Journal of Liberal History

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PRIVATE MONOPOLY
IMPERIALISM

SECTIONAL INTEREST
AND PRIVILEGES
(TRADE UNIONS)

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Liberal Leaders
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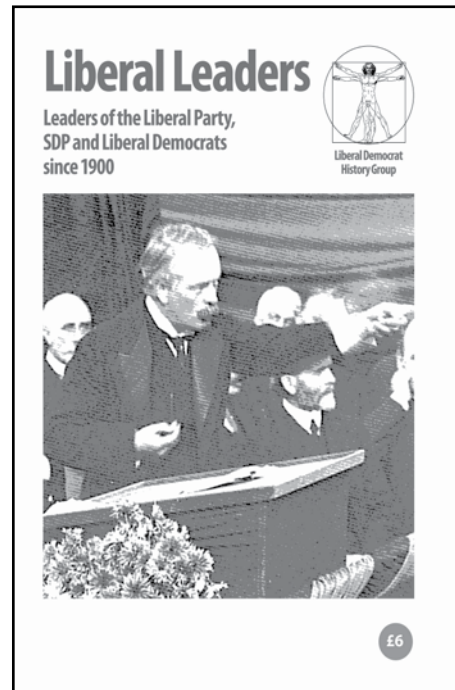
RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

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.

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.*

The Lib-Lab Pact
The period of political co-operation which took place in Britain between 1977 and 1978; PhD research project at Cardiff University. *Jonny Kirkup, 29 Mount Earl, Bridgend, Bridgend County CF31 3EY; jonnykirkup@yahoo.co.uk.*

'Economic Liberalism' and the Liberal (Democrat) Party, 1937–2004
A study of the role of 'economic liberalism' in the Liberal Party and the Liberal Democrats. Of particular interest would be any private papers relating to 1937's *Ownership For All* report and the activities of the Unservile State Group. Oral history submissions also welcome. *Matthew Francis; matthew@the-domain.org.uk.*

The Liberal Party's political communication, 1945–2002
Research on the Liberal party and Lib Dems' political communication. Any information welcome (including testimonies) about electoral campaigns and strategies. *Cynthia Messeleka-Boyer, 12 bis chemin Vaysse, 81150 Terssac, France; +33 6 10 09 72 46; cynthia.boyer@univ-jfc.fr.*

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

Liberal Unionists
A study of the Liberal Unionist party as a discrete political entity. Help with identifying party records before 1903 particularly welcome. *Ian Cawood, Newman University Colllege, Birmingham; i.cawood@newman.ac.uk.*

The Liberal Party in the West Midlands December 1916 – 1923 election
Focusing on the fortunes of the party in Birmingham, Coventry, Walsall and Wolverhampton. Looking to explore the effects of the party split at local level. Also looking to uncover the steps towards temporary reunification for the 1923 general election. *Neil Fisher, 42 Bowden Way, Binley, Coventry CV3 2HU ; neil.fisher81@ntlworld.com.*

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.*

The political career of Edward Strutt, 1st Baron Belper
Strutt was Whig/Liberal MP for Derby (1830-49), later Arundel and Nottingham; in 1856 he was created Lord Belper and built Kingston Hall (1842-46) in the village of Kingston-on-Soar, Notts. He was a friend of Jeremy Bentham and a supporter of free trade and reform, and held government office as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Commissioner of Railways. Any information, location of papers or references welcome. *Brian Smith; brian63@inbox.com*

Issue 67: Summer 2010

Cover illustration: cover of *Liberal Magazine*, January 1947

Liberal Democrat History Group

The Liberal Democrat History Group promotes the discussion and research of 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 of Liberal History* and other occasional publications.

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

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LIBERALS AI

Dr Richard S. Grayson introduces this special issue of the *Journal of Liberal History*

THIS SPECIAL issue tackles a long-standing issue within the Liberal Democrats and their predecessor parties: relations between themselves and other parties on the left of British politics. The phrase 'other parties on the left' is deliberately chosen. Although the Liberal Democrat History Group has previously examined the issue of liberalism's relationship with the right, the parties have rarely been anything other than self-consciously radical, in tune with many of the concerns of left radicalism. So this issue examines key moments in Liberal history when the relationship with the left has been crucial, whether at times of formation, government, decline or possible realignment.

The first issue which emerges as regards relations between Liberals and those on the left is that it has not always been easy to place Liberal politicians on a left–right spectrum. More particularly, that has meant that there have been shifts over whether the Labour or Conservative party is favoured as a possible partner. As **Robert Ingham's** article on 1945–55 shows, there have been times when the party was in two minds. In 1945, the party started with leftish instincts, but over the next decade elements of the party were in talks with both Labour and the Conservatives. Meanwhile, there have been moments of conflict

between the 'left' and 'right' of the party. **Graham Lippiatt** sets out the Radical Reform Group's influence on the direction of the Liberal Party. This was formed in 1952 when some were concerned that the Liberal Party was becoming too influenced by economic liberals.

Some of these controversies have arisen due to the diverse roots of the party. **Edward Royle** writes about two figures who were among the most radical of their generation. George Jacob Holyoake was a committed Chartist and secularist. Thomas Paine, while often placed more in a revolutionary and even socialist context, advocated a number of liberal positions on issues such as markets and constitutional reform.

Matthew Roberts explores the origins of the Liberal Party, setting out the impact of Chartism on the party. Although normally part of the Labour narrative, the impact of Chartists on the Liberal Party was significant. This could be seen as part of a chronology which sees the Liberal Party as becoming the leaders of social reform by the early twentieth century. Yet **Michael Freeden** highlights some of the difficulties of assuming that the Liberal Party pre-1914 was an overwhelmingly New Liberal one. It still had a significant body of individualist and traditional Liberal support, much of which funded the party, and

which was at odds with collectivist sentiments. However, as he also points out, the existence of New Liberalism had a profound impact on the ideas of the Labour Party, even if, in Keynes's words, 'Possibly the Liberal Party cannot serve the State in any better way than by supplying Conservative Governments with Cabinets, and Labour Governments with ideas'.

This impact of Liberals on the Labour Party is tackled explicitly in **John Shepherd's** examination of the movement of Liberals to the Labour Party between 1914 and 1931. During this time there were fluid boundaries between the parties, with flows of ideas from Liberal to Labour taking place even without people formally shifting to the Labour Party. Of course, this prefaced the later influence of Beveridge and Keynes on the post-1945 social democratic settlement.

The fluidity of ideas between Liberals and Labour has periodically led some to question of whether there should be a formal organisational connection between the two parties. Jo Grimond is a complicated figure in the Liberal Party's history. While he was in no way a 'big stater', he was, as **Matthew Cole's** piece shows, driven by a desire to realign the left and consistently sought to collaborate with the Labour Party. That he failed was partly because there was too much ideological distance between the

ND THE LEFT

two parties, not least because of the Labour Party's focus on nationalisation as the core of its economic policy.

The most thorough attempt to create a formal relationship between Labour and the Liberal Democrats was made by Paddy Ashdown and Tony Blair in the mid to late 1990s. **Alan Leaman's** fascinating piece includes reflections about those times from somebody who was as close to Ashdown as anyone while relations developed. That such a connection was possible arose partly from a sense among many Liberal Democrats that they were cut from the same cloth as many Labour members. This view was commonly put at the time by Roy Jenkins, who argued that the split among 'progressives' before and after the First World War had artificially given the Conservatives electoral dominance for much of the twentieth century. Ashdown and Blair were inspired by Jenkins to try to bridge the divide.

Of course, there are now serious questions as to whether the kind of realignment which has previously been talked about can ever happen. The Liberal Democrat–Conservative coalition agreement may have undermined the Liberal Democrats' progressive credentials forever. Progressives may eternally see the Liberal Democrats as a centre-right rather than centre-left party and never consider anything other than

Labour ever again, thus ending any question of the kind of realignment imagined by Grimond and Ashdown. In such a situation, the former Labour voters who have already come to the Liberal Democrats (a form of realignment in itself), might go back to Labour with speed, feeling betrayed by a party which they believed would not align with the Conservatives. Members and activists may join them in a reformed and reinvigorated Labour Party under new leadership. Alternatively, progressive voters may see practical gains from the coalition and stay where they are, allowing the Liberal Democrats to retain a progressive mantle. In such a situation, the Liberal Democrats may emerge strongly out of a coalition with the Tories and after an election in a reformed system, once more be strong enough to form a progressive government with Labour.

Yet left radicalism is not and need not be the preserve of Labour. Some of the chapters in this issue reveal a strong sense that at times, the Liberal Party saw itself as being radical and 'left' in a very different way to the Labour Party. **Matthew Cole's** piece on Grimond shows how the Liberal Party was pursuing a decidedly non-socialist form of radicalism. **Peter Hellyer's** article on the late 1960s demonstrates how far Young Liberals were at the radical cutting edge of British politics with their involvement in

campaigns on Vietnam and South Africa. They were even seen as being to the left of Labour and members were dubbed the 'Red Guard'.

In a similar vein, **James Graham** covers a small and, most would say, far less significant movement within the Liberal Democrats: the New Radicals, who had some profile within the Liberal Democrats in 1998–2003. As Graham recognises, the movement 'failed' to achieve most of its goals, even though he argues that some positions (such as on members of the House of Lords being involved in lobbying) have now been 'vindicated'.

The most important point about the New Radicals is what the existence of such a movement says about the heart and soul of the Liberal Democrats, namely, that the party has a strong radical core. Even if some of the ideas of the group went way beyond Liberal Democrat policy, it is almost impossible to imagine a group called New Conservatives emerging within the party with the goal of preserving existing institutions. If nothing else, the very existence of the New Radicals points to the sentiments which drive the heart and soul of many Liberal Democrats.

Dr Richard S. Grayson is Head of Politics and Senior Lecturer in British and Irish Politics at Goldsmiths, University of London.

OUT OF CHARTISM,
POPULAR RADICALS AND THE LIBERA

One of the most remarkable political developments during the first half of the nineteenth century was the rise of a more coherent, organised and assertive popular radicalism, culminating in the Chartist movement of the late 1830s and 1840s. **Matthew Roberts** examines the ways in which the nascent Liberal Party was able to use the ideas, values and beliefs of the Chartists and other Radicals to construct broad-based coalitions of support – a process which was fraught with tension and liable to break down at any time.

THE 'AGE of the Chartists' was the golden age of popular protest, of crowds meeting in town squares, public parks and on moorland summits (sometimes with weapons and under the protective cover of darkness) to demand their democratic rights. So unnerved were the state and the propertied classes that forces of surveillance and suppression were unleashed on the Chartists which – along with internal divisions and the failure after ten years to secure the enactment of the coveted 'People's Charter' – led to the decline of the movement after 1848.

In contrast to the tumult of the early-Victorian years, the mid-Victorian decades were tranquil. Politically, this 'Age of Equipoise' manifested itself in the constituencies in the rise of popular Liberalism, based on a coalition of ex-Chartists (popular Radicals) and Liberals. But why did these popular Radicals and Liberals, after two decades of conflict with one another, agree to cooperate? Historians have been divided. It used to be argued that this transformation was largely the result of underlying changes in the structure and outlook of the working class: rising real wages, greater job security, the rise of an influential and politically moderate group of 'labour aristocrats', and the splintering of the working class in terms of occupation, status and culture. More recently, these structural explanations have fallen from favour, which, to a new generation of post-Marxist, post-Modernist historians, seem rather crude and simplistic. In seeking to explain the rise of popular Liberalism, revisionist historians have rejected social explanations and have turned their attention back to politics itself.[1]

This article develops this politics-centred approach by paying attention to some of the ways in which the Liberal Party was able to use ideas, values and beliefs to construct broad-based coalitions of supporters. Whilst agreeing with the renewed emphasis which has been placed on the importance of political ideas, this article lends further weight to a growing body of post-revisionist work which has reemphasised just how painful and protracted the transition was from Chartism into Liberalism, a process that was fraught with tension and liable to break down.[2] The first section of the article surveys the various explanations of mid-century political stability which have been put forward by historians and relates these to the debates on the rise of popular Liberalism. The second section looks at what Liberals and popular Radicals were able to agree on by focusing on some of the key political issues of the day in the mid-Victorian decades. While the third section highlights some of the differences of opinion and conflict over principles which bedevilled the

Great Chartist Meeting on Kennington Common, 10 April 1848 (this and accompanying daguerrotypes were the first ever taken of a crowd scene)

popular Liberal coalition during this period.

Why did the confrontational politics of Chartism give way to the relatively harmonious and compromising politics of moderate reformism? This question was central to the Marxist inspired historiography of the 1960s and 1970s, not least because it presented Marxists with the uncomfortable question of why the working class, having come so close to achieving its revolutionary destiny in the 1840s, abandoned its mission and reconciled itself to the established order. A whole range of 'consolatory' explanations were advanced to explain this apparent 'false consciousness', most of which highlighted the socio-economic foundations of mid-century stability. Against the background of economic recovery in the late 1840s and the boom conditions of the 1850s, social tensions began to lessen as cyclical unemployment began to decrease and real wages began to rise, thus limiting the appeal of a radical politics based on 'hunger and hatred'.[3] The rising profit margins of the manufacturing middle class allowed it to engage in a variety of practices, the objective of which was to reshape the workers in their own image in the workplace (by creating an elite stratum of workers – labour aristocrats – to control the rest of the workforce, and by engaging in paternalistic practices

to keep the rest of the workforce content) and in the community (by sponsoring rational recreation). Whatever the cause, the effect was the same: the dilution of working-class radicalism.[4]

In more recent times, historians have become increasingly sceptical of the explanatory value of structural interpretations of mid-century stability. To take one example, it is surely not possible to explain the rejection by the working class of the far-reaching goals of Chartism by focusing on the privileges of a few labour aristocrats who may, or may not, have exercised a moderating influence over the rest of the workforce. Even during its interpretative heyday, critics of the labour aristocracy thesis pointed out that the widespread existence of a skilled labour force was hardly a novelty in the mid-Victorian decades, that it was difficult to pinpoint which workers were labour aristocrats as there was no sharp division between them and the rest of the working class, and that it was simplistic and reductionist to try and map values like respectability on to particular sections of the working class. In addition, if labour aristocrats really were that privileged and went to such lengths to distinguish themselves from the wider working class, are we really to believe that they exercised such an influential position?[5] Similar arguments can also be levelled at middle-class 'moral imperialism'. Middle-class sponsored initiatives such as improvement societies were often shunned, subverted or hijacked by workers who, in any case, had their own versions of respectability and independence.[6] Even where attempts to mould workers in a middle-class image seemingly triumphed it could just as likely be the result of what Peter Bailey has termed 'role-playing' by the working class: feigning middle-class values, as it were, because it was expedient for workers to do so.[7]

Turning more directly to popular politics, it used to be argued that the rise of a more cautious and moderate organised labour movement was one of the key factors in mid-Victorian political stability. But this is not a satisfactory explanation either. Many labour activists who had previously been Chartists turned away from politics altogether, channelling their efforts into cooperatives, friendly societies and trades unions.[8] Now, the fact that many ex-Chartists turned their backs on politics might account, to some extent, for the political stability of these years by virtue of their absence, but it cannot explain why many of those Radical activists who remained convinced of the efficacy of political solutions attempted to cooperate, when possible, with the Liberal Party. And neither can employer paternalism explain why members of the working class seemingly moderated their politics. As recent work has made clear, even when employers did practise paternalism towards their workforce (and it is worth pointing out that many employers simply could not afford to do so, or, at any rate, not on any significant scale), working-class employees did not necessarily vote at the behest of their lords and masters.[9]

Consequently, these structural explanations can only be made to explain so much. As a growing number of historians have come to appreciate, a more satisfactory explanation of mid-century political stability and the rise of popular Liberalism is to be found by focusing on political change itself. After all, the transition from Chartism to popular Liberalism was a political development. We cannot read off the trajectory of popular politics from the state of the economy. If such a correlation existed between economic depression and the popularity of Chartism then how can we explain the collapse of Chartism in 1842 amidst continued poverty and unemployment, or Chartism's revival in 1848 against the background of economic improvement? Finally, acute poverty and unemployment, although not as pervasive, did not disappear in the politically tranquil mid-Victorian decades.[10]

So what does a focus on politics tell us about why popular Radicals and Liberals were able to cooperate? Firstly, that Chartism had been a victim of its own success. Not only had the Chartists genuinely alarmed the political elite in 1848 (giving rise to a sort of 'never again' mentality), they had also drawn attention in a dramatic way to the privations of the masses. So powerful was Chartism's critique of the state as utterly partial and negligent that it undoubtedly played a significant part in making the state more responsive to popular grievances. True, the state responded largely on its own terms, and in a way that did not look like a direct concession to Chartism (which, for obvious reasons, it could not be seen to do). Where the Chartists were proved wrong was in their claim that the state was incapable of reforming itself without being democratised, which has led some historians to argue that Chartism had been ideologically bankrupt all along.[11] But, surely, it would have been naive of the Chartists to have presumed otherwise. Without the threat of democratisation at the back of the minds of the political elite, the state would never have reformed itself in the way that it did. Secondly, just as the state had been unnerved so too had the propertied classes. Chartism had jolted urban Liberals (and Tories) out of their complacency and convinced many of their leaders that social conditions would have to be improved if a return to unrest was to be prevented. Thus, urban Liberals became less dogmatic in their commitment to the strictures of political economy.[12] As Mark Hovell observed many years ago, Chartism gave Liberalism 'a wider and more popular outlook'.[13] On the other side, growing numbers of Radicals were also coming round to the idea of moderate, piecemeal reform and to the need to cooperate with Liberals (and to a lesser extent Tories) to secure it, although it took some longer than others. As we have seen, Chartism as a particular strategy had failed to bring about radical political change, and so it made sense for popular radicals to reassess their strategy and tactics.[14]

So the crucial difference, in the mid-Victorian decades, from the Chartist era was that the 'instalment men', as Fergus O'Connor had once derisively dubbed them, now held sway. This position was illustrated by the atheist and republican Charles Bradlaugh, who told one audience at the time of the Second Reform Bill that, while he favoured universal suffrage as a natural right, 'if

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he could not get all that he asked for, rather than have nothing … he would take what ameliorations he could get without ceasing to aim at ultimately winning the whole'.[15] The freethinking radical Robert Cooper made a similar point in a letter to the north-east Radical Joseph Cowen in which he advised the radical movement to 'work for an instalment, until the whole is gained'. For Cooper and many ex-Chartists, experience had taught them that 'every great measure, political or social, has only been carried by the joint action' of the middle and working classes.[16] What made instalment politics easier to accept for popular Radicals was that they were now faced with a much more responsive Liberal Party.

The Liberal Party used to be seen by historians as an incoherent and contradictory group of reformers, each preoccupied with their own particular 'fad'. Precarious and transient unity was achieved only when the party's leaders were able to rally the ad hoc group of reformers behind a transcending issue, such as Gladstone's support for the disestablishment of the Irish Church in 1868, or his indictment of Disraeli's foreign and imperial policy in the late 1870s.[17] Thanks to the work of Jonathan Parry, Eugenio Biagini and others, it has become clear that both parliamentary and popular Liberalism was, in fact, a far more coherent political movement than was once thought.[18] What enabled some ex-Chartists and Liberals to come together in the 1850s and 1860s was a shared, if problematic, commitment to 'liberty, retrenchment and reform', to cite the title of Biagini's important study. But what did these ex-Chartists bring to popular Liberalism? If the growth of popular Liberalism was based, in part, on the willingness of former Chartists to support the Gladstonian Liberal Party, how much continuity was there between Chartism and mid-Victorian popular Liberalism? Before we address this question we need to ask: what were Liberals and popular Radicals able to agree on?

In terms of ideology, liberty was, of course, central. This was a rallying cry around which a broad spectrum of reformers coalesced.

What enabled some ex-Chartists and Liberals to come together in the 1850s and 1860s was a shared, if problematic, commitment to 'liberty, retrenchment and reform'.

Liberty, at its most abstract, meant support for 'civil and religious liberty, for all men and for all countries'.[19] Civil liberty meant that all people, regardless of their status or beliefs, should be equal in the eyes of the law. This overlapped with religious liberty. As the *Liberal Weekly Times* put it in 1867, 'where divers [sic] religions co-exist in the same community, none should be petted and none coerced'.[20] Thus, Radicals and many Liberals were opposed to an established church. As is well known, middle-class Nonconformity spearheaded this campaign; but this was not just a middle-class battle. Opposition to the Established Church was also voiced by Radicals (many of whom were also Nonconformists and secularists; and a few were even atheists), who viewed the Church as one of the pillars of a corrupt, aristocratic and selfish state. In Radical eyes, the Church was tainted by its large interest in land and by its close association with landowners, a good many of whom were Whigs.[21]

Notions of liberty also informed Liberal and Radical views on the role of government. The purpose of government was to preside over a disinterested state that did not identify with or reward specific interests at the expense of others. Former Chartists could take some comfort in the fact that the Whig-dominated Liberal governments of the mid-Victorian decades sought to position themselves as the impartial custodians of the national interest (this was far more difficult for the Conservative Party, as it was still associated with the deeply unpopular Corn Laws). This was achieved by reducing or abolishing duties on articles of popular consumption, by repealing the last remaining 'taxes on knowledge', and by removing civil disabilities. That much of this was presided over by aristocratic Whigs went some way to rehabilitate their reforming reputation in popular Radical circles, who for the last two decades had castigated the Whigs as the enemies of the people.[22]

This commitment to liberty was the positive expression of a more fundamental underlying Liberal and Radical principle: opposition to privilege. More than any other movement, Liberalism eschewed class politics and sought to unite, though not always successfully, the productive classes in opposition to the idle and selfish classes. For Liberals and Radicals, retrenchment provided a powerful weapon to combat privileges, many of which were paid for by the state and, by extension, the overburdened taxpayer. To Richard Cobden – echoing the Utilitarian James Mill and the Radical Thomas Paine – expenditure on the national debt, the army and navy, and the Civil List had 'for the real object the granting of outdoor relief for … the aristocracy'.[23] The solution was a drastic reduction in state expenditure. In turn, this would reduce taxes, stimulate trade and increase wages. The popularity of Cobden in the 1840s and 1850s, and that of John Bright and Gladstone in the 1860s, rested in part on their commitment to low and more equitable taxation, free trade and cheap food, and to the articulation of these demands in the language of moral entitlement.[24] Liberals and Radicals had no objection to government intervention when it was used to combat privilege. But it was only in this negative sense that they accepted the need for state intervention. This was linked to the belief amongst Liberals that it was not the state's responsibility to provide for the welfare of the community. That was the job of voluntary self-governing organisations (such as cooperatives). Liberty thus created the conditions for a vibrant and inclusive civil society: the voluntary organisation of collective action in pursuit of shared interests. It should be added, though, that Radicals were more willing than Liberals to conceive of a positive role for the state and make more exceptions to the laissez-faire rule in the areas of poor relief, public services, the limitations on the hours of labour and the regulation of working conditions.

When government intervention was necessary Liberals and Radicals were agreed that it was imperative that the people had a say in the affairs of government, to ensure that the right kind of intervention took place. Participation in the political process also fostered active citizenship.

OUT OF CHARTISM, INTO LIBERALISM?

For Liberals and Radicals, the alpha–omega of citizenship was independence as it was believed that only independent men had the capacity for 'enlightened disinterestedness'. Social responsibility, moral seriousness and personal accomplishment were the stock ingredients of active citizenship.[25] The ideal society they envisaged was self-regulating and composed of independent small-scale producers, in which citizens cooperated with one another on equal terms, hence the preoccupation with facilitating wider ownership, not just of homes though building societies but also of land. It is important to remember, though, that Liberals and most Radicals agreed that there was to be equality of opportunity, not social equality.

Nowhere was this preoccupation with independence more evident than in relation to the franchise. The disinterested maturity that Liberals sought from the electorate, it was argued, would be guaranteed by limiting the franchise to male householders, i.e. those men who had set up house and preferably a family too. In the words of the Liberal MP J. A. Roebuck, 'if a man has a settled house, in which he has lived with his family for a number of years, you have a man who has given hostages to the state, and you have in these circumstances a guarantee for that man's virtue'.[26] Electoral entitlement was bound up with that quintessential Victorian attribute, namely 'character': a wide-ranging concept denoting industriousness, self-help, thrift, duty, honesty, self-restraint and, of course, independence. Although 'character' was potentially open to all, irrespective of birth or even wealth, in the eyes of Liberals these virtues were not universal; they had to be learned (hence the importance of education) and earned through hard work and self-sacrifice. Then – and only then – would enfranchisement follow. Liberalism was thus far from being democratic. To many Radicals, these Liberal criteria seemed elitist, and this explains why they often disagreed over what constituted fitness for the franchise. As we shall see, the Chartist commitment to

> **Electoral entitlement was bound up with that quintessential Victorian attribute, namely 'character': a wide-ranging concept denoting industriousness, self-help, thrift, duty, honesty, self-restraint and, of course, independence.**

universal manhood suffrage died hard amongst Radicals.

As these divisions over the franchise imply, when it came to translating Liberal ideology into practice, differences and divisions emerged within the Liberal coalition. Biagini highlights the ways in which the watchwords of 'liberty, retrenchment and reform' mobilised diverse constituencies of electoral support for the Gladstonian Liberal Party. Indeed, the very elasticity and capaciousness of these cries, which assumed many different forms, is part of the reason why so many different individuals and interests supported the Liberal Party: from aristocratic Whigs all the way down to artisans. But a note of caution is needed here. It was relatively easy to champion abstract rights such as religious freedom, individual liberty, equality before the law, the rights of oppressed minorities on the continent, and to be in favour of 'reform' (whatever that meant). On the other hand, when it came to specifics, these watchwords could just as easily divide as unite the disparate band of reformers in terms of how they were to be defined and prioritised, let alone achieved.[27] To take one example, despite the Liberal rhetoric on civil liberty and equality before the law, there was a widespread suspicion amongst Radicals that one law existed for the rich and another for the people, and that the Liberal Party was complicit in perpetuating these injustices. This sense of popular injustice was acutely felt in relation to trades unions, as it was widely believed that the law was biased in favour of employers, many of whom just so happened to be Liberal manufacturers. While Gladstone's first government extended legal protection to the unions through the Trades Union Act of 1871, this was accompanied by another act that effectively made picketing illegal. The rapacious and tyrannical elites that Radicals were fighting against could, on those occasions when the 'tyranny of capital' was at issue, be extended to include the manufacturers and commercial plutocrats who dominated urban Liberalism. Thus, class-based tensions could destabilise the Liberal coalition.[28]

To return to the issue of state intervention, although Radicals were often to the fore in demanding legislative protection for certain vulnerable groups, such as factory workers and trades unionists, it would be wrong to presume that they were in favour of widespread state intervention. Indeed, Radicals could be far more libertarian than mainstream Liberals, especially over issues concerning personal freedom, as shown by their hostility to the centralisation of state power, towards temperance legislation, and compulsory vaccination. On these issues, Radicals were sometimes closer to Tories than they were to Liberals. The latter, especially the Nonconformist wing of the party, were generally in favour of legislative intervention in these spheres on the grounds that wider public interests and morals needed protecting.[29]

As for the contentious issue of franchise extension, we have already seen that Liberals and Radicals all too frequently found themselves at loggerheads. For Biagini, democratisation 'was the really all-embracing issue for popular Liberals' and popular commitment to franchise extension was the most conspicuous issue that 'illustrates the continuity between Chartism and working-class Liberalism'.[30] While Radicals and advanced Liberals might have worked for democratisation, moderate Liberals and Whigs were deeply fearful of moves in this direction. For these Liberals, the all-embracing issue was how to restrain democratic excess through safeguards such as education, the ballot, and voting systems that would ensure continued representation for minority interests. Thus, different attitudes towards democracy strained the Liberal coalition, as was dramatically illustrated in 1866–7 when the right-wing Liberal Robert Lowe spoke out against franchise extension and in doing so incurred the wrath of popular radicalism.

A growing body of recent work on post-Chartist radicalism has demonstrated that the movement of former Chartists into the Liberal Party between the 1850s and 1870s was anything but smooth: the process was often painful,

occasionally violent, and liable to break down. To present this transition as seamless, consensual and inevitable is to take Liberal and even some Radical rhetoric at face value. Indeed, there is something almost 'official' about this vision of popular Liberalism, a vision seen through the rose-tinted lens of John Bright and Gladstone who fell in love with a largely imagined self-sacrificing artisan who had renounced his Chartist past (at least this was the story that Gladstone and Bright told themselves and others to justify giving the vote to urban working men in 1866–67). As Robert Hall has shown, this vision was also projected by those former Chartists who eventually threw in their lot with the Gladstonian Liberal Party.[31] These ex-Chartists deliberately played down their radical pasts so as to make themselves acceptable to the Liberal Party. As such, we need to be aware that it could be expedient for both Liberals and Radicals to present the Liberal coalition as consensual.

The Liberal Party – inside, but especially outside of, parliament – was ultimately a coalition of reformers who maintained their own distinct identities. While the balance of forces might have been in favour of cooperation between reformers under the capacious umbrella of Gladstonian Liberalism, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that Liberals and popular Radicals continued to be divided by ideas, goals, priorities and strategies. It makes little sense to reduce these differences to underlying class conflict between a middle-class Liberal Party and a working-class radicalism. As in the Chartist era, Liberal–Radical tensions were, first and foremost, political not socio-economic and were concerned with real ideological differences which do not map very easily on to different social classes.

The differences between Liberals and Radicals were reinforced by their readings of English history. For Radicals the leitmotif of English history was the struggle of a virtuous and dispossessed people doing battle against tyrannical and corrupt forces. In this reading of history, a succession of monarchs and aristocrats after 1066 had progressively stripped the

people of their rights and liberties, despite the heroic actions of popular crusaders such as Wat Tyler, the leader of the Peasant's Revolt of 1341, and the Levellers of the English Civil War. To the Radicals of the nineteenth century, the present-day aristocrats were nothing more than the descendents of the illegitimate Normans.[32] Liberals, on the other hand, rather than look back to a vanquished golden age, viewed the past as the progressive unfolding of liberty in its triumph over arbitrary rule and religious intolerance. While their Whig aristocratic allies focused more on the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, the Liberals looked more to the preceding Civil War period and, particularly, to the battles of Oliver Cromwell and his supporters against political tyranny and religious intolerance.[33] These competing histories thus reinforced the distinctiveness of Liberal and Radical identities, especially in times of political conflict when Radicals became frustrated with Liberalism.

Radical frustration within the Liberal coalition had the periodic effect of reinvigorating a radical politics that was independent and critical of the Liberal Party, which manifested itself in a variety of guises: latter-day Chartism (especially in London where household suffrage was held to be of limited value); labour militancy, which spilled over into radical suffrage politics as trades unions sought to end the legal restrictions hampering them; republican and secularist radicalism as personified by Bradlaugh, who had, at best, an uneasy relationship with mainstream Liberalism; rival Liberal candidatures in the constituencies; and, by the 1880s, socialism. This independent radicalism also supplied the leadership and activist core for a plethora of popular campaigns. These included the International Workingmen's Association (1864), the Reform League (the organisation which spearheaded the popular radical campaign for franchise extension in the 1860s), the Land and Labour League (1869), the republican movement of the early 1870s, Bradlaugh's campaign in the 1880s to establish the right of voters to elect representatives of their choice, and the Trafalgar Square

demonstrations against unemployment in 1887 and the attempt by the state to prevent public meetings from being held there along with a host of other campaigns around the issue of public access to open space.[34]

These campaigns were taken to a wider constituency via the national radical press – notably the widely circulating *Reynolds's Newspaper* and Bradlaugh's *National Reformer*, both of which continued to fulminate against the elitism and corruption of the political system much as the Chartists had. Newspapers such as these played an important part in mobilising a radicalism that was often at odds with mainstream Liberalism. The gothic idioms of romanticism that had characterised early Victorian radicalism could still be found in mid-Victorian radical rhetoric, as the following attack by *Reynolds's Newspaper* in 1868 illustrates: 'Royal, clerical and aristocratic lechers are all at one-time sucking at the veins of the people and vampire-like, drawing their life-blood'.[35] Even when popular Gladstonianism was at its zenith in the 1870s and 1880s, the Liberal coalition could fracture in the provinces, especially in the absence of a strong Tory opposition (when internal differences between Whigs, moderate Liberals, advanced Liberals and Radicals could become much more pronounced), as was the case in some northern towns.[36] This was revealed at the 1874 general election when a number of Radicals contested seats against Liberals. Loyalty to Gladstone, it seems, did not preclude opposition to the Liberal Party and, very occasionally, loyalty to the Liberal Party did not preclude opposition to Gladstone.

The dynamics of electoral politics in Leeds provide a good example of these Liberal–Radical tensions. At the 1874 general election, the sitting Liberal MPs – one of whom was the ex-Chartist Robert Carter, and the other was the politically moderate journalist Edward Baines Junior – were challenged by the temperance lecturer Dr Frederick Lees. The intervention of the latter has usually been interpreted as evidence of Nonconformity's dissatisfaction with the policies of Gladstone's first

Radical frustration within the Liberal coalition had the periodic effect of reinvigorating a radical politics that was independent and critical of the Liberal Party.

government.[37] This was certainly a factor in Lees' candidature, but there was a lot more to it than this. For one thing, Lees was actually nominated by the Leeds Trades Council and was well known to the workingmen of the borough, as was Carter. Both Carter and Lees had been elected to the Leeds Town Council in 1850 as Chartists. At that time, neither of them could see any difference between Whigs and Tories. Twenty-four years later, Lees was telling his working-class audiences much the same, and claimed that his principles had remained unchanged for forty years. Carter, on the other hand, believed emphatically that it was a distinction worth drawing. Similarly, while Lees looked back on his Chartist past with pride and used it to legitimise his candidature with the working class, Carter made no mention of his political origins and had in fact been playing down his radicalism since the late 1850s, culminating in his adoption as one of the official Liberal candidates at the 1868 general election.[38] Although Lees' supporters urged the working class to cast their second vote for Carter, there were marked differences in their platform. Whereas Carter spoke of the need to equalise the county and borough franchises (effectively extending the provisions of the 1867 Reform Act to the countryside), Lees was in favour of manhood (and even female) suffrage. While Carter took the view that the advanced section of the Liberal Party was the Radical Party, and thus urged Radicals to cooperate with, and work through the nominees of, the Liberal Party, Lees told the Radicals that 'they had for forty years lost their way through fear of dividing the Liberal ranks' and that their 'sacrifices for the Liberal cause … had met with no reward'. Lees concluded by calling for political independence: the 'time had arrived when they (the Radicals) ought to be directly represented in Parliament, and not indirectly represented as in the past. (Cheers.)'[39] The effect of Lees' candidature was to divide the Liberal ranks, with many voting for Lees and Carter as instructed by the Leeds Trades Council, and not for Baines and Carter as instructed by the Leeds

Liberal Association. While Carter was returned at the head of the poll the Tories captured the second and third seat, thus defeating a humiliated Baines.

Six years later, at the 1880 general election, the Leeds Liberal Association was so divided and unable to agree on a candidate that they nominated Mr Gladstone – in absentia – as one of their candidates. Despite playing no part in his Leeds candidature, which led the Tories to dub him as the 'phantom candidate', Gladstone topped the poll. A small group of ultra-Radicals led by the well-known commons rights agitator, John De Morgan, objected to the dictatorial actions of the association in nominating Gladstone, whom they regarded as an unsuitable candidate on the grounds that he would not be able to devote much attention to the interests of an important borough like Leeds. De Morgan had been nominated by the Radicals as their candidate in 1878 at a meeting attended by some 8,000 people,[40] but his republican sympathies and clashes with the law over commons rights had not endeared him to the Leeds Liberal Association and so he was passed over. Thus, De Morgan took the decision to stand as an independent candidate. He was eventually forced to abandon his candidature due to the smear campaign unleashed against him by the Liberal Association, who accused him of being in the pay of the Tories, with some of his key supporters defecting, but not before he used the public platform to put forward a 'definite programme of Radical principles': reform of land and labour laws, manhood suffrage, shorter parliaments, free education, abolition of capital punishment, and repeal of the Vaccination and Contagious Diseases Acts. This was far more advanced than the platform of the second official Liberal candidate John Barran (he had succeeded Carter after his retirement in 1876), who devoted most of his speeches to attacking Disraeli's profligate foreign and imperial policies.[41]

There remained a powerful radical current of suspicion, and even outright opposition, to dictatorial Liberal elites, a situation made worse from the 1870s

If outbreaks of independent radicalism represented the exception rather than the norm after the fall of Chartism, this was because the Liberal Party was finally taking the Radical agenda more seriously.

when many local Liberal Associations reconstituted themselves broadly along the lines of the Birmingham Liberal Association – the infamous 'Caucus'. As critics noted at the time, despite its professed aim of democratising party organisation by opening up membership, power in the Caucus was deeply hierarchical. As such it could be unpopular amongst Radicals who resented the formalised chains of command, hence the survival of independent Radical clubs and organisations. It was the dictatorial actions of the Leeds Liberal Association in bringing forward candidates without consulting the wider body of Liberal and Radical popular opinion that so outraged Lees, De Morgan and their supporters. In bringing forward Lees, the Leeds Trades Council complained that the 'working men had been treated by the leaders of the Liberal Party in Leeds as mere tools in their hands'.[42] It was with pride and a sense of conferred legitimacy that Lees was able to withstand official Liberalism's opposition to him by pointing out that he had been nominated at an open meeting of some 6,000 men. De Morgan's supporters made a last stand against the dictatorial actions of the Liberal Association by opposing the decision of the latter to nominate Herbert Gladstone for the seat that his father had declined. The following account of Herbert Gladstone's nomination meeting is taken from the diary of Katherine Conder – daughter of E. R. Conder, a Congregational minister – an example *par excellence* of late-Victorian Liberal Nonconformity and its private view of popular Radicalism:

> Then Mr. Kitson asked whether any one wished to propose any other candidate, whereupon, amidst tremendous hooting and howling and roars of laughter, a dirty, toothless, disreputable-looking workman mounted the platform, and (after daring to drink out of Herbert's glass of water!) proposed John De Morgan! … The man declared 'he was a good Liberal and' (waving his hand in Mr. Gladstone's face)

'I've nothing to say against this'ere yoong mon!' ... No one was forthcoming to second the amendment ...[43]

If outbreaks of independent radicalism represented the exception rather than the norm after the fall of Chartism, this was because the Liberal Party was finally taking the Radical agenda more seriously. Nonetheless, for all that Liberals and Radicals could cooperate and make common cause in the mid-Victorian decades, when one bears in mind the strategic reasons why Liberals and Radicals often emphasised their affinity and the persistence of a Chartist-style radicalism into the 1870s (and not just in London) this does seem to call into question Biagini's argument that: 'In the popular mind, Chartism, Liberalism and democracy seemed to have become completely identified.'[44] This article has done little more than scratch at the surface to reveal the tensions within the Liberal coalition. As historians dig deeper into Liberal–Radical relations in mid-Victorian Britain, we will surely come to further appreciate that, although a broad church, popular Liberalism was not immune to schisms even in the halcyon days of Mr Gladstone.

Matthew Roberts is Senior Lecturer in Modern British History at Sheffield Hallam University. He works on Victorian popular politics and parliamentary reform. He is the author of Political Movements in Urban England, 1832–1914 *(Palgrave, 2009).*

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THE LIBERAL PARTY AN[

One-to-one relationships between a political party's programme and its broader ideology are extremely rare, and British liberalism at the turn of the nineteenth century was no exception. The cumbersome and frequently conflicted machinery of political parties does not often allow for the quick assimilation of the radical or innovative ideas that are normally initiated at its periphery. Nevertheless, an unusual amount of ideological change filtered through into the Liberal Party, and even onto the statute books, following the famous Liberal landslide electoral victory of 1906. **Michael Freeden** examines the relationship between the New Liberalism and the Liberal Party.

