

Journal of Liberal

HISTORY



Election spending under scrutiny

Dr J Graham Jones

Honiton, Dumfriesshire and the Lloyd George Fund 1929 election

Russell Deacon

The slow death of Liberal Wales 1906 – 1979

Dr John Powell

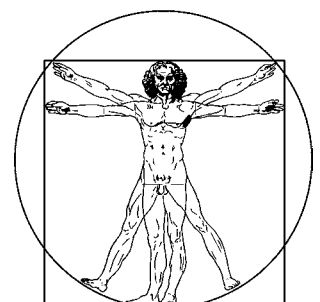
A squire in the House of Lords Biography of Lord Kimberley (1826–1902)

Graham Lippiatt

Joseph Chamberlain and the Unauthorised Programme Meeting report

Frank Trentmann, Tony Little and Mark Pack

Poverty, Palmerston and elections Book reviews



HISTORY GROUP MEETINGS PROGRAMME 2006

Winter

Blissful dawn? The 1906 election

On 7 February 1906, the counting of votes was completed in the 1906 general election, and the Liberal Party had obtained a majority of 132 over all other parties. In addition, for the first time, 29 Labour MPs were elected and shortly afterwards the Parliamentary Labour Party was founded. To mark this anniversary, the Corporation of London is organising a lecture to which all Liberal Democrat History Group members are invited.

Speaker: **Lord Kenneth Morgan** (author of definitive biographies of Keir Hardie and Jim Callaghan, and one of the foremost historians of twentieth-century Britain)

6.00pm Tuesday 7 February (followed by reception at 7.30pm)

Old Library, Guildhall, London EC2.
For more details, see back page.

Spring

Defender of liberties: Charles James Fox

2006 also sees the bicentenary of the death of the Whig leader Charles James Fox. A proponent of the supremacy of Parliament, the freedom of the press and the rights and civil liberties of the people, and a believer in reform, rationalism and progress, rather than repression, the ideas he defended – particularly over the challenge of the state to the liberties of the individual in time of war – are as relevant to our own times as to those of the Britain of 200 years ago.

Speaker: **Frank O’Gorman** (Emeritus Professor of History, Manchester University)

8.15pm Friday 3 March
Queen’s Suite Room 5, Harrogate International Centre. For more details, see back page.

Summer (1)

Free trade, citizenship and social inclusion: Political and historical perspectives of the 1906 Liberal landslide

A National Liberal Club participative symposium to mark the centenary of the Liberal victory, chaired by Evan Davis, BBC Economics Editor, with Dr Frank Trentmann (Birkbeck College, London) on free trade, Professor Jose Harris (University of Oxford) on citizenship and Dr Stefan Collini (University of Cambridge) on social inclusion. Commentators on contemporary comparisons will include Professor Robert Skidelsky (Warwick University) and Baroness Shirley Williams.

1.00 – 5.00pm Wednesday 17 May

National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE

Registration fee £20; more details in the next *Journal*.

Summer (2)

The Suez crisis of 1956 and the Liberal Party

Date to be confirmed, but early or mid July. National Liberal Club, London.

Autumn

The Dictionary of Liberal Thought

Launch of the History Group’s latest publication. Date to be confirmed, but probably Sunday 17 September.

Brighton (fringe meeting at Liberal Democrat conference).

Scottish Liberal Club

From Duncan MacLaren MP to Henry Campbell-Bannerman PM: How a long tradition led to a triumph

Marking the centenary of the Liberal victory of 1906, the John G Gray Lecture will be given by Willis Pickard.

6.15pm Thursday 16 February
City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh.

Journal subscriptions

Our apologies for the late despatch of this issue of the *Journal of Liberal History*. It was held back until mid-January to allow us to circulate papers for the AGM in the same mailing, but then was further delayed by events not unconnected with the Liberal Democrat leadership election.

The next issue (spring 2006) is due out in early April, and then we will resume normal service, with the summer issue out in July.

Old heroes for a new leader

As we did in 1999, we are approaching all the Liberal Democrat leadership candidates to write a short piece on their favourite historical figure or figures – the ones they feel have influenced their own political beliefs most, and why they have proved important and relevant. Their articles will appear on the History Group’s website, www.liberalhistory.org.uk, in mid-February.

Email mailing list

If you would like to receive up-to-date information on the Liberal Democrat History Group’s activities, including advance notice of meetings, and new History Group publications, you can sign up to our email mailing list: visit the History Group’s website (www.liberalhistory.org.uk) and fill in the details on the ‘Contact’ page.

Journal online subscriptions now available

The Liberal Democrat History Group is pleased to announce the availability of a new subscription service: online subscriptions.

In addition to printed copies, online subscribers will be able to access pdf files of current and past *Journals* via the Group’s website, www.liberalhistory.org.uk. Online subscribers will be sent a password (changed each year) for access to the protected area of the site.

Online subscriptions cost £35.00 per year. Overseas (non-UK) online subscriptions are available for £40.00 per year, or £100 for three years.

Older copies of the *Journal* will continue to be available to all visitors to the site. Issues 1–24 are currently available as pdf files.

Journal of Liberal History

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Contributions to the *Journal* – letters, articles, and book reviews – are invited. The *Journal* is a refereed publication; all articles submitted will be reviewed. Contributions should be sent to:

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Cover illustration: 'The Party Chest', *Punch*, 10 July 1929

Mr MacDonald: 'This is our new design, sir. I understand that you favour dress-reform?'

Mr Lloyd George: 'I do, but I shouldn't care to expose my chest like that'.

(The Prime Minister [MacDonald] has stated that any consideration of electoral reform would include an inquiry into the use of 'huge central funds' employed for party purposes.)

See *Dr J Graham Jones' article in this issue*.

Liberal Democrat History Group

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

For more information, including details of publications, back issues of the *Journal*, tape records of meetings and archive and other research sources, see our website at: **www.liberalhistory.org.uk**.

Chair: **Tony Little** Honorary President: **Lord Wallace of Saltaire**

HONITON, DUMFRIES AND THE LLOYD

Dr J. Graham Jones uses correspondence in the Lloyd George Papers at the National Library of Wales to examine the use of the infamous Lloyd George Fund to assist the Liberal candidates in the Honiton and Dumfriesshire parliamentary constituencies in the general election of 30 May 1929. He helps to show how, for nigh on forty years, the existence of the Lloyd George Fund caused much debate and anxiety within the ranks of the Liberal Party.

Lloyd George speaking at Caernarvon Castle in 1929



MFRIESSHIRE D GEORGE FUND

As soon as he became Prime Minister in December 1916, Lloyd George began building up a substantial 'political fund', soon obtaining large sums of money from wealthy individuals who considered that he alone was capable of winning the war effort or who looked to the new coalition government to counter the growing forces of 'bolshevism' and 'socialism'. More particularly, the money came from those who simply wanted honours, especially peerages, and soon discovered that they could now be instantly obtained from a simple cash transaction.¹ The money was subscribed to the Coalition Liberal Party in office just as it had been donated to the Conservative Party and to the Liberal Party before the war – it was the traditional means of financing political parties – but Lloyd George's 'sin' was that he pushed the system much further and much more blatantly than either his predecessors or his successors. Moreover, the Coalition Liberal Party of 1916–22 possessed only a skeletal organisation, a deficiency which enabled Lloyd George, via the trustees whom he

himself appointed and dismissed, to exercise close personal control over the use of this fund.

Thus, when Lloyd George fell from office in the autumn of 1922 (permanently as it so happened), he retained the near-ownership of a large political fund that he regarded as a resource which he might employ for any political cause he chose. It certainly amounted to several million pounds. In 1924 Viscount Gladstone, at the heart of the Liberal Party organisation, referred to Lloyd George as possessing 'power to raise a million in cash',² and it may well be that the total fund assets amounted to some £3 million. (This was the estimate of its size by Vivian Phillipps, a shrewd observer of political life and a future Liberal chief whip, in his volume of reminiscences entitled *My Days and Ways*.) Large sums of money had been invested very profitably in the *Daily Chronicle* which had much increased the size of the original fund and had also provided Lloyd George with a subservient newspaper. By this time a highly anomalous situation had developed. Lloyd George retained ownership of

When Lloyd George fell from office, he retained the near-ownership of a large political fund that he regarded as a resource which he might employ for any political cause he chose.

a large personal fund, although he was not at the time the leader of the Liberal Party; while the party itself, led by Asquith, was in abject poverty, dreading the inevitable trauma and expense of the next general election campaign.

Use of the Fund

The Fund had not, however, lain idle in the meantime. It had been used to help establish no fewer than 224 constituency Coalition Liberal associations in the country (and a group of regional councils), but few of these remained genuinely active and rooted in the localities.³ The highly precarious electoral base of the Coalition Liberals had been potently revealed in a string of crucial by-elections between 1919 and 1922, following which constant dreary reports were received of the weakness of Coalition Liberal organisation in the constituencies. A new journal, the *Lloyd George Liberal Magazine*, was also established. Shortly before the collapse of the coalition government in the autumn of 1922, Lloyd George, anxious to have control of the most influential

newspaper in the country during an expected period in opposition, had attempted to make further use of the Fund to purchase *The Times* newspaper, but this had eventually come to nothing. As a result of the Prime Minister's audacity, *The Times* was converted into a trust permanently safe from the intrigues of any single individual. The callous, cavalier amassing of the Lloyd George Fund had in itself seemed blatantly to debase the standards of public life and decency. After the general election campaigns of 1922 and 1923, the Independent Liberal organisation had been nigh on bankrupted, incapable of waging a further general election campaign on a broad front. Lloyd George was only too well aware of this fact; it gave him a trump card to play.

For Lloyd George, his Fund was the one material weapon which he could use against the Asquithian Liberal 'old gang'. He was certainly not prepared tamely to hand it over to prop up the authority and (in his view) outworn ideas of his political enemies. Far better to retain control of it until the Liberal Party was ready to accept him as its leader and then to make good use of it to formulate and implement his own new radical policy initiatives.

Eventually, when the first minority Labour government collapsed at the end of 1924, precipitating yet another general election campaign, Lloyd George made available the miserly sum of £50,000 from his Fund, which, together with some £40,000 in donations and £30,000 from its own severely depleted resources, enabled the Liberal Party to put up a total of only 343 candidates. The severe financial handicap was compounded at constituency level by a simple failure of nerve to fight, even in localities where the Liberals were within striking distance of victory. The frenzied exchanges and negotiations over the Lloyd George Fund which had preceded the election continued, unrelieved, after it.

For Lloyd George, his Fund was the one material weapon which he could use against the Asquithian Liberal 'old gang'.

The New Liberalism

By this time, Lloyd George had found another, potentially more rewarding, use for his political fund. Ever since the spring of 1924 in fact, he had assumed responsibility for setting up and financing a number of autonomous investigative committees to examine the social and economic ills of the nation and evolve radical new policies for their remedy. Their successive reports duly appeared, among them *Coal and Power* (1924), *Towns and the Land* ('the Brown Book') (1925) and *The Land and the Nation* ('the Green Book') (1925). From these substantial tomes, and the later *Britain's Industrial Future* ('the Yellow Book'), which was published in February 1928, were evolved dramatic, far-reaching new policy initiatives on which the Liberal Party was eventually to fight the general election of 30 May 1929. Back in November 1925 Lloyd George had also set up an independent propaganda body under his own presidency called the Land and Nation League, equipped with a large fleet of publicity vans and charged to campaign up and down rural England and Wales to drum up support for the highly contentious 'Green Book' proposals. This campaign was reputedly given an up-front donation of £80,000 from the Lloyd George Fund and charged to hold no fewer than 5,000 public meetings before the occasion of the Liberal Land Convention in 1927. Many local Liberal Associations and Liberal candidates looked askance at these audacious moves inaugurated by Lloyd George in dictator-like fashion and financed by lavish handouts from the infamous Fund, while, conspicuously, a 'Liberal Million Pound Fund' appeal, launched by party headquarters in 1925 in a last-ditch attempt to put the party back on an even keel financially, languished miserably.

Among the Lloyd George Papers in the custody of the Parliamentary Archive at the House of Lords is a copy of an 'instrument' (Lloyd George Papers G/86/3)

which is devoted to the control of the Lloyd George Fund. Sir John Davies (better known as J. T. Davies) is appointed Chief Trustee of the Fund, and the other trustees are to be Sir William Edge, Henry Fildes, Major Gwilym Lloyd George (LG's son) and Charles McCurdy. (Edge, Gwilym LG and McCurdy were all former Liberal Party whips.) The Trustees declare that the Fund is to be 'held by us to be used under [Lloyd George's] direction for the furtherance of political action of the following causes ...'. A long list of political objectives follows: peace, the unity of the Empire, increased production, improved transport, land settlement, forestry, housing, education, improved levels of wages, etc. Should Lloyd George die, the trustees are to make use of the Fund for these purposes. Authority is vested in the Chief Trustee who is empowered, together with one of the other trustees, acting in unison, to disburse the assets of the Fund and to make transfers. Lloyd George personally was to be responsible for nominating three of the trustees. This document suggests that the Fund was then regarded as a trust rather than a Liberal Party chest.

Overall, it has been estimated that no less than £650,000 was taken from the replete coffers of the Lloyd George Fund to finance the policy committees; £240,000 was donated to run the Land and Nation League; £60,000 was used to assist the near-bankrupt Liberal Party headquarters; and some £300,000 was set aside to finance the next general election campaign.⁴ This embarrassingly lavish use of the fund during the second half of the 1920s led to pointed questions about its origins and control. Most blatantly, 'an embarrassed old fogey' in the shape of Lord Rosebery, Liberal Prime Minister way back in 1892–95, truly a voice from the long distant past, wrote a letter to *The Times* in February 1927 enquiring deftly, 'What is this sum, how was it obtained, and what was its source? On such a matter there should be no possibility of doubt.'

... An authoritative statement should be furnished as to the source of this Fund'.⁵ Rosebery, however, received no direct reply, and further probing was regularly sidestepped.

But the use of the Fund had at least enabled the Liberal Party to face the electorate in May 1929 with an impressive, original programme, and more than 500 candidates in the field, a substantial increase on the number which it had been able to put forward in 1924. The Lloyd George Fund was indeed poured into the pre-election and election campaigns and, in a sense, enabled the Liberal Party to offer for the last time a wholly credible alternative government, potentially far higher in calibre than either the Conservative or the Labour front benches. As Trevor Wilson justifiably wrote of the Liberal Party appeal in 1929, 'It is unlikely that the British electorate has ever been paid the compliment of a more far-sighted and responsible party programme.'⁶

As Michael Kinnear wrote in his impressive analysis of British general election campaigns, 'The chief feature of the 1924 election was the virtual elimination of the Liberals', now reduced to just forty MPs, a net loss of 119 seats.⁷ Four and a half years later, it was essential for the party to reverse this trend if it was to stand any prospect of remaining a major political party. In 1924 the Liberals had been demoralised, divided and lacking a programme. In 1929 they were ostensibly (if temporarily) united, in good heart and endowed with a highly imaginative, radical new programme. Their best prospect of winning seats was in agricultural areas, notably in the Celtic fringe – Wales, Scotland and the West Country of England. This article now focuses on two rural constituencies which were typical of those which the Liberals needed to capture if they were to stand any prospect of making a national comeback in 1929: Honiton in Devon and Dumfriesshire in south-west Scotland.



Honiton

Dr Henry Pelling calculated that the Honiton division of Devon (sometimes known as Devon East), with an average Conservative poll of 61.6 per cent in general elections from 1885 to December 1910, was the safest Conservative seat of the fourteen parliamentary divisions in Devon and Cornwall.⁸ Indeed, throughout the period of Dr Pelling's study, the division consistently returned a Conservative MP to Westminster, on three occasions (1886, 1895 and 1900) unopposed, on every other occasion by a substantial majority over a sole Liberal opponent.⁹ Situated on the eastern side of Devon and thus susceptible to church influence emanating from Exeter, the cathedral city of the diocese, it appeared solidly Conservative. Its Member of Parliament until 1910 was Sir John Kennaway, a country gentleman based at Ottery St Mary and the owner of an estate amounting to 4,045 acres.¹⁰ Towns such as Exmouth and Sidmouth were also thought to vote solidly Tory.

Liberal Party HQ in action during the 1929 campaign

In January 1910 Sir John was succeeded by A. C. Morrison-Bell who had represented the division ever since. The constituency had therefore experienced a marked continuity of personnel and representation. In 1918 Morrison-Bell was re-elected unopposed as a Coalition Conservative, but in subsequent elections the seat had begun to appear much more marginal. The Liberal candidate had polled 10,404 votes (44.5 per cent) in 1922, 12,177 (49.4 per cent) in 1923, and 12,025 (44.8 per cent) in 1924. Indeed, in its reunion year of 1923, the Liberal Party had come within 293 votes of capturing the seat. On each of these occasions the Liberal aspirant was J. George L. Halse, a native of the county who had spent his entire career as a local businessman, never living outside the borders of Devon. He was also well known locally as a long-serving member of the Devon County Council, the Honiton Board of Guardians and the Sidmouth UDC. In 1924, Halse had told the electors of Honiton, 'I shall hold myself free as an

HONITON, DUMFRIESSHIRE AND THE LLOYD GEORGE FUND

Independent Liberal to support any measures which I have advocated, no matter from what quarter of the House of Commons they are introduced.¹¹

Honiton was precisely the kind of constituency which the Liberals needed to capture if they were to make any real headway in 1929. A new element of uncertainty was provided in that election by the nomination of a Labour candidate for the first time ever in the history of the division – Alderman F. Rose Davies of far-distant Aberdare in the south Wales valleys, a person who had no previous connection whatever with Honiton. It is evident that the Liberal Party looked to Devon and Cornwall as the scene of an array of potential victories in May 1929.¹² It earmarked eight divisions in the counties as likely Liberal gains: Barnstaple, Honiton, South Molton, Tavistock, Bodmin, Camborne, North Cornwall, and Penrhyn and Falmouth. All had Conservative majorities of less than 2,800; all except Honiton had been held by the Liberals previously.¹³ Honiton contained a substantial agricultural vote: at the time of the 1921 census 35.2 per cent of its occupied male population was engaged in agriculture.¹⁴ Yet, at the end of the day, Sir Clive Morrison-Bell, the beneficiary of a substantial personal vote and a thoroughly overhauled county Conservative organisation, was re-elected with a majority of 1,558 votes (4.4 per cent). Labour ‘intervention’ had not determined the outcome of the poll, for Mrs Rose Davies polled only 915 votes (2.6 per cent) and easily forfeited her deposit.

The official Return of Election Expenses for 1929 revealed that Morrison-Bell had incurred total expenses of £1031, Halse £721 and Mrs Davies just £185.¹⁵ Halse’s expenditure was in addition to his expenses of £686 in 1922, £931 in 1923 and £980 in 1924. Small wonder, therefore, that at the height of the 1929 general election campaign he had appealed earnestly to Sir Herbert Samuel, as chairman of the Liberal

Organisation Committee, for a grant of £4,000 towards the considerable expenses of the election. An interview between Samuel and Lord St Davids, chairman of the trustees of the Lloyd George Fund, followed, but proved fruitless. Overwhelmed by a rash of insistent appeals and an array of begging letters, the St Davids Committee felt unable to accede to such requests.¹⁶

Some days later Halse, still the victim of substantial outgoings, now appealed for a *loan* of £2,000, offering to repay £1,000 within three months of the date of the election, and the remaining £1,000 within six months. He outlined his case in very reasonable, compelling terms:

As you are aware during the last three elections I have paid about £1300 / £1500 towards my election expenses & I need scarcely say that my campaigns have cost me directly & indirectly a very great deal besides this. This seat has never in its history returned a Liberal and the fact that it is now looked on as a seat that should be won at the forthcoming election will I think be agreed by everyone is almost entirely due to my personal efforts and sacrifices these last four years. I do hope therefore that you will be able to kindly arrange for the loan I have asked for.

He even offered to travel to London for a meeting with Sir John Davies, one of the trustees and administrators of the Fund, to make out his case, although he was naturally reluctant to do so – ‘I want to put in all the time I can in work in the constituency’.¹⁷

Colonel Tweed, on reflection, agreed to support Halse’s request for a loan:

I think Halse’s promise to repay can be relied upon – he is a very decent sort of person – and I understand that the reason for his financial stringency is due to the fact that he has a lot of bills owing to him by farmers (Halse is a Corn Merchant) in

Honiton was precisely the kind of constituency which the Liberals needed to capture if they were to make any real headway in 1929.

his constituency, and he does not wish to press for payment of his accounts during the Election. On the other hand his original request to Sir Herbert Samuel was for the sum of £4,000 so I fear his business is not in a very flourishing state.¹⁸

Reluctantly, Viscount St Davids approved a loan to Halse of £2,000 – ‘though I hate doing so’ – and a cheque was promptly despatched.¹⁹ ‘This means a very great relief to me’, responded a ‘very grateful’ Halse, ‘& I will repay it earlier than six months if I can conveniently do so. I am glad to say that in spite of the intervention of a Labour Candidate we have great hopes of winning this seat for Liberalism for the first time in the history of the Division.’²⁰

A whole year later, however, none of the debt had been repaid, and the administrators of the Lloyd George Fund pressed Halse to make repayment.²¹ It would seem that, as Halse had failed to capture Honiton for the Liberal Party in May 1929, the Fund’s trustees were unprepared to write off the loan. A somewhat embarrassed Halse – ‘during the last nine months the grain trade has been extremely depressed and this has made things very difficult for me’ – offered to commence repayments in instalments beginning in August.²² In August, he wrote again:

Unfortunately since you were kind enough to lend me the money the grain trade has been exceedingly depressed, in fact I suppose worse in many ways than for 30 years and as a consequence my previous losses have been added to. I am glad to say things are now beginning to turn round a little and I quite hope that the next few months will show a substantial improvement in my position, but I am afraid for a time things will be very difficult.

He offered to repay £250 every other month until £1,000 was

repaid and then to make every effort to repay quickly the second £1,000. This offer was accepted, and there are no other references to the matter in the Lloyd George Papers.²³ But it is clear that the trustees and administrators of the Lloyd George Fund continued to badger the beleaguered Halse to repay the loan a full fifteen months after the date of the election in spite of his straightened circumstances. 'We are very badly in need of funds at the moment', J.T. Davies had written to the unfortunate Halse (who was, in the event, to contest the Honiton division yet again in 1931) at the end of June.²⁴

Dumfriesshire

The Dumfriesshire constituency in the south-west of Scotland was usually held by the Liberals, but it also contained a substantial Conservative minority. It was won by Liberal Unionist candidates in 1886, 1892 and 1900 and a Coalition Conservative in 1918. It reverted to the Liberals in 1922 and 1923, but in the Conservative landslide of 1924 fell to the Tories by a majority of 4,246 votes (15.4 per cent). At the beginning of the twentieth century 25.2 per cent of its occupied male population was engaged in farming, and a further 16.4 per cent was employed as farm servants and shepherds.²⁵ By 1921, 31.1 per cent was still engaged in agriculture.²⁶ Like Honiton, it was precisely the kind of constituency which the Liberal Party desperately needed to recapture in the political circumstances of 1929. The party had held nine Scottish seats in the 1924–29 parliament, and set as its target a recapturing of nine further divisions, eight from the Conservatives and one (Stirling and Clackmannan) from Labour.²⁷ The defending Conservative MP at Dumfriesshire, Brigadier General John Charteris, had seen extensive service in India as a member of the Royal Engineers from 1896, had been head of the Intelligence Department during the Great War, and

'The difficulties facing a Liberal candidate were thus very formidable and it was thought rightly or wrongly that I was the only Liberal who would have a chance of success in what was considered a key constituency.'

had acted as special correspondent to *The Times* in the 1912 Balkan War.

