon became renowned for his hospitality. His receptions at Halkyn House in Belgrave Square became a highlight of the social season for Edwardian Liberals.

Beauchamp was Captain of the Honourable Corps of Gentlemen-at-Arms in 1906–07 and His Majesty's Steward, 1907–10. But his promotion to Asquith's cabinet in June 1910 as Lord President of the Council came as a surprise. 'Beauchamp a cabinet minister!' proclaimed a Tory who had known him well at Oxford. 'I don't know why, but this strikes me as inexpressibly funny.'[1]

In the absence, before December 1916, of cabinet minutes, it is not easy to determine the nature of Beauchamp's contribution to the turbulent political years before the outbreak of the First World War.

Such evidence as there is suggests that he was rather overshadowed inside a cabinet of political heavyweights such as Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, Edward Grey and R.B. Haldane, as well as Asquith himself. He was, judged one colleague, except on 'office questions' a 'silent member of the Cabinet'.[2]

That observer's judgment had only marginally changed by March 1915, as Beauchamp neared the end of his ministerial career: 'Beauchamp is a nonentity of pleasant manners, a good deal of courage, and a man of principle, but with no power of expression.'[3] Asquith himself placed him in the lowest category in the ranking list of his ministers which he drew up for the amusement of his youthful confidante, Venetia Stanley.[4]

With some show of reluctance on his part, Beauchamp was moved to the post of First Commissioner of Works in November 1910.[5] In this position he proved to be a useful committee man while more colourful figures occupied the political limelight. In April 1912 he sat on a cabinet committee to deal with the wave of strikes in the transport system and in December 1913 he chaired the Central Land and Housing Council, designed to advance Lloyd George's Land Campaign.

By this stage he was regarded as being on the radical wing of the party and in January 1914 presented Asquith with a letter signed by Hobhouse, McKenna, Runciman, McKinnon Wood, Simon and himself opposing Churchill's extravagant estimates at the Admiralty.[6] With the approach of European war he was among the group of about seven ministers who hesitated over the declaration of hostilities. 'All agreed we were not prepared to go into war now, but that in certain events we might reconsider our position, such as the invasion wholesale of Belgium.'[7] This group lunched at Beauchamp's house, which was conveniently close to Westminster, on 2 August to discuss their position. The following day, after the cabinet had discussed the formal statement to be made by the Foreign Secretary, Asquith announced that, with regret, he had received the resignations of John Morley, John Burns and John Simon. Beauchamp 'leant forward and asked to be included'.[8] In the event he, along with Simon, withdrew their resignations when Asquith pointed out that, should the cabinet break up, the only result would be to allow the Unionists to enter the government.

Beauchamp now returned to the post of Lord President to fill the vacancy created by Morley's resignation. In the early months of the war Asquith gave serious consideration to his appointment to the forthcoming vacancy for the Viceroyalty of India, knowing that he would relish the ceremonial side of that position. When, however, a coalition was formed in May 1915, the necessity to make room for Unionist ministers made him an inevitable casualty. He himself regarded Churchill as the 'primary cause of trouble', believing that the First Lord should be the first victim of the governmental reconstruction.[9]

As the demands of war threatened to encroach ever further upon traditional Liberal principles, Beauchamp became President of the Free Trade Union in 1916 in succession to Arnold Morley. Once Lloyd George became Prime Minister, he moved increasingly into a position of opposition to the government and he was sympathetic to Lord Lansdowne's call for a compromise peace.[10] This strand of Liberalism suffered grievously in the general election of December 1918, but Beauchamp, with his seat in the upper chamber, provided a source of stability and continuity in the party's fortunes during the difficult decade of the 1920s, becoming the party's leader in the Lords in 1924 in succession to Viscount Grey. In this post he campaigned tirelessly. In the 1929 election campaign he was the party's most travelled speaker. He was particularly active at the party's annual conferences in the second half of the decade.

With the Liberal Party still deeply divided – notwithstanding the apparent reconciliation of Lloyd George and Asquith in 1923 – he sought the role of conciliator, though with only limited success. While Beauchamp reconciled himself to Lloyd George's effective takeover of the party after Asquith's retirement, many other Liberals did not. An attempt to patch up differences with Walter Runciman led to a particularly blunt rebuff from the latter's wife. Beauchamp recorded his exasperation:

> I came to see you at your request. I was advised not to come by those who know you. In your home to which you had invited me, you entertained me to an hour and a half of studied insolence such as I have never experienced in a varied life. You took advantage of the fact that you were a lady to whom I must speak with respect in her own house. I hope I may never have such an experience again. I am afraid we must disagree as much on the principles of hospitality as we do on our ideas of what Liberalism means.[11]

Like many other Liberals he faced the 1929 general election with some optimism. But the result, in which the party secured 23.4% of the popular vote but only fifty-nine seats in the House of Commons, came as a bitter disappointment. He sought consolation in taking the Chancellorship of the University of London in succession to Lord Rosebery.