Leaders of the New Liberalism: David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill

I T IS intriguing to explore what had happened to propel liberal thinking and practice along a path that would take it from a focus on entrepreneurship, free trade and a government largely concerned with law, order and the legal protection of private spaces, to constructing the rudiments of what was to become the UK's greatest domestic achievement, the welfare state. But one also needs to ask: did the new liberalism fundamentally change the Liberal Party?

Setting the scene

Before we begin to assess the changes that the Liberal Party actually underwent in that process, we need to take on board the ideational changes that took place – as is so often the case

– as a preliminary to the political upheaval. In ideological terms – in the public discourses that compete over the control of political language and action – a dramatic transformation was taking place, one that had begun in the 1880s. That transformation was partly due to the extension of the franchise and the gradual introduction of new – and less privileged – sections of society into the political arena, both through the vote and through unionisation; partly due to the growing awareness among conscientious intellectuals of the unacceptable costs of the industrial revolution in terms of disease, unemployment, squalor and the sheer exploitation of the poor by the rich; and in part due to the percolation of innovative theories of social structure concerning human interdependence and

D THE NEW LIBERALISM

vulnerability through academic channels into the public domain. The awareness that new social classes would now play a permanent role – and a quasi-democratic one, within the franchise constraints of the period – made it obvious that competition over their support and consent would cause changes in public policies. During the 1880s, various 'unauthorised' programmes emerged from the pens of radicals, socialists and liberals which – despite some crucial differences – displayed an extraordinary amount of common ground. From the 1890s, the increasing number of reports, surveys and newspaper articles on the abject suffering of the socially marginalised – in particular those of Charles Booth on London and Joseph Rowntree on York – had started to make an impact on the public mood. And theories of the organic interdependence of society, with its imperatives of support for others being as important as the cultivation of personal autonomy, began to replace the highly individualistic strictures of English utilitarianism and the self-help injunctions of Victorian moralists.

The debate took place, tellingly enough, in periodicals, newspapers and popular books long before it infiltrated into parliament. The pages of august monthlies such as the *Contemporary Review*, the *Fortnightly Review*, and the *Nineteenth Century*, as well as those of progressive and radical weeklies and monthlies, foremost among which was the *Speaker*, later to become the *Nation* (and later still to be amalgamated into the *New Statesman*), became major forums in which proposals for a national policy were deliberated. The liberal daily press, in particular the *Manchester Guardian*, also had a crucial role in forging new attitudes. But their readership was limited to small groups of the educated middle classes. No less importantly, they still had to contend with well-established liberal views on the

sanctity of individual liberty and private property over and above other liberal values such as the development of individuality and decency towards others. Indeed, that was one of the central divides: between those who had advocated, and were satisfied with, political reforms such as a fairer and less corrupt electoral system, while fiercely guarding individual liberties, and those who believed that social reform had to begin where political reform left off. While left-leaning liberals still retained some standard political reforms on their agenda – in particular, they had their eye on the unrepresentative nature of the House of Lords – they were convinced that the political authorities had now to address urgently questions of social justice and human need.[1]

In the 1880s, party-political Liberalism was still displaying the features of an older era – the importance of Nonconformity, temperance and financial retrenchment – and those features did not go away; indeed, they continued to have substantial adherents alongside the radical elements of liberalism. But they no longer characterised the party as a whole and they exposed serious problems relating to its middle-class social base. Generally speaking, identifying the Liberal Party as middle class requires some caution. Then, as now, it is too broad and undiscriminating a term. The middle class included bankers, lawyers, administrators and merchants as well as teachers, journalists and social reformers of many stripes, both religious and secular. The financial, cultural and ideological differences among those categories were glaring. The hairline splits in the Liberal Party were already a generation old before they began to widen to create a potential schism, as the Whigs among the Liberals drifted toward the conservative ranks, a movement exacerbated in 1886 when the Unionists under Joseph Chamberlain (himself a

curious mixture of radical and conservative imperialist) left the Liberal Party en masse. The remodelled Liberal Party lacked funds (although it still retained the support of some rich industrialists) but not the potential for a sweeping reinvention of itself, which it proceeded to carry through over twenty years. The party, unsurprisingly, chose to be far more reluctant to speed along the path demanded by its radical wing and many of its intellectuals, because it was fearful of losing too much support among its traditional middle-class base. As the Liberal politician and reformer C. F. G. Masterman, expressed it, the Liberal dilemma was whether it would 'retain, for example, its few men of wealth, without losing those adherents who demand direct taxation of that wealth in the interests of social reform'.[2]

Of course, there were other movements afoot towards fundamental social reform among budding socialist groups – not the least the Fabian Society who had mastered the dissemination of propaganda pamphlets among working-class sectors. But initially only the Liberal Party had the clout, range and organisation that would enable such reform to reach national platforms. That first became evident in the Newcastle Programme of 1891, itself the successor both to Joseph Chamberlain's 'unauthorised programme' of 1884–5 and to the *Star* newspaper's programmes of 1888–9. That said, the Liberal Party was initially very slow to react. During W. E. Gladstone's final term as prime minister, in 1892–3, the Grand Old Man rejected the novel political idea of publishing a party programme, insisting that one issue at a time was the right way to proceed, and immediately got bogged down in the Irish problem at the expense of other social issues. Gladstone's moral brand of crusading liberalism was profound but it was also beginning to be stranded on the shores of a

The remodelled Liberal Party lacked funds, but not the potential for a sweeping reinvention of itself, which it proceeded to carry through over twenty years.

creed that in later decades would typify enlightened conservatism, free trade excepted. Thus, a year before his death he praised one liberal essayist for 'all the efforts you may make on behalf of individual freedom and independence as opposed to what is termed Collectivism.'[3] His successor, Lord Rosebery, was no closer to radical circles, and the Liberal Party seemed destined to widen its internal rift between the reformists and an increasingly ossified middle-class conventionalism. Ten years in the wilderness from 1895, however, did the trick as so often is the case. Not that middle-class conventionalism disappeared but it was mostly excluded from the Liberal corridors of power until after the First World War, when it divided its loyalties between a shrinking Liberal Party and the Conservatives.

Liberalism and Labour: intersections, overlap and difference

Many commentators and scholars believe that the rise of the Labour Party in 1900 was not only the catalyst for a platform of energetic social reform in Britain, but that it was also the architect of the Welfare State. Both contentions have to be taken with quite a few grains of salt, although that imagined narrative was sincerely believed by British socialists and their historians until well into the 1960s. This was partly a measure of the success of the Labour Party story, broadcast by Fabians from the outset and cemented through the reverse historical perspective seen from the vantage point of post-1945 Labour social legislation. But it also occurred through the later relative invisibility conferred by association on liberal ideology through the marginalisation of the Liberal Party. Indeed, at the time of the publication of the Beveridge Report in 1942, with its social vision of a resurgent post-war Britain, the liberal press astonishingly failed to recognise the report as a member of its own family of ideas, or to note that William Beveridge was himself a prominent liberal.[4]

To address the first issue – the presence of a wide spectrum of reformist thinking and initiatives that stretched way beyond the budding Labour Party – one has to appreciate that London in particular was host to a lively scene of social reformers, journalists, religious activists and others in patterns of discourse and interaction that criss-crossed the city, with the result that plans and programmes of political and social transformation were common among a wide range of progressives. When Sir William Harcourt, Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer in the early 1890s and hardly a radical himself, declared in 1894 that 'we are all socialists now', he intended to emphasise the growing recognition that responsibility towards the less fortunate members of society and an ethos of mutual concern were part and parcel of contemporary thinking, precisely the area from which Gladstone dissociated himself. The terms socialist and even 'liberal socialist' were therefore largely bereft of party associations until the Labour Party emerged on the scene from 1900 and colonised 'socialism' as part of its rhetoric. Liberal and Labour intellectuals and propagandists, quite a few of whom would become future MPs in 1906, mixed freely in the various Ethical Societies, in humanist associations, in the editorial meetings of the *Nation* (the most important weekly at the forefront of reformist liberal thought), at numerous public lectures, and under the auspices of a small but highly influential debating society, the Rainbow Circle. Between them, a common or at least overlapping political language was forged, in which a drive towards institutional change was combined with the need for urgent measures regarding old age pensions, the feeding of schoolchildren, living below the breadline, and the cyclical bouts of heavy unemployment that beset the economy. That is not to argue that the separate consolidation of labourite, trade union and socialist groups under the aegis of the Labour Party did not act as a powerful incentive to speeding up some of the progressive metamorphoses that liberalism was undergoing. It is, however, to argue that the rationale for those changes could be extracted from within the values and beliefs

The Rainbow Circle is a marvellous example of what was happening behind and across the party scenes. It was a fascinating site of ideological formation.

internal to liberalism itself. We may also observe that some of the more radical social proposals of the Labour Party, such as the right to work, were rejected out of hand by the Liberal Party, and that it was mostly resistant to plans to nationalise industries.

The Rainbow Circle is a marvellous example of what was happening behind and across the party scenes.[5] It was a fascinating site of ideological formation: a discussion group founded in 1894 that met monthly and included notable thinkers and activists from both liberal and moderate-Labour circles. It attests to the formation of a joint crucial mass of what we could roughly term social democrats, whose dividing lines, for example on the scope of nationalisation, were outweighed by commonalities. Ramsay MacDonald was the first secretary – the minutes being written out in his clear and nicely rounded handwriting – and he rubbed shoulders with J. A. Hobson (the liberal journalist, theorist and economist), Herbert Samuel (to become the leader of the Liberal Party in the inter-war years), J. M. Robertson (the liberal polymath, writer and politician), and a host of other notable London professionals. Eight of its members (out of around twenty-five) became radical MPs in the 1906 parliament. Among the many discussion topics of the Rainbow Circle in its early years were 'The Old Manchesterism and the New Radicalism', 'The Duty of the State to the Individual in the Industrial Sphere', and 'A Practical Programme for a Progressive Party'. This latter theme, in 1898–1899, was debated against the backdrop of developing the small London Progressive Party as the powerhouse that would unite forward-looking supporters of political and social reform of both left and centre-left. That experiment did not last, however, as any suggestion of a durable arrangement of that nature foundered on the rocks of the entrenched electoral and organisational interests of the larger existing party spectrum. No wonder that twenty-five years later the famous liberal theorist and social philosopher L. T. Hobhouse was able to look back and declare that the British party system did not match what

we would now call the ideological divide across the country. There were four groupings of political opinion, not three, he argued: (a) communist and theoretical socialist; (b) ordinary Labour and good Liberal; (c) bad Liberal and ordinary Tory; and (d) diehard.[6] Certainly, at the turn of the nineteenth century, the creators of arguments and programmes among progressives were within the second camp, drawing broadly from the same pool of ideas.

The culmination of that evolutionary process was the emergence of the new liberalism, a development of the liberal creed that integrated some fundamental value reorientations together with some more subtle changes to that august tradition. The ideological transformation built partly on the ructions that the party had already experienced, with Whigs and radicals existing uneasily under the one roof, each faction struggling against submitting, respectively, to enticement from Tories on the one hand and variants of social democracy on the other. But the new liberalism succeeded beyond conceivable measure in sustaining its position at the core of the mutating party. It preserved the party's unity through retaining a basic loyalty to the most cherished liberal principles; yet the changes it effected in the party's ideology were nonetheless remarkable. In particular, the new liberals expanded on the Oxford philosopher T. H. Green's commitment to impeding hindrances to human liberty and the promotion of a society's common purposes. Specifically, they identified a far broader range of constraints that had to be removed in order to realise John Stuart Mill's classic formulation concerning the 'free development of individuality'.[7] Not only formal and legal barriers but also economic, social and educational ones had to be lifted. Here – as a liberal, not socialist, creation – can be found the seeds of the welfare state: the determination that all members of society were entitled to the fullest development and well-being that could be collectively provided; the confidence in the state as the beneficent enabler of human flourishing; and the faith that such provision would enhance

considerably the central liberal values of liberty, individual self-expression and progress within a constitutional setting. All that differed substantially from the forms of socialist collectivism that laid greater stress on an undifferentiated class emancipation in which individual development played a lesser role; and even more so from conservative forms of communitarianism – rather than collectivism – in which national and local loyalties were the traditional adhesive that required protecting.

Radicalising the party

All these currents were swirling just beneath the surface of the Liberal Party. In fact, the landslide victory of 1906 was achieved mainly on a rather conventional platform of free trade (versus Conservative intentions to use protectionism and tariff reform to tackle the 'condition of England' question) and the physical malaise of the nation was conveyed, among others, through the shock of discovering how many potential recruits to the British army fighting in the Boer War had to be rejected due to rickets – liberal imperialism was still a force to be reckoned with. All that gave little hint of the eruption of the new liberalism into the party mainstream a couple of years later. That transformation was partly due to a change in leadership, once the insipid Henry Campbell-Bannerman had been replaced as prime minister. Tellingly, his successor Herbert Asquith was no new liberal either, but many in his team were either consciously or incidentally recruited to the ranks of the new liberalism, not least the dynamic and mercurial Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George. Lloyd George's political teeth had been cut in an atmosphere of Welsh radical Nonconformity, honed on resistance to Britain's imperial adventures in South Africa (little Englanders was the belittling name he and his allies had earned as one century passed into the next), and further whetted through the experiences of mass urban unemployment, increasing concern about the state of the physical health of the nation, and outrage about the maldistribution of wealth across

society. Even what passed for radicalism in the late 1880s and 1890s – progressive taxation, old age pensions, housing, and land reform – was rapidly overtaken (though not abandoned) by an unprecedented and dramatic surge in welfare legislation.

The Liberal reforming zeal, combined with its actual implementation, has had only one rival in the UK over the past century: the post World War II Labour welfare legislation (the other twentieth-century instance of legislative activism, under Margaret Thatcher, was mainly one of reversing the social achievements of her predecessors). It was Hobson who later commented that the vision of the Liberal Party had almost matched the rosiest expectations of the new liberal social reformers.[8] A Feeding of Schoolchildren Act, aimed at addressing the chronic undernourishment of children from poor families in their schools, was passed in 1906. An Old Age Pensions Act followed in 1908, with the breakthrough provision that they were non-contributory. Typically, this was both a move to reduce the poverty of retired and elderly people and an ideological statement that those who had worked for society would not be forgotten by the state. Then came the heart of the innovations, the 1909 Budget and the National Insurance Act of 1911. Not only the conventions of the time, but also consequent British historiography, tend to differentiate between political reform and social reform, as if the latter were not political, reflecting the common but misleading distinction (in terms of its political nature) between changes to the machinery of government – extending the franchise, fairer democratic representation, or local government reform – and the redistribution of scarce essential goods in order to improve the lot of the disadvantaged. That is patently not the case – politics always having been concerned with managing the distribution of scarce resources among contending claimants – and the struggle over the 1909 Budget clearly illustrates that social reform is a core political activity.

Lloyd George knew what he was doing when he introduced

> The new liberalism preserved the party's unity through retaining a basic loyalty to the most cherished liberal principles; yet the changes it effected in the party's ideology were nonetheless remarkable.

radical measures of progressive taxation into the Budget, as well as setting up a national development agency. He was concurrently offering long-needed measures of social justice and taking on the Lords who, with their built-in conservative majority and their power of veto over a stunning liberal majority in the House of Commons, were beginning to frustrate the Liberal administration by throwing out or delaying vital policies. 'Mr. Balfour's poodle', as the House of Lords had become, had to be put on a leash. At a stroke, Lloyd George managed to goad the Lords, through their predictable rejection of the Budget, into painting themselves into a corner. The Lords argued that the Budget was unconstitutional in offering a free ride to measures that had never been a part of British budgets, incorporating the centralised and long-term planning of social policy, while Liberals retorted that the Lords were neither constitutionally nor historically authorised to throw out a financial bill. Behind all that, one of the major impacts of the penetration of the new liberalism into the central corridors of political power was visible. The state was now entrusted with enabling and often directly promoting the well-being of its citizens and not simply with ensuring the maximisation of individual liberty and free enterprise, with preserving order in the face of criminality, or with patrolling the boundaries between external vulnerability and defence. That was famously put by Hobhouse when he wrote: 'mutual aid is no less important than mutual forbearance.'[9]

The extraordinary spate of legislation in 1911, encompassing limited health and unemployment insurance as well as the removal of the veto power from the House of Lords, suggests a vibrant and fundamental statement about a Liberal Party well to the left of the political spectrum and among the most reform-minded democratic parties throughout Europe. Unfortunately for the Liberal Party, that transformation was not a completely durable one, and its role as the major bearer of a welfarist ideology failed to become consolidated. What we

may term 'welfarism'[10] signalled a move towards a society in which the central purpose of domestic politics had become to protect the citizenry at large from those vicissitudes and fragilities of human life that were both unavoidable and remediable. It was also one in which the state put at the disposal of its members the wherewithal to develop individual capacities in the best sense of liberal progress.

Curbing liberal enthusiasms

Both contemporary and future problems for the Liberal Party, however, rendered its transformative path far from smooth. To begin with, the relatively heavy tax obligations incurred by the proposed reforms upon the less altruistic members of the middle class did not go down well. The party was confronted with frequent rearguard protests in the name of the middle classes – once themselves the radical engine of political reform, but now battening down their hatches against redistributive radicalism intended to assist the worst off. Already in 1906, a strikingly titled pre-emptive pamphlet, 'The Bitter Cry of the Middle Classes', reflected the particular fear of those who had recently found financial stability but were now facing the prospect of groaning under the tax yoke for the sake of what many still regarded as the less deserving. Those particularly affected were from the lower middle classes, who still harboured traditional liberal ideas of the primacy of contractual relationships and personal merit. Consequently, many Liberal Party reforms, especially in the sphere of taxation, had to be designed to help them, more than the working class.[11]

Second, the establishment of the Labour Party created a new set of difficulties for the Liberal Party. Some of those had, of course, to do with competition over the anti-Tory vote. Electoral pacts between the two parties did no favours to the Liberals by enabling the victory of Labour candidates. The rarefied political language spoken by liberals, even those seeking social justice for the dispossessed, was foreign to the ears of many members of the working class, who

were reared on 'bread and butter' socialism and had become the target of more efficient agitation from groups such as the Fabians. It has always been something of a problem for liberalism to translate its relatively complex ideas and arguments into the kind of populist mode that both conservatives and socialists – in very different ways – have successfully exploited. Unpopular leadership decisions about the rights of workers, including their right to strike, caused further alienation and also distanced the Liberal Party from its own progressives. But the problem ran deeper than that. Ideologically speaking, the Liberal Party now had the additional complication of differentiating itself in the public mind from Labour while maintaining a dynamism that would still put it at the forefront of British radicalism. That proved impossible, and the consequence was not so much that the party abandoned its journey to the left as that many of its key reformers eventually left the Liberal Party after the First World War and joined Labour – not because Labour policy was notably different from that of the new liberals, but because Labour was slowly becoming in their view a more efficient fighting machine. As a consequence, one wing of the Labour Party in effect hosted the new liberalism in a fresh guise, and the party lost many of its radical campaigners.

Third, the leadership problems of the Liberal Party were considerable. The rivalry between a modernising Lloyd George and a far more sedate Asquith eventually came to undermine the party's stability and attractiveness. Failure to act quickly on the enfranchisement of women did not strengthen the party's reputation as being in the vanguard of progress. And the party seemed to peter out of ideas after 1911 over problems with Ireland and with the miners – the latter reflecting the increasing combativeness of some of the trade unions, resulting, among other things, in Lloyd George's Land Campaign, a programme that seemed remote from the interests of the preponderantly urban working class. No less seriously, the central London organisation of the party – the

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National Liberal Federation – was frequently out of touch with feelings in the constituencies and with local desire to have Liberal representatives that were closer to working-class concerns. As a result, the Liberal Party's potential to resist the rise of the Labour Party was impeded.

Fourth, there were some serious flaws in the ideology of the new liberals themselves. One of the most significant underpinnings of their arguments was the organic nature of their approach to society as an interconnected body that possessed its own vital social interests running alongside the requirement for individual well-being, but whose flourishing depended on the health of the individual parts. Yet society, too, was seen to have the right to claim the goods it required to discharge its functions, including its own well-being and future development. The main welfare measures advocated at the time by the new liberals were anchored in the imagery that such an organic approach provided. Although the organic view of society was much in vogue among theorists and commentators at the time, it was less amenable to inspiring an electorate whose social mythology still rested on strong individualistic conceptions of separateness and independence. The party elite rarely adopted that terminology and it was far from universally appreciated among liberals. Nor did its effective notion of welfare dovetail with the new liberal one. For various reasons – many of them financial but some also principled – the actual welfare measures, while perceived to be in the right direction, fell far short of new liberal intentions. In very broad terms, the prevailing understandings of welfare policy were (and still are) split between helping the weak and marginalised on the one hand, and envisaging a society where central assistance is available to all and in which flourishing means not inching over a minimum but assuredly obtaining an optimum. That latter project was not at the heart of effective Liberal Party policy, although it might have been faintly visible in its Elysian fields.

No less indicative of the limits of the new liberalism were some of its biases. Authoritarianism, illiberalism and paternalism had to be navigated constantly even in the most liberal and generous versions of welfarism. Evidently, new liberal ideas on welfare were produced by intellectual elites who still believed in nineteenth-century fashion that they had a duty to civilise the nation and that their ethical conceptions of a good society were impeccable. Given the still-limited range of the franchise and the relative paucity of state education, extensive democratic approval and an informed electorate were not yet available. The noted voluntary tradition of either self-help or of mutual assistance outside the sphere of the state still had high visibility and determined support. But the role of the expert – so much at the centre of Fabian activism – was not dismissed by liberals either. The tensions between reformers of the Right, who wished to improve the moral character of individuals, socialists who wished to identify and cater to known categories of need while ignoring the individual as the unit of attention, and the new liberals who wished to employ the state in the service of the individual, were evident in the policies of, and debates within and around, the Liberal Party. A form of soft paternalism emerged, in which the view prevailed that enlightened liberals needed to work on behalf of the workers, whose social visions were either distorted by socialist propagandists, or undeveloped as a result of the heavy toll that economic hardships imposed on them. But there was also a fundamental faith in the homogeneity of a social vision in which one size would fit all. Finally, there was a considerable amount of condescension towards the working classes. The noted historian G. M. Trevelyan, close to liberal circles, wrote at the beginning of the twentieth century: 'Whenever a good thing is accomplished it is not in the first instance because the people wish it to be done, but because a few men will do it … The success of a nation, the greatness of an age, the work done by a body or group of persons, is always in ratio to the percentage of men of this quality.'[12]

One such form of paternalism appeared in the interest progressive liberals had in eugenics, not as a means to enable a particular race to achieve social domination, as was the case in many other right-wing instances, but as a technique to include the physical improvement of the body as part of the wider conception of social reform. Another, more at the centre of Liberal Party policy, was the continuous resistance to women's suffrage. In part that reflected a deep cultural conservatism at the heart of the party, not always shared by its more radical members; but there was also a calculated electoral fear – painfully realised in the early years of women obtaining the vote – that the Liberal Party might not attract a sufficient number of votes from those newly emancipated citizens. Unlike the previous reliance for charitable activities on the voluntary sector, the Liberal government centralised its welfare legislation heavily and introduced a uniform system – for example in relation to Labour exchanges. Its insistence on compulsion with regard to national insurance was anathema to the British social reform tradition and not a few liberals bemoaned 'the newer Liberalism of Social Responsibility and … Paternal Government'.[13] It required a considerable degree of ideological repackaging to present compulsory health and unemployment insurance as a measure designed to counter the compulsion embedded in the economic circumstances from which so many people suffered and thus increase their liberty.

Conclusion

So did the Liberal Party become a new liberal one? One can answer this on three levels – its practices while the new liberalism was at its zenith, its support groups, and its longer-term development. In terms of its top leadership before 1914, new liberals were hardly prominent. Lloyd George was a radical but not necessarily an organicist new liberal with a general vision of a good society or a sense of how to change the complex nexus of relationships between individual and state. He was a political strategist equipped with a fighting spirit and a populist eloquence that served him well. Winston Churchill, the only other leading

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cabinet minister to adopt the new liberalism, published a series of his speeches in 1909 called *Liberalism and the Social Problem*, that contained some of the new liberal (and Fabian) ideas about a national minimum; and he was instrumental in establishing the labour exchanges. But he was a politician on the make, restless, ideologically fickle, and easily bored, and incapable of deep and sustained social thinking. Being Home Secretary before the First World War appealed far more to his sense of adventure when he delighted in personally leading a siege of a group of anarchists in London. Asquith was parodied by his remark 'wait and see', hardly a clarion call of advanced liberalism. This leaves some of the second-ranking politicians, but they were unable to sustain the extraordinary momentum the new liberalism had accrued in the three years from 1908 (old age pensions) to 1911 (national insurance).

One of the main difficulties facing the Liberal Party was that it was caught between being seen to act against the interests of its individualist supporters on the one hand and being seen to be too slow to convert to a social liberalism on the other. Free trade was the only 'older' platform on which all liberals could unite. That ideological split unfortunately caused a double haemorrhage that left the Liberal Party after the First World War a far more centrist party than it had seemed to be in the pre-war decade. The new liberal infatuation with the state as the beneficial agent of a fair society was eroded by the conduct of the government during the war, when emergency measures, and even conscription itself, were attacked for restricting individual freedoms, and the Liberals rediscovered the importance of liberty. Libertarian ideas, which had been rather quirky in the aftermath of the Liberal landslide, came out of the cold. State intervention was now accused of being a form of 'Prussianism' under German, specifically Hegelian, influence. But entrepreneurship and business efficiency also made a comeback in the policies of the Liberal Party, against the backdrop of the post-war economic crisis from 1920 onwards, the alliance of Lloyd George with the Conservatives,

> **One of the main difficulties facing the Liberal Party was that it was caught between being seen to act against the interests of its individualist supporters on the one hand and being seen to be too slow to convert to a social liberalism on the other.**

and the disappearance of most of the social reform wing into the ranks of Labour. The weakness of the party as a coalition of internal ideological positions, which had been mitigated by its enormous pre-war electoral success, could no longer be disguised.

In 1926, Keynes wryly remarked: 'Possibly the Liberal Party cannot serve the State in any better way than by supplying Conservative Governments with Cabinets, and Labour Governments with ideas'.[14] There is more than a grain of truth in that. Perhaps the ultimate mission of liberalism was an unintentionally altruistic one: that of infusing British political culture with liberal principles that became integrated into a far broader political spectrum. As a political machine, and financed as it was by its more traditional backers, the Liberal Party could not move quickly enough towards fundamental social reform after the brief – though highly significant and influential – pre-war spurt. Its leadership became embroiled in petty squabbles that occasioned a split between Asquithian and Lloyd George Liberals, and was not capable of sustaining a social vision. After the war, its creativity was retained only at its margins – in the annual Liberal Summer Schools, for example – and it could no longer make the running. True, Keynes contributed to the party's unemployment policies and its more technical economic thinking, but those were insufficient to create a popular stir, and the party began to suffer from outdated and adverse descriptions by its rivals – something that before the war was impossible. Nonetheless, the combination of party, ideology, and opportunity at the outset of the twentieth century created something special. The emergence of an outspoken social liberalism in the UK singled out British liberalism from among its European counterparts as a singularly rich and progressive creed. For a society once disparagingly called 'a nation of shopkeepers' that was an extraordinary achievement.

Michael Freeden is a Professor of Politics at the University of Oxford and the director of its Centre for Political Ideologies, and a Fellow of Mansfield College Oxford. Among his books are The New Liberalism *(Oxford, 1978),* Ideologies and Political Theory *(Oxford, 1996) and* Liberal Languages *(Princeton, 2005). He is editor of the* Journal of Political Ideologies.

1   For a more detailed discussion see M. Freeden, *The New Liberalism: An Ideology of Social Reform* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

2   C. F. G. Masterman, 'Politics in Transition', *Nineteenth Century*, 63 (1908), p. 12.

3   Quoted in J. S. Phillimore and F. W. Hirst (eds.), *Essays in Liberalism by Six Oxford Men* (London: Cassell & Co., 1897), p. x.

4   See M. Freeden, *Liberalism Divided: A Study in British Political Thought 1914–1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 366–371.

5   M. Freeden (ed.), *Minutes of the Rainbow Circle, 1894–1924* (London: Royal Historical Society, Camden 4th Series, 1989).

6   J. A. Hobson and M. Ginsberg, *L. T. Hobhouse: His Life and Work* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), p. 66.

7   J. S. Mill, *On Liberty* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1870), p. 33.

8   J. A. Hobson, 'The Significance of the Budget', *English Review*, 2 (1909), p. 795.

9   L. T. Hobhouse, *Liberalism* (London; Williams and Norgate, 1911), p. 124.

10   M. Freeden, 'The Coming of the Welfare State', in T. Ball and R. Bellamy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 7–44.

11   G. R. Sims, 'The Bitter Cry of the Middle Classes', *Tribune*, July 1906. See also P. Waller, 'Altercation over Civil Society: The Bitter Cry of the Edwardian Middle Classes', in J. Harris (ed.), *Civil Society in British History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 115–134.

12   G. M. Trevelyan, 'The Past and Future', in C. F. G. Masterman (ed.), *The Heart of the Empire* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901), pp. 412–13.

13   J. Armsden, 'First Principles of Social Reform', *Westminster Review*, vol. 169 (1908), p. 639.

14   J. M. Keynes, 'Liberalism and Labour (1926)', in Keynes, *Essays in Persuasion* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1931), p. 343.

Thomas Paine was a radical writer whose ideas grew out of the revolutionary times through which he lived and whose importance lay in his ability to move public opinion by reaching a readership beyond traditional elite politics.**Edward Royle** examines his impact on Liberalism and liberal thought.

THOMAS PAINE
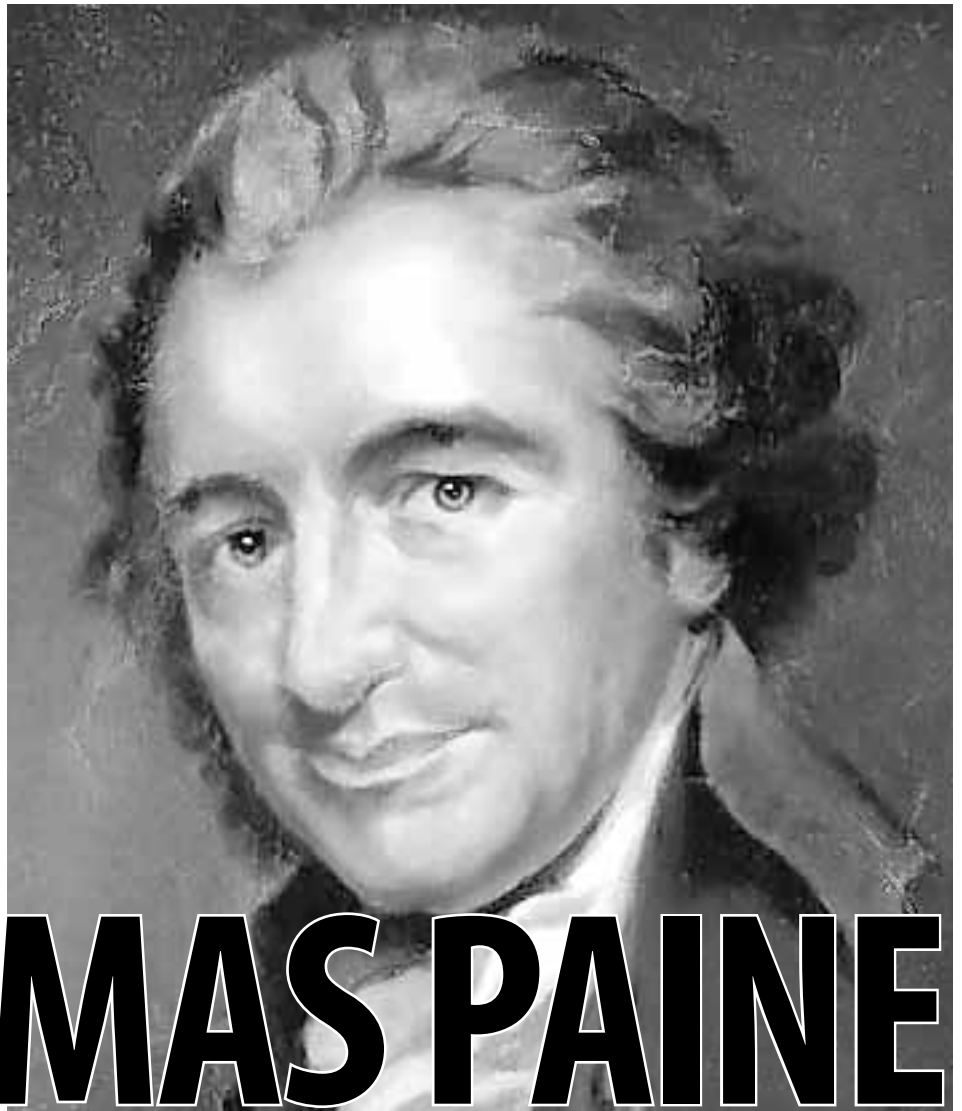
Thomas Paine
(1737–1809)

P AINE WAS born into an artisan family in Thetford, Norfolk, on 29 January 1737. His father, a stay-maker and a Quaker, sent his son to the local grammar school where he was well educated in English but not in Latin, for his father did not approve of the pagan classics. Thus spared learning the classical forms of rhetoric which were then conventional among the educated, Paine's later written style appeared to his contemporaries as fresh, direct and open to the less well-educated public. Its cadences and imagery remain remarkably accessible to the modern reader. Following the early death in 1760 of his first wife, the daughter of an excise officer, he applied to join the Excise Service and in 1764 was appointed to the Grantham district. He was, however, soon dismissed for allegedly neglecting his duties. Four years later, after a short period working as a teacher in London, he was reappointed in Lewes where he married his landlady's daughter and helped run their tobacconist's shop. Bankruptcy, the breakdown of his marriage, and a second dismissal from the Excise then led him to emigrate to Philadelphia in 1774.

From this first stage in his life Paine took experiences that shaped his subsequent political thought. As an unenthusiastic member of the hated Excise Service, he knew at first hand the unfairness of the tax burden, and the oppressive power of the eighteenth-century state. This may have predisposed him towards the Americans, whose revolt against Britain was provoked by the imposition of new excise duties. As an artisan and failed shopkeeper he also appreciated the economic insecurities of small tradesmen, particularly the problem of the lack of coinage, so necessary to their livelihoods, and their resentment at the use by the higher classes of paper bills and promissory notes. This fed into his anti-aristocratic politics and his suspicion of paper money. Paine's political ideal was always to be that of the small, independent producer, free from oppression and exploitation from above and from poverty below. He had gained experience of the latter when he served on the vestry at Lewes where, among other things, he had to share in the administration of the poor law. Finally, he took from this first stage of his career experience of organising and expressing protest, having taken up the cause of the excise officers, whose low pay contrasted unfavourably with that of the excise supervisors and collectors. His first pamphlet was *The Case of the Officers of the Excise* (1772) and it was while lobbying for this in London that he met Benjamin Franklin, the colonial

agent for Pennsylvania, who gave him an introduction to his friends in Philadelphia.

The new world that Paine entered in 1774 would have seemed familiar to him, with many of his English experiences replicated in an enhanced form. Philadelphia had a vibrant literary culture of newspapers and coffee houses in which the common issues of the day were discussed much as they had been back in Lewes. Paine quickly grasped the essence and tone of public affairs, and was soon contributing to the *Pennsylvania Magazine*. Then, in January 1776, he wrote the first of his three most significant works: a short pamphlet entitled *Common Sense*, which denounced the oppressive government of George III and demanded an independent America. This was more than all but a minority of Americans would have demanded at this time but it caught the flow of opinion and made Paine a key player in events over the next few years.

Once the war had broken out and was initially going badly for the colonists, their spirit was rallied by the encouraging rhetoric of Paine's *Crisis* papers, first published in the *Pennsylvania Journal* in December 1776. The ringing tones with which the first *Crisis* paper opened – 'These are the times that try men's souls' – ensured that Paine will always have a place at the forefront of modern English political propaganda. But he was not a diplomatic man and, whether from naivety or courageousness, he proved better at making enemies than friends. He failed to appreciate that America, like England, was an unequal society and that the colonial leaders were neither so radical nor so low born as the stay-maker from Norfolk. When he used state papers to expose a corrupt arms deal with the French in 1778–79, he was forced to resign as secretary to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and when he defended the Bank of Pennsylvania's refusal to issue more paper money, he was accused of forgetting the poor. Perhaps a little weary and disillusioned with the conservatism of the infant United States now it no longer needed – nor, apparently, valued – his support, he returned to Europe to forward his interest in scientific experiments and in particular his plan for an iron bridge.

Political events in France soon created a new opportunity for his literary talents. The revolution of 1789 was widely welcomed in Britain, where friends of the American Revolution saw it as another stage on the way to liberty and progress. But one such friend, Edmund Burke, took a very different view. Sooner than most of his contemporaries, he saw that the French were tearing up tradition and he feared for the consequences of a rootless and theory-based revolution founded on abstract rights. In November 1790 he published these doubts as *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Paine was one of many to rush to refute this work, publishing in February 1791 Part 1 of *Rights of Man*, his second great work of political propaganda. In this work, and especially in Part 2, issued a year later, Paine employed the same logic as he had earlier applied to the American situation. The French were defended but, more importantly, the British system was attacked. With a characteristically pithy aphorism Paine pronounced that 'An hereditary governor is as inconsistent as an hereditary author' and he dismissed Burke's florid rhetoric with the telling image: 'He pities the plumage but forgets the dying bird'. *Rights of Man* became one of the most influential and widely circulated political tracts of the 1790s, with 200,000 copies said to have been sold in the first two years. Though this figure is probably an exaggeration, it is certainly true that the work was widely distributed, reissued, and avidly read and discussed by tradesmen and artisans in radical societies throughout urban Britain. Against the background of the war between Britain and France, and the threat of an Irish rising and a French invasion, Paine's advocacy proved to be both a blessing and a curse for British radicals: a blessing because it focused the argument against Burke and the British constitution and gave it popular expression; a curse because its extremism could be used to tar even moderate reformers (the majority) with the republican brush. Paine's

importance, indeed, was written up by the government for its own propagandist purposes. He was convicted of seditious libel in September 1792, and, thereafter, seditious intent could be imputed to any who sold his works or praised his ideas.

By September 1792, Paine had moved on again and was in France where, true to his principles, he supported the abolition of the monarchy but not the execution of the king. As a member of the National Convention, he joined the moderate Girondin faction and so fell foul of the more extreme Jacobins, and for a time he was held in the Luxembourg prison under sentence of death. It was at this time that he composed his third great work, *The Age of Reason*, written in two parts before and during his time in prison and published in 1794–95. In this work he applied to Christianity and the Bible the same remorseless logic and scathing prose with which he had earlier attacked the British monarchy and constitution. Ironically, Paine's motivation was conservative. He was writing from within the British tradition of Natural Theology to support belief in the God of Nature and against the materialistic atheism of philosophers like his friend Condorcet. But his popular language proved a gift to his political opponents and an embarrassment to many of his friends in Britain and America, as his religious iconoclasm was branded atheism and used to discredit still further his republican views. When Paine was released in 1795 and returned to America, he found the country he had helped to shape cold and unfriendly towards him. Only a few loyal friends were there to support him in his declining years, which ended in New York in June 1809.