As its candidate in this key, highly marginal constituency and natural Liberal territory, the party had chosen Dr Joseph Hunter, a medical man who was exceptionally well known locally as the long-serving medical officer of health for Dumfries from 1902 until 1926 and as physician to the Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary.²⁸ In 1927 he had taken up a new post as Director of the Liberal Campaign Department centrally, a pivotal position during the run-up to the 1929 general election campaign when he was one of the party's national organisers. His 1929 election address bore the bold slogan 'Vote for the Doctor, the Man you Know', and carried an endorsement from Sir Herbert Samuel who had spoken on Hunter's behalf at Dumfries on 29 April 1929:

There is no man who has done more to promote the complete & lasting reunion of the Liberal Party. Dr Hunter has made great financial & personal sacrifices to devote himself to political life. I hope the people of Dumfriesshire will recognise the value of these sacrifices & that devotion & will give him a full measure of support at the Election.²⁹

The official Return of Election Expenses for 1929 revealed that Dr Hunter had spent a total of £1106 (£5 in fact in excess of the prescribed legal limit), Charteris £1061 and W. H. Marwick, the Labour candidate, £415.³⁰ On this occasion, however, the outlay was justified as the Liberals comfortably recaptured Dumfriesshire by 3,190 votes (8.9 per cent), a spectacular achievement after a keenly contested three-cornered contest. Of the thirty-two new constituencies captured by the Liberals in May 1929 from one of the other parties, the majority at Dumfriesshire was the third most substantial.

The following August, when all the bills in connection with

the election campaign had come to hand and been evaluated, Dr Hunter wrote a lengthy letter to Sir John Davies. He explained the background to his selection as candidate and the pressure placed on him by Lloyd George to continue as candidate although at the time he was serving as Director of the party's Campaign Department:

When Mr Lloyd George asked me to become a member of his Political Staff, he expressed a desire that I should be the candidate here and although I found it difficult to combine the duties of Director of the Campaign Department with the responsibilities of a distant constituency, and asked that I might be relieved of the latter, he instructed me to persevere with the candidature as he was most anxious that the seat should be won. At the 1924 Election the Liberal vote had gone down to 8000 and only exceeded that of Labour by a comparatively small margin, while a Conservative member had been returned with a majority of more than 4000. The difficulties facing a Liberal candidate were thus very formidable and it was thought rightly or wrongly that I was the only Liberal who would have a chance of success in what was considered a key constituency. As you are aware the result exceeded all expectations. The Liberal Vote was doubled at the Election and the adverse majority of 4000 was turned into a majority in my favour of over 3,000.

Referring to the 'continued strenuous effort' which he had made in the constituency, he went on:

The constituency had become semi-derelict and you will remember that when Mr Lloyd George decided that I must go on with the fight, I explained the position to you and received your kind promise of financial help. I carried out a complete process of reorganisation in what is a very widely scattered area

HONITON, DUMFRIESSHIRE AND THE LLOYD GEORGE FUND

– formed committees in every parish – held a continuous series of meetings since 1928 and distributed literature to practically every home in addition to a complete application of the Survey Scheme. This necessitated the employment of a man and woman organiser and the use of a motor car every day. From the beginning of April till the Election day, I myself travelled 3000 miles and addressed 150 meetings. This all involved expense to an extent that I am unable to bear personally and the money has actually been paid up to date by my agents who are solicitors and members of a firm which has acted as political agents here since 1832. I shall be greatly obliged if you will ask Lord St Davids if he can give me a grant to cover the expenses. The Conservative organisation in Dumfriesshire is considered to be the best in Britain and without spending money it would have been impossible to counter it. I am satisfied after going over every account that the expenditure was justifiable.

Claiming that the cost of the campaign, inclusive of the cost of the use of a motor car, amounted to £1050, he appealed for financial assistance.³¹ A cheque for this amount was immediately despatched to Hunter, clearly as an outright donation, and was gratefully received.³² The fact that he had won the seat probably meant that, unlike the unfortunate Halse, he was not required to reimburse the Lloyd George Fund.

The Lloyd George Fund after 1929

After the 1929 general election, it was estimated in a letter from Lord St Davids to Sir Herbert Samuel, dated 9 July 1929, that the Fund then stood at just £765,000, together with some 279,000 ordinary shares in the *Daily Chronicle*. At that time, it yielded an annual income of about £30,000.³³ After the election was over, attempts were again made to persuade

Lloyd George to make his Fund available *in toto* to the Liberal Party, but these were, predictably, decisively repelled. ‘How can you get people to subscribe’, asked a frustrated Vivian Phillipps, ‘when they think that L.G. has got all that money – and that it really belongs to the [Liberal] Party?’³⁴ But Lloyd George was resolutely determined that the Asquithians were not to get their hands on his personal treasure chest.

After the political and constitutional crisis of the summer of 1931, which brought about the formation of the National Government, Lloyd George went his own way, leading a tiny rump of just four independent Liberal MPs, all members of his own family circle, in the House of Commons. He consciously distanced himself from the mainstream group of Liberal MPs, now led by Herbert Samuel, and changed the official name of the Fund from ‘National Liberal Political Fund’ to ‘Lloyd George Political Fund’. He laid down that grants should henceforth be made from the Fund for ‘political purposes which would advance Liberalism in this country’.

Lloyd George was soon to devote his energies to launching his ‘New Deal’ proposals and his non-party Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction which he set up in 1934. Much of the Lloyd George Fund must have been given over to these initiatives. Much must have been used, too, to run his London office, with its extensive staff of (often about twenty) secretaries, researchers and assistants, and which cost him about £20,000 a year to maintain. This activity was organised by his Principal Private Secretary A. J. Sylvester. Considerable resources were expended during the long 1930s, too, on the researching and drafting of the mammoth *War Memoirs*, a formidable undertaking. In 1937, Lloyd George sought to appoint Dr Christopher Addison (an old ally, by now a member of the Labour Party) and his daughter Megan as additional trustees of the Fund,

but this move, apparently, came to nothing. In the following year, both Lord St Davids and Sir John Davies died within three days of one another, and the Fund then ran to about £470,000.³⁵

In 1939, reflecting on the sources of the income enjoyed by the other political parties, Lloyd George claimed that his Fund was ‘the only clean political fund existing today’,³⁶ on the grounds that it was not attached to a particular political party, but was rather devoted to certain political ends. By the time of Lloyd George’s death in the spring of 1945, the Fund had been severely depleted. The executors of his will requested details of the Fund, which then stood in the name of his second son Gwilym Lloyd George, but were refused details by the bank on the grounds that the Fund did not constitute part of Lloyd George’s estate. The Inland Revenue appears to have accepted without haggling that the Fund was not Lloyd George’s personal property, but a trust.

Thereafter the fate of the Fund is shrouded in some uncertainty. It certainly remained in existence after Lloyd George’s death, beyond the control or reach of the struggling post-war Liberal Party, but it was very depleted by this time. To some extent, rumours of its continued existence poisoned relations within the Liberal Party during the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s – the party’s doldrums period – when it was often felt that it might be quarried to bail out the party. Some potential donors were reluctant to contribute to party funds as they argued that the infamous Fund should be used up before they dipped into their own pockets to assist the ailing party. It never became the preserve of the post-war Liberal Party. Indeed, for nigh on forty years the existence of the Lloyd George Fund had caused much debate and anxiety within the ranks of the Liberal Party. In the exaggerated language of Mr Frank Owen, ‘This Fund was the tragedy of Liberalism in Britain. It was the political tragedy of Lloyd

In 1939, reflecting on the sources of the income enjoyed by the other political parties, Lloyd George claimed that his Fund was ‘the only clean political fund existing today’.

George. In part, perhaps, it was a tragedy for Britain.³⁷

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- 1 There is much valuable material on the Lloyd George Fund in John Campbell, *Lloyd George: the Goat in the Wilderness* (London, 1977), Roy Douglas, *The History of the Liberal Party, 1895–1970* (London, 1971) and Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party, 1914–1935* (London, 1966). For a most helpful, brief overview of the Liberal Party during these years, see also Paul Adelman, *The Decline of the Liberal Party, 1910–1931*, 2nd ed. (London and New York), 1995. Useful also are Barbara Bliss, ‘The Lloyd George Fund’, *New Outlook*, November 1966, and Chris Cook, ‘Lloyd George’s last great battle’, *ibid.*, May 1970.
- 2 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Asquith Papers, Viscount Gladstone to Asquith, 1 August 1924.
- 3 See Chris Cook, *The Age of Alignment: Electoral Politics in Britain, 1922–1929* (London, 1975), pp. 43–45.
- 4 See Sir Ivor Jennings, *Party Politics*, Vol. 2 (London, 1965), p. 265.
- 5 *The Times*, 16 February 1927.
- 6 Wilson, *Downfall*, p. 345.
- 7 Michael Kinnear, *The British Voter: an Atlas and Survey since 1885*, 2nd ed. (London, 1981), p. 46.
- 8 Henry Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections, 1885–1910* (London, 1967), p. 164, table 14. Only Totnes or Devon South, with an average of 61.3 per cent, came close to this figure.
- 9 For these voting figures, see F. W. S. Craig (comp.), *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1885–1918* (London, 1974), p. 257.
- 10 Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 172.
- 11 Election address of J. G. H. Halse, October 1924.
- 12 *Manchester Guardian*, 1 May 1929.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 Kinnear, *The British Voter*, p. 119: ‘The Agricultural Vote in 1921’.
- 15 Cmd. 114, PP 1929–30, Vol. XXIV, p. 755.
- 16 National Library of Wales (hereafter NLW) MS 22,532E, f. 51, Colonel T. F. Tweed to Halse, 30 April 1929.
- 17 *Ibid.*, ff. 53–53, Halse to Tweed, 11 May 1929.
- 18 *Ibid.*, f. 54, memorandum from Tweed to Sir John Davies, 16 May 1929.
- 19 *Ibid.*, f. 55, Viscount St Davids to J. T. Davids, 22 May 1929. He went on, ‘Please ask Miss Pitt not to put “very secret” outside envelopes to me. I am sure it must whet the curiosity of local post-masters, and add materially to the risk of a letter being opened’.

Indeed, for nigh on forty years the existence of the Lloyd George Fund had caused much debate and anxiety within the ranks of the Liberal Party.

- See also *ibid.*, f. 56, Halse to Sir John Davies, 25 May 1929.
- 20 *Ibid.*, ff. 57–58, Halse to Sir John Davies, 25 May 1929.
- 21 *Ibid.*, f. 59, J. T. Davies to Halse, 26 May 1929 (‘Private’) (copy).
- 22 *Ibid.*, ff. 60–61, Halse to Sir John Davies, 3 June 1930.
- 23 *Ibid.*, ff. 64–65, Halse to Sir John Davies, 4 August 1930; *ibid.*, J. T. Davies to Halse, 2 September 1930 (‘Personal & Confidential’) (copy).
- 24 *Ibid.*, f. 63, Davies to Halse, 23 June 1930 (copy).
- 25 Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 398, table 48.
- 26 Kinnear, *The British Voter*, p. 119: ‘The Agricultural Vote in 1921’.
- 27 *Manchester Guardian*, 7 May 1929: ‘An electoral survey’.
- 28 *The Times*, 1 June 1929.
- 29 Election address of Dr Joseph Hunter, May 1929.

- 30 Cmd. 114, PP 1929–30, Vol. XXIV, p. 845.
- 31 NLW MS 22,532E, ff. 40–44, Dr Joseph Hunter to Sir John Davies, 2 August 1929.
- 32 *Ibid.*, ff. 45–50, letters, 7–19 August 1929.
- 33 See Frank Owen, *Tempestuous Journey: Lloyd George, his Life and Times* (London, 1954), p. 689.
- 34 British Library, Viscount Gladstone Papers, Vivian Phillipps to Gladstone, 26 July 1929.
- 35 Owen, *Tempestuous Journey*, pp. 691–93.
- 36 Parliamentary Archive, House of Lords, Lloyd George Papers G/3/7/2, Frances Stevenson to W. S. Belcher (amended by Lloyd George), 16 February 1939.
- 37 Owen, *Tempestuous Journey*, p. 707.

LETTERS

Bribery and Berwick

Bribery may not have affected the political allegiance of many Victorian voters (‘Berwick-upon-Tweed: A Venal Borough?’, *Journal* 48, autumn 2005) but it could upset people. In Berwick in 1857 a much respected Dissenter clergyman, Rev John Cairns, who became a national leader of the United Presbyterians, wrote to one of the Liberal candidates, Matthew Forster, saying that he could not support him because he had been turned out of Parliament for bribery five years previously (Alexander MacEwen, *Life and Letters of John Cairns, DD, LLD* (London, 1895)). Forster wrote to Cairns:

I am grieved at the loss of a supporter of whom I have always been so proud, but I thank you for the frank and kind terms in which you notify that loss. If you knew all the circumstances attending the decision to which you allude, I think the conclusion you have come to would have been a little more merciful. But it may be a satisfaction

to know that I have taken such precautions and securities as will prevent the possibility of any like result on the present occasion.

Whether such determination to be honest this time – or his past record of venality – was the reason, Forster, one of three Liberal candidates for the two-member seat, came bottom of the poll, beaten even by a bribing Tory.

Willis Pickard

Death duties in 1894

A small correction, if I may. In his review of *Harcourt and Son* (*Journal* 48), Martin Pugh incorrectly states that in the 1894 budget the graduated scale of death duties peaked at six per cent on estates of a million pounds. The correct figure is eight per cent, Harcourt having abandoned a proposed top rate of ten per cent after representations from Rosebery (p. 253). Professor Pugh criticises a ‘remarkably brief treatment’ of the budget, but I do at least try to get my facts right!

Patrick Jackson

THE SLOW DEATH OF

by
Dr
Russell
Deacon



OF LIBERAL WALES

1906 – 1979

Many parts of the United Kingdom can claim a strong Liberal heritage. In some areas such as the West Country, Liverpool and Scotland, Liberalism once dominated, then disappeared rapidly but has since come back in sizeable strength. The case of Wales is somewhat different. Liberalism survived here in considerable vigour for several decades after it had almost vanished elsewhere in Britain; in a number of Welsh constituencies it provided post-war British Liberalism with some of its best opportunities for recovery. In the event, however, there was no significant revival, and this article therefore looks at the main reasons behind what can justly be described as ‘the slow death of Liberal Wales’.

How Liberal was Wales?

In 1906 the Welsh Liberals achieved an electoral feat in Wales that had never been seen before and has never been seen since. Thirty-three of Wales’s thirty-four parliamentary seats were taken by MPs who took the Liberal Whip in Parliament.¹ The Liberals had MPs in every constituency in Wales. It took seven decades for

this record to be fully reversed; by the general election of May 1979 there was not one seat in Wales which the party could claim had been held continuously since that great Edwardian landslide. Although the same was also true for the Liberals of both Scotland and England, Liberal strength in Wales was much stronger and the process of attrition in Wales much slower than anywhere else. Table 1 shows that Liberal strength in Wales was far in excess of any other region of the United Kingdom in 1906. It was the only part of the UK to hold a significant Liberal presence in the post-war election of 1945 right up until the 1959 general election.

Without the Welsh Liberal presence of the immediate post-war era it is difficult to see how the wider Liberal Party in Britain could have survived. On 7 March 1950, a former Liberal MP acknowledged Welsh Liberalism’s importance in the House of Commons; Winston Churchill, in replying to the Liberals upon an issue of policy, said:

I must guard myself carefully against any suggestion of uttering what are called blandishments to the nine representatives of the Liberal Party, most of whom

we see in their places under the guidance so generously provided by the Principality of Wales.²

In the late 1940s and 1950s the Welsh Liberal MPs were so closely tied up with keeping the national party alive that there was little time for any clear distinctions between the development of Liberalism in Wales and that occurring elsewhere. Yet at the same time in Wales Liberalism was rapidly fading, in part aided by the fact that its MPs were also having to dedicate so much time to ensuring the survival of the national party.

The strength of Welsh Liberalism

The Welsh historian K.O. Morgan noted of Liberalism in Wales between 1880–1914 that it ‘permeated Welsh life at every point during this period. Every major transformation in Welsh life owed something to it.’³ As we noted at the start the ultimate evidence of Welsh Liberal domination occurred in 1906 when the Welsh Liberals gained a massive 97 per cent of all Welsh parliamentary seats. From the opening up of the franchise via the Electoral Reform Acts of the nineteenth century,

The case of Wales is somewhat different. Liberalism survived here in considerable vigour for several decades after it had almost vanished elsewhere in Britain.

THE SLOW DEATH OF LIBERAL WALES 1906 – 1979

Table 1: Percentage of Liberal seats held by region in the general elections of 1906, 1945 and 1959

	1906	1945	1959
County of London	64	0	0
Rest of the South of England	69	1.6	0.5
North of England	66	1.1	1.2
Midlands	67	0	0
Wales	97	17	8
Scotland	82	0	1.4
Northern Ireland	16	0	0
University	0	14*	n/a

* University of Wales seat

Source: David Butler and Gareth Butler, *Twentieth-Century British Political Facts 1900–2000* (Macmillan 2000), pp. 240–41

Welsh Liberalism had developed to cover virtually every shade of political opinion present in Wales. Stuart Rendel, the first Chair of the newly formed ‘Welsh Parliamentary Party’ in a speech on 28 June 1892 to his constituency at Newtown, defined the nature of the Welsh Liberal MPs:

There is undoubtedly a Welsh Party, that Party is not made of one pattern of man, any more than it is made up on men of one height, or one age; it has diverse elements which contribute to its strength, aye and its unity. The creation of a Welsh Party is an accomplished fact.⁴

Across Wales voters could see that:

Liberals were Welsh nationalists. The Liberals inspired the Welsh nationalist political group *Cymru Fydd* (The Wales To Be). It was supported by Tom Ellis and David Lloyd George, and for a time, Welsh Liberals even referred to themselves as the Welsh National Party in the House of Commons.⁵ They drew their massive political support from the very same North, Mid- and West Wales constituencies that now elect mainly Plaid Cymru MPs.

Liberals were the friends of the working classes (urban and rural). For working-class political aspirations the Liberals provided the disestablishment of the church in Wales, agricultural reforms,

Lloyd George’s People’s Budget, the exemption of working men’s clubs from Sunday closing laws and the repeal of the anti-trade union law. These all appealed to those working-class voters who would later endorse Labour in such vast numbers.

Liberals were the friends of the capitalists. For the politics of the businessmen there was the pro-capitalist and free-trade talk of the Liberal industrialists of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea. ‘Capitalist’ Liberal MPs such as shipping-line owner Sir W H Seager (Cardiff East), chemical industrialist Sir Alfred Mond (Swansea West and later Carmarthenshire) and coal mine and railway owner David Davies (Montgomeryshire) helped gain the anti-socialist vote.

Whilst this ability to represent all people in Wales was maintained, the Welsh Liberal hegemony could continue. The glue that for a long time held the different Liberal strands together concerned their opposition to what Welsh Liberal demonology referred to as the ‘Unholy Trinity’⁶ – the brewers (temperance) the bishops (disestablishment of the church) and the squires (tenant land reform). Another part of the bond of unity was the issue of free trade, of particular importance in the elections of 1906 and 1923. Free trade was, however, a two-edged sword that in 1931 also brought the party disu-

nity and subsequently a permanent split.

Who were Welsh Liberals?

From the late 1880s onwards Welsh Liberal parliamentary representation consisted of mainly Welsh-born non-public-school-educated men drawn either from the legal profession or from business. They were also mainly nonconformist in religion and had become considerably more nationalist in outlook than their predecessors.⁷ After the Second World War, Welsh Liberal MPs were to come predominantly from backgrounds connected with the legal world. Although the most famous Welsh Liberal MP David Lloyd George was a solicitor, Liberal MPs were normally barristers-at-law. Of the nine Welsh Liberal MPs elected between 1945 and 1979 five were barristers. Between 1951 and 1974 only barristers-at-law represented all Welsh Liberalism in the House of Commons. Many failed candidates also came from the same background, notably Martin Thomas QC,⁸ Sir Alan Talfan Davies QC⁹ and Winston Roddick QC.¹⁰ Even today three of the five Welsh Liberal Democrat peers are still barristers.¹¹

The reason why barristers dominated the Welsh party to such a large degree was that in a party that was always limited in funding and fundraising they had their own resources.¹² In addition when it came to both getting selected and the campaign trail their court appearances had ensured that they were great public speakers. The downside of having MPs who were also practising barristers was that their legal careers were built at the expense of their political work. The problem of the ‘part-time MPs’ became an issue which the political opposition was only too happy to highlight at election time. This was particularly true for Cardigan’s Roderic Bowen whose opponents always referred to him as the part-time MP.

The causes of the slow death of Liberal Wales

Four main reasons can be identified for the slow death of Liberal Wales.

1) *The end of the electoral pact with Labour*

The first major cause of Liberal seat losses started two decades before Welsh Liberalism reached its zenith. In 1885 the first Labour/Liberal (Lib-Lab) candidate in the UK, William Abraham (known as ‘Mabon’¹³), was elected in the Rhondda constituency. Mabon, a miners’ agent, was elected with a majority of 867 votes (12.6 per cent) over the Liberal candidate Frederick Lewis Davies. Despite Mabon taking the Liberal whip, therefore not technically depriving the Liberals of a seat, he did provide the first clear example of a candidate standing under a Labour banner being able to defeat a Liberal in a straight fight.¹⁴ His dominance of the Rhondda was also aided by the fact that no Liberal candidate ever stood against Mabon after his election in 1885 until his death in 1922.

The direct threat of the Labour Party to Welsh Liberalism took a while arriving. In 1900 there were just two direct contests between Liberals and the Independent Labour Party, in the Gower and in Merthyr Tydfil. Keir Hardie was elected in Merthyr Tydfil but John Hodge in the Gower did not gain enough support even from his own party during the election to beat the Liberal candidate.¹⁵ For a while after this, direct competition between Liberals and Labour was kept to a minimum, due to the secret pact negotiated between Herbert Gladstone, the Liberal Chief Whip, and Ramsay MacDonald, Secretary of the Labour Representation Committee.

The co-operation between Labour and Liberals had the benefit for Labour of making them, after 1906, the second largest

political party in Wales.¹⁶ This cosy relationship ended in the general election of January 1910, when the Lib-Labs became fully-fledged Labour candidates as a result of the Miners’ Federation affiliating to the Labour Party. In the elections of 1910, however, the legacy of the electoral pact still held sway, and only a few seats, such as Gower, Swansea Town and Mid-Glamorgan, saw direct Labour – Liberal contests in the December 1910 election. In these seats, with the exception of the Gower, the Liberals secured substantial majorities over their Labour opponents. This was, however, to be the last election in which the pact or its legacy held sway. By 1912, even in Merthyr Tydfil, where Lib-Labs had worked so well together, plans were afoot to end the pact. As the next election was on the horizon the Merthyr Liberals abandoned the unofficial electoral agreement not to stand a candidate against Keir Hardie.