In 1931, however, Beauchamp's political career came to an abrupt end. He resigned all his appointments and public offices, except for the Lord Wardenship of the Cinque Ports which he had assumed in 1913, and went to live abroad. But for a crisis in his private life, he might well have received high office in the National Government formed a few months later. (His successor as leader of the Liberal peers, the Marquess of Reading, emerged as Foreign Secretary.) Though the matter was not widely publicised at the time, it is clear that Beauchamp was threatened with divorce and criminal proceedings which would reveal his homosexuality. His accuser was his own brother-in-law, 'Bend'or', the eccentric second Duke of Westminster.[12]

The Labour MP Hugh Dalton confided the truth of the matter to the privacy of his diary:

> On Thursday night I dined with Ponsonby at the House, and he told me all about the sad case of Lord Beauchamp, who has had a persistent weakness for footmen, and has been finally persuaded by Simon and Buckmaster to sign an undertaking not to return to England. The King didn't want a scandal because he was a Knight of the Garter![13]

Thereafter Beauchamp lived a somewhat pathetic peripatetic existence. According to one account he told his children that suicide was the only way out.[14] He hoped that the arrival in 1936 of a new king, Edward VIII, with supposedly enlightened views, might enable him to end his exile.[15]

It was not to be. He died of cancer in New York on 15 November 1938. His wife had died in 1936, but he was survived by two of his three sons and by four daughters. His title passed to his eldest son, who had been elected as Liberal MP for Norfolk East in 1929 and who held junior office in the National Government. Perhaps Beauchamp's most lasting legacy was the assumed portrayal of his family tragedy in Evelyn Waugh's novel *Brideshead Revisited*.

Notes:

1. J. Vincent (ed.), *The Crawford Papers* (Manchester, 1984), p. 159.
2. E. David (ed.), *Inside Asquith's Cabinet* (London, 1977), p. 121.
3. David, *Inside Asquith's Cabinet*, p. 229.
4. M. and E. Brock (eds), *H.H. Asquith: Letters to Venetia Stanley* (Oxford, 1982), p. 452. In Asquith's private code Beauchamp was, rather dismissively, styled as 'Sweetheart'.
5. To make way for Lord Morley who was anxious to leave the India Office.
6. Beauchamp and others to Asquith, 29 January 1914, cited in R.S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill: Young Statesman 1901–1914* (London, 1967), pp. 676–77.
7. J.A. Pease, diary 2 August 1914.
8. David, *Inside Asquith's Cabinet*, p. 180.
9. M. Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill 1914–1916* (London, 1971), p. 454.
10. D. Dutton (ed.), *Odyssey of an Edwardian Liberal* (Gloucester, 1989), p. 54.
11. Beauchamp to H. Samuel, 17 December 1928, enclosing letter to Mrs Runciman, Samuel MSS A/155/vii/43.
12. G. Ridley, *Bend'Or, Duke of Westminster: a Personal Memoir* (London, 1985), p. 173.
13. B. Pimlott (ed.), *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton 1918–1940, 1945–60* (London, 1986), pp. 148–49.
14. K. Young (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart 1915–1938* (London, 1973), p.223.
15. N. Smart (ed.), *The Diaries and Letters of Robert Bernays, 1932–1939* (Lampeter, 1996), p. 257.

Archives

Liberal and Related Archives at the University of Hull

Brian Dyson, Hull University Archivist

The University of Hull's Brynmor Jones Library (BJL) has been collecting political archives and manuscripts ever since the foundation of the university, initially a college of London University, in 1928. It literally started with one item, a John Stuart Mill document donated by Professor Harold Laski of the London School of Economics.

The numerous collections now held include several of potential interest to Liberal Democrat party historians. Indeed, the first collection of any size to be received, in 1933, was the archive of the nineteenth-century polymath and Radical MP, *Thomas Perronet Thompson* (1783–1869).

Born in Hull, the son of a wealthy local merchant and banker, this extraordinary man enjoyed several different careers. He graduated in mathematics at Queen's College Cambridge in 1802, and then had periods in the navy and the army. Close family connections with William Wilberforce led to his appointment in 1808 as governor of Sierra Leone, from where he was recalled in apparent disgrace within two years, having tried to change too much too fast. He rejoined the army, and was involved in disastrous campaigns in the Gulf (including the evacuation of Ras-al-Khyma in July 1820), leading to his court martial.

Returning home, he threw himself into Radical politics, met Jeremy Bentham, and made the first of many contributions to *The Westminster Review*. Inheriting his father's fortune in 1828, he spent most of it on his life as a political journalist (he immediately bought *The Westminster Review*) and Radical politician. His two most significant publications, pamphlets on *The True Theory of Rent* and *Catechism on the Corn Laws,* appeared in 1826 and 1827.

In the 1830s he took up the cause of Catholic emancipation, and his pamphlet on the subject quickly sold 40,000 copies. He was a strong supporter of the Reform Act of 1832, and soon sought a more active political role by standing for parliament himself, winning a by-election for Hull in 1835 as a Radical, in which capacity he was one of only six MPs to sign the original People's Charter in 1837, calling for a wider franchise and parliamentary reform. He also became active in the Anti-Corn Law League, and following victory in 1846 was publicly praised by Richard Cobden for his support. In 1847 he won Bradford for the Radi-

cals, holding it until 1852, regaining it in 1857 and holding it until his retirement in 1859. The surviving papers of this life-long supporter of free trade and social justice are quite extensive, and a valuable source for Radical/Liberal politics during the early to mid-nineteenth century.

The BJL also holds the surviving papers of *H.B. Lees-Smith*. Lees-Smith (1878–1941) was born in India but brought up in London and graduated from Queen's College Oxford in 1899. He joined the Fabian Society, and his first employment was at Ruskin Hall. He was appointed a lecturer at the LSE in 1906, and to a chair of public administration at Bristol in 1907. In January 1910 he was elected as one of two Liberal MPs for Northampton. Like many other Liberals of the time, his eventual switch to the Labour Party came via his opposition to secret diplomacy and membership of the *Union of Democratic Control*, the general council of which he later joined (and the archives of which are also held in the BJL).