Within Paine's political writings, notably *Rights of Man* Part 2 and also the brief *Agrarian Justice* (1796), there is a programme for social and economic action. Paine essentially belonged to that growing number of radical free-market economists who derived their ideas from the Scottish Enlightenment and Adam Smith. His economics, like his politics, were about the liberty of the individual. Government was 'a

Paine essentially belonged to that growing number of radical free-market economists who derived their ideas from the Scottish Enlightenment and Adam Smith.

Further reading

The work of resurrecting Paine's reputation owed much to the American rationalist preacher, Moncure D. Conway, whose *The Life of Thomas Paine with a history of his literary, political and religious career in America, France, and England*, 2 vols. (1892) and *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, 4 vols. (1894–96) were published by G. P. Putnam in New York.

The fullest modern collection of Paine's writings is Philip S. Foner (ed.), *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, 2 vols. (New York: Citadel Press, 1945), to which should now be added Hazel Burgess (ed.), *Thomas Paine: A collection of unknown writings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), although the latter was published too late to be consulted for this essay.

Two important studies, which differ in some respects from the interpretation offered here, are Gregory Claeys, *Thomas Paine: Social and Political Thought* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1995) and Mark Philp, *Paine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). Good recent surveys include John Keane, *Tom Paine. A Political Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 1995) and a collection of articles by Bernard Vincent, published as *The Transatlantic Republican: Thomas Paine and the Age of Revolutions* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005).

necessary evil'. Monopolies were evil and against the public interest, but there was one monopoly – the hereditary interest in land – which pressed particularly hard on the poor. His contribution to the contemporary debate about the poor laws was conventionally radical in that he thought they should be abolished, but he was unconventional in that he wanted them to be replaced by a progressive tax on real estate to provide work for the unemployed, education for children, pensions for the aged, and gifts for all on the occasions of their births, marriages and deaths as compensation for the loss of their birth right in the land.

This was certainly provocatively radical and added to conservative prejudice against his views, but, as Thomas Spence pointed out in *Rights of Infants* (1797), Paine was prepared to sell the birthright of the people for 'poor beggarly stipends' of a few pounds. Unlike Spence, Paine did not assert the inalienable right of the people to common ownership of the land. Perhaps for this reason he left no band of disciples to urge his views on the nineteenth-century land reform movement, which looked instead to Spence for inspiration. Paine's economics were rooted in his politics and he was always an upholder of private property in the liberal tradition of John Locke, whereby the right to private property resided in the added value created by improvement. He was perhaps naive in his expectation that his progressive tax on ground values would destroy the landed classes but he fundamentally thought that, because property underpinned political power, it was essential for private property to remain to underpin democracy. Without property the small man could expect neither independence nor freedom. Paine's ideal, as expressed in *Rights of Man*, was that 'Every man is a proprietor in government, and considers it a necessary part of his business to understand. It concerns his interest, because it affects his property. He examines the cost, and compares it with the advantages.' Here we have political equality expressed in the language of the market and underpinned by utilitarian philosophy. This was the voice of the tax collector and the Lewes vestry man, not the prophet of socialism. In Paine's thought, politics were always primary, all else flowing from that fact. This remained the message of radicalism for a hundred years and more.

The significance of Paine's views has been much debated. His ideas were certainly radical when compared with the mainstream of his times but to see him as a forerunner of modern socialism and a founder of the welfare state is both fanciful and unhistorical. His ideas were the creation of the later eighteenth century and can be understood only in that context. Paine existed at the extreme edge of contemporary opinion: belief in God, but in deism not Christianity; belief in the free market and against monopolies, but an advocate of new taxes on the rich; a constitutional reformer, but one who was not only a democrat but a republican. His extreme reputation was exaggerated by his opponents and the tradition of support for Paine that was passed down to the nineteenth century was sustained – with the notable exception of William Cobbett – only by men and women who were not ashamed to be called republicans and atheists. So although Paine's ideas in the later nineteenth century sat easily on the radical edge of mainstream Liberalism, this was seldom acknowledged because the name of Paine continued to have the whiff of brimstone about it. He remained marginalised until at least the end of the century, after which his reputation was gradually rehabilitated until, at the bicentenary of American Independence, his part in that struggle could at last be recognised, even by a conservative like President Reagan. In Britain, with less justification, the twentieth century witnessed an attempt to adopt Paine for socialism, a view which failed to take into account the essential radical-liberalism of Paine's writings. Yet, in 1989, the true Paine-ite moment of 1789 was recaptured when, with the acknowledged failure of socialist regimes, political change was seized upon once again by revolutionaries across Europe as the necessary precondition for restoring the welfare of the people.

Edward Royle is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of York. He began his research in Cambridge in the 1960s, publishing studies of popular radicalism and freethought between 1791 and 1915, and has since researched and written about various aspects of radicalism, religion and the broader social history of Britain since the mid-eighteenth century.

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THE FLIGHT FROM T
LIBERALS WHO JOINE

From 1914 to 1931, many of those previously active in Liberal politics defected to Labour. Why did so many Liberals switch their political allegiance ('almost like changing one's religion', as one Liberal MP observed) and abandon their party, which had been in office, or coalition government, from 1906 to 1922, to enlist with the fledgling Labour Party? And how far, if at all, did their presence influence Labour's development during a key period of political realignment in British politics? **Professor John Shepherd** examines the history.
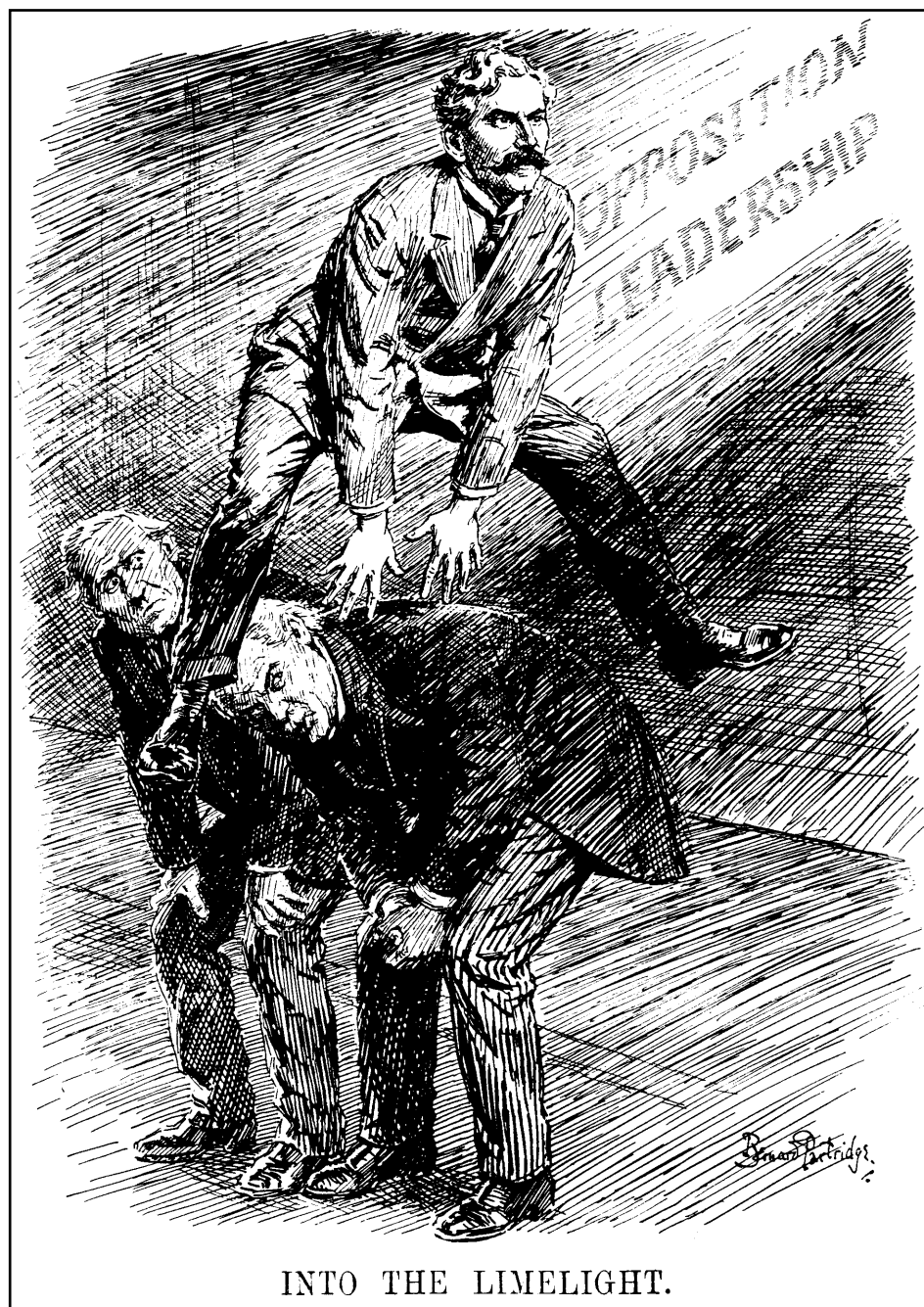
INTO THE LIMELIGHT.

THE LIBERAL PARTY
D LABOUR, 1914–1931

O N 13 December 1923 the former Liberal imperialist, Secretary of State for War and Lord Chancellor, Lord Haldane, wrote his daily letter as usual from London to his ninety-nine-year-old mother, Mary, in Scotland about his negotiations with Ramsay MacDonald. The Labour leader was about to form Britain's first Labour government. 'In the evening he offered me anything I chose if I would help him; the leadership of the House of Lords, the Chancellorship, Defence, Education and the carrying out of my plans … the press is in full cry and Williams [Haldane's butler] is keeping them off'.[1] In January 1924, Haldane became Lord Chancellor rather than the former Conservative and King's Bench judge John Sankey, MacDonald's original choice. Haldane told his mother and sister that MacDonald 'has consulted me about every appointment'.[2]

Haldane's triumphant tone revealed he firmly believed that meetings he had held with MacDonald in London and Scotland had greatly influenced the Labour leader. From India a reassured Viceroy, Lord Lytton, wrote to Haldane: 'I think I can trace your hand in most of the appointments'.[3] MacDonald had seemingly not sought advice from senior Labour figures such as Arthur Henderson, J. R. Clynes (both – unlike MacDonald – with ministerial experience in the wartime government) or Philip Snowden. Nor did he heed the advice of the Fabian Sidney Webb, who had inundated MacDonald with written guidance about taking office.[4]

The announcement of the new administration, which included ex-Liberals and Conservatives alongside figures from the trade union and labour movement, attracted considerable attention abroad as well as in domestic politics.[5] However, it was MacDonald who was primarily responsible for bringing in 'specialised outsiders' to appeal to the middle-class as well as traditional working-class voters of Britain.[6] As well as Haldane, among those now rewarded with Cabinet office were former Liberals Charles Trevelyan (Education), Josiah Wedgwood (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster), Noel Buxton (Agriculture and Fisheries), and also ex-Conservative recruits, Lord Parmoor (Lord President), Lord Thomson (Air) and, most surprisingly, the former Viceroy of India, Lord Chelmsford (Admiralty). Other non-Cabinet posts were also filled by ex-Liberals, such as Sir Patrick Hastings (Attorney General), and Arthur Ponsonby (who returned to the Foreign Office as MacDonald's deputy).

From 1914 to 1931, many previously active in Liberal politics (or with strong Liberal associations) defected to Labour in broadly three clusters: the first during 1914–1918, followed by another contingent from 1919 to 1925, and then the last who joined from the mid-1920s to the early 1930s.[7] According to Andrew MacCullum Scott, Liberal MP

'Into the Limelight', *Punch*, 29 November 1922: in the 1922 election, Labour under Ramsay Macdonald beat the Liberal factions led by Asquith and Lloyd George to become the leading party of the left.

for Glasgow Bridgeton (1910–22), who joined Labour in 1924, 'changing one's political party is almost like changing one's religion'. As he also shrewdly observed, the process of conversion *en masse* was a rare event.[8] Nonetheless, he was now witnessing a mass movement of this kind in the world of twentieth-century politics. Why did so many Liberals switch political allegiance and abandon their party, which had been in office, or coalition government, from 1906 to 1922, to enlist with the new fledgling Labour Party? And how far, if at all, did their presence influence Labour's development during an important period of political realignment in British politics?

Probably around three hundred MPs of all parties changed their political affiliation during the last century.[9] Individual politicians switching political connections between the Liberal and Labour parties have been part of the warp and weft of twentieth-century British politics. In early twentieth-century Britain, the years between 1914 and 1931 were arguably the most significant in terms of movements between parties.[10] Over forty years ago, before many collections of politicians' private papers became open, Professor Catherine Cline published a pioneering study based on seventy prominent recruits who had joined Labour in the early twentieth century, the vast majority of whom were former Liberals, mainly from the progressive wing of the party. Included were politicians such as Lord Haldane,

Charles Trevelyan, Arthur Ponsonby, Christopher Addison, Noel Buxton and Charles Roden Buxton, as well as the financier Sir Leo Chiozza Money and John A. Hobson, the influential economist.[11] Only three women featured among her recruits to Labour: Mary (Molly) Hamilton, Dorothy Buxton and Helena Swanwick.[12] More recently, two historians have thrown valuable light on this intriguing subject. Martin Pugh's account of recruits from upper-class Conservative backgrounds, such as Sir Oswald Mosley, Oliver Baldwin (son of Stanley Baldwin), Lady Warwick and Muriel, Countess De Warr, reveals the extent of their influence within Labour politics. [13] David Howell's study of the development of the British Labour Party during MacDonald's leadership demonstrates how progressive politicians from other parties formed a significant part of Labour's multi-identities in the interwar years.[14] According to Robert Dowse, in all probability more than two thousand Liberals active in national and municipal politics shifted to Labour at this time, although he gives no evidence as to how this figure was arrived at.[15] Interestingly, undertaken some fifty years ago, Dowse's research into the paths former Liberals followed into the Labour Party between 1910 and 1920 had a secondary purpose of shedding light on the possibility of a major Liberal–Labour realignment during the first main post-war Liberal revival under Jo Grimond's leadership in the late 1950s and early 1960s.[16]

Why politicians change parties can be a fascinating and intricate question involving political convictions, motivation and ideology – not without their difficulties in analysis for historians, political scientists and psephologists. Forty years ago, in plotting changes of allegiance by MPs, David Butler and Jennie Freeman noted the labyrinthine complexities of 'compiling an exact and comprehensive list of all floor-crossings, whip withdrawals, whip resignations and whip restorations'. For example, the parliaments of 1919–1922 and 1924–1929, during which there were some significant Liberal defections, presented them with a near-impossible task in

deciphering politicians' manoeuvrings between different coalition and non-coalition factions.[17]

Since the 1960s, a considerable amount of ink has been expended by historians debating the 'decline of Liberalism and the rise of Labour'.[18] The impact of the First World War on British politics and society was crucially significant in the growth of the Labour Party and the decline and even eventual destruction of the Liberal Party. Over forty years on, Trevor Wilson's powerful and enduring metaphor about the Liberal Party, which likened its downfall to the fate of a healthy pedestrian mowed down by a runaway omnibus, still seems apposite.[19]

The Liberal government's participation in the First World War, its lack of clear war aims and, in particular, the failure of Sir Edward Grey as Foreign Secretary to declare the nature and extent of the British military undertakings with France were certainly decisive factors in the growing disenchantment among radical Liberals. At the outbreak of hostilities, not just Charles Trevelyan, parliamentary under-secretary at the Board of Education, but also Cabinet ministers John Burns and John Morley all resigned from Asquith's government. Unprecedented total war compelled the Asquith and Lloyd George wartime premierships to implement illiberal policies undreamt of by British Liberals. The Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) hastily enacted in August 1914 and later renewed, was followed by restrictions on personal liberties including press censorship, identity cards, food rationing and other state controls. In particular, the principles and values of British Liberalism were challenged fundamentally by the heated debates in 1915 and 1916 over the introduction of conscription for males aged 18–41. In particular, conscription created a crisis in wartime coalition government that divided the Asquith Cabinet and brought continued acrimony and deep rifts within the Liberal ranks. In the end, John Simon, the Home Secretary, resigned and around fifty Liberal MPs voted against the Military Service Act. Remarkably, H. B. Lees-Smith, Liberal MP for Northampton

Why politicians change parties can be a fascinating and intricate question involving political convictions, motivation and ideology – not without their difficulties in analysis for historians, political scientists and psephologists.

1910–18 and later Labour President of the Board of Education in 1931, returned to parliament from serving as a private on the Western Front to oppose the measure.[20]

Even more crucial to declining Liberal fortunes were the deep divisions created by Lloyd George's ousting of Asquith to take over the wartime premiership in 1916, which brought about a fatal rupture in British Liberalism and demoralised Liberals in the constituencies. As the party haemorrhaged parliamentary and municipal membership to Labour or the Conservatives, for many disaffected Liberals Lloyd George bore the overwhelming responsibility for the permanent split in their party.[21] It was a charge that stuck to him, as many Liberals remained increasingly distrustful of the 'Welsh Wizard', even during his long exclusion from power after 1922. In 1918 the parliamentary confrontation between Asquith and Lloyd George during the Maurice Debate about British troop levels on the Western Front had demonstrated clear Liberal divisions at Westminster. The 'Coupon Election', in which 130 coalition Liberals supporting Lloyd George were returned to Westminster compared to only twenty-eight independent Liberals under Asquith, emphasised this critical rupture within the party, now divided into two bellicose factions.

Despite brief periods of Liberal unity in 1923 and 1929, Liberalism remained fatally wounded during the post-war years in contrast to the remarkable growth of the Labour Party at parliamentary and municipal levels. During the early post-war years, the Liberal leadership's post-war foreign and imperial policy and its attitude to the punitive Treaty of Versailles was instrumental in driving Liberals into the Labour ranks.[22] The reputation of the Lloyd George coalition government suffered irreparable damage as a result of the intervention in Bolshevik Russia, the Chanak Crisis that almost brought war with Turkey and, particularly, the 1919 Amritsar Massacre in India and the ruthless policy of using the 'Black and Tans' in Ireland.[23] In contrast, Labour increasingly took over the Liberal mantle of radicalism

in domestic, foreign and imperial affairs. By 1922, as Labour outstripped the Liberals to become the official parliamentary opposition with 142 members in the Commons, the Liberals totalled only 116 MPs divided between fifty-four Asquithian 'Wee Frees' and the sixty-two Liberals led by Lloyd George.[24]

During the First World War, various networks in the British 'peace movement' provided the bridges, usually via the pacifist Independent Labour Party, for disenchanted Liberals to join, or move closer to, the Labour Party. Among the different anti-war groups which sprang up during these years, the Union of Democratic Control (UDC) was the most prominent, alongside the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF), the Bryce Group and the League of Nations Society. Each had their specific orientation in opposing the war, but shared overlapping memberships and sympathisers among dissident Liberals, pacifist ILP members and anti-war radicals. The NCF, founded in November 1914 by Fenner Brockway, opposed the introduction of compulsory military service in 1916 (the occasion of Sir John Simon's resignation as Liberal Home Secretary) and was the main organisation to aid conscientious objectors and their families. The influential Cambridge don, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, was prominent in the Bryce Group and was highly active in the Society for the League of Nations in planning schemes for a post-war international peace organisation. Many of the Liberals from these peace groups met socially with members of the ILP and others Labourites (including those who had previously supported the war) at the 1917 Club. Founded by J. A. Hobson, and taking its name from the date of the Russian Revolution, the club provided an important forum for those opposed to the war.[25]

The day after the outbreak of war, the Union of Democratic Control was founded by Norman Angell, E. D. Morel, Ramsay MacDonald and Charles Trevelyan, with its London headquarters in Trevelyan's house at 14 Great College Street. They were soon joined by Arthur Ponsonby,

> **Despite brief periods of Liberal unity in 1923 and 1929, Liberalism remained fatally wounded during the post-war years in contrast to the remarkable growth of the Labour Party at parliamentary and municipal levels.**

another critic of Britain's participation in a European conflict.[26] The UDC was not another 'stop the war' group, but a highly significant pressure group for peace. There was no unique UDC stance on the war, but the organisation became a significant sounding board for different viewpoints among dissenting radicals, Liberals and Labourites. It campaigned for a just and peaceful post-war settlement under which no territory should be transferred without a plebiscite, and for foreign policy to be under parliamentary control. However, members of the UDC experienced a hostile public reception during wartime, which brought Liberal members closer to the ILP and the Labour Party. *The Labour Memorandum on War Aims*, published in December 1917, demonstrated how close the Labour Party's proposals were to the work of the different groups in the British peace movement.[27] In addition, in the post-war years, as Labour's pro-war and anti-war factions reconciled, UDC condemnation of the punitive Versailles peace treaty and of the French occupation to enforce reparations occupied common ground with Labour's foreign policy. In 1924 the UDC could claim that fifteen of its members – including former Liberals – were in Ramsay MacDonald's first Labour government.[28]

However, the cause of this significant political realignment, as mainly middle-class and upper-class politicians broke away from their party to join Labour, with its strong trade union sectional interest, remains a complex question. An examination of the individual biographies of a number of the former Liberals who held office in Ramsay MacDonald's minority governments in the inter-war years shows differing and sometimes convoluted reasons for switching to Labour. Whether they were Asquith or Lloyd George supporters – or neither – their motivations were wide ranging and not always simply due to distaste for the Liberal leadership's conduct of the war or to 'pacifist principles'.[29] Percy Alden, Bertrand Russell and Sydney Arnold were undoubtedly prominent pacifists. The Welsh nationalist, E. T. John, voted against

conscription and was President of the Peace Society from 1924 to 1928. However, a number of those soon to abandon their party – including Ernest N. Bennett, Albert Dunn, James Chuter Ede, John Hay and H. B. Lees Smith – fought with distinction in the First World War. Ede was from a staunch Liberal nonconformist background and a career in teaching and Edwardian municipal politics. While on army service he switched to Labour as the party to secure social reform for working people.

A stalwart of the UDC, Richard Denman, Liberal MP 1910-18 for Carlisle, opposed British intervention in 1914, which cost him the support of his local Liberal party. Yet, he served as a second lieutenant on the Western Front and sent home graphic accounts of wartime gas attacks.[30] In 1918 Denman supported the Lloyd George coalition, but denounced the Versailles Treaty in 1919 and eventually joined Labour in 1924.[31] Three well-known Liberal recruits to Labour from different political backgrounds – Josiah Wedgwood, Cecil L'Estrange Malone and J. K. Kenworthy – became famous for their combined parliamentary opposition to British military intervention in Russia. What they shared in common was notable war service.[32] Charles Roden Buxton's activities in the UDC and his advocacy of a negotiated peace settlement and a future League of Nations led to a breach with the Liberals in his new constituency of Central Hackney. In 1917 he joined the ILP and built up strong friendships with socialists such Clifford Allen and Fenner Brockway.[33] However, both the well-travelled Charles Buxton and his brother, Noel, were experts on the Balkans. Remarkably, as unofficial envoys they had attempted to enlist Bulgaria on the side of the Allies in 1914.[34]

Another leading pacifist member of the UDC, Arthur Ponsonby, former principal private secretary to the Liberal prime minister, Campbell Bannerman, and his successor as the Liberal MP for Stirling Burghs from 1908, was a prominent critic of Sir Edward Grey's foreign policy. In the parliamentary debate of 3 August

1914, he was among the five members who spoke out against the war. However, early signs of his move away from Liberalism and towards socialism were apparent in his critical writings on the ethics of wealth and social class, such as *The Camel and the Needle's Eye* (1910) and *The Decline of the Aristocracy* (1912). A former royal page to Queen Victoria, he was soon dropped from King George V's guest list for the monarch's garden party. However, Ponsonby did not join the ILP, the main route into the Labour Party, until after the 1918 election. His constituency association had disowned him on account of his opposition to the war. In the 'Coupon Election' he was heavily defeated at Dunfermline as an Independent Democrat.[35]

A career politician, Charles Trevelyan was Liberal MP for the Elland Division of Yorkshire from 1899 to 1918. In 1914, he had resigned as Parliamentary Secretary in the Board of Education from Asquith's Liberal government at the same time as Cabinet colleagues, John Morley and John Burns in protest against British participation in the war. However Trevelyan, who loathed war, was no pacifist and had voted for the Liberal government's naval programme of dreadnought battleships. He was one of a small group of Liberals who distrusted Grey's reasons for British intervention in the war.[36] In parliament he became the UDC's leading figure. His carefully considered resignation, as war was declared, caused a deep rift with most of his family and brought down the wrath of a jingoist press on his head. Disowned by his Elland constituency, in the 1918 election as an Independent he suffered a devastating defeat to finish bottom of the poll.[37]

In 1921 Trevelyan published *From Liberalism to Labour* to explain to a wider public the daunting changes in British politics that underpinned his decision to sever links with the Liberals and throw in his lot with Labour. As he put it, 'the wholesale transference of the working-class vote from Liberalism to Labour' spelt the end of his Liberal Party. Only Labour offered the real possibility of social reform, the nationalisation of land, railways and mines,

Occupying the centre of the British politics, a Liberal Party in difficulties was vulnerable to losing members to the other parties on the left and the right.

a wealth tax, and the free provision of secondary and university education in which he believed. He concluded: 'the only hope for our generation lies in a powerful and intelligently led Labour Party'.[38] In 1919, similar sentiments that the days of the Liberals were over as a political force in Britain were uttered by H. B. Lees-Smith when publicly rejecting Asquith's call for radicals to remain in the Liberal fold. In near-visionary terms the Liberal MP for Northampton from 1910 to 1918, who joined Labour in 1919, proclaimed 'we are standing on the threshold of a new world order' and envisaged the 'establishment of a co-operative commonwealth' to eradicate 'gross inequalities of wealth'. Moreover, in his view, the harsh Versailles Treaty inflicted upon Germany threatened another cataclysmic international conflict that only the election of labour and socialist governments throughout Europe could prevent. 'All the men who share these views', he declared, 'are in the ranks of Labour'.[39]

Occupying the centre of the British politics, a Liberal Party in difficulties was vulnerable to losing members to the other parties on the left and the right. An instructive example of Liberals jumping ship to both Labour and the Conservatives was the arrival of three prominent Liberals – Josiah Wedgwood, Alexander MacCallum Scott and Winston Churchill – in the same taxi for their party's meeting at the Reform Club in 1916, three days after Asquith's resignation as prime minister. Of the three, Churchill gradually found his home in 1924 in the Conservative Party. In the same year, MacCallum Scott – the Radical Liberal MP for Glasgow until 1922, and Churchill's biographer and sometime private secretary – joined Wedgwood in the Labour Party. [40]

A scion of the famous Staffordshire pottery firm, Josiah Wedgwood was a staunch ally of pacifists and conscientious objectors. Yet, as already noted, he was among those Liberal MPs with a distinguished military career. Wedgwood had fought in the South Africa War and won the DSO at Gallipoli in the First World War. In the pre-war years,

various extra-parliamentary agitations, such as the Free Speech Defence Committee with the socialist MP, George Lansbury, brought him into contact with the organised trade union and labour movements. The Asquith government's controversial infringement of civil liberties, witnessed in the use of troops in industrial disputes, the 'Don't Shoot' prosecutions and the horrific forcible feeding of suffragette prisoners, helped push Wedgwood firmly in the direction of the Labour Party.[41] In 1918, he was returned unopposed as an independent Radical. By 1919, the maverick Wedgwood was a member of the ILP and had taken the Labour whip.

Among the Labour Party recruits, the land values tax, free trade and the capital levy were also significant causes of friction with the Liberal leadership and contributory factors in inducing dissatisfied Liberals to consider joining Labour. Wedgwood was a life-long 'single taxer' and disciple of the American reformer, Henry George. With other Liberal MPs, including Edward Hemmerde, Robert Outhwaite and J. Dundas White, he was prominent in crusading for a far stronger land tax to rejuvenate society than the tame measure in Lloyd George's 1909 budget. However, with the Liberal leadership's failure to act by 1918, the land taxers took their campaign into the Labour Party. Similarly, protectionist measures, such as the McKenna duties in 1915 and the adoption of the report of the Paris Economic Conference in 1916, provoked fury among Liberal free traders. Hobson recalled this violation of the sacrosanct article of faith at the heart of British Liberalism as the reason he left the Liberal Party and eventually joined Labour in 1916. In the early post-war years, Labour's sole advocacy of the capital levy also probably helped attract Frederick Pethick Lawrence, J. A. Hobson and Sydney Arnold, all Liberal authorities who championed this tax.[42]

Christopher Addison, former medical doctor and eminent professor of anatomy, who enlisted with Labour in 1923, was the only former Lloyd George supporter to switch parties and probably the most significant of the ex-Liberal

recruits. His longevity in British Liberal and Labour politics was remarkable. Addison was at the heart of most of the landmark events of twentieth-century party politics. He was involved in Lloyd George's premiership bid in December 1916 and the political crisis that brought the downfall of Ramsay MacDonald's second Labour government in 1931. In 1945 Clement Attlee appointed him Leader of the House of Lords in Labour's first majority government.[43] Although critical of Grey's foreign policy, Addison had given full support to British participation in the First World War. As Lloyd George's important ally for eleven years, Addison held important wartime posts, including the Ministry of Munitions and the new Ministry of Reconstruction tasked with post-war social and economic planning. In 1919, as the first Minister of Health in the newly created ministry, he oversaw the first substantial housing programme. However, the construction of 200,000 'homes for heroes' had proved sluggish and increasingly costly and led to his humiliating demotion to minister without portfolio. His resignation followed an acrimonious rift with Lloyd George over broken pledges on social reform. In 1923, negotiations with Arthur Henderson led to his change of political affiliation to Labour. With the break-up of the coalition, other coalition Liberals, such as the Liberal chief whip, Freddie Guest, gradually defected to the Conservatives. However, Addison, who had been conspicuously on the left on domestic, foreign and imperial policy, was the only one to join Labour.

By the late 1920s the small radical group of seven MPs within the Liberal Party provided two further recruits for Labour. Joseph Kenworthy and William Wedgwood Benn resigned as Liberal MPs in 1926 and 1927 after Lloyd George had taken on the leadership of a reunited Liberal Party in 1926. In the post-war years, both had been members of the Asquithian opposition to Lloyd George's coalition government. A former naval officer, Kenworthy had won a spectacular by-election at Central Hull in March 1919 after being roundly defeated as a Liberal candidate in 1918. In the 1920s his radical credentials included support for the Soviet Union, Zionism and Indian home rule. In 1924, Kenworthy consistently backed the minority Labour administration. He was one of twelve Liberals to vote against his own party's amendment to the no-confidence motion (over the prosecution of the communist J. R. Campbell) that brought down Ramsay MacDonald's government. He later claimed he had 'an unofficial bargain made with [Arthur Henderson] which could have led to a Liberal–Labour alliance in the constituencies as well as at Westminster'.[44]

William Wedgwood Benn was a member of the famous Benn dynasty of several generations. In 1906, he succeeded to his father's East End seat of St George's Tower Hamlets and then held a succession of Liberal government posts, including serving as a Liberal whip from 1910 to 1915. During the First World War he had a distinguished military service record, acknowledged by many honours bestowed in Britain and abroad. A staunch Asquithian, Benn – like Kenworthy – became increasingly opposed to Lloyd George's politics and moved towards the Labour Party until he eventually applied for membership in 1927. He recalled, in 1929, that he had left a party deeply divided at Westminster and losing membership in the constituencies. 'Everyone knows that thousands of those who were in the past prominent Radicals are now stalwarts in the Socialist Party', he declared. After over twenty years in the Liberal Party, he had switched to Labour owing to total disenchantment with Lloyd George. 'Deep down in the hearts of all there is a feeling of distrust of his character and repugnance to his methods which far outweighs the power of his energy, imagination, and money.'[45] Benn was an important recruit for the Labour Party, recognised by his appointment as the Secretary of State for India in MacDonald's second Labour Cabinet, with responsibilities for negotiations with Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Party during difficult years in Anglo-Indian relations.

The movement of former Liberals, as well as Conservatives, into Labour's ranks during 1914–1931 undoubtedly changed the make-up of their new party and contributed to its development as a major party in the inter-war years and even beyond.

In 1961, Cline concluded that, during 1914–1931, at a time of major realignment of the British party system, the presence of former Liberal newcomers had helped change Labour radically from a parliamentary splinter group into a major political force.[46] However, this was an evaluation made after a long period in which the Liberal Party had been in decline or even heading for disintegration. So, to what extent was this a realistic assessment of the impact of those ex-Liberals who joined Labour on the party's development as a major political force in British politics?

The movement of former Liberals, as well as Conservatives, into Labour's ranks during 1914–1931 undoubtedly changed the make-up of their new party and contributed to its development as a major party in the interwar years and even beyond. Characteristically, these new recruits were largely from a social milieu poles apart from the world of industrial labour, trade unionism and working-class politics. In 1906, the first Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) consisted mainly of former trade unionists and workmen: coalminers, engineers, mechanics, steel smelters and labourers with direct practical experience of manual labour. Only a few – such as MacDonald and Snowden, both former pupil–teachers – had experienced social mobility to a different class.[47]

In contrast, those such as the Trevelyans, Ponsonbys and Buxtons were, by and large, representatives of the wealthy upper and upper-middle classes – the products of public schools (mainly Eton) and of Oxford or Cambridge – who had traditionally governed Britain and the British Empire. And in terms of wealth and property, there were marked differences from their Labour counterparts from working-class backgrounds. While at Westminster, Labour MPs normally resided in cheap hotels or lodgings, whereas Labour's new recruits from other parties owned London homes in socially exclusive areas of the capital, such as Westminster (Trevelyan), Belgravia (Chelmsford), St James's (Haldane), Chelsea (Benn, Ponsonby),

Knightsbridge (Buxton, Par-moor) and Mayfair (Jowitt).[48]

As a party new to government in the 1920s, Labour also benefited from having a number of lawyers among the Liberal recruits – such as Lord Haldane and Sir Patrick Hastings – in filling legal posts. In 1929 MacDonald appointed the former Conservative, Lord Sankey as Lord Chancellor. The successful barrister and Liberal MP for Preston, William Jowitt, became Attorney General, and was then unusually re-elected for the same constituency, but as a Labour MP. After the contro-versial downfall of the Labour administration in 1931, Jowitt was among those who accompanied MacDonald into the National government, but quietly returned to Labour in 1936. In July 1945 he became Lord Chancellor, one of eight former recruits to Labour in Clement Attlee's Labour Cabinet.[49]

Establishing a Labour presence in the House of Lords was another difficulty, but was resolved by creating new peers without heirs to succeed – including the Con-servative recruit Brigadier-Gen-eral Thomson and the ex Liberal MP, Sydney Arnold. In 1925 the crossbencher and former Under Secretary of State for Air, Lord Gorell, became a useful addition to depleted ranks of Labour in the upper house. A writer of fiction and poetry, he apparently declined the opportunity to enter a future MacDonald Cabinet. 'Poetry not politics is my real life', he noted.[50]

In 1920 MacDonald declared that the rich vein of Labour's expertise in local government and trade union work could be mined when forming a national gov-ernment.[51] However, Churchill's famous charge, in the same year, that Labour identified with class rather national interests and was 'quite unfitted for the responsi-bility of government', unlike its Liberal and Conservative pred-ecessors, echoed with Labour politicians throughout the early post-war years.

From the outset, MacDon-ald put his imprint, impossible to remove, on his administra-tion. Interestingly, after the 1923 election, he had consulted three former Liberals, Arnold, Lees-Smith and Hobson, as to whether he should risk forming a minor-ity government. He was deter-mined to demonstrate Labour's respectability and competency. At a dinner at the Webb's house, MacDonald went through his memorandum for government – on foreign policy, unemploy-ment and the budget- with future ministers. 'Unanimous that mod-eration & honesty were our safety. Agreed to stand together,' he noted.[52]

The new recruits to Mac-Donald's party brought exper-tise, particularly in areas such as foreign affairs, finance and agri-culture, where Labour notably lacked experience. With their backgrounds in politics, adminis-tration and, in some cases, minis-terial office, they provided an aura of respectability and competence that MacDonald eagerly sought as leader of a national party. At the same time, the newcomers who joined Labour were largely at ease in their new political home with little need to abandon their Lib-eral principles, or change their individual life styles. On policy, there was much common ground between Labour and Liberals on free trade and economic policy, social reform, and personal lib-erty.[53] This did not go unno-ticed elsewhere. 'A socialist govt. actually in power. But don't get uneasy about your investments and your antiques. Nothing will be removed or abstracted … They are all engaged in looking as respectable as lather and blather will make them,' David Lloyd George reassured his daugh-ter, Megan.[54] Probably Hobson was an exception in admitting he 'never felt quite at home in a body governed by trade union members and their finance, and intellectually led by full-blooded Socialists'.[55]

In 1918, Arthur Henderson's important reconstruction of the post-war Labour Party included a new constitution and party programme, *Labour and the New Social Order*, that would appeal to disenchanted Liberals. Particular attention was given to establishing constituency parties and recruit-ing a wider party membership. In the 1920s, the new converts pro-vided a ready source of candidates and money for local Labour asso-ciations, rather than influencing

developments in the well-estab-lished central party organisation. They were not a distinct group in the PLP, or on the National Executive Committee. The two minority Labour governments were dominated by 'the big five' of MacDonald, Snowden, Hend-erson, Thomas and Clynes.

After the First World War, the establishment of the Co-operative Party by the Co-oper-ative movement was a significant development in Labour's social and cultural evolution as a politi-cal party. In 1922 A.V Alexander was one of four MPs returned to Westminster for the Co-operative Party which allied to Labour in 1927. A former Liberal, Alexan-der, who had served in the First World War, became the Co-operative Party's most impor-tant figure and an adept junior Labour minister in MacDonald's 1924 administration. He brought Labour special expertise with his views on defence and foreign affairs as First Lord of the Admi-ralty in MacDonald's Second Cabinet in 1929-31 and at the wartime Admiralty from 1940-1946.[56] From 1945 Alexander was one of a number of former distin-guished Liberals in Attlee's gov-ernment - Addison, Benn, Ede, Jowitt and Pethick Lawrence-who reached the higher ranks of the Labour Party to be rewarded with peerages.