The Welsh working-class tradition of voting Liberal aided by the Liberals embracing some socialist ideals in welfare policy enabled Liberalism to remain firmly in control of the electoral situation prior to the First World War (see Table 2). Only five seats were technically lost to Labour by the Liberals at the time of the

December general election of 1910 (see Table 3), and only in the Merthyr Tydfil and Gower seats were these losses not the result of Lib-Labs transferring fully over to the Labour Party. In December 1910 the Liberals still held as many seats as they had in 1900, and with the exception of Radnor all had majorities of close to 10 per cent or more. Despite this Liberal command of the Welsh political scene the seeds had been sown for Labour’s political growth. Their growth was now to be rapid and in the next decade they would challenge the Liberals directly for the political dominance of Wales.

2) *The First World War and the inability of Welsh Liberals to adjust to the competition from socialism*

The First World War had a dramatic impact on Welsh Liberal fortunes. Many of the Liberal pacifists and idealists left the party forever over issues related to the war. Later on the party split between those who supported Prime Minister David Lloyd George and those who stayed with former Prime Minister H. H. Asquith. Wales stayed firmly in the Lloyd George camp, due mainly to his own personal dominance and background in Welsh Liberalism. Such was Lloyd George’s supremacy in Wales that

Table 2: The Welsh Liberals’ electoral record 1900–10

Election year	Percentage of Welsh seats won	Percentage of votes	Percentage of seats contested
1900*	77	53.4	97
1906*	97	52.5	100
1910 (Jan)	79	51.1	88
1910 (Dec)	76	47.6	91

* Includes Lib-Labs

Table 3: Liberal losses to Labour 1900–10

Seat	Year of Loss	Reason
Merthyr Tydfil (first seat)	1900	Won by Independent Labour Candidate
Glamorgan South	1910 (Jan)	Lib-Lab became Labour
Glamorgan Rhondda	1910 (Jan)	Lib-Lab became Labour
Gower	1906	Won by Lib-Lab candidate over Liberal
Monmouthshire West	1910 (Jan)	Lib-Lab became Labour

THE SLOW DEATH OF LIBERAL WALES 1906 – 1979

when Asquith's post-1924 general election committee, chaired by Sir Donald Maclean, went across Britain hearing complaints and gathering suggestions to restore Liberalism, its efforts to penetrate Wales were rebuffed by Lloyd George. Maclean was simply informed that the Welsh could sort out their own house without outside interference.¹⁷ Similarly, when Asquith lost his own seat in 1924 and was offered the possibility of a safe seat in Wales he declared to C.F.G. Masterman that 'I'd sooner go to hell than Wales'.¹⁸

Only a few Welsh MPs such as Llewellyn Williams (Carmarthen Boroughs) and David Davies (Montgomery), who had fallen out with Lloyd George during the war, did not follow him into coalition with the Conservatives. Others who had crossed Lloyd George found themselves denied the Coalition 'Coupon' during the general election of 1918. One instance concerned the twin constituencies of Arfon and Eifion, which were being merged into a single constituency of Caernafonshire (county). The Arfon MP, Caradog Rees, stood down allowing the Eifion MP Ellis W. Davies to be adopted as the new Liberal candidate. Lloyd George, however, was totally opposed to Davies and instead gave the 'Coupon' to his supporter C.E. Breeze. Davies consequently then stood as an Independent Liberal and came third to Breeze with Labour coming second.¹⁹ This Lloyd George-inspired bitterness continued to lead to internal Liberal party feuds in Wales, including the infamous Cardigan 1921 by-election where Liberal fought Liberal as the only candidates in the contest.

The advance of socialism, however, proved in the short term to be a greater threat to Liberals in industrial Wales than disunity within their own ranks. The miners' trade union leaders distanced themselves from the Lib-Lab party of Mabon with its close links to Liberalism.

They moved on to syndicalism and then to communism as their ideology,²⁰ something which Liberalism could never endorse. With the electoral pacts over, the 1918 'Coupon' election saw the Labour Party take almost a third of the seats in Wales, whilst the Coalition Liberals took just over half. In the next general election (1922) the position was reversed, with Labour now holding more than half the seats. Even when the Liberals contested virtually every seat in Wales in 1929 they failed to gain more than a third of the Welsh vote (see Table 4).

At the same time as Labour was advancing electorally the Welsh Constituency Liberal Associations, especially in the industrial south, were collapsing entirely or at the best becoming inactive shadows of their former selves, as Liberal activists drifted over to the Labour camp. As the historian C.P. Cook noted:²¹

Many constituencies on the eve of the 1923 election presented a dismal sight: thus, in November 1923 the Cardiff Liberals possessed no agent, no executive and no offices within the city. At Merthyr, the Liberal organisation had collapsed; it was equally non-existent at Newport. In Abertillery neither Liberal nor Conservative had done any propaganda work in the last twelve months. Likewise, nothing had been heard of the Liberals in the Bedwelty division; although Bedwelty produced an eleventh-hour Liberal in 1923, none had appeared in the constituency before then.

Whilst Liberalism in South Wales was disappearing a new generation of Welsh politicians was emerging. *Cymru Fydd*²² had produced a group of radical Welsh Liberal MPs of whom Lloyd George was the most prominent. A generation later, young miners, railwaymen and steelworkers were studying at a new centre of political change, the Labour College (1919–28). They embraced the view of the Welsh MP Keir Hardie, who believed that the Celtic nations of Britain 'were peculiarly suited to a socialist form of society'.²³ These new 'Red Radicals' cited the Welsh co-operative pioneer Robert Owen and his disciple R. J. Derfel, the apostle of community socialism, as inspirations to their own socialism.²⁴ The radical Welsh Liberal MPs such as Tom Ellis, David Lloyd George and Frank Edwards were also seen as models for this new breed of politicians.²⁵ The new 'Red Radicals', including James Griffiths,²⁶ Idris Cox,²⁷ Ness Edwards,²⁸ Aneurin Bevan²⁹ and Morgan Phillips,³⁰ were to play as important a part in shaping the Labour Party as Sir William Harcourt, David Lloyd George and Clement Davies did the Liberal Party.

Initially these 'Red Radicals' in the Labour Party came from outside the Liberal movement. Over time, however, they were to be joined by those who left the Liberal movement itself. One of the first defections was that of the Liberal radical nationalist MP of pre-war years, E. T. John (East Denbighshire). John was a

Table 4: The Welsh Liberals' electoral record 1918–29

Election year	Percentage of Welsh seats won	Percentage of votes	Percentage of seats contested
1918 (Coalition)	53	39.3	61
1918 (Liberals)	6	9.7	25
1922 (Coalition)	25	26.7	58
1922 (Liberals)	6	7.6	33
1923 Liberals*	33	36.9	89
1924 Liberals	31	31.1	69
1929 Liberals	27	33.6	97

* Includes one Independent Liberal win in Ceredigion

Table 5: Liberal losses to socialism and the consequences of the break-up of coalition government

Seat	Year of Loss	Seat	Year of Loss
Aberavon	1922	Llanelli	1922
Aberdare	1918	Merthyr Tydfil	1922
Abertillery	1918	Neath	1922
Anglesey	1918 (1)	Newport	1922 (by-election)
Bedwellte	1918	Pontypool	1918
Caerphilly	1918	Pontypridd	1922 (byelection)
Carnarfonshire	1922 (2)	Swansea East	1922
Ebbw Vale	1918	Wrexham (3)	1922

(1) Regained by the Liberals 1923 – 1951

(2) Regained by the Liberals 1923 – 1945

(3) Regained by the Liberals 1924 – 1929, 1931 – 1935

passionate Liberal Welsh nationalist who then became a Labour Welsh nationalist – the prototype for the Labour Welsh nationalist candidates whom a generation later would defeat the North West Wales Liberal MPs.

A generation on from E.T. John one of these Labour-defeated Liberal MPs in turn defected to the Labour Party, in what was perhaps the most damaging blow ever to occur to North Wales Liberal fortunes. On 26 April 1955, amongst much publicity, Megan Lloyd George announced her conversion to the Labour Party. Megan had always insisted she was a ‘radical’. She, together with her fellow Welsh radical, Emrys Roberts, and every other Parliamentary Liberal radical, had lost their seats by 1951. As the electorate no longer seemed ready to endorse any Liberal radical MP for a place at Westminster, for Megan and some other Liberal radicals, joining Labour was no longer a problem. She declared that: ‘in the changed situation of today it is only in the Labour Party that I can be true to the radical position’.³¹

With the Welsh Liberal radicals removed, the Welsh Liberal Party came under the control of those who had little time for socialism. The Reverend W.F. Phillips, part of Liberal nonconformity, had summed up their thoughts about Labour and socialism in 1913:

What is Socialism? Socialism is a social revolution which is to

unseat the King, to destroy the family, to deny individuals their freedom, and to expel God from his creation and His Son from the life of humanity.³²

Even up until the mid 1960s many remaining Welsh Liberals continued to regard ‘Socialism as akin to Satanism’.³³

The Liberals failed to compete with the radical and revolutionary appeal of Labour had to the working classes. Many of the working-class voters in South and North Wales had come in from England and had little connection with the Chapel or much sympathy for Welsh nationalism and its aspirations. Whilst Liberalism offered incremental change, Labour offered the revolutionary quick fix. The miners and steelworkers were in the mood for a revolutionary change, which their leaders saw as taking place either through Communist revolution or at the very least the Labour Party. At the same time Labour built up its campaigning presence in all Welsh constituencies.³⁴ As a result the working-class vote was increasingly sucked into Labour’s grasp. Even knowing how to behave with their former political allies was a dilemma for Welsh Liberals. On 22 April 1924, Lloyd George summed up the dilemma to his Caernarfonshire constituents when he said:

If we dare to criticise the Labour Government then we are visited

with ‘peevish resentment’. Liberals are expected to be the oxen to drag Labour over the rough roads of Parliament for two or three years, and at the end of the journey, when there is no further use of us, we are to be slaughtered.³⁵

Sir Alfred Mond wrote to Lloyd George in 1923 that Labour was coming to regard the South Wales coalfields as ‘the Eldorado of their Utopian hopes’.³⁶ Lloyd George’s attempts deal with socialism was to try to radicalise Liberal policy through his rural and industrial policies, the Yellow and Green Books. This did not, however, result in success at the ballot box and only succeeded in driving Sir Alfred Mond (Carmarthen) and other anti-socialist elements of his own Welsh party directly into the arms of the Conservatives or, later on, to the National Liberals.

The legacy of the First World War, the rise of socialism and the collapse of the coalition government helped the Liberals lose a massive sixteen seats in Wales (see Table 5). The Labour leader James Ramsay MacDonald’s victory in Aberavon in 1922 was symbolic of the passing of South Wales from Liberal into Labour hands. Here he pushed the Coalition Liberals, who had previously held the seat, into third place behind the Conservatives. Whilst some of those seats lost in 1922, such as Anglesey, Carnarfonshire and Swansea East, were regained again, most were not.

THE SLOW DEATH OF LIBERAL WALES 1906 – 1979

3) *The splits within the Liberal Party and the failure of the Welsh party machine*

After the impact of the Labour Party on Liberal electoral fortunes, continued and new splits within the Liberal Party were to help remove a substantial number of the Liberals' remaining seats. The first major divide, between Asquithian and Lloyd Georgite Liberals, did not cause much of a problem in Wales, and ended in 1923.³⁷ Eight years later a new civil war, with more severe repercussions, broke out, as the 1929–31 MacDonald Labour government broke up over the problems caused by the Great Depression. The problems of whether to support socialism or seek to defeat it split the right of the Liberal Party from the left in Wales and elsewhere. In September 1931, Sir John Simon left the party with nineteen other right-wing Liberals. A further split between Lloyd George and the remaining Liberals who followed Sir Herbert Samuel, led to three Liberal factions fighting the 1931 general election, though in Wales all the Liberal factions combined only fought 20 of the 36 seats (they had fought 35 as a combined party in 1929).

Across Wales the splits between the Simonites, who now stood as Liberal Nationals, and the Samuelites, who stood as Liberals, was to cause havoc in the Liberal Associations. The leading North Wales Liberal and friend of Lloyd George, Thomas Waterhouse, stated that in Flintshire:

We have too many Whigs left in the Liberal Party. We want a radical programme and to go forward with courage. The great word 'Liberal' has been prostituted by men like Sir John Simon with their 'Liberal Nationals'. The Liberal Nationals were out to destroy the Liberal Party. Their intention at the next election is secured with Conservative votes. To-day we are fighting from within the party to Radicalise it ... we want rid of all the Liberal

Nationals first, and all the Whigish element afterwards, and the sooner they go the better.³⁸

Both the Flintshire Liberals and other North Wales Liberal Executives, such as Denbighshire, refused to endorse the Liberal National candidates. Apart from the fall in the number of contested seats, however, the civil war of the 1931 general election had no immediate impact; there were no Liberal National – Liberal contests in Wales. In 1935, however, splits opened up in Welsh Liberalism which would never be healed. One example was in Denbigh where the Liberal National Dr J.H. Morris Jones wrote of the selection:

The Liberal feud in Denbigh intensified ... After a boisterous two hours' meeting my friend (former Denbigh Coalition Liberal MP John Cledwyn (J.C.) Davies) was adopted as the Liberal candidate by sixty-six against forty-two. When the atmosphere had become a little calmer, I said: 'The vote has gone against me in this room. I shall now appeal to the electors.' All my forty-two supporters, including the Chairman, my agent, Mr Sydney Watkins, and other officers remained behind. We formed ourselves into an Election Committee. The fight was on. The Conservatives meeting the next day unanimously endorsed my candidature.³⁹

Morris-Jones won his Denbigh seat with a 5043 (14.5 per cent) majority over Davies. Three other Welsh Liberal Nationals – Frederick Llewellyn-Jones (Flintshire), Lewis Jones (Swansea West) and Clement Davies (Montgomeryshire) – won their seats without Liberal opposition. Only Montgomeryshire eventually returned to the Liberal fold. Flintshire was finally lost when the Liberal Party Constituency Executive fell out with the popular incumbent MP Llewellyn-Jones over his decision to join the Liberal Nationals,

only to reunite with him again but too late for his reselection in the 1935 general election; the Conservatives then won the seat. Lewis Jones stayed at Westminster for another decade, but in 1945 he lost his Swansea West seat and failed to regain it in 1950. Jones therefore became the last 'Liberal' MP for a seat in South Wales until Jenny Willot gained Cardiff Central in the May 2005 general election.

Clashes between Liberals and Liberal Nationals proved to be the most destructive for the post-war Liberal Party in Denbigh. As noted earlier, Morris-Jones beat the Liberal candidate by 5043 votes in 1935, as the Conservative vote went directly to him – an outcome which was repeated in 1945, when Morris-Jones beat the Liberal candidate E.H. Garner Evans into second place. At the next election Garner Evans himself defected to the Liberal Nationals and Conservatives and beat the Liberal Glyn Tegai Hughes by just 1209 votes (2.7 per cent). This close contest made Denbigh the only National Liberal⁴⁰ – Liberal marginal seat in the country. Right up until the general election of 1959 the National Liberal and Conservative candidate in Denbigh was able to take enough Liberal votes to ensure that they could not reclaim their former seat. Until its demise in the boundary changes of 1983 Denbigh remained the best example of the Welsh Liberal phoenix refusing to rise from the ashes of North Wales Liberalism.

There was to be one further footnote to the Liberal Nationals' toll of Welsh Liberal seats. In 1945 Gwilym Lloyd George (Pembroke) stood as a 'Liberal National and Conservative' and did not leave the wartime coalition government, like his fellow Liberal and Labour MPs. Although Gwilym continued to receive copies of the Liberal whip until 1946 and fought under the 'Liberal and Conservative' banner in 1950, with a great emphasis on the 'Liberal' part of

After the impact of the Labour Party on Liberal electoral fortunes, continued and new splits within the Liberal Party were to help remove a substantial number of the Liberals' remaining seats.

Table 6: The Welsh Liberals' electoral record 1935–50

Election year	Percentage of Welsh seats won	Percentage of votes	Percentage of seats contested
1931 (Coalition)	11	6.9	11
1931 (Liberals)	11	14.6	31
1931 (Lloyd George)	11	6.6	11
1935 (Liberal National)	8.3	4.1	8.3
1935 (Liberals)	19.4	18.3	36
1945 (Liberals)	19.4	15.2	48
1945 (Liberal National)	8.3	4.8	11
1950 (Liberals)	14	12.6	58
1950 (National Liberal and Conservative)	2.7	6.4	17

Table 7: Liberal losses to splits or defections within the party

Seat	Year of Loss	Reason
University of Wales	1923 (1)	Two Liberal factions split the vote – Labour wins the seat
Cardigan	1923 (2)	Independent Liberal wins seat
Carmarthen	1926 (3)	Liberal defects to Conservatives
Pembroke	1945	Liberal defects to Liberal National
Denbigh	1931	Liberal National wins seat
Flint	1931	Liberal National wins seat
Montgomery	1931 (4)	Liberal National wins seat
Swansea West	1931	Liberal National wins seat
Carmarthen	1957	Liberal defector to Labour wins seat

(1) Regained by Liberals 1924–50

(2) Independent Liberal became Liberal 1924–66, 1974–92, 2005 – present

(3) Regained by Liberals 1931–35, 1945–57

(4) Liberal National becomes Liberal 1942–79, 1983 – present

his nomination, he never again attended a Liberal parliamentary meeting.⁴¹ Another Welsh constituency had been lost to Welsh Liberalism. In 1938 his father had predicted that 'Gwilym will go to the right and Megan to the left',⁴² and just a few months after his own death this prophecy was beginning to come true.

The Liberals lost nine seats in Wales as a direct result of splits within the party (see Table 7). Although seats like Cardigan, Carmarthen, Montgomery and the University of Wales would come back into the fold, the others would not.

One additional factor involving divisions within the party needs to be touched upon – the divide between the North and South Wales Liberal Federation which continued from their foundation in the late 1880s to their dissolution in 1966. In the

1890s the South Wales Federation rejected the opportunity to unite with the North Wales Federation as one mass Welsh party under *Cymru Fydd*. After this rejection there was little trust between the two federations and although they were nominally under the Welsh Liberal Council, and then the Liberal Party of Wales' umbrella, both went their separate ways on matters of policy and campaigning. Both federations would issue contradictory statements and policies throughout their existence, much to the frustration of Welsh Liberal MPs. The South was also particularly reluctant to put forward candidates in elections, preferring instead to bide its time for the 'right candidate or right moment' on which to spend its sparse resources.⁴³

As a result of rivalries and poor electoral ambitions, in 1959 the Liberals contested under a quarter

of the Welsh seats; in 1964 this proportion went up to one third, but it fell back again in 1966 to just over a quarter. In contrast to the Liberals, in 1966, Labour and the Conservatives were now contesting all Welsh seats, and even Plaid Cymru fought over half. Such a poor record of electoral competition, combined with the loss of Cardigan in the general election of 1966 and the failure once again to regain Carmarthen in the 1966 by-election, spurred the remaining Liberals to end the reign of the Welsh Federations, and they were united together under the federal Welsh Liberal Party banner in September 1966. Although this did not end internal party differences, it did make them considerably less public and helped bring the number of Welsh Liberal candidates for the 1970 general election up to just over 50 per cent.

4) *The arrival of Plaid Cymru and the withering away of the remaining Welsh Liberals*

In 1931 eight Welsh Liberal MPs (other than Liberal Nationals) remained. Four Samuelites were elected: R. T. Evans (Carmarthen), Rhys Hopkin Morris (Cardigan), Ernest Evans (University of Wales) and H. Hadyn Jones (Meirionnydd). Of these seats, the University of Wales seat was to stay with the Liberals until its abolition in 1950. Carmarthen, Meirionnydd and eventually Cardigan were to fall to Labour and later on to Plaid Cymru. The loss of seats in Carmarthen and Cardigan was aided by the withdrawal of the Conservative agreement not to contest these seats, which channelled anti-socialist votes back to the Conservatives.

The rise of Plaid Cymru posed something of a puzzle to Welsh Liberals. In the late nineteenth century the leading Welsh Liberal MP Henry Richard had seen Liberalism and Welsh nationalism as going hand in hand. As K.O. Morgan noted: 'To a marked degree, Liberalism and nationalism were fused, and in a real sense

THE SLOW DEATH OF LIBERAL WALES 1906 – 1979

Table 8: Welsh Liberal seats lost to Labour due to the ending of two-party contests which in turn fell to Plaid Cymru

Seat	Year of loss	Fell to Labour	Fell to Plaid Cymru
Anglesey	1951	1951 (1)	1987 (2)
Caernarfon Boroughs	1945	1945	1974
Cardigan	1966 (3)	1959	1992
Carmarthen	1957	1957	1966
Merionnydd	1951	1951	1974

(1) Fell to Conservatives in 1979

(2) Regained by Labour at Westminster in 2001 but held by Plaid Cymru in the Welsh Assembly election of 2003

(3) Regained by Liberals 1974–92 and 2005

Table 9 : In these seats Welsh Liberals lost due to the ending of two-party contests

Seat	Year of loss	End of two-party contest or unopposed seat
Cardiff East	1922	1910 (January)
Swansea West	1923 (1)	1910 (December)
Flint	1924 (2)	1924
Brecon and Radnor	1924 (3)	1924
Pembroke	1924 (4)	1923
Montgomeryshire	1979 (5)	1951

(1) Regained by Liberals 1924–29, Liberal Nationals 1931–45

(2) Regained by Liberals 1929–31, Liberal Nationals 1931–45

(3) Regained by Liberals 1985–92, 1997 – present

(4) Regained by Liberals 1929–50

(5) Regained by Liberals 1983–present

Table 10: The Welsh Liberals' electoral record 1951–79

Election year	Percentage of seats won	Percentage of votes	Percentage of seats contested
1951 (Liberal National and Conservative)	3	3.3	6
1951 (Liberals)	8	7.7	25
1955 (Liberals)	8	7.3	27
1955 (Liberal National and Conservative)	3	3.2	11
1959 (Liberals)	6	5.3	22
1959 (Liberal National and Conservative)	3	3	8.3
1964 (Liberals)	6	7.3	33
1966 (Liberals)	3	6.3	28
1970 (Liberals)	3	6.8	53
1974 (Liberals) [Feb]	6	16	86
1974 (Liberals) [Oct]	6	15.5	100
1979 (Liberals)	3	10.6	78

the Liberals were the party of Wales and the reason for its growing national consciousness'.⁴⁴

Liberals therefore felt initially that Plaid Cymru was a benign force, which followed the same course of the nationalism they

had followed for generations.⁴⁵ There were even some attempts to form a Liberal – Plaid Cymru alliance in the late 1950s and 1960s.⁴⁶ As Plaid contested more seats in Welsh-speaking Wales their presence began to cause

more concern and they became much more of a perceived threat to the Liberal vote. When Plaid Cymru's Gwynfor Evans contested Meirionnydd in 1945 he gained 2448 votes (10.8 per cent), more than twenty times the newly elected Liberal MP Emrys Roberts' 112 (0.4 per cent) vote majority. At the time, Liberals viewed Plaid Cymru's votes as coming straight off their own, and when Plaid failed to stand in seats it was felt that their vote would automatically go to the Liberals. Welsh Liberals, after all, also had a pedigree as a 'Welsh Nationalist Party' and were at the heart of Welsh political movements such as the Campaign for a Welsh Parliament. In 1951 Plaid Cymru did not stand in Meirionnydd but the Liberal MP Emrys Roberts still lost the seat to Labour. The Plaid vote went directly to Labour as nationalist voters supported a socialist Labour Party rather than a nationalist Liberal Party. After the election Jo Grimond wrote to Emrys Roberts: 'I thought that with no nationalist standing you were safe. It seems to have been a most cruel stroke that Labour should have gained the votes.'⁴⁷ One Liberal member, however, laid the blame for the defeat directly at the Liberal Party's own door:

It's all very well blaming Plaid Cymru, but the truth is that we have not kept our organisation in order. We did less work than any other parties between elections and therefore a lot of blame should be placed on the Liberals of Meirionnydd, myself included.⁴⁸

The Liberals pulled themselves together in Meirionnydd and for the next three elections were within a whisper of taking the seat from Labour. In the 1970 general election Plaid Cymru's Dafydd Wigley took the second position, ahead of the Liberals, followed in 1974 by Dafydd Elis Thomas taking the seat for Plaid Cymru. The Liberal opportunity

in Meirionnydd disappeared forever with Thomas's victory.