He served as a private soldier in the army during the First World War, being invalided out in 1917. He continued to support a negotiated peace, and in December 1916 was the first to mention the idea of a League of Nations in the House of Commons. At the general election of 1918 he stood as an Independent Radical and lost. He then joined the Independent Labour Party, and was returned as Labour MP for Keighley in 1922, losing to a Liberal in December 1923. He regained the seat in October 1924, and in June 1929 was made Postmaster-General in the second Labour government, moving to become Minister of Education in February 1931. When Labour joined Churchill's coalition in 1940 he remained outside the government, becoming Chairman of the Labour Party and, effectively, leader of the opposition. He died in December 1941.

The small collection of his papers in the BJL includes correspondence, 1919–41 (including letters from Arthur Ponsonby and Winston Churchill), speeches, press cuttings, articles and other papers.

Another leading figure to make the switch from Liberal to Labour was *William Allen Jowitt* (First Earl Jowitt of Stevenage, 1885–1957). After graduating from New College Oxford, he enjoyed a brilliant legal career, taking silk in 1922. He was a Liberal from an early age, winning the Hartlepools seat in 1922 as an independent Liberal. In 1929 he was returned for Preston and immediately offered the position of Attorney-General in the Labour Government. Having accepted, he resigned and sought re-election as a Labour candidate, increasing his vote. After the 1945 election he was made Lord Chancellor. He was knighted in 1929, ennobled in 1945 and created an earl in 1951. The BJL holds a small collection of papers collected by J. Peart-Binns whilst producing a biography of Jowitt, including photocopied correspondence (1905–51), and speeches (1940s).

Moving closer to the present, *Eric Lubbock* (b. 1928) was a successful businessman prior to his stunning by-election victory for the Liberals over the government candidate at Orpington in March 1962, a seat which he held until his defeat in the 1970 general election. He was the Liberal Whip in the House of Commons between 1963–70, before succeeding to the peerage as fourth Baron Avebury in 1971. His political papers in the BJL include over 3,000 case files for the 1962–70 period, plus subject files on topics such as metrication and fluoridation.

Finally, the BJL holds papers assembled and donated by the secretary of the *Beverley & Haltemprice branch of the Social Democratic Party* in East Yorkshire between 1981 and 1989. There are some 245 items in the collection, and they reflect the sometimes frenetic activities of the group during that period, particularly in relation to fund-raising, recruitment, policy matters (at local, regional and national level), and relations with other parties, notably the Liberals. The collection sheds as much light on regional and national matters as it does on local issues, with many papers of the SDP's various councils and conferences, plus numerous policy pamphlets and leaflets produced under the auspices of the Council for Social Democracy.

Availability

All the above collections are fully catalogued and available to researchers, whether or not they are members of the University of Hull. The HUMAD2 computer system allows direct access to catalogues or lists of most of the collections, and is available via the World-Wide Web (address below). Original documents may be consulted in the BJL. Written application is required before a first visit, but thereafter appointments can be made by telephone or email.

The opening hours for archives are basically 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. and 2 – 5 p.m., Monday – Friday, with occasional Monday evening and Saturday openings. For further details contact: The University Archivist, The University of Hull, Brynmor Jones Library, Hull, HU6 7RX; telephone: (01482) 465265; email: archives@acs.hull.ac.uk; web address: http://www.hull.ac.uk/lib/archives.

Help Needed!

The Liberal Democrat History Group will be having an exhibition stand at the Liberal Democrat conference in Harrogate (19–23 September), in order to increase membership, sell copies of the *Journal,* the *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* and the new *Dictionary of Liberal Quotations,* raise our profile and make new contacts. We would like to hear from any member who would be able to spare an hour or two helping to look after the stand; if you can help, please contact the Editor (see page 2 for contact details).

Reviews

The Jeremy Thorpe Story

Jeremy Thorpe: *In My Own Time* (Politico's Publishing, 1999)

S. Freeman and B. Penrose: *Rinkagate: the rise and fall of Jeremy Thorpe* (Bloomsbury, 1996)

'Jeremy Thorpe' in M. Parris, *Great Parliamentary Scandals* (Robson Books, 1995)

Reviewed by Robert Ingham

'This is not an autobiography' writes Jeremy Thorpe in the introduction to his recent volume of memoirs and, perhaps for once, he does not exaggerate. *In My Own Time* is a collection of anecdotes and episodes, often entertaining in themselves, but offering few insights into Thorpe's own character and motivation or into some of the more controversial aspects of his life.

One key question for any student of Thorpe is how someone of his staunch Tory background – both his father and grandfather sat as Conservative Members of Parliament – came to be drawn into membership of the Liberal Party. Thorpe offers scant explanation of his decisions not only to join the Liberal Party, but to devote his considerable talents to fighting and winning a Parliamentary seat. If motivated by the desire to enter the House of Commons and stay there, Thorpe would surely have taken the easier course of joining the Conservative Party, as a result of which he might well have become a minister. Ideological factors surely played some part, but one explanation might be that, by becoming a Liberal, he automatically became a gigantic fish in a tiny pool.