After the First World War, which radically altered Labour's attitudes towards the wider world, foreign affairs took on greater significance as the Labour Party gradually evolved an interna-tionalist policy in the 1920s. By withdrawing from the Lloyd George coalition government, Labour was not directly associ-ated with the punitive Versailles peace settlement. Ramsay Mac-Donald's resignation in 1914 as chairman of the PLP brought him public odium for his seemingly pacifist and unpatriotic stand, but enhanced his moral reputation and standing among radicals in the UDC and encouraged many to move over to Labour.[57]

In 1917, the party conference called for the establishment of an advisory committee on foreign policy. Ultimately, as part of the modernisation of Labour orches-trated by Arthur Henderson and

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Sidney Webb, nine advisory committees of policy experts were established to advise on different areas of policy. As new recruits joined from other parties, they provided much needed expertise on international questions. Moreover, the Advisory Committee on International Questions (ACIQ) was more than just a committee of experts advising the Labour Party Executive by compiling memoranda and publishing pamphlets. During its thirteen-year lifespan, the ACIQ proved a vital forum comprising a wide range of academics, intellectuals and politicians with diverse outlooks on international relations. At its hub were new recruits such as Norman Angell, Philip Noel Baker, Charles Roden Buxton, Noel Buxton, Hugh Dalton and G. Lowes Dickinson.[58] In particular, during the 1920s, Arthur Henderson, Labour's Foreign Secretary in 1929, increasingly drew on the ACIQ's expertise in shifting Labour's foreign policy towards a firm belief in the role of the League of Nations as a world peace-keeping body backed by an effective and enforceable system of collective security. However, the ACIQ had more influence on Labour policy in opposition than in government. In 1924 MacDonald was both premier and very much his own Foreign Secretary.[59]

There were other examples, too, of ex-Liberals in Ramsay MacDonald's two inter-war Labour administrations who brought valuable expertise in shaping and administering Labour policy. As Lord Chancellor, Haldane, whose sister, Elisabeth, was a member of the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee, made significant changes to the criminal justice system in England and Wales, revitalising the antiquated system of local advisory committees that nominated lay justices of the peace (JPs) and appointing more working men and women to the magistrate's bench in different areas. And Wedgwood, in particular, as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, was uncompromising in appointing women as JPs, following the Sex Disqualification Removal Act (1919).[60] In broadening the magistracy's social and political composition, Haldane and Wedgwood were

Trevelyan's two periods of office as President of the Board of Education in 1924 and 1929–31 illustrate how switching parties from the Liberals to Labour usually meant little change in political outlook or beliefs.

actively responding to mounting pressure by the labour movement and women's groups, such as the campaign led by Florence Keynes, mother of the economist John Maynard Keynes.[61] In 1920, Wedgwood's predecessor, Lord Crawford, had complained privately: 'I confess I do not at all like of having to appoint women to the [JP] Advisory committees … it is difficult enough to get a woman competent to serve as a magistrate, and … to find someone … to give opinions on the appointment of men'.[62] Traditionally, JPs had been overwhelmingly recruited from among the landed gentry and middle-class professionals, such as industrialists and businessmen. Among Wedgwood's successful appointments was Selina Cooper, radical feminist, trade unionist and ILP member.[63] As former Liberals, Haldane and Wedgwood followed in the footsteps of predecessors in earlier Liberal governments who first responded to calls for greater labour representation in the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century.[64] Lay justices of the peace – voluntary unpaid Crown appointments drawn from their local communities – remain to this day responsible for dealing with over 90 per cent of criminal justice in England and Wales.

Trevelyan's two periods of office as President of the Board of Education in 1924 and 1929–31 illustrate how switching parties from the Liberals to Labour usually meant little change in political outlook or beliefs. Trevelyan, Labour's spokesman on education in the 1922–1923 parliament, brought to Cabinet office in 1924 previous experience as parliamentary under-secretary at the Board of Education from 1908 to 1914. However, there had been little difference in policy between his former and new parties since the 1918 Fisher Act raised the school leaving age to fourteen and required local authorities to draw up educational plans. Labour's *Secondary Education for All* (1922), written by Richard Tawney, the influential Christian socialist on Labour's advisory committee on education, set the pattern of education in the inter-war years on which progressive Liberal and Labour politicians could agree.

However, Trevelyan's performance in two periods of Cabinet office also reveals the limits to his influence on domestic policy in government, particularly with the cost-conscious Philip Snowden at the Treasury. In a typical tussle over educational expenditure, Snowden admonished Trevelyan: '… all of your proposals but one admit of great expansion. In such circumstances I rely on the watchfulness of my Department to safeguard me and my successors from future difficulties'.[65] Beatrice Webb considered that Trevelyan was 'wonderfully well self-advertised'. 'He is quite fond of his job – far more determined and industrious than any of his predecessors', she added.[66] He was not in fear of his civil servants and realised he had to steer between the Scylla of the local authorities who ran the state schools and the Charybdis of the Treasury determined to reduce government expenditure.

With a list of practical policies, his record in 1924 was not unimpressive: the reduction of elementary school class sizes; improving run-down school buildings; raising the percentage of free school places from 25 per cent to 40 per cent; and the restoration of state scholarships from state-aide schools to universities. 'The collective effect gave an impression of immense expenditure', he confided to his wife, Molly.[67] He was the first minister to address the National Union of Teachers' conference, attended by 2,000 delegates, in 1924.[68] Trevelyan was also responsible for establishing the Hadow Committee, although its landmark report on secondary education did not appear until 1926, after Labour had left office. Overall, in 1924 Trevelyan undoubtedly proved an adept minister with a sound grasp of administrative detail, though the extent of his influence over Labour policy must take into account the presence of R. H. Tawney and Labour's advisory committee on education.[69]

However, Trevelyan's second spell at the Board of Education from 1929 was less successful, Trevelyan ran into grave difficulties over his main policy to raise the statutory school leaving age to fifteen. His third Education

Bill (the first two were lost for lack of parliamentary time) ran into Roman Catholic opposition in parliament and was eventually defeated in the Lords in February 1931. In March, frustrated by the general direction of Labour policy, Trevelyan resigned. He publicly mentioned the lack of constructive socialist plans, such as the ILP's 'Socialism in Our Time' which was based on J. A. Hobson's theory of underconsumption.[70] Addressing the Parliamentary Labour Party, his resignation speech, with a biting personal attack on Ramsay MacDonald, was heard in silence. However, a swift riposte, from the prime minister of an ailing government, revealed MacDonald's view in 1931 of the ex-Liberal recruits:

> Some of us gave you and others who were not acceptable to our friends at the time a very generous welcome, and we expected greater assistance … At the moment when everyone who cares for the future of Socialist political ideas should be striving by a united front to overcome immediate difficulties created by individualistic divisions … it is very curious that the greatest troubles are coming from those who are our latest recruits.[71]

Outside of international affairs, the development of agriculture was the area where the influx of the new recruits had the greatest impact on the policy. Former Liberals such as Addison, the Buxtons, Wedgwood and the National Union of Agricultural Workers leader, George Edwards, Labour MP for South Norfolk in 1920–22 and 1923–24, brought expertise where Labour lacked personnel with appropriate knowledge and experience of rural affairs. As a political party with its origins in industry and the urban environment, Labour in the 1920s needed to develop agricultural programmes as a national party. Moreover, there was a persistent belief that the failure to win rural seats would prevent Labour from becoming a party of government, as in many rural constituencies there was still a strong Liberal presence. However, although he

switched parties in 1918, Noel Buxton retained his North Norfolk seat until 1930 (when he entered the Lords) and virtually wiped out the local Liberals.[72] In the second Labour government, Buxton returned as a cautious Minister of Agriculture. '… there is a great deal to do without legislation in drainage, marketing, education, research & other things', he advised his enthusiastic deputy, Addison.[73]

In June 1930, Buxton was succeeded by Addison. It was the latter's second political career after his earlier commitment to social reform as an Edwardian 'New Liberal' and the state collectivism of wartime government. As the 1929–31 Labour government struggled in a world economic downturn following the Wall Street Crash, the development of agriculture became a crucial area of policy which could improve Britain's balance of payments by reducing agricultural imports. Addison's policies to combat the long rural depression and support home agriculture with quotas for production had been worked out as a junior minister. His most successful proposal, for which he won all-party support, produced the Agricultural Marketing Board in 1931, which radically improved various sectors of agriculture. It led to a revolution in policy that was extended by the National government and the wartime coalition to cover a range of other agricultural foodstuffs.

Addison was also a significant intermediary between his old Liberal ally, Lloyd George, and the minority MacDonald administration in cross-party discussions on agriculture reform and unemployment. In 1931, he was a leading member of the minority in the Cabinet who opposed the 10 per cent cut in unemployment benefits which ended MacDonald's government. Addison continued to make a considerable and influential contribution to Labour politics in the 1930s, with the publication of *A Policy for British Agriculture* in 1939. As Lord Addison, at the age of seventy-six, he became an important and respected member of the Attlee Cabinet, and his membership of the Cabinet from 1945 to 1951 was notable for his skilful leadership

of the Tory-dominated House of Lords. As Kenneth Morgan has adeptly shown, Addison was one of the most important of the Liberal converts to Labour in the 1920s and the only minister to serve in both post-war governments. In particular, his remarkable and far-reaching career demonstrated 'the continuities of the progressive tradition in British politics'.[74]

In 1923, the *Manchester Guardian* editor, C. P. Scott, declared that 'Between Liberalism and Labour there are deep natural affinities, but for many a long day each is likely to pursue its separate path'.[75] In 1903, Ramsay MacDonald's secret pact with the Liberal chief whip, Herbert Gladstone, gave a clear run to nearly thirty Labour candidates in the 1906 election – including MacDonald himself and Philip Snowden – and formed the basis of the Edwardian 'Progressive Alliance' between Liberals and Labour. However, the impact of the First World War, which triggered the exodus of so many Liberals from their party into the Labour ranks, transformed the relationship between the two parties on the progressive left.

As he considered possible former Liberals to fill posts in his new administration, MacDonald rejected Harold Spender's suggestion for 'a broader Liberal–Labour concordat to reap a possible harvest of fruitful legislation'.[76] Scott wanted Liberal–Labour cooperation to continue and regretted that 'while Liberalism and Labour are snapping and snarling at each other, the Conservative dog may run away with the bone', but MacDonald had a different project in mind – the destruction of the Liberal Party and the independence of Labour. For MacDonald and Baldwin, the legacy of the 1923 election was that within a British system there was only room for two parties – moderate Labour and respectable Conservatism.[77]

However, forty years ago, the Liberal leader, Jeremy Thorpe, contended that the arrival of the Labour Party in the inter-war years to replace the Liberals was more than simply a disaster in electoral terms in the history of British radicalism. He observed that, while the Liberals remained

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out of power, it was key Liberal figures, such as John Maynard Keynes and William Beveridge, who provided the influential blueprints for major social and economic reorganisation in the twentieth-century.[78] While the Liberal Party was certainly in decline, Liberalism remained alive and well, both inside and outside the British Labour Party.[79] In today's unpredictable political and electoral climate, with the advent of a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government, calls for a revival of progressive politics, including Labour and Liberalism that dominated the early twentieth-century, may well be heard again.

Professor John Shepherd is Co-Director, Labour History Research Unit at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. He is author of George Lansbury: At the Heart of Old Labour *(Oxford University Press, 2004) and is completing a book on James Callaghan's government and the 'Winter of Discontent' 1978–79 for Manchester University Press.*

Principal Liberals who joined the Labour Party between 1914 and 1930

Between 1914–1918*:* Ernest Nathaniel Bennett, Charles Roden Buxton, J. Chuter Ede, Mary Agnes Hamilton, Albert Edward Dunn, E. T. John, B. N. Langdon-Davies, Richard Lambert, Joseph Martin, Edward Rosslyn Mitchell, Leo Chiozza Money, E. D. Morel, Helena Swanwick, Alfred Trestrail, Cecil Wilson.

Between 1918 and 1919*:* Noel Buxton, J. A. Hobson, Joseph King, H. B. Lees-Smith, R. L. Outhwaite, Arthur Ponsonby, Charles Trevelyan, James White.

Between 1919–1925: Morgan Phillips Price, James Dundas White (both in 1919), Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, E. G. Hemmerde (1920), Sydney Arnold, Richard Haldane, Patrick Hastings, Frederick Pethick Lawrence, Edwardian Rosslyn Mitchell, Bertrand Russell (1922), Christopher Addison, Percy Alden, Frederick Seymour Cocks, William Massingham (1923), Richard Denman (1924), Alexander MacCullam Scott (1924) Ronald Gorell Barnes (1925), Athelstan Rendall (1925),

Between 1925-1930: Cecil L'Estrange Malone (c. 1928), Reginald Fletcher (1929), William Jowitt (1929), William H. Dickinson (1930).

1   Haldane to Mary Haldane, 13 December 1923, Haldane Papers MS 6006.

2   Haldane to Mary Haldane, 12 January 1924, Haldane Papers MS 6006.

3   Lytton to Haldane, 6 February 1924, Haldane Papers, MS 5916.

4   Beatrice Webb, *Diary*, Vol. 3, 15 January 1924.

5   For MacDonald's appointments, see John Shepherd and Keith Laybourn, *Britain's First Labour Government* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), Chapter 3.

6   Ramsay MacDonald, *Diary*, 9 December 1923, Ramsay MacDonald Papers, TNA/PRO 30/6/1753.

7   See the appendix of former Liberals, who joined Labour, broadly based on the (mainly) parliamentary group in C. A. Cline's sample: Catherine Ann Cline, *Recruits to Labour: The British Labour Party 1914–1931* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1963), p. 134 n. 26 and appendix, pp. 149–78). Other recruits to Labour not mentioned in her study have been added. Not all those listed became Labour MPs or Peers.

8   A. MacCullum Scott, 'The Flight from the Liberal Party', *The Labour Magazine*, III, No. II, March 1925.

9   Robert Leach, *Turncoats: changing party allegiance by British politicians* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1995).

10   This history of this period has also been usefully examined in Roy Douglas, 'A failure of leadership: an explanation of Liberal defections 1918–1929', *Journal of Liberal History*, 25, Winter 1999–2000, pp. 18–23 and 51.

11   Catherine Ann Cline, *Recruits to Labour: The British Labour Party 1914–1931* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1963)

12   Mary Hamilton was a stalwart of the Union of Democratic Control, Labour MP and Ramsay MacDonald's biographer. Dorothy Buxton (née Jebb), humanitarian and co-founder of the Save The Children Fund, was a member of Labour's Advisory Committee on International Questions (ACIQ). Helena Swanwick, a founder of the 1917 Club, joined Labour in 1918 and also served on the ACIQ.

13   '"Class Traitors": Conservative Recruits to Labour, 1900–30', *English Historical Review*, 113, 1 (February 1998), pp. 38–64.

14   David Howell, *MacDonald's Party: Labour Identities and Crisis 1922–1931* (Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 309-331.

15   Robert Dowse, 'The Entry of the Liberals into the Labour Party 1910–1920', *Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research*, Vol. 13, No. 2, November 1961, pp. 78–87.

16   Unfortunately, Dowse added 'However, it is not my intention to examine the current situation'. Ibid. p. 78.

17   David Butler and Jennie Freeman, *British Political Facts 1900–1967* (Macmillan, 1963, 1968), p. 147.

18   There is a considerable literature on this major debate. For two useful surveys of the historiography, see: Michael Bentley, 'The Liberal Party, 1900–1939: Summit and Descent' in Chris Wrigley (ed.), *A Companion to Twentieth Century Britain* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 22–37; Keith Laybourn, 'The Rise of Labour and the Decline of Liberalism: The State of the Debate', *History*, 80 (June 1995), pp. 207–26.

19   Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914–1935* (Fontana, 1968), pp. 20–21.

20   Cline, op cit., pp. 164–65.

21   Kenneth O. Morgan, *The Age of Lloyd George* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 68.

22   David Blaazer, *The Popular Front and the Progressive Tradition: Socialists, Liberals and the Quest for Unity, 1884–1939* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 99–144.

23   Kenneth O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government 1918–1922* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986 edition); Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party* (Macmillan, 1997), pp. 52–53.

24   David Dutton, *A History of the Liberal Party in the Twentieth Century* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 86–90.

25   Cline, op. cit., p. 13–17.

26   For The Union of Democratic Control, see Sally Harris, *Out of Control: British Foreign Policy and the Union of Control 1914–1918* (The University of Hull Press, 1996); Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics during the First World War* (Oxford University Press, 1971).

27   Keith Robbins, *The Abolition of*

War: '*The Peace Movement' in Britain 1914–1919* (Cardiff: The University of Wales Press, 1976).

28   F. W. Pethick Lawrence, 'The True Significance of the Election', *Foreign Affairs*, January 1924, pp. 134–35. *Daily Mail*, 1 December 1915; *Carlisle Journal*, 6 June

29   David Howell, *MacDonald's Party*: *Labour Identities and Crisis 1922–1931* (Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 315.

30   *Daily Mail,* 1 December 1915; *Carlisle Journal* 6 June 1916, Denman Papers, Box 1.

31   R. Denman to F. Guest, 7 August 1919; F. Guest to R. Denman, 9 August 1919; *Surrey Times*, 22 May 1920; *Manchester Guardian,* 12 November 1924; H. Atkinson to R. Denman, 8 December 1914, Ibid, Box 5.

32   Clifford Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade*: *The British Invasion of Russia 1918–20* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), p. 82.

33   Victorian De Bunsen, *Charles Roden Buxton* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1948), pp. 76–79.

34   Cline, op. cit., pp. 153–55.

35   Raymond A. Jones, *Arthur Ponsonby*: *The Politics of Life* (London: Christopher Helm, 1989)

36   Duncan Brack, 'Biography: C. P. Trevelyan, Man of Principle' *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*, 31, Summer 2001, p. 5.

37   A. J. Morris, *C. P. Trevelyan*: *Portrait of a Radical 1870–1958* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1977), pp. 112–20; 138–43.

38   Charles Trevelyan, *From Liberalism to Labour* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1921), pp. 22–23; Duncan Brack, op. cit., p. 6.

39   H. B. Lees-Smith to the press (?), June 1919, Hastings Bertrand Lees-Smith Papers DSL/1.

40   Trevor Wilson, op. cit., pp. 108–9

41   *Hansard*, 25 March 1912, cols. 84–85; J. C. Wedgwood, *Memoirs of a Fighting Life* (Hutchinson, 1941), pp. 66–7, 78–9, 82–3; M. Sheftz, 'The Impact of the Ulster Crisis (1912–1914)*', Albion*, 5 (1973), pp. 169–83; John Shepherd, *George Lansbury*, pp. 106–9.

42   Cline, op. cit., pp. 43–64.

43   Kenneth and Jane Morgan, *Portrait of A Progressive*: *The Political Career of Christopher, Viscount Addison* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 276 .

44   J. M. Kenworthy, *Sailors, Statesmen and Others* (Rich & Cowan, 1933), pp. 213–15.

45   William Wedgwood Benn, 'What Should a Radical Do?', *The Labour Magazine*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, May 1929, p. 9.

46   Cline, op. cit. This is drawn from the assessment on the book's dust jacket; see also pp. 130–31.

47   David E. Martin, '"The Instruments of the People"? The Parliamentary Labour Party in 1906', in David E. Martin and David Rubinstein, *Ideology and the Labour Movement*: *Essay Presented to John Saville* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), pp. 126–30.

48   Nicholas Owen, 'MacDonald's Parties: The Labour Party and the "Aristocratic Embrace", 1922–31', *Twentieth Century British History*, 18, 1 (2007), p. 34.

49   Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour in Power 1945–1951* (Oxford University Press, 1985), 79–80. The eight were Attlee himself, Dalton, Cripps, Ede, Jowitt, Addison, Stansgate (Benn) and Pethick Lawrence.

50   Lord Gorell, *Diary*, 21 January, 24 February, 9 November 1925; *Labour Magazine*, III, 10, February 1925, pp. 452–53.

51   Ramsay MacDonald, *A Policy for the Labour Party* (1920), pp. 109, 123, 137, 145.

52   Ramsay MacDonald, *Diary*, 10 December 1923, MacDonald Papers , TNA/PRO 30/69/1753

53   Eugenio Biagini, 'Prophet For The Left? Gladstone's Legacy 1809–2009', *Journal of Liberal History*, 64, Autumn 2009, p. 26.

54   David Lloyd George to Megan George, 4 February 1924, in Kenneth O. Morgan (ed.), *Lloyd George Family Letters, 1885–1936* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), p. 202.

55   J. A. Hobson, *Confessions of an Economic Heritage* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1938), p. 126.

56   Greg Rosen, *Serving the People. Co-operative Party History from Fred Perry to Gordon Brown,* (The Co-operative Party, 2009), pp. 1–16.

57   A. J. P. Taylor, *The Troublemakers*: *Dissent over Foreign Policy 1792–1939* (London: Panther , 1969 edition), pp. 120–52.

58   Casper Sylvest, '"A Commanding Group"? Labour's Advisory Committee on International Questions 1918–1931' in Paul Corthorn and Jonathan Davis (eds.), *The British Labour Party and The Wider World*: *Domestic Politics, Internationalism and Foreign Policy* (Tauris, 2008)*,* pp. 52–63.

59   John Shepherd, '"A gentleman at the Foreign Office": influences shaping Ramsay MacDonald's internationalism in 1924', in Paul Corthorn and Jonathan Davis (eds.), op. cit., pp. 25–47.

60   This act also removed the bar to women jurors and women lawyers. Anne Logan, *Feminism and Criminal Justice*: *A Historical Perspective* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 80.

61   P. Strachey (London Society for Women's Suffrage and eleven other women's organisations) to Andrew Bonar Law, 29 July 1922, Bonar Law Papers, 97/5/26; Anne Logan, 'Ninety Years On', *The Magistrate*, February 2010, 66, 1, p. 2.

62   Lord Crawford to Lord Shuttleworth, 19 July 1920, Duchy of Lancaster Papers (DLP).

63   '… and therefore that women and the representatives of Labour should receive priority up to two-thirds of the appointments'. W. R. Warwick (Duchy of Lancaster Office) to Arthur Bennett (Warrington Advisory Committee), 15 September 1924, DLP.

64   John Shepherd, 'James Bryce and the Recruitment and Appointment of Working-class Magistrates in Lancashire, 1892–1894', *Bulletin of The Institute of Historical Research*, LII, 126, November 1979, pp. 155–169.

65   Snowden to Trevelyan, 22 August 1924, Trevelyan Papers (CPT) 108, f. 72.

66   Beatrice Webb, *Diary*, 2 May 1924.

67   Charles Trevelyan to Molly Trevelyan, 4 March 1924, CPT Ex 118, ff. 3–4.

68   Charles Trevelyan to Molly Trevelyan, 21 April 1924, Ibid, f. 15.

69   Rodney Barker, *Education and Politics 1900–1951*: *A Study of the Labour Party* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 29–64.

70   *The New Leader*, 6 March 1931, 24 April 1931.

71   MacDonald to Trevelyan, 2 March 1931, Ramsay MacDonald Papers (John Rylands collection) RMD/1/14/83 quoted in Duncan Tanner, 'Political leadership, intellectual debate and economic policy during the second Labour government, 1929–1931', in E. H. H. Green and Duncan Tanner (eds.), *The Strange Survival of Liberal England*: *Political Leaders, Moral Values and the Reception of Economic Debate* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 142.

72   Clare V. Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*: *The Politics of Rural Britain 1918–1939* (Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 218–57.

73   Buxton to Addison, 21 June 1929, MS Addison dep. c. 163, f. 2.

74   Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Addison, Christopher, First Viscount Addison (1869–1951)' in H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004); Kenneth Morgan and Jane Morgan, op. cit.; Kenneth Morgan, *Labour People*: *Leaders and Lieutenants – Hardie to Kinnock* (Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 189–96.

75   Quoted in the *Manchester Guardian*, 10 April 2010, p. 38.

76   Harold Spender to Ramsay MacDonald, n.d. (December 1923), cited in Harold Spender, *The Fire of Life* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1926), p. 277.

77   Kenneth O. Morgan, *Lloyd George* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974), pp. 170–78.

78   Roy Douglas, *The History of the Liberal Party 1895–1970* (with a foreword by the Rt Hon. Jeremy Thorpe MP) (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1971), pp. xi–xvii.

79   Richard S. Grayson, *Liberals, International Relations and Appeasement*: *The Liberal Party, 1919–1939* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), pp. 29–57.

The life of George Jacob Holyoake exemplifies the development of popular Liberalism. **Edward Royle** analyses his biography and impact.
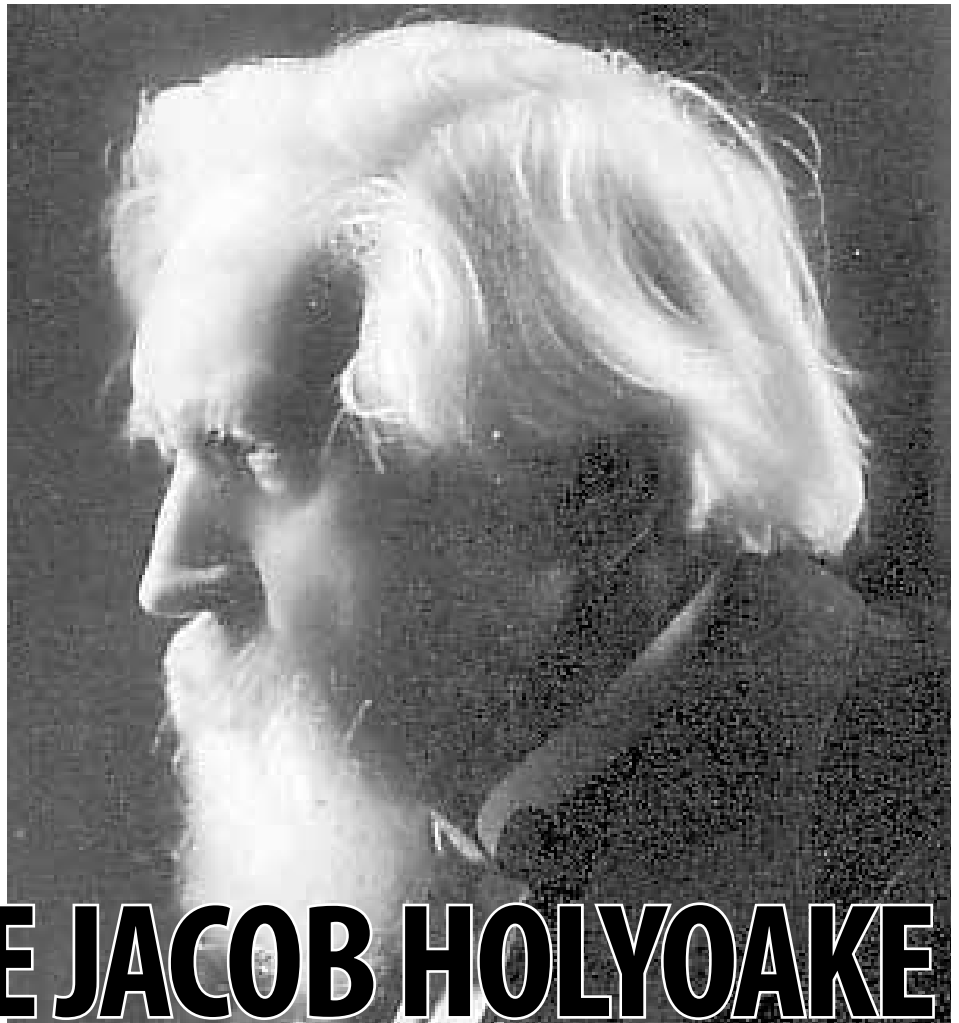
GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE

A s a young artisan eager for education and self-improvement, Holyoake's personal journey took him through the radical protest movements of the 1830s and 1840s to a career in journalism and political agitation and a position of some importance on the fringes of the Gladstonian Liberal Party. He is significant today as a pioneering agitator for those individual civil rights and liberal values which J. S. Mill championed in his essay *On Liberty* and which remain part of the liberal programme in our modern multi-cultural and multi-faith society; and he is best remembered as an advocate of cooperation and co-partnership as the middle way between capitalism and state socialism.

Born on 13 April 1817 in Birmingham where his father, George, was a whitesmith and his mother, Catherine, a horn-button maker, Holyoake was educated only at dame and Sunday schools. At the age of nine he began work with his father

at the Eagle Foundry where he was subsequently apprenticed as a whitesmith. Through the influence of fellow apprentices he was drawn into Birmingham politics in the early 1830s when Thomas Atwood organised the agitation for parliamentary reform through the Birmingham Political Union. Even more important was his association with the followers of the socialist, Robert Owen, led locally by William Pare. In 1836 Holyoake began attending classes at the mechanics' institute where he soon demonstrated his aptitude for mathematics and gained ambitions to become a teacher, but his association with the Owenites counted against further progress at the institute. In March 1839 he married Eleanor Williams (1819–1884), daughter of a small farmer, and in May 1840 his first child, Madeline, was born. These changed family circumstances and his growing aspiration to teach led him in October 1840 to apply to the Owenites to become their stationed lecturer in Worcester. The

George Jacob
Holyoake
(1817–1906)

following May he was promoted to social missionary in Sheffield.

At this stage Holyoake's opinions were still being formed. His association with the Birmingham Political Union, revived in 1837 as part of the early Chartist movement, marked him out as a radical and democrat. As a follower of Owen, he looked to the transformation of society by peaceful means into a cooperative commonwealth. In religious matters, early Unitarian influences at the mechanic's institute gave way to the deism of Robert Owen and this was probably Holyoake's position until an incident in 1842 pushed the young lecturer into declaring himself an atheist when he was imprisoned for six months in Gloucester gaol for blasphemy following a flippant comment about God at an Owenite lecture in Cheltenham. This punishment, coming in the midst of similar sentences for other Owenites and leading Chartists in 1842–43, brought Holyoake's name to the fore and gave him status as a martyr to free thought, making him a

national figure in popular radical circles. He now became what he was to be for the rest of his long life – a prolific writer, a perceptive journalist and a public lecturer, though his thin voice and slight stature scarcely fitted him for the latter role. His first taste of journalism had come before his imprisonment when he edited a short-lived weekly periodical, the *Oracle of Reason* (1841–43), whose first editor – fellow Owenite missionary, Charles Southwell – had been imprisoned for a year in 1841 for attacking the Bible. After his release from Gloucester gaol in 1843, Holyoake then edited the *Movement* (1843–45) followed by the *Reasoner*, which he began at the behest of the publisher, James Watson, in 1846 to sustain the causes of democracy, republicanism, Owenite socialism and free-thinking rationalism. The paper was published weekly until 1861 and its successors continued under various names until 1872. With the revival of Chartism in 1848, Holyoake also co-edited, with the republican poet and engraver, William James Linton, a short-lived weekly under the title, the *Cause of the People.*

In the chaos of recrimination which followed the failures of Owenism in 1846 and of Chartism in 1848, Holyoake emerged as one of several national figures with a claim to lead these movements. Through his publishing activities and lecture tours he bid to unite the scattered local remnants of latter-day Chartists and Owenites in a new organisation which he called Secularism. Though this embraced his support for democracy at home and republicanism abroad, its chief purpose was to campaign against all religious influences, in the law, politics and morality. Secularism was, above all, to be a movement to secure the civil rights of all, irrespective of theological persuasion. This represented a shift away from the extremism of the earlier 1840s, to which he was always reluctant to admit, and grew out of his temperamental discomfort with the position into which he had been forced by circumstances in 1842. The move was also encouraged by the links he was forging with middle-class liberal intellectuals in the later 1840s, particularly

the South Place Chapel grouping around W. J. Fox and those who gravitated to the Muswell Hill home of W. H. Ashurst, Robert Owen's solicitor and friend of the Italian republican, Mazzini. In 1849 Holyoake's rising status among this radical intelligentsia of the metropolis was marked by an invitation to become a member of the Whittington Club, and his correspondents from the later 1840s include such leading liberals as George Dawson, George Henry Lewes, Harriet Martineau, John Stuart Mill, Francis William Newman and Peter Alfred Taylor as well as Ashurst himself. Holyoake was also, with some of these people, associated with the *Leader* newspaper, edited by Thornton Hunt, which advocated advanced liberal principles in political and social affairs.

This association with the liberal intelligentsia may have gratified Holyoake but his growing moderation caused increasing controversy with his former friends and allies. Chartists criticised his expediency in settling too readily for a step-by-step approach to democracy, and his insistence that Secularism meant concentrating on driving out religious influences in this world, not undermining belief in the existence of God, alienated those who believed that the latter was a necessary precondition of the former. Holyoake was not a charismatic public speaker and, when such a person appeared in the form of Charles Bradlaugh at the end of the 1850s, Holyoake found himself no longer recognised as the most important leader of what he always regarded as his own movement. His resentment at this never faded, but the time had come to move on, and he did so in two directions.

The first was in promoting specific agitations to secure what he regarded as the aims of true Secularism. Chief of these was freedom of belief, expression and publication. Many of his aspirations were summed up in Mill's essay *On Liberty* (1859) which – notably in Chapter 2 – drew upon Holyoake's own experiences of the dead hand of prejudiced public opinion in general and his campaigns against the judicial oath in particular. Holyoake was also

active in the campaign against the so-called Taxes on Knowledge which imposed financial constraints on a free press. In 1849 he had, with his brother Austin, commenced printing on his own behalf and in 1853 he took over James Watson's stock and began publishing in his own right. Gladstone's work as Chancellor of the Exchequer, accepting in 1853 a motion to reduce the newspaper stamp to zero, and his challenge to the House of Lords over the abolition of the paper duty in the 1861 budget were key moments in the transformation of the former Conservative and Peelite into 'the People's William'. At the same time, the struggle for Italian liberation and unification provided another reason for radicals like Holyoake to see Gladstone as their parliamentary leader. Since 1848 Holyoake had been increasingly involved in the European republican movement where moderates in England could support foreign extremists with a good conscience. He collected money for Mazzini, tested prototype bombs for Orsini, and was secretary to the committee which sent a legion out to Italy to fight with Garibaldi in 1860. By the early 1860s Holyoake's work for liberty both at home and abroad reflected those broader shifts in political structures which were leading to the formation of the Gladstonian Liberal Party.

Secondly, Holyoake developed through the Secularist movement his connections with local groups of former Chartists and Owenites to form links with the infant cooperative movement. In 1858 he published a history of the Rochdale Pioneers Equitable Society, founded in 1844, and in so doing fashioned their mythic role in the post-Owenite cooperative movement and also made his own reputation as a leading publicist for that movement. The book was to go through ten English editions and also appeared in four different French translations as well as ones in German, Italian and Hungarian. He also wrote histories of cooperation in Halifax (1867) and Leeds (1897) as well as several general histories of cooperation (1875–1906) and other propagandist works in the cause, including one intended for the American

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Further reading

Holyoake's correspondence of some four thousand letters is at the National Co-operative Archive, Holyoake House, Manchester, and an almost complete collection of his publications, diaries and other manuscripts are at the Bishopsgate Institute, London.

His own readable but unreliable memoirs are contained in *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, 2 vols. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1892) and *Bygones Worth Remembering*, 2 vols. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1905).

The most comprehensive but uncritical biography is Joseph McCabe, *Life and Letters of George Jacob Holyoake*, 2 vols. (London: Watts & Co., 1908). For a modern but briefer treatment, see Lee E. Grugel, *George Jacob Holyoake: A Study in the Evolution of a Victorian Radical* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1976), and for aspects of his life see Barbara J. Blazsack, *George Jacob Holyoake (1817–1906) and the Development of the British Cooperative Movement* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellan Press, 1988) and Edward Royle, *Victorian Infidels: The Origins of the British Secularist Movement, 1791–1866* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974).

The latter should be supplemented by two recent essays by the same author, 'The Cause of the People, the People's Charter Union and "Moral Force" Chartism in 1848' in J. Allen and O. R. Ashton (eds.), *Papers for the People. A Study of the Chartist Press* (London: Merlin Press, 2005); and 'Leadership and strategy in British radicalism after 1848' in Joanne Paisana (ed.), *Hélio Osvaldo Alves. O Guardador de Rios* (Braga: University of Minho, 2005), pp. 283–98.

market. Though the Rochdale store is usually identified with retail shopkeeping, it also had its educational and productive sides, and Holyoake was always as concerned with producers' cooperation and profit-sharing schemes as he was with grocery stores. Cooperation was still for him a grand scheme whereby the workers could achieve independence from their employers by their own concerted efforts. In this advocacy he was both influenced by and influenced John Stuart Mill whose *Principles of Political Economy* (1848) steered a similar path between capitalism and socialism. As state socialist ideas gained ground among radicals in the 1880s, Holyoake found an increasingly ready ear among Liberal politicians who saw him as a reassuring spokesman for the liberal working classes.

Holyoake lived until 1906, by which time he had outlived most of those who could challenge his uncertain memory of the events to which he had devoted his long public life, and his status owed much to his age. The second half of his life, from the 1860s to 1906, coincides almost exactly with the rise and fall of the Gladstonian Liberal Party. Holyoake was never central to this process, nor quite as important as he himself liked to believe, but he was closely associated with it and his experiences can act as a commentary upon it. He offered himself at the polls as a Liberal candidate in Tower Hamlets (1857), Birmingham (1868), and Leicester (1884), but withdrew on each occasion before the vote; and in 1893 he was made an honorary member of the National Liberal Club.

However, the true extent of his involvement in the Liberal Party is to be found in his voluminous correspondence and his journalism: he can best be described as a lobbying correspondent and an important channel of communication between the party, individual MPs and the wider radical public. During 1861–63, for example, he worked closely with J. S. Trelawney over the latter's unsuccessful Secular Affirmations Bills, feeding him material for use in parliamentary debate. His technique was to circulate his publications widely in influential circles, ensuring that MPs were well briefed on controversial issues. His campaign (for once against J. S. Mill) in support of the secret ballot made a substantial contribution to that debate. He was always particularly active at the time of general elections, trying to suggest and persuade suitable candidates to stand as Liberals and to influence their views. He corresponded regularly not only with expected radicals like John Stuart Mill, James Stansfeld, Charles Dilke, Thomas Hughes, John Bright, Henry Fawcett and J. H. Thorold Rogers, but also with the moderate Whig, Lord Elcho, over parliamentary reform in 1866, and Walter Morrison of Malham Tarn, who was a supporter of cooperation but who joined the Liberal Unionists over Ireland in 1886. Holyoake worked particularly closely with Joseph Cowen,

proprietor of the *Newcastle Chronicle* and MP for Newcastle upon Tyne (1873–1886). In 1862 the two men orchestrated the publicity surrounding Gladstone's visit to Middlesbrough which is sometimes taken as the first occasion when Gladstone appreciated the extent of the popular support he enjoyed. Holyoake was London correspondent for Cowen's paper for many years and between 1874 and 1883 had lodgings in Newcastle Chambers off the Strand.

Holyoake moved to Brighton in 1885, the year following the death of his wife. The following year he married Jennie Pearson but his closest political aide remained his youngest daughter, Emilie, who became secretary of the Women's Trade Union and Provident League in 1889. He continued active to the end, publishing his ideas, making occasional speeches and writing letters. Some of the causes he took up were trivial and give the impression of an old man unable to break his lifetime's habit of lobbying and agitating, but his stream of letters to leading figures was generally received at least with politeness and often with expressions of gratitude and even enthusiasm. Across a wide range of issues he contributed to liberal public opinion: matters such as secular education, affirmations instead of oaths, emigration, cooperation and profit-sharing schemes, restrictions on Sunday leisure, the tax on railway travel, Irish policy, international peace, and the Boer War. On 14 January 1906 his last public act was to issue an appeal in *Reynolds's News*, urging support for the Liberals in the coming general election. He did not live to see that triumph, dying on 22 January. His ashes were buried in Highgate cemetery a week later and the memorial raised over the site was fittingly provided by the cooperative movement.

Edward Royle is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of York. He began his research in Cambridge in the 1960s, publishing studies of popular radicalism and freethought between 1791 and 1915, and has since researched and written about various aspects of radicalism, religion and the broader social history of Britain since the mid-eighteenth century.

A RETREAT FR[O]
THE LIBERAL PARTY A[

The 'realignment of the left' in British politics was one of the defining features of Jo Grimond's leadership of the Liberal Party and has been an important factor in Liberal politics ever since that time. The Liberal Party of the 1940s and 1950s, by contrast, is generally regarded as leaning towards the right, defined by its relationship with the Conservatives and the rump National Liberal Party.[1] Little attention has been paid to relations between the Liberals and Labour during this period. **Robert Ingham** exanines the record.