Ironically, it was events in Meirionnydd that were also to cost the Liberals their seat in Cardigan. Towards the end of 1964 Elystan Morgan, who had previously stood for Plaid Cymru, defected to the Labour Party. The Liberals viewed his departure from Merionnydd as an indication that Plaid would not stand at the next election, giving them a chance to gain Plaid votes and retake the seat.⁴⁹ Plaid did find another candidate, however, and the defector Morgan went instead to contest Cardigan as the Labour candidate. Here the Liberal MP Roderic Bowen had fallen out with his parliamentary colleagues over whether he should become the Speaker. He had been grooming himself for this position for a number of years, which only added to his constituency reputation as something of an 'absentee landlord' MP; by 1964 he had reduced the former Liberal stronghold to a Liberal – Labour marginal.⁵⁰ Elystan Morgan was to remove Bowen from political life for good by 523 votes (1.7 per cent) in 1966. Although eight years later the 'Welsh Nationalist' Liberal Geraint Howells was to win the seat back from Labour it was once again lost in 1992, this time to Plaid Cymru. The seat remained a two-party competition between Plaid Cymru and the Liberal Democrats – the only such former Liberal seat in Welsh-speaking Wales to do so – and was regained for Liberalism by Mark Williams in 2005.

Three other Liberal MPs held seats in Welsh-speaking Wales as members of the Lloyd George 'family group' in 1931: David (Caernarfon Boroughs) Megan (Anglesey) and Major Goronwy Owen (Caernarfon), who had married Gwilym's sister-in-law. Caernarfon Boroughs and Caernarfon were lost in 1945 and Anglesey in 1951. In these seats, or their successor seats, within a decade of their loss the Liberals were no longer able to mount an effec-

tive challenge to Labour. In time all these seats were to fall to Plaid Cymru.⁵¹ For a time there seemed a chance of regaining Conwy, where the Welsh-speaking 'Welsh Nationalist' Liberal candidate, the Reverend Roger Roberts, pulled the Liberals firmly into second position behind the Conservatives between 1983 and 1992. In the event, however, the seat was to fall to Labour at the general election of 1997 and to Plaid Cymru at the Assembly election of 1999, which ironically repeated the pattern of the Liberals' fate in all their Welsh-speaking seats (see Table 8).

Another problem for Welsh Liberals was that their core vote was quickly weakened by multi-party competition; the greater the competition the greater the dissolution of the Liberal vote. Some Liberal seats fell as soon as they were exposed to more than one other political party (see Tables 8 and 9). Anglesey, for instance, was won by a 1081 (4.4 per cent) majority in 1945; the 1950 election saw the intervention of the Conservatives with the Liberals still holding on, but the 1951 election saw a doubling of the Conservative vote in the seat and its loss by the Liberals to Labour. The pattern was repeated again and again in Wales; Liberals did not have enough loyal voters to sustain them in three- or four-party competitions. It was not until the 1970s that the Welsh Liberal vote began to rise again (see Table 10).

Conclusions

Liberal Wales was important to the British Liberal Party as a whole because for a long while it represented one of the most solid bastions of Liberal support. At various times it also helped provide the party's parliamentary leadership. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, although the Liberals had all but abandoned industrial South Wales, there was the hope that Liberal Wales would once again return if only in the North

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and West. This was not to occur, though Meirionnydd, Denbigh and Wrexham frequently became near-misses at general elections.

At the general election of 1966, with the loss of Cardigan, the Welsh Liberals were reduced to just one seat, Montgomeryshire. One effect of this, however, was an attempt, in September 1966, to revitalise the old Liberal Party of Wales. The feuding North and South Wales Liberal Federations were dissolved and merged into the Welsh Liberal Party. In the decades that followed the Welsh Liberals continued to fight desperately to save their party from political annihilation. Then, in 1974, the Liberals regained Cardigan, their first successful electoral fightback since 1945. In 1979, Montgomeryshire, the last Liberal seat to remain constantly in Liberal hands since 1906, fell to the Conservatives;⁵² once more the Liberals were reduced to just one seat, Cardigan. But they still retained a foothold in Wales.

Welsh Liberalism had once seemed indomitable, and indeed it was the only area of the United Kingdom where it was not totally extinguished in the twentieth century. Over the course of three-quarters of a century, 1906–79, the Welsh Liberals were squeezed between the rising tides of socialism in the form of Labour, Welsh Nationalism in the form of Plaid Cymru and the varying fortunes of the Conservatives in Wales. Internal feuds which took the anti-socialist Liberals off into the National Liberals and Conservatives further undermined the party. That it survived at all was due partially to the ability of Welsh Liberal barrister MPs, such as Alex Carlile, Clement Davies and Emlyn Hooson personally to support the Welsh party. It was also down to other politicians and Welsh party organisers, including Geraint Howells, Martin Thomas, Roger Roberts and Richard Livesey, who were cultured in the values of Liberalism and did not seek another political party to fulfil their own aspirations.⁵³ In turn

they were able to pass the Liberal baton on to a new generation of Liberal Democrat politicians who have helped to stave off the threat of imminent electoral extinction more effectively and, in 2005, to produce something of a mini-Liberal revival in the Westminster elections.⁵⁴

The decline of Welsh fortunes saw the leadership of the party pass from Wales to Scotland in the form of Jo Grimond, David Steel and Charles Kennedy, and to the West Country, in Jeremy Thorpe and Paddy Ashdown. This only highlighted the successful revival of Liberal fortunes outside Wales. The Liberal Wales of Lloyd George had indeed faded but it took three-quarters of a century to do so, far slower than anywhere else. It provided Welsh political history with the spectacle of – the slow death of Liberal Wales.⁵⁵

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The Liberal Wales of Lloyd George had indeed faded but it took three-quarters of a century to do so, far slower than anywhere else.

1 The one MP in Wales who did not take the Liberal whip, Keir Hardie, was in a two-member constituency, Merthyr Tydfil; the other member, David Alfred Thomas, was a Liberal MP.
 2 Cited in Alan Watkins, *The Liberal Dilemma* (MacGibbon and Kee, 1966), p. 57.
 3 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation, Wales 1880-1980* (Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 52.
 4 Graham V. Nemes, 'Stuart Rendel and Welsh Liberal Political Organisation in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Welsh History Review*, Vol 9, No 4, December 1979, p. 467.
 5 Hywel D. Davies, *The Welsh Nationalist Party: A Call to Nationhood* (University of Wales Press, 1983), p. 3.
 6 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Lloyd George, Family Letters 1885-1936* (University of Wales Press, Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 13.
 7 Kenneth O Morgan, *The Age of Lloyd George: The Liberal Party and British*

Politics, 1890-1929, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1971), p. 119.
 8 Martin Thomas contested Wrexham five times. A founder of the Welsh Liberal Party in 1966, he held many posts in the Welsh Liberal and Federal Liberal Party. He was ennobled Lord Thomas of Gresford in 1996.
 9 Recorder at Crown Courts in Merthyr, Swansea and Cardiff. He was a passionate devolutionist and served on the Kilibrandon Commission which recommended a Parliament for Wales. He twice contested Carmarthen and then Denbigh, coming second all three times.
 10 Barrister and first Counsel-General of the National Assembly for Wales, contested Anglesey in 1970, led the general election campaigns in Wales for the Welsh Liberals in 1974 and 1979 and was a leading light in the Welsh Liberal Summer Schools.
 11 Lord Livsey and Lord Roberts being the exceptions.
 12 Lords Hooson and Thomas to author.
 13 William Abraham adopted the bardic name of Gwilym Mabon in 1869; he was subsequently known by the surname of Mabon.
 14 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales In British Politics 1868-1922* (University of Wales Press, 1980), p. 187.
 15 Eddie May, 'The Mosaic of Labour Politics, 1900-1918' in Duncan Tanner et al, *Labour Party in Wales 1900-2000* (University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 74.
 16 Ibid.
 17 Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914-1935* (Collins, 1968), p. 318.
 18 Roy Jenkins, *Asquith* (Collins, 1964), p. 505.
 19 Cyril Parry, 'Gwynedd Politics, 1900-1920: The Rise of a Labour Party', *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 4, No.2 (1968) pp. 313-28.
 20 Davies, *The Welsh Nationalist Party: A Call to Nationhood*, p. 12.
 21 C. P. Cook, 'Wales and the General Election of 1923', *Welsh History Review*, Vol 4, No 2 (1968), p. 392.
 22 The Welsh Nationalist movement of the 1880s and 1890s that had almost united the Welsh nation under one nationalist Liberal political banner but had ended in failure and the decline in nationalist fervour for several generations.
 23 Davies, *The Welsh Nationalist Party: A Call to Nationhood*, p.10.
 24 Tanner, D, Williams, C and Hopkins, D, *The Labour Party in Wales 1900 - 2000*, University of Wales Press, 2000
 25 Ibid.
 26 MP for Llanelli, Member of the Attlee Government (1945-51) and the Wilson Government (1964-66), first Secretary of State for Wales.
 27 Editor of the *Daily Worker* 1935-37.
 28 MP for Caerphilly, Member of Attlee Government (1945-51).

29 MP for Tredegar, founder of the National Health Service and Member of Attlee Government (1945-51), hero of many Labour Socialists.
 30 General Secretary of the Labour Party 1944-62.
 31 Watkins, *The Liberal Dilemma*, p. 75.
 32 W.F Phillips, *Y Draig Goch Ynte'r Faner Goch* (Cardiff, 1913), p. 16.
 33 Glyn Tegai Hughes, Lord Hooson and Lord Thomas to author.
 34 Parry, 'Gwynedd Politics, 1900-1920: The Rise of a Labour Party'.
 35 Frank Owen, *Tempestuous Journey: Lloyd George His Life and Times* (Hutchinson, 1954), p. 678.
 36 Morgan, *Lloyd George, Family Letters 1885-1936*, p. 304.
 37 Only two Liberal seats were lost as result of the two Liberal factions splitting the vote: the University of Wales to Labour and Cardigan to an Independent Liberal. Both came back into the Liberal fold in 1923.
 38 Sian Jones, 'The Political Dynamics of North East Wales, with special reference to the Liberal Party 1918-1935' (Ph.D thesis, University of Bangor, 2003), p. 218.
 39 Henry Morris-Jones, *Doctor in the Whips' Room* (Robert Hale Limited, 1955), p. 100.
 40 The Liberal Nationals became the National Liberals in 1948.
 41 *Western Telegraph and Cymric Times*, 2 March 1950, p. 8; and Jorgen Scott Rasmussen, *The Liberal Party* (Constable, 1965), p. 11.
 42 Andrew Sweeting, 'Gwilym Lloyd-George', in Duncan Brack et al, *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (Politicos, 1998), p. 239.
 43 North Wales Liberal Federation and related Liberal correspondence held at the National Library of Wales' political archives support this view again and again, as did the author's interviews with many former Liberals of the pre-1966 period.
 44 Kenneth. O Morgan, 'The New Liberalism and the Challenge of Labour: The Welsh Experience, 1885-1929', *The Welsh History Review*, June 1973, p. 290.
 45 Glyn Tegai Hughes (Chairman of the Liberal Party of Wales 1958-60) to author.
 46 Glyn Tegai Hughes and Lord Hooson to author.
 47 Andrew Edwards, 'Political Change in North-West Wales 1960-1974: The Decline of the Labour Party and the Rise of Plaid Cymru' (Ph.D thesis, Bangor University, 2002), p. 86.
 48 Ibid., p. 86.
 49 *The Liberal News* 15 October 1965, p. 7.
 50 J. Graham Jones, 'Grimond's Rival: Biography of Roderic Bowen MP', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* 34/35, Spring/Summer 2002, pp. 26-33.
 51 Anglesey's Westminster political

history is mixed. It is the only Welsh seat to be held by all four main Welsh political parties since 1945: Liberal 1945–51, Labour 1951–83, Conservative 1983–87, Plaid Cymru 1987–2001, Labour 2001–.

- 52 A Liberal seat for nearly a century, and the seat of Liberal leader (1945–56) Clement Davies, 1929–62. The seat fell to the Conservatives due to two main factors: the unpopularity of the Lib–Lab Pact of 1977–78, and

Emlyn Hooson's enthusiastic backing of Welsh devolution, which proved to be an unpopular cause within the constituency – Lord Hooson to author.

- 53 Russell Deacon, 'Interview with Geraint Howells (1925–2004)', *Journal of Liberal History* 44, Autumn 2004, pp. 22–23.
- 54 The May 2005 general election saw the Welsh Liberal Democrats break out of their Powys Westminster

stronghold when they won Ceredigion and Cardiff Central. In the process they replaced Plaid Cymru as the official opposition to Labour in Wales, at Westminster. It was their best Welsh result since 1950.

- 55 For a post-war history of the Welsh Liberal Party also see: J. Graham Jones, 'The Liberal Party and Wales, 1945–79', *The Welsh History Review*, Vol 16, No 3, June 1993.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

If you can help any of the individuals listed below with sources, contacts, or any other information — or if you know anyone who can — please pass on details to them. Details of other research projects in progress should be sent to the Editor (see page 3) for inclusion here.

Hubert Beaumont MP. After pursuing candidatures in his native Northumberland southward, Beaumont finally fought and won Eastbourne in 1906 as a 'Radical' (not a Liberal). How many Liberals in the election fought under this label and did they work as a group afterwards? *Lord Beaumont of Whitley, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW; beaumontt@parliament.uk.*

Letters of Richard Cobden (1804–65). Knowledge of the whereabouts of any letters written by Cobden in private hands, autograph collections, and obscure locations in the UK and abroad for a complete edition of his letters. (For further details of the Cobden Letters Project, please see www.uea.ac.uk/his/research/projects/cobden). *Dr Anthony Howe, School of History, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ; a.c.howe@uea.ac.uk.*

Cornish Methodism and Cornish political identity, 1918–1960s. Researching the relationship through oral history. *Kayleigh Milden, Institute of Cornish Studies, Hayne Corfe Centre, Sunningdale, Truro TR1 3ND; KMSMilden@aol.com.*

Liberal foreign policy in the 1930s. Focusing particularly on Liberal anti-appeasers. *Michael Kelly, 12 Collinbridge Road, Whitewell, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim BT36 7SN; mmjkelly@msn.com.*

Liberal policy towards Austria-Hungary, 1905–16. *Andrew Gardner, 17 Upper Ramsey Walk, Canonbury, London N1 2RP; agardner@ssees.ac.uk.*

The Liberal revival 1959–64. Focusing on both political and social factors. Any personal views, relevant information or original material from Liberal voters, councillors or activists of the time would be very gratefully received. *Holly Towell, 52a Cardigan Road, Headingley, Leeds LS6 3BJ; his3ht@leeds.ac.uk.*

The rise of the Liberals in Richmond (Surrey) 1964–2002. Interested in hearing from former councillors, activists, supporters, opponents, with memories and insights concerning one of the most successful local organisations. What factors helped the Liberal Party rise from having no councillors in 1964 to 49 out of 52 seats in 1986? Any literature or news cuttings from the period welcome. *Ian Hunter, 9 Defoe Avenue, Kew, Richmond TW9 4DL; 07771 785 795; ianhunter@kew2.com.*

Liberal politics in Sussex, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight 1900–14. The study of electoral progress and subsequent disappointment. Research includes comparisons of localised political trends, issues and preferred interests as against national trends. Any information, specifically on Liberal candidates in the area in the two general elections of 1910, would be most welcome. Family papers especially appreciated. *Ian Ivatt, 84 High Street, Steyning, West Sussex BN44 3JT; ianjivatt@tinyonline.co.uk.*

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

Recruitment of Liberals into the Conservative Party, 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. *Cllr Nick Cott, 1a Henry Street, Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE3 1DQ; N.M.Cott@ncl.ac.uk.*

Life of Wilfrid Roberts (1900–91). Roberts was Liberal MP for Cumberland North (now Penrith and the Border) from 1935 until 1950 and came from a wealthy and prominent local Liberal family; his father had been an MP. Roberts was a passionate internationalist, and was a powerful advocate for refugee children in the Spanish civil war. His parliamentary career is coterminous with the nadir of the Liberal Party. Roberts joined the Labour Party in 1956, becoming a local councillor in Carlisle and the party's candidate for the Hexham constituency in the 1959 general election. I am currently in the process of collating information on the different strands of Roberts' life and political career. Any assistance at all would be much appreciated. *John Reardon; jbreardon75@hotmail.com.*

Student radicalism at Warwick University. Particular the files affair in 1970. Interested in talking to anybody who has information about Liberal Students at Warwick in the period 1965–70 and their role in campus politics. *Ian Bradshaw, History Department, University of Warwick, CV4 7AL; I.Bradshaw@warwick.ac.uk*

Welsh Liberal Tradition – A History of the Liberal Party in Wales 1868–2003. Research spans thirteen decades of Liberal history in Wales but concentrates on the post-1966 formation of the Welsh Federal Party. Any memories and information concerning the post-1966 era or even before welcomed. The research is to be published in book form by Welsh Academic Press. *Dr Russell Deacon, Centre for Humanities, University of Wales Institute Cardiff, Cyncoed Campus, Cardiff CF23 6XD; rdeacon@uwic.ac.uk.*

Aneurin Williams and Liberal internationalism and pacificism, 1900–22. A study of this radical and pacifist MP (Plymouth 1910; North West Durham/Consett 1914–22) who was actively involved in League of Nations Movement, Armenian nationalism, international co-operation, pro-Boer etc. Any information relating to him and location of any papers/correspondence welcome. *Barry Dackombe. 32 Ashburnham Road, Ampthill, Beds, MK45 2RH; dackombe@tesco.net.*

A SQUIRE IN THE THE BIOGRAPHY OF

When Lord Kimberley died on 8 April 1902, he was most commonly remembered as Gladstone's loyal lieutenant: competent, hard-working, high-minded, and self-sacrificing. By praising these very civilian virtues in the context of war-charged, turn-of-the-century high politics, his twentieth-century eulogists were politely wondering exactly why Kimberley had mattered. After all, as one journalist wrote, 'he was as far removed from the younger school of statesmen as if he had lived and served his country in the days of Queen Anne'.¹ **John Powell** examines Kimberley's record.

Opposite:
John Wodehouse,
1st Earl
Kimberley, in
1862

None could deny that his record of service was impressive. He had been Minister Plenipotentiary to Russia (1856–58) in the tense days following the Crimean War; earned an Earldom as Viceroy of Ireland (1864–66); and sat in every Liberal cabinet between 1868 and his death, serving successively as Lord Privy Seal (1868–70), Colonial Secretary (1870–74, 1880–82), India Secretary (1882–85, 1886, 1892–94), and Foreign Secretary (1894–95). He was also much liked as party leader in the Lords (1891–94, 1896–1902). His long and varied career, though distant, was full of high diplomacy, high places, and high stakes, thus inviting incongruous comparisons.

Shortly after Kimberley's death, the Vicar of Wymondham Church delivered a sermon based (very loosely) on Hebrews 11:32ff.:

David, after he had saved his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers.

After praising Kimberley's 'prominent public career' and 'conspicuous ability', Rev. Parker then recalled the legacy of another prominent man, recently deceased – Cecil Rhodes – recalling his 'vastness of ideas', 'great force of character', and 'generous benefactions'. The vicar then

encouraged his parishioners to follow the example of the two great men who, however different from one another, shared a common 'steadfastness of purpose'. The sermon was fair to the achievement of both men, but there can be little doubt that as the last strains of 'A Few More Years Shall Roll' wafted out into the churchyard, almost everyone would have understood what Rhodes's purpose had been, almost no one Kimberley's.² Journalists played a similar game, but preferred standing him alongside party leaders. Kimberley was, a writer for the *Oxford Chronicle* reminded his readers, 'on diplomatic service before Lord Rosebery had gone to school, and was holding important office when Lord Salisbury was still engaged in writing articles for the press!'³ Comparisons to Rhodes, Rosebery, and Salisbury, however, only obscured Kimberley's true legacy as one of the great administrators of his generation. He had neither talent nor ambition for party leadership, and always yearned for the end of session and a return to country life. Across fifty years of government service, he retained the sensibilities of a country squire, deeply rooted in the nature and society of his native Norfolk.

Early life

John Wodehouse was born on 7 January 1826, the first of four children of Henry Wodehouse,

HOUSE OF LORDS: LORD KIMBERLEY



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an uncommon commitment among members of the 'fast set'.

In May 1846 his studies were interrupted by the death of his great-grandfather. He succeeded as third Baron Wodehouse in May 1846, inheriting an estate of almost 10,000 acres in Norfolk and several hundred in Cornwall, mostly in Falmouth city. Wodehouse returned to Christ Church in October. Disgusted with the teaching there, he read privately with the philosopher Henry Longueville Mansel and in 1847 took a first in classics, reputedly one of the best in years. Matriculating with him upon his return had been John Charles Henry Fitzgibbon, eldest son and heir of the third Earl of Clare, and brother to Florence Fitzgibbon, who soon attracted Kimberley's attention. Though some questioned the wisdom of an Irish match, he proposed marriage at a breakfast given by the Duchess of Bedford, only ten days after their first meeting. They married on 16 August 1847, and eventually had five children: John (1848–1932), Alice (1850–1937), Constance (1852–1923), Alfred (1856–58), and Armine (1860–1901). By almost all accounts the marriage was happy, though Florence was delicate and displeased by posts abroad. Wodehouse remained close to his children throughout his life.