This approach is given credence by some of the stories Thorpe tells. Thorpe puts himself across as the great fixer in British politics. Wherever a crisis threatened – Ghana, Uganda, Rhodesia – and whatever issue was at stake – coal, Europe, arms to South Africa – Thorpe was involved, sometimes at the head of a committee of Liberals, sometimes alone, offering his assistance to the government of the day, attempting to broker a solution. A government back-bencher, or opposition front-bench spokesman, would not have been allowed such opportunities. This is not to decry Thorpe's role during, for instance, the passage of the European Communities Bill through the House of Commons, or his genuine internationalism. The impression is given, however, that Thorpe preferred to be at the centre of events rather than to be concerned with the daily grind of third-party politics – the policy papers, local election contests and federation dinners.

This impression is reinforced by the limited attention paid by Thorpe to matters internal to the Liberal Party. He mentions his election as Treasurer of the Liberal Party, in 1965, and the success he had in raising money to clear the party's overdraft, as well as the Special Aid scheme he established to channel funds towards winnable seats, without letting us into the secret of how his fund-raising was so successful and where the money came from.

This may seem a trivial issue, but it is central to the relationship between Thorpe and his senior colleagues. Thorpe was able to keep some of the money he raised away from the party hierarchy, giving him a degree of political independence from the Liberal Party Organisation. This was controversial to many, and offensive to some. The Special Aid Scheme was the genesis of the targeting policy now pursued by the Liberal Democrats. Thorpe operated the Scheme without accounting for its activities or funds to the party at large, using its resources to remove Liberal officers and candidates from some constituencies and replace them with his preferred choices. A detailed study of why Thorpe was abandoned by his colleagues when the Scott affair blew up must take account of the mysterious nature of Thorpe's financial affairs.

The Scott affair is dealt with by Thorpe in just nine pages, with nothing new added to his standard denials. Some commentators, for instance John Campbell (*Independent*, 10 May 1999), have regretted that Thorpe did not use this opportunity to open up. In fact, *In My Own Time* is Thorpe's attempt to provide some balance to his life story.

Almost everything written about Thorpe concentrates on the end of his career. Little serious analysis of his years as Liberal leader has yet been attempted; that which has been produced is written in the light of the Scott allegations. Thorpe seeks to redress the balance, highlighting his account of the 1974 coalition talks as the centrepiece of the book. It is an understandable, and brave, effort on Thorpe's part, but the Thorpe story cannot be placed in context until the bizarre end to his career is explained. It

seems we must wait for Michael Bloch's biography to provide some long-awaited answers.

Plot upon plot

The Scott affair consisted of a series of inter-locking sub-plots, each comprising a mass of often contested detail which, taken together, can be regarded as either something extremely important, or something tragically trivial. Parris, in *Great Parliamentary Scandals*, describes the Thorpe imbroglio as the most sensational of the century, bar the Profumo scandal. Thorpe admitted, in modern parlance, to an inappropriate relationship with Norman Scott, an aimless drifter, but denied a homosexual one. Around the pair swirled a collection of increasingly unlikely characters, from Peter Bessell to MI5, the South African security organisation BOSS and Harold Wilson. Looking back, what can we make of it now?

Thorpe was tried in May 1979 for conspiracy to murder Norman Scott and for inciting David Holmes to commit the act. He was acquitted on both counts, although one juror later wrote that a conviction could have been secured on different charges.

Scott, victim of a feeble, if terrifying, attempt on his life, cut a pathetic figure throughout the trial, being described by Mr. Justice Cantley as 'a crook, an accomplished liar … a fraud' as well as a 'whiner', 'parasite' and, for good measure, 'a spineless neurotic character'. The chief prosecution witness, former Liberal MP and close friend of Thorpe, Peter Bessell, was a serial confidence trickster who admitted in court to a 'credibility problem', one which was exacerbated by the revelation that he had signed an agreement with the *Daily Telegraph* to write his account of the Thorpe affair, the fee for which depended upon a successful prosecution. How did these two sorry individuals bring a Privy Councillor, despite his acquittal, to his knees?

Parris comes close to answering this latter question, in his largely sympathetic account of the affair. Thorpe's political career was finished even before he lost his parliamentary seat and appeared at the Old Bailey in May 1979 because the confidence senior Liberal colleagues placed in him had long since evaporated.

Scott's allegations had been brought to the attention of Liberal parliamentarians in 1971, when Scott told his story, fictional or otherwise, to a constituent of Emlyn Hooson, who then informed her MP. Some Liberals, not least Bessell, were already aware of Thorpe's problems with Scott; others suspected Thorpe of homosexuality. The Byers inquiry into Scott's story, hardly exhaustive, exonerated Thorpe; Parris notes that: 'Thorpe emerged as the victim of a spiteful and unbalanced blackmailer'. Scott continued to publicise his story, however, and when it reached the newspapers, in 1976, Cyril Smith resigned as Chief Whip, claiming ignorance of the allegations, and other MPs failed to back their leader. When Thorpe finally resigned as Liberal leader, in May 1976, Richard Wainwright was singled out for particular criticism, after the Colne Valley MP had questioned on radio why Thorpe had not sued the newspapers concerned. Parris reminds his readers that only one Liberal MP, John Pardoe, assisted Thorpe's election campaign in 1979.

Did senior Liberals stab Thorpe in the back, as Parris implies, by believing rumours and falsehoods rather than the word of an honourable man? Steel, Smith, Wainwright and others have written little or nothing on the affair and are unlikely to do so while Thorpe is alive. If they did, however, they might reveal that the reasons for Thorpe's downfall were connected more to internal party events than to the Scott case, as noted above. There were also many Liberals who considered Thorpe to have subjugated Liberal policy to showmanship and strategy; he could seem particularly out of touch with the Young Liberals of that era. Regardless of the veracity of Scott's allegations, they focused further unwelcome press attention on Thorpe's private life and personality and away from Liberal policy and shed bright lights on some of the dubious company Thorpe kept. When the Scott story broke, Thorpe had to go.