T HE LIBERAL Party began the 1945 parliament broadly supporting the Labour government but gradually became more critical, particularly after Frank Byers replaced Thomas Horabin as Chief Whip in 1946. A number of former Liberal MPs defected to Labour during the late 1940s and early 1950s and high-level talks took place between the parties in 1950 aimed at preventing the

Conservatives from returning to power. These moves were unsuccessful, which was probably just as well from the point of view of preserving the independence of the Liberal Party, but showed that there was considerable interest in re-establishing a progressive coalition in UK politics well before Grimond reinvented the Liberal Party after 1956. The extent to which the Liberal Party was split down the middle in its approach to

OM THE LEFT?
ND LABOUR 1945–55

its major rivals at this time is also now starkly apparent. Some senior Liberals were talking to Labour about keeping the Conservatives out of power at the same time as others were discussing the possibility of electoral arrangements with the Conservatives aimed at defeating Labour: Clement Davies may well have been party to both sets of conservations.

The results of the 1945 general election showed a marked shift to the left in British politics, with the Labour Party sweeping to power. The number of Labour MPs increased from 166 at dissolution to 393, with the Conservative total falling from 398 to 213, their lowest number since 1906. The Liberals had hoped to benefit from this swing, not least because their ranks included Sir William Beveridge, author of the eponymous report which was to become the keystone of the welfare state and who had been elected Liberal MP for Berwick in 1944. In fact, the election marked a new low in the long-term decline of the Liberal Party and a mere twelve Liberals were returned to parliament. Beveridge was one of the casualties; and one of the Liberals returned at the poll, Gwilym Lloyd George, was only a nominal supporter of the party and was later to side unambiguously with the Conservatives. The best that could be said about the election result was that the Liberals had not been wiped off the map.

The immediate problem for the Liberals after the election was to select a new leader, as Sir Archibald Sinclair had been defeated in Caithness and Sutherland. Sinclair's National opponent, Eric Gandar Dower, had rashly promised to resign his seat when Japan was defeated, and Liberals expected Sinclair to win the ensuing by-election. In the event, Gandar Dower changed his mind and served for the full Parliament. Faced with this situation, Liberal MPs selected Clement Davies as their chairman for the parliamentary session after a process in which all of the MPs were asked in turn if they would consider taking the job. Thomas Horabin became Chief Whip.

Davies was a controversial choice. Elected for Montgomeryshire in 1929 he followed Sir John Simon into the Liberal Nationals, before becoming an independent in 1939. He rejoined the Liberals in 1942 and was associated with the left-wing Radical Action group.[2] Horabin was also associated with Radical Action and the views expressed in his 1944 monograph *Politics Made Plain* put him well to the left of Sinclair and other Liberal grandees. Only a year before Davies and Horabin had emerged as leaders of the Liberal MPs, Lady Violet Bonham Carter had described them as examples of the 'lunatics and pathological cases' prominent in the party because of its weak position.[3]

Left: Clement Davies, Leader of the Liberal Party 1945–56

Liberals in parliament 1945–50

The first decision Davies and Horabin had to take concerned the Liberal attitude to the King's Speech, which outlined the legislative programme of the new government. Then, as now, the debate at the start of the parliamentary session lasted several days and there were usually votes on opposition amendments. Unusually, no amendments were moved in 1945. Clement Davies devoted much of his speech to international affairs – war was still raging in the Far East – and his remarks about the new government's domestic agenda were positive:

> I am sure that we can all rejoice at the end of the Tory régime, at the end of reaction and chaos. We are looking forward not only in this country but in all countries of Europe, where democracy is rising with new hope, to this progressive Government We wish this Government well, but we want them to take that road firmly. We want them to show plenty of backbone, determination and courage. [An Hon. Member: 'Do not worry.'] I am not worrying; I am just expressing the hope. Why should I not give them this reminder? If they fail, if there is a breach of faith, they will not only do permanent damage to their own party, but to the cause

of democracy throughout the world. They may do more damage even than 20 dictators. I am perfectly sure that they will go on with this great programme; all I hope is that prosperity will follow upon their work.[4]

Liberal support for government measures was expressed on several occasions during the 1945–46 session, mostly by Davies himself who seems to have received little support from his colleagues in flying the party flag in the Commons. His support for the nationalisation of the Bank of England was criticised by the Conservatives as a 'blank sheet' policy.[5] Later in 1945, Davies supported the National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) Bill but admonished the government for being insufficiently radical.[6] Criticism of socialist timidity was also expressed by Roderic Bowen in his maiden speech. Bowen, widely regarded as a right-winger,[7] began his speech on the Trunk Roads Bill with the words 'I shall venture to criticise a socialist Minister on the score that his scheme of nationalisation is of far too limited a character'.[8]

The approach taken by Davies and Horabin was based on the notion that the Labour and Liberal Parties were united by a common purpose and differed only in terms of zeal and commitment: this view was reflected in a conference organised by Radical Action at Brackley in April 1946, which Davies and Horabin attended. Could radical Liberals be critical of the fact that Labour was implementing what one participant, Everett Jones, considered to be a largely Liberal programme? The answer was an overwhelming no. Horabin, who had recently resigned as Chief Whip, declared that Labour were doing a first-class job and it was the Liberals' duty to back the government. Davies said that all Labour lacked was a progressive plan of action and a 'war cabinet' style organisation which would improve their policy delivery.[9]

Horabin's biographers, Jaime Reynolds and Ian Hunter, have attributed Horabin's resignation to disenchantment with 'what he perceived as the party's rightward

drift under Clement Davies' leadership'.[10] Evidence of a shift away from undiluted enthusiasm for Labour's programme can be found in the autumn and winter of 1945. Speaking on the second reading of the Dock Workers (Regulation of Employment) Bill, Davies agreed with Labour's aim of putting an end to the casual labour system for engaging dock workers but expressed concern at the impact on the liberties of individual workers.[11] Three weeks later, and somewhat surprisingly given his remarks in August, Davies participated in a Conservative motion of censure on government policy, moving a Liberal amendment which attacked Labour for sacrificing civil liberties.[12] It is notable that Davies's concerns were 'right-wing' in terms of the language of the times but were entirely consistent with the Liberal Party's traditional approach to individual rights.

When Horabin resigned as Liberal Chief Whip he claimed that this was because he wanted to contribute more often to debate in the House.[13] He made only one speech – on foreign affairs in June 1946 – before he resigned the Liberal Whip in October 1946. On this occasion he was more candid about the reasons for his departure, complaining that the Liberals had moved to the right and that the government deserved the support of radicals.[14] Davies appointed Frank Byers, the new MP for Dorset North, to replace Horabin as Chief Whip. Described by Roy Douglas as 'one of the small group of visionary and indefatigable individuals determined to infuse vigour and determination as well as a sense of organisation into the party',[15] he quickly became one of the most dominant figures in the party. In October 1947 he was asking Lady Violet Bonham Carter whether Clement Davies should be confirmed as official leader of the party, 'on the ground that he [Frank] cld control him better'.[16]

Left-wing Liberals were later in no doubt that Byers had moved the party to the right, well away from the role set out by Davies in 1945 of providing backbone to a Labour government which might prove too timid. Lancelot Spicer,

a former Liberal candidate and chairman of Radical Action, produced a discussion paper for the remaining members of Radical Action in 1948 which described Byers as 'irritating' and 'inadequate' and implied that he was responsible for the party's ditching its radical stance.[17] It seems clear, however, that Byers was reinforcing a trend which had begun earlier and which reflected Davies's own view that Labour had insufficient regard for civil liberties.

The King opened the 1946–47 session of parliament on 12 November 1946 and Clement Davies made his speech in response the next day. General support for Labour's programme was combined with a note of caution, absent a year earlier:

> With regard to the legislative proposals, I repeat what I said at the beginning of this Parliament … we as Liberals will support every progressive measure which is really for the benefit of the community as a whole … But that is on one condition, that whereas we want these radical economic reforms as much as any hon. Member sitting on that side of the House, we will not part with a single one of our spiritual liberties, which are far and away more important than any economic reform.[18]

The Liberals also brought forward an amendment for debate, attacking the trade union closed shop. This direct assault on the heart of the Labour movement was devised by Frank Byers, who opened the debate.

The Liberals' opposition to the 1946 Transport Bill, in which it was proposed to nationalise all inland public transport save for air travel, caused difficulties for the party. G. R. Strauss, the minister in charge of the bill, quoted a wartime Liberal Party pamphlet which advocated nationalisation of the railways, long-distance road haulage and the passenger transport industry. 'Well, our bill fully endorses those general principles,' teased Strauss.[19] Davies had already spoken to oppose the creation of a 'vast all-embracing monopoly' and to say that his party would go no further than

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the nationalisation of the railways and the canal network.[20] 'Is this an indication of the retreat of the Liberal Party from the policy on which it fought the last general election?' thundered a Radical Action letter to *The Guardian*.[21]

The party's attitude to the government had hardened considerably by the time of the 1947 King's Speech. Davies said the government had 'done more than any other Government of this country in time of peace to limit the freedom of the individual' and accused Labour of 'threatening' the 'spiritual liberty' of the people.[22] He went on to argue that:

> No Government ever started on their career with greater good will than His Majesty's Government. They had the support of all the workers, and the full support of the trade unions. They had the realisation among the people that the tasks confronting them were enormous. I wished them well on behalf of my colleagues in my speech on the Address in reply to the first Gracious Speech from the Throne in this Parliament. We wished them well, not so much for their success, but because we realised that upon them would depend the fate of the country, and the responsibility to bring it through its difficulties back to normal. They had greater powers over finance and materials, together with controls of all kinds, than any Government has ever had; and what has obviously happened, from the words used this week by the Prime Minister, and emphasised by the Minister for Economic Affairs, is that there has been a lack of vision, foresight and realisation of the effect of many of their actions – a real lack of vision as to what might happen as a result of the failure to exercise the control over finance which was in the hands of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Obviously, they did not realise the immensity of the problems, still less the danger. Still less did they give that proper guidance which the country was entitled to expect.[23]

As Clement Davies moved to the right, and the influence of Thomas Horabin waned, some on the Liberal left again looked to reach an agreement with Labour.

One final example of the Liberals' swing to the right during this period will suffice. G. R. Strauss led for the government on the bill to nationalise the steel industry in 1948 and again made hay with a statement of Liberal policy from before 1945. On this occasion he cited a pamphlet entitled *A Radical Economic Policy for Progressive Liberalism* which bore Davies's signature and which argued that 'steel, coal, transport and power are examples of industries which it is vital should be owned by the community'.[24] Davies called for an inquiry, arguing that nationalisation was not necessarily best for the industry at that time and claiming that his stance was consistent with his earlier views.[25] He was undermined by his former colleague Horabin, however, making his first speech in parliament since he was injured in an aeroplane crash in January 1947. 'I really cannot understand why my right hon. and learned Friend is not supporting the Second Reading of this Bill' began Horabin:

> Throughout the war years we worked very closely together. He was my leader in those days even before he was Leader of the Liberal Party, and he taught me quite a lot about the economics we should need to adopt when peace came. It was he who, to a very large extent, converted me to the nationalisation of steel, to the nationalisation of land and so on, but unfortunately I could not change my point of view. I fought the General Election on this issue, and so did my right hon. and learned Friend I believe – perhaps not on the nationalisation of steel, but certainly on the question of the nationalisation of the land.[26]

Horabin's peroration fell on deaf ears and the Liberals united to oppose the bill.

Talking to Labour

There had been sporadic contacts between left-wing Liberals and the Labour Party before the 1945 election, but these had come to nothing. In June 1944 various members of Radical Action, including Emrys Roberts, soon

to become a Liberal MP, dined with the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, to discuss the possibility of Labour and radical Liberals entering into a 'contract' or 'bargain'.[27] No clear statement was given of what that contract might involve, but it is reasonable to assume that Radical Action hoped to secure a free run against the Tories for some of their candidates. No agreement was reached, with Morrison taking the orthodox Labour line that all progressives ought to join the Labour Party. He was assured that none of those present had any attention of defecting as this would 'not forwards the cause they were promoting.' This approach to Morrison was made behind the back of the Liberal leadership; a suggested second meeting appears not to have taken place.

At the same time, the Labour Party chairman, Harold Laski, approached Honor Balfour, who was then intending to contest Darwen for the second time following her near miss as an independent Liberal in the 1944 by-election. Balfour was offered a choice of eight safe Labour seats if she were to join the Labour Party. Balfour described the offer as 'tempting' but loyalty to her constituency workers, and her rejection of Clause IV of the Labour Party's constitution, kept her in the Liberal fold.[28] Immediately after the election, Laski repeated his offer, 'we want progressive Liberals in the Labour Party … anyone with your gifts would be welcome.'[29]

As Clement Davies moved to the right, and the influence of Thomas Horabin waned, some on the Liberal left again looked to reach an agreement with Labour. Lancelot Spicer wrote to Richard Crossman MP in November 1946 on behalf of the remaining members of Radical Action stating 'as a group trying to work out a positive set of aims, we are anxious to find out how far we can agree with existing political groups.'[30] The 'dogmatic and doctrinaire' discipline of the Labour whips was given as one reason why Radical Action could not yet endorse the Labour Party, but the initial post-war contact had been made.

A serious approach to Labour was delayed until 1948. Spicer

floated the idea of a radical/ Labour coalition operating in seats where the Liberal vote remained strong.[31] The election of a strong radical group to the House of Commons, to supplement Lady Megan Lloyd George and both Emrys and Wilfrid Roberts, would save Labour from the electoral defeat Spicer predicted at the forthcoming general election.

In the same year, A. P. Marshall, a prominent member of Radical Action, sent two memoranda to Morgan Phillips, the Secretary of the Labour Party, written in the name of 'a number of Liberals who have for some years been members of the Radical wing of the Liberal forces' and who were struggling to adapt to 'a desperately difficult situation.'[32] Marshall argued that the Liberal Party was suffering from an 'advanced state of political Parkinson's disease' and would need to die in order for a vibrant radical party to be born. Marshall set out a number of conditions which a government had to satisfy in order to win the support of radicals. The crucial condition was that the government had to enjoy the overwhelming support of the working class. Marshall argued that this ruled out radical support for a Conservative government, as well as any cooperation with the Tories on the basis of the 'Design for Freedom' plan drawn up by an unofficial group of Liberals and Conservatives. That left the Labour Party as the only viable home for radicals. 'All of us in private conversations have found a great measure of agreement with many Labour men and women on immediate and short-run problems. We often find them kindred spirits seeing similar ends in human life. We like their deep and genuine human impulses.'

The first memorandum, written in February 1948, listed five reasons why radical Liberals would not join the Labour Party. These were that they:
- did not accept clause IV of the Labour Party constitution;
- did not accept Labour's rigid disciplinary system;
- did not like the close association between Labour and the trades unions;
- were unimpressed with the standard of officials in the

constituency Labour parties; and
- did not accept Labour's stance on private enterprise.

However, in the redrafted second memorandum, written in May 1948, the last reason was omitted. Marshall wrote to Phillips to say that, 'we found our talk with you extremely helpful in clarifying certain points.'[33] The second memorandum may have appealed to the right wing of the Labour Party, in that it called for 'radical reforms to achieve Social Democracy.' Marshall continued to offer an electoral deal to the Labour Party, claiming that a radical/ Labour coalition would command the support of at least two-thirds of the Liberal Party and would drive away the Communist Party as well as ensure victory at the next general election. The offer was ignored. Phillips would settle for nothing less than the defection of Radical Action members into the Labour Party. This left Radical Action 'standing very much alone' and Spicer suggested that the group admit failure and disband its political activities.[34] This is what happened after the 1948 memoranda. Spicer refused to stand for the Liberal Party in the 1950 general election, despite being offered the candidacy in Loughborough.

But that was by no means the end of contact between Labour and individual radical Liberals. The results of the 1950 general election left Labour in need of allies, especially as it was widely anticipated that the swing to the right would continue at the next election. Megan Lloyd George, in alliance with Emrys Roberts and Edgar Granville, wrote to *The Times* to argue for 'cooperation with Labour on honourable terms to make an effective majority for reform'.[35] Lloyd George engaged in a running battle with the right wing of the Liberal Party during the 1950–52 period, accusing them of undertaking a 'drift away from the old Radical tradition'.[36] In 1950 she, Spicer and Emrys Roberts met with Morrison to discuss the possibility of an arrangement which could prevent the Tories from winning the next election. Morrison commented that although he favoured such a deal, he did not think he could

Megan Lloyd George, in alliance with Emrys Roberts and Edgar Granville, wrote to *The Times* to argue for 'cooperation with Labour on honourable terms to make an effective majority for reform'.

carry the parliamentary Labour Party with him.[37]

In March 1951 a notice was circulated by 'The Pilgrim' addressed to 'all intelligent Labour MPs'.[38] The Pilgrim argued that a Lib–Lab deal, in which both parties withdrew from certain seats, would gain Labour seventy seats and the Liberals thirty. 'Get down now to the job of working out an electoral arrangement with the Liberals,' the Pilgrim urged. Whereas such a notice could normally be dismissed as a historical curiosity, at the same time Tom Reid, the Labour MP for Swindon, wrote to Morgan Phillips to reveal that Lib–Lab negotiations had been ongoing during the Parliament. Reid's letter deserves quoting in full:

> For months here individual MPs – Labour and Liberal – have been talking of uniting ... A few weeks ago a Liberal MP approached me about it … I then saw Herbert [Morrison] and asked him if I should butt in. He was dubious about the feasibility of the plan; he had made approaches himself. But he told me to go ahead as an individual representing myself only. I did so and saw Megan [Lloyd George]. We covered the whole subject. I found that here had been all sorts of suggestions but no comprehensive understanding covering all the big issues. Then I had several talks with 5 of the Liberal MPs. My first object was to prevent them bringing down the government. In this they have been co-operative … We hammered out a policy for the period till the next election, not one item, I think, contrary to Labour policy. I handed it to Herbert suggesting that he should sound the Executive. The difficulties of getting joint action at elections, constituencies etc was fully realised. Meantime, the Liberals sounded some of their leading people outside Parliament and added a few things to their policy outlined. I showed the note to Herbert … I told him I would give it to Chuter Ede who, I knew, saw possibilities in the plan. That was last night. I asked Chuter to show it to the

Prime Minister, and then pass it on to some leading members of the Executive. Meantime I had seen Alice Bacon and discussed the whole thing … If deemed promising the executives of the two parties must discuss the policies suggested and if agreed, their implementation if deemed feasible.[39]

In 1951 more than half of the parliamentary Liberal Party, and several prominent Liberals outside of parliament, agreed to a policy statement which was designed to ensure that the Labour government stayed in power for as long as possible. Furthermore, the possibility of a more far-reaching deal, encapsulating electoral arrangements and future government policy was mooted. This agreement was known to Attlee and to senior members of the Labour administration as well as to many senior Liberals. What happened to the agreement? It is likely that both party executives looked unfavourably on the deal: the Liberals' because of the number of executive members who leaned towards the Tories not Labour, and Labour's because the Liberals were not trusted to stick to any deal. Phillips regarded Clement Davies as 'extremely ineffective' and it is likely that he felt that Davies had no power or ability to carry his party, assuming he backed the arrangement.[40]

Who were the five Liberal MPs, with whom Reid discussed the deal? Megan Lloyd George, Emrys Roberts and Edgar Granville, all former Radical Action members, would certainly have been approached. Archibald Macdonald, later to help form the Radical Reform Group, may also have been involved. The identity of the fifth, assuming that Reid is not mistaken, is something of a mystery. Rhys Hopkin Morris and Roderic Bowen would, by inclination, have had nothing to do with the Labour Party. Donald Wade was elected only as a result of an arrangement with his local Conservative association and would be unlikely to have assented to a deal with Labour. That leaves Clement Davies and Jo Grimond. Grimond, as Chief Whip, would almost certainly have been involved in any

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high-level discussion. However, his desk diaries from the period reveal nothing and he never mentioned any such discussions in his memoirs. Evidence of Davies's involvement comes from Labour MP Philip Noel-Baker, who recorded Davies commenting in March 1951 that 'somehow the two progressive parties *must* get together to save the world.'[41] Was this a signal of practical political intent, a pipedream, or a mistake by Noel-Baker? Whatever the answer, it is clear that some of the Liberal Party's most senior figures were involved in detailed negotiations with a Labour MP, with a view to establishing a far-reaching agreement with the Labour Party both in Parliament and in the constituencies.

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Again, this was not the end of the issue. Megan Lloyd George lost her seat, Anglesey, in 1951 and there was widespread speculation that she would defect to the Labour Party. In February 1952, her lover, Philip Noel-Baker wrote, 'Archie [Sinclair] has been seeing Hugh Gaitskell and is still asking for *pacts*; Herbert [Morrison] is still stalling as hard as ever. I think they may try to get you to take Anglesey for *us* [i.e. Labour] … I think you ought to see Clem [Davies] at once and say so right away.'[42] Noel-Baker is not the most reliable source of information on this matter. Sinclair was by this time ill and in the House of Lords. Only the year before, Churchill had offered him a place in the cabinet.[43] However, the suggestion that Lloyd George should return to parliament as a Welsh Labour MP had been made. Her Liberal colleagues, who had supported her 'radical group' in Parliament, had other ideas. Honor Balfour, Dingle Foot and, to a lesser extent, Philip Fothergill were still excited by the possibility of a mass radical defection

to Labour. During the 1945–55 period a number of Liberal MPs and former MPs drifted into the Labour Party in an uncoordinated fashion. Balfour felt that a well-organised, high-profile defection of several prominent radicals might achieve the sort of realignment of British politics which Jo Grimond was to advocate several years later. Vital to this plan was Lloyd George, who was the most prominent member of this radical group. If she could lead a mass defection, then the balance of power within the Labour Party might tilt to the right, and a radical social democratic Labour Party could emerge, attracting widespread support from across the political spectrum. However, no coordinated activity took place. Lloyd George announced her defection in 1955 independently. Foot followed her shortly afterwards. No mass defection took place. The moment was lost.[44]

Conclusion

The Liberal Party's relationship with Labour after 1945 was more complex than has previously been suggested. The unlikely leadership pairing of Clement Davies and Thomas Horabin began the 1945 parliament as critical friends of the Labour government, worrying not that it would prove too left-wing but that it would be too cautious. By the winter of 1945, however, Davies was beginning to have his doubts about the impact of Labour's economic prescriptions on what would now be called human rights and the Liberals' drift to the right began.

With hindsight, the Liberals' strategy was naïve and doomed to failure. Had the party continued to argue that Labour needed to be more radical it would have found itself allied in the Commons to a ragbag of Communists and independent left-wingers who openly rejected liberalism. The initial course set by Davies and Horabin would have left the mainstream Liberal Party far behind. In dropping Horabin, Davies helped unite the party – no easy task given that it contained such disparate elements as Megan Lloyd George and Rhys Hopkin Morris. It proved impossible, however, for Davies

to argue convincingly that Liberal policy on economic matters had been consistent throughout the decade and that his own views were soundly based. As the 1940s progressed, Labour was increasingly able to portray Davies and his supporters as ideological right-wingers who had disowned the radical liberalism of the past.

The failure of a group of left-wing Liberals to break from the party en masse to join Labour was principally due to the Labour Party's refusal to compromise on fundamental issues such as Clause IV of its constitution. An organised defection would undoubtedly have weakened the Liberal Party further but probably would not have proved fatal. An electoral arrangement with Labour was seriously considered after 1950 and again seems to have foundered because Labour had no wish to compromise. It is a striking measure of the Liberal Party's weakness at this time that it was in negotiations with both major parties that could have put an end to the party's independence. The 1950–51 period was thus a crucial turning point in the history of the party: despite the Liberals' popular support reaching an all-time low, the party leadership turned its back on national electoral arrangements with the other parties and pledged to soldier on alone.

This period also showed how important it was for the Liberal leadership to decide on the attitude the party should take to both of its major rivals, each of which had a strong incentive to emphasise their liberal credentials and attract Liberal voters. Liberal grandees often argued that the party needed to make a clear statement of its policy in order to regain its strength. But the party never wanted for policies: what the electorate needed was a clear explanation of where the Liberals stood on the political spectrum (however much Liberals disliked the concept) and why the party remained relevant. This was to come later in the 1950s, when Jo Grimond positioned the Liberals firmly on the left of British politics and appealed for support from progressives in all parties alienated by the extremists in both. This was where most Liberals thought they stood in 1945, but only after

Labour's frailties became evident during the 1950s was it possible to develop a coherent narrative to explain why the Liberal Party still mattered and to use this to campaign for votes.

Robert Ingham is Biographies Editor of the Journal of Liberal History *and has written extensively on Liberal history in the* Journal *and elsewhere.*

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1   For example see R. Ingham, 'Battle of Ideas of Absence of Leadership', *Journal of Liberal History*, 47, Summer 2005, pp. 36–44.
2   See M. Egan, 'Radical Action and the Liberal Party during the Second World War', *Journal of Liberal History*, 63, Summer 2009, pp. 4–17.
3   M. Pottle (ed.), *Champion Redoubtable: the diaries and letters of Violet Bonham Carter 1914–45* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), p. 294 (entry for 15 February 1944).
4   HC Deb, 16 August 1945, cc. 117–18.
5   HC Deb, 29 October 1945, cc. 71–74 for Davies' speech and c. 140 for criticism from Oliver Stanley.
6   HC Deb, 10 October 1945, cc. 296–300.
7   See J. G. Jones, 'Grimond's Rival', *Journal of Liberal History*, 34/35, Spring/Summer 2002, pp. 26–34.
8   HC Deb, 8 November 1945, cc. 1477–80.
9   Balfour Papers, 'Minutes, Radical Action weekend conference at Brackley', 7 April 1946. This collection can be consulted at the Bodleian Library, Oxford.
10 J. Reynolds and I. Hunter, 'Liberal Class Warrior', *Journal of Liberal History*, 28, Autumn 2000, p. 20.
11 HC Deb, 12 November 1945, cc. 1795–99.
12 HC Deb, 5 December 1945, cc. 2352–60.
13 Reynolds and Hunter, op. cit., p. 20.
14 Ibid.
15 D. Brack et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (Politicos, 1998), p. 64.
16 M. Pottle (ed.), *Daring to Hope: the diaries and letters of Violet Bonham Carter 1946–69* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000), p. 36 (entry for 13 October 1947).
17 Balfour Papers, 'A Radical-Labour Coalition?', April 1948.
18 HC Deb, 13 November 1946, cc. 214–15.
19 HC Deb, 18 December 1945, c. 1990.
20 HC Deb, 16 December 1945, cc. 1655–64.
21 *The Guardian*, 3 December 1946.
22 HC Deb, 24 October 1947, c. 385.
23 HC Deb, 24 October 1947, cc. 387–88.
24 HC Deb, 15 November 1948, cc. 55–56.
25 HC Deb, 16 November 1948, cc. 251–62,
26 HC Deb, 16 November 1948, c. 263.
27 Balfour Papers, 'Notes on dinner with Herbert Morrison', 22 June 1944.
28 Private interview.
29 Balfour Papers, letter H. Laski to Balfour, 4 August 1945.
30 Balfour Papers, letter L. Spicer to R. Crossman, 21 November 1946.
31 Balfour Papers, 'A Radical–Labour Coalition?', April 1948.
32 General Secretary's Papers, Box 4, GS/Lib/4ii–v, Memorandum by Arthur Marshall, February 1948. This was redrafted and can be found at GS/Lib/6 and also as part of Spicer's Papers, 'Memorandum by A. P. Marshall', May 1948. These papers can be consulted at the National Museum of Labour History.
33 General Secretary's Papers, Box 4, GS/Lib/5i–vi, letter A. P. Marshall to Morgan Phillips, 14 May 1948.
34 Balfour Papers, memorandum July 1948. This appears to be the last of Spicer's discussion papers.
35 M. Jones, *A Radical Life: The Biography of Megan Lloyd George, 1902–66* (Hutchinson, 1991), p. 212.
36 Ibid., p. 213.
37 Ibid., p. 214.
38 General Secretary's Papers, Box 4, GS/Lib/18ii.
39 General Secretary's Papers, Box 4, GS/Lib/20i. James Chuter Ede was Labour MP for South Shields and the Leader of the House of Commons. Alice Bacon was Labour MP for Leeds North East and Chairman of the Party.
40 General Secretary's Papers, Box 4, GS/Lib/20, correspondence between M. Phillips and M. Starr, 11 June 1952 and 24 June 1952.
41 Jones, op. cit., p. 215. Philip Noel-Baker was Labour MP for Derby South and was engaged in an affair with Megan Lloyd George throughout this period.
42 Ibid., pp. 236–37.
43 G. de Groot, *Liberal Crusader: the Life of Sir Archibald Sinclair* (Hurst & Co., 1993), p. 235.
44 Private interview.

RADICAL REFORM GROUP

The Radical Reform Group has until recently been relatively neglected by historians of the Liberal Party. **Graham Lippiatt** gives an overview of the group's formation and history, examines the material published by the group itself and reviews the published literature which covers it.

THE RADICAL Reform Group (RRG) was a social liberal pressure group of the 1950s and 1960s. It was founded in 1952[1] by Desmond Banks[2] and Peter Grafton.[3] Concerned that, under the leadership of Clement Davies, the Liberal Party was falling unduly under the sway of classical, free-market liberals and was drifting to the right, they feared the domination of the party by economic liberals such as Oliver Smedley[4] and Arthur Seldon,[5] who both later helped establish the Institute of Economic Affairs, the think tank that was to become an engine of Thatcherism. One prominent Radical Reformer recalled that he joined because of worries that the party was so small and weak in the early 1950s that it was in danger of being taken over by people like Smedley and S. W. Alexander[6] who would be seen as cranks who wanted to turn the party into an economic sect.[7]

The RRG saw their task as promoting 'social reform without socialism' and sought ways in which the institutions and policies of the welfare state and the managed economy could be improved and strengthened.[8] Looking back, one reformer set out the task of the RRG as '… mov[ing] the party as a whole to adopt a programme, especially in industrial and economic affairs, which could become the platform for a new, radical force in politics.'[9] This emphasis on creating something new in British politics was because the RRG recognised that there was something wrong with a political and electoral system which produced great opposing, disciplined party blocs. In the preamble to its constitution, the RRG stated that 'no existing party, acting as such, is, in view of sectional background or historical obsolescence, producing, on

its own, policies which will both give effect to the principles [of liberty and social justice] and gain wide acceptance from all shades of political opinion.'[10] The RRG's intention was to create an effective third force in British politics and looked for ways of forging links with like-minded individuals in other parties. Banks also gave as a justification for the formation of the RRG the need to strengthen the Liberal Party as an alternative for disillusioned electors against the growth of extremist groups. 'If there were no Liberal Party,' he declared in a speech in Cornwall in March 1956, 'we might well be witnessing today the growth of some dangerous movement akin to that of Monsieur Poujade[11] in France.[12]

In the spring of 1954, the RRG decided to disaffiliate from the Liberal Party in an effort to attract members from the social democratic wing of the Labour Party. It hoped to exploit divisions in the Labour Party between the supporters of Aneurin Bevan[13] and those of Hugh Gaitskell.[14] Most RRG members remained card-carrying members of the Liberal Party but one former Chairman, E. F. Allison, defected to Labour[15] and one of its vice-presidents, the former MP for Dundee, Dingle Foot, (who also later joined Labour, in 1956) openly supported Labour candidates in seats not contested by Liberals in the 1955 general election. The Labour splits did not prove permanent however, and the RRG strategy was not a success. Membership declined and the media were not interested. At the Annual General Meeting of the group in the National Liberal Club on 29 October 1955, members voted narrowly to revert to being an organisation wholly within the Liberal Party.[16] This homecoming was welcomed by a leader in

the *News Chronicle* entitled 'Left or Limbo?'. It called the earlier decision to divorce from the party a mistake, criticising the RRG for having been dormant too long and looked forward to its renewed activities on the left of centre, where it said 'all good Liberals should be'.[17]

Thereafter the RRG continued its role as an internal social liberal ginger group, supportive of Jo Grimond's electoral strategy of realignment. The marginalisation or defection of leading economic liberals and the return of the RRG helped to set the progressive tone of Liberal politics during the years of Grimond's leadership, when the party tended to choose the social liberal and Keynesian economic approach.

Material published by the Radical Reform Group

In all, the RRG published three pamphlets setting out the purpose and strategy of the group and detailing the policies that the Liberal Party and the country ought to adopt.[18] The group also published a regular newsletter which contained commentary on the political developments of the day, Liberal election prospects, essays on policy questions, and internal announcements and notices. This author has not been able to establish exactly when the first newsletter was published but the last one appears to have been the issue of September 1964.[19] Between November 1956 and September 1964, twenty-three newsletters were circulated to RRG members.[20]

The earliest of the RRG pamphlets was a three-page document, *Radical Approach: A Statement of Aims by the Radical Reform Group*, published in 1953. In the introduction, the authors set out an essentially Liberal belief in the supreme value of the human

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personality and the need to create the conditions of liberty in which each personality can develop to the full. They observe, however, that liberty is a changing concept and declare that the task in the twentieth century is to win economic liberty at the same time as preserving and extending political liberty. What was wanted was a 'synthesis of freedom and social justice'. To achieve these aims the state has a clear role to play in specific fields. The first is the welfare state, in which 'no one through unemployment, sickness or old age shall be destitute; in which people with families to care for shall be helped to provide for them by those whose burdens are lighter; and in which the opportunity of a good start in life shall be available to all.' The pamphlet recommends the payment of a family allowance for the first child, an increase in old age pensions and the principle of a free health service. The next field for government action is full employment, which the pamphlet asserts is to be maintained broadly 'along the lines of Lord Beveridge's proposals for what he called the socialisation of demand'. Next the pamphlet sets out its authors' belief in free trade, although with Britain taking the lead in the creation of an international rather than a unilateralist system. In agriculture, the maintenance of planned production through a continuance of the policy of guaranteed prices and assured markets for farmers is advocated. In industry, it recommends co-ownership, profit-sharing and anti-monopoly as the watchwords. In summary, the authors argue that they seek wholesale social reform, but not socialism as understood in Britain, through the policy of nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

Radical Aims: A statement of policy by the Radical Reform Group, which was published in 1953 or 1954, recalls the reaction to Labour's post-war socialism and how that led in the Liberal Party to the 'increasing influence of a school of "laissez-faire" apostles who but a few years ago were regarded as a lunatic fringe' seeking to revert to the philosophy of Herbert Spencer.[21] There follows an essay raising particular human

problems and again according a central place to the concept of liberty and the liberal tradition as a framework for thought and action. That framework, it is asserted, must 'ensure to all men an economic status comparable to the status demanded by the plea for liberty. As of right, wealth and income must be more equally shared …'. The document makes some advanced recommendations in relation to the Third World. Albeit in language which today would be unacceptable, the authors recognise the 'appalling aspect of our present economic system [in] our treatment of backward peoples' (sic). They acknowledge the damage to 'native peoples and native ways of life' (sic) and state that 'our attitude to backward areas must be consistent with our highest beliefs; if men need freedom and the economic conditions to give it life, the need of all men is equally real'. Finally, in an early example of environmental consciousness, the pamphlet acknowledges that humanity needs to be more responsible with and demonstrate humility towards the world's material resources. It deplores the profligacy with which the free economy has treated natural resources such as coal, oil, forests and ores, tacitly recognising that these resources are finite and must be developed with more than the profit motive as the sole criterion.

Many of these approaches and policies found their way into the Liberal Party general election manifesto for 1955.[22] Particular convergence was found in the approaches to colonial development, industrial democracy and anti-monopoly, support for the welfare society, and provision for the old and the vulnerable. However, there was one notable clash with the RRG programme. Whereas *Radical Approach* had urged the need for guaranteed prices and assured markets for British farmers, the manifesto pointed out that Britain was spending £300 million annually subsiding agriculture, which it described as a short-sighted policy. Additionally, the manifesto was strong on traditional Liberal approaches to devolution and electoral reform as well as advocating European unity and robust

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support for the United Nations and multilateral disarmament. These were not issues which the RRG discounted. The constitutional agenda underpinned much of the RRG critique of British politics set out in the group's unpublished constitution and the need for a radical alternative. And foreign policy questions came to feature more prominently in the later publication, *Radical Challenge* (1960). In the early days of the RRG, however, the domestic agenda was its primary focus.

The final RRG publication, *Radical Challenge* was a longer work, running to ten pages. *Radical Challenge* was a child of its political times. In 1956, Jo Grimond had become leader of the Liberal Party. In 1958 the party won the Torrington by-election, the first Liberal gain in a by-election since 1929. The economic and political landscape seemed to be moving, with the slow decline of heavy industry and with more of Britain's population becoming affluent and aspiring to middle-class lifestyles. Post-Suez a new, less traditional, outlook on foreign and Commonwealth affairs appeared to be developing, more in tune with liberal thought. In the aftermath of the 1959 general election, with a third successive Labour defeat, there seemed a real opportunity for progressive forces to realign around the Liberal Party and break from a Labour Party hidebound by its historic connections to the trade unions and Clause IV socialism. This thinking echoed the early aspirations of the RRG to create a fresh and radical, yet non-socialist, force in British politics.

So the introduction to *Radical Challenge* stressed the threatened eclipse of Labour and acknowledged those in the Labour Party (specifically naming Tony Crosland[23] and Roy Jenkins) who recognised the need for an overhaul to abandon nationalisation and class-consciousness. The purpose of the pamphlet was 'to give a clear lead to progressive-minded men and women', to offer a prospectus of radical goals as a rallying point around which such progressives could realign.

The first section, 'Beyond Independence', calls for continuing self-determination and

independence for colonial peoples and an end to minority rule in places like Algeria and South Africa. It proposed a more interdependent approach, foreseeing that colonial successor-states would struggle to be economically viable and dependent upon aid. It looked forward to international assistance for developing nations on the model of the Marshall Plan. The next section, entitled 'Unarmed Combat', deals with the Cold War, calling for detente and disarmament, particularly of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It calls for an independent, international authority to control and inspect national arsenals. Once the arms race is over, the pamphlet looks forward to a world where the duel between the liberal democracies and the Communist bloc transfers from the military to the socio-economic plane.

In 'A New Deal for Industry', the pamphlet reiterates the policies of industrial democracy and employee shareholding, praising the German model of 'co-determination' whereby large firms operate joint employer–worker boards. In the section dealing with 'The Role of Government', the state is urged to intervene in aspects of the economy which have traditionally been regarded as the sphere of private enterprise but not to engage in nationalisation or to prolong artificially the death throes of a sinking industry. Rather, it is the government's role to indentify and encourage new industries which create new goods or services for which there is a market, to assist with retraining and to give the lead to private industry by establishing publicly owned and financed concerns in these areas and by providing basic facilities such as cheap communications. This section goes on to champion the breaking up of existing monopolies, the prevention of new ones and the encouragement of small-scale enterprises in industry and agriculture through government-funded low-interest loans.

The section on 'Trade Union Reform' criticised the failure of the unions to adapt to changing industrial conditions, and their clinging on to outdated practices and becoming increasingly bureaucratic and centralised. An advance towards unions representing all the workers in a given industry, to avoid demarcation disputes, is proposed, as is local negotiation of wage rates to keep down inflation. Unrealistically, however, these reforms were supposed to spring spontaneously from within the union movement. This was because it was felt that their value would be vitiated were they to bear the hallmarks of vindictive or repressive legislation. There was also a call for the correction of abuses in union finances and elections.