Returning from their Italian honeymoon in March 1848, the Wodehouses were caught in the revolutions then sweeping central Europe. Between 20 and 25 March, they travelled by coach from Florence to Padua, then by gondola on to Venice, uncertain of the status of particular Austrian garrisons but bringing the first news of successful revolts in Vienna, Modena, and Venice to throngs of Italian villagers along the way. Addressing cheering revolutionaries in his broken Italian invigorated his liberal Liberal? sympathies. Upon reaching 'tranquil' England, however, and observing the aftermath of those heady, revolutionary days, he reflected unfavourably on 'the

present anarchy of Europe'. It confirmed the wisdom of Burke's *Reflections*, and encouraged Wodehouse to keep 'usage and precedent' before him as a political touchstone.⁵

Upon returning to England in April 1848, Wodehouse did not immediately plunge into the 'icy cold atmosphere' of the House of Lords.⁶ In part this reflected his disappointment at missing the real political stage, but there were also other matters requiring immediate attention. Wodehouse had inherited the Kimberley estate with encumbrances of more than £140,000, and set out to do something about it. With the assistance of his uncle, city banker Raikes Currie, he leased and sold land in and around Falmouth as the arrival of the railway spurred development. It was a slow process, but by 1864 all creditors had been paid. While these personal financial considerations weighed upon him, the daily unfolding of political events on the Continent reminded him of the narrowness of his Oxford education. As a result, he embarked upon a systematic, four-year study of modern philosophy, history, politics, and political economy, one that reinforced both his liberal Liberal? tendencies and his natural caution. By 1850 he felt sufficiently prepared to make a maiden speech, judged one of 'great promise'. Though usually supporting the Whigs, he guarded his political independence, refusing on at least one occasion to second the address and devoting most of his energies in 1850 and 1851 to the work of the Colonial Reform Society, an organisation comprised of men of 'all parties' seeking systematic reform of colonial policy and self-government for the settlement colonies. As one of only a handful of rising young noblemen, he was courted by the Whigs, and formally joined them in 1852. He undertook hazardous duty in opposing Lord Derby in the Lords. He also began to canvass the gentry in an effort to reinvigorate the party in Norfolk, ultimately play-

ing a significant role in 1857 in electing the first Liberal in East Norfolk since 1832. With the help of Currie, he was appointed to Aberdeen's government as Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office (1852–56) at the age of 26, a promising start for a young man of no great wealth or family. As Currie wrote to his son, 'if the Government last, as Johnny [Lord John Russell] can never lead the House of Commons and really do the work of the Foreign Office, this most interesting and important department will almost fall into the hands of our industrious and noble friend'.⁷

What might have been the perfect situation turned cloudy when Russell suddenly left the Foreign Office in 1853. He was succeeded, however, by Lord Clarendon, who liked Wodehouse personally, appreciated his work, and appointed him Minister Plenipotentiary to Russia (1856–58) following the Crimean War. By some accounts, Wodehouse's diplomacy was direct, unflappable, and confident, perfectly suiting Clarendon's determination to 'meet coldness with coldness'. Wodehouse resigned with the fall of Palmerston's government in 1858, but returned as Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office under Russell in the following year, with full charge of foreign affairs in the House of Lords. Later in 1859 he was selected second English plenipotentiary to the abortive Congress of Villafranca. The idiosyncratic qualities and political opinions that appealed to Palmerston were neatly summarised by Greville, who observed that Wodehouse was 'clever, well informed, a prodigious talker and a great bore, speaks French fluently, and has plenty of courage and aplomb; his opinions are liberal but not extravagant'.⁸

Wodehouse seemed well situated to continue his climb when he once again collided with Russell, who was elevated to the peerage in July 1861. He resigned immediately, despite Russell's request that he remain. 'Having

Opposite: 'Lord Wodehouse, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland', *Illustrated London News* 12 May 1865

had charge of the business for two years in the House,' he wrote in his first diary entry, 'I could not submit to the loss of position'.⁹ The Liberal leadership was eager to find something for him, but there was nothing at home and he firmly resisted offers abroad, turning down governorships of Madras and Bombay, the Governor-Generalship of Canada, and perhaps the Turkish embassy. Although no permanent position could be found, in December 1863 Wodehouse was given the delicate task of mediating the intractable Schleswig-Holstein dispute. Negotiations with Bismarck and the kings of Prussia and Denmark were unsuccessful, but the failure did little harm to his career, and did provide valuable diplomatic experience and international visibility. As almost everyone recognised, he failed where 'probably no man could have succeeded'.¹⁰ Still no suitable positions opened. After almost three years out of office, in April 1864 Wodehouse reluctantly accepted Palmerston's offer to serve as Under-Secretary at the India Office. 'All my hardworking service has not advanced me an inch,' he wrote, reflecting on eleven years of service since the Aberdeen administration. Clarendon, who had recommended him for the vacant Duchy of Lancaster (which Clarendon eventually took himself), advised Wodehouse to accept the position. Weighing his old mentor's advice and with little recourse but retirement, he finally agreed. The nature of his assent suggests, however, his determination and sense of alienation from the party leadership. 'At all events I shall make it a little more difficult for my Whig friends to get rid of me.'¹¹

It was a good decision. Five months later Palmerston offered him the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland, not the office he wanted, but 'a great advancement' and clearly a stepping stone to the Cabinet. Kimberley dutifully kissed the ladies at Dublin Castle, received endless deputations, visited agricultural fairs and art shows, and



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hunted and dined with the Irish lords. He was determined, however, to do real work, promoting grants-in-aid for land drainage and disestablishment of the Anglican church in Ireland. These battles could not be won in Dublin. A smouldering Fenian conspiracy in September 1865, however, presented an immediate problem that required resolute action and political courage. Wodehouse ran 'some risk of exceeding the law' in order to obtain the necessary intelligence to enable the government to make a dramatic night raid on the homes and offices of the chief conspirators.¹² His handling of the Fenian rebellion was the single most important episode in Wodehouse's career. As a hardworking and talented but largely unconnected young Liberal vying for one of a handful of important government posts, his initiative provided the party leadership with visible proofs that his services might have public use as well as private merit. It gave him, for the first time, a small degree of leverage. Widely praised, by February 1866 Wodehouse made it clear to Russell that he would resign if another peer were put in the Cabinet ahead of him – a calculated risk that could have effectively ended his career. Wodehouse's Irish successes were also recognised by Queen Victoria, who conferred upon him the title Earl of Kimberley. With new social standing and a small supply of political capital, a new era in his life had begun. Rosebery later judged the Viceroyalty his 'best piece of work'.¹³

Kimberley and Gladstone

When Kimberley returned to London in July 1866, the Liberal Party was being transformed, though it was not clear what the outcome would be or how long it would take. When Palmerston died in October of the previous year, Kimberley had hoped that Gladstone would be his successor, though the Queen's call went to Russell instead. The Liberals ought to be banished from office,

Kimberley told John Thaddeus Delane of *The Times*, 'and only return when the old batch are fairly out of the way'.¹⁴ Kimberley viewed Gladstone as the natural leader of a modern Liberal Party largely shorn of its Whig trappings.

Though Gladstone was seventeen years Kimberley's senior, their political association went back at least to 1849, when both took a significant interest in the non-partisan 'export nationalism' of the Colonial Reform Society (CRS) and the Canterbury Settlement. Both men believed that free trade and reduced government expenditure were guarantees of good government, and this laid a solid foundation for cooperation on other matters. As Kimberley and Gladstone moved in the same direction toward the modern Liberal Party, there were nevertheless notable differences. Where Gladstone had been dismayed by Russell's anti-Papal campaign of 1851, Kimberley actively opposed both 'foreign interference' and 'Romish practices' in the Anglican church, which had 'encouraged if not caused, that interference'.¹⁵ Kimberley had supported Palmerston in the 'Don Pacifico' debate, and generally throughout the 1850s found Gladstone's 'message of mercy and peace' regarding foreign relations naïve and pusillanimous.¹⁶ Kimberley later repented of both his religious intolerance and international jingoism, though he remained more ready than Gladstone to project British influence in the world.

Three issues eventually drew them together politically around 1860: Italian policy, free trade, and the budget. Kimberley was naturally much involved with Italian affairs, handling the Foreign Office business in the Lords and having prepared specially for the abortive Congress of Villafranca in December 1859. Gladstone had a more personal interest in the peaceful unification of Italy, having spoken and published widely on the subject, beyond the 'bounds of discretion', according

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to some. When the Marquis of Normanby accused Gladstone in the Lords of circulating false accusations against the Duke of Modena, Kimberley found himself in the middle of a peculiarly personal feud. Being unable to defend himself in the House of Lords, Gladstone requested that Kimberley quash the 'loose statements', and remarked that he was 'quite at ease' knowing that his case was in Kimberley's hands. On 22 July 1861, Kimberley responded vigorously to Normanby, alluding to the difficulties involved in a peer attacking a member of the House of Commons, smartly suggesting how 'very disagreeable' it would be to Gladstone's accusers 'to meet him face to face'. Kimberley conceded what Gladstone had admitted already – that an error had been made regarding one particular case in Modena – then defended the validity of Gladstone's principal accusation of arbitrary government on the part of the Duke.¹⁷

Gladstone's budget campaign of 1860–61, including battles over every aspect of the French Commercial Treaty and repeal of the paper duties, constituted one of the great political triumphs of the Victorian era. Yet he considered it 'the most trying part' of his entire political life, and the 'nadir' in his 'public estimation'.¹⁸ When it is remembered that he was opposed by virtually the whole of the Cabinet on one or both of these issues, that he saw little prospect for attaining Liberal leadership, that he was hated by the Whigs and 'old Tories', and that it was still wondered aloud whether he could harness his great gifts, one is reminded of Gladstone's precarious personal position. 'Ill; vexed and indignant at the possible and probable conduct of the peers' in the spring of 1860, Gladstone received hearty support from Kimberley on both the commercial treaty and repeal of the paper duties. Though in no position to aid Gladstone in the Cabinet or the Commons, he did provide relevant foreign information and

support for the measures in the House of Lords at a time when it mattered.

While in Ireland between 1864 and 1866, Kimberley corresponded with Gladstone on Irish questions, seeking metropolitan financing for arterial drainage and declaring himself in favour of a land bill, concurrent endowment, and an inquiry into the question of national education. It is impossible to say exactly at which points the two influenced one another, but Kimberley had certainly been forced to deal with Irish questions more systematically at an earlier date than Gladstone, and had arrived at essentially the same positions well before Gladstone became prime minister. No one was surprised when he was among the small meeting of previous cabinet members and others, called by Gladstone to discuss Irish affairs on 24 February 1868.¹⁹

The charmed circle

With Gladstone's offer of the Privy Seal in December 1868, Kimberley finally gained the Cabinet, which had been his primary political goal. As he observed, the office itself was nothing, but it put him 'well on the road to promotion when the occasion offers'. He did receive promotions, to the Colonial Office and India Office, and briefly under Rosebery, the Foreign Office. But apart from a real eagerness to get the Colonial Office in 1870 – his first major administrative post – he was content with a voice in the Cabinet. Apart from an earlier appointment to the Foreign Office or the premiership itself, neither of which he coveted, there was nowhere else to go. Kimberley had arrived, and the question then became, could he meet the expectations of high office?

Kimberley accurately appraised his own gifts, which were well suited to administrative work and political argumentation in the 'icy' atmosphere of the House of Lords, but less attractive to the public at large. Nowhere

was this self-awareness more evident than in his deference to Rosebery, twenty years his junior, who went to the Foreign Office in 1886. When Rosebery at first declined the office in 1892, Kimberley feared that he would have to undertake the job. 'Happily,' he wrote in his diary, 'there can be very little probability of such a *pis aller*. We should be terribly weakened by losing R., not only because he is by far the most acceptable person for the F.O., but because, next to Gladstone, he is by far the most influential man in the country of our party.'²⁰ Kimberley nevertheless was willing to help the party in almost any way. He led the Lords in the late 1880s when Granville was ill; after Granville's death (1891 to 1894); then by consensus after Rosebery's retirement in 1896. He was even willing to take the detested Lord Presidency of the Council on a temporary basis.

Kimberley is so closely identified with his work at the Colonial and India Offices that it is easy to forget that his first eighteen months in office were spent on Cabinet committees studying questions of Irish land, church, and disturbance of the peace, and drafting of the required legislation. The dramatic increase in departmental work after 1880 precluded much close involvement with Irish affairs thereafter, though he was frequently consulted by Gladstone, particularly on financial matters. At the Colonial Office (1870–74, 1880–82), Kimberley continued the Liberal policy of troop withdrawals from the settlement colonies, oversaw the granting of full responsible government to Cape Colony, and approved selected African annexations. In the tropical colonies and southern Africa he rejected Cardwell's extreme policy of retrenchment, annexing the diamond fields of Griqualand West and laying the groundwork for the annexation of Fiji and extension of British influence in Malaya and the Gold Coast. Kimberley took Gladstone's retirement at face value in 1875, warmly

supporting Hartington, but nevertheless welcoming Gladstone's return. He stunned Gladstone by refusing the Indian Viceroyalty in 1880, but agreed to return to the Colonial Office.²¹ The Cabinet immediately reversed Lord Lytton's forward policy in India, but supported confederation in southern Africa, begun under Lord Carnarvon in 1877. The resulting Boer War (December 1880 – March 1881), in which British troops suffered a morally devastating, though strategically inconsequential, defeat at Majuba Hill, led to the only challenge to Kimberley's Cabinet position during his career. Backed by Gladstone, he weathered the press storm and the doubts of some among the Liberals. On 3 August 1881, the Convention of Pretoria was signed, restoring self-government to the Transvaal under the 'suzerainty' of Britain.

When the fifteenth Earl of Derby joined Gladstone's second administration in December 1882, Kimberley agreed to go to the India Office, where he served during the remainder of the government and during the third and fourth Gladstone administrations (1882–85, 1886, 1892–94). While there, he impressed Permanent Under-Secretary Arthur Godley as second only to Gladstone as an administrative official. Kimberley urged a non-partisan approach to India work, which earned him considerable support on both sides of the aisle. Though he supported the principle of Viceroy Lord Ripon's measures for local self-government, he modified ambitious details in the interests of sound administration, arguing that 'for the ultimate safety and security there should be a gradual introduction of Natives into our services' in order to avoid a 'high autocratic policy'.²² Concerned with the looming Russian advance in Central Asia, Kimberley encouraged Ripon's early retirement, a more conservative domestic administration of the government under Lords Dufferin (1884–88) and Lansdowne (1888–94), and a strong frontier

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policy. Russian occupation of the Penjdeh district of Afghanistan on 30 March 1885 brought the two countries to the brink of war. The Cabinet agreed with Kimberley that further encroachments should be met with force. By the end of Gladstone's second ministry in June, Russia had accepted the principle of arbitration, and a formal settlement was eventually reached a year later, defining more than 300 miles of the Russo-Afghan border.

During Gladstone's fourth ministry (1892–94), the decline of the rupee was the most troubling issue in India, leading to depression and the loss of capital investment. In an attempt to bolster the value of the currency, Kimberley

**'Uncle Kim',
a senior party
figure, 17 July
1901**

adopted the recommendations of the Herschell Committee in 1893, including a controversial plan for closing mints to the coinage of silver, an early step toward establishing a gold exchange standard. As a result of financial conditions in India, he resisted motions brought forward in the House of Commons that might have led to the reduction of opium revenues, at one point politely threatening to resign if Gladstone persisted in supporting such a motion. In the end Gladstone argued Kimberley's points as if they were his own, 'utterly pulverise[ing] the Resolution'.²³

With Gladstone's resignation in March 1894, a Liberal era clearly passed. Lord Rosebery,

widely considered the most attractive Liberal in the country after Gladstone, now had to compete for influence with the Leader of the House of Commons, Sir William Harcourt. With Rosebery making Kimberley's appointment to the Foreign Office a *sine qua non* to his own acceptance of the Prime Ministership, Kimberley's position was politicised from the start. From this divided beginning, he entered upon the most difficult and least satisfying ministerial experience of his career: uncomfortable with Rosebery's methods, at odds with Harcourt's policies, and unable to find common ground with the other powers.

During his first months in office, Kimberley routinely sought Rosebery's advice, seemingly a sound transition policy, as the two men had worked together cordially during Gladstone's third and fourth ministries and were both committed to a policy of imperial consolidation. Kimberley soon became uneasy, however, with Rosebery's penchant for secrecy, and felt compelled to communicate more freely with the Cabinet than Rosebery preferred. Kimberley's first major act was to conclude the controversial Anglo-Belgian treaty of 12 April 1894, largely negotiated under Rosebery's direction during the previous year. German and French protests against Britain's leasing of a strip of Congolese territory bordering German East Africa led to a withdrawal of that portion of the treaty, and much of Kimberley's energy at the Foreign Office thereafter was expended in improving strained relations with Germany. Talks with German and French representatives smoothed immediate difficulties but proved inconclusive in settling broader international tensions. Kimberley agreed to allow German recruitment of labourers at Singapore, and discussed a potential future division of the Portuguese empire in east Africa, but adamantly opposed German influence in the Transvaal and resisted attempts to embroil Britain in Franco-Italian disputes in East Africa. Concerned over growing Russian influence in East Asia, in 1894 Kimberley negotiated a new commercial treaty with Japan, renouncing British extra-territoriality in order to create an 'invaluable ally in case of need'.²⁴ Courting Japan, however, further strained relations with the powers. After some early success in bringing Russia and France into a plan for collectively enforcing reforms on the Ottoman empire following the Armenian massacres of 1894, Kimberley ultimately failed to gain their support for coercive measures, in part because Britain had declined to join Russia, Germany, and France in forcing Japan

to moderate its settlement of the Sino-Japanese War during the spring of 1895.

More troubling for the government was the internecine war between Rosebery and Harcourt, who questioned the prime minister's leadership at every turn and vigorously promoted a Little England policy. He wrote long jeremiads full of 'blood and thunder', eventually demanding that 'all questions of importance relating to Foreign Affairs should be submitted' to him before they were made in the Commons. Rosebery refused to speak directly to Harcourt, forcing Kimberley to act as the necessary medium for carrying on business. According to Rosebery, there was a 'deepseated and radical difference of opinion' on foreign policy. 'His view is broadly that in questions between Great Britain and foreign countries, foreign countries alone are in the right and Great Britain always in the wrong' / Kimberley agreed. After a tumultuous fifteen months, the only thing all three could agree upon was resignation, which took effect on 29 June 1895.²⁵

Last years

From 1895 Kimberley played the role of elder statesman, 'Uncle Kim' to a younger generation of Liberals. To Rosebery he was 'an honest straightforward able old Whig', 'conciliatory and popular to the last degree' as leader in the House of Lords. He spoke more frequently on behalf of Liberal candidates, particularly after the death of his wife in 1895. He often quietly mediated personal disputes, as he had in Gladstone's second, third, and fourth ministries. He was frequently consulted by younger Liberals, who drew upon his long experience. By 1898, with both Rosebery and Harcourt gone, Kimberley worked cordially with Henry Campbell-Bannerman to repair party fortunes. He attempted to bridge the middle ground between CB and the Gladstonians, who generally sought to

maintain liberal Liberal? orthodoxy; and Rosebery and the Liberal Imperialists, who favoured substantial party reform. Though a thorough Gladstonian in his commitment to the ideals of Irish home rule, free trade, and individualism, Kimberley consistently backed law and order, both domestic and international, as the true foundation of liberal governance. Thus he supported the Conservative government during the Boer War, continuing his long tradition of bipartisan foreign policy.²⁶ Although he criticised the government's lack of foresight, he supported the fundamental principle that the Boers must be militarily subdued before negotiations could begin. His conservatism on this point, in conjunction with staunch support for liberal domestic measures, minimised the negative impact of 'pro-Boer' activity within the party, providing a patriotic shield as Liberals began to reorganise under Campbell-Bannerman. Though ill, just before his death Kimberley agreed to stay on as 'nominal leader' in the Lords, anticipating a Liberal resurgence that was years away.

Assessment

After reading Kimberley's manuscript memoir in 1906, Rosebery wrote a telling minute, full of both insight and misperception:

I doubt if he ever knew much except of the surface of political proceedings ... And so engaged in honest work, he knew little else. His judgments are not profound but sincere. The whole record is the honest, humble and sincere record of a hardworking, simple life. *Simple* not in the sense of plain living but of a certain innocence as compared with worldliness.

Kimberley's political creed was undoubtedly simple. He was a profound believer in Burke's dictum that a 'disposition to preserve, and an ability to improve'

Kimberley's political creed was undoubtedly simple. He was a profound believer in Burke's dictum that a 'disposition to preserve, and an ability to improve' were the standards of a successful statesman.

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were the standards of a successful statesman. By this standard, however, caution was always to the fore, leading younger politicians to sometimes accuse him of a kind of 'inert Whig *laissez faire*'.²⁷ Kimberley also believed that what was true in theory was frequently false in practice; he was therefore against all reforms based merely on appeal to categories or theories. Reform was a matter of details. He was perfectly willing for Gladstone to set the agenda – one naturally based upon shared principles – then to assist in drafting detailed legislation or dispatches for implementing the policies. Few problems were easily resolved, for they could be variously contextualised, and sometimes required resolution of irreconcilable elements. When governments were routinely required to tread such dangerous ground, it simply was not prudent to take a dogmatic line.

In this sense, it might be argued that both Gladstone and Rosebery sometimes took advantage of his *simple* political philosophy, knowing that if they argued persuasively, Kimberley would likely follow. If they could not automatically depend on his support, they knew that he fundamentally leaned in their direction, and that his natural caution might be removed by a careful argument, a little charm, and a workable piece of legislation. The most striking example of this manipulation was Gladstone's success in 1886 in convincing Kimberley to reconsider his adamant opposition to the retention of Irish members in the House of Commons. This may, however, be the exception that proves the rule, as it is the only known case in which Kimberley actually regretted a decision to support Gladstone.²⁸

On the other hand, throughout his career Kimberley took full advantage of opportunities to influence policy and legislation. The Cabinet process admitted adjustment in virtually every kind of business at every level. The views of Gladstone and Rosebery could be overturned, or, more fre-

quently, modified through private argument, committee proceedings, and the process of drafting and revising legislation and dispatches. A leader's call could also be resisted if one were willing to take political risks in matters of supreme importance. Kimberley threatened resignation on at least three occasions, in 1866 over Fortescue's inclusion in the Cabinet; in 1873 over the proposed Ashanti invasion; and in 1893 over Sir Joseph Pease's opium motion. In each case he won his point.

If Kimberley were neither a popular politician nor a visionary, he had real strengths that contributed to the success of an administration. He was well educated, bright, and thick-skinned. He got on well with members of all parties, and was widely respected. Though not a speaker of renown, he was a reasonably good debater and a quick thinker, with plenty of courage. He managed his departmental business well in the Lords, and worked efficiently with Gladstone, Rosebery, and other party leaders in coordinating policy and policy statements. He did not 'create events', either in the Cabinet or the world. If a strong measure was urged, as in sending Wolseley to the Gold Coast in 1873, or in instructing Dufferin in 1885 that 'an attack on Herat will mean war between us and Russia everywhere', even the most pacific ministers were inclined to concede its necessity. On the political level, competent departmental management minimised Liberal fracturing and limited occasions for Press importunity. Although Gladstone found no shortage of Liberals with high claims to office in 1868, the administrative failures of Lowe and Bruce, the illness of Bright, the inactivity of Dodson, the scandal surrounding Monsell and the Post Office, the conversion of Ripon to Roman Catholicism, and the relative ineffectiveness of Carlingford made safe and competent hands more necessary than ever. Kimberley continued in successive ministries to administer his departments

with energy and acumen as Liberal ministers for various reasons either left or were abandoned – Argyll, Forster, Dodson, Northbrook, Carlingford, Dilke, and the Unionist host that departed in 1886. If only for the sake of stability, Gladstone could ill afford to lose Kimberley.