Scandal

While Parris' account of the Thorpe scandal is low-key, Freeman and Penrose take 400 pages to tell the tale. They attempt to merge two older books – *The Pencourt File*, by B. Penrose and R. Courtiour (Secker & Warburg, 1978) and *Jeremy Thorpe: A Secret Life*, by L. Chester, M. Linklater and D. May (André Deutsch, 1979). The latter was written in expectation of a guilty verdict being served on Thorpe, and suffers accordingly. The former is written in a truly awful third-person style and is clearly inspired by a desire to prove a conspiracy theory encompassing Thorpe's downfall, the resignation of Harold Wilson, the post-war decline of the UK and any other political mystery of the era.

Freeman and Penrose do not attempt to repeat that mistake, but the odd episode involving Wilson describing himself as 'the big fat spider in the corner of the room' who 'might tell you to go to the Charing Cross Road and kick a blind man standing on the corner' is retained. Freeman's introduction talks unconvincingly of 'important issues … such as the amorality of politics, official secrecy and cynicism and idealism in journalism', but they do not come across in his book. The only compelling passage is the cruel description of Thorpe's current condition; Parris provides a kinder but more genuine portrayal. Thorpe also describes his illness and the frightening means by which it is currently treated. However you review the facts and fiction of the Thorpe case, the tragic result of it is incontestable.

Landowner and Minister

Angus Hawkins and John Powell (eds): *The Journal of John Wodehouse, First Earl Kimberley, for 1862–1902* (Camden Fifth Series, Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1997)

Reviewed by Tony Little

John Wodehouse was born in 1826 and died in 1902. He kept a journal from 1862 onwards, but in the first few pages gave a summary of his life to date and his service in the diplomatic corps in Russia. He was a member of each of Gladstone's cabinets and served Rosebery. He died, effectively still in service under Campbell-Bannerman, as leader of the much-diminished opposition group of Liberal peers.

Kimberley was an ambitious politician who in the early part of the *Journal* spends much time fretting that his talents have not been noticed by the Palmerstonian leadership. Yet he went on to hold office as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland – a success in a post in which few won laurels – during the outbreak of the Fenian revolt. He was Lord Privy Seal and Colonial Secretary in the first Gladstone Government. He was again Colonial Secretary for part of the second Gladstone administration, and went on to the India Office. In 1892, he became Lord President of the Council (responsible for education) and when Rosebery became premier Kimberley took his place as Foreign Secretary.

This is a general journal, useful not only for the detail it brings out on the various controversies of the period, but for reminding us that even the most dedicated politicians led other lives. As a landowner, Kimberley regularly noted the state of the harvest and the weather and enjoyed his fishing and shooting. He took an interest in local affairs, whether as a magistrate looking at penal policy or as paternalist concerned with the practical arrangements for the poor. As a family man he was evidently closely attached to his wife[1] and children, but had concerns about a son whose gambling proved expensive. A householder's worries do not stop with the harvest, and in the course of the book Kimberley suffered both fires and a burglary to his homes. A firm Protestant, he harboured a strong prejudice against Catholicism but could not prevent it reaching into the family as well as the political circle. Towards the end of his life he was even to try a 'motor car', described in 1899 as 'that horrible vehicle' (p. 468) – perhaps Kimberley was an early environmentalist.

Nevertheless, it is the general politics which make the *Journal* worthwhile. Kimberley refers to items of departmental concern but did not use the *Journal* as a daily record of his actions as a minister. Rather it is the overall political stage and the actors upon it that most attract his pen. Kimberley had prepared a *Journal of Events* in the 1870s, based on the first Gladstone ministry, which has subsequently been published.[2] He also prepared a memoir which has not survived but is known through notes taken by Rosebery and held in his archives (and reprinted at the end of the *Journal*). Consequently, the *Journal* is not completely unblemished. At the start of his cabinet career, he tried to be careful not to record the details of secret cabinet discussions, and as the *Journal of Events* and the memoir were prepared he went back over the diaries, amending and, more unfortunately, excising, comments. Despite this activity, what is left is worthwhile and for the period of the second Gladstone ministry onwards, Kimberley was more relaxed about the material he included and more forthright in the judgements he passed.

As a Liberal rather than a Whig, it is clear that he was not a part of that close-knit circle of the Cousinhood, and despite his loyalty to the Gladstonian wing of the party he did not follow his leader uncritically. Kimberley is generally viewed as a kindly but talkative old buffer, but the *Journal* gives a somewhat tougher view of his judgements. He was particularly harsh about Harcourt – 'utterly without principle, an arrant coward and a blustering bully' (p. 438) – emphasising the degree of difficulty faced by Rosebery in trying to run his ill-fated regime. Even Lady Waldegrave, the great Whig hostess, fell heavily foul of his pen: 'She was once rather good-looking, but always coarse and had a fat ill-shaped figure … She fancied she understood politics and that she exercised a great influence on statesmen, who behind her back only laughed at her … As to her entertainments the food and wine were always bad …' (pp. 311–12)

In fact, Kimberley rarely found the food at public banquets or great events to his liking, though he did consider the wine at Buckingham Palace up to scratch. Not all his verdicts are so harsh; he was generally kind to Granville and, among the opposition, to Salisbury, though never to Derby (the Prime Minister). Offsetting these judgements, he was usually tough on himself, rarely saying anything complimentary about his own speeches and recognising that his public following was limited.