The next section, 'The Wards of Society', calls for a strengthening of the welfare state in relation to the elderly and especially an increase in old age pensions. It attacks the arbitrary imposition of an age of retirement at sixty or sixty-five years. It identifies the unfairness of a system which discriminates against women who wish to return to work after their children are grown up. It is particularly scathing about the state of mental hospitals (sic), where essentially sane people have been incarcerated for years without redress and where patients are institutionalised. It questions whether the contributory principle should be retained in the financing of pensions and unemployment benefit or whether a new and comprehensive tax should supersede all existing methods of paying for social services.

The section 'Education: The Open Door' attacks the eleven-plus examination as predestining every child to social superiority or inferiority on the basis of a single assessment at too early an age. It calls for comprehensive education but on a human scale and accepts the continuation of public schools in a free society, while looking forward to a day when they will fade away.

The final section is called 'The Defence of Standards' and anticipates more contemporary arguments about the decline in the quality of life at the same time as the growth of affluence. It worries about over-commercialisation and the primacy of the 'values of the box-office and the sales-graph'. The section welcomes greater cultural and aesthetic opportunities but it calls for measures to alert people to the dangers and equip them for distinguishing the excellent as opposed to the shoddy. It identifies adult education and the control of advertising as two possible approaches. It calls for good town and country planning to avoid creeping 'subtopia' and calls for less emphasis on road building and more to resuscitate the railway network. There is a last plea for the arts to flourish but to avoid the over-concentration of facilities in London.

The Radical Reform Group in published literature

Until an upsurge of interest in Liberal Party politics brought on by the formation of the SDP and possibility of Liberal influence on government, the standard works covering the history of the Liberal Party in the 1950s and 1960s were those by Roy Douglas[24] and Chris Cook,[25] neither of which mentions the RRG at all. It does get a passing reference in David Dutton's survey of Liberal history published in 2004.[26] However Dutton refers to the group as a direct successor to Radical Action; yet, while they may have been some overlap in membership, there is no evidence that the RRG sprang from the ashes of the earlier organisation.[27] Jorgen Scott Rasmussen's study of the Liberal Party, published in the UK in 1965, does not deal with internal pressure groups.[28] There is no mention of the RRG in the memoirs of prominent Liberals of the time, although it was Jeremy Thorpe who was most closely associated with the group and we await the publication of papers dealing with Thorpe's career. There have been entries in two History Group publications, *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* and *Dictionary of Liberal Thought* which add to the literature, the first a biography of Desmond Banks[29], the second an analysis of the history and thought of the RRG.[30]

The earliest detailed reference to the RRG in published literature is to be found in Alan Watkins' book, *The Liberal Dilemma*,[31] published in 1966. Set within the chapter entitled 'The Darkest Days', this gives a good flavour of the times in which the RRG was born and the social liberal rationale behind its

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formation. He sets the departure from and reversion to the Liberal Party in a wider political context. Watkins queries the effectiveness of the group in providing a comprehensive umbrella for all those in the party who broadly agreed with its approach, citing one source attacking the RRG as misunderstanding the traditional synthesis of political, social and economic liberalisms from which party policy is derived. Watkins also questions whether the Radical Reformers were just opposed to the doctrinaire free-traders or whether they wanted to replace the old guard with a new, young leadership drawn from their own ranks. Watkins does, however, conclude that it is possible to see the RRG as the precursor to the revolution that Jo Grimond put into effect.

The next most detailed mention comes in Vernon Bogdanor's *Liberal Party Politics*, published in 1983, with references in chapters by William Wallace on 'Survival and Revival' and by Andrew Gamble on 'Liberals and the Economy'. Wallace associates the return of the RRG to the Liberal Party and the leadership of Jo Grimond as related elements in the revival of Liberal electoral fortunes which he dates from the winter of 1955–56 and which are strongly boosted by anti-Conservative feeling over Suez. These factors, says Wallace, help the Liberal Party begin 'to rediscover a sense of purpose and a place in the political spectrum.'[32] Gamble, in a single reference, concentrates on the opposition of the RRG to the economic liberals and concludes by linking the RRG to Grimond's views on the future of politics.

Some useful references to the RRG are also to be found in Garry Tregidga's regional study, *The Liberal Party in South-West Britain since 1918*.[33] Tregidga charts a Liberal revival in the south-west and places it within a wider context, in which the RRG played its part and with whom local figures, like Dingle Foot[34] and Jeremy Thorpe, were associated. Tregidga points out that the RRG, founded by young parliamentary candidates, was attracting support from the Liberal revival in the universities and that Thorpe in particular was spreading the RRG gospel at the

regional universities in Exeter and Bristol.[35]

The most recent contribution to the literature on the RRG is Mark Egan's book, *Coming into Focus*,[36] published in 2009 but based on his Oxford doctoral thesis awarded in 2000. The book contains a section devoted the RRG as part of the chapter about the Young Liberals (YL). It lists the RRG as a YL ginger group, along with Radical Action and New Orbits, although it concedes that the RRG was not led by YLs, just that a number of prominent young Liberals were active in the group. Egan's main contention is that the RRG was not an engine of new thinking but a ginger group for what was essentially already party policy in the face of the lacklustre leadership on policy development by Clement Davies and the threat of laissez-faire liberals like Oliver Smedley. Such was the 'rudderless nature of the party', writes Egan, 'that a separate ginger group had to be established in order for the mainstream Liberal view to be presented to the [Liberal] Assembly'.[37] Egan rightly points out that, once Grimond became leader of the party, the need for the RRG declined. Both in terms of strategy, i.e. realignment of the left, and in robust policy development based on the social liberal tradition and economic interventionism, the party revived and found its political place under Grimond. As Egan notes, many of the Radical Reformers like Banks, Moore and, of course, Jeremy Thorpe went on to hold important positions in the party and to influence policy formulation. However Egan states that Grimond was not connected with the RRG (albeit he kept in touch with members of the group). In fact Grimond was President of the RRG in the late 1950s. However, in a letter to Peter Grafton dated 2 March 1960, he declined the invitation to continue in the role on the grounds that 'it may give an odd impression if I am an Officer of a group within the party'.[38] He went on to say that 'much as I value the work being done by the group, I think this may be all the more necessary if you propose to have any really serious discussions about the sort of area of agreement of the Left'.

It remains moot as to how far the RRG influenced Grimond or whether he simply shared common views with the group, but his connection with the RRG and its key personnel was close from almost the start of his leadership and continued through the period when his association with the strategy of realignment of the left was at its height.

One of the proposals at the 1960 AGM was for there to be 'one main effective party of the left'.[39] Grimond seemed to think that any work done on policy strands that could lay the foundations of the realignment of the left could be inhibited if he, as leader of the party, carried on as chief officer of the RRG.

It remains moot as to how far the RRG influenced Grimond or whether he simply shared common views with the group, but his connection with the RRG and its key personnel was close from almost the start of his leadership and continued through the period when his association with the strategy of realignment of the left was at its height. The RRG also had close ties with Grimond's successor as party leader, Jeremy Thorpe. In the exchange of letters in which Thorpe accepted the invitation to continue as a vice-president of the RRG for the year 1965–66, his association with the group was described as so long as to be virtually historical.[40] After Thorpe had won the leadership contest in 1967, he wrote to Peter Grafton saying that his victory was 'an RRG victory' and warned that he needed and expected the group's continued support.[41]

How far do these published sources assist in coming to a conclusion about the strength and membership of the RRG and its influence on the strategy and policies of the Liberal Party in the 1950s and 1960s? As early as 1954, writing in the Liberal Party publication *Ahead*, Timothy Joyce was referring to press speculation that the forthcoming Liberal Party Assembly in Buxton would be a battleground between the Radical Reform Group and a free trade group over the issues of agricultural protection and industrial co-ownership. Perhaps reflecting the fact that he was writing in an official organ, Joyce tried to downplay this conflict saying that the average constituency association knew little about these 'splits and splutterings' and cared little for either group. He estimated both factions had only a few dozen followers each.[42] This seems to be borne out by the numbers attending the AGM of the RRG of 1955, at which it decided to come back into the Liberal Party, as the vote

in favour of that resolution was passed by sixteen votes to fifteen.[43] However, the attendance sheet for the AGM of 9 February 1957 lists fifty-three members present and the membership list of the RRG for the year 1965 contains 184 names.[44] It is uncertain how many could be described as active, and the list includes honorary and former honorary members and officers, such as Jo Grimond and the radio personality and cricket commentator John Arlott.[45] Clearly, though, even at a time when the activities of the RRG were no longer expanding, there was still a large pool of supporters of its aims and objectives. The evidence of the publications of the RRG, the references to it in the national and party media, its programme of events, the publication of its newsletter over many years and the references to its influence in the party in some of the published literature all point to the RRG as being a key social liberal pressure group inside the Liberal Party in the 1950s and 1960s, influencing strategy and policy and with connections to the very top of the organisation.

Graham Lippiatt is a contributing editor of the Journal of Liberal History, *Secretary of the Liberal Democrat History Group and author of the entry on the Radical Reform Group in* Dictionary of Liberal Thought *(Brack & Randall (eds.) , Politico's Publishing, 2007).*

The RRG was a key social liberal pressure group inside the Liberal Party in the 1950s and 1960s, influencing strategy and policy and with connections to the very top of the organisation.

1   Peter Grafton, 'The Radical Reform Group', *Ahead*, October 1953; *The Times*, 24 June 1954, p. 3.

2   Desmond Banks, Lord Banks of Kenton (1918–1997).

3   Peter Grafton (b. 1916), chartered quantity surveyor; Liberal candidate for Bromley in 1950.

4   Oliver Smedley (1911–1989), chartered accountant; Liberal candidate at Saffron Walden in 1950 and 1951.

5   Arthur Seldon (1916–2005), economist; active Liberal at the LSE and in the Orpington party.

6   S. W. Alexander (1895–1980), journalist; Liberal candidate for Ilford North in 1950 and sometime Chairman of the London Liberal Party.

7   Interview with Richard Moore, 14 May 2006.

8   Andrew Gamble, 'Liberals and the Economy', in Vernon Bogdanor, *Liberal Party Politics* (Oxford:

9   Clarendon Press, 1983), p.201.

9   Derick Mirfin, 'The Liberal Party's Radical Reform Group', *Time and Tide*, 12 April 1962.

10 Constitution of the Radical Reform Group, unpublished (probably 1952).

11 Pierre Poujade (1920–2003) French populist politician, supporter of Vichy France in 1940–42, who articulated the grievances and nationalism of shopkeepers and other small business people.

12 Alan Watkins, *The Liberal Dilemma* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1966), p. 80.

13 Aneurin 'Nye' Bevan (1897–1960), Welsh Labour politician and government minister who introduced the National Health Service. The Labour Party withdrew the whip from Bevan in 1955 over his leadership of a revolt against party policy on the atom bomb.

14 Hugh Gaitskell (1906–1963), leader of the Labour Party, 1955–1963.

15 *The Times*, 29 April 1955, p. 18.

16 Transcript report of the Annual General Meeting of the Radical Reform Group, held on 29 October 1955 at 3 p.m. in the Meston Room of the National Liberal Club – in possession of the author.

17 *News Chronicle*, 23 February 1956, leader.

18 These are the only publications credited to the RRG in the catalogue of the British Library.

19 Interview of 5 June 2007 with Professor Alan Deyermond (1932–2009), sometime editor of the RRG newsletter.

20 Copies of newsletters in possession of author from the papers of the late Professor Alan Deyermond.

21 Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), classical liberal political theorist who challenged socialism, Fabianism and the New Liberalism.

22 British political party post-war manifestos can be accessed on the internet pages of politics resources at http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/man.htm.

23 Anthony Crosland (1918–1977), Labour minister and leading social democratic thinker who influenced the generation that founded the SDP.

24 Roy Douglas, *The History of the Liberal Party 1895–1970* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1971); updated in *Liberals: A History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat Parties* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2005).

25 Chris Cook, *A Short History of the Liberal Party 1900–1976* (Basingstoke:

26 Macmillan, 1976).

26 David Dutton, *A History of the Liberal Party in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 180 and 189.

27 Mark Egan, *Coming Into Focus: The Transformation of the Liberal Party, 1945–64* (Saarbrucken: VDM Verlag Dr Muller, 2009), p. 124.

28 Jorgen Scott Rasmussen, *The Liberal Party: A Study of Retrenchment and Revival* (London: Constable, 1965).

29 Graham Lippiatt, 'Desmond Banks', in Duncan Brack et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (London: Politico's, 1998), pp. 26–27.

30 Graham Lippiatt, 'The Radical Reform Group', in Duncan Brack and Ed Randall (eds.), *Dictionary of Liberal Thought* (London: Politico's, 2007), pp. 329–31.

31 Alan Watkins, op. cit., pp. 69ff and p. 80.

32 Vernon Bogdanor (ed.), *Liberal Party Politics* (Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 45.

33 Garry Tregidga, *The Liberal Party in South-West Britain since 1918: Political Decline, Dormancy and Rebirth* (University of Exeter Press, 2000), pp. 146ff.

34 Dingle Foot (1905–1978), Liberal MP for Dundee 1931–45.

35 Tregidga, op. cit., pp. 148 and 154–55.

36 Mark Egan, *Coming Into Focus: The Transformation of the Liberal Party, 1945–64* (Saarbrucken; VDM Verlag Dr Muller, 2009).

37 Egan, op. cit., p. 126.

38 Copy of a letter from Jo Grimond to Peter Grafton of 2 March 1960, from papers left to the author by Lord Banks.

39 From letter from Peter Grafton to Jo Grimond of 23 February 1960.

40 Letters between Jeremy Thorpe and Peter Grafton, 6 and 10 December 1965, in possession of the author.

41 Letter from Jeremy Thorpe to Peter Grafton, 27 January 1967, in possession of the author.

42 *Ahead* magazine (Liberal Party, 58 Victoria Street, SW1), April 1954, p. 4.

43 Transcript report of the Annual General Meeting of the Radical Reform Group, held on 29 October 1955 at 3pm in the Meston Room of the National Liberal Club – in possession of the author.

44 Both documents included in papers left to the author by Lord Banks.

45 Leslie Thomas John Arlott OBE (1914–1991), Liberal candidate for Epping 1955 and 1959.

'AN OUT-OF-
GRIMOND AI

Jo Grimond is the Liberal leader most often associated with attempts to realign British politics on the left, to create what he foresaw as 'a new progressive movement' taking in 'the Liberals and most of the Labour Party'.[1] On three occasions during his leadership he stirred up controversy in the Liberal Party by predicting or suggesting such a development, and yet never achieved any change. **Matt Cole** examines the relationship between the Liberals and those of what Grimond called 'an out of date word'[2] – the left.

WHEN HE stepped down as leader, the party had not established any closer relationship with Labour, and, although its image and recruitment had in some ways moved leftwards, this had not significantly altered its electoral base or its parliamentary representation. Grimond himself fought shy of such links when opportunities to establish them seemed to arise, and even when cooperation with Labour politicians came about in the Lib–Lab Pact ten years later, Grimond was amongst the more apprehensive members of the parliamentary party. In his *Memoirs* Grimond makes little mention of it.

Why did a leader of Grimond's dynamism repeatedly embark on this strategy, and then each time abandon it? Alan Watkins expressed the bemusement of many commentators looking back on Grimond's career and his failed bids for realignment:

> At two recent periods – in 1959–61 and in 1964–66 – there

DATE WORD' ND THE LEFT

was a chance that, given resolute action by Mr. Grimond, a start might have been made on the radical alliance. Admittedly the circumstances were not ideal; they never are; but they were the best that Mr. Grimond could reasonably have expected. However, Mr. Grimond waited on events. He gave reasons for not acting. The Labour Party had made no approaches: the party was still committed to public ownership: the time was not yet: there must be a real meeting of minds, and not a hastily concocted arrangement. But politicians cannot afford to await the miraculous arrival of a perfect world. They cannot afford to wait until Parliament is reformed and the machinery of government overhauled and the Labour Party altered in character. They must take things as they find them. And this Mr. Grimond, perhaps to his credit, has always refused to do.[3]

Watkins points to a number factors, but emphasises the judgment of Grimond himself in this mystery. An examination of opinion in the parties around him, however, shows that realignment was inherently implausible, and that – to the extent that it is significant – Grimond's personality and personal political philosophy account for the attempt as much as for the failure of realignment.

Before realignment

There is a good deal of evidence that Grimond's personal politics were, as he claimed, strongly progressive. In an unpublished passage of his *Memoirs*, he remembered that as a young man in the early 1930s 'with my upbringing and temperament, it would have been difficult not to be a Liberal. But I might I suppose have joined the Labour Party.'[4] In the euphoric atmosphere following the Second World War and the arrival in office of a Labour government, he recalled later that 'we were all to some extent socialists' and that 'I had rosier visions of what might be achieved by governments on behalf of communities.'[5] He was, unlike any of his parliamentary colleagues in the 1950s, always opposed at the polls by the Conservatives, and he voted against the Conservative government in parliamentary divisions more often than any other Liberal MP between 1951 and becoming leader, and when he became leader the votes of Liberal MPs were cast much more evenly between government and opposition (see Figure 1). Grimond was supportive of the Radical Reform Group formed in 1954 to resist the growing influence of libertarian free-market economists in the Liberal Party, becoming its President in 1958.

However, this implied leftward disposition does not seem to have affected Grimond's overall approach to parliamentary

Left: 'He needs me': Harold Wilson and Jo Grimond (*The Guardian*, 1965)

politics. Figure 1 shows that in the Commons, though he was slightly less reliable as a supporter of Conservative measures than his colleagues, Grimond joined in the Liberal MPs' general pattern of voting predominantly with the Conservatives. For at least one division he acted as a teller on the Conservative side of the lobby, and he was described in correspondence between Liberal National and Conservative leaders as 'very sensible and well-balanced.'[6]

This apparent 'drift to the right', as Megan Lloyd George called it, was a feature of the Liberal Party generally at the time, reflected in the electoral pacts at Bolton and Huddersfield, and in Churchill's courtship of Clement Davies, and it was a trend from the consequences of which Grimond could not isolate himself. At a time of potentially fatal vulnerability for Liberals, they could hardly decline to at least humour Conservative approaches, and attempts by Basil Wigoder, A. P. Marshall and a group of MPs led by Megan Lloyd George to forge a link with Labour had met with contemptuous rejection before 1951.[8] After that Lord Thurso and Sir Andrew MacFadyean were similarly rebuffed.[9] Even upon taking up the leadership in 1956, Grimond did not change his tone or that of the party substantially. Official policy had been set very clearly against any national pacts in 1955, and an early series of
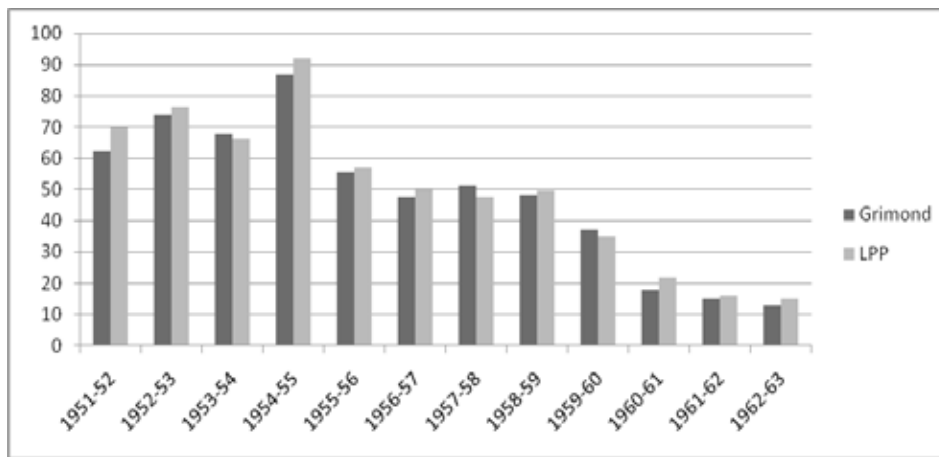
Figure 1:
Percentage
of votes cast
with the
Conservatives
by Liberal MPs
in Commons
divisions,
1951–63[7]

articles setting out 'New Liberal' strategy and policy under Grimond in *Liberal News* made no mention of realignment.[10] Two years later Grimond published *The Liberal Future*, in which he gave no hint of any arrangement with Labour, but rather asserted that 'Socialists … were prepared to use the State even if it meant over-riding personal liberty', a principle which had led to the rise of National Socialism, that national-isation had been 'a fiasco' and 'the promise of endless welfare bene-fits to be handed out by the grand-mother state … is incompatible with freedom', and most wither-ingly that 'a Liberal must submit his beliefs in the private enterprise system to a more radical criti-cism than is now provided by the Labour Party.'[11] Roger Fulford's authoritative (though not author-ised) book for the general election of the same year, *The Liberal Case*, was studiously equidistant in its assessment of the relative appeals of the Labour and Conservative Parties in a balanced parliament: he set out three principles gov-erning Liberal cooperation which might affect either party in the same way, starting with a demand for electoral reform to which the Labour Party showed no signs of responding.[12] The priority of Gri-mond's early period in the leader-ship, when he sought to 'get on', was to distinguish the Liberals from both of the main parties.

1959

It was only following the 1959 general election, with a larger share of the vote but still only six MPs, that Grimond openly proposed realignment. Over the weekend following the Conservative victory, he gave interviews to *The Guardian* and *The Observer* calling for the for-mation of a joint movement of Labour and Liberal supporters:

> I would like to see the radical side of politics – the Liberals and most of the Labour Party – make a new appeal to people to take an active part in all sorts of real political issues. There must be a bridge between Socialism and the Liberal policy of co-ownership in industry through a type of syndicalism coupled with a nonconformist out-look such as was propounded on many issues by George Orwell.[13]

'I have always thought there should be a really strong pro-gressive movement as an alterna-tive to Conservatism,' Grimond was reported saying on the front page of *The People*. 'The elec-tion result might well create the atmosphere for this to happen. At the moment I cannot say that I shall offer any kind of deal to the Labour Party. But I shall be meeting certain people next week and it is likely that the possibility of a deal will at least come under discussion.' The 'certain people', the paper assumed, were his col-leagues in the leadership of the Liberal Party. It was also reported that private talks were being held between Labour MPs to persuade Gaitskell that 'the only future for Labour lies in sinking Social-ism without a trace and embrac-ing a policy of radical reform.'[14] Paul Johnson wrote in the *Evening Standard* that such a deal was the talk of the Labour Party 'all over London (but chiefly in Hamp-stead).'[15] Douglas Jay advocated a new Liberal–Labour relationship, 'even up to a merger', at a party on the same weekend that Gri-mond gave his interviews,[16] and Bill Rodgers found in a discussion with Mark Bonham Carter set up by the *Sunday Times* to explore the idea of realignment that they 'reached a surprising measure of agreement'.[17]

Such an unexpected and con-troversial departure requires expla-nation. Grimond had evidently been amongst those less keen on the role of the Liberals as a prop to Tory governments in the first half of the decade, and Churchill's retirement and the Suez episode had convinced even those who had been advocates of a deal with the Tories that their liberal creden-tials had expired. The weakness of Labour now made an appeal to the left apparently more promising, and the Labour leader since 1955, Hugh Gaitskell, was already seek-ing to reform the party's approach to trade unions and nationalisa-tion. Lastly, Grimond now had alongside him in parliament an ally in the campaign for realignment in the new MP for North Devon, Jer-emy Thorpe. It was Thorpe who made speeches and wrote a piece in the *Evening Standard* at this time reassuring Liberals that their inde-pendence was not under threat, and that it was business as usual for Liberal campaigning regardless of realignment.

Nonetheless, Grimond's sug-gestions met with anxiety and rejection in both Liberal and Labour Parties and he was forced into a quick rearguard action in further newspaper interviews and a radio broadcast on *Any Ques-tions*. Opinion at the top of the Labour Party was already hostile to any relationship with the Liber-als: in a speech the previous year, Party General Secretary Mor-gan Phillips had dismissed talk of a deal with the Liberals say-ing that a Labour victory short of overall majority would be 'disas-trous', that the Liberals appealed to 'escapism' and that aspects of new Liberal campaigning such as torchlight parades were 'unhealthy'.[18] A *Sunday Times* col-umnist teased Labour support-ers on 'The Liberal Menace'.[19] Gaitskell immediately rejected the advice of Jay and others to con-sider a deal.

In the Liberal Party there was also surprise and concern. Some of Grimond's small band of MPs were already fearful of his strategy and critical of his management style. Roderic Bowen, who had been a Liberal MP since 1945, recalled that he had taken a critical view of Grimond from the outset:

> Grimond to my mind was really riding two horses. In the country and in the Party, he was saying: 'The Liberal Party is a great party, it's an independent party, it's fighting Labour and it's fighting Tories tooth and nail, and it's totally independent'. That was the image he was presenting to the country. In private, within the Liberal Party, he was really saying that the Liberal Party should be reduced to a sort of sphere of influence within the Labour Party.

Bowen reassured himself at the time that 'I don't think the Labour Party really had any use for Grimond. They would have welcomed taking the Liberals, which had become much stronger by then of course, under their wing, absorbing them; and of course, that involved ingratiating Grimond, but personally I don't think they had any use for Grimond.'[20] Former Young Liberal leader and parliamentary candidate Roy Douglas noted that Grimond's remarks caused 'a considerable degree of apprehension and concern among the rank and file of the Liberal Party'; and Grimond's biographer agrees that 'many party members, after all the splits and secessions of the past fifty years, cherished above all else the party's independence' and that 'Grimond may be faulted for giving such an ambiguous interview on such a sensitive topic.' Grimond told his staff that he expected the Party Council to be critical of his actions.[21] Immediately he sought to downplay the significance of his remarks and the changes he was proposing, telling *The Times* on the day the *Observer* interview was published that 'I was really saying nothing more than I have been saying on the subject for some time' and that 'I am not talking about immediate coalition and I am merely speaking for myself.' A week later he had scaled down his ambitions to no more than a 'growing together of radical opinion on some issues that may come up in the next few years.'[22] Douglas considers this attempt to distinguish entirely between perception of Liberal policy and his own statements to be implausible, but acknowledges that 'for the time being, the matter blew over. Perhaps everyone who in other circumstances might have made a fuss was too exhausted after the general election. Perhaps they were satisfied that reciprocity from the Labour side was out of the question.'[23] A mixture of Labour obstruction, Liberal resistance and his own poor presentation had put paid to Grimond's first attempt at realignment within seven days.

1962

Despite his disappointment, Grimond, according Barberis, 'continued to hanker after some sort of alliance or realignment' and 'kept the realignment pot simmering'.[24] His next opportunity to test reaction to Labour–Liberal cooperation was initiated from the other side, as those on the Labour Right, such as Mark Abrams, reflected upon their third electoral defeat.[25] In November 1961, maverick Labour MP Woodrow Wyatt published a letter in *The Guardian* arguing for an electoral deal between the parties.[26] He set out his proposal again in the *New Statesman* the following January:

> There are many radical necessities on which Labour and Liberal supporters are agreed – the urgent need to raise housing and education standards, to restore the social services to first place in Europe, to increase the impetus towards fair shares of wealth, to step up help to the aged, to improve the health service, to stimulate British industry with the aid of more than the half-hearted planning proposed by the Conservatives.

'If a Labour–Liberal electoral alliance is to succeed' urged Wyatt, 'the ground must be prepared for it well in advance. I suggest that it should start by a combined appeal from Gaitskell and Grimond through all media of communication, including television.' He identified ninety-seven seats where one party should stand down: in thirty-six the Labour Party; in sixty-one the Liberals.[27] Other individual voices on the left were also urging cooperation: Wyatt's fellow Labour MP Desmond Donnelly publicly supported a deal, and Michael Shanks had just published his renowned study *The Stagnant Society*, in which he argued that 'it is not surprising that there has been growing support for the idea of some sort of alliance between the Right-wing of the Labour Party and the Liberals. Until this happens the opposition vote in the country will remain divided and the Conservatives will enjoy a monopoly of power (unless they too split). Mr Gaitskell has more in common in policy and in outlook with Mr Grimond than with Mr Cousins.'[28]

Shanks's reference to Transport and General Workers' Union General Secretary Frank Cousins highlighted one of the issues – the role of trade unions – which had given rise to bitter dispute in the Labour Party under Gaitskell, the others including public ownership and nuclear defence. A reviewer of *The Stagnant Society* in *Liberal News* wrote reassuringly that 'Mr Shanks sees one big difficulty. He fears that the Liberals are even more anti-trade union than the Tories. This may have been true 10 years ago, but it is certainly not so now.'[29]

Grimond's response to this renewed speculation was positive, but tempered by his awareness, from the bruising experience of two-and-a-half years earlier, of the dissent which any encouragement to Wyatt would provoke within the Liberal Party. He re-emphasised that 'it would be intolerable for the country and suicide for the parties concerned if Liberal and Labour cut each other's throats because of vested interests when they could work out together a progressive policy broadly acceptable to both.' At the same time, however, he maintained a diplomatic distance by arguing that Wyatt's preoccupation with seats before policy 'may

'I have always thought there should be a really strong progressive movement as an alternative to Conservatism,' Grimond was reported saying.

appear both naïve and cynical'.[30] In some ways conditions were more promising for realignment than in 1959: Labour revisionists had been frustrated by the failure of Gaitskell's move against Clause IV in 1959, and unnerved by his need to go to the barricades over defence at the 1960 Labour conference.

The Conservatives, on the other hand, were now alienated from Liberal politics: only Central Office intervention had maintained the electoral pact in Bolton in 1959, and the Liberals had broken it at the East Bolton by-election of 1960. The last senior voice in the party to propose a national deal with the Liberals had been Randolph Churchill in 1958 and the Conservative Steering Committee had rejected such a proposal.[31] Despite deteriorating economic conditions, a ragged and remote Tory government was holding its own in the polls and even making by-election gains.[32] In March, Grimond tried to capitalise on these circumstances saying that 'the divisions in politics fall in the wrong place. The natural breakdown should be into a Conservative Party – a small group of convinced Socialists in the full sense – and a broadly based progressive Party. It is the foundations of the last named that the Liberal Party seeks to provide.'[33]

Much of the Liberal Party, however, remained reluctant to provide such a foundation, and Grimond knew it. Even before Wyatt's *New Statesman* article had hit the news stands, John Buchanan, the Liberal candidate at the Oswestry by-election, had attacked the idea of any Lib–Lab deal as 'wrong politically and wrong morally'. He pointed to the experience of the Liberals supporting the 1929 Labour administration, and warned that the Liberals 'would be deluged by Labour pressure.' The right approach, he stressed, was 'to be strong enough to push the Socialists into second place. We did it at Oswestry; we can do it elsewhere.'[34] This self-confidence was restated by Bolton MP Arthur Holt a week after Grimond's comments. Though writing to the Editor of the *Daily Herald*, he might equally have been responding to his party leader:

You say there is a gulf between the Liberal and Labour Parties. Correct. You say there is a gulf between the Labour Party and the new Radicals. Correct. You say the Labour Party is stuck in the mud. You want a new Party with new sensible attitudes to politics. … You have got it all in the Liberal Party.[35]

It was the immeasurable strengthening of such confidence that came with the Orpington by-election victory which curtailed this second bout of realignment speculation. Although this brought, in Eric Lubbock, a supportive colleague into Grimond's parliamentary group, it also emboldened those who wanted to see the Liberals go it alone. Two months later, they were further encouraged by the retention of Clement Davies's seat Montgomeryshire by Emlyn Hooson, a relative right-winger who would speak out against later attempts at working with Labour.

1965

Grimond's last attempt at establishing a working relationship between the Liberals and Labour was not principally on policy as in 1959, or an electoral alliance as in 1962, but at the parliamentary level. The outcome of the 1964 general election had been a Labour government led by Harold Wilson with an overall Commons majority of only four seats. Although this was tantalisingly close to the balance-of-power situation that Grimond had anticipated might precipitate cooperation between their two parties, it was clear that Wilson would press on without seeking support from outside Labour ranks.

Less than a year into the 1964 parliament, however, Grimond – buoyed up by the victory of David Steel, another advocate of inter-party cooperation, at the Roxburghshire by-election in March 1965 – gave another press interview which raised the prospect of the Liberals working with Labour. This time his suggestion was that Liberal MPs might bolster the parliamentary support for the Labour government's programme in exchange for 'a serious agreement on long-term

policies.'[36] As in 1959 and 1962, there was some evidence for Grimond to believe that such an offer would be well received. Orpington MP Eric Lubbock remembers 'a lot of Lib-Labbery' in the 1964 parliament, some support for which came from 'the most surprising' quarters, such as Scottish Liberal MP George Mackie. Lubbock found John Silkin a close and sympathetic contact in the Labour Party. The possibility of cooperation boosted morale amongst Liberal MPs and in some ways compensated for the frustrations of the election. The Wilson government was engaged in projects which had Liberal sympathies, not to say origins, such as the introduction of an Ombudsman, and 'we were fully behind rent controls and race relations legislation.'[37] Wilson's Chief Whip Ted Short acknowledged 'the small but useful fund of goodwill I had built up with the Liberals' in the early stages of the parliament, and took the view of Steel's victory at Roxburghshire that 'as the Liberals voted with us occasionally, this was something of a gain for us.'[38]

As on the previous two occasions, Grimond almost immediately met a slammed door of Labour indifference, and had the rug pulled from under him by Liberal objectors, this time more vocal than ever. The National League of Young Liberals had pre-empted the debate by passing a resolution at their annual conference two months earlier rejecting any form of pact or alliance with either of the main parties.[39] When *The Guardian* interview was published – with the sensational headline 'Coalition Offer to Labour from Mr Grimond' – opinion in the Liberal Party was at best divided, and critics did not keep their counsel. Only two MPs fully supported the statement, and some of Grimond's closest allies were amongst the critics: Arthur Holt, who had lost Bolton to Labour in 1964 pleaded that 'it raises great local difficulties in some areas where Labour's image is still moronic and prejudiced. Local Liberals find national level speeches an embarrassment and it is vital that the Parliamentary Party keep in closest touch with the PPCs in these areas.' In neighbouring Colne Valley, another

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Grimond tried to capitalise on these circumstances saying that 'the divisions in politics fall in the wrong place. The natural breakdown should be into a Conservative Party – a small group of convinced Socialists in the full sense – and a broadly based progressive Party. It is the foundations of the last named that the Liberal Party seeks to provide.'

keen admirer of Grimond, Richard Wainwright, had come within 200 votes of winning the seat from Labour in 1964, and warned that he was 'driven to be pessimistic about the proposals.'[40] A Liberal Independence Committee was established by four former parliamentary candidates who wrote an open letter to Grimond warning that his approach risked leaving the Liberals 'submerged in Socialism.'[41] Some leading figures such as Lord Byers were especially suspicious of Wilson because of the prime minister's abandonment of Liberalism after Oxford University, where they had been contemporaries.[42]

Press coverage from across the political spectrum was humiliating: The *Sunday Mirror* said that Grimond's gesture would be 'publicly scorned', and its daily stablemate that it was 'a non-starter'; the *Sunday Telegraph* believed 'Ministers see no need for taking up Mr Grimond's offer' and *The Sun* declared that 'Mr Grimond hasn't a cat in Hell's chance of dictating terms to the Government for Liberal support. Whose side are they on? Even the question doesn't matter. Neither side at present cares much.' Even the more restrained tone of *The Economist* dismissed the intervention as 'yet another buzz that is destined to die away.'[43] Unsurprisingly, by the time the Liberal Assembly came around in September, even though Grimond intervened unexpectedly early to make a speech setting out his terms to Labour again, incoming Party President Nancy Seear looked back on the episode to deliver a stinging rebuke to the idea of a Lib–Lab arrangement:

> For forty years we have prophesied that the country would come to recognise the need for a non-socialist progressive party. We have not spent these years isolated but undefiled in the wilderness to choose this moment of all moments to go, in the biblical phrase, 'a whoring after foreign women'.[44]

To make the humiliation more complete, the foreign women were noticeably unbiddable. Silkin had warned Lubbock that Labour's National Executive Committee offered no mechanism for closer cooperation between the parties;[45] and though Wilson had Transport House conduct some initial research into the likely impact of using the Alternative Vote electoral system, he discovered that it would have weakened Labour in 1964, and dropped any possibility of negotiations. The tone of Wilson's boast afterwards that 'I never considered accepting his [Grimond's] proposal for one moment'[46] may reflect partisan bravado, but its substance is confirmed by Wilson's refusal to work with the Liberals in February 1974, when he had no majority at all. In his speech to Labour's 1965 conference, Wilson dismissed the record and significance of the Liberals with characteristic brutal wit.

Again Grimond had mishandled the press, his own MPs and supporters, and his intended partners in the Labour Party, and it is difficult not to return to Watkins's harsh assessment of his role. Douglas certainly took that view with six years' hindsight and a thorough inside knowledge of the Party:

> It is difficult to see what effect Grimond sought to produce, or how he imagined that this statement would assist. There was much alarm amongst Liberals, and the sharpness of their reaction seems both to have pained and surprised Grimond. If he sought to bring Party advantage to the Liberals by inclining to Labour in a balance-of-power situation, it is difficult to see why he thought he would succeed with ten MPs when Lloyd George had failed with fifty-eight, and Asquith had failed with a quarter of the House of Commons. If he sought some fundamental realignment of British politics, then he palpably misjudged completely the temper of active workers in both the Liberal and Labour Parties. A few brief conversations with constituency officers of the Liberal Party, or others in frequent contact with ordinary voters, would have sufficed to assure him that his plans, whatever they were, were simply 'not on'.[47]

> **Grimond's personality not only drove the process of realignment but also accounts for the abject nature – though not the simple fact – of its failure.**

Assessment

Three questions arise from this series of episodes: why did Grimond attempt realignment?; why did it fail?; and what was its long-term significance? All three questions can be answered by examining not only Grimond's personality, but also opinion in the Liberal Party and in the Labour and Conservative Parties.

Grimond's personality not only drove the process of realignment but also accounts for the abject nature – though not the simple fact – of its failure. We have good evidence that, although he participated in it because the survival of the party was at stake, Grimond was unenthusiastic about the Liberals' closeness to the Conservatives in the first half of the 1950s, and, once he became leader, Liberal MPs' voting patterns turned against the government. The shift of the Conservatives away from the Liberals consolidated this change. However, it was Grimond's unpredictable and remote manner which made his bids for realignment particularly ineffective: they came as a surprise even to his closest allies, and were expressed in such vague and inconsistent terms as to provoke a mixture of bewilderment, fear and anger rather than approval. Moreover, though Grimond was a leftist by instinct, his vision of the left – as he indicated at length in the passage from which the title of this article is taken – was inherently at odds with that which formed the core beliefs of even the most receptive elements of the Labour Party in the 1960s: Grimond was wholly opposed to further nationalisation, and committed to co-ownership; as a member of the Unservile State Group in the 1950s, he had put his name to publications proposing the ending of housing subsidies and tax relief for private school fees;[48] in the 1970s Grimond himself acknowledges that his views towards the left became more critical after the realignment project, and that 'the Socialist movement in the 70s steered by no star.'[49]

Even at the height of his own leadership, Grimond gave spontaneous signals of his distaste for the most sacred of Labour icons. Richard Wainwright, whose battle against Labour in the Colne

Valley by-election of 1963 was fully supported by Grimond, made a personal note of one such instance. Grimond addressed a large meeting at Holmfirth and the audience waited eagerly for questions from the floor:

> After a couple of friendly questions there came a rasping voice: 'What will Mr Grimond do for the working class?' Jo uncoiled himself and summoned up his matchless gift of commanding emphasis; and then just one sentence: 'The working class – I would abolish the working class'. Several seconds for his nine-word answer to sink in, and then huge applause, not from Liberals only. And no comeback from the well known Labour questioner.[50]

It is perhaps unsurprising that Grimond was associated by the young Vince Cable in the middle 1960s principally with economic liberalism.[51] And it is therefore no surprise that his attempts to reach out to Labour sometimes lacked conviction.