Kimberley also had an uncanny ability to refine complex issues. Though a legend of garrulousness in conversation, he consistently surprised colleagues with 'admirably concise and lucid' letters and memoranda, shorn of 'irrelevant matters'. Gladstone had noted this skill as early as 1860, and continued to appreciate the way it facilitated the time-consuming process of business by committee.²⁹ In Cabinet he irritated some by speaking frequently, but he was one of the few ministers prepared to discuss the range of topics that regularly came before them, and one of the few members who understood the complexities of international finance.³⁰ If Kimberley never wrote a bill to solve an intractable problem, he was adept at clarifying the points upon which profitable discussion might turn, facilitating the process of Cabinet discussion. In a tight situation, Kimberley could be trusted to take charge of a bill in the House of Lords. Ironically, the legislation for which he was most praised, the Parish Councils Bill of 1894, came too late to have much effect on his political career.

Any assessment of Kimberley's career, however, necessarily comes back to his official work, which was usually done out of the public eye. Arthur Godley considered Kimberley the best *official* he had ever served under, excepting only Gladstone, and he was held in similar regard at the Colonial Office.³¹ He had his share of rough patches in which he was publicly and privately criticised – most notably in relation to the first Boer War (1880–81) – but these never led Palmerston, Russell, Gladstone, or Rosebery to conclude that he needed to make way for a younger, better man.

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Kimberley was virtually unassailable at the Colonial and India Offices. Experienced, cautious, and thorough, he was seldom challenged by other members of the Cabinet. At the moment one might think him only a competent bureaucrat, he would display both mastery and resolve in taking decisive action. Sir Garnet Wolseley recalled his *surprise*, for instance, at Kimberley 'abruptly and angrily' settling the question of 'war or no war' against the Ashanti in 1873 over the objections of several ministers.³²

Kimberley usually agreed with Gladstone, but his disagreements were frequent enough and of a kind to suggest a distinct influence on the course of British foreign relations. He argued against the imperial antipathy of Gladstone, Lowe, and Cardwell during the first administration, and generally dampened Gladstone's instinctive moralism. By patient and studied determination, he convinced Gladstone that any attempt to prohibit Australian colonies from passing differential tariff measures in 1872 would be detrimental to the Empire, and that the annexation of Fiji, which Gladstone had gone to great lengths to prevent, was sound policy. He and Cardwell sanctioned the Ashanti expedition in 1873 without consulting either Gladstone or the Cabinet. He refused the annexation of Samoa, Namaqualand and Damaraland, and the Cameroons in 1882, the latter over the objections of Dilke and Granville. Kimberley firmly resisted Ripon's more advanced moves toward self-government in India, both on grounds of efficiency and the dangers of foreign threat. A tea planter worried over the pace of Ripon's reforms was consoled with the assurance that 'the people now in office, Lord Kimberley, Lord Northbrook, and Lord Granville, were as likely to do anything really in the direction of freeing the Indians as any three Tories in the kingdom'. Although an exaggeration, the observation points to the rising division between

Gladstonian Liberals and Radicals within the party.³³ In 1884 Kimberley convinced a reluctant Gladstone that Dufferin ought to succeed Ripon as Indian Viceroy, and resisted the Prime Minister's wish to delay Dufferin's departure in order to accommodate party need on a vote in the Lords. In 1893 he refused to make further concessions to Joseph Pease on the opium question, despite Gladstone's arguments. In 1895 he refused the annexation of Formosa on his own authority. The collective impact of these and a hundred other small decisions was substantial, and suggested already in *The Times* obituary, where he was not 'so much afraid of Imperial responsibilities and Imperial expansion as a good Gladstonian' was 'naturally expected to be'.³⁴

Kimberley was the kind of politician whose political role is most easily lost to history – an intelligent man without imagination; one who met the high expectations of his society without disturbing them. He was the quintessential conscientious administrator who made the Empire work, before heading to the country in August.

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- 1 *Candid Friend*, 19 April 1902, Kimberley Papers, Bodleian Library MS (hereafter KP), eng.c.4484, f. 133.
- 2 'Pulpit References,' *Norwich Mercury*, 19 April 1902, p. 9.
- 3 *Oxford Chronicle*, 11 April 1902, KP eng.c.4481, f. 304. This story was widely repeated in the press.
- 4 Henry Wodehouse died in 1834.
- 5 Wodehouse, notes on reading, 14 July 1848, in John Powell, ed. *Liberal by Principle: The Politics of John Wodehouse, 1st Earl of Kimberley, 1843–1902* (London: Historians' Press, 1996), pp. 58–63.
- 6 John Wodehouse. *The Journal of John Wodehouse, First Earl of Kimberley for 1862–1902*, Camden 5th ser., vol. 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Royal Historical Society), p. 44.

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- 7 Caroline Currie, ed. *Bertram Wodehouse Currie, 1827–1896: Recollections, Letters, and Journals*, 2 vols. (Roehampton: Manresa Press, 1901), 1:518. On Wodehouse's early career, see *Liberal by Principle*, pp. 11–16, 68–80; *Journal of Wodehouse*, pp. 44–47.
- 8 Lytton Strachey and Roger Fulford, eds. *The Greville Memoirs, 1814–1860* (London: Macmillan, 1938), 7:446–47.
- 9 *Journal of Wodehouse*, p. 61.
- 10 *The Times*, 9 April 1902, p. 3.
- 11 Wodehouse always distinguished himself from his 'supercilious exclusive friends the Whigs.' *Journal of John Wodehouse*, pp. 44, 133.
- 12 *Liberal by Principle*, pp. 106–07.
- 13 *Journal of John Wodehouse*, pp. 174 n. 465, 180, 186–87, 488.
- 14 *Journal of John Wodehouse*, p. 177, n. 473.
- 15 *Liberal by Principle*, pp. 68–69.
- 16 *Liberal by Principle*, pp. 82–83; Kimberley journal, Kimberley Papers, Bodleian Library, MS.eng.e.2790, p. 6
- 17 For the following events of 1860–61, see *Liberal by Principle*, pp. 32–34.
- 18 John Brooke and Mary Sorensen, eds. *The Prime Ministers' Papers: W. E. Gladstone*, 4 vols. (London: H.M.S.O., 1971–81), 1:83.
- 19 *Journal of Wodehouse*, p. 214. On Kimberley's Irish views and Gladstone's interest, see John Powell and Padraic Kennedy, 'Lord Kimberley and the Foundation of Liberal Irish Policy: Annotations to George Sigerson's *Modern Ireland: its vital questions, secret societies, and government*,' *Irish Historical Studies* 31, no. 121 (May 1998): 91–114.
- 20 *Journal of Wodehouse*, p. 501.
- 21 Gladstone's offer was curious and his motivation unclear. Though an undoubtedly large appointment requiring judgment and administrative skill, Kimberley's acceptance would have removed, according to received wisdom, one of Gladstone's staunchest supporters and most able lieutenants from the Cabinet. If Gladstone really believed that Kimberley could be induced to take such a post abroad, it demonstrates how little he knew his colleague.
- 22 3 *Hansard*, 277 (9 April 1883): 1736, 1767.
- 23 *Journal of Wodehouse*, p. 415; *Liberal by Principle*, pp. 210–11.
- 24 *Liberal by Principle*, p. 254, n. 52. See also Louis G. Perez. *Japan Comes of Age: Mutsu Munemitsu and the Revision of the Unequal Treaties*. Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999.
- 25 For Cabinet warfare during Rosebery's administration, see *Liberal by Principle*, chapter 6; *Journal of Wodehouse*, pp. 424–37. For a sympathetic view of Harcourt, see Patrick Jackson's excellent *Harcourt and Son: A Political Biography of Sir William Har-*

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- court, 1827–1904*. Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004.
- 26 In Lord Salisbury's eulogy in the House of Lords, he noted Kimberley's 'singular impartiality in public affairs.' 'I do not say that he was absolutely impartial – under our system of government that is impossible ... but if he was not absolutely free from all bias, he came as near it as, I think, any man whom we have listened to and followed in this house.' 4 *Hansard*, 106 (15 April 1902):260.
- 27 *Liberal by Principle*, pp. 23–24. See particularly George Leveson Gower, *Years of Endeavour* (London: John Murray, 1942), pp. 133–34.
- 28 *Liberal by Principle*, pp. 184–85; *Journal of Wodehouse*, pp. 366–67, 499.
- 29 Gladstone to Wodehouse, 28 April 1860, KP eng.c.4003, f. 52; *Liberal by Principle*, p. 44, n. 213.
- 30 Having city banker Raikes Currie as political mentor undoubtedly contributed to Kimberley's financial acumen, and to his desire in 1852 for appointment as Vice President of the Board of Trade.
- 31 Arthur Godley was Gladstone's principal private secretary, 1880–82; Permanent Under-Secretary at the India Office, 1883–1909; *Liberal by Principle*, p. 273. On the Colonial Office see the account, probably by Robert George Herbert, permanent under-secretary at the Colonial Office, 1871–92, in *Free Lance*, 19 April 1902, Kimberley Papers, Bodleian Library c.4484, f. 143.
- 32 Wolseley to Fleetwood Wilson, 22 September 1902, Wolseley Papers, Perkins Library, Duke University, 18-H.
- 33 Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *India Under Ripon: A Private Diary* (London: T.F. Unwin, 1909), p. 18.
- 34 *The Times*, 9 April 1902, p. 3.

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Whiggery and the Liberal Party, 1874–1886 and *The Liberal Ascendancy, 1830–1886*). Introducing the meeting, our Chair, William Wallace (Lord Wallace of Salt-aire, President of the History Group and joint deputy leader of the Liberal Democrat peers), remarked on just how unstable a coalition the late nineteenth century Liberal Party actually was and how this instability was manifest in the career of Joe Chamberlain and the fate of the Unauthorised Programme.

Picking up on William Wallace's reference to instability, Professor Marsh began by saying how much, in his opinion, the Unauthorised Programme of 1885, and radicalism in general, was an unstable and destabilising phenomenon. This he described as the 'radical dilemma'. The Unauthorised Programme was a clumsy presentation of prescient policy because radicalism is the most difficult position to maintain in British politics while holding high office. Until Joe Chamberlain radicals either avoided high office, like Cobden, or proved innocuous in it, like Bright. This may be surprising because Professor Marsh went on to say that he saw radicalism as an essentially Liberal position, in the British (and Canadian) sense as opposed to the Continental or American. Radicalism in this interpretation was situated historically on the left flank of the Liberal Party and was not a socialist position. It was Chamberlain who was really the first Liberal to embrace radicalism and seek to implement it from the government front bench, while holding high, and seeking higher, office. It was not, however, until the Liberal governments after 1906 and Attlee's Labour administration of 1945–51 that radicalism was espoused and implemented by a British government. Interestingly, Professor Marsh thought we had been getting a version of it again since 1997 and he highlighted what he believed was a dilemma for Liberal Democrats

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Joseph Chamberlain and the Unauthorised Programme

Evening meeting, July 2005, with Peter Marsh and Terry Jenkins

Report by **Graham Lippiatt**

The cover design of the paperback edition of Denis Judd's study of Joseph Chamberlain published in 1993¹ shows a picture-postcard cartoon of the top-hatted, monocled Chamberlain wearing a patchwork coat, each segment of which contains a description of some aspect of his political life: 'socialist', 'republican', 'extreme radical', 'Gladstonian', 'Liberal Unionist', 'ordinary Conservative' and more besides. At the bottom of the coat are some unclaimed patches marked 'vacant', waiting only for the next shift in Chamberlain's career for a new label to be sewn into the fabric of this coat of many political colours.²

The theme of the History Group's summer meeting was an exploration of one of the most famous of Chamberlain's political personae – the provocative social-reforming campaigner, which earned him the soubriquet 'Radical Joe' – and an assessment of its impact on the party.

Our distinguished speakers were Peter Marsh (Honorary Professor of History at Birmingham University; Emeritus Professor of History and Professor of International Relations at Syracuse University, New York and author of *Joseph Chamberlain, Entrepreneur in Politics*) and Dr Terry Jenkins, (Senior Research Officer at the History of Parliament Trust; author of *Gladstone,*

today in the party's attempts to gain power, drawing a parallel with the problems Chamberlain experienced in 1885, trying to outflank the government of Tony Blair which he likened to that led by Gladstone (notably in its Middle Eastern foreign policy).

According to Professor Marsh, the Unauthorised Programme of 1885 was based on a number of illusions and was executed clumsily, but it did anticipate the need to implement policies that were not introduced until twenty years later. Its first articulation came in 1883. The Liberals had been back in office for about two years but expected to remain in power indefinitely. They thought the Tory election victory in 1874 was merely a blip; normal political service had been resumed after the Liberals' 1880 election win. However, by 1883 there was disappointment at the performance of the Liberal government, particularly among radicals. This led to one of the illusions referred to by Marsh. Radicals looked forward to the next item on the agenda of Liberal government being franchise reform. Chamberlain expected the widened franchise of the 1884 Reform Bill to open a new, democratic, era in political history in which social legislation would dominate the agenda – but he was wrong. This did not happen until some time later, when the forces that gave rise to the New Liberalism emerged. At this time it was moral and religious issues that continued to retain their dominant appeal to the electorate. There was also a direct personal connection between the Unauthorised Programme and the New Liberalism in the person of Lloyd George, described by Professor Marsh as a 'Chamberlain groupie' in 1885, who broke with his hero reluctantly in 1886 but retained his faith in the radical principles of the Programme and later found himself superbly placed to implement them.

The Unauthorised Programme was first announced in a series of articles in 1883–84

in the publication *Fortnightly Review*. Although Chamberlain did not write most of the articles, they were clearly stimulated and guided by his thinking and everything that Chamberlain later said in his speeches of 1885, the speeches that came to constitute his Radical Programme, had appeared already in the *Fortnightly Review* scripts. Apart from some interest within Liberal circles, the articles created no great public or political stir. This remained the case even when they were grouped together and published with an introduction by Chamberlain.

The Programme began with education, as Chamberlain himself had done as a crusader for free, secular, universal, compulsory elementary education. This was to cause a problem for the largely Liberal-supporting nonconformists, as to make education free would inevitably mean public grants to Anglican schools, an issue which would remain anathema for them into the twentieth century. But the core of the radical programme was socioeconomic, advocating a more equitable distribution of wealth, a tax on landowners and the carving of smallholdings out of land on aristocratic estates to increase property ownership among the rural poor. It also advocated slum clearance and the provision of decent housing by aristocratic landlords. What was prescient, new and contentious about this was the emphasis on the role and responsibility of government to correct the most offensive aspects of the maldistribution of wealth.

It was Chamberlain's speeches in January 1885 that transformed this agenda from an interesting set of policy issues into a true political sensation. In his first speech in Birmingham when talking about social and economic insurance, Chamberlain used the word 'ransom'. This missed the intended target. It did not appeal to the newly enfranchised electors but it did awaken the fears of the middle classes

about their own economic security. By his next speech at Ipswich, Chamberlain was using the word 'insurance', not 'ransom', but the genie was out of the bottle. It was also clear after Ipswich that the Birmingham speech was not a one-off but part of a succession of pronouncements, developing a prior, considered programme. Chamberlain introduced at Ipswich the issue of the use of taxation as an instrument of social and economic redistribution, highlighting the unfairness in local taxation of charging the same rates on the housing of the poor as on those of the wealthy. He suggested a graduated income tax on those whose wealth exceeded their immediate needs, exciting middle-class alarm. The speeches were clumsy rhetorically but explosive in their intrinsic content. What Chamberlain was trying to do was to move the central ground of British politics away from moral and religious affairs to socioeconomic issues and to redefine the role of the state in bringing about social and economic justice from within a government in which he was a high officeholder.

A further example of Chamberlain's political clumsiness in 1885 was his handling of Gladstone and his breaking of the boundaries, as Gladstone understood them, of cabinet solidarity. Gladstone was angry about this but Chamberlain only lectured the prime minister about what he saw as the changed political landscape brought about by the 1884 Reform Act. This only exacerbated the rivalries between the two men that were developing not just on domestic policy but, crucially, over Ireland and foreign affairs too.

In summarising, Professor Marsh painted a portrait of Chamberlain, holding high cabinet office in a Liberal government, trying radically to advance the basic principles of its domestic policy. Intrinsically, that was a virtually impossible task – even if it had been done

It was Chamberlain's speeches in January 1885 that transformed this agenda from an interesting set of policy issues into a true political sensation.

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with a far greater finesse than Chamberlain managed. But the programme did foreshadow the great Liberal socioeconomic reforms of the 1908 Asquith government, and the man who was the direct political descendant of Chamberlain and inheritor of the Unauthorised Programme was David Lloyd George.

Our second speaker, Dr Terry Jenkins, then turned the attention of the meeting to the impact of Chamberlain's programme on the Liberal Party itself, and in particular the role of the Whigs. For much of the Victorian era, the Liberals were the dominant force in British politics, remarkably successful in embodying the social and cultural aspects of the age. The party stood for political and religious liberty, free trade, small government, low taxation and individual self-improvement. It represented the new, dynamic forces in British society, which had been created by the processes of urbanisation and industrialisation. Crucially, however, it also combined the representation of the new urban, industrial Britain with traditional political forces, exemplified by the survival of the Whig aristocratic leadership within the Liberal Party. The Whigs continued to provide an administrative elite forming the backbone of most Liberal governments. For example, even in 1880, when Gladstone formed his second administration, there were thirteen cabinet ministers of whom six were peers and four others had aristocratic or landed connections – one being Lord Hartington, heir of the Duke of Devonshire. At the same time, an examination of the make-up of the Parliamentary Liberal Party in 1880 showed that about 43 per cent had close aristocratic or landed connections; they were sons of peers or baronets or were significant landowners, people listed in Burke's or other reference works of notable landowners. In a much-quoted speech to his constituents as late as December 1883, Lord Hartington provided a justification and

definition of the role the Whigs played in the Liberal Party:

I admit the Whigs are not the leaders in popular movements but the Whigs have been, as I think, to the great advantage of the country to direct and guide and moderate those popular movements. They have formed a connecting link between the advanced party and those classes which possessing property, power and influence are naturally averse to change. I think that I may fairly claim that it is greatly owing to their guidance and their action that the great and beneficial changes which have been made in the direction of popular reform in this country, have been made not by the shock of revolution and agitation but by the calm and peaceful process of constitutional acts.

Whiggery by the 1880s was virtually the same thing as moderate Liberalism, the phrases being used interchangeably. The term Whig had also by this time come to be applied to men who would not be described as Whigs in the normal social sense; men like George Goschen (who came from a London banking family of German extraction, not from a landed background). Nevertheless, although the Whig tradition was clearly a strong force in Liberal politics as late as the 1880s, it became an article of faith for later generations of Liberals (perhaps, noted Dr Jenkins, still around even among modern Liberal Democrats) that the Whigs had become merely a dead weight. It came to be widely accepted that the departure of Whigs such as Hartington and Goschen in 1886, when they rebelled against Gladstone's policy of home rule for Ireland, was a necessary process. In this analysis, the Liberal Party was obliged to shed its Whig incubus before it could evolve towards the New Liberalism of the Edwardian era. Essential to this assumption about what came to be known as the revolt of the Whigs in 1886

is that the revolt was not really about Gladstone's Irish policy at all. Ireland and home rule provided a convenient fig leaf to hide the ideological nakedness of the Whigs, a ready excuse to leave the party at a time when they were fundamentally out of sympathy with its modernising and radicalising views, the sort of views expressed in Chamberlain's Unauthorised Programme. A great wave of progressive Liberal thought swept them away and landed them on the shore of their natural home, the Conservative Party.

Examining the position that Hartington and other Whigs took in 1885 at the time of Chamberlain's radical programme, however, Dr Jenkins' view was that it was too simplistic to regard the Whigs as an obsolete remnant about to be washed away by historic forces. In fact, he argued, there was no causal link between the Unauthorised Programme and the revolt of the Whigs in 1886. It is true that 1885 was a time of great tension and anxiety for the Whigs but in the context of the usual struggles and disagreements inside the Liberal Party, enhanced by the franchise and redistribution reforms of 1884 which had transformed the electoral system, creating two million extra voters and a sweeping redistribution of seats. This had removed representation from many small boroughs, particularly in southern England, and created new seats in London and the provincial cities. This in itself undoubtedly weakened the electoral power of the Whigs as it reduced overwhelmingly the remaining 'nomination' seats, those in the gift of the great aristocratic families or the pocket of a great landowner. It also created some unease for the Whigs about how they were going to cope under this new system.

Then there was the threat from Chamberlain himself; his attempt, through the Unauthorised Programme, to

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seize the initiative and impose his policies as the programme that all Liberal candidates would have to adopt in order to find favour with the new electorate, against the background of not knowing much about what the new voters really believed or wanted. Despite this, however, Dr Jenkins said there were very few cases in 1885 of outright defection from the Liberal Party by Whigs. At best there are cases of abstentions or withdrawals of endorsement. For instance in Cheshire, two of the great Whig landowners, the Duke of Westminster and the Marquis of Crewe, refused to support candidates who followed the Radical Programme's ideas on land reform. This kind of action represented the limit of Whig disaffection from the Liberal Party in 1885; their attitude was instead to fight their corner and try to win the argument for the future inside the party, not defect from it. Typical was the action of Lord Everington, the heir of Lord Fortescue. In a letter to his father in February 1885, he explained why he wished to stand for Parliament after the reforms of the previous year. 'Moderate men will never have so good a chance as now with the new constituencies whose character will be affected for some time to come by their new members.'

Nor was it the case that the Whigs were devoid of policies of their own in the face of the Unauthorised Programme, and represented merely a dead weight trying to slow down the radicals without ideas of their own. Most obviously, Hartington, in his speeches during the long 1885 election, put great emphasis on the reform of local government through the creation of county councils. Local government for the counties was common ground for all Liberals, even though in the end the reform was introduced under a Conservative government. In a further irony, reform of local government was a starting point for a number of

Chamberlain's demands, as the Radical Programme called for the proposed county councils to have powers for the compulsory purchase of land so that the smallholding and allotment distribution plans could be put into effect. Hartington and other Whigs such as Albert Grey MP (the heir to Earl Grey) also went some way in the direction of land reform. They were sympathetic to measures designed to simplify the legal process involved in the transfer of land. They showed growing interest in alternative ways of providing smallholdings short of compulsory purchase and forcible redistribution. Grey was a promoter of organisations, along the lines of building societies, which could provide loans to enable agricultural workers to become smallholders. So, the debate between the Whigs and the Radicals in 1885 was about what was going to happen later after local government had been reformed, not a fundamental ideological dispute about the nature of Liberalism.

In September 1885, the position of Hartington and the Whigs was made considerably easier when Gladstone issued his election manifesto. Up to that point it was not entirely clear that Gladstone would lead the party through the general election, but his manifesto of 18 September reassured the Whigs. Gladstone showed no interest or endorsement in the policies being pushed by Chamberlain, who described the manifesto as a slap in the face. On land reform issues Gladstone's position was much closer to the Whig stance. For the remainder of the election campaign the Whigs were able to present themselves as party loyalists and paint Chamberlain and the radicals as the trouble-makers destabilising the party. Significantly, it was Goschen who in October 1885 coined the term 'Unauthorised Programme' to characterise Chamberlain's campaign, stressing that it did not represent the official policy of

Nor was it the case that the Whigs were devoid of policies of their own in the face of the Unauthorised Programme, and represented merely a dead weight trying to slow down the radicals without ideas of their own.

the Liberal Party or of the prime minister.