The *Journal* reinforces current positive views on the effectiveness of

the Hartington/Granville leadership in the period 1875–80 and of the difficulties Gladstone found in leading the party after 1880, particularly in the realm of foreign affairs. Kimberley is especially interesting on the response of Britain to the rise of Germany, where he was inclined to take a much more vigorous line than the rest of the government in confronting the Germans over their colonial ambitions.

The House of Lords was where Kimberley operated – a topic which, I believe, is a much-neglected part of Victorian studies. The *Journal* throws several interesting sidelights on the Lords. In 1869, there were probably over 160 Liberal peers (p. 236) but after the gradual loss of support among the aristocracy over Irish land reform and the split over Home Rule, the Liberal strength in the Lords dwindled to around forty, only half of whom were present at the meeting at Spencer House in 1897 to elect Kimberley as their leader (p. 445). No wonder Lord Rosebery felt he lacked support as prime minister.

This is a well-produced work with a substantial array of 1447 footnotes to assist in explanation or further detail (plus a further forty-five for the memoir), including cross-referencing to the Gladstone Diaries where relevant. Some further help could have been given on foreign affairs in the early part of the book but, as the editors get into the rhythm of the work, they become sure-footed guides in the main period of domestic interest. Kimberley has not had a full biography but, taken together with the extracts from his correspondence, also edited by John Powell,[3] we are beginning to see a fuller picture of the contribution he made to the Liberal front bench. The *Journal* is well worth the study but does require some prior knowledge of the main events of the period.

Notes:

1 She may have been less happy – see John Powell (ed): *Liberal by Principle* (The Historians Press, 1996).

2 Ethel Drus (ed): *A Journal of Events during the Gladstone Ministry 1868–74* (1958).

3 Powell, *Liberal by Principle.*

Politics on TV

Party Political Broadcasts: The Greatest Hits (Politico's Publishing; VHS, 169 minutes)

Reviewed by Mark Pack

The eagle-eyed pedant may be a little confused by the start of this videotape. It announces that in *1953* Harold Macmillan starred in the first official party political broadcast, and then goes straight into a Labour broadcast from *1951*. In fact, 195I saw the first political broadcasts during a general election (often called party election broadcasts, or PEBs) whilst 1953 saw the first broadcasts outside election time (often called party political broadcasts, or PPBs).[1]

The BBC had been pressing for political broadcasts to be used during the 1950 election, but initially met hostility from politicians. The very first political broadcast, either PEB or PPB, was eventually seen on 15 October 1951, and featured the former Liberal Home Secretary Lord Samuel. An eighty-one year old peer, he made a rather odd choice for this leading role, although he had a certain degree of recognition from his participation in the then popular radio show, *The Brains' Trust*. The broadcast was not a great success; Samuel not only overran his allotted fifteen minutes but was cut off before he reached the end of his talk, due to a misunderstanding with the producer over the pre-arranged signal for ending the broadcast. Given this, it is perhaps a matter of some relief that the broadcast does not feature on the tape!

However, the omission of Lord Samuel does highlight the major weakness of this otherwise enjoyable and useful collection. Although extracts from forty-two broadcasts are included, and the tape runs to almost three hours, many of the most famous or significant broadcasts are missing. The collection is also heavily weighted towards the 1990s, with twenty-three of the forty-two broadcasts included dating from 1991 or later.

Nonetheless, there are enough for the interested viewers to see for themselves some of the changes in the construction and use of broadcasts since 1951. Many of the early ones – including the first on the tape from Labour in 1951 – show a relatively naïve approach to the TV medium, with interviews where the interviewee, rather than looking at the interviewer, immediately turns to the camera on speaking. Nonetheless, from very early on many of the broadcasts were slickly – for their day – packaged.

One of the four political broadcasts from the 1950s included on the tape is Labour's from September 1959, which was a very polished piece masterminded by Anthony Wedgwood Benn (as he then called himself). As he himself later said, 'I was the Peter Mandelson – Bryan Gould of the 1959 election. I fought a brilliant campaign and lost.' Based on the format of the then popular BBC programme *Tonight* the broadcast had the appearance of a current affairs programme. It provoked the Conservatives to broadcast a reply, filmed in the same studio and revealing some of the tricks used by Labour.[2] This was the first election

in which the audience for TV PEBs was larger than that for PEBs on radio.

The other 1950s broadcasts included are Labour's first from October 1951, Hugh Gaitskell's call for the Prime Minister to resign over Suez (November 1956) and the first broadcast outside election time, by the Conservatives in May 1953. This had an opening line unlikely to be considered an audience-grabber nowadays: 'Good evening. I'm Bill Deedes, the Conservative Member of Parliament for Ashford.'

The 1960s are not represented on the tape, which means that, *inter alia,* viewers are deprived of Harold Wilson's debut with the autocue in 1963, which soon became standard equipment. Also missing is the dramatic opening to the 1966 Liberal broadcast, which featured silhouettes of Ludovic Kennedy and Harold Wilson. The 1970 election saw major innovations in the format of broadcasts by the Conservatives, as they started using carefully shot and edited footage to produce lively, 'newsreel' style films.