However, whatever Grimond had done the realignment project would have failed. Each time, Liberals who had fought to protect the party's existence expressed opposition with increasing vehemence, and Grimond himself came to recognise that 'the idea that the Liberal Party should be the mainstream of realignment was regarded as a Grimond eccentricity.'[52] The fact that Liberal opposition was not even fiercer is accounted for partly by Labour contempt for realignment. The only Socialists who responded warmly to Grimond's overtures were mavericks like Wyatt and Donnelly who did not remain in Labour themselves. The vast majority of the Labour movement was too tribal and often too complacent even to acknowledge the Liberals.

The significance of the realignment idea may lie in its longer-term effects. It ensured a public profile for the Liberals, and re-established an impression of the Liberals as a party of change, and possibly a party of government. Grimond's assertion of a leftist stance recruited many new activists in the late 1950s and early

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1960s who had not been attracted by the party previously – though many of these were keen opponents of cooperation with Labour, which they had also rejected.[53] The general idea of working with elements and former members of the Labour Party might not have borne fruit in the 1970s and 1980s had its seeds not been sown in the 1960s. This may, indeed, have been Grimond's hope: to lay the ground for a long-term healing of the progressive rift of the Edwardian era, on the right terms. Yet all of this is speculative and highly contentious. Whatever Grimond's realignment strategy sought, its fate was not dictated by Grimond; its achievements were largely accidental and belated; and its immediate failure was inevitable.

Matt Cole lectures for the Hansard Society at the London School of Economics. Later this year he is to publish Richard Wainwright, the Liberals and Liberal Democrats: Unfinished Business *with Manchester University Press.*

1   *The Guardian*, 10 October 1959; *The Observer*, 11 October 1959. This idea was reiterated in the *News Chronicle*, 14 October 1959.

2   This is Grimond's description of the term 'left' in J. Grimond, *The Liberal Challenge* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1963), p. 315.

3   A. Watkins, 'The Tragedy of Jo Grimond', *The Spectator*, 20 January 1967, p. 60.

4   M. McManus, *Jo Grimond: Towards the Sound of Gunfire* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001), p. 374.

5   J. Grimond, *Memoirs* (London: Heinemann, 1979), pp. 132 and 260.

6   Jack Maclay MP to Lord Woolton, 10 December 1951, Woolton MS 25 Folios 197–98. Maclay suggested continuing negotiations about cooperation between the National and Independent Liberals (and thereby the Conservatives) after Grimond's return from New Zealand in early 1952.

7   These figures are calculated from detailed tables in the *Conservative Campaign Guide*s of 1955, 1959 and 1964.

8   See M. Egan, 'Basil Wigoder', *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (London: Politicos, 1998); Marshall's proposals of February 1948 are in the Labour General Secretary's files GS/LIB/4ii, Museum of People's

History; B. Donoughue and G. W. Jones, *Herbert Morrison: Portrait of a Politician* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p. 509.

9   Thurso (formerly Sir Archibald Sinclair) was reported by Philip Noel-Baker to have approached Gaitskell about a pact in February 1952: cited in M. Jones, *A Radical Life: the Biography of Megan Lloyd George* (London: Hutchinson, 1991), p. 237. MacFadyean's appeal was made publicly at the Corn Exchange in Plymouth on 21 February 1953 (*The Times*, 23 February 1953).

10   This series was called 'Where Liberals Stand', and ran in various issues of *Liberal News* in the first half of 1957.

11   J. Grimond, *The Liberal Future* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), pp. 21–22, 55.

12   R. Fulford, *The Liberal Case* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), pp. 39–50, esp. p. 49.

13   *The Observer*, 11 October 1959.

14   'Is it a Lib–Lab Deal?', *The People*, 11 October 1959.

15   M. Foot, *Aneurin Bevan: a Biography*, Vol. 2 (London: Davis-Poytner, 1973), p. 631.

16   McManus, op. cit., pp. 146–47.

17   B. Rodgers, *Fourth Amongst Equals* (London: Politico's, 2000), p. 40.

18   *Sunday Times*, 1 June 1958.

19   'A Student of Politics', *Sunday Times*, 8 June 1958.

20   R. Bowen, interview, 8 August 2000.

21   McManus, op. cit., p. 146.

22   *Daily Telegraph*, 17 October 1959.

23   R. Douglas, *A History of the Liberal Party 1895–1970* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1971), p. 272.

24   P. Barberis, *Liberal Lion: Jo Grimond – a political life* (I.B.Tauris, 2005), pp. 100–101.

25   M. Abrams, *Must Labour Lose?* (Penguin, 1960).

26   *The Guardian*, 23 November 1961.

27   W. Wyatt, 'My Plan for a Lib–Lab Pact', *New Statesman*, 26 January 1962, pp. 110–12.

28   M. Shanks, *The Stagnant Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), pp. 175–76. The postscript is dated June 1961.

29   John Landell Mills, *Liberal News*, 5 October 1961.

30   'Radicals Must Unite', *Liberal News*, 3 February 1962.

31   R. Churchill, *London Evening Standard*, 2 April 1958. The proceedings of the Steering Committee are

NEW RADICALISM

AND THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT WHIG TENDENCY

The New Radicals were a group of Liberal Democrat activists operating within the party from 1998 to 2005. **James Graham** assesses how the group was founded, what it stood for, and how much it achieved.

WHAT WAS New Radicalism? To call it a faction is probably misleading: it had no organising committee and certainly no bank account; it was defined more by what it was against than by what it was for; and although it comprised a group of party activists, it was dominated by one activist in particular – Donnachadh McCarthy.

Born in County Tipperary, Donnachadh McCarthy studied medicine for four years at the National University of Ireland in Cork.[1] He did not complete his studies but instead joined the Cork Ballet School and became a professional classical dancer. Moving to London in 1986, he performed in the Royal Opera Ballet. He asserts that it was a unique opportunity to go to Venezuela to visit the indigenous Yanomami people – with whom he lived for two weeks – that was responsible for switching his life's passion from dance to environmentalism. In 1994 he was elected as a Liberal Democrat member of Southwark Council and from that vantage point began to get involved in national politics.[2]

After campaigning to improve the party's internal environmental practices, McCarthy shot to prominence within the party when he decided to take a stance against the decision by Paddy Ashdown to appoint Richard Holme as the director of the Liberal Democrats' 1997 general election campaign. Holme, at the time, was also a director of global mining corporation Rio-Tinto Zinc – then embroiled in a controversial strip-mining operation in Indonesia.[3] In the autumn of 1996, McCarthy stood on an explicitly anti-Holme ticket for election to the party's Federal Executive, and won. Despite failing in his objective to force Holme to choose between RTZ and his positions in the party, he was re-elected to the Federal Executive every year but one until 2004.

The bad feeling surrounding Lord Holme's appointment continued to fester and McCarthy's frustrations on the Federal Executive grew. These led him to write what was to become a defining article in *Liberator* magazine shortly after the 1997 general election. In 'Lib Dem Leaders – Out of Control' he stated:

> One of the fascinating aspects of the history of the old Liberal Party was the conflict between the Liberal [sic] and Whig traditions. The competition between these two strands of Liberal thought has been a vital ingredient in ensuring the continued vibrancy of the party. The Radicals have contributed idealism, commitment to principles and community politics. They have consistently pushed for greater democratic accountability in the governance of the country. The Whigs contributed organisational know-how, finance and pragmatism. It is important that both strands should exist in equilibrium. It is only when one or other strand gains domination of the party or indulges in damaging revolt that problems arise.[4]

McCarthy went on to assert that the radical strand had declined in the party throughout the eighties and nineties and that it was time for a revival.

Better historians than me will have to assess the veracity of this thesis, but it served as an intoxicating narrative for many. The *Liberator* Collective[5] organised a fringe meeting at the autumn conference held in Eastbourne that year, at which McCarthy and others fleshed out the basis for what was to quickly become known as New Radicalism. Afterwards, away from the hotel bars of conference, discussion about the form that this New Radicalism should take continued on the internet, using a CIX conference set up for this purpose by Richard Gadsden.[6] This was to become the main forum for New Radicalism throughout its time as a meaningful force within the party.

For those who do not know what it is, Compulink Internet eXchange (CIX) was one of the UK's first internet service providers. Pre-dating the World Wide Web, its main means of communication was via a series of discussion forums, or 'conferences'. A home-computing enthusiast, Paddy Ashdown recognised its potential as an organising tool and championed its widespread use across the party. The establishment of New Radicalism and the rise of CIX within the party's activist base coincided with each other and Donnachadh McCarthy and the New Radicals would go on to take full advantage of that fact. It effectively connected three generations of 'radicals', with members of the sixties' 'Red Guard' (including Tony Greaves), the Liberator Collective, Liberal Democrat Youth & Students, and

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others all working together on a shared agenda.

In the months following the Eastbourne conference, New Radicalism began to take shape. A list of five 'tenets' was drafted to define what New Radicalism was. These were:

- *A healthy community.* We will work for healthy, well-educated, balanced liberal communities where all, whether advantaged or disadvantaged, can contribute to and enjoy a good quality of life.
- *Community economics.* Community politics must be supported by a strong local economy. The global economy must be balanced by a local economy that respects our local communities.
- *A pure environment.* Pure air, pure water, pure soil, pure food are the rights of our own and coming generations.
- *Open democratic international and local government.* The powers of the multinationals must be democratically regulated and local communities must have open democratic governance where individuals have the liberty to take and use power over their own lives.
- *Politics by example.* This new radicalism insists that the party is run entirely in line with its own principles.[7]

Looking back at this list and other contemporary articles, I am struck by three things. First, New Radicals tended assume that New Labour would deliver a meaningful upheaval of the UK political system and that it was consequently necessary for the party to move on from this agenda. Indeed, the first New Radicalism conference, held on 20 June 1998, was entitled 'What do we stand for post-Constitutional Reform?'[8] The reality is that, more than a decade on, the constitutional reform project begun by the Cook–Maclennan talks is anything but finished. Second, none of these tenets reflected what was the New Radicals' primary short-term concern: cooling off the party's close working relationship with the Labour government and, ideally, putting a stop to the work of the Joint Cabinet Committee. This was to be the New Radicals' primary focus

in 1998, culminating in its performing a key role in organising the grassroots resistance to Paddy Ashdown's attempts to widen the JCC's scope. Third, there was no political philosophy underpinning it. The principles spelt out in the preamble to the Liberal Democrat constitution are taken as a given with the New Radical tenets merely offered as bolt-on extras that don't add up to a coherent whole. Even some of New Radicalism's keenest exponents, including myself, would voice concerns about whether liberals should be calling for a 'pure' environment.[9] There was talk of New Radicalism eventually evolving into a 'democratic think tank',[10] but no New Radical publications were ever to be produced. As a consequence, while individuals would serve on party policy working groups focusing on a range of issues, the main focus of the New Radicals became 'politics by example'.

Given that New Radicalism had defined itself as embroiled in a Manichaean struggle with the party's Whig tendency, it was almost inevitable that it would find itself in conflict with that most Whiggish of institutions, the House of Lords parliamentary party.[11] McCarthy's conflict with Richard Holme proved to be merely the first round. The New Radicals coordinated two main campaigns regarding the Lords. First, with full reform of the Lords not on the immediate political agenda, the New Radicals fought for an 'interim'[12] system whereby the party membership – not the leader – would control who should be nominated. Second, they campaigned for an end to the practice of Liberal Democrat peers working as paid lobbyists.

The first objective was achieved relatively simply. The proposal for the establishment of an 'interim peers list' was backed overwhelmingly at the 1998 spring conference. However, due to a combination of not knowing the number of peers that the Prime Minister would enable the Liberal Democrats to appoint[13] and the obscure way in which prospective life peers are vetted by Parliament and government, the system that the Federal Executive eventually agreed gave the leader maximum

leeway. The election held in 1999 had 181 candidates competing for fifty places. Additionally, former MPs were deemed to be on the list automatically and the leader would be permitted a 'free choice' at each round of appointments. The effect was that only a handful of 'elected' peers have ever been ennobled.

The action against lobbyists proved to be an even tougher challenge. Life peers hated the proposal. A motion was passed at party conference, and the parliamentary party was given a year to respond. It declined to ever formally do so and it quickly became apparent that it had no intention of complying with the 'request'.[14] This was eventually to result in McCarthy's resignation from the Federal Executive after a furious exchange with party President Navnit Dholakia on the stage of the 2004 spring conference.

However, the New Radicals' greatest achievement had taken place just over a year before that, when they played a pivotal role in firming up Liberal Democrat opposition in advance of the Iraq War. The Liberal Democrats' formal opposition to the war came quite late in the day. The party's position in 2002 had been mainly one of scepticism and emphasising the importance of working within the UN rather than of outright opposition. However, New Radicals were determined to strengthen Liberal Democrat opposition to the war and concluded that the best way to do this was to persuade the party to formally join the historic anti-war march on 15 February 2003. I have written elsewhere about the internal struggle to persuade Charles Kennedy to participate in the march following a unanimous vote on the Federal Executive to support it.[15] Suffice it to say, he was eventually persuaded (or forced) to go along with it and, with McCarthy, spoke at the post-demonstration rally. With this success under his belt, McCarthy appeared to command an alternative power base to the leadership. But it all went wrong very quickly.

The anti-war march marked a sea change in the party's popularity and, in other circumstances, should have united the two sides. Instead, all the tensions and

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frustrations of the previous six years exploded. Kennedy went on to insist that the policy agreed at the following spring conference in Torquay opposed the war but supported the troops,[16] a confusing qualification attacked by the party's critics.[17] McCarthy and Lord Greaves meanwhile pursued an agenda of recrimination on the Federal Executive. In so doing, in my view they immediately threw away the political capital that the success over the anti-war demonstration had earned. This was to serve as the beginning of the end for New Radicalism and McCarthy's time within the Liberal Democrats. He eventually resigned from the party in 2005, writing an article in *The Independent* denouncing Charles Kennedy's record as party leader.[18]

As for New Radicalism more widely, it quickly died without its figurehead. However, this was also partly due to technological and financial realities. New Radicalism was firmly embedded in CIX which, by the early noughties, was an outmoded and uncommercial technology. For all its uses, people were not willing for pay the £7.50 a month that the service cost at a time when they could buy broadband access for not much more. As CIX's use within the party waned, so did New Radicalism's influence.

For my own part, I remain in two minds about my time as a 'New Radical'. Its intellectual vacuum meant that it quickly ran out of steam, and it has subsequently been largely forgotten. Its disproportionate focus on internal party matters is something which, in retrospect, appals me. However, I do feel that Donnachadh McCarthy's stance on a number of issues has now been largely vindicated. He was fighting against a complacent and conservative establishment which should have known better and on many occasions behaved appallingly.

Robin Eames's recent inquiry into the House of Lords' Code of Conduct[19] has cracked down on Lords taking paid advocacy work in a way that was dismissed by Liberal Democrat peers five years previously; the party should have been leading calls for reform in this area, not sullenly going along with it. Similarly, McCarthy's

McCarthy was fighting against a complacent and conservative establishment which should have known better and on many occasions behaved appallingly.

repeated demand for more democratic oversight of the party's fundraising operation might well have prevented the debacle surrounding the £2.4m donation made by fraudster Michael Brown in 2005. Regardless of McCarthy's tactical and strategic failings, the challenge to the party leadership that he set was one that it failed.

James Graham served on the Liberal Democrat Federal Executive 2003–2005 and organised the New Radicals' 'Radical Winter School' in Leeds in January 2002.

1   Donnachadh McCarthy, *Saving the Planet without Costing the Earth* (London: Fusion Press, 2004), p. 237.

2   Ibid., pp. 209–225.

3   Donnachadh McCarthy, 'No Place for Holme?', *Liberator*, Issue 239, September 1996 (London: Liberator Publications), pp. 16–17.

4   Donnachadh McCarthy, 'Lib Dem Leaders – Out of Control', *Liberator*, Issue 244, June 1997 (London: Liberator Publications), pp. 26–27.

5   *Liberator* was in many ways New Radicalism's crucible and main sounding board, which explains why so many references in this article are to pieces from the magazine. But the two were never formally in alliance. Gareth Epps was the only member of the *Liberator* Collective who was also closely associated with New Radicalism.

6   Donnachadh McCarthy, 'New Radicals Find Their Voice', *Liberator*, Issue 247, November 1997 (London: Liberator Publications), p. 14.

7   Donnachadh McCarthy, 'The Great Strategy Debate', *Liberator*, Issue 249, February 1998 (London: Liberator Publications), p. 12. An earlier version of this list appeared in *Free Radical*, Issue 7.3, December 1997 (London: Liberal Democrat Youth and Students), p. 11, where the reference to local government in the fourth tenet was not included.

8   Stewart Rayment, 'New Radicals Are Looking to the Liberal Future', *Liberator*, Issue 253, August 1998 (London: Liberator Publications), pp. 18–19.

9   Gareth Epps, 'New Radicals – New and Radical?', *Liberator*, Issue 250, March 1998 (London: Liberator Publications), pp. 28–29; James Graham, 'Time for a Radical Restart?', *Liberator*, Issue 277, August 1998 (London: Liberator Publications), p. 19.

10   Epps, op. cit.

11   Note, however, that Tony Greaves was an outspoken New Radical himself, while Conrad Russell was a key ally.

12   Note the 'post-constitutional' assumption that Labour would eventually get around to reforming the second chamber, something which it failed to achieve in thirteen years of government.

13   The Cook-Maclennan Agreement issued jointly by Labour and the Liberal Democrats before the 1997 general election stated that following the removal of hereditary peers from the House of Lords, 'we should move, over the course of the next parliament, to a House of Lords where those peers who take a party whip more accurately reflect the proportion of votes received by each party in the previous general election' (Robin Cook and Robert Maclennan, *Looking Back, Looking Forward. The Cook-Maclennan Agreement, Eight Years On* (London: New Politics Network, 2005), p. 39). That implied the Liberal Democrats would get to make far more appointments than they ended up doing.

14   The Liberal Democrat constitution explicitly prohibits conference from 'mandating' elected representatives in any body in the Party (Clause 2.5).

15   James Graham, '15 February 2003: five years (and 11 days) later', *Quaequam Blog!*, 26 February 2008, http://www.theliberati.net/quaequamblog/2008/02/26/15-february-2003-five-years-and-11-days-later/.

16   Greg Hurst, 'Blair betraying UN, says Kennedy', *The Times*, 17 March 2003, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/iraq/article1120622.ece

17   Paul Foot, 'Bring our boys home', *The Guardian*, 19 March 2003, http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2003/mar/19/media.liberaldemocrats.

18   Donnachadh McCarthy, 'The lamentable leadership of Charles Kennedy', *The Independent*, 12 July 2005, http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/McCarthy-mccarthy-the-lamentable-leadership-of-charles-kennedy-498479.html.

19   *Leader's Group on the Code of Conduct Report* (House of Lords, 29 October 2009).

THE YOUNG LIBERALS A

Peter Hellyer reviews the relationship between the Young Liberals and the left in the 1960s.
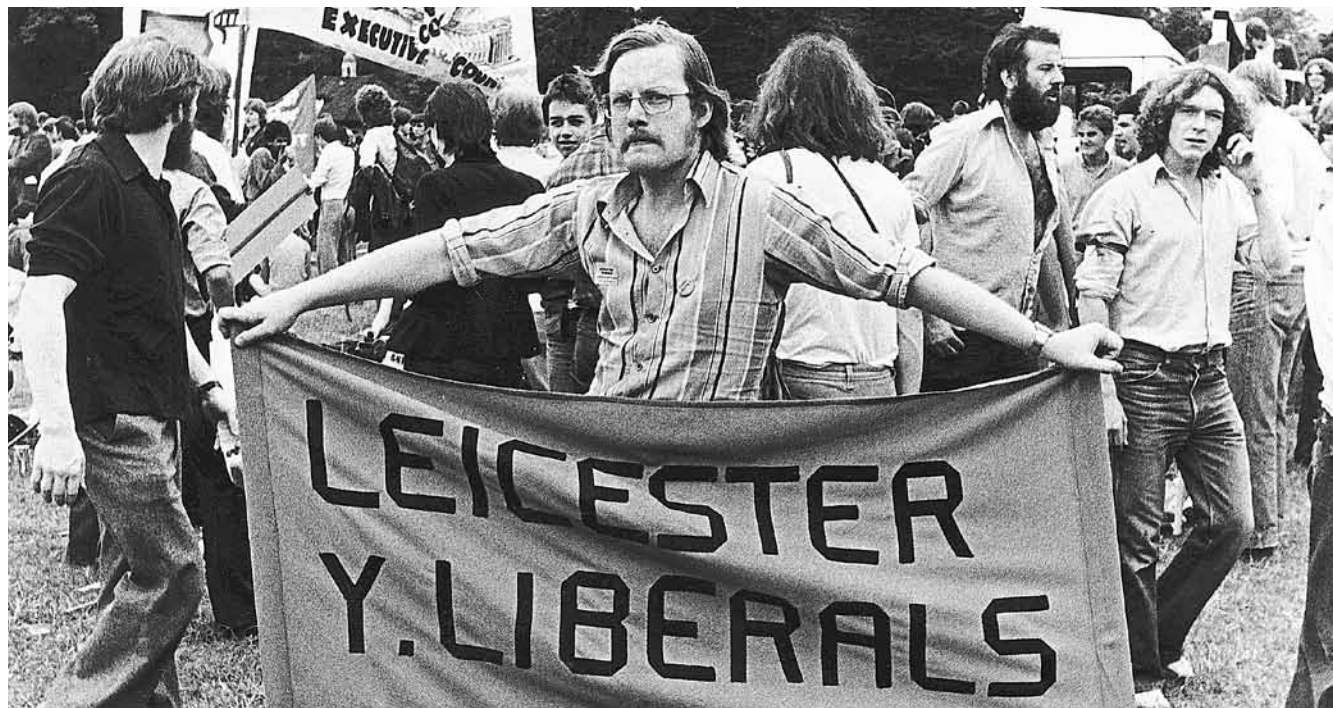
BRITISH POLITICS today lacks a large and active political youth movement directly affiliated to one of the major parties. Forty-five or so years ago, however, there was one: the Young Liberal Movement, YLM, comprised of the National League of Young Liberals, NLYL, and the Union of Liberal Students, ULS, for a short while dubbed the 'Red Guard' by an over-excitable media. For this issue of the *Journal*, I have been asked to provide some of my own recollections of the YLM and its relationships with the 'left' in British politics. A shorter examination of some of the issues discussed can be found in a paper I published in Issue No. 17 of the *Journal*.[1]

Others, who also played an active part, whether at a national or local level, will have their own memories. Their recollections and interpretations are likely to differ from mine, because, although we were all involved in what can be broadly described as the YL 'leadership', the nature of our activity differed.

With that cautionary note given, and conceding that, since I now live in the United Arab Emirates, I lack access to much research material, I present the following thoughts and recollections. My focus will be on the years of the Labour government led by Harold Wilson between 1964 and 1970, for the following reasons. First, it was during those years, mainly from 1966 to 1970, that the YLM reached its peak, claiming at its height 25,000 or so members in several hundred branches throughout the country. George Kiloh, NLYL Chairman from 1966 to 1968, outlined the attractiveness of the YLM, as he then saw it, in a book written by Jonathan Aitken, 'The Young Meteors', published in 1967:

> In the past the word Liberal has always been associated with namby-pambyness, but I think we're getting away from that. It's our intention to show a far more militant approach than has ever been seen in youth politics before. Our theme is originality, irreverence,

hardness, single-mindedness – and all this adds up to our intention to capture the left in British politics … Why am I a Liberal? – I'll never quite know, but perhaps it's because the Liberals are the only party with the slightest hope of ending the present depressing political cycle. Also, our supporters are full of ideals, and ideals capture the imagination of the young far more than the hypocrisy and dishonesty of the big parties.[2]

Secondly, in those years the YLM often had a somewhat testy relationship with the 'senior' party, although good relations at a personal level between many YL leaders and leaders of the party, both inside and outside parliament, always continued. At the same time, the YLM developed extra-party relationships with a wide range of other radical movements that were frequently the cause of severe strains.

Tony Greaves, Chairman of ULS at the beginning of the period and then of NLYL at the

end, has recalled in a previous issue how the YLM decided to adopt an approach of opening up links with the left:

> It all grew out of that generation of people who joined the party when it was advancing enormously. There had been Orpington (in 1962), followed by a number of near-misses … Then Harold Wilson had become leader of the Labour Party and took over our 'time for a change' message. The Liberal vote went up in the '64 election but overall the result was disappointing … We won more seats in the '66 election, but by that time Jo (Grimond) was exhausted, the party was running out of ideas and didn't know where it was going. A small group of us younger party members felt something must be done. We decided to get more involved in young people's campaigning with other groups, particularly the Young Communists. We also decided to try to make the Liberal Party more radical in its policies and more campaigning in its approach. That's why we started at the Brighton Assembly (in 1966) with defence and industrial democracy.[3]

By 1970, however, the YLM itself was heading into a decline. Tony Greaves has explained the changes as follows:

> The old YL leadership that had made such an impact in the mid-1960s was now experiencing an ideological crisis. On one side of the developing split were people such as George Kiloh, Terry Lacey, Louis Eaks, Hilary Wainwright and Tony Bunyan, who saw their allegiance as fundamentally to a left-based student and youth movement and began to call themselves socialists and distance themselves from the

'senior party'… On the other side were those of us who were clear that we were radical Liberals and for whom any future in politics had to lie with the Liberal Party, however much we despaired of its electoral failures and its seeming inability to campaign effectively or at all! Such people around the old YL leadership included Michael Steed, Bernard Greaves, Gareth Wilson and Simon Hebditch… and people like Gordon Lishman and Lawry Freedman spanning the two groups.[4]

Kiloh and the others on his side of the divide left the party, several joining Labour and others confining themselves to extra-parliamentary activity, while the second group remained within the Liberal Party. Following the passing of the 'Community Politics' resolution at the 1970 Eastbourne Party Assembly, proposed on behalf of the YLM by Tony Greaves and Gordon Lishman, the focus of many YL activists turned towards working within the party structure and in local communities. Disagreements between the YLM and the party continued but collaboration, rather than an often deliberate seeking of confrontation, became increasingly the norm and the 'Red Guard' phase, which had peaked at the end of 1967, was finally over.

Thirdly, I was myself most active during these years. While remaining a Liberal (or Liberal Democrat), increasing levels of overseas work from a London base from 1970, and then a move to the UAE in 1978, has meant that my subsequent involvement in the party has been largely confined to general election campaigns, always in the Scottish Borders.

Finally, during these years, several major foreign policy issues came to the fore, on each of which the Young Liberals adopted positions that were opposed to those

of the Labour government, but which led to the establishment of relationships both with the Labour left and the extra-parliamentary left. On one, that of Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa, the YL approach was broadly aligned with, though more radical than, the position of the party leadership, while on the others the YLs, or at least a significant part of their leadership, were often at variance with or in opposition to the rest of the party. I was primarily active in campaigns on foreign policy issues, being NLYL International Vice Chairman from 1967 to 1969, and it is with these that this article will deal, for the most part through personal recollections rather than detailed historical research.

During the last century or so, several large extra-parliamentary protest groups have emerged that have maintained links with conventional party politics. One such group was the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), founded in the late 1950s, which had become a powerful force with strong links to the Labour Party by the early 1960s, attracting over 150,000 to its annual Aldermaston marches. After the signing of the 1963 Global Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, support dwindled, while, following the election of the Labour government in 1964, some of the leading figures in CND, who were also Labour MPs, were constrained by their relationship with the government. During the 1964–1970 Labour government, moreover, the foreign policy issues that came to the fore were specific in terms of geography, rather than being general in nature, like nuclear disarmament. CND was ill equipped to respond to any of them. A brief description is necessary.

The first issue to emerge was that of white minority rule in Southern Africa. During the 1950s, the process of withdrawal from Empire gathered pace,

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extending to Africa. In 1957, Ghana had been given independence, and by early 1960 Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan had concluded that decolonisation was inevitable, as he noted in his 'Wind of Change' speech to the South African parliament in February 1960.

Nigeria became independent that year, others rapidly following, including Tanganyika in 1961, Kenya in 1963, and Zambia, formerly Northern Rhodesia, on 24 October 1964, nine days after the election of the Labour government. The progress of decolonisation then came largely to a halt. South of the River Zambesi, the government of Southern Rhodesia, representing the largest white-settler community in any of the African colonies, was determined to retain power, although Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, each without significant settler communities, all became independent between 1966 and 1968.

In Angola and Mozambique, armed struggle against the Portuguese colonial authorities had commenced in 1961 and 1964 respectively. Further south, the South African government had shown its determination to hold on to power, through, for example, the Sharpeville massacre of March 1960, an event which led directly to the conversion of the small Boycott of South Africa movement into the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM), a body with which many Liberals, including Jeremy Thorpe MP, were associated. The small South African Liberal Party had come under increasing harassment following Sharpeville, with many of its members being arrested or 'banned' to prevent them from attending gatherings and undertaking much other activity.

Confident of South African support, the Rhodesian government, led by Ian Smith, resisted pressure from London to move towards majority rule and issued its Unilateral Declaration of Independence on 11 November 1965. Sanctions were ineffective and a low-level insurgency commenced. Opposition to white-dominated rule in southern Africa became an important foreign policy issue for the British left, both within and outside parliament.

A second issue was that of the Vietnam War, which escalated from August 1964, with increasing involvement by the United States. An expansion of US ground forces commenced in January 1965, followed by bombing of North Vietnam in March 1965, this continuing until October 1968. The North Vietnamese 'Tet Offensive', launched in January 1968, led to an opening of talks. A programme of 'Vietnamisation' followed, with US troops being gradually withdrawn. The Paris Peace Accords were signed in 1973 and the war ended in April 1975 with the fall of Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City.

Despite American pressure, the British government refused to send troops to participate in the conflict, minded, perhaps, of lessons learned from the Malayan insurgency, which had ended in 1960, and from the Malaysia–Indonesia 'Konfrontasi' from 1962 to 1966. Supported by the Conservatives, however, it did provide some political support for the United States, this prompting widespread criticism from the left, both within and outside the Labour Party.

It was argued by the United States that if one country fell under the influence of Communism, with which movements of national liberation were assumed to be associated, then surrounding countries would follow. The Vietnam War was the major test ground of this 'domino theory'.

On the British left, the simplistic identification of independence movements with Communism was not accepted. The Non-aligned Movement had been founded in 1955, including Egypt, Yugoslavia and Commonwealth member India amongst its leading members, while, through the Movement for Colonial Freedom, which at its peak had over seventy Labour MPs as members, there was widespread support for decolonisation. The 1962 Cuban missile crisis not only prompted the further growth of CND, but also stimulated more debate on whether British interests were best served by a close alignment of foreign policy with the United States. On the left, there was further debate between the Communist Party and members of the Labour Party sympathetic

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to the Soviet Union and those, including the Young Liberals, who were more inclined to adopt the view of 'a plague on both your houses'. Within the Liberal Party, there had always been a vocal pacifist wing, and there had been much discussion during the early 1960s of the Rapacki Plan, a proposal launched by Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki in 1958 calling for the denuclearisation of Poland, Czechoslovakia and both Germanies.

The third major foreign policy issue to emerge during the 1964–1970 Labour government was in the Middle East. Following its victory in the June 1967 War, Israel was no longer an embattled Jewish settler-state with a small Palestinian-Arab minority, but a clearly dominant regional military power occupying large tracts of land conquered from neighbouring Arab states.

Sympathy for Israel was strong across the political spectrum in Britain, for a variety of reasons, including the memory of the Nazi Holocaust. The Labour Party had strong relations with its Israeli counterparts, these relations extending deep into the Labour left, while many leading Liberals, including Jeremy Thorpe, were also firm supporters of Israel. As small-scale Palestinian resistance commenced, the Israeli response prompted a reassessment of the nature of the state and comparisons with the settler-states in Southern Africa. Within the Liberals and on the left, the Israel/Palestinian issue was to prove the most divisive of all foreign policy issues in the late 1960s.

It is in the context of these issues that I shall examine the relationship of the Young Liberals, myself included, with the rest of the British left during the 1964–1970 Labour government. Younger than the first wave of the YL leaders of the period, I first became an active Liberal after leaving school in December 1964. The winning Conservative in the October 1964 general election in my constituency, East Grinstead, had been elevated to the House of Lords to make way for Geoffrey Johnson-Smith, who had lost his seat in London, with a by-election set for February 1965. With several months to go before

starting studies at Sussex University, I volunteered to help the Liberal candidate, Richard Holme. The result was a creditable second place, the Liberal share of the vote rising to 31.5 per cent at the expense of Labour.

Involvement in the local YL branch followed, while during the summer I worked at Liberal Party Headquarters under Michael Meadowcroft. In September, I attended my first Party Assembly as a constituency delegate, providing me with an opportunity to establish links with the YL leadership and with others from around the country.

At the time, Sussex University was a stronghold of the Trotskyist 'Militant Tendency', then commencing its campaign to infiltrate the Labour Party. I joined the small Liberal and Radical Society although I became more active with the Brighton YL branch. An early focus of campaigning was opposition to the Rhodesian UDI, which took place within a few weeks of my arrival at university. The YLs worked closely with the local Labour Party, encouraged by South African exiles studying at the university, including Thabo Mbeki, later Nelson Mandela's successor as President of South Africa.

The Liberal Party was strongly opposed to UDI, this being emphasised by Jeremy Thorpe's speech at the 1966 Brighton Assembly, in which he advocated the use of British V-bombers to end the rebellion. The Brighton Assembly was also the occasion when, as noted by Tony Greaves (above), the Young Liberals drew the attention of the media, partly through the tabling of a resolution calling for withdrawal from NATO and adoption of a neutralist foreign policy. A similar motion had earlier been passed at the 1965 ULS conference in Manchester calling for a united non-nuclear Europe. Proposed by George Kiloh, who had become NLYL Chairman earlier in the year, the Assembly resolution was defeated after fierce argument.

Another YL resolution, proposed by Greaves and Terry Lacey, then Vice Chairman of ULS, called for 'workers' control' in industry, it, too, being defeated after a fiery debate. The views

of the YL and ULS delegates, as well as their confrontation with the leadership, attracted extensive attention from the media, which happily dubbed them the 'Red Guard,' a nickname that continued to be used until late 1967. The heady degree of publicity stimulated a growth in YL and ULS branches around the country.

Prior to the 'Bomber Thorpe' speech, the Liberal Party already had close relations with the Anti-Apartheid Movement and in 1966, David Steel, elected as an MP at the Roxburgh, Selkirk and Peebles by-election the previous year, became the AAM President, a post he held until 1970. These links were further developed by NLYL, which became an affiliate organisation of AAM with a representative on the AAM National Committee and, subsequently, individual YLs were elected members of the AAM National Executive.

Liberal and YL involvement in campaigning against Smith's Rhodesia and against apartheid were important in establishing the radical credentials of the party, at least on this issue. Collaboration with the Labour left followed as well as with the major southern African liberation movements, the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU), the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa, and the South West African Peoples Organisation (SWAPO) of Namibia, these becoming regular visitors to the party's annual Assemblies.

Within the party, there was broad agreement on support for AAM and the liberation movements. Indeed, in at the 1967 Blackpool Assembly, a YL resolution on southern Africa was proposed by myself and seconded by David Steel and was passed overwhelmingly, although an amendment to remove a commitment to supporting the armed struggle of the liberation movements was passed after it had been accepted from the platform, without consultation, by David Steel. This difference on the armed struggle in southern Africa was paralleled by disagreement on support for direct action in Britain itself, on this and other issues. This became particularly apparent during 1969, with the formation of the Stop the Seventy Tour committee,

with which several leading London-based YLs were involved, including Louis Eaks, then NLYL Chairman, myself, Simon Hebditch and the slightly younger Peter Hain, who had moved with his parents, members of the South African Liberal Party, to Britain in 1966.

Seeking to block a planned tour by the South African all-white cricket team in the summer of 1970, STST, supported by many other groups, launched a campaign in late 1969 and early 1970 to disrupt rugby matches being played by the South African Springboks. All but one of the matches were greeted with large demonstrations, including the invasion of pitches. The exception was the match at Galashiels, in the Borders, the home of Scottish rugby, where STST responded to a request from David Steel, still AAM President and the local MP, that there should be no mass protest. Instead, he and his wife, with a few colleagues, picketed the ground, with thousands of his constituents walking past him into the game. At the June 1970 general election, several months later, the issue was still a hot topic for Liberal canvassers in the Borders and Steel's majority fell to 550, the lowest in his many years as an MP. By that time, STST's objective had been achieved – the South African cricket tour had been cancelled.

While the senior Liberal Party and the YLs (and STST) were united in their opposition both to the winter rugby tour and to the cricket tour due to follow in the summer of 1970, there was serious disagreement over whether or not that should extend to civil disobedience. In February 1970, for example, the Liberal Party Executive voted to censure Louis Eaks, still NLYL Chairman, for his public remarks supporting such disruption.

The active campaigning by both the YLs and the senior party placed the Liberals firmly on the left on the issue of southern Africa and also established the credentials of the YLs within the burgeoning but fissiparous extra-parliamentary left. Both the YLs and the party, moreover, generally shared the same goals, despite differences in tactics.

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This was not to be the case on the other two broad issues, those of the Vietnam War and the Cold War and, later, on the Arab–Israeli conflict. On these, YL initiatives had a major effect on relations with the senior party, the former causing occasional, albeit serious, concern to party chiefs, but the latter leading to open conflict.

As the escalation of the Vietnam War began in late 1964, both the YLs and the senior party quickly adopted a policy of opposition to the war. The Union of Liberal Students and the National League of Young Liberals passed anti-war resolutions at their conferences, these being followed by another resolution jointly proposed by both to the Liberal Party Council which was again passed. The party then organised a national campaign, with YL involvement, to collect signatures to an anti-war petition.

The YLM also began to develop relationships with other groups opposed to the war, or, more generally, to the United States. These included the Young Communist League, who always viewed the YLs with great suspicion, partly because the YLs, with slogans such as 'Make Love, Not War' and often with long hair and garb inspired by the US 'flower power' movement, appeared to be insufficiently serious, as well as lacking a coherent ideology. (In return, the YLs viewed the YCL as boring and under the thumb of an irrelevant party led by uncharismatic apparatchiks). Others with whom the YLs came into contact included Trotskyist bodies like the International Marxist Group (IMG), the International Socialists and the 'Militant Tendency' – then building up strength within the Labour Party and, in particular, the Labour Party Young Socialists – as well as Maoist groups.

In October 1967, the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, established as an umbrella campaign group in 1966 by activists associated with the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation and the IMG, organised a small demonstration outside the American Embassy in Grosvenor Square, with which the YLs were not associated. In January 1968, the launching by the North Vietnamese and their NLF allies of

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the 'Tet Offensive' led to a much greater awareness of the conflict in Britain and the YLs joined a coordinating committee established by VSC to organise another demonstration in March.

The committee included some rather uneasy bedfellows. The Trotskyists and Maoists openly supported the North Vietnamese and the NLF. The YCL, on the other hand, following the Kremlin line, supported a negotiated peace rather than a military victory. The YLs were accepted as members of the committee partly because their credentials had been established on southern African issues and partly because of the 'Peace in Vietnam' policy of the senior party. However, a number of those YLs who were actively involved tended to align themselves more with the 'Victory to the NLF' faction than with the YCL group, whose policy was close to that of the senior Liberal Party.