However, it was notable that even then Hartington never condemned the Unauthorised Programme, particularly once Chamberlain had backed down from his initial ultimatum speech at Lambeth on 24 September, when he rashly demanded that his programme must be adopted as the policies of the next Liberal government. Within a week Chamberlain had retreated from this position, stating only that he requested his policies be treated as open questions by the next Liberal administration. Hartington was always willing to accept that these were indeed issues requiring more debate and consideration, against the background of his severe practical doubts and his warnings of raising unrealistic expectations. He acknowledged that in some circumstances compulsory purchase of land was already right and possible and not original or revolutionary, refusing to make Chamberlain's position on land reform into a party-splitting issue of absolute principle. On another of Chamberlain's key policies, free education, Hartington raised doubts about certain practical considerations but again did not rule it out.

From the Whig perspective Chamberlain's campaign backfired in a number of ways as they saw him spending more and more of the later part of the election backtracking from the position he had taken early on. Free education, for instance, virtually disappeared from his speeches by the end of the campaign, as so many nonconformists objected to the prospect of Anglican schools receiving state funding. Chamberlain was also perceived as having misjudged the campaign, crassly pushing forward his demands and using inflammatory language to promote his views. Many Liberals blamed Chamberlain's approach for the setback the party received in the English boroughs in the general election, as the Conservatives won

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an unexpected majority of these seats. This came as a shock to the Liberals, many of whom, including Chamberlain, had anticipated a landslide for the party. It was assessed that the extreme language that Chamberlain and the radicals had used had frightened many moderate voters. The setbacks in the boroughs cut the Liberal majority and took the shine off the election victory.

This outcome demonstrated, in Dr Jenkins' view, that the Liberal Party as a whole, not just the Whigs, was not ready for the acceptance and implementation of Chamberlain's radical programme. The main lessons of the election drawn by the party were that there had been a rejection of radical policies and a justification of moderate and traditional Liberal approaches. Even after the 1885 election, therefore, the Whigs did not feel that their position inside the party was anachronistic or under serious threat of being swept away by a tide of progressivism. They believed that they were well placed to fight for their version of Liberalism in opposition to Chamberlain. When, therefore, the Liberal split came in 1886 it was, in Dr Jenkins' assessment, genuinely about Ireland and about Gladstone's style of leadership. There was no ideological divide between radicals and Whigs and the Whigs did not use Ireland as a smoke-screen under cover of which they could leave the party and join the Conservatives. The issue of home rule split the party in an entirely different way. It created a fault line that ensured that Hartington and Chamberlain were actually in alliance with each other in the Liberal Unionists. Of the MPs who rebelled over home rule, only about half were from aristocratic or classic Whig backgrounds; about 30 per cent were businessmen.

There is no doubt that the split of 1886 was immensely damaging to the Liberals,

There was no ideological divide between radicals and Whigs and the Whigs did not use Ireland as a smoke-screen under cover of which they could leave the party and join the Conservatives.

demoralising the party and undermining its ability to present itself to the nation as a truly national party; and of course it was a gift to the Conservatives who, with their new Liberal Unionist allies, were able to dominate politics for the next twenty years. While it is true that many of those who left the party in 1886 were from the Whig tradition, this did not have the effect of liberating the Liberal Party in the years immediately following, and allowing it to become a progressive party of welfare and social reform. For example, looking at the Newcastle Programme of 1891, while there were some elements of tax reform clearly inspired by Chamberlain's earlier ideas, the emphasis was on mainly traditional Liberal policies such as home rule, disestablishment of the Scottish church and temperance reform. Dr Jenkins thought highly questionable, therefore, the proposition that the Liberal Party had to divest itself of the Whigs before it could move on to the New Liberalism. By the 1890s and 1900s the political

agenda was changing and politicians of all parties were forced to confront a new landscape. Issues such as old age pensions or social insurance were new; they were not the policies being talked about by Chamberlain in 1885, although ironically Chamberlain was at that time trying to develop policy on these questions from within his alliance with the Conservatives.

In conclusion, Dr Jenkins said he would agree with the view expressed by the late Professor Colin Matthew, editor of the Gladstone diaries, when he speculated that if the Liberal Party had held together in 1886 on the Irish question, it could have become a party of positive social welfare.

Grahma Lippiatt is the Secretary of the Liberal Democrat History Group.

- 1 Denis Judd, *Radical Joe, A Life of Joseph Chamberlain* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press), 1993.
- 2 See also, Marji Bloy, *Joseph Chamberlain* in Duncan Brack et al, *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (London, Politico's Publishing), 1998.

REVIEWS

The strange birth of social democracy

Gareth Stedman Jones, *An End to Poverty? A Historical Debate* (Profile Books, 2004)

Reviewed by **Frank Trentmann**

The battle for the next election has begun. So far, the main show in town to watch is not the conflict between parties but the contest between Brown and Blair. How to end poverty has become the battleground between rival egos and

rival views of social democracy. In this ambitious and thought-provoking book, Gareth Stedman Jones argues that it is fundamentally flawed to think that the future of social democracy lies with either New or Old Labour. *An End to Poverty?* offers a fresh

account of the birth of social democracy and an earlier vision of how to make poverty history. Instead of to trade unions or the welfare state, Stedman Jones looks to Thomas Paine and the Marquis de Condorcet in the 1780s and 1790s as the founding fathers of social democracy. In response to the American and French Revolutions, and drawing on new knowledge about probability, Paine and Condorcet developed a republican vision that combined social insurance with civic commitment in a commercial society. Poverty, they argued, could be eliminated through social insurance and universal education, paving the way for a republican, more inclusive and egalitarian community. Instead of seeking to navigate between liberalism and socialism, social democratic politics today, Stedman Jones urges, should return to this initial republican project and combine commercial society, social equality, and inclusive citizenship.

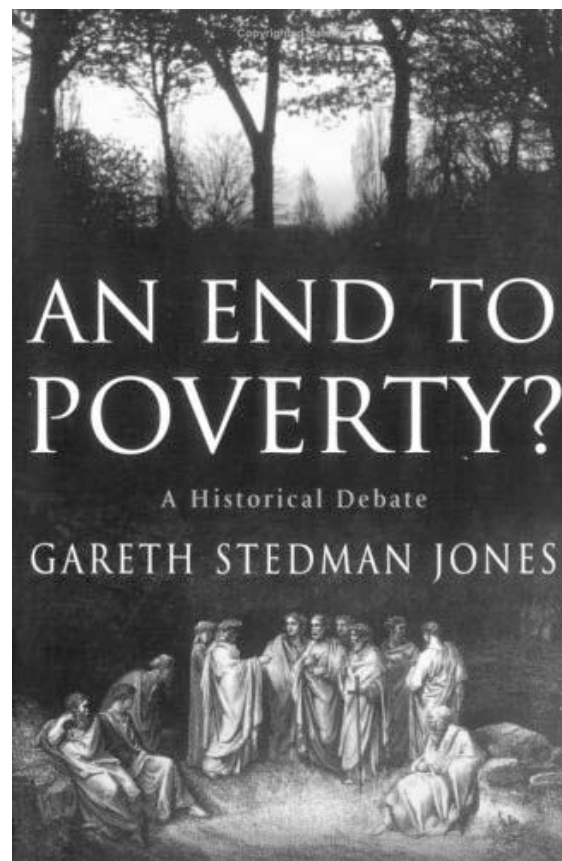
After the 1790s, it is all downhill. Reaction to the French Revolution closed off the space for radical politics. The organic republican vision that fused a commitment to free trade with social insurance was driven apart into ideological extremes of liberal political economy, on the one hand, and socialism, on the other. Where states introduced social reforms, such as the Liberal legislation in Edwardian Britain, these largely lacked the eighteenth-century vision of universal rights and democratic inclusiveness. This book offers a way out of the sometimes tiresome back and forth between Old and New Labour that has been haunting British politics. The future of social democracy does not lie with either New Labour or Old Labour. Rather, both Old and New Labour would do well to rediscover the essence of original social democracy.

This is an inspired and thought-provoking book. Few authors writing today combine historical vision with political

engagement like Gareth Stedman Jones. He offers a razor-sharp account that cuts through many of the more technical debates in the history of ideas and economics to bring to life the changing meanings of political economy for the general reader. Broadly speaking, the account of the rise and fall of the republican social democratic idea is told through the changing readings of Adam Smith. Against the background of an initially optimistic response to the American and French Revolutions, Paine and Condorcet offered a new radical reading of Smith that allowed them to combine Smith's embrace of commercial society with a new and more egalitarian project of a democratic community. Fear of revolutionary anarchy, monarchism, nationalism, and evangelicalism, in turn, later mobilised alternative and ultimately more influential positions of political economy. The social and the political now split, as political economy came to concern itself with economic freedom and markets – not democratic culture. Poverty became an issue of personal behaviour and morality – Malthus' contribution receives much emphasis here – or an economic problem. The elimination of poverty had ceased to be part of a democratic project of creating citizens. Socialism, on the other extreme, divided society into workers versus capitalists, losing sight of the significance of commercial society for civic life recognised by Paine and Condorcet.

One way to describe this book's place in the literature on social democracy is anti-Whiggery. Instead of a heroic rise of the working class and Labour in response to an unfolding industrial capitalism, the narrative here is one of Fall and disintegration. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century social democratic politics lost a richer founding vision. In fact, Stedman Jones' critical discussion of socialism and laissez-faire political economy as two extremes carving up the

liberal-republican vision of the founding fathers is an argument that Labour and socialist movements have fragmented and corrupted true social democracy. Here attention to the ideological fusion of liberal and republican elements in the 1780s and '90s connects with Stedman Jones' earlier, seminal work on *Languages of Class* – and takes him one step further. In that work, emphasis had been on the political language of anti-aristocratic corruption, rather than on socio-economic forces, in the creation of the first large labour movement, Chartism. Now, this political process appears as a merely partial appropriation of a richer, pre-existing social democratic position. Chartists took from Paine an understanding of aristocratic excess and its fiscal burdens, but they no longer carried forth the egalitarian understanding that came with his proposals on social insurance. Moving the founding moment of social democracy from social movements to social thinkers thus leaves Chartists (and class politics more generally) in a more



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subordinate, problematic position. More generally, it reinforces an older historiographical view of the centrality of the revolutionary era – both in generating modern ideas and, through the anti-revolutionary reaction, in casting a long shadow over the nineteenth century.

How much weight can Paine and Condorcet carry in this new story of social democracy? Politicians and historians may have different answers to this question – as indeed will the poor and their champions (the ultimate audience of this republican social democratic ideal). Historians may debate whether the celebration of Paine's and Condorcet's ideas as a foundational moment of social democracy risks minimising the contribution of subsequent traditions. The anti-Whiggery of the book rests on a stark contrast between an organic radical view of the 1780s and '90s and a subsequent polarisation of discourse and politics into two rival camps of laissez-faire individualism and socialism. This narrative may do useful political work in liberating Adam Smith from the clutches of recent neo-liberals. As history, however, it arguably projects twentieth-century programmes of individualism versus collectivism back into the nineteenth century, where popular politics were far less clear-cut. Broadening the discussion from key texts to popular politics might suggest a reverse narrative. Far from having been dislodged, many of Paine's building blocks of free trade and civil society were common pillars of the popular radicalism that peaked in the decades before the First World War.

Stedman Jones' fascination with Paine and Condorcet lies with their organic or republican conception of socioeconomic and political identities. In the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he argues, this new social democratic language of citizenship was 'pushed aside' by socialism with its antithesis between worker and

capitalist, on the one hand, and 'laissez-faire individualism and a language of producer and consumer', on the other (p. 235). This statement illustrates the problem of causation in a nutshell. True, liberalism and neo-liberalism in public choice theory and public policy have increasingly adopted a producer-versus-consumer view anchored in individualist theories, but this is mainly a recent trend. Few thinkers and social movements in the first half of the nineteenth century gave the consumer a distinct or prominent position. In fact, one of the few political economists who did accord consumption special attention, Jean-Baptiste Say – who figures in this book as one of the thinkers unravelling the radical vision – did so by including the consumption in factories as well as that by private end-users. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that a language of the consumer took shape – and then it did so by fusing civic and socioeconomic ideas and identities, as in battles over consumer rights and consumer representation. In short, it is difficult to see how an individualist free market conception of consumer vs. producer could have played a role in the earlier decline of radical social democracy. Quite the contrary, it could be argued that the Victorian and Edwardian discovery of the consumer injected civic ideas into political economy.

The book is more persuasive in highlighting just how much the reaction to the French Revolution amounted to a profound disjuncture for the history of ideas and politics. Paine's effigies were burnt. His radical bestseller was pushed aside by a wave of loyalist texts. Stedman Jones shows clearly how this reaction and fear of radicalism prompted a new moral, Christian and politico-economic defence of property and individual responsibility. As far as later radical generations are concerned, Stedman Jones emphasises that Paine's writings were only selectively used. But

why did later radical and social-democratic thinkers and movements not pick up again Paine's proposals for social insurance? Why this particular pattern of reception or selective amnesia?

Stedman Jones' plea for a fresh appreciation of the radical ideas of the 1780s and '90s both as an inspiration for contemporary politics and as a historical phenomenon comes close to endowing a particular historical moment with a kind of timeless meaning and significance. The changing appeal of the idea here becomes a battle between rival authors and their texts, fighting over the body of Adam Smith. This approach partly reflects just how much historians of society have turned away from socioeconomic developments and towards language and ideas to explain change. It also, however, assumes that the appeal and function of ideas is relatively autonomous from socio-economic developments. Texts alone cannot explain the changing social and political purchase and reverberations of an idea. Perhaps it was not only textual reinterpretations of political economy, but also the changing material world that made later generations of radicals and social democrats produce and look to other ideas and interpretations of the world. Put crudely, perhaps Paine's republican fusion of commerce, civil society and citizenship worked better for a commercial society than for an industrial or post-industrial society.

This last point brings us to the politicians and political readers targeted by this book. Stedman Jones is rightly critical of the increasingly ahistorical tone and tenor of political debate; fellow historians of the left are criticised for their 'distant and condescending' attitude to the enlightenment (p.9). The 1780s and '90s did produce a progressive democratic vision. But is it a good or adequate vision for our times? Why return all the way to the radical enlightenment rather than simply start with

The book is more persuasive in highlighting just how much the reaction to the French Revolution amounted to a profound disjuncture for the history of ideas and politics.

later ideas of social justice and social policy, such as the New Liberalism, welfare economics, or more recent theories of justice? Deep down for Stedman Jones, I suspect, poverty and policies to eliminate poverty are of interest less for their size, effect or practicality than for the civic vision lying behind them. Paine and Condorcet would probably be stunned by the dramatic expansion of social services since the late nineteenth century. Schooling is universal. In Britain at the turn of the twenty-first century, more than £12 billion was spent on personal social services; local authorities spent nearly three-quarters of their share on the most vulnerable groups, children and older people. In France in the 1980s (though not in Britain) there was a pronounced trend closing the gap in income between the elderly and the rest of society, surely assisting greater social equality and inclusion. Clearly, Stedman Jones has an important point that the egalitarian approach of radicals like Paine matters, for it includes the poor as equals in a civic community, whereas early welfarist legislation could be hierarchical and exclusionary. A fervent New Labour minister, by contrast, might argue that, rather than having moved away from this older vision, they are moving closer to it, after the well-intended paternalistic welfarism of Old Labour. New Labour discourse and policy initiatives are full of attempts to fuse economy and politics, market and citizenship, and to create 'citizen-consumers'. Such a minister might produce a long list of targets and initiatives intended to replace hierarchical or statist patterns with more local and inclusive forms of civic engagement that involve and give voice to the poor and socially excluded. More than at any time since the Edwardian period, free trade, civil society, and community engagement are staples of Labour Party discourse. The obvious riposte to this only semi-fictional

minister is, of course, that discourse is one thing, putting politics into practice quite another. But it is precisely here that the conceptual gulf between ideas and politics and society opens up in the history of ideas driving this important book. It is not at all clear how Paine's visionary idea would have played out in practice. Nor is it clear at all what particular policy proposals a current minister open to persuasion should take away from the account offered here. What policy blueprint has Paine got to offer a government that is already committed to increased spending on nurseries, health care and social services whilst accepting the virtuous discipline of markets? The historical record of the last century suggests the tremendous difficulty of overcoming poverty, whatever governments' intentions.

What, finally, about political readers with a home in radical politics and social movements? In contrast to his sustained attention to social insurance, Stedman Jones is largely silent about the long-term legacies of the other two elements of the early social democratic trinity: civil society and free trade. This is not because of ignorance; he has elsewhere produced an original perspective on Hegel and civil society. Here, however, the silence about free trade and civil society in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries distracts from some of the evolving limitations, some would say defects, of a theory that fuses social equality and citizenship with free trade. Partly, this has to do with the specific nature and trajectory of Paine's version of civil society. Paine equated the state with aristocratic corruption, war and immiseration. Hence, a strong civil society meant a small state. How such a version of social democracy could be squared with the current demands of social services and taxation is difficult to imagine, as the current dilemmas of pensions' reform amply shows. Paine's strategy for inclusion

The relationship between free trade and a social democratic project to erase poverty is also problematic.

rested on grants to the poor to assist their education. This is very different from the contemporary world where social inclusion requires not only education but access to television sets and fashionable clothes to allow the poor to participate in the lifestyle of a society of consuming citizens.

The republican vision also invokes a certain organic form of a community of like-minded active citizens. There is a principal tension between the idea of such a community and the idea of a commercial society. How could the integrity of such a community be reconciled with the more free-floating, diverse and pluralistic dynamics of an open, commercial society? Paine's and Condorcet's notions of social justice presumed a fairly homogenous community with shared moral beliefs. Societies today are far more pluralistic and include many incompatible beliefs. Civil and commercial societies, unlike small and more closed communities, may be marked by tolerance but they also involve thin identities that do not easily rise to the more active demands of republican citizenship. Arguably, the original social democratic vision was trying to do the impossible and reconcile rival systems of commercial civil society and more communitarian republicanism.

The relationship between free trade and a social democratic project to erase poverty is also problematic. Paine's and Condorcet's vision was global. In the course of the book, however, the focus increasingly narrows to domestic social policies, ignoring global trade and poverty. Some writers have argued that British free trade produced 'late Victorian holocausts' by promoting famine and starvation and resulting in a sharply widening gulf between First World and Third World. While a good case can be made that the abolition of agricultural subsidies in the European Union would raise the standard of living of producers in developing countries, an equally

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good case exists to warn that in a real world of considerably different levels of development, income and power, trade liberalisation has reinforced poverty in the poorest parts of the world. Paine's and Condorcet's vision of the benign and pacific force of free trade was a radical utopian idea at the time but it had little to offer social democratic movements in the early twentieth century dealing with international crises, trusts and cartels or seeking to provide social justice and fair prices for both consumers and producers. There are good historical reasons why successive generations of social democrats moved away from a free trade ideal to explore alternative forms of coordination, regulation, or 'fair trade'. It is not at all clear how social citizenship and social equality can be achieved under free trade conditions. Historians are not prophets, but judging

from the overwhelmingly hostile position of current social movements to global free trade, it is unlikely that a plea for reviving the original social democratic utopia of free trade, social insurance and citizenship will make for very popular politics.

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he also enjoyed the nickname Lord Cupid and his dedication to the social pleasures, on which Chambers elaborates more fully than most previous biographers, may have been too ostentatious for him to be taken seriously as a statesman.

All that changed with the death of Canning. As anti-Catholic as he remained in his personal beliefs, Palmerston saw Catholic Emancipation as a necessity of state, electoral reform as inevitable and a liberal foreign policy as desirable. Consequently, he and the other Canningites parted company with Wellington and Peel, who swallowed emancipation but resisted reform. Under the 1830 Whig administration of Grey, he took the Foreign Office and held that position in the succeeding Melbourne and Russell governments. Despite his reputation of being over-ready to send a gunboat to intimidate some poor defenceless smaller nation, Palmerston's pugnacious foreign policy was more concerned with keeping the peace between European rivals than making marginal additions to the Empire. To that end, he worked hard for the creation of Belgium as a buffer to French expansion and interfered in the politics of the Iberian peninsula to promote constitutional government and limit French influence. Similarly, his endorsement of Italian nationalism was partly a reflection of his Liberal values, but more significantly he sought to limit the over-extension of the Austrian autocracy so that the Austro-Hungarian Empire remained a valuable counterweight to Russian ambition. Everywhere he was aware of the risk of revolution to the unreformed European monarchies, though his brash warnings were rarely heeded by those he sought to protect. Chambers makes the complexities of these Continental affairs clear and this book will serve well those with only a sketchy prior knowledge.

Chambers suggests that Palmerston's career was, 'without doubt, the most entertaining; and it was probably the most influential internationally' ... it can also be argued that Palmerston was crucial to the success of the Liberal Party.

A very distinguished tightrope dancer

James Chambers, *Palmerston: 'The People's Darling'*

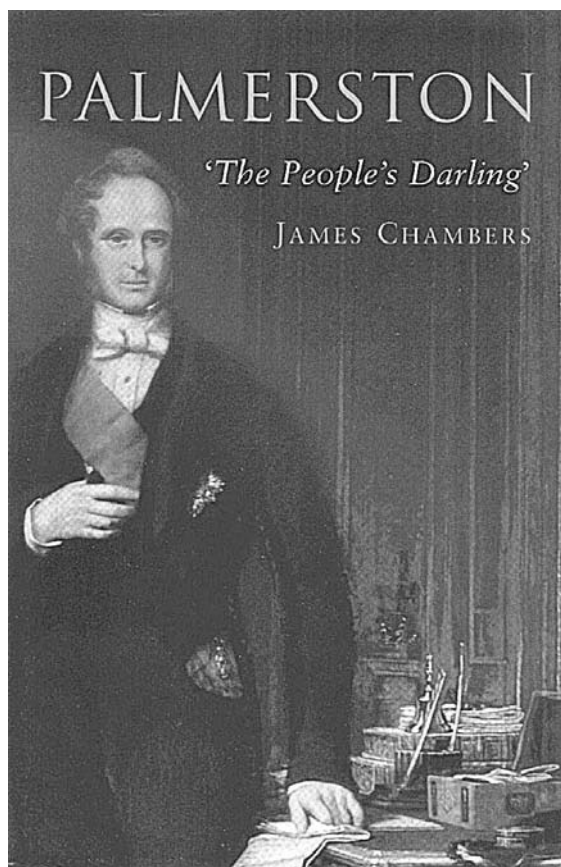
(John Murray, 2004)

Reviewed by **Tony Little**

Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston, began his ministerial career in 1807, at the age of twenty-two, fresh from university and before he found a parliamentary seat. Yet he did not reach the premiership until he was seventy, the oldest first-time prime minister. His career took him from the Napoleonic wars and the lax aristocratic morality of the Regency period to British Imperial dominance and the height of Victorian conformity. In his preface, Chambers suggests that Palmerston's career was, 'without doubt, the most entertaining; and it was probably the most influential internationally'. Although not a claim that Chambers makes, it can also

be argued that Palmerston was crucial to the success of the Liberal Party.