These innovative broadcasts are not featured on the tape, although it does include the rather bizarre University Challenge-style Labour broadcast from March 1970. This had teams answering questions on topics such as whether or not pensioners were better off after six years of Labour. Also present is the Jimmy Saville – Jeremy Thorpe double act from April 1972. Apart from its unfortunate reminder of 1970s clothes styles, it also illustrates how hostile questioning used to be welcomed, rather than viewed as something to be carefully spun out of existence. Included amongst those allowed to question Thorpe was a member of the Monday Club's Executive, who attacked the Young Liberals for their support of direct action.

The rest of the 1970s is well represented, with Conservative, Labour and Liberal broadcasts from February 1974 and two Conservative broadcasts from April 1979. Sadly missing, though, is the famous May 1978 Saatchi's broadcast – which was also their first public advertising for the party – that showed Britain 'going backwards' under Labour and had been preceded by a taster newspaper advertising campaign.

Only one broadcast from the first half of the 1980s is included, the Alliance's of May 1983; however, the broadcasts of the time showed little innovation or creative spark. Of the late 1980s we have both a humorous Tory broadcast of April 1986, along with one of the famous John Cleese PPBs. Rather than his broadcast explaining PR, the tape includes his April 1987 effort, which was a highly articulate plea for moderation in politics. Although it had plenty of jokes and smart visual gimmicks, at heart it is a carefully argued piece of political philosophy, and serves as a reminder that complicated arguments can still be put over, even in modem politics.

The 1987 election is represented by one broadcast from each of the main parties, including Rosie Barnes and rabbit from the Alliance, and Labour's 'Kinnock – the movie.'[3] The Conservative broadcast contains an extended sequence – over two and a half minutes – of pictures and backing music, with no talking or voice-over. At the time, this was the longest such sequence, with music provided by Andrew Lloyd-Webber, and pictures of Mrs Thatcher as international political leader. Two of the shots stand out particularly Thatcher and Helmut Kohl getting into 'his and hers' tanks, and another of Mrs Thatcher standing rather meekly by as Richard Branson waves enthusiastically to the crowds. The other two 1980s broadcasts included are Glenda Jackson in the conservatory with her plants (August 1987) and the Green Party's broadcast for the European elections (June 1989).

From the 1990s, there is John Major's broadcast on the Gulf War (January 1991), along with four from the general election of 1992, including the famous 'Jennifer's ear' broadcast on the health service. Six broadcasts are included for the period between the 1992 and 1997 elections, including one from the SNP, and the Natural Law Party's broadcast for the European elections of June 1994. The 1997 election is generously covered with eleven broadcasts, including SNP, Liberal and UK Independence Party, though not even for 1997 is any broadcast from Plaid Cymru included. Most striking about these broadcasts is that up to and including 1992, Labour's broadcasts regularly feature the problems of poverty amongst pensioners, but those on the tape since then are notable for their relative neglect of this issue. The final broadcast is William Hague's apology for the Conservatives from October 1997.

The tape is rather a lucky-dip collection of political broadcasts, with many of the most famous, important or interesting ones missing. However, credit should be given for the effort of putting together such a tape – and one which, moreover, both provides good value for money and has plenty to please both the casual viewer and the interested amateur or professional student of politics.

Notes:

1 Political broadcasts on radio predated those on TV by several decades, having started in the 1920s.

2 Although this broadcast still exists, at least in parts, this early example of TV rebuttal is regrettably not included on the tape.

3 Curiously, the version included is not the more famous one, which in place of the nearly-obligatory screen saying 'Vote Labour' ended with a plea to vote for Kinnock. This is probably the only party political to have so ended with a plea to vote for a leader rather than their party.

The 'New Liberalism'

George L. Bernstein: *Liberalism and Liberal Politics in Edwardian England* (Allen & Unwin, 1986)

Reviewed by Matthew Roberts

The Edwardian Liberal Party, troubled throughout its entire existence, seems to have found even less peace in death. For the Edwardian Liberal Party can be likened to a corpse that has been subjected to an eternal autopsy with a seemingly infinite number of historians gathered around it, prodding and poking it in different places whilst failing to agree on the cause and time of death.

At the same time, some historians have argued that the Liberal Party was showing no sign of decay before the First World War. This is the thesis advanced by Dr Clarke in his book *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*. He has argued that class-based politics had arrived by 1910 and that Liberalism had adapted to this trend in the form of a 'new liberalism', an. ideology based on radical and collectivist social reform. More importantly, he maintains that this successfully bolstered working-class support for the Liberals, and it was this that was responsible for their success, rather than a temporary revival of nonconformity and free trade. Furthermore, Clarke tells us that most Liberals accepted this reorientation. Above all, this new liberalism provided the basis for a progressive alliance with the newly established Labour Party. This alliance, so the argument went, successfully contained the Labour Party and maintained the Liberals as the dominant party of the left.[1]

With the exception of a few articles, it would be fifteen years before a comprehensive response to Clarke's work appeared. George Bernstein's *Liberalism and Liberal Politics in Edwardian England* proved to be that very response. He takes a much more cynical view of the new liberalism and the progressive alliance, arguing that neither offered an effective solution to the party's problem of attracting working-class votes.

In contradistinction to Clarke, Bernstein rejects the notion that class-based politics had arrived. Indeed, for him, the Liberal Party could not cultivate support on class lines. Since the backbone of its support came from the middle classes, any appeal to the working classes would be tantamount to admitting that they had a distinct interest which needed to be promoted in opposition to the middle classes. Furthermore, this was anathema to the ideology of Liberalism, based as it was on appealing to both the middle and working classes by uniting them against the landed classes. More importantly, he maintains that the Liberals' success before the war was precisely because class-based politics had not fully arrived, and it was the attack on privilege and wealth that attracted the working classes. If the point came where labour began to see capitalism as the enemy, liberalism would have little appeal to the workers.