The demonstration, on 17 March 1968, which attracted over 20,000 people, of whom a few hundred, at most, were YLs, was noteworthy because of violent skirmishes with the police. Talks between the United States and North Vietnam commenced in the summer of 1968, but the bombing of North Vietnam continued and a much larger demonstration took place on 27 October 1968, with the YLs again being members of the coordinating committee. Over 200,000 people took part, the vast majority of whom marched peacefully down Park Lane, although a small minority, who did not include any of the YLs participating in or watching the march, broke away and once again confronted the police outside the American Embassy. In the same month, the US bombing of North Vietnam was finally halted, US troop withdrawals began in early 1969, and the Vietnam War gradually became an issue of declining importance for the British left.

The involvement of the YLs in the anti-Vietnam War campaign had caused some embarrassment for the senior Liberal Party, partly because of their apparent identification with the 'Victory for the NLF' faction, in contradiction to official party policy, and partly

because of the violence associated with the two London demonstrations in 1968. There was also concern about the association of the YLs with other left-wing groups, including Communists of both Soviet and Chinese varieties as well as several Trotskyist factions, that were clearly illiberal. There were many in the senior party, and, indeed, in the YLs, who felt that this was, at best, naive. Indeed, some senior party members came to the false conclusion that the YLM had been infiltrated by 'Communists'.

Other events during 1968, however, ensured that the YLs had few illusions about the nature of the Soviet Union. Following the YL anti-NATO resolution at the 1966 Brighton Assembly, there was a marked increase in the amount of attention being paid to the Young Liberals, both by the Young Communist League and by the embassies of the Soviet bloc in London. One result was the extension of invitations to visit the Soviet Union as guests of the Komsomol. One such visit, by Louis Eaks and myself, took place in December 1967 and January 1968. Our hosts, who had prepared a conventional programme of visits to collective farms and the like, were somewhat taken aback by our requests and questions. Thus in Moscow, we insisted on visiting the tomb of the Russian anarchist Prince Peter Kropotkin, in Kiev we asked party officials to explain the nature of the Ukraine's separate national identity, and in the Latvian capital, Riga, we spent hours with a young artist who carefully explained the history of Latvia's forcible annexation by the Soviet Union and the validity of its continued desire for independence.

A subsequent series of articles I wrote for *Liberal News* led to a formal letter of protest to party headquarters from the Soviet Embassy saying that my articles had 'distorted Soviet reality'. I considered that to be a great compliment. Despite this, however, the British YCL and the Communist Party maintained relations with the YLs, and we were invited to attend the World Youth Festival in Sofia, Bulgaria, in August 1968, as were other member organisations

of the World Federation of Liberal and Radical Youth, WFLRY, most of whom came from Western Europe.

The World Youth Festivals, which had begun in 1947, were organised by the World Federation of Democratic Youth, WFDY, and the International Union of Students, IUS, both Soviet dominated. Previous Festivals had been tightly controlled and the organisers clearly intended the Sofia event to follow the same pattern. The early part of 1968, however, had been a time of radical ferment through much of Europe.

In January, Alexander Dubcek had become First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, launching a programme of liberalisation that became known as the 'Prague Spring', challenging Soviet control of Eastern Europe for the first time since the 1956 Hungarian uprising. In April and May, student movements in Germany and France, led by an eclectic mix of anarchists, Trotskyists and Maoists, had attracted a large following, and in France a student occupation of universities in Paris grew into a general strike that had brought the government of President Charles de Gaulle close to collapse. While the UK was little affected, a student occupation of the Hornsey College of Art in May, in which YLs were involved, provided a small degree of excitement.

European participants in the Sofia Festival included not only Soviet-style Young Communists, from both sides of the Iron Curtain, but also a melange of revolutionary Western European students, young Czechs eager to spread ferment among other Eastern European delegations, Yugoslavs keen to emphasise that they were not part of the Soviet bloc and many others, including a small, but active, group of Young Liberals, including myself and Phil Kelly and John Kelly, both from ULS. None were inclined to accept the tightly regulated programme designed by the Bulgarians and their paymasters and conflict of some kind was almost inevitable. The issue of the Vietnam War provided the opportunity. The Festival organisers announced a Day of Solidarity

with the Vietnamese people, deciding to mark this by a tree-planting ceremony. The loose alliance of radicals decided that a more forceful display of opposition to American policy would be appropriate, with over 1,000 joining a rapidly organised march to protest outside the US Embassy. When the police arrived, the demonstrators sat down in the road. As mounted police rode over the crowd, chants likening them to France's anti-riot police, the CRS, rose. Hostile to US policy though all of the demonstrators may have been, antipathy to Soviet-style Communism was equally strongly felt.

On the way home, the YL delegation visited Prague, at the invitation of the Czech Young Communists, and felt honoured to be asked to deliver a speech at the local equivalent of London's 'Speakers' Corner' in support of the newly liberal Czechoslovakia. On 21 August 1968, a week or so after the delegation returned to London, Soviet tanks rolled into the Czech capital and the Prague Spring was over. The Young Liberals were among organisations participating in protest demonstrations outside the Soviet Embassy in London and relations with the YCL were never the same again.

The YLs, though still critical of NATO and of US policy in Vietnam, became vocal critics of the Soviet Union, as did much of the rest of the British left, both within and outside the Labour Party. As the war in Vietnam wound down, with the beginning of the US withdrawal, disagreements between the YLs and the senior party on what approach to take to the Soviet bloc began to fade.

The third major foreign policy issue to come to the fore in the late 1960s was the Arab–Israeli dispute. As the Israelis, victors in the June 1967 War, consolidated control over the West Bank and Gaza, the Palestinians launched a small-scale military resistance, led by Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement. In March 1968, an Israeli foray across the River Jordan was blocked by the Jordanian army and Fatah, this leading to increasing publicity for what was still a very small and ineffective organisation.

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In early 1969, still NLYL International Vice Chairman, I attended a conference in Cairo, at which all the major African liberation movements, with whom the YLs already had good links, were present, along with representatives of Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organisation. This was followed by a visit to Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, organised by the World Federation of Democratic Youth, still trying to engage with the YLs, despite our unruly behaviour at the World Youth Festival the previous summer. Other participants included a neo-anarchist Dutch radical and an apparatchik from East Germany's Frei Deutsche Jugend. Meetings with Fatah leaders, a tour of a refugee camp and a visit to a guerrilla camp were part of the programme. I returned to London convinced that the Palestinians did, indeed, have a case, and that the almost unthinking support for Israel in Britain, including within the Liberal Party, needed some re-examination. The gradually emerging evidence of close ties between Israel and the white regimes in Southern Africa was sufficient to convince some other Young Liberals, including Louis Eaks, who became the YL Chairman during the 1969 Easter conference, that we should take a closer look at the issue.

Mild expressions of disapproval of Israeli policies followed, these attracting a barrage of criticism from within the party, coupled with suggestions that any criticism of Israel was driven by an underlying anti-Semitism. YLs active in the campaign against apartheid were infuriated by the allegation and people who had begun as gentle critics were pushed to become more determined opponents of Israeli policy.

The 1970 NLYL/ULS Easter conference at Skegness, attended, for the first time, by a representative of Fatah, saw a major argument over the extent of support for the Palestinians. Louis Eaks, elected as Chairman in 1969 and seeking a second year of office, supported a resolution backing the Fatah policy of a single state in Israel/Palestine while Lawry Freedman, backed by several others, argued for support for a two-state solution. The resolution, as

passed, was somewhat confusing, calling for a single state, though without mention of Fatah, and for ceasefire lines to be respected and for the belligerent parties to enter into negotiations. It also called for the youth wings of the Israeli Liberal Party (which was allied with the extreme right-wing Zionist Herut Party, led by Menahem Begin) and the Israeli Independent Liberal party to be expelled from the World Federation of Liberal and Radical Youth unless they accepted the principle of a secular democratic state.[5]

The disagreement within the YLs over the Israel/Palestine issue was to some extent responsible for the failure of Eaks to gain re-election as Chairman and he was defeated by Tony Greaves, a *Jewish Chronicle* report on the conference being headlined 'Young Liberals reject extreme pro-Arab' and noting that the 'extremist chairman' had been replaced by 'a more moderate anti-Zionist.'[6]

The policy adopted, however, was sufficiently critical of Israel to prompt a furious response from the senior party, in particular from Jeremy Thorpe, who had succeeded Jo Grimond as party leader in 1967. Several prominent Liberals, including some major party donors, were also Jewish, and threats were made to cut off financial support. The sister parties in Israel, fellow members of Liberal International, were not amused either.

Having adopted a pro-Palestinian policy, the YLs found themselves with a peculiar collection of allies. The Labour left was still largely pro-Israel, partly because of links with the left-leaning Mapam Party in Israel and partly because many prominent members of the Labour left were themself Jewish or of Jewish origin. Insofar as there was a pro-Arab element within the Labour Party, it was to a large extent made up of people who had come to support broader Arab nationalism as part of the anti-colonial struggle (the British withdrawal from Aden having occurred as recently as the end of 1967). Many of these Labour 'pro-Arabs' were to the centre of the party on domestic issues.

On the extra-parliamentary left, the insistence of Trotskyists and Maoists on trying to analyse in terms of class what appeared, to the YLs at least, to be a movement of resistance to military occupation was also a source of disagreement. In consequence, the YLs' best connections were with Arab groupings, like the General Union of Palestinian Students, or with those around the newspaper *Free Palestine*, founded in 1968 and later edited by Louis Eaks for many years. YL support for the Palestinians, and the resulting strain on relations with the senior party, continued during the chairmanship of Peter Hain, who succeeded Tony Greaves in 1971.

As mentioned earlier however, by 1970 the YLM was heading into a decline, the reasons for which are perhaps worthy of further study. In terms of their involvement in the international issues cited above, with the exception of southern Africa, only a minority – probably a small minority – were associated, and the nature of these issues was, in any case, evolving. As noted in the quotation from Tony Greaves, above, an 'ideological crisis' had emerged within the YL leadership. This had several aspects. First, as correctly stated by Tony Greaves, there was a division between those whose views had evolved in such a way that they no longer considered themselves to be Liberals (or liberals) and those who 'were clear that we were radical Liberals and for whom any future in politics had to lie with the Liberal Party …'.

Another area of disagreement, partly, but not wholly, coinciding with these ideological divisions, was whether or not it was acceptable to adopt direct action or civil disobedience in pursuit of campaigns, such as that against the South African rugby tour. Many members of the senior party objected, on principle, to the breaking of the law, with a similar view being adopted in many YL branches around the country, particularly those which were closely linked to their constituency Liberal Associations.

Another source of strain within the YL leadership was the fact that some of those who were London-based came to focus their attention primarily on single-issue campaigning, often on international issues, such as Israel/Palestine, in contrast to many members

of the leadership who were based outside London. While branches of the Union of Liberal Students often worked closely on campus with other left-wing groups, on both international and domestic issues, branches of the Young Liberals, closely linked to, and often a major force within, local constituency associations, were more likely to undertake the bulk of their political activity, including involvement in local and parliamentary elections, within a Liberal Party framework. Through their experience of, and frustration with, the conventional campaigning techniques, the collection of views that came to characterise the 'Community Politics' approach were beginning to emerge. In contrast, many of the London-based leadership were often related only peripherally, if at all, to their local Liberal associations.

Moreover, throughout the heyday of the YLs, the National Executive of NLYL included representatives from the regional federations who were often uncomfortable with the ideological approach of the London-based leadership and of the leadership of ULS. Among these were David Penhaligon, representing Devon and Cornwall and later MP for Truro from 1974 to 1986, and Howard Legg, representing Wessex, who has now been a local councillor for over twenty years. Coming from rural areas where the political issues of the day were different from those in the larger towns and cities, and where often the Conservatives, rather than Labour, were the main opponents, they too were more concerned with domestic issues as well as being worried about the YLs becoming involved in law-breaking. Happy to be radical, they were never comfortable with revolutionary left-wing rhetoric.

The April 1970 NLYL conference at Skegness marked the beginning of the parting of the ways between the two separate ideological strains. Tony Greaves became Chairman, defeating Louis Eaks, with another former ULS officer, Gordon Lishman, winning election as Organising Vice Chairman, a post he had held in an acting capacity since the resignation of his predecessor a few

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months earlier. Both then proposed the successful 'Community Politics' resolution at the Party Assembly later in the year. Eaks failed to obtain Assembly backing for a resolution supporting the principle of a single state in Israel/Palestine and then drifted away from the YLs to focus on the Israel/Palestine issue.

In the same year, George Kiloh joined the Labour Party, later explaining his decision as follows:

> Back in '65, I remember quoting myself. I didn't want to be in the Labour Party because it was like 'an old waiting room in a station'. Semi-derelict and nothing was going anywhere. The remark made sense then. The Labour Party was like that. I joined with difficulty, but I joined because there were more people like me there. We were a minority in the party, but we were there nevertheless.[7]

Others did the same, like Terry Lacey and Phil Kelly, who went on to edit *Tribune*, the organ of the conventional Labour left, and has served intermittently since 1984 as a Labour councillor in Islington. Yet others, such as Hilary Wainwright, devoted their attention primarily to radical extra-parliamentary activity, without joining Labour, while Tony Bunyan, for several years the YLM National Organiser and now the Director of Statewatch, moved to focus on civil liberties issues. Others effectively withdrew from active political engagement.

It is worth placing on record that only a small minority of YLs focused between 1965 and 1970 on the foreign policy issues mentioned above as the major part of their political activity, particularly outside university campuses and the hothouse atmosphere of the radical extra-parliamentary left in London. For the most part, with the possible exception of southern Africa, YL branches devoted the bulk of their activity to local campaigning, developing the experience that was later to serve the party in such good stead as support for 'community politics' grew.

Although there were serious disagreements between the YLM and the senior party on aspects of these foreign policy issues, and on other issues, wise heads in the senior party, such as Frank Byers, Tim Beaumont, Gruffydd Evans, himself a former NLYL Chairman in 1960–61, and the Head of the Liberal Party Organisation, Pratap Chitnis, ensured that, for the most part, lines of communication were kept open. Indeed, the YLs were effectively used as 'stalking horses' during an abortive attempt in the late 1960s to force Jeremy Thorpe to resign as leader. Frustrations and irritation, on both sides, did not lead, as some feared, to an open split. Instead, those YLs who felt they could no longer call themselves Liberals simply moved on elsewhere. On the role of those who remained, as practitioners of 'community politics' and as candidates, councillors and, later, parliamentarians, I am not qualified to comment.

Looking back, the Israel–Palestine conflict, which has always crossed the conventional boundaries of 'left' and 'right', has proved over the years to be the most intractable of the foreign policy issues with which the Young Liberals engaged so actively from 1965 to 1970. The Vietnam War, the 'Cold War', the Soviet bloc, Ian Smith's Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa are all fading memories, but there is still scant room for optimism in the search for peace in the Middle East, although few now doubt that a two-state solution in Israel/Palestine is the most desirable option and opposition to the polices of Israel's successive governments is now widely spread throughout the political spectrum. And the large, irreverent, often impractical and naive Young Liberal Movement of the period is now little more than an historical footnote.

Peter Hellyer is a member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of Liberal History. *International Vice-Chairman of NLYL 1967–69, concurrently a member of the Executive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and subsequently an aide to David Steel, he has worked in the United Arab Emirates for over thirty years, currently as an adviser to the Government's National Media Council. He has returned frequently to take part in election campaigns in the Scottish Borders, most recently in the 2010 general election.*

The large, irreverent, often impractical and naive Young Liberal Movement of the period is now little more than an historical footnote.

1   P. Hellyer, 'Young Liberals – the "Red Guard" era', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*, 17, Winter 1997–1998, pp. 14, 15.

2   J. Aitken, *The Young Meteors* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1967), p. 120. Quoted in Craig Taylor, 'Promises, promises', *The Guardian*, 6 September 2003. http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2003/sep/06/weekend.craigtaylor.

3   A. Slade, 'From Angry Young Man to Simmering Old Guru – Interview with Tony Greaves', *Journal of Liberal History*, 45, Winter 2004–2005, pp. 30–34.

4   T. Greaves, 'The Year Things Began To Change', *Liberator*, 300, pp. 12–13.

5   David Rich, *pers. comm.*, 4 January 2010.

6   *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 April 1970.

7   Craig Taylor, 'Promises, promises', *The Guardian*, 6 September 2003. http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2003/sep/06/weekend.craigtaylor.

Alan Leaman assesses Paddy Ashdown's and Tony Blair's attempt to realign British politics – 'the Project' – and draws lessons for the future.
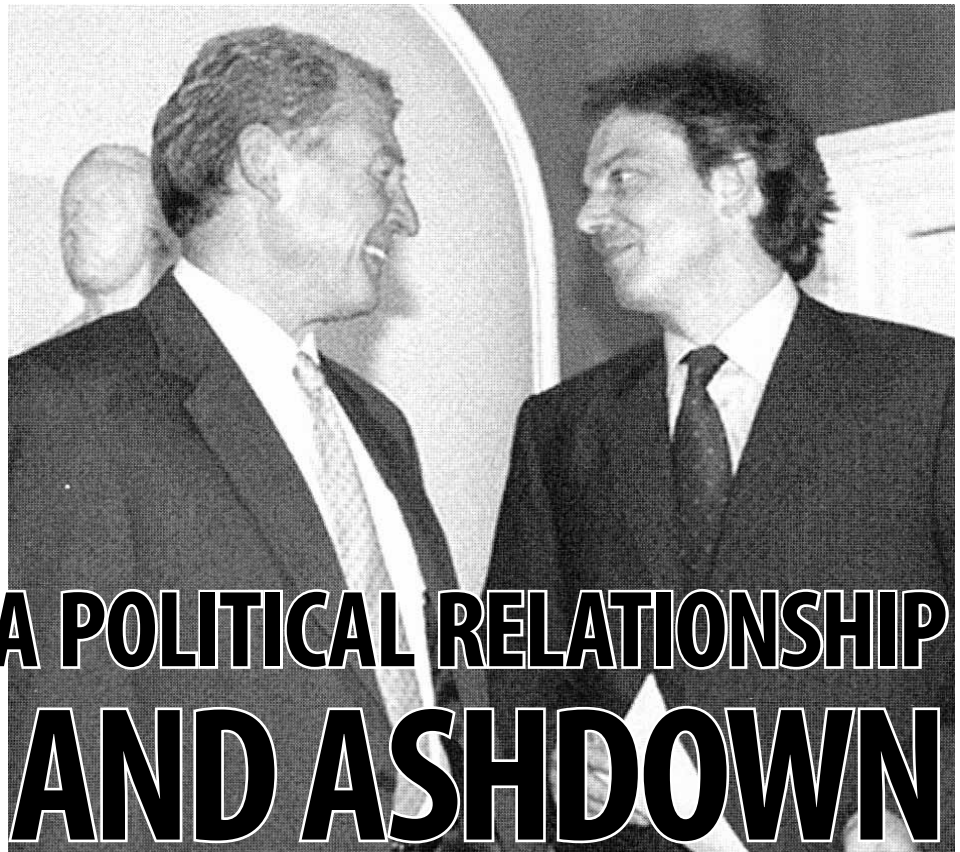
NOTES ON A POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP
BLAIR AND ASHDOWN

Observers of Liberal Democrat politics in recent decades might feel a little confused – and with some justification. There was the Alliance in the 1980s, with its doctrine of 'equidistance' from the Conservatives and Labour and explicit hope of a hung parliament. Then Paddy Ashdown took his merged party in the direction of greater cooperation with Labour, particularly after the accession of Tony Blair as its leader, prefigured in his 1992 speech in Chard.[1] Charles Kennedy spoke during his time as Lib Dem leader of replacing the Conservative Party while repositioning his party to the left of the Labour government. And, to bring the story right up to date, Nick Clegg has written that the Labour Party's 'time is up', that the Liberal Democrats can 'replace Labour as the dominant force of progressive politics',[2] and has taken his party into a governing coalition with the Conservative Party.

It is easy to caricature this as the opportunism of a flexible and pragmatic third party. I once explained to a gathering of BBC journalists that the first job of a Lib Dem leader is to spot what is happening in politics, work out how to benefit, and then announce with confidence that it was always your plan to bring this particular circumstance about. The truth is that all political parties have to tack to prevailing winds and take advantage where they can.

But this is also the story of a long, consistent and hard-fought effort to redesign the battle lines of UK politics; in particular, to realign the centre-left. Some argued that Paddy Ashdown's approach was the exception to the Lib Dem strategic rule – an attempt to create a shortcut to power. They contrasted this with the 'long march' that would keep the Lib Dems more independent of other parties and ensure that its policies were not compromised.

In truth, Ashdown's contribution is exceptional only in the sense that it was almost a triumphant success. It suited its times – electorally as well as politically. It delivered a number of reforms and benefits for the Lib Dems – particularly constitutional reforms – that would otherwise have been lost. And it very nearly secured the fundamental changes in the structures of British party politics that Liberal Democrats seek.

Personal background

My credentials for writing about this are partial, as many will no doubt rush to point out. A long personal history of involvement in the Liberal Party – on policy committees, working in the office of Paddy Ashdown when he was leader (including drafting the Chard speech), as a parliamentary candidate and, finally, as Lib Dem Director of Strategy in the run-up to the 1997 general election – meant that I spent around two decades immersed in these strategic issues. I even wrote a journal article called 'Ending equidistance'.[3] I was closely involved in what, I believe, was the most serious attempt to realign British politics since the creation of the SDP.

I also came to those roles with a grounding in what might be called the pluralism of the left. At University the Liberals participated in organisations called the Broad Left and the Left Alliance. Campaign organisations such as the Anti-Apartheid Movement and Charter 88 brought Liberals into close and often cooperative

contact with members of the Labour Party as well as others. The long period of Conservative electoral domination from 1979 onwards, mirrored in many parts of the country by a Lib Dem advance in local government, the arrival of 'no overall control' councils and tactical voting by Labour and Lib Dem supporters in constituencies, all added to the experience. To me it was natural that Liberals should look around for allies and partners.

Of course, there is plenty of anti-pluralism on the centre-left as well. Tribalism runs deep and wide in the Labour movement, where it mixes with a particular suspicion of liberalism and electoral reform. Liberal Democrats also hold their party dear for the best and worst of reasons.

None of my experience led me to believe that Labour were anything other than a serious competitor, an obstacle to the Liberal Democrat ideal of a more open, decentralised, reformist, progressive and forward-looking alternative to the Conservatives. They were too closed and statist to be the answer; but they were too large and obstinate to be ignored. Any Liberal Democrat strategy has to have a coherent answer to the question: what do you do about Labour?

The build up to Blair – up to 1992

It is important to understand that the Blair–Ashdown relationship came at the end of a long process. Lib-Labbery had been around for years. When Ashdown eventually moved to end equidistance, we felt that we were returning the Liberals closer to their core and historic strategy and purpose, on the reasonable enough basis that modern Liberal history begins with Grimond.

In the 1960s, Jo Grimmond talked about realigning the left around a non-socialist alternative to Conservatism. David Steel led the Liberal Party into a formal relationship with the Callaghan government via the Lib–Lab pact. Both Grimond and Steel were drawing, inter alia, on strong networks of cross-party relationships and discussions. The creation of the SDP and formation of

the Alliance – from Roy Jenkins' Dimbleby lecture onwards – all fitted with this narrative of realignment.

As Mrs Thatcher consolidated the Conservatives in power during the 1980s, the opposition parties naturally became more interested in each other and, from time to time, would learn how to cooperate. When Paddy Ashdown published his 1989 book, *Citizen's Britain*, we made sure that Labour luminaries such as Giles Radice and Raymond Plant were aware of it and encouraged to respond. Subsequently, Plant went on to chair a commission for Neil Kinnock on electoral reform which reported in 1993, while Radice was a voice for sanity on Europe and much else.

In local and other elections, too, we became more and more conscious of the so-called 'tactical vote'. This phenomenon was being driven from the grass roots – by voters as much as by politicians. But it subtly altered the atmosphere at Westminster as well. By the time of the 1992 general election it was a natural and widespread view that some sort of Labour–Liberal Democrat arrangement could emerge if the result was indecisive, even though the party's formal position remained one of 'equidistance'. Paddy and I had even been to Germany to talk with the FDP about how they prepared for coalition talks.

When Neil Kinnock used the last week of the 1992 Labour campaign to suggest movement on proportional representation towards the Lib Dem position, he pushed Lib–Lab relations to the top of the election agenda. The Conservatives quickly saw their chance, linking the two opposition parties together and using fear of a Labour victory to squeeze the Lib Dem vote. The circumstances that Lib Dems had often hoped for – a high prospect of a hung parliament with a converging Lib–Lab policy agenda – had rebounded to our disadvantage.

The build up to Blair – 1992 onwards

We drew some lessons from the 1992 experience. The first, and the one that turned out to be most

wrong, was that the Labour Party was unlikely to be able to win a future election on its own. At the time, no one could have foreseen the creation of New Labour. This occasioned a certain amount of chutzpah on our part. I recall giving a press briefing for the Sunday papers on the weekend after the election in which we said that Paddy was now gearing up to take on the role of effective leader of the opposition.

The second lesson was more significant and robust. The final days of the campaign had been uncomfortable for us. John Major had made a lot of the uncertainty implicit in a hung parliament or a Lib–Lab arrangement. It had pushed many voters back to the Conservatives. The conclusion we drew was that, next time, the political ground would have to be prepared in advance of the election, not while the campaign was in full force. The electorate would need to have evidence – prior to going to vote – that cross-party cooperation could work and that it could support stable and effective government.

Much of the Lib Dem approach to the next parliament flowed from this second conclusion. Yet, at first, it gained little traction. Paddy threw himself into his *Beyond Westminster*[4] project, to the frustration of many of his senior colleagues. The election of John Smith as leader of the Labour Party closed down many possibilities (though, curiously, he did resurrect the old Liberal Party slogan – One More Heave – to describe his political strategy). The Lib Dems and Labour then fell out – spectacularly on many occasions – over the ratification of the European Union's Maastricht Treaty, with each accusing the other of bad faith and poor judgement.

Yet, still, the logic of the Chard speech was pushing both parties and their thinking. When Michael Heseltine abruptly announced a massive pit closure programme, we made sure that Paddy spoke at the main protest demonstration alongside Smith. Numerous political conferences, seminars and private dinners enabled progressives in both parties to get to know each other and to seek common cause. Charter 88 was a rallying point for reformers across

The electorate would need to have evidence – prior to going to vote – that cross-party cooperation could work and that it could support stable and effective government.

the whole of the centre-left and was steadily building and winning the case for the wider political and constitutional reforms that were eventually to find their way into the Lib Dem 1997 manifesto and, though with less enthusiasm, into that of Tony Blair's Labour Party.

Blair becomes leader – 1994–97

The election of Blair as leader of the Labour Party then added enormously to the possibilities of the Ashdown approach. Blair had a freedom and a potential seen in no Labour leader before him. He had no time for the traditions and dogmas of his own party. There was no sense in which he was a socialist. His talk of the need to mend the schism in the centre-left suggested a real potential for a new pluralist settlement.

So Blair marked a break with traditional Labour. He was distant from the trades unions, unambiguous about support for free trade and the market economy, and eminently pro-European. He was interested in public sector reform. He was also, palpably, a modern person, with little social conservatism (though his views on criminal justice were a running sore with the Lib Dems).

In the aftermath of Iraq, cash for honours, and the financial crisis of 2007–09 his reputation has tumbled. Much of his premiership is now viewed as opportunity lost. But we should not underestimate just how different he was (and was felt to be) when he emerged as Labour leader in 1994.

Blair also added to the imperative that was driving the Chard speech strategy. For a while, the Lib Dems were totally eclipsed. Labour's new leader seemed to reach out and to win new friends wherever he wanted. The maintenance of equidistance in those circumstances would have left Britain's third force at best irrelevant, and at worst an obstacle to the fresh start that Britain yearned for.

With the passage of time, it is easy for us now to forget that Blair was an extraordinarily dominant and imaginative leader of the opposition, carrying almost everything before him and commanding an unprecedented coalition of support. Equally, and in contradiction, we forget that

the prevailing view amongst non-Conservatives was that the election result would be close (certainly not a landslide). To fail to react to these circumstances – to appear to be standing in the way of the tide – would have risked political suicide. More importantly, it would have also effectively meant turning our back on the most significant political opportunity for Liberal Democrats in a generation.

So the pace quickened, supplemented by the cooperation and dialogue that was now possible between those at the top of each party. We talked about a 'project' and politicians and journalists understood what we meant. We spoke with Labour about joint work on unemployment – then climbing fast towards three million: Cook was in favour, Dobson opposed. Attempts were made to ensure that both our conferences were successes and targeted at the Conservatives – though Blair himself was not above intervening in Lib Dem conferences via press interviews and other manoeuvres. Above all, we managed to create the Cook–Maclennan Commission on Constitutional Reform, a joint working party of Labour and Lib Dems to agree on a process for the implementation of key reforms.

Paddy also started making speeches about the importance of securing at least ten years – two parliaments – of reforming government and was happy that this implied a period of consistent cooperation on the centre-left. By the time of the election, informal lists of seats had been given to supportive newspapers which were then able to advise their readers on how to use their 'tactical' votes in order to maximise the chances of defeating sitting Conservatives.

Blair and Ashdown clearly enjoyed their working relationship, and the mutual respect that lay behind it. Each would have found in their conversations a certain amount of release from the tribulations of their own party. They both were brilliant practitioners and thinkers about politics, with an instinctive feel for the bigger picture and how voters were responding.

This was no cosy love-in however. Battles were fought when they were needed. The 1995

Littleborough and Saddleworth by-election was probably the toughest of the parliament, with the Lib Dem Chris Davies eventually emerging as the victor over Labour's Phil Woolas following an aggressive and personal campaign. This burgeoning relationship was about two political leaders who saw personal, party and broader political advantage in drawing closer together.

There were some important personal differences as well. Blair had no real understanding or appreciation of the effort and dedication that was required to become a Lib Dem MP, or of the emotional and political attachments this built. Ashdown found Blair's relative caution frustrating. As a military man, his instinct was to confront problems and move quickly to put himself in a better place. Blair, the lawyer, was more often looking to work and talk around problems, buy some more time, and keep his broader coalition on board.

The 1997 election and beyond

In a sense, this strategy delivered too well. The Lib Dems more than doubled their number of MPs in 1997, benefiting significantly from their association with the wider cross-party effort to defeat the Conservatives. But we were faced with a New Labour landslide.

The immediate aftermath of the election campaign was just about the only moment when a further deepening of the relationship would have been possible – and that proved, as we know, impossible. As Paddy Ashdown's diaries confirm, Blair pulled back over the weekend following the election. His majority was too large. He was not prepared to press the issue with his party.

True, the creation of a Joint Cabinet Committee helped deliver much of the constitutional reform programme, and to hold off those in the Labour ranks who wanted to minimise the changes. It also helped to sustain some badly needed momentum behind the 'constructive opposition' approach that the Lib Dems adopted. Ashdown was able to use his influence with Blair to considerable effect during the remaining

Blair had a freedom and a potential seen in no Labour leader before him. He had no time for the traditions and dogmas of his own party.

two years of his leadership, not only helping to keep the government to commitments previously made and to press forward on others but also preventing the Lib Dems from lapsing into full-out opposition to the Labour government. But this influence was a declining asset.

In 1997 I argued to the Lib Dem Conference that the party now had an electoral and political interest in the success of New Labour. But I was already pushing against prevailing party sentiment. The perception that the 'project' was the personal creature of Paddy and Tony meant that it was too easily dismissed as an elite undertaking. The party had decided, consciously or not, that it wanted a quieter life.

Strangely, a lot of our focus at the time was on the potential for two referendums: one on entry to the euro and the other on electoral reform. Both, had they taken place, would have required and fostered a new sense of partnership and common purpose amongst centre-left politicians who were prepared to back each cause. Thousands of words were written about both, with much speculation about when they would happen, in which order, and which would be more difficult to win. As we know, the government ducked out of both.

In late 1998 I said to Paddy Ashdown that he would need to stay on as leader in order to help secure a yes vote in the two referendums. He nodded, but I could tell from the look in his eyes that his thinking was heading in a different direction. He announced his resignation as leader of the Lib Dems a few weeks later.

An evaluation

Was all this worth it? Unquestionably. Even in its limited form, the Blair–Ashdown relationship delivered electoral and political benefits that would otherwise not have been available to the Liberal Democrats. Arguably, it has produced better government for the country as well.

As a result of the relationship, a far larger number of Lib Dems now hold elected positions – in Strasbourg, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Westminster and in local government.

Why fight so hard to become the leader of a political party if you are not prepared to use that position in the pursuit of ambitious political goals?

Proportional electoral systems are entrenched in many parts of the UK. In Scotland and Wales, too, the Lib Dems have now had experience of holding office, and coalition governments have proved effective, making the Cameron–Clegg coalition following the 2010 general election that much easier to construct. The Blair government implemented significant reforms that will not now be undone. And the Blair–Ashdown relationship has left a template for others to pick up and use in the future. The simple fact that this happened means that it will be that much easier next time around.

More than that, this very nearly became the moment when centre-left politics was changed much more fundamentally in the direction that Liberal Democrats exist to promote. A Blair–Ashdown administration could have achieved a great deal more.

In the end, Blair's failure to answer the question put to him by Ashdown (increasingly in public) – Are you a pluralist or a control freak? – meant that the project could not be sustained. But Ashdown was surely right to try to force the issue. Why fight so hard to become the leader of a political party if you are not prepared to use that position in the pursuit of ambitious political goals?

Lessons for the future

Nick Clegg has written recently that he wants the Liberal Democrats to be leaders of a wider liberal movement that is capable of being an effective alternative to the Conservatives.[5] He is right to do so. He also argues that the current Labour Party (it is insufficiently *New* Labour?) is out of tune with its times. He makes a persuasive case. Implicit in this thesis is a recognition that the centre-left must reorganise itself further if it is to be a real success.

Inevitably, the onset of the 2010 election campaign and subsequent coalition negotiations with the Conservatives put such a restructuring of politics on hold. The party electoral battle took precedence and the opportunity to construct a serious and governing coalition with the Conservative Party after the election has dramatically altered

the relationship between Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party. Clegg's answer to the old Lib Dem question – what do you do about Labour? – made a lot of sense in this context; he fought them and fought them hard, though it was noticeable that significant numbers of Labour seats did not fall to the Lib Dem challenge as many had hoped and expected.

Clegg himself has distanced himself from previous thinking about realigning the centre-left, telling one interviewer that it underestimates 'quite how fluid British politics has become'.[6] However, the party is likely to return to the question at some point, provoked, perhaps, by a future referendum on electoral reform.

Labour, of course, may retreat to a comfort zone of oldish Labour, unlearning many of the lessons that Tony Blair insisted on in the 1990s. Alternatively, a new Labour leader might make a fresh start, ditch the union link, be prepared to face down a weakened left and reach out to build new alliances and refashion the centre-left. Liberal Democrats will want to be prepared for either eventuality.

The conditions for a new realignment could once again re-emerge quite quickly – only more so. At that point, the Liberal Democrats will want to study and build on the experience of Blair and Ashdown.

Alan Leaman worked in Paddy Ashdown's office in 1988–93 and was Director of Strategy and Planning for the Liberal Democrats 1995–97. He is currently CEO of a leading business trade association.

1   Paddy Ashdown, *A Fortunate Life* (Aurum Press Ltd, 2009), p. 268.
2   Nick Clegg, *The Liberal Moment* (Demos, 2009).
3   Alan Leaman 'Ending equidistance', *Political Quarterly*, April-June 1998, .pp 160-169 Reprinted in the *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* 19, Summer 1998.
4   Paddy Ashdown, *Beyond Westminster: Finding Hope in Britain* (Simon & Schuster, 1994).
5   Nick Clegg, 'Welcome to the new era of Liberal politics', *The Times*, 17 September 2009.
6   Interview with Nick Clegg, *The Observer*, 7 June 2010.

THOMAS PAINE AND THE RADICAL LIBERAL TRADITION

In the two centuries since Thomas Paine's death, his works and reputation have been both vilified and appropriated by individuals and movements from across the political spectrum. His name has become a touchstone of left-wing and liberal thought, celebrated for the courage of his political vision, even as the specific context of his writings has too often been disregarded. This meeting will discuss the continued resonance of Paine's thought and assess his relevance for radical and liberal activists today.

Speakers: **Edward Royle**, Emeritus Professor, University of York and author of many works on 18th and 19th century history including *Revolutionary Britannia? Reflections on the Threats of Revolution in Britain, 1789–1848* and *Robert Owen and the Commencement of the Millennium: A Study of the Harmony Community*; **Dr Edward Vallance**, University of Roehampton and author of *A Radical History of Britain: Visionaries, Rebels and Revolutionaries – the Men and Women who fought for our Freedom* and The *Glorious Revolution: 1688 – Britain's Fight for Liberty*. Chair: **Dr Richard Grayson**, Head of Politics, Goldsmiths College, guest editor of this special issue of the *Journal* and co-editor of *After the Crash: Reinventing the Left in Britain* and *Reinventing the State: Social Liberalism for the 21st Century*.

6.30pm, Monday 12 July 2010
David Lloyd George Room, National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London, SW1A 2HE

'An out-of-date word': Grimond and the left (continued from page 56)

described in J. Ramsden, *The Winds of Change: Macmillan to Heath, 1957–75* (Longman, 1996), pp. 36–37.

32 On a small swing, the Conservatives had won Brighouse and Spenborough from Labour in a by-election on 17 March 1960.

33 *The Times*, 17 March 1962.

34 'Pact "Not on your Life"', *Liberal News*, 25 January 1962. Buchanan presumably meant 'second of the opposition parties', for at the by-election on 8 November 1961 he had narrowly won second place for the Liberals, pushing Labour into third position.

35 '*Herald's* Blind Eye', *Liberal News*, 10 February 1962. Holt wrote to the *Herald* in response to an article, 'Nation in Search of a Party' which called upon Labour to transform itself urgently but rejected any reference to the Liberals. The letter was not published.

36 *The Guardian*, 24 June 1965.

37 Lord Avebury (formerly Eric Lubbock), interview, 12 August 1999.

38 Edward Short, *Whip to Wilson* (Macdonald, 1989), pp. 117 and 172.

39 'Stormy Young Liberals say –"No Pacts"', *Liberal News*, 23 April 1965.

40 All quotation in this paragraph not otherwise attributed is cited in *Liberal News*, 2 July 1965.

41 *The Guardian*, 26 June 1965.

42 This was confirmed by Luise Nandy, Byers's daughter, in an interview, 18 January 2009.

43 All quotation in this paragraph not otherwise attributed is cited in *Liberal News*, 2 July 1965.

44 *The Guardian*, 23 September 1965.

45 Lord Avebury (Eric Lubbock), interview, 12 August 1999.

46 H. Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964–70: a Personal Record* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson and Michael Joseph, 1970), p. 139.

47 R. Douglas, *History of the Liberal Party 1895–1970* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1971), p. 281.

48 G. Watson (ed.), *The Unservile State: Essays in Liberty and Welfare* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1957), pp. 129–30.

49 Grimond, *Memoirs,* p. 260.

50 Wainwright's note of this exchange is in the Wainwright papers at the LSE.

51 V. Cable, *Free Radical: a Memoir* (Atlantic Books, 2009), p. 42.

52 Cited in McManus, op. cit., p. 146.

53 A case in point is John Pardoe, whose journey to Grimond's Liberal Party from Labour's left is documented in A. Slade, 'What might have been', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*, Issue 36 (November 2002).