By family background and an Enlightenment education in Edinburgh, Palmerston should have been a Whig but, in the face of Revolutionary France, he accepted junior office under the Tories. His two-decade apprenticeship in junior office was unusually long and not easily explained. Throughout his life, Palmerston could irritate superiors, from the Queen downwards, combining his insistence on the prerogatives of his own office with disregard for the responsibilities of others, while expressing himself so bluntly that he earned the nickname Lord Pumicestone. As a young man,



A jolly way of looking at disasters

Palmerston was rather less clear in explaining his purpose to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert whose Germanic and monarchist sympathies clashed with their Foreign Secretary's broader vision. Palmerston ignored his wife's sound advice that 'You always think you can convince people by Arguments' and the Queen 'has not reflection or sense to feel the force of them ... I should treat what she says more lightly & courteously, and not enter into argument with her, but lead her on gently, by letting her believe you both have the same opinions in fact and the same wishes, but take different ways of carrying them out' (p. 287). He continued irritating the royal family until, in frustration, the monarch and her consort conspired with Lord John Russell to sack him at the end of 1851. But the plot was so inept that the sacking was the making of Palmerston's career rather than its finale. Within weeks, Palmerston had his tit-for-tat with Russell over a

militia bill, ending the minority Whig administration.

A minority Conservative government under Lord Derby proved unable to survive without Palmerston's blessing, and in Lord Aberdeen's 1852 coalition Palmerston was restored to office as Home Secretary. This meant that 'Pam' avoided the blame for the Crimean War and its inefficient conduct despite being a senior member of the government, while Russell was discredited for deserting the sinking ship when he resigned in advance of a critical Radical motion to the Commons. In consequence, the seventy-year old Palmerston assumed the premiership as the inevitable war leader.

Equally inescapable was his return to meddling in foreign affairs and, while he still did not see eye to eye with Victoria and Albert, he kept his provocations below a level which required dismissal. If he had overpowered the royal family, he had not yet mastered the Commons where his speeches, polished for publication, read better than they sounded. He spoke from notes, and Chambers describes his delivery as 'stuttering' with 'hesitations and grasping for words' (p. 138). Defeated over the inept handling by officials of the Chinese seizure of the *Arrow* in 1857, his position was only retrieved by victory in the ensuing general election. His subsequent defeat over the Orsini plot to assassinate the French emperor ended his first government – a rare case of Palmerston appearing to act not as the British bulldog but as a poodle to the French who demanded a change in British law to allow the prosecution of asylum seekers accused of terrorist plotting (*plus ça change*).

The Conservative administration, again headed by Derby, which replaced Palmerston's first government, was itself short-lived and, while it unfairly claimed the full credit for the resolution of the Indian Mutiny, it failed to secure its Reform Bill and called the resulting election

in the middle of a European crisis over Italy. Palmerston capitalised on the British public's sympathy for the Italian nationalists, which contrasted with the apparent Conservative bias towards their Austrian enemies. After the election, Italy served to reunite the squabbling Liberal factions in the famous 1859 meeting in Willis's Rooms. Queen Victoria's attempts to avoid sending for either Russell or Palmerston played out in a manner which guaranteed Palmerston the job; Palmerston was blessed in his enemies.

Palmerston described his role as that of 'a very distinguished tightrope dancer' and Chambers presents a clear narrative of this confusing period in British politics, although he concentrates on foreign affairs and succumbs to the temptation of including well-known stories from the Crimean War because they are well known rather than because they aid our understanding of Palmerston. He deals less well with the complexities of domestic politics and the motivations of the Liberal factions, which, intermittently, combined in opposing their nominal leader.

Palmerston's second government weathered all its trials and he died, still in office, six years later, shortly after his victory in the 1865 general election. The story of this period is usually told in terms of foreign policy crises, which included an Anglo-French arms race, the American Civil War and the notorious Schleswig-Holstein problem. Chambers follows this standard pattern and gives a clearer presentation of the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, in which Bismarck called Palmerston's bluff and Britain left a small powerless ally in the lurch, than I have seen elsewhere.

So much more in earnest than he appeared

However, this focus on foreign policy also represents the book's chief weakness. Chambers finds foreign affairs more exciting than

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domestic and he writes well on them but he is following a well-gleaned path while neglecting the less well-harvested field of Palmerston's domestic policies, politics and achievements. Palmerston's period in the Home Office is briskly despatched, and if the first Palmerston government had domestic achievements they are little noticed. Palmerston's second government consolidated the existence of a Liberal Party and habituated its components to working together. This required considerable skill in the management of men and, in the case of Gladstone, almost superhuman tolerance. Yet this tricky exercise, so suggestive of the Blair–Brown relationship, and Gladstone's extraordinary management of the Treasury under Palmerston, the principal domestic achievement of the government, are passed briefly over. Indeed the whole of the second government is given only 10 per cent of the book's length.

Chambers subtitles his book 'The People's Darling' because Palmerston embodied the spirit of John Bull. In his most famous speech he ended by asserting 'as the Roman in the days of old, held himself free from indignity, when he could say "Civis romanus sum"; so also a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and strong arm of England will protect him against injustice and wrong' (p. 322).^a Electors and non-electors alike recognised more readily than MPs that Palmerston put the interests of the nation first and foremost. But Palmerston was also the first premier to court popularity. Though at odds with his hostility to electoral reform after 1832, he sought to incorporate the working classes into the political nation through speaking engagements outside his own constituency. He was an early and skilled protagonist of press management. His wife's much-sought-after social entertainments were carefully designed to bind MPs to him and his cause.

Palmerston was a mass of apparent contradictions. A keen exporter of reforming Liberalism abroad and a fierce opponent of slavery, he felt little need to keep adding to the statute book at home. Not a religious man, his carefully thought-out ecclesiastical appointments, within the Church of England, rallied nonconformists to Liberalism; despising Irish Catholicism, he provided Catholic education on his Irish estates. Florence Nightingale was a neighbour of Palmerston and her admonition, 'though he made a joke when asked to do the right thing, he always did it ... He was so much more in earnest than

he appeared' (p. 431), captures an essential component of the man which leaves room for a more analytical approach than Chambers adopts. Nevertheless Chambers makes the most of his opportunities to provide a tempting introduction to an engaging character whom Clarendon described as having a 'jolly way of looking at disasters' (p. 437).

Tony Little is Chair of the Liberal Democrat History Group.

¹ For an extensive selection from the speech see Duncan Brack and Tony Little, *Great Liberal Speeches* (Politics, 2001), pp. 109–119.

What the voters saw

Emily Robinson & Justin Fisher, *General Election 2005*

– *What the Voters Saw* (New Politics Network, 2005)

Reviewed by **Mark Pack**

The 2005 general election has already seen a plethora of books published, ranging from the latest volume in the Nuffield election studies (Kavanagh and Butler, *The British General Election of 2005*) through to probably the most detailed polling analysis ever published of a campaign, the fruits of the extensive opinion polls commissioned (at a cost of hundreds of thousands of pounds) by Tory peer Lord Ashcroft (*Smell the Coffee: a Wake-up Call for the Conservative Party*).

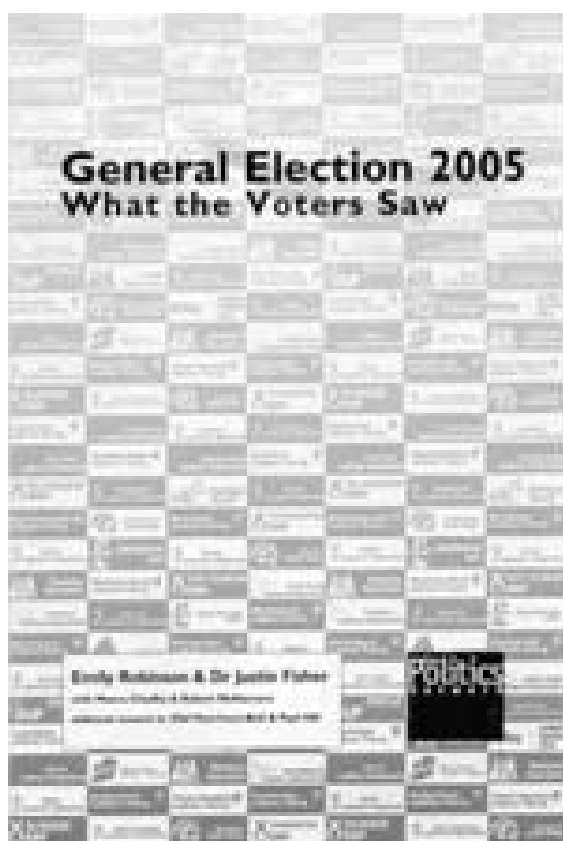
In this menagerie, Robinson and Fisher have found a distinctive and interesting niche as their work reports on a study, conducted by the New Politics Network and funded by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, into what electors really received through their letterbox, over the phone or in person on the doorstep during the election. A panel of 313 volunteers across 223 different seats recorded all the

contacts they received and this book analyses the results.

To Liberal Democrat campaigners many of the results will be less surprising, perhaps, than to others – but as it is a staple complaint of Lib Dem election organisers that academics and pundits do not understand how their local campaigns really work, that is not necessarily a bad thing (though doubtless quite a few eyebrows will be raised at the omission of the Liberal Democrats from the list of parties who it is said – on page 11 – 'have the capability to target different voters with different leaflets within the same constituency!').

The study provides very clear evidence for more leaflets bringing more votes, with the seats the Lib Dems gained often showing double-figure number of contacts for electors from the Liberal Democrats. One lucky – or unlucky, depending on your point of view – soul in Hornsey & Wood Green received no less

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than eighteen different leaflets from the Liberal Democrats. As the authors understandably conclude, 'the Liberal Democrats were determined to win this seat'. The result? A Liberal Democrat gain, with a swing of 15 per cent. Similar double-figure levels of contact were recorded in other dramatic wins in Manchester Withington and Westmorland & Lonsdale.

A more detailed reading of the figures shows some strong results for the Liberal Democrats on more modest campaigns, but the overall picture is a clear link between very heavy levels of Lib Dem contact and good Lib Dem results. What is also clear is that in many of these seats the 'classic ALDC' type campaign of four or five leaflets is now seen as barely breaking sweat. This is partly a reaction to the increasing difficulty of getting a political message across as advertising and marketing material have encroached more and more on every aspect of life (and through the letterbox). On the other hand, in many seats the Liberal Democrats clearly still struggle to

reach this level of intensive campaigning activity across a Parliamentary seat – and as a result across the country as a whole the Lib Dem leaflets come out as the least local due to the reliance on standard national artwork in many of the weaker seats.

The connection between activity and results appears much looser for the other parties, again a reflection of the wider world, in this case the higher core support and media coverage for Labour and the Conservatives.

The book is rounded off with a detailed analysis of what the parties said on immigration – the most contentious

issue of campaign ethics during the campaign – and a sketch of the campaign in five individual constituencies. At £7.50 for just forty pages the book is rather pricey, but there is enough interest in this brief book to make it worthwhile – and brevity does mean a busy political activist may actually have the time to read it!

Mark Pack works in the Liberal Democrats Campaigns Department and, in his spare time, wrote most of the eighteen letters and leaflets the lucky Hornsey & Wood Green resident received.

A Prime Minister speaks

Paul Richards (ed.) *Tony Blair: In His Own Words* (London; Politico's Publishing, 2004)

Reviewed by **Mark Pack**

This collection brings together forty-three of Blair's speeches, articles and similar items stretching from 1982 to 2004.

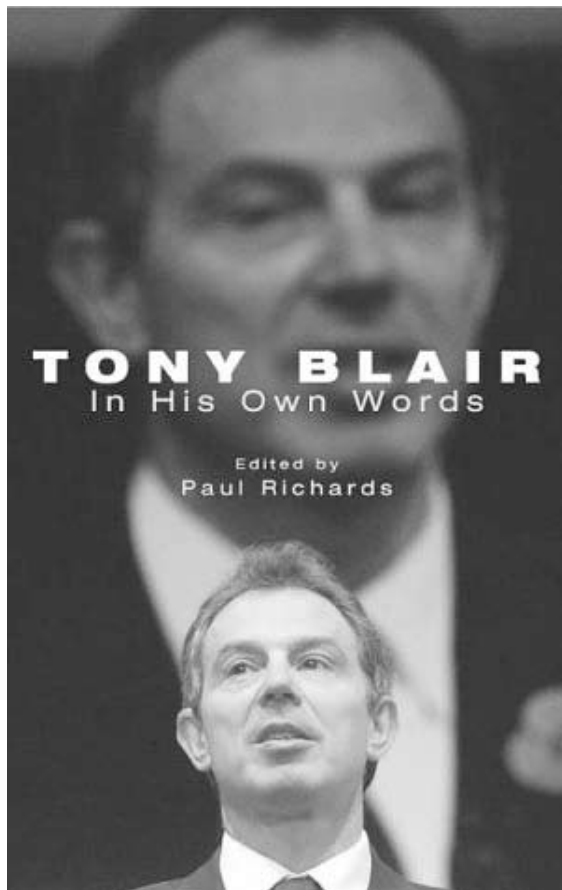
The quote on the inner flap is typical Blair: 'I want us to be a young country again. With a common purpose. With ideals we cherish and live up to. Not resting on past glories. Not fighting old battles.' It has visionary rhetoric, displaying a real verbal oratorical style (so rare in politicians these days) with its sparseness with words and verbs – and not distinctively Labour in content. It has overtones of JFK but with a few small changes could have come from Mrs Thatcher.

Some of the speeches are heavily edited, with the extracts thereby losing their coherence and form, but fortunately those to suffer most are the conference speeches, which are available elsewhere. And Blair's political CV from 1983 is published in full and untouched, leaving in even the bizarre misspelling by Blair of his own name.

The editor, an ardent New Labour fan, argues that Blair's values come through the book as consistent and heavily based on his Christian views. There is no room here for criticisms of Blair's timidity after having won a large Parliamentary majority, nor of the Women's Institute speech that, due to its failure, is one of his most famous.

Perhaps the most interesting speech is Blair's 1982 lecture outlining the state of British politics. Some later themes of Blairism are already clear, including criticism of Tony Benn for divisiveness. Concerns about social exclusion and the scepticism of party activists ('the trouble is that they can end up with little or no time for meeting those with whom they disagree') are here too.

Blair was even then searching for an alternative to sterile right-left debates, albeit in a rather different form from his latter beliefs. In the early 1980s he was willing to praise the left for generating new thinking. And the 1982 Blair also criticised the



Labour right for basking in praise from the *Financial Times*, *The Times* and *Guardian* – yet seeking praise from at least the first two would later become an obsession of New Labour.

Other early items also clearly show traits that have become emblematic of Blair. In his 1990 interview with *Marxism Today* we have the family man changing nappies, and a determination verging on insolence and wrapped in self-deprecation. He happily admits – even boasts about – unpopular aspects of his beliefs and background.

Many of the items have dated very little. This reflects Blair's tendency to talk on larger and more enduring themes than on policy detail. It also reflects his failure to deliver on many of them in government – he is still talking about the same issues now because his government has failed to move the debate on.

Blair's *New Statesman* article on crime is also here with the 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime' approach that made his name as a national

politician and helped bring about a major shift in the Labour Party's attitude towards crime. For such an important shift, the article itself is curiously disappointing. It is a fairly banal romp through the horrors of crime with the usual superficial *mêlée* of statistics showing that crime is at its worst since the Creation. There is no serious analysis of the levels of crime, their trends or their causes. Yet the soundbite helped bring about a substantive shift in Labour's policies and priorities.

The importance of his religious beliefs comes through in pieces such as his foreword to *Reclaiming Socialism: Christianity and Socialism*. Here we see how his religious beliefs underpin and give justification to his self-righteous stridency and directness on some issues, notably Iraq: 'Christianity is a very tough religion ... There is right and wrong. There is good and bad ... We should not hesitate to make such judgements. And then follow them with determined action.'

The religious tenor appears in many of the speeches and writing which were not aimed at a specifically religious audience, as in his 1996 conference speech and its quasi-biblical exhortation about '1,000 days to prepare for a 1,000 years', the references to Old Testament prophets and

the rallying cry – 'let us lead [the nation] to our new age.'

His justification of the war in Iraq is often couched in similar moralistic tones: 'This is a tough choice. But it is also a stark one ... I believe we must hold firm ... to show at the moment of decision that we have the courage to do the right thing.'

As with any good collection of speeches there are a few gems of detail to cherish, such as Blair's approving quotation of Lenin on the importance of being willing to compromise.

The Liberals and Liberal Democrats barely feature in the book, despite the fact that Blair's views on the possibility of realignment and on deals to entrench an anti-Conservative majority had a major role in much of his political thought for several years.

The production qualities are the usual Politico's mix – good paper and clear print, but sloppiness creeps in during the production process, in this case evidenced by a rather hit-and-miss index.

Mark Pack has a doctorate in nineteenth century English elections, and now works in the Liberal Democrats' Campaigns and Elections Department, specialising in internet and legal matters.

Political studies

British Elections & Parties Review: Volume 13 (edited by Colin Rallings, Roger Scully, Jonathan Tonge and Paul Webb; Frank Cass, 2003) and *Volume 14* (edited by Roger Scully, Justin Fisher, Paul Webb and David Broughton; Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2004)

Reviewed by **Mark Pack**

Over the years the volumes in this series have maintained a consistent house style despite a large number of different editors. These two volumes, as with previous ones,

contain a collection of new research in the field of political science. There is the usual smattering of chapters which make a nod to the outside world, and a few which do not rely on the

detailed consideration of residuals, coefficients and significance levels. But the core of these publications is the detailed statistical analysis of modern British politics. They are the place to turn to for an overview of the latest statistical analyses of the UK political system, by both established and new academics.

The fourteen chapters of Volume 13 and the twelve in Volume 14 mainly cover elections held in 1999–2003. The non-UK content of Volume 13 is higher than normal in the series, due to its coverage of various European elections in 2002.

Both contain the usual triple-layered approach familiar to readers of previous volumes. There are summaries of each chapter, which give a brief fifteen-second overview of the content, then the full chapters, and then detailed footnotes and bibliographies which often provide pointers to much deeper levels of detail.

Volume 13 has a trio of chapters on overseas elections in 2002 – in France, Ireland and Netherlands. All three in their different ways illustrate the crisis of legitimacy of mainstream parties in modern Western democracies. In Ireland, Fine Gael could not turn dissatisfaction with the government into support for itself, whilst in both France and Holland an extreme party managed to force itself centre stage.

These studies are followed by five chapters on devolution within the UK. They are largely contemporary, with very little historical rooting to the stories they tell. What there is, though, serves as a useful reminder of the paucity of support for devolution over many years in Wales. Important though it may have been to Welsh Liberal politicians, it was much less of an issue for the public.

Although many of the academics genuinely engage with their subject areas, there is still a degree of ivory tower other-worldliness lingering in the background. How else could a statement such as the following be reported as a newsworthy

research finding? ‘In general, the more intense a party’s campaign in a constituency relative to its opponents’, the better its performance,’ we are solemnly told. Many campaigners may wonder why it has taken academics so long to accept that campaigning has an impact. One reason, of course, is that much of the most effective constituency campaigning has been carried out by those outside the two main political parties – and so considered until relatively recently as fringe parts of the political system (and therefore not worthy of much study).

Volume 14’s first two chapters examine how voters decide whom to support. In the theoretically perfect world of a rational voter, people base their preferences on careful consideration of the parties’ views on a range of issues. In reality, two major shortcuts are taken. First, there is the retrospective evaluation of the incumbents – support them if they’ve done a good job and oppose them if not, regardless of future policy promises. Second, views on issues can be influenced by the positions parties take. Thus, rather than backing a party because of its views on issue X, a voter may have taken a view on issue X because that is the view taken by their favoured party.

Whilst the particulars of the evidence and the statistical models are very specific to modern British electoral politics, the general theoretical points raise interesting issues for historians of the Liberal Party. Both suggest that some caution should be attached to identifying a straightforward link between changes in party policy on issues such as free trade with consequent levels of public support for the Liberal Party.

Four chapters then examine the issue of modern political citizenship and participation in social movements – what shapes it and what encourages it. As with voter choice, these chapters attempt to quantify and then analyse statistically a range of possible factors.

Two chapters on devolution follow, one on the record of Scottish opinion pollsters and one on the 2003 Welsh Assembly elections. The former, in going through a range of explanations for the poor performance of political pollsters in Scotland, provides a useful primer on the pitfalls of conducting political polling.

The three overseas chapters in Volume 14 – on New Zealand’s AMS PR system and on a leadership election by party members and grassroots campaigning in Ireland – cover topics of relevance to UK elections. The one other chapter deals with the voting records of Labour MPs since 2001 (rebellious frequently by historical standards, though not in large numbers).

There are some production blemishes in Volume 13, such as the mysterious footnote three in Chapter 2 that does not refer to the main body of the text and the wrong labelling of part of Table 5 in Chapter 1. More notable is the decline in the quality of what should be one of the most useful appendices. This volume, as with the others, includes in its appendices a narrative diary of the main political events, details of election results and similar. This makes the full collection of volumes a handy reference source. But the collection of public opinion polls in Volume 13 is much thinner than usual. Volume 14 sees a welcome and marked improvement.

Despite these blemishes, the series remains an interesting and useful collection of new research, packaged in a relatively accessible way and suitable for a wider audience than just specialist academics.

Mark Pack works in the Liberal Democrats’ Campaigns and Elections Department, specialising in internet and legal matters. The British Elections and Parties Review series has now been replaced by the Journal of British Elections and Parties Review, also published by Taylor & Francis.

Both suggest that some caution should be attached to identifying a straightforward link between changes in party policy on issues such as free trade with consequent levels of public support for the Liberal Party.

A Liberal Democrat History Group evening meeting

BLISSFUL DAWN? THE 1906 ELECTION

On 7 February 1906, the counting of votes was completed in the 1906 general election, and the Liberal Party had obtained a majority of 132 over all other parties. In addition, for the first time, 29 Labour MPs were elected and shortly afterwards the Parliamentary Labour Party was founded. To mark this anniversary, the Corporation of London is organising a lecture to which all Liberal Democrat History Group members are invited.

Speaker: **Lord Kenneth Morgan** (author of definitive biographies of Keir Hardie and Jim Callaghan, and one of the foremost historians of twentieth-century Britain)

6.00pm Tuesday 7 February (followed by reception at 7.30pm)
Old Library, Guildhall, London EC2

Unlike previous History Group events you **MUST** let the organisers know in advance if you intend to attend the event. The level of security needed at the Guildhall means names must be given to Guildhall security twenty-four hours in advance, so if you want to attend please send your name and contact details to the Public Relations Office, City of London (email to pro.events@cityoflondon.gov.uk, or fax to 020 7332 3076).

A Liberal Democrat History Group fringe meeting

DEFENDER OF LIBERTIES: CHARLES JAMES FOX

2006 also sees the bicentary of the death of the Whig leader Charles James Fox. A proponent of the supremacy of Parliament, the freedom of the press and the rights and civil liberties of the people, and a believer in reform, rationalism and progress, rather than repression, the ideas he defended – particularly over the challenge of the state to the liberties of the individual in time of war – are as relevant to our own times as to those of the Britain of 200 years ago.

Speaker: **Frank O’Gorman** (Emeritus Professor of History, Manchester University)

8.15pm Friday 3 March (following the Liberal Democrat History Group AGM at 8.00pm)
Queen’s Suite Room 5, Harrogate International Centre

Please note that due to conference security, only those with conference photo-badges will be able to attend. For those only wishing to attend fringe meetings, registration is free but is limited to Liberal Democrat party members; and please allow time to register and pick up your badge at the Conference Centre in Harrogate).