One of the most interesting tenets of Bernstein's thesis is the argument that the new liberalism did not become a priority for the rank and file. Throughout the book the reader is constantly reminded that traditional liberal issues such as land, education and temperance continued to predominate. Nevertheless, Bernstein implicitly accepts that a 'new liberalism' existed. For him, it was simply the case that the majority of the rank and file were tepid towards it. Arguably, it would be more appropriate to say that for many Liberals, this was the reality of the new liberalism, i.e. an underlying commitment to traditional liberal issues and remedies, masked by progressive overtones.

Similarly with the progressive alliance: with what Bernstein tells the reader, one feels that he is on the right lines but does not go far enough. He is quick to tells us that the Liberals could never form a successful alliance with Labour since they differed on fundamental issues. The Liberals saw Labour as challenging their most sacred principles – a free market, private property and even individual liberty itself. At the same time, many in the Labour camp were increasingly hostile to the seeming indifference of many Liberals to the plight of the workers. The Liberals could never accept the level of interference in the economy that Labour advocated. What Bernstein misses is that there had never been a progressive alliance. What had existed in some constituencies was a short-term expedient arrangement that benefited the two parties, keeping the Conservatives out – a frequent issue when there was a split on the left. Or as Martin Pugh pertinently states, many of the Liberal rank and file: 'perceived that Labour stood for the same policies as the Liberal government, which is a more realistic and a more modest claim than the view that they subscribed to a common progressive ideology.'[2]

Perhaps the most rewarding part of *Liberalism and Liberal Politics* is the final chapter on 'Liberalism and External Affairs'. This is not a subject that usually finds it way into a book concerned with the decline of the Liberal Party. What Bernstein has to say abundantly demonstrates that any account of Liberal eclipse should take note of the party's approach to foreign and imperial af-

fairs. The chapter is littered with examples of occasions where high-minded Liberal principles conflicted with the everyday reality of world affairs. In many ways, Grey was the epitome of this contradiction. The fundamental objective of liberalism in foreign affairs was the negation of a balance of power, for this implied that nations were inherently hostile to one another and it limited freedom of manoeuvrability. Yet the threat of Germany forced Grey to make overtures to France and Russia, thereby accepting the notion of a balance of power. The outbreak of war in 1914 seemed to be yet another nail in the coffin for liberalism.

There is little ambiguity in the impression that Bernstein wants his readers to go away with. The final sentence could not be clearer: 'If class-based politics were coming, so was the decline of the Liberal Party – not imminently, perhaps, but eventually and inevitably.' The question was, how much longer would traditional liberal issues continue to appeal to the electorate? There were already signs by 1914 that the working classes no longer placed their faith in that Gladstonian relic known as the Liberal Party.

A Liberal Democrat History Group Fringe Meeting

1974 Remembered

The two elections of 1974 formed the peak of the second post-war Liberal revival, giving the party six million votes but no more than fourteen MPs. A wide range of participants in the campaigns – including Tim Beaumont, Viv Bingham, Adrian Slade, Sir Cyril Smith, Paul Tyler MP and Richard Wainwright – share their recollections of the elections of twenty-five years ago.

8.00pm, Sunday 19 September

Committee Room, Majestic Hotel, Harrogate

Notes:

1 P. F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

2 M. Pugh, 'Yorkshire and the New Liberalism', *Journal of Modern History* 1978, D1146.

Mill on Limited Liability Partnerships

continued from page 16

The only regulations on the subject of limited partnerships which seem to me desirable, are such as may secure the public from falling into error, by being led to believe that partners who have only a limited responsibility, are liable to the whole extent of their property. For this purposes, it would probably be expedient, that, the names of the limited partners, with the amount for which each was responsible, should be recorded in a register, accessible to all persons; and it might also be recorded, whether the whole, or if not, what portion of the amount, had been paid up.

If these particulars were made generally accessible, concerns in which there were limited partners would present in some respects a greater security to the public than private firms now afford; since there are at present no means of ascertaining what portion of the funds with which a firm carries on business may consist of borrowed capital.

No one, I think, can consistently condemn these partnerships without being prepared to maintain that it is desirable that no one should carry on business with borrowed capital; in other words, that the profit of business should be wholly monopolised by those who had had time to accumulate, or the good fortune to inherit capital; a proposition, in the present state of commerce and industry, evidently absurd.

(signed) *J. S. Mill*

History Group Publications

Following the success of the *Dictionary of Liberal Biography*, the History Group will be publishing more books in association with Politico's – and readers of the *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* are invited to help.

The *Dictionary of Liberal Quotations* is scheduled for September 1999, part of a set of three political quotations books.

Great Liberal Speeches, intended for publication during 2000. This book will include the full texts of around thirty famous speeches by Liberal politicians, with commentaries.

An Oral History of Twentieth-Century Liberalism. A thematic study of the Liberal Party and liberalism, drawing upon interviews with Liberal activists and politicians, as well as autobiographical sources.

Dictionary of Liberal Biography, 2nd edition, provisionally scheduled for 2002 or 2003 – but we would like to hear ideas now for the inclusion of major figures omitted from the first edition.

Please write with ideas, on these and on any other potential books, to Duncan Brack, Flat 9, 6 Hopton Road, London SW16 2EQ; ldhg@dbrack.dircon.co.uk